

# NEW CHURCH *Life*

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

**SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2017**



## **The New Church Role in a Racist Free World**

The Rev. Jeremy F. Simons writes: "New Church teachings offer a perspective that may help to explain why overcoming racial prejudice and achieving harmony is one of the most important issues facing the modern world." (Page 371) (Pictured are children on the chancel with the Rev. Mark B. Allais, pastor of the racially mixed New Church Buccleuch in Johannesburg, South Africa.)

*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

Racism is one of the great challenges facing the world and the Rev. Jeremy F. Simons says New Church teachings provide the right perspective for achieving racial harmony. It starts with not looking down on anyone or any group. Jeremy writes: “The truth is that, according to the Heavenly Doctrines, all of humanity is in a similar spiritual condition. Evil is not restricted to any one corner of the globe, and every society is beset by significant and vexing social issues.” The Writings offer hope for real progress. (Page 371)

What is the purpose and value of life in this world? The Rev. Michael D. Gladish writes in a sermon about “why our sensory experiences in this world are so important as a foundation for our spiritual lives; why we should value and appreciate them; and how we can take full advantage of them in appropriate ways even when things may seem bleak or threatening.” As time goes by, he says, “we can appreciate more and more how every natural experience prepares us in some way for greater understanding, greater enlightenment and greater fulfillment.” (Page 379)

In a sermon, “Salvation by Means of a New Heart and a New Mind,” the Rev. Eric H. Carswell says that we are born again through a process of internal change as we try to love and obey the Lord. The Lord is calling on us “to become fundamentally different human beings from the people we are as we arrive at young adulthood. Our usefulness, indeed our fundamental happiness, depends on this change.” (Page 386)

The Rev. Kenneth J. Alden presents a comprehensive report on the Council of the Clergy Meetings in Bryn Athyn in June, including: the process for nominating the next Executive Bishop; papers offered and responses to them; some of the issues facing the Church; a report on the Women’s Participation Task Force; and various workshops. (Page 392)

The European Assembly in Great Britain in early August was a great success, and Ray and Brenda Waters convey both the uplifting sphere and the variety of doctrinal presentations in a lively report. (Page 412. See photos on pages 450 and 451.)

Per Bingen, a proud Norwegian and lifelong student of the Writings, presented a paper at the European Assembly, “A Counterattack on Darwinism.”

The thrust of Darwinism – that everything is random, without a God in charge of the universe – infests our schools and culture, and threatens our own belief system, our Holy City. But small and insignificant as we appear to be we can lead the counterattack against “this terrible, godless doctrine” and a make a difference. (Page 416)

*The Earths in the Universe* is perhaps the most challenging book of the Writings. What we learn from science – so far – does not uphold what Swedenborg reports, so what are New Church people to make of this “revelation”? The Rev. Willard L. D. Heinrichs offers “Teachings, Reflections and Speculations,” including: “From just a few of the relevant teachings it seems clear that the Lord has attached considerable importance to this work that, sadly, now gives some people associated with the New Church considerable trouble.” (Page 423)

From outer space to prehistoric times, what are we to make of ancient predators that seem to correspond to evil but could not have come from hell, because it cannot create anything from itself. Joseph S. David wrestles with this conundrum in a fascinating article and concludes: “From creation, no animal itself can be evil or good, no matter how fierce and bloody, and also no matter how cute and cuddly. Crocodiles will always act crocodilian and kittens kittenish. They can do no otherwise.” (Page 432)

Church News, beginning on page 441, includes:

- The Women’s Participation Task Force, with a link to its comprehensive report
- Report on the General Church Board meetings, including plans for a General Assembly in Bryn Athyn in 2020 – the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the New Church
- What’s new at Bryn Athyn College this year, including continued enrollment growth and new programs
- A preview of the new academic year at the Academy of the New Church Secondary Schools, including new programs and staff
- Highlights of the upcoming Charter Day celebration
- The continued growth and development of the impressive New Christian Bible Study website
- A preview of the program at January’s Boynton Beach Retreat

# Editorials

## THE TEST OF POWER

America's Founding Fathers had something of a heavenly model in mind when they envisioned a new form of government vested in "we the people." In their Declaration of Independence they made clear:

*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed . . .*

The pursuit of such ideal government remains elusive throughout the world, and citizens are often frustrated, disappointed – even rebellious. Government represents power in our lives – ideally the power to serve the people justly and effectively, but too often a corrupted power that is self-serving and ill serves its people. We should begin first by looking to the Lord, the source of all power. "Except the Lord build the house they labor in vain who build it."

Indeed, the roots of good government are in the Word. Jesus warned about "the princes of the Gentiles" exercising dominion over the people and said:

*But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant. Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many. (Matthew 20:25-28; Mark 10:42-45)*

After the Promised Land was divided for the Children of Israel and they were left to their own governance, Joshua exhorted them shortly before his death to be "very courageous to keep all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom, to the right hand or the left." (*Joshua 23:6*)

Of course it was not long before the governors began serving themselves first – turning to the right and the left – and we have been witnessing the waywardness of governments ever since.

*Heaven and Hell* gives us the ideal of government in heaven: "In the heavens there is no government except the government of mutual love." (213)

Further along, in No. 218, we read: "We may conclude from this what the officials are like – namely, that they are the people who more than others

enjoy love and wisdom and who, therefore, out of that love, wish well to everyone and out of that wisdom know how to make sure it happens. People like this do not control and command but minister and serve, for doing good for others out of a love for what is good is serving, and making sure that it happens is ministering. They do not make themselves more important than other people but less so, for they put the welfare of the community and of their neighbor first and their own later.”

Contrast that with so much of what we witness today among our “public servants.” Too many of them are caught up in a VIP culture that places them above those whom they are supposedly serving. There are just too many examples of corruption, of self-aggrandizement, of putting power above the common good.

It is sobering then – and should get the attention of those who abuse their power – to read the description of government in hell: “The forms of governments (in the hells) are exact opposites of those in the heavens because they all derive from selfishness. All people there want to control others and to be preminent. They hate people who do not agree with them, and use vicious means to get even with them because this is what selfishness is like. So for them it is the more vicious ones who hold office, and who are obeyed out of fear.” (220)

Cynics say we get the government we deserve – because we are too apathetic, uninformed and uninvolved to demand enough of ourselves to expect more of our representatives.

There are truly many good and committed public servants, but also too many who let a little power go to their heads. We weep with the angels as Shakespeare describes in *Measure for Measure*: “But man, proud man, drest in a little brief authority, most ignorant of what he’s most assured, his glossy essence, like an angry ape, plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven as make the angels weep.”

Abraham Lincoln framed the essential challenge: “Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man’s character, give him power.”

And that is the test. It is not just those who govern us whom we judge, but should first be ourselves. We are “governors” in many areas of life – of our own character, and within our families, communities, societies. At whatever level – from CEO of a company to a mother or father – the ideal is the servant leader: a person of strong values and purpose, coupled with humility and the desire first to serve. It is the heavenly model – acting always from love of the Lord and the neighbor, not the love of dominion.

Let Joshua’s parting words to the Children of Israel be our guide: “And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the

flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

(BMH)

### RELIGIOUS FEELINGS: CONJUGIAL LOVE

If we think of conjugal love just in terms of romance it must seem strange to call it a “religious” feeling. But when we reflect on the Divine source and spiritual essence of that love, as revealed in the Heavenly Doctrine, then we see that it is indeed a religious feeling.

This is speaking of conjugal love in its purest form, of course. Although it originates in the Divine, this love manifests itself on many levels and in many ways. The sphere that goes forth from it is a universal sphere that affects all creatures, “from angels to worms.” Its holiness is not apparent to our lower, animal nature, but our spiritual, distinctly human nature senses the Divine and heavenly essence of conjugal love.

This does not mean we have to wait until we are angels to experience this love. A wonderful thing about it is that, more than any other love, it serves to awaken the angel within us, and gives us the most beautiful and powerful awareness of heaven’s reality that we can experience in this world.

Swedenborg did not learn about heaven just by instruction, but from *experience*. The fullness of his experience, for the special purpose of preparing him to receive a new revelation, was unique, but we, also, learn about heaven from experience – especially the experience of conjugal love.

This does not apply just to people who are fortunate enough to be happily married in this world, but to everyone. Swedenborg never married during his life on earth, but his knowledge of conjugal love was not just intellectual or theoretical; clearly, he felt the joy of it in his spirit. That feeling is something everyone can experience, married or not. In fact, the yearning people have for “connubial bliss” that leads them to seek marriage in the first place shows that they know what that bliss is--and not just from hearing about it but from feeling the influence of it, from heaven, within themselves.

Consider what is said regarding the states of this love. They are: “innocence, peace, tranquility, inmost friendship, full confidence, and a mutual desire of mind and heart to do each other every good. And from all these come blessedness, happiness, joy, pleasure, and from their eternal fruition, heavenly felicity.” (*Conjugal Love 180*)

Like the dew on the early morning grass as the sun moves higher in the sky, the first exquisite feeling of being in love wanes as the love of self reasserts itself and worldly concerns reoccupy the mind. But in the Lord’s providence, the impression it has made upon our soul is preserved, like a

treasure hidden in a field, or a pearl of great price, or a seed from which the tree of life will grow. And, as we are told, conjugal love will be raised up anew in the New Church--not just the New Church in the world, but in each person who is made spiritual through the Word. (See *Conjugal Love 81e*)

The connection between conjugal love and the life of religion is made explicit in this passage: "Every advance and every step from religion and into religion is also an advance and step from the conjugal and into the conjugal that belongs to and is peculiar to the Christian person." (*Conjugal Love 80*)

Religion enters into every aspect of life, and the life of religion is to do good. Marriage provides the most concentrated and permanent setting for this, that is, for the practice of religion. It is an on-going, lifelong endeavor. It requires the husband and wife to cooperate with each other in caring for their children and the various other uses of life, and it requires each of them as individuals to cooperate with the Lord in their own regeneration.

In this way their marriage is strengthened and grows, and together they "step from the conjugal and into the conjugal" and "from religion and into religion." And eventually, as one angel, into the life of heaven.

(WEO)

### 'WHAT UNITES US IS STRONGER THAN WHAT DIVIDES US'

Brave words. Nice sound bite for politicians and others trying to smooth things over in a country that appears to be coming apart at the seams. In the political realm it may just be wishful thinking, but there is one area of life in which it is essential for there to be a uniting force that can heal any divisions that occur: namely, marriage.

Inevitably, since no two people are exactly alike, there will be differences that tend to push a husband and wife apart. And these will be exacerbated by the "love of dominion" and other selfish desires lodged in our natural heredity.

But there are also shared interests that join a husband and wife together; and these "similarities" (or "similitudes" in older translations of the Writings) are very important in overcoming the forces that would divide them. There are a number of these uniting similarities, but one stands out above all: *religion*. A shared religious conviction forms a deep bond that helps a marriage weather many storms.

Even those (similar qualities) that are further apart can in time be joined by various means, especially by a couple's accommodations to one another's wishes, by their performance of mutual duties, by their courteous treatment of each other, by their refraining from things unchaste, by their joint love of little children and care for their children; *but above all, by their conformity in matters connected with the church*. For through matters connected with the church a joining of distant similarities is achieved inwardly, and only outwardly through other means. (*Conjugal Love 228, italics added*)

Young people contemplating marriage today look at the state of the world, at the divorce statistics, at their own limitations, and are tempted to think that marriage is unrealistic; and an increasing number are opting out.

But everything good requires effort, and the forces that are with us are stronger than those against us. The Lord in His providence protects those who trust in Him, and joins them to Himself, and to each other, and to heaven.

(WEO)

### THE POWER OF ONE ANGEL

The power of evil operating through falsity to tear the world apart is great, but it is nothing compared to the power of good acting through truth. This is the source of the angels' power, which they use to defend us when we are tempted by the hells.

“I have seen hundreds of thousands of evil spirits dispersed by angels and cast down into hell,” Swedenborg wrote. “When an evil spirit is merely looked at by the angels he falls into a swoon.” In fact, just one angel can wield power we can hardly conceive of, and is “able to restrain a thousand all at once.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 6344.4; *Heaven and Hell* 232)

Now think of this in regard to marriage. The more each partner, with the support of the angels the Lord sends to help them, is freed from the influence of evil spirits who delight in destroying marriages, the more closely the husband and wife can be joined together. And in heaven, when they have become so united as to form one angel themselves, they will be able at a glance to ward off a thousand evil spirits – including ones that might be troubling some couple on earth bravely striving to save their marriage.

*Shine bright, thou golden ring, with gleam and glitter,  
from fire that melts and welds the twain in one;  
a perfect union, all the dross consuming.  
Behold one angel when its work is done!*

(WEO)

# Letter 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).

## *Concern About the Internal Sense*

To The Editors:

“ . . . for there is absolutely nothing in the Word that has not what is Divine within it, or that does not possess an internal sense.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 1988)

In *New Church Life* March/April 2017 my letter urged caution in the use of Dr. Willard Mansfield’s book which claims to be an abridged version of the *Arcana*, containing only those parts having an internal sense. My point was that the Writings frequently say that only the angels and regenerate men can see the internal sense of the Word. Thus no man can determine which parts of the *Arcana* have an internal sense or not, or for that matter, which parts of the *Arcana* are the internal sense of the Bible.

In his reply in the May/June issue Dr. Mansfield states: “ I am not sure how Mr. Ridgway comes to the conclusion that I am deciding on ‘which parts of the Word have an internal sense and which should be read and other parts which have not and may be given scant attention or left out.’”

However, the full title to his book states that is exactly what he has done, for it reads: “*The Arcana – an abridged presentation for the laity of the New Church presenting the continuous internal sense of the Word as revealed by Emanuel Swedenborg’s Arcana Coelestia.*” In other words, he has decided to omit those parts of the *Arcana* he considers are not part of the continuous internal sense of the Word. This is precisely why I urged caution. In this regard, note carefully the first bullet point below quoting from *Heaven and Hell*.

In his review of Dr. Mansfield’s books, the Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Sr. confirms this: “He (Dr. Mansfield) has left out the many sections where the Lord explains the details of the internal sense,” and also, “over 15 years of daily diligence he has carefully edited passages to keep the essential internal sense.”

I note, too, that Dr. Mansfield now quotes the Rev. Todd Beiswenger as

saying that he has only included the internal sense.

It is sad that Dr. Mansfield seeks to dismiss my comments by saying that I haven't read his books. One does not need to. The comments by him, Bishop Buss and Mr. Beiswenger all state clearly that Dr. Mansfield has omitted those parts of the Writings which he has determined are not the internal sense or do not have an internal sense.

One can only conclude that both Bishop Buss and Dr. Mansfield are able to determine what is the internal sense and what may be omitted. Or are they both saying that the Writings in the naked natural letter have no spiritual or celestial sense but, in the earthly sense of the letter are only the internal sense of the Bible, the same for us humans as for those in heaven? Or are they suggesting that only parts of the Writings have an internal sense or are the internal sense, in which case, those other parts cannot be regarded as the Word, and the parts that Dr. Mansfield has omitted are not part of the Word?

In addition, Dr. Mansfield suggests that what he has done is no more than what ministers do all the time. I would suggest that what ministers do is not the same. Ministers, as far as I am aware, do not suggest in their sermons or elsewhere that passages they quote do not have an internal sense. They draw doctrine from the Writings and attempt to explain the meaning of various passages. Dr. Mansfield, on the other hand, has decided that some parts of the Writings are not part of the internal sense. That is an entirely different matter – a man doing exactly what the Writings tell us we are unable to do.

I was surprised by his sweeping judgment that the reason for my expressed views is because I am unhappy “with any manipulation of the Writings in any way.” How would he know what is in my mind? I have clearly stated my concerns with his work. And, if “manipulation” includes changes to what the Lord has given us, then should not every New Churchman fight for the integrity of the Word?

The Lord has told us that every jot and tittle of every word is holy and has a meaning seen by the angels. Given that our reading of the Word conjoins heaven and earth and the angels see the internal sense of the Word when we read it, it is vital that we do not manipulate the Word. It would seem that Dr. Mansfield does not object to manipulation. Are the Writings not the Word? If one edits the Writings or decides that some parts do not form part of the internal sense, then one is not maintaining the “essential internal sense” or its continuity.

In my original letter all I was saying was that the Word of the Second Coming states clearly that only the angels and regenerate men are able to see the internal sense of the Word and that the General Church needs to tread with great care before accepting that a person may decide which parts of the *Arcana* have an internal sense.

However, in the March/April issue of *New Church Life* Joseph David not only appears to disagree with me but seems to be stating that the Writings do not have an internal sense, but rather are, in the sense of the letter, the naked internal sense of the Bible. That is, although the Writings are supposedly the Word, Divine Truth from the Lord, as dictated to Swedenborg, they have no internal, i.e. no spiritual or celestial sense within the natural. I would ask, then, how we are to interpret the following:

- *Heaven and Hell* 1 states: “But those who so believe do not know the arcana which lie concealed in every particular of the Word. For in every particular of the Word there is an internal sense which treats of things spiritual and heavenly, not of things natural and worldly, such as are treated in the sense of the letter. And this is true not only of the meaning of groups of words, it is true of each particular word.” *De Domino (Concerning The Lord) Preface 9*, states: “But they are to be excused who do not know anything about the style of the Word, that there is a spiritual sense within every single word.”
- There are also numerous other statements in the Word that one cannot see the internal sense without enlightenment from the Lord, that is regeneration. See, for example, *Arcana Coelestia* 8106, which states: “The internal sense cannot be comprehended by anyone that is not regenerated.” (See also *Arcana Coelestia* 10323, 10551)
- The Writings do not explain all the books of the Bible, but only *Genesis*, *Revelation* and part of *Exodus*, and that by only part of the Writings, namely *Arcana Coelestia*, *Apocalypse Revealed* and *Apocalypse Explained*. Many of the books of the Writings do not deal with the Bible and those that do only deal with a very small part of it.
- How are we to regard all the other books of the Writings which do not directly treat of the Bible, including *Conjugal Love*, *Divine Providence* and *Earths in the Universe*? The only possible answer then is that they do not have an internal sense and are not the Word as they do they not explain the Bible.
- However, more importantly is the nature of the New Word. Were they not given as the New Word, for the New Church in heaven and on earth, a New Word, which descended from God out of Heaven, the New Heaven? As part of the Glorification process the Lord brought the hells under control and established a New Heaven, a New Church, which replaced the then existing heavens and church. A New Word was given then for that New Church. More than this, the New Word has been given from the Lord in His new state, that of the Glorified Divine Human. With the Resurrection and Glorification was not everything

changed and became new? The Lord Himself was different and the way in which He comes to men is different. Can the New Word therefore be an iteration of the old?

- In *New Church Life* March/April 2017 the Rev. Michael Gladish, in his sermon “*What the Lord Actually Accomplished*,” noted in *Arcana Coelestia* 6371: “Prior to His coming into the world there was among men and among spirits an influx of life from Jehovah or the Lord which came by way of the celestial kingdom, that is, through the angels who were in that kingdom. This was the source of their power at that time. But when the Lord came into the world, and by so doing made the Human within Himself Divine, He took to Himself what had rested with the angels of the celestial kingdom, namely power and control. For what flowed from God and passed through that heaven had until then been the Divine human. That influx was also the Divine person who presented himself, when Jehovah revealed Himself in this way. But this Divine Human came to an end when the Lord made the human within Himself Divine.”
- Another passage of interest is *Arcana Coelestia* 1775: “I have conversed with certain spirits concerning the Word, saying that it has been necessary that of the Lord’s Divine Providence some revelation or Word should come into existence, for a revelation or Word is the general recipient vessel of spiritual and celestial things, thus conjoining heaven and earth . . .” Are the Writings neither revelation nor Word? It would seem that this passage is not talking about the Bible but about the revelation or Word to come into existence and which has, within the natural sense, spiritual and celestial things thus conjoining heaven and earth.
- *Arcana Coelestia* 3179, commenting on man’s regeneration, indicates that we are able to see almost nothing of the internal sense of the Word: “There are innumerable, nay, illimitable secret things by which man is at that time led by the Lord, some only of which shine forth from the internal sense of the Word.”
- *Arcana Coelestia* 1955 clearly states that there is far more to the internal sense than the words on the page: “That the words before us involve arcana, everyone can see from the single consideration that no one can know what it is to ‘see after Him that seeth Me,’ except from an internal sense, in which also there must be such things as cannot be explained to the apprehension, except by means of ideas like those of the angels, which do not fall into words, but only into the sense of the words; and this quite apart from the material ideas out of which come the ideas of

the sense of the words. Concerning the things before us, which appear so obscure to man, the angels have ideas so clear and distinct, and enriched with so many representations, that were only a small part of them described, they would fill a volume.”

- “For there is absolutely nothing in the Word that has not what is Divine within it, or that does not possess an internal sense.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 1988) Does this not apply also to the Writings, which the General Church holds to be the Word? Further, what is the relevance of this statement to Dr. Mansfield’s decision to omit sections of *Arcana Coelestia* from his books on the grounds that they are not part of the continuous internal sense?

Regarding the above, it seems that this is a subject of great importance both for myself and the whole reading church community, which requires considerable study. It might well be that there are different views, each of which is significant and appropriate for different people, depending particularly on his/her state and the needs that the Lord sees for each individual at any particular time.

Writer’s name removed from online edition per his request.  
Canberra, Australia

#### OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY

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

#### LOVE TO THE LORD

Here we have another term which expresses a concept peculiar to the Writings and strikingly at variance with the one held in the world. It does not mean love of the Lord’s person on account of His example, sufferings and death on the cross, but love of the Divine things that are in Him and from Him. Thus the term does not refer to a personal affection such as is implicit in the evangelical Christian idea of the Lord as Companion, Elder Brother and Friend, but to a love that is spiritual in origin and extension – believing in and loving the Lord’s precepts and loving and doing in sincerity what is good. (See *Apocalypse Revealed* 903; *Heaven and Hell* 278)

# A Racist Free World

*The Rev. Jeremy F. Simons*

*New Church teachings offer a perspective that may help to explain why overcoming racial prejudice and achieving harmony is one of the most important issues facing the modern world.*

It is not news that the struggle against racism and bigotry is one of the world's major challenges. But New Church members may not be aware that the struggle against racism is a significant subtext throughout the *Heavenly Doctrines*. New Church teachings not only clearly state that racism is wrong, they describe its cause, and they explain the process that will one day overcome it. There is good reason to say that the Writings portray the fight against racism as perhaps the most important issue facing the world.

The purpose of this article is to describe the perspective that the Writings bring to the issue, to attempt to address some common misconceptions about what they teach, and to offer reasons to believe that this seemingly intractable human condition is not permanent. A world without racism, like a world without hunger, crime, disease or war, is not likely in any absolute sense, but these things are all part of the vision of the New Church presented in the *Heavenly Doctrines*.

Two passages may help us come to grips with the situation. One is from the *Doctrine of the Sacred Scripture 108*:

Communication with the whole of heaven takes place by means of the Word. It is for the same reason that, of the Lord's Divine Providence, there exists a universal commerce of the kingdoms of Europe, principally of those where the Word is read, with nations outside the church.

This statement offers a simple explanation as to why the connection of the world's various peoples is a good thing. The ultimate result will be that the Word is spread, and all peoples will be connected to heaven by it.

The second passage is apparently unrelated:

If the successive states of the churches on our earth are considered, it is evident that they have been like the successive states of a person who is being reformed and regenerated. For in order to become a spiritual person, they are first conceived, afterwards born, then they grow up, and are subsequently led on further and further into intelligence and wisdom. (*Apocalypse Explained 641*)

An argument could be made that this blending of cultures and peoples is the most important thing happening on this planet.

This says that the world is growing up. Its changes are like the development of an individual.

I see these two messages as saying that we can expect the interactions between nations and cultures at first to be immature and difficult, and only gradually to become more peaceful and positive, as the world progresses, and as the spread of the Word takes effect.

### **The process of development is a core aspect of the New Church**

An argument could be made that this blending of cultures and peoples is the most important thing happening on this planet. To support that idea we only need to look at the daily headlines, the actions of governments, and the comments we hear on social media. A large percentage of these things revolve around the conflict between nations, cultures and peoples.

Our constantly changing world brings peoples of differing race, culture, language and nationality into closer contact than ever before. The world is shrinking, due to the inexorable progress of knowledge, technology, communication and transportation. Together with an increasing global population, these forces expose individuals in every part of the world to peoples, traditions and ideas that they were never in contact with in the past. The exposure has a significant and continual impact on every part of the world.

In the long run most people would agree that this contact is a good thing. Good ideas spread, the opportunities for international cooperation increase, and people help each other. From a New Church point of view, globalization inevitably spreads the Word, and the effect of this is greater than most people can appreciate.

In the short run, however, the global rubbing of shoulders poses threats and causes reactions that often lead to conflict and violence.

### **There has been a long history of conflict**

From a global historical perspective, there are offenders and victims in these conflicts. The offenders have often been the European nations and peoples. Since the 15<sup>th</sup> century we Europeans have extended our reach worldwide, seeking trade, empire, wealth, emigration and control. The evidence of history, and the testimony of the Writings, points to our long-term culpability. From appropriating whole continents, to genocide, enslavement and theft, to the routine mistreatment of virtually every population group that they ever

encountered, Europeans have posed a threat to people everywhere.

These criticisms of the European role in world history are often made, and there is a widespread interest in righting the wrongs of the past. Of course, the various European nations never saw themselves as perpetrating injustices, but as bringing civilization and Christianity to the world, and as pursuing their national interests in competition with other nations. Nor was bad behavior confined to Europeans. Warfare, slavery and cruelty have existed in virtually every part of the world to varying degrees.

Today the technology and values of Western culture exert a strong influence everywhere. Is it surprising that conservative elements in many places resent and resist these inroads? Understanding this dynamic goes a long way to explaining, for example, Islamic fundamentalism, its resistance to the “corruption” emanating from the West, and their resorting to terrorism as a way of opposing nations that they cannot challenge militarily.

### **The struggle against racism is key**

If all the world’s population groups were isolated from each other, with no contact between them, racism would be unknown. As this is neither possible nor desirable, we need to deal with racism.

The New Church teaches clearly that racism is wrong:

The Lord’s life is mercy, which is that of love towards the whole human race. Those people cannot possibly be drawing on the life that is the Lord’s who, although they profess the truths of faith, despise others in comparison with themselves. (*Arcana Coelestia* 2261)

I can love all in the universe according to their religion, not more those in my own country than in other kingdoms, nor more those in Europe than in Africa. (*Charity* 89)

Those who love fairness, judiciousness, sincerity and the kindness that comes from charity, and particularly those who love faith in and love to the Lord, do so because they love what is inside a person without regard to what is outside him. (*True Christian Religion* 449)

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The Writings also state that the fallen nature of Christianity has meant that Europeans have historically behaved in ways that have not always been just or charitable toward people in other parts of the world.

There are gentiles who when they lived in the world had known from contact and report that Christians live the worst life, in adulteries, hatred, quarrels, drunkenness, and the like . . . But they are instructed by the angels that the Christian doctrine and faith itself teaches quite differently, but that Christians live less according to their doctrines than gentiles do. (*Arcana Coelestia* 2597)

The faults listed in this passage are the very ones that Muslims often mention in their criticisms of the West.

There are also other specific comments in the Writings that may help to explain these tensions. For example, regarding the British character:

There is a similarity of mind among the British. As a result, they form close ties with friends from their own country and rarely with others. They give each other aid and love honesty. (*True Christianity* 808)

The Writings praise the English, but this is one among several statements about a tendency to love fellow countrymen more than others. Americans probably have a similar tendency, and you might expect that the same would be true everywhere. Yet the Writings say that Africans, for one, are very different:

They say that they do not love their own race only, but all however many there are in heaven, so that they have an ingrained universal love. (*Spiritual Experiences* 453)

It is not hard to imagine how differences in cultural tendencies like these could lead to misunderstandings, with some groups seeking contact and friendship, and other groups rejecting it. Today people from all over the world are mixing as never before, and there is a corresponding rise in racial tensions.

### **Are the Writings' statements about cultural identity helpful or hurtful?**

Due to these tensions, especially arising from a long history of intolerance, today almost any comments about national, racial or religious groups are considered to be insensitive and racist. It would be easy to dismiss Swedenborg's views as prejudice bound up in the misconceptions of the 18<sup>th</sup> century worldview. To gain a perspective on this we need to take two things into account.

The first is that Swedenborg is speaking about these peoples as observed in the spiritual world, where their true character can be seen, and that his comments were guided by the Lord.

Secondly, we need to appreciate the inversion present in these descriptions. In comparing the world's population groups, the Writings make Christians both the best and the worst of peoples, with other populations and religious groups following suit.

For example, we have this statement:

Christians among whom the Word is read constitute the breast of that grand humanity. They are also at the center of all, with Roman Catholics round about them. Around them are Muslims who acknowledge the Lord as a very great prophet and as the Son of God. After them come Africans. And the outermost periphery is composed of nations and peoples from Asia and the Indies. . . . All those who are in that grand humanity also face toward the middle where the Christians are. (*Doctrine of the Sacred Scripture* 105; see also *Last Judgment* 48; *De Verbo* 17; *True Christianity* 268)

In this passage, and others like it, good Christians appear to be described as the best of the peoples in this world. Other passages, however, paint the typical citizen of the European world much differently.

Many of the Gentiles, on seeing the way Christians live, find their teaching abhorrent. This is clear also from the fact that nowhere else is the way people live more despicable than in the Christian world. (*Arcana Coelestia* 916.3)

People outside of the Church, called gentiles, lead a far more upright life than those inside the Church do, and they embrace far more readily that which true faith teaches. This matter becomes clearer still from souls in the next life. [3] From the so-called Christian world come the worst people of all, those in whom deadly hatred of the neighbor and deadly hatred of the Lord prevail. More than anybody else in the whole world they are adulterers. But this is not true of all other parts of the world. (*Ibid.* 1032)

The vast majority of Christians today are inwardly either Arians or Socinians and any adoration they pay to Christ as God is merely hypocritical. (*True Christianity* 852.111)

Passages like these assert that the average person of European descent is less likely, not more likely, to be a genuinely kind and thoughtful lover of God than the average Muslim, Jew, Asian or African. Specific statements drive this home. For example:

More are saved from the gentiles than from Christians; as also the Lord said in *Luke* 13.28-30. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1059.2; also 2284.5, 2598.3)

A greater proportion [of people] from Africa, than from other regions of the earth, are introduced into heaven. (*Spiritual Experiences* 453)

Muslims are really extremely surprised (at the behavior of Christians in the next life), who themselves are easily taught, and allow themselves to be guided, and easily receive the faith. (*Spiritual Experiences* 480; also *Divine Providence* 255)

Although the Islamic practice of polygamy is condemned, other aspects of that religion are praised. Less is said about the peoples of Asia, but what is said is very positive. For example, about the Chinese, we read that “evil spirits could not approach, because they were of a spiritual-celestial character.” (*Last Judgment (posthumous)* 131; also 132; *True Christianity* 279; *Arcana Coelestia* 2596, 2602)

Christians and Jews are the only population groups that receive harsh criticism in the Writings, for the simple fact that these are the people of the church, the ones who have had the Word and who have failed to live by it. If this had not been the case there would have been no need for the Lord to be born on earth.

### **The criticisms are aimed at the people of the church**

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Although the harsh criticisms leveled at Christianity have not been surprising to many people, the similar statements about Judaism have struck many readers as anti-Semitic. They are problematic, especially given the Writings' warnings against contempt for others. The *Reader's Guide* in the New Century Edition of *Secrets of Heaven* has this to say about these statements:

They cannot be simply eradicated or excised from the text, because from Swedenborg's

theological point of view the corrupt nature of the Jewish religion before Jesus' birth is integral to the spiritual history of the churches. It serves to explain both the need for that birth as a new dawn and the intensity of Jesus' ensuing spiritual struggle. (*Secrets of Heaven*, vol. 1, *Readers Guide*, p. 53)

Both Christians and Jews are described as being devoid of love and charity and as having falsified the Word, and are therefore held responsible for the need for the Lord's Advent. (cf. *True Christianity* 121, *Arcana Coelestia* 3479) A number of passages say negative things about the Jews, sometimes repeating classic anti-Semitic accusations of avarice and materialism, even calling them the "worst" of all nations in the Ancient world. (*Arcana Coelestia* 9320, *True Christianity* 801)

But other passages specifically say that the Christian peoples are significantly worse (*Spiritual Experiences* 480, 5978), especially with respect to their cruelty and persecution of others (*Spiritual Experiences* 3598, *Arcana Coelestia* 824), their tendency to adultery (*Apocalypse Explained* 1008.2), their hatred for the Lord (*Arcana Coelestia* 1886.4 *pref.*), and sometimes praising Jews in comparison with Christians (*Arcana Coelestia* 3479). This contrast should also be clear from

the evidence of how viciously Christians have persecuted Jews, and others, over many centuries.

According to these teachings, therefore, the Christian peoples have no business looking down on anyone, but ought to look up to Jews, even more to Muslims, and even more to Asians and Africans.

### **Don't look down on anyone**

More to the point, no one should look down on anyone. The truth is that, according to the Heavenly Doctrines, all of humanity is in a similar spiritual condition: "In fact the whole human race is evil, with everyone, if left to himself, rushing into hell." (*Arcana Coelestia* 587) Evil is not restricted to any one corner of the globe, and every society is beset by significant and vexing social issues.

This suggests that the differences from place to place are minor and transient. More importantly, it suggests that everyone should be regarded as an individual, not as a member of a group. Everyone is different and unique, people are not bound by their identity and culture (*True Christianity* 32)

The good news here is that when the Writings describe the character of various nations they frequently attribute it to factors that are susceptible to change. For example, one of the most important factors repeatedly mentioned is the presence or absence of political freedom.

When it comes to the spiritual or theological teachings of the church, the nations that have freedom are like eagles that can soar aloft to any height; the nations that have no freedom are like swans swimming on the surface of a river. (*True Christianity* 815; also *Last Judgment* (posthumous) 5)

We live at a time when political freedom is rapidly spreading worldwide. Good things will result.

### **The cause of the problem is also the solution**

A refrigerator magnet at our house proclaims: "*Beer got me into this mess, and, by golly, beer will get me out of it.*" While this is clearly wrong, it does seem that the same factors that have brought the many peoples of the world

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into contact, and therefore into conflict, will help to resolve those conflicts.

My belief is that antagonisms that have their origin in cultural dissimilarity, and the resulting mutual misunderstanding, will inevitably fade with time, contact, familiarity and education.

With every year that goes by nations become more and more like each other, adapting to each other's technologies, language, fashions, economic and governmental standards, and social customs. While this does not happen quickly, it does happen – with contact, communication and especially with integration. As people come to know individuals from all corners of the world, they come to see that all people are essentially the same, and to appreciate the subtle differences that make every people and every person special.

The hidden spiritual factor, though, is that while this is going on the Word is continually being spread. Year after year it is earth's runaway best seller in over a thousand different languages. If the predictions in the *Heavenly Doctrines* are accurate, the same will one day be true of them as well – as the New Church “grows from a few people to many more, till it reaches its appointed state.” (*Apocalypse Revealed* 562)

A new Church is being established by the Lord in which will be the worship of the Lord alone, as it is in heaven. Thus, everything in the Lord's Prayer from beginning to end will be fulfilled. (*Apocalypse Revealed* 839)

This new Church, truly Christian, will endure to eternity. It is to become the crown of the previous Churches, because there will be true faith and true charity. In this new Church there will be spiritual peace and internal blessedness of life. (*Coronis* lii-liv)

I think that this describes a world that will one day be mature and connected, a world without racism or bigotry, a world that will be “subsequently led on further and further into intelligence and wisdom.” (*Apocalypse Explained* 641) This is what is meant by the New Church.



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# The Purpose and Value of Life in This World

*A Sermon by the Rev. Michael D. Gladish*

Lessons: *1 Kings 3:5-15; Matthew 6:25-34; Heaven and Hell 304*

Throughout the literal sense of the Word we find dramatic examples of people seeing, hearing, touching, tasting and smelling certain things, or doing things in such a way that they would be seen, heard, felt, tasted or smelled. Of course, every one of these incidents has an important spiritual meaning, or spiritual sense. Seeing, for example, corresponds to understanding, and hearing to obedience. But the power of the natural senses, and so the importance of the natural life in general, is also a critical feature of these stories.

Our topic today is that natural life: why our sensory experience in this world is so important as a foundation for our spiritual lives; why we should value and appreciate it; and how we can take full advantage of it in appropriate ways even when things may seem bleak or threatening.

The lessons in *1 Kings 3* and *Matthew 6* are similar in that they stress and illustrate the principle that when we turn to the Lord first of all and ask Him for heavenly things He also provides for us on the material plane – maybe not everything we want, but everything we need to live a heavenly life even in this world. Our third lesson, then, gives us some preliminary ideas about why we must be born into this world first, rather than just being born into heaven – thus why angels were not created as a race separate from the human race, but all began life as we do on earth.

To summarize and condense a lot of information: in creating life, or rather forms of life, God always acts from the highest, most refined principles of love and wisdom directly down into the lowest, most inert physical substances so that what He creates can exist in a fixed, stable form having a unique identity defined by time and space. We might compare this to our own creations, which begin as abstract wishes or ideas which are then expressed in some physical embodiment, like a shoe or a pencil or a refrigerator. But once these things

Just as our bodies are made of material stuff, so our minds require a material environment within which to operate.

Without confronting the hard, fixed, limited physical world outside of ourselves we would never have to make any choices or face any consequences and we would never grow or change.

have been created they can then take on a life of their own, or can be used in a variety of ways.

So with human life the Lord creates the material “stuff” out of which our bodies and brains can be built, and He provides the genetic code to bring it all together into the human form. But once all that is done He then gives us the faculties of will and understanding so that we can act as if of ourselves, making decisions that determine what kind of person we will be, and specifically how we will respond to Him.

But here’s the thing: just as our bodies are made of material stuff, so our minds require a material environment within which to operate. Without confronting the hard, fixed, limited physical world outside of ourselves we would never have to make any choices or face any consequences and we would never grow or change.

In fact we would never develop the unique personality that sets us apart from other people; in a way we would all just be extensions of the Lord’s own love and wisdom.

But when we do confront the hard, fixed, limited physical world outside of ourselves, each one of us from a different perspective, the organic substances of our minds are affected in such a way that unique memories are formed. These memories, like habits, become a permanent part of us, defining us, differentiating us from others, and establishing a plane of consciousness that will serve us forever in the life after death. Of course, those memories, that foundation, once laid can never be changed, so the life after death simply continues based on the decisions we make here.

For example, in our own lives we face daily choices, every one of which has visible and invisible consequences that can play out to all eternity. What books we read, what films we watch, what music or conversations we listen to: all these impressions (and that’s exactly what they are, impressions) are stored away in our memory banks, whether we realize it or not, and they all enter with some affection, either good or bad, so that they contribute to our

character.

In addition, what we say or do, either by ourselves or in the company of others, also creates impressions that we carry with us forever, even if we are not consciously aware of them. Of course, we can't control the affections or feelings with which other people receive our words and actions, but a little rational thought and our own experience can be pretty good predictors.

In what we call the Ancient Church thousands of years ago people therefore took great care to try to evaluate the states of those around them – not to judge them as in any way inferior, but to identify their strengths and weaknesses in order to be useful to them. In a pejorative sense today we would call this “labeling,” bias or discrimination. But to those people it was part of the process of being supportive.

We do the same thing when we provide “handicapped access” or “affirmative action” legislation for specific minorities. The point is, if we can see where a person or group has some specific need and we can accommodate or provide for that need, then we all benefit, because they get a good experience from us, and we get a good experience for ourselves by helping. These actions build the foundation for eternal life.

We have to be careful, though, because most people don't like to be told what to do, and contrary to the appearance at times, most people don't like to be dependent on others. Furthermore, life is not primarily about the blessings of this world, which are intended to provide for eternal life. So, when we think of helping ourselves and others have a good experience of life we need to learn to think as the people of the Ancient Church did, and use the time and resources we have been given to enhance the qualities of love and wisdom among us, not just the qualities of physical health, food, clothing and shelter.

That said, one of the things that we gain through our lives in this world is perspective. We learn to prioritize. And the longer we live, the more hours of experience we log, the more refined that perspective can get. Anyone facing a personal crisis one day – whether self-inflicted or imposed by others – might not have the faintest idea that a resolution of that crisis is right around the corner in the form of something new and unexpected, typically provided by another human being whose loves and talents have

As time goes by, over many years, we can appreciate more and more how every natural experience prepares us in some way for greater understanding, greater enlightenment and greater fulfillment.

been cultivated without any special awareness that this is the person to be helped. We need time to get this. But as time goes by, over many years, we can appreciate more and more how every natural experience prepares us in some way for greater understanding, greater enlightenment and greater fulfillment.

An illustration of this from a book, *The Rational Optimist*, is how just about every prediction of doom and gloom for this planet over the last several hundred years – from the overpopulation crisis to the food and energy resource threat and global warming – has been met, unexpectedly, by new scientific discoveries that have extended the viability of life as we know it despite the exponential growth of the population. One can quibble over the details but the fact is that we produce so much more food and energy than we need right now that the glut has actually forced prices down, and the only reason for deprivation anywhere in these matters is political.

In other technical fields the refinements of applied science, including miniaturization and the ability to do more with less are illustrated by the hand-held devices just about everyone carries these days, each one of which has more computing power than the original Eniac machine that filled a whole room just 70 years ago.

In a recent interview on PBS an immigrant professor at the Stanford School of Medicine explained how he has developed a functional microscope made primarily of folded paper. It will sell for less than one dollar, enabling people even in the poorest and most remote areas of the planet to analyze and treat horrible diseases right there in the field.

What's the point? Well, obviously the planet itself is not producing new elements, but people are discovering new ways to employ them, and with the increase of the population there is a corresponding increase in the number of creative minds applying themselves to our problems.

It is exactly the same in spiritual things: the more people there are using the resources of this world to apply the principles of love and wisdom, the better prepared we will be for eternal life. Just so, the more time we have to practice these things the more confirmed and effective we will be – which is why human longevity continues to be extended in this world, and why heaven itself is never full or complete but always expanding.

Each person who contributes in any way to the welfare of the human race benefits from the feeling of usefulness and purpose that enriches his or her spirit, and anyone who actually gets help in some tangible, appreciable way can enjoy the blessings of spiritual life in the thought and affection embodied in it. So, both givers and receivers build up reservoirs of experience in this world that fix and establish their trajectories forever.

But let's consider some of the hard cases that sometimes make all of us wonder about the value of this worldly life. As we know, there are people

with profound disabilities in nursing homes or special-care facilities. There are convicted felons who will spend the rest of their earthly days in frightening prisons. There are people who have been horribly abused – not to mention those who hurt themselves by being abusive. And there are people who suffer from acute pain, confusion, depression, mental illness or plain, old-fashioned sin. What is the value and purpose of life on earth for these people?

If we only think materially about these cases we won't get much satisfaction. We might even be inclined to favor euthanasia. But if we think spiritually a new perspective comes into focus.

First, we need the experience of life in this world to provide the sensory input that allows each one of us to develop a unique perspective based on a unique set of circumstances. Whether we are rich or poor, healthy or sick, whole or disabled, the sense impressions we take in create a bank of memories that will serve us to all eternity – not that the memories define us, but what we do with them does.

Secondly, as challenging as they are, our disabilities can help us recognize the spiritual value of life in the world by limiting and directing our attention to specific challenges and to the people whose love and wisdom can help us deal with them. As for facing disabilities in others, the value for us is to inspire understanding, compassion and material consideration, which often means spending time or money unselfishly, a choice and a discipline we all need to learn.

Something similar applies when we suffer from abuse, persecution, crime, sickness, deprivation, and so on – not to make light of any of this, but if we have a heart and can let go of our resentment or anger we can learn to be compassionate toward others who have suffered similar things, and even to become advocates for them in the public forum. In the end no one is as effective at helping someone in distress as another person who has suffered

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a similar thing and come through it. We can use our bad experiences to help others overcome theirs.

With people who have done terrible things – and who of us hasn't, if only inwardly? – the purpose and value of life in this world is obviously for amendment, i.e., reformation and regeneration, before it's too late. While it's true that a person who dies prematurely, whether by accident or execution, surely will have his or her freedom restored in the spiritual world so that a proper choice can be made between heaven and hell, that tragic death still curtails the benefits to be gained by living a new, better life in this world, gaining new natural knowledge and experience with a new attitude that could enhance the spiritual life forever.

Our doctrines do say that capital punishment is necessary, in that fear of the loss of life is one factor that can help to maintain order in the world. But that fear doesn't really effect reform, and execution certainly doesn't; it just keeps the prudent or the timid under control. As for suicide being a way to end misery of any kind, that is just a cruel hoax perpetrated by evil spirits, since the same misery that prompted the act will still be present in the person's mind on waking up in the spiritual world and will have to be dealt with there just as if the person were still here, but without the benefit of new sensory experiences to confirm and consolidate the change. Besides, death by suicide can bring untold grief to whole families and communities, so it really is inspired by ruthless and sadistic spirits.

We began this morning with a short summary of how the Lord operates – from first principles through what we call “ultimates,” i.e., the physical elements of the earth – to intermediates, namely the human minds that are invested with the freedom and rationality to be conjoined with Him in eternal life. Then we reflected on the importance of sensory experience in building the foundation for eternal life – unique, individual human life drawn from unique, individual earthly experiences. But some of you may be wondering about all the little children who die without the benefit of long years of sensory experience.

We know the Lord is merciful. We are cruel, but He is merciful. The Writings tell us that little children who die make up a full third of all those who now enter heaven. Why? Because they have not yet had the opportunity to confirm themselves in any real evil. Still, lacking the experience others gain by a longer life they have not really confirmed themselves in good, either, so they have a kind of innocence about them that depends much more on others for knowledge, insight and wisdom than would be the case otherwise.

Of course they are happy and feel perfectly free, but that's because they are not so invested in themselves as others are, and are quite content to be led by others. But the Lord's gift of life is intended to be received as if it were our

own so that we can feel His blessings as outcomes of our own decisions. So premature death, however we define it, has to be seen as something permitted, and certainly not ideal.

In summary, life in this world, whether pleasant or troubled, can be described in one word: opportunity. Naturally, materially, we are often bound and limited, but spiritually everything we experience can be used for our benefit. Let us use it wisely, and support one another to the best of our ability as we do.

Amen.



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#### OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY

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#### LOVE TO THE NEIGHBOR

This also denotes an impersonal affection, that is, not love of the proprium of others and what proceeds from it, but love of good from the Lord and its subjects, which are men and women. It therefore refers to love of uses, which are goods. This does not mean that love toward the neighbor is cold and abstract, for what we love in others anyway is quality of mind and achievement, but that love is given to those qualities which seem to be good. The concept implies wise discrimination. (See *Divine Love and Wisdom* 426; *Heaven and Hell* 278)

# Salvation by Means of a New Heart and a New Mind

*A Sermon by the Rev. Eric H. Carswell*

Lessons: *Genesis 21:8-14, Arcana Coelestia 2657 (portions)*

Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, scoffing. Therefore she said to Abraham, "Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, namely with Isaac." (*Genesis 21:9-10*)

**T**his story from *Genesis* may seem to be a simple case of family rivalry. Sarah having finally had a son of her own was not going to put up with Ishmael, Hagar's son -- and the oldest legal heir -- making fun of her son, Isaac. She wanted both Hagar and Ishmael sent away. It might seem to be a case of personal jealousy or intolerance, but as shown in the story, God told Abraham that complying with Sarah's request is what he should do. Isaac was going to be their heir and God had significant plans for Ishmael as well.

When understood on a deeper level this story, together with the rest of Abraham's life that led up to it, presents a fundamental and important New Church idea. On this deeper level the story of Ishmael, mocking the very young child Isaac and his and his mother's consequent dismissal, presents an essential perspective on what it takes to achieve salvation.

Religious people since the time of early Christianity have wondered how to avoid the misery of hell and receive the joys of heaven. They have wondered what it takes to receive salvation. Over the ages, different answers have arisen.

During medieval Christianity it seemed that the popular idea was that if you went on enough pilgrimages, lit enough candles, gave enough money to the church, or if you gave to the poor, tended the sick, and so on -- that is if you did enough good deeds -- you would be welcomed into heaven.

This seemed to fit with an idea from the book of *Revelation*. There we read that each person is judged by his or her book of life. From this perspective, it would seem that salvation occurs if a person has enough "gold stars" and not too many "black dots" in his or her book of life. But in the medieval church the people were taught that the priests could designate the blackness of a dot or the

shiny gold of a star, and perhaps even erase some of the black dots.

The church hierarchy had great power from this role. Too many people focused on simple external definitions of good and bad behavior. The effects of this system deeply troubled reflective people, like Martin Luther – with very good reason.

During the Reformation, the Protestant leaders radically rejected the medieval Catholic view. They replaced it with a concept of salvation by faith. People need to have a faith that Christ died for the sins of those who believe in Him. From this perspective, the spiritual rebirth that the Lord promised came from this faith.

One explanation of this doctrine is that a person can be “born again” in a moment of acknowledged belief. From this perspective, what a person does and does not do is not the key to salvation. There is no need to balance gold stars with black dots. The clergy are not the people who decide how bad a certain behavior is or what a person must do to atone for it. Salvation is a matter of faith – period. In this view, salvation depends on a key idea or insight.

The teachings for the New Church present a very different concept of how each of us receives salvation or how we can become angels to live in heaven to eternity. Today’s story from *Genesis* illustrates one part of our preparation for heavenly life.

The conflict between Ishmael and Isaac is part of the story of Abraham’s life. The teachings for the New Church reveal how Abraham’s life reflects a parable of human spiritual development. It started with the call of Abraham, described in *Genesis* 12, and continues step by step through various ups and downs of his and his family’s life.

Each step of this saga describes a different element in the miracle of our spiritual rebirth. Each step helps us receive the life and joy of heaven. The steps included learning what the Lord teaches, and making better decisions from this knowledge. It included potential obstacles or dangers that can – for shorter or longer periods – stop our spiritual progress, such as the problem reflected in King Abimelech taking Sarah from Abraham.

The fundamental underlying theme is that each of us needs to learn from the Lord and work from our best understanding to live according to what He teaches. We need to seek the Lord’s help in recognizing the key spiritual battles that He calls us to face. We need to recognize and acknowledge faults and flaws in our natural approach to so many situations. We have to ask the Lord’s help in changing these faults and flaws.

Sometimes it is a matter that we care too much about the wrong things. Other times we do not care enough about some of the right things. Sometimes hurtful and dangerously incorrect ideas dominate our thinking. All of this plays out in our patterns of motivation, thought, word and deed. The Lord calls us to act from what seems to be our own power to change these patterns,

Simply stated, a person is born again through a process of internal change made possible by regular and sincere efforts to love and obey the Lord and to wisely love the people around us.

while acknowledging that all we do comes from His power, His wisdom and His love.

Notice this explanation of the path to salvation is not a matter of just doing enough of the right things and avoiding too many bad things. It certainly includes us attending to what we do and do not do, but it goes deeper. It does not involve a human authority, such as an ordained clergyman, defining with precision the do's and don'ts or any concept of keeping track of which good deed outweighs which bad deed.

The New Church path to salvation certainly involves faith. It involves a deep and fundamental faith that the Lord Jesus Christ is the one God of heaven and earth, and is our Savior and Redeemer. But it also involves a trust that those who try to live according to what He has taught us in His Word will be led to heaven.

Salvation occurs within a person's sincere effort to worship and serve the Lord through obeying Him and serving one's neighbor. It occurs through conscious efforts to recognize sin within oneself and conscious efforts to change the thoughts, words and actions that lead to that sin. Simply stated from this perspective, a person is born again through a process of internal change made possible by regular and sincere efforts to love and obey the Lord and to wisely love the people around us.

The inner meaning of the story of Ishmael mocking Isaac reflects a part of this process. Ishmael represents a person's natural adult reasoning ability based on limited and faulty human ideas and concepts. A person can have the best parents in the world, can have attended church every Sunday of his or her life, can have been taught throughout childhood and the teen years what is true and good, false and evil, and still arrive at full adult life with a reasoning faculty that is deeply flawed.

This flawed reasoning faculty stands in the way of heavenly life. It can be deeply disguised because the individual may know the facts and basic ideas that he or she should believe, and may be able to speak articulately about them, and especially may be able to apply these rules to other people's lives, but will inevitably be short-sighted or even blind in seeing their personal application. The Lord would fundamentally transform this merely natural rational faculty. This transformation is so great that it is referred to as being a new and entirely different rational faculty as described in our second lesson.

The beginning adult reasoning faculty or the first natural rational doesn't see or believe some key ideas about what is really true. Ishmael's mocking of Isaac is an image of this flawed perspective. This first adult rational laughs within in a mocking way at key and fundamental ideas that the Lord would have us believe and live from. It does not really believe the Lord. It is inclined to ridicule some of what He would teach us.

Consider the following example of the first adult rational's perspective taken from the *Arcana Coelestia's* explanation of this story:

This rational would again mock if it were told that in heaven the greatest are those who are least; that the wisest are those who believe and perceive that they themselves are the least wise; that the happiest are those who wish the greatest happiness to others and the least to themselves; that heaven consists in wishing to be below everyone else, but hell in wishing to be above everyone else; and that consequently the glory of heaven does not hold within it anything at all of that which the glory of the world holds. (*Arcana Coelestia* 2654:5)

The first rational just does not get it. It is convinced of its own perspective and wisdom. People who lead their lives solely by this first rational will make many spiritually foolish decisions that will be harmful to themselves and others. This part of our mind can excuse us from obeying some of the commandments with self-justifying reasons. A person who lives solely by this first rational will inevitably set his or her heart on too worldly a set of treasures or on too-short-term goals.

The first rational cannot easily believe that the Lord actually expects us not to put our own welfare above others. It finds the idea of wanting and seeking good things even for people we strongly disagree with a foolish perspective. It would rather condemn and even punish.

Acting from this first rational people will face many issues, frustrations and discouragements that will tremendously influence their peace of mind and ability to do what is right and good in many situations. The first rational faculty does not really know what the happiness of heaven is like because people operating from it have such limited experience with true eternal happiness that it will be

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essentially unrecognized.

The Lord has described for us how salvation occurs. A wise person can recognize many elements of it in the Old and New Testaments. A more detailed and direct explanation has been given us within the teachings for the New Church. He has told us of a fundamental spiritual change that He wishes to bring about in each of us. It is a spiritual rebirth that does not take place in a moment, nor is it a state earned by doing more good deeds than bad ones. Consider the following:

These matters may be illustrated by comparing them to the fruit of trees. To begin with the first rational is like unripe fruit which ripens gradually until it produces seeds within itself. Then, having reached the point when it is ready to part from the tree, its state is complete. The second rational however, which the Lord confers on those who are being regenerated, is like this same fruit now lying in good soil, where the flesh surrounding the seeds decays and these express themselves from the core, after which they send down a root and also a shoot up above the ground that grows into a new tree and spreads out, till finally it produces new fruits, and after that gardens and orchards, according to the affections for good and true things which it is receiving; see *Matthew* 13: 31, 32; *John* 12: 24. (*Arcana Coelestia* 2657:4)

Salvation is like becoming a seed that has sprouted and grown a new tree. Some people never even get to be ripe fruit. Their patterns of thinking and action are so flawed it is like a tree with only leaves, or blossoms that never form fruit, or fruit that rots on the branch or falls before a seed is even ready within it.

The spiritual challenge represented by the teenage Ishmael mocking the young child Isaac does not describe an early state of spiritual growth. Much goes on in a person's spiritual development prior to this step.

We might wonder how we will be ready to recognize the failure of our natural rational faculty. How will we notice that we are dismissing the truth? In the story Sarah, Isaac's mother, is the one who notices what Ishmael is doing. Her attention to this problem represents an insight given to us by the Lord. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 2651) If we truly want to be led by Him, He will certainly

knock at the door of our minds, offering the insights we need. He will bring us the strength and conviction to reject the thoughts that would have us dismiss the truth that should be guiding our lives.

What does this all mean for our own lives? The Lord calls us to a spiritual journey like the one Abraham actually took. Several things are very important to know about this journey.

Salvation is like becoming a seed that has sprouted and grown a new tree. Some people never even get to be ripe fruit.

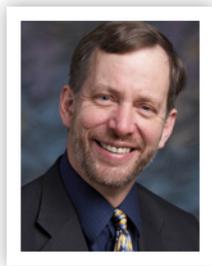
It will not take place apart from our conscious cooperation. It will also not take place merely through the acquisition of factual knowledge or concepts from the Lord. And it will absolutely not take place in a single instant or a short period of time within our lives. It is an adult journey.

The Lord calls us to become fundamentally different human beings from the people we are as we arrive at young adulthood. Our usefulness, indeed our fundamental happiness, depends on this change.

Perhaps during this coming week if you pay attention, with the Lord's help, you will catch the natural part of your mind scoffing at an important true idea or mocking the value of doing or not doing a certain action in obedience to the Lord or to serve those around us. When you catch this unhealthy ridicule, call it by the name it should properly have. It is a danger to your salvation. It has its perspective from evil motives and false ideas. Ask the Lord for help to overcome this doubting state of mind and then live differently than it would guide you to do.

Just as Abraham felt sadness at the idea of dismissing Hagar and Ishmael, you may feel some sorrow at turning from this familiar pattern of thought, but be assured the Lord will stir a hope in your heart and He gives you the sure promise that the happiness and usefulness of heavenly life will become yours through such efforts.

Amen.



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# Report on the 2017 Council of the Clergy Meetings

*The Rev. Kenneth J. Alden*

**E**ighty-four ministers attended this year's meetings, plus one listening via Internet, two candidates for the priesthood, and one guest, for a total of 88. Of these, 60 were from North America, 22 from Africa, three from Europe, two from Asia, and one from Australia. Although no theme for the meetings was planned, strong themes emerged: choosing the culture of the Word over that of the world; serving the spiritual needs of those in and not yet in the church; and examining the Latin of the Writings to better understand the heavenly doctrine the Lord has given.

## Tuesday, June 20

### **Worship**

The Rt. Rev. Brian W. Keith opened the meetings with a worship service centered on *Psalms* 89 which exalts the Lord for His power. He used His own power to glorify or make Divine His Humanity. The filling of Aaron, the high priest's hand represents the Lord's power to save. When the Word is placed in a priest's hand at his inauguration, it symbolizes that power of the Word entrusted to priests. They are to lead people to be taught by the Lord directly from His Word, for in it is infinite power, and it belongs to the Lord alone.

### **Membership**

To invite the full participation of new members, the Membership Committee report was the first item of business. The Rev. Grant H. Odhner, committee chairman, recommended the followed newly ordained priests for membership: Elmo K. Acton (United States), Abel Nguessan Amahin, Etienne Mogue Beugre, Mellon René Agnes Lasme, (all from Côte d'Ivoire), Leopold Yaovi Kouglo Assiobo (Togo), and Dong Y. Yang (South Korea). All six ministers were unanimously welcomed as voting members of the council.

Other business included redefining committee member terms to coincide with meetings of the whole council, rather than calendar years; remembering members who left the natural world since our last meetings (the Revs. Robert H. P. Cole, Norman E. Riley and Douglas M. Taylor), and the unhappy task of dropping from membership men who had resigned (Vicente H. R. Nobre) or had their recognition by the executive bishop as priests of the General Church withdrawn after a lengthy process and much counsel (Jacob M. Maseko and Ronald D. Schnarr).

The Rev. Thomas H. Rose announced that to serve as a minister of The Lord's New Church which is Nova Hierosolyma he was required to formally resign from the General Church priesthood. He explained that he treasures his 29 years of service in the General Church, and continues to feel at one with it and this council.

### **The Lord and Spiritual Growth**

The Rev Henri Joël K. Kouassi introduced our first speaker, the Rev. Göran R. Appelgren, whose paper was titled: "The Lord's Glorification Series – A Case for Real Spiritual Growth."

He got our attention by declaring, "I have no idea what I'm talking about." His premise was that our spiritual life is "a mess," and that the Lord alone sees the way to regenerate us, just as He brings order to the "mess" within a chrysalis, and produces a butterfly. The Lord took on this "mess" when He was born into this world. Led by His Divine love, He used His Divine power to get out of that mess and make His Humanity Divine.

That process is described in *Arcana Coelestia* where it treats of the meaning within the stories of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The many strange stories about Abraham passing his wife off as his sister, or Rebecca putting up Jacob to trick Isaac into giving him Esau's blessing, are a reminder that we are in a messy spiritual situation, and only the Lord can bring us through. He sees the good ground where His seeds of truth may grow, and leads us to a unity of will, thought and action.

As pastors lead, it is most important to keep in mind that it is good ground which alone can receive truth. He closed with the reminder of *Psalms* 37:23: "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord."

The practice of inviting a prepared response to each paper was introduced this year. The Rev. Alan M. Cowley gave the first. He expanded where Göran's paper suggested that people can be afraid of the church, whereas the Doctrines are not meant to be the "LAW" that judges, but "a spiritual force that can change people's lives to something they never dreamt were possible."

Alan introduced an analogy of his own, in which someone going to a gym to improve his health may be intimidated by the sense that only fit people

belong there, and the equipment is overwhelming to learn. He returned us to another of the paper's analogies – a greenhouse – suggesting that people can use the light of truth for growth when they are warmed by the opportunity to choose what they want to work on in their lives, with the clergy on hand to help and encourage.

Fourteen others responded from the floor, some pushing back (some younger priests feel the church has moved beyond appearing perfect and not welcoming in people who are flawed), some appreciating Göran's way of fostering his own congregation's initiative in understanding the Word, and others enlarging particular points (the angels of the highest heaven acknowledge that they are a mess, but it doesn't take away their sense of being in heaven).

### **Process for Nominating an Executive Bishop**

A brief business session followed, in which it was first agreed that those willing to serve as nominees for the next executive bishop would be given wide latitude in how they constructed their statements of vision for the church and philosophy of leadership. Then, an overall "Calendar and Mode of Nomination of Executive Bishop" was adopted which largely follows the pattern used for the nomination of the present executive bishop.

Various elections followed. Ballots were distributed to take five names to be on the Nomination Process Oversight Committee; two names to serve on the council's membership committee, and four names to recommend for the Bishop's Consistory.

### **Same-Sex Marriage Myths**

The Rev. Christopher A. Barber introduced the first speaker after lunch, the Rev. Jeremy F. Simons, whose topic was: "Four Myths: How well do we understand the impact of same-sex marriage?"

Jeremy began by saying that many ideas related to this topic that are commonly believed are actually contradicted by teachings in the Writings. He therefore sees some of those beliefs as myths. The topic was not what the Writings say specifically about homosexuality, although passages about it were included in an appendix, but it addressed four of these myths.

**First**, although people commonly understand homosexuality to be the opposite of heterosexuality, the Writings describe the relevant opposites as conjugal love and licentious love, or chastity and unchastity. Homosexual behavior is just one of many forms of sexual expression that are opposed to conjugal love.

**Second**, most people seem to believe that sexual preference is genetically determined, but sexual preference is not described that way in the Writings.

Rather it is one of many hereditary tendencies that are common to all people.

**Third**, many believe that since sexual orientation is genetically determined that therefore sexual behaviors are not contagious and pose no threat to marriage. The Writings contradict this idea.

**Fourth**, it is commonly believed that alternative sexual lifestyles can be stable, happy and fulfilling, but the Writings are specific about the ways that these behaviors inhibit people's long-term happiness and peace.

Jeremy also included an appendix about women in the clergy and its relationship to this topic.

Due to the difficulty of doing justice to a sensitive subject by summarizing it further, those interested can find the paper simply by clicking on this link: <http://bit.ly/2wa0ECS> or typing it into your browser. Alternatively, go on [www.newchurchthought.org](http://www.newchurchthought.org). In the "popular posts" box, click the "homosexuality" post and scroll down to "2017 UPDATE."

The first of two formal responses was from the Rev. Michael D. Gladish. He restated the myths as positive truths:

1. Homosexuality does not spring from same-sex attraction, but from an interest in sex generally.
2. It is no more genetically determined than other evils.
3. Like all evils it is contagious and not limited to any portion of society. A remedy to contagion is having moral expectations.
4. Such relationships are never truly stable, happy and fulfilling, long term.

The Rev. Scott I. Frazier's response took into account his experience with 18-24-year-olds. He said the paper did a great job of highlighting what the Heavenly Doctrines say. The other half of the battle is that young people are debating whether to believe them, as they do not read for obedience to documents. They easily see homosexual issues as matters of mercy and privacy and don't see themselves as stakeholders in a family-centered society. Recasting the issue around sex-outside-of-marriage versus sex-in-marriage is good.

Nine responses from the floor touched on others' experience discussing these issues with young people; and the need to take a heavenly perspective to appreciate marriage and recognize disorder for what it is; the need to look for the good in those in disorder, and work from there.

### **Doctrine's Proximity to the Source**

Tuesday's final session was devoted to a topic resembling "derived doctrine" which has been discussed in the pages of *New Church Life* since the 1930s, although that term was never mentioned in the paper.

The Rev. Kurt Hy. Asplundh introduced the Rev. Christopher A. Barber and his paper, "Introducing a Taxonomy of Doctrinal Construction." After

defining his use of several terms (e.g. “Doctrine is anything that the church holds to be official teaching [or that a priest teaches] based on or informed by its sacred canon.”) Chris laid out a system of grading doctrinal construction, not for its quality, but for its distance from the source.

Two classifications that were above the grading system represented the source: the Ineffable Truth which is immovable and eternal, and the canon of Divine revelation which yet varies in our minds with different translations and our understanding of the historical context of the literal sense.

The five grades measure the distance from this source:

- Grade A, Orthodoxy (= right teaching) consists of clear and direct quotes.
- Grade B, Synchronodoxy (= simultaneous teaching) consists of orthodoxal points held in mind together. (On finding few examples in this category, he suggested this may not be a useful grade to keep in the taxonomy.)
- Grade C, Logodoxy (= logical teaching) consists of logical conclusions drawn from orthodoxal and academic points.
- Grade D, Eurekaodoxy (= discovery teaching) is Logodoxy taken to more speculative and projective but still plausible conclusions.
- Grade E, Sophodoxy (= wisdom teaching) consists of best guesses based on the general understanding of someone well-informed on doctrine of Grades A-C.

We were then given a 15-minute small group exercise in which we graded doctrinal topics and briefly shared our experience of working with the taxonomy. Chris then shared his experience of grading 10 papers dating from the present back to 1925. Grading them for style of argumentation or construction, he found the orthodoxal style used heavily, followed by the sophodoxal and logodoxal. When it came to the conclusions, they were split between logodoxal and eurekaodoxal 56% to 44%.

He observed that ministers love to quote the Word, but that does not necessarily lead to an orthodoxal conclusion. He suggested the taxonomy would be most useful in measuring how close our own work is to the source, and urged us to humbly and honestly convey to parishioners how close to the source our teaching is. Defending what is not clearly taught undermines our ability to defend what is.

The Rev. Brett D. Buick, in giving the formal response, reiterated the paper’s use: to help us be more honest in presenting our conclusions. Drawing on his work as a lawyer he asked what difference in weight is given to circumstantial evidence versus direct evidence in a court of law. In fact, they can be given equal weight, which he illustrated by our ability to know with certainty that

it was raining outside even when we did not experience the rain directly. He suggested that the synchronodoxical and logodoxical conclusions we draw may thus be of equal weight to orthodoxical conclusions, and we should not be scared of “circumstantial” evidence from the Word.

### **Options and a Book**

Among the closing announcements about the optional Scripture study and self-care sessions offered each morning before the regular sessions, the Rev. Kwadwo Adu Amoako gave us a brief description of his recently published book: *Jesus Christ Unveils Divinity by His Humanity*.

### **Wednesday, June 21**

Wednesday began with the Rev. Ekow E. Eshun leading worship. He spoke of the good shepherds of *Ezekiel 34* as being those pastors who teach truths and lead to the good of life with care for the flock. He urged us to put ourselves into the shoes of those suffering from the many kinds of change in the world, and show the kind of care the Lord does, who seeks out His flock.

Results from Tuesday’s balloting were reported. Bishop Keith noted the 63 men recommended for Consistory showed a broad respect for their colleagues. From this list he and the Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr. would select four with an eye to having a balance of perspectives on Consistory. The Rev. Grant H. Odhner then announced that he and the Rev. George G. Dziekpor had been re-elected to the membership committee, and that the Revs. Stephen D. Cole, Jeremy F. Simons, Coleman S. Glenn, Jean A. Atta and himself had been elected to serve as the Nomination Process Oversight Committee.

### **Love of Dominion**

The Rev. Dr. Andrew M. T. Dibb introduced the speaker for Wednesday’s first session: the Rev. Eric H. Carswell, whose paper was “Love of Dominion by Means of the Word.” After reviewing several passages in which the Writings give a scorching condemnation of the Roman Catholic Church’s deliberate abuse of their influence, Eric presented teachings on the love of dominion that might be closer to our experience.

*Apocalypse Explained* 1029, for example, speaks of “Babylon” at first as-it-were exercising zeal for the Word and salvation but gradually making these the means and dominion the end, as they “arranged to have sanctity and integrity prevail in all,” thinking this would be acceptable to the Lord. He raised the important function of the priesthood: maintaining order in the things relating to heaven, as taught in *The New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine* 312.

He pointed out that the order that is to be maintained is not primarily that

of external behavior – so important in the Israelitish church – but the order needed for acting in freedom according to reason – things protected under the first law of Divine providence. So priests are charged with compelling no one's belief, and leaving in peace those who do not disturb the church. He cited Bishop Willard Pendleton as saying that one of his key jobs was protecting the freedom of the church.

Among his main points was that the laity of the church will feel engaged in and supportive of the church when they have ample opportunity to exercise their freedom and rationality in church matters. He gave examples of when doctrine clearly requires a priest to limit the possibility of laymen introducing disorder into the church, and examples of less clear doctrinal application where what would be gained by insisting on following the priest's understanding would be more than lost by suppressing the freedom of the laity to take initiative according to their best understanding. For discussion, he left us with three models of governance with varying types of lay involvement.

In his prepared response, the Rev. Lawson M. Smith acknowledged that the loves of dominion and the pride of one's own intelligence have destroyed all previous churches, but pointed out that hellish loves work by means of falsified truths. He emphasized the need to teach genuine truths, and not to substitute the commandments of men for what the Lord says. He recommended simplifying the roles and responsibilities of the clergy to reduce the opportunity for dominion.

Following a period of small group discussion, time remained for seven individual responses, several of which noted the need for good communication in our changing times, in which lay individuals expect more "say" in church matters but have less time to read and reflect on the Word.

### **Abhorring Evil**

The Rev. Derek P. Elphick introduced the second speaker of the morning, the Rev. Bradley D. Heinrichs, and his topic: "Abhorring Evil in a Tolerant World." Brad set the stage by citing contemporary studies which identified *tolerance* as the new "religion," while *caring* and *fairness* are the only moral values acknowledged by many. In spite of such trends, the Lord urges us to battle evil, look it in the face, see that it is infernal and horrible, and not only shun it but feel averse to it and at last abhor it. (See *Doctrine of Life* 95) He teaches us that evils are not without consequence, but contagious. (See *True Christian Religion* 120:2)

Brad said that while we are tending to those in disorder, trying not to offend them, simple people are getting lost, spiritually. They are easily misled by the appearance that falsity is truth and evil good, and think they are doing good when they are actually aiding evil. He raised the question of what the

Lord would do, and of how we can deliver the message of the Word in a way that it can be heard.

The message about homosexual conjunctions is that they are classed under “adultery,” and adultery is so opposed to marriage that it would destroy the last spark of its life. In the spiritual world, adultery literally stinks, but today many have lost their sense of smell and do not recoil at its stink. What we want for our sheep is for them to come into those advanced angelic states where they are conjoined with the Lord and heaven, which comes about when they are not only averse to adultery, but abhor and detest it in all its forms.

The tolerance that is so esteemed today is not the most caring thing we can do. Rather, we are taught that we help those in evil by exhortation, discipline and punishment and consequent amendment. (See *True Christian Religion* 407) He also sounded a note of caution against judging others spiritually and being alert to those who are swept up in evil through no fault of their own. He reiterated that his main concern is for the simple good people who are harmed when evil is tolerated and accepted.

Three men who teach high school or college students were chosen for the formal responses:

- The Rev. Barry C. Halterman confirmed that generally kids today don’t see things as “evil” but “just different,” and raised the question of how we can both foster their willingness to see good in everyone and also show that evil really is bad.
- The Rev. Brett D. Buick expanded on the importance of presenting people with choices and the value on showing the contrast between opposites.
- The Rev. Scott I. Frazier spoke of the growing maturity of thought in students over their college years, and of his effort to guide their initial aversion to making any kind of “judgement” against evils that seem harmless, to at least being willing to prefer what is good. Brad ended by encouraging us to trumpet the truth in a way that can be heard by the simple good who are caught valuing tolerance and seeing judgment as bad.

## Workshops

The first concurrent sessions after lunch were a workshop led by the Rev. Nathan F. Cole on two computer resources: the Kempton Project, and NewSearch; and another led by the Rev. Charles “Chuck” E. Blair titled: “Leading Churches in an Age of Accelerations.”

After presenting the challenges of the rapid changes we experience today as opportunities to leverage technology, shifting demographics in our

congregations, and shifting needs for the furtherance of our mission in this world, Chuck led a brainstorming session on restructuring churches in healthy ways, founded on trust between ministers and congregations.

Groups identified patterns and trends they have observed, projected where each is headed, and then suggested implications and possible solutions for dealing with those trends. The wide-ranging discussion touched on trends from social media use, to declining attendance by males; from the expansion of Sunday sports, to impatience with ritual.

The afternoon ended with two more optional sessions. The Rev. Nathan D. Gladish showed a 31-minute video of a presentation the Rev. Frank S. Rose had given at the western clergy meetings the previous year, and then led a discussion of the contents. The presentation was called, “Hope for the General Church.”

Frank told of his appreciation for the General Church and his desire to support its growth and prosperity. He presented charts of statistics showing a slowing rate of growth in North America, such that he projected it could take 100 years to double its current size there. He said we need to “repent of” (re-think):

1. Growing the church through doctrine (when all doctrine must have *life* as the end in view);
2. Relying on New Church education for growth (when the same money, deployed for ministers’ salaries, has a much better projection for growth);
3. Relying on communities for growth (when they actually create barriers to growth such as the “insider”/“outsider” distinction.)

He concluded with an overview of some of the commitments made by the Sunrise Chapel pastor and congregation when its average attendance rose from 18 to 120 in 21 years. He said the story is told in his two books: *Growth Pains and Pleasures* and *The Art of Effective Preaching*. Discussion followed in small groups.

### **Testimony from Life**

The other optional session was led by our guest minister from The Church of Truth in Louisville, Kentucky, Ronald D. Schnarr, M. Div., who presented his paper: “Testimony: Speaking from Life.” He led with *Apocalypse Explained* 392:4 which says: “‘Testimony’ signifies the Lord, and with man the confession of the Lord from the heart . . . because the Lord testifies respecting Himself with all who accept His testimony, and these are such as live a life of love to the Lord, and a life of charity towards the neighbor.”

He then asserted that a passage from the Word is just as much the Word whether it is copied onto a paper, memorized, or lived (even when the words

have been forgotten), it being a matter of will, love and wisdom that make it the Word.

When several in the audience pressed him for a clearer distinction between what is of man and what is of the Lord, he spoke of the need for testimony to be about the Lord and for it to teach His commandments, but it is done from the portion of the Holy Spirit which each person receives. He said testimony should show what the Lord has done for us and can do for others. It should not set us up as better than others but as better than who we were.

One in the audience cautioned that inviting people to give testimony can put them in harm's way because a sense of merit can change a person from winning in the battle against lust to losing. Another reminded us that the Lord often told those He healed to tell nobody. Back-and-forth discussion also touched on whether excluding testimony from a worship service is a matter of cultural preference or a guard against worshiping from one's one intelligence and what is not suitable because not from the Word.

Ron compared the use of testimony with the use of prudence: a prudence from self leads to hell, but used from the Lord, it is how the Divine providence leads. As used at The Church of Truth, testimony follows the teaching of the Word and shows, "This is how I lived this in my life."

### **Church Development in Young People**

Another paper offered to the council *in absentia* by one of our most senior ministers was "Where Are We with Our Young People" by the Rev. Robert S. Junge. In it, the author traced the story of Israel, as slaves in Egypt, and of Moses, prepared and raised up by the Lord to work the miracles and plagues by which Israel was delivered. He shared his reflections on how this story of the raising up of a nation under God might apply to the gradual process by which the church is established in each upcoming generation.

He saw parallels between Moses' slaying of the Egyptian to the way in which children are introduced to the Word standing up against what is wrong. Moses' life in Midian speaks to a state distinct from the world, in which a simple belief in the Word can prosper, unmolested. When Moses returns to Egypt to demand Israel's release, miracles are done by Aaron's rod which the Egyptian magicians mimic, but those done by Moses' rod lead them to acknowledge that "this is the finger of God."

So there is a gradual transition from the way the doctrine or teaching of the church (Aaron's rod) impresses the young mind, to the acknowledgment of the true Source of order and happiness that is in the Word.

## Suppers

Holy Supper was offered at Bryn Athyn Cathedral, particularly so that ministers could take the sacrament with their wives. In the evening, ministers and wives ate together at Cairnwood Estate, following a social hour. Bishop Keith offered appreciation for the support wives and families give to the ministers.

## Thursday, June 22

The Rev. Nathan D. Gladish opened worship with *Psalm* 141 and its multi-sensory depiction of prayer. With this psalm and several other readings he directed our attention to the uses of prayer for others, and how it introduces us into spiritual community with others.

## Grammar Serving Understanding

The Rev. Malcolm G. Smith introduced the Rev. Derrick A. M. Lumsden whose paper was titled: “The Grammar of the Divine Human: Understanding Coupled Adjectives in Swedenborg’s Latin.”

After noting that we are on holy ground when dealing with the subject of the Divine Human, Derrick turned to language. Latin often uses adjectives substantively, as we do in English when speaking of “the good” or “the handsome.” They can be paired in English “the handsome good” as they are often paired in Latin. *Divinum Humanum* is such a pairing of substantive adjectives. But because this pairing is distinguished from *Humanum Divinum*, should one of the terms be thought of as an adjective and the other as a substantive? If so, which one?

To answer the question, he examined another pair of substantive adjective pairs which, in English, are translated: “spiritual celestial” and “celestial spiritual” in the light of three passages that the Writings themselves use to define these terms. The conclusion he drew from the analysis was that even though Latin tends to place adjectives after nouns, in the case of paired substantives, the first seems to function as an adjective and the second as a noun (as English speakers expect in English).

Applying this to the original pair would mean that “Divine Human” is the Human that has a Divine quality and “Human Divine” is the Divine that has a Human quality. He wanted to bring this subject to the Council to see if this conclusion is a valid way of unpacking coupled adjectives, as it has implications for helping us understand the emphasis of the Lord’s substance, identity and power – that the Human was made Divine. Likewise, for those regenerated in His image, it is our humanity which is to be made spiritual and celestial in quality.

The Rev. Stephen D. Cole gave a formal response with a broadening look

at substantive adjectives in both English and Latin. He showed that we must infer meaning from context, not simply from grammar, for there is nothing in the grammar that will tell you the meaning from staring at the forms.

Among the responses from seven others were these points: because we should give pause where something could have been expressed more simply but wasn't, we should be cautious about Derrick's hypothesis; "Divine Human" and "Human Divine" are adjectival forms of "God-Man" and "Man-God" which God became; context is important to understanding, for the Writings themselves say of certain word-order conventions that they have "sometimes" been observed; ambiguity may lie more in the doctrinal concept than in the grammar. Derrick ended the session with the thought that grammar is part of the context, but that it breaks rules, as well.

### What Induces People to Leave?

After a break, the Rev. Sylvain A. Agnes introduced the Rev. David H. Lindrooth whose paper was called: "Closing the Back Door." David began by saying that his paper was change-oriented and was offering some approaches we might take toward change. Applying our wonderful ideals can be messy. We see some things not working out for the church and we are called to do things better. There is a power struggle between clergy and laity and we need to hear that people are unhappy.

He referred to a book by Josh Packard, PhD and Ashley Hope: *Church Refugees: Sociologists reveal why people are DONE with their church but not their faith*, and said that it resonated with things he has heard from people who no longer participate in the General Church.

He said that we don't need to abandon our doctrine, but make incremental changes in four areas identified in the book:

1. People are desperate for friendship and **community** in coming to church, but leave because they experience judgment.
2. People come to the church for **conversation** and dialogue for developing their own faith but feel that they are served a dogmatic faith that is not closely tied to what the Word says, judging by the complexity of the explanations.
3. The desire for **participation** is illustrated by the shoes piling up at the doors of these meetings, showing that women want influence in the church. People who want to participate can get tangled in bureaucracy and this discourages participation.
4. Only three of our congregational websites offer **service** opportunities beyond the congregation. Finding ways to serve *with* others avoids the pitfall of serving others in a condescending way. Benefactions of charity are useful for leading people into faith.

David then invited groups to discuss the issues in these four areas, and what to do about them. After the small groups, a brief general discussion affirmed several approaches of the paper, with a dissenting view suggesting that the discouraging growth in the West is exactly what the Writings predicted, and that the future of the New Church is rosier in Africa and Asia.

### **Caring Wisely**

After lunch, the Rev. Dr. Raymond J. Silverman introduced the Rev. John L. Odhner and his workshop, based on his paper: “Spiritual Care.” John expressed hope that in the workshop we would work for each other, meeting the variety of needs we may have.

He spoke of the hunger of the disciples when they fished all night but caught nothing. With slides and statistics, he showed that the members of the General Church are such a tiny proportion of the world population (one in a million) that they appear as nothing – like one pixel on a slide with a million pixels.

He said he was not at all concerned about this, for the Lord said the New Church would be among a few, and illustrated how powerful one-in-a-billion can be, by comparison with the life-saving effect of minute dosages of medication. The Lord can save by a few. But still the disciples were hungry to catch fish. The Lord told them to cast on the right side, which is to teach the good of charity, which would gather people in.

John then turned our attention to the duties to six kinds of the neighbor which represent the whole doctrine of charity and which were discussed in detail in his paper. They are described according to their needs: hungry, thirsty, strangers, naked, sick and bound in prison. (See *Matthew* 25:34-36; *New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine* 107.)

He spoke of the need to diagnose before treating patients, so that helpful medicines can be given. The internal of charity uses such discernment in conferring benefits. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 9209:2.) One way to know what others need spiritually is to ask about those needs, and one way to know what to do is to practice.

John then directed us to form groups and use worksheets he provided. First individuals were to use the side labeled, “What Do I Need?” and check the boxes beside phrases representing the needs of those who are spiritually hungry, thirsty, etc. which described themselves. Second, groups were to use the side labeled, “How Can We Help Each Other Right Now?” by reviewing the needs checked, selecting one area such as hunger or thirst, and then using the suggestions provided on the worksheet in the boxes labeled, “Help for Spiritual Hunger,” “Help for Spiritual Thirst,” etc.

After this exercise, 10 responses to the experience or paper were given.

Many commented on the usefulness of the process, and John shared some of his experience using this worksheet regularly in small groups, including married couples who found asking each other what they need transformed their relationship. He expressed the hope that the New Church would become known as having acts of love as more central than ritual and sermons, which took center stage in previous churches.

### **The Word for Half the World**

The final afternoon session had two concurrent sessions, but began with a plenary presentation in which the Rev. Brian D. Smith and Mr. Stephen L. David updated us on the progress of The New Christian Bible Study (NCBS) Project.

Brian told of his work with the Spanish side of the project and the way in which it has led to Spanish speakers downloading and publishing Spanish translations of the Writings in their local areas.

Steve said the big goal of the project is for everyone to be able to read the Word and the Writings side-by-side in their own language, and that this is now possible for half the world's population to do with at least one book of the Writings.

After presenting other exciting statistics (e.g. over 17 million pages published), and exciting features (e.g. you can take notes and make bookmarks on the site), he both urged us to use the website, spread the word about it, [[www.newchristianbiblestudy.org](http://www.newchristianbiblestudy.org)], “like” it on Facebook, and send in material such as sermons explaining the Word. The group then split into two, with some staying to discuss the NCBS project further, and others moving to another room for the following:

### **How Do the Writings Address Feelings?**

The second concurrent session was led by the Rev. Scott I. Frazier who presented his paper: “Emotions, Affections, and Delights: an Examination of the Heavenly Doctrines in Search of the Seat of Emotions.” He made clear that this was not a finished study but a “foray into the forest” to see how well the modern idea of “feelings” and “emotions” can be fit to the Writings’ treatment of “affections” and “loves.”

He described four ways in which he conducted this exploration and gave a detailed account of his methodology, results and conclusions. He was trying to discover how the Heavenly Doctrines describe what we feel. Are emotions a subset of affections or synonymous with the delights and undelights associated with affections? Are “feelings” emotions and “emotions” affections?

From his study to date, he concluded that emotions aren’t a category or “room” in the mind, the way the will is; we do not feel affections directly in the

way that we say we feel emotions; and “delights” as described in the Heavenly Doctrines are probably not analogous to the “emotions” in common parlance.

He said that the use of this ongoing study is to understand our feelings better. Judging by the active engagement of those participating in the interactive presentation and discussion, understanding our feelings in the light of the Heavenly Doctrines is a useful pursuit.

### **Relaxation**

Refreshments before dinner, as well as the clergy dinner, provided welcome time to discuss any of the ideas and issues raised at the meetings or arising from ministry back home or to exchange news about family and friends. During the entertainment section, light-hearted songs were offered by the Rev. Kenneth J. Alden (sung at his last annual meeting in Boynton Beach), the Rev. Grant H. Odhner, and the Rev. Elmo K. Acton (both sung in celebration of the latter’s graduation from theological school), and selected humorous or inspiring video clips were shown by the Rev. Charles “Chuck” E. Blair.

### **Friday, June 23**

#### **Moral Standards Support Spiritual Development**

After announcements, the Rev. Christopher A. Barber opened the first session with prayer and then introduced our final speaker, the Rev. Stephen D. Cole whose paper was titled: “Freedom and Morality: The Necessity of Moral Judgments in Society.”

He laid out the propositions his paper argued as these:

1. That, at this day, no one can be saved until a spiritual conscience has been formed.
2. That it cannot be formed unless a moral conscience has been formed first.
3. That the latter is formed on the basis of the love of reputation, honor and gain, and from the fear of the loss of them.
4. That a moral conscience, therefore, cannot be formed apart from a moral climate in which transgression of moral standards does, in fact, involve the loss of reputation, honor, or gain.

First, however, he argued two other propositions having to do with freedom. The gist of these was that genuine freedom is a free agency that we have by virtue of the faculty of freewill that gives us the ability to choose between good and evil. Such freedom is manifest in spiritual freedom and grows with regeneration. On the lower, rational (moral) and natural (civil) planes, freedom is limited or determined by what we love. As we are regenerated spiritual love flows down into the civil moral planes, exercising its choice to do

good for the sake of eternal life. So we talk of “putting someone in freedom” by teaching truths about the spiritual choices available.

Stephen then turned to how a spiritual conscience must be formed gradually, based first on adhering to civil laws, then behaving according to moral law, and at last acting from Divine law. (See *Divine Providence* 322)

He cited *Arcana Coelestia* 987 which shows how awful we would be if we were not hindered by the bonds of the law and those securing honor and wealth. We need outward restraints and the pressure of public opinion. It need not be severe, and can be as supportive as a 12-step group. But if a church is like a hospital for sinners, it won't work if the church tells them they are just fine: evils, like disease, will spread.

He concluded with the thought that the stands we take against evils affecting our church may have through the spiritual world an untold and transformative effect on moral climate and events of the world in which we live.

The Rev. Coleman S. Glenn gave the formal response, focusing on moral climate. He affirmed the rapid changes in opinion about moral issues as tracked by recent polls, but pointed out that the Writings also note deficient moral regard among Swedenborg's contemporary Christians.

He suggested that moral climate's departure from spiritual morality shows itself most clearly in things having to do with marriage. He drew attention to the fact that spiritual morality eventually departs from the natural morality on which it was founded, when higher principles direct it to be more discerning.

He concluded with thoughts on how we can work to make New Church culture primary, even as we are bound to live within an unfriendly culture. In part this is done by building on the positive aspects of the secular morality, in part by showing the goodness of true ideals, and by instilling a New Church morality in the home.

Among the few responses from the floor were these thoughts: that a goal of the Academy movement was to establish a supportive moral climate; that we both want children to care about their reputation and also warn them not to do as their peers may think they should; and that it depends on what you look at as to whether you see changes in moral suasion as negative or positive.

### **Reports of the Executive Bishop**

The second session was devoted to reports and other business. Bishop Keith began by updating his report as executive bishop with a few announcements, including the efforts of the Advancement Office to encourage participation in local General Church congregations, and the positive response to the invitation to search online for local churches to attend and webcast services to live stream.

Brian sought response to two additions to the clergy handbook that he was proposing with the support of Consistory. The first affirms the clear teaching of the Word that marriage is between one man and one woman, joins them together in body and soul, is to continue to the end of life in this world, and that only adultery breaks this joining. It also encourages the use of the rite of betrothal and the practice of counseling couples at least six times in preparation for betrothal or marriage, and makes it explicit that marrying or blessing a same-sex union is a significant disorder which will lead to dismissal. This addition to the handbook was approved unanimously by a voice vote.

The second addition was on subordination in the priesthood, to give a clearer picture of what is expected in our application of the teaching that there are to be governors (*praefecti*) in the church, among whom there is subordination. (See *New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine* 313.) As improvements in the wording were sought that would strengthen the idea that the Lord alone governs the church and that those of lower station should subordinate themselves to those in higher position, among other things, the proposed addition was tabled until those concerns could be addressed.

Brian then highlighted a few points from his report on the Academy of the New Church, as chancellor: the reasons for the higher-than-expected budget deficit in the high school; the college's hope to bring its deficit down further by higher enrollment; the proposed college student center is fully funded by contributions and should open in two years; and the break-even point for the college budget requires 480 students out of a capacity of 500, but the president, Mr. Brian G. Blair, believes we should plan beyond that.

In response to discussion, several other points were raised:

- How hard the schools work to make it possible for students to attend
- The difficulty of overcoming expense barriers for international students who are not eligible for U.S. government loans
- The efforts being made at the college to orient faculty to New Church culture, including donations which pay faculty to read the Writings over the summer
- The fact that the college faculty council reserves 80% of its vote for faculty with New Church background

### **Women's Participation Task Force**

The Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr. then introduced the Report of the General Church Women's Participation Task Force. He acknowledged that this is a sensitive subject for many in the church because many care strongly about it. The task force exists because rather than letting conflicting views fester, it is better to keep the conversation going with the hope of finding things most

people can agree on.

Pete introduced task force member Dr. Charlotte Gyllenhaal who helped analyze feedback from focus groups and write the report. She said that the task force arose from the General Church Strategic Plan as part of the lay participation initiative. Committee work began last September, wrestling with the doctrines and how they fit with lived experience.

Although some favored a women's ordination policy, it was clearly stated from the start that this process did not seek to address women's ordination; rather it was about improving things for women in the church and improving the life of the church. To hear from more women across a broad range of viewpoints, focus groups were set up and met in the spring. Although much of the content of these sessions was difficult to hear, Pete added that he found people to be affirmative to having this conversation.

Pete then presented the 14 findings of the task force with encouragement to reflect on them and ask ourselves if these are messages we want to be sending. Charlotte then presented 10 recommendations that the task force puts before the church for consideration. [These findings and recommendations, together with the full report are now available at <http://about.newchurch.org/about/reports>]

She said the strategic plan calls for a committee to be appointed to report on how these recommendations are implemented over the next year. She noted the report would soon be released and that some would undoubtedly feel the report goes too far, and others, not far enough. Pete added that he would be working on a process for getting clergy feedback on the report.

Discussion followed, touching on the mode of implementation and the extent to which specific recommendations were supported primarily by those looking for stepping stones to the ordination of women.

After Charlotte was thanked and departed, discussion returned to the report, with these points coming out: implementation of the recommendations should await a more meaningful opportunity for clergy response to the report; some women did not feel that the focus groups were a "safe space" to differ from those advocating for increasing women's roles in the church and to express satisfaction with their roles; there are questions about the doctrinal basis for some of the recommendations of the report; and that our beautiful teachings about the uses of wives and mothers are under-represented in the report. Regarding this last discussion point, it could be valuable for the clergy to ask why those teachings are not coming across in the ways intended for a significant portion of our church population.

### **How to Be Led by the Lord**

The Rev. Daniel W. Goodenough then gave the final worship service on being willing to follow the Lord's leading. We need His light and wisdom. Much is taught about His leading, but it is not just a doctrine but something leaders need to practice personally, work on and think about, so we will be not only reformed in the rational but in our natural as well.

Dan offered five suggestions:

1. Follow the directions, one of which is certainly to shun evils as sins.
2. Pray to the Lord Jesus Christ, asking for help in letting Him lead and asking for light to understand from His point of view.
3. Think about being led by the Lord, and what it means in the details, otherwise we will be led by other people and other concepts. Reading the Word and reflecting on it is part of the fourth law of Divine providence about being led by the Lord. It is also useful to see the world as His creation and to reflect on our place in it – in earthly nature – and as sheep in His pasture.
4. Focus on benefitting others in honest and faithful acts of good will in one's office and with whomever one has dealings; this is "charity itself."
5. Maintain a healthy, optimistic, affirmative, friendly, spiritual attitude.

It is also useful to ask others what it means to them to be led by the Lord for our own reflection. It is important to be led by Him because He created us. Dan closed with this verse: "For truly the Lord is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture." (*Psalms* 100:3)

### **Making Clergy-General Church Board-Academy Board Connections**

Members of the boards of both the General Church and Academy joined us for lunch, followed by two afternoon sessions in an exercise designed by Mr. Arthur Edwin "Ned" Uber III and the Rev. Grant H. Odhner.

Ned explained that the main purpose of these sessions was to make connections between members of the clergy and the two boards. People were to form groups of four with one board member per group, choose a leader, recorder and reporter and discuss a prepared question. When the whole group reassembled, reporters gave a brief summary from each group. Ned took notes on these reports on his computer which were projected for all to see and later distributed to the boards and clergy.

The first question involved opportunities and challenges for the church in the 2020s. The process repeated after a short break, but with entirely new groups which would discuss what the central offices of the General Church could do in response to one item from the previous discussion, chosen by each

group, and then (an item not noticed by all groups) the implications of this for the kind of leadership we need from the next bishop.

The reports touched on strengthening and extending many uses of the General Church, including education, outreach and focusing on essential doctrines for the sake of life, with several groups mentioning engaging and bringing along the next generation, attention to the global church, volunteer service, and a comprehensive approach to translation from training to publication, so the Writings are available in all languages.

The reports also touched on means of delivery, including marketing, social media, hardcopy publication of the Writings, and the clear articulation of vision, mission and the higher reality's relationship to our lives. Giving attention to the tone of our message was mentioned, as well, as a way to open dialogue and find common ground. Needed from the next bishop were things to facilitate the above, especially leadership in the study of the Word and setting a tone of dialogue.

The session ended with a few minutes of open microphone, during which thoughts were shared about a sense of rift between the clergy and the church and the resulting damage and whether this stemmed from differences in assumptions and frames of reference. Appreciation was expressed for how apparent it was from this gathering that we are truly an international church. And a question was raised as to whether people had expected this meeting to talk about the qualities of the next executive bishop, priorities among them, and the process to be used, and whether people wanted to direct this time to those topics.

When a show of hands indicated that a number of people had hoped for such discussion, they were invited to meet afterwards in another room. To close the session, Ned invited Bishop Keith to summarize the afternoon's discussion, but he felt that our tradition of the executive bishop not choosing his successor made it prudent for him to excuse himself from speaking to this part of the process.

About a dozen people met upstairs in the Dining Hall for half an hour. Concerns were voiced about the potential outcome of the nominating process and the church's response, in its present state, without more lay participation. Gratitude was expressed for the leadership of the current executive bishop and hopes for the next. Some felt that an appointed assistant-to-the bishop presents the church with an "heir apparent" and sought alternatives to avoid this circumstance in the future.

After a variety of views had been expressed, those gathered joined the clergy, board and spouses for a social hour in progress in the Dining Hall and on the patio.

# The Second European Assembly – 2017

*Ray and Brenda Waters*

**Theme: From Where We Are** – “No matter where you are on your spiritual journey, the Lord leads you from that place.”

It is five years since the last European Assembly, of recent times. So the organizing committee, chaired by the Rev. Howard Thompson, decided to make this a “really memorable event.” Everyone present agreed they succeeded! Their bold decision to cater for 100 people (we actually totalled 90-plus) necessitated moving to High Leigh Conference Centre, near London, with its good transportation links.

Another bold change was running the event from Friday afternoon until midday Monday (four days). This was intended to give plenty of leisure time for mingling, while still leaving scope for a full program of four plenary (main) sessions and a choice of eight workshops. All this was made possible by the participation of the Church’s Executive Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Brian W. Keith and the Rt. Rev Peter M. Buss Sr., plus eight ministers and a number of members of the laity. They all led us through various aspects of the Assembly’s theme focusing on: “*The means by which The Lord leads us.*”

Upon arrival we realised how much High Leigh had expanded since the British Assemblies of some years ago. It now has more than 150 bedrooms and can cater for 250 people. Therefore we weren’t the only group present. Was that a problem? Emphatically No! We had our own meeting facilities and dining area; and the members of other groups were universally courteous and friendly.

Early arrivals had the joy of encountering old friends and meeting new faces. This process was accelerated by nametags, distributed by Dale Morris, the organizing committee’s secretary. They acted as superb “conversation openers.”

We gathered first for supper, followed by our opening worship, fittingly

conducted by Europe's senior minister, the Rev. Göran Appelgren. He showed us: "How the historical prophecy of the Lord's coming (*Matthew 24*) also describes how He is coming within each of us."

"Getting to know you" continued when Howard as host minister ran the Welcome Plenary Session. He asked those from each continent to raise their hands in turn. The traditional banter between nations soon had us all laughing together. We had attendees from Africa, Asia, Europe and North America. And so to bed? Not quite. An evening bar was available and lot more meeting-and-catching-up went on.

On Saturday morning we soon fell into our daily routine of breakfast, worship and sessions divided by refreshments. Bishop Keith led morning worship, continuing our theme by talking about: "The secret of life being persistence in following the Lord."

It is difficult to convey the sphere of love and joy we experienced during this Assembly. However, having members of the laity take active reading and singing roles in the presentations helped to enhance this sphere. Also, the degree of informality encouraged everyone to participate with questions as well as telling their own story of "where they were and how they got there." There was no shortage of people who spoke up!

There were four main plenary sessions:

- **Plenary 1:** *The Lord's Glorification Series – A Case for Real Spiritual Growth* by the Rev. Göran Appelgren. This was illustrated as the Lord being a builder, with us doing our part. Like a chrysalis that would look a confused mess if cut open, but from which a beautiful butterfly emerges when we trust the Lord is in charge.
- **Plenary 2:** *Teaching the Ten Commandments to College Students* by the Rev. Dr. Ray and Star Silverman. They described the techniques used in their book, *Rise Above It*, demonstrating the various levels of meaning of The Ten Commandments and applying them to our lives. A considerable number of people also attended a continuation session the next afternoon.
- **Plenary 3:** *Finding Our Place in the Kingdom.* The Rev. Howard Thompson led us through a careful consideration of what the Lord's Kingdom is to each of us.
- **Plenary 4:** *The Lord's Leading and the Paths Through Which He Leads Us.* Bishop Peter Buss Sr. continued the theme of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, upon which he had based our Monday morning worship service, saying, as part of his conclusion: "Firstly, whatever state you are in, you are never alone. The Lord is always with you holding your hand. And secondly, the Lord leads you by touching you so that you freely walk with him as He holds your hand."

Lunch came before Saturday afternoon's seven workshops. So this is a fitting place to report that we munched our way through meals that were all well up to the high standard set previously by Purley Chase. And how the catering staff served so many people without long queues forming was a mystery.

We could choose from eight workshops scheduled and repeated so that five could be attended:

- **Workshop 1:** *Reflections on Recovery Compared with Regeneration* – the Rev. Michael and Gwenda Cowley
- **Workshop 2:** *NewChurch LIVE – Meeting People Where They Are* – the Rev. Chuck Blair
- **Workshop 3:** *The Leaves of the Tree to Heal the Nations; The Second Coming as a Spiritual Clinic for Soul, Mind, Body* – the Rev. Alain Nicolier
- **Workshop 4:** *Lessons Learned: Experience of Church Plants* – the Rev. David Lindrooth, assisted by the Revs. Chuck Blair and Ethan McCardell
- **Workshop 5:** *Just What is The Lord Up To?* – Bishop Brian Keith
- **Workshop 6:** *The New Church in China* – Michael Xie
- **Workshop 7:** *Shining the Light of the Heavenly Doctrines on Darwinism* – Per Bingen
- **Workshop 8:** *European Small Group Experience: Dutch Group experience* – Marian Van Genne and Frits Bot; and *Women's Online Study Group* – with the ladies of an online study group

**Children and Young People's Programs:** With 16 youngsters present dedicated programs were essential. Glynnis Williams organised the younger ones to make representations of the days of creation in various media. Katherine Dukes led the older ones through a life-coaching program called "*The Crazy Eight*" – a way to escape a continuing cycle of anger and sadness. Both ladies were supported by stalwart helpers, plus speakers on other subjects, and everyone's hard work was essential to the success of the Assembly.

**Socializing:** The four-day program gave the opportunity for a fun social evening and a more formal Assembly Banquet. This gave us the opportunity to dress smartly and enjoy waiter service along with a bottle of wine. Bishop Keith gave an encouraging speech explaining: "How the Lord accommodates to us to meet us 'where we are,' and offers us the opportunity to be led by Him to a higher state."

The following evening Kathy and Geoff Wyncoll organized an altogether

more robust social. It had everything. Children told jokes, poems were read, we played games, struggled with quizzes and marvelled at both the vocal and instrumental talents shown by participants of all ages.

Also, for those of us who didn't need to relax (nap!) Richard Morris led an interesting five-mile walk on Sunday afternoon – and it didn't rain! In fact we had sun, clouds and rain over the weekend, but nothing in too great abundance.

**Worship Services:** All our services included beautiful singing by a choir, which Elizabeth Kourkov arranged. In addition to those services already mentioned, the Rev. Ethan McCardell conducted two Evening Vespers. On Saturday he showed how the parable of *The Prodigal Son* leads to consideration of forgiveness. On Sunday he used the story of the cleansing of Naaman by the prophet Elisha to show it is small steps, done with innocence, that lead to the Lord – not mighty acts.

Nearly 100 people attended the Sunday Holy Supper Service, with Bishop Keith and two ministers on the chancel. The Rev. Göran Appelgren spoke about the parables of *The Widow and the Judge* and *The Pharisee and the Tax Collector*. He then called the children forward, to create a sphere of innocence, illustrating how we need such a sphere in our own spiritual development. “We allow ourselves to humbly make the right choice between ‘the Widow and the Judge’ and between ‘the Pharisee and the Tax Collector.’”

The final activity was Monday lunch, before which Bishop Peter Buss spoke and the Rev. Michael Cowley, on guitar, led the singing of Heather Childs' arrangement of *The Lord's Prayer*.

In closing we must thank the many people, particularly the committee, who made this a wonderful and inspiring European Assembly. It completely succeeded in doing what it set out to do.

For us there were two personal stand-out moments. Firstly, the number of people who said: “This means so much to me because I have recently found the New Church (and am part of a small group).” Surely we owe it to them, in particular, to ensure that European Assemblies continue at regular intervals. And finally, Bishop Buss' beautiful description of a conjugal couple being led by The Lord, through winding paths, to their eternal home in heaven.

# A Counterattack on Darwinism

*Per Bingen*

(This is one of the presentations given at the European Assembly in Great Britain, August 4-7)

I take it for granted that you are all familiar with the great Danish storyteller Hans Christian Andersen's fairytale, *The Emperor's New Clothes*.

You know the story of the vainglorious emperor, who in his hunt for beautiful clothing was tricked into believing that he was dressed in the most splendid clothing ever, woven of the most delicate fabric – when in reality he was quite naked.

When he showed himself to his subjects, in his imaginary clothing, everybody praised his new outfit. (You don't mess with the emperor!) All except one, a little boy who cried out: "But he is naked!" And then it spread throughout the crowd: "The emperor is naked!" And so they made him a laughing stock.

Now this wonderful story has been used by many different people to illustrate that there are many such emperors out there; they come in all forms and sizes. Pompous and full of wind, they stand forth with their claim of being something big and beautiful and important, when in reality they are standing there completely undressed – to be pitied rather than revered.

One such vainglorious, but naked, emperor – perhaps the greatest of them all – is the theme of this essay: Darwinism. Furthermore, that we, as New Church people, should have the role of the little boy who finally calls out and points to the undeniable fact: This emperor is stark naked!

And then the rest of the crowd, Christians of all doctrines, will reach this same conclusion – that Darwinism, clad in its imaginatively splendid clothing, in reality stands quite naked.

But let us start with its birth. When Charles Darwin published his work, *The Origin of Species*, in 1859, it came as a culmination of the years of

enlightenment that preceded, and in which Swedenborg and his scientific works also played a considerable part. The Age of Enlightenment itself was, in my view, the final showdown between the strict literal understanding of the Word and the ever-increasing scientific view on reality.

The understanding of the Word in its literal sense – that the world was created in seven days; that the flood was a worldwide event reaching over the tops of the mountains etc. – held that the understanding was to be kept bound under faith, no questions asked, and consequently, no spiritual freedom. The literal sense of the Word, or rather the understanding of the literal sense as being absolute true, was in a battle it was doomed to lose with the ongoing Age of Enlightenment.

And today? Today it is as it is written in the Bible, in *Revelation 20*: And when the thousand years are fulfilled, Satan will be on the loose from his prison, he is going out, misleading the nations in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, assembling them to war, whose number is as the sand of the sea. And they are coming up over the breadth of the land, and they encircle the camp of the saints, and the beloved city.

For it is as if Gog and Magog (Darwinism) are on the loose. It is as if their number is as the sand of the sea. It is as if they are spreading out over the breadth of the land (Christianity). And it is as if they have encircled us, our camps, and our holy city!

Darwinism has filled our schools and our educational systems, our medical and our political systems; yes, it has come so far as to threaten our own belief system, our Holy City!

In Swedenborg's day Gog and Magog, misled by Satan released, meant the struggle with the belief system of the old church, based on faith alone, with the new church, based on charity and then faith, or rather, the fight between faith without life and faith from life!

Today the battle takes place between those who maintain that everything is coincidental and random, thus that God does not exist (Darwinism) and those who believe that there is a God, and that everything has a goal and purpose.

That there is such a fight going on, I need only to quote from Wikipedia:

The essence of the origin of species (their bible) is that human existence or existence in general, has neither goal nor meaning, but is a result of a combination

Darwinism has filled our schools and our educational systems, our medical and our political systems; yes, it has come so far as to threaten our own belief system, our Holy City!

Today the battle takes place between those who maintain that everything is coincidental and random, thus that God does not exist (Darwinism) and those who believe that there is a God, and that everything has a goal and purpose.

of chance and laws of nature; and that the development of nature towards humanity as the crown of creation, is nothing but human wishful thinking. Man is just a random species that coincidentally and temporarily is the earth's most intelligent. The order of things are not willed, and therefore neither good nor moral.

I repeat: "The order of things are not willed and are therefore neither good nor moral!"

This attack – and it is an attack, make no mistake about that – on those who believe that everything has a purpose and a meaning, thus that God exists, and that morals and ethics are real values, essential to all truly human life, seems today as a case won, at least throughout the

western hemisphere, for the Darwinists.

Darwinism does pose a threat to our beloved city, that's for sure!

So how can we, small and insignificant as we apparently are, even among our own brothers in Christianity, how can we make any difference and lead a counterattack against this terrible, godless, doctrine of Darwinism?

Well, keep in mind the little boy in the fairy tale, who first stated the fact of the matter, that this emperor is in fact naked! And that then it spread throughout the crowd, that is, throughout Christianity.

Keep also in mind, that young David, then almost unknown in Israel, he was the one who killed Goliath, the gigantic hero of the Philistines, with a stone from his sling, and then decapitated the fallen hero with his own sword.

With no further comparisons, and with all due respect: We are, as a church body, definitely young; and we are also almost completely unknown in Israel, that is, in the rest of Christianity. So these things should not stop us!

But how? And with what should we stop and put an end to this doctrine of randomness that attempts to poison our minds with its seemingly, oh so logical, explanation of how everything came to be?

Let's go back to young David. He used two weapons to put an end to his big opponent – a slingshot and Goliath's own sword. Now, a slingshot and stone means a common, everyday truth, one that is known to all. Goliath's sword is what he uses to fight his opponents. In our case, the sword of Darwinism is the scientific approach to reality – the one that says, if it cannot be measured or weighed or verified by mathematics, it simply does not exist! So, what is this

everyday truth which can knock out the giant Darwinism? And what is its sword, with which it may be finally decapitated?

Well, I think that one such truth, known to all, could be the simple fact that everything is built up of atoms, and that atoms are incredibly small. This was the sling-stone that hit Darwinism, in my own mind, and laid it flat. Because there was this conflict going on in my mind, between things religious, which in its essence is spiritual or otherworldly, and the Darwinistic, scientific approach to reality, which in its essence is natural, or worldly. To me, still being here in the natural world, with my otherworldly religion,

Darwinism looked like a giant. He was an everyday and everywhere presence. Wherever I turned I bumped into him. Because he belonged to my world!

In Zen Buddhism there comes a time in a man's life called the awakening, the Sato. My awakening, the first of many after that, came when Trym, my eldest grandson came to me in search of assistance with his homework in physics. He was then about 12. My awakening was the result of the following reading in his physics book: "Atoms are incredibly small; if the core of a helium atom was the size of a dime, its electron would rotate around this core at a distance of 400 meters. If the core is compared to the size of the sun, the electron would orbit at a distance that equalizes the distance between the sun and the planet Pluto."

This moment of Sato, this sudden glimpse of insight, was the sling-stone that laid the giant Darwinism flat in my mind. For think of the consequences of this insight. NASA's space-probe, for instance, New Horizon, was launched from earth January 19, 2006. It travels with a speed of 50,000 kilometers per hour, until it passed by Pluto on July 14, 2015. That is 9.5 years at a speed of 50,000 kmh!

And still it is a scientific fact that it is comparatively the same distance between the sun and planet Pluto as there is between the core of a helium atom and its electron. So yes, atoms are incredibly small; and still the distance from its core to its circumference is so immense!

What does this really mean? Well, according to Wikipedia again: A virus contains around 100 million atoms, and a bacteria around a 100 billion!

So how can we, small and insignificant as we apparently are, even among our own brothers in Christianity, how can we make any difference and lead a counterattack against this terrible, godless, doctrine of Darwinism?

This is the circle of life, and it is common to all manifestations of life as we know it. And this process can in no way be said to be coincidental or random. It always has a purpose!

What on earth is it that makes these 100 million atoms come together to organize themselves over these vast distances – keeping in mind the distance between the sun and planet Pluto – into the relative simple organism that is called a virus? Is it coincidental? Random? Could it be pure chance?

Give me a break, Darwinists!

And even if one person, with a maximum of good will, should consider the possibility that it is coincidental, then what about the probably hundreds of millions of

viruses that constitutes a single attack of flux in a human body? And what about all other organisms which in turn are made up of these tiny atoms? Indeed, what about everything else – seeing that all matter is composed of atoms?

And as if these well-known, simple, scientific facts should not be mind-boggling enough, here is another one: It happens all the time!

For when a human sperm cell unites with the egg cell, and the two united begin to split and grow, from two to four, from four to eight, from eight to sixteen, and so on, up to the literally zillions of cells that constitutes the newborn baby nine months later – this truly amazing process is the result of atoms flowing in, and organizing themselves, first into molecules, then into amino acids, the building blocks of a living cell.

Remember, a bacterium, a single-celled organism, is made up of about a 100 billion atoms. They come together over these vast distances, organizing themselves into what we call a bacterium.

Man, on the other hand, is a multi-celled organism. Billions and billions of cells, each one of which is made up of a 100 billion atoms, give or take a million or two. This constitutes our very own bodies! And it happens all the time! Can all this organizing, this hallmark of life, in any way be called, random, coincidental, pure chance?

No way, my friends, absolutely not!

At this point I feel the need to state that this essay is not an attack on the theory of evolution, and on the scientific approach to what nature consists of, and how it works. On the contrary, evolution is an unavoidable process of life itself. Evolution – or better, growth – is a characteristic of life. It has a beginning – seeds fall to the ground. It has an in-between state – it grows up

to be a plant producing seeds. It has an ending state – seeds again falling to the ground; and so on, and on, and on.

This is the circle of life, and it is common to all manifestations of life as we know it. And this process can in no way be said to be coincidental or random. It always has a purpose! The purpose of the seed being to produce the plant in order to produce seed again.

So if there is nothing random or coincidental about how life manifests itself in its many forms in the singular, why should it be any different when we consider it in general – namely life as it has evolved on this earth from its origins?

Or rather: Why should the origin of species – my Darwinistic sword which I used against itself – be random and coincidental when everything else known about life's appearances are not?

There is, and cannot be, anything coincidental about 100 million atoms coming together to form a truly simple organism, as a virus. So why should the general development, this organizing, the origin of species on this planet, be any different? The millions, nay, billions of years the process of evolution has been in the making? Not at all!

According to the doctrine of our church, time and space are peculiar to the natural world. In the spiritual world, from which the natural world comes into existence – in the words of *Arcana Coelestia* 8211, whatever exists in the natural world derives its origins and causes from things which exist in the spiritual world.

In other words, time and space do not exist there. Instead of time and space there are states and changes of state. There are initial states, which evolve into in-between states, which again evolve into ending states. If we keep this spiritual idea in our minds, and bring it to the theory of evolution, you will see that it fits exactly. The origin of species on this planet has a state of beginning – the first living cell. It has an in-between state – the evolution of all the species. And it has an ending state, which of course is mankind; or better, much, much better, the ending state is our Lord Jesus Christ, the One True Purpose and Goal!

The evolution of the different species, all having their place and time, is probably fully comparable with the evolution and growth of the human embryo to the new-born baby nine months later.

In the union of the sperm cell and the egg cell there is a conatus, an effort: it must be! And its purpose is the new-born baby after nine months of continual development, or evolution,  
or growth!

There is, therefore, no reason to think that this very same principle is not valid when it comes to the origin of species on this earth. That with the first living

Listen to this beautiful teaching in *Arcana Coelestia* 5847: “For there is one only life, namely that of the Lord, which flows into all, but is variously received.”

cell in the earth (the womb), there was a conatus, an effort, a purpose, through intermediates, toward the coming forth of human kind.

But what is life? Is it just a chemical reaction in the cells, as most of the modern-day biologists advocate? Is life really only the result of matter on the move? Of course not! Life is a force flowing in, working in and on matter. It is a force just like gravity, no one has ever seen it, only the result of its activity on matter can be seen.

Listen to this beautiful teaching in *Arcana Coelestia* 5847: “For there is one only life, namely that of the Lord, which flows into all, but is variously received.”

Lastly, by the somewhat harsh term counterattack, I do not mean that we should go out in public debate against the Darwinists. No, let the blind lead the blind. But rather let us lay flat and deaden this giant in our own minds – our own, vastly exaggerated, respect for this harmful doctrine, this threat against our beloved city. Let us replace it with this plain truth: “Each and all things in the world have come forth from the divine, and they continue to come forth from the divine.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 5711)

In other words: subsistence is perpetual coming into being. Creation is an on-going process. It happens all the time!



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# *Earths In The Universe:* Teachings, Reflections and Speculations

*The Rev. Willard L. D. Heinrichs*

Permit me make a few general observations first. I think it is very significant that the teachings of this work appear three times in the Theological Writings given by the Lord through Emanuel Swedenborg.

First, they are presented in a scattered form, beginning early in the originally unpublished *Spiritual Diary/Experiences*.

Second, they were drawn out of that work and presented in in-between-chapter sections in the first published work of the Theological Writings, the *Arcana Coelestia*. (As such they are like those teachings about life after death, appearing between the chapters in *Arcana Coelestia*. Of these it is reported: "But as these matters would be scattered and disconnected if inserted among those contained in the text of the Word, it is permitted, of the Lord's Divine mercy, to append them in some order, at the beginning and end of each chapter; besides those which are introduced incidentally." (No. 71)

Finally, after the completion of the Last Judgment in the spiritual world in 1756-57, these teachings were drawn out of the

Three times the Lord chose to present this teaching! There must be something of real importance here if the Lord chose to use so much of his aging servant's time to three times write out and then twice publish the results.

From just a few of the relevant teachings it seems clear that the Lord has attached considerable importance to this work that, sadly, now gives some people associated with the New Church considerable trouble.

*Arcana Coelestia* by the Lord through Swedenborg and were presented in a separate published book on the beginning of the New Jerusalem in both worlds as a part of its doctrine. (See, for example, *Spiritual Diary/Spiritual Experiences* 5946)

In fact there is some reason to believe that this may have been the first work, after a small treatise on the *White Horse*, to have been drawn out of the *Arcana Coelestia* for this purpose. Three times the Lord chose to present this teaching! There must be something of real importance here if the Lord chose to use so much of his aging servant's time to three times write out and then twice

publish the results.

As further evidence of the significance of the teachings of this work, *Earths In The Universe*, notice what is twice recorded in memorable relations, first in *Conjugal Love* 532 and then in *True Christian Religion* 846. "As to my spirit I was once taken up into the angelic heaven and into one of its societies. Some of the wise men there then came to me and asked, 'What news from earth?' I told them: 'This is new: The Lord has revealed arcana which surpass in excellence the arcana hitherto revealed from the beginning of the Church.'

"To their question, 'What are these arcana?' I answered, 'They are these: [Seven paragraphs follow enumerating some of these arcana, concluding as follows:] Futhermore, revelation has been made concerning the inhabitants of the Planets and concerning the Earths in the Universe; besides many memorable and wonderful things from the spiritual world, whereby much that pertains to wisdom has been disclosed from heaven.'" (*Conjugal Love* 532)

As indicated above, from just a few of the relevant teachings, it seems clear that the Lord has attached considerable importance to this work that, sadly, now gives some people associated with the New Church considerable trouble.

What could be so important about this work? This has been a matter of some speculation in the New Church. I will not say much about it here except to draw attention to just one teaching that occurs near the beginning of that part of the work which has the heading: "The Earths In The Starry Heaven, a teaching that may provide some insight into this matter."

The context here is that Swedenborg, from the Lord, is commenting on the

difficulty that many people have in believing the spiritual things that have been revealed through him by the Lord out of heaven. “Nevertheless, let what has been said hitherto, and what is still further to be said concerning angels and spirits, be for the few who are in faith. And that the rest also may be led along to something of acknowledgment, it has been conceded to relate such things as delight and attract the person who is desirous of knowing; and now about the earths in the starry heaven.” (*Earths in the Universe* 124)

I include the above, in part, because that which may have “delighted and attracted” some people to the Heavenly Doctrine in the past now seems to serve as a stumbling block, at least to people in the western world. We might wonder: Did not Swedenborg anticipate the kind of reaction that *Earths In The Universe* often receives at this day, especially in the western world?

There is quite a strong indication in a number of passages that there was just such an anticipation. In some of the earliest passages in *Spiritual Experiences*, bearing on this subject, the Lord led Swedenborg to declare: “Even now, many do not even believe these things that have been seen and heard by me concerning those in another planet, but involve them in various appearances, calling them phantasies; and, if they dared, they would also call whatever they read in their holy Word phantasies. [As an example of this latter, see *Arcana Coelestia* 231 -233 regarding what has killed every church from most ancient times to the present.] Thus, they are unbelievers; wherefore what they will think about these things within themselves I do not know.” (*Spiritual Experiences* 572, from a series “Concerning the Inhabitants of Jupiter”)

“Spiritual ideas, concerning which see above [nos. 1487, 1498], can make it known that men of this earth will judge variously concerning these matters, namely that there are such planets which, however, can by no means be denied, and that [their inhabitants] are of such a nature, and especially, that it could be possible for men to converse with them; since men judge from the external sense and from each one’s phantasy and love. But this is of no consequence, for these things have been seen and heard as sensibly as in human society, therefore I care nothing for their judgments.

“I am persuaded that when they become spirits, and still more in the case of those who become angels, they will clearly see the truth, as perhaps also will some of the human race, if it is well pleasing to the Lord. . . . It is the fallacies of the senses which mislead the inhabitants of this [our] earth, who are of the corporeal sense [speaking of their function in the Grand Man/Human], and who extend their ideas scarcely beyond the senses of the body [and might we add: the sophisticated instruments that now serve our senses of the body?]. (*Spiritual Experiences* 1532 from a series “Concerning The Inhabitants of Saturn)

Many more teachings could be cited indicating that Swedenborg, not from

In general, when it comes to where people were from, the “open instruction from heaven” given to Swedenborg, in the accounts that were published, is rather unequivocal.

any angel or spirit, but from the Lord alone while he read the Word, was lead to present the teachings contained in the *Earths In The Universe*, regardless of what people of his age or any future age might judge concerning them.

Still some have suggested that while it is clear that Swedenborg was totally serious and believing about what was revealed in this book through him, perhaps he was somehow misled by spirits and/or angels, at least in some cases, as to the planets or moons with which spirits and inhabitants were to be associated.

It is thought that the information in Swedenborg’s own mind would be a limiting factor in this regard, not that angels, especially, would deliberately mislead him.

I find such a position impossible to sustain in the light of what is said in the opening passage in *Arcana Coelestia*, that introduces the whole inter-chapter series there “On The Inhabitants Of Other Earths.”

Speaking of the identity of the angels, spirits and inhabitants in the discussion to follow, Swedenborg notes that he was given “open instruction from heaven as to whence they were.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 6695) What does this mean? Were the angels responsible for the identification of the various earths? I think not, because of how the Lord elsewhere describes how revelations are given from heaven and indicates what is meant by such a frequently used phrase as occurs in this number.

“Whether it be said, that these revelations are out of heaven, or are from the Lord, it is the same; because the Divine of the Lord with the angels constitutes heaven, and nothing whatever from the angels’ proprium (selfhood, or what is their own).” (*Apocalypse Explained* 8; see also the explanation given in a passage such as *Apocalypse Revealed* 943)

From other teachings I believe it is apparent that if angels unintentionally were misleading Swedenborg as to the correct identity of some earth or moon, Swedenborg would have perceived a sensible check within himself not to believe them. There just does not seem to be even a whisper in any of the relevant teachings that Swedenborg was wrong as to what planet or moon that inhabitants were from. There are instances in which, at least for a while, Swedenborg was not certain where some people were from, but in these cases he is led to make this fact plain in the passage. We are not left to guess.

Stepping back for a moment, what if we were to grant the possibility that the angels were responsible for presenting the natural ideas about matters relating to the planets and moons discussed in *Earths In The Universe*, would this necessarily make them to be potentially misleading, and were they wholly dependent on Swedenborg's meager store of knowledge?

Note what the Lord permitted Swedenborg to record in *Arcana Coelestia* 10771, a passage in which angels were relating to Swedenborg some things about conditions on a small planet in another solar system than our own. "These things the angels related from a comparison made with things on our earth, which they saw in me, or in my memory. They drew these conclusions by means of angelic ideas, whereby the measures of spaces and times are at once known in the right proportion relatively to the spaces and times elsewhere. In such matters, angelic ideas, which are spiritual, immeasurably surpass human ideas, which are natural." While in this instance they made use of Swedenborg's knowledge as a part of their resources, they certainly do not appear to have been much limited by it!

In general, when it comes to where people were from, the "open instruction from heaven" given to Swedenborg, in the accounts that were published, is rather unequivocal.

In the little chapter in which our moon is under discussion there is this assertion: "That there are inhabitants in/on the Moon also is known to spirits and angels, for they often speak with them; and in like manner that there are inhabitants in the moons or satellites which revolve about the planet Jupiter and the planet Saturn. Those who have not spoken with them nevertheless have no doubt that there are men in them, for they too are earths; and where there is an earth, there is man; for man is the end for the sake of which every earth was created; and nothing has been made by the Supreme Creator without a purpose. That the end of creation is a human race, that there may be a heaven from it, can be seen by every one who thinks from reason. The angels also say that an earth cannot subsist apart from the human race, because the Divine provides all things

In view of the kind of teachings that I have noted, I feel pretty confident that when Swedenborg was led to assert that there are people living on this or that planet in our solar system, or in some other solar system, they are or were there at the time the teaching was given.

on an earth for the sake of man.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 9237; see also *Earths In The Universe* 112)

In view of the kind of teachings that I have noted, I feel pretty confident that when Swedenborg was led to assert that there are people living on this or that planet in our solar system, or in some other solar system, they are or were there at the time the teaching was given. I just can find no indications in the Heavenly Doctrine to believe otherwise.

But then how do we account for the data accumulated by scientists which, so far, do not appear to confirm what the Heavenly Doctrine asserts? What provisions has the Lord made of all things on these planets and satellites for the sake of their inhabitants that they can be there and yet we have not detected them? I would suggest that the Lord, in the Heavenly Doctrines, has not left us without some clues, a few of which may be the following.

In a series in *Spiritual Experiences*, Swedenborg is led to discuss the character of some spirits who apparently had lived on a satellite associated with Jupiter. These people were of such a “spiritual” orientation that they were denying that they had had natural bodies, intimating that perhaps they had always been spirits. Investigation was made and it was determined that they had indeed had natural bodies when they had lived on their earth.

Then this general, and I believe very significant, principle is given: “Corporeal forms are governed entirely by the state of the atmospheres, and many other things pertaining to the earths in which they dwell.” (*Spiritual Experiences* 1670)

This is a very broad principle which could apply to situations ranging in variety from conditions somewhat similar to what we have on our earth to conditions that are radically different from this planet.

Perhaps conditions on Venus are of the first kind. Although impossible perhaps for us maybe they are still similar enough for us to have some idea as to how people may exist there. I do not know if Swedenborg as a scientist knew of the great heat on the surface of Venus, but in the Heavenly Doctrine there is clear indication of this.

While many passages about the people on Venus might leave us with the impression that they live there much as we live here, note what is said in the following passage about surface conditions in at least some places there and the adaptation that people have made to them. “On account of the excessive heat where they dwell they do not consociate during the daytime, but at night; wherefore they live in darkness, yet they see.” (*Spiritual Experiences* 1450)

Conditions on Saturn may also be somewhat similar to our own, but still a long way outside of what we might tolerate. Apparently it is very cold on Saturn, at least for the people living there, and so it is indicated that the Lord has provided them with a thermal skin. “They have no other than natural

clothing, being naked, but covered with a thick tunic or skin, so that they do not suffer from the cold.” (*Spiritual Experiences* 1522-23)

In respect to Mercury, its nearness to the sun is a matter of concern and yet we are told that “they enjoy a middle temperature, neither too hot nor too cold.” We are not told specifically how this might be arranged but some general things are noted.

Swedenborg records: “It was granted me to tell them, that it is provided of the Lord in regard to them that they should not be exposed to too much heat by reason of their greater nearness to the sun, inasmuch as heat does not arise from the sun’s nearness, but from the altitude and density of the atmosphere, as appears from the cold on high mountains even in hot climates; also that heat is varied according to the direct or oblique incidence of the sun’s rays, as is plain from the seasons of winter and summer in every region.” (*Earths In The Universe* 45; *Arcana Coelestia* 7177)

Are there things about the atmospheres around Mercury that we do not know about, perhaps elements in the atmospheres that we do not know exist and so we can not test for them? Also, I seem to remember hearing about some scientific data indicating there is a significant wobble in Mercury’s axis. Could this be part of the provision of some habitable regions on Mercury?

In regard to satellites around Jupiter a comparison is made with our moon: “. . . which, like [our] moon, are surrounded by a different kind of atmosphere “ from that which envelopes the planet. (*Spiritual Experiences* 1670) And in regard to our moon we are specifically told of a relative lack of air around the surface. (*Arcana Coelestia* 9235; *Earths In The Universe* 111)

I have speculated that the inhabitants of our moon (and perhaps of some other planets and their satellites) may be relatively few and may live in great, hothouse type caverns below the surface of the planet.

When our people were on the moon years ago, the craft that was to bring them back to earth was busy photographing the surface as it went round and round. Here and there photographs showed spots on the surface of the moon that reflected the sunlight sort of like glass surfaces might do. Might they be naturally formed covers over some the subsurface caverns?

What might be the meaning of those long-continuing echoes that were recorded by instruments left on the moon when the landing craft was sent crashing back to surface after our people boarded the craft that returned them to earth? I do not know, but maybe?

As for Mars, another possibility may present itself. There is a teaching in *Spiritual Experiences* that might be read to suggest that the inhabitants of Mars might cease to exist on their planet due to their deteriorating spiritual condition and how their use in the Grand Man/Human would be taken up by people from some other planet. “Only it is insinuated, that if the inhabitants

In short, as so many teachings of our Lord indicate, in matters such as this the problem is not with the Word, but in the heredity, in the culture, in the sensual, materialistic character of many people of this planet.

of Mars did not remain in their state, which amongst us is called the state of integrity, that others would succeed from a new earth, who would be similar; for when one race perishes, another succeeds; for there can be nothing lacking, so the Lord provides.” (*Spiritual Experiences* 3250)

I do not see any clear indication elsewhere that the population had already perished, but then again, I may have missed some clues given by the Lord in other places in the Heavenly Doctrine.

There may be a whole other approach to understanding why it is that we may never be able to conclusively detect the presence of inhabitants or their fauna and flora on many other planets. We need to carefully study the doctrine of discrete and continuous degrees as it is presented in the Heavenly Doctrine, and most fully in that marvelous series in *Divine Love And Wisdom* 167 - 281.

We are assured that for anything natural or spiritual to exist it must consist of three distinct degrees that are related as end, cause and effect. In the spiritual world there are three heavens that are just so related, yet each has such a distinct existence that those in the lowest heaven ordinarily have no conscious awareness of angels in each of the higher heavens, and those in the middle heaven, ordinarily, have no conscious awareness of those in the highest heaven.

We also know from the doctrine that in the natural world there are three discrete/distinct degrees of existence. Are these, perhaps, also so distinct that we could have three levels/degrees/dimensions of existence in the natural world, with embodied people living in them, and again those in a discretely lower/grosser degree/level/dimension be ordinarily unaware of those (with all their distinctive fauna and flora) living in one of the higher ones?

Perhaps all we might see and detect with our instruments in respect to some other planets is that degree of existence that is on our own level, which serves them as a general base, container and support, but on which or in which they do not ordinarily consciously live. Perhaps, if we visited such inhabited planets, we and all our instruments could pass right through them without any awareness of their presence and existence.

Is there any basis in doctrine for the above (possibly wild) speculation? Of

this I am not sure. Still, for example, the doctrine of degrees as it is applied to the natural atmospheres in *Last Judgment (posthumous)* 312 might provide some basis. In this teaching it is evident that there are distinct degrees of substances that are productive, first, of gravitation, second, of magnetism (electromagnetism (?)) that is associated with the transmission of light), and, finally, of what might be termed air.

I don't believe we have yet detected the subtle substances that are productive of gravitation, only the resulting force. This may also be true in respect to electromagnetism. But I am getting more and more out my depth here!

I present the speculation involving the possible application of the doctrine of discrete degrees to this whole subject of why we are not finding people on other planets as yet, primarily, with the intent of suggesting that there may be in the Heavenly Doctrine many teachings that if they were known and understood could give us a more than adequate explanation for this situation.

In short, as so many teachings of our Lord indicate, in matters such as this the problem is not with the Word, but in the heredity, in the culture, in the sensual, materialistic character of many people of this planet.

So much more could be said on this subject, so many more teachings could be brought to bear on it, but I think that I have already said much more on it, indicating my orientation, than some may want to read. I am hoping that what I have written will be of use to the readers of *New Church Life*.



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

# The Mystery of The Prehistoric Predator

*Joseph S. David*

Lately I have been paging through my copies of the Writings looking for any marginal notes I may have made in the past, or trying to remember why I underlined or highlighted a particular word, line or paragraph. Sometimes I find a comment like, “that’s hard to swallow,” or maybe “Ouch” or “I don’t understand that.”

One of the teachings that drew such comments comes up several times in different books: that the Lord did not create evil animals but that they come from hell, and therefore could not have been around before men came into being to create hell. This would mean that all the prehistoric creatures that have any similarities to the creatures listed as being evil in the places where such lists are given, could not have existed. Also, this would directly seem to contradict the teachings that the Lord created everything.

This presents us with a contradiction with the science of Paleontology regarding prehistoric life all the way back to the very first appearance of creatures that were fossilized at the start of what is called the Cambrian age (about 540 million years ago). And even worse, a contradiction within the Writings themselves, because we are also taught that the Lord created everything that was or is.

I don’t believe that either one of these contradictions can truly be there. I am also convinced of the findings of paleontologists that, long before mankind came into existence, there existed animals that were predators and animals that were prey.

Swedenborg knew that animals represented human affections, and that the domesticated or tamed animals represented good and charitable affections, while fierce or predatory animals represented evil or selfish affections. He states in many places the good correspondences of flocks, and herds, and beasts of burden. But he also gives the teaching that the fierce animals were created from the hellish affections that men developed and which were prevalent in hell. (See references below)

I think there are several problems with this. One is that hell can't create anything from itself; it has no intrinsic life to put into something created. What it can create is only fantasy. And second, it means that no fierce or predatory animals could have existed before men were not only created, but had also eaten of the tree of knowledge of good and evil and had turned away from the Lord.

I am not a paleontologist of any kind. I don't have a degree in ancient history or biology or archeology or anything like that. I have a degree in engineering, and I spent my career in the design of machinery for mining coal and other bedded deposits.

The closest I have come to anything prehistoric was to see on the roof of a coal mine the fossilized imprint of a length of what had obviously been a bit of tree trunk, with a diamond pattern of branch scars on it. That was cool! Furthermore, I don't pretend to have a final answer to the problem I'm going to outline here, but I would like to open it and then hear what others have thought about it. I have been getting *New Church Life* for a long time, but no other doctrinal publications, and I've never seen anything there.

### Evil Animals

So, I'll start with those places in the Writings that cause me discomfort. Here are two quotes from the Writings in full, followed by five other references that say pretty much the same thing:

The first is from *True Christian Religion* 78: "... about hell, that no such things are seen there as are seen in heaven, but only their opposites . . . there are seen birds of night . . . wolves, panthers, tigers, rats, mice, venomous serpents . . . brambles and nettles . . . heaps of stone and bogs . . . All these are correspondences of the affections of the loves of those in hell. Which affections are the lusts of evil. Notwithstanding these things are not created there by God, nor were they

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created by Him in the natural world, where like things exist. For all things that God has created and does create were and are good; while such things on the earth sprang up along with hell, and hell originated in men . . .”

The second is from *Divine Love and Wisdom* 338 and 339: “By evil uses are meant all noxious things in the animal vegetable and mineral kingdoms. Specifically; poisonous snakes, scorpions, crocodiles, great snakes, horned owls . . . in a word creatures that destroy grasses, leaves, fruits, seed, food and drink, and are harmful to beast and man. In the vegetable kingdom there are all hurtful, virulent, and poisonous plants, and in the mineral kingdom all poisonous earths . . .

“All things that are evil uses are in hell and all things that are good uses are in heaven. Before it can be seen that all evil uses that take form on earth are not from the Lord but from hell, something must be said . . . nothing whatever takes form in the natural world that does not derive its cause and therefore its origin from the spiritual world, and that good is from the Lord and evil from the devil, that is, from hell. . . . In hell are to be seen all those things that are evil uses.” (Note here that it is not the thing itself but the use to which it is put that is good or evil.)

Others of like meaning are *Arcana Coelestia* 3218, *Apocalypse Explained* 1201, *Divine Love and Wisdom* 339, 340, and *True Christian Religion* 53. Given the number of passages available, this doesn't seem like a minor item.

Humankind can know about the Lord, and we can acknowledge and follow Him, or we can reject Him and so live out of the order that was created for us, but animals apart from humans can't do otherwise than what they are created to do from their inherent order and instinct.

### **Everything Created is from the Lord**

Counter to these quotes are some seven I found that seem to be in apparent opposition. They are very direct.

*Arcana Coelestia* 5272-2: “The meaning is that the Divine truth that goes forth from Divine good, that is, goes forth from the Lord, is the originator of all things that have been brought and are brought into being. Divine truth going forth from Divine good is the ultimate reality and the essential being within all creation; and this Divine truth is what makes and creates all things.”

And from *Divine Love and Wisdom* 198: “The Divine, which is substance in itself, that is, the one, only, and sole substance is the

substance from which is each and everything that has been created.” (See also *Divine Love and Wisdom* 44, 52, 59, 283 and 356.)

These two sets of quotations seem to totally disagree: there are evil animals from hell, yet all things that are created are from the Lord. Before I try to untangle this for myself I want to introduce two more sets of quotes.

### **All Animals Live in the Order of Their Lives**

Humankind can know about the Lord, and we can acknowledge and follow Him, or we can reject Him and so live out of the order that was created for us, but animals apart from humans can't do otherwise than what they are created to do from their inherent order and instinct.

So, in this third set, the first from *Arcana Coelestia* 637-2: “Dumb animals are quite different however, for theirs is an order under which they do live wholly according to the order that is theirs, whereas man lives altogether contrary to order.”

And a second, from *Arcana Coelestia* 987-2: “Wild animals are born into a certain natural order. Those that are . . . beasts of prey do inflict harm on other animals . . . yet their devouring of other creatures is so that they may satisfy their hunger. And once that is satisfied they harm none.”

So from creation, no animal in itself can be evil or good, no matter how fierce and bloody, and also no matter how cute and cuddly. Some we may fear, rationally or irrationally, and some we may love in a natural way, but only their correspondences can be said to be good or evil. Crocodiles will always act crocodilian and kittens kittenish. They can do no otherwise. (Further references are: *Arcana Coelestia* 1902, 5850 and 7750; *Apocalypse Explained* 1202, (cont.); *Divine Love and Wisdom* 283; *Divine Wisdom* Part III, No. 4 -3; *True Christian Religion* 84.)

### **Influx from Heaven is Twisted in Hell**

What comes from the Lord into heaven then flows on down and into hell, but just like rain falling onto a street or parking lot doesn't remain clean as it collects and runs on downhill, so the flow outward from the Lord gets dirtier as it flows down through hell. Here are some quotations:

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From *Arcana Coelestia* 3642: "But good and truth, as these existed with the angels, underwent with those in hell an amazing conversion into evil and falsity, a conversion that took place by degrees as the good and truth flowed downward where hell was acting as one by means of false persuasions and evil desires. . . . In this way they are made, so to speak, into a single entity and thereby kept in order according to which they are associated with one another."

And from *Divine Love and Wisdom* 348: "I have heard that goods and truths have been sent down through the heavens by the Lord, to the hells, and that these same, received by degrees to the lowest deep were there turned into evils and

falsities which are the opposite of the goods and truths sent down. . . . From all this it can be seen that even evil uses are from the spiritual sun, but that good uses are turned into evil uses in hell. It is evident that the Lord has not created and does not create any except good uses, but that hell produces evil uses." (See also *Arcana Coelestia* 9498, *Divine Love and Wisdom* 336, 338, and *True Christian Religion* 624.)

### Outline

Okay, here are four well-documented positions that I would like to see put into a common understanding because I am convinced that all four are from the Word and that fully understood they all agree. The Lord created many kinds of animals to live on the earth, long before men were created. All of them were good in the sense that they filled uses that were required in the overall pattern that the Lord foresaw as necessary to create a habitat for the mankind to come.

It seems to me apparent that when He created forms to hold life, that He came up with marvelous mechanisms for variability that could serve for the simplest of creatures many millions of years ago and that still serve the same purposes now, even if one of today's creatures has had spiritual life added to them on top of the natural life that had existed in the world for so long.

Once the bacteria and algae had done their work to bring about an atmosphere, then more complex creatures were created, and even from that first appearance of creeping things in the shallow seas of the Cambrian age,

in order to keep a balance within the life He had created here, there were creatures that can be called predators, and those called prey. This duality in creation has continued ever since

Predators are often thought of as scary and fearful beasts and I think that the scariness is part of the answer to the naming of certain beasts that are called evil in the Word. Some of the scariness is rational, we should be scared of leopards, crocodiles and poisonous snakes, and if we ever saw one (outside the zoo) we should be scared. With rats and mice the reaction might be more disgust than fear. And some people have an irrational fear of some animal that really couldn't hurt them.

Although animals live in the order they are given, and cannot be evil, they can correspond to affections in men that are evil. And though hell can't create any physical beings at all, they can create the appearance of monsters, and do, as they contemplate the corresponding harm they wish to do to their companions, or us down here, just as angels create appearances of gentle creatures or gardens that correspond to their loving affections.

### Science in the Mid-1700s

I want to insert here some idea of what scholarly people, including Swedenborg, might have accepted as fixed scientific truth in the years when he was writing and publishing; what to those people was up-to-date science. About the same time that Swedenborg started to turn his scientific mind to a new source of truth, other inquisitive minds were doing more open thinking about the natural world.

Earlier, before Swedenborg was born, the leading thinkers about natural philosophy were looking at the Bible as a source document to pin down the dates to determine the age of the world, and at that point they felt that they could use it just as they could use documentation from the ancient Greeks and Egyptians.

In 1654, a work was published by the Rev. James Ussher, who had been bishop of the Irish church. Himself a Calvinist, he was a very conciliatory man who tried hard to bring religious peace to Ireland. This scholarly work concerned the age of the earth. No one questioned that the stories of *Genesis* could lead to an answer, but there were different versions.

Ussher chose a Masoretic text as being the most accurate because the Masorites were so careful. His calculation was that creation started in October, 4004 B.C., and of course took seven days. Other scholars might quibble about days or months, but this date was generally accepted by the churches and by the learned.

We can find four places where this date is accepted and used by Swedenborg. Two of these are from a memorable relation used both in *Conjugal Love* 182 and *True Christian Religion* 693. There is a third in *Conjugal Love* 29, and the

fourth is in *Last Judgment (Posthumous)*, no. 90.

*Conjugal Love* 29 reads: “Who, using his reason, cannot conclude accordingly that people who have lived from the beginning of creation – a period reckoned at 6000 years?” (4004 BC + say 1760 AD = 5764, close enough.) To me this indicates that Swedenborg was not really interested in disputing the length of time that creation had been in being.

Earlier, when he wrote his *Principia*, he was deeply into the problem of just how the material for the universe was created, but apparently not concerned about the timing involved. Students of his scientific works are welcome to correct me about that, but once he had completed that work on the *Principia* and the following two volumes that completed the work he had started out to do, his next major project was about the anatomy of the human body. And after that, in 1744, he stopped all of his scientific work and devoted himself to the Lord’s work.

From this point on he would have been extremely busy, and would probably have considered that time spent on speculation about the age of the earth or animals of older times and changes in them, to be a waste of time. Also, and significant, although many people were aware of the presence of seashells imbedded in rock, no large and identifiable bones had come into public knowledge as yet. Swedenborg was aware of the seashells also and in 1719 when he was exploring around Mt. Kattekill he noticed such rocks and wrote a short booklet about them for the Queen and presented it to her on her birthday (which was the same day as his). But he, like all others that noticed these, attributed the cause to the flood noted in *Genesis*.

It was some 30 years after Swedenborg’s death that interest in ancient and extinct animals became widespread. And as well there doesn’t seem to be any indication in the theological works that any interest in the subject arose.

Some fossils were found in quarries in Europe, from time to time, but the quarry men didn’t care much about them, and they were generally seen as victims of the flood. The closest major change in scientific thinking was an interest in the age of the earth.

Comte Buffon, a renowned French naturalist, experimented with heated balls of earth and stones to measure the time required to cool them off, and from this tried to calculate the age of the earth, assuming it had been part of the sun and had broken off. But he didn’t publish his work until 1779. His estimate was 75,000 years rather than Ussher’s 6,000. So really there was no knowledge of prehistory at all; history started with *Genesis* as far as the science of that day was concerned.

### **God Creates Humans**

Just how The Lord created humans I don’t know, but I’m sure that at some

time in the far past He introduced a spiritual level of life, above the natural level, into perhaps a small community of near human animals that he had prepared – a level that had not existed before on this earth. I'm sure that these humans, that we call pre-adamites, have been discussed before in our church, but I am ignorant of what those discussions said. Nevertheless, I'm sure they would have known that there were predators that could be dangerous to them, and fear of those predators would have been present.

Also, in groups of humans such emotions as jealousy, envy, love of dominion and anger would sooner or later come into being and so hellish states. Also, then there would come hereditary evil, and as well natural instincts, and babies would be born with hereditary evil imbedded in them. Now there would be a hell that could twist good uses into evil ones.

I'm sure that some of those humans, living in hell after their "death," found that they could induce fear of predators into their still earth-bound companions even when the predators were not around.

### **My Conclusion**

As the enjoyment of causing fear grew in the hearts of the evil spirits that were slowly causing hell to grow, would this cause the correspondence of the actual predatory animals to change as the apparent characteristics now have an evil use of fear and domination? I don't know.

How does hell twist things to make the animals actually evil? I think this only happens in the minds of those they terrorize by their imitations, and probably also in their own minds when scared by another hellish spirit. When the evil spirits appear to other spirits in the world of spirits, or in hell itself, I think they can appear as a predator so frightening that their victims believe them to be the real thing.

They appear to have the teeth, claws, fangs, or sting of the prototype, even though the prototype never has the malice that the evil spirits have. So, the brutal power that is there, and is in order when men are absent, becomes a deadly malice that is the hellish disorder when portrayed in the imitations the evil spirits put on. The devils and satans become the leopards, crocodiles, scorpions or vipers, and as far as their wills are concerned, they are those animals created in their own minds, twisted by the cruel lusts they have.

Remember, only human beings have the spiritual levels that survive natural death. Animals don't, nor do plants. So, there are none of these natural forms living in the spiritual world. All the lands, waters, plants and animals are appearances, corresponding to the loves and reasonings of the inhabitants, whether good or evil.

There are no natural crocodiles or wolves living in hell, nor natural lambs or doves living in heaven. What we might see there are the creations of our own

loves or the loves of the communities that we are associating with, temporarily or forever. If we are in an association with a hellish group we may be frightened by a crocodile, or be disgusted by a swarm of rats, or have our minds darkened and the light of truth put out by a flock of owls and bats.

All these have truly been created in hell by the lusts of the companions we are with. And this can happen in the world of spirits, where we still have the choice of the companions we take up with. The good uses that the natural animals were created for, even if it's only cleaning up some type of garbage, are turned into bad uses by hellish spirits who want to frighten or dominate.

Here is an interesting bit from an article by Bishop George de Charms for the February 1983 issue of *New Church Life: Divine Providence and the Divine Permission of Evil*. "So also are the hells governed by the Lord through the instrumentality of evil spirits who from hatred and revenge bring punishment upon others to check their evil intent and keep it within bounds . . . The evil dwell in their own delights of punishing others, of dominating over them, of enslaving them, and thus of exalting themselves in their own eyes. Within strict limits they are permitted to enjoy such delights."

Predation is widespread in nature. It may be most obvious in films taken on the Serengeti Plain in Africa. But you can also see it in your own backyard. (A lot of it takes place down in the grass and you can't see it very well, but it's there.)

Small spiders patrol and eat small insects. Others spin webs that we see in the weeds close to the house walls. At certain times when the wasps are ready to lay eggs, they in turn hunt for the spiders to paralyze and drag off to feed their larva. And the robins! They are truly fierce predators, constantly hunting for bugs and worms to feed themselves or their greedy little nestlings. To us, a robin is a cheerful harbinger of spring, but to a worm, the robin is a tyrannosaurus. This is in order. The Lord created them this way.

It may be that I am the only one bothered by this subject, but possibly not. I would welcome thoughts and comments from other New Church people who have given thought to it.

**Joseph S. David** was born in Bryn Athyn in 1936 and attended the New Church schools there through one year of college, then transferred to pursue an engineering degree. In 1958 he married Pat de Maine and they moved to Franklin, Pennsylvania, where he worked for a company that made coal mining machinery. They raised five children and sent them all to the Academy. Joe notes that, "Pat left me for the spiritual world in 2010, but I still feel quite married to her." In 2012 he moved to Indianapolis, Indiana, "to get to know the youngest group of grandchildren, and that has worked well." Contact: *joe.david.36@gmail.com*

# Church News

*Compiled by Bruce Henderson*

## **WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION TASK FORCE**

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

As has been previously announced in *New Church Life* and elsewhere, a Women's Participation Task Force has been hard at work over the past year exploring ways in which the General Church might draw more effectively on the wisdom and energy that the Lord has given to women.

In June of 2017, this group completed a report of its findings and recommendations. This report was presented to the General Church Clergy and the General Church Board of Directors, and has since been released to the church at large. You can access it at [www.about.newchurch.org/about/reports](http://www.about.newchurch.org/about/reports).

## **GENERAL CHURCH BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

At the June 23-24 meetings of the General Church Board of Directors members met with the clergy and the Academy Board of Trustees to consider the uses of the Church and the Academy in the selection process for the next executive bishop. The board expressed a desire to give additional input to the clergy as part of the process. The clergy will consider if they can modify their timeline to accommodate this change.

**Bishop Brian Keith** reported that the Bryn Athyn Society has graciously issued an invitation to a General Assembly in 2020 – the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the New Church. We are engaging more with Bryn Athyn College and Academy Secondary Schools graduates about connecting with the General Church. Strategic planning is continuing, with much of the implementation now woven into departments.

**The Rev. Phil Schnarr** and **William Buick** were reelected to the board of New Church Challenge. Newly elected to the board were **Beth Kindred** and **Nina Kline**.

**Assistant Bishop Peter Buss Jr.** reported on an episcopal visit to West Africa, including Ghana, the Ivory Coast and Togo. He said changes have been made to the technology fund for clergy to provide for its continuance.

Bishop Buss and **Charlotte Gyllenhaal** delivered the report on the

Women's Participation Task Force. (See above.)

Executive Director **David Frazier** expects the fiscal year 2017 budget to have a slight surplus. A report was presented on rough data for the last 10 years on expenses of the General Church, employees, student enrollment and worship attendance around the world, and how resources are being used.

Charlotte Gyllenhaal shared her reflections as outgoing chair of the Education Committee. She thanked fellow board members for their service and the General Church Education staff for all they are doing to support our schools and congregations.

General Church Outreach discussed the causes of the discontinued Austin, Texas, church plant, the uses performed there, and the lessons learned.

The Office of Advancement is increasing communications with email contacts throughout the year and at church festival times, and phone calls are made regularly expressing appreciation for contributions. The number of donors increased from last year but total donations were down.

The Theological School Committee reported there will be four students this year. A letter has been sent to new theologs making them aware of the financial support they are receiving from the General Church.

Lacking a volunteer to serve as liaison with the Academy Board, the thought is to blend this in with the Communication Committee, perhaps with representation from the Academy administration.

## **BRYN ATHYN COLLEGE: A NEW YEAR**

*Angella Irwin*

*Marketing Communications Manager*

### **Enrollment Growth**

Enrollment at the College is growing robustly. While final numbers are unavailable at the time of publishing, compared to last year, freshman enrollment is on track for a 35% increase, and total enrollment is expected to increase by 20%. In addition to these encouraging statistics, the overall name recognition of Bryn Athyn College is expanding in the southeastern Pennsylvania and mid-Atlantic markets.

Due to increased communications efforts, athletic success, and expanded conference and camp activity on campus, there are more people getting to know Bryn Athyn College and its mission. **President Brian Blair** noted: "People not only recognize our name and that we are a faith-based school, but they also understand that we offer a specifically New Church environment."

### **Dual Enrollment Program**

For the first time, Bryn Athyn College and Academy of the New Church

Secondary Schools are partnering to register high school students in select college-level courses, for which they will earn college credit. President Blair at the College and **Jim Adams**, managing director at the Secondary Schools, started the ball rolling, and Girls School and Boys School Principals **Kira Schadegg** and **Jeremy Irwin** worked closely with **Dean Allen Bedford** to design the program.

Principal Jeremy Irwin said: “This program is one of the best examples of cross-campus coordination in recent history. Various members of the larger community have asked about this type of possibility for years, and it’s gratifying to see it come to fruition. This represents a tremendous opportunity for high school students to get the best of both worlds.”

President Blair echoed this sentiment: “This is where the true value of the Academy plays out – where strength is added to both the high school and the college.”

### **New Faculty and Programs**

As enrollment grows, the College is able to expand its curriculum. Three recent additions include a minor in communications, a Master of Education program with a focus on literacy, and a Bachelor of Fine Arts in the building arts.

The new communications classes are already showing high numbers of registrants, and one exciting benefit of the program is the opportunity to work with subject-related organizations like *Off The Left Eye*, a Swedenborgian YouTube channel exploring faith, spirituality and the afterlife through video, hosted by creator and producer **Curtis Childs**. The video production team, based on the College’s campus, offers a wealth of workplace experience for communications interns just steps away from their classroom.

The Master of Education is projected to launch in fall 2018, headed by **Kelly Ballard**, Ph.D. Ballard comes to Bryn Athyn College with more than 14 years of experience as a classroom teacher in the William Penn School District in the third to ninth grades. The master’s program builds on a strong undergraduate experience in the education major, which has recently been accredited to offer Pennsylvania state teaching certification in childhood and special education.

**Stephen Hartley** joins the faculty as assistant professor and head of the Building Arts Program. He will be supporting the growth from a two-year associate degree to a four-year Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in the Building Arts. Hartley comes to Bryn Athyn with experience as department head of historic preservation and restoration at Savannah Technical College and, most recently, as a project officer at the University of York.

### **Summer Camps**

A record number of visitors were at Bryn Athyn College this summer. With the international Swedenborg and the Arts conference in June, the soccer and

lacrosse camps held in July and August, and prospective student tours and events, there were close to 1,000 visitors on campus. Guests ranging from local youth athletes to internationally recognized academics have enjoyed the main buildings, residence halls and athletic facilities, while getting to know our faculty and staff.

The subsequent growth of Bryn Athyn College’s reputation paves the way for continued and expanded exposure to both nearby and remote communities.

**ACADEMY OF THE NEW CHURCH GIRLS AND BOYS SCHOOLS**

*James M. Adams, General Manager*

*Jeremy T. Irwin and Kira R. Schadegg, Principals*

Enrollment projections for the 2017-2018 school year:

<b>Girls School</b>		<b>Boys School</b>	
Seniors	33	Seniors	30
Juniors	22	Juniors	30
Sophomores	23	Sophomores	40
Freshmen	21	Freshmen	33
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>133</b>
Dorm	35	Dorm	28
Day	64	Day	105
International	10	International	8

**New programs:**

For more than a decade we have used a student information system built and designed specifically for ANC. In recent years it has become abundantly clear that we needed an updated, integrated system to better serve all our constituents. After significant research and review, primarily performed by our Instructional Technologist, **Hayley Gunther**, a generous donor made it possible for us to fund the switch to a new product.

During the last year, we have been working hard to transition to a new platform called Ascendence, developed and managed by a company called Senior Systems. This is the same platform used by many of our peer institutions, such as Germantown Friends, Haverford School, Hill School, Kiski School, La Salle College High School, Perkiomen, Westtown and Wyoming Seminary.

The new system will be more effectively integrated across various elements of our own institution and provide more reporting functions that become increasingly necessary in the field of educational administration. Also, we have opted to include an application – *My Backpack* – which will allow students and parents rapid and focused access to a host of resources, including grade reports and student scheduling.

We acknowledge there will be challenges as we adjust to the new system,

but we are grateful for the support and excited for the opportunities it provides for us and our constituents.

This year we will offer Honors Humanities as a Dual Enrollment course.

Honors Humanities is a dual enrollment course that allows students to simultaneously earn honors-level secondary school credit and college credit granted by Bryn Athyn College. In order to enroll in this course, students must have a minimum weighted GPA of 3.3 and apply to Bryn Athyn College as part of the enrollment process. This will be open to rising seniors.

This course is a year-long offering. The first portion is *Psychology 101: An Introduction to Basic Constructs of Psychology*, including scientific methodology, the brain, consciousness, memory, identity, learning, motivation, intelligence and the nature of mental illness. Relevant New Church doctrines are analyzed and compared to secular theories of psychology. This will be taught by **Kiri Rogers**.

The second portion is *Philosophy 102: A Survey of Some Major Philosophers and Theories in Metaphysics, Epistemology and the Philosophy of Religion*. This will be taught by **Marcy Latta**. There will be a two-week session at the end taught by **Neil Simonetti**. The final weeks of the course will be focused on creating a presentation that synthesizes concepts learned in each portion and integrates New Church doctrine.

Thanks to a generous donor we will be providing every student with his/her own Kindle. This will enable students to access their textbooks from the device through a program called *Kurtzweil*. This will significantly lighten the load of the backpacks on campus.

#### **New staff:**

The Boys School is sad that the **Rev. Elmo Acton** and **Carol Brannon** are not returning in the 2017-18 year. Elmo did a very nice job teaching all sections of sophomore boys religion while completing his M.Div. in Theological School. He has moved to Michigan to serve the Oak Arbor society. Carol had served for a number of years as the Boys School Administrative Secretary, which includes a tremendous number of responsibilities. She ably managed all tasks and was a critically important dose of femininity in a predominantly masculine environment. She cared deeply for the men and boys who are part of the Boys School and we are grateful for her years of service.

The Boys School is happy to welcome **David Hyam** as an assistant housemaster and sophomore health teacher. He will also continue to be an assistant soccer coach and science department laboratory manager.

**Jeremy Fehon** is transitioning from a part-time role (Geometry and Introductory Physical Science) to a full-time role, adding a section of Algebra 2 and Biology to his workload.

**Ben Cole** is also transitioning from a part-time role (Geometry) to full

time, adding Latin, Medieval History and Student Support to his workload.

**The Rev. Coleman Glenn** has taken on the role of teaching sophomore boys religion and will be serving both Bryn Athyn College and the General Church in various capacities.

**Keene Blair** is the new Boys School Administrative Secretary. She had been serving in this role in a temporary capacity for several months and we are thrilled that she has agreed to stay on in a full-time, long-term capacity. Keene has a great deal of insight, diligence and love for the mission and people of ANC.

Both schools are sad to see **Kim Adams** depart as Delta Mu advisor this year. She brought a gift for organization to this role and we are sure this will make it easier for her replacement, **Molly Cronlund**, to step in.

We are also losing a superior costume master with **Judy Merrell** stepping down. Judy has taught sewing and done a superior job both designing and organizing the costumes for the past several productions. It was a pleasure to work with her.

The Girls School is happy to welcome three new teachers: **Angella Irwin** will be teaching yoga; **Lori Odhner** will replace Judy Merrell teaching costuming and as costume master; and **Christina Orthwein** will be teaching photography.

The Girls School Faculty will be discussing the newly printed *Conjugal Love Faculty Handbook* produced by the Conjugal Love study that took place from 2010 until this spring. We will be determining ways that each teacher can integrate the concepts and ideas of the doctrine on conjugal love into her curriculum.

On September 27, thanks to a grant from the Cole Foundation, the Secondary Schools and Bryn Athyn Church School will host a speaker at MPAC – Julie Lythcott-Haims, the author of *How to Raise an Adult - Break Free of the Overparenting Trap and Prepare Your Kid for Success*.

Both the Boys School and Girls School faculty read and discussed this book last year. While it is primarily written for parents, we found plenty of fodder for discussion about how the faculty might be contributing to the phenomena of students who are not prepared for adulthood. The public will be invited to attend this event.

### CHARTER DAY 2017

This year's Charter Day celebration for the Academy of the New Church takes place October 19-23 in Bryn Athyn. Highlights will include the Cathedral address, the banquet, class reunions, sporting events and the annual scholarship golf event.

The Cathedral address will be given by the **Rev. Michael K. Cowley**, pastor of the Olivet Church in Toronto, Canada. We hope to have a copy of

that address in the November/December issue.

The banquet program will feature students of Bryn Athyn College discussing how service has helped to shape their experience at the College. They will talk about what service has taught them about themselves and others, and how the College's motto – *Think for yourselves. Live for others.* – has helped them develop their personal lives. They will also discuss what service will continue to look like in their future and in their professional lives after graduation.

For a printer-friendly full schedule of events and details please go to [www.anccs.org/charterday](http://www.anccs.org/charterday) or [www.brynathyn.edu/charterday](http://www.brynathyn.edu/charterday).

To register for events, including tickets to the banquet and Mix & Mingle please go to [www.charterday2017.eventbrite.com](http://www.charterday2017.eventbrite.com).

### **THETA ALPHA INTERNATIONAL**

#### Notice of Annual Meeting and Elections

Theta Alpha International's Annual Meeting is being held during our annual luncheon on Charter Day, Friday, October 20, 2017 in Heilman Hall, Bryn Athyn, PA. The meeting includes an election for the full slate of officers. Nominees for each position are:

President: Janet Krettek (Fuller)

Vice President: Carla Cooper Reuter

Secretary: Brita Synnestvedt Conroy

Treasurer: Melodie Haworth Greer

We would love to see you at the luncheon. For more information, contact us at [anccaughters@gmail.com](mailto:anccaughters@gmail.com). Also, watch for details about tickets in Charter Day announcements from the Academy.

### **UPDATE: THE NEW CHRISTIAN BIBLE STUDY PROJECT**

*Steve David*

The New Christian Bible Study Project is going strong. Our "Writings for Everyone" initiative took another jump forward, as a student team combined forces with staff and volunteers to import 51 more translations of books of the Writings – now in 17 languages. Potential reach: 3.7 billion people.

Our "Cover to Cover Commentary" project jumped, too. We gathered explanations of the internal sense by New Church scholars, organized them, and pulled them into our system, so we now have commentary for most of the Word.

Plus, site traffic is up to 115,000 visits per month! There's a long way to go before we hit the big leagues of Bible Study sites, but given the internal sense, the New Church ought to be able to do it.

(See a full report in the November/December issue of the Life.)

## RETREAT PREVIEW

Here is a summary of the three speakers' presentations for the Boynton Beach Retreat, January 29 - February 2, 2018.

**The Rt. Rev. Tom Kline** will give four lectures:

1. The Nature of Spiritual Substance (with real applications to life)
2. Being a Bishop (his travels throughout the world)
3. Church Leadership (all he learned about being a leader in a congregational setting)
4. **Surprise!**

**Chara Daum's** work has involved the very beginnings of the church embodied in the Writings, and the very latest efforts to disseminate those works to the world. She will talk about her work on *The New Century Edition of the Works of Emanuel Swedenborg*, her involvement with the *Spirit and Life Bible Study*, and being part of the *offTheLeftEye* team on the "Swedenborg and Life" show.

**The Rev. Barry Halterman's** presentation – *One God, Many Religions. Why?* – will examine the core teachings of the major world religions, seeing how the Lord adapts His teachings to meet the unique needs of people from various cultures. The series will look for the universal truths the Lord has spread across all major religions and how they fit with New Church teachings.

For the third year in a row the rate for the Retreat is the same: \$235 per person if you pay by October 15. Contact: [bbretreat@newchurchboyntonbeach.org](mailto:bbretreat@newchurchboyntonbeach.org).

## VINEYARD UPDATE

The New Church Vineyard website – [www.newchurchvineyard.org](http://www.newchurchvineyard.org) – has changed. General Church Education has redesigned the site, with many additional resources and a new user interface to help find what you want. The new version was scheduled to be launched in September.

## CORRECTION

In article in the July/August issue, *The Divine Inspiration of Emanuel Swedenborg*, reprinted from the January 1973 *New Church Life* by the late Rev. Geoffrey S. Childs, there was a small but significant error.

After a quote from *Divine Providence* 96:6, "Sometimes the Lord so fills an angel with His Divine that the angel does not know that he is not the Lord," are these sentences: "When so infilled, the 'angel speaks not from himself but from the Lord.' His words are not the Lord's."

That "not" does not belong. It should say: "His words are the Lord's." Our thanks to sharp-eyed reader Joseph David for catching this error.



Zazu (Felix Orthwein)



Young Simba (Lilia Odhner)



Larissa Hulon



Young Simba (Lilia Odhner) and  
Mufasa (Dante DeMaria)



Caeden Reuter and Chyler Henderson



Scar (Devyn Henderson-Costello) and Hyenas

EUROPEAN ASSEMBLY  
(Photos courtesy of Anne and David Glover, and Andrew Bruell)



Group shot



Cousins reunited (left to right): Geoffrey and Ruth Greenwald, Michael and Gwenda Cowley, David and Anne (Greenwald) Glover



Marian van Genne and Josephine Appelgren



Rapt attention to a presentation



Meal time for children



Lisa Buss and Michael Xie

EUROPEAN ASSEMBLY

(Photos courtesy of Anne and David Glover, and Andrew Bruell)



Left to right: Kerry Burniston, Debra Thompson, Sue Solly, Marian von Genne, Josephine Appelgren, Liz Keurkov, Glyn Williams



Carl Dukes and Debra Thompson



High Leigh Conference Centre



Meal time



Ministers and wives, left to right: David Lindrooth, Gören Appelgren, Chuck Blair, Josephine Appelgren, Ethan and Jessica McCardell, Alan Nicolier, Brian and Gretchen Keith, Michael and Gwenda Cowley, Ray and Star Silverman, Peter and Lisa Buss, Christopher Bown, Debra and Howard Thompson



Break time

(Note: Most of these photos are from 2016 but illustrate the overall spirit of the camp – every year.)



Balloon Tower Competition



Camp Field Day Competition with Blake and Paul Messman



From left to right, Elsa Moorhead, Brett Buick, Kirsten Cranch and Calvin Heinrichs with young campers



Play time



Young campers with Jonathan Glenn



Left to right, Jenn McQueen with Emma, Anna Martin, Ariel Martin, and Carla Buick with Anna



Camp Field Day Competition with John Cole

# Life Lines

## THE TEACHER IN ALL OF US

The annual Charter Day celebration in Bryn Athyn each October honors the birth of the Academy of the New Church with the granting of its official charter in 1877. It is a time to recognize where the Academy is today – between dream and destiny. And we honor New Church teachers whose mission is unique in the world.

The late, great southern novelist Pat Conroy once paid tribute to a high school English teacher who fanned the flame in this budding writer by making him first a reader. He gave Conroy a list of 100 books he should read in the summer before going to college. Conroy met the challenge and it changed his life.

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

Isn’t that what great teaching is all about? Isn’t that what being an eager student is all about? Isn’t that what real education is all about?

We all have favorite teachers – men and women who sparked an interest, inspired a passion, and left an indelible mark, perhaps without even realizing it. A lesson that lasts a lifetime may occur in a moment that has nothing to do with a lesson plan but has everything to do with life. And one thing many a graduate of the Academy knows: we leave as different people – better people – than when we first walked into Benade Hall.

When the great historian David McCullough spoke at Glencairn Museum in 2003, he said something important about education – that we cannot love something we do not know. And that what we love, we cannot help but teach. So, in a sense, we are all teachers – to our children, to our friends, even to strangers.

There are good and loving teachers all over the world. But there are no teachers who do what our teachers do in the Academy and throughout our New Church schools. They are as unique as our mission, as special as our vision, as vital as our cause.

Our primary mission, from the Academy Charter, is the education of our own children in the light of the Heavenly Doctrines. For our Church and Academy to grow, every generation must embrace and love the doctrines –

and teach their children to do the same.

This is critical. What Plato said centuries ago still resonates today: “The only two questions that matter in all of history are: Who is teaching the children? And what are they teaching them?”

In his *Outlines of History* almost 100 years ago, H. G. Wells said: “Human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe.” The race is ever more urgent.

We see the growth of the Church as the greatest cause in the history of the world. And what our teachers are doing – what we all should be doing as occasional “teachers” – is on the leading edge of this cause. The Church may be barely known in the world but this is among the most essential work anywhere.

Esther Yardumian, a much-loved teacher in the Academy Girls School for many years, said in a memorable “all-purpose valedictory” before her retirement: “We teach not so much to communicate the truth as to prepare the mind to accept truth for its own.”

This is the essence of what the Academy and New Church education are all about: leading young minds to truth and acknowledgment of the Lord. Teaching truth – not just facts, not just career preparation – is an alien concept in much of academia today. For our teachers, it is their use – their calling. For all of us, it is an inspiration.

In his seminal book, *Education For Use*, the late Bishop Willard D. Pendleton says use is “that doctrine which, when rightly understood, will give unity, meaning and purpose to the curriculum of New Church schools.”

It also gives unity, meaning and purpose for life. The Mission Statement for the Academy Secondary Schools says: “Our core purpose is to prepare students for a principled and useful life in this world and the next.”

That is what our teachers are doing, which is what makes them unique in the world. And that is what all of us can help to do ourselves – teaching what we know and love.

(BMH)

### **BETWEEN DREAM AND DESTINY**

Many years ago an old man with a dream created a new university. His vision was grand but his expectations naïve. He saw no need for rules in this college. He was sure that high-minded students would govern themselves – that good will and good judgment would prevail.

Well, you can imagine what happened. Students got drunk, made trouble, skipped classes, didn’t study. The dream quickly shattered. Desperate trustees called a special meeting and asked the founder to address the student body.

A frail and shaken old man talked wistfully about his hopes and dreams. Tears welled in his eyes and he was unable to go on.

The students were chastened but the noble experiment had failed – although it would take on new life. Not long after this the old man died – his dream still an inspiration but unfulfilled. Engraved on his tombstone were the simple words: “Thomas Jefferson – Author of the Declaration of Independence and Father of the University of Virginia.”

Thomas Jefferson, of course, had grand dreams but no idea that this fledgling college would become one of the great universities of the country. But it was not an impossible dream because he had a noble vision and inspired others to pursue it.

We are stewards of a dream even grander and more significant than Jefferson’s – a dream we celebrate each Charter Day in Bryn Athyn and nurture with our own hopes and ideals.

The men dreaming of an Academy of the New Church – a “great house” of New Church education – were William Henry Benade, Frank Ballou, Walter Childs and John Pitcairn. Like Jefferson, they could not foresee what would become of their dream – how that infant College and Divinity School in a basement on Cherry Street in Philadelphia would grow to what it is today, with a horizon extending beyond our sight.

That is what Charter Day is all about – celebrating the dream and pursuing the destiny.

(BMH)

## **BEYOND THE REFORMATION**

October is also an important month in overall church history – the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation. That profound challenge to the authority of the Catholic Church was launched on October 31, 1517, by Martin Luther with his famous “95 Theses.” And what became a transformative movement helped to bring profound religious, social and political change throughout Europe.

This also occurred – not coincidentally – with the invention of the Gutenberg printing press, which not only brought the Word to the people again but provided the means for the printing and distribution of religious books and pamphlets, which flooded Europe.

The challenge to such Catholic practices as indulgences – buying your way out of purgatory and virtually eliminating the need for repentance – was necessary. But for all the “reformation” and religious churning the movement brought about, it was fatally flawed by its insistence that salvation came from faith alone.

Still, we can see the Lord’s Providence at work here in helping to pave the way for the new revelation to come through the Writings of Emanuel

Swedenborg. Watch for an article in the November/December issue of *New Church Life* on this whole fascinating history and its implications for the New Church.

(BMH)

## ROOTS

My wife and I enjoyed a delightful tour of Scandinavia in July. It's a beautiful part of the world, with incredible scenery and happy, wholesome people. Norway is particularly spectacular. Everywhere you look is a postcard.

But it was Sweden that resonated – for two reasons.

First, Sweden is the homeland of my late mother, Eva (Sandstrom), and I hope she was smiling somewhere that we finally made the pilgrimage. This was a guided tour so there was no opportunity to visit Swedenborg's roots. But we did have a free afternoon and evening to enjoy a typical Swedish meal in the home of cousin Alf Bryntesson and his wife, Karin, plus Eva and Olle Björkström and Gustav Fornander.

We also visited the beautiful New Church in Stockholm, where these five are among the pillars. Their devotion to keeping this church going is inspiring.

The second reason Sweden resonated is because this is the homeland of Emanuel Swedenborg, the man chosen by the Lord to receive the new revelation that will eventually transform the world.

Swedenborg might be disappointed that the Church is so small and struggling in Sweden – as well as the rest of the world – although he would be heartened by his trust in the Lord's leading and vision for His Church. And that is surely what keeps the Bryntessons, the Björkströms, the Fornanders so dedicated, along with their pastor, the Rev. Göran Appelgren.

Swedenborg apparently is becoming better known and respected in his homeland – but he does not yet have the status of a “Tail Fin Hero.”

Norwegian Air honors the “heroes” of Scandinavia with large portraits on the tail fins of their planes. There are 71 of these heroes – representing architecture, art, freedom fighters, music and entertainment, literature, philosophy, pioneering, science and sports. Among them are: Roald Amundson, Hans Christian Anderson, Victor Borge, Roald Dahl, Greta Garbo, Edvard Grieg, Sonja Henie, Thor Heyerdahl, Henrik Ibsen, Soren Kierkegaard (the only philosopher), Jenny Lind and Carl von Linne. There is no Emanuel Swedenborg. Not yet.

(BMH)

## SCIENCE VERSUS SCIENTISM

I love science because I love nature, which is so beautiful and interesting,

mysterious and charged with transcendental meaning.

In addition to being mentally and spiritually stimulating and restorative, nature is also a treasure-house of practical uses, which are discovered, investigated and drawn out of it by means of science. Modern medical science, especially, is something I am very, very thankful for.

Science deals with things that are real and tangible, and it provides a method for gaining objective knowledge of nature's order, demonstrating and applying it. It also stirs the imagination and inspires a sense of wonder, especially at its theoretical edges; think of the human genome project, relativity, quantum theory, and artificial intelligence, for example. And evolution.

*Scientism*, however, is not science, but a mania fostered by materialism. This is an important distinction. Scientism is to science what materialism is to matter, and idolatry to religion.

Like any heresy, scientism takes something true and useful, and corrupts it by separating it from its context in the whole spectrum of human thought and blowing it out of proportion. In so doing, scientism turns science, which is based on knowledge and reason, on its head, turning it into an obsession and the stuff of magic. It seems paradoxical, but actually isn't, that in the spiritual world those who ascribe all things to nature incline toward magic. (*Heaven and Hell* 488.3)

(WEO)

### **THE NEW IDOLATRY**

The pagans of old worshiped nature; in our age, as belief in God wanes and the belief that nature is everything increases, the worship of science has blossomed. Other churches may be declining, but the Church of Science is growing.

Scientism is perhaps an even worse form of idolatry than that of the ancients. They were ignorant of the natural causes of things, so there was a degree of innocence in their idolatry. Furthermore, all things in nature *do* represent aspects of the Divine. The wiser of the ancients were not worshiping nature per se, but were responding to the reflections of the Divine they perceived in it.

Our modern worship of science and technology, though, is a step further removed from genuine worship than the ancient worship of nature was. Scientism is the worship of human intelligence, and is thus a form of self-worship.

Science as a tool, rather than as an idol, is a wonderful thing, a truly useful product of human reason. There is much to be learned from the scientific study of nature. But to worship nature, rather than the God who created it, and to make science into a religion, is simply the latest form of the oldest of all

delusions: the idea that we can be like God. Technological hubris, like every other form, can only end in disaster.

(WEO)

### ‘THE INSANITY OF OUR AGE’

The insanity of our age is materialism – the belief that only things that can be apprehended by the senses and understood naturally are real. When this mindset prevails, then “nothing is believed respecting the things of interior nature; still less concerning the things that are of eternal life. Hence comes the insanity of our age.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 1630) It is noted also that this insanity «is believed to be wisdom.» (*Ibid.* 5116.5)

Under the spell of such an outlook, people care only about earthly, bodily and worldly things, and “believe themselves to be like beasts.” (*Ibid.* 3646) They “do not believe they have a spirit within them which is to live after the death of the body, when yet this spirit is much more substantial and real than the material body.” (*Ibid.* 3726.4) Materialism, which many think is grounded in reality, actually results from ignorance of the deeper spiritual reality of which natural substance nature is merely the outer covering.

Materialist premises form the “core curriculum” of atheism. Starting in early childhood, such assumptions are insinuated into people’s minds, in classrooms and by means of the media. They are taught – implicitly if not explicitly – that there is no God, no spiritual world, no life after death, no Divine revelation, no transcendent spiritual order governing human life, and so on.

And we wonder why so many young people have rejected religion!

(WEO)

### TYPEWRITER LITERACY

Imagine a society of people living on a remote island completely cut off from the modern world. They have no written language and a Stone Age culture. One day in the 1950s they find a crate containing a typewriter that had washed ashore, flotsam from a ship that sank perhaps. They are very curious about this object and inspect it closely. Gradually a small community of typewriter experts develops and spends years taking the typewriter apart and learning how it works.

Eventually they can explain how pressing the keys makes the little metal arms jump up and hit the carriage, and how each time that happens the carriage moves a little to the left, until it has gone as far as it can and makes the bell ring; and various other details of how it works. There was even some typing paper in the crate and they have noticed how it fits into the machine,

and advances on the roller in small increments when they push the lever that moves the carriage back each time after the bell rings. They see the little black marks that pushing the keys makes on the paper, and have even given each one those little symbols a name.

So now they know a great deal about this mysterious mechanism. But because they have no alphabet or system of alphabetic script, they really don't know the first thing about the typewriter. They don't know what it *is* because they have no idea of its *purpose*. They could assign purposes to it – perhaps the clacking of the keys would suggest using it as a kind of percussion instrument in making music. But they would not know its real purpose.

The point is: Our understanding of the whole world would be similarly deficient, no matter how much knowledge of the mechanics of it we acquired, if we didn't know its purpose, which has been revealed to us in the Lord's Word. "The purpose of creation is a heaven from the human race." (*Divine Providence* 27, 323) Those who find that unbelievable are free to assign any other purpose to it they want, or conclude that it has no purpose – but it would be hard to top "heaven."

(WEO)

### BEYOND BLINDNESS

A book I read recently tells an inspiring true tale: *Crashing Through: The Extraordinary True Story of the Man Who Dared to See*, by Robert Kurson.

It's the story of Michael May, a middle-aged man who was blinded by a chemical explosion at age 3 and went on to have a very successful and satisfying life as a blind man. Then he was offered a long-shot chance to have his sight restored with a new procedure involving stem cells.

It seems like a no-brainer to get your eyesight back. But it was a risky operation with potentially serious side effects – from incomplete or brief recovery of sight to cancer.

Few blind people are candidates for the procedure and the success rate was not encouraging. Surprisingly, some who had their sight restored suffered from depression. One woman – once she could see again – even screamed at her doctor, "You have ruined my life!"

I read in another book years ago that with many people who have their sight restored their instinct in the face of crisis is to shut their eyes and deal with it as a blind person. That's their comfort zone.

So, we can't just assume that any blind person would say, "Sure, I'd love to have my sight back," and that the transition would be easy.

Well, May weighed the risks with his wife and went ahead. The operation was successful, although not without extremely painful setbacks. But he

persevered and sight was restored in one eye. The amazing thing though is that even though his sight in that eye was considered perfect, he still did not see clearly. He had trouble distinguishing faces, for instance, or between multiple items such as goods on a supermarket shelf.

What the doctors discovered is that even though his eye was restored the portion of his brain that controls sight had lost the training we acquire unconsciously as infants in defining and distinguishing what we see. An example given is that all sheep look alike to us but to a shepherd who has trained his brain with them, each has its own distinctive face. The only thing I could relate this to is hearing a totally foreign language that sounds like gibberish without knowing – without training the brain – where one word stops and another begins.

This is all an illustration of the marvel of the Lord's creation – how the eye and the brain function together, through intricate fibers and receptacles we still don't fully understand – and we just take for granted how seamlessly it all works.

Well, May is adapting to a newly sighted but still limited world, and it is a heroic, inspiring story. But I was left disappointed that throughout all the drama of some 300 pages there is never a mention of God or prayer. You would think anyone facing such a momentous risk-reward decision would instinctively pray. You would think he would gain some appreciation for the way God works in our lives – right down to the incredible intricacy of our bodies. But this spiritual aspect was missing from his story.

The happy note is that Mike May was blind and now he sees. The sadness is that he still is missing something. How much more could he see if he “cured” his spiritual blindness as well?

(BMH)

### **THE HEAVENS DECLARE**

What was it about the total solar eclipse traversing the continental United States on August 21 that mesmerized millions of people with awe and wonder?

Clearly something majestic and celestial was going on here – not just a random phenomenon of science. For the sun and the moon to align just so that the sun was blotted out for several minutes was a cosmic illustration that this was something far grander and more meaningful than a meteor shower or the Northern Lights. Like the first “earthrise” photo from the Apollo 8 mission in 1968 this gave us all a sense that we are part of something bigger and grander than our small place on earth.

What moved people to tears – and unrestrained whoops of joy? Even teenagers looked up from their screens and felt an unfamiliar awe that perhaps

brought a whole new light into their lives.

We take the sun and the moon for granted. They are just there, lighting the day and illuminating the night. But when the relatively tiny moon is positioned just perfectly to blot out the immense sun for a few moments, yes this is something awe inspiring.

Eclipses don't happen on other planets, even those with many moons. Our moon is just the right size and the right distance from earth. That's not an accident. In relative terms, the moon is a tiny BB compared to the gigantic beach ball of the sun – and they are almost 100 million miles apart. The position of the moon must be precise for an eclipse to occur – throughout all of its trajectory across the United States. And such eclipses can be exactly pinpointed. When the last total eclipse occurred in the U.S. in 1979 scientists knew the next would be August 21, 2017, and what its path would be. We already know that the next will occur on April 8, 2024, tracking from Texas to Maine. But another in 2045 – just 28 years away – will have a corridor from California to Florida, blotting out the sun for six minutes – the longest total eclipse in the world until 2114. Nothing random about all that.

To the millions of people who witnessed this year's eclipse – either a full or partial effect, or even on television – something moved in them also and left them with a sense that they were a part of something bigger than “our small place on earth.”

We all became one with the psalmist 3,000 years ago: “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands.” (*Psalms* 19:1)

(BMH)

### **DEVOLUTION, INVOLUTION, EVOLUTION**

Before a new form can *evolve* (“roll out of”) an existing form, the potential for the new form must first have *involved* or “rolled into” the existing form. For example: the reason an oak tree can evolve from an acorn is that the acorn came from an oak tree in the first place. It is from its source that the acorn has the potential for a new oak *involved* (or enfolded, or enveloped, or embedded, or implanted) in it.

But what gave the parent tree its potential to produce the acorn? It got it from the acorn it grew from, of course. But that answer just pushes the problem back a generation – the old “chicken or egg” conundrum. The deeper question is: where did the life force that initiated and perpetuates the whole oak-acorn-oak cycle come from in the first place?

It must have *devolved* or “rolled down from” some original, self-existing entity which did not evolve from anything prior to it but simply *is*. In a word, God, who is Being itself and Life Itself. It is from the Life emanating from God

that all created substances, spiritual and natural, in all their endlessly varied forms, devolved, were involved in the outmost substances of creation, and could then evolve.

Now apply this to human evolution. If, as is widely believed today, human beings evolved from animals, it is only because these prior forms (these “acorns” of human life) came from a God who is Human. This is where animals got their potential to evolve toward humanness. In fact, the whole earth and everything in nature, has within it a “conatus” – an urge, an inherent tendency -- to strive toward the human form.

Unlike the natural oak from which natural acorns come, the “Divine Oak” (or Tree of Life) from which we humans come is invisible – but then so is the soul that makes us human. For that matter, although an acorn and an oak are visible objects, the life force within them that makes the evolution of acorn to oak possible is not visible. It’s the same with us. Our physical body is visible and tangible, but without the invisible human soul within it, the body would be just another form of animal; not human.

Regardless of the stages of formation the human body may have gone through since life on earth began, it is not the *body* that makes us human. So, to say that humans evolved from animals (or to go back further, the same primordial stuff animals evolved from) is at best a vague, incomplete, and misleading statement. Better to say that both animals and humans evolve from God.

“Those who do not evolve the creation of the universe and all things thereof by continuous mediations from the First [Being], can but hold hypotheses, disjointed and divorced from their causes, which, when surveyed by a mind with an interior perception of things, do not appear like a house, but like heaps of rubbish.” (*Divine Love and Wisdom* 303)

(WEO)

## EVOLUTION OF THE AUTOMOBILE

In Michigan once we took children from the Oak Arbor Church School to visit a Ford Motor Co. assembly plant. At the beginning of the assembly line the steel frame of the car was assembled, then as we moved down the line the axles, springs, wheels, doors, engine, transmission, and the rest of the car’s components were added. The part that really amazed me was at the end of the line when a worker got in the car, turned the key and drove it off the line under its own power.

The whole process of assembly from piles of parts took an incredibly short time; a new car rolled off the line every few minutes. (And this was before all the robot assemblers there are now. Of course, the various components

– engine, transmission, doors, etc. – had to be built first before being put together on the assembly line, so that took additional time).

The automobile evolved from the assembly line, but only because the assembly line, *designed* for that purpose, had *already evolved* in the mind of Henry Ford, who then brought the idea down into a physical form. Behind the natural history of the automobile, there is a spiritual pre-history. It is the same regarding all things that evolve: a car evolves from a design produced by finite human intelligence; nature's myriad forms are created by the infinite wisdom of a Divinely Human designer.

(WEO)

### EVOLUTIONARIES

A couple of years ago I read a book called *Evolutionaries: Unlocking the Spiritual and Cultural Potential of Science's Greatest Idea* by Carter Phipps. It is an interesting, lively, enjoyable read.

The author recounts stories of his visits and conversations with well-known proponents of evolution (the "evolutionaries" of his title), which serves to put a human face on the science. The book covers a terrific amount of ground and presents many questions, problems and thoughtful dialogue about them in a very readable and interesting way.

The author could hardly be more enthusiastic about how great the theory of evolution is, but he doesn't shy away from acknowledging difficulties with it. He discusses eugenics, for instance, and its influence on Marx and Hitler. Such abuses, he says, "are no more intrinsic to evolutionary thinking than fanaticism is to religious thinking, or nihilism to scientific thinking." These are "failures of immaturity – the regrettable and often reprehensible growing pains of a culture coming to terms with an idea as explosive as evolution." (p. 15)

My impression that evolution is a **quasi-religion** is confirmed. "Evolution, in this respect, has a unique capacity to be a source of spiritual fulfillment, of authentic meaning and purpose, renewing our faith in the possibilities of the future. and inspiring us to reach for those higher potentials, individually and collectively." (p. 16)

Phipps also admits that "proponents of exciting new fields sometimes **overreach**, and evolutionary psychology . . . is no exception. . . . Suddenly it's in vogue to explain all of human behavior by appealing to Darwinian processes . . . as if religion, morality, altruism, love, evil, marriage, infidelity, music, poetry and so on can all be traced solely to the industrious activity of selfish genes."

This unbridled, extravagant applying of evolutionary theory "carries with it a dangerous **reductionism** that circumscribes rather than expands our insights into human life and culture." (p. 18)

Quasi-religious. Overreaching. Reductionist. These are the very things that make me cautious about the theory of evolution and irritated by glib assertions that evolution explains *everything*. I am grateful to Mr. Phipps, an ardent supporter of evolution, for acknowledging the legitimacy of these concerns.

(WEO)

### EVOLUTION VERSUS DARWINISM

I think it is useful to draw a distinction between “evolution” as a *scientific* theory, and Darwinism, which is an attitude and ideology (an “ism”) that looks to the science of evolution for its validation.

In so far as the actual science is concerned, I have no more problem with evolution than with the theory of relativity, quantum theory, germ theory, or any other scientific theory. The problem is that the line between the strictly *scientific* part of evolution, based on empirical evidence, and its many ramifications – by which it is applied to practically every issue under the sun – is very blurry. Where do the hard facts of evolution end and Darwinism begin? The two are so intermingled that it’s virtually impossible to separate them.

The claim is made that evolution has nothing to do with religion and is not incompatible with belief in God. But is that true? Darwin’s own faith was certainly undermined by his theory. He was careful to avoid broadcasting this for the sake of his wife, a devout Christian, but in private letters he spoke frankly about it.

The problematic feature of Darwinism is “natural selection” and its suggestion of atheism. The basic idea of “natural selection” seems reasonable, even obvious – but it should be understood that *nature* isn’t doing the selecting (the very word “select” implies conscious decision), but God operating in and through nature.

Richard Dawkins and many other contemporary champions of it have made it very clear that for them the theory is not at all compatible with belief in God. And who can deny that the way it is taught in secular schools and explained in popular books and television shows has had the effect of insinuating atheism into the minds of the public at large?

Perhaps part of the reason evolution tends to be presented in a way that strongly challenges religious faith is its proponents feel a need to push back against the “creationism” that claims to represent Christian faith. But creationism, based on a literal interpretation of Genesis, is also erroneous. To New Church people, neither of these alternatives – flawed science attacking flawed religion, or vice versa – is palatable.

(WEO)

**TRANSHUMANISM**

But forget Darwinism, a new, improved plan for divesting ourselves of our humanity is on the horizon.

While Darwinism reduces the status of humans to that of animals (ones whose brains have evolved further than those of other species, but essentially no different), transhumanism envisions downloading people's knowledge (and consciousness, although just what consciousness is remains a mystery) onto computers, thus create a new super race of human-machine hybrids.

So here we are, trapped between the devil and the deep blue sea!

(WEO)

**SPACED OUT IN HEAVEN**

The concept of no space and time in the spiritual world is challenging in this world, where everything is measured by time and distance. But we do get glimpses of what the other world must be like.

We read about angels moving from one place to another who "get there more quickly if they are eager and more slowly if they are not." Well, we've all been experienced that, like a young boy dragging himself to school – or romping to a playground.

"The path itself is lengthened or shortened depending on the desire, even though it is the same path. We can see from all this that distance and space itself depend wholly on the inner state of angels; and since this is the case, no notion of space can enter into their minds even though they have space just the way we do in our world." (*Heaven and Hell* 195)

Well, here's a question: how do you play golf in heaven? Every shot demands a certain club for a certain distance. Might a hole look like a 180-yard par three in my state, but a longer par four for a partner in a different state? Which club do I use? Hmmmm.

Well, I have a club in my bag called a "Heaven Wood." Maybe that's all I'll need.

(BMH)



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Matthew 6*



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