

NEW CHURCH *Life*

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

MAY/JUNE 2016



The New Church and the Nicodemus Tension

Why focus a New Church Day address on the tension Nicodemus felt as both a Pharisee and a disciple of Christ? The Rev. Christopher Barber illustrates how that tension relates to our own lives – and the life of the Church. (Page 222)

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

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In This Issue

What does Nicodemus and the tension he felt as a Pharisee and a disciple of Jesus Christ have to do with New Church Day – and with our own lives? In a 19th of June address the Rev. Christopher A. Barber says tension exists whenever we become aware of the difference between where we are and where we could be, want to be, or ought to be. As that applies in the conflicted life of Nicodemus it also applies to the Church and to our lives. (Page 222)

The spirit of Memorial Day in the United States – the last Monday in May – is similar to sentiments in many nations where we honor those who have given their lives for their countries and our freedom. In a Memorial Day address given last year in Bryn Athyn, the Rev. Thomas H. Rose says that “each and every one of us is [also] called to service for the love, uplifting and protection of our friends and neighbors. We are called upon to defend and protect all that is good and innocent and truly loving. And the greatest expression of this is selflessness.” (Page 233)

In a New Church Day sermon, *Letting Love Be Our Spiritual Clothing*, the Rev. Jared J. Buss says that the Woman clothed with the Sun – a beloved image on the 19th of June – represents the living truths we are taught by the Lord. The beginning of our spiritual journey is to find the truths to clothe us, and then to express the love that moves within them. (Page 237)

The Rev. Douglas M. Taylor was the oldest General Church minister – 90 – when he passed into the spiritual world in February. He and his wife, Christine, with whom he is now reunited, were much loved – in their native Australia and in the United States. In a memorial address the Rev. Walter E. Orthwein compares him to the kind of fisherman – a lover of truth – whom the Lord called as disciples. (Page 243) See also a tribute in Church News from his friends in Australia. (Page 284)

Surely we are not Swedenborgians! So says the Rev. Gerald G. Waters who feels we sometimes misrepresent our church – often unintentionally – by calling ourselves Swedenborgians or using phrases such as “Swedenborg teaches,” when it is the Lord alone who teaches. We may even harm the Church by attaching Swedenborg’s name to it – something Swedenborg himself never would have wanted. (Page 249)

The Rev. Kenneth J. Alden asks another provocative question: Does the Lord want you to join the church organization? “The answer that will mean the most to you,” Mr. Alden says, “is the one you hear from the Lord.” His is a kingdom of uses so the question of joining should relate to how useful we can be as a result. (Page 251)

The Rev. William H. Clifford offers a theory that the Lord’s redemption is accomplished through a series borne out in the way the revelation is revealed to us in the successive volumes of the Writings – through the subjugation of the hells, the ordering of the heavens, and the establishment of a new church. (Page 254)

“How do we love God?” asks NewChurch LIVE pastor the Rev. Chuck Blair. It can be a complex theological question, but can be as easy as showing love to a stranger. God’s love is made real in the world when we see it, hear it, witness it, experience it, share it. A simple photo of workers at a fast-food restaurant praying with a woman who had just lost her husband captures more powerfully what a whole sermon might strive to do. (Page 260)

“Emanuel Swedenborg and the Popol Vuh: The Myth of the Ancient Word.” What’s that all about? Dylan C. Odhner explains it all in a paper written as part of his PhD program – how the revelation given through Swedenborg helps to bridge our understanding between mythology and the truths of the Word. (Page 261)

Modern technology is not only a wonderful tool for spreading information but also for storing it. Marvin Clymer, head of Digital Collections in the Swedenborg Library in Bryn Athyn, describes the electronic collection of pamphlets and publications that help to write the rich history of the Church. (Page 269)

Church News (page 273) includes:

- Tributes to retiring pillars of the Academy of the New Church Secondary Schools: Girls School Principal Susan O. Odhner; Athletic Director Shawn Synnestvedt and his wife and partner, Aileen H. Synnestvedt; School Nurse Allyn E. Simons; and Registrar and teacher Kyle Genzlinger
- Election of three new members and nine incumbents to the General Church Board at the May meeting of the General Church Corporation
- A regional meeting of European ministers in Sweden
- The commissioning of five new Stephen Ministers in Bryn Athyn
- Touching remembrances of the Rev. Douglas Taylor from his native Australia
- A day-long workshop in Bryn Athyn on domestic violence, trauma/grief, suicide and addiction which was well attended and greatly appreciated

- A special program in Bryn Athyn College on domestic violence
- A teachable moment from the Academy Secondary Schools production of *Oliver!* – a special workshop for students on domestic violence and other consciousness-raising activities
- The second annual Book Expo at Bryn Athyn College
- Family and student summer camps: Jacob's Creek, Laurel, Living Waters and the British Academy Summer School

OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY

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

FALSITY

This term occurs frequently in the Writings, and several distinctions are involved in the different ways it is used. Falsity is everything that is contrary to truth; and falsities, which are the principles and persuasions of what is false, are scientifics which resemble what is rational and intellectual.

In general there are two kinds of falsity – falsity from evil and falsity producing evil. By the former is meant all that man thinks while he is in evil, all that favors his evil. By the latter is meant any principle grounded in a man's religion which he wrongly believes to be true and which will lead to evil when applied.

Falsities of concupiscence are those which confirm the things of the world and its pleasures. Falsities of ignorance exist with those who are in good as to life but through no fault of their own are without truths. What is contrary to truth is falsity, but truth applied to justify and confirm evil is what has been falsified. Fallacies are falsities with which evils conjoin themselves. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 790, 2243, 6400, 9144, 9331; *Divine Providence* 220)

Editorials

THE PROMISE AND THE CHALLENGE

New Church Day inspires us each year with the image of the Holy City New Jerusalem “coming down out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” This is the promise of the Lord’s Second Coming – of the New Church coming to earth as “the crown of all churches hitherto established on the earth.” It is an exciting, daunting and humbling vision.

That Church has been descending for almost 250 years now and it is easy to feel discouraged that its crowning glory still is just a blip on the horizon. We see a lot of storm clouds, with flashes of sunshine and hope.

Our formal structure – the General Church of the New Jerusalem – has a strong, loyal base but has not grown significantly in the past 100 years. Indeed, church membership has begun to shrink slightly in North America. This is all the more troubling because the world seems morally adrift and desperately in need of a spiritual compass – of being led by the Lord, not by “Siri,” the ubiquitous voice on their Smart phones telling them where to go. The world needs the New Church more than ever, and we need to be doing all we can to grow its presence. But we have our own challenges.

Any church is only as strong as its next generation and we are not attracting our young, New Church-educated people to join and participate in the life of the Church the way they once did – even though many no doubt consider themselves “New Church.” Doctrinal issues are driving some people away. There is great pressure to change and adapt to new cultural and secular priorities.

The world has witnessed enormous change since the New Church began descending from heaven in 1770. Culture, values and attitudes are forever shifting and always will. To grow the Church we must look for ways to accommodate its message without ever compromising the essential doctrines of the Church. The challenge is to balance what we can usefully change with what must not change.

Accommodation is the way we change the way ideas are presented so that they may be understood more easily, without changing the essence of the idea.

We accommodate, for instance, in teaching the same doctrine to first graders, newcomers, adults and theologs. We change the way truth is presented but the doctrine does not change. Our greatest opportunities for outreach now are over the internet, where demands for accommodation can be extreme. Meanwhile Bryn Athyn College is in the midst of ambitious plans for growth while also challenged to maintain its integrity as a unique New Church institution and not succumb to temptation to dilute doctrine to make it “more appealing.”

Our charge is to nurture and grow the New Church – both the church specific and the church universal – throughout the world, but first within our own lives. We can do this through accommodation but must always be clear about what this New Church is that we are establishing. This begins with what is fundamental and eternal in the Heavenly Doctrine of the New Church – that this is how the Lord has made His Second Coming and that there is Divine authority within the revelation in the Writings.

The eternal truth and good within the doctrines are how the Lord builds His Church in the world – and it is the Lord alone who is building His Church. We are constantly challenged in how we understand and apply the doctrines in an ever-changing – and increasingly secular – world. And in the midst of all this roiling change, the Church must also keep changing, evolving, improving – accommodating – just as we must do so in our own lives. But changing or altering divinely revealed truth, for whatever end, can only undermine the Church, not build and strengthen it.

The original vision still is true and inspiring. The New Church is still descending and we are all called upon to play a role in its establishment – by establishing it first and firmly in our own hearts and minds. In His good time the Lord will make it the crown of all churches. We are here to keep faith with that vision and to help it along the way, in whatever ways we can.

(BMH)

THE ELECTION

The tone of the campaign for President of the United States has been discouraging. But in the midst of the political storm, we can be blessed with equanimity if we keep in mind how imperfect human judgment is, and view the election within the larger perspective of the Divine providence that actually governs the destiny of nations.

“Man’s own prudence is like a few specks of dust in the atmosphere, while Providence is like the whole atmosphere.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 7007)

The root of civil disease is spiritual disorder, and the only real cure is to get to the root of the problem. This is something only the Lord can do. Government policies, programs, regulations and benefits of various kinds,

can't touch what really ails us. Any healing of the nation that doesn't get at the underlying spiritual cause of its troubles will only be palliative at best. A cure, not just political hospice care, is what we need.

The truths of the Lord's Word are the medicine that can revitalize our civil order. But they must be freely accepted, understood and applied. Then they become "rational truths by which those who are in evils and falsities are led to think soundly and live becomingly." Such truths are the "leaves for the healing of the nations" that grow on the tree of life (love to the Lord) in the holy city New Jerusalem. (*Revelation 22:2; Apocalypse Revealed 936*)

How differently the speeches of the candidates would affect us if we perceived in them a love of truth! Real truth, not "talking points" drilled into them by "focus groups" and pollsters. And what about the country they seek to lead? If the people as a whole were more concerned with and affected by spiritual truth, would they not be more deserving of leaders who were similarly concerned and affected?

There is a lot of dissatisfaction among the people with the quality of the candidates, but a deficiency in political leadership probably reflects a deficiency in the people as a whole. No political leader can make the people good and wise, but good and wise people will produce good and wise leaders.

"In people who love truth because it is true, theological issues dwell on the highest level of the mind; moral issues are located on the middle level, below theological issues; and political issues dwell on the lowest level, below moral issues." (*Apocalypse Explained 852--section 186*)

We need to think and act on all three levels, while keeping in mind their relative importance. The spiritual (meaning especially love of the Lord and thought enlightened by His Word) flows into and forms the moral sphere by which spiritual principles are brought into actual life. The two higher degrees, the spiritual and the moral, then flow into the civil and give it its vitality and quality.

In the true order of things, political issues are the lowest of the three great categories of human thought and life. They are important, though, because human beings were created to live in communities, and are thus by nature political creatures. We are not *just* political creatures, however, and must avoid becoming so caught up in political enthusiasms that we lose sight of the deeper issues of human life. The body politic then becomes soulless.

The purpose of a nation's civil order is to provide a foundation to support the spiritual and moral planes from which the civil is derived. The abstract principle of "justice," for example, needs courts, presided over by wise and honest judges who look to that principle, and police officers to enforce the law, if justice is to become a reality in the world.

Political matters are important because the civil plane is the ultimate (in

the sense of outmost) expression of spiritual and moral order, and “there is power in ultimates.” It is in their application to life on the civil plane that the potential of heavenly truths to strengthen a civilization is realized. It is the spiritual and moral quality of a society that elevates it and makes it “a city set upon a hill” and a beacon to the world. (*Matthew 5:14*)

Our natural lives and worldly activities are like a stage on which the spiritual and moral issues of life are enacted. A stage, and sometimes a battlefield, because behind every earthly conflict there is a spiritual conflict of good and evil, truth and falsity.

A political contest is a kind of war. The very word “campaign” is a military term, and candidates talk constantly about “fighting” (for *us*, of course, they say). America is embroiled in a “culture war” and the divide on all three levels of life – spiritual, moral and civil – has gotten very deep. This is reflected in the increasing rancor of our political battles, and no smooth talk about “uniting us” can paper over that fact.

But there are two extremes we must avoid. One is cynicism and the thought that politics is just a dirty business of little significance and unworthy of our attention. There have always been hypocrites and charlatans in every field of human endeavor, but to discount the value and importance of the whole field of politics is a mistake. The use itself is noble and it has the potential for great good when it is driven by high motives and serious discussion of vital principles of government and how to apply them.

The opposite error is to expect too much from government and to worship political leaders as demigods or even saviors. People who do this may unwittingly become part of an infernal alliance with a politician who has a messiah complex.

We need to be able to say: We have a Savior, and do not look to any politician or government program for our salvation. We have a religion, and no ideology can take its place. We have hope for heaven, and do not expect a government-mandated paradise on earth.

An election is part of the on-going process of building and repairing our civil order, but in the end: “Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it.” (*Psalms 127:1*)

(WEO)

Letters to the Editors

Being Loyal to the Truth

To The Editors:

Re the letter from Ned Cole, “Why is the Church not Growing?” in the March/April 2016 issue of *New Church Life*:

I very much agree with Mr. Cole about the importance of caring for the truth. He gives us an important challenge.

When facing any question we need to be loyal to the truth, but in doing so we have a problem. There are many subjects for which the Writings do not give a direct answer. In those cases people go to the Writings and do doctrinal studies. The results of those studies are not at all in the same category as the direct teachings of the Writings. We can be loyal to the truth and at the same time be skeptical about these studies.

For example, take the question of ordination. The studies I have read may be convincing to some people but not to everybody. Those who disagree may be more loyal to the Writings than the authors of those studies! I have read the arguments and do not think that the Writings teach an all-male priesthood. (The passage so often quoted from *Spiritual Experiences* 5936 does not mention ordination or church services.)

There have been a number of times in our history when people came to conclusions from their reading of the Writings that were not actually direct teachings there. I realize that people can and do go to great lengths to make arguments from the Writings about various subjects, but I do not think that their conclusions deserve the same loyalty we give to the Writings.

Let’s take just two examples. The General Church organization has been very strongly influenced by two conclusions, both of which, I believe, were incorrect.

1. The most fruitful field of evangelization is New Church education. The Writings do not teach this and experience does not confirm it.

2. Episcopal government. We have this form of government for historical, not doctrinal, reasons. In 1848 the Rev. Richard de Charms made a thorough doctrinal study of the Writings about church government and concluded that

the Writings do not say that we should have episcopal government.

Mr. Cole writes: “The more the church has tried the less it grows.” Unfortunately this has been true of most of our history, but not all. Some of our efforts have achieved good results. In Tucson our efforts for growth resulted in a steady increase for 21 years.

A point of correction: Peter Boericke (letter, “Our Loss,” November-December 2015) was under the impression that 2015 was the first year in the history of the General Church that we had a drop in membership. Actually it was the fifth. (Previous years with losses: 1938, 1958, 1996, 1997)

We need to accept Mr. Cole’s challenge to be loyal to the truth. This may lead us to become more cautious about accepting doctrinal arguments from the Writings about issues that are not directly set forth in them.

The Rev. Frank S. Rose
Tucson, Arizona

A Church in Crisis?

To The Editors:

Many thanks for all your work on the *New Church Life*. I read it from cover to cover and reflect often on what has been written. It is a treasured publication that I always enjoy.

With the intense disagreements on the role of women in the Church, based on many passages from the Writings that others have expounded upon, I still question whether women can have other expanded roles that have been dominated by our males. Why can’t couples be the greeters/ushers together at our doors vs. only male ushers? And why can’t women or couples also be allowed to take the donations up to the minister just prior to the end of a service? Finally, why can’t the women, who have the theological training, be allowed to assist with some of the readings before the sermon?

I love our Church with all my heart and have been a member since birth. I do not fully understand why we severed our ties with the Convention Church or the break that occurred with the Nova Hierosolyma Church when the Rev. Theo Pitcairn left our Church.

When I read in the *Bryn Athyn Post* of church services in private homes, “Concert Churches” in the Mitchell Performing Arts Center, the large

number of membership resignations, etc., I worry that these events, plus the controversies over women's roles, are all related to a bigger picture that we haven't really understood.

Is our New Church the absolute true religion reflecting the doctrines and second coming of the Lord? Are we the purest and truest? Or could we possibly have clouded our spiritual interpretations by our human limitations and zeal to find immediate solutions?

Our Church has an incredible foundation with our small schools systems, beginnings to open our doors to "outsiders," evangelization in areas outside the United States, outreach efforts, etc. Is our organization growing in committed numbers or are we still in the midst of a crisis? I fear it is still in a crisis.

Dana Gruber
Lakebay, Washington

Women and the Church

To The Editors:

I see old arguments about women in ministry are still cycling. (Letter, "Why is the Church not Growing?" Ned Cole, March-April New Church Life, page 119) A fallacious argument is being put forward to suggest women ministers are responsible for the decline of a church.

The decline of attendance at churches has more to do with people not feeling fed by the traditional model of church, rather than because women began preaching. Yet this argument is still being touted with no evidence to back it up. The Catholic Church does not ordain women, yet its numbers are decreasing and its churches closing too.

I have heard arguments that more conservative/fundamentalist churches are growing who don't ordain women, whereas more liberal ones are not. Of course: people prefer certainty, rather than not knowing, and those churches provide that certainty, which provides comfort. It's not because they don't have women preachers, although that may provide comfort for some.

Yet again we hear that the Writings say women should not be priests. They categorically do not do so! If they did these arguments would never have continued.

Conjugal Love passages have also been quoted, referring to the roles of women, but these are not the same as today's roles. I remember arguments in the '50s and '60s about women's uses being "domestic" and men's being "forensic," but in the 18th century those roles were completely different.

Wealthy women were running small businesses, not single-family homes. Even if they weren't, many passages in the Writings are descriptive, not prescriptive, yet descriptive passages are often treated as prescriptive. In old translations "homo" is "man," thereby excluding women in their English translations. This said more about the mores of the time than what the Writings said. I heard one translator say the Writings are amazingly feminine in the Latin, yet growing up I bought that "man" included me. Today I see it definitely did not.

Passages quoted from the Spiritual Diary are not from the Writings, and were Swedenborg's observations of individual women, not a judgment of women as a whole. Indeed, in that work, words have had to be added by the translator to make sense, which were not in the original Latin. Check out Durban Odhner's and Jonathan Rose's translations of some of those passages compared to men who chose a different rendering.

I would have preferred the work not been published. Much of it is judgmental, harsh and totally unlike the rest of the Writings. In the published Writings, such as *Arcana Coelestia*, *True Christian Religion*, etc., the manuscripts were clear and unambiguous. *Spiritual Diary* was never prepared for printing.

I take issue with Ned Cole's assertion that women do not belong in the priesthood. He's entitled to his own opinion of course, but not his assertion about women. Those of us who felt called to serve people spiritually were denied the ability to serve in the church in which we grew up or to serve those we loved. Many of us decided to embrace other Swedenborgian churches and serve others outside the General Church community, knowing that all the doctrine in the world will not change hearts. Only by seeing the amazing ways women serve people spiritually will things change.

So, yes this was indeed a big issue for many who left the General Church. I decided to stay, but actually regard Creekside Independent Church as my church now, although also support the Bryn Athyn Informal service. Mr. Cole even accuses the priests of not caring about the truth. What a pity to emphasize truth when the Writings themselves speak of the importance of charity, which I do not see in that remark.

Rev. Julie Conaron
Interfaith and Swedenborgian Minister
Hospice Chaplain
Willow Grove, Pennsylvania.

Islam and Swedenborg

To The Editors:

This is in response to Benjamin Pendleton's article in the January-February 2016 *New Church Life*, "Islam, Swedenborg and the Heavenly Doctrines," which was in response to my article, "Swedenborg and Islam" in the January-February 2012 issue, which he misquotes three times.

At the end of his article Mr. Pendleton seems to imply that all statements in the Writings from the natural world are necessarily true: spirits from the moon, references to the Quran. He asks if I believe that dead Christianity, faith alone or atheism are adequate responses to militant Islam. That's irrelevant and certainly not true. In his defense of Swedenborg's treatment of Islam he seems also to be defending the indefensible – Islam.

He says, "the Heavenly Doctrines' statements on Islam . . . presumably were given in part so that we could have some way of responding to the challenge Islam presents. What is lacking are any ideas/solutions for dealing with the situation." I doubt if the Writings anticipated the future challenge of Islam, and what is "lacking," of course, is true of my article as well as specifics in the Writings.

Mr. Pendleton says I said, "several . . . statements in the Writings on Islam are 'simply not true.'" Not so. I said this with respect to one statement: "(Swedenborg says) from the Quran Muslims acknowledge Jesus as the 'Son of God.' This is simply not true."

He uses more than a page discussing this, including a quote that supports my statement: "The Christians say, The Messiah is the Son of God. . . . The curse of Allah be upon them." (9:30)

He concludes: "The Heavenly Doctrines are correct: the Quran does acknowledge that Jesus was the Messiah and that He was conceived of Jehovah the Father." But the Quran still does not mention the "Son of God." When Son is mentioned it's always, "Son of Mary." Indeed, 19:35 says: "It becometh not (the majesty of) Allah that He should take unto Himself a son." And 6:100: "How should He have a son when He has no consort?" The Quran does, however, accept the virgin birth, although under different circumstances.

As for "conceived of Jehovah the Father," nowhere does the Quran use any of these words in this connection. The Quran says: "Allah createth what He will" (3:47) "He created him of dust." (3:59) "We sent unto (Mary) Our spirit [who said] that I may bestow on thee a faultless son." (9:17-21) "We breathed into her (something) of Our spirit." (21:19 and 66:12, and a few more such).

And in the Quran it's not Jehovah, but Allah, and it can't be Father if there is no Son.

Mr. Pendleton says, "The assertion that Swedenborg could not have any knowledge about Islam" is not correct. I said, "I don't know if Swedenborg read the Quran; it wasn't widely available in the 18th century." I quoted two sources to this effect, one stating that "written translations were few, scarce and for the most part inaccurate."

Perhaps it's significant that none of the 45 or so statements in the Quran urging Muslims to fight is mentioned by Swedenborg. His letter of 1767 says, "It was forbidden me to read dogmatic and systematic books in theology before heaven was opened to me."

Mr. Pendleton says that I said, "the one God of the Quran is similar to that of sun worshippers." What I said was, "Muslims believe in one God . . . as do sun worshippers." Not "similar to."

He writes, "to say that (Allah) is not the God of the Old Testament seems wrong. The God of the Quran in fact appears to be a consummate example of God presented in the Old Testament." This is absolute nonsense. As noted in my 2012 article, "Allah leads people astray . . . [and] can save anyone He wishes."

As noted above, in many places the Quran urges Muslims to fight. Is this the God of the Old Testament? "I created . . . humankind only that they might worship me." (51:56) There are, however, some similarities between the Quran and the Old Testament. Mr. Pendleton uses two pages discussing these.

He says, "The God of the Quran is the God of Aaron . . . Jesus [and all the Prophets]." If you are a Muslim you should think so.

Mr. Pendleton refers to my statement that, "The Writings in several places speak of Muslims believing that Jesus was 'the greatest prophet,' as in *Last Judgment* 50. This, however, is not the case." I gave three quotes from the Quran, including: "We make no distinction among any of (the prophets)." Mr. Pendleton takes issue with this and devotes more than a page to quotes from the Quran that bring this into question, but do not contradict my statement.

He lists each of the Commandments and gives the Muslim equivalent – five of the nine incorrectly or without noting conflicting statements in the Quran:

- "Remember the Sabbath Day." He quotes from the Quran what was expressed by Moses, not what is meant for Muslims. The Quran says, "When [Friday] prayers are ended, disperse and go your ways in quest of God's bounty." Hardly the avoidance of work as enjoined upon the Jews.
- "Honor your father and mother." He quotes the Quran as saying, "do good to your parents." (17:23) It also says, "Believer, do not befriend your fathers or brothers if they choose disbelief." (9:23)

- “You shall not murder.” He gives an inconclusive statement from the Quran, which also says, “It is unlawful for a believer to kill another believer.” (4:92) The Quran also says much about fighting and killing, some of which is in fact murder.
- “You shall not commit adultery.” He quotes the Quran as saying, “do not even go near to adultery.” (17:32) Four wives and an unlimited number of slaves/concubines is not adultery in Islam. Captured women automatically become slaves whom it is OK to rape. (4:24)
- “You shall not covet.” (4:32) The Quran says, “Do not covet the favors by which God has exalted some among you above others.” This has no resemblance to the Old Testament Commandment.

Perhaps some of our differences stem from the Quran not being consistent. The Quran has Allah saying, “If we abrogate a verse or cause it to be forgotten, we will replace it by a better one or one similar.” (2:106) Of course He can, but why wouldn’t Allah get it right the first time? In any case, if a verse has been abrogated, we are not told what the new verse is or what verse it replaces. This, in a sense, brings the whole Quran into question.

If I may add some thoughts about Islam, which we do not get from news sources: The Taliban, Al Qaeda, ISIS, etc., the so-called “radical” and “extremist” groups, are really pretty close to being good Muslims – much more so than the so-called “moderates.”

“The believers who stay at home . . . are not the equals of those who fight for the cause of (Allah) . . . [who] has exalted the men who fight . . . above those who stay at home.” (4:95)

Islam is a “peaceful religion,” according to the Pope, President Obama and David Cameron of England. It obviously is not, hasn’t been, didn’t start that way, and isn’t supposed to be.

William L. Weaver
Largo, Florida

P.S. Re Ben Pendleton’s letter in the March-April issue, “Jesus, Islam’s Greatest Prophet”:

“The assumption appears to have been that the word ‘distinction’ [in Quran 2:136] is referring to distinction in the rank among the prophets. This is not correct.” Mr. Pendleton says a translation uses “division.” I have five translations that say “distinction” and one that says “difference,” but it all amounts to the same.

More fuel to the fire: Does the Quran say Jesus went to hell? “Certainly! You (disbelievers) and that which you are worshipping now besides Allah are (but) fuel for hell! (Surely) you will enter it.” (Quran 21:98)

But the Quran also says: “. . . they slew him not for certain. But Allah took him up to Himself.” But not “bodily” as Mr. Pendleton states, nor does the Quran refer to Jesus’ “return to the Day of Judgment.”

He says “(A Quranic verse) appears to say that Jesus excelled Mohammed.” It doesn’t appear that way to me. The Quran also says: “He (Jesus) was not more than a slave.” (43:59)

He adds: “What the Quran is saying is that, unlike Judaism and Christianity, Islam presents the unified, undivided message of all of God’s prophets.” (Including Mohammed) Doesn’t Christianity make such a claim? The quote just says, “We follow the religion of Abraham.”

Oh well, the Quran is ambiguous, obscure and inconsistent.

OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY

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

FINITE

This term is applied without exception to created things. It should be noted, therefore, that the spiritual, though non-material, is finite. The characteristics of the finite are that there is nothing of the Divine in its esse, that is limited by space and time or their spiritual analogues, that quality and quantity can be predicated of it, and that it is bounded both within and without.

Also, the finite has a beginning and an end. Man indeed lives to eternity, but he does so by constant renewal from the Lord. (See *Divine Love and Wisdom* 44; *Divine Providence* 52; *True Christian Religion* 27, 29, 33; *Apocalypse Explained* 629)

The New Church and the Nicodemus Tension

The Rev. Christopher A. Barber

(This was an address at the New Church Day Banquet of the Washington New Church, June 30, 2015)

Let's start with a stupid example. Imagine that you are an executive working for PepsiCo, the soft drink company. You've been there for a decade-and-a-half in an executive position. One day you are grocery shopping and at the end of an aisle you spot a table with free samples. On end of the table is a bottle of your sweet beloved Pepsi; on the other is a bottle of Coke. Right away you know what this setup is: it's the Pepsi Challenge.

Without hesitation you take the blindfold and begin the challenge. You are handed a cup. You take a whiff and drink it. You are handed the other cup. This one is the winner! You remove your blindfold and you see that your preferred cup is labeled "Coke."

"How can this be?" you ask yourself. You've stood for Pepsi since the '90s! You know where your loyalties lie. You know who pays your salary. But this – this Coca-Cola, it lacks the tart taste of Pepsi. It has a kind of savor you'd never detected before. It's good. You like it. You might even . . . prefer it.

To add insult to injury, the attendant hands you a red pin: "I picked Coke in the Pepsi Challenge."

You feel conflicted, confused, tense. This is a crisis of faith.

My Background

As a teacher of religion to young minds, many of whom are steeped in popular culture and secular ideas and ideals, I create space for inner conflict and tension, and deal at a professional level in crises of faith. It is my job to help wake students up to an awareness of a Divine. This happens gradually, and for most I'm not the first to try, but I am the most recent in a line of teachers, parents, family and ministers.

The greatest joy of my job is getting a front-row seat to epiphanies, having the opportunity of seeing a teaching of the church really hit home. The most powerful of these generally relate to the afterlife – the belief in a spiritual

world that interacts with our natural world, the jaw-dropping realization that eternity begins today, and some of those most healing teachings that guarantee peace for loved ones who have been lost. I find so much hope for the future of the Church in those moments of faith and clarity.

The greatest sadness of my job is watching that epiphany become just a flash in the pan. For example, teachings on providence can really strike a chord with someone, but when personal tragedy strikes just as that teaching is being understood, it's not uncommon for it to be discarded as nonsense. Think about the sower and the seed that falls on stony ground, but does not take root in a meaningful way.

The *Gospel of Matthew* puts it this way:

For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. (13:21)

My classroom, though often a lighthearted and fun place to be, is rarely without tension – tension between what the students believe from their culture, and what the Lord teaches in His Word.

We are no Strangers to Tension

But of course this kind of tension is not restricted to the classroom, and it is not restricted to study of the Lord's Word. Tension exists when we become aware of the difference between where we *are* and where we could be, want to be, or ought to be.

- When **working**, tension is the result of a job that needs doing and is incomplete.
- When **waiting**, tension is the result of a time that will come, but is not yet.
- When **saving**, tension is the result of desiring/requiring an amount that you don't have yet – maybe for a car, a house, a toy, a vacation, even tuition.
- When **abstaining**, tension is the result of something that you want but know you should not have – food, spending, attention . . .
- When **growing**, tension is the result of a size that you want to be or a position that you want to have.
- When **practicing** tension is the result of a skill that you wish to master that you do not yet have.

Tension exists when we become aware of the difference between where we are and where we could be, want to be, or ought to be.

There are so many kinds of tension that we could talk about.

So often we look at the difference between where we want to be and where we are, and have a negative or a depressed reaction. We might become angry or afraid, even frustrated, and most acutely, anxious.

The Bible is one Tense Book.

If there's a book that thrives on tension, it is the Bible. It is full of people examining their current state and wondering when it is going to change. Think of Abraham and Sarah waiting for their descendants who will be innumerable like the stars. Or Moses who was asked to speak for God, despite his slowness of speech and tongue. How about Simeon, who was told he would not die until he saw the anointed one?

And who can forget the Israelites taken captive, stuck in Babylon, even though they knew they belonged in Israel. There are countless examples I could cite. The Bible is full of anxious waiting and reflection. But there is one example in particular that I want to focus on and use as a model.

Nicodemus

At the time of the Lord's ministry in the world, there was a ruler of the Jews named Nicodemus. He was a Pharisee. We often hear about the different political classes in Jerusalem at the time, and they seldom are presented in a favorable light. Usually they are trying to trap Jesus or trick Him into blaspheming so they could have Him executed. This man, Nicodemus, was quite different from his political brethren.

It's true that Nicodemus, by virtue of being a Pharisee, was influential politically, socially and perhaps even economically.

Nicodemus would also have been extremely educated. The Pharisees were responsible for studying, interpreting and determining application of the Laws of Moses. That's a lot to read and understand at a time when the majority of the population (97%) couldn't even write their own names.

In addition to being well-off and learned, Nicodemus would have been an extremely pious person. His job demanded it. His actions would have been seen by the locals, and most importantly for his professional life, by his colleagues. Regardless of how he felt and what he did behind closed doors, his external life must have shown his position in the leadership, from his dress to his activities.

The combination of these, his political power, his social standing, and his economic security, combined with his education and piety, would have made him a very elite person, the kind of person you would let ahead of you in line, or would step aside in a crowd so that he could pass.

What a life to have! But something happened to Nicodemus to make him consider throwing it all away – something that we might have dreamed of being able to encounter. Nicodemus saw the ministry of Jesus – and it shook him right out of his secure life and threw him into a tense position.

As the story goes, Jesus was teaching throughout Israel, but spent a lot of time in Jerusalem. His reputation preceded Him and He was known for His itinerant preaching. A number of leaders saw what He was doing: His miracles, His breaking of traditional laws, and their hearts were hardened as a result. But there were a few of the Pharisees who were not only intrigued but inspired by Him and believed that He was sent by God.

It doesn't say explicitly what happened before Nicodemus took the greatest risk of his professional career, but the risk is clear. Chapter three of the *Gospel of John* opens with these words:

There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with Him."
(3:1-2)

Within these two short verses, we learn volumes about the situation. Nicodemus comes to Jesus *by night*. This is significant, because, while some of his miracles are done privately, Jesus has always *taught* publicly. Why didn't Nicodemus approach Him during one of His lessons? Clearly he had been present for them. It's pretty obvious here that Nicodemus needs this to be a secret meeting between him and this rebel.

The next thing we see revealed here comes from the way Nicodemus addresses Jesus – Rabbi, teacher. What's the big deal? Lots of people call Jesus Rabbi or Rabboni: Mary Magdalene, the disciples, other random believers. But hearing it from a Pharisee, a great ruler, scholar, student of Moses, and teacher of Israel, this is a sign that Nicodemus is willing to be humble before Jesus. He, the great teacher, is willing to learn.

Lastly, from this selection, not only does Nicodemus believe that Jesus

Not only does Nicodemus believe that Jesus is a great teacher, one from whom he himself can learn, but he believes that Jesus is a teacher come from God – a great prophet. All of this coming from the mouth and the presence of a Pharisee. Imagine how tense Nicodemus must have felt.

The Nicodemus
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Remember, tension is the result of seeing the difference between where you are and where you could be, want to be, or ought to be.

When Nicodemus heard Jesus teach, he had an epiphany. He had a moment of sudden clarity and faith. He

saw that he could be inspired by Jesus. That he could be moved by Him in his heart. That he could follow Him and learn from Him, maybe even do miracles like Him.

Nicodemus saw that he could become a disciple – *if*, and it's a big if, he gave up his current life.

Imagine the tension within Nicodemus.

The result of seeing what could be, and recognizing what he was, and what he would lose, led to a number of mixed emotions. Nicodemus was curious, asking: Who are you? He became confused about his own position in the world, being willing to submit to this Rebel Rabbi. There was fear, which we saw in his sneaking around at night.

He was even stupefied by the teachings of Jesus. Maybe you know of their famous exchange, when Jesus said that people must be born again? Nicodemus asked how an adult can get back into his mother's womb. And, of course, if Nicodemus gave up being a Pharisee and became a disciple, he would insult his heritage, because he was likely the most recent in a line of men who were Pharisees in his family. He would lose his political influence, his social standing and his economic security – his *honor*, his *reputation*, and his *gain*.

This, what I call the Nicodemus Tension, is something we all experience when our natural lives and man-made ideas are confronted with spiritual life and Divine truth.

Why Tension?

One thing that you might have already noticed is that we become tense only when we learn something new or see something new. In a sense, ignorance really is bliss.

I had a student pick up on this idea when I was teaching about the difference

between heaven and hell. I mentioned that we can't be held accountable for breaking spiritual laws that we had no idea existed, because that wouldn't be fair. The student then offered that the fairest thing I could do as a teacher of spiritual law would be to stop teaching the truth so people could live freely, die happy, and get a free pass into heaven!

I told her that she was clever, and that it might work, but who would pay my salary?

The thing is, we are designed to take in new information all the time. Information about our bodies is conveyed through our nervous system. Information about our environments. Information about our compatriots and companions. Information about satisfying our urges. It's staggering how much information we are capable of processing. But we don't process new information without the assistance of old information. We don't take in new ideas without building on or bumping up against old ideas.

For this reason there is always tension.

This is why I tend to see my classroom as a battleground, a place where ideas collide, where some win, some lose, and others are completely obliterated. Every time I offer a new idea, the question is being asked in a student's mind: "How does this fit with what I already know?"

Every time you hear a new idea, or even an old idea presented in a new way, the question is being asked in your mind: "How does this fit in with what I already know?"

This is because we are creatures of contrast. This is true by our very natures. The human condition is, from birth, conflicted. Consider these basic teachings from the Heavenly Doctrines:

- All people are born for heaven, and no one is predestined to hell.
- All people are inclined to evils of every kind by birth, and even would (without the Lord's intervention) cast themselves headlong into the lowest hell.

Both of these statements are true. And the difference between them causes tension from our very first breath. At birth, we are born natural. Yes we have spirits who are present in the spiritual world, but we are naturally minded. For a time, this is fine and doesn't cause stress. But the first time we hear the word "no," the first time we have our plans thwarted, the first time we are told to take responsibility for our actions . . . we experience tension.

It's because there is always a higher standard for us than we can see for ourselves. There is a plan for our lives. We experience that plan as children through the leading of our parents and guardians. We later experience that plan through the leading of our teachers. And ultimately, we were born to experience that plan through the instruction of our God.

There is always a higher standard for us than we can see for ourselves. There is a plan for our lives. Each stage can be tense, but it's always for the purpose of shaping us into better human beings.

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Why Talk About This at New Church Day?

Perhaps the tension that is most pervasive that we experience as members of the New Church comes from the difference between what we are promised the New Church will be, and how we experience it here and now.

We are promised in the Old and New Testaments, in their literal and internal senses, as well as in the Heavenly Doctrines, that:

- The literal apocalypse in the *Book of Revelation* is an analogy for the spiritual renewal of the Lord's Church
- The reign of the New Church shall be for ages and ages
- That the former church will be destroyed (even though people will continue to adhere to it and worship in it)
- That the New Church will be established "in place" of the so-called old church
- And most beautifully, that the New Church is the crown of all the churches *ever to exist*

This is pretty exciting stuff! The promise is wonderful and implies a picture of a group that is thriving, that is powerful, that is influential in the world. After all, it is the Lord's NEW Church, the crown of all the churches, the replacement for what is old and corrupt! The membership of this church should be in the billions! It should be a household name, much the way Catholicism, Mormonism, Islam and Judaism are known far and wide – even the way Scientology is known!

What a promise!!

Now, let's look at where we are:

- So small
- So fringe
- So weird
- So unknown
- So "old-fashioned"

This is a harsh list. But if we look at ourselves in contrast to the promise that we get from the Lord in His Word, this is the list we might create. It almost makes a literal apocalypse more appealing, because at least that would give us something to get excited about.

And this brings me to my big point. Because we are creatures of contrast who encounter countless tensions throughout the day, it can be all too easy to be too hard on ourselves. We can be too quick to conclude that we don't measure up to whatever standards are being set at home, at work, in our relationships, and by our God, and never could.

We all know what this feels like – it's painful, it's heartbreaking. It leaves us feeling empty and insignificant and small. It leaves us feeling tense.

And here's the thing: any time we say these things to ourselves, any time we determine that our cause of achieving our goals is lost, any time we put ourselves down and believe that we are nothing – we are right.

We are right, and at the same time we are mistaken.

We are right because on our own, we are nothing: we are but the dust of the earth. We are mistaken because we are not on our own. With the Lord, we can be all things. Teamed up with the Source of Life, we can have all life. With the God of creation by our side, we can be created anew.

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.
(Revelation 22:13)

I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.
(Matthew 16:18)

*Unless the Lord builds the house,
they labor in vain who build it.
Unless the Lord guards the city,
the watchman stays awake in vain. (Psalm 127:1)*

I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. (John 15:5)

We are nothing, but can become everything. Talk about a tension.

Making Use of the Tension

More than once I have been called out in the classroom for teaching this idea, that we are nothing. No one likes being put down, no one likes being called nothing, and for teenagers this is doubly true. As one student pointed out to me:

"Mr. Barber, we're at a time in our lives when we're trying to figure out who we are. We're applying to colleges, trying to start our futures. Everyone is telling us that we can be anything! And you're telling us that we are nothing!"

He went on to offer that it made him feel bad and that I probably should stop teaching it.

My response was simple: *hold on to both ideas, and let them balance each other out.* This is just what we are taught in the Heavenly Doctrines:

Despair causes those who feel it to acknowledge in an effectual and feeling manner that there is nothing of truth and good from themselves, and that from themselves they are condemned; but that they are delivered from condemnation by the Lord; and that salvation flows in by means of truth and good . . .

Despair also causes them to feel the happiness of life which is from the Lord; for when they come out of that state, they are like those who have been condemned to death, and are set free from prison. (*Arcana Coelestia* 6144)

The message is clear; it hurts to learn that all life comes from the Lord and that nothing good comes from ourselves. But the result of learning this – of seeing the contrast between what is and what isn't – is freeing. It lends us more clarity than we ever had before. It feels tense, yes, and it might leave us feeling anxious. But the overall message is that it is good for us.

There is no avoiding this tension. We're predisposed to experience it from birth. So how can we make use of it?

The key to turning this tension into a tool for growth rests in the contrast. Being creatures of contrast means that we can examine the world around us and the world within us – those ideas that we accept, believe, teach and exemplify through how we live. We can label things as being “better” and “worse.” We can say whether a plan is effective or a waste of time. We can decide if a way of life is helpful or hurtful. We can distinguish between good ideas and bad ideas.

The Lord uses contrasts in His Word all the time: life and death, light and dark, black and white, good and evil, heaven and hell, selfish and selfless, spring and autumn, summer and winter, night and day, fertile and infertile, accomplished and unsuccessful, rich and poor, humility and vanity, obedience and disobedience, and so many more. The reason is simple: We gain clarity by means of contrast.

Just as heat feels warmer when we have been out in the cold; just as light seems brighter when we have been in the darkness; just as the colors of spring seem more vibrant after the dormancy of winter, truth seems truer after falsity is considered. Goodness feels better after evil has been encountered.

And the Lord's promises to us about what could be, what He wants to be, and what ought to be seem that much more glorious and wonderful when we look at where we are.

Moreover by means of desolations and temptations, states contrary to heavenly life are felt, the result of which is the implantation of a sense and perception of the satisfaction and happiness of heavenly life; for a sense and perception of what is satisfying and happy is impossible without comparison with the opposites. (*Arcana Coelestia* 6144)

When we cease to see the “where we could be, want to be, ought to be” as an impossible goal, and hold fast to the idea that the Lord wants us to have all things in Him; when we stop measuring ourselves against how far we have left to go, but rather look at how far the Lord has already brought us; when we believe in His promises for His students, His Pharisees, His people, and His church, we can cease to be anxious, and start to be excited, looking forward with anticipation and recognizing that the Lord makes good on His promises daily.

With these things in mind, we can learn to love where we are on account of where we’ve been.

Where Are We?

As a church we have a global ministry, with congregations serving the Lord and spreading the New Church around the world. We have a strong internet presence through advertising and through our outreach offices, where we have a thriving correspondence program that serves people who are searching for meaning in their lives, contemplating the mysteries of faith. We have schools where New Church education is not a dream, but is a reality – where young people are brought into knowledge of all things, both natural and spiritual, through the lens of the New Church.

And it’s all because of what we have. We have the Word of the Lord and we can read it in its fullness because we have the Heavenly Doctrines, which open up to us the internal sense of the Word and serve as a window into the spiritual world.

Yes, we are a small church. But we are not insignificant. We can be all things because the Lord is with us and is invested in His New Church.

But going back 2000 years, what did Nicodemus do as a result of his inner conflict? What did he do with the contrast between his life as a Pharisee and his potential as a disciple?

Nicodemus, working from the Law, strove to defend Jesus and His followers from unfair persecution and slander, so much so that at one point a colleague asks as an insult whether he was a disciple of Jesus.

Later on, in what is the greatest show of devotion that is recorded regarding Nicodemus, he risked everything to bury Jesus after His crucifixion. He brought more than a hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes for

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washing the body, and then bound Him in linen strips with spices according to Jewish custom, and deposited Him in a tomb.

It's true that in the Gospel he does not give up his position as a Pharisee. He does not sell everything that he has, abandon his wealth, and become a disciple the way the 12 apostles did. But it cannot be denied that he took up his cross and worked for the benefit of Jesus and His ministry.

What did he do after the death of the Lord? Did he throw away the life he had always known to help grow the Christian Church? Did he die a martyr on account of his devotion to this rebellious rabbi? We don't know because the Gospel ends. His story after that time was not written.

Nor is our story written – not fully. Not as students of the Word, not as disciples of the Lord, not as citizens of heaven, and not as The New Church on earth.

We experience the Nicodemus Tension as anxiety when we believe we are doomed. When we do not trust in providence. When we become impatient and do not wish to wait and when we let anxiety overtake our view of the future.

But we can turn this anxiety into excited anticipation when we believe that the Lord will keep His promises. When we believe that those promises are not impossible standards, but are achievable goals, we can work diligently with anticipation that the Lord will come into our lives, that He will build His church, and that the New Church will reign for ages and ages, that it IS the crown of all the churches ever to exist, and will ever be.

Let's delight today in that tension, take a look back and see where we have been, rejoice in how far we have come, and get excited about where we are going.



The Rev. Christopher A. Barber teaches religion at the Academy of the New Church Secondary Schools. He says it is his joy to help students grasp biblical and theological concepts in the light of the New Church worldview. He thoroughly enjoys working with adolescents, as they are in the springtime of their critical analysis. Chris loves researching obscure figures from New Church history, studying the Fourth Gospel, and watching documentaries. He lives in Huntingdon Valley with

his wife, Annika (Fitzpatrick), and their son, Jaiell. You can read more about him at www.chrisbarber.info. Contact: chris.barber@ancss.org.

(Photo Credit: Olivia Brock, Girls school '16, ANC photography student.)

Memorial Day Address 2015

Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania

The Rev. Thomas H. Rose

Thank you for coming here today to give heartfelt acknowledgement to those who gave their lives for the sake of our protection and safety. I want to give special thanks to the families and close friends of those who gave their lives, because a big part of their lives was lost as well, and they themselves are deserving of our deepest gratitude.

Memorial Day, of course, is so much more than a holiday involving sales, shore trips, cookouts and the kick-off of summer. Each one of you here this morning knows that, as do many others who will attend other ceremonies today or quietly visit grave sites or gather with family and friends in a spirit of remembrance.

Today is one of the two days in the year that are specifically set aside in honor of those who serve or have served in any branch of our armed services. Veterans Day in November is a day of special appreciation to all veterans. It grew out of the celebration of the end of fighting – a ceasefire that took effect on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month in 1918.

Today, Memorial Day, rather than from a spirit of celebration, grew out of a spirit of deep gratitude and honoring of those who died in service. This day of remembrance started in the cemeteries of the North and the South from the practice of decorating the graves of the fallen after the American Civil War.

Decoration Day became Memorial Day, a solemn day, honoring those who gave up their earthly lives for community and country.

Is there a connection between the two days? Of course there is. The two days are for those who have acted from a willingness to protect and defend each one of us. Let's not forget that every man and woman who served, or currently serves, was and is willing to do the same as did those we acknowledge today – to give their lives in our defense.

So I want to emphasize that spirit – the spirit of self-sacrifice for the sake of others. Thinking of airmen, seamen, soldiers and Marines who are still living, some of us may feel awkward saying thank you to them. Some veterans don't

Yes, talking about veterans on Memorial Day is appropriate, because I am talking about the true spirit behind the idea and action of service to the neighbor. Giving of ourselves for the sake of others is a sacrifice of the proprium or the negative ego, the sense of our own self-importance.

necessarily want it and certainly don't seek it. Nevertheless I think it is a good thing because it represents our feeling of gratitude toward all who serve.

A few times, without thinking, I have worn an Air Force or U. S. Veteran ball cap while gimping along with my cane. Seeing this, a passer-by is most likely to think that I am a combat-wounded veteran. Well, thank you for tolerating my disability as I need to sit in order to speak to you today, but be assured that I was not wounded in combat.

Of course, when someone is motivated by my cane to come up and thank me for my service, I never really want to take the time to say, "Well, yes I am a veteran, but the use of this cane is necessary due to a congenital blood condition . . . blah, blah." So I let them feel a spirit of gratitude and I allow myself in that moment to represent all who serve. A uniform, a prosthetic

limb, a cane, even just a hat may be a signal to you to express gratitude. Or even just a look.

Yes, again, talking about veterans on Memorial Day is appropriate, because I am talking about the true spirit behind the idea and action of service to the neighbor. Giving of ourselves for the sake of others is a sacrifice of the proprium or the negative ego, the sense of our own self-importance.

Think about whether you have ever given help to a person in need, even if it was inconvenient to you. Have you ever acted toward another person in a truly selfless manner because your own sense of comfort and even safety needed to be squelched or put aside for the sake of his or her needs? If so, then you have served the neighbor with some measure of self-sacrifice.

Have you ever really pushed yourself to the limit, not like a martyr, but really suppressed your own needs from love as a friend, a spouse, as a parent, son or daughter, as a teacher or mentor, as a complete stranger when you see a deep need? Then you have actually given something of your own life for your friends and neighbors.

If you have stood vigil for another without getting enough sleep or eating

enough food, if you have rushed to someone's aid in the middle of the night, if you have held strong when someone was weak and needed you to be strong, then in those moments you have given up your quality of life for the sake of another.

We read in the doctrine of the New Church:

When anyone looks with love on someone in distress . . . a feeling of compassion comes over them. And since the feeling is stirred by the Lord, it is an alerting by Him. Indeed when people who are perceptive have feelings of compassion they know that they are being alerted by the Lord to offer help. (*Arcana Coelestia* 6737)

We stand here today and we can see the world of nature, we see innocent children and each other, we see our community's park, and our country's flag flying over this monument to service, which sits on the edge of picnics and games as a sentinel of peace and safety. Just over there we see a great cathedral representing a faith system in which the Lord calls us to consider all things of revelation more deeply, more spiritually.

God doesn't call us actually to die. God is life and is about all things living. What needs to die spiritually is the sense that we are better than others. The remarkable words of the Lord that are being cited all over this nation today are these: "Greater love has no one than this: than to lay down his life for his friends." (*John* 15:13)

Yes, the willingness to serve and protect to the point of death is to be honored as a great gesture of love. We now call it the "ultimate sacrifice." But the words of the Lord here in this gospel are talking about the laying down of our own ego and self-interest for the sake of the people around us.

I submit that each and every one of us is called to service for the love, uplifting and protection of our friends and neighbors. We are called upon to defend and protect all that is good and innocent and truly loving. And the greatest expression of this is selflessness – the laying down of self-life and the lifting up of the spirit of life that the angels have, that is, to truly live for the sake of others.

I submit that each and every one of us is called to service for the love, uplifting and protection of our friends and neighbors. We are called upon to defend and protect all that is good and innocent and truly loving. And the greatest expression of this is selflessness.

This is expressed in *Arcana Coelestia*, or *Secrets of Heaven*:

When the eyes of a person [any person] are fixed on what is right and good he is like a soldier fighting in battle for his country. During it he gives no thought at all to his life, nor to his status or his assets in the world, which compared with what he is doing are of no importance to him. (*Arcana Coelestia* 9210)

We all know, deep inside, that we are not honoring death itself nor are we glorifying dying. We are honoring the spirit that these people most pointedly modeled for us of selfless service to the neighbor, selfless to the point of discomfort, danger and high risk.

We are honoring those men and women who carried this spirit in fullness all the way to the point of physical death. Remembering them is reminding ourselves to live for the sake of others in everything that we do.

Today we honor those who gave their lives for our country, our freedom and our safety and protection. Today, the citizens of this nation are honoring those who gave their lives in military service – whether in combat or not, nevertheless while on duty in the spirit of service. It is truly an ultimate act of giving.

Think about the parents, the siblings, the families decorating the graves of their loved ones in beautiful cemeteries today. Think of those you yourself know who died in service to this country. In your mind, lift your thoughts to them and decorate their lives. Acknowledge the spirit of their sacrifice and adorn it with flowers. And then lift your thoughts to the Lord of the resurrection, the God of life itself.

“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you.” (*John* 14:27)



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Letting Love Be Our Spiritual Clothing

The Rev. Jared J. Buss

*Readings: Revelation 12:1-9; Apocalypse Explained 707; Arcana
Coelestia 5248.1*

(This was the third sermon in a series on the core teachings of the New Church, in preparation for New Church Day.)

In the *Book of Revelation* the Lord gives us an astonishing picture of what He wants us to become: the image of a woman clothed with the sun. (*Revelation 12:1*) This image is incredible, even on the most basic level. Imagine seeing someone actually clothed with the sun, someone covered up with and radiating that golden fire. The Greek word for “clothed” comes from the root idea “thrown around,” so we can picture someone wrapped up in sunlight, enveloped in a sphere of the sun.

This image is contrasted with an equally intense image – of a great, fiery red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns. (*Ibid.* 12:3) The dragon, like the woman, is blazing; the word describing its color comes from the Greek word for fire. So think of an enormous serpent, the deep red color of glowing embers. This whole picture is one of two fires and the forms they take – two fires representing diametrically opposite loves and ways of life.

Our focus here is on the way of life that is portrayed by the woman clothed with the sun. The woman clothed with the sun represents the New Church, and particularly the life of the New Church. This is the life that we are invited to – the life that the Lord wants for us.

The sun represents love to the Lord (*Apocalypse Explained* 707; cf. *Apocalypse Revealed* 533), and the woman in this vision is said to be “clothed with the sun” because she represents people who live from that love. As we are told in *Apocalypse Revealed*: “The woman here appeared clothed with the sun because the [New] Church is governed by love toward the Lord; for it acknowledges Him and keeps His commandments, and that is loving Him.”

If there were just one thing we remember about the woman clothed with the sun, hopefully it would be this – that she represents living the truths the Lord teaches.

(533) This passage refers to the *Gospel of John*, where the Lord says, “He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me.” (14: 21)

So the image of the woman clothed with the sun is just a picture of us taking this simple teaching fully to heart – choosing to keep the Lord’s commandments. The power of the sun that surrounds the New Church – and can surround us if we choose to be a part of this church – is the power of living the Lord’s truth. It is the power of a willingness to say, “this is what the Lord has taught, so I will humble

myself and do it.” Not “if I want to,” not “when the magic inspiration strikes” – but “in this moment.”

The brilliance of that sun is the brilliance of the Lord’s teachings fulfilling their purpose, doing what they are supposed to do – which is to bring His blessings, the warmth of that sun, to everyone they can touch.

If there were just one thing we remember about the woman clothed with the sun, hopefully it would be this – that she represents living the truths the Lord teaches. But we’ll look now at two other aspects of this story, teachings that help us understand more fully what it is to be the woman clothed with the sun.

The first is the fact that the woman is juxtaposed against the great red dragon. The second is the idea of having clothes of sun, or of love, since, as we read, clothing usually represents something having more to do with truth. (*Arcana Coelestia* 5248)

The dragon is the dead opposite of the woman clothed with the sun. It’s a picture of what we’re heading toward if we choose to be anything but the woman clothed with the sun. The woman represents people who live the Lord’s truth; so the dragon represents people who choose to live a life of evil even though they know truth from the Word. The woman is living the truth; the dragon is knowing the truth but living something else.

A lot of New Church teaching emphasizes the fact that the dragon represents the doctrine of faith alone – the doctrine that we are saved because we believe something, and that the way we live has nothing to do with our salvation. It’s important to recognize that yes, the doctrine of faith alone is the most perfect expression of this thing represented by the dragon – but the dragon itself is something broader. (See *Apocalypse Explained* 714.4,5)

We are told that, “a great red dragon signifies all who are merely natural and sensual from the love of self, and yet have more or less knowledge from the Word . . . and think to be saved by knowledge alone apart from life.” (*Ibid.* 714.1) In other words, the dragon represents the spirit of being caught up in shallow things because of a love of self, even though we know the truth that teaches us to look deeper. And especially it represents that voice telling us: “Don’t worry – don’t worry about closing the gap between what you know and how you live. The way you treat the Word is just fine.” The dragon particularly represents every excuse for doing evil in spite of the Word, from the most formal and institutionalized excuses to the most simple and pervasive.

This is the thing that makes the dragon so terribly powerful: the fact that it offers us reasons for doing the opposite of what the Lord teaches us to do, reasons that make everything okay.

This is the thing that makes the dragon so terribly powerful: the fact that it offers us reasons for doing the opposite of what the Lord teaches us to do, reasons that make everything okay. We are told that the doctrine of salvation by faith alone appealed to people because it allowed them to “indulge the appetites of [their hearts and bodies], without any fear of hell,” since the way they lived had nothing to do with their salvation. (*Apocalypse Revealed* 539)

The falsities that the dragon proffers today appeal in just the same way: they allow us to indulge ourselves without fear. “You can always work on having a real marriage later. You have a whole lifetime to repent. Enjoy yourself now.” “You’ve known so many spiritual victories. Suffer a minor defeat – just one concession. Just one lie. You’ll still be fine.” Really, the falsities that the dragon whispers to us will be very personal – perfectly suited to bend the truth in just the way that is most convenient for us.

It’s easy to get the mistaken idea that the dragon is something that preys on people’s intellects – on people who know a lot of truths. But we can choose to twist the truth whether we know a lot or a little. The issue isn’t what we know. It’s that in our hearts we say, “Yes, I know that . . . but what I want is more important,” and we find an excuse. The dragon is about justifying and living a life of evil, which is why it is that ember color.

We read: “The dragon is called fiery red because a fiery red color symbolizes falsity arising from the evils attendant on lusts, which is a falsity of hell.” (*Apocalypse Revealed* 537.4) In a word, the dragon is ultimately a picture

So the initial part of our spiritual journey is about finding truths to clothe us... But the purpose of acquiring these truths – this clothing – is to express the love that moves within them.

of living a life of love of self – the total opposite of a life of love to the Lord.

We start our lives in between these two loves – in between the fires of the dragon and the woman clothed with the sun. To shun one is to move toward the other. If we move away from justifying a life of evil, from making excuses, we're moving toward that simple choice to do what the Lord says, because He has said it. The woman in this vision is a picture of the total triumph of that choice. Love to the Lord is so wholly present within her that it blazes around her as her

clothing. We are invited to wear that clothing of the sun, which is an image of how completely we can choose to live the Lord's truth.

As we read, clothing represents the lower or outward parts of us. (*Arcana Coelestia* 5248) Our physical clothing is our outermost layer. It's what we use to show ourselves to the outside world – to declare our identity and reveal what we are. It's also what we use to protect ourselves. Our spiritual clothing, then, is what we use to declare and reveal and protect the things that we love, the things that are more deeply us. Unsurprisingly, we're told that clothing usually represents truths. Truth declares and protects good. We are told that truth in our understanding is what makes the good with us visible. (*True Christian Religion* 397.4)

Think of what love is without truth. What is it like to want to do what the Lord teaches, without knowing how? That feeling, that desire, all by itself, can't go anywhere. It can't do anything. If we want to serve the Lord, we need to know what He teaches. If we want a friend or a child to know that we love him, we need to know how to say that, or how to show it.

So the initial part of our spiritual journey is about finding truths to clothe us. It's about discovering what we believe, and what our actions will say about what we really believe. As we do this, we start to "wear" certain ideas, certain truths, that say to the world, "this is what I am."

In this state the loves that move us to do what's right are hard to see; they're hidden under something opaque – under layers of cloth, as it were. The love that's with us might not manage to look like love by the time it makes it to the outside. In this state we might find ourselves confronted with an angry spouse and sifting through all kinds of resentment, on the brink of saying something cruel, until we remember the Lord saying, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

If that truth can get us to say something constructive to our partner, to push away those excuses for being cruel, then we've done the right thing. But the moment might not shine with affection; we might not be able to keep all the resentment out of our voice. Even so, it's a step in the right direction.

But the purpose of acquiring these truths – this clothing – is to express the love that moves within them. And as we learn and live the truth more willingly, more diligently, that love comes more and more into its own, and shows on the surface. Think of people you know who have lived their whole lives in service to the Lord and to the Church, who are able to show you, even when they do the simplest things, even when they communicate a hard truth, that they love you. In these people, love has revealed itself within the truth. We are told:

[A]ll truths are the recipient vessels of good; and therefore the more genuine the truths are and the more they are multiplied, the more abundantly is good able to accept them as vessels, to bring them into a state of order, and only then to reveal itself, doing so in the end in such a way that the truths are not seen, except insofar as good shines through them. (*Arcana Coelestia* 2063.3)

In other words, when the truths we know are being used the way they are meant to be used, it's as though they fade to the background. They become a translucent vessel for love. When we learn what the Lord teaches, and purify that truth by living it, and bring it together with other truths because we're living all of those truths, then we make ourselves an ever more and more complete home for the Lord's love, and that love shines in us. And when even the most basic things that we know and do have become wholly devoted to living the Lord's truth, then our outermost layer serves only to reveal His love, and we are clothed with the sun.

So when we become a part of the woman clothed with the sun we are clothed with the truth, but it is truth that has made one with love to the Lord – the sphere of truth enveloping us has been suffused with the fire of love, and that is what we show to the world around us. This is what the Lord wants the people of His New Church to be: people who live His truth so completely that their whole life shines with that intention, that willingness to do as He has commanded.

Think back to the dragon, to that spirit of finding ways around the Lord's teachings – that willingness to twist the truth for the sake of finding an excuse for a selfish hunger. That is truly the mortal enemy of the woman clothed with the sun. Every decision we make to twist the truth so that we can do evil instead serves to blind us to the fact that the truth exists to reveal the Lord's love. And, conversely, every time we refuse to make excuses, refuse to play intellectual games with the truth, but choose instead to say, "If I love the Lord, I will keep His commandments," then we are letting ourselves see how the only purpose of those commandments is to reveal something good, and bring us blessings.

Seen this way, the vision of the woman clothed with the sun is incredibly

The vision of the woman clothed with the sun is incredibly beautiful – perhaps so beautiful that it’s hard for us to believe that we’re capable of becoming that. But it is a vision of the New Church that the Lord is creating now, in heaven and on earth.

beautiful – perhaps so beautiful that it’s hard for us to believe that we’re capable of becoming that. But it is a vision of the New Church that the Lord is creating now, in heaven and on earth.

It may be a long time before we can really see it in this world; it may be a long time before we can see it in ourselves. But the Lord has given us this vision so that we can have something to hope in – so that we can know what we’re waiting for, and striving for. And He’s given us this vision so that we can know where to begin.

We build the Lord’s New Church, we become the woman clothed with the sun, when we choose to keep His commandments – when we do the will of our Father in heaven. (cf. *Matthew* 7:21) It is our very simple decisions to

do what is right because we believe in the Lord that make room for the most glorious things that He can create for us.

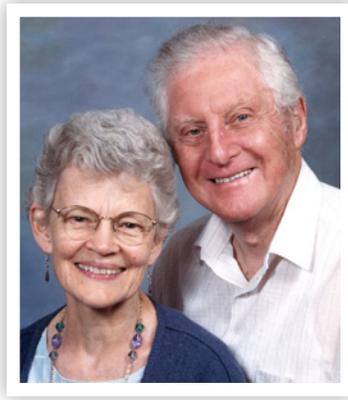
And He is yearning to create this church, yearning to make this vision come to pass. “For Zion’s sake I will not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burns.” (*Isaiah* 62:1)

Amen.



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Memorial Address: The Rev. Douglas McCloud Taylor



Christine and Douglas Taylor

The Rev. Walter E. Orthwein

Bryn Athyn Cathedral, February 25, 2016

The Lord was walking by the Sea of Galilee one day at the beginning of His public ministry and saw some fishermen casting their net into the sea. “Follow Me,” He said, “and I will make you fishers of men,” which they immediately did. (*Matthew 14:18-20*)

Today we have gathered here to celebrate the life of a disciple of the Lord from our own time who devoted himself to this use with enthusiasm and unusual ability: the Rev. Douglas Taylor.

A convert himself, Doug was a pioneer, a guiding light, and a tireless worker in the effort to reach out and bring more people into the New Church. A true spiritual fisherman.

And he cast his net on the right side of the boat – as the Lord would tell His disciples to do another time, when He appeared by the sea again after His resurrection. That means to teach from love and to teach the good of charity. It is not just truths per se that attract people but the potential for good in them. It is when people see the good that truth makes possible – the use of it – that

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I heard the voice of the Lord, saying:
 “Whom shall I send,
 And who will go for Us?”
 Then I said, “Here am I! Send me.”
 (*Isaiah 6:8*)

makes them want to learn it and live by it. This is what brings people into the Church. (*Apocalypse Explained 820.2*)

It was Doug’s own love for the truth, and his own discovery of the goodness contained in it, that made him a great communicator of it.

It wasn’t just by chance that the first disciples the Lord chose were fishermen.

It is because “fish” – like all animals (and everything else in creation) – represent aspects of our human nature, which is why animals are mentioned so often in Scripture.

The Lord is called a Lamb (a symbol of innocence), as well a Lion (the power of Divine truth). He is called a Shepherd, and His people like sheep, who hear their Shepherd’s voice and follow Him.

And so it goes, all through the letter of the Word. Gentle deer, ravening wolves. The serpent that goes on its belly. That fox, Herod. A golden calf. A white horse. Sparrows that fall, eagles that soar. Faith like a mustard seed. The sea and boats and fish. And heaven itself is like a net, as the Lord said in a parable (in *Matthew 13*).

All these things correspond to aspects of human nature: the thoughts and affections and qualities of character that inhabit the spiritual environment of the human mind.

It was this doctrine of correspondences that captured Doug Taylor’s imagination when he first discovered the New Church. He loved imagery, and used it to good effect in illustrating spiritual principles in his teaching.

There are countless examples, but let’s return to “fish” for a moment. They represent a natural state of life, as opposed to spiritual. We can see how fish represent such a condition: they are relatively insensitive, cold-blooded creatures, and the underwater realm they inhabit is cold, dense and dim.

Before we are brought into a spiritual state, we all start out as “fish” – governed by natural affections, motives, thoughts and goals. An unloving, uncaring, coldly calculating person might even be called a “cold fish.”

Another characteristic of fish is how prolific they are, which goes along with their more specific representation as natural knowledge. This makes them especially significant, symbolically, for our “age of information,” in which facts are multiplying so rapidly that people can hardly keep up with all the knowledge now available.

In a naturalistic age, a materialistic age, an age drowning in facts but lacking in spiritual understanding and sensitivity, “spiritual fishermen” are much needed to elevate people’s minds into the warmth and light of heavenly

life – that is, the love and wisdom emanating from the Lord, who appears as a sun in heaven.

Swedenborg was a “spiritual fisherman.” It was his divinely appointed mission to teach spiritual truths by relating them to natural truths. He was prepared for this by his many years of scientific and philosophical study, followed by a revelation of spiritual truth and many years of experience in which he was conscious of both worlds, the spiritual and the natural. He was able, therefore, to illustrate and confirm the truths of revelation by means of science and logic – and thus to teach spiritual truths in a way that the natural mind could grasp. As Doug liked to say: the New Church is “a religion that makes sense.”

Swedenborg was a unique case, of course, but the spiritual truths the Lord revealed for him to publish enable us, also, to teach spiritual truths naturally, or in a way the natural mind can grasp. That is, by relating them to things people are already familiar with on the natural level: the stories and symbolism in the letter of the Word and the facts of nature.

In providence we have an ever-increasing multitude of natural facts discovered by modern science with which to fill the nets of faith and reason and so enrich our understanding of spiritual reality.

Consider, for example, how a radio (something that didn’t exist in Swedenborg’s day) receives an electronic signal that we cannot see or hear and converts it into sound. This provides a fine illustration of how spiritual life from the Lord – invisible and undetectable by any natural instrument – flows into a person’s body and activates it. Human beings on every level – soul, mind and body – are “receivers” of life from the Lord which, like the sound coming from a radio, appears to originate in the receiver but does not.

The typical call for people simply to “believe” and “accept Jesus as their Savior” is insufficient for the New Church, because the Heavenly Doctrine is complex and appeals to rational understanding. The highest kind of reason, spiritual rationality, is the ability to see how the spiritual and natural dimensions of creation are related.

Seeing this makes all things – earthly and heavenly – new. It brings heaven down to earth with rational logic and concrete imagery drawn from the world of nature and the letter of the Word. And it elevates our earthly existence into the light of heaven by revealing the Divine and spiritual reality from which it comes and which it represents, and to which it is designed to lead.

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And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” They immediately left their nets and followed Him. (*Matthew 4:18-20*)

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And Swedenborg wrote:

I was once asked how, from a philosopher, I became a theologian; and I answered, "In the same manner that fishermen were made disciples and apostles by the Lord: and that I also had from early youth been a spiritual fisherman." On this, my questioner asked, "What is a spiritual fisherman?" I replied, "A fisherman, in the Word, in its spiritual sense, signifies a man who investigates and teaches natural truths, and afterwards spiritual truths, in a rational manner." (*Influx* 20)

Doug Taylor was a master at presenting deep spiritual truths in a way that people new to the Church could understand, by relating them to things they were already familiar with.

He had a fine command of language (as both a speaker and writer), and an ability to construct diagrams to illustrate abstract things – such as the levels and functions of the human mind, or the arrangement of the heavens. We see such diagrams in his last book, *The Hidden Levels of The Mind: Swedenborg's Theory of Consciousness*, published in 2011.

Doug also wrote several other books, including: *Spirituality That Makes Sense*, and *Landmarks In Regeneration*. Not to mention hundreds of sermons, classes, pamphlets and radio talks.

In addition to his academic achievements, he was a remarkably skilled and multi-faceted person – "full of surprises," as his children said.

He excelled at sports, especially cricket and Aussie-rules football (he was a great kicker). One of his heroes was Sir Donald Bradman, a legendary cricket player. (I was told that no memorial for Doug would be complete without mentioning Sir Donald Bradman.)

Doug also had considerable artistic talent, and when he was 14 years old he won a major art competition with a drawing of Sir Winston Churchill, another lifetime hero of his.

He was a fine singer, and also had a wonderful speaking voice, as fine as any English Shakespearean actor – which brings up an interesting anecdote.

Sir Laurence Olivier, the famous actor and director of the Old Vic repertory company in London, brought a production of a Shakespeare play to Australia while Doug was in college. The University Drama Club was called upon to supply extras, and Doug got the part of a soldier. As he was waiting in the wings, Olivier walked past him to go on stage, tapped Doug on the shoulder and said: "Good luck, laddy."

When the play was over, the press, for some reason, latched onto Doug to interview – much to the chagrin of the director and star. Doug's acting career never equaled Laurence Olivier's, but for one brief moment there he did, in a way, upstage the great thespian.

Doug was born into a Presbyterian family and grew up on a farm in Terang, in the Australian state of Victoria. He was a very good student, but the

local public schools weren't the best, so when a Jesuit Catholic school with a fine educational program happened to open up in the area, Doug's father enrolled him there – with the provision that although Doug would attend the religion classes he would not attend the Catholic religious services. On Sundays he went to the Presbyterian Church.

Doug emerged from this religious mix as an agnostic – but not for long. It was his future wife, Christine Brock, who introduced him to the New Church. They met at the University of Adelaide, where Christine was studying music education and Doug was studying French.

They met, “as if by chance” (as it says in *Conjugal Love* 316.3) at a French Club picnic. A visiting friend from France, a young man named Henri, brought Christine to the picnic and introduced her to the club president, who happened to be Doug Taylor. “That was the biggest mistake I ever made,” Henri said some years later. For Doug and Christine, of course, it was providential. They were married for 62 years, had five children and now 12 grandchildren.

Doug was mystified and put off by Christine's religion at first, but she gave him a book of the Writings to read, *The New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine*. He stayed up all night reading it – and it changed his mind.

Then he went to Christine's father, a New Church minister, to learn more about the religion. In their discussion, Mr. Brock especially focused on the doctrine of correspondences – and that was a real eye-opener. Doug loved it.

Several years later, Doug and Christine moved to Edinburgh where Doug studied for his master's degree in education. While teaching in Bristol, England, for a year, he met the Rev. Frank Rose and became especially interested in New Church education. So Doug and Christine and their growing family decided to move to Bryn Athyn so he could become a New Church minister in the General Church, with a focus on education.

Doug was ordained on the 19th of June, 1960. He first served the congregation in Tucson, Arizona, for three years, then as pastor to the Hurstville congregation in New South Wales, Australia, for 11 years. Then he was called to be assistant pastor in Bryn Athyn, and four years later became the first Director of Evangelization for the General Church.

There had previously been an “Extension Committee,” but Doug

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Here is a quotation that appears in Doug's last book, *The Hidden Levels of the Mind*: “(We need to realize that the mind that we use while living in this natural world) is made up of both spiritual substances and earthly substances. These latter substances fade away when we die, but the spiritual substances do not. So when we become spirits or angels after death, the same mind is still there in the form it had in the world.” (*Divine Love and Wisdom* 257)

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(And finally, from the work on Conjugal Love, speaking of a husband and wife who have looked to eternity and have lived together in a loving marriage):

They “are not separated by the death of the one, since the spirit of the deceased partner dwells continually with the spirit of the one not yet deceased, and this until the death of the latter, when they meet again and reunite and love each other more tenderly than before because in the spiritual world.” (*Conjugal Love* 321.6)

changed the name to “Evangelization” to emphasize the truth that the purpose was not just to increase the church’s membership but to preach the good news of the Lord’s second coming.

Ever the trooper, at age 64, Doug returned to Sydney and served as pastor in Hurstville for four years before finally retiring and returning to Bryn Athyn. But even then he continued to serve as the visiting pastor to the Baltimore society until he was finally too old to make the drive safely.

But his passion for sharing the truths of the Heavenly Doctrine with others never waned. He knew from his own experience what a blessing they are, and wanted to bring others into the New Church so that they could share the joy

he found in its teachings, and the spiritual community founded upon them.

Just three or four weeks ago, Doug’s grandson Brahm Genzlinger paid him a visit, and Doug read to him from his pamphlet, “*Why Are We Here?*” It’s a warm picture: the 90-year-old priest reading to his grandson, evangelizing to the end.

Doug’s earthly life began 90 years ago in Australia, but the passion and work that gave his life meaning, and affected the lives of so many people whom he served so faithfully, is eternal. It comes from the Lord, and lives within Truth itself, and radiates from it. It is life, or love, which is the same thing. This is the spirit within truths that make them like seeds, which are destined to grow, and multiply, and bring forth fruit.

In closing, let us remember the parable the Lord told about the dissemination of His Word and the various ways in which it would be received: the Parable of the Sower. In the supreme sense, the Lord Himself is the Sower – but all those who serve Him in the work of spreading the truths of faith are also sowers. They serve the Lord in providing for the human goodness and happiness that the truths of His Word produce. This is the story of the Reverend Douglas Taylor:

“Behold, a sower went forth to sow . . .” (*Matthew 13:3*)

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Surely We Are Not Swedenborgians!

The Rev. Gerald G. Waters

For some years now I and several others have felt increasingly concerned at the frequent reference in some New Church literature, whether it be sermons, Journey Programs or collateral works, to “the **works or teachings of or from Emanuel Swedenborg.**”

In recent years the General Church has promoted the introduction and use of Journey Programs for small groups as an added and effective way to teach and evangelize the wonderful new truths the Lord has given mankind in His second coming.

These programs are, I believe, most applicable to younger people and those searching for spiritual truth, which would include those non-New Church folk who are invited to join Journey groups. These people are the future of the Church and they need to understand clearly that the teachings of the New Church come from the Lord and NOT from Swedenborg.

Yes, they were given through a man chosen by the Lord, Emanuel Swedenborg, just as the books of the Old and New Testaments were given through the minds of men chosen by God. Personally, I feel Swedenborg would be distraught to know that the Writings he was enlightened to write down are being referred to as his teachings.

Now, perhaps I am over-reacting to references of Swedenborg in church literature and could benefit by having the views of others, and I would welcome that.

So in the hopes of receiving such views, let me give you a sense of what I'm talking about by quoting from a Journey Program we, in New Church-Westville, South Africa, are currently working on.

In one section of the Journey Program dealing with the “Gift of Change” it says: “**Swedenborg** describes the process of positive change, or repentance as one that is essential to experiencing our full human capacity.” A little further on it says: “According to **Swedenborg**, repentance doesn't mean just noticing our failures.” Then, over the page under the heading, “What does it mean ‘to shun evils as sins?’” and after the explanation of this, it concludes by saying:

“This, **Swedenborg** refers to as repentance.”

On the front cover of the daily workbook for the program there is a note that reads: “A daily workbook exploring five of life’s gifts, with teachings from Emanuel Swedenborg.” It would be far better if it read: “with teachings given **through** Emanuel Swedenborg.”

There are many more references I could give from other programs and collateral works but that hardly seems necessary as they are simply similar to what I have mentioned.

My grave concern is that, as a church and perhaps unwittingly, we are giving the impression to those not so well read and those seeking the truth that the New Church – or the General Church if you like – is all about the teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg with little reference to the second coming of the Lord and the fact that these are the Lord’s teachings, NOT Swedenborg’s teachings.

To entrench this, some of our church members proudly refer to themselves as Swedenborgians! We all know that Swedenborg was a very gifted, intelligent and humble man chosen by the Lord as the medium through whom His new revelation could be given. For that we respect and honor him greatly, but that is as far as we should go. To regard him as the author of the Writings is a misconception, and to refer to the Writings as **his** teachings is a falsity which can and will lead to confusion in the minds of those seeking the truth and will greatly deter from the growth of the Church.

It is not my intention to point fingers at the authors of these lovely Journey Programs and other church literature. They do a wonderful job and perform a great use and we are very much indebted to them.

The bottom line of what I am trying to get at is that if we keep stressing the importance of and belief in **what Swedenborg says or teaches**, we will be undermining the growth of the Lord’s New Christian Church on earth and will give the “dragon” that wishes to destroy the infant child continued opportunity to label the New Church as a cult. A cult is defined as, “a system of religious worship especially as expressed in ceremonies; **devotion or homage to person or thing.**” (From the Concise Oxford Dictionary)

We all, most dearly, want to help the Lord grow His Church on earth and in the heavens. To do that let us be sure that we pay tribute to Him and not Swedenborg.

The Rev. Gerald G. Waters began studying to be a minister of the General Church at age 65 after retiring from a banking career in 1997. He was ordained in 2002 and has been active with the New Church Westville and with isolated groups in South Africa. When the South African Corporation of the General Church was established in 1994, he served on its board from the inception, first as Administrator then as Executive Vice President. He retired as an active minister in 2014 and lives happily with his wife Gay in a retirement village close to the Durban church. Contact: gwaters@iburst.co.za

Does the Lord Want You to Join the Church Organization?

The Rev. Kenneth J. Alden

In the General Church of the New Jerusalem we carefully distinguish between the church organization that we see and the church whose members are known to the Lord alone. These latter are the people who have the church in them: the universal church in the case of people who have some measure of faith in God, charity or goodwill toward their neighbor, and who live according to God's commandments; and the specific church in the case of those who worship the Lord Jesus Christ as God, and who know and believe the truths of the Word and live by them.

Baptism serves as a sign that, spiritually, a person is in the specific church (if an adult), or is being prepared to be in it (if not yet an adult). Baptism serves as a meaningless, hypocritical or false sign if a person, after baptism, turns away from the Lord and from living according to His commandments.

Adults who have been baptized are eligible for membership in the General Church. This is an organization, visible to people in the natural world, and formed for the purpose of worshiping the Lord Jesus Christ and propagating the Heavenly Doctrine. "Worship" suggests not only the familiar activities of the Sunday service, but all that is implied by honoring the Lord: refusing to do or intend anything that goes against His will and doing His will by serving the neighbor such that the Lord's heavenly kingdom increases in numbers and quality. Propagating likewise implies not only a physical act of publishing Swedenborg's theological Writings, but also making them available to people in ways that they may be sown in people's thoughts, affections and lives.

Although there are direct benefits for ourselves in joining the Church, we benefit most when we join it for the sake of benefitting others. For one thing, what we can do for others' spiritual life is enhanced and multiplied by the support and reinforcement of others with similar goals and complementary principles.

Parents often find it easier to teach their children about the Lord and His Word when they also bring their children to church and Sunday school and

take turns teaching themselves. Referring our friends to the human and other resources of our church not only gives reassurance as to the credibility of our beliefs, but also enriches the way we serve their spiritual needs through the variety and reinforcement the Lord provides through others.

Another benefit in joining a church for others' sake is that our motives are purer when we put ourselves out for others. Being part of an organization dedicated to worship is, like worship itself, something we should do more for the Lord's sake than our own. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 9450, 10411, 10683; *New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* 167)

Making the effort to attend church regularly so that there is one more voice to add to the singing, or one more person to greet a visitor or friend, illustrates how worship for others' sake serves the Lord. The marvelous thing is that when we worship for the Lord's sake or join the Church for His sake and the neighbor's, the blessings which accrue to us will be immeasurably better because they are not suffocated by self-regard.

There are, of course, no perfect human organizations. They are all composed of imperfect people who, like ourselves, make mistakes, fall short of their goals, aspire to ideals beyond their limitations, etc. In looking for a church to join so that we can better serve the Lord by working in concert with others, we should look for a church with core beliefs, principles and goals which align with our own or inspire us to better ones. These core beliefs and goals are the ones we have seen to be from the Word, for only that which is from the Lord will lead us to the Lord.

The thing that makes the General Church stand out as a church organization is its acknowledgment that the theological Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg are "the Word" – a revelation that is from the Lord, reveals the Lord, and reveals the truths that will lead us to conjunction with Him and eternal life in His kingdom.

It has been said that this revelation is our "constitution." It has drawn us together, and is what will draw us back together when we stumble or stray. There is great innocence and love for the Lord in the question, "What do the Writings say?"; for in pursuing the answer, we willingly subordinate ourselves to a will and wisdom above our own, a will and wisdom we acknowledge to be Divine-Human – the Lord's.

Does the Lord want you to join the organization known as the General Church of the New Jerusalem?* The answer that will mean the most to you is the one you hear from the Lord. His kingdom is a kingdom of uses, so the question of joining will relate not only to how useful joining is for yourself, but how useful you can be for the spiritual and eternal life of your family, friends, co-workers, acquaintances and strangers.

It will relate not only to how the Church can equip and support you, but

to how your contribution and participation can equip and support others for such service. In the end, worship must not be for our sake but the Lord's, not for having our way according to our understanding, but for doing the Lord's will according to His wisdom, and so entering more fully into His kingdom of uses.

*See also the Rev. N. Bruce Rogers, "Why Join the General Church?" *New Church Life*, March-April 2015. It is available online at: www.newchurch.org/materials/publications/nc-life/archive.html



The Rev. Kenneth J. Alden will conclude his term as pastor of the Boynton Beach New Church in Florida on June 30. He has served also in Detroit, Michigan; the Washington New Church in Mitchellville, Maryland; the Carmel New Church in Kitchener, Ontario, Canada; and the Colchester Society in England. He lives with his wife, Kim (Truax), in Lake Worth, Florida. Contact: pastor@newchurchboyntonbeach.org

OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY

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

FORESIGHT

This term is applied in the Writings to a particular operation or mode of the Divine Providence. Only that which is good is provided by the Lord; yet He knows all evil before it comes to pass and provides for it. This pre-knowledge of evils is what is meant by the Divine foresight. It is to the Lord what prudence is to the human race, with the notable difference that it is infinite, infallible and not cumulative but simultaneous.

Divine foresight does not interfere with or qualify human freedom. The Lord does not foresee what will happen because He has predetermined what shall happen; He foresees what man will do in his freedom. The term itself is an accommodation to the finite mind. Because all things are present to Him, and there is no past or future, He does not "look ahead." (See *Arcana Coelestia* 3854)

Redemption and Reading the Heavenly Doctrines

The Rev. William H. Clifford

In my daily reading of the Heavenly Doctrines, the Lord nudges me to keep an eye out for various series. Recently it was given me to see a series concerning redemption. The series involved the three processes that make up redemption:

- The subjugation of the hells
- The ordering of the heavens
- The establishment of a new church

I was also led to reflect on how this series relates to the giving of the Heavenly Doctrines, and how it might apply in our personal regeneration.

This series on redemption is treated of in *True Christian Religion* 115:

THE REAL REDEMPTION WAS THE CONQUEST OF THE HELLS AND THE ORDERING OF THE HEAVENS, AND PREPARATION BY THIS MEANS FOR A NEW SPIRITUAL CHURCH.

I can assert with complete certainty that these three events constitute redemption, since the Lord is today too carrying on the process of redemption, which began with the accomplishment of the Last Judgment in 1757. This redemptive process has continued from that time down to the present. The reason is that today the Second Coming of the Lord is taking place, and a new church is to be established, something which could not happen unless the conquest of the hells and the ordering of the heavens had taken place first. Since I have been permitted to witness all that has happened, I am able to describe how the hells were conquered and how a new heaven has been founded and arranged, but it would take a whole book to do so. However, I did reveal how the Last Judgment was carried out, in a small book [*The Last Judgment*] published in London in 1758.

[2] Redemption consisted in the conquest of the hells, the ordering of the heavens and the establishment of a new church, because without them no one could have been saved. This is their proper order: the hells had first to be conquered, before a new heaven of angels could be formed, and this had to be formed before a new church could be established on earth. For people in the world are so linked with the angels in heaven and the spirits in hell, that in the interiors of their minds they are identified with one party or the other. This subject will be discussed in detail in the

last chapter of this book, dealing with the Ending of the Age, the Lord's Coming and the New Church. (Chadwick)

The interesting aspect of this series of redemption (the subjugation of the hells, the ordering of the heavens, and the establishment of the church) is that there are three events associated with this series that can be dated.

Redemption could not begin before the Last Judgment had been accomplished. This makes sense. How could the hells be subjugated and the heavens ordered before the good and evil in the world of spirits have been separated and sent to their respective places? As the Lord came closer to the world of spirits, the evil could not stand the presence of the Divine truth, and so fled to the hells to avoid the light of truth. So actually the evil were not sent to hell, but fled there. As noted above in *True Christian Religion* 115, the Last Judgment was accomplished in 1757. This is the first of our three dates.

The second date is the date of the Second Coming: 1769.

When *Brief Exposition* was published [1769] the angelic heaven, from east to west and from south to north, appeared purple-colored with the loveliest flowers; this happened before my very eyes and before those of the kings of Denmark, and others; on another occasion it appeared as if it were on fire, and beautiful. "The Coming of" the Lord was written on all the books in the spiritual world; by command I therefore wrote this in the same place in two copies in Holland. (*Ecclesiastical History* 7,8; Elliot)

The third event is the beginning of the New Church, which took place on June 19, 1770 when the Lord sent the twelve apostles throughout the spiritual world

... to preach the Gospel, that the Lord God Jesus Christ is king, and His kingdom shall be for ever and ever. (*True Christian Religion* 791; Chadwick, cf. *Ibid.* 4, 108)

A brief review of the order of the redemption series before us:

- We have the Last Judgment (1757)
- Followed by the subjugation of the hells and the ordering of the heavens
- This was an on-going process
- The Second Coming (1769)
- The beginning of the New Church in the spiritual world (June 19, 1770)

The Last Judgment, however could not take place without some preparation.

This is a series of spiritual events and processes. The spiritual, however, must also be ultimated in the natural if it is to have any reality. Part of the ultimatum was in the writing and publishing of the Heavenly Doctrines.

Let us see how this series might have been ultimated in the publishing of

the Heavenly Doctrines. For simplicity sake, I am only going to treat of the published works, although I believe that the unpublished works could easily fit into this scheme.

Let me be clear, what follows is my speculation. I know of no statements in the Heavenly Doctrine that teach this.

Preparation for the Last Judgment was by means of the Lord and His Divine Truth descending out of heaven into the world of spirits. This caused evil spirits to flee and throw themselves into the hells below. I believe that the ultimate, which served as a basis for this, was the writing and publication of the *Arcana Coelestia* (1749 - 1756).

With the completion of the Last Judgment in 1757 the work of redemption could begin, which consisted in the subjugation of the hells and the ordering of the heavens. While the subjugation of the hells and the ordering of the heavens are two distinct activities, they are usually treated of in the Heavenly Doctrines in the same breath. The Heavenly Doctrines do make it clear that the subjugation of the hells had to precede the ordering of the heavens, or at least had to begin first. The books of the Heavenly Doctrine relating this are:

- *Heaven and Hell* (1758)
- *New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* (1758)
- *The Last Judgment* (1758)
- *The White Horse* (1758)
- *Earths in the Universe* (1758)
- *The Doctrine of the Lord* (1763)
- *The Doctrine of the Sacred Scripture* (1763)
- *The Doctrine of Life* (1763)
- *The Doctrine of Faith* (1763)
- *The Last Judgment Continued* (1763)
- *Angelic Wisdom Concerning the Divine Love and Wisdom* (1763)
- *Angelic Wisdom concerning the Divine Providence* (1764)

The dating of these works suggests that those works published in 1758 may have played a more important role in the subjugation of the hells, while those works which were published in 1763 and 1764 may have been more important for the ordering of the heavens.

Before the Lord sent His apostles throughout the spiritual world on June 19, 1770, He prepared them for their important task. This is evident in *True Christian Religion* 339 where we are told that the Lord sent them to observe Swedenborg writing on the difference between the blind faith in an invisible God and the faith in the Lord God the Savior who is God and Man.

It seems to me that the following works are related to the establishment of a new church and a new Christian heaven:

- *Apocalypse Revealed* (1766)
 - I can see this work as being a kind of transition between those works related to redemption and those related to the establishment of a new church
- *Conjugal Love* (1768)
- *Brief Exposition* (1769)
 - Which as noted previously also marks the date of the Second Coming
- *Interaction Between the Soul and Body* (1769)
- *True Christian Religion* (1771)

This divides the Heavenly Doctrines into three broad categories:

- Those related to the preparation for the Last Judgment
 - Arcana Coelestia*
- Those related to redemption
 - The works published between 1758 and 1764
 - Heaven and Hell, Heavenly Doctrines, Last Judgment, White Horse and Earths in the Universe
 - Doctrine of the Lord, Sacred Scripture, Life, Faith, Last Judgment Continued, Divine Love and Wisdom and Divine Providence
- And those related to the establishment of the new church
 - The works published in 1766 and afterwards
 - Apocalypse Revealed*, *Conjugal Love*, *Brief Exposition*, *Intercourse Between Soul and Body* and *True Christian Religion*

Some general observations about this sequence: The *Arcana* is full of marvelous truths. For example, it has the most detailed explanations of the Lord's glorification. For the most part, however, the teachings in the *Arcana* are scattered. There is not, except for the inter-chapter material, sequential treatment of doctrine like you find in the later works. This is appropriate for their role in the preparation for the Last Judgment. Spirits had to be affected by bits and pieces of the Divine truth before they could be led to see them in a coherent manner. The same is true for us when we begin the process of reformation and regeneration.

Once good and evil have been separated (the Last Judgment) these bits

and pieces of Divine Truth can be collected and presented in a more formal and logical manner. This is also true for us in our regeneration.

The works published in 1758 (*Heaven and Hell, Heavenly Doctrine, Last Judgment, White Horse and Earths in the Universe*) are largely drawn from the inter-chapter material in the *Arcana*. The works of 1763 and 1764 (*Doctrine of the Lord, Sacred Scripture, Life, Faith, Last Judgment Continued, Divine Love and Wisdom and Divine Providence*) are developments of doctrines found in the *Arcana*, rather than extractions from the *Arcana*.

The works published in 1766 and later (*Apocalypse Revealed, Conjugal Love, Brief Exposition, Intercourse Between Soul and Body and True Christian Religion*) are further developments, but they look to the establishment of a new church. They talk about the falsities of the previous Christian Church and the truths of the new Christian Church.

These works also tend to be more direct and critical of the previous Christian Church and its faith. While there are teachings concerning the new Christian Church in the *Arcana*, they are vague about its nature. These later works, however, make it clear that the new Christian Church must replace the previous church.

My sense is that there is a sequence in how the Lord presents His truths in the Heavenly Doctrines which was important to be followed for the sake of the Last Judgment, Redemption, the Second Coming, and the establishment of the New Church.

I feel that this sequence or process mirrors our needs for Divine truth in the process of our regeneration.

The Lord begins our regeneration by presenting truths to us in a scattered fashion. This allows us to accept them because we can't see how disruptive they will be to our evils and falsities. As our regeneration progresses the Lord separates some of our evils and falsities from some of our goods and truths, performing a kind of last judgment. After this the Lord collects our scattered truths, and organizes them. He uses them to subjugate some of our evils and falsities, and then to order the goods and truths of our internal.

When this is done, the Lord makes a coming into our lives; He is present in us in a new and deeper manner. This is followed by an establishing of His Church in us. Our faith in Him has become more solid and entrenched. He can now be more direct about our evils and falsities and the need to put them aside.

When we read the Heavenly Doctrines in chronological order, I believe that the Lord can more easily order our minds by separating our evils and falsities from our goods and truths, subjugating our evils and falsities, ordering our goods and truths, becoming especially present with us, and forming us into a new church. I believe that the Lord can do this even when we don't read

the Heavenly Doctrines in sequence; but I sense there is something special that happens when we do. And if there is something special that happens when we read the Heavenly Doctrines in chronological order, it is because there is a correspondence between the sequence of truths given in the Heavenly Doctrines, and the process by which the Lord leads and regenerates us. This is not taught explicitly in the Heavenly Doctrines, but it is what I sense from my reading of them.

None of the above benefits will happen if we don't read the Heavenly Doctrines. Nor will they happen if we simply read them without looking to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is only when we look to the Lord, seeking to live the life of religion, that He can fill us with His enlightenment. It is only when we take the teachings of the Heavenly Doctrines, use them to examine ourselves and shun the evils as sins against the Lord that He can feed us, lift us up and bless us forever.

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OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY

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FORM

Here we have another philosophical term which occurs frequently. It refers to an organic receptacle in which an essence is so formed as to appear; and it does not relate to shape, but to the order, disposition, arrangement and relation of the parts which make a thing competent to its use. Thus form is said to be the same as function or use. (See *True Christian Religion* 52; *Arcana Coelestia* 4223, 4926; *Last Judgment* 12:4; *Divine Love and Wisdom* 200, 209)

How Do We Love God?

The Rev. Charles E. (Chuck) Blair

Loving God, at one level is incredibly esoteric. “Wu Wu” stuff as my friend would say. How do we love something that often appears to our dim human eyes distant, disembodied, contentious even?

Emanuel Swedenborg offers this:

Loving God “does not mean loving God for the image He projects but loving the good that comes from Him. Loving the good is intending and doing it.” (Heaven and Hell 15)

Restated, there are these good things that come from God – the good stuff – the good stuff often even in the midst of the hard stuff. God’s love made real into the world. Seen, heard, witnessed, experienced, shared.

Our job – to love God. Which means placing our intention behind that good stuff and DOING IT.

In ways hard to describe, that aligns our best intentions with God’s loving intentions. Or more accurately, it uncovers in our soul those loving intentions gifted from God – God’s and ours at the same time.

We can see that all over. A recent story featured the photograph here of a group of fast-food workers joining a woman in prayer who had shared with the cashier that just a few hours before she had lost her husband. Humanity at its best. God’s loving work among us and through us. A picture that answers in some small way, “How do we love God?”



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Emanuel Swedenborg and the Popol Vuh: The Myth of the Ancient Word

Dylan C. Odhner

(Note: This paper was written as part of Dylan Odhner's MA/PhD program, *Mythological Studies With an Emphasis in Jungian Depth Psychology*.)

As a discipline, mythological studies have long since left the highly romantic Campbell-Era behind. Whether this represents a necessary maturation of the field, or an overall degradation of the culture at large, is a question worthy of consideration in its own right, but that is not my focus.

I do not believe it is an overstatement to refer to Joseph Campbell's memorable career as an "era," for his personal charisma and unabashed universality put mythology back into popular consciousness, and placed the term "comparative mythology" into the collective lexicon. But though his talents were many, his real contribution was singular: he popularized the Jungian *hero* archetype, and packaged it in such a way that for the first time it broke out of academia and into pop culture.

Campbell was able to do this by giving the modern masses their first taste of *universality*. We learned – with eyes and mouths open wide in amazement – of the myths of *Paradise* and *The Flood* which, whether from Ancient Greece, contemporary China, or remote societies of the Congo, had eerie and exhilarating consistency. Most of all, we learned of the *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, and just enough Jungian jargon to picture this archetypal hero springing up from the collective unconscious – ready to save whichever society he happens to be born into.

In this way, Campbell's celebrity served as a delivery mechanism for both Jungian depth psychology and mythology as a whole. But after feasting on the *universal*, society was left with the subtle yet distinct aftertaste of oversimplification and eurocentrism. There is an innate lack of sophistication, not in Campbell himself, but in the consumer-friendly version of him.

In order to claim that a mythic image or motif is “universal,” one must first prove that it appears with consistency in a number of disparate cultures, and then disprove any historical or anthropological explanations for this consistency.

This approach has a number of unforeseen consequences. First and foremost, the desire to show consistency in mythic imagery inevitably leads to what anthropologists might call “cherry-picking” – the arbitrary selection of evidence based solely on the degree to which it fits our own preconceived pattern. Indeed, why would a mythologist waste time studying counterexamples when there is all of time and the entire globe to search for the perfect prototypes?

Next, apart from it being unfeasible to satisfactorily disprove all possible historical or anthropological connections, the perceived need to do so encourages students of myth to select only the most disparate examples. Perhaps most important of all, this approach inadvertently saps mythology of much of its power by valuing only its universal elements.

Mythic images and motifs are beautiful, entertaining and thought provoking even when we can clearly trace their origins through cultural diffusion and religious syncretism. In fact, it is often the historical context and the stylistic particularities of a myth that make it most worthy of study.

It is not without a sense of irony that now, after preaching the dangers of universalism, I shift to the core focus of this study. As I stated, the field of mythological studies has largely moved past the romantic universalism of the Campbell-Era. But though I was not alive for it, I often get a feeling of nostalgia for that golden age of mythological studies. And it was this very feeling of nostalgia that hit me in waves as I read the Mayan text, the *Popol Vuh*.

This text – first translated from its ancient hieroglyphic form in the 16th century and left in obscurity until the mid-19th century – bears seemingly impossible resemblance to some of the writings of 18th-century Enlightenment philosopher and theologian Emanuel Swedenborg.

It is not my intent to identify a universal mythic theme, but rather to compare and contrast these disparate texts in their particulars. Though I believe that my exploration of the historical contexts of each text will show them to be about as heterogeneous as is likely on this shared planet, it is not my aim to disprove the possibility of a direct connection. In fact, the unearthing of a previously unknown intercontinental connection could be of equal, or perhaps greater, value.

After briefly studying the origins and historical context of each text, I will compare what each has to say about the early stages of humanity – what we might describe as a Golden Age and a Silver Age. I will explore how the two stages differ from one another; how the beings of each interact with each other;

how they interact with the Divine. Finally, I will study the similar references to an “Ancient Word” which appear in both the Mayan *Popol Vuh*, and the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg.

When viewed as a whole, I hope that the commonalities between these disparate texts serve as compelling evidence of a deep connection. Specific claims concerning the nature of this connection – whether it is religious, anthropological, archetypal – would require further study, and may prove unverifiable.

In the introduction to his award-winning 1996 translation, Dennis Tedlock attempts to trace the *Popol Vuh* back to its murky origins. He contends that the narrative existed first in a hieroglyphic form, but this offers little precision. Mayan hieroglyphics are believed to have been in continuous use from roughly the third century BCE until the Spanish conquest in the 16th century.

It was in the early conquest period, however, that the Mayans were first introduced to alphabetic writing. Tedlock notes that there is “no little justice” in the fact that it was the Christian missionaries who – after enforcing the destruction of all ancient texts – taught the locals to write in Spanish. The Christian oppressors clearly did this so that the Bible might be translated for the Mayan people, but translation is a two-way street.

There is little consensus and no overt evidence of this 16th-century text, and it is not until 1701 that the origins become more clear. In this year, a Dominican friar by the name of Francisco Ximénez made the oldest surviving copy of the *Popol Vuh*. Whatever, or whomever, his source was, the Ximénez text remained in obscurity within the Dominican monastery until after Guatemala declared independence in 1821. Even then, it was not “rediscovered” and published until 1857.

These years of obscurity – after the *Popol Vuh* was recorded in its alphabetic form, but before its rediscovery – entirely eclipse the enigmatic career of Emanuel Swedenborg. In 1688, literally half a world away from the origins of the Mayan *Popol Vuh*, Swedenborg was born in Stockholm, Sweden. Throughout the first half of his adult life, he gained fame as an inventor, scientist and thinker. He met with the King of Sweden and was later elevated to nobility. He is credited with anticipating the biological concept of the neuron; the philosopher Wilson Van Dusen even credits Swedenborg as an early father of psychology and phenomenology: “[His approach] gathers the raw data of experience itself. It attempts to observe, understand and describe human experience itself. As in many other things he was ahead of his time.” (Wilson xxxii)

But in 1745, in his mid-50s, Swedenborg had a spiritual awakening that dramatically changed the trajectory of his career, and his life. At first in the form of dreams, and later in waking visions, he began an existential

journey not unlike like that of Carl Jung nearly 200 years later. Swedenborg's experience, however, was undoubtedly more intense – living for nearly three decades a “dual existence in both the spiritual and natural worlds alternately.” (Warren xxxiii) In his introduction to the *Compendium of the Theological Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg*, Samuel Warren speaks to the gravity of this unprecedented occurrence:

Swedenborg came to believe that God had called him to bring a new revelation to the world, and from 1745 until his death 27 years later, he spent the bulk of his time adding theological works to his already lengthy scientific and philosophical writings. Few transcendent experiences recorded in human history encompass such a sweeping claim.

According to Swedenborg, the nature of this “new revelation” was not a new prophet, nor even a new text, but rather a new, metaphorical interpretation of the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. He argued that contemporary Christian beliefs in the “Second Coming” and “End of Days” were in fact symptomatic of an overly literal interpretation of the Bible. To this end, he then began the monumental task of outlining – verse by verse – the “internal sense” of the Bible. His study of *Genesis* and *Exodus* alone extends more than 7,000 pages.

It is in Swedenborg's exegesis of the first chapters of *Genesis* that we see startling consistency with the *Popol Vuh*. In the characters of Adam and Eve, Swedenborg does not see a literal description of two individuals, but a representative description of the earliest stage of humanity. This Golden Age of humanity – which he calls the Most Ancient Church – is described in some detail:

I have been informed that the men of the Most Ancient Church were of so heavenly a character that they conversed with angels, and that they had the power of holding such converse by means of correspondences. (Warren 26)

This ability to communicate openly with the heavens is directly echoed in the Mayan *Popol Vuh*, in which the people of the Golden Age are described as anthropomorphic wooden manikins:

The first four humans, the first four earthly beings who were truly articulate when they moved their feet and hands, their faces and mouths, and who could speak the very language of the gods, could also see everything under the sky and on the earth. (Tedlock 21)

Both texts describe the antediluvian peoples of the earth being in direct communication with another world, but the similarities do not end there. On a more symbolic level, the ability of the people of the Mayan Golden Age to “see everything under the sky and on earth” seems to correlate strongly with Swedenborg's description of the people of the Most Ancient Church: “When they looked upon any of the objects of this world they not only thought of

them naturally, but also spiritually, thus in conjunction with the angels of heaven.” (Warren 26) What is more, in both cases, this perfect vision seems to be the source of their direct communication with the heavens.

It seems to be written into the very concept of a Golden Age that it cannot last, and this holds true for both Swedenborg’s Most Ancient Church, and the *Popol Vuh*’s “first four human beings.” In the *Popol Vuh*, the fall of man seems to be caused by a hubristic lack of humility:

This was the peopling of the face of the earth: They came into being, they multiplied, they had daughters, they had sons, these manikins, woodcarvings. But there was nothing in their hearts and nothing in their minds, no memory of their mason and builder. They just went and walked wherever they wanted. Now they did not remember the Heart of Sky. And so they fell. (Tedlock 70)

Swedenborg describes a similar lack of humility, but in psychological terms. Instead of glorifying God for their gifts, the people of the Most Ancient Church began to internalize these gifts, glorifying themselves. In this way, the biblical flood might not be viewed as a *punishment*, but as a self-inflicted consequence:

“This development, symbolized by the Flood in Genesis, caused evil desires and twisted thinking to inundate their minds, [... so that] they ‘drowned’ in their inability to separate thought from desire.” (Rose 66) This interpretation is enough to make one suspicious of a pre-Latin etymological connection between the words “deluge” and “delusion.”

Students of comparative mythology will not be surprised that the *Popol Vuh* also contains a mythical deluge. “And so they accomplished nothing before the Maker, Modeler who gave them birth, gave them heart. . . . The manikins, woodcarvings were killed when the Heart of Sky devised a flood for them.” (Tedlock 71)

There are even references which are virtually indistinguishable from the biblical *covenant of the rainbow* after the flood. (*Genesis* 9:13): “The sky-earth was already there, but the face of the sun-moon was clouded over. Even so, it is said that his light provided a sign for the people who were flooded.” (Tedlock 73)

It is clear from both texts that the people of the Silver Age were not simply the *survivors* of the flood. Instead, we are given a fascinating description of how the Divine changed humanity’s nature, perhaps even on a neurological level. It is therefore not the flood, but the alteration of the human mind that began the Silver Age, which Swedenborg calls the Ancient Church, to distinguish it from the *Most Ancient Church* that preceded it. (Rose 66) In the *Popol Vuh*, this “alteration” has an almost surgical nature:

Let it be this way: now we’ll take them apart just a little, that’s what we need. What we’ve found out isn’t good. Their deeds would become equal to ours, just because

their knowledge reaches so far. . . . When they changed the nature of their works, their designs, it was enough that the eyes be marred by the Heart of the Sky. They were blinded as the face of a mirror is breathed upon. (Tedlock 148)

Here, the imagery of how a “mirror is breathed upon” is of key importance, for Swedenborg describes the people of the Most Ancient Church receiving “direct revelation and guidance from God through the mirror of nature.” (Rose 66) After the flood, however, this direct mirror to heaven was too dangerous, and so God saved the human race “by making the intellect separable from the will.” (Ibid.) From the perspective of a structuralist, the concepts of a mirror “breathed upon,” and an “intellect separable from the will” follow the same directionality; what once was fused is now separate, like the cutting of the collective umbilical cord. (Levi-Strauss 295)

A new stage of humanity also requires a new form of revelation. Because direct communication with the heavens was no longer possible, a new medium needed to emerge. In both the *Popol Vuh* and the Writings of Swedenborg, this took the form of an *Ancient Word*. Up until this point, a strict naturalist might claim that there is indeed a direct connection between these two texts: the Christian Bible. But there is a subtle element of eurocentrism in claiming that all perceived similarities between the Bible and any other texts must be due to christianization.

It is a form of retroactive cultural appropriation in which a “foreign” text always has the short end of the stick. Even the natural sciences support the concept of parallel evolution, through which, for example, both marsupial and placental flying squirrels have evolved despite 100 million years of continental separation.

Regardless of this, the concept of an *Ancient Word* cannot be found anywhere within the Christian Bible, and yet it is placed in the very first line of the *Popol Vuh*: “This is the beginning of the Ancient Word, here in this place called Quichē. Here we shall inscribe, we shall implant the Ancient Word, the potential source for everything done in the citadel of Quichē, in the nation of the Quichē people.” (Tedlock 63)

Tedlock makes an explicit connection between the power of this *Ancient Word*, and the power that was previously granted to the Golden Age:

When “everything they saw was clear to them” the Quichē lords were recovering the vision of the first four humans, who at first “saw everything under the sky perfectly.” That would mean that the *Popol Vuh* made it possible, once again, to sight “the four sides, the four corners in the sky, and on earth.” (Tedlock 29)

When Swedenborg introduces the concept of the *Ancient Word*, he also hints at the thoroughly allegorical nature of its contents: “It has been told me by the angels of heaven that there was a Word among the ancients written by pure correspondences. . . . Those who knew interiorly the correspondences of

the Ancient Word were called wise and intelligent, and after that diviners and magi.” (Warren 134-5) And like the Silver Age keepers of the *Popol Vuh*, the people of the Ancient Church used it to regain a form of open communication with heaven, “but a poorer one than the Golden Age had enjoyed.” (Rose 67)

One final similarity between the *Popol Vuh* and the theological Writings of Swedenborg is the mysterious and seemingly contradictory way in which the two texts refer to the *Ancient Word*. The Mayan text begins with the words, “This is the beginning of the *Ancient Word*,” and ends with the strong indication that the *Ancient Word* no longer exists. Here is a final comparison, which – though both excerpts are reinterpretations – nonetheless adds emphasis to the many similarities which run through these two disparate texts:

There is the original book and ancient writing owned by the lords, now lost, but even so, everything has been completed here concerning Quichē. (Tedlock 198) [emphasis added]

There is a revelation, the Ancient or Early Word, now lost, which contained profoundly allegorical tales and obscure prophecies of the Messiah to come. (Rose 67) [emphasis added]

Despite having no apparent historical or anthropological connection, both the Mayan *Popol Vuh* and the unique biblical exegesis of Swedenborg offer insights into the early stages of humanity. Though differing in vocabulary, both speak of a Golden Age, when early humans could converse directly with the heavens, and had a form of perfect vision (or insight), beyond the laws of the current day. By internalizing these gifts, and crediting themselves rather than praising their maker, they brought on their own demise.

The human beings who emerged from the deluge were of a different nature, perhaps even on a neurological level. For their own safety, their direct line of communication with the heavens was severed, and their instinctual knowledge was limited. But in exchange, they were given an *Ancient Word*, which – for those who could understand it – granted access to the Golden Age wisdom from before the flood. This *Ancient Word* is now lost, but there remains ambiguity about its possible recovery.

It was not my intent to identify a universal mythic theme, and I do not believe that I have done so. Indeed, if universal elements have been discussed, it is only because they are some of the same motifs which have been written about for centuries.

Swedenborg himself spoke to the apparent universality of these themes, well over a century before Müller, Freud, Jung or Campbell: “It is well known that [there is] a knowledge of paradise, of the flood, of the sacred fire, and of the four ages – from the first or golden age to the last or iron age.” (Warren 136)

Interestingly, Swedenborg had his own explanation for these universal myths, which is highly relevant to the topic at hand. Far from a coincidence, he believed that all of these myths could be traced to a single source: the same *Ancient Word* discussed above. This explanation is surprisingly compelling to me, but my own study leads me to believe that it is taken too literally.

If the myths of Ancient Greece, Egypt and India are based off remaining fragments of a literal and physical *Ancient Word*, then what of the myths of the Americas – and more specifically, the Mayan *Popol Vuh*?

When viewed symbolically, however, Swedenborg's explanation is virtually indistinguishable from Jung's archetypal theory, but for the belief in Divine revelation. In that case, the movement from the Golden Age to the Silver Age represents a shift in human consciousness development, or perhaps the birth of true human freedom.

With this change, a new Divine revelation must be given to humanity – now in the form of written language. In this way, the *Ancient Word* – as an intermediary stage between the oral tradition and written language – is indeed the source of the ancient mythologies of Greece, Egypt and India. It is also the source of the *Popol Vuh*.

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Classic New Church Journals Find New Life in a Digital Age

Marvin B. Clymer

“There are now many who are interested in the doctrines of the New Jerusalem; some deriving from their little knowledge a wish to know more, and others desiring that the light which discloses to them the way of life, may shine more and more distinctly, day by day.”¹

Early readers of Swedenborg’s Writings joined together in small groups to read about and discuss the new truths just revealed from heaven. Their enthusiasm led them to begin translating his books from the original Latin and publishing them in Europe and America. In addition, they were anxious to spread the good news through New Church periodicals, but time and again journals were printed for a few months and then were discontinued due to a lack of monetary support from the very limited number of subscribers.

The first New Church journal in the world was *Samlingar för Philantropen* (Magazine for Philanthropists), first published in January 1787 by the Exegetic – Philanthropic Society in Stockholm and edited by Charles Frederick Nordenskjöld. Due to objections from the clergy, the Swedish authorities prohibited further publication after four quarterly issues had been produced.

The first New Church journal printed in the English language was *The New Jerusalem Magazine*, published monthly in London only from January to June of 1790, followed by an Appendix and Index printed in 1791. It was published by “several members of the London Universal Society for the promotion of the New Church.”

The Intellectual Repository became the first journal to be successfully established in England. Originally printed for “A Society of Gentlemen” in London in 1812, it became the official organ of the General Conference in England in 1830 when the name was changed to *The Intellectual Repository and New Jerusalem Magazine*. Publication continued until 1881.

The first journal published in America, *The Temple of Truth*, appeared in Baltimore on August 1, 1801 and only survived for three months. Intended for

1 From the first issue of *The New Jerusalem Magazine*, printed in Boston, September 1827, page 1.

the general public, this weekly paper was written by the Rev. John Hargrove, pastor of the first New Church “temple” in America, defending the doctrines of the New Church from attack by the editor of a Deist paper in Philadelphia called *The Temple of Reason*.

After several more unsuccessful attempts in other cities, a group in Boston began printing *The New Jerusalem Magazine* in 1827, using the same name as the 1790 London journal. Ten individuals had agreed to be responsible for any losses that were incurred by the publication and the first successful New Church journal in North America came to life.

The editors wrote in the first issue: “There is nothing within the bounds of being . . . that may not be illustrated by the light which we suppose to be now ‘coming down from the Lord out of heaven.’ As it falls upon the paths we are treading, we may observe and record its disclosures; and we shall attempt to do so, as best we can.”

Though articles and editing were contributed by volunteers, the limited number of subscribers made the cost of printing and mailing a constant concern, causing ongoing losses. *The New Jerusalem Magazine* had no competition at first but, as the New Church grew, interest increased in producing additional journals catering to geographical and theological preferences.

The New Jerusalem Magazine was produced by private individuals until the General Convention took over its publication in 1855. Annual deficits continued to be a problem and the Convention reluctantly decided to cease production in 1872. In 1877 a new series began under private control once again and it continued until 1893.

These early New Church periodicals contain a wealth of information about the development of the New Church and views of early members. Scholars and people interested in New Church history have long consulted the bound issues of these journals in places like Swedenborg Library in Bryn Athyn. Unfortunately, many people cannot travel to New Church libraries for research purposes and those who do are often frustrated by limited or nonexistent indices complicating the process.

The Library took its first tentative steps to producing digital media in 1997 when it began scanning *The Academy Collection of Swedenborg Documents* (also known as *The Green Books*) with the support of Charles S. Cole Jr. and The Carpenter Fellowship Fund.²

In 2007 the Swedenborg Library Digital Collections were established with a grant from the Phoebe W. Haas Charitable Trust. The purpose was to digitize documents, photographs and printed material related to Emanuel Swedenborg, the New Church, Academy of the New Church, Bryn Athyn College and the community of Bryn Athyn to make them available to a broader audience.

2 See *Academy Collection of Swedenborg Documents* in January 2009 *New Church Life*, p. 18-25.

A good deal of emphasis has been placed on digitizing early New Church journals which have not been available on the Internet. With the assistance of additional grants from the Haas Trust, William Penn Foundation and The Carpenter Fellowship Fund, the Library was able to hire Bryn Athyn College students to scan and correct digital files from all 56 volumes of *The Intellectual Repository* and add them to the Library's online Digital Collections.³ This amounts to 31,620 pages of digital material, chronicling 70 years of early New Church history (from 1812-1881), which is now searchable by keyword or browsing.

So if a student, scholar or historian desires details about prominent advocates of the New Church such as Robert Hindmarsh, John Clowes, Thomas Hartley, or even a virtually unknown figure, it is simply a matter of entering a name or topic in the search field and the program will highlight all references to that person or subject in the entire collection.

After finishing *The Intellectual Repository* in 2012, work began on digitizing *The New Jerusalem Magazine*, published in Boston from 1827-1893. While *The Repository* (printed in London) naturally emphasized the development of the New Church in Europe, *The Magazine* focused on the Church in North America. So the two journals complement each other very well. The three-year project was completed in August of 2015 when the final volume of *The New Jerusalem Magazine* was added to the Digital Collections, totaling 41,421 pages of material – the largest collection to date.

The pages of *The New Jerusalem Magazine* (NJM) are filled with articles, notes and references to early, influential New Church people in America such as James Glen, Francis Bailey, John Young, Hetty Barclay, John Hargrove, Richard de Charms, David Powell, Thomas and Samuel Worcester, James P. Stuart, Chauncey Giles, Samuel Warren and William Benade. Sermons and papers on a wide variety of theological topics are also included which are still relevant today. Some noteworthy articles and addresses include:

- *The Planting of the Mustard Seed* by Rev. Frank Sewall
Centenary of the New Church in America. NJM 1884: p. 449
- *Annals of the New Church in America* by William Roberts
A series of 18 articles about New Church History. NJM 1871-82
- *Historical Sketch of New Church Periodicals in America* by Willard H. Hinkley
10 articles about early New Church journals. NJM 1884, 1885 & 1886
- *Emanuel Swedenborg: A Man Unjustly Branded* by Julian K. Smyth
Correcting misrepresentations of Swedenborg. NJM 1884; p. 65

³ See *Classic New Church Journal Enters the Digital Age* in July/August 2012 *New Church Life*, p. 395-396.

- *Day of National Thanksgiving* by Thomas Worcester
Celebrating Civil War victories. NJM 1864: p. 293
- *National Fast Day* by Thomas Worcester. NJM 1865-66: p.110
Day of mourning after the assassination of Abraham Lincoln
- *The Twenty-Ninth of January 1888*. NJM 1888: p. 272
Bicentennial Celebration of Swedenborg's birth in Stockholm
Translated from Nykyrk-Tidning



Swedenborg Library Digital Collections now contain more than 115,000 pages of documents, text and images relating to the history of the New Church which are accessible from almost anywhere on the planet at www.swedenborglibrary.org/digital. To review early journals select *New Church Literature*> *New Church Journals*. To access an article listed above, just enter the title (in

quotes) into the *Search For* box on the opening page.

Swedenborg Library is grateful to the generous donors who have made this project possible, and with further support, hopes to share many more New Church treasures with inquiring minds around the world.

For additional information or questions about Swedenborg Library Digital Collections please contact:

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Marvin B. Clymer attended the elementary, secondary and collegiate New Church schools in Bryn Athyn. He began working in the Academy of the New Church Archives in 2005. After helping to establish the Swedenborg Library Digital Collections, he has been responsible for maintaining and developing the Collections. He lives with his wife, Wendy (Twining), and daughters in Willow Grove, Pennsylvania. Contact: marvin.clymer@brynathyn.edu

Church News

Compiled by Bruce Henderson

PILLARS OF THE ACADEMY

Jeremy T. Irwin, Principal of the Boys School

Kira R. Schadegg, Incoming Principal of the Girls School

Six valued members of the Academy Secondary Schools staff and faculty will be leaving at the end of the school year in June and will be greatly missed: **Susan Odhner**, Principal of the Girls School; **Shawn and Aileen Synnestvedt**, Athletic Director and Assistant Athletic Director; **Allyn Simons**, School Nurse; **Kyle Genzliner**, Registrar and teacher; and **Greg Synnestvedt**, teacher. Here is a short tribute to each, followed by their own personal statements.

Sue Odhner:

Sue joined the Academy Girls School faculty in 1998. She taught sophomore history, Formative Years and a variety of elective courses. She coached soccer, was the Social Director and co-head of Student Services.

In 2007 Sue became the Girls School Principal. Under her leadership we became a Gurian Model school, one of two such schools in the Philadelphia area. Another major initiative she has spearheaded is the faculty study of *Conjugal Love* and pertinent ancillary material, with a goal to guiding the faculty to help our girls better understand and appreciate the teachings in this premier doctrine. Love and care for the eternal welfare of the girls in the Girls School has always been Sue's cardinal focus.

Shawn and Aileen Synnestvedt:

Shawn has given his entire career to ANC and the institution will miss him greatly. His dedication to ANC's mission and to the higher spiritual principles of our efforts is second to none. Whether it's teaching physical education, coaching a sport, or serving as Athletic Director, Shawn has always endeavored to do the right thing.

Countless students and employees have become better, wiser, kinder

and more capable because of Shawn's steadfast and careful mentorship. His departure leaves a very large hole in the fabric of our community, but his legacy will be remembered by thousands who have been touched by his authentic care and tutelage.

Aileen has been a stalwart support to her husband Shawn in the athletic realm for his entire tenure at the Academy. She became even more valuable to the Girls School when she took on the job of Assistant Athletic Director. Aileen combines those tasks with managing the Asplundh Field House and she makes it look easy! This speaks volumes about her superior organizational skills, grace under pressure and interpersonal acumen. We wish Aileen and Shawn well in their new adventures in North Carolina.

Allyn Simons:

Allyn, or Nurse Ratchet as she refers to herself, has done much during her tenure to move the Health Services System into compliance with best practices in the field. She has provided a calm presence in emergency situations, completely overhauled our record-keeping procedures and been a source of comfort to ill students. She has done all of this with a sense of humor and a kind word of advice for students and faculty alike. Remember: washing hands without soap and hot water is just giving the germs a drink!

Kyle Genzlinger:

Kyle has served in many roles during his time at ANC. He has been a housemaster and Registrar and also taught a number of classes, though he is probably most recognized for teaching Senior Project plus Civics and Economics. Kyle's unwavering dedication to ANC's mission and excellence in all he does has been a tremendous benefit to everyone at the Academy. He has perennially been considered by students as one of the best teachers on staff.

Greg Synnestvedt:

Greg is an incredibly intelligent, thoughtful, capable man who did a great job teaching Accelerated Algebra and AP Statistics. We were fortunate to have him as a colleague this year and wish him joy and success as he looks toward married life and graduate school.

PERSONAL STATEMENTS

SUSAN O. ODHNER (Mrs. Gregory Odhner)

Never in my wildest dreams did I think my professional life would go as it did. After marrying and having children, I decided to go back to college and finish my degree. My goal was to go on to law school and become an attorney.

After completing my degree at Bryn Athyn College, I worked full-time at Glencairn Museum. I loved it there. The environment was lovely and the Glencairn team was just great. I had the opportunity to teach school groups there, and I realized then where I was headed.

My teaching career started in 1998 at the Academy of the New Church Girls School. My first year I was very part time. I taught a course called Choices, was the Social Director, and the head girls soccer coach and I loved everything I did. The following year I became full time and went on to teach also The Formative Years, Early European History, Local and Church History and American Literature.

I had the privilege of teaching for eight years as a full-time member of the Girls School faculty and loved my job. I felt that I was making a difference in the lives of teenagers and worked to help them become good, solid citizens ready to take on what life put in front of them.

In 2007 Margaret Gladish was retiring and I decided to apply for the job of Girls School Principal and was chosen to fill that role. This position is not for the faint of heart, but is rewarding and satisfying and I have not regretted one day of my tenure.

My goal from the beginning was to help our girls know that the Lord is there for them, that they could have a working relationship with Him and that He is there to guide and care for them in all they do. This goal made all of the difficult moments – and there were many of them – bearable.

Every day was something new and I enjoyed the challenge. My faculty is a wonderful group of strong, caring women and I will miss them as I head into retirement.

We have done many important things to make our school better in the last nine years:

- We became a Gurian Model School – for the Girls and Boys Schools – one of only two in the Philadelphia area and 2000 world-wide. We love their approach to gender-based education and it goes well with our theological beliefs that men and women are different.
- We have a committee of Girls School faculty members, retired faculty, community members and clergy who are working together to help



make the book *Conjugal Love* more relevant to our girls. We know that many of our girls come with a complicated past and we want them to know that the Lord loves them and is merciful; that they can have good, healthy relationships; and that there is always hope.

- We have started an initiative called Values in Action and are partnering with The Growth Opportunity Center. This initiative came in response to concern about bullying in our schools. It is not a punitive program in nature but through self-reflection and self-examination it is designed to make our students and faculty better, more caring human beings. This, too, is an initiative by both schools.

I have been privileged to work with a dedicated group of people who believe in New Church education. Coming to work has been easy as what we do is so inspiring.

I have received a wonderful education at the Girls School and I know that it will guide me as I enter this new phase of my life.



SHAWN AND AILEEN H. SYNNESEVEDT

Shawn and Aileen have been “institutions of the institution” for more than 35 years. They have been the heart and soul of the Academy Secondary Schools athletic program, perpetuating the legacy of such legends as **Stan Ebert** and **Ron Nelson**.

They graduated together in the Class of 1977, married in 1980 and have raised five sons, while devoting much of their lives to the Academy and Bryn Athyn community.

Shawn graduated from Trenton State College (now the College of New Jersey) in 1982 with a BS in Health and Physical Education and Recreation, and earned a Master’s from Arcadia University in 1998.

He was a Stuart Hall houseparent (with Aileen) from 1979-84 and 1989-93, and has been teaching at the Academy since 1980 – first as a long-term sub in Health and Physical Education and full-time teacher since 1988. For the past 12 years he has been Athletic Director for the Secondary Schools, and between 2008 and 2010 was Cross Campus Athletic Director, including Bryn Athyn College.

He has also been a long-time assistant and head coach, including cross country, boys and girls basketball, baseball, soccer and football. His 1995 baseball team won the Friends Schools Championship.

Among many of his special services, he headed the Wounded Warrior Softball Team Host Committee, chaired the Pennsylvania Independent

Schools State Wrestling Tournament, served on five School Accreditation Teams for the Middle States Association, and was manager of the Bryn Athyn Swim Club for numerous summers. He was the Academy commencement speaker in 2012, focusing on marriage.

After earning an Associate Degree at Bryn Athyn College in 1979, Aileen threw herself into a number of jobs, including: Bryn Athyn Swim Club Treasurer, resident Dining Hall Manager and manager of the Snack Bar, program coordinator of the Bryn Athyn Youth Hockey program, and lead volunteer for the Academy Scholarship Golf Tournament.

For the past nine years she has worked side by side with Shawn as Athletic Department Administrative Assistant, Assistant Athletic Director, and Asplundh Field House Facility Manager.

In 1992 the seniors dedicated their yearbook to Shawn and Aileen, and in 2007 they were jointly named Outstanding Volunteers for the Academy.

Shawn says of his years at the Academy: My experiences as a high school student at the Academy absolutely changed my life, my family and shaped my career. At a time where I lost my father (coming into high school), the Boys School faculty stepped up in a big way to provide the role modeling that was essential in my life. As a junior I met Aileen, and even without some of the Girls School faculty's approval we started dating and never stopped.

But it was mentors such as **Ron Nelson, Garry Hyatt, Jerry Odhner, Dudley Davis, Bob Johns, Dan Pendleton, Andy Davis, Nishan Yardumian** and many others who gave me the push in the direction of education. When the call came in 1988 to move from a part-time contributor to full time, I was really excited to give back to the Academy that had given me so much as a student.

Teaching Health and Physical Education has been great, and while I know and value the great New Church education that takes place every day in the halls and classrooms of the school, I think that some of the best New Church education occurs on our playing fields. Athletics has been and continues to be one of the strongest areas where the practical application of New Church theory and philosophy can be seen every day. Our students continue to showcase our school in so many positive ways through their level of teamwork and sportsmanship and the Academy is a centerpiece in the region that others look up to as one to emulate.

As Athletic Directors we are just stewards of our positions here. There have been great people who have gone before us and we are really excited about those who will follow us. Aileen and I inherited high-quality programs from our predecessors and we hope that we are passing the torch with a bright flame for the future. It is really our excellent coaching staffs that deserve all of the credit. They are the ones that make the Academy athletic engine go!

Aileen adds: It has been a privilege and honor to have had so many wonderful experiences at ANC. As an employee, I feel so lucky to have been given the opportunity to serve a use in New Church education. My husband and I and all five of our sons were granted the good fortune to attend New Church schools all of our lives. To me there is no greater institution than ANC and the New Church schools around the world, where a student can receive an excellent education based on faith, service to others, living a life with integrity and preparation toward life eternal.

The best part of working at ANC over the years has been the students, the incredible colleagues and amazing facilities. I leave with a full heart toward all the people that I have been blessed to know and look forward to hearing about all the wonderful things still to happen in New Church education.



ALLYN E. SIMONS (Mrs. Jeremy F. Simons)

I came to the Academy of the New Church as the nurse in 1998, so this stretch accounts for 42% of a 43-year nursing career. The other 58% I worked in psychiatry, emergency room and hospital administration, in Illinois,

North Carolina and Pennsylvania. Along the way I picked up a BSN, MSN, MEd and certifications, all in the areas of my nursing practice.

As I wrap up 18 years at the Academy I am filled with gratitude and wonder at how far we have come in these years. I started as one nurse for the Secondary Schools, College and Elementary School, and I am now one of two nurses for the Secondary Schools alone.

I started working in a little hole-in-the-wall office under the old Dining Hall, where toxic sludge periodically burst from old pipes into the exam and waiting rooms. I am now located in a clean, modern, well-equipped clinic sitting between the Secondary Schools dorms. Today our school health program matches national norms and professional standards for school health care in our setting.

I have worked with the BEST people in the world, people who care deeply about New Church education, and especially for the physical, emotional and spiritual well-being of students. In my area of practice, it is rare for the school nurse to be well-integrated with the faculty, and to be accorded the great support, respect and confidence given to me by administration and faculty. This great support, respect and confidence enabled me, in turn, to serve students and their families and school personnel with great support, respect and confidence.

If I could go back in time, I would thank with all my heart every student, parent, teacher, principal, boss, employee and visitor whom I have known over this long, happy career. I have learned more than I ever thought possible, and I have received ten-fold more than I have given. It's been the best job I could ever imagine, and I would do it all over again, except it's time for me to get out in the garden.

KYLE GENZLINGER

I graduated from the Pamplin College of Business at Virginia Tech with a BS in Management Science and Information Technology. I started teaching United States History to junior boys in 2003-2004 and did that for two years. I also taught Web Design and Web Development. Then I settled in with Senior Project (2006-2007) and have been doing that for the last 10 years. I loved co-teaching this course with **Cory Boyce**.



In 2008-2009 I started teaching Civics and Economics and have been doing that for eight years. I did six years in the dorm as a housemaster and have been the Registrar for the last four years.

I built and maintain the information system that manages all the student data (transcripts, schedules, grades, credits, etc.)

I coached JV baseball for one year.

The best part of teaching at ANC is by far the people – specifically the students. They are fun, engaged, earnest and good people. It is a pleasure being a part of their young-adult years.

I will begin work at Cairnwood Cooperative Corporation in the fall.

GREG SYNNESTVEDT

I had the privilege of teaching AP Statistics and freshman Accelerated Algebra at the Academy this year -- quite a dreamy assignment for a first-year teacher, since these are both small, accelerated math classes. Teaching and working with students has been enlightening, enjoyable, formative and fun. I would like to thank **Jeremy Irwin, Baird Kistner, Elizabeth Fuller, Cory Boyce, Phil Feerrar**, my parents, **Dan and Lisa**, and my fiancé **Ivy Daum**, for their help and support. I learned a lot – and I hope that my students did too!



I owe many thanks to the faculty and administration for welcoming me and for being awesome. I am

grateful to have had the opportunity to work with friendly, thoughtful people, to have started each day on the job with a chapel service, and to have had conversations about life and religion almost every day at lunch. I'm going to miss working at ANC. I hope that one day in the future I can come back for a second year, or more!

I will be continuing my education next fall, starting Arcadia University's doctorate of physical therapy (DPT) program in late August, about a month after Ivy and I get married. The program is two-and-a-half years, and I am looking forward to getting started. Ivy and I will be living in Bryn Athyn.

GENERAL CHURCH CORPORATION

The annual meeting of the Corporation of the General Church of the New Jerusalem was held May 14 in Bryn Athyn. We will report on any news from this meeting in the July-August issue, including elections to the Board of Directors.

The slate of candidates included these incumbents eligible and willing to be re-elected:

Andrew R. Bruell	Dunmow, Essex, England
Robert M. Dike	Chamblee, Georgia
Darryl G. Hasen	Scarsdale, New York
P. Blake Hill	Kitchener, Ontario, Canada
Lee Horigan	Etobicoke, Ontario, Canada
Brent H. Hyatt	Bowie, Maryland
Daniel P. Martz	Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania
David Norman	McGregor, Texas
New nominees for three-year terms were:	
David Radcliffe	Mitchellville, Maryland
Beth Brock	Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania
Kirk Hasen	Huntingdon Valley

Thanked for their service to the Board after three terms were **Charles Ebert**, Lafayette, Colorado, and **Dain Kistner**, Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania.

REGIONAL CLERGY MEETING IN SWEDEN

Rev. Göran Appelgren

Tuesday through Thursday, April 19-21, we gathered in Stockholm for our Regional European clergy meetings, which replace the central meetings usually held in Bryn Athyn. The meetings were chaired by **Bishop Brian Keith**. Participating ministers were: the **Revs. Alan Cowley, Peter Devassy, Thomas Floyd, David Gaffney, Olaf Hauptmann, Ethan McCardell, Alain**

Nicolier, Howard Thompson, myself, and as an invited guest a prospective minister, **Frits Bot** from Holland. (See photos on page 296.)

We were fortunate enough also to have several wives joining us: **Josephine Appelgren, Susan Cowley, Gretchen Keith, Jessica McCardell and Jeanne Nicolier**. At the last moment **Debra Thompson** had to cancel her trip, something we felt very sorry for.

We did not have a theme but rather a sphere in which we could explore things like ritual, outreach and counselling, all in the sense of becoming better at touching people's hearts and thereby opening ways for them to trust the Lord and follow Him. The European scene is to a large extent something we see in the rest of the Western world more and more – an independence of thought that absolutely does not mean a rejection of spirituality but demands of us to communicate in such a way that what we have to offer will key in to their hearts and their needs. Here is a list of the presentations as described by each presenter:

- Göran Appelgren: *Times They Are A-Changin'* – reaching new people and our young
- Frits Bot: The present state of the New Church in Holland
- Alan Cowley: A concept about modelling our worship services according to the stages of repentance – not all within one service, but from week to week – and how the whole service, including the music and ritual, could reflect this each week.
- Peter Devassy: The challenge of presenting New Church ideas in the hostile, dogmatic Christian environment of the state of Kerala in India
- David Gaffney: William Bruce's "*Matthew*" – an effective way I have evolved of presenting this to a mixed "audience"
- Olaf Hauptmann: Apologetics and keeping young people in the church
- Brian Keith: *How the Lord Preserves Freedom, Yet Still Leads – by Bending*. Approaching the question of how much the Lord pushes us while still respecting our freedom.
- Ethan McCardell: Empathy – connected to "tools for healing"
- Alain Nicolier: On traditions in the church and using the story about the disposal of the ashes of sacrifices on the altar of the tabernacle – all this in relation to the spread of the Second Advent dynamic in Europe and the need to have a complete new approach and letting go of old models that are obsolete and barriers to reach out to people in Europe
- Howard Thompson: Understanding Spiritual Harm

Needless to say we had very interesting conversations and learned a lot from each other.

I would like to share three highlights apart from the three days of deliberations.

The first highlight was the visit to The Royal Academy of Sciences where the Swedenborg Collection is kept, a collection that from 2005 is part of Unesco's Memory of the World Register, something we should feel very proud about. This is how that Register is described:

"The Memory of the World Register lists documentary heritage which has been recommended by the International Advisory Committee, and endorsed by the Director-General of UNESCO, as corresponding to the selection criteria regarding world significance and outstanding universal value." See <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/flagship-project-activities/memory-of-the-world/register/>

The second highlight was an evening with the society. The ministers and wives were 16 altogether, and those who were able to make it from the society were just as many or more. We had a lovely dinner and the many lively conversations at the tables. Bishop Keith entertained us with a slide show presenting the Church in Africa, which was inspirational to everybody. I would like to thank the five families who hosted all of these people, and they all said it was a great inspiration to them to open their homes for their guests.

And the third highlight was a Holy Supper service at the end. A theme at our discussions had been rituals and how to reach people's hearts and minds, so I as the organizer, with help from Alan Cowley, tried to create a more intimate sphere. For instance, we stood in a circle close to the altar and after the consecration passed the bread and the wine from one to the other. It is hard to put in words how this felt, but at least it was an effort to explore in a safe place the deeper layers of the supper that the Lord instituted at the end of His life on this earth.

From Friday onward people travelled back at different times, and I am sure we all felt that we had been sharing gifts from the Lord that will keep us going for a long while back in our own little corners of the world.

NEW STEPHEN MINISTERS

Five newly trained men and women were commissioned in the Stephen Ministry at the Bryn Athyn Cathedral on April 3, 2016, in a service conducted by the **Rev. Eric H. Carswell**, pastor of the Bryn Athyn congregation. The new Stephen Ministers are **Peter Boericke, Christopher Dunn, Helen Ference, Debra Leich** and **Mara White**.

This is the third group of people trained in the Stephen Ministry in Bryn Athyn. They all receive extensive training, under certified leaders: the **Rev. John L. Odhner, Nina C. Dewees** and **Nita J. Holmes**. Their role is to minister

confidentially with individuals in the community, while receiving ongoing training.

The Stephen Ministry was developed in 1975 by a Lutheran pastor in St. Louis, Missouri, who found he needed help in serving the needs of his congregation and saw this as a wonderful way for lay men and women to get involved and be of service. Today more than 11,000 congregations from more than 150 denominations use the program to train, organize and supervise the Stephen Ministers.



Left to right after the Stephen Ministry Commissioning Service are Peter Boericke, Christopher Dunn, Helen Ference, the Rev. John L. Odhner, one of the local leaders of the Stephen Ministry, Debra Leicht and Mara White. (Photo courtesy of Jane Blair)

The extensive program is based on Christian principles but each approved and participating congregation is encouraged to adapt and apply its own doctrines. An example of what is used from the Writings in Bryn Athyn is: “God loves each and every human being; and because He cannot do good to them directly, but only indirectly by means of other people, He therefore breathes into people His Love.” (*True Christianity* 457)

For more information about the program go to www.stephenministry.org or contact Nina Dewees at 215-947-6225 x200 or Nina.Dewees@brynathynchurch.org.

THE REV. DOUGLAS M. TAYLOR

In a message published in the March issue of the New Church Newsletter of the Hurstville Society in New South Wales, Australia, the **Rt. Rev. Brian W. Keith** announced the passing of the **Rev. Douglas M. Taylor**:

“I am saddened and joyful to announce that the Rev. Douglas Taylor entered the spiritual world this morning (Monday, February 22). He can now fully rejoin **Christine** and renew their life together, and most probably re-enter the active ministry he loved.

“Doug was our oldest minister, at 90 years. He was ordained on June 19th in 1960. He first served Tucson (Arizona) for three years, then returned to Australia, serving as pastor to the Hurstville congregation in Sydney for 11 years. From there he was called as assistant pastor in Bryn Athyn for four years. Then he became the first Director of Outreach, serving for 11 years. And then, at age 64, he returned to Sydney and served as pastor for four years before finally retiring.

“Doug, baptized into the New Church in 1955, had a passion for sharing

the truths of the Lord's second coming with others who could be blessed as he had been. Throughout his postings he initiated radio programs and countless events focused on newcomers. And as the first director, Doug laid out the doctrinal underpinnings for outreach and worked with the clergy and laity on practical ways to convey the truths of the New Church to others. His love for the Heavenly Doctrines and for people was evident in everything he did.

"Doug will be missed here, but it is wonderful to think of his renewal of life. Everything he loved and stood for coming into being again, with a vigorous body and spirit! May the Lord send a blessing on him, his family, and the many friends he has throughout the world. Well done, good and faithful servant."



REFLECTIONS FROM DOWN UNDER

The April issue of *The New Church Newsletter* of the Hurstville Society included the following tribute to the **Rev. Douglas M. Taylor**. (See the Memorial Address for him on page 243.)

For the Hurstville Society the Rev. Doug Taylor represents a significant part of their history. He shares the distinction of longest serving pastor with the inaugural minister, the **Rev. Richard Morse** – 17 years – the only difference being that Doug's pastorate was broken up into several years at different times. He just kept coming back to the little church he loved.

Born an Australian and marrying an Australian (**Christine Brock**), he studied overseas both as a teacher then a minister. He first served the Hurstville New Church from 1963 to 1974, returning from January 1989 to July 1993. When our society was without a pastor he helped out along with other retired ministers – not just once but three times: 1998, 1999 and 2006-7.

One particularly notable aspect of Doug's ministry was the popular radio talks he gave on Sunday evenings from 1968 to 1974. Doug did not shy away from any opportunity to promote and defend the church. In 1969 when the Apollo spacecraft landed on the moon he handled a TV interview deftly when the interviewer said: 'Doug, the astronauts have landed on the moon and didn't find any moon men. What do you say about that?' Doug replied good-naturedly, 'Well, they had better go back and have another look!'

Many may not know that Doug was accomplished in many areas of life, some of which are touched on in his Memorial Address. His daughter Ros writes that in a *History of Marist Brother's College* in Mt. Gambier, South

Australia, where Doug attended high school there is a whole paragraph about him.

It states that he was an entertainer, cartoonist, one of the top French students in South Australia, an all-around sportsman, captain of the cricket team, and is still on the Honor Roll there for voluntarily enlisting in the Royal Australian Air Force during World War II.

No matter where Doug and Christine lived in the world and served the New Church these words from Dorothea Mackellar's poem, *My Country*, express the deep love they both held for Australia:

*I love a sunburnt country,
A land of sweeping plains,
Of rugged mountain ranges,
Of droughts and flooding rains.
I love her far horizons,
I love her jewel sea,
Her beauty and her terror –
The wide brown land for me!*

FINDING HOPE

Bronwen M. Henry

On Saturday, April 2, more than 200 people gathered in Bryn Athyn to talk about things we don't usually talk about: domestic violence, trauma and grief, suicide and addiction. The event featured Dr. Dan Gottlieb from National Public Radio's "Voices of the Family." He did a phenomenal job, creating a safe space and being honest. His compassion was palpable.

This event was not recorded. If you are eager to find hope in the face of these issues there are small groups forming and I would love to connect you. Please contact me: 215.530.2036 or bronwen.henry@brynathynchurch.org

Sometimes the idea of finding hope is offensive. Sometimes life is so hard that hope feels rude. Bryn Athyn Church, together with Gloria Dei Church and Growth Opportunity Center, put on an event to create space to talk about hard things, in an honest, heartfelt way. One of the core intentions of this gathering was to hold those attending with so much care and gentleness, and to create a safe space.

The event, which included more than 200 people (more than 100 of whom were not previously connected to Bryn Athyn Church) was a powerful, transformational space. A second goal was to let people know that they were not alone and to help connect them to resources. There were six non-profit organizations with displays ready to serve and help people.

Here are some of what participants said:

- You and your folks couldn't have been more welcoming to everyone. The event was so well organized and planned. The care and kindness from the all associated with the event was palpable.
- I thought the event was wonderful. I was absolutely blown away by people's honesty in sharing their experiences. I really do think that it gave people a voice and support.
- I think the entire church had a breakthrough today.

The closing for this event included a generously donated tree and memorial stone planted at the Cathedral. This tree was planted with the names, prayers and hopes that participants wrote on leaves. It was a powerful ending to a powerful event.

You can visit this tree now on the West Lawn of the Cathedral. It is a willow oak reminding us of the comfort available to all who have lost someone to these challenges or who are battling them. It is marked with a memorial stone with the comforting words of Jesus: "Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest." (*Matthew 11:28*)

BRYN ATHYN COLLEGE TAKES ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The Rev. Dr. Thane Glenn, Chaplain

On April 1, Bryn Athyn College hosted a presentation for students, faculty and staff: "Dating Abuse: Why Do They Stay?"

The College invited Cassandra Iannetta, an educator from Laurel House – a safe house and resource center in Montgomery County for victims of domestic abuse – to speak to our campus community about what abusive relationships look like, and what we can do to prevent abusive situations from escalating. She focused particularly on dating relationships, since the potential for abuse in these situations speaks most directly to the stage of most of our students.

Ms. Iannetta took us through an active participation exercise in which she narrated a hypothetical borderline-abusive relationship. She asked us to signify at what point we would walk away from it, and at what point we might return. The exercise drove home the point that abuse is not always easy to delineate, and that it often takes the form of emotional and psychological harm, not only physical mistreatment.

She then talked about why people in abusive relationships have a difficult time leaving them, and offered some clear steps on how to get help or to reach out to those mired in abusive situations.

Bryn Athyn College felt it was important to offer this program, since most College students are in a formative stage in which they are beginning

to cultivate the values and behaviors they will carry into the most important relationships in their lives.

For those who might find themselves victims of abusive behavior, we hope this program was a step in helping them to identify the harm and to learn how to get help. For those who might discover abusive tendencies forming in themselves, we hope this program gives them the courage to face those behaviors and get the support they need to prevent them from becoming engrained habits. And for all of us, we hope that we are becoming better informed in how to help those around us in need.

A TEACHABLE MOMENT FROM OLIVER!

On April 21 the Secondary Schools of the Academy of the New Church conducted a Domestic Abuse Prevention Workshop for all students after opening chapel. This was in conjunction with the production of the musical, *Oliver!*, which had its first performance the following night. The schools have also focused on bullying this year.

The workshop consisted of three parts:

1. Performance of a scene from *Oliver!* dealing with domestic violence.
2. Educators from Laurel House (<http://laurel-house.org/>) addressed the entire school about the topic.
3. Students broke into small discussion groups by class, led by the faculty, aimed at processing the information and strategizing practical ways to apply it to life.

Counselors from the Growth Opportunity Center and Montgomery County Intermediate Unit were available throughout the morning to speak with any students who needed additional support.

The workshop was part of a greater initiative begun earlier in the year to increase awareness of domestic abuse and work with students to make healthy relationship decisions.

Two other areas of our project:

1. Students involved in the production of *Oliver!* helped with fund raising and distributing information about domestic abuse prevention.
2. Various resources have been compiled on this website, which has been sent to all students: <https://sites.google.com/site/endingdomesticabuse/>

The workshop was organized, along with the school principals, by **Kendra Knight**. Contact: kendra.knight@ancss.org

BRYN ATHYN COLLEGE: BOOK EXPO 2016

Lisa Childs, NCAP (New Church Associated Publishers)

Bryn Athyn College hosted the second annual Book Expo April 9, to celebrate and explore *Science, Spirituality, and Swedenborgian Theory throughout History*. The Book Expo is a unique opportunity for lay people to hear from scholars regarding published books, upcoming books, or other work. It is also an opportunity for scholars to share with lay people outside of the academic classroom. There is a vast array of books available for perusal and sale.

The overall theme of the Book Expo is to follow spirituality weaving through ancient history, sciences, philosophy, medicine, naturalism, abolition of slavery, child labor rights, covering new spiritual paradigms, envisioning the afterlife, Swedenborg's works – scientific and theological – and much more.

The talks were rich in content, generating a high level of interest and excitement. We are grateful for those who shared their energy, expertise, and thought: **Dr. Soni Werner**, **Ben Cole** (standing in for **Steve David**), **Dr. Reuben Bell**, **Dr. Kristin King**, and **Dr. Jane Williams-Hogan**. Videos of talks for 2015 and 2016 are available on *youtube.com* by searching on “NCAP Swedenborg.” The *Cole Foundation for Renewing the Culture* provided snacks and refreshments during the day and also hosted a lovely wine and cheese event, with complimentary books, as a relaxing close to the day.

The Book Expo was made possible by Bryn Athyn College (www.BrynAthyn.edu), for hosting and supporting this event the Cole Foundation (www.ColeFoundation.org), Swedenborg Scientific Association (www.Swedenborg-philosophy.org) and for funding Swedenborg Foundation (www.Swedenborg.com).

Publishers, books and resources were provided by: **Brian Mann** of Swedenborg Foundation, Ben Cole of www.NewChristianBibleStudy.org, **Doug Webber** of www.dream-prophecy.blogspot.com, **Willard Mansfield** in absentia (Abridged Arcana Coelestia), and **Lisa Childs** of NCAP (Swedenborg Scientific Association Press, Bryn Athyn College Press and the General Church of the New Jerusalem Publications). Please look for Book Expo 2017.

THE TALKS

Dr. Soni Werner: *Conscience: Forensic Psychology*. This e-book is about preventing crime, intervening once it occurs, and rehabilitating criminals after they have been incarcerated. Dr. Werner's latest e-book summarizes some of the latest research in neuroscience on the criminal brain and research studies on forensic psychology. In addition, the conscience is viewed from a Swedenborgian perspective.

Dr. Reuben Bell, President of the SSA: *Intelligent Default*. Natural forms are not “designed,” nor do they appear by accident. Every organic form is a “default setting,” as it were, established according to parameters inherent in matter, in response to environmental conditions, but dependent on reciprocal, functional interaction with a spiritual cause as well. These parameters are analogically reflective of the human form, manifesting itself in continual creation, by means of processes described by Swedenborg’s doctrines of Degrees, Forms and Correspondence. Evolution of new forms and adaptation of existing forms to changing conditions, occur in the crucible of the “randomness” of nature, into which, at its inmost level, flows the template of divine human form. Book available in 2017.

Ben Cole for Steve David: *Huh? What’s this basket still doing here, covering our lamp?* There are a couple of billion people who are trying (or used to try) to read the Word [Bible] – but without enough light. In the New Church, we’ve got more light, but there’s this inadvertent basket over it. We’ve tried to get rid of it, but it keeps hanging around. How can we break through?

Dr. Kristin King: *Gardens of Heaven and Earth*. This title plays on the idea both of location and of content: gardens in heaven and on earth, but also gardens made of heaven (or what the Writings call “substance”) and gardens made of earth (or matter). The talk focused on some connections between textual gardens in the revelatory language of correspondences, and earthly gardens in history and our own backyards.

Dr. Jane Williams-Hogan: *The Call of Charismatic Books: Swedenborg, Artists, Writers, and Spiritual Seekers*. This talk discussed the Writings as “charismatic” books and one artist, one writer, and one seeker: American Landscape painter, George Inness (1825 -1894), Argentinian writer, Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986), and American humanitarian and spiritual seeker, Helen Keller (1880-1968).

Books can be purchased on www.Amazon.com (search books for “NCAP Swedenborg”) and/or the Bryn Athyn Cathedral Bookstore. NCAP book catalogs can be obtained at the Bryn Athyn Cathedral bookstore or by emailing ncapbooks@gmail.com and also at www.Swedenborg.com for the Swedenborg Foundation’s catalog.

FAMILY CAMPS

New Church Family Camp at Jacob's Creek

The popular, annual New Church Family Camp at Jacob's Creek is scheduled for July 24-27 at the Laurelville Mennonite Church Center in Mt. Pleasant, Pennsylvania, about 50 miles east of Pittsburgh.

The theme for this year's camp is *The Heavenly Marriage*. **The Rev. Matthew Genzlinger**, pastor of the Concord New Church in Massachusetts and pastor for the camp, says:

"The Lord has gathered into the marriage relationship all joys and delights, from the first to the last of them. We are also taught that chaste marriages are the support of heaven. In the presence of a chaste marriage the hells become 'furious, insane, mentally impotent and cast themselves into the deep.' (*Apocalypse Explained* 1002)

"This year we will be exploring the beautiful (and sometimes challenging) teachings about marriage. We'll see that *The Heavenly Marriage* does not only refer to the marriage between a husband and wife; it refers to the marriage between goodness and truth, love and wisdom, the Lord's Divine itself with His Divine Human.

"I am personally looking forward to exploring how exactly a husband and wife interact with each other on a spiritual level, causing them to become like one angel. How is a wife the spiritual **heart** of a marriage? How is a husband the spiritual **lungs**?

"These wonderful teachings about *The Heavenly Marriage* can inspire all of us, whether we are currently married or single, feeling good about our marriage or struggling."

The camp includes a full children's program. In addition to daily worship and presentations on the theme, there will be a host of activities, including hiking and sports, field day, talent night and campfire songs and stories.

In addition to Matthew Genzlinger the pastoral staff includes: the **Rev. Ryan Sandstrom**, pastor of the Ivyland New Church; and the **Rev. Brian Smith**, assistant pastor of the Washington New Church and principal of its school. The **Rev. Brad Heinrichs**, pastor of the Carmel New Church in Kitchener, Ontario, Canada, and other ministers will be helping in many areas.

Camp Directors are **Blake and Paul Messman**, and **Jamie and Julie Uber**.

Last year the camp was completely full, with a record attendance, so anyone interested should register as quickly as possible.

For information and registration forms

- Contact Jamie and Julie Uber: 412-782-2710 or julie.uber@gmail.com
- Online: www.jacobscreekcamp.alotSPACE.com
- Facebook: www.facebook.com/JacobsCreekFamilyCamp

Laurel Family Camp

The 48th annual family friendly New Church camp in Laurel Hills State Park in the Appalachian Mountains will run July 31 through August 6. The theme this year is Power.

This also is a camp for all ages, incorporating worship, singing, community, morning presentation and spiritual growth groups.

For information and to register please contact **Cyd Knoble**: cydknoble@gmail.com or 267-718-5465.

Living Waters Family Camp

The Living Waters Family Camp will take place July 7-10 at the Hidden Valley Christian Camp in Paisley, Ontario.

This year's theme is Forgiveness. **The Rev. Brad Heinrichs**, pastor of the Carmel New Church in Kitchener, Ontario, and director of the camp says: "There are a number of universal deep-seated questions most people ponder at some point in their lives regarding forgiveness. Will my sins be forgiven, or are my transgressions so bad that they cannot ever be pardoned? How does forgiveness really work and is there anything we can do to facilitate it?"

"The Heavenly Doctrines have volumes to say about these issues and give us clear answers to these and many other questions related to forgiveness. We will explore these teachings and hopefully come away with a powerful sense of the Lord's overwhelming wisdom, mercy and compassion."

Brad notes: "Now is a great time to start a family tradition where grandparents, parents and children can all go to a summer camp and worship, learn, pray and play together. These family camps provide a fantastic opportunity for the Lord to store up some cross-generational New Church remains."

In addition to worship and classes activities will include canoeing, fishing, hiking, bird watching and swimming. There will also be a giant slip-n-slide, sand volleyball courts, trampolines, ping pong, bonfire pit, canoes, kayaks, fields for games and playgrounds for children.

For information contact Brad Heinrichs: pastor@carmelnewchurch.org or 519-748-5802.

BRITISH ACADEMY SUMMER SCHOOL

The British Academy Summer School, designed for young adults from 18 to 24, will run from July 17-30 at the Purley Chase Center in Warwickshire.

The session brings together students from Great Britain, other European nations and the United States for the study of New Church teachings and creative social life. There will also be opportunities to explore some of the

English countryside and a weekend in London.

Camp leaders say, "This is a camp where lasting friendships have been made and holds fond memories for all who have attended over its long history."

For more information contact this year's Headmaster, the **Rev. Howard Thompson**, revhathompson@mail.com or visit the website, http://newchurch.org.uk/?page_if=373.

ACADEMY JOURNAL

The Office of Advancement for the Academy of the New Church has recently published the *Academy Journal*. This is a compilation of various reports for fiscal year 2015 from Academy organizations, as well as the Treasurer's report and financial audit. It is available online at <http://www.brynathyn.edu/alumni/news/publications/>. There is also a limited number of hard copies available. If you would like a copy please contact the Office of Advancement at 267.502.4895 or email advancement@anc-gc.org.

CELEBRATION SUNDAY FOR LIVING GRATEFULLY JOURNEY PROGRAM – BUCCLEUCH NEW CHURCH, AFRICA



The children are a big part of our congregation and bring much joy



An opportunity for family to travel from afar and be a part of the special day



The men in charge of preparing the fire and cooking the meat



Our Celebration Sunday is about community, family and fun - even for the smallest



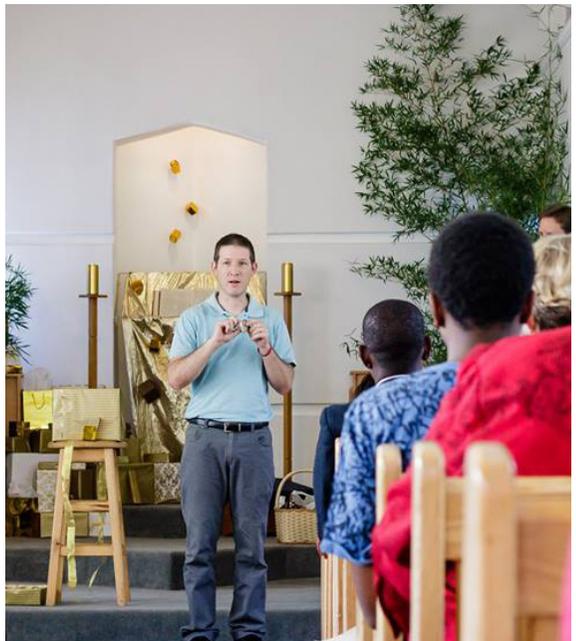
The children help the usher hand out the order of service each Sunday



Celebration Sunday was also Palm Sunday – represented by the children starting church with a procession of branches



Mother and Daughters



Pastor Mark Allais: We gave our gifts to the children with the reminder that the Lord is leading and guiding, and for the adults a gift as a reminder of His constant life given to us inspiring us to change and grow.



The opening number, "Food, Glorious Food!" performed by the Workhouse Boys



Monica McDonald as Bet



Sophomore Rayna Synnstedt as the Artful Dodger



Senior Brittany Gunther (center) starred as Mrs. Sowerberry



Back row left to right: Declan Durand and Addie Shenk
Front row left to right: Teryn Rose, Amisshah Synnstedt, and Camryn Buss



Mr. Bumble (Cade Bau-Madsen) and Widow Corney (Brielle Williams)



Junior Brianna Salvatori played the role of Nancy



Senior Tykah Echols played the role of Fagin



Teryn Rose and Serena Boyesen



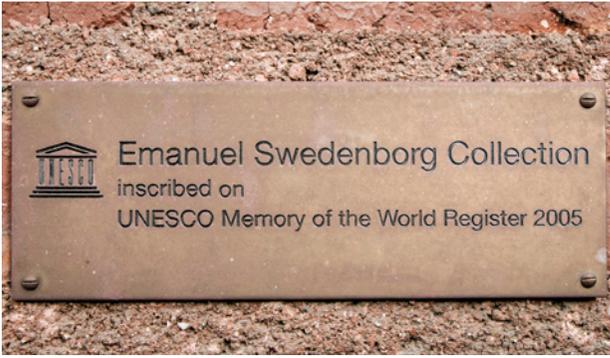
Sophomore Declan Durand starred as Oliver



Noah Claypole (Eric Zhang) and Charlotte (Kaia Merrell)



Fagin's Gang, along with the Artful Dodger and Oliver, perform the musical number "Consider Yourself"



Emanuel Swedenborg Collection UNESCO plaque



Peter Devassy with a statue of Swedenborg



Swedenborg's Summer House at Skansen



Stockholm church chancel



A group shot from Stockholm (left to right): Jeanne Nicolier, Howard Thompson, Alain Nicolier, Olaf Hauptmann, Alan Cowley, Susan Cowley, Jessica McCardell, Ethan McCardell, Brian Keith, David Gaffney, Peter Devassy, Josephine Appelgren, Göran Appelgren, Thomas Floyd, Frits Bot.

PHOTOS: GRETCHEN KEITH

Life Lines

TABLEAUX OF REMEMBRANCE

The Memorial Day Address by the Rev. Thomas Rose on page 233 is one of thousands of such tributes to fallen soldiers that echo throughout the United States on Memorial Day – the last Monday in May. His is unique, of course, for its New Church perspective. Similar observances around the world honor the men and women who have died in service to their country and our freedom. They deserve our deepest gratitude and respect – every day.

In the tiny park below the Bryn Athyn Cathedral where this observance is held every year is a plaque listing those who served in foreign wars. The names ring with the generations of the community and the Church: Alden and Cooper, Pendleton and Pitcairn, Bostock and Gyllenhaal, Odhner and Rose, Smith and Synnestvedt. It is such names on plaques and monuments that bring it all home for us. These are the men and women driven to protect our freedom and to accept responsibility – values nurtured in churches and schools and living rooms. They accepted the calling that it is nobler to risk death for the sake of honor than to risk dishonor for the sake of life. We honor them for their character.

Beyond the tranquil setting of a quiet little park in Bryn Athyn are searing symbols of what “laying down your life for your friends” is all about. Two of the most stirring to me are the American Cemetery at Omaha Beach in France and the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, DC.

The American Cemetery sits above the beaches where the cataclysmic horror of D-Day gives way now to sacredness and serenity. Ten thousand stark white crosses and Stars of David stand eloquent and mute – and shout the price of freedom. There is an eerie stillness among those endless, perfect rows, mocking the wantonness of war. The impact of so many silenced brave young men dulls voices to whispers. This is hallowed ground.

When you read the names on each alabaster tombstone – some inscribed “Known only to God” – you begin to understand that each of these men had a story, a dream, and each was a hero to his loved ones and his country.

The connection to names is all the more compelling at the Vietnam Memorial, a stark and piercing slash in the ground in the shadow of the Lincoln Memorial, with 58,000 names etched into its somber black marble. Its

numbing power is that as the living search the wall their faces are reflected in the names of the dead. They were, after all, just like us.

Such brave young men and women teach us about life – what it means to sacrifice, what it means to serve, what it means to love. Like all of the names on tombstones and plaques, they speak to sad stories of what might have been, but proud testimony to what their lives still mean to us. They died before their time but gave their lives to something they believed in that was larger than life itself. The sum of that commitment is our freedom.

Their stories, their dreams, were poignantly captured in what has come to be called “The Letter” – written in 1861 by Sullivan Ballou of the 2nd Rhode Island Volunteers. It became famous in Kenneth Burns’ epic TV series on the Civil War. And it is revered as a classic expression of what such brave men risk and why – about their faith in a greater meaning to life, and about the pain of those who love and lose them. It says in part:

“Dear Sarah: I have no misgivings or lack of confidence in the cause in which I am engaged, and my courage does not falter. I know how American civilization leans on the triumph of the government and how great a debt we owe to those who went before us through the blood and suffering of the Revolution. And I am willing, perfectly willing, to lay down all my joys in this life to help maintain this government and pay that debt.

“Sarah, my love for you is deathless, and yet my love of country comes over me like a strong wind and bears me irresistibly to the battlefield. If I do not return, my dear Sarah, never forget how much I loved you, nor that when my last breath escapes me on the battlefield, it will whisper your name. If the dead can come back to this earth and flit unseen around those they love, I shall always be with you in the brightest day and the darkest night. Always. And when the soft breeze fans your cheek, it shall be my breath . . . my spirit passing by. Sarah, do not mourn me dead: Think that I am gone and wait for me, for we shall meet again.”

Sullivan Ballou died one week later in the first Battle of Bull Run. He did not live to see his sons grow or his dreams fulfilled. But he helped assure that they would grow in a free, united nation, guided by principles that are still a beacon to the world. That was worth dying for. And it is nice to think that Sarah indeed felt his presence all her life – and found him waiting.

Out of the Civil War also came Abraham Lincoln’s mournful prayer that attends all our wars: “that these dead shall not have died in vain.”

So how do we assure with our lives that they have not died in vain?

War has always been with us. Throughout more than three centuries of recorded history, only 268 years have been without war somewhere in the world. There have been “good wars” and “bad wars,” necessary wars and inevitable wars, wars that changed history, wars of folly and wars that are

forgotten footnotes.

But we know that the wars that plague our history and foreshadow our future are rooted in the spiritual conflicts we are all called upon to fight. The more resolute and courageous we are in fighting these battles, the lesser the threat that more young men and women will be sent to pay the price for our freedom.

This is why we honor those who set the example for us – who showed us by their lives, their service and their character what it means not to have died in vain. They remind us that character is the only thing you take with you when you die – and character is the only thing you leave behind. They remind us that character is what we seek to build in ourselves, in our children, in our citizens, in our country. They remind us that this is what we honor in our heroes – their character and their example.

(BMH)

“OUR RELIGION”

In the early hours of June 6, 1944 – D Day – tens of thousands of American and Allied troops landed on the heavily fortified beaches of Normandy, France, to fight the Nazis.

That night, as the terrible battle raged, leaving some 10,000 dead or wounded in the cause of freedom, President Franklin Roosevelt went on the radio to pray on behalf of the nation for the soldiers, and for victory in the war.

His prayer began: “Almighty God, our sons, pride of our Nation, this day have set upon a mighty endeavor, a struggle to preserve our Republic, our religion, and our civilization, and to set free a suffering humanity.”

“*Our religion.*” Imagine that! Seventy-two years ago the President of the United States, in a radio address to the nation, prayed to God to “preserve our Republic, our religion.”

In the new postmodern, post-Christian, fiercely secular America of today, a President who spoke of “our religion” would be accused of violating the separation of church and state, and perhaps even promoting “theocracy.” *Our religion? Whose religion?*

The phrase is a bit vague, but the Americans of 72 years ago knew what it meant. Protestants, Catholics and Jews could all identify with the common set of values that formed the Judeo-Christian civil religion of the United States.

Were people (including New Church people) whose faith was outside the mainstream offended by the reference to “our religion”? I doubt it. They could appreciate the religious liberty which they enjoyed in America under the Judeo-Christian tradition. And as for atheists, there weren’t many.

In any case, the country, especially at this precarious moment, was

not about to disown the Divine and renounce its own culture simply to avoid offending the sensitivities of the few who might take exception to the President's prayer.

In England, also, there was an awareness that it was not just a country, but a religion and the civilization built upon it, that were under attack. Winston Churchill, in his famous "Finest Hour" speech to the House of Commons on the 18th of June 1940, declared: "Upon this battle depends the survival of Christian civilization."

Today, the fate of Christian civilization is again hanging in the balance. But how times have changed! The shared religious faith that united the people in a common purpose and gave them the fortitude to win World War II has been severely eroded.

The situation we're in now is actually more dangerous than it was in World War II, when we faced powerful enemies from without, but received confidence and hope from "our religion" within.

(WEO)

"ONE NATION, UNDER GOD"

During the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln also led the nation in turning to God for help. Calling for "a day of national humiliation, fasting and prayer," Lincoln quoted the 33rd *Psalms*: "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord."

Because the Lord was its God, the United States survived its great trial and became a bastion of liberty and a beacon to the world. From the beginning it imagined itself to be "a city set on a hill," as the Lord said in the Sermon on the Mount, and in so far as any nation can be said to be that, it succeeded – but only because it strove to be "one nation, under God." Remove the "under God" part, and the oneness will soon disappear also.

(WEO)



Miss Mary Lou on her 88th birthday.

MARY LOU WILLIAMSON: LEAVING A MARK ON HER 'CHILDREN'

Miss Mary Lou, who passed on to the spiritual world on February 9, was an irrepressible spirit in the world of New Church education. She taught for 40 years – kindergarten and first grade for the first 20 years, in Glenview and Bryn Athyn – then drama, speech and English in the Academy Girls School. She also directed plays for Bryn Athyn College

and managed the Media Center in the Secondary Schools for the last five years of her career. She never married but treasured all the students she taught and mentored as “my children.” And their lives are forever blessed by her effervescent spirit.

In her memorial address the Rev. Erik Buss began: “We gather today to honor Miss Mary Lou, as so many know her – teacher, caring friend, dramatic personality, wonderful human being.”

Erik marveled that “not many people can span from kindergarten to college so effectively and have people give passionate testimonials from all levels, some 60 or 70 years later!”

One former college student marveled at the way she coaxed him through a big role in a play, how “she took the time to believe in me,” and what a huge impact that has had in his life. She left that kind of appreciation and affection among all of “her children.”

A sense of humor and a flair for drama lit up Mary Lou’s life, which is why everyone remembers her with a smile.

Some students will never forget her standing on her desk to get their attention, as Robin Williams did in *Dead Poets Society*.

One recalled “her dramatic teaching techniques, acting out elements from history and stories we studied,” sometimes running between lectern and desks to dramatize epic battles in history. Another treasures a vision of her “dressed in a flapper dress and dancing around the classroom.”

I never had her as teacher but love the story of a senior class trip to Washington, DC, when she surprised and entertained even the staff at Ford’s Theater by taking the stage and re-enacting the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. That’s how spontaneous and genuine she was.

But all of this, as Erik noted, was not showing off but was all about inspiring her students. One of them said: “She brought history and literature alive. One of my majors in college was history – because of her – not just the way she taught it but because she got us reading historical fiction and that became a love of mine. She most definitely planted the seed and watered it well.”

That is the sign and the legacy of a master teacher – someone who inspires a love for learning by being a loving, caring, committed person herself. She made each student feel special to her, and thus a sense of being worthy themselves.

She once said of working on dramatic productions in the old Assembly Hall: “What I cannot ever forget are the students who touched and enriched my life. It would take pages to enumerate them all, but I remember them with deep affection.”



Miss Mary Lou during
her teaching years

The lasting nature of her relationships went both ways. A kindergarten student from 50 years ago remembered that “every time she saw me afterwards, even as late as this fall of 2015 – she gushed when she saw me and asked how I was doing. She had that Mr. Rogers quality of making one feel valued and special. Some felt it was overly dramatic or sappy but it really felt so good; it went so against the negative opinions I had of myself. It makes me happy to imagine her being welcomed in the next world and being gushed over and adored – a blessing back for the way she treated others.”

Mary Lou reminds me of a book I read years ago by Pat Conroy, a great writer who passed away just after she did in March. Conroy is better known for *The Great Santini*, *The Lords of Discipline* and *The Prince of Tides* than *My Losing Season*. What made that book so memorable is that it is not just about playing basketball at The Citadel, but is the story of a young man learning about himself. It is about all the teachers and coaches – the Mary Lou Williamsons of his experience – who helped him to find the values and truth he could believe in. It is about those transforming moments of discovery that happen between a great teacher and student – and forever leave a mark on both.

Conroy describes a formative experience at Gonzaga High School, where an English teacher named Joseph Monte fanned the flame of a budding writer by making him first a passionate reader. He gave Conroy a list of 100 great books he should read before going away to college.

Conroy met the challenge and forever loved him for it. He wrote: “The great teachers fill you up with hope and shower you with a thousand reasons to embrace all aspects of life. I wanted to follow Mr. Monte around for the rest of my life, learning everything he wished to share or impart, but I didn’t know how to ask. All I knew was, I was not the same boy who walked into Gonzaga that previous fall.”

Miss Mary Lou’s “children” all know the feeling.

(BMH)



Joy and Dan McQueen

JOY AND DAN MCQUEEN: THE AMBASSADORS

Joy Synnestvedt McQueen passed on to the spiritual world on March 11 – exactly 16 years after her beloved husband Dan had left this world. All those years she was a widow people still thought of them together because that’s the way they lived their lives.

She never actually fulfilled her dream of becoming a New Church teacher, but that didn’t stop her from living the role – from heading the religion lessons program for isolated children throughout

the Church to the 24/7 role of “head teacher” in a close family of six.

And her role as co-parent with Dan flowed from their commitment to marriage. In his memorial address for her, the Rev. Jeremy Simons quoted from an article Joy had written in 1968 for the *Theta Alpha Journal*, “Raising a Family in the New Church,” which included:

“It all begins with the marriage . . . from this all else radiates. All we have to do to come into the joys of conjugal love is approach the Lord (pray humbly, go to church, meditate and reflect); love the truths of the Church (long and search for truth in the Writings and in doctrinal classes); and do its goods (live the truth learned, practicing it from then on). It is the blueprint for a truly happy marriage – the core, the foundation of a New Church family.”

Joy and Dan lived their beliefs – beginning each morning with family worship, reading the Word, faithfully attending church functions and championing morality. Dan was a proud Marine, and Joy a proud Marine wife, and that also infused their life with patriotism, honor and courage.

But perhaps they are best known throughout the Church – especially in far-flung reaches of the United States – as passionate ambassadors for the Church and zealous recruiters for the Academy of the New Church.

As Jeremy put it: “She and Dan loved to take long tours all over the country in their camper. Their goal was to visit New Church families and encourage them to send their teens to Bryn Athyn, and they were very successful in their efforts. Their warm, confident and outgoing personalities helped them form friendships everywhere they went.”

And as he concluded his memorial address: “We give thanks for Joy’s life with us, for her generous, forthright and loving character, her service to others in her work and friendships, and her large and beautiful family. We offer our prayers that she might find happiness to eternity in the Lord’s kingdom. She surely arrives there ready to serve.”

(BMH)

WHO ARE WE?

You may have done a double-take when you saw the headline on the article by the Rev. Gerald Waters on page 249: “Surely we are not Swedenborgians!”

He wants us to say what our church is: a new revelation from the Lord Himself, not a religion vested in the man chosen to transcribe its truths for us.

Indeed, it is all too easy to refer to ourselves somewhat glibly as “Swedenborgians” – sometimes because we aren’t always sure what to say. I remember falling into this trap many years ago when I was drafted into the United States Army. I had to name my religion, which would go on my dog tags.

Well, I didn't want to put down Protestant, the easy default, because that's not accurate. General Church of the New Jerusalem was too long; just Church of the New Jerusalem probably would be better. The New Church sounds like something just built. We weren't using the term "New Christianity" back then. So I just put down "Swedenborgian."

Mr. Waters' point is important and valid. We revere Emanuel Swedenborg as a devoted servant of the Lord, but we know this is not his church. Calling ourselves Swedenborgians just encourages the notion that we are some kind of a cult, which is not useful or accurate. And as Mr. Waters speculates, Swedenborg would be appalled to hear his name invoked for the Church.

But we do have a challenge in being clear about what we call ourselves – so that it is clear what this church is, and what it is not. We do – often inadvertently – use such terms as "Swedenborg teaches," or "as Swedenborg writes," even in New Church literature, when we know the teachings are coming from the Lord alone. Mr. Waters' gentle but adamant chiding is a good reminder to be more careful, and more accurate.

One problem is that our official name – the General Church of the New Jerusalem – is cumbersome and not definitive. We have taken to using terms like the New Church, and New Christianity, which are better and more succinct.

My old Army sergeant was merely baffled when I gave him the name "Swedenborgian," but that's what appeared on my dog tags. I don't know what New Church service men and women do now, but it is the same challenge we all face – what we call ourselves and our church. And that should always have Swedenborg in the background – where he would prefer to be – not in the very name we use for our church and our religion. For "surely we are not Swedenborgians!"

(BMH)

ENLIGHTENMENT

No animal seeks enlightenment or has any concept of it, but human beings have always sensed that there is a reality higher than natural knowledge and understanding can reach, and have wished to experience it.

The quest for spiritual enlightenment has overtones of mystery and mysticism, yet the desire for it persists in our scientific age, and is perhaps especially keen *because* science and reason are such dominant themes today. In our materialistic, worldly culture we feel a need for a spiritual awakening.

As a philosophical movement, The Enlightenment was indeed a step out of the darkness of superstition into the light of reason and science, but as many people sense, we need now to take the next step, into the light of spiritual truth.

This is because natural knowledge and natural reason alone tend to confirm materialism and a view of humans as being only a species of animal. Denial of transcendence can even lead to such outbursts of madness as the Reign of Terror in the French Revolution – a terrible by-product of the 18th-century Enlightenment movement.

The Writings explain that true enlightenment is the result in a person of the influx of Divine truth emanating from the Lord's Divine love. (*Arcana Coelestia* 10330) "Every truth from good is a shining light and a source of enlightenment." (*Ibid.* 5208)

Enlightenment is achieved by "studying the Word with the goal of knowing truths." And not just knowing, but being affected by the truth. "Everyone has such enlightenment as is his affection of truth; and such affection of truth as is his good of life." (*Ibid.* 7012)

So here we have the key to enlightenment. It comes to those who love truth and are affected by it; and that affection is aroused by living a useful life and doing what is good.

We need not seek enlightenment as an end in itself, therefore; it will come to us as our thoughts and deeds are transformed by meditating on the Word, and living by it.

(WEO)

HOW NANCY REAGAN CAME TO BELIEVE IN THE AFTERLIFE

The following is an excerpt from a column in *The Wall Street Journal* in which Peggy Noonan recalls a visit with Nancy Reagan, who died at the age of 94 on March 6th – 12 years after her husband, President Ronald Reagan. Nancy had not believed in the afterlife, she said, but this is how that changed:

One day at dusk in November 2013 we were talking quietly as I held her hand at her bedside. She began to talk about Ronnie and how even now he was ever-present to her. Then she said: "I didn't believe in the afterlife. I never believed in it, but things have happened since Ronnie died. He visits me."

"You mean you dream of him," I said. She got a quizzical look. "I don't know if it is dreams or what. It sounds funny or crazy, sometimes I wake up at night and he's in bed next to me and I see him."

Once, she said, she woke in the middle of the night and looked over at the big beige stuffed chair at the bottom of the bed to the left. "You look cold," she said to him, and went to the closet for a blanket. She draped it over him and went back to bed. The next morning she awoke and looked over at the chair. The blanket, she said, was still there, but moved to the side as if someone had pushed it when he left.

She could not, she said, explain this. Whatever it was, the love that she felt did not just disappear.

"I now believe in the afterlife," she said.

Do such experiences, which are not terribly rare, violate people's freedom and rationality by compelling them to believe in life after death? No, they can be dismissed as mere dreams or something imagined. Those who are convinced by them probably already had the unconscious beginnings of belief in life after death in their hearts; the experience of seeing a loved one who had died just brought that belief into full flower.

(WEO)

SOME WILL NEVER LEARN

We might think that materialism would be impossible in the spiritual world – after all, the materialist's own existence there should stand as living proof of the very thing his philosophy denies. Swedenborg tried that line of reasoning with an evil spirit he encountered once, but it only worked for a moment. Here are some excerpts from the account of their conversation (with just the spirit's words in quotation marks):

I asked: Since you come from a community where there are schools of learning, tell me what you and your companions believe about God. "God," he replied, "is for us the universe, which we also call nature. God, heaven, angels and the like are idle words and fictions inspired by meteors, which many people here have seen flash before their eyes."

I went on to ask what he and his community believed about religion. "We who are educated above the ordinary level," he replied, "look on religion as nothing but a toy for the common people. We believe what we see and love what we touch."

Then I asked his opinion on heaven and hell. He laughed and said: "mere nonsense, thought up by some church dignitary to seek fame among an ignorant populace."

He said all this exactly as he had thought in the world, unaware that he was living after death, and forgetful of everything he had been told when he first entered the world of spirits. Therefore even when asked about life after death, he replied that it was a figment of the imagination.

On hearing this I could no longer stop myself from laughing. Satan, I said, you really are mad. Are you not in shape like a person? Don't you talk, see, hear and walk? Remember that you lived in another world, and now you are alive after death, yet you have been speaking exactly as you did before you died.

He was given back his memory, and on remembering he was ashamed and cried: "I am mad. I have seen heaven up above, and heard angels there speak things beyond description. But this was when I was a recent arrival. Now I shall remember this to tell the companions I left behind." But as he went down forgetfulness blotted out his memory, so that on arrival he was as mad as they were, and called what I had told him madness. (*True Christian Religion* 80)

(WEO)

THOMAS JEFFERSON AND EMANUEL SWEDENBORG

Thomas Jefferson stepped out of history and onto the campus of Bryn Athyn College on April 1 – and it wasn't an April Fool's stunt.

This Jefferson is actually Bill Barker, who has devoted his life to being a Thomas Jefferson “interpreter” at Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia. He is amazingly good at it, staying in character whenever he is dressed for the role.

He was born just a few miles from Bryn Athyn and attended a private school that competes with the Academy of the New Church. He not only feels at home in Bryn Athyn – “just off the old York Road when I used to travel to Philadelphia from my home in Monticello.” He also feels at home with Emanuel Swedenborg.

Jefferson has visited the College and the Bryn Athyn community several times since the College developed a special relationship with Colonial Williamsburg several years ago. During an engaging talk and question-and-answer session on this visit he noted that he had great respect for Swedenborg and valued several of his volumes in his own library.

Jefferson is not the only American President believed to be familiar with Swedenborg. There was also John Adams and Abraham Lincoln, plus Benjamin Franklin, one of the Founding Fathers. It was not unusual that well-read people in the 1800s knew Swedenborg – including Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, William James and Robert and Elizabeth Browning.

Jefferson is best remembered as the author of the visionary Declaration of Independence, as a firm believer in individual rights and limited government, and as an outspoken advocate for religious freedom. He was raised in the Episcopal Church but abandoned it in his youth. As did Lincoln he shunned organized religion but considered himself a devout Christian.

He once wrote: “I am Christian, in the only sense in which Jesus wished anyone to be.” He created his own somewhat controversial “Jefferson Bible,” which focused on “The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth.” He believed that God was the Creator of the universe and that “all evidence of nature testifies to His perfection.”

We can only guess at how much he was influenced by the revelation given to Swedenborg by the Lord but Jefferson did believe in the afterlife and was confident that the “sum of all religion is loving God and the neighbor.”



Jefferson outside the Mitchell Performing Arts Center with Bryn Athyn College history professors Drs. Greg Rose and Wendy Closterman (Photo courtesy of Jane Blair)



Thomas Jefferson in the Mitchell Performing Arts Center (Photo courtesy of Sandra Odhner)

He was attacked as an atheist in the presidential campaign of 1800 but praised God and religion in his inaugural address and attended services that day in the Capitol. As President in 1802 he invited the Rev. John Hargrove, one of the first New Church ministers ordained in America and pastor of the New Jerusalem Church in Baltimore, to deliver a sermon to the President and members of Congress: “On the Leading Doctrines of the New Jerusalem.”

That apparently got Jefferson’s attention. He again invited Mr. Hargrove to preach before both houses of Congress on Christmas Day in 1804 on “The Second Coming and the Last Judgment.” Imagine that happening today!

When Jefferson died – on the Fourth of July in 1826 – he asked to be remembered on his tombstone not as President of the United States but with this inscription: “Here was buried Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of American Independence, of the Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom, and Father of the University of Virginia.”

(BMH)

A LESSON IN TRUST

Thomas Jefferson’s relationship as President with the Rev. John Hargrove was not just a casual thing. A page on the website of the Oak Arbor New Church in Rochester, Michigan, includes a letter from Jefferson to Hargrove on March 11, 1801, which still resonates today: It includes:

“I deplore with you the present sanguinary and turbulent state of things in the Eastern world, and look forward to the restoration of peace, and progress of information, for the promotion of genuine charity, liberality, and brotherly kindness towards those who differ from us in opinion.

“The Philanthropy which breathes through the several expressions of your letter is a pledge that you will endeavor to diffuse the sentiments of benevolence among our fellow-men, and to inculcate the important truth, that they promote their own happiness by nourishing kind and friendly dispositions towards others.”

Hargrove was born in Ireland in 1750, came to Baltimore, Maryland, in 1769 and became a Methodist. He was introduced to Swedenborg in a sermon on the trinity delivered by the Rev. James J. Wilmer of the Protestant Episcopal Church. Hargrove began reading the Writings with the intention of refuting them, but came to accept them as Divine revelation.

When he formally withdrew from the Methodist Church his family suffered financially but his wife stood steadfast behind his decision.

She reportedly asked him, “Do you conscientiously believe that the new doctrines are true?” When he said he did, she charged him: “Then give up everything for the truth.”

“My dear wife,” he said, “if I do that, you and our children may starve.”

She was undeterred. “No,” she said calmly, “the Lord will provide. I and the children will trust in Him.”

(BMH)

WHAT LEADS US

The turbulent election process going on in the United States leaves little doubt that whoever is elected President in November, much of the country – and perhaps many in the world – will be unhappy and concerned.

But although we get caught up in the personalities and policies of our leaders, it is important to remember that “who” leads us is never as important as “what” leads us.

In the United States what leads us ultimately includes: the conviction in the Declaration of Independence that our inalienable rights flow from God; the core protections of the Constitution, invested first in individual liberty; and trust in the common values of “we the people.”

It was Thomas Jefferson who proclaimed, “Give the people the facts and the country will be safe.”

He also wrote, well after his presidency: “I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion.”

So as we take the measure of those who would lead us, we need to take the measure of ourselves in standing up for what will lead us.

(BMH)

CHOOSE THIS DAY . . .

In this graduation season for the Academy of the New Church Secondary Schools and Bryn Athyn College it is worth reflecting on what is distinctive and special about them.

The mission of the Secondary Schools begins: “Our core purpose is to prepare students for a principled and useful life in this world and the next.”

The mission of the College declares up front that its education “challenges students to develop spiritual purpose” and that the ultimate purpose “is to enhance students’ civil, moral and spiritual lives, and to contribute to human spiritual welfare.”

That is what is unique about our schools. We teach to the spirit as well as the mind. We prepare students for this world and the next, where their choices will forever lead them.

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

All very true. But New Church education wants us especially to be comfortable and confident in the presence of spiritual options as well, realizing that we are choosing, every day, whether to follow the Lord or turn away from Him. And it is through the pattern of these choices – made day by day, over a lifetime – that we ultimately choose heaven or hell.

This the real test of education – how we prepare to recognize and handle the choices that guide our destiny.

“I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life.” (*Deuteronomy 30:19*)

And as Joshua put it to his people: “Choose this day whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” (*Joshua 24:15*)

(BMH)



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