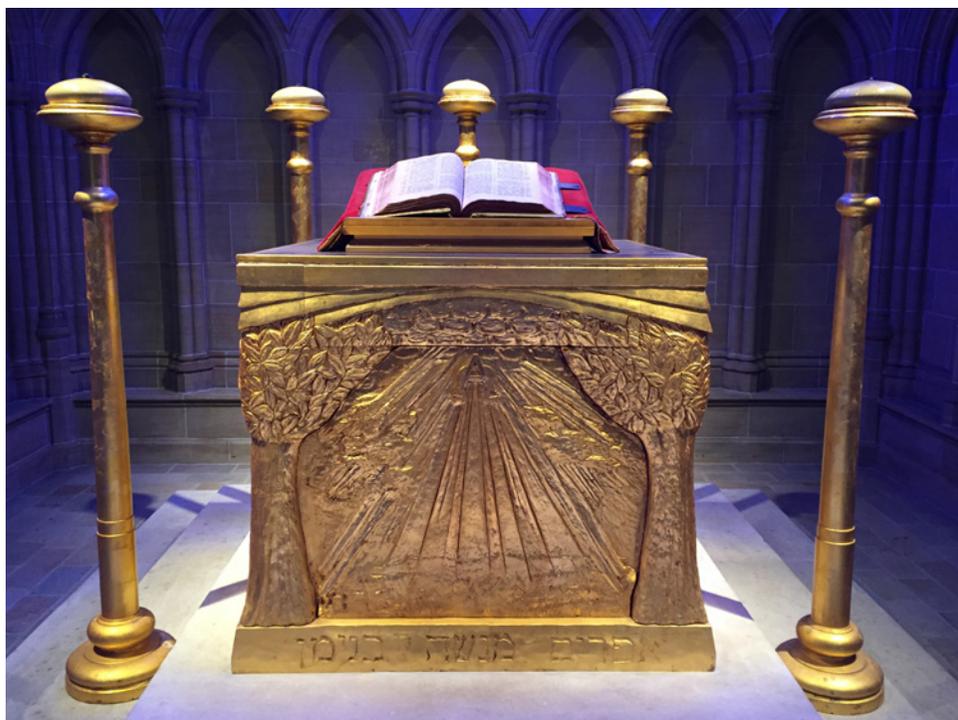


# NEW CHURCH *Life*

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

**JULY/AUGUST 2017**



## **The New Understanding of the Word**

Reading the Word can be daunting, challenging, confusing. But the Rev. James P. Cooper says that with the new understanding we have been given by the Lord, we can see that the Word is full of teachings ever pertinent to our daily lives. (Page 284)

(Image: The open Word on the altar of the Bryn Athyn Cathedral.)

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

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# New Church Life

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

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# In This Issue

The Lord did not give us the Word to discourage our reading of it but to inspire us to find meaning within it for our lives. In an article on “The New Understanding of the Word” the Rev. James P. Cooper counsels: “When we approach the Word with the heartfelt conviction that it is the Word of God, and that we are seeking to learn how to shun evils and to do good to others, then the Lord will speak volumes to us through the Word. If, on the other hand, we never turn to the Word because we believe that all it contains is some outmoded moral structure that does not apply to us, then it will indeed be silent in our hearts, for it will find no room there.” (Page 284)

In an article reprinted by request from the January 1973 *New Church Life*, the late Rev. Geoffrey S. Childs writes about one of the fundamental beliefs of the New Church: *The Divine Inspiration of Emanuel Swedenborg*. He notes: “This is our faith: that the Lord has made His second coming through Swedenborg, who was His scribe; and that the Writings are therefore the Lord’s alone, and not at all Swedenborg’s. This belief is the rock upon which our church is built.” (Page 295)

It is easy to identify with the Good Samaritan who came to the aid of a man left beaten on the side of the road, who had been bypassed by a priest and a Levite, but how discriminating are we in deciding who are our neighbors? In a sermon, *Discerning Love – The Best Way to Help*, the Rev. John L. Odhner warns that “love of self makes us prefer our own kind, and leads us to see others superficially. It is the root of prejudice and discrimination.” Meanwhile, he says, the Lord has told us about the hungry, thirsty, strangers, naked, sick and in prison so that “the teaching of charity may be restored” to the church. (Page 301)

We all know the parable of the lost sheep and how the shepherd rejoices over finding the one lost sheep while the other 99 have not strayed. In a sermon, *Finding Our Lost Sheep*, the Rev. Solomon J. Keal likens this to the Lord, as the ultimate Good Shepherd, who is always there for us no matter how lost we may be. He counsels: “The shepherd is that part of us that can keep watch over our spiritual life and notice when something is missing. But it’s also that part of us that doesn’t condemn (in ourselves or in others) when there *is* something

missing; it simply seeks to bring that goodness back.” (Page 308)

In her address for the Bryn Athyn College commencement Erin Glenn Busby recalled her days at the Academy of the New Church when a student new to New Church education confessed that religion classes got easier when she realized that “the answer was always good and truth.” But that simple answer is also a profound guide for life. “I have become convinced,” Erin told the graduates, “that it is the right answer for life – good and truth are always the answer. Pursuing both is never wasted, and combining the two is the route to happiness.” (Page 315)

And in her address for the Academy of the New Church Secondary Schools graduation Leann Perry Hill said the thrust of their education in the Girls and Boys Schools has prepared them to make wise choices throughout their lives. “Each day as you make your life choices,” she told them, “remember that those choices will in the end define who you are, and what you will become.” (Page 319)

The Academy Girls School administration and faculty have completed phase one of an exhaustive study of *Conjugal Love*, aimed at making this distinctive approach to marriage more relevant and inspiring to today’s mix of students. Girls School Principal Kira Schadegg says that in the fall the faculty will begin looking for ways to implement this study into the curriculum – across all grades and subject matter. Kira credits former Principal Sue Odhner for starting the whole process. “Her deepest desire was that our girls grow into caring, compassionate, kind women, who are morally grounded and spiritually motivated.” (Page 322)

This year’s Journey Campaign is *Practicing Forgiveness*, and Sasha Silverman, who wrote the workbook with the Rev. John L. Odhner, concedes that forgiveness can be challenging. But “What comes through most clearly to me,” she writes, “is that forgiveness is really just a form of love. In fact, it may be the most powerful expression of love.” (Page 324)

- Church News (page 326) includes:
- Bryn Athyn College graduates and awards
- The Academy Secondary Schools graduates and awards
- A first ever graduation at the Kempton New Church High School
- The 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Sunrise Chapel in Tucson, Arizona
- A report on the spring meeting of the Academy Board of Trustees
- A brief report on the Swedenborg and the Arts International Conference at Bryn Athyn College
- A preview of the January 2018 Boynton Beach Retreat
- A summary of the General Church Clergy Meetings

# Editorials

## THE SIMPLE TRUTH

A cartoon in *The New Yorker* magazine years ago showed two attorneys standing in front of a huge law library and one is saying to the other: “To think that it all started with the Ten Commandments.”

Libraries and book shelves in legal offices are filled with countless laws that govern our lives in a structure of order. It can all be overwhelming and intimidating, but it all is rooted in the Ten Commandments.

We may feel the same way at times about the Word and that imposing row of green books – the Writings – on many a shelf in New Church homes. Those 30 volumes of intricate and complex doctrine can seem overwhelming as well.

All of that doctrine is there for a reason – as are all of those laws. All those teachings are provided to make our lives easier and advance us toward heaven. But all of that doctrine comes back to simple fundamentals as well: The Ten Commandments. The Two Great Commandments. The Golden Rule. Do what is right. Shun evil. Love the Lord. Love the neighbor.

We are blessed to know that the complexity and depth of the Word and the Writings are explained in the revealed spiritual sense and by correspondences. We are told that angels delight in studying the Word – in which they see the correspondences – to all eternity, growing ever closer to the Lord as they do so.

It’s impossible to get that just from reading the literal sense of the Word. Consider something as seemingly meaningless and irrelevant as the tenth chapter of *Genesis* – just a list of names and generations. We tend to skip over that. But we are told that the contents of this chapter “include all the different ways in which worship embodied charitable good and religious truth in the ancient church. The chapter describes such differences as they existed not only in the ancient church in general but in each individual church as well.”

This obscure and easily ignored chapter is really addressing qualities and needs within each one of us. “In fact, it holds more information than anyone could ever believe. That is the nature of the Lord’s Word.” (*Secrets of Heaven* 1264)

The *Gospel of John* opens with: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God. And the light shines in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.” That light illuminates the revelation offered in the

Writings. And that light will be ever more intense and meaningful to us in heaven as the complexity of doctrine coursing through the Word becomes more and more simple, understandable and meaningful in our spiritual lives.

All the various denominations in Christianity have constructed arcane doctrines to separate themselves from one another. But these differences need never exist, we are told, “if we considered love for the Lord and charity for our neighbor the chief concern of faith. If we did, these distinctions would simply be differences of opinion on the mysteries of faith. True Christians would leave such issues up to the individual and the individual’s conscience. In their hearts they would say, ‘A person who lives as a Christian – who lives as the Lord teaches – is a real Christian.’” Then one common faith would emerge out of all the churches and “all disagreement due to doctrine would vanish . . . and the Lord’s kingdom would come on earth.” (*Secrets of Heaven* 1799.4)

Indeed, we are told, “Love to God and love toward the neighbor are the whole of the Word.” (*True Christian Religion* 287) From *Genesis* through *Revelation* those are the unifying and overriding principles.

So out of all that doctrine, all those differences, the messages are simple: The Lord is One. Saving faith is to believe in Him. All religion has relation to life and the life of religion is to do good. Good and truth. Choose life. Love the Lord. Love the neighbor. Obey the Commandments.

The Word is rich in meaning for our lives – “every jot and tittle.” The Writings are packed with teachings to help us be better people – and eventual angels. “The Lord has given the Word to mankind, and also to angels, so that by means of it they may be with Him. Indeed, the Word is the means by which earth is united to heaven, and heaven to the Lord.” (*Heavenly Secrets* 3476) And, “Such is the style of the Word that there is holiness in every sentence, every word, in some places even in every letter. Thus the Word forms a link between man and the Lord, and opens the way to heaven.” (*True Christian Religion* 191) But we should not be discouraged with the complexity of it all.

The Ten Commandments are clear, simple, explicit. They are a touchstone of faith for all religions. And they are the essence of the Word, containing “in brief summary, *all* things of religion. Through them the conjunction of God with man takes place. There is nothing more holy.” (*Ibid.* 283)

The Two Great Commandments that Jesus gave to the Pharisees when they tempted Him are similarly simple and direct: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang *all* the law and the prophets.” (*Matthew* 22:35-40)

There is so much to learn. And we will be at it to all eternity. But always there is the comfort: “Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy

burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.”

(BMH)

### RELIGIOUS FEELINGS: CONTENTMENT

When our natural needs and desires are met we have a sense of natural satisfaction and contentment, but since we are essentially spiritual beings, created for life in heaven, we also yearn for a deeper and more lasting kind of contentment that no worldly success or possessions can provide.

The longing of the soul for spiritual good and truth may be less urgently felt than the more immediate needs and wishes of the moment, but it is more essential. It is what sets humans apart from animals.

The reality of heaven may be denied intellectually, but the longing for it cannot be so easily turned off. An obvious example is the natural skepticism about the possibility of lasting happiness in marriage. This skepticism is common and often expressed, and yet hope for a happy marriage “springs eternal in the human breast.” The spiritual reality that keeps rekindling that hope is greater than all the natural evidence (of which there is indeed an abundance) that suggests it is a vain and unrealistic hope.

What *is* vain is the expectation that true peace of mind can ever be found apart from God. “You have made us for Yourself,” Augustine wrote, “and our hearts are rest-less till they find their rest in you.” And we have this promise from the Lord: “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls.” (*Matthew 11:28-29*)

We are conjoined with the Lord, we take His yoke upon us, by shunning evils and living a life of charity and use, as He teaches us in His Word. This also joins us with other people who are on a similar path of life. This is what makes heaven: being conjoined with the Lord and with our neighbors.

“Man is not born for himself, but for the sake of others; that is, he is not born to live for himself alone, but for others.” (*True Christian Religion 406*) But here is the strange paradox of human life: we are born for the sake of others, not ourselves; but we are born into the loves of self and the world, and are thus naturally inclined to live for ourselves and seek our own happiness above that of others. How can we get out of this predicament?

The answer, of course, is that we must be “born again,” as the Lord said. It is only by means of this new, spiritual birth (“regeneration”) that our ultimate destiny – heaven – can be attained. And the deep and enduring feeling of contentment that only the life of heaven holds.

(WEO)

# Letters To The Editors

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).

## *Response to "Finding the Humanity In Judas Iscariot"*

To The Editors:

I was fascinated by the Rev. Christopher Barber's article on Judas Iscariot. (*New Church Life*, May/June, 2017) Thank you, Chris! What I am supplying in no way implies any critique, but I did notice the absence of *Arcana Coelestia* 4751, which has featured in many articles on Judas in these pages, including two of my own: *New Church Life* March, 1988, page 95, and March 2009, page 111, the latter dealing entirely with the Lord governing His own states.

The Lord has self-control over His own glorification, unlike any of us in regeneration. So when the Lord finally told Judas, "What you do, do it quickly" (*John* 13:29) it involved the Lord's own glorification, and also establishing the Christian Church.

*Arcana Coelestia* 4751 points out that "Judas also, in that he sold the Lord, the like is represented here by Judah who said, 'Come, let us sell Joseph.'" If we then follow the story of Joseph being sold to the Ishmaelites, but it was to the Midianite states, this reveals the spiritual stages in between the Church as it was with Israel and such as it was to be. That means the Christian Church, finally the True or New Christian Church, which is "true Christianity now for the first time beginning to dawn." (*True Christian Religion* 700)

It turns out each true church, the Most Ancient, Ancient, Israelite, Christian and New (as In Nebuchadnezzar's dream image), has been identical as to internals, differing only as to externals. "[Here is] . . . a comparison with the good and truth of the Ancient and the Primitive [Christian] Churches. . . . When the external of the Ancient and Jewish Churches are unfolded or unwrapped, the Christian Church is disclosed. This is meant by the veil of the temple being rent asunder." (*Arcana Coelestia* 4772)

Judas' betrayal was thus at the Lord's command, "Do it quickly," which means certainly, i.e. the Lord's self-control. It led to the veil being rent, which is the Christian Church unveiled. The Lord was establishing the Christian Church by unwrapping the externals of the Jewish Church. This was to reveal the same internal as all previous genuine churches, now to be clothed with new externals, namely baptism and the Lord's Supper. Judas was the agent of the change, and he committed suicide, death meaning resurrection, i.e. a new external for Christianity.

Here is a small section of my original 1983 Council of the Clergy paper on Judas Iscariot, parts of which were melded in the above-mentioned articles. I hope your readers might enjoy this with Chris' superb examination.

### **The Internal Sense as Guide**

"We turn now to *Genesis* 37:25-27, which contains the passage parallel to Judas' betrayal of the Lord. This passage has the Ishmaelites from Gilead (sensual good) on camels (scientifics) going to Egypt (knowledge), and Judah saying, "Come, let us sell Joseph," and his brothers agreeing.

"The internal sense of these verses reads: 'There was further thought by those in simple good, such as gentiles have, about interior natural truths received by instructions in scientifics. The depraved quality in the Church, which is against whatever is good, saw no profit or eminence to be gained if these truths (especially about the Lord's Divine Human) should be completely extinguished. Those acknowledge Divine Truth who have simple good, and they are without blame, because what is from them is accepted.' (*Arcana Coelestia* 4746-4754, expository sections)

"This is the very sequence of which it is said, 'By Judas also, in that he sold the Lord, the like is represented as here by Judah, who said, 'Come, let us sell Joseph.'" (*Ibid.* 4751e)

"In the internal sense, the *depraved quality of the Church* is involved in *preserving* the Church because of those who are in simple good. As Dr. (Hugo) Odhner so aptly put it: 'The nominal acknowledgment of the Lord must still be maintained, lest the organized Church should lack any real reason for existing, and thus lose power among the simple. It is this dilemma that haunts the Christian Churches.'

"The Lord preserves states of simple good amidst the destruction and death of churches. There are many people who are without blame, sheep without a shepherd.

"Judas seems to partake of both the depravity and somehow also of the blameless simple good – a double nature which is perhaps at the root of trying to understand Judas. It may also be part of the Jewish people as a whole. (cf. Jews entering heaven *Spiritual Diary* 246, 2881, 4332, 4385, 3479; *Arcana*

*Coelestia* 788:2, 302)

“There is also a reflective quality about this story: Reuben returned to the pit and found it empty, which means, ‘The faith of the Church in general *could view* the falsities which belonged to faith separate, and *saw that there was no longer any faith.*’ (*Arcana Coelestia* 4761, cf 5762)

“This quote seems to point straight at Judas’ ability to realize what he had done. He had partaken of depravity, and saw the death of the Church of which he was a part. This discovery certainly invites mourning: i.e. Reuben rent his garments. (*Arcana Coelestia* 4763) Perhaps this depicts Judas’ despair, even in Reuben’s words: ‘The child is not. And I, whither do I come?’ which means, ‘Where is now the Church?’ (*Ibid.* 4766)

“If these words are applied to Judas, they make almost heartrending good sense. Judas’ faith in the chief priests and the Church was, to say the very least, shaken. ‘I have sinned, in that I have betrayed innocent blood.’ This could indicate to us Judas’ motive of betrayal, and why he then killed himself.”

Rev. Dr. Erik E. Sandstrom  
Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania

### *What Are We Looking For?*

To The Editors:

If we accept that the revelations penned by Emanuel Swedenborg are part of the Divine Word, then we probably accept the idea that everything created corresponds to, or represents, some aspect of the Infinite Divine. For example, see what is said in *Arcana Coelestia*, 2999, 3000.

When we learn to read we first study letter shapes and sounds, words, sentences and finally entire stories. The letter shapes, the sounds, etc., are building blocks used to represent the stories. If we concentrate only on the natural building blocks we lose the real message.

Take the story of Noah and the flood. It seems to me absurd to think that a man, Noah, built a big boat, managed to get all animal species aboard, two-by-two, and floated off to eventual safety. The story of the ark must be building blocks *representing* something Divine. Therefore, looking for the “lost ark” can be recognized as an absurdity. The *natural* reality of finding, or not finding, an ark’s remains is immaterial to the *spiritual* concepts being revealed.

The planet Mercury, likewise, must have a *spiritual* correspondence or representation. Emanuel Swedenborg was a *spiritual* revelator, and it seems

possible to me that all that Swedenborg reveals about Mercury in the book, *Earths in the Universe*, is a *spiritual* story – a message dealing with aspects of our Divine Lord. Looking for natural, physical evidence to support the spiritual message, then, could be as useful as looking for the “lost ark.”

Martin E. Klein  
Boynton Beach, Florida

Correction: In the letter from Heulwen M. Ridgway, “New Church Catechisms,” in the May/June issue of *New Church Life*, there is a paragraph, beginning “In my view,” before the listing of the second catechism. This paragraph should have followed the second section of Questions and Answers, since it refers to both sections. Our apologies.

#### OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY

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

#### LAW

The nature of Divine law will be better understood if we think of it as being represented by the laws of aerodynamics, physics or chemistry rather than by laws enacted by legislative bodies and then turned over to the judicial branch for enforcement; for the former cannot be broken, but the latter can.

As is well known, a law of physics is not the statement in the textbooks but the order or relation of phenomena noted and described in the statement. Divine laws are unchangeable and unbreakable operations of Divine order, and the revelation of them in the Word is not the law itself but the statement of the law.

Thus when we are told that it is a law of the Divine Providence that certain things should not be done, the teaching does not only prescribe a mode of conduct; it states an unalterable order with which man must cooperate if he wishes to achieve the end. Note that there are no laws of nature, but Divine laws in nature. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 7186, 10119, 7206)

# The New Understanding of the Word

*The Rev. James P. Cooper*

(Reprinted with permission from the *New Church Canadian*)

Perhaps one of the most basic assumptions we would make about a Christian is that he should revere and honor the Word of God. It should be a fundamental part of every Christian's belief that the Word was written by God through the prophets in order to give mankind those truths which will lead us to happy, productive lives in this world, and to eternal happiness in the next. The difficulty is that although we may believe these things are so, it is far more difficult for us to actually find them in the Old and New Testaments.

Take for example a husband and wife who are having difficulties in their marriage. Where are the scriptures that will help them overcome their fears and begin to resolve their differences through good communication? Where are the scriptures that show teens the dangers of substance abuse? We could go on, but our purpose here is not to criticize the structure of Scripture, but merely to point out that the Bible does not appear to speak directly to many of the issues that are most critical to us in our daily lives.

Are we perhaps expecting too much from the Old and New Testaments? But how can we expect too much if it is God's Divine Word? But what about the apparent contradictions, where an Old Testament passage seems to say one thing, while a New Testament passage seems to say the opposite: which teaching should we follow?

It is dilemmas like these that have led some Christian denominations to exclude certain parts of the Word. Some denominations focus on the teachings of the Old Testament, while others focus almost entirely on the Gospels or the Epistles depending on their doctrinal point of view and their philosophical leanings.

It is a principle of the law, and many other professions, that a document must be internally consistent. That means that when you write something, the position or point of view you take should not be one thing in one place,

and something else in another. When you see such apparent inconsistency in a legal document, your assumption should be that you don't understand the point, and you should make the effort to go back and see how they can both be true illustrations of some larger concept.

If we are to assume Divine authorship for the Word (and we do) we must then also assume that this same principle applies – that because the Word is the work of one author, it must be internally consistent. Since it does not appear to be consistent as to its letter, perhaps we need to look at it in a new way to discover where its consistency lies.

There are many things in the Word which are appearances of truth that yet contain within them genuine, spiritual truths – principles which can govern all aspects of our lives. It does no harm for us to think simply about the appearances, as long as we do not then try to twist scientific truth to make them true, for in so doing the truth is harmed, as are the principles contained within them.

Take an example from something very simple and familiar: the saying that the sun rises in the morning. Certainly, that is the appearance. When we look to the east early in the morning, we see the sun appear from below the horizon, and then begin to climb. We have no sensation of motion for ourselves, and the sun appears to be much smaller than the earth. Therefore, even though we all know intellectually that what we are actually experiencing is the earth turning while it orbits the much larger sun, still we say that the sun rises and sets. Everybody knows what we are talking about, and everybody knows that it is not strictly true, but it is an appearance that we accept and use. Such a convention of speech causes no harm.

However, there were those who believed that the truth of the Word lay in its letter, that made it a matter of religious faith that the earth was the center of the universe, and that the sun, moon and stars revolved around it. Then, after the invention of the telescope, when scientific evidence began to contradict that view, the church leadership put the scientists to death for their heresy!

For the moment, science seems to have won that battle, but does it mean we have to throw out any scriptures that refer to the sun rising or setting? No, it means we have to look beyond the letter to the meaning within the words, if we are to find the real life and spirit of the Bible. For, as Paul wrote in his second letter to the *Corinthians*, *the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.* (See *True Christian Religion* 257)

It is clear from a study of the nature of Scripture that the only people who were intended to take it literally were the ancient Hebrews and their descendants up until the time of Christ. If the Word is to be of some use to Christians, then, it must be by some other means.

The doctrine of the New Church teaches that God, in His Divine Wisdom,

wrote the Word in just such a way that every letter and word would have a literal meaning of value to the Jewish Church, but at the same time contain within them a spiritual meaning that could be unlocked and that would provide moral and spiritual meaning to all those who were to follow after the Jews.

This spiritual sense is defined by the doctrines of the New Church in the following words:

The spiritual sense is not the sense that shines forth from the sense of the letter of the Word when one is studying it and so construing it as to confirm some dogma of the church. That may be called the literal and ecclesiastical sense of the Word. The spiritual sense is not apparent in the sense of the letter; it is interiorly within it as the soul is in the body, as the thought of the understanding is in the eyes, or the love's affection in the face. It is that sense chiefly that makes the Word spiritual, not only for men but for angels also; and therefore by means of that sense the Word has communication with the heavens. (*True Christian Religion* 194)

Even when we accept the concept that the Word was written in the way it was in order to contain an internal sense, yet we wonder why it could not have been written in a plainer style. Why must there be the difficult sayings and apparent contradictions? It seems that the same internal sense could have been carried in a literal sense that was far more specific and clear.

We are told that the reason for the Word being written in such a difficult style is because the Lord saw the need to conceal the rational statement of His Divine truths until such time that mankind had advanced enough that they were ready to receive them, as He said in *John*: "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now." (16:12)

The Lord has hidden spiritual truths in the letter of the Word, but He has hidden them in plain sight, like a puzzle where certain figures are hidden, but as soon as someone shows you one of them, they all pop out so clearly that you wonder how it was possible that you didn't see them right from the first. Once we accept the idea that the whole of the Word is a parable that can be understood using a clearly defined set of keys we find that the Word is full of teachings pertinent to our daily life, each level deeper than the next.

The Old Testament was written the way it was because, as to its letter, it was suited to the spiritual level of the children of Israel, and today the stories of the Old Testament are most interesting and appropriate for elementary school children.

The New Testament was written in a different way, because it was designed to speak, in its literal sense, to a group of people who had a sophisticated understanding of the Old Testament. We find that students in high school appreciate its moral stance and level of thought.

But it takes an adult mind to reach within to the spiritual levels, and that

is why the doctrine of correspondences which discloses the internal sense of the Word could not be revealed until after the Renaissance and the Age of Enlightenment – until certain ideas had been planted and come to fruit in the collective understanding of mankind.

When that time had come, the Lord made use of a new prophet, Emanuel Swedenborg. We may observe that people today are a little uncomfortable with the idea of a prophet in modern times, and yet when we look at the way the Bible was constructed, and the testimony of Scripture itself, we see that there have been literally thousands of people during the course of recorded

history who have been called by the Lord to be prophets, to have their spiritual senses opened so that they could hear the word of the Lord through an angelic messenger, and then carry it by written or spoken word to others.

We should note that the word “angel” is derived from the Greek word for “messenger;” one who carries the Word of God to men. We should not automatically discard the possibility of a modern prophet. The principles of prophecy still apply, and in fact, the scientific and rational nature of the revelation required that the prophet be a modern, educated man so that he could understand the ideas presented to him and then represent them to mankind in a meaningful and clear way.

Emanuel Swedenborg was a man whose accomplishments in many fields of science, politics and economics made him uniquely suited to the task of explaining the doctrines of the New Christian Church.

His Theological Writings demonstrate that the “spiritual sense” can be systematically, even scientifically, drawn out of Scripture by the use of a system we call the “science of correspondences.” Briefly stated, this doctrine shows that everything in the natural world exists because it corresponds to something in the spiritual world.

For example, we say that all the animals in the Word correspond to different affections. Think of the various places in Scripture where animals play a part in the story, and if we know that good animals represent our good and charitable feelings, while dangerous beasts represent our evil desires, we can begin to see a reason for the parts that the various animals play in the different stories

Once we accept the idea that the whole of the Word is a parable that can be understood using a clearly defined set of keys we find that the Word is full of teachings pertinent to our daily life, each level deeper than the next.

The Doctrines of the New Church combine solid Christian traditions with our own experience of life, reason, common sense, science and psychology to create a religion that makes sense.

of the Word. We can see why the Lord so often associated Himself with sheep, for example, because sheep represent our willingness to be led by the Lord, an affection He wanted to foster in us.

The theological Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg contain many volumes of information about what various passages in Scripture mean, using this scientific system which can be applied to any text from *Genesis* to *Revelation* and throughout. This system shows that every word and verse actually carries within it truths that pertain to the history of the church, our own states of spiritual growth and rebirth, the doctrine of the spiritual

world, and the nature of God Himself. The science of correspondences unifies the whole of Scripture so that it makes sense and has relevance to our lives and our situations here, now, today.

This new system shows that science and religion are not enemies, but rather two different ways that the Divine Wisdom shows itself. We turn to science for a description of how things work, and we turn to the Word to find out why. The Doctrines of the New Church combine solid Christian traditions with our own experience of life, reason, common sense, science and psychology to create a religion that makes sense.

The Theological Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg – some 30 volumes, written over a period of 25 years – form a comprehensive system free of inconsistencies and contradictions which opens Scripture up in a new way, allowing the Divine truths that have always been there to shine forth and to bring new light into the lives of men on earth, provided that they seek to put them to use in their lives.

The one question that each of us will face in our lives, when trying to answer our own questions about religious belief and faith is: “How do I know that this teaching is true?” All of us will ask that question no matter what faith we were born into.

In the final analysis, we each decide for ourselves what is true by living according to it, and asking ourselves if it leads to what is good, to what we, from conscience, believe that God wants us to do. We in the New Church believe that the Theological Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg constitute a new revelation because that is what they themselves claim, and when we live

according to the truths they reveal, we are lead to do good to our neighbour, and to love the Lord with a greater degree of understanding than has been possible before.

We read from *True Christian Religion* 244: “The things in the literal sense of the Word are apparent to every man because they present themselves directly to the eye; but the things that lie hidden in the spiritual sense are apparent only to those who love truths because they are truths, and do goods because they are goods. To them the treasure that the literal sense covers and guards lies open.”

The Word has been written in the way it was so that its very form and structure would protect it from those whose intention is evil, and who would seek to use it to gain power over other. Such people, because they seek evil, cannot see the wonderful truths in the Word. But, for those who turn to the Word for comfort and guidance in ways to improve their life, the Lord opens their eyes and enlightens them, so that for them the Word overflows with His love.

The way the Word speaks to some people and not to others is illustrated by the story of king Saul. Before Saul, the children of Israel had always been governed by some leader, such as Moses, or Samuel, to whom God spoke directly – and in the case of when the Ten Commandments were given to Moses, so openly that all the people gathered around the mountain heard it for themselves. But the children of Israel as a group were becoming more and more interested in evil, and they no longer wished to be governed by a prophet, but demanded to have a king so that they could be like the other nations.

The Lord agreed, and selected Saul to be the first king of Israel. At first it seemed to work out very well. Saul was handsome, brave and a natural leader. He depended on the counsel given to him by the prophet Samuel, and the nation prospered. Eventually Saul became disobedient, and Samuel was instructed to tell him that none of Saul’s sons would be king after him as punishment.

Saul then tried to kill David, whom he perceived would be the Lord’s choice to be the next king. His pursuit of David caused him to leave his kingdom unprotected and open to attack by the Philistines. And finally, when he returned to face the Philistine attack, he found that the Lord would no longer speak to him through prophets, or through dreams, or in any other way, that he was left alone. Without the Lord’s help, he lost the battle, his three sons, and his own life. (See 1SA 25ff)

The important question we have to ask ourselves in this context is: Did the Lord actually stop guiding Saul, or was that just the appearance? Wouldn’t it be more correct to say that Saul had stopped listening to what the Lord had to say?

When we approach the Word with the heartfelt conviction that it is the Word of God, and that we are seeking to learn how to shun evils and to do good to others, then the Lord will speak volumes to us through the Word. If, on the other hand, we never turn to the Word because we believe that all it contains is some outmoded moral structure that does not apply to us, then it will indeed be silent in our hearts, for it will find no room there.

What about the fact that the Lord had spoken to the children of Israel through prophets from the time of Abraham, but there was no more prophecy for 400 years before the Lord was born, a period known in church history as the “Great Silence”? Was God angry? Did God turn his back on His own church for 400 years? Can God really be angry? What about the silence in our own time? Why does the Lord not speak to us through prophets today?

The answer is that God was not silent then, nor is He silent today. He is constantly reaching out to every one, but He is and was doing so by means of the written Word. Although the Bible, as we know it, did not exist until the 17th Century, still the words of the prophets were written down and studied in ancient times. Those who wanted to know what the Lord taught could seek it out.

For example, the Wise Men in the East knew when to expect the star, because they listened to what the Lord said to them in the words written by the prophets and carefully preserved by them. Actually, the reason the Lord spoke to the ancient prophets was specifically so that the Word could be

written down and fixed in one particular form that could one day be known to all mankind.

The Lord speaks to us every day in the Word. In times of trouble, all we have to do is pick up the book and open it, and there is the Word of the Lord bringing us comfort and guidance. But what about those people who don't receive comfort, for whom there seems to be a great silence? The Heavenly Doctrines of the New Church indicate where the problem lies:

For the Divine truth which is from the Lord is continually flowing in with man, and forms his understanding; and if you will believe it, without this continual influx of

the truth Divine that proceeds from the Lord a man can perceive and understand nothing whatever. For the Divine truth that proceeds from the Lord is the light which lights up the mind of man, and makes the internal sight, which is the understanding; and as this light continually flows in, it adapts every one to receive. But they who receive are they who are in the good of life; and they who do not receive are they who are in evil of life. Nevertheless the latter, like the former, have the capacity of perceiving and understanding, and also the capacity of receiving, in so far as they desist from evils. The Divine truth which proceeds from the Lord is continually flowing into human minds and adapting them to receive it, and that it is received in the proportion that the evils of the loves of self and of the world are desisted from. (*Arcana Coelestia* 9399)

The Lord never stopped speaking to Saul. He never stopped trying to lead the Jewish Church out of its downward spiral. It was just that He was saying things that they did not want to hear, He was telling them that they had to turn away from their evil ways and return to the way of the Lord, but they chose to continue in their evil ways which gave them delight.

The same principle applies for us. When we approach the Word with the heartfelt conviction that it is the Word of God, and that we are seeking to learn how to shun evils and to do good to others, then the Lord will speak volumes to us through the Word. If, on the other hand, we never turn to the Word because we believe that all it contains is some outmoded moral structure that does not apply to us, then it will indeed be silent in our hearts, for it will find no room there.

The doctrines of the Church tell us that those who wish to understand, and who shun evils as sins, will be able to understand the Word, and that, in general is true. But it must be understood that this principle has to be applied with mercy, and with accommodation to the states of the reader. We cannot assume that because people have difficulty at their first attempts in reading the doctrines of the church, or some of the more difficult books of Scripture, that the Lord is not speaking to them because they are evil. It is like any other skill in the natural world: it must first be learned, and then practised. Another consideration is this:

All the histories of the Word are truths more remote from essential Divine doctrinal things, but still are of service to little children and older children, in order that thereby they may be by degrees introduced into the interior doctrinal matters of truth and good; and at last to Divine things themselves; for within them, in their inmost, is the Divine. (*Arcana Coelestia* 36902)

In other words, the Word has been specifically constructed in such a way that there is something in it for everyone. Little children love the story of creation, and learn simply that God created them and everything else. Older children love the stories of the conquest of Canaan, and learn that the Lord will fight for them in their battles against evil. And if such a foundation has

been laid, and there is an effort to keep the life in order, every time a person returns to the stories of the Word they will see something new, something deeper, something more Divine.

Those are taught by the Lord who read the Word not for the sake of self and the world, but for the sake of good and truth itself, for then they are enlightened. But when men read it for the sake of self and the world, they are blinded. (*Arcana Coelestia* 9188)

There is one other problem regarding the Word that needs to be addressed, and that is that many people feel that the language is too difficult, that they cannot understand. But again, we must ask ourselves if the problem is with the Word, or with our attitude toward the Word.

When I was a teen, I was interested in sports cars and hot rods, so I bought a magazine about building custom cars. I only understood about two words out of five, but I studied the illustrations and reread the articles until that magazine was just about worn out. And then I bought another one. It wasn't long before I could speak easily with members of the local sports car club and serve as a marshal at meets.

Later I became interested in other very specialized fields such as flying, photography and computers and the same kind of thing happened. At first I didn't understand what anybody was talking about, but because I was interested and persistent, I soon learned the necessary vocabulary. Those people who have learned to use computers as adults will know exactly what I am talking about. Anyone who needs to make use of a specialized field of knowledge first has to learn its particular language.

Look at the problems most laymen have with legal documents, page after page of phrases like "the party of the first part" and words like "fiduciary." If you complain to the lawyer and insist he write "in laymen's terms" he will most

likely tell you that those particular words and phrases are necessary because there are very complex ideas that have to be expressed clearly and without ambiguity, and so a specialized legal language has been created.

The point is that all these principles apply first and foremost to the Word. The words and phrases that have been chosen were specifically selected for their impact on our natural senses, and at the same time for the sake of the spiritual meanings that they contain within them.

God wrote the Word for the sole purpose of communicating with us. He certainly wouldn't have written it in such a way as to make it impossible for most people to read.

Yes, it can be difficult to read the Word at first. But remember that it wasn't so long ago that the Bible was used in every American school as a primary reader for grade one. It can be read and understood simply by the young and the simple, but if they persist, and make the effort to acquire the skill, and to practice it regularly, the Word can easily be read with understanding. God wrote the Word for the sole purpose of communicating with us. He certainly wouldn't have written it in such a way as to make it impossible for most people to read.

The Word was written to be a means of conjunction and communication between God and man. God, being infinite, cannot actually be conjoined with finite man. However, we have been created in such a way that we can receive the truth into our minds. Truth is from God, and He can therefore be conjoined with us by means of what is His in us, that is, the truth in our minds.

We learn the truth from the Word, and compel ourselves to obey it. The Lord then changes our loves so that we come to love doing what is true, and that Divine truth becomes a part of our essential character. The Lord can then draw nearer to us because there is genuine truth from Him in our minds, and the associated good love in our heart.

But it is not just the Lord who is more closely conjoined with us when we read the Word, but the angels in heaven as well. Angels and spirits draw nearer to us when we are thinking and doing things that they love. This also means that evil spirits draw nearer to us when we are doing things that they love. But when we read the Word, and we are thinking about the historical characters and the things that they did, the angels who are with us see within the characters and stories to the Divine principles that are hidden there, and they are inspired to worship the Lord.

Every word, even to the smallest iota of all, in the Word, involves spiritual and heavenly things; and that the Word is in this manner inspired, so that when it is read by man, spirits and angels immediately perceive it spiritually according to the representations and correspondences. (*Arcana Coelestia* 2763:2)

These are the arcana contained in these words and in those which follow; but they are delivered in an historical form in order that the Word may be read with delight, even by children and by simple-minded persons, to the end that when they are in holy delight from the historical sense, the angels who are with them may be in the holiness of the internal sense; for this sense is adapted to the intelligence of the angels, while the external sense is adapted to that of men. By this means there is a consociation of man with the angels, of which the man knows nothing at all, but only perceives a kind of delight from it that is attended with a holy feeling. (*Ibid.* 3982:3)

In the book of *Revelation*, John reports that the angel said to him: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who

overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.” (2:7)

The Word has been provided by the Lord so that those of us who have an ear, that is, those of us who are willing to hear and obey what the Lord has to teach, will hear what He has to say to the churches, that is, to all those who would follow Him.

Each of those who hear the Word will then face the conflict between the desires of their will and the laws of life set forth by the Lord. To those who hold firm in these temptations, to those who overcome hell, the Lord has promised that they will eat of the tree of life in the midst of the Paradise of God.



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#### OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY

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

#### **LIMBUS**

The limbus is a border, drawn from the finest things of nature, which man retains after death to give fixation, stability and permanence to his life in the spiritual world. Because it is natural, even though formed from the purest things of nature, the limbus does not enter the spiritual world, but remains within nature as a basis for man's immortality; and as his character is impressed upon it, it is the basis for his survival as an individual.

The limbus is also referred to as the cutaneous envelope or border, and the substances which constitute it are the natural substances of the mind. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 3293; *True Christian Religion* 103; *Divine Love and Wisdom* 257, 388e; *Wisdom* vii:7)

# The Divine Inspiration of Emanuel Swedenborg

*The Rev. Geoffrey S. Childs*

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When the Lord was on earth He said: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth." (*John 16:12,13*)

Of this coming it is said:

The Lord will now appear in the Word. The reason why He will not appear in person is that since His ascension into heaven He is in His glorified Human; and in this He cannot appear to any man unless the eyes of the spirit are first opened. [Rather] He will appear in the Word, which is from Him and is thus Himself. (*True Christian Religion 777*)

This second coming of the Lord is effected by means of a man [Swedenborg], to whom the Lord has manifested Himself in person, and whom He has filled with His spirit, that he may teach the doctrines of the New Church from the Lord by means of the Word. (*Ibid. 779*)

This is our faith: that the Lord has made His second coming through Swedenborg, who was His scribe; and that the Writings are therefore the Lord's alone, and not at all Swedenborg's. This belief is the rock upon which our church is built. Yet there are those who would reject this rock as the head of the corner; for there are those who have read the Writings and do not consider them a Divine revelation.

Most of these describe Swedenborg as an amazing genius and as astonishingly prolific in his ideas. But they readily and easily ascribe these ideas, these truths, to Swedenborg, and not to the Lord. They ignore what Swedenborg himself testifies about the authorship of the Writings.

Those who doubt the Divine authority of the Writings have a probing question to ask: How can a man, who is finite, write what is Divine? This is a valid question, for Swedenborg was only a finite man. To see how the Lord

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could nevertheless reveal the Divine Word through him is a vital point of doctrine. For since we believe that the Writings are true, we must have a rational answer to critics.

Here we can turn to the past, for knowledge of how previous revelations were given will enable us to understand Swedenborg's inspiration in clearer light. Thus, the Old Testament was written through Divinely chosen scribes – Moses, the prophets and others Divinely chosen. How is it, then, that what they wrote was the Lord's and not their own? It is because they wrote down, verbatim, what was dictated to them by the Lord. In this the Lord uses angels as His spokesman.

We are told: "Sometimes the Lord so fills an angel with His Divine that the angel does not know that he is not the Lord." (*Divine Providence* 96:6) When so infilled, the "angels speaks not from himself but from the Lord." His words are not the Lord's. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1745:3) All that is the angel's own is quiescent. Such "subject angels" appeared to the scribes of the Old Testament. "They [these scribes] wrote as [subject angels] dictated, for the very words which they wrote were uttered in their ears." (*Ibid.* 7055:3)

This literal dictation was a necessity in the Old Testament, for in it the very Hebrew letters – every jot and tittle – have a Divine correspondence. Yet the dictation was not as arbitrary as it sounds; for the Old Testament scribes were first prepared and instructed before such Divine dictation was given to them.

They were Divinely educated for their roles and were thus enabled to cooperate willingly, where necessary. The eyes of their spirits were opened and the things about which they were later to write were portrayed before them. But when they actually wrote their portion of the Word they were not in the spirit but in the body. Then they heard interiorly the literal words, Divinely dictated, which they wrote down, letter by letter; and this they did with joy, as servants of the Lord.

Yet as scribes they were far different from Swedenborg. For these early revelators did not understand the meaning of what they wrote – or rather what was written through them. It is true that they had often seen in the other world the things later written through them, yet they had no idea of

the inner meaning of what was dictated. “They were not illustrated as to the understanding.” (*Apocalypse Explained* 624:15)

However, the words chosen for them to write were such as they would natively use. (*Word Explained* 6955) The distinctive style of each scribe was kept. One reason for this was for the sake of the freedom of the scribe. Also, if the entire Old Testament were written in exactly the same style, and yet by any different writers, this would compel belief in Divine authorship. And compelled belief is always avoided in Divine providence for it can lead to one of the worst of all evils – profanation. What any evil person believes through compulsion he later rejects, and in so doing comes into what is profane.

It is a fascinating testimony to the Divine Omniscience that the words in the vocabulary of each prophet were correspondentially highly suitable. Astonishingly, and yet understandable, the Lord supervised the education of each scribe from his infancy.

The *Gospels* of the New Testament and the book of *Revelation* were written in a similar manner to the Old Testament. Each of the writers was first thoroughly prepared. They were Divinely led to inquire into all the details of the Lord’s life on earth, to come into a deep knowledge of it.

Where it was necessary, their spiritual eyes also were opened. And when their education and preparation were full and complete, then subject-angels came to them as well and they received a literal dictation from the Lord through an angel. For in the New Testament every Greek word has its correspondence and therefore needed to be Divinely chosen. Nevertheless, the New Testament writers could comprehend something of what was written through them. They knew of the Lord’s life and they had an understanding of His moral teachings. But the spiritual sense of what they wrote: this was unknown to them.

As with the scribes of the Old and New Testament, so with the scribe of the Second Coming. There are striking similarities. But there was also a great difference. It is known that Swedenborg was prepared for his use as a revelator from his infancy. His whole life was guided by a special Providence. Thus Swedenborg testifies: “The Lord prepared me from childhood.” (Letter to the Landgrave of Hesse-Darmstadt, *Posthumous Theological Works* 1, 590) “From my youth to my tenth year I was constantly engaged in thought upon God, salvation and the spiritual affection of men.” (Letter to Dr. Beyer, *Ibid*, 8)

He was carefully withheld from confirming the false doctrines of the Old Church, or even from studying them in any depth, for this might have clouded his mind. It was also of the Divine Providence that he loved the sciences and philosophy. He was asked why, as a philosopher, he had been chosen as a revelator. Why, for instance, was not a learned priest chosen instead?

He answered that the spiritual things which the Writings reveal are to be

Because the Writings were to be a rational revelation, the Lord willed that Swedenborg understand the new doctrines to be revealed. Therefore, before he became a revelator he underwent a lifetime of preparation.

taught and understood naturally and rationally. For this reason, Swedenborg reveals, “I was introduced by the Lord first into the natural sciences and thus prepared; and indeed from the year 1710 to 1744 when heaven was opened to me.” (Letter to Oetinger, *Ibid.*, 571)

The human race as a whole was reaching adult status and attaining scientific rationality. That is why new revelation was needed. The human race was ready and needed to hear Divine truth on a plane that was not fully opened before. That is why a man like Swedenborg was chosen – a scientist and a highly rational man. The Divine love and the Divine wisdom were now to be revealed on the rational plane.

God was to be with us in His glorified Human.

Because the Writings were to be a rational revelation, the Lord willed that Swedenborg understand the new doctrines to be revealed. Therefore, before he became a revelator he underwent a lifetime of preparation.

First he was led toward spiritual truth through science and philosophy. Then, when he was ready, the Lord appeared to him, revealing the use that was to be his role and honor. But then there were still years of preparation.

His spiritual eyes were opened only gradually, and at first he saw the light of heaven dimly. At the same time he read the literal Word and the universals of its spiritual sense were unfolded to him. For four years this spiritual education continued. More and more the nature of the spiritual world was revealed to him. By experience he came to know the truths of heaven and the glory behind the clouds.

It was only when he had a real grasp of the heavenly doctrines, of correspondences and of the nature of the other world that he was permitted to enter into his role as revelator. Then, when the *Arcana Coelestia* was started, the Lord began to reveal the Writings to mankind. And it was the Lord who did this.

Thus Swedenborg says: “As for myself, I have not been allowed to take anything from the mouth of any spirit, nor from the mouth of any angel, but from the mouth of the Lord alone.” (*Verbo* 29e)

Many spirits and angels spoke to him. But through interior perception given to Swedenborg the Lord chose what was to be used in the Writings; it

was the Lord who chose and ordered and it was from His mouth, using subject spirits and angels as means.

Concerning the Writings Swedenborg states: “When I think of what I am about to write, and while I am in the act of writing, I enjoy a complete inspiration; for otherwise it would be my own; but now I know for certain that what I write is God’s living truth.” (*Docu.* 251:7)

His inspiration is defined in these words: “Inspiration is not dictation, but is influx from the Divine.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 9094:4)

There is a number in the *Arcana* that reveals how the Lord inspired Swedenborg: “There was an influx like a most gentle and almost imperceptible stream, the current of which does not appear, but still leads and draws. This, which flowed in from the Lord, led in this manner all the series of my thoughts into the consequent things, and altogether gently [yet] powerfully, so that I could not wander into other thoughts, which also I was allowed to attempt, but in vain.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 6574)

This inspiration extended even into the single words Swedenborg used. (*Spiritual Diary* 2270)

Thus, for instance, with the *Arcana* itself, Swedenborg had the letter of the Word open before him. He had studied and been instructed in its correspondences for years. Then, as he was preparing actually to write the *Arcana*, the Lord, by directing influx, chose what was to be written down. Swedenborg did not choose; the Lord did.

He experienced an internal dictation that was absolute; and as he testifies, he was only an instrument. What is marvelous is how the Lord prepared Swedenborg so that he could be a perfect instrument. Beautifully and interiorly, he was the scribe of the Lord his Maker. “For He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God; for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.” (*John* 3:34)

Before us stand the Writings in their beauty, in their Divinity. The final Word is the Lord’s, even as is the Old Testament and the New Testament. We rejoice because the “Spirit of Truth” has come, to lead us into “all truth.” In

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this revelation, what is finite is removed; the Divine Lord Himself stands fully revealed. He is revealed as the Lord of love, the Divine Comforter who would lead each human being to a home in heaven.

In His final Word, the Spirit saith, "Come." And man's answer may be: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." (*Revelation 22:17,20*)



The late **Rev. Geoffrey S. Childs** passed on to the spiritual world in 2009. He is survived by his wife, Helga (Synnestvedt), and a large family of children and grandchildren. During his long service to the Church – from 1952 to 1999 – he was: minister of the Advent Church in Philadelphia; pastor of the Carmel Church, in Kitchener, Ontario, Canada; pastor of the Detroit (Michigan) Society; pastor of the Olivet Church in Toronto, Canada, and headmaster of the Olivet Church School; President of the Academy of the New Church; and Bishop's Representative in South Africa. He was also the author of the book, *The Golden Thread*.

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#### LOVE OF SELF

In the form in which it is usually spoken of, this love consists in wishing well to oneself alone, and not to others except for the sake of self, and it is a corporeal love of exercising dominion over others. It was not evil in the beginning, however, but one of the three universal loves into which man was created; and when it has been purified and subordinated by regeneration it becomes the proper love of self and preservation for the sake of uses, and one of the loves which makes man to be truly a man. (See *Heavenly Doctrine* 65; *True Christian Religion* 507)

# Discerning Love:

## The Best Way to Help

*A Sermon by the Rev. John L. Odhner*

Lessons: *Isaiah 58:1-8; Matthew 25:31-40; Secrets of Heaven 844:3*

*Is this not the fast that I have chosen: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; when you see the naked, that you cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh? (Isaiah 58:6-7)*

Once a lawyer asked Jesus: “What can I do to have eternal life?”

Jesus answered with a question: “What does the law say?”

The lawyer replied: “Love the Lord with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself.”

Jesus said: “That is right. If you do that you will live forever.”

Then the lawyer asked: “So who is my neighbor?” (Paraphrased from Luke 10:25-37)

The question that lawyer asked 2000 years ago is one that many people are asking today. “Who is my neighbor? Who are the people that I am supposed to love?”

In this country we are asking: “Are immigrants from Mexico, Syria or India my neighbor whom I should love? What about immigrants who are here without documentation? What about people who live halfway around the world, who don’t have enough food to eat and who are suffering from diseases and oppressive governments? Are they my neighbor? And if so, how am I supposed to love them?”

“What about people who are poor or homeless nearby? What about the person in the next apartment, who wakes the whole complex up with loud parties late at night? What about my boss who underpays me and makes unreasonable demands at work? What about my family member who borrows money and won’t pay it back, and is probably using it for drugs?”

We may have a lot of questions about who our neighbors are and how we are supposed to love them.

Love of self makes us prefer our own kind, and leads us to see others superficially. It is at the root of prejudice and discrimination.

When Jesus answered the question about who is our neighbor, He spoke in part to the issue of prejudice and discrimination. He told the story of the Good Samaritan. A man who had been beaten and robbed was lying by the roadside when a priest came by, but didn't help. Then came a Levite, a temple worker, who also passed without helping. Finally, a Samaritan came and helped the man.

The Samaritans did not live far from Jerusalem, just a couple days walk, but the Jews considered them to be foreigners and despised them. They certainly didn't think of the Samaritans as being the sort of people who would be welcomed in God's Kingdom, and they would rather not have any dealings with them.

We all have a natural tendency to distrust people we don't know and understand, and naturally it is easier for us to understand people who share our language, our culture, our genes and our values. We are all born with a natural inclination to love ourselves, and loving ourselves leads us to love people who are most like us and most connected with us. (See *New Jerusalem* 67)

Love of self leads us to think of our own way of doing things as being better than other people's ways of doing things, so naturally we think of ourselves as being better people, and maybe seeing our own group as being more loved by God, or even being His chosen people.

Another characteristic of the love of self is that it leads us to see other people superficially. When we deeply care about other people we take the time to really get to know them and understand their challenges, values and loves. When we don't care, we don't really want to know other people deeply, so we just evaluate them by how they appear outwardly, and we only care for them if we can gain something from them, and they don't get in our way or make us uncomfortable.

The very best qualities that people have are not the ones that appear on the surface. The values and intentions that we form from our conscience are from the Lord with us. When we don't really care about others, we don't spend enough time with them to discover what kind of conscience they have from the Lord.

Love of self makes us prefer our own kind, and leads us to see others superficially. It is at the root of prejudice and discrimination. It leads us to judge others by the clothes they wear, the color of their skin, the food they eat, the depths of their pockets, and the language they use. It leads us to treat

others with contempt, and to hate them if we think they may take away our jobs, our money, our comfort, or our sense of superiority.

At its worst, love of self twists our idea of God, so that we see God in our own image and likeness, having the same character of selfishness and prejudice that we have, preferring us as His chosen people, and condemning to hell everyone who does not embrace our cultural values and doctrinal beliefs.

The teachings for the New Church often speak of the need for discernment in the way we love other people. Years ago in the church you may have heard the term, “discriminating charity,” but it had nothing to do with prejudice and discrimination. What we mean by discrimination these days is judging people by superficial characteristics, such as race, education, wealth, clothing and so on. Such discrimination comes from selfishness, never from genuine love. To love someone in a genuine way is to love the genuine person, and that means discerning what a person’s true character, values and intentions are.

Jesus said, “Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned.” (*Luke 6:37; Matthew 7:1*) Some people have taken this to mean that we should make no judgments of other people, but treat all people as equally deserving of unconditional love, care and non-judgmental respect. But Jesus also said: “Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with just judgment.” (*John 7:24*) In this passage Jesus was condemning discrimination and prejudice, which is judging according to the appearance. At the same time He was saying that we need to judge people with righteous or just judgment.

If we think about it, it’s pretty obvious that we cannot get along in life without making serious judgments. To use an unlikely example, suppose someone I don’t know very well asks: “Can I borrow your gun? There’s a little job I need to take care of.” Didn’t Jesus say: “Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away”? (*Matthew 5:42*) Should I just give him the gun? Of course not! In a situation like this, it’s much better to be suspicious and judgmental than to be an accessory to murder. We are not genuinely helping either a crook or the victim by helping the crook commit a crime.

Now suppose that instead of asking for a gun the same person asked me: “Can you loan me \$800, so I can buy a g— I mean, so I can pay my rent?” Obviously, helping someone out without knowing his intentions may not help him at all. We have to judge with just judgment.

Actions are spiritual if they are done with judgment based on a love for justice. That is, as we practice goodwill we check to see whether we are acting on the basis of justice. We use our judgment to tell.

It is possible for us to do harm through our good deeds. It is also possible for us to

do good through apparently evil deeds. For example, we do harm through a good deed if we give a needy robber money to buy a sword, even if the robber while begging doesn't say that that is what the money is for; or if we bail the robber out of prison and point the way to the forest, saying to ourselves, "It is not my fault if the robber steals. I have helped another human being"

For another example, if we feed some lazy person and protect him or her from being forced to labor for work, and we say, "Stay in a room at my house. Lie in bed. Why wear yourself out?" we are encouraging laziness. Likewise, if we give dishonest friends and relatives of ours jobs in high places from which they can practice all kinds of malice. Surely anyone can see that these acts of goodwill are not done with any love for justice or with any judgment.

On the other hand, we can also do good through actions that look bad. Take for example a judge who lets a criminal go because the criminal is crying and pouring out devout words, praying for the judge to grant a pardon because the criminal is the judge's neighbor. The judge would be performing an act of goodwill by imposing the penalty established in the law, because this would stop the criminal from doing any further harm and being a threat to the community; and the community takes precedence as a form of the neighbor. (*True Christianity* 459)

When I was 18 years old a man at a bus stop asked for enough money for the bus fare home. I was a poor student at the time, but I decided to have compassion on him. Yet the moment the money was in his hand, he turned on his heel without a backward glance and walked straight across the street into a bar. I felt cheated.

As a result of experiences like this and teachings like these, I came to think that before we love people or do good to them, we should determine whether they are basically good or bad, so we know whether to love them or not. If I am in some doubt about what their motives are, it would be better to walk away than to let a potentially bad person take advantage of me somehow.

I was wrong in thinking that we should not love bad people. The goal of discernment in love is not to decide *whom* we should love so much as *how* we should love them. We are supposed to love everyone. Jesus said: "Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust." (*Matthew* 5:44-45)

Teachings for the New Church explain this further:

All individual members of humankind are the neighbor we are to love, but [in different ways] depending on the type of goodness they have. . . . Loving our neighbor is intending and doing good not only to neighbors, friends and good people but also to strangers, enemies and evil people. But we exercise goodwill in our dealings with the latter in different ways than we do in our dealings with the former. We exercise goodwill in our dealings with our neighbors and friends by benefiting them directly. We exercise goodwill in our dealings with our enemies and

evil people by benefiting them indirectly through our warnings, corrective action, punishments, and therefore efforts to improve them. (*True Christianity* 406-7)

To understand a person's true character we need to look at his intentions. New Church teachings tell us:

The wise do not look at a person's works, but at the life that is in the works, that is, at the intention. (*Apocalypse Explained* 185)

The angels regard everyone in the light of his purpose, intention or end, and make distinctions accordingly; and they therefore excuse or condemn those whom the end excuses or condemns. (*Married Love* 453)

The first step in looking at others' intentions might be to determine whether their intentions go in a good or bad direction. But when we think carefully about the needs of others we can see more specifically how to help them. In ancient times they thought about people's spiritual needs in terms of physical needs. As we read in our lesson, they called some people poor, others wretched and afflicted, or bound and in prison, blind and lame, strangers, orphans and widows. In the most general sense, they used the six categories that the Lord used in speaking of the sheep and goats: the hungry, thirsty, strangers, naked, sick and in prison.

These six physical needs address major world problems. There are about a billion hungry people who do not have enough food today; about a billion who do not have clean water to drink; millions of strangers—refugees, immigrants and homeless people; millions who have inadequate clothing and healthcare; and the millions who are in prison, slavery, or suffering under oppressive regimes. We should, and we can, work to address these world problems both by helping those who are in need close to home, and by contributing to global efforts. Yet doing no more than giving or sending food, clothing, medicine or money is a superficial and temporary solution at best. This is because the root of our problems is on a spiritual level. For example, there is enough food in the world to feed every hungry person, but political corruption and war make it very difficult to get food to the people who need it, and even if we could get food to every hungry person another war or another drought in another month or year will bring the famine back again. Real and permanent good comes when we help people not only physically, but spiritually, when we improve not only their worldly life, but their eternal life.

The internal part of good will and compassion is to clearly discern who and of what character are those to whom we do good, and in what way to each one. People who finally reach an internal purpose of goodwill and compassion know that this very internal purpose is to will well and do good to the internal person with the kinds of things that serve their spiritual life. And the external consists in doing good to the external person, with the kinds of things that serve to the bodily life; but still, this must always be done carefully so that while we do good to the external person, we

Which of these needs is most significant in your life right now? Are you hungry for usefulness? Thirsty for understanding? Longing for connection? Feeling grief or worthlessness? Sick with anger, lust, or resentment? Stuck in an emotional or spiritual prison?

might also at the same time do good to the internal person. (*Secrets of Heaven* 9209.2)

To do good to the internal person we need to know what his spiritual needs are, and we can we learn these needs by determining who are spiritually hungry, spiritually thirsty, and spiritually strangers, naked, sick or in prison. People who are spiritually hungry want to do something good, something useful. People who are spiritually thirsty are eager to understand deeply and to learn. People who are spiritual strangers want to be introduced to the Lord and the Church, to make connections and become part of the community. The spiritually naked feel loss and grief, vulnerability, worthlessness and shame. The spiritually sick struggle with addiction to selfish desires, and

spiritual prisoners are trapped by misunderstandings and false assumptions.

The six conditions sum up our spiritual needs. We need to be useful. We need to learn and grow. We need connection and community. We struggle with shame, grief and worthlessness. We need to overcome our hurtful desires. And we need freedom to act according to our conscience.

So I ask, which of these needs is most significant in your life right now? Are you hungry for usefulness? Thirsty for understanding? Longing for connection? Feeling grief or worthlessness? Sick with anger, lust, or resentment? Stuck in an emotional or spiritual prison?

And if you know your own needs, can you identify the spiritual needs of other people in your life? New Church teachings the say that “people in the church certainly ought to know” how to discern the spiritual needs of their neighbor. We should be able to look at another person and say, “I think this person is hungry for usefulness,” or “I think that person is in a spiritual prison.”

If we don't understand which class of the neighbor someone is in, that is if we don't understand his true spiritual needs, we cannot effectively help him. We might offer a volunteer job to someone who is hungry for usefulness, or invite a spiritually thirsty person to a study group. But offering a study group to someone who is intensely grieving is like giving water to the naked. Offering a volunteer job to someone who can't control his anger or addiction is like

inviting to a banquet someone who is sick to the stomach. Inviting someone struggling with atheism to come to church is like giving a coffee shop gift card to someone in prison.

The Lord has told us about the hungry, thirsty, strangers, naked, sick and in prison so that “the teaching of charity may be restored” to the church. (*Secrets of Heaven* 2417.8) He has told us to “examine carefully the kind of life a person leads” before we help him (*Ibid.* 6704), so that we can understand his real spiritual needs.

That means that we have to begin by listening, and then listen some more. Then, when we have come to know them well enough that we understand their true spiritual needs, we can help them the way the Lord intended – with love that is wise and judgment that is just.

Amen.

The Lord has told us about the hungry, thirsty, strangers, naked, sick and in prison so that “the teaching of charity may be restored” to the church.



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# Finding Our Lost Sheep

*A Sermon by the Rev. Solomon J. Keal*

*Lessons: Psalm 23; Isaiah 40:1,2,11; Luke 15:1-7; Secrets of Heaven 343, 9836:6*

“Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!” (Luke 15:6)

The parable of the lost sheep is a well-known and well-loved story in the Word. The imagery of the Lord as our Shepherd – such as in the 23rd *Psalm* – is equally well-known and well-loved.

In the highest sense, this parable tells of the Lord’s love, compassion and care for each and every person, and His ability to give everyone His undivided attention when we need help, no matter how lost we are. (See *Secrets of Heaven* 5992.3) The Lord will not give up on any of us. He can come to the aid of each and every one of us individually (see *True Christianity* 766), just as the shepherd in the parable came to the lost sheep.

In another sense, the parable of the lost sheep can be a warning to us when we begin to behave like the scribes and Pharisees. The context of the telling of this parable in *Luke* is that Jesus was eating with tax collectors and sinners, and the scribes and Pharisees were criticizing Him for associating with these “lost” people. We can sometimes have a tendency to think of ourselves as “found,” and other people as “lost.” And so in the internal-historical sense of this story, the parable reminds us that all of us are lost sheep in some way.

The Lord did not come into the world to save those who are celestial, but to save those who are spiritual. . . . The people who belonged to the spiritual Church, could not have been saved unless the Lord had come into the world. . . . And the same is also meant in the parable about the hundred sheep. (*Secrets of Heaven* 2661.2; see also 1059.2-3; *True Christian Religion* 142)

Also: “My people have been lost sheep.” (*Jeremiah* 50:6)

But I would like to focus on the regenerative sense of this parable – the sense that provides us with teachings about our own individual spiritual growth. In this sense we can look at all the characters in this story as representing parts of us. The scribes, the Pharisees, the tax collectors, the sinners, the shepherd, the 99 sheep, and the one lost sheep; all of these describe parts of us on our journey of spiritual rebirth.

The teachings for the New Church tell us that sheep represent various

kinds of goodness. We read: “Sheep signify those who are in the good of charity, therefore in an abstract sense, ‘sheep’ signify the goods of charity.” (*Apocalypse Explained* 1154)

There are many different forms of goodness: for example: compassion, forgiveness, optimism, courage, patience, joy, innocence, humility, gratitude, good manners, honesty, trust. These are just some of the many “sheep” that can exist in our flock. And as this parable shows us, we can sometimes lose track of some of these forms of goodness in our own behaviors.

For example: I think we can all relate to times in our lives when we’re feeling worn down and we’ve lost the sheep that is our sense of compassion, or the sheep that is associated with our willingness to forgive. Sometimes we can lose our optimism sheep, or our courage sheep. I think we’ve all lost-our-patience sheep at times. To a certain degree we’ve all lost our innocence sheep and hope to find it again.

We sometimes lose the sheep associated with our sense of joy. I think we sometimes don’t even notice when we’ve lost our humility sheep. When we feel hopeless and depressed because of hard times in our life, we can feel like we’ve lost our faith sheep, or the sheep associated with our trust that God is in control. And I think we’ve all lost our temper sheep at times.

What do we do when we notice that we’ve lost these sheep in our life? There are parts of us – represented by the scribes and Pharisees in this story – that tend to condemn ourselves for losing these sheep. I lost my patience; I must be a bad person. I lost my faith; I must be a bad person. I lost my sense of compassion; I must be a bad person.

Or we might notice other people who have lost sheep from their flock, and the “scribes and Pharisees” in us may identify them as sinners: They lost their innocence sheep; they must be bad people. They lost their forgiveness sheep; they must be sinners.

It’s interesting that the word “sin” goes back to a word that simply means to “miss the mark,” such as to miss a target in archery, or in the case of this story, to recognize that something is missing or lost from our life.

Sin is simply when goodness is missing, the same way that darkness is when light is missing. It’s not gone forever; it’s just missing or lost. And we can find it again. But harsh spiritual judgments toward the losing of sheep come from the “scribes and Pharisees” in us, not from the “shepherd” in us. It’s not a *bad* sheep, it’s just a *lost* sheep. We’re not bad people; we’re just missing goodness.

There are two versions of this parable in the *Gospels*, with a couple of significant differences. One of the differences is that in the *Luke* version of this parable, it says that the shepherd left the 99 in the wilderness and went after the one which was lost. (See *Luke* 15:4) In the *Matthew* version, it says that the shepherd left the 99 in the mountains, and went after the one which

Harsh spiritual judgments toward the losing of sheep come from the “scribes and Pharisees” in us, not from the “shepherd” in us. It’s not a bad sheep, it’s just a lost sheep. We’re not bad people; we’re just missing goodness.

was lost. (See *Matthew* 18:12 Kempton Translation)

The teachings for the New Church only directly address the sheep being in the *mountains*:

“Sheep in the mountains” signify those who are in the good of love and charity; but “the one that is gone astray” signifies one who is not in that good, because he is in falsities from ignorance; for where falsity is, there good is not, because good is of truth.” (*Apocalypse Explained* 405:33)

Mountains represent a state in which we are close to heaven, and close to the Lord. (See *Secrets of Heaven* 795) This version of the parable I think describes the reality of the situation, which is that the 99 sheep in us that are not lost are close to heaven and close to the Lord. Even when one sheep

wanders off, there are many other good qualities that remain with us.

(The parable never describes exactly how the 99 didn’t wander off when the shepherd went to look for the one. Perhaps another shepherd was left to watch the 99. But whatever the hypothetical logistics are, we are left with a sense that the 99 in the mountains are left in a safe place while the shepherd goes off to rescue the one.)

In the *Luke* version of the parable, the 99 are left in the wilderness. I think this version of the parable could describe how the situation feels to us. The teachings for the New Church tell us that the “wilderness” represents a time of spiritual temptation or spiritual struggle (see *Apocalypse Revealed* 546), particularly when we experience a lack of truth, represented by the lack of water in the wilderness.

When we notice that there is goodness missing from our life, and we condemn ourselves for it (which is the context for the *Luke* version), we can sometimes believe that therefore there is nothing good left in our lives. I lost my patience; therefore I must also have lost compassion, love, charity, fairness, forgiveness, etc. This is not necessarily the truth, but it can often feel like the 99 percent of us that is doing all right is in the wilderness. We’ve lost sight of those other good sheep in us for a time.

And in all fairness, our spiritual sheep will be continually getting lost, usually more times than once. Our patience is not usually something that we

only lose once in our lifetime. And when one sheep is lost, that can often lead to more sheep getting out as well. I've lost my patience, and now I've lost my temper, and now I've lost my compassion.

But the imagery in both *Gospels*, I think, could also be referring to the value of focusing on one thing at a time in our spiritual growth. It could describe the idea that it is legitimate for us to give our undivided attention to one lost sheep at a time (see *True Christianity* 530.3, 566.2), and not stress out too much about all the many sheep that will wander off over the course of our spiritual life. Though at times it may feel like the 99 are in the wilderness, the Lord keeps them safe in the mountains, while we go searching for the one.

When we notice a sheep missing in our life, we often use language that reflects the imagery in this story. We talk about feeling “scattered,” or like we’re “falling apart.” “So they were scattered because there was no shepherd.” (*Ezekiel* 34:5) We can also talk about how we feel like we “don’t have our life together,” or that “we’re not all there,” or “feeling pulled apart.” Sometimes we might simply say, “I think I’ve lost it!” What exactly we’ve lost we might have to stop and think about.

In this story there were 100 sheep. Sometimes we can associate the number “one hundred” with perfection, like getting “100%” on a test. But bringing the one lost sheep back into the flock and reuniting the 100 sheep is not about us achieving some kind of perfect state of goodness in our life.

The teachings for the New Church state that “100” represents a state of completion or wholeness, (see *Secrets of Heaven* 3107; *Apocalypse Explained* 675:1,10), while “99” represents what is not complete or not full yet. (See *Secrets of Heaven* 1988.2) Finding the lost sheep is about reconnecting the parts of us that have been scattered. In fact, the word “religion” means “reconnection,” and this is the aim of the shepherd in us: to seek the reconnection of all of our good parts – all of our sheep.

The “shepherd” or “shepherdess” [*anthropos*; “person”] in us is that part of us that can notice what is missing, and then compassionately go searching for it. It’s the part of us that aims for “togetherness and unity” instead of “dispersal and disjunction,” as was said in one of our lessons. (*Secrets of Heaven* 343)

The shepherd is that part of us that is truly in the Lord’s image; looking at our life and other people’s lives with compassion instead of condemnation. Seeking to find the lost goodness, without spiritual judgment. Seeking to comfort.

“When He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.” (*Matthew* 9:36)

In the *Matthew* version of this parable, the context is the Lord talking about children: “Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for

I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven.” (*Matthew 18:10*)

When we notice some form of goodness missing from ourselves or other people, hopefully we can see that missing goodness as if it were a missing child, and feel compassion for the resulting pain, anger and fear in us or in others because of it.

The shepherd is that part of us that can keep watch over our spiritual life and notice when something is missing. But it’s also that part of us that doesn’t condemn (in ourselves or in others) when there *is* something missing; it simply seeks to bring that goodness back.

It’s that part of us that can search for something funny when it feels like we or others have lost our sense of humor. It’s that part of us that can search for something to feel grateful for, when we feel depressed. It’s that part of us that can remind other people of their good qualities when they are feeling hopeless about their life, or even when we are feeling hopeless about their life. It’s that part of us that can remind children of what they like about their sibling, without condemning them for the fight they’ve gotten into. It’s about bringing the sheep back into our lives.

And it’s because the sheep belong in our flock. We are all born to be angels. When a sheep goes missing from our flock, that’s not an indication that it doesn’t belong in our life. We just have to re-find it. For example, when

we notice that we keep losing our patience, we might start to think that patience doesn’t belong in our flock. Maybe I just can’t be a patient person. But the shepherd in us is capable of saying, “No, patience is something that belongs in my flock. I’m going to try to get it back.”

The Lord has given us the capacity for these wonderful qualities of His, and as much as He is our Shepherd, we are also created in His image. The Lord has given us the capability to shepherd the goodness in our own life. As He says: “And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.” (*Jeremiah 3:15*).

Sometimes our shepherd has to go on a long journey to find these

The shepherd is that part of us that can keep watch over our spiritual life and notice when something is missing. But it’s also that part of us that doesn’t condemn (in ourselves or in others) when there is something missing; it simply seeks to bring that goodness back.

scattered forms of goodness. This is the journey of spiritual life. In fact, what the teachings for the New Church say about the steps of repentance fits nicely into the imagery of this story. The four steps of repentance are to “examine ourselves, recognize and admit to our sins, pray to the Lord, and begin a new life.” (*True Christianity* 530)

“*Examining ourselves*” is like the shepherd part of us looking out over the flock. “*Recognizing and admitting to our sins*” is like the shepherd noticing that there is a sheep missing. “*Praying to the Lord*” is when we recognize that the shepherd part of us needs to be created in the image of the Lord as our Shepherd – compassionate and not condemning for what is lost or missing. And “*Beginning a new life*” is like the part of the story when the shepherd in us has to go on a journey – perhaps a difficult one – to find and bring that goodness back into our life.

The Lord, who spoke by means of correspondences, said that when the lost sheep was found the owner placed it on his shoulder, rejoicing. (*Luke* 15:5 “*The sheep that was lost and found*” is goodness as it resides with someone who comes to their senses [or repents].” (*Secrets of Heaven* 9836:6)

And at the end of this story there is joy. The joy of positive change. The joy of repentance. The joy of rediscovery. The joy of finding our sheep that was lost. I think we all know that sense of accomplishment and relief we can have when we rediscover a missing goodness in our lives: I found something to be grateful for, and it totally changed my mood! I found my patience, and I feel so good about not losing it this time! I was finally able to find it in my heart to forgive that person, and I feel so much better! I found my courage to go ahead and apply for that new job, and whether I get the job or not, I feel a sense of accomplishment. Recently I had a misunderstanding with someone, and we were both upset by it. But I took the time to have a long talk with that person, and as a result we both found our missing compassion and understanding sheep again, and we feel so much better.

Nothing gives [angels] greater delight and happiness than to remove evils from a person and lead them to heaven. This is their joy. (See *Luke* 15:7) Scarcely anyone believes the Lord has that kind of concern for a person, a constant concern lasting from the very beginning of a person’s existence to the final moment of their life, and for evermore after that. (*Secrets of Heaven* 5992:3)

When we notice the goodness that is missing from our life and other people’s lives, help us to rediscover it as a shepherd would a lost sheep. Help us look to You as the model for how we can be shepherds.

Lord, help us to have that kind of compassion for ourselves and other people. When we notice the goodness that is missing from our life and other people's lives, help us to rediscover it as a shepherd would a lost sheep. Help us look to You as the model for how we can be shepherds. You restore our souls. Your shepherding rod and staff bring us comfort.

"Comfort, yes, comfort My people!" says your God. "Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned. He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who are with young." (*Isaiah* 40:1,2,11)

Amen.



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# Always the Right Answer: Good and Truth

*Erin Glenn Busby*

Being back in Bryn Athyn reminds me of my high school days, and I thought about a story that might be apocryphal. But I will tell it the way I remember it. One of my friends had not attended church schools before moving to Bryn Athyn at the beginning of high school. Part way through high school, someone asked her if religion classes were hard because she didn't have the same background as the other students. She said, "Well, it was intimidating at first, but it got much easier once I realized that the answer was always good and truth!"

I don't know how well that strategy really worked for religion class. But I have become convinced that it is the right answer for life – good and truth really are always the answer. Pursuing both is never wasted, and combining the two is the route to happiness.

I will mention that my friend's statement that "it's all good and truth" is not without support in the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg. In *The New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine*, we read: "All things in the universe, which are according to Divine order, have relation to good and truth," (11) and that truths without good have no life, but are like a body without a soul. (22)

I have found that, if you pursue truth and good for their own sakes, you never know when you might use them. One example in my life is the book *Middlemarch*. I've always loved novels, and probably my favorite class in college that had nothing to do with my majors was a class on the Victorian novel. George Eliot's *Middlemarch* is one of the greatest of these novels.

Among other things, it is foremost an exploration of how people find their use in life, and what they can do when they get that disastrously wrong. In fact, the main storyline of *Middlemarch* is a good example of what happens when you don't combine good and truth: Dorothea Brooke is an idealistic young woman who marries a much older clergyman with the idea that she will help

I have become convinced that it is the right answer for life – good and truth really are always the answer. Pursuing both is never wasted, and combining the two is the route to happiness.

him in compiling his life's work, a "Key to All Mythologies."

She has the love (the good), but there is no truth for it to support, because the older man does not welcome her assistance and it turns out that his work is not going to amount to anything. She won't find her real use in life until she can put her love toward something more deserving.

Anyway, there isn't a lot of call for analysis of Victorian novels in law school or while clerking for a federal judge. But then I got called in for an

interview with [United States Supreme Court] Justice Stephen Breyer. In the interview, we talked about some things directly relevant to work as a Supreme Court clerk – articles I had written in law school and my work at the court of appeals. But we spent most of the interview talking about *Middlemarch*. And by the end of the interview, we knew that we could work together.

I should point out that Justice Breyer doesn't have some weird *Middlemarch* test for clerks. He spent most of the interview with one of my friends discussing cycling, something I could talk about for maybe three minutes. But it was a passion the two of them shared. And what Justice Breyer wanted to know was that we did have things we were passionate about, things we would think hard about and like discussing. And if they were things he liked too, that was even better.

Another example is a bit more directly related to my profession. In law school, I studied first amendment law. This is something you really have to study for the love of it, because almost no one actually gets paid to practice first amendment law. And at the time I was planning on being a tax lawyer, which I actually did for a couple of years after I finished law school and clerking.

It turned out that I liked being a tax lawyer (a lot of it is like putting together a giant puzzle), but I decided I would like being an appellate lawyer even more. And when I moved to Texas I represented a lot of public schools. It turns out that schools actually do have cases that involve the first amendment. And the clinic that I run at the University of Texas has taken on two first amendment cases this year. And it turns out that knowing a lot about this stuff helps in being a legal advisor to a religious school.

So you never know when truths you pursued for their own sake will come into use. But the things that can make us happiest are when we combine love

and truth. For example, I've had great satisfaction from serving on the Board of Trustees of the Academy of the New Church, the parent institution of Bryn Athyn College.

I always had a love for the school, but after I graduated and moved away, I wasn't all that involved. Then, about seven years ago, I received a call asking if I would join the Board. It wasn't terribly convenient: I had a new baby and lived thousands of miles away. But I was worried about how the schools were doing – I knew that they were running large deficits and I didn't see how that was going to stop – so I took a deep breath and thought that if I wanted all the good things about the schools to continue it was time for me to step up. It was time to combine into a use my knowledge about schools and law (and my willingness to buckle down and learn a bunch of other stuff) with my love for the school.

I'm not going to claim any of the credit for what has happened at Bryn Athyn College and the rest of the Academy over the past seven years. But I am so proud of what the faculty, administration, donors, leadership and students have accomplished. And I hope that my service on the Board and advice on legal matters have helped.

In reading about good and truth, I looked at *Arcana Coelestia*. In number 2258, Swedenborg writes that Divine truth is judgment and Divine good is mercy. Reading this took me back to living in New York after 9/11.

I was lucky – even though my office was very near the World Trade Center, I didn't lose anyone I knew at the towers. But it was still an unsettled, disturbed time for the whole city. Like most New Yorkers, I wanted there to be something I could do to help, but there wasn't really that much.

I spent some time at the big assistance center at pier 94, helping people fill out requests for death certificates. I figured that lawyers can help with forms, although I had second thoughts when they told us during training that we absolutely could not cry. (“Not crying” is not really part of my core skill set.)

The assistance center was an incredible example of what can happen when you combine good and truth – so many people combining their love for their neighbors and their knowledge of how to provide help created an amazing resource for people.

Anyway, one of the things that was off-kilter was that the subways weren't running like usual, and I ended up taking a car downtown

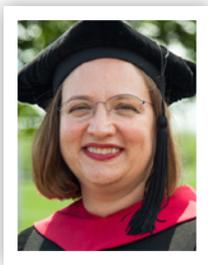
Even when things have gone very wrong, I believe that using truth and good to walk humbly with your God will lead you to use and happiness.

much more often than usual. And I would watch every time for a certain synagogue on the Upper West Side. It had the words of *Micah* 6:8 carved around the top of the building: “What doth the Lord require of you, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?”

Somehow, thinking about those words made the day, made the city, seem less unsettled. Even when things have gone very wrong, I believe that using truth and good to walk humbly with your God will lead you to use and happiness.

So here we are at commencement: the end of one journey and the start of many others. You’re heading off now to pursue further studies, start new careers, and generally find your place in life. My wish for you today is that in all those pursuits you “do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God.”

Congratulations to the Class of 2017!



**Erin Glenn Busby** graduated from the Academy Girls School in 1991, earned her B.A. from The College of William and Mary, and graduated first in her class from Harvard Law School. She clerked for Supreme Court Associate Justice Stephen Breyer and Judge Michael Boudin of the Court of Appeals for the First Circuit. Before becoming an independent appellate specialist she was an associate in two law firms. She has had a distinguished career as an attorney and law professor at the University of Texas and is co-director of the Supreme Court Litigation Clinic

at the University of Texas Law School. She is a member of the Academy Board of Trustees and serves on the Legal Advisory Committee. She and her husband, Justice J. Brett Busby, live in Houston, Texas, with their two children. Contact: [egbusby@swbell.net](mailto:egbusby@swbell.net)

# Preparation for Wise Choices

*Leann P. Hill*

I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to everyone at ANC, including donors who made it possible for my kids to attend this fine institution. Their time here has put them all in great standing to be their best selves in life. Gerry and I are eternally grateful. Thank you.

Today I am lucky enough to have been invited to address the parents and the 2017 graduating class of awesomeness.

**Fellow parents:** Today we stand together, proud of all of our kids and their many accomplishments. Good for them, but I want to take a minute to say good for us, too – the parents!

We took our job seriously. We attended years of events during their elementary school career: class trips, feasts, plays, concerts. We walked the halls and oohed and aahed at their art work. We ensured that homework was done, clothes were clean and backpacks were filled with notebooks, homework and healthy food. Then, four years ago we watched as our gangly teens entered high school and with our hearts in our mouths, we let them go.

Although we still felt that of course they needed us at every turn, we stood back, knowing that we had given them roots and trusting that it was time for them to spread their wings. Knowing that only by practicing independence could they gain it. We might still have been wringing our hands in worry about what lay ahead for them but we stopped micro-managing them and guess what? We watched as our offspring took the baton we had handed them and soared!

It wasn't always easy watching them navigate life and its challenges, but as hard as it was to pull back and let them practice for college and adulthood, we did it. And they did it! Look before you and see this bunch of well-adjusted, capable and self-assured human beings and give

It's a powerful position  
you will be in, when  
you know that you  
are making decisions  
that will affect the  
rest of your life.

yourselves, parents, a round of applause!

**Graduating seniors:** Congratulations on this milestone accomplishment. Soon you will be leaving home and heading out to your colleges, gap years or employment opportunities. Soon you will get to be fully in charge of your lives. Yikes. No one will be there to wake you up, do your laundry or make sure you are doing the things required of you.

*That* is what you've been practicing these last four years. Practicing your independence. It's a powerful position you will be in, when you know that you are making decisions that will affect the rest of your life. These decisions include the small ones like getting up and going to class, doing the required work, being a part of your new community and broadening your horizons. But they will also involve other bigger decisions, like who you associate with, what your social lives look like, how much you party and what you partake in.

I just referred to you as a bunch of well-adjusted, capable and self-assured human beings. You are all of those things! They weren't just random adjectives I used to describe you. You are brave and strong and full of purpose and potential. Remember that and make us and yourselves proud.

Choose your friends wisely. They will be the people who will be your support, your tribe. They will either help and encourage you to be the best version of yourself and to succeed, or they will drag you down pathways that will end up causing you stress and pain.

I wish for all of you, a tribe of supporters who will elevate you and cheer you on to succeed, encourage you to try new things and to take full advantage of the opportunities that will be available to you. I also hope that you will be that kind of supporter for the people in your lives.

On the subject of choices, one day when this life's journey is done, most of us would like to hear the reassuring words: "Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many." Each day as you make your life choices, remember that those choices will in the end define who you are, and what you will become. So if there is one thing that you can take away from today, I would ask you to be careful and mindful of your choices.

Each day as you make  
your life choices,  
remember that those  
choices will in the end  
define who you are, and  
what you will become.

I hope for all of you, a life that is easy breezy. I would, however, be remiss in not saying that sadly most of you won't get to sail through life. There will be challenges. I hope in the face of some of these challenges, you fail. Not too often, or too hard or too tragically. But only through failure or

making mistakes do you get to realize your full potential and what you are capable of.

When the rubber meets the road, I hope you remember these words spoken by Christopher Robin to Pooh Bear: “You are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think.”

In my life, it has been the overcoming of failures, surrounded by people who love and support me, that stick out as major accomplishments that I am most proud of. When you make a mistake, learn from it. Lick your wounds, but not for too long. Pick yourself up and figure out how to do the next right thing. Nothing will make you prouder of yourself than making decisions that will help you overcome adversity.

Be grateful. Grateful for the lives you have led up to this point. Grateful for parents and families who support you and have your back. Grateful for this school and all the schools you will attend. Grateful to the teachers who willingly share their expertise with you. Grateful to live in a country that affords you the luxury of getting the experience of being in charge of your life.

I could go on ad nauseam with anecdotes and snippets of advice; just ask my kids. But I know you are all anxious to get busy with today’s celebrations. So go, celebrate. You’ve earned it. Thank you.

I hope you remember these words spoken by Christopher Robin to Pooh Bear: “You are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think.”



**Leann Perry Hill** received her Bachelor of Science degree from Bryn Athyn College in 1992. She taught preschool out of her home for six years and has been a substitute teacher at the Bryn Athyn Church School. Her daughter, Samantha, graduated with this Girls School Class of 2017, and two sons previously graduated from the Boys School. Leann has been working as a realtor for the past 11 years. During this commencement ceremony she was granted an honorary diploma from the Girls School. She lives in Bryn Athyn.

Contact: [caymangirl1@verizon.net](mailto:caymangirl1@verizon.net)

# Conjugal Love Study

## in the Academy Girls School

*Kira R. Schadegg, Principal*

During the 2010 school year a group of Girls School faculty members began reading *Conjugal Love* with a view to making it more accessible to the girls we teach. Little did we know that it would take seven years to complete the project!

It took two years to work our way through the text of *Conjugal Love*. While we were reading that volume it became apparent to us that we needed to look at other recent works on the topic. We read Master's theses from Kay Alden, Nina Dewees and Hilary Bryntesson. We also read *Growth of the Female Mind - Sincerity and Severity* by Dr. Soni Werner and *The Conjugal Culture* by Alaina Johns Mabaso.

Once we completed the reading our next task was to synthesize and distill the copious notes masterfully recorded by the Rev. Eric Carswell. Vina Parker and Gwenda Cowley made the first attempt at this distillation process. After their summer of work we came back together and worked through a lengthy process of grouping information and eventually settled on four main topics:

1. Their relationship with the Lord
2. Their relationship with the faculty
3. The exploration and development of themselves and their individual feminine gifts
4. Healthy relationships with others, including the opposite sex

The final stage was to manage serious editing, as well as putting the concepts into language that would be understandable to the adolescent mind. Hilary Bryntesson took on this task, editing the information in sections. Hilly has a marvelous way of forming New Church concepts with words that resonate with teenagers. After each editing session the committee would meet

and pore over Hilary’s wonderful document, offering suggestions and comments.

We have spent this entire school year meeting twice a month to complete the editing. The guide book was sent to the printer on May 31, 2017. This will enable the book to be distributed to the Girls School faculty prior to summer break. It will make a fascinating beach read!

We will begin the fall discussing ways in which each faculty member can implement this study into her existing curriculum. The idea is that the doctrine of conjugal love should infill the entire curriculum across grades and subject matter. Those of us on the committee have a sense that this is already happening in many places in the curriculum. The faculty discussion will formalize that observation.

It is also our hope to develop a guide book for parents. This will be less comprehensive than the faculty guide book and will only include the highlights but it will enable us to ensure that parents understand the reason behind our integrated curriculum. Thus the committee has not disbanded. We intend to begin work on the parent guide book in the fall.

While I have been a committee member since the inception of the committee, this work was the vision of Susan Odhner, Girls School Principal from 2007 to 2016. A debt of gratitude is owed Sue for her love and care in the business of raising girls with the knowledge that the Lord loves them no matter what.

Her deepest desire was that our girls grow into caring, compassionate, kind women, who are morally grounded and spiritually motivated. I believe the integration of the doctrine of conjugal love throughout our curriculum will make Sue’s dream for our girls possible.

The idea is that the doctrine of conjugal love should infill the entire curriculum across grades and subject matter.



**Kira R. Schadegg** is a former science teacher and current Principal of the Girls School of the Academy of the New Church in Bryn Athyn. She and her husband, Bob, live in Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania. Contact: *Kira.Schadegg@ancss.org*

# It's Okay To Be a Space Cadet: Appreciating the Power of Forgiveness

*Sasha Silverman*

As a child, one book that gripped and delighted me was called, *Good Charlotte*. According to my memory of the story, a little girl named Charlotte has a bad reputation in her foster home. Although she never intends to cause problems, she finds herself in constant trouble for coming late to meals, not having her stockings pulled up all the way, forgetting her chores, or spilling her food.

One day, a new caretaker comes to the foster home. This woman unconditionally sees the good in Charlotte. For every mistake Charlotte makes, the woman finds a delightfully positive interpretation. By being seen as “good,” Charlotte begins to shine.

Looking back, I realize I related to Charlotte in many ways. I definitely had my own “space cadet” streak, and it could get me into trouble. Luckily, I was surrounded by some very forgiving people. For example, in the fourth grade, my beautiful teacher asked me to run an errand for her. While she described how to find the laminating machine, what hall to go down, where to turn, and what drawer to get paper from, I nodded attentively, staring at her amazingly sculpted eyebrows. How in the world did she get them to look so smooth? And her eyelashes. They were so long and pretty!

By the time she'd finished talking, and I'd begun marching down the hallway on my mission, I realized I hadn't really heard a word she'd said. I stopped in my tracks, racking my brain for clues, but came up blank. It felt like walking waist-deep in water to return to my classroom, tap my teacher on the shoulder and ask her to tell me those directions once more. My sweet teacher knelt down and repeated everything to me slowly, with a twinkle in her eye.

Though I'm now a grown woman, I'm still that little girl who gets lost in daydreams and forgets simple things. The other morning, my super-responsible daughter asked if I'd pack her lunch so that she'd have time to get some extra things ready before school. “No problem!” I assured her. Later that afternoon,

I suddenly had a vague memory of her asking me the question, a memory of hugging her goodbye, but a realization that I had not, in fact, done a single thing to help her with lunch. Lucky for me, she totally forgave me.

Knowing that I'm surrounded by people who see me for the best in me, and forgive the other parts, feels like such a gift. It reminds me of this quote:

“People in whom goodness prevails turn everything toward goodness, and excuse. Therefore, whatever is from the Lord, and whoever are led by the Lord, turn everything toward good.”  
(*Spiritual Experiences* 1705)

For the past few months, I've poured through dozens of forgiveness stories in preparation for the Fall Journey campaign, *Practicing Forgiveness*. It's been such a touching topic to study. What comes through most clearly to me is that forgiveness is really just a form of love. In fact, it may be the most powerful expression of love. It's the kind of love that cuts through hate, revenge, bitterness. It's the kind of love that doesn't shrink away, even in the hardest situations. It's the kind of love that refuses to let hurtful behavior get the best of us or make us bitter. It's the kind of love that sees and believes in the good in every person, and in every situation. It's the kind of love that Jesus preached about, and lived by.

For the *Practicing Forgiveness* workbook, my co-author John Odhner and I have juxtaposed modern stories of forgiveness with stories from the New Testament. We also include discussion questions, quotes, meditations, activities and space for personal reflection. Our dream in putting together this content is that we all might begin to see each other with a little less judgment, a little more gentleness, and a lot more love.

If you're interested in getting involved, we would be glad to have you join. The first round of *Practicing Forgiveness* groups will launch this fall. For more information, please find us at [www.newchurchjourney.org](http://www.newchurchjourney.org).

What comes through most clearly to me is that forgiveness is really just a form of love. In fact, it may be the most powerful expression of love.



**Sasha Silverman** is Content Editor for General Church Outreach, developing annual Journey Programs with the Rev. John Odhner. She lives in Bryn Athyn with her two children. Contact: [sasha.silverman@newchurch.org](mailto:sasha.silverman@newchurch.org).

# Church News

*Compiled by Bruce Henderson*

## **BRYN ATHYN COLLEGE COMMENCEMENT AND AWARDS**

Bryn Athyn College conferred 47 Bachelor of Arts and 16 Bachelor of Science degrees at its 140<sup>th</sup> commencement on May 27, 2017. This was the largest graduation class in the College's history. There was also one Master of Divinity degree conferred.

The graduates represented four countries (Canada, England, Liberia and the United States), and nine states (Arizona, Delaware, Maryland, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Virginia).

The Commencement Address was given by **Erin Glenn Busby**, a 1991 graduate of the Academy Girls School, who is in the midst of a distinguished career as an attorney and law professor. (See page 315)

Here are this year's graduates:

### ***Associate in Arts:***

**Gabrielle C. Anderson**, E. Lansdown, PA

**Steffi C. Geronimo**, Harrisburg, PA

**Amanda Bevan**, Bensalem, PA

**Bryan Martinez**, Brooklyn, NY

**Rachel E. Bostock**, Treasure Island, FL

**Tuong Nguyen**, Huntingdon Valley, PA

**Julia Cooper**, Bryn Athyn, PA

**Avery Sprinkle**, Potomoc, MD

**Julia Ford**, Jenkintown, PA

**Maia M. Wyncoll**, Kempton, PA

### ***Bachelor of Arts*** (\* indicates *cum laude*)

**Benjamin Adams**, Bryn Athyn, PA

**Priya Johnson**, Philadelphia, PA

**Christopher Allen**, Rydal, PA

**Tirah Marie Echols Keal**,\* Bryn Athyn, PA

**Michelle Bedford**,\* Huntingdon Valley, PA

**Catherine Kirk**, Springfield, PA

**Christian Blair**,\* Bryn Athyn, PA

**Julia Linde**, Hatboro, PA

**Gage Blair**,\* Bryn Athyn, PA

**Nelson Lopez**, Lewes, DE

**Deion Boyer**, Philadelphia, PA  
**Christian Buss**, Bryn Athyn, PA  
**Amanda Calamito**, Stockton, NJ  
**Andrew Chapin**, Butler, PA  
**Jody Chapin**, Butler, PA  
**Victoria Chareczko**, Willow Grove, PA  
**Kristina Clark**, Perth Amboy, NJ  
**Kattie Cox**, Altavista, VA  
**Erik Cranch**, Bryn Athyn, PA  
**Luke David**,\* Grove City, PA  
**Siafa Dempster**, Monrovia, Liberia  
**Zachary Franzen**, Chanhassen, MN  
**Luke Frazier**, Bryn Athyn, PA  
**Phoenix Fritch**,\* Auburn, PA  
**Marcquia Garvin**, Philadelphia, PA  
**Richard Glenn**, Greenbelt, MD  
**Brandon Good**,\* Bryn Athyn, PA  
**Deacon Heinrichs**, Kitchener, ON, Canada  
**Kyle Jennings**, Bensalem, PA

**Jayson Marbach**, Bensalem, PA  
**Anna Martin**,\* Huntingdon Valley, PA  
**Natalie Matteo**, Philadelphia, PA  
**Lamell McCants-Stone**, Manhattan, NY  
**Arielle McGraw**, New York, NY  
**Lauren O'Connor**,\* Warminster, PA  
**Carlos Perez**, Manhattan, NY  
**Michael Redondo**, Philadelphia, PA  
**Valene Santoo**, Abington, PA  
**Keana Schoennagle**, Hazleton, PA  
**Janina Smith**, Kempton, PA  
**Troy Steed**, Philadelphia, PA  
**Bethany Tough**, Pittsburgh, PA  
**Stephan Tucker**, Langhorne, PA  
**Brittany Vick**, North Brunswick, NJ  
**Jay Volcy**, Philadelphia, PA  
**Tyler Wagner**, Philadelphia, PA  
**Je'la Watson**, West Chester, PA

***Bachelor of Science*** (\* indicates *cum laude*)

**Justin Ball**,\* Mitchellville, MD  
**Derek Buss**,\* Bryn Athyn, PA  
**Taylor Davis**, Philadelphia, PA  
**Bianca Feliciano**, Perth Amboy, NJ  
**Emma Gross**,\* Abington, PA  
**Austin Grubb**, Mesa, AZ  
**David Hyam**,\* London, England  
**Stephen Johnson**, Bensalem, PA

**Zachary Jones**, Abington, PA  
**Ryan Landels**, Coldstream, BC, Canada  
**Courtney Morrison**, Carthage, NC  
**Daniel Mulhern Jr.**, Warminster, PA  
**Austin Nyekan**,\* Bensalem, PA  
**Saryluz Ramos**, Philadelphia, PA  
**Colin Rogers**, Bryn Athyn, PA  
**Eric Rossi**,\* Perkasie, PA

The Valedictorian was **Michelle Bedford**.

***Academic Awards***

Bryn Athyn College Academic Awards were presented to:

**Michelle Bedford**

**Derek Buss**

**Luke David**

**Phoenix Fritch**

**Athletic Awards:**

Female Scholar Athlete: **Brenna Sweeney**

Male Scholar Athlete: **Nikita Klinisovs**

Female Athlete of the Year: **Kristina Clark**

Male Athlete of the Year: **Jon Carr**

**Note:** Academic Achievement Awards, including scholarships and grants, were published in the May/June issue of *New Church Life*.)

**ACADEMY SECONDARY SCHOOLS GRADUATION AND AWARDS**

The Academy of the New Church Secondary Schools graduated 56 students on June 10 in Bryn Athyn. This includes 24 students from the Girls School (13 with honors) and 32 from the Boys School (12 with honors). This year's graduated class included students from four states (Illinois, Maryland, Pennsylvania and South Carolina), plus eight from China – three in the Girls School and five in the Boys School.

The commencement address – *Preparation for Wise Choices* – was delivered by **Leann P. Hill**. (See page 319.)

Many photographs, in addition to those on pages 342 and 343, have been posted on the Academy Secondary Schools Facebook page, and at [www.ancss.org](http://www.ancss.org), courtesy of Joy Feerrar. There is also a video of the commencement ceremony on the Facebook page. (Link to the Facebook page at [www.ancss.org](http://www.ancss.org))

**Graduates of the Girls School (\* indicates With Honors)**

**Lauren Ball,\*** Mitchellville, MD

**Alexis Nakos,** Huntingdon Valley, PA

**Emily Cooper,\*** Bryn Athyn, PA

**Emma Pitcairn,\*** Bryn Athyn, PA

**Zia Cooper,** Bryn Athyn, PA

**Teryn Rose,\*** Bryn Athyn, PA

**Christine Daum,\*** Huntingdon Valley, PA

**Clara Roth,\*** Bryn Athyn, PA

**Isabella DeMaria,** Huntingdon Valley, PA

**Brianna Salvatori,** Maple Glen, PA

<b>Lysandra dePadua</b> , Huntingdon Valley, PA	<b>Lauren Sheedy</b> ,* Bryn Athyn, PA
<b>Caterina Fuller</b> ,* Huntingdon Valley, PA	<b>McKenna Smith</b> , Glenview, IL
<b>Astri Hernandez</b> ,* Riversdale, MD	<b>Katie Will</b> , Charleston, SC
<b>Samantha Hill</b> ,* Bryn Athyn, PA	<b>Brielle Williams</b> ,* Huntingdon Valley, PA
<b>Haley Holsworth</b> , Philadelphia, PA	<b>Mengxi Zhang</b> , Beijing, China
<b>Olivia Mangano</b> ,* Newtown, PA	<b>Jie Zheng</b> , Shanghai, China
<b>Monica McDonald</b> ,* Huntingdon Valley, PA	<b>Yucen Zhong</b> , Hangzhou, China

The valedictorian for the Girls School was **Brielle Williams**.

Theta Alpha Gold Medals were awarded to:

**Samantha Hill**  
**Clara Roth**  
**Brielle Williams**

Honorary Girls School Diplomas were awarded to:

**Leann Hill**  
**Karen Salvatori**

**Graduates of the Boys School** (\* indicates With Honors)

<b>Duncan Allen</b> , Meadowbrook, PA	<b>Caden Martz</b> , Huntingdon Valley, PA
<b>Gareth Allen</b> , Meadowbrook, PA	<b>Kyle Mattison</b> , Wyncote, PA
<b>Edwin Asplundh</b> ,* Bryn Athyn, PA	<b>Jack McCabe</b> , Churchville, PA
<b>Cade Bau-Madsen</b> , Bryn Athyn, PA	<b>Matthew McCabe</b> , Churchville, PA
<b>Brayden Boyesen</b> ,* Bryn Athyn, PA	<b>Bryson McCurdy</b> , Bryn Athyn, PA
<b>Charlie Chen</b> ,* Gui Yang, China	<b>Alexander Pendleton</b> , Bryn Athyn, PA
<b>Benjamin Conroy</b> ,* Bryn Athyn, PA	<b>Heath Pitcairn</b> , Bryn Athyn, PA
<b>Andrew Fisher</b> , Pittsburgh, PA	<b>Dain Rohlla</b> ,* Huntingdon Valley, PA
<b>Hans Frazier</b> , Huntingdon Valley, PA	<b>Oskar Simons</b> ,* Mitchellville, MD
<b>Julius Frost</b> ,* Bryn Athyn, PA	<b>Galen Stevens-King</b> ,* Bryn Athyn, PA
<b>Braden Heilman</b> , Sarver, PA	<b>Skyler Synnestvedt</b> , Osceola, PA
<b>Kameron Kittrels</b> , Elkins Park, PA	<b>Hayden Trautmann</b> ,* Huntingdon Valley, PA
<b>Patrick Kolb</b> , Meadowbrook, PA	<b>Junming Wang</b> , Guangzhou, China

**Wyeth Kuhl**,\* Bryn Athyn, PA

**Westley Wedell**,\* Huntingdon Valley, PA

**Jimmy Liao**,\* Guangzhou, China

**Nick Xiao**, Shenzhen, China

**Ramon Loeb**, Warminster, PA

**Eric Zhang**, Shenzhen, China

The valedictorian for the Boys School graduates was **Westley Wedell**.

Boys School Faculty Awards were presented to:

**Galen Stevens-King** (Gold)

**Westley Wedell** (Gold)

**Brayden Boyesen** (Silver)

**Benjamin Conroy** (Silver)

**Eric Zhang** (Silver)

Honorary Boys School Diplomas were awarded to:

**Randall Mattison**

**Eric Rohtla**

#### **ACADEMIC AWARDS**

*Academic Excellence Award:*

**Anji Cooper**

**Clara Roth**

**Madison Zagorski**

*Emilie K. Asplundh Performing Arts Award:*

**Rayna Synnestvedt**

*Theta Alpha International Essay Winners:*

First place: **Camryn Buss**

Second place: **Anji Cooper**

Third Place: **Rebecca Liu**

Honorable Mention: **Leah Antwi** and **Hannah King**

*Presidential Scholarship from Bryn Athyn College:*

**Benjamin Conroy**

**Christine Daum**

*Major individual athletic awards:*

#### **Girls School**

*Sportsmanship Award:* **Katie Will**

*Outstanding Female Athlete:* **Samantha Hill**

## Boys School

*Payson W. Lyman Award* (for Charity and Dedication): **Jack McCabe**  
*Stanley F. Ebert Award* (for Courage, Integrity, Perseverance,  
 Sportsmanship and Scholarship): **Bryson McCurdy**

### KEMPTON GRADUATION: A FIRST

*Dale Smith, Assistant Principal*

This year, the Kempton New Church School (in Kempton, Pennsylvania) held its first high school commencement. On June 8, **Tess Brown, Ty Brown** and **Bennett Buick** walked the stage at KNCS, which in the last two years expanded its long-time K-10<sup>th</sup> grade offering to cover the last two years of high school as well. This new development carries on the Kempton Society's already rich history of education at the senior high school level. This was primarily accomplished through its ASPIRE initiative, a parent-led hybrid home school program.

Now KNCS offers students a state-approved high school diploma, which bears the following: "Nothing is more important to man than to know what is true." (*Arcana Coelestia* 794) This is indicative of the purpose of the Kempton New Church School, which is to help children develop into good neighbors who know and care about what is important, into people who can be useful and happy members of society both in this life and in the world to come.

The commencement address was delivered by **Dan and Erika Brown**, parents of Tess Brown. They spoke about remains, a highly suitable topic given the deepest hopes that KNCS holds for its students. Remains play a critical role in a person's salvation, and supporting their implantation in our children, by the Lord alone, is the underlying aim of all New Church parents and teachers.

The program included the recognition of some of the graduates' extra-curricular achievements:

- **Levi King**, who was a full-time student at KNCS from kindergarten through 10th grade and continued with some KNCS coursework through 12th grade, received the Presidential Service Award (through the high school's service club).
- Tess received a merit scholarship from Bryn Athyn College, a scholarship from the Lehigh Valley Fleet Reserve Association, and first place awards from juried art shows at Lehigh Carbon Community College.
- Ty received a certificate of achievement for his yearlong apprenticeship at Bergen Jungé Welding and Fabrication and was also congratulated for his many Berks County 4-H Club accomplishments and awards.
- Bennett received a merit scholarship from Bryn Athyn College and achieved the rank of Eagle Scout in the Boys Scouts of America.

All three graduates addressed the audience, expressing gratitude for the school and faculty, for the community, and for each other. They also gave special gifts to the church and school as departing thank-yous, gifts that were the culmination of their Senior Projects. Bennett left behind the beginnings of a Latin textbook based on the Writings. Ty donated a large fire pit he welded himself for use during Kempton's Autumn Weekends fundraisers. Tess created a wall mural in the school entrance depicting the parable of the mustard seed. The painting beautifully illustrates the direction in which KNCS, with inspiration from the Word, seeks to point: "The kingdom of heaven." (*Mark 13:31-32*)

(See photos from the commencement ceremony on page 344, taken by Thaddeus Glenn.)



#### **KEMPTON RETIREMENT PLANS**

We have some exciting news from Kempton where plans are being made for a residential, independent-living facility, called *The Old School House*, similar in goals to Cairnwood Village in Bryn Athyn. Downsizing in rural areas like Kempton is sometimes difficult, so this will help to provide housing for an important portion of our local church

population which is drifting away to other locations.

The local public elementary school, located only three miles from the church, has been purchased. Plans are being made to install up to 11 one- or two-bedroom units. Common rooms, great views, and a kitchen that can serve meals and help the Kempton New Church Society are also included. Additional plans call for another 14 units to be built, cottage-style, on the same property. Zoning has been approved for work to begin as soon as additional funding can be secured.

For inquiries contact **Tom Kerr** at 610-756-4376 or [tjkerr3@gmail.com](mailto:tjkerr3@gmail.com).

#### **SUNRISE CHAPEL 30TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION —**

**MARCH 24-26, 2017**

*The Rev. Nathan Gladish, Pastor*

I am mighty proud to report on a very successful celebration -- the 30th anniversary of Sunrise Chapel's Wrightstown Road building dedication. It

was a packed, weekend-long program of activities for all ages. In the spirit of serving more people, we not only organized events for long-time members but also designed ways to welcome the broader community to learn about the Chapel for the first time and to enjoy making new connections.

We launched the festivities Friday evening with a meet-and-greet-and-eat in Friendship Hall. Our peripatetic Bishop, **Brian Keith**, gave us a fast-paced slideshow world tour of all the New Church churches he has visited. Then the **Rev. Frank Rose**, Pastor Emeritus of Sunrise Chapel, gave a photographic walk down memory lane, overviewing the history of the church in Tucson from its beginnings in the 1940s to the present. What fun to see the images of people who have been very important in the development of this local congregation!

Saturday our goal and focus was to welcome the public with a community-oriented family fun day featuring something for everyone. For children, there were two enormous blow-up climbing structures near the playground, as well as a trackless train ride around the property and arts and crafts in the Children's Chapel. Two food trucks in the parking lot attracted passersby who also enjoyed the lively tunes of the local Speedway Brothers Band, playing under the brand new roof of the gazebo.

People relaxed, reconnected, visited, made prayer flags, toured the facilities, walked the Memorial Garden and the recently installed labyrinth and generally had a good time hanging out. It was a beautiful day for an indoor-outdoor event that successfully drew many new faces. A good number of folks also participated in the silent auction in the Library and then learned more about the church by strolling through Friendship Hall to see the information displays detailing the functions and groups that are held at the church.

Saturday evening's program, beginning with dinner in Friendship Hall, featured another rousing musical experience when all five of **Frank and Louise Rose's** children banded together from Pennsylvania, Minnesota, California and Tucson to provide a unique and amazing hour of tunes. Following that, seven awesome speakers gave short, educational, and inspirational "TED-like" talks on topics of their choice to the delight of the crowd. What a rich and fun-filled day!

Sunday's focus was a powerful, interactive worship service in which we rededicated ourselves individually and collectively to the joy of spiritual growth and spiritual community. We topped off the festivities with a delicious catered lunch and more socializing.

Almost a year of planning, creative energy and teamwork went into preparing for and pulling off this very special occasion. In the process, with generous financial gifts from several sources, we also updated aspects of the Chapel interior with a new audio feature for the hearing impaired, new carpet and baseboard trim, new floor tile, a new entrance door, some new lighting,

ceiling remodeling, fresh paint, and even a new multi-function electronic keyboard.

Outdoors we also repurposed the entrance garden to make it more welcoming and user-friendly, and we put much-needed shade over the existing gazebo. Thank you to everyone who contributed generously their time, talents and treasure to make this celebration so wonderful! We really rolled out the red carpet.

Most importantly, our hearts were warmed by the thoughtful participation of so many people from far and near, many of whom have been long-time supporters and others were first-time visitors. What a delight to come together to honor the past, enjoy the present, and encourage hope for the future of the New Church in Tucson, Arizona.

### **ACADEMY BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

At the May 5-6 meetings of the Academy Board of Trustees **Brent McCurdy** was elected Vice Chair of the Board. He succeeds **Charlie Cole** who was thanked profusely for his four years of service in this role.

#### **Budgets**

Next year's schools' budget was approved with a \$2.4 million deficit. Finance Committee chair **Chuck Lindsay** said this is a very conservative budget and that the schools hope to be under budget. Plans are in place for a balanced budget in 2021 thanks to enrollment and contribution increases.

Glencairn Museum's budget was approved with a \$120,000 projected surplus.

Cairnwood Estate's budget was approved with a \$108,000 deficit which will be drawn from previous years' surpluses.

#### **Bryn Athyn College**

**President Brian Blair** reported that this year's graduating class of 63 students was a record. Enrollment projects are strong for next year, anticipating 315-350 students.

A dual enrollment program has been initiated with the Secondary Schools, allowing students to take several college courses for credit. This is also a recruiting tool.

New programs to be offered next year include a four-year program in building arts (stonework, ironwork and stained glass), and a Master's program in education.

Donations have already been pledged for a new Student Center on campus and a Building Arts studio. A landscape redesign for the back campus is being considered.

### Academy Secondary Schools

**Managing Director Jim Adams** noted that the strategic plan has been completed and approved by the Board. It includes seven goals with accompanying tasks, plus the incorporation of 12 MSA accrediting standards which will make the next accreditation process more integrated.

The admissions goal for 2017-18 is 240 students, with 65 in the dormitories. There is an enrollment bubble in the freshman and sophomore classes, requiring triple sectioning and additional faculty expense.

The Girls School has completed a years-long study of *Conjugal Love* which looks to ways to infuse its concepts throughout the curriculum and make its teachings more relevant to today's students.

### Advancement

Board chair **Sue McGrath** reported that 30% of four-year graduates of the College are contributing, compared to a national average of 15%. And 38% of Secondary Schools parents are contributing and participating in many "friend raising" activities. The goal is to get the parent participation rate up to 60%.

### Executive Committee

**Charlie Cole** reported that the committee is developing a purpose statement for joint meetings with the General Church Board's Executive Committee.

## SWEDENBORG AND THE ARTS CONFERENCE

(From a report in the *Bryn Athyn Post* by **Drs. Jane Williams-Hogan** and **Devin Zuber**, Co-Chairs of the *Swedenborg and the Arts International Conference* held at Bryn Athyn College in June.)

The Swedenborg and the Arts Team wants to thank all who came to the conference, whether for one day or the whole week. It was wonderful to have you there in the audience and the presenters were delighted to meet you. They left with a "kind and caring" image of Bryn Athyn and its residents. Many of them have written to us to share their experience attending the conference.

They were impressed by the quality of each other's papers, the insights they got, the level of the comments and the conversations they had, the collegiality they witnessed, the amazing architectural gems of Bryn Athyn, and the warm and friendly atmosphere of the community.

The conference was called "splendid," "marvelous," "fabulous," "spectacular and transformative," with "so much to think about and build on." "It was one of the best, most cohesive conferences I've ever attended. Everything was beautifully executed." "I am home now, a bit tired but very happy about everything I have heard and seen in Bryn Athyn." "It was a highly praised and wonderful conference." "The conference was a work of art."

We will be following up this event by putting the presentations online on *YouTube.com* as soon as possible, to be followed later with a book containing some background material and the presentations. Both of these endeavors are important for continuing the momentum of this watershed event. Financial contributions to defray continuing costs would be welcome.

### **BOYNTON BEACH RETREAT**

The Boynton Beach Retreat for 2018 in Florida is scheduled for January 28 through February 1. Registration fees remain the same: \$235 per person through October 15 and \$260 thereafter. That fee includes an opening night barbecue and lunch each day.

The Duncan Center, which hosts the retreat, will have the same rate for rooms for those who wish to remain on site, which also includes breakfast. The cost of the banquet – included in the registration fee – also remains unchanged.

The speakers lined up for the 2018 Retreat include:

- **The Rt. Rev. Thomas Kline**
- **The Rev. Barry Halterman**
- **Chara C. Daum**

Bishop Kline's topic is to be announced.

Barry Halterman, who is chaplain and religion teacher in the Academy Secondary Schools, will be talking about his study of world religions

Chara Daum expects to talk about her translation work on *The New Century Edition* of the Writings, her work with the *offTheLeftEye* team for the *Swedenborg and Life* videos, and her involvement with the *Spirit and Life Bible Study*. All of this, she says, "has me bridging the very beginning of the New Church on earth (Swedenborg's Latin) with the current edge of the New Church on earth – being on the front line for newcomers."

Registration materials and materials will be mailed in late August or early September. Meanwhile you can check the Boynton Beach Retreat Facebook page for updated information. Questions may be directed to [bbretreat@newchurchboyntonbeach.org](mailto:bbretreat@newchurchboyntonbeach.org).

### **CLERGY MEETINGS 2017**

(Editor's note: Below is a report of the General Church Clergy Meetings held in Bryn Athyn June 19-23. It was written as a Pastor's Message for the *Bryn Athyn Post* by the Rev. Jeremy F. Simons. We anticipate a complete report in the September/October issue.)

Last week the General Church Clergy gathered from all over the world to the Academy of the New Church Dining Hall to share studies of the Heavenly

Doctrines, and thoughts about what is happening in the Church. Here is a list of some of the main papers and presentations:

- *Closing the Back Door: Factors causing decline in the Church* – **The Rev. David Lindrooth**
- *Four Myths: How Well Do We Understand the Impact of Same-Sex Marriage?* – **The Rev. Jeremy Simons**
- *Love of Dominion by Means of the Word* – **The Rev. Eric Carswell**
- *A Taxonomy of Doctrinal Construction* – **The Rev. Christopher Barber**
- *Spiritual Care Workshop* – **The Rev. John Odhner**
- *Abhorring Evil in a Tolerant World* – **The Rev. Bradley Heinrichs**
- *The Grammar of the Divine Human: Understanding Coupled Adjectives in Swedenborg's Latin* – **The Rev. Derrick Lumsden**
- *The Lord's Glorification Series – A Case for Real Spiritual Growth* – **The Rev. Göran Appelgren**
- *Emotions, Affections, and Delights: An examination of the Heavenly Doctrines in Search of the Seat of Emotions* – **The Rev. Scott Frazier**
- *Freedom and Morality: The Necessity of Moral Judgments in Society* – **The Rev. Stephen Cole**
- *Testimony: Speaking from Life* – **The Rev. Ron Schnarr**

There was also a presentation from **Steve David** about the New Christian Bible Study, approval of a process about the choice of our next bishop after the **Rt. Rev. Brian Keith** retires in a few years, additions to the Clergy Handbook, the report of the committee on Women's Roles, and various other items.

A theme that emerged in the discussions and papers was about the best ways to respond to the changing cultural environment here in the West. We noted the contrast with the rest of the world – a world well represented by our growing number of colleagues from Africa and Asia. There were 23 ministers there from Africa, out of about 40 on that continent, and about five representing Asia, out of about 10 there, and one from India. Issues like declining church attendance, issues related to marriage and sexual morality, how to expand the roles of women, the growth of social service ministries among us, and our struggles to pass on the church to the next generation, came up repeatedly.

The meetings even made a local TV newscast on Friday evening, with an interview of **Chelsea Odhner** and **the Rt. Rev. Peter Buss Jr.** about a display of shoes contributed by community members at the Dining Hall door. The shoes represented the voices of women who hope to see a change in the General Church ordination policy.

On Friday afternoon, the clergy met with the General Church Board

about the future direction of the Church and had a fruitful and interesting discussion. Interest centered around how to adapt to our current generation here, and how to better support the rapid growth of the Church in Asia and Africa.

**OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY**

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

**LOVE OF THE WORLD**

This term denotes a material love of desiring to appropriate to oneself by every artifice the wealth and possessions of others; one which causes a man to set his heart on riches and suffer the world to lead him away from heaven.

However, there is also a proper love of the world, but by regeneration it is subordinated to the love of heaven. This is an important teaching because, as the Writings emphasize, it is not necessary for man to renounce the world in order to enter the kingdom of heaven.

The spiritual man continues to love the world, as he continues to love himself, but as a master loves a servant. Love of the world is less deadly than love of self, but these two loves are the origins of all evils. (See *Heavenly Doctrine* 76; *True Christian Religion* 507)

BRYN ATHYN COLLEGE COMMENCEMENT  
(Photos by Serena Sutton, Angella Irwin and Holly Feerrar)



Procession



Steve Johnson



Bryn Athyn College Faculty



Graduating Class of 2017



Commencement speaker Erin Busby



Valedictorian Michelle Bedford



Bryan Martinez



President Brian Blair



Elmo Acton – Theological School Valedictorian



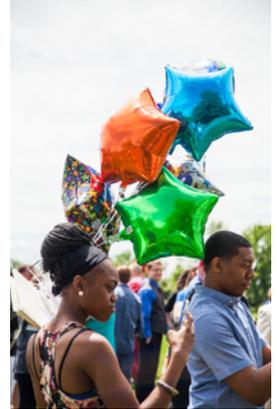
Katie Cox and fellow graduates waiting for the ceremony to begin



Abbie and Elmo Acton



Allen Bedford



Balloons



Amanda Calamito



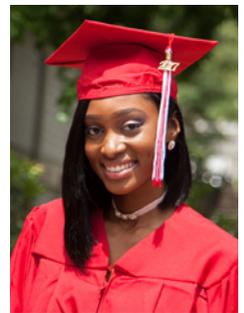
Greeting the graduates



Lamell Stone



Cap toss



Taylor Davis



Kim Frazier with son Luke

ACADEMY SECONDARY SCHOOLS GRADUATION AND AWARDS  
(Photos by Serena Sutton and Holly Adams)



Brielle Williams



Hans Frazier



Samantha Hill



Teryn Rose



Senior Class Song



Brayden Boyesen



Class Banners hung in the Field House



Chancellor Brian Keith



Commencement speaker Leann Hill



Brielle Williams – Girls School Valedictorian



Graduates Duncan and Gareth Allen with their parents Justin and Meg, and siblings Adele and Caelan



Westley Wedell – Boys School Valedictorian



Alexander Pendleton with parents Missy and Thayer Pendleton



Class Banner (photo courtesy of Stephen Conroy)



Zia Cooper



Jack McCabe and Bryson McCurdy celebrate with cigars



Dale Smith, Assistant Principal



Dan and Erika Brown, commencement speakers



The graduates: (left to right) Bennett Buick, Tess Brown and Ty Brown



The Rev. Lawson Smith, Pastor



Levi King, receiving the Presidential Service Award

# Life Lines

## “AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS”

This year’s Journey Program from General Church Outreach is *Practicing Forgiveness*, prepared by Sasha Silverman and the Rev. John Odhner. The steps of the six-week program discuss how difficult forgiveness can be but how essential it is for our spiritual growth and regeneration. (See an article on the Journey Program, page 324.)

We pray each day to “forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” But it is easy to feel that people who have wronged us do not deserve forgiveness – that they must apologize, show remorse, seek forgiveness first. But such instincts focus on self, rather than what the Lord wants and expects of us.

The booklet for this Journey Program includes this quote: “Since the end of World War II, I had a home in Holland for the victims of Nazi brutality. Those who were able to forgive their former enemies were also able to return to the outside world and rebuild their lives, no matter what the physical scars. Those who nursed their bitterness remained invalids. It was as simple and horrible as that.” (Corrie ten Boom, survivor of the Jewish Holocaust)

Many of us remember with abject horror the day a man walked into a one-room Amish schoolhouse in rural Pennsylvania in 2006 and shot to death 10 young girls. (It was similar to the wanton carnage in a Sandy Hook, Connecticut, elementary school in 2012 where 20 young children and six adults were killed by a lone gunman.) The instinct – the very first instinct – of the Amish parents was to forgive the man who committed this atrocity on their innocent children. Their lives were shattered but grace and forgiveness were essential to living their faith.

One of my favorite books is *Man’s Search for Meaning* by Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl. Through those apparently endless and hopeless days in Auschwitz he observed that those who found some meaning in their lives survived while those who did not and gave up hope often died quickly. He also discovered that the last freedom we lose – when all freedom is stripped away – is choosing our attitude: how we deal with what confronts us. And that no matter how much we may be deprived of personal freedom, we never lose our spiritual freedom.

At one point he quotes Dostoyevsky: “There is only one thing I dread:

not to be worthy of my suffering.” That speaks to the trials of temptation and regeneration.

In the midst of the horror of Auschwitz Frankl says: “I grasped the meaning of the greatest secret that human poetry and human thought and belief have to impart: the salvation of man is through love and in love.”

He came to realize – in his “search for meaning” – that turning away from God is the source of all evil, and that in loving God and the neighbor man forgets self and becomes more and more human. He becomes more and more an angel. And it starts with forgiveness.

Another iconic book on suffering and redemption is *Unbroken* by Laura Hillebrand. This is the beautifully written story of Louis Zamperini, who was shot down over the Pacific in World War II, endured 47 days floating in a raft, then two-and-a-half years of brutal captivity in a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp. For much of that time he was tortured by a grotesquely cruel guard nicknamed “The Bird.”

When the war was over and Zamperini was freed, he returned home physically unbroken but psychologically scarred. He became an alcoholic, suffered a broken marriage and was drifting through an empty life. But he became worthy of his unbroken spirit when he found religion and gave his life over to the Lord. He was even able to return to Japan – on a mission to forgive his tormentor.

These lessons are extreme, far removed from our experience of relatively petty grudges, slights and the redemptive power of forgiveness. But they all contain the seed of what Frankl discovered – and took into a career of helping countless people through psychiatry: that it is evil spirits and the love of self that hold us back from forgiveness, and the Lord and His angels who are with us when we forgive.

Forgiveness is healing. Nursing a grudge, holding on to hate, and withholding forgiveness is said to be like swallowing poison – and hoping the other person dies.

(BMH)

### **WHAT WILL YOU DO IN HEAVEN?**

Most of my professional career was spent in journalism. I still keep up with the news. But I realize there will be no “news” in heaven. No “latest” video of catastrophes. No talking heads analyzing what’s happening in various parts of the spiritual world. No hourly “News Alerts.” Maybe that’s what helps to make it heaven. But it also makes me wonder: what am I going to do there?

We are familiar with the teaching in *Heaven and Hell* 393 that there are “so many offices and departments, so many tasks [in heaven], that there are simply

too many to list.” By comparison, “there are relatively few in the world.”

Well, I can think of a lot of useful professions in this world that won't be needed in the next: Insurance salesman. Realtor. Doctor. Car mechanic. Pharmacist. Banker. Weather forecaster. Accountant. Stock broker. Pilot. Exterminator. Credit card manager. Plumber. The list goes on and on. So what are all these heavenly uses “too many to list”?

We aren't told in any detail. But we know that heaven is a kingdom of uses and that the happiness of heaven lies in doing what we love and serving the Lord and fellow angels without any thought of reward. We are told in that same number in *Heaven and Hell* that “everyone in heaven is engaged in his or her work according to its correspondence, and the correspondence is not with the work itself but with the use of the particular task.”

It is good just to know that every angel has a unique responsibility, perfectly suited to his or her temperament. And all of these duties blend into a perfect harmony for the common good.

Sounds like heaven to me.

(BMH)

#### WHY WE LONG TO BE FREE

The desire for liberty is built into human nature because *free* is what God created us to be. People seek political freedom for their nation in order to make their home on earth more like heaven, the country of their souls.

All human progress is driven by a longing for freedom. What is the perpetual quest for knowledge but an effort to escape the bonds of ignorance? What is science but a search for ways to push back the limitations of time and space and physical existence? What drives the economy except the desire to be free from want? What is the pursuit of justice but an attempt to throw off the oppression of injustice? What inspires the quest for peace but the wish to be free from the strife of war? Why do we seek salvation except to be delivered from hell?

The desire to be free is universal because the world was created by God for the sake of a heaven from the human race. This is why we were endowed with the faculty of free will, while other creatures are governed by instinct. Heaven consists of a loving relationship with the Lord, and love can only be given and reciprocated freely. To fulfill our destiny as human beings, therefore, we must be free.

We love freedom for the simple reason that God loves us, and therefore seeks oneness with us, which can only be achieved when we reciprocate His love – freely.

(WEO)

**FREEDOM'S SPOUSE**

Freedom does not exist in isolation; it is forever married to reason, the other essential faculty that defines human nature. This is because the good that genuine freedom seeks, and the truth that forms the core of genuine rationality, come from Divine Love and Wisdom, which are one in God, just as the heat and light that go forth from the sun are one in it.

Human rationality comes from truth and leads to wisdom. And since truth describes reality, what would there be to reason about in the absence of truth? Knowledge of what is true is the “raw material” of sound reasoning. False reasoning – based on ideas that do not accord with reality – does not constitute rationality.

Knowledge of *spiritual* truth is needed to be *spiritually* rational. And since human freedom is essentially a spiritual condition (because human beings are essentially spiritual creatures), knowledge of the Lord's Word is a necessary prerequisite for the spiritual rationality needed for the preservation and wise use of human liberty.

The first law of Divine Providence is that man should “act from freedom in accordance with reason.” The lives of animals are governed by instinct; the uniquely *human* instinct is an instinct for truth. Truth by which we may govern our own lives, as if of ourselves. Truth that is loved, understood, and freely applied to how we live.

(WEO)

**THE LIMITS FREEDOM LOVES**

Human liberty is a property of love; “freedom” is being able to act on what you love. But loves are various, and some are contrary to each other; so human freedom includes the power to choose *not* to act on desires we perceive to be bad. Compelling ourselves not to act badly, or to act well when we don't feel like it, is an important way in which we use our free will.

Each love has its own objects and seeks its own ends. Therefore, the freedom that belongs to each love is limited by the love itself. To speak of being free to do something you have no desire to do would be paradoxical.

For example, to say one who desires conjugal love is free to commit adultery is nonsense because conjugal love hates adultery. To say that one who loves honesty is free to lie and steal is nonsense because those things are the opposite of what the love of honesty loves. Good loves establish their own boundaries.

Heavenly freedom is the greatest and most expansive of all, because there is no end of good loves. But there is a boundary around heavenly loves in general, beyond which is hell; and hell is not free at all.

The Ten Commandments mark the boundaries of freedom. The desires that arise in us from hell in our unregenerate states view the commandments as restrictive, frustrating and harsh. In heaven, though, they are a beautiful set of promises from the Lord to the angels that they will not commit the crimes they forbid but will remain safely in the opposite states of goodness.

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain! You shall not murder! You shall not commit adultery! You shall not steal! The angels, who would rather die than do these things, love these commandments, because they see within them a promise, a gentle reassurance, that they won't do them. For them, keeping the commandments is the essence of what it means to be free.

(WEO)

### **“THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE”**

These words, spoken by the Lord to His disciples, are well known and often quoted. But they are preceded by an important “if” that's often left out. The full saying is: “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (*John 8:31-32*)

In order for the truth to make us free, we must know the truth. That much is obvious. If you're trying to go home and find yourself at a crossroads in the middle of nowhere, the freedom you have to go north, south, east, or west is useless if you don't know where home is and where you are. What you need is a map.

The “map” here stands for the Lord's Word, which was given by Him to lead us to our eternal home in heaven. But it can't help us unless we know what it says, understand how to interpret it, trust it, and are willing to follow it.

The Lord leads and protects His disciples by means of His Word, but for us to really be disciples we must have more than a passing interest in it. It must enter into our thoughts, words and deeds. It must define the parameters of our life. We must abide by it, and abide in it, so that it forms our mental abode, our spiritual dwelling place.

Then we will be “disciples indeed,” who know the truth, and are made free by it.

(WEO)

### **THE COURAGE TO PRAY**

We don't think of going to church and saying the Lord's Prayer as a call to courage. But when Leo Thorsness died this spring at age 85 in Iowa many people learned that his inspiring life was rooted in suffering, uncommon courage – and prayer. He lived his life with a simple credo: always do what's

right and help others. It was a lesson learned as a prisoner of war in Vietnam.

Thorsness was awarded the Medal of Honor for his courage as a pilot in 1967, risking his life to save the lives of a crew who had bailed out in hostile territory after their plane was shot down. Just 11 days later his own plane was shot down and he spent six years as a POW. He endured horrific torture, including breaking his back, suffered malnutrition and endured solitary confinement. But his captors never broke his spirit, nor that of his fellow prisoners.

Thorsness wrote a book about his ordeal, *Surviving Hell*. But he never lost sight of heaven. He and his comrades came to appreciate their country – and their freedom – and to feel more blessed than their cruel captors.

But their faith in each other – and in God – was quickly tested the first Sunday they were together when they decided to hold a church service. It was swiftly shut down. But the next Sunday they gathered again at one end of their cell and began to pray.

As their senior ranking officer began to lead them in the Lord's Prayer, guards rushed in and dragged him off for torture. The second in command immediately stepped up and began the prayer again. This happened successively with five men stepping up to lead the prayer and being dragged out, knowing they would be horribly beaten.

But after the fifth man was dragged off the guards left too. And a sixth officer stepped up led the men in reciting the prayer.

Thorsness wrote: "Five courageous officers were tortured, but I think they believed it was worth it. From that Sunday on until we came home, we held a church service. We won. They lost. Forty-two men in prison pajamas followed [the first officer's] lead. I know I will never see a better example of pure raw leadership or ever pray with a better sense of the meaning of the words."

Thorsness was survived by his wife of 64 years, a daughter and two grandchildren. They said he was never bitter about his POW experience but was a better person because of it. He lived his life with good humor and enduring decency, committed to doing what's right and serving others. And it all came from daring to pray when prayer took real courage – and faith in what the prayer was saying.

(BMH)

### THE HOPE OF OUR 'BETTER ANGELS'

A popular and controversial book, written by Steven Pinker in 2011 – *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined* – has soared on the wings of a new "angel." Bill Gates, one of the wealthiest and most influential men in the world, has called it one of the most important and inspiring books he has ever read. Now it is a best seller all over again.

I have not read it yet, and at 832 pages it is a daunting prospect. But the book has gotten a lot of attention – positive, negative, dismissive and hopeful.

The title comes from Abraham Lincoln's First Inaugural Address, with America roiling on the cusp of the Civil War. Lincoln appealed to “the better angels of our nature” for a nation united as friends rather than divided as enemies. That hopeful vision was quickly consumed by one of the most violent wars in American history.

Now comes Pinker arguing that we live in the most peaceful time in history. Many who have witnessed a century of two horrific world wars, the development of weapons of mass destruction, the growing horror of genocide and terrorism, movies and video games steeped in mayhem and city streets stalked by violence, are left shaking their heads. No doubt ubiquitous social media and 24-hour news channels make us more aware of violence all around us, and history is replete with wanton inhumanity. But it's a strain to accept that this is the most peaceful time in history.

Pinker's research is exhaustive but is criticized for cherry picking data and for biases that may reflect more personal ideology than fact-based conclusions. He flatly declares, for instance, that even if Iran does develop nuclear weapons it will never use them.

He does suggest “four better angels” that can influence our culture away from violence toward altruism, and make positive outcomes more likely: empathy, self-control, moral sense and reason. He does not include faith and religion. No wonder, perhaps, because Pinker calls himself a humanist and an atheist. He seems to feel that religion – at least wars fought in the name of religion – is more responsible for violence than for peace.

Without having read any of those 832 pages I am quite sure there is no mention of what “true Christian religion” reveals – that all evil has its origin in hell and that all good flows from the Lord and heaven. Nor is Pinker aware of the Last Judgment and the fallout that still infests our lives and culture – including war and violence. Hopefully all of that really is on the wane, as the Heavenly City descends and our lives become more spiritual, and our times will become ever more peaceful.

And that really does come down to “the better angels of our nature” choosing to follow the Lord.

(BMH)

### “BRIGHT GEMS FOR HIS CROWN”

Imagine spending years becoming a skilled diamond carver – first as a student, then an apprentice, then an assistant, and then many more years on the job perfecting your craft. Then, as the time to retire nears, you decide to finish a project you've been working on for many years. All the wisdom you've gained

through a lifetime of experience will now be put to use in carving one last diamond, the largest and potentially most beautiful and valuable of all.

And you succeed! The stone – rough, irregular, practically opaque, and with dangerous weak spots running through it – has been transformed into a one-of-a-kind masterpiece, a brilliant gem full of light and color. What a sense of fulfillment and joy you feel as you hold the crowning achievement of your life’s work up to the light. The hackneyed slogan, “a diamond is forever,” suddenly seems fresh and meaningful. And then you shrug your shoulders and toss it in the trash.

Does that make any sense?

We are all diamonds in the rough. And our main use in life, whatever our worldly occupation might be, is to cooperate with our Creator in the carving of our character to make it fit for a place in His crown, that is, in heaven.

One of the “proofs” of life after death, for me at least, is that it just seems inconceivable that after a lifetime of being formed into a better person – wiser, more loving, stronger and at the same time more conscious of our own flaws and need of the Lord’s constant guidance . . . after finally learning to do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with our God . . . after all the spiritual labor of regeneration and providential molding of our spirit into something more truly human – that after all this, we should just cease to exist when our physical body dies.

No, we were not raised up from the dust of the ground just to be returned to it – but for something infinitely wonderful.

*“Like the stars of the morning, His bright crown adorning, they shall shine in their beauty, bright gems for His crown.”*

(WEO)

### **THE “SECRET” TO HAPPINESS**

In a recent sermon on *What Does the Lord Do for Us?* in the Bryn Athyn Cathedral, the Rev. Eric Carswell observed: “The Lord absolutely promises heavenly happiness for those who follow what He teaches. He promises: ‘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.’”

But he also noted that if we could be convinced that “wearing a little blue dot on the back of your hand guaranteed a happier, healthier, more productive life, we would all be wearing blue dots on the back of our hand.”

The best-seller lists are forever touting the latest book-of-the-month “discovery” of the secret of happiness. They continue to sell because people are desperate for some sort of blue dot magic that guarantees happiness.

But it doesn't take a pill, a book or a blue dot.

“The Lord shows mercy to everyone, loves everyone, and wants to make everyone happy forever.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 904:2)

We just need to look in the right place. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and it will be opened to you.

(BMH)

### **A WELCOME RETREAT**

The late Rev. Fred Schnarr founded Eldergarten in Boynton Beach, Florida, in 1995 as continuing, distinctive education for “students” who had reached “the age of wisdom.” Now it has changed its name to the Boynton Beach Retreat and enlarged its appeal to all ages, but the lively spirit and New Church mission remain. This week of scholarly presentations, happy social life, boat cruise and banquet is a perfect mid-winter retreat.

This year's program maintains the high standard. Presenters will include the Rt. Rev. Tom Kline, the Rev. Barry Halterman and Chara Cooper Daum.

Evaluations from last year's Retreat echo general themes: overall appreciation for the Duncan Center – for guests rooms, meals and the meeting venue; and praise for the high quality of presentations (one a day for four days from each speaker).

Among the comments from attendees:

- We love coming here. The mix of structure and freedom is wonderful.
- I learned a lot. Enjoyed reacquainting myself with old friends.
- The Retreat is a treat each year.

Indeed it is. For more information on this winter's Retreat see Church News, 336, or contact Bob Brickman – in his final year as volunteer director: 561-278-6037 or email [bbretreat@newchurchboyntonbeach.org](mailto:bbretreat@newchurchboyntonbeach.org).

(BMH)

### **CHARY COLE: A CHARACTER AND A TREASURE**

At the reception following the memorial service for Charis P. Cole in Bryn Athyn in June the stories from family and friends flowed with affection and good humor.

Chary was an original through all of her 94 years – a lovable eccentric and a treasure.

She was passionate – always – about the Church, about the sanctity of marriage, about her love of country. She felt it was her duty to be informed, to speak out and to encourage others to hold high standards – for themselves and for our leaders, in the Church and in government. But as dogmatic as she could be, she also believed in listening and finding grounds for agreement.

When she had to give up driving several years ago she was regularly seen careening around town in a golf cart with two little white terriers riding shotgun. She was sometimes oblivious to traffic and always on a mission to spread the truth and sound the alarm that our beliefs and culture were drifting into a ditch.

Readers of *New Church Life* over the years maybe did not get the full effect of her unflappable character but saw in her letters the heart and zeal she wore on her sleeve. Some of those letters were just too political to publish, but most were just Chary Cole – full of conviction that sprang from sincere love and concern.

In a letter in the March/April 2014 issue, for instance – *The Duties of Citizenship* – she said with characteristic fervor and candor:

“The New Church will not grow and thrive unless we recognize evil. We should pay close attention to what candidates say and stand for, how they vote and what they do. We also need to know which candidates are true to God, the Ten Commandments, Christian morals and law.

“The New Church has a duty to stand for what is right and good – even in politics. Good government is essential to the happiness and the welfare of the people.”

But much as she advocated speaking out, she also believed in listening, and added: “Some people think politics is dirty and that we should not talk about it in public. But politics is how we choose our leaders. We learn the truth by talking together and listening to others. We need to talk about politics and listen to both sides.”

In another letter in January/February 2015 – *The Gift of Our Freedom* – she said some things in the Writings are hard to understand but was dismayed that “we avoid these things in fear of hurting beliefs. I think if we talk about these things and try to figure them out, we learn and understand them better.”

Finally she had to give up her home, give up the golf cart, and move into a personal care facility nearby. But that did not diminish her mission – or her letters.

In her last letter, in the January/February issue this year, she told of going to the Cathedral to get literature to hand out to new friends in her new home and how delighted she was with the pamphlets she picked up.

“These are like precious gems – so clear, so easy to understand and beautiful. They could inspire young and old in the Church and also help people unfamiliar with the Writings.”

That was Chary to the end: a woman on a mission for God and country – a character and a treasure.

(BMH)



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