

# NEW CHURCH *Life*

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

**SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2016**

## The Gift of Inspiration

The Rev. John L. Odhner writes in a sermon that “the gift of inspiration” from the Lord is that He is always working on us from the inside, enlightening our understanding so that we can experience “the miracle of a new heart and a new spirit.” (Page 422)



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# New Church Life

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

- 411 In this Issue
- 414 Editorials: Thy Kingdom Come, Thy Will Be Done • Labor Day
- 417 Letters to the Editors
- 422 The Gift of Inspiration – *A Sermon by the Rev. John L. Odhner*
- 428 Greater Engagement: A Plan for the General Church  
*The Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr.*
- 432 Friendship – *A Sermon by the Rev. Bradley D. Heinrichs*
- 438 General Church Religion Lessons and the General Church  
*Sarah B. Odhner*
- 444 Introducing Our Ministers: Changed by Faith – and Paying it Forward:  
The Rev. Christopher A. Barber
- 451 Considering Conscience – *A Sermon by the Rev. Christopher A. Barber*
- 457 Book Review: Growth Pains and Pleasures  
*By the Rev. Frank S. Rose, Reviewed by Bronwen M. Henry*
- 460 Prayer's Role in the Salvation of our Soul – *The Rev. Kurt P. Nemitz*
- 468 The Character and Possible Uses of the Spiritual Diary/  
Spiritual Experiences – *The Rev. Willard L. D. Heinrichs*
- 478 Church News
- 497 Life Lines
- 510 Announcements

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# In This Issue

**H**ow does the Lord lead and inspire us? In a sermon, *Lead Us and Guide Us, Lord: The Gift of Inspiration*, the Rev. John L. Odhner says the Lord's influx is like radio waves all around us – only recognized and received when we tune in. “To understand how the Lord is working in our world,” he says, “we need to understand how He teaches and leads us. He teaches from the inside. He flows into our souls with His love and enlightens us inwardly with spiritual light.” (Page 422)

The Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr. reports on the strategic planning process in the Church: “Greater Engagement – A Plan for the General Church, 2016-2020.” He says: “The goal of any church planning is to see more people serving and being served. While we rejoice in the ways that the General Church is helping people around the world, and express gratitude for the many people who give of themselves to others by means of the Church's activities, there is an opportunity to invite more people to take advantage of what the Church has to offer.” (Page 428)

Friendships are extremely important in our lives, but the Rev. Brad Heinrichs cautions in a sermon that there are good and bad kinds of friendship. “The first step in forming any genuine friendship,” he says, “is to study the Word and distinguish between what is acceptable conduct and what is not. How many people today would consider that a prerequisite for any genuine friendship?” (Page 432)

No doubt many of you have fond memories of the old General Church Religion Lessons, either as family recipients or as volunteers who made them such a vibrant part of reaching out to church families. We are happy to reprint an address given at the Charter Day luncheon last year by Sarah B. Odhner discussing the history of the program and its impact throughout the Church – on adults and children. (Page 438)

In *Introducing Our Ministers*, the Rev. Christopher A. Barber confesses that he had “a loose relationship with faith” while growing up and even became “functionally an atheist.” But when his single mother married a New Churchman his life began to change. Now his renewed faith is “paying it forward” as a popular Religion teacher in the Academy Secondary Schools.

(Page 444) In a sermon about the story of Balaam, Mr. Barber finds relevance for today in “Considering Conscience.” (Page 451)

Bronwen Henry of General Church Outreach writes a rapturous review of a new book by the Rev. Frank S. Rose: *Growth Pains and Pleasures*. The book is all about Mr. Rose’s journey as a New Church minister striving to find the best way to contribute to the growth of the Church. Bronwen says within this story is an important message and rich meaning for each of us and she invites us to reflect on our own path in the General Church in its light. (Page 457)

The Rev. Kurt P. Nemitz offers his thoughts on *Prayer’s Role in the Salvation of our Soul*. He writes: “Prayer is of utmost importance, because it is what makes it possible for God and His Divine qualities to come into our hearts and minds. Prayer opens the door of our mind to His love and wisdom which we so much need. Vital spiritual things do happen when we pray.” (Page 460)

The Rev. Willard L. D. Heinrichs presents a personal study on *The Character and Possible Uses of the Spiritual Diary/Spiritual Experiences*. He cautions that these are his own opinions, and invites dialogue. He feels there are good reasons to conclude that these five volumes are Divine revelation. So many times, he says, he has been led to the conclusion that what is advanced in these books “is always in essential agreement with what is taught elsewhere in the Heavenly Doctrine. I think that I hear the same underlying Divine and heavenly melody.” (Page 468)

Church News, beginning on page 478, includes:

- New callings in the Kempton Society in Pennsylvania, with long-time Vice Principal Mark Wyncoll moving over to the General Church as head of Annual Giving, and Kempton alum Dale Smith being named the new Vice Principal.
- The New Journey Program from General Church Outreach on the meaningful test for communication: Is it true? Is it kind? Is it useful? Co-author Sasha Silverman relates it with a story: *Move the Cracker, Offer the Wine: Finding a Gentler Approach to Conflict Resolution*.
- A report – with photos – from the Rev. Todd Beiswenger on Camp Wanawong in Australia. The lively program ranged from a game of Russian Roulette – using eggs instead of bullets – to a doctrinal discussion of the *Book of Revelation*.
- An enthusiastic report from student Jamie Reynolds on what a life-changing experience it was for her to attend the annual British Academy Summer School. (With photos)
- Changes and expectations for the new school year at both Bryn Athyn College and the Academy Secondary Schools.
- A new video from New Church Education on Swedenborg’s childhood

- The Charter Day dedication of two new residence halls for Bryn College – named for former Academy President, the Rev. Daniel W. Goodenough, and the late Dr. Sherri R. Cooper, beloved teacher in the College.
- The impressive Medieval Camp at Glencairn Museum, with photos.
- The Tools 4 Life Camp for juniors and seniors in Bryn Athyn, this year with the theme, “Dare to Prepare Your Heart.”
- A report on several enthusiastic visits by organ societies to the Bryn Athyn Cathedral to hear both of the world-class organs there.
- A preview of the Boynton Beach Retreat in Florida in January, with three exceptional speakers: Brian Henderson on Glencairn Museum; Dr. Erica Goldblatt Hyatt of Bryn Athyn College on end-of-life studies; and the Rev. Mac Frazier on “Lessons Learned from Planting a Church in Austin, Texas.”

#### OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY

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

#### **GOOD**

Good is defined in the Writings as the affection of thinking and acting according to Divine order. Thus it belongs to love to the Lord and charity toward the neighbor, is spiritual, consists in willing and doing well unselfishly, and is heaven with man.

That which proceeds from man’s proprium is never good and may actually be entirely evil. However, what man loves he calls good, whether it be heavenly or infernal, because it is felt by him as such. This is what has given rise to the theory that good is only relative, but the Writings make clear that there is absolute good. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 4538, 4997, 7255; *Divine Providence* 279; *Divine Love and Wisdom* 335; *True Christian Religion* 38; *Faith* 14)

# Editorials

## **THY KINGDOM COME, THY WILL BE DONE**

When we say the Lord's Prayer we express our hope for what will be. We should also see this daily prayer as a personal commitment.

Praying that the Lord's kingdom come and His will be done – “as in heaven, so upon the earth” – may seem almost an empty wish. We see so little of heaven in the world around us. We see so much happening every day that cannot be God's will. But surely it is not hopeless. We see good people everywhere standing against evil and living good lives. But our history is rife with “stiff-necked people.” Our culture is awash in self-indulgence. What can we as a small church – and as individuals – do to give hope to our prayer?

We know that “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)

He is working through each one of us to increase His presence in the world. His kingdom is our kingdom, if we seek first to establish it in our own hearts and minds.

So, we all have a role in bringing His kingdom and His will into the world. It all starts with our personal regeneration.

Regeneration is a concept almost unique to the New Church. It is not seen as a moment of instantaneous salvation but as a lifelong process of living the life of religion. That means looking to the Lord, shunning evils as sins against Him, and living for use and charity in all we do. Part of the process also is combatting temptation, which can seem overwhelming at times. But we have the Lord's calm assurance that His yoke is easy and that living the life of heaven is not as difficult as we might imagine.

The struggle is not as bleak as some might fear: full of conflict, suffering and gloom, with no reward until it is all over. States of temptation come and go; they are not constant. And along the way we catch glimpses of heaven that energize our quest. Indeed, the Lord assures us that the regenerating life – while it does have conflict and combat – is ultimately a happy process.

Indeed, we are hardly aware of the countless ways the Lord is purifying our internal nature, drawing out and separating what is in our will and understanding that can be bent toward His good and truth – toward heaven.

So the Lord is working through us not only for our own spiritual growth and regeneration but for the positive impact and influence we can have on others by living the life of regeneration. As we regenerate – gradually, individually and together – we also help to make this a better world for others. As we choose in freedom to regenerate, His will is being done through us as if of ourselves.

His kingdom comes, His will is done, in heaven and on earth, as we allow Him to work through each of us.

(BMH)

### LABOR DAY

One of the things that sets humans apart from other creatures is that we have to work. And there is a lot involved in the idea of “work.”

Animals certainly keep busy looking for food, but each one’s occupation is determined simply by the species it belongs to, whereas humans have a wide range of possible uses they might take up.

The work of animals begins and ends with obtaining what they need to survive, but the work people do involves much more than mere survival.

For animals the question of whether they find their work satisfying is a non-issue. With people, though, the degree of satisfaction they find in their occupation varies greatly. Those who enjoy their job and perceive that their work is of benefit to others are very fortunate.

In heaven, the angels love to be of use to others, and therefore find great satisfaction and joy in their work. In hell, the evil spirits work only because they have to, and their toil is just more misery for them. In this world, things are not so clear cut, but the more we are affected by the heavenly love of the neighbor the more likely we are to find enjoyment in our work.

The angels, though, receive the basic necessities of life, food and shelter gratis. The work they do is a pure expression of their love of being useful, and the happiness they find in it is based entirely upon that. In this world, even those who love being useful and whose occupations perfectly match their abilities and interests will find jobs to be unsatisfying that don’t pay enough to provide for the basic necessities of life.

The New Church Doctrine of Use sheds a lot of light on the value and importance of labor, and reveals its spiritual dimension. The Writings explain that our job, even though we are paid for it, can be a work of charity. “Everyone who looks to the Lord and shuns evils as sin, if he sincerely, justly and faithfully does the work of his office and employment, becomes a form of charity.” (*Doctrine of Charity* 158)

In fact, a job done in such a spirit is an act of worship. We are told that “glorifying God means to bring forth the fruits of love, that is, to carry out the

work of one's calling faithfully, sincerely and diligently for this is from love to God and love to the neighbor, and is (for) the good of society." (*True Christian Religion* 738) The passage then quotes *John 15:8*: "By this is My Father glorified, that you bring forth much fruit; so shall you become My disciples."

This gives us a new idea of what a "good job" is. A job that pays well is a good job. A job well done is a good job. But in the best sense of all, a "good job" is one done by someone who loves the Lord and wishes to be of use to others.  
(WEO)

**OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY**

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**GRAND MAN**

Here is another term that is found only in the Writings. The angels are organized into societies, and these into groups, each one of which performs a general use to which corresponds to the function performed by some member, organ, viscus or membrane of the human body. Every part of the body, even every single cell, has its heavenly counterpart in the field of use.

As to their uses the heavens are thereby organized in the form of a man, and it is this heavenly man that is called the Grand Man. Note that heaven is so called from use, not from shape, though we may well suppose that if it could be seen in its entirety it would appear in the human shape. Note also that while the heavens from this earth constitute a grand man, the Grand Man is made up of all the heavens from all the earths.

The Writings present us with three general ideas: 1) heaven as a grand man, with the world of spirits as the alimentary system and hell as the waste excreted from the body; 2) heaven as a grand man and hell as a great monster; 3) heaven, hell and the world of spirits as one man: heaven being the man, the world of spirits being the alimentary system as to the work of the angels in that world, and the hells being those things which are in the body but not of it, yet which serve vile uses, that is, for purification and so on. This last concept is under the teaching that everyone in the spiritual world must be of some use, as well as those in the hells and those in the heavens.

The general idea of the Grand Man is that the Lord is within heaven and the church as the soul is in the body—immanent but discretely distinguished; that heaven and the church are the mind and body; and that they are to the Lord what the spiritual and natural organics are to man. Thus the Lord is the soul and life of the Grand Man; angels, spirits and the spiritual minds of men of earth are the mind of that man; and men on earth are its body and senses. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 2906, 4219, 4225, 6807; *True Christian Religion* 119)

# Letters

Letters may be sent to the Editors of *New Church Life* at  
Box 743, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009  
or e-mailed to [Bruce.Henderson@newchurch.org](mailto:Bruce.Henderson@newchurch.org).

## *The Lord Speaking to Us*

To The Editors:

I would very much like to thank the Rev. Gerald Waters for his article, "Surely We Are Not Swedenborgians!" (*New Church Life*, May/June 2016, page 249)

Since childhood I was taught that the Heavenly Doctrines, or the Writings, are the Lord speaking to us. I find it disturbing when so often I hear lay people and ministers say, "Swedenborg says . . .", or "according to Swedenborg . . ."

I think over the years a casualness has subtly developed with regard to the authority and sanctity of the Heavenly Doctrines. As we welcome newcomers to our church services I often wonder if they understand that the teachings they are hearing are *from the Lord* through His chosen servant, Emanuel Swedenborg. And that these truths ARE the Lord's Second Coming.

I am not sure that this is being communicated – even to many who have been baptized and raised in the Church. A fundamental belief that makes us distinct from all other religions on earth is that the Second Coming has already occurred. Swedenborg merely was the medium through which the Lord God Jesus Christ chose to reveal Himself to mankind.

As Mr. Waters pointed out, "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."

Karen G. Heinrichs  
Rochester, Michigan

## *Service: The Key to Growth*

To The Editors:

I wanted to say how much I appreciated Craig Bostock's article on change in the Christian Church. (*The Future of the Christian Church and a Prediction of its Interaction with the New Church*, *New Church Life*, July/August, 2016)

Christianity is confronted by a lot of challenges. One recent article on the Catholic Church in my hometown of Pittsburgh noted:

Since 2000, weekly Mass attendance has dropped by 40 percent — for almost 100,000 fewer regular church-goers; K-8 Catholic school enrollment fell by 50 percent; and the number of active priests plummeted from 338 to 225.

The General Church faces many of the same challenges embedded in those statistics.

Within that it is important to note, as Craig pointed out, that we can grow the New Church, sharing its beautiful teachings with more people. Growth is incredibly challenging; that needs to be clearly stated. Our old way of holding our faith — as being the one and only answer to people's theological questions — is largely out of step.

People, in my experience, are not searching solely for a theology but are searching as well for a mission-centered, purpose-driven community. So that is where we must start — with created loving, caring, compassionate communities that move forward into the world with purpose.

What can we, as the New Church, specifically offer? At its simplest level I think our faith shines as a holder of God's transformational love versus the transactional love held by many denominations. And, with that transformational love in mind, we can serve. That is critical.

In the end, I have found this journey of church planting with NewChurch LIVE beyond humbling. While we have grown around 60% in the past six years and increased our donations more than 150%, we face many questions about how to serve more effectively.

Planting a church will rapidly break one of many cherished notions of "how to." What is left is a very real faith. However, that while we may not know all the specifics of how to grow or run a church, we can do this: we can serve. We can find those who suffer, near and far, and serve: the very essence of *being* the Church — the very essence of the New Church.

The Rev. Chuck Blair  
Pastor, NewChurch LIVE  
Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania

## *Planting a Seed*

To The Editors:

The Life Line item about Nancy Reagan by WEO (the Rev. Walter Orthwein) in the May/June 2016 issue of *New Church Life* was of special interest to me. It told how Nancy, widow of the late President Ronald Reagan, changed from not believing in the afterlife to becoming a believer after having what appear to be dreams of some sort.

Mr. Orthwein ends his item by saying that people who are convinced by such experiences “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.”

No one can know if Nancy had an unconscious beginning of belief in life after death before the dreams that convinced her. However, within a few days of President Reagan’s death, and having heard of the loving marriage that he and Nancy had, I decided to send Nancy a copy of *Heaven and Hell* in the hope that it would comfort her. I did not know at that time that she did not believe in the afterlife or I would not have contemplated this.

I was living in Colchester, England, at the time and phoned the American Embassy in London, got through to the right official, explained that I wanted to send the President’s wife a book that might help comfort her in her loss as it had been a great help to me in bereavement, and asked for Nancy’s mailing address.

I was given the address, assured that the book would be delivered, and mailed my package. Only a few days later I received a phone call from another official at the Embassy in London to thank me for caring about the American President and his wife. However, I doubt if the book could have been delivered by then and I never heard if it was received or appreciated. Now WEO suggests that those who change from unbelief to belief after dreams “probably already had the unconscious beginnings of belief in life after death in their hearts.” I will never know but do wonder if the Lord’s power in *Heaven and Hell* planted that beginning.

Heulwen Ridgway (Miss)  
Canberra, Australia

## *Truly a Life Line*

To The Editors:

I need you to know how much I have enjoyed *New Church Life* since you both (Bruce Henderson and the Rev. Walter Orthwein) took it on. I read it

with appreciation cover-to-cover each time it arrives. (I often don't even start at the Announcements in the back!)

I like learning about the featured ministers and find it especially informative to have their "stories" paired with a sermon they gave. But my very favorite parts of the *Life* are your editorials and Life Lines.

In this world where we are so globally connected that we know what is going on everywhere, the appalling evil and unspeakable sadness can be overwhelming, especially when we know that it is a horrifying picture of the hells we must shun in ourselves. Your Life Lines are truly a life line for me. They help me make sense of this worldly chaos by supporting my cherished spiritual beliefs with a clear and unapologetic spiritual perspective.

Thank you so much! I hope you are able to continue this essential work for many years.

With heartfelt gratitude.

Ginny Gladish  
Mitchellville, Maryland

## *Words With Love*

To The Editors:

I am commenting on the "Bad Words" and "Newspeak" items (by the Rev. Walter Orthwein – WEO) in *Life Lines*, and also "Let Your Light so Shine" (by Bruce Henderson – BMH), in the July/August 2016 *New Church Life*:

I totally agree with Walter Orthwein about the bad thoughts, and have often wondered why swearing has become so prevalent. I take comfort in knowing that since the Second Coming everything "hangs out" as it were, rather than being hid. While Victorian mores may have looked fine they often held a multitude of sins. I heard one Victorian phrase that said it's OK to have a mistress as long as nobody finds out, so it was very much about appearances.

As for "Newspeak" I am less concerned about the substitution of different words. To me the word "relationship" still implies a commitment, and I believe there are many good things about political correctness. I remember African-Americans and homosexuals being called many derogatory names, and all of those words carried the weight of disdain and derision. To me politically correct language could be used to be kind to someone who is different from you, rather than being just a way to secularize language.

I also do not believe that in this world there are clear definitions of just two sexes. Things go wrong in the natural body which makes people very mixed up about which sex they are and which sex they are attracted to. I prefer to err on the side of kindness, because I know when somebody is living a life that

honors the Creator and helps others that's more important than their sexual identity or even their gender.

I loved Bruce Henderson's focus on love being the only way to overcome hate. That is why I believe in most cases wars have caused more problems than they solved. The only way things will improve in this world is when more and more people embrace the Divine and know that the right way to live is to serve others.

Rev. Julie Conaron  
Willow Grove, Pennsylvania

### *Clarification*

To The Editors:

In response to my letter (May/June *New Church Life* 2016) it was written that the argument I used is still being touted with no evidence to back it up.

My letter was edited and parts were left out. I wrote that, "I am going from my memory," and this got edited out. This may not be a big thing because after this I wrote, "It seems that I have seen statistics," not that there were.

This sentence was also edited out of my letter: "Perhaps it would be good if someone would look at what I have written and check some of the actual numbers to see if this is true."

I have to admit that right before I sent the letter in someone had mentioned to me either that some more conservative churches that allowed women in the ministry were not losing members or were growing. I did not rewrite my letter to mention this. Maybe I should have. But I thought most churches that have women in the ministry might be losing members. I thought it would be a good idea if someone got interested in checking the statistics to see what the actual numbers are. I made some assertions but there are also a lot of places where I wrote "it seems" and not that "it was" or "there were."

The response to my letter also mentioned that the Catholic Church does not ordain women and is not growing.

The Catholic Church is referred to in the Bible as: "Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of whoredoms and abominations of the earth." (*Revelation* 17:5) The Catholic Church has had a problem with sexually perverted priests and believes that priests should be celibate and that the Pope is infallible. Catholics invoke saints. The Pope should not be looked to for inspiration in the New Church.

Edward (Ned) Cole  
Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania

# Lead Us and Guide Us, Lord

## *The Gift of Inspiration*

*The Rev. John L. Odhner*

*I will give you a new heart and  
put a new spirit within you. (Ezekiel 36:26)*

Some people have no trouble believing that God is at work in this world. They see the beauty and order of nature, the waterfall, the sunrise and the bird in flight. They see the magnificence of the heavens – a hundred billion galaxies with a hundred billion stars in each. They see the ability of the human mind to transcend selfishness, show compassion, discover truth and create beauty. In all of these they see God at work.

Other people wonder whether God is actually at work in this world. They may see nature as blind and mechanical, operating from chance or necessity, but without any purpose or intelligence. They may ask: “If God is working in the universe, where is the evidence? Is there anything that happens anywhere in the universe that can’t be explained better by science than by the myths of ancient religions?”

Many Christians will point to the Bible as God’s Word for us. In the Bible God teaches us what we cannot learn from science. As it is God’s truth, there is no need to question but only to believe. Now the Lord’s Word truly teaches us things beyond time and space, beyond the realm of science and physical sensation. It teaches us of love, compassion, wisdom and justice. It teaches us of heaven and eternal life. It teaches of the Lord’s struggles against the hells and His infinite love and mercy. We cannot learn any of these things from science and nature.

Yes, when we take the Bible on a literal level, without its deeper meaning, it is dead. Think of someone wearing clothes. As the person runs, works and dances, the clothes move with the body, flowing gracefully, purposefully. When the person puts off the clothes, they lie lifeless on the floor or hanger. As the clothes are to the body, the body is to the soul. While the soul animates the body, it runs, works and dances; the eyes sparkle, the lungs breathe and

the heart beats. When the soul leaves the body, it falls back lifeless, pallid and opaque.

It is the same with the letter and the spirit of the Bible. When we see the spirit within the Bible it comes alive. It flows and dances through our lives, bringing inspiration, motivation and clarity. When we miss the spirit and argue over the literal meaning it becomes flat and hard; it dies.

Jesus said, “It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.” (*John* 6:63) Paul wrote: “We should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.” (*Romans* 7:6) “The letter kills, but the spirit gives life.” (*2 Corinthians* 3:6)

We might argue about whether the creation story accurately describes natural history. We might question whether Noah could have fit so many species on his boat for a whole year, or whether Moses actually could have divided the Red Sea with his rod. But these are just questions of scientific fact, not of eternal truth. If we rely on purely literal stories of the Bible to defend our faith, it is like collecting military uniforms and hanging a general’s uniform in front of them, then imagining that the empty uniforms will defend us, while the general’s uniform leads them all in battle. And then we brag to our enemies: “You will never defeat us! Look how many uniforms we have!”

If we believe in miracles but feel contempt and resentment toward others, have we grasped even the most fundamental truths of Scripture? If our faith is selfish and spiteful, it has no truth in it at all, no matter how much we think the Bible gives us the truth. We have the dead letter, but we do not have the spirit.

If on the other hand we use science to disprove the miracles in the Bible we still have missed the truth. Challenging the literal meaning of the Bible without seeing its spirit is like hanging up a garment, shooting it full of holes, and then believing that you have killed the owner because the garment is full of holes. It’s just shooting down straw men.

This battle rages across our culture today, with literalists setting out their interpretations like so many uniforms, and atheists shooting them full of holes. They are all just looking at the literal meaning and missing the real truth and spirit.

Jesus said that the whole Bible teaches love for God and love for others. (*Matthew* 22:40) “Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for

When we go to the Bible  
not to prove others  
wrong but to find out  
how to love others better,  
we begin to see the  
spirit within the letter.

To understand how the Lord is working in our world we need to understand how He teaches and leads us. (He) teaches us from the inside. He flows into our souls with His love and enlightens us inwardly with spiritual light.

us. Literalism focuses on the written Word, thinking that the Lord teaches and leads us by writing down exactly what we should believe and do, so that all we need to do is follow the recipe, recite the creed and heed the rules.

The teachings for the New Church offer a different perspective on the Lord's leading: "The Lord leads us by inflowing and teaches us by enlightenment." (*Divine Providence* 165) That is, the Lord teaches us from the *inside*. He flows into our souls with His love and enlightens us inwardly with spiritual light.

We can't see, hear or touch them. We may have no idea they are even there. Yet our minds are receivers and when we pick up those messages they show up in us as thoughts and feelings.

this is the Law and the Prophets." (*Ibid.* 7:12)

When we go to the Bible not to prove others wrong but to find out how to love others better, we begin to see the spirit within the letter. The Bible comes alive and the Lord is present in it, leading us and teaching us – not as an empty uniform but as a living and breathing person. For the Spirit within the Bible is not simply abstract teachings about love but "the Lord is the Spirit." (*2 Corinthians* 3:17) The Lord is present in His Word with infinite Divine Love and Wisdom.

To understand how the Lord is working in our world we need to understand how He teaches and leads

us by inflowing and teaches us by enlightenment." (*Divine Providence* 165) That is, the Lord teaches us from the *inside*. He flows into our souls with His love and enlightens us inwardly with spiritual light.

If we try to find God in the world around us, through scientific observation or verified miracles, we completely miss the main arena of His work. "The kingdom of God does come with observation; now will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed the kingdom of God is within you." (*Luke* 17:20-21)

The Lord's primary work is to change us inwardly. "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit

within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.” (*Ezekiel 36:26-27*) So if we want to have any understanding of how God works in the world, we have to understand how He works in our hearts and spirits.

When we listen to a radio or watch TV we don't pay much attention to the radio or TV itself but to the music or message that is coming in. A message is widely broadcast and the radio waves that carry it are all around us, and even go right through us, but they are invisible and inaudible until they are picked up by a receiver. If you were to go on a search for those radio waves without an antenna you would find no evidence that they exist. Yet through the antenna, tuner and amplifier in the radio we can hear the message clearly.

Since the message comes into the receiver invisibly it seems as if it is coming from the radio or TV itself. Someone who does not understand radio waves may have no comprehension that every sound and image is coming from somewhere far away.

The Lord is constantly broadcasting messages to all people. Like radio waves, those spiritual influencers are invisible. We can't see, hear or touch them. We may have no idea they are even there. Yet our minds are receivers and when we pick up those messages they show up in us as thoughts and feelings.

These thoughts and feelings flow in from the Lord through heaven and hell, through angels and spirits, and sometimes the messages are distorted along the way. So we have good thoughts that flow in through heaven and bad thoughts that flow in through hell. The desires, feelings and thoughts that flow in make up our whole life, just as the messages that come by radio waves constitute all the life that appears in the radio or on TV.

The Lord's Word is like the tuner for the radio. The tuner allows the radio to focus on a particular frequency so that it can make sense of the incoming radio waves. When we search the Word with a sincere desire to understand and follow the Lord's leading, the truths we live by tune our minds to a frequency that can receive the Lord's messages. If we believe the Bible literally, but we are not open to the spirit within, we are like a radio that has a tuner but does not have an antenna, so it doesn't pick up any signal. We are not paying attention to the spirit.

On the other hand, if we reject the Bible completely we can't tune our

The power and magic of the commandments lie in the way they open up a channel for the Lord's love to flow into our lives.

Jesus fed 5,000 with a few loaves and fishes, and they were satisfied for a day and then became hungry again. The miracle that the Lord asks us to participate in today is to share the Lord's love for all people.

thoughts to heavenly frequencies. We won't be able to recognize and amplify the messages that are coming from the Lord and instead we are tuned in to messages that have been distorted by selfishness, materialism and literalism.

The Lord gave us His commandments to help us tune in to the best frequencies. If we focus on the Golden Rule, doing for others what we want done for us (*Matthew 7:12*), then that message of love will guide us in understanding the Bible correctly. As Jesus said, all of Scripture is about love for the Lord and love for the neighbor. (*Ibid. 22:40*) When a scribe recognized this truth Jesus told him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." (*Mark 12:34*)

We find the same truth mentioned in the Ten Commandments. One table teaches us to love the Lord and the other teaches us to love (and not harm) our neighbor. These commandments are central because obeying them tunes our minds to the Lord's "channel" and allows Him to work in us. And the Lord's teaching and leading involves not just the literal statements of the Bible but all the feelings, thoughts and ideas, all the music, voices and images that flow in through the tuner.

This is one reason why it is hard for some people to see how the Lord is working in their world. They aren't looking for the inflow of love and the light of wisdom but are looking for physical evidence or miraculous interventions. It's like looking for signs of life in an empty garment, or taking apart a radio tuner to find the messages inside it.

Since the commandments are what get us tuned in to the Lord's leading, they are the first and most central part of the Lord's Word to the people of Israel. The ultimate goal of the journey from Egypt was to enjoy freedom and prosperity in the Promised Land. The first destination on the journey was to reach Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments. There they would build an ark and tabernacle to house the commandments, and later it would be the Ten Commandments that divided the waters of the Jordan River and brought down the walls of Jericho and the idol Dagon.

The commandments were very important, but it would be foolish to think that the tables of stone in the ark of the covenant had some intrinsic magical

power as portrayed in popular movies like *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.

The power and magic of the commandments lie in the way they open up a channel for the Lord's love to flow into our lives. When we make a covenant to follow the Lord's commands, then He flows into us with good intentions and true thoughts. That is how He teaches and leads and that is how He works miracles.

Jesus' disciples were amazed at His miracles but He told them: "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do because I go to My Father." (*John 14:12*)

Jesus controlled the weather and raised the dead, yet He is telling us that if we believe in Him we can do greater works? Many have imitated Christ and tried to work miracles but they never seem to be "greater" than the ones Jesus did. I see "miracle workers" performing at conferences and revivals, on the street and on television, usually starting with people who are basically healthy and convincing them that after prayer of laying on of hands they actually feel better. I have never seen them do miracles greater than what Jesus did.

We can do greater works but greater does not mean more impressive outward signs. The miracles that Jesus did were physical acts that symbolized spiritual ones. Giving sight to a blind person helps him or her to have a happier, more useful life to eternity. Helen Keller said that worse than being born blind would be being able to see but not having vision.

Jesus fed 5,000 with a few loaves and fishes, and they were satisfied for a day and then became hungry again. The miracle that the Lord asks us to participate in today is to share the Lord's love for all people. This is a greater work because it feeds people for much more than a day. It feeds people's souls with the bread of heaven that gives eternal life.

The gift of inspiration is that the Lord is working on us from the inside. He is always working on us from the inside and the outside at the same time, leading our feelings and intentions, and enlightening our understanding so that we can see Him mentally, feel Him in our hearts, and experience the miracle of a new heart and a new spirit. Amen.



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# Greater Engagement: A Plan for the General Church 2016-2020

*The Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr.*

Over the past 18 months, a team of people<sup>1</sup> has been working to prepare a four-year plan for the General Church. Along the way, we have invited extensive feedback from the clergy and Board of Directors of the General Church. We are grateful for their input, which has significantly influenced the final version.

The goal of any church planning is to see more people serving and being served. While we rejoice in the ways that the General Church is helping people around the world, and express gratitude for the many people who give of themselves to others by means of the Church's activities, there is opportunity to invite more people to take advantage of what the Church has to offer.

This plan seeks to provide for greater engagement by:

- Rallying around the uses of worship, education and outreach
- Communicating better
- Supporting employees more effectively
- Appropriately sharing planning expertise and resources with our church centers around the world
- Understanding more deeply what could effectively address our organizational chafe-points. The goal is a more vibrant world-wide church that is effectively helping people make progress toward heaven.

In terms of plan design, we took the approach of focusing on what the centralized General Church can do, without desiring to dictate what should happen at the congregational level. We also expect that many traditional uses,

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<sup>1</sup> The team consists of Brian Keith, Peter Buss Jr., Karen Stoeller, Charlotte Gyllenhaal, David Lindrooth, David Frazier and Chuck Ebert.

such as worship and translation, will continue; the plan addresses opportunities or challenge areas that can enhance our overall ability to serve.

After an initial section on General Church mission and values, you will notice six strands to this plan: Education, Outreach, Participation, Communication, Professional Development and International Church.

## **General Church Mission**

To help people live a heavenly life through the teachings of the Lord God Jesus Christ in His Second Coming.

## **Core Values**

- Turning to the threefold-Word as the source and foundation for all that we do
- Developing people's faith in the Lord and trust in His providence
- Applying principles from the Word to a life of useful service
- Sharing the truths the Lord has provided with the next generation and with all who are receptive
- Supporting marriage between a man and a woman, and honoring the unique and complementary nature of each sex
- Embracing families as an essential part of the Lord's plan of a heaven from the human race
- Helping people hear the call to a better way of living, through the process of self-examination and repentance
- Welcoming all who wish to explore these values to participate in the life of the Church

## **Education Strand**

Goal: Educate and equip children and young people for regeneration and an eternal life of usefulness.

Strategy #1: *Renew commitment to the use of New Church education by communicating relevance and gathering people together to focus on it.*

Strategy #2: *Update and develop New Church educational materials and make them more readily available.*

## **Outreach Strand**

Goal: Reach out with the truths of the New Church and welcome new people into the life of the Church.

Strategy #3: *Build traffic to newchurch.org to 800,000 unique visitors per year (currently 400,000) and improve methods of cultivating contacts to become active participants in the General Church.*

Strategy #4: *Assist congregations in developing a Small Group Growth model, and establish Sunroomgroups.org as a self-sustaining video content delivery system for small groups.*

### **Participation Strand**

Goal: Provide avenues for greater involvement and participation in the life of the Church.

Strategy #5: *Promote involvement of women through a task force charged with exploring respect for and utilization of feminine wisdom in church activities.*

Strategy #6: *Engage youth by starting a youth task force to counsel with members of the Church on service to and by young people, including receiving input on plans for youth membership.*

### **Communication Strand**

Goal: Develop a communications plan to promote the purposes and values of the General Church and invite counsel.

Strategy #7: *Create interactive forums between central administrative offices and the Church as a whole, which provide greater information flow, opportunity for feedback, and appropriate inclusion in discourse on issues facing the Church.*

### **Professional Development Strand**

Goal: Develop, engage and retain highly qualified talent that has the capacity to advance the Church's mission.

Strategy #8: *Establish an employee learning center (General Church Employee University) to provide learning opportunities, build capabilities, improve performance and provide career development for all employees.*

Strategy #9: *Refresh and maintain a total compensation program that is equitable and consistent.*

### **International Church**

Goal: Support the development of the Church internationally.

Strategy #10: *Support the development of the Church internationally by sharing expertise, training and resources in evidence in all other strands and leading toward long-term sustainability.*

A prayer:

It has been said that plans come and go, with little perceived impact or value. The value of the planning process that we have gone through is that it is already focusing our collective energies in specific directions. A prayer that comes along with this plan is that the Lord will bless our collective efforts, and

help us see a more engaged and vibrant church as a result.

If you would like to see a more extensive version of this plan, please visit: <http://about.newchurch.org/about/reports>. We welcome questions and feedback, which can be directed to the Bishop's Office.



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#### OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY

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

#### **GYRES**

These are mentioned in the Writings as forms into which newly arrived spirits must be inaugurated that they may be initiated into fellowship with others and into the practice of thinking and speaking in concord and unanimity. A gyre is a circular or spiral motion, and the term is used in the Writings to describe a motion that is complete, perfect and perpetual. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 5128)

# Friendship

*The Rev. Bradley D. Heinrichs*

*Lessons – I Samuel 18:1-4, 20:1-42, John 15:5-17,  
True Christian Religion 448-449*

*You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. . . .  
These things I command you,  
that you love one another. (John 15:14,17)*

Friendship is something that every human seems to desire, in one form or another. But how often do we think of being friends with the Lord? When you stop to reflect on that concept, it seems pretty obvious that we should be striving to be the best of friends with the Lord.

And here in the text from *John*, the Lord gives us some very simple and direct instructions as to how we can be His friends. Do whatever He commands – which specifically in this lesson is to love one another as He loves us.

So it appears that in loving one another and forming genuine friendships with those around us, the same basic rules of friendship would apply – doing whatever the Lord commands.

The story of David and Jonathan gives us a powerful and moving illustration of what a genuine friendship should be. Jonathan as the son of King Saul would have been next in line to the throne, except for one big problem. His father had broken his covenant with the Lord and so the Lord had chosen David to become the next king. Jonathan and David were best friends and you might think this could have driven a wedge between them.

However, Jonathan was on the side of what was right and good rather than blindly supporting his own family, and chose spiritual family over blood relationships. And don't we all strive for that precious ideal of having a good friend so close that it feels as though our souls are tied or knit together over a common vision of what the Lord wants? So with this context in mind, let us delve into the subject of friendship and see what the Writings have to say on this important subject.

First, let's look at the beginning verses of *John* that led up to, "*you are my*

*friends if you do whatever I command you.*” It was an analogy about a vine and the Lord said: *“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.”*

The significance of the vine is that the Lord is talking about conjunction of a person from the spiritual church with Him. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 1069:5) This is important to know because a person from the spiritual church is reformed by truths in the understanding, as opposed to good in the will, as was the celestial Most Ancient Church.

Therefore, the first order of business for a person of the spiritual church is to learn the truths of the Word which will form his faith, and so aided by truth come to recognize the difference between good and evil. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 5113:2) So the first step in having conjunction with the Lord, dwelling with Him, and becoming His friend, is to learn the truth of the Word. We must study the vine!

Consequently, the first step in forming any genuine friendship is to study the Word and distinguish between what is acceptable conduct and what is not. How many people today would consider that a prerequisite for any genuine friendship?

Now just knowing the truth does not make a living faith, but a dead one. And a dead faith does not produce charity. Charity, or love toward the neighbor, is the principle love of the spiritual church. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 1069:5) Charity can only come into existence if faith is lived. When the truth is applied to life then the vine *“bears much fruit.”*

So the second step in forming genuine friendships is being charitable, or living according to your faith. Being genuinely charitable comes in two steps. The first of charity is to shun evils as sins against the Lord, and the second of charity is to do good deeds which are of use to the neighbor. (See *Charity* 1; *True Christian Religion* 435)

This is also a startling new concept about friendship. The primary element of genuine charity and friendship is not to do evils that would harm that person; the second is to do good and useful things for them. Not surprisingly, this takes us right back to the Ten Commandments. One tablet, concerning duties to our neighbor, consists of the “You shall nots”: you shall not murder, commit adultery, steal, bear false witness, or covet.

And we are told in the Writings for the New Church that conjunction can only be effected by the Lord if a person first does what is written on His table. Roughly paraphrased in simple English: The Lord cannot help join us to Himself or to our neighbors and friends unless we shun those evils as sins.

If you reflect on this idea, the truth of it seems obvious. We cannot really say we love the Lord if we can't even treat the people directly around us decently – with respect, caring and concern. So it is only after succeeding in

shunning those evils as sins that we can work on the second of charity and learn to develop the good qualities that are of benefit to our neighbor and help to form genuine friendships.

Murderous and vengeful thoughts and actions will be replaced with a concern for justice and fairness. Adulterous thoughts and actions will be replaced with a zeal for chastity and protecting the sanctity of marriage. The desire to steal will be replaced with sincerity and the desire to give instead of take. Wanting to bear false witness and lie will be replaced with a love of the truth and honesty. And coveting things for ourselves will be replaced with looking out for the needs of our neighbor before our own. (cf. *Life* 67-91)

Once we reach this state then we are a branch of the vine – a part or instrument of the Lord, which bears much fruit. The fruits of the vine is the good works, deeds or actions that we perform for our neighbor. Faith is nothing if it is merely knowledge and does not look to charity. And charity is nothing if it is not manifested in good works. This is the Lord's goal – that we be of service to our neighbors. That is why heaven is said to be a kingdom of useful services. (See *Conjugal Love* 7:3) This is when we obey the commandment fully – to love others as He has loved us. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served but serve. (*Matthew* 20:28)

There is one more secret contained in these verses from *John* about the key to forming genuine friendships: “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love. . . . These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.” (*John* 15:10-12) The Lord tells us that if we keep His commandments, we will abide in His love. But what was the reason given? That His joy might remain in us and that our joy might be full.

He does not ask us to keep the commandments for any sense of personal self-gratification, but so that we will be happy. And this is in perfect accordance with the three qualities of Divine love and thus of all genuine loves: to love others outside of oneself, to desire to be one with them, for the purpose of making them happy. (See *True Christian Religion* 43)

This should be a guiding principle in all our interactions with our friends. Are we serving them in such a way that seeks to bring them joy and make them happy – and not just in the short term, but eternally happy? In the long run this will make our joy full, because the Writings define genuine love as feeling the joy of another, as joy in oneself. (See *Divine Love and Wisdom* 47)

So far we have only covered the guiding principles of forming genuine friendships with others and being a true friend to the Lord. And it is easy to see what a wonderful thing genuine friendship is. But we find in the Writings that along with friendship comes responsibility, accountability and consequences, so they are not to be entered into lightly.

We are told that there are basically two kinds of friendships – interior and

exterior. Exterior friendships can be entered into with just about anybody, for mutual benefit, enjoyment and recreation. (See *True Christian Religion* 446) But interior friendships should only be formed with those who are in good, and we are told to be wary. (*Ibid.* 449) Some of us may find ourselves repelled by this idea. Aren't those in disorder the ones who need us the most?

Didn't the Lord also teach us, "*love your enemies, bless those who curse you, and do good to those who hate you . . . For if you love [only] those who love you, what reward have you?*" (*Matthew* 5:44,46; *Faith* 21) Yes, the Lord did

teach us that, and we should love our enemies and seek to help them in any way that we can. But the caveat is that we should not blindly get sucked into an interior friendship with them. To enter into a deep and interior friendship with a person in open disorder, without regard for the evils they are involved in, produces a serious risk.

If we don't use the truths we learned to discern between what's good and evil, then we slowly become numb to those evils to the point where they no longer are repulsive to us. In this state we gradually allow the line between right and wrong to fade and start to mix good and truth with evil and falsity.

In *True Christian Religion* these types of interior friendship formed without discrimination are quite dangerous to the "good" person. For in the next life they have a very tough time breaking this interior bond with the "evil" and are compared to "a sheep tied to a wolf, or a goose to a fox, or a dove to a hawk." Or even "like kid goats with leopards . . . kissing each other and swearing to maintain their former friendship." (See *True Christian Religion* 448)

So we are instructed only to love the good in our friends, and be careful that we don't get tricked into loving, condoning and supporting the evil. Obviously we can't determine someone's interior state but we must use prudence and make the best judgment we can.

Now let's turn our attention back to the beautiful story of David and Jonathan's friendship for illustration. Jonathan was the son of King Saul, and David was the anointed king-to-be by the Lord. This meant that if David became king, Jonathan would never succeed his father Saul on the throne. And yet Jonathan saw the goodness in David and recognized the evil in Saul –

The first step in forming any genuine friendship is to study the Word and distinguish between what is acceptable conduct and what is not. How many people today would consider that a prerequisite for any genuine friendship?

If we don't use the truths we learned to discern between what's good and evil, then we slowly become numb to those evils to the point where they no longer are repulsive to us.

his own flesh and blood.

So he was willing to give up the right to be king, and bow to the Lord's will and support the Lord's goodness that he found in David. He was even willing to risk his own life – “to lay down his life for his friend” – if necessary. (*I Samuel 20*)

We are told that their souls were tied or knit together. Why? Because they shared a mutual love of the same good; they both were striving to serve the Lord's will. And in the covenant they swore together before the Lord, the criteria of their deep and interior

friendship became evident.

Jonathan said: “*The Lord judge between you and me . . . forever.*” This was not a friendship entered into blindly. It was based on faith in the Lord's Word, and was to be judged in accordance with the truth. It might have been said, “You are my friend if you do whatever the Lord commands you.”

By contrast from this deep bond of friendship, to the point that their souls were knit together and they loved each other as their own soul, it becomes evident how dangerous it would be to have your soul tied or knit to someone in evil. Because if you allow the evils of a friend to be enmeshed with the good qualities of the Lord in yourself, it will be extraordinarily difficult to rip this fabric apart in the next life.

So as we all strive to form those genuine friendships with those around us that we all treasure, let's remember to separate personality from character and learn to love only what is good in the person. This means that we must first learn the truth, then shun evils as sins, and finally do good to our neighbor.

In this way we will form genuine lasting friendships based on mutual good, trust and respect, and become a true friend of the Lord by doing what He has commanded us – loving one another as He has loved us. We will be transformed into a fruitful branch of the vine, and then we will no longer be called just servants but friends – because living the truth of the Ten

So we are instructed only to love the good in our friends, and be careful that we don't get tricked into loving, condoning and supporting the evil.

Commandments will set us free.

“*You are my friends, if you do whatever I command you.*” So if we keep the covenant on our tablet we can be assured we will be the type of friend to others that we hope they will be to us – supportive of the good qualities and not condoning or being accepting of the evil ones. This is the type of friend who will allow the evils and fruitless branches or behaviors to be pruned away so that the good qualities can become more fruitful and prolific. (cf. *John 15:2*)

Perhaps the Lord best sums up all these teachings on forming genuine friendships with one last bit of advice contained in the Golden Rule: “*Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.*” (*Matthew 7:12*) Amen.



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#### OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY

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#### HEAVENLY MARRIAGE

This term, which is also peculiar to the Writings, is interiorly descriptive of a reciprocal conjunction of good and truth, or of the will and the understanding, which has its origin in the union or marriage of love and wisdom in the Lord. The heavenly marriage is effected in those only who have been regenerated, and it takes place in the rational of the intellectual proprium. Essentially it is a union in which love or good from the Lord received in the new will inspires life into truths in the understanding and directs them to uses, and in which those truths in their turn give form and quality to that love.

The details are complicated, but the basic idea is that good from the Lord received from within by the internal way is brought into conjunction with truth received from without, from the Word, by the external way, that is, through the senses. We note that this union, which descends into ultimates in the mind, is preceded by a union entirely internal which initiates conjunction, and to which betrothal corresponds. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 3952, 2803.)

# General Church Religion Lessons and the General Church

*Sarah Bruell Odhner*

Adapted from a Theta Alpha Luncheon Address, October 9, 2015

This article presents outcomes of a study on General Church Religion Lessons, a program that provided weekly religion lessons for 500-600 children affiliated with the General Church from 1940 to 1990.<sup>1</sup>

The program was the primary mission of Theta Alpha, an alumnae association of the Academy Girls School, for 50 years. The goal of the women who started and sustained the program was to build the General Church through personal contact with isolated families.

My study explored Religion Lessons within the framework of New Church education, the broader context of the sociology of religion, and women's changing roles in society. I will be sharing the findings of sociological studies on ways in which religion is passed from one generation to the next, as well as research findings that shed light on ways in which General Church Religion Lessons were important for the growth of the General Church.

Friendship networks  
developed within  
religious organizations  
... support and sustain  
the religious values  
that are taught at home.

Cornwall, 1998; Hargrove, 1979

## **Transfer of Religion from One Generation to Another – a Sociological Perspective**

Sociologist Peter Berger suggests that

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<sup>1</sup> This speech is based on research undertaken for my Master of Arts thesis, *Establish the Work of Our Hands: General Church Religion Lessons 1940-1990*, Bryn Athyn College, 2015. The complete thesis is online at [www.bitly.com/ThetaAlphaGCRL](http://www.bitly.com/ThetaAlphaGCRL).

the transfer of religion from one generation to another “hangs on the thin thread of conversation” between parent and child, teacher and student.<sup>2</sup>

When conversations are few and far between this thread is weak, but when woven into the fabric of daily life it becomes strong enough to survive the challenges of adulthood.

Sociologists of religion have demonstrated that a person’s religious ideas are primarily shaped by family and friends. Of these, family is the most important. Children witness parents practicing religion, and as they grow up they are introduced into supportive religious communities and protected from influences opposing these views. Parents monitor

friendships, choose schools, take children to church or Sunday school and encourage the development of devotional habits like prayer.

In studying how people acquire and fall away from faith Marie Cornwall says: “The more central religion is in the family, the more central it becomes in...a child’s worldview.”<sup>3</sup>

Statements such as this led me to investigate whether supporting parents in teaching their children religion at home resulted in an increase in the percentage of children who joined the General Church as adults. Although lack of data prevented me from establishing a definitive answer, evidence pointed to the program having a positive impact on General Church membership.

Friends are another important influence in the formation of religious identity. As children become aware of different ways of thinking, they need to know others who share their beliefs in order to see them as plausible and to embrace them as adults. Adults continue to need friendships with others who believe as they do. Sociologists use the number of friends a person has in a church as an indicator of whether or not a person is likely to remain a church member. The more friends a person has, the more likely it is

Decisions to disaffiliate from a church often have less to do with a church’s doctrine than with a person’s sense of social belonging and his or her recent experiences.

Hoge, 1988

2 Berger, Peter L. (1967) *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*, New York: Doubleday and Company.

3 Cornwall, Marie. (1988) “The Influence of Three Agents of Religious Socialization: Family, Church, and Peers.” In *The Religion and Family Connection: Social Science Perspectives*, ed. Darwin L. Thomas. Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University. pp. 207–31.

With a view to growing the General Church W.F. Pendleton proposed, “that the sphere of the Church be in the home; that there be New Church day-schools, and thus that the children be kept in the sphere of the Church, in the home, in the school, and in their social life, until they reach adult age.”

Pendleton, 1899

that he or she will continue to belong.

With this in mind, I looked at New Church growth efforts. The General Church was founded in 1897, more than 100 years after the Writings were given. Reflecting on previous New Church growth initiatives, its founders observed that newcomers struggled to reconcile New Church beliefs with contradicting childhood beliefs. In light of that, they decided that the best growth would be realized by educating children in New Church schools and communities.

### **Establishment of General Church Religion Lessons**

At its founding, the General Church identified “isolated” members as meriting support. Funds were set aside for ministers to visit isolated members in hopes that the infant church would

grow. In 1923 Elizabeth Simons Jungerich proposed that Theta Alpha lend its support to isolated families by developing educational resources for children.

In 1940 her proposal finally sprang into existence. In fact the program started so suddenly that families who responded to an advertisement placed in *New Church Education* magazine requested lessons that were not yet written, funded or staffed. Women felt a strong call to the useful service of nurturing children and their parents, of encouraging children to develop a relationship with the Word.

Almost immediately the Rev. Harold Cranch volunteered to help write lessons, and the General Church agreed to cover lesson printing costs from funds for the isolated. In 1946 the program was brought under the joint leadership of Theta Alpha and the General Church. This leadership continued until 1990, when lessons were placed under the auspices of the newly formed General Church Office of Education.

### **Impact of Lessons on the General Church**

In order to assess the program’s impact I surveyed program participants. I received responses from 251 individuals consisting of volunteers, parents of children who received lessons, and adults who completed lessons as children.

Of the 220 who completed lessons, 67% joined the General Church as adults. Of those who received lessons, 78% said the lessons had a positive impact on their choice to join the Church.

I looked for factors that might modify this result, for example family worship habits, church attendance, lesson routines and attendance at Academy schools. The only factor that produced a different result was attending Bryn Athyn College, which yielded 74% membership. By comparison, main-line churches in the United States feel they have achieved a positive result if 50% of children raised in a church join as adults. Survey results revealed additional program benefits, such as friendships among volunteers and increases in parent-child religious conversations, which we will now discuss.

### **Impact of Lessons on Volunteers**

The women who volunteered for the program developed peer friendships, found meaningful roles within the General Church, and were connected with the international church. Volunteers reported:

- I was new and wanted to help.
- I was asked by someone.
- I loved working with the other wonderful volunteers.
- I loved hearing from the kids.
- I established a real rapport with the mother of the boys I wrote to.
- It was our lifeline to the church. (They became valued contributors while caring for children at home.)
- I wanted to help isolated children develop a love of the stories in the Word as a foundation for loving the three-fold Word as adults.
- I loved serving the Church, feeling I was helping out, reaching the isolated with valuable church material for children.
- I loved knowing I played a small part in a . . . worldwide, church organization. I felt grounded and useful.
- I was helping with something important.

Religion Lessons knit together women and families around the globe. Theta Alpha chapters took responsibility for specific tasks, giving women meaningful reasons to work together. The universal nature of women's experiences allowed them to support each other despite differences of age, culture and great distance. Older women nurtured young mothers.

Women said:

- We . . . supported one another. Several women I worked with were older than I, and grew to be mentors for me.

- I worked with older women who were nurturing of me as a young mother. I could bring my baby with me.
- I loved receiving letters from my students.
- One of the biggest benefits was feeling connected.

### **Impact of Lessons on Families**

Religion Lessons had an impact on the parents of the children receiving them in three important ways.

Contact between leaders, teachers and parents nurtured adult friendships.

Lessons reminded parents to give their children religious instruction, and also educated parents, increasing their confidence to teach.

Lessons provided a springboard for family worship and church.

Parents said:

- We loved the time spent together.
- My children enjoyed reading and discussing the stories.
- Our children learned stories of the Word through parent-child activities.
- Lessons gave us support to instruct our children.

### **Lessons gave us a framework to work with.**

Above all, lessons *nurtured* parents, giving them the feeling of being cradled in the arms of the General Church, a church which *cared* for them, which cared *about* them even when they felt far away. As one parent said: “Receiving the envelope in the mail encouraged me to do a Word-based activity. I don’t think we would have done so much based on the Word had it not been for the structure of receiving all we needed in that envelope.”

One measure sociologists use to predict whether people will remain in a church as adults is the distance they live from their church of origin. People living within 5-10 miles often join as adults. Those further afield tend to disaffiliate. Theta Alpha *defied all odds* by connecting with people living an *average* of 219 miles from a church, and in some cases more than 1,000 miles away. *This was a remarkable feat!* As one parent said, “It reminded me in a very isolated situation that there was a church out there that cared about me and my family. I decided to become an official member of the General Church at this time in my life.”

### **Impact on Adults Who Completed Lessons as Children**

Religion lessons had a threefold impact on children. They occasioned religious conversations with parents and teachers, connected them with church members outside their families, and played an important role in their developing religious identity during childhood. As children grew older and

attended the Academy schools they also felt secure, knowing they would fit in.

In recalling time spent doing lessons, one survey respondent remembered “hearing stories from the Word with my mother.” Another testified having become a member of the church “because of those lessons and my Mom spending the time with us . . . and her making religion part of life.” The church that meant so much to parents also “made an effort to have us participate.”

While conversations with parents are important during childhood, conversations with others outside the family are especially important during adolescence. One person reminisced: “I loved receiving letters from Rev. Karl Alden. He brought out an affectional side of religion which brought it alive.”

Contact with corresponding teachers connected children with the General Church, which was especially important for girls, who thrive on social interaction. The average size of families receiving lessons was four children. Teachers gave children from busy families important attention.

When asked at what age they first identified as New Church, 58% of girls said before age five. For boys, 38% first identified as New Church during their teen years while reading the Writings for themselves or attending Academy Secondary Schools. Many who received Religion Lessons are active church members today and live in church communities, attend services of worship and send their children to New Church schools.

Women are natural experts on raising children. Under the flag of Theta Alpha, the women of the General Church used their expertise to support parents, especially mothers, in passing New Church ideas from one generation to another.

The lessons developed by Theta Alpha continue to have an impact on the General Church today as the forerunners of most children’s material available today. They fostered the development of children’s songs, books and pictures, many of which have been up-cycled and now take the form of YouTube videos, Jacob’s Ladder lessons and Youth Journey Programs that continue to support the General Church today. I invite you to take a look at [education.newchurch.org](http://education.newchurch.org).



**Sarah B. Odhner** has had a lifelong association with the New Church. An educator, she taught Sunday school for 30 years, also taught at the Oak Arbor School in Rochester, Michigan, and currently works at Bryn Athyn Church School and develops religious education programs for General Church Education. General Church Religion Lessons were an important part of her own education in England and led her to explore their impact on the General Church. Sarah and her husband, the Rev. Grant

Odhner, have six children and three grandchildren. They live in Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania. Contact: [sarah.odhner@gmail.com](mailto:sarah.odhner@gmail.com)



Joy Cole

## The Rev. Christopher Augustus Barber

*Changed by Faith – and Paying it Forward*

Chris Barber had a loose relationship with faith growing up in New Jersey. He attended a Methodist Church with his grandmother for a while, but when she stopped going he did too, becoming “functionally an atheist.” A series of providential experiences led him to Bryn Athyn College where he found his calling – to be a minister and teacher – and also found his wife.

“My life and perspective really were changed by faith,” he says – the faith he discovered at the College. “I felt more alive and like there was a purpose to life that was intangible.”

He admits he may have been a bit obnoxious about it at first. “I was so startled and shaken and awakened and enlivened by my connection with God that I had a hard time keeping it to myself.”

His introduction to the New Church came from his step-father, Andrew H. Bown, who had married his mother, Rosalyn Barber.

While at college in Bryn Athyn he met Annika Fitzpatrick. They married in 2010, Annika is now a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Pennsylvania. They are the parents of Jaiell Spencer Barber who is 12 years old.

Since his ordination in 2013 he has taught Religion in the Academy Secondary Schools.

His story begins in Woodbury, New Jersey, where he attended public school and participated in musical theater and choir. He also developed a strong interest in history.

In junior high school he started volunteering at the Gloucester County Historical Society – the youngest member in its history. He helped with tours and archiving, and began doing his own research on the side.



Chris and Annika Barber with their son, Jaiell

He was stationed in the museum's basement during open houses, where the Betsy Ross Kitchen was located, along with archaeological exhibits. He eventually moved up to greet visitors in the Sampler Room, filled with various ABC samplers.

He loved his time there, including doing independent research into deeds in the County Clerk's office, next to the high school. He would pick a random deed and follow the paperwork of the property from its most recent to its earliest record. "Many of the research skills and stamina I have today come from my research in the County Clerk's office."

Chris participated in People to People Student Ambassadors in 2003, visiting England, France, Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and Switzerland. His favorite place was Meiringen, Switzerland.

But, he admits, he was not a very motivated student for a long time. "I loved to learn and socialize, but didn't so much enjoy the assigned work. I didn't really take charge of my own education until late college. Theological School was the first time I felt 100% invested in my work. It was a new and wonderful feeling."

After his mother married Andrew Bown he became connected with the New Church and tried out Bryn Athyn College "because I liked the people." He only intended to be here for a short time before transferring to study political science and broadcast journalism, but ended up staying "because I liked religion."

"I owe a lot," he says, "to the first class I took, Religion 101, with Scott Frazier. His teaching continues to influence me and manifest itself in my own classroom management and demeanor."

The most perspective-changing course he took was *Divine Love and Wisdom* from the Rev. Prescott Rogers. "His grasp of degrees forever shifted my understanding of the world around me and the Word."

"My absolute all-around favorite course in College was Egyptian Art and Religion with Ed Gyllenhaal. It was a course on Egyptian magic, and it was my

most fascinating study in college.”

He decided early on in his first term of college to pursue Theological School. “It was within the first two weeks of my freshman year at Bryn Athyn that I decided I wanted to study the doctrines for a living. How exactly I would use that study wasn’t that important; I expected I’d sort it out later. I recognized the value of the Heavenly Doctrine, that people’s lives could be absolutely changed for the better with an awareness and acceptance of them.” This happened in Scott Frazier’s 101 class.

The Rev. Grant Schnarr’s book, *You Can Believe*, “primed me to receive *New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* with full and eager acceptance. I use excerpts from his book in my teaching at the Academy today.”

What were the major influences in his choosing to become a minister?

He goes back to his roots. “I spent my youngest years as a tag-along to a Methodist Church in South Jersey. My grandmother attended and I went with her. I didn’t like it much because it was boring and she was on the church financial committee which meant she would be there forever after church helping to count money and keep the books. All the grownups sounded like they were having a blast, but I was not, as I was the only child there, left to amuse myself.

“When my grandmother stopped going to church I stopped going too, and really a kind of religious apathy set in, followed by antagonism. I didn’t like religion, I thought nothing of God, and was functionally an atheist.

“Over time, after the death of a friend in 2004, a kind of misery set in as I got to thinking about death, and what awaits us after we die. I fondly recalled the movie, *What Dreams May Come*, starring Robin Williams and Annabella Sciorra, and I wished it was reality but knew it was fiction. Little did I know at the time that the story has Swedenborgian connections.”

Through a roundabout way he became connected with a Christian youth group in Connecticut called Musicon. “In 2005 I toured with them for a few weeks up and down the East Coast, visiting churches and being part of their ministry, and I was moved by the other kids’ and counselors’ faith and sincerity, and I wanted that too. The director, the Rev. Jon Colegrove, prayed with me one night in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, and that really set the wheels in motion for a newfound acceptance of God and faith in Him and His Word.”

Back home he started attending an Episcopal Church called Christ Church and eventually was baptized there by the Rev. Fr. Brian K. Burgess. Jon Colegrove stood for him as his godfather, along with two family friends Mike and Darcie Sanchez. That’s when he began to feel his life changed by faith.

“When I arrived in Bryn Athyn and read *You Can Believe*, when I started *New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine*, and when I engaged in discourse with Scott Frazier on the doctrines of the New Church, I felt spiritually at

home. I couldn't believe people actually believed in something as powerful and perfect as the Heavenly Doctrine. And I knew that other people would be relieved to learn these things as well.

"I had a history that led right up to my time in Bryn Athyn, some ups and downs, but all the time, with every incident and thought, I was being prepared to accept the 'call' to ministry."

He decided to become a minister within the first two weeks of college in 2006. "In hindsight," he says, "it's a little crazy that I made that decision so soon after arriving in town. But it's a decision that stuck! I re-affirmed my decision many times. First when I declared my major (Religion), then when I applied to Theological School, when I became a candidate, and finally at ordination. It sounds absurd, but really, it just felt obvious at the time, and has felt right ever since."

Among his key experiences in Theological School that affected how he approaches the ministry, he lists:

- Mark Carlson's Counseling classes which "helped me develop a sense of empathy and put away my judgmental nature. Seek first to understand, and then realize that maybe that's all you'll be able to do. Very humbling class."
- Experiential Learning and understanding the complexity of church governance and pastoral presence. "The Academy and General Church's financial struggles forced me to confront a lot of my own anger issues and learn to be proactive rather than allow myself to feel like a victim. I focused my Theological School Valedictory on Overcoming Obstacles."
- Practicum in Pittsburgh under his uncle, the Rev. Christopher Bown, "showed me that I love teaching! I never expected that."
- "In my final term of Theological School, I entered the Religion Department as a long-term substitute, and it showed me that I thoroughly enjoy teaching and spending time with high school students."

While teaching in the Boys and Girls Schools of the Academy of the New Church, he has also done some pastoral counseling, "but mostly my job is to teach and be a positive presence."

In the classroom and chapel, he says, "I tend to fancy myself a bit of a raincloud. I enjoy talking about humanity's challenges and how we all need to be honest with ourselves about how difficult life can be sometimes."

His favorite themes are: reluctant prophets, dragging our feet to service and change, betrayal and repentance.

He says he always has a positive message at the end, "but I think that life

can be really hard sometimes, and in the same way as the *Psalms* express raw emotion of every kind, students should have a similar homiletic experience. It reflects their reality and thus is affirming of their lives in a way that sheer optimism never could be.”

Among the highlights of his career so far are:

- Conducting a doctrinal study on transgenderism
- Presenting the Nicodemus Tension (see *New Church Life*, May/June, 2016, page 222)
- Receiving an Honorary Diploma from ANC

“I feel comfortable in the classroom,” he says. “I feel at home and this means I can focus less on myself and more on the material and the students who are present.

I’ve managed to craft four separate curricula (*Freshman Gospel of John*, *Sophomore Life After Death*, *Junior Introduction to New Church Doctrine*, and *Senior Marriage and Relationships*) and have been part of writing an online makeup course on the Ten Commandments.”

He makes it a priority to continue developing his knowledge in each of the subjects he teaches. “This has kept me sharp and helped me to re-invest in my work with regularity. It’s refreshing”

He finds that being surrounded by colleagues and in touch with clergy “who are so knowledgeable, confident and experienced is a double-edged sword. On the one hand it’s sometimes hard to feel adequate in the presence of greatness. On the other, it keeps me ever-striving to be better. I improve as a result of the perceived gap between others and myself.”

Among his hobbies is an Academy address project, working on collecting all addresses of individuals affiliated with the early Academy movement between 1881 and 1900. “It’s an odd project, but has been going well and has been a lot of fun.”

He is also interested in his Barber family history. “We go back to slave roots in southern Maryland. I have reconnected with family and others connected to my family down there, and have done research both online in paid databases, and in plantations, museums and libraries in Maryland in an attempt to gain a better understanding of my Barber history.”

He really enjoys researching obscure figures in New Church history. “Many New Church ‘worthies’ have already been documented, and I like looking through old letters in the archives and in *New Church Life* in search of some fascinating person lost in the quagmire of history. I’ve slowly been building a database of these people and will sometime release it for public use.

“Not all figures that are interesting to me are obscure. My two favorite characters are the Revs. John Clowes of Manchester and George Field of Battle

Creek. Their lives and ministries are fascinating to me, and their memoirs are really fun to read.”

His interests extend to local history as well. “Wherever I am, I like to know what it used to be like. I like especially the history of houses: when was it built, what happened here, who lived here, what was life like here? If a building no longer stands, I’m more likely to be interested in it and will lament its demolition. I tend to focus on what was rather than what is, and I enjoy that.”

He also loves documentaries – especially the history of places, people and things. “It doesn’t matter what it is or how recent or distant in history it took place. I consume two to three documentaries a week.

“I like old books, especially books that belonged to interesting people or played a significant role in history.”

As for art, “I have a very active mind which mostly manifests in bizarre art. I have created many digital moving creations, some audio experiments and a few short videos. I also enjoy manipulating pictures in ways to create new and absurd items. I have recently tried my hand at colorizing old photos, and that’s really hard but very fun. I also dabble in painting and sketching. None of what I make is objectively good, but it is fun.” Chris has dreams of someday going back to school for art so he can better express the images that cross his mind.

Among favorite books that have influenced him he lists:

- Albert Camus’ *The Stranger*. “I read this book in high school in one sitting and have read it once a year ever since. I love the way this book probes the concept of purpose and intent. It calls to mind the questions, ‘are we always in control’ and ‘what is culpability?’ These are very important questions in the Swedenborgian worldview.”
- George Orwell’s *1984*. “I first read this in high school and fell in love with the way it treats power and dominion. ‘The object of power is power.’ The value of history. ‘Who controls the past controls the future; who controls the present controls the past.’ The inarticulable value of language. *Newspeak* was a language designed to control how people could think. Very terrifying and powerful lessons in the *Appendix to 1984*. The questions that it raises regarding agency and autonomy.”
- *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*. “I encountered this book a few years ago, and I’ve never felt the distancing nature of time so nullified. It felt like I knew him personally, like he was talking to me. I felt like he wrote what he did because he thought I’d find it interesting. I especially loved his treatment on the Virtues. I include segments of this in my Junior Religion course.”

He lists favorite and influential movies too:

- William Peter Blatty's *The Exorcist*. "I love how this movie treats the power of good and the power of evil as real forces rather than imagined ones. In the Exorcist series good always triumphs."
- Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange*. "This movie is a fantastic essay on the value of human freedom, and how those things done under compulsion do not stick. It's also visually stunning and has a deeply emotional soundtrack."
- *The Searchers* starring John Wayne. "This movie confronts in what I find to be a powerful way the misery of prejudice and how it can hurt even the most intimate of relationships. It is also a fantastic view of persevering through loss to preserve the good things that remain."

Chris is studying Human Sexuality at the Master's level at Widener University "to better understand the dynamics of how the ultimates of conjugal love serve as a natural foundation for the marriage of Goodness and Truth in the Lord, and how we are to help people who have experienced sexual trauma. Also, I hope to understand how big and various the world really is in order to be able to be comfortable working with as many people as possible.

"Sex and sexuality are deeply important subjects, but we have a tendency to brush these conversations aside as invasive or even offensive. I hope to bring a critical and compassionate mind and approach to these subjects, while staying true to doctrine."

His favorite passage from the Writings is *Divine Love and Wisdom* 331:

Useful functions for the support of our bodies have to do with its nourishment, clothing, shelter, recreation and pleasure, protection, and the preservation of its state. The useful things created for physical nourishment are all the members of the plant kingdom that we eat and drink, such as fruits, grapes, seeds, vegetables, and grains. Then there are all the members of the animal kingdom that we eat, such as steers, cows, calves, deer, sheep, kids, goats, lambs, and the milk they give, as well as many kinds of bird and fish.

The useful things created for clothing our bodies also come in abundance from these two kingdoms, as do those for our shelter and for our recreation and pleasure, for our protection, and for the preservation of our state. I will not enumerate these because they are familiar, so listing them would only take up space.

There are of course many things that we do not find useful, but these extras do not prevent usefulness. In fact, they enable useful functions to continue. Then there are abuses of functions; but again, the abuse of a function does not eliminate the useful function, just as the falsification of something true does not destroy the truth except for the people who are doing the falsifying.

You can read more about the work Chris has done with each of his courses at [www.chrisbarber.info](http://www.chrisbarber.info). You may contact him at: [chris.barber@ancss.org](mailto:chris.barber@ancss.org)

# Considering Conscience: Finding Relevance in the Story of Balaam

*The Rev. Christopher A. Barber*

*Lessons: Numbers 5:1-35;  
New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine 131, 133*

**T**he *Book of Numbers* reveals a fascinating snippet of the life of a man named Balaam. Balaam was a soothsayer or a sorcerer (really a wizard) from Syria, and the story of him and his donkey is compelling and confusing, but the Heavenly Doctrines have revealed a new detail about the literal story. This information, coupled with the teachings on the internal sense, reveals a powerful depiction of a person's conscience hard at work. Before we look at that, however, it is important that we have a clear idea of the main things leading up to this strange event.

Balak, king of Moab, and the elders of a neighboring land, Midian, have become greatly concerned at the recent settlement of the Israelites on the Plains of Moab, which was just on the other side of the Jordan, where Israel was gearing up to take the Promised Land. Both Balak and the elders are terrified of what might happen to them at the hands of Israel. The text says they are "exceedingly afraid" and "sick with dread." (*Numbers 22:3*) They see the size of Israel, and fear for their crops, their homes and their lives.

So Balak hatched a plan: There was a sorcerer that the king had heard about and he knew that he did quality work. If the sorcerer could be hired to come and curse Israel, Balak the king could launch a military attack and then maybe, just maybe, Israel would be weakened to a point where they could be defeated. Moving forward with this plan, Balak sent messengers, payment in hand, to summon the sorcerer. (Either they were desperate enough to send payment upfront, or what is more likely, Balaam's reputation as a competent wizard preceded him.)

When the messengers arrived, they delivered Balak's message:

Please come at once, curse this people for me, for they are too mighty for me.

Perhaps I shall be able to defeat them and drive them out of the land, for I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed. (*Numbers* 22:5-6)

Balaam invites the messengers to stay for the night. And these were no ordinary messengers, but men of status called elders. They are ambassadors sent to impress Balaam, and to impress upon him how dire the situation is. Even so, he acknowledges that he must first consult with the Lord.

God does not give permission, however, for Balaam to go and curse the multitude of Israel. Instead, He gives a simple but powerful revelation about them: “You shall not go with them; you shall not curse the people, for they are blessed.” (*Ibid.* 22:12) It doesn’t get any simpler than that, does it? There is nothing unclear about that message. All the information Balaam needed to make a decision about this request from King Balak was revealed with one sentence:

1. You shall not go with [the messengers]
2. You shall not curse the people
3. They are blessed

And so, when Balaam woke up in the morning, he turned down their request and sent the elders on their way.

But Israel is still around and Balak is still afraid of Israel and refuses to take no for an answer. He sends messengers once more, only this time he sends more people than before – princes of higher status than the elders from the first trip. The princes deliver this message:

Please let nothing hinder you from coming to me; for I will certainly honor you greatly, and I will do whatever you say to me. Therefore please come, curse this people for me. (*Ibid.* 22:16-17)

Balaam, as before, doesn’t give an immediate answer. He says he will consult with the Lord once more. But why? What more could the Lord say? Wasn’t He already clear enough the first time when He said: “You shall not go with them; you shall not curse the people, for they are blessed.”

What Balaam should say to the princes might seem very obvious to us, but the tension is now starting to build. What compelled Balaam to consult with the Lord a second time? Was it honor? Was he swayed by the impressive princes before him? Was it riches? Or maybe, no matter how many times a request was made, this was standard protocol. Who can say?

Whatever the motivation, Balaam does consult with the Lord a second time, and this time he is actually given permission to go! “If the men come to call you, rise and go with them; but only the word which I speak to you – that you shall do.” (*Ibid.* 22:20). So here we have it! God has given Balaam his blessing under one condition: Balaam may only perform pre-approved deeds. (Something tells me that cursing Israel will not be among those pre-approved

deeds. But no matter!) Balaam wakes up, saddles his donkey, and goes with the princes of Moab.

Strangely, in the very next verse, it says that “God’s anger was aroused *because he went.*” (Emphasis mine). Isn’t that odd? Didn’t He *just* give permission to go? And it’s not like Balaam did anything that was out of line; it says that God was angry “because he went.” Was God being fickle? Was He playing games with Balaam? Was He being unfair or unjust – trying to trap him?

How often do we feel that about the Lord? That He sets up a system for us and when we try to live within it we find that it is a challenge. “Is He trying to trick me? Is He setting me up for failure?” Of course not! Even though we can’t tell from the story, we must always be careful and never attribute pettiness, meanness, unjustness or anger to the Lord, no matter *what* appears to be happening in the text. Something else must be going on – something we can’t see just yet.

Because God’s anger was aroused, He sent an angel to stand in the way of Balaam and the donkey. The angel stood firm with his sword drawn in his hand. Balaam didn’t see this. He didn’t see the danger in front of him. His donkey did, however, and for the preservation of her master, she turned and walked off the path. Balaam was furious about the detour, and so he hit her and made her get back on the path.

This happened a second time, only instead of avoiding the angel by walking off the path, for the preservation of her master, the donkey walked up close to a wall. This would have been fine – if Balaam’s foot had not been crushed in the process. And so Balaam was even madder than before and he hit the donkey once more.

This happened a third time! An angel stood in the path, but this time, they were in a place where there could be no turning to the right or to the left, and so, *for the preservation of her master*, she stopped and she lay down right beneath Balaam. By this point he was furious and hit her with his staff. Then, the miraculous happens, and the Lord allowed Balaam to hear the words of the donkey, and the following exchange occurs:

“What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?”

And Balaam said to the donkey, “Because you have abused me. I wish there were a sword in my hand, for now I would kill you!”

So the donkey said to Balaam, “Am I not your donkey on which you have ridden, ever since I became yours, to this day? Was I ever disposed to do this to you?”

And he said, “No.” (*Ibid.* 22:28-30)

With this recognition of the faithfulness of the donkey, the Lord revealed

the angel who stood in the path with his sword drawn.

Can you imagine how that must have felt? There is a message here: This donkey was looking out for Balaam, recognized the danger ahead, and made immediate changes to ensure his safety. When the danger became apparent to Balaam, he was overcome at the sight, and threw himself on the ground before the angel, who then spoke these words:

Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come out to stand against you, because your way is perverse before Me. The donkey saw Me and turned aside from Me these three times. If she had not turned aside from me, surely I would also have killed you by now, and let her live. (*Ibid.* 22:32)

The angel was there because Balaam's way was perverse before the Lord. Why? What did he do to provoke such anger? This story could be lost on us, and we'd be left to speculate. Thankfully, the Lord has revealed information in the Heavenly Doctrines, which makes this story significant and personal.

According to the Writings for the New Church, the Lord's anger towards Balaam was not unjustified or out of place and it should not have come as a surprise to Balaam. *Apocalypse Explained* 140 reveals the missing piece of the puzzle: "When Balaam rode upon the donkey, he continually meditated enchantments against the sons of Israel; *the riches with which he should be honored were in his mind.*"

There it is! The missing piece! The Lord's anger was aroused against the sorcerer because immediately as he set out on his journey, Balaam started rehearsing the very curses he was going to use against Israel, even though the Lord told him very clearly: "You shall not go with them; you shall not curse the people, for they are blessed." This is why the Lord sent the angel to block him.

These details help to understand the significance of what is going on in this story in the literal sense, which has application to who we are in our spirits and how we grow. In the story, there is a tension between what Balaam knows is right, and what he actually wants to do. To put it another way, there is a struggle between his head and his heart. His head says "obey the Lord" and yet his heart is so set on riches that he rehearses spells against Israel in direct defiance of the Lord. Thankfully, Balaam had his donkey to keep him safe.

That's what we're seeing here. This scene depicts the inner workings of an individual who is struggling in temptation. Balaam himself stands in for the will part, or the desire of a person, and the donkey stands in for the intellectual part, or the understanding of a person. If we look at it this way, then the story is incredibly relevant to our experience of life.

The Lord designed the will of a person with the intention that it should do good things, and He designed the understanding of a person so that it will receive truth to shape and direct the goodness of the will. In a sense, the will, which is the driver, rides the understanding, which is the donkey.

As individuals, we learn truths all the time. Think of the image of the Lord standing at the door and knocking, letting us know that He is always there, waiting and wanting to be there for us and to be in our lives. This knocking is His truth in our lives. It is a constant invitation to good living, and without it, without His truth, all hope of salvation and good living would be lost. And so, His truth is everywhere.

The best place to find it, of course, is from the Lord Himself, in His Word. But we can also learn by means of attending church, doctrinal classes, conversations with priests and fellow believers – even modern philosophies and yes, we even bump into the Lord's truth in the electronic media. The Lord is offering His truths through countless avenues, so that we can be inspired by them and our hearts might be changed by Him.

Consider what is said in *New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* 131:

When someone knows the truths of faith and grasps them in his own manner, and so comes to will and do them, then he develops a conscience.

These truths, these things which we learn from the Word, church and others, enter into our understanding, and insofar as they are accepted to some degree, they become a part of us and they help to form what is called a conscience.

And what is a conscience? I think immediately of Jiminy Cricket, that little voice saying that this thing is good and this thing is bad. Sometimes instead of a thought it is a bodily feeling of repulsion – maybe it's felt in the belly or in the chest. If the thought or feeling is trying to promote good living, then it is filled by truth and it is the conscience. In this story, we get to see conscience in action.

It is useful to see how the conscience functions in the person. There is a common misconception that we are all born with a conscience and that we merely need to activate it, or find or uncover it. But we are actually born into ignorance, and must grow into knowledges – to come into an understanding of the world around us. The conscience that we get is concerned with those knowledges and those truths.

So, here we have Balaam – who is motivated by honors and riches, who is so blinded by that motivation that he does not see the angel on the road, threatening to kill him. The angel is not Divine vengeance, but it is instead an objective reality. It is a fatal truth that to live for this world alone is to live for oneself and not for the Lord, and leads to destruction – spiritual death. Fortunately, Balaam has some truth in his mind. He knows the Lord, consults with Him nightly, talks to Him, and learns from Him. Balaam has truth in his mind, even if his motivation is clouding his judgment. And so when his conscience, the donkey, sees what is happening, she turns to the side.

But Balaam, even though he knows that it is good and right to obey the Lord, tries to fight his understanding and beat it into submission in favor of his evil will – his desire to disobey the Lord for the purpose of becoming rich and highly honored.

This might happen to us sometimes, when we want something that we know is against the Lord's will. Perhaps we smother the thought that we should be obedient, but it creeps up again. How many times can we beat the donkey into submission before she dies? How many times can we put the Lord's truths aside before we can no longer hear them? How many times can we disobey the Lord's commandments in favor of our own selfish living? How many times can we ignore the very real truth that spiritual living saves and natural living condemns?

What if Balaam got off his donkey as she sat on the ground and charged forward on foot, effectively leaving all of the truths that he had learned behind?

We must stop from time to time and be grateful to the Good Lord that He has given us the ability to learn and understand His truths that lend new meaning and purpose to our lives. That we can rise above the thoughts of honors and riches in this world and can serve others in the things that we do. That we can love one another the way He has loved us. We must heed His Word so that we do not go marching to our destruction, but rather, that our eyes be opened to the reality that He is Good, and in Him we can have all things.

No one said it's easy all the time to obey the commands of the Lord, but that's why we have a capacity to understand the Lord's Truths, even before we truly love them.

When Balaam's eyes were opened, he saw the reality and humbled himself before it. The angel reminded him to be obedient, and he went on his way, and ultimately, in this he blessed Israel three times.

May we be inspired by the Lord's truths. May we come to understand them, be affected by them and live them. And may we be a blessing to the world the way Balaam was in this chapter of his life.

Amen.

# Growth Pains and Pleasures

*By the Rev. Frank S. Rose*

*Reviewed by Bronwen M. Henry*

Reading an advance copy of the Rev. Frank Rose's newest book I found myself captivated. Hearing an octogenarian's journey through church life was inspiring. In addition, all who know Frank Rose have witnessed his creativity, compassion and wisdom, and this book delivers all three.

In some ways this is essentially the story of one pastor's work, yet it is peppered with stories of camaraderie, and of the many lay people who attended, supported, led, donated and held the vision of the New Church. This book is a testament and reminder that the Church is made up of many people working together.

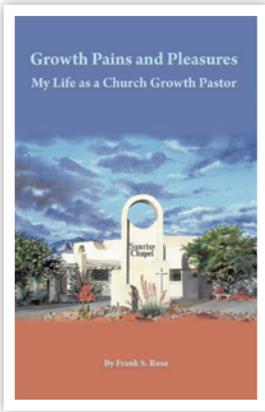
## **The Storyline**

How do you capture a life's work? One location at a time. Mr. Rose begins by taking you through his journey from schooling, to hearing his calling, to serving in various churches in the General Church of the New Jerusalem. He leads the reader through his professional experiences beginning in Colchester, England, to his time serving at the Carmel New Church (in Kitchener, Ontario, Canada) and the Bryn Athyn Church, and ultimately to his experience as the first full-time pastor in Tucson, Arizona (Sunrise Chapel).

## **The Core Thread**

Through the lens of one man's journey, the book offers unparalleled insight into the history of the General Church organization, offering readers a solid understanding of where our church stands today and how we arrived in this place. A core thread weaving throughout the book looks toward church growth.

Mr. Rose wrestles repeatedly with the question: "If the Church is so wonderful, why is it so small?" His answer might surprise and confront you; it may feel like a call to action. His perspective honors the history of the Church,



while offering insights about where we fall short and where we need to advance.

## Insights

Perhaps one of the more striking insights for me was Mr. Rose's rejection of the notion that his charisma led to the success of the church at Sunrise Chapel. Knowing him and his magnetism, it seemed to me that those qualities must have been key ingredients to his success. However, as he points out, he did not have this same level of success in Colchester nor in the Carmel Church, lending to his theory that the systems and structures we work in are as important – if not more

important – than the specific skills and talents of the people working within them.

Mr. Rose also urges us to move from the question of, "Are these people New Church?" to "How can we serve these people?" He explains that he was trained at a time when church was to offer "worship, instruction and New Church social life."

This has been evolving with time (thankfully), and now he casts a vision of a church that offers the following: worship, learning (from personal study and sharing since not all learning comes from an instructor), pastoral care (done by laity as well as clergy), community, spiritual growth and service to others.

## Broad Experiences

While reading Mr. Rose's book, I often found myself impressed by the breadth and depth of his experiences, as well as his tremendous impact. For instance, many readers may be surprised to learn that he began many of the camps still present in our church culture today: British Academy Summer School, Maple and Laurel. Also, of all the bishops who have ever led the General Church, he knew all but one! How many people can say that?

## Creativity

As an artist I found the thread about his creative work delightful. (Mr. Rose, who is an artist, painted a lovely watercolor of Sunrise Chapel, featured on the book's cover.) While reading, I found myself musing on the importance of cultivating creative outlets, in addition to the pastorate, for preventing burnout.

## Shortcomings

I found only one shortcoming to this rich narrative of one man's journey as a

church growth pastor: I wanted more. As a wife and mother, I found myself especially interested in his wife Louise's journey, and their journey as parents and how childrearing fit in with this work. Only occasionally did I find references to the balance of personal and public life.

Also, this book (as he acknowledges in the postscript) doesn't touch on the path of the international church outside of the United States and Europe. I hope that other pastors will feel called to write their own experiences and insights about the varied ways the Church is growing, and where we need to grow or evolve further.

### **What now?**

This book is not only a history, but also an invitation to look at ourselves as individuals and a church and do better. The narrative leads us to ask ourselves, "What now?" and "How can our organization's history inform our evolution?"

I would urge anyone reading this book to consider your own path in the General Church. Where have you witnessed areas of growth? Where have there been setbacks? Where could our church expand? How can we reform our systems to support growth? How can we reform ourselves of old habits holding us back?

While part of us may not want to hear what Mr. Rose has to say, I believe that if we are courageous and willing to hear the wisdom of his experience, we will find that there is an important message here for each of us.

This review would be incomplete without referencing the Epilogue. It is a must-read and a poignant call for each of us.

It was a delightful opportunity to get this broad view of one man's journey through the General Church. I was touched by Mr. Rose's humility and his sense of Providence along his path. He has clear trust in the Lord's guidance, seen in the unfolding of nearly a century of faithful New Church life and work.

With this broad view one can see the Divine leading, and how apparently serendipitous moments take their place as part of a powerful journey. It offers hope that one's own journey might have just such a beautiful thread of purpose and impact.

The breadth of experience, the humility with which it is written, the candor, the longing for insight, the honoring of the history and casting a vision for the future – all of these make for a book well worth reading for all who care about the past, present or future of the General Church.

Information: Order this book at *NewChristianResources.org*

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# Prayer's Role in the Salvation of Our Soul

*The Rev. Kurt P. Nemitz*

**D**o you go to your door and open it unless you hear someone knocking? Or do you randomly give something away unless someone asks for it first?

Doubtless this reality of human nature was in our Lord's mind when He said: "I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened." (*Luke 11:9, 10*)

So how then do we knock on the door of the Giver of all good things, the Infinite and Almighty God? How do we ask and seek for what we need most of all – the help we need for us first to become, and then to persevere as genuine human beings; to become useful participants in the grand community of mankind here and now; and tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow in heaven?

Through **prayer**. For as it is succinctly put in *Secrets of Heaven*, "Prayer, regarded in itself, is talking with God." (# 2535)

Consequently, prayer is essential for our becoming wholly human; it is vital to our salvation.

I have felt urged to write about this because it seems we may have been overlooking the importance of prayer in both our worship and personal life. As a result many adults and even children may not have been adequately enabled to reach up to grasp the gentle hand that our merciful Lord stretches down to draw us up to Himself in heaven.

Let me begin this consideration of prayer by asking this question: "When is the first time prayer is mentioned in the Word?"

If we take prayer literally as the act of "talking or conversation with God," the first time prayer occurs is in the very first book of the Word – the third chapter of *Genesis* – where Adam and Eve seek to excuse themselves to God for eating of the forbidden fruit. But after that prayer is mentioned again in the very next chapter, and here in a more usual sense, for we here read of people "calling on the name of the Lord":

And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and named him Seth, "For God has appointed another seed for me instead of Abel, whom Cain killed." And as for Seth, to him also a son was born; and he named him Enosh. Then men began to call on the name of the Lord. (*Genesis* 4.25, 26)

From then on prayer is mentioned again and again in both the Old and the New Testament. From a list I took from the Internet I counted that prayer is mentioned in the Old Testament 196 times, and in the New Testament in connection with Jesus 68 times. After that, in a list I made from the *New Search* program, prayer is specifically spoken of in the Heavenly Doctrine almost 300 times! And although I do not have an exact count, I estimate that the general subject of prayer is generally discussed in the Heavenly Doctrine more than 200 times. I also have a list of more than 10 times when Swedenborg or others in the spiritual world prayed for certain things to happen – and of course, they did!

#### Asking's Purpose

Why then is prayer brought to our attention so often in Divine revelation? The reason is quite simple: it is because prayer is essential to the fulfillment of the Divine purpose of creation, namely that human beings may receive and be filled with our Lord and Creator's Divinely human love and understanding, and consequently with heavenly happiness – unendingly. The purpose of prayer is that it makes it possible for us to receive what we truly need, to receive what is from the Lord.

This is what we are taught in the *Apocalypse Revealed*, 376, where the following words of John are explained:

Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" And I said to Him, "Lord, You know."  
(*Revelation* 7:13)

This, we are told: "symbolizes their *desire to know* and *wish to inquire*, and *the reply and the instruction then given*." (Italics added.)

John was asked these questions, "because it is common in all Divine worship for a person to first wish, desire and pray, and for the Lord then to

Prayer is of utmost importance, because it is what makes it possible for God and His Divine qualities to come into our hearts and minds. Prayer opens the door of our mind to His love and wisdom which we so much need. Vital spiritual things do happen when we pray.

reply, instruct and effect. A person does not otherwise accept anything Divine.” (*Ibid.*)

What follows is how it is explained to us in *Apocalypse Revealed*:

Now, because John saw those who were arrayed in white robes, and desired to know and ask who they were, and because this was perceived in heaven, he was therefore first asked about them, and afterward informed.

The case was similar with the prophet Zechariah when he saw the many representations displayed before him, as can be seen in the first chapter of Zechariah (1:9, 19, 21, 4:2, 5, 11, 12, 5:2, 6, 10, 6:4).

Moreover in the Word we frequently read that the Lord answers when people call on Him or cry out to Him (as in *Psalms* 4:1, 17:6, 20:9, 34:4, 91:15, 120:1), and that He gives to people when they ask (*Matthew* 7:7, 8, 21:22, *John* 14:13, 14, 15:7, 16:23-27). Yet, even so, it is the Lord who gives people to ask and what they should ask for, and the Lord knows it, therefore, beforehand. But still it is the Lord’s will that a person first ask, in order that the person may do so as though on his own, and that the petition may thus be assigned to him. Otherwise, if the petition itself did not emanate from the Lord, it would not have been said in those passages that people would receive whatever they ask. (*Apocalypse Revealed* 376, emphasis added)

Yes, prayer, to use the definition we began with from *Heavenly Secrets*, is “talking with God.” It is a conversation with Him from the depth of our heart about what we need. As the passage in *Heavenly Secrets* goes on to explain:

Prayer regarded in itself is talking with God; and at the same time some inner view of the things being prayed for. In answer to this there is a similar inflow into the perception or thought of the person’s mind, which effects a certain opening of his inward region towards God. The experience varies according to the person’s state and according to the essence of what he is praying for. If his prayer springs from love and faith and if they are entirely heavenly and spiritual things about which and for which he prays, something like a revelation is present within his prayer which manifests itself in the affection of the person praying in the form of hope, comfort, or some inward joy. (*Arcana Coelestia* 2535)

Our Lord Himself, we are told, had such revelations when He prayed, for we read:

“It happened, when Jesus was baptized and prayed, that heaven was opened.” (*Luke* 3:21)

“It happened, when Jesus took Peter, James and John, He went up on the mountain to pray. When He was praying the appearance of His face was altered, and His clothing became dazzling white.” (*Luke* 9:28, 29)

Also in John, after Jesus when praying said, “Father, glorify Your name”:

“A voice came from heaven, ‘I have both glorified it and will glorify it again.’” (*John* 12:27, 28)

Here it is clear that the Lord's praying consisted in a talking to the Divine, which then brought a response, which when it comes from God is a revelation. Prayer is of utmost importance, because it is what makes it possible for God and His Divine qualities to come into our hearts and minds. Prayer opens the door of our mind to His love and wisdom which we so much need. Vital spiritual things do happen when we pray.

What this comes down to is that without prayer, the door to repenting and becoming a genuinely spiritual person is not open.

In response to prayer there is inflow into the perception or thought of the person's mind, which effects a certain opening of his inward region towards God. . . . If his prayer springs from love and faith and if they are entirely heavenly and spiritual things about which and for which he prays, something like a revelation is present within his prayer which manifests itself in the affection of the person praying in the form of hope, comfort or some inward joy. (*Arcana Coelestia* 2535)

### Our Prayers Only Open the Way

When we have this blessed answer to our prayers it seems as if we ourselves have stirred the Lord to help us, but the reality is otherwise:

**It appears as if human thoughts, from a person on earth or from a spirit, move the Lord, when yet all things to the very least flow in from the Lord, thus into the person, not from the person.** For I am taught that the fact is that when the life of the Lord flows into a subject fitted to receive, heaven is moved, because the order is complete, and the receiving vessel is fitted, so to speak, to receive. It is different when it is not fitted, for then the qualities flowing in cannot operate." (*Spiritual Experiences* 2960, emphasis added)

Here is what happens to us when we pray genuinely – when we pray for something, yet ultimately still have what is spiritual and heavenly in view. We are then lifted up into a higher realm, and in this realm, which is in the spiritual world, we unconsciously interact with others, and through them God the Messiah, the Lord our Savior, affects us. We can see this in what Swedenborg writes in *Spiritual Experiences* 210, under the heading: *About general fields arising from everything in the Kingdom of God the Messiah*. Note what he says about what happened to him when he was praying the Lord's Prayer:

Nothing more amazing and unbelievable can be told than that there are seemingly general realms or fields of those properties which constitute God the Messiah's Kingdom, that interact with those in human minds, both the more

inward and the inward, which are in the Kingdom of God the Messiah. These fields cannot be described, but the matter could be illustrated by a comparison.

In general, there are higher and lower heavenly, as well as spiritual, fields. The lowest realm has been ruined as long as it is allowed for evil spirits to inhabit it, and this field still rises up even to the rational realm, and disturbs it.

Today, by the mercy of God the Messiah, I was placed in that rational field in such a way that the reasoning part of me was in harmony with that realm, which was therefore not disturbed as at other times. Then the spirits in it felt oppressed, saying that they could not live in it, as a bird in an atmosphere where there is no air, but [only] ether, or as a fish in air, but wanted to flee away. This tells me that when the Kingdom of God the Messiah comes, then evil spirits are necessarily cast out, for they are almost unable to draw breath in it . . .

When I was praying, especially the Lord's Prayer, I was received into that realm, which enabled me to view the more inward content of that prayer.

All those heavenly and spiritual realms look to the Kingdom of God the Messiah, because they are from God the Messiah, Who is the Kingdom of God. It follows from all this that there must surely be a general realm, in order for there to be individual ones, which cannot exist except in community; and that all individual things relate back to collective ones, which in turn guide the individual ones – ultimately into the order they themselves are in. Otherwise individual elements must necessarily be cast out of the community. These are rules known to Philosophy, and universally valid.

Prayer brings us into the very realms of heaven! Swedenborg writes further in # 258:

I was raised up into the very inward realm, as often as I prayed our Lord's Prayer, though in differing ways. Whenever I was praying our Lord's Prayer, morning and evening, almost every time I was raised up, in different ways, into the very inward realm, and in fact [this raising up,] together with the change, was so perceptible that nothing could have been more so. . . . Explanations of the more inward contents of the Prayer were inspired at these times, with a great deal of variety.

### **Prayer's Chief Goal: "Deliver Us from Evil"**

However, we would be mistaken to think that we should pray chiefly so that we may have deeper insights and peace of mind. We should pray chiefly to receive strength to persevere in times of trouble, especially to receive motivation to resist those evil inclinations in us that bring harm on ourselves and others. As is written in *Apocalypse Explained* 803:

When a person begins to think for himself, which is the case after he has grown up, it must be to him the first and chief thing to refrain from doing evils for the reason that they are sins against the Word, thus against God, and for the reason that if he

does them he will gain, not life eternal, but hell; and afterwards as he grows up and becomes old he must shun them as damned, and must turn away from them in thought and intention. But in order to so refrain from them and shun and turn away from them, he must pray to the Lord for help.” (My emphasis, as in the following citations.)

Jesus, our Lord, Himself prayed, we know, not only in the garden of Gethsemane, when “He knelt down saying, ‘Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done,’” but certainly also already at His baptism in the Jordan. Prayer gave Him strength to go on with His inward and outward struggles against the forces of evil within Him and around Him.

Indeed, it is actually prayer that makes our own resistance to evil at all possible. For, as it is put in *Apocalypse Explained* 938:

All the evils into which man is born derive their roots from the love of ruling over others and from the love of possessing the goods of others, and all the delights of man’s own life flow forth from these two loves, and all evils are from them, so the loves and delights of these evils belong to man’s own life. And since evils belong to the life of man, it follows that man from himself can by no means refrain from them, for this would be from his own life to refrain from his own life. The ability to refrain from them of the Lord is therefore provided, and that he may have this ability the freedom to think that which he wills and to pray to the Lord for help is granted him.

And in *Apocalypse Explained* 1164:

With those about to be reformed evils are removed by temptations, which are not punishments but combats. Such persons are not compelled to resist evils, but they compel themselves and pray to the Lord, and thus are delivered from the evils which they have resisted. Such afterwards refrain from evils, not from any fear of punishment but from an aversion to evil; and at length this aversion to evil is their resistance.

## The Knock of Prayer Opens the Door to Repentance

What this comes down to is that without prayer, the door to repenting and becoming a genuinely spiritual person is not open. This is clear from the question asked in *True Christianity*, 530: “How are we to repent?” The answer is:

We are to do so actively. That is, we are to examine ourselves, recognize and admit

Be assured, peace will truly come when what is wrong within us has been removed. Such is the absolute, vital necessity and power of prayer!

to our sins, pray to the Lord, and begin a new life. The fact that repentance is not possible without examining ourselves [has been shown]. And what is the point of examining ourselves unless we recognize our sins? What is the point of that recognition unless we admit that those sins are in us?

The passage concludes:

What is the point of all three of these steps unless we confess our sins before the Lord, pray for His help, and then begin a new life, which is the purpose of the whole exercise? This is active repentance.

As the process of becoming an angelic person is similarly summed up in *Apocalypse Explained* 837:

[T]he first thing of reformation [for a person] is to refrain from sins, to shun them, and finally to be averse to them; but that he may refrain from them, shun them, and be averse to them he must pray to the Lord for help.” (*Apocalypse Explained* 837.5, emphasis added)

Be assured, peace will truly come when what is wrong within us has been removed.

Such is the absolute, vital necessity and power of prayer!

## **The Fundamental Purpose of Prayer**

This is what prayer is actually all about – **a change of life for the better**. Therefore, although I have dealt mainly with the purpose and nature of formal prayer, and suggested how we might make better use of prayer in our worship, I wish to conclude with the teaching of the *Heavenly Doctrine* that the fundamental purpose of prayer is actually the worship of life or, as it is there termed, “practical piety”:

Worship does not consist in prayers and in outward devotion, but in a life of caring concern. Prayers are only its outward practices, for they come out from a person through his or her mouth, consequently people’s prayers are such as they themselves are in respect to life. It does not matter that a person bears him- or herself humbly, that he or she kneels and sighs when he or she prays; for these are outer things, and unless outer ones proceed from inner ones they are only gestures and sounds without life. In each thing that a person utters there is affection, and every person, spirit, and angel is his or her own affection, for their affection is their life; it is the affection itself that speaks, and not the person without it; therefore such as the affection is such is the praying. Spiritual affection is what is called caring concern for the neighbor; to be in that affection is true worship; praying is its utterance. From this it can be seen that the essential of worship is the life of caring concern, and that its instrumental means are bodily acts and praying; or that the primary of worship is a life of caring concern and its secondary is praying. From this it is

clear that those who place all Divine worship in oral piety, and not in practical piety, err greatly. (*Apocalypse Explained* 325.3, my translation)



**The Rev. Kurt P. Nemitz** is retired and lives in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He still works as a translator for the General Church, focusing on the Index to *Spiritual Experiences*. He is the husband of the late Melinda (Echols).

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#### OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY

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#### HEREDITY

Although this term is used in Christian theology and in biology and psychology, the Writings give to it a new and entirely different meaning. Heredity covers all the characteristics transmitted by parents to their offspring. According to the Writings what are thus transmitted are tendencies – which are not imputed – to the goods or evils in which the parents have confirmed themselves and which have become habitual with them.

The lives and loves of parents cannot be inherited, but inclinations to them are passed on, and the sum total of these is the parental heredity. Thus a state of damnation or of regeneration cannot be inherited; but we are told that the children of regenerating parents receive inclinations to love and wisdom and the things that wisdom teaches.

In this lies the hope of the human race. The parental heredity is twofold, and the maternal, which is external, is put off by regeneration, while the paternal heredity can never be eradicated. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 1313, 4317, 4563.)

# The Character and Possible Uses of the *Spiritual Diary*/ *Spiritual Experiences*

*The Rev. Willard L. D. Heinrichs*

From time to time during probably the whole of the history of the General Church, priests and lay people alike have been speculating and making personal pronouncements about the character and uses of the work which used to be known as *The Spiritual Diary*, but which is now generally known as *Spiritual Experiences*.

The most fundamental question is whether or not this theological work, given through the pen of Emanuel Swedenborg, is to be considered as a part of the inspired Theological Writings – part of the Heavenly Doctrine – gifted to the New Church by the Lord in His Second Advent.

The purpose of this essay is to offer some brief personal testimony of what I have come to see as the character and some possible uses of this work. I should acknowledge from the outset that I hardly think the Lord needs any finite human to establish the credibility of any part of His Divine Revelation. Still, I am happy to witness its impact on me.

In respect to what may be termed external evidence that such revelation may begin with the *Spiritual Diary*/*Spiritual Experiences*, I make a special note of a statement recorded by Swedenborg that appears on page 20 of the Acton translation of the first volume of the *Spiritual Diary*, and on page 213 of the first volume of the Odhner translation of *Spiritual Experiences*:

*1747, 7<sup>th</sup> August, old style [old calendar]; A change of state in me, into the heavenly kingdom in an image.*

From that time onward, so far as I am aware, we have the full text of the passages that constitute this multi-volume work. The passages

**Note: The Rev. Kurt Nemitz,** living in retirement in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, is busily engaged in translating – for the first time – the Index to *The Spiritual Diary*/*Spiritual Experiences* from Latin into English. Mr. Heinrichs notes that this “should serve as an important and wonderful assist to any reader and student of the Heavenly Doctrine to find and examine in the text of *The Spiritual Diary*/*Spiritual Experiences* almost any subject that the Lord has chosen to discuss there.”

that preceded this significant declaration -- numbers 1 to 148-1/3 -- were apparently discarded by Swedenborg. Translators bringing the work into publication have sought to reconstruct their general content from the index that Swedenborg prepared for this work.

Now let us turn to what might be termed internal evidence. Along with a myriad other subjects, what do we find in the text of the work itself that testifies to its character and the manner of its transmission? In regard to this important question I have identified upwards of 20 passages that in one way or another appear to be relevant: 1635, 1647, 2270, 2739, 2894, 2955, 4034, 1140, 1145½, 1181, 1389, 1464, 1466, 1498, 1637, 2185, 2476, 2749, 3963.

Perhaps two of the leading passages recorded by Swedenborg that speak most directly to character and mode of transmission of what was being written from the Lord through him are numbers 1647 and 4034. It is important to note that these two telling passages, along with the others just listed, were all recorded in the text of *The Spiritual Diary/Spiritual Experiences* prior to the time that Swedenborg began, from the Lord, to write the manuscript of the *Arcana Coelestia* at the close of November and in the beginning of December of 1748.

***“That The Things Which I Learned From Representations, Visions, And Discourses With Spirits And Angels Were From The Lord Alone.”***

*Spiritual Diary*1647: “Whenever there was any representation, vision and discourse, I was kept interiorly and intimately in reflection upon it, as to what thence was useful and good, thus what I might learn therefrom; which reflection was not thus attended to by those who presented the representations and visions, and who spoke; yea, sometimes they were indignant when they perceived that I was reflecting. Thus I have been instructed; consequently by no spirit, nor by any angel, but by the Lord alone from Whom is all truth and good; yea, when they wished to instruct me concerning various things, there was scarcely anything but what was false: wherefore I was prohibited from believing anything that they spoke; nor was I permitted to infer any such thing as was proper to them [or akin to their proprium]. Besides, when they wished to persuade me, **I perceived an interior or intimate persuasion that the thing was so and so, and not as they wished;** which also they wondered at; the perception was manifest; but cannot easily be described to the apprehension of men.” (1748, March 22) [Emphasis mine] (Compare this passage with what the Lord has declared in *True Christian Religion* 779; *Apocalypse Revealed Preface*; *De Verbo* 29; *Invitation Preface* VIII; *Coronis* 18, 20)

*Spiritual Diary/Spiritual Experiences* 4034: “It was now observed, as previously remarked above, that evil spirits were constrained to utter the things that were to be noted (and recorded) by me, although ignorant of the reason of the constraint; on which account even those mucus-spirits became

I believe there is good reason to conclude that in the text of *The Spiritual Diary/Spiritual Experiences* we are dealing with Divine revelation.

indignant that they should speak thus, not knowing that it was for such a purpose or that they spoke what I was to note down as coming from them. There was then given also a perception of what was to be observed, and yet evil spirits, as they have now said, know not whence it came, and are disposed to abstain from uttering certain things for the reason that they dislike that anything should be divulged concerning them, **from which it appeared, that even those things which I have learned by means of evil**

**spirits, I have learned from the Lord alone, though the spirits spoke.** It was different when good spirits spoke; they declared openly how the truth was.” (1748, November 22) [Emphasis mine]

For the sake of comparison let us remind ourselves again of the similar testimony that Swedenborg was given to record in *True Christian Religion* 779:

“That the Lord manifested Himself before me, His servant, and sent me to this office, that He afterward opened the eyes of my spirit and thus introduced me into the spiritual world and granted me to see the heavens and the hells, and to talk with angels and spirits, and this now continuously for several years, I affirm in truth; **as also from the first day of that call I have not received anything whatever pertaining to the doctrines of that church [The New Church] from any angel, but from the Lord alone while I have read the Word.**” [Emphasis mine]

Reflecting on these and other passages all taken together I believe there is good reason to conclude that in the text of *The Spiritual Diary/Spiritual Experiences* we are dealing with Divine revelation.

However, I believe there is much more internal evidence, very much more, in the text of this work than what has been noted above that has convinced me of the Divine presence in and Divine authority of the work.

What follows is my own experience. It is a general assertion, and I can at least imagine that others have had and will have a different experience. I have spent some 53 years reading, studying, underlining in, making notes from, and comparing teachings in *The Spiritual Diary/Spiritual Experiences* with teachings provided elsewhere in the Heavenly Doctrine, and especially in what are spoken of as the published works of the Theological Writings. So many, many times I have been led to the conclusion that what is advanced in *The Spiritual Diary/Spiritual Experiences* is always in essential agreement with what is taught elsewhere in the Heavenly Doctrine. I think that I hear the same

underlying Divine and heavenly melody.

After having worked my way seriatim through the whole of the text twice, and having revisited selected portions a myriad other times, I have been always delighted anew by what I have discovered there. I have always re-experienced that same underlying harmony that exists in all Divine teaching, and have rejoiced in those powerful illustrative, down-to-earth, and practical confirmatory teachings that seem to especially characterize this work.

Also, and very importantly for me, while reading and reflecting on the teachings in this work, I have experienced the same sense inside of me of the Lord speaking to me as I have experienced while contemplating teachings elsewhere in the Word of the Second Advent.

Obviously, no one is required to accept this testimony as binding on themselves. All I would urge is that anyone considering the character of the text of *The Spiritual Diary/Spiritual Experiences* accept the Lord's challenge, as presented in a passage such as *Apocalypse Explained* 190 – a challenge to those who are in a genuine spiritual affection of truth – and, having done so, then read and study the whole of the text for themselves with as open a mind as they can muster to the possibility that this text just may be Divine revelation.

See what happens, and then, if one feels the urge, let us correspond in person or by email. I am only too aware of the futility of trying to convince someone that *The Spiritual Diary/Spiritual Experiences* is a part of Divine revelation when they have not yet read and studied it enough for themselves to form a valid opinion on the matter.

The same holds true for a work such as *Apocalypse Explained*. If one has not read and studied it, how can they be staggered by its Divine and heavenly beauty – its precious gems of Divine good and truth covering the spiritual ground as far as the mental eye can see! As the old saying goes: "The proof of the pudding is in the eating."

While advancing my testimony regarding *The Spiritual Diary/Spiritual Experiences*, I am well aware that the format appears problematic to some. For the most part we have in this text a long succession of recorded, journal type spiritual experiences, together with seemingly unconnected or loosely connected little doctrinal presentations. The text, for the most part, unlike some other Divine works, is not a seriatim explanation of the internal content of some portion of Scripture, or a tightly organized, systematic treatment of the doctrine that elsewhere has been given to us by the Lord out of heaven.

Still, I would assert, as confirmed by a passage such as *True Christian Religion* 779, quoted above, that its contents were communicated to Swedenborg while he read the Word, and as a result, that he enjoyed that marvelous protection of his state of mind by the Lord while he observed spiritual phenomena and later was led to record them in a written text. I recall how some years ago the

Rev. Robert Jungé called my attention to many places in *The Spiritual Diary/Spiritual Experiences* where, clearly, Swedenborg was given experiences in the spirit while he was reading in some specific series in the Sacred Scripture.

I would also assert that a reflective student of the Theological Writings – of the Heavenly Doctrine – will notice that the Lord, in His wonderful accommodation to a myriad different forms of mind, has used what might be termed a whole smorgasbord of approaches or formats to present to us what He would have us receive in His Second Advent.

I would invite everyone to take a moment, from time to time, to reflect on the differing formats that have been employed by the Lord, beginning from the first “change of state” in Swedenborg on 7<sup>th</sup> August, 1747, and extending to those last little Divine works that were recorded before his passing to the spiritual world in 1772.

Some readers of this article will have engaged in this reflection in times past, but I feel that it is worth doing again and again so that we continue to recognize the fact of these different formats and remember to utilize the special qualities of each, and so do not inadvertently stumble into heresies through ignoring them. We well know the heresies greater and lesser that people can slip into, and have slipped into if, in drawing teachings for example from the *Arcana Coelestia*, they ignore the successive series there which arise out of the sequential exposition of *Genesis* and *Exodus*.

Before passing on to some thoughts as to possible uses that *The Spiritual Diary/Spiritual Experiences* may serve, it might be useful to comment on an element that one “very occasionally” encounters in passages recorded in the earlier part of this work. In these instances, the diligent reader may sense an incompleteness in the expression of some aspect of a doctrine, such that the teaching involved, without careful analysis of the immediate and broader context, does not appear to be in full harmony with later teachings on the same subject. However, in these rare instances, the Lord has not left the reader without a cautionary note.

If one is watching, somewhere in the passage or little series, one will generally find that the Lord has moved Swedenborg to include some such assertion as “I do not yet know what is signified by . . .” or maybe “so far as is yet known,” and so forth. In still other rare instances a deliberate point may be made that certain “spirits told” Swedenborg thus and so, and the way in which it is expressed seems calibrated to prompt the careful reader to pause and ask of the Lord clarification of the point.

To me, as indicated, these are signals from the Lord not to jump on board too hastily, but to await further instruction and clarification. In the meantime, on closer inspection, one just might find that the explanation that is given in the passage, while not the same as given elsewhere, may nevertheless be

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valid or true in its own right. As with representations in the Sacred Scriptures (i.e. the statue that appeared in Nebuchadnezzar's dream) so with some of the representations seen by Swedenborg in the spiritual world, one representation may be used to represent internal realities in a variety of ways.

In this regard I think of how a certain representation of the Word seen by Swedenborg in the other life is dealt with by the Lord in a whole succession of ways in various works of the *Heavenly Doctrine*, in *Spiritual Diary/Spiritual Experiences* 3605 ½; *De Verbo* 1; *Sacred Scripture* 26:3,4; *Apocalypse Revealed* 255; and *True Christian Religion* 277.

### Potential Uses

Now on to the matter of what sort of special use I would propose for a Divine work such as *The Spiritual Diary/ Spiritual Experiences*. Of course, as with other works of the *Heavenly Doctrine*, we might employ its teachings in many different ways depending on the specific teachings involved and the specific matters that we are addressing from them. I would present what follows as just one of the special uses that I have made of the teachings of this work.

I may say from the outset that at least some readers may be surprised that I would choose to illustrate this possible use by referring to two subjects that some may well find unpleasant to the point that they wish that I would omit them from the discussion. These subjects are homosexual practices and the sexual abuse of children. However, I think there are at least a couple of good reasons for including them.

The first is that these subjects are very much before the general public at this day and are deeply troubling to many, many people. For those who long for the Lord's guidance in all matters of life – spiritual, moral and civil – they call out for, even demand, examination in the light of Divine and heavenly principles. And yet, for reasons I will seek to explain in what follows, the Lord in what are known as the “published” works, has chosen not to speak very openly about them. Does this mean He has left us bereft of any particular teaching concerning them? No, He has not!

This leads me to the second reason for including them in this article. In *The Spiritual Diary/Spiritual Experiences* the Lord, for our needed instruction and enlightenment, has chosen to address these very unpleasant subjects or issues quite directly, yet in cautious and delicate terms.

I do not propose to launch into an extended discussion of such a large and complex subject as homosexual practices. This I have attempted to do in

several previous articles appearing in *New Church Life* in 1993 and 2015. Still, by way of illustrating how one “might” use *The Spiritual Diary/Spiritual Experiences* and other works of the Heavenly Doctrine not published in Swedenborg’s lifetime, I will include the following excerpt from an email exchange that I enjoyed with one of my clergy brothers some years ago. In that exchange there were the same two delicate issues that I touched on for the sake of illustration: homosexual practices and the sexual abuse of children.

It is true that in the Heavenly Doctrine there is not an abundance of direct teaching on a subject such as homosexual practices – some, but not a whole lot. One finds that generally the more direct teachings are reserved in the works not published in Swedenborg’s lifetime, perhaps being reserved there for use in more private circumstances when necessity calls for their exposure. However, not infrequently, the observant

reader can, as it were, pick up the trail in a published work and then, if so moved, follow it back into the unpublished works. The particular subject is more openly and fully dealt with as one works back in this manner.

Take, for example, what the Lord says in *Conjugal Love* 54 about monks and nuns being released from monasteries and convents after their death and their entrance into the spiritual world. We find that various lots await them in that life, some good, but some rather sad and horrible. In regard to the latter it is noted that “those who have burned with impermissible/forbidden lust are cast down.”

What might be involved here in these “impermissible” or “forbidden” lusts? Well, let us see if we can obtain some help if we step back into an unpublished work such as *De Conjugio (On Marriage)*. There, in #s 55 –57, we

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are told about many from convents “having delighted themselves in heinous lasciviousness.” Their depraved character and final lot is pretty fully described in this series, but we are still not clearly informed as to what they were involved in.

A passage such as Last Judgment (posthumous) 109 adds a little more light to the discussion of this sad subject. But it is in a passage such as *Spiritual Diary/Spiritual Experiences* 5457, in the details there furnished, that we begin to find a more pointed indication of the kind of things the Lord was talking about in *Conjugial Love* 54.

But we have not yet followed the trail to its beginning. We have not yet reached down to the very roots of this teaching. To take that final step we need to go back a little further in *The Spiritual Diary/Spiritual Experiences*, especially into the series 3895- 3900. This series is an obvious parallel to the previously noted teachings , and now we are left in no doubt as to what is involved in those impermissible or forbidden practices, even though in a series such as this, the Lord continues to talk to us in somewhat guarded and delicate terms.

So, do we leave a passage such as *Conjugial Love* 54e to stand by itself, or do we go back to the “roots” passages to explain what is apparently involved in those impermissible or forbidden lusts? I would suggest that in many circumstances and in many ages it will not be necessary to go back to the possibly less public “roots” teachings. In fact it might, in some circumstances, be harmful and offensive to do so, especially with innocent children.

However, I am glad that somewhat raw material – those root passages – are there to refer to when such things as are impermissible and forbidden lusts are being evangelized and palmed off as permissible, and more than that, are being celebrated. Then we can, and I think we must, reach down to the roots and draw out of the so-called unpublished works what lies within those unexplained expressions in the published works. When the need to do this is passed, we might just quietly pass over those same expressions without explanatory comment.

Let us now move to the second example or illustration as to how *The Spiritual Diary/Spiritual Experiences* may serve to provide us with much needed Divine guidance in certain ages and specific circumstances. Those who have read and studied widely in the Heavenly Doctrine know there is very little in the way of open teaching in the published works bearing on the sexual abuse of children. Indeed, for many people, perhaps the only place where the reader’s mind might be alerted to this very grave evil is in *Conjugial Love* 484, where the Lord speaks briefly about “triple adultery” and refers us to *Leviticus* 18: 6-17.

As with homosexual practices, so with this subject, the Lord is very guarded in respect to how He speaks of it. Indeed, in the text of the published

It is true that in the Heavenly Doctrine there is not an abundance of direct teaching on a subject such as homosexual practices. . .

However, not infrequently, the observant reader can, as it were, “pick up the trail” in a published work and then, if so moved, follow it back into the unpublished works.

works He may actually refuse to talk about it. For example in the *Arcana Coelestia* the Lord illustrates the sad and consummated internal state of the Christian world at the time of the Last Judgment by heart-wrenching descriptions of physical cruelty to little children. (See, for example, *Arcana Coelestia* 2125 and 2126.)

As an extension of this teaching, in *Arcana Coelestia* 2125 there is reference to two women in a kitchen, but at this point in the passage, Swedenborg is given to report, “*but I am not at liberty to mention what I saw therein.*” Still, it is added: “*But what was seen in the kitchen represented the same hatreds and thoughts in their*

*further developments.*”

Again in most ages we may happily leave it at that and not offend people needlessly with what was seen to be going on in that kitchen. And yet in the age in which we now live it would appear that sadly for the sake knowing the truth and being moved to take strong action against this evil, we need to take the matter further, dig down to the roots of this guarded reference. And this we can do, in *The Spiritual Diary/Spiritual Experiences*. As to the depraved people represented by the two women in the kitchen, Swedenborg records: “*I was instructed that these are they, who are delighted with that foulest lust of defiling infants and very little girls. (These things it is not thus proper to speak in public, lest they come into man’s thought.)*”

Lest there be any who have any lingering question about the seriousness of the crime involving sexual molestation of children, the Lord concludes the passage with this assertion: “*Things are generated before unheard of, which destroy the nature of man – like as with those who perished at last by the deluge.*” (*Spiritual Diary/Spiritual Experiences* 2711 and 2712; see also 2719, 2801, 2883, 3993ff.)

Again, do we not disclose these teachings that abide at the roots of passages in the published works? I think there are times when we must do so, times when the people of the Church, living in certain cultures, must stand and draw a clear and indelible line in the spiritual sand in defense of our – really the Lord’s – children.

Other instances might be noted where the Lord chooses not to discuss

a subject in a certain context in His Heavenly Doctrine, but nevertheless supplies us with important and helpful teachings elsewhere, enabling us to build a doctrine for the instruction and enlightenment of His Church.

See, for example, the very practical and Divine counsel and warning the Lord gives us in the doctrine concerning the Grand Man (# 5055) when treating of the correspondence of the organs of generation. And yet, elsewhere, in a different context, in both the published works and those not published in Swedenborg's lifetime, we are provided with some general teachings on this subject.

Again, should we not form and declare this doctrine? I believe that we can and should. Still, closely heeding the Divine counsel and warning in *Arcana Coelestia* 5055, we should be sure to exercise due care and attention as to the forums in which we do this, and the manner in which this subject is explored and communicated.

So much more could be said beyond what I have advanced above about the unique character and uses of a work such as *The Spiritual Diary/Spiritual Experiences*. However, "lest I encroach on eternity" (to borrow a phrase from the late Dr. William Whitehead), I think I need to draw this article to a close with the hope that those who have not yet done so might give this wonderful multi-volume work some serious study.

I think anyone who does so ultimately will find it, at times, absolutely entrancing. It is just so individual, so practical, so illustrative, and so often succinct, expressing in just a couple of passages, the most profound Divine truths and thrilling spiritual realities. As noted earlier there is that old saying that "the proof of the pudding is in the eating."

However, if such a study is going to bear the full burden of the spiritual and practical fruit that the Lord wishes to communicate by means of, I would urge that we approach this work as we might approach any other product of the Lord's Second Advent.

In *Arcana Coelestia* 2080 the Lord, speaking of our approach to Him in His Word and in prayer, reminds us that, "*In all perception whatever, there is a propounding and a reply.*" And elsewhere, if we want to obtain from His Word the greatest spiritual, moral and practical benefit, there is that familiar Divine counsel: "*Read with the uses of life in mind.*"



**The Rev. Willard L. D. Heinrichs** is retired and lives with his wife, Vanessa (van Rij), in Longmont, Colorado. During his active ministry he served in Dawson Creek, British Columbia, Canada; as Superintendent of the South African Mission; and as a teacher of Religion in Bryn Athyn College of the New Church and its Theological School. He invites anyone interested to contact him at: [willard.heinrichs@gmail.com](mailto:willard.heinrichs@gmail.com).

# Church News

*Compiled by Bruce Henderson*



## NEW CALLINGS IN THE CHURCH

After 29 years of teaching and leading at the Kempton New Church School in Pennsylvania, **Mark Wyncoll** is retiring to become the Annual Giving Director for the General Church.

Mark has been Vice Principal of the school for the past 20 years, which is in the process of adding a high school, and has taught for all 29 years of his career there. He earned a Master's in Education degree in 1996. In a letter to the Kempton Society he said:

“Teaching at the Kempton New Church School has been a wonderful job

for me. I have loved working here with many dedicated teachers, ministers and volunteers. The students have worked hard and brought me so many delightful experiences that my memory overflows. Supporters, parents and alumni have treated this school carefully and respectfully. It has been a joy and delight to serve in such a place where the Lord's Word is loved and honored.

“I have long believed there would come a time to transition out of KNCS to allow fresh perspectives to emerge. After 29 years the time has come to move on to another career opportunity.”

He noted that accepting the role with the General Church “will allow my family to keep living in Kempton while I serve our church in a very different way.”

He said Kempton is working on a plan “that will allow for the school children to be well served,” and that he would begin his new use once a replacement has been found.

**The Rev. Lawson Smith**, Pastor, said in an open letter to the society:

“Mark has given us all amazingly thoughtful, caring service over many

years. He has a strong sense of principles of New Church education from the Word, and he has a gift for sharing these principles with teachers, students and parents. It is a huge understatement to say that we will miss him in the school. But we are grateful for all the years he has given us, and very glad that he and **Wendy** and family are not leaving Kempton.”

After describing the process for a search for a new assistant principal, he said: “We have seen over and over again the Lord’s providence taking very good care of us, the Church and the school. Let us trust that the Lord is with us, and let us strive to be with Him.”

### **And the New Vice Principal Is . . .**

The Rev. Lawson Smith sent a letter to the society on August 19 announcing that **Dale Robert Smith** has been hired as the new Vice Principal of the Kempton New Church School. Dale was expected to transition from his current job with Bryn Athyn College on October 1. Lawson said: “We are blessed to have Mark still on staff to help Dale learn the job.”

Dale grew up in Kempton and went to the Kempton New Church School. He graduated from Bryn Athyn College of the New Church in 2010 with an interdisciplinary degree in Business and History. He also took courses at Georgetown University in comparative political and economic systems in 2009. For three years he was also a resident assistant in Stuart Hall dormitory, mentoring and providing discipline for high school boys.

After graduation he worked for a year at Bell and Evans, a poultry processing company. Then he was hired as the bursar for Bryn Athyn College and the Academy of the New Church, working for three years before transferring to the Financial Aid Office for the College, first as a coordinator, then assistant director. He also has been the assistant manager of the freshmen residence halls.

He took one-year courses toward a master’s degree in English at Arcadia University, then shifted his studies to a Master of Education – Specialization: Higher Education Leadership, at Temple University, which he completed this summer.

Dale married **Tovah King**, daughter of **Steve and Janis King**, in the summer of 2013.

Lawson included these quotes from Dale’s letter of application:



“It is with pleasure that I submit my application for the vice principal position at the Kempton New Church School. As someone who attended New Church schools from first grade through college, I have a genuine affection for New Church education. I wholeheartedly support the concept of using the Lord’s Word and the Heavenly Doctrines as primary source material.

“I believe that KNCS as a whole is exceptionally attuned to teaching according to New Church doctrine, and has remained committed to viewing education through a New Church lens. I would endeavor to support the faculty, pastors and ministers in continuing their dedication to the teachings, so that the school remains deeply rooted in the Word and the truths of the Second Coming.

“I also love working with children and young adults, and have felt called to work in the field of education ever since I left my position in the corporate world.

“Kempton is poised to become a leader and a model for K-12 New Church education. Many religious institutions have become progressively more secular, and have drifted away from their religious foundation. Kempton’s commitment to using the Lord’s Word as a guide is powerful, and I would be honored to help KNCS continue the tradition of providing high-quality New Church education. I would love to bring my passion, experience, knowledge, personal qualities, and collaborative approach to leadership to my role as vice principal at KNCS, with a keen eye toward post-secondary readiness, financial sustainability, and dealing with bullying.”

## JOURNEY PROGRAM

### **Move the Cracker; Offer the Wine Finding a Gentler Approach to Conflict Resolution**

*Sasha Silverman*

A couple of days ago, my two kids and I saw a frenzy of ants on our kitchen floor surrounding a single Wheat-Thin cracker. My first thought, “kill those ants!” did not fly with my son who insisted that I not -- even accidentally -- harm a single ant. So I picked up the infested cracker, freaked-out that the ants might start running up my hands, and flung the cracker outside into the grass. Within minutes, every ant had left our floor.

Something struck me in that moment. It reminded me that when we feel threatened, whether by a tiny insect, a stranger, a family member, or anyone else, we might instinctively react with aggressive words or actions to keep ourselves safe. Yet, sometimes there’s no need for stomping. No need for poison. Sometimes we can get our desired result just by “moving the cracker,” or looking for a gentler approach.

While listening to National Public Radio’s *Invisibilia* program, I heard a

powerful example of this. In the segment, we hear the true story of a group of friends who are outside on a summer night, celebrating one woman's opening of her restaurant. The friends are toasting with wine and cheese and enjoying a magical evening when something shocking happens. A man appears, points a gun at the group, and insists they give him their money. Incredibly, not a single party guest has even a dollar.

The guests first try to appeal to the gunman's conscience, asking: "What would your mother think of you doing this?" The gunman sneers back, cursing, saying he doesn't have a mother. Then they try another approach: "Can we offer you some wine?" Amazingly, the armed man accepts the glass, takes a drink and says, "This is pretty good wine." The panicked party guests quickly respond: "Here! Have more! Have some cheese!"

The man ends up sitting down, gun still in his pocket, drinking the wine and eating the cheese. At one point he says to the stunned crowd, "I guess I came to the wrong place." After a while, he leaves into the night, still holding his wine glass, and the guests are moved to tears with relief and disbelief. In the morning, they find the empty glass has been returned, carefully placed near the house, on the sidewalk.

A moment of terror turned into a holy moment. In the midst of his aggression, a sad and angry man received an offering of love, an invitation and a gesture of acceptance, and it changed everything. We all have moments when we can choose to react with aggression or take a moment and try a gentler path. By listening to others, questioning our assumptions, coming from love, and trying a new approach, we may see the surprising result of "moving the cracker" and "offering the wine."

If you're interested in practicing some of these communication strategies in a consistent way, I warmly invite you to join us for the Journey Program, *Mindful Communication Challenge*, this fall. In this five-week program we focus on listening carefully to others and paying attention to our own thoughts, feelings and words. Before speaking, we practice asking ourselves, "Is it true? Is it kind? Is it useful?"

Visit us at [www.newchurchjourney.org](http://www.newchurchjourney.org) to find out more or to get connected.

## **CAMP WANAWONG, AUSTRALIA**

*The Rev. Todd J. Beiswenger*

*Pastor of the Hurstville New Church*

*I've learned that people will forget what you said,  
people will forget what you did,  
but people will never forget how you made them feel.*  
– Maya Angelou

I heard this quote some years ago, and quite like it. As a preacher I'm well aware that for the most part people are not going to remember what I say. It's not just my words we forget; statistics are shocking as to how much we forget in just 15 minutes. But I think Maya Angelou is right: we do remember how people make us feel.

I think it's true with events too. We don't always remember all that much of the content presented at a camp, but we do remember the friendships, good feelings and the food! While this camp was just a weekend, we hope all who participated had a good time and left with good feelings toward each other and the Church.

The good times started with pizza, followed with a camp fire. We did tell some stories. Some were tall tales, others made you groan with the punchline, and others illuminated the Lord working in our lives through various ways. We finished with some of the chapters of C. S. Lewis's *The Screwtape Letters*.

Saturday opened with a worship service on the theme, "A letter to me." We read in the first chapters of *Revelation* that the Lord writes letters to the seven churches, giving them kudos for the things they do right and offering pointed criticism for what they could do better. So we tried to write letters to ourselves thinking about what would be said to us.

The **Rev. Julian Duckworth** explored what June 19<sup>th</sup> means to us, and offered a reason perhaps why the disciples were sent out on that date. This is just before the longest, lightest day in the northern hemisphere, and so may have served as a symbol that the Lord has provided us with greater light and clarity, but with more light still to come.

Our other morning session was "New Church vs. Old Church." We compared 12 distinctive differences between the Old and New Church, divided into three teams, and played Pictionary to hit on a key distinction. The children were all too eager to do the drawing, and all the teams did very well in guessing 11 of the 12 categories correctly.

In the afternoon many took the opportunity for an extended bush walk. That evening we played games. Every Australian camp has a tournament of sorts, usually table tennis where some talented soul from Canberra or Melbourne plays in the finals. To maintain the tradition, but making the championship available to a wider pool of people, we had an "Ultimate Plinko Tournament" – based on the U.S. TV show, "The Price is Right." There's no skill, just luck.

Our tournament was rigged so that every child won in the first round, but **Murray Heldon** vanquished them all and took home the Ultimate Plinko Tournament Championship trophy. He received this with great humility and thanked his trainer and all the little people who helped him get to this glorious pinnacle of life.

We also played Russian Roulette, but using eggs instead of guns and bullets. We started with a dozen – eight hard boiled. The player had to pick an egg and smash it against his or her forehead. The kids were all too eager – and all were hard boiled! Then the crowd called for their pastor to take a chance – and somehow everybody thought it was funny that he was the first to literally have egg on his face.

The next morning we presented an overview of *Revelation*, noting that there is a lot of transparency in the New Jerusalem, and therefore no secrets. Everybody was asked to write a secret of their life on a piece of paper, and think how they would feel if it was revealed.

*Revelation* warns us that to be angelic we need to be transparent too, where our inner life and outer life are in integrity. Then the kids got a chance to slay the dragon by destroying a piñata, which has become a tradition here.

People left well-fed, with smiles and memories of good feelings they can carry all their lives – even if they don't remember a word that was said. That's good enough for me.

(See photos on page 486.)

## **BRITISH ACADEMY SUMMER SCHOOL**

*Jamie Reynolds*

*Glenview, Illinois*

To most teenagers, actively choosing to attend summer school sounds outrageously silly, and for a moment I believed that; however, two weeks in England completely changed my view. Similar to many other British Academy Summer School students, I did not know what to expect. What would it look like? Who else would be there? The fact that I did not know very much about the itinerary left me feeling excited and a little nervous for what was to come.

The day our group, the Americans, arrived at Purley Chase we were greeted by some new and some familiar faces rushing to welcome us. As a first-time BASS student, almost all the faces were unfamiliar to me, but that changed very quickly. Early on, I was able to connect with people from around the world on a spiritual level. How awesome is that?

Simply the concept that there were other New Church kids my age in different countries was hard to grasp, let alone that I was playing ice-breaker games with them in England. While playing the games I realized that everyone at BASS was more similar than they would appear. BASS is a community where you don't see him as "that kid from Colorado" or her as "that girl from Sweden." Not at all. BASS is a place where memories are made with life-long friends.

I also believe the ministers and other teaching staff made it a priority to connect with us better than ever! I have never felt as equal and comfortable toward adults as during my time at BASS. The raw, kind and loving approach the staff had toward

BASS truly made it evident why they were there: because they wanted to do all they could to make our time there incredible, while learning and practicing our New Church values.

To anyone considering attending BASS, keep in mind that you seriously do make what you want of it. With the right attitude it can become an amazing, beautiful and unique time that you will never forget. The friends you will make there will carry on, being your friends across the seas and forever if you put the work in. True friendships are not determined by where you live, but by the love you share for one another.

I was blessed to have gotten the chance to attend British Academy Summer School this past summer. I will never forget it.

(See photos on page 487.)

### **STILL GROWING AT BRYN ATHYN COLLEGE**

*Angella Irwin*

*Marketing Communications Manager*

The 2015-16 academic year saw much forward movement in a variety of areas at Bryn Athyn College, and the 2016-17 year is in hot pursuit to out-do its predecessor. Our academic programs are expanding, new structures and facilities are being built, the academic profile of incoming students is enjoying an upward trend, a new associate faculty member has been hired, and we are reaching out and connecting more and more with alumni and friends.

The education major at BAC has long been a staple of our academic offerings, and until recently we partnered with another university for our students to earn state certification. Those days are behind us, as this spring our Education Department submitted an application for certification and was approved by the Pennsylvania State Board of Education for early childhood education. The process was completed in what seemed like record time, and we expect to receive certification approval in special education later this year.

The Building Arts Associate Degree is now available to students who wish to pursue a hands-on pre-professional experience in the areas of forging and stained glass. Studio courses in these disciplines are paired with the core liberal arts curriculum to deliver a solid Associate in Arts to graduates. A Data Sciences minor has also been added to the academic programming reflecting an increased need in the work force for employees who can gather and analyze data, create and interpret models, and optimize results. This minor combines mathematical, computer science and business applications.

The College is excited to welcome **Dr. Suzanne Nelson** as a full-time employee. She assists multiple areas as assistant professor of Nutrition, Director of Sports Nutrition and Director of Career Education and Development.

GLENCAIRN MEDIEVAL CAMP



Cade and Chyler Henderson (center), pictured with cousins Jack and Normandie Henderson



Storming the castle



Archery Practice



Kent Fuller and Jeffrey Simons



The May Pole



Zoe Alden, Anna Zagorodny and Ayla Mergen



Having fun before the knighting ceremony



Slaying the "dragon" piñata



Murray Heldon, champion of the Ultimate Plinko Tournament



Attendees at Camp Wanawong



Playing Russian Roulette – with eggs



Around the camp fire



Jamie Reynolds at Chatsworth House



Sunset Ride on the London Eye



Blue Team ready for the BASS Olympics



A very happy Eric van de Merwe



Campfire Poetry Readings: Left to right, Jess Elphick, Susanna Appelgren, Benjamin Rogers-Petro, Jamie Reynolds, Kellan Roth, Adam Holland



Free time: Sonja Burniston and the Rev. David Roth

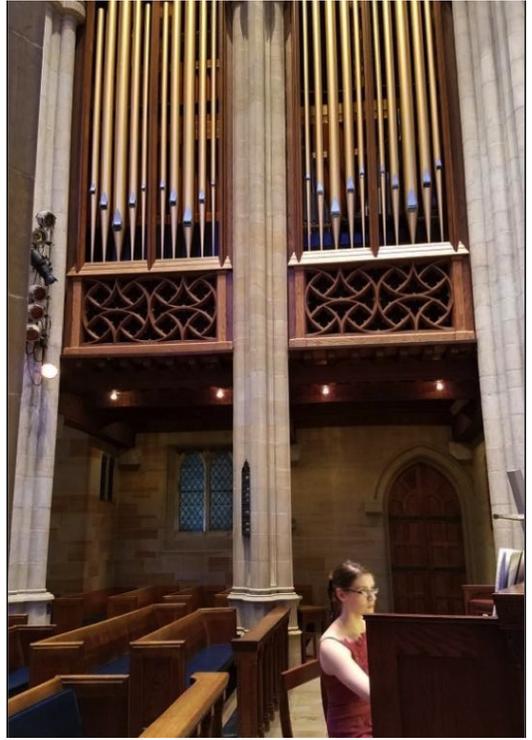


All dressed up for Gala Night: Back, left to right: Rev. Ethan McCardell, Rev. David Roth, Benjamin Thompson, Liam Elphick, Benjamin Rogers-Petro, Amisshah Synnestevedt, Adam Holland, Shane McCurdy. Middle: Emily Elphick, Philly Agrizzi Louzada, Jess Elphick, Jamie Reynolds, Eva Kossman, Helena Lippay, Jess Lake, Rachel Elphick, Eric van de Merwe, Rev. Howard Thompson. Front: Theo Kurkov, Susanna Appelgren, Lysandra de Padua, Susan Scappatura, Estelle Rogers, Kellan Roth, Malachi McCardell.

PHOTO CREDIT: WILLIAM T. VAN PELT



Organ enthusiasts fill the Cathedral



Monica Czausz, a talented student from Rice University, playing the Chara Aurora Cooper Haas Pipe Organ.



Some of the publications where the pipe organ has gained the Cathedral exposure. From top left clockwise: 2016 OHS (Organ Historical Society) Convention booklet, 2016 OHS Calendar, 2016 Palladio Awards in architectural design, 2015 periodical The American Organist, 2014 periodical The Diapason.

Two new residence halls were added to campus and now house first-year students. The buildings have been named for the late **Dr. Sherri Rumer Cooper**, a beloved former professor and namesake of a research fund at the College, and the **Rev. Daniel W. Goodenough**, a much-admired former College administrator and professor of Religion.

Bryn Athyn College is excited to break ground on a new turf field in October. Lights will be installed to augment the scheduling possibilities and allow for evening games and practices. The turf field will not only benefit the athletic department but also the College community –including the Physical Education Department, intramurals and club sports. Construction is expected to be completed by November and the field will be ready in time for the men’s and women’s lacrosse preseason.

The Alumni Office will continue to offer a number of alumni events and communications, including the *Alumni Magazine*. The Chapel-and-Chat series will continue to invite alumni to attend a College chapel service and stay for conversation with fellow alumni and College staff.

A Distinguished Speaker Series will begin this year, bringing outstanding alumni and friends of the College to speak to students and alumni on pertinent topics. Town Hall Meetings with the College President and Deans will invite the community to stay updated and involved, with opportunities for questions. Much of this outreach and community building will be available in a livestream format for those who cannot attend events in person.

Another improvement at the College is a beautiful new website that not only looks different, but offers better functionality on mobile devices. Take a look at [www.brynathyn.edu](http://www.brynathyn.edu). The increased traffic on the website is exciting, and as more news unfolds, many of these stories can be found in the news section there.

## **CHANGES AT ANC SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

*James M. Adams - Managing Director*

*Kira R. Schadegg - Girls School Principal*

*Jeremy T. Irwin - Boys School Principal*

### **Faculty changes in the Girls School:**

At the end of last year we bade farewell to **Sue Odhner**, **Kris Pitcairn**, **Allyn Simons** and **Aileen Synnestvedt**. They will be missed.

*New employees: We are thrilled to welcome **Wendy Clymer** as the new Girls School secretary. We welcome **Molly Cronlund** to the Science Department. She will be teaching girls Introductory Physical Science and Chemistry. **Spring Silverman** is the new full-time Girls School Athletic Director. We are excited to*

*have her join our faculty.*

Changes: **Kim Adams** is the Delta Mu advisor. **Michaela Boyesen** becomes a full-time faculty member. **Liz Fuller** is our registrar. **Martha Odhner** is taking over girls Human Anatomy and Physiology. **Crystal Smith** is the Director of the Doering Health Clinic and school nurse. **Erica Stine** is the girls senior class advisor. **Mary Williams** takes over as the girls sophomore class advisor. **Erica Cantley** is Theta Alpha liaison.

There are 95 enrolled students in the Girls School: 21 freshmen, 18 sophomores, 32 juniors and 24 seniors. There are 66 day students and 29 boarding students.

The theme for the year is: "Behold, I make all things new." (*Revelation* 21:5) There is a sense of excitement in the Girls School about the new school year that is invigorating.

### **Faculty changes in the Boys School:**

We are sad that **Shawn Synnestvedt**, **Kyle Genzlinger**, **Greg Synnestvedt** and **Ivan Maddock** are not starting the year with us, but are very happy to welcome several new employees. **Brandon Asplundh** is the new Boys School Athletic Director; **Jeremy Fehon** is teaching a section of Introductory Physical Science to freshmen boys and Geometry to sophomore boys; and **Cory Boyce** has returned to teach Senior Project, AP Calculus, AP Statistics, and serve as Math Department Head.

Some internal shifts include: **Eyvind Boyesen** is the PE/Health Department Head; **Keith Gruber** is the Visual Arts Department Head; **Doug Reuter** is the head baseball coach; **Cade Gurney** is the head ice hockey coach; **Simon Daum** is the assistant Sigma advisor and co-director of the fall play; **Ty Klippenstein** is teaching Civics and Economics; **Dylan Glenn** is teaching Ancient History; **Rob Forster** is the new Asplundh Field House Facilities Manager; and **Chris Groh** is helping us as an IT support technician. **Crystal Smith** is in charge of all health-related programs on campus, and we could not be more pleased with the level of care she provides our students.

We started the year with 134 boys enrolled in the Boys School: 40 freshmen, 32 sophomores, 30 juniors and 32 seniors. We have 101 day students and 34 boarding students.

### **Benade Hall Fourth Floor Renovations**

This summer, thanks to very generous donations from the Glencairn Foundation, the Class of 1975 and a private donor, we were able to renovate the entire fourth-floor science labs, hallways, offices and storage rooms.

Our Science Department met a number of times with us to help determine

the best uses of each lab and how to reconfigure them to coordinate with their courses. These renovations will make such a positive difference for our students and faculty.

The renovations included some minor construction, new paint, new LED lights (wherever possible) and new flooring. The work was done by Gurney Kerr, GK Electric, Henderson Painting, Kieran McKenna flooring, and our ANC facilities team.



During this project we donated a lab table, wood cabinets and science scales to the Kempton New Church School, plus lab cabinets and chairs to the Bryn Athyn Church School.

Here are some before-and-after pictures:

### ANC Summer Programs

We had another successful Performing Arts Camp. This was a whirlwind two weeks of ANC Performing Arts Camp with 50 sixth, seventh and eighth graders – several of whom are ANC students this year. Some students arrived a few days early to help build the sets. Both performances of *Disney Junior Beauty and the Beast* were packed.

We had a fun-packed summer camp with 115 attendees, and a very successful Tools 4 Life Camp (see report elsewhere in Church News).

## SWEDENBORG'S CHILDHOOD

General Church Education has produced an excellent 11-minute video on Emanuel Swedenborg's childhood, available online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gfou-7HBGWg>.

This is a very professional production. **Sarah B. Odhner** says: "I believe this video, along with additional videos in this series, has the potential to educate New Church young adults and those learning about Swedenborg, and for the first time, presents him in a way that is accessible for today's media generation."

She says that within the coming year General Church Education hopes to complete the final video in the series: *Emanuel Swedenborg, Revelator*.

Comments and feedback are welcome: [Sarah.Odhner@newchurch.org](mailto:Sarah.Odhner@newchurch.org)

## A SPECIAL DEDICATION

One of the highlights of the Charter Day weekend will be the dedication of two new residence halls on the Bryn Athyn College campus, named for the **Rev. Daniel W. Goodenough** and **Dr. Sherri R. Cooper**.

College President **Brian Blair** says both "are greatly admired for their contributions to New Church education at the College, and we feel incredibly fortunate to have their lasting impression commemorated in this way."

Rev. Goodenough had taught in the College and the Theological School before serving as President of the Academy – including the Secondary Schools and the College. He and his wife, **Ruth (Parker)**, are retired to the American Midwest.

The late Sherri Cooper was a beloved science professor whose teaching was enriched by her new-found New Church faith. A special research fund has been established in her name in the College. Her husband, **David**, is president of the College Alumni Association.

These residence halls each house 41 students and are connected by a common space designed for group meetings and social gatherings. They complete a ring of five complementary buildings of student suites. A communal plaza in the center is under construction.

## THE MEDIEVAL LINK

*Christine A. McDonald*

*Education Coordinator, Glencairn Museum*

For more than 30 years Glencairn has hosted annual summer camps for children of New Church families and friends. This summer, more than 80 campers stepped into an active exploration of medieval times and characters, guided by 20 student counselors and staff members.

Through instructional group activities, discussions, projects and theatrical plays these young lords and ladies together uncovered what drove daily life in the Middle Ages.

During this shared learning experience, Glencairn strives to foster a curiosity and deeper understanding about the religious beliefs and practices of medieval culture, while encouraging contemplation about the differences and common links it reveals regarding our own cultural experience and awareness.

Next summer, Glencairn invites children ages 9 and 10 to join us for Mythology Camp, where we will focus on the mysterious myths and fantastic fables of a variety of cultures represented in the Museum's collections.

(See photos of the Medieval Camp on page 485.)

#### **TOOLS 4 LIFE**

*Ali S. Childs, Director*

As the new director of Tools 4 Life, I formed a board of directors from past years to understand what made the camp a success. The original theme this year was *Dare to Prepare Your Heart*, based on the parable of the sower. From there we developed a second theme to ask the question: What dream is finding you? We wanted the campers to learn the art of being curious and not have to figure it out. The Lord has it figured out; we show up and do our best.

We invited guest speakers, including:

**Malcolm Walter**, one of the founders of the camp

**General Walter Lord** of the United States Army, speaking on leadership and service.

A "real" TED talk speaker, **Peter Atwater**, giving his own TED talk on confident decision making.

The campers experienced the importance of working hard through creating their own service projects and TED Talks to playing hard, thanks the Bryn Athyn Fire Company, **Lach Brown** and **Kenny Schauder** for a 100-foot slip-and-slide.

Thanks to our wonderful community, counselors, parents and campers, Tools 4 Life was a huge success.

#### **ORGANS DRAW VISITORS TO BRYN ATHYN CATHEDRAL**

*Graham Bier, Director of Music, Bryn Athyn Church*

When it comes to organs, the Bryn Athyn Cathedral is blessed with the best that technology and art have to offer. Certainly it could function musically with either of two organs alone. However, they represent Cathedral quality in two diverse approaches to organ building and both are used with great

frequency, often in the same service. Perhaps the best example was on Good Friday 2015, when the Choral Vespers music was a mass that Louis Vierne had written for his large cathedral in Paris that has two organs that are sometimes played at the same time.

Thanks to the generosity of **Tom and Charlene Cooper**, we have the greatest that digital organ technology has to offer: a 2011 Q410 made by the Allen Organ Company that contains within it seven “suites” of organ samples from different types of pipe organs around the world. Our Assistant Organist **Kenneth Coy** also uses his emulator to add high-quality samples of orchestral instruments into the mix.

In keeping with the historic nature of the building, we also have a pipe organ installed by the Kegg Pipe Organ Company in 2014. (See *New Church Life*, Sept/Oct 2014, 469-470) Many of its 46 ranks are comprised of pipes built by the masterful E. M. Skinner, an organ builder whom Raymond Pitcairn had selected to create an instrument for Bryn Athyn prior to those plans being put on hold. This organ was donated to the Cathedral by the Wyncote Foundation and organist **Frederick Haas** in memory of his mother, **Chara Aurora Cooper Haas**.

Our regular Cathedral congregation is fortunate to enjoy our two instruments on a weekly basis as they serve as musical workhorses to support our many services, but the organs have also acted as an unexpected form of outreach, bringing visitors interested in the sacred arts from near and far. This summer we had three large groups visit the organs, in addition to many individuals.

In early May, the Allen Organ Company held their annual conference in Philadelphia. To break up sessions on new models and technology, their tradition is to choose a field trip to see one of their organs in action. They chose Bryn Athyn Cathedral and about six dozen Allen Organ dealers came to listen to both instruments and learn a bit about our building and history.

The Longwood Gardens International Organ Competition takes place in mid-June, and seeks field trips to enrich the experience for families of competitors and attendees. About 100 people visited the Cathedral to hear **Terry Schnarr** and **Leah Martin** play. Unexpectedly, three of the competitors took time out of their busy competition schedules to come along. Two of the young gentlemen hailed from Australia and New Zealand, but the highlight was the Frenchman, an expert in his national tradition of sacred improvisation during church services.

We invited him to the bench and he improvised such peaceful and uplifting music inspired by the organ and the building that I wish the congregation could have been there.

Finally, at the end of June the Organ Historical Society (OHS) descended on Philadelphia. Visiting more than 30 significant area organs in a week, their

schedule would overwhelm even the most enthusiastic organ aficionado, but one of their highlights in a city with a rich array of notable instruments was their visit to Bryn Athyn Cathedral.

Five hundred participants arrived to hear a presentation of selected music by the young organist Monica Czausz. Afterward they were bused to the Society Building to eat dinner before heading into the city to hear one more organ before sleep.

The highlight of this visit was the hymn. OHS has a practice of singing a hymn with each organ they visit, and the sound of 500 trained musicians raising their voices to the Lord in our Cathedral still reverberates in my ears. Our staff can take pride in how smoothly their visit went, but even more so, our staff and community were so warm and welcoming that the OHS attendees said they almost couldn't believe it and shared their thanks throughout the rest of their week.

A particularly touching moment was when Mr. Haas was introducing our pipe organ. He shared fond memories of his baptism in the small chapel, and his unsolicited words about our religion included an exhortation that attendees investigate the Writings of the New Church –beautiful testament to the lasting influence of the Lord's work through the Writings.

Many of our visitors from these events came away with a great impression of our Church and a sparked interest in the Writings, and we can be grateful that the Lord in His providence drew them here.

(See photos on page 488.)

### BOYNTON BEACH RETREAT 2017

The annual Boynton Beach Retreat in Florida is scheduled for Sunday, January 29, through Thursday, February 2, 2017. It returns to the Duncan Center, which has kept the housing rate for those staying there the same as last year.

**Bob Brickman**, Director, describes the three “outstanding” speakers lined up:

**Brian Henderson**, a favorite of many, will return in his new capacity as Director of the Glencairn Museum. He has a lot of interesting news and thoughts about this fast-growing effort in Bryn Athyn.

**Erica Goldblatt Hyatt**: Anyone read the Bryn Athyn College Alumni Magazine several months ago will know of her interesting work on end-of-life experiences and helping people through the grieving process. I highly recommend her book, *Grieving for the Sibling You Lost*. It can be helpful to any age.

**The Rev. Glenn “Mac” Frazier** worked for the past few years on planting a New Church in Austin, Texas. Recently he has accepted a call to serve as assistant pastor of the Glenview New Church. His topic will be, *Lessons*

*Learned from Austin.*

On Monday afternoon there will be a question-and-answer session with the **Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr.**

On Tuesday afternoon there will be a brainstorming session looking to the future of the Retreat. Bob says: “The same crew has run the Retreat for several years now. Is it time for new leadership and ideas? We would like to hear ideas for increasing attendance – including younger folks. Do we need to change the times or the schedule? Should it be a long weekend? We’re ready and anxious to hear your thoughts and suggestions for improvements.”

Registration is \$235 per person until October 15 and \$260 per person thereafter.

Housing at the Duncan Center, which includes breakfast, for a single room is \$356 through Wednesday and \$445 through Thursday. For double occupancy it is \$196 per person through Wednesday and \$245 per person through Thursday.

For any questions or additional information please email Bob Brickman at [bbretreat@newchurchboyntonbeach.org](mailto:bbretreat@newchurchboyntonbeach.org)

**MISSING RELATIVE**

In listing the survivors of **Jonathan Olds** (*A Legacy for the Future*, *New Church Life*, July/August 2016, page 375) we inadvertently left out one of his surviving nephews, **Joel Smith**.

# Life Lines

## THE ROAD TO EMMAUS: A CONTINUING JOURNEY

When the disciples asked Jesus why He so often spoke in parables (instead of clear teachings), He said: “Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of heaven, but to them it has not been given.” (*Matthew 13:10,11*)

He also offered this familiar assurance: “I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He the Spirit of Truth is come, He will lead you into all truth.” (*John 16:12,13*)

How blessed we are in the New Church to have what the Spirit of Truth has revealed about the internal sense of the Word. But two thousand years later most of the world still does not have that light. Why that is we cannot say – although we are still witnessing the fallout from the Last Judgment – but must do what we can to set that light on a hill.

Scholars and church groups all over the world still diligently study the literal sense of the Bible. No doubt their perceptions are elevated at times, but their speculations are limited.

David Limbaugh is one such seeker. He is the much-less-bombastic brother of Rush Limbaugh, known in his own right as a prominent lawyer, lecturer and commentator. He is also a self-taught biblical scholar, whose latest book is: *The Emmaus Code – Finding Jesus in the Old Testament*.

He is convinced that the story of the two disciples encountering the resurrected Jesus on the road to Emmaus “is the key that unlocks the Old Testament, showing that its entire purpose is to herald the coming of our Savior.”

We know this is true – that the Old Testament is filled with prophecy and portent about the Lord coming on earth. But we also know that it is only Divine revelation – not human scholarship – that unveils the spiritual meaning.

In that walk to Emmaus after His crucifixion Jesus opened these disciples’ understanding of the Scriptures, which He has also done for us in the revelation given through Emanuel Swedenborg.

Limbaugh is diligent, scholarly and sincere in his quest to find spiritual meaning and harmony in the Old Testament. He quotes scores of scholars who have similarly probed for meaning. But they are looking only at the letter of the Word.

He sees that the overarching theme of the Bible leads to Jesus Christ, and he is on the right track. The whole of the Word really is helping us to see and know the Lord in His Divine Human.

Many of Limbaugh's instincts are good: "Though the Bible comprises many diverse books with different stories, it is ultimately one story of God's redemptive plan for man, whom He created purposely in His image for His glory, and for a personal relationship with Himself."

But he also is limited in his understanding by just the letter of the Word. He still believes, for instance, that the flood of Noah was real and that such judgment will come again into the world. And he sincerely believes that faith alone redeems.

Yes, we are blessed to have the internal sense, but that does not make us special. It just gives us opportunity and responsibility. We are all wayfarers on that road to Emmaus, having our eyes opened to the meaning of the Scripture, and doing what we can to help any pilgrims along the way. They are searching too for any light we can offer.

(BMH)

## **CHANGE AND THE CHURCH**

The world has been changing since time began. It just seems to happen at warp speed now. We have to wonder not only what revolutionary changes will mean in our lives – and the lives of our grandchildren – but what it will mean to our culture and our church.

Consider: Just 20 years ago Kodak dominated the world of photography. Within a few years it was put out of business by digital photography, and digital cameras have since been rendered virtually obsolete by iPhones. This sort of New Age Industrial Revolution will quickly overtake other industries in the next few years – from health care and education to artificial intelligence, 3D printing and self-driving electric cars.

Change can erupt before we even know it. While some of us still are figuring out what Uber and Airbnb mean, Uber is suddenly the biggest taxi company in the world, without owning a single car, and Airbnb is the biggest hotel company in the world without owning any properties.

Today's young people are facing a whole new set of challenges: What will survive in this environment, and how can we do it better? But those of us happy to be on the sidelines still need to be aware of where trends are taking us – and what needs to be preserved?

The question is most acute when it comes to the future of the New Church. You can see a report from the Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr. on page 498 on the General Church's strategic plan for the near future. We are also witnessing

how the Internet is rapidly changing how we deliver church and how we attract people all over the world to the teachings of the New Church. But we cannot always foresee how quickly old patterns can become obsolete and whole new challenges presented. We need to be ready. And we all need to be involved in the process.

(BMH)

### **IMPORTANCE OF BELIEF IN THE AFTERLIFE**

If there is no life after death, then believing in it is unrealistic. On the other hand, if there *is* life after death, then those who deny it are being unrealistic.

Most people, probably, are somewhere in the middle – they lean toward belief, or disbelief, but aren't sure. Many would say it doesn't matter, and is something we can't really know until we wake up in the next world (if indeed there is one). This is an important subject, though, worthy of careful consideration, because what we think about the afterlife greatly influences our view of life in this world and how we act.

Most people in all places and times have believed in some form of life after death. Even if it is a mistaken notion it does not seem to cause any serious harm, and is a comfort to many. There is less harm in an erroneous belief in heaven than in an erroneous disbelief in heaven.

But if heaven does exist, and the supreme purpose of life in this world is to prepare us for it, then denying or failing to acknowledge and actively engage with that reality is an impediment to fulfilling the most important business of our life in this world. The “afterlife” is a continuation of the life we are living here and now. We need to get with the program.

(WEO)

### **THE REALITY AND UNREALITY OF DEATH**

We say “death is a fact of life,” but to be more exact, it is a reality of life *in this world*. The natural *fact* of death is overridden and superseded by the spiritual *truth* that life itself never ends. In the larger scheme of things, death is actually the *opposite* of reality.

The material forms in which life appears--including our own physical bodies – are temporary containants of life; it is only these that die. Life itself – that is, the Lord – is the supreme Reality. And our reality is that “whoever lives and believes in (Him) shall never die.” (*John 11:26*)

In heaven, the angels are totally immersed in life and have no idea of death. In our world, life and death are intertwined, and so we do have to deal with death. But in itself, death is nothing, just the absence of life.

The very fact that we are aware of death is actually evidence of the reality

of life that lies beyond it – just as the shadow of a tree on the ground testifies to the existence of the tree, and of the sun shining through it. The tree is real and substantial, alive and moving in the breeze, green and feasting on the sunlight. The shadow is really . . . nothing.

The truth of the Lord's Word -- that's what is real, and living, and brings life to us that can never be taken away.

“The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.” (*John 6:63*)

“I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.” (*John 8:12*)

“Because I live, you will live also.” (*John 14:19*)

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with Me.” (*Psalms 23:4*)

(WEO)



Major General Walter Lord talks about leadership to Tools 4 Life campers in the lounge of Glenn Hall.

### A CERTAIN TRUMPET

The theme for this year's Tools 4 Life Camp at the Academy of the New Church was *Dare to Prepare Your Heart*. Camp Director Ali S. Childs based the theme on the Parable of the Sower – the importance of preparing fertile ground in our minds so that dreams may grow to fruition.

Part of taking charge of your life – which is what this camp for high school juniors and seniors is all about – is knowing how and when to lead, how and when to follow.

Leadership and service were the primary focus of the camp. For one morning session Ali invited Major General Walter Lord of the United

States Army to speak about leadership and to take part in a service project.

Gen. Lord has been a friend and mentor of our son, Glen (who also has a long history with Tools 4 Life) since serving in a peacekeeping mission together in Bosnia in 2002-03. Glen arranged for him to come to Bryn Athyn with his wife, Grace, and they were thoroughly taken with the mission of the camp and the quality of our young people.

Gen. Lord, who lectures on leadership all over the world, was pleasantly surprised when he asked if leaders are born or made. He said most groups he addresses assume leaders are born. But almost all of the campers agreed that leaders can be made. Of course, some people take more readily to leadership than others, but Gen. Lord is confident that leaders can be made with proper training.

That's because leadership is primarily a combination of opportunity and attitude. Anyone can lead who has passion for a cause and can inspire others to rally to it. Good leadership is not about power so much as influence – ideally influencing people to serve others and do good.

Gen. Lord told the campers: “God has a plan for you. You don't know what it will be, but you have to prepare yourself for it.” That, of course, falls right in line with the guiding philosophy of New Church schooling: education for use.

God, of course, should be the ultimate leader in our lives, and He leads not from power but from love. He leads by influx, flowing unseen into our lives as a positive influence.

There are all kinds of leaders – authoritarian, charismatic, those just put in the role, and those who lead by example. They can be good or bad. And anyone can be a leader.

When Jesus taught His disciples about leadership, He set the example. He told them that the princes of the Gentiles exercised dominion over them, “but it shall not be so among you: whosoever will be great among you, let him be your servant. Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.” (*Matthew 20:25-28*)

The servant leader is the ultimate model of leadership because it is based on how the Lord leads. Whether in business or politics, education or a family, this is a person – and any and all of us can aspire to this – who is humble and dedicated to a cause that is larger than him or herself. Such a leader looks first to serve, and then to lead others in common cause toward a goal. And the more such a person leads with morality, integrity, charity and faith – a “certain trumpet” sounding a clear call toward a goal – the better the leader, and the surer the followers.

“For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for the battle?” (*I Corinthians 14:8*)

Leadership is knowing where you need to go and why, and leading others to a goal they all believe in. It is all about the call of that certain trumpet.

(BMH)

### **FOLLOW THE LEADER**

A recent *Wall Street Journal* cartoon spoke volumes without saying a word. It simply showed Moses coming down the mountain with the two tablets of the Ten Commandments. Shuffling up the other way was a modern corporate dweeb bent over a cell phone, listening for the ubiquitous Siri to tell him where to go.

Write your own caption: Who are you following? Who is your God?

(BMH)

**OLYMPIC GOLD**

The Olympic Games of Ancient Greece were both religious and athletic festivals. City-states and kingdoms vied for laurel crowns amid animal sacrifices and religious overtones. Legend has it that any conflicts were put aside until after the Games. This was history's first vision of promoting peace by bringing people together to face off in athletic competition rather than war.

It didn't really work then. And it doesn't seem to be working now. The Olympic ideal still inspires hope, but it seems quickly overwhelmed by the harsh realities of the world. Might it be working better though than we imagine?

Just before this year's Summer Olympics began in Brazil, the Rev. Jeremy Simons preached a sermon in Bryn Athyn, *Peace is not a Game*. For two golden weeks these modern "Games" took over a world stage dominated by terrorism, raging conflict and divisive rhetoric that seem to defy any hope of peace but gave us a sense of unity, nobility and peace.

Jeremy offered the encouraging conviction that when we bring to the Games the perspective of the Lord's Word and providence, the unity that can seem both real and illusory contributes to the dream.

"When the international community comes together for the Olympic Games," he said, "something emulating cooperation and love among all people takes place. Surely international organizations like the United Nations, the Red Cross and many others play a more important role than the Games do. But the Olympics do some things that these others do not.

"For one thing, they are visual, easy to understand, non-political and popular. Many millions of people in all parts of the world follow them with interest."

Sadly, the Olympics have become stained with politics and corruption, but the ideal still lifts our spirit. We feel it with the parade of nations opening the event, with thousands of athletes and officials from all over the world coming together in a great show of peace and love. The triumphs, the failures, the joy just of representing one's country, and all the personal journeys touch our hearts.

The final celebration left a glow of hope before plunging us back into all of the strife and challenges in the world. There may not have been an epiphany of world peace but there was profound relief that the terrorism everyone feared in such a target-rich setting never even threatened. We are left again with the feeling that no matter what evil emerges in the world – and evil unfortunately will ever be with us – goodness from the Lord always prevails.

Jeremy offered this encouragement: "It is not that the Games solve anything in particular in the near future. Rather, it is that the repetition of events like these gradually changes the mindset of people in every part of the world.

“The conflicts and tensions that exist between nations, races and cultures seem so intractable that it is tempting to believe that peace isn’t possible, that things will never change. This is not true. It’s just that it takes more time than we would like for the process of blending so many peoples and cultures to take place. In the past most of the world’s peoples were isolated and seldom interacted with others very different from themselves. Now it is happening at a pace undreamt of just a few generations ago.”

Consider all this within the perspective of history and the vision of the New Church being established on earth. Jeremy used as his text *Micah* 4:4: “Everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken.”

Imagine how many thousands of years we have lived with that promise. To our earth-bound experience, it defies patience. But in the spiritual continuum that the Lord sees, it is all in His order and moving in the right direction.

Jeremy quoted *Apocalypse Explained* 461, explaining that the successive state of churches on earth is like “the successive states of a person who is being reformed and regenerated.” So the world is “growing up,” similar to the way we all do.

“Combining this idea with the one about connecting all people of the earth, it is not hard to imagine that the interactions between nations and cultures would at first be immature and difficult, and only gradually become more peaceful and positive, as the world ‘grows up.’

“An argument could be made that this blending of cultures and peoples is what is going on in the world today – even that it is the most important thing happening on this planet.”

We may wonder if the eventual establishment of the New Church throughout the world will bring real peace, or if the Church will forever be a minority, but the Olympic Games do still offer “a vision of peace that includes everyone on earth. The intense competition can be seen as symbolizing the efforts needed by all people if that peace is really to happen.”

That prophecy from *Micah* begins with the familiar: “Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.”

It is easy to be pessimistic about where the world seems headed and how long it is taking to give hope to Micah’s vision. But Jeremy offers the counterpoint: “The world is growing up and coming together. The Word is being spread, and it is connecting us with heaven.”

There is gold in our future.

(BMH)

**MORE TO BE DESIRED THAN GOLD**

One of the many inspiring stories from the Games was American swimmer Michael Phelps, who raised his total to 28 medals (23 gold) – making him the most decorated Olympian of all time. But Phelps also has one of the more intriguing back stories, which we didn’t hear so much about.

It is no secret that before he reached these latest heights he had come to the lowest point in his life. Just two years ago he was arrested for driving under the influence and his life suddenly plunged in a downward spiral. He said in a television interview that this “was more of a sign than anything else that I had to get something under control, whatever it was. I look back at that night, and everything happened for a reason.”

He checked himself into rehab and said: “I was at the lowest place I’ve ever been.” He even contemplated suicide. “I felt like I just didn’t want to see another day – felt like it should be over. I think I was at a point in my life where something needed to change. And I needed to figure things out.”

At this point Ray Lewis, a friend and former linebacker for the Baltimore Ravens, gave him a copy of the Rev. Rick Warren’s popular best-seller: *The Purpose Driven Life*.

Phelps later told the national TV sports channel ESPN that he became known as Preacher Mike in his rehab sessions because he began every session with lessons he learned from this book. He called Lewis to say, “I can’t thank you enough. You saved my life.”

Eric Metaxas, author of many Christian books, says this story “is a reminder of the role that God’s people are called to play as bringers of hope and agents of restoration. The results may not be as dramatic as Phelps’ story, but they will matter every bit as much.”

After dominating five Olympic Games, Phelps is said to be looking forward to retirement and spending time with his newborn son. He will have many lessons to teach him from what it took to win all those gold medals – but lessons as well about what gave him purpose and saved his life.

Perhaps one of them will be from *Psalms* 19:9,10: “The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold.”

(BMH)

**WHAT MAKES A COUNTRY GREAT?**

“America is great because she is good. If America ceases to be good, America will cease to be great.” This familiar quotation is attributed to Alexis de Tocqueville, from his great work on *Democracy In America*. But it doesn’t matter who said it – the thought is certainly true. There is more to greatness

than economic and military might. Ancient Rome had those but was brought down by the decadence of its culture.

Greatness comes from goodness, and there is only one source of good: God. The key to success for a nation, as for an individual, is to “do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.” (*Micah 6:8*)

Love of country is a good thing, but what is it that people should love about their country except its goodness? A country that represents and defends what is good and true will be loved and respected not just by its own citizens but by good people everywhere.

If a good country happens also to be large, rich and powerful, it will not be feared or resented by good people in other countries, but they will look to it as a good example, friend, benefactor and protector.

The love of dominion, the love of ruling over others and taking what is theirs, is the most powerful and relentless expression of the love of self, and there have always been nations held in thrall by rulers possessed by that love.

Therefore, the world needs countries which are both strong and good.

(WEO)

#### **MORE FROM TOCQUEVILLE**

This astute observer came from France to America in its infancy, carefully recorded what he saw, reflected deeply upon it, and published his thoughts in his classic *Democracy In America*. It would be interesting to know what he would think of America today, but here are a few excerpts from the book he published 1835.

“In the United States, the sovereign authority is religious . . . there is no country in the world where the Christian religion retains a greater influence over the souls of men than in America, and there can be no greater proof of its utility and of its conformity to human nature than that its influence is powerfully felt over the most enlightened and free nation of the earth.”

“Not until I went into the churches of America and heard her pulpits flame with righteousness did I understand the secret of her genius and power.”

“The safeguard of morality is religion, and morality is the best security of law as well as the surest pledge of freedom.”

“The Americans combine the notions of Christianity and of liberty so intimately in their minds, that it is impossible to make them conceive the one without the other.”

“Christianity is the companion of liberty in all its conflicts – the cradle of its infancy, and the divine source of its claims.”

(WEO)

**DEMORALIZED**

If Uncle Sam went to see a psychotherapist today, the diagnosis might well include such terms as: disheartened, dispirited, discouraged, depressed, disturbed, disconcerted, fazed, confused, thrown off balance and rattled. In a word . . . “demoralized.”

We can see in that word the “root cause” of the malaise that has the post-Christian West in its grip. “Demoralized” is generally used to describe a person or community suffering from a loss of confidence and hope, but we can see in the word a more essential meaning that explains the cause of the affliction, namely, loss of morality.

A culture that divests itself of “traditional morality” in favor of a “new morality” (formerly known as immorality) is likely to find itself *demoralized* in every sense of the word.

“Optimism” is often put forth as the solution to what ails us. But for it to be genuine, there has to be something to be optimistic about. To be uplifted we need to believe in forces for good which are higher, stronger and more reliable than our own schemes for advancement – namely, heaven, Divine providence, the Word of God, and the moral order derived from the Word that connects us with this help from above.

(WEO)

**IMPROVING GOVERNMENT**

Human beings are the only creatures with the ability to change their own nature. A horse is truly a horse from birth, but our potential to become fully and truly human requires our cooperation in order to be realized. We are born natural and ignorant, but with the potential to become spiritual and wise.

Animals are governed by instinct, but the government we humans devise for ourselves is designed to restrain our natural instinct to act selfishly, and help us become useful to others.

When individual human beings exercise spiritually enlightened reason to govern themselves, they make a conscious effort to restrain their baser impulses and impose spiritual order upon their natural lives. Civil government, ideally, does the same, thus assisting individuals in their quest to become better people. Not just better fed, housed, and cared for when sick – but better spiritually. The best civil government helps us in our quest to become better human beings.

“If men were angels, no government would be necessary,” James Madison wrote. He was speaking of earthly government. In heaven, the angels are governed, but from within, by their love to the Lord and of their neighbors. They are governed by Divine truth and gladly submit to its leading. The more we on earth embrace this kind of free and rational self-government, the less external governance we will need and the more perfect it will be.

(WEO)

**VOTE WITH THE ANGELS**

The American presidential campaign – which has worldwide attention – is even nastier and more disgusting than usual. The dominant tone – from mainstream media to our own personal social media exchanges – is often visceral, cynical, judgmental, uncharitable. No matter how disappointed we may be with candidates or political realities, we can do better than this.

We all have a role in establishing that tone – by what we say, what we pass on to others, what we tolerate. It is often said that we get the government we deserve – because of our low standards, prejudices and not being fully informed. Let us be worthy of better.

The ideal template – for our political discourse, as well as our overall communication – is this year's General Church Journey Campaign: *Mindful Communication*. Its thrust is always to be asking ourselves before speaking: Is it true? Is it kind? Is it useful?

In his first inaugural address in 1861, with the United States on the cusp of civil war, Abraham Lincoln set the standard:

"We are not enemies, but friends. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearth-stone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."

We could use that mantra: Is it true? Is it kind? Is it useful? We could use those better angels in the voting booth.

(BMH)

**ACADEMY REMAINS**

My Class of 1956 is holding its 60<sup>th</sup> reunion this Charter Day. We will come together – from as far away as Australia – sharing bonds and memories still fresh and warm in our hearts and minds.

The Academy of the New Church is unique in this way. Other schools and colleges hold reunions that revive memories and friendships, but the lifetime relationships formed at the Academy are special.

My wife used to lead French exchanges at the Academy and the teacher she worked with in France marveled at the way our students kept coming back and felt bonded not only by friendship but the shared faith and values that are so much a part of the Academy experience.

He said – with a hint of sadness – that once his students graduate he probably will never see them again and they will not come back to visit their school. This is true of many schools that do not have the spiritual core that still connects so many of us.

This Charter Day many reunion classes and others will come back together with one common bond that never fails to connect them: their shared Academy experience and the lifelong friendships established here – still connected not only through the Academy but the Church.

It is the same each year. Every class's experiences are unique, but share common touch points. Below is a poem I wrote for a video made to celebrate our reunion which is offered here only because so much of what we remember resonates throughout the Academy experience.

*Across the vale of 60 years  
The echoes beckon and everyone hears.  
Images surface from times gone by  
That may be past but will never die.*

*In Stuart and Glenn Halls memories dwell  
With the tolling of the Bean Hall bell.  
Be still and listen and hear the calls  
Of haunting voices filling the halls –  
Stan, Sig and The Rick still connecting with you;  
Lyris, Morna, Miss Wilde and Dordo too.*

*Close your eyes and perhaps your memory goes  
To those old chapel seats pinching your toes,  
KOBs breaching the third-floor wall,  
Roller skating in the Assembly Hall.*

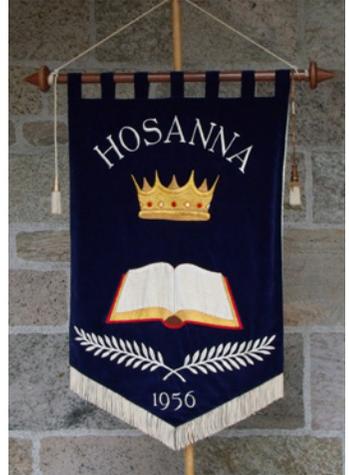
*Campus cleanup, coal pile, a scholarship crew,  
Gilbert & Sullivan, dance cards, the JD too;  
All a part of us still that never wanes –  
Those precious ANC “remains.”*

*Here friendships were forged, some marriages made,  
Dreams were dreamed and plans were laid.  
Our lives are blessed because they are based  
On values instilled and faith embraced.*

*Our yearbook portrayed “The Lion’s Roar”  
Now it’s more of a contented purr,  
With gratitude and a humble prayer  
For the blessings we all share.*

*Warm memories and loving sentiment  
To those already heaven sent.  
“Hosanna!” our banner ever sings,  
Our thanks and praise forever rings.*

(BMH)



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#### **HERESY**

Because this term is used so loosely, it is important that we have a clear definition of it. Such a definition is contained in a statement that heresy is doctrine separated from the Church, for the essentials of the Church are the acknowledgment of the Lord and of the Word and the life of charity. Only doctrines which would separate from these may rightly be called heresies, therefore; others, even if they conflict with our views, are only differences of opinion or of interpretation.

It is to be noted that heresy condemns no one; what condemns is confirmation of the falsity in the heresy from an evil love. Those who are in heresy as to the understanding, therefore, can be reformed and saved if they do not thus confirm it. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 324, 3488, 6400; *Sacred Scripture* 92; *Divine Providence* 259.)





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