

# NEW CHURCH *Life*

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

**MAY/JUNE 2011**



## End of Life

What does a New Church doctor do when a desperate patient pleads, "Please, please, let me die"? Dr. Jim deMaine writes about the experience on page 135, and the Rev. Ethan McCardell offers the perspective of a New Church minister, page 138.



## **35TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY – 2011**

Everyone in the Church has received a packet of information about the 35<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, to be hosted in Bryn Athyn June 23 – 26 by the General Church and the Bryn Athyn Society.

All of that information – about the plenary sessions, 48 workshops, social activities and much more – also is available at [www.gcassembly.org](http://www.gcassembly.org). You may also register for the Assembly at that website.

Please join people throughout the Church – and throughout the world – for an Assembly with a new approach and a unifying theme: *“Helping people grow closer to the Lord God Jesus Christ in His Second Coming.”*

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# New Church Life

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## NOTES ON THIS ISSUE

In an appropriate sermon for New Church Day – *The New Church* – the Rev. Kurt Horigan Asplundh reminds us that the Lord has called all of us to be disciples in his New Church. But daunting as that may sound it does not mean that we must be expert evangelists – just good role models. “We need only to live a life of faith with integrity and courage.”

Advances in medical technology have complicated end-of-life issues – for doctors, patients and their families. Dr. Jim deMaine, a retired pulmonary/critical care doctor from Seattle, has extensive experience and provides a haunting entry from his blog, “*Please, please let me die.*” His pastor, the Rev. Ethan McCardell, adds the perspective of a New Church minister.

Imagine all the progress we have seen in the past 100 years – in science, medicine, technology, quality of life. Well, 100 years ago John Pitcairn was also marveling at the rate of progress in the world in a commencement address at the Academy of the New Church, which we are happy to reprint. But he wondered how much the human spirit was progressing – how much “real progress” was taking place – or if we were actually regressing as a civilization. The questions are all the more insistent and relevant amid our own breathtaking “progress.”

We’re all familiar with “The Great Commission” of the Gospels to go forth and “make disciples of all nations.” The Rev. Garry Walsh of Phoenix, Arizona, says that equally important is the second and directly related “Great Commission” to “be fruitful and multiply” – especially as it relates to producing spiritual offspring.

The Rev. Stephen Cole spins a beguiling parable about *The Golden Fruit of the Mountain*, which may sound familiar – because we’re all on the journey.

Continuing our series introducing some of the newer ministers of the Church, the Rev. Jay Barry of Bryn Athyn, tells how the seed was planted at age 12 and was nurtured through 40 years of a successful business career until he decided to enter Theological School. “I had always felt that I was participating in the spiritual life while engaged in business,” he says. “Being ordained is just a continuation of what began many years before.” Included is a recent sermon of his: *Change Your Thinking, Change Your Life.*

As part of a series of essays on doubt on the New Church Perspective website – [www.newchurchperspective.com](http://www.newchurchperspective.com) – Jennica Nobre shares her own journey. She tells how some of her peers have been unable to overcome their doubts – turning even to atheism – but how the process has led her to a strong and confident New Church faith.

# 19th of June Message

*The Rt. Rev. Thomas L. Kline*

*“The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl.  
And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.”*

(Revelation 21:21)

Each gate of the Holy City was a single pearl. The pearl pictures our relationship with the Lord. Why, of all precious gems, does the pearl have this special representation?

First, the pearl comes from a living creature. In the same way our love of the Lord is living, growing and dynamic.

Second, the beauty of the pearl is the result of healing. When a piece of shell or a grain of sand becomes lodged against the sensitive flesh of the oyster, that irritation is gradually coated with a smooth pearly substance. What was pain is replaced by something beautiful.

In the same way, we often grow closer to the Lord as He heals us in times of pain and need. His gentle arm lifts us up when we come into the hard struggles of life. As we reach out to Him, our love for Him becomes something beautiful to behold.

Shortly after we celebrate the 19<sup>th</sup> of June, we will be gathering for the General Church Assembly. The theme of our Assembly is “Helping people grow closer to the Lord Jesus Christ in His Second Coming.”

As we gather for these two celebrations, let us picture the Holy City New Jerusalem descending upon the earth. The Lord, through a new light from heaven, is bringing a new age of spiritual peace and freedom to the world. If we look closely at the Holy City, we will see the precious pearl at each gate – a beautiful picture of the Lord welcoming us to His heavenly kingdom.

*“Conjunction with a visible God...is like beholding a man in the air or on the sea spreading forth his hands and inviting to his arms.”*

(True Christian Religion 787).

# Editorials

## New Church Day

The three main festivals on the Christian liturgical calendar are Christmas, Easter and Pentecost. The New Church celebrates the first two, but the third, Pentecost, has been eclipsed in the New Church by a new holiday: New Church Day, or as we often refer to it, the Nineteenth of June.

Pentecost, 50 days after Easter, commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Lord's disciples after His resurrection. (*Acts 2:1-6*) It came at the same time as the second of the three great Jewish festivals, the "Feast of Weeks" harvest festival, celebrated on the 50th day after Passover. That feast later became associated with the giving of the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai 50 days after the Exodus from Egypt. Pentecost is sometimes described by Christians as "the birthday of the church," as is New Church Day in the New Church.

On June 19th we commemorate the culminating event of the new revelation, which took place in the spiritual world on that date in 1770. The day before the Lord called together His 12 disciples who had followed Him in the world, and the next day He sent them out through the whole spiritual world to proclaim the new Gospel that "the Lord God Jesus Christ reigns." (*True Christian Religion* 791)

But there is a larger sense in which we might think of New Church Day. Using "day" in the sense of "era," the whole time in which we live is the Day of the New Church. It is a day that is just beginning, and it is a day without end. Few on earth are aware of the new spiritual day which is dawning, and which promises to bring new light and warmth to human consciousness. Few have seen "the Bright and Morning Star" ushering in the New Day. But....

"Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it." (*Matthew 13:16-17*)

The Lord spoke those words to His disciples, to whom He had given glimpses of the secrets of heaven while He was on earth; but they apply even more fully to those today who have received the even greater secrets He has revealed for His New Church.

Just as the Lord's birth and resurrection are not just long-ago historical events but take place daily in the hearts and minds of those who are being regenerated by Him, so New Church Day is not just on June 19th but every day for those who welcome Him in His Second Coming.

"This is the day which the Lord has made. We will be rejoice and be glad in it!"

(WEO)

## The New Church Gift

The Lord's Second Coming — which we celebrate on June 19<sup>th</sup> as the birthday of the New Church — is a gift to the world. It helps us to know, love and be conjoined with a visible God. It shows us the reality of heaven and hell, and how we choose our spiritual home. It teaches us about the holiness of marriage, the reality of Providence and the way the Lord is always leading us to heaven. And it blesses us with the internal sense of the Word, so that we may know its true meaning and apply it with understanding in our lives.

Without this revealed internal sense, Christianity has struggled to understand the Bible — from the real meaning of the seven days of creation to the inscrutable images of the Book of Revelation. Among theologians, philosophers and ordinary individuals there is floundering and disagreement, with good and faithful people coming to whatever understanding they can, within the limits of human rationality. Some blindly accept what they cannot understand as "mysteries of faith." And some just reject it all — as atheists and agnostics.

Jesus told His disciples — and all of us: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He the Spirit of Truth is come, He will guide you into all truth." (John 16: 12,13)

Without the gift of that Spirit of Truth, people are left to doubt and questions — and even rejection. A recent letter writer to *The Philadelphia Inquirer* reacted with scorn to praise of the King James Version of the Bible as "a mighty collection of wisdom, holiness and comfort — a warning against extremism in religion and secular life." She wondered if the writer "has been so caught up in the language and translation that he's missed all the violence: the jealous God full of wrath and vengeance; the genocide; the denigration of women; the approbation of slavery; and the approval of incest and infanticide? Extremism to the max!"

She concluded: "Most of us are taught to revere the Bible, not read it. When I actually did, I became an atheist."

This is sad. But it is understandable that the Word can be so misunderstood without an enlightened guide to the internal sense.

People left to wander through human interpretations resort to all sorts of convolutions. Thomas Jefferson — revered as the author of America's Declaration of Independence and "the most self-consciously theological of all American presidents" — also was reviled as a "howling atheist" and "a confirmed infidel" for developing his own *Jefferson Bible*.

With a razor and a pot of paste he reduced the Bible to 86 pages, dividing the "true words of Jesus" from those put into His mouth by "the corruptions of schismatising followers." He claimed his Bible — to be displayed in November in the Smithsonian's Museum of American History in Washington — proved he was "a real Christian."

His Bible has no angels, no wise men, no resurrection. But at least he did have an overriding perception that religion is all about fearing God and loving the neighbor.

Many Christians believe in the divinity of the Word and its basic messages of repentance and salvation. But without the Spirit of Truth guiding, sometimes we see the blind leading the blind.

In a new runaway best-seller, *Love Wins*, Rob Bell, pastor of a 10,000-member church in Michigan, is promoting a whole new concept of what it means to be a Christian. He at least gets it right that "the heart of the Christian story is that God is love." But he interprets this to mean that everyone goes to heaven — no matter what — and that hell doesn't even exist.

This plays into the popular culture of nonjudgmentalism, virtually dismissing redemption, repentance and much of traditional Christian doctrine. It's understandable, but tragic, that people are seduced by the lure of a free pass to heaven, no matter the quality of their lives and choices, and rejecting the traditional Christian view — and clear teaching of the Writings — that we must be born again through repentance to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Many Christians, however, are upset with this "new Christianity" — born not of revelation but from one charismatic man's own reading of the literal sense. Critics see this for what it is — building a theological house upon the sand.

How fortunate we are in the New Church to have the gift of the internal sense of the Word — a house built upon the rock of revealed truth. And what gift do we bring to this "birthday" celebration? Simply to read the Threefold Word with which we have been blessed and to live it — with faith, with understanding, with courage and with integrity. And then to follow The Great Commission and share the gift throughout the world.

(BMH)

## Let's Pretend

The relationship between external and internal things is a major theme of the Writings. The internals — how we really feel and think — are the most important, of course; but the externals are important also because of the way they affect the internal. For instance, we are told that the use of external worship is to stimulate internal worship. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1618.2)

This leads us to consider what kind of internal states might be activated and stirred up by the *opposite* of external worship: by irreverence, profanation and mockery of holy things, and by gross entertainment. The answer is obvious.

External conditions, in the lives of individuals and more generally in the life of society as a whole, determine the kind of spirits that draw close and influence people. Good spirits recoil and flee when they encounter a natural atmosphere which is contrary to the sphere of heaven. (*Divine Love and Wisdom* 254)

Parents and teachers are well aware of how important it is to promote good external conduct among children. Polite and charitable language, order and neatness, fair play and preventing bullying contribute to a good atmosphere in the home or classroom. Cities, also, have learned that not tolerating relatively minor “quality of life” crimes (such as graffiti and vandalism) results in an atmosphere in which the number of more serious crimes declines. External conditions are important.

The Writings explain that various good uses are served by “conjugal simulations,” that is, by married partners acting as if there were an internal bond of affection between them even if there is not. (see *Conjugal Love* 278-288) This, of course, is quite contrary to the prevailing opinion in society today, although even now many people still recognize that “staying together for the sake of the children” is a legitimate reason for not divorcing. If for this or other important external reasons they choose to act as if they still truly loved each other, that simulation can serve to preserve a remnant of conjugal love and perhaps even a revival of it.

But wait a minute, isn't this phony and hypocritical? Not necessarily. There is a subtle but very important distinction here which is worth considering. One who acts well outwardly even though inwardly he doesn't feel like it is indeed a hypocrite if his intention is just to fool people into believing he's better than he is. But if he is “putting on a good face” from a sincere wish to be better than he is, or perhaps to “set a good example” and encourage others to act well (be brave or charitable, for instance), that is not hypocrisy. He is compelling himself from a good motive to speak and behave as he knows he should, and with the hope and intention of becoming inwardly more and more

as he appears outwardly.

We can apply this principle to the life of our Church. Controversies arise from time to time and tempers flare. I am not suggesting we must turn a blind eye to things we see as misguided and detrimental to the organization, but if we would all be careful to speak in a friendly way even when disagreeing, surely this would create an atmosphere welcoming to angelic spirits and the healing sphere of peace they bring from heaven.

(WEO)

## **Pastoral Moves and Retirements – 2011**

From the Bishop's Office

**Glenn Alden** – Retiring as Pastor of Tucson, Arizona

**Todd Beiswenger** – Hurstville, Australia, Pastor

*Assistant to the Pastor in Ivyland next year while awaiting a visa*

**Pearse Frazier** – Kempton, Pennsylvania, Assistant to the Pastor

**Nathan Gladish** – Tucson, Arizona, Pastor

**Dan Goodenough** – Retiring as Regional Pastor

**Stephen Muires** – Sweden, Assistant to the Pastor

**Calvin Odhner** – Toronto, Canada, Assistant to the Pastor

**John Odhner** – Moves to 50% with the Office of Outreach

**Ryan Sandstrom** – Washington, D.C., Assistant to the Pastor

**Howard Thompson** – Bryn Athyn, Assistant to the Pastor

**Coleman Glenn** – Dawson Creek, British Columbia, Canada, Pastor

*Coleman will also be serving congregations in Grande Prairie and Silver Valley in Alberta, and possibly visiting other places in the Canadian Northwest.*

# Letters to the Editors

## *Put No Faith in Councils*

To The Editors:

Bishop Tom Kline's point in the January/February 2011 issue that it is better for the clergy to leave questions of application in the Holy Supper to individual conscience than to impose unity in our celebration of that sacrament is a good one. The clergy are not united as to the application. I believe that there is not a perfect unity as to the doctrine either.

I did not attend the clergy meetings at which the question of Holy Supper elements was discussed, but I remember that several ministers – the Revs. Donald Rose, John Odhner and Glenn Alden, to mention a few – did not at all agree that the Writings teach that the proper elements are fermented wine and unleavened bread. Having studied the passages, I agree with them. It seems that the clergy in effect said: "The Writings do not actually state that these are the proper elements, but they infer it, so we will declare it to be the doctrine of the Church."

Consider this passage: "It is in general the same with the Church. When this is being re-established matters of doctrine concerning good and truth have first to be gathered into one since they are the base on which it is built. Matters of doctrine also have connections one with another and relate one to another. Consequently unless they are first gathered into one a defect would exist and things that are missing would have to be supplied from the person's rational. And how blind and deluded the rational is so far as spiritual and divine things are concerned when it relies on itself in the conclusions it reaches has been shown in various places already." (AC 3786:2)

I take it, then, that the clergy gathered together the doctrine, could not find any passage specifically prescribing the elements of the Holy Supper, and so they supplied it from their own rational. It may have seemed an innocent enough process, but in my mind, and that of others, it does violence to the Writings, and the result, I respectfully submit, is not "a clear doctrine of the Church."

It seems to me that the Lord's words apply here:

"But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." (Matthew 15:9 cf Mark 7:7)

I tremble at the thought of the clergy coming up with edicts about things like this, and suggest that they reconsider this question in *True Christianity*:

"How much trust should we put in councils?" (TC 176 cf. TC 489). Do the

clergy imagine that they are the only ones allowed to have opinions about such things? Lay people also read the Writings, and often fail to see the things that the clergy say are there.

Rev. Frank S Rose  
Tucson, Arizona

## *Welcome Changes*

To The Editors:

I would like to congratulate the editorial team and the General Church for your bold reinvention of *New Church Life*. The change was immediately apparent upon receiving the January-February edition, and upon reading the contents it is clear that the work has been thorough. Two aspects of this work particularly spring to mind.

First, the readability of the articles. As interesting and thorough as articles in the *Life* have always been, the trend today is toward brevity in all things: most particularly overall length but even down to paragraphs and sentences. You have balanced longer, more thought-provoking articles with shorter ones in a more conversational tone, too.

Second, one cannot help but notice a marked openness and honesty about the state of the Church in the contents of the publication. Your General Church survey was a breath of fresh air. Also, I note Bishop Kline's remarks about the elements used in the Holy Supper and support his conclusions. Where the Writings are not clear and explicit on any particular point, then surely there is room for freedom according to reason, and this is never a weakness but an attractive strength.

I would also commend Rev. Derek Elphick's brave comments (however sheepish) on the message of the New Church. We are told, "A church that begins with faith is controlled solely by the understanding, and the understanding by that which has been inherited, namely self-love and love of the world." (AC 4672) Yet the organized New Church began its existence as a statement of faith, and so it is no surprise that its short history thus far has been marred by division.

Of course, it's easy to look back and pass judgment, but we should not forget that those founding members were reacting to the situation in the only way they knew how: that is, in the prevailing spirit of their time. Nevertheless, it is a fact that the whole New Church will have to reckon with in time, not only the General Church. So, I walk alongside Rev. Elphick in taking some of

those first steps to realizing what the New Church truly can become.

I thank you for your work, and I look forward in eager anticipation to future editions.

Rev. David A. Moffat  
 Honorary Pastor  
 The New Church in Canberra, Inc.  
 Australia  
 david.moffat@newchurch.org.au

## *Connecting With The Church*

To The Editors:

I have recently received relatively close together the January/February and March/April 2011 editions of *New Church Life*. I enjoyed both the design changes (e.g. more illustrations/photos, more “white space” and the new typeface being used) and the attempts to respond to the contents of the survey, especially in making content contemporary and applied.

I wonder if this new start has made me especially sensitive to what feels like a theme running through these two issues. That theme comes over to me as “the forms of the church.” It comes out especially strongly in the articles by Rt. Rev. Tom Kline and Revs. Derek Elphick and Derrick Lumsden in the January/February edition. In the March/April edition the report by Rt. Rev. Tom Kline and the following item by Rev. Grant Odhner are also relevant, as well as the conclusion to Rev. Derek Elphick’s article. I’m also seeing the letter from Janet Briggs in this category.

I’m sure that this issue has “risen to the surface” for me at least partly because of the way that the religious landscape of the United Kingdom (from which I write) and indeed the whole of Western Europe is changing. I don’t know how much this features in discussions within the General Church, although I’m sure it affects General Church societies and groups in this country.

Within the General Conference, we are faced with the New Church being included in a decline in church-going (less than 10% of the population is now reckoned to attend church regularly, with the exact proportion diminishing as one descends through the age groups from 70 to the early 20s).

Over the last few years, I have done some research in this area and what is clear is that the number of people with connections with church continues to diminish; obviously, this means that the number of people who have little

or no experience of church is growing. The consequence of this for the New Church, which has tended to position itself very much in relation to the “old church” (see, for example, Vance Genzlinger’s articles in last year’s *New Church Life*) is considerable.

Most of what I have read in this area comes from the UK, but I have just started reading *Soul Tsunami* by Leonard Sweet. His viewpoint is essentially a cultural one, taking in postmodernism and technological changes in society. As it was written more than 10 years ago, things will no doubt have moved on, but it at least confirms for me that the challenges to the church, at least in its institutional form, extend to North America.

Although I appreciated many of the challenges in some of the articles I have mentioned above regarding a sense of being aware of “the needs of the listener,” as Derek Elphick put it, I wonder if they go far enough.

Leonard Sweet and others argue that in meeting people, we need to think about going beyond the boundaries of the forms of our institutions and indeed our beliefs, so that we can meet people where they are, not where we want them to be or indeed think they should be. Perhaps the emphasis on ensuring that whenever the doctrines are presented they are made relevant to everyday life (as mentioned in the results of the survey) goes some way toward this.

I have wondered, however, if Janet Briggs’ letter gives us some further clues as to how to do this. She talks about this in relation to possible male and female roles within the priesthood, but, although this may be relevant to that question (and I have heard similar discussions both inside and outside the New Church), I’d like to think about this in relation to the application of doctrine.

To do so, I’d like to refer to the article, *The Rule of 30*, by Rev. James P. Cooper (with an apology, especially to the writer, for being this specific, but I hope that it may provide a useful example). It starts with a pastoral situation, the spouse “left behind” following the death of the other partner, especially when this then leads to him or her outliving this partner by many years. The rest of the article doesn’t mention that situation specifically, but it is obviously implied.

Janet Briggs’ letter talks about a type of priesthood focused on “ministry” rather than “teaching and preaching” which “would help the individual become more aware of the unfolding *significant threads in his or her personal life experience*, and give assistance with *particularly difficult shifts*” (my italics added).

This seems to be the area that James Cooper is working toward, but his article doesn’t focus on the person’s experience as such, not least because he focuses on the doctrines (admittedly in helping people to see them in a less rigid fashion) rather than staying with the direct experience of the surviving

partner. (Derek Elphick also refers to something of this area of “difficult shifts.”)

What I cannot help wondering is how – especially if we are going to be able to connect and work with a growing number of people for whom most of the concepts, rituals and culture of Christianity are unfamiliar – we can engage with them other than by meeting them in their experience of life.

Many of our forms, including most of the formats we have for worship, may not be suitable for this. We need to evolve new and more interactive ways of being with people, including through new technologies perhaps. Derek Elphick talks about Rick Warren’s book, *The Purpose-Driven Life*, tapping into something that people are looking for and the key is perhaps in this emphasis on *life*. It may be worth mentioning that Rick Warren is reported as involving Dr. Mehmet Oz (and others) in a health program at Saddleback Church.

Most of the references I have come across express this in negative rather than positive terms, but there may be some acknowledgement in this of the need for both the practical and a greater depth. Could the General Church consider doing something of this nature in any way?

I hope that you do not mind my sharing these thoughts with you “from across the pond.” I am working on some of these ideas for presentations in the next few months and hope I’ll be able to produce some of them in written form, perhaps online, so anyone who wishes to explore this approach further might like to contact me via david.lomax@solce.org.uk.

David Lomax, Principal  
Swedenborg Open Learning Centre  
Manchester, United Kingdom

P.S. Whilst valuing the contemporary relevance of both Ricky Gervais and Dan Brown, I can’t help feeling that there might be other figures in the media who might offer deeper commentaries on the areas in which we feel we have something to offer. I was also a bit taken aback at the use of the word “madman” to describe Jared Loughner in the item about Dr. Michael Lemole. While that may be the way he is described in various sections of the media, it’s not how I’d personally like a church publication to refer to him.

### **Response from Walter Orthwein**

There was no compelling need to mention any particular atheist in the editorial, but I chose to quote Ricky Gervais precisely because he is not an intellectual, but a popular entertainer, and thus serves to illustrate how pervasive the influence of atheism is today among ordinary people.

Swedenborg said that the new revelation was being revealed lest the unbelief of the learned infect also the simple. (*Heaven and Hell 1*) Nevertheless, this is

exactly what is happening; ordinary people perceive that many intellectuals and scientists do not believe in God, and although (mercifully) the “simple” do not have the knowledge or philosophical training to confirm atheism for themselves, more and more are accepting the presumably intelligent opinion of the “cultural elite.”

There is not space in a short editorial column to examine the (spurious and largely ridiculous) arguments of atheists such as Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, Sam Harris, Daniel Dennett and other such intellectuals. I couldn’t even address all of Ricky Gervais’ points. But others have done a fine job of rebutting them.

I recommend, for instance, the book *Rage Against God* by Peter Hitchens (brother of Christopher, who wrote *God Is Not Great*). Peter was just as convinced and adamant in his atheism as his brother, but, like so many others, has come to see the light. His book impressed me as the work of someone who is very intelligent and has had a broad experience of life, like his brother, but who has also, through much mental suffering, attained unto wisdom.

### *The Price of Freedom*

To The Editors:

I commend you and your staff for the fresh new appearance of *New Church Life*, and your focus on applying the teachings of Swedenborg to life. The decision to go to a bimonthly publication also seems wise, in light of increasing mailing and printing costs.

The reference to 9-year-old Christina Green, killed in Tucson, (pp 59-60), was indeed moving. You quote Christina’s mother as saying “somehow God needed her more there than we need her here.” This was the response my Swedenborgian minister made to me when my 6-year-old brother was drowned back in 1941. I didn’t accept that then, and I don’t today. Tragedies occur as the price of freedom. Why do we feel the need to come up with some additional explanation?

Americans made a tragic choice to invade Vietnam and killed three million people. Secretary McNamara said it was “a mistake.” Do we believe that God must have had a reason to permit this, beyond the price of freedom? Were those millions needed in heaven, right then, in a realm without time or space?

Good CAN come from evil, but is it inevitable?

Ernest O. Martin  
Duvall, Washington

# The New Church

*A Sermon by the Rev. Kurt Ho. Asplundh*

“Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child. But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.” (Rev. 12: 13-14)

The Lord has revealed that the book of Revelation tells about the establishment of the New Church. The woman clothed with the sun signifies that church. Her child signifies its doctrine. The woman had a difficult birth. She labored in pain to be delivered because the doctrine of the New Church meets strong resistance and opposition.

Here is a remarkable thing. The Lord who comes “with healing in His wings” to save the human race is resisted, even persecuted. But this is nothing new. When the Lord first came on earth, born as a babe in Bethlehem, Herod sought to slay Him. His teachings offended many of the Jews. At last, they crucified Him.

The same thing is happening with the establishment of the New Church. There is opposition to it. It is resisted.

But we don’t see that. Indifference, perhaps. Lack of interest. But persecution? We don’t see that.

We don’t see open persecution, especially in this country and in this day and age when there is a great deal of religious tolerance. The opposition and resistance to the New Church is deeply hidden. It surfaces only now and then, but it is there as a powerful negative spirit.

The story of this hidden spirit of opposition, even *hatred*, of the New Church is to be found in the graphic accounts of the book of Revelation – *spiritually understood*. The tumultuous accounts written in this book can leave little doubt that something powerful is going on here.

Let us look particularly at the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter of Revelation that treats of the woman and the dragon. The great red dragon that wanted to devour the woman’s child as soon as he was born signifies the resistance of the hells to the New Church. But the child was saved, “caught up to God and to His throne.” The meaning of this is that the doctrine for the New Church is protected by the Lord and guarded in heaven until the world is ready to receive it.

The wonderful truths of the New Church have been revealed. The Lord has established a New Church that is to be the “crown” of all the churches. But

where is it in the world? It seems to be hidden away, lost. Ineffective.

Often, we lament the slow growth of the Church and need to be reminded that this is in the Lord's hands. The Lord assures us in the final chapter of Revelation, "Behold, I am coming quickly" (Rev. 22: 7, 20), but this does not refer to time. Coming to pass "quickly" does not mean that the things foretold in Revelation are going to happen immediately or speedily, but that they are certain. That is the Lord's assurance (AR 4, 944). We should not doubt the certainty of the establishment of His New Church. It will come.

Here is a general law about the Church: "It is of the Lord's Divine Providence," we read, "that the church be at first among few and that it gradually grow to be among more..." Why?, we ask. Because "before the truths of the New Church can be received the falsities of the previous church must first be removed." (AR 547; AE 732) These falsities have become embedded in the thought of the Christian world. They must be seen, challenged and judged before the New Church can flourish. Michael's wars with the dragon and the beast represent the reality and intensity of this judgment and separation. It is a spiritual battle that must take place.

The dragon described in the book of Revelation is an ugly combination of parts – a kind of winged serpent, combining the slithering movements of a snake on the ground with an ability to fly. Spirits signified by the dragon may raise themselves on clumsy wings to learn knowledges from the Word but, failing to apply them, inevitably fall back to earth. They remain in natural and sensual ideas.

The Writings teach that this dragon signifies those who embrace the false doctrines inscribed in the creeds and dogmas of Christianity. Indeed, those who hold to these old beliefs furiously resist the promulgation of the Lord's teachings for the New Church. Swedenborg experienced this from a crowd of Christian spirits who still adhered to a false faith: "When I was writing these [new] doctrines," Swedenborg wrote, "followers of the dragon stood about me and with all their fury endeavored to devour them, that is, to extinguish them...." (AR 543)

At this time in history, the attack of the dragon on the New Church is not an open persecution. Someday, that may come. For now, these attacks are subtle. They play upon our evils of pride, love of the world and many others. These loves are the target of the dragon. If the spirits of hell can excite these loves in us, they effectively close off our reception of the Heavenly Doctrine. The dragon wins and the truths of the Church are hidden away for a time and times and half a time.

There are two essentials we must embrace before the New Church can be established: First, the acknowledgment that "the Lord is the God of heaven and earth, and that His Human is Divine. Second, that conjunction with the

The Lord has called us to be disciples in His New Church. “You did not choose Me,” He said, “but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit.” (John 15: 16) He has given us a responsibility to serve a great use.

Lord is by a life according to His commandments. (AR 490) Two essentials: the acknowledgment of one God and obedience to the commandments.

We are told again and again how important it is to hold to the essentials of the New Church. Indeed, the Writings say plainly that “unless the New Church should arise, which acknowledges these two essentials and lives accordingly, no one can be saved.” (AR 9)

The New Church is key to the spiritual life of the whole world. “There cannot be any conjunction with heaven unless somewhere on earth a church exists which has the Word and whereby it the Lord is known...” (De Verbo 17) This is the New Church.

The Lord adds this important information: “It is sufficient that a church possessing the Word exist somewhere on earth, even if it consists of relatively few people. By means of it the Lord is still present throughout the whole world, and by it heaven is joined to the human race.” (De Verbo 17; SS 104)

It is the Lord’s intention and promise that the New Church will grow to fullness to become the “crown” of all the churches. This is taking place, but not yet completed. The New Church now on earth is the Lord’s lifeline to people throughout the world. Without this church, the people of the earth would perish both naturally and spiritually. The Lord guards against this ultimate cataclysm, but He uses the people of the Church to provide this vital link between heaven and earth.

We know that the Lord’s love goes out to all people of any religion on the globe, but that this love would be cut off unless a true church exists somewhere – even if it consists of comparatively few receivers. This true church is pictured in the overall vision as the heart and lungs of the global body. This is the New Church and we are among those who have been called to be custodians of it.

Acceptance of the Church is according to states of mind, not time frames. How slowly the doctrine of the Church grows in our personal life. It is difficult for us to change long-held ideas and patterns of life. As long as false ideas and the loves of self continue to rule our minds, we will not be ready to receive the New Church. Some may be ready and, in providence, they will receive it, but the world will not be ready.

We do not need to be skilled evangelists. Nor do we need to be devoted to endless benefactions of charity. We need only to live a life of faith with integrity and courage.

The Lord has called us to be disciples in His New Church. “You did not choose Me,” He said, “but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit...” (John 15: 16) He has given us a responsibility to serve a great use.

But you may say, “Why me? I am not worthy. I am not perfect.” Neither was Peter perfect. He walked on water while He had faith, but sank when he saw the wind and the waves. He acknowledged the Divinity of the Lord, but denied Him three times the night of the Lord’s arrest.

No man is perfect, only the Lord. And with the Lord’s help we can serve His Church.

The Lord has chosen us to nurture the heart and lungs of the universal body of His Kingdom. Let us be true to our commission.

We do not need to be skilled evangelists. Nor need we be devoted to endless benefactions of charity. We need only to live a life of faith with integrity and courage.

For “the Church is from the Lord,” we read, “and is present with those who approach Him and live in accordance with His commandments.” (CL 129)

“So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, ‘Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come....’ Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them!” (Rev. 12: 9-10, 12)

Lessons: Isaiah 65: 17-19, 25; Rev. 12: 1-6, 13-14; AE 714: 2, 3



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The Rev. Kurt Horigan Asplundh was ordained in 1960 and into the second degree in 1962, and is retired. He served as Pastor of the Pittsburgh Society, Principal of the Bryn Athyn Church School, Dean and Pastor of the Bryn Athyn Society, and editor of *New Church Life*. He and his wife Martha (Lindsay) live in Bryn Athyn.

# Please Let Me Die

*James B. deMaine, MD*

Erik's wife had warned him many times, "Stay off ladders, dear. Leave it to someone younger."

Erik though was a pretty spry 72-year-old and had been cleaning the gutters for many years. He had a sturdy 25-foot extension ladder, had years of experience as an athlete, and wasn't about to slow down for no good reason.

It was an unusually bright crisp November day in Seattle, when Erik laid the ladder against the house. He knew there were both maple and oak leaves in the gutters and that it shouldn't be hard to clean them out. After securing the footing of the ladder and donning rubber gloves he set about tossing the matted leaves toward a yard recycling bin two stories below.

That's about the last thing he remembered other than the crushing chest pain like a mighty force squeezing the life from him. After that it was a daze. He struggled with the restraints, felt like he must pull the tube from his throat, and vaguely recalled Kafka's "*Metamorphosis*." He was Gregor Samsa awakening as a giant insect trapped lying on his back, struggling with his new existence. Was this real?

Erik's wife, Gerta, had found him unconscious at the foot of the ladder, barely breathing. The medics arrived within two minutes, found Erik to be in ventricular fibrillation and applied CPR, then shocked the heart back into normal rhythm. Circulation returned and Erik's color "pinked up." The medics though were aware of the fall, strapped him safely to a gurney, and rushed him to the trauma center.

Erik awoke feeling no pain. In fact, he couldn't feel anything. He tried to move his arms and legs, but nothing happened. He saw Gerta crying at his bedside. All this added to both confusion and anxiety. He still couldn't believe his metamorphosis into a helpless being and wanted to get some answers.

The MRI scan showed that in the fall he had severed his cervical spine at the C1 level. It was explained to him that he was quadriplegic and would likely

Editor's note: Throughout a 32-year career as a pulmonary/critical care doctor in Seattle, Dr. Jim deMaine had extensive experience with end-of-life issues and reconciling them with his New Church beliefs. He has created an end-of-life blog ([www.endoflifeblog.com](http://www.endoflifeblog.com)) with stories from his experiences. He says, "I try to point out the ethical issues, stresses, successes and failures. This is a personal, hopefully educational exercise." Following this account from his blog is a response from the Rev. Ethan McCardell, Pastor of the Light for Life New Church in Seattle. As Jim says on his blog, readers' comments on both articles are welcome.

need to stay on a breathing machine indefinitely. This explanation was gentle at first, with some hope attached with a “wait and see” attitude. There was no brain damage because CPR was begun successfully within a few minutes and the heart restarted without delay. It was the fall. Gerta was right: “Why didn’t I listen?”

The transition from the ICU to rehabilitation care was gradual. A tracheotomy was done and an intensive program started to get Erik as mobile as possible. Gerta and Erik had been highly successful entrepreneurs in high tech and knew not only how to get things done, but also had the resources to get the best.

A specially equipped wheelchair had a battery powered ventilator to support Erik’s breathing. A specially designed breathing tube allowed him to talk in a stutter-step way, but it was a big step toward some communication and independence. The electric wheelchair could be controlled by Erik’s puffs of air, so he became mobile.

Gerta had the house remodeled so he could navigate throughout the main floor, out the door onto a ramp, and go down by the swimming pool (now barricaded) and back. Gerta was expending a huge amount of energy. She wanted Erik to be alive and as happy as possible.

Erik mechanically went through the rehabilitation and body care with some wonderment but progressive discouragement. He hated the daily body massages to prevent sores, tone his muscles, and to try to get his bowels to move. He required a urinary catheter and periodic enemas to handle bodily functions. This was all somewhat tolerable until he began to have recurrent pneumonia. Each time this happened, he would be struggling to breathe and required suctioning from his trachea since he couldn’t cough effectively. The first year there were five trips to the ER, two requiring a hospital stay.

In the second year, Erik was having worsening pneumonia with more difficult bacteria and was struggling both physically and emotionally. He let me know that he wanted to talk. Gerta was there when Erik clearly said, “I don’t think it’s worth it.”

Gerta, shocked, said “Erik, you can’t mean that. There’s so much more that can be done and I can’t think of living without you.”

Erik backed off, but got me alone one time later. “Look doctor, enough’s enough. This isn’t living. Do I have to go on this way?”

I asked, “Erik are you down? Are you depressed?”

With more than a touch of scorn he said, “Wouldn’t you be?”

I did have my favorite very practical psychiatrist friend see Erik for assessment. He found that Erik was not clinically depressed and was thinking clearly. He wasn’t suicidal per se, but just saw no future in going on.

I asked Erik why he might not want to go on. He said, “First, I’m no longer functioning as a man. I have no chance of recovering. I’m worsening and am a burden to my wife. I’m serious. I should have the right to decide when enough’s enough.”

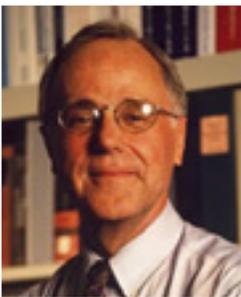
Gerta was distraught to hear all of this and pushed Erik to go on. In the third year following the accident, Erik had another severe bout of pneumonia and was in the ICU. We met with Gerta who was struggling, “I just don’t want to lose him. He means everything to me.”

The social worker spent hours supporting Gerta. Somehow slowly she was able to find the strength to support Erik. “He’s been suffering so much and it’s so hard to see him that way and to try to make him go on.”

At the bedside in the ICU, Erik made it very clear, “I’m ready to meet my maker and finally be at peace.”

With further conferencing with Gerta, the social worker, and the ICU nurses we sedated Erik with small doses and removed the ventilator. He died peacefully with Gerta at the bedside.

Comment: A case like Erik’s continues to haunt me. Did I do the right thing? Didn’t people like Stephen Hawking live on ventilators? Didn’t Christopher Reeve (Superman in the movies) struggle more than Erik before succumbing to a similar injury? Being a doctor at the bedside can thrust almost god-like powers in decision-making. What’s best? Is there a clear right or wrong? My own take is that there isn’t a truly right or wrong answer. I felt my obligation was to support the patient’s wishes and at times that means not continuing the artificial means of life support. There’s a well-known quote in medicine from Dr. Francis Peabody: “The secret in caring for the patient is to care for the patient.”



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. James B. (Jim) deMaine is a retired pulmonary/critical care doctor and Clinical Professor of Medicine at the University of Washington. He attended Bryn Athyn College 1956-58 and received his medical degree from the University of Pennsylvania. He and his wife, Lourdes, live in Clyde Hill, Washington. They have three grown children and enjoy their grandchildren.

# Please Let Me Die: A Response

*Rev. Ethan D. McCardell*

I was deeply moved by Erik and Gerta's story. Who wouldn't be? Two people who love each other, who want nothing more than to share life together, and who recognize in the depth of their commitment to one another a sense of spiritual purpose for their life. At least that's what I got from their story.

As finite people, we're left with so many questions when we read stories like this. A leading concern I've always had as a believer in God is: "If God is Love, how could Love allow this?"

I don't intend to answer that question for anyone in this response. Enlightenment isn't transferable. It's a function of each person developing his or her one-to-one relationship with God. However, the Heavenly Doctrine for the New Church does give me a profound framework that helps to ground and order my thinking about the eternal nature of God's guidance when temporal reality causes me to question it.

In thinking about this story, I was drawn again to one of the most specific references given in *Spiritual Experiences* for why people die when they do:

"The reasons why some die as boys and girls, some youths, some adults, some old men and women:

"First, on account of their use in the world to people;

"Second, on account of their use, while a person is in the world, to spirits and angels; for a person, as to his or her interiors, is with spirits and he or she is there as long as they are in the world, in which all things in the spiritual world terminate;

"Third, on account of use to themselves in the world, either that they may be regenerated (spiritually reborn), or that they may be let into their evils lest they lie dormant and afterwards break out, which would result in a person's eternal ruin;

"Fourth, on account of use afterwards in the other life, after death, to eternity.

"Everyone who will be in heaven has his or her place in the Grand Human, or, on the other hand, they have their place in hell: wherever forces fail they are balanced, and, of the Providence of the Lord, people are brought toward that place. So also, the kingdom of the Lord is cared for. The welfare of that kingdom is *universal Providence*." (*Spiritual Experiences* 5003)

So we're given four reasons – all under the umbrella of *universal Providence* – for why people die when they do. Dr. deMaine usefully commented on the physician's sense of his limitations when "thrust into almost god-like"

decision-making. I liked the *almost*.

Part of what this passage suggests to me is that although he sought to cooperate with God “as if of himself,” the Lord had already foreseen and provided for the time and the means of Erik’s transition. As his use in this world drew to a close, his use “to spirits and angels” could come into its fullness. That drew me also to this reflection:

“And God will be with you” means the Lord’s Divine Providence. For as the Lord is with someone He leads that person and makes provision so that all that happens, whether sad or joyful, may bring him or her what is good. *This is Divine Providence.* (Heavenly Secrets 6303)

So believing in the orbit of Providence, by definition, suggests the need for belief in that which we cannot control (and only the Lord can) once we reach the limits of what we perceive as our own power. The irony is, even that which we perceive as our own power only exists because of the Lord’s life flowing into us. When I think about things from a perspective like this, I feel I’m brought closer to that state of peace experienced by the angels:

“Peace holds within itself trust in the Lord, the trust that He governs all things and provides all things, and that He leads toward an end that is good. When a person believes these things about Him he is at peace, since he fears nothing and no anxiety about things to come disturbs him. How far a person comes into this state depends on how far he achieves love to the Lord.” (Heavenly Secrets 8455)

So, any peace I experience in response to situations like this is directly proportionate to how much I love the Lord? I’m not suggesting our difficulty in processing events like this is a shortcoming – or a threat to our spiritual life – but more of an opportunity. It’s an opportunity to recognize that we don’t need to “do the math” - *to make it all make sense for our finite mind.*

Jesus said: “You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8: 31-32)

Maybe we can trust. Perhaps that’s as poignant – and uplifting – a thought as is this touching story.



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The Rev. Ethan D. McCardell was ordained in 2003 and into the second degree in 2004. He was Assistant to the Pastor of the Carmel Church in Caryndale, Ontario, Canada, and Pastor of the Freeport Society in Pennsylvania. He is Pastor of the Light for Life New Church in Seattle, Washington, where he lives with his wife, Jessica (Howard), and their five children.

# True Progress

*John Pitcairn, 1911*

Editor's note: Following is an Academy of the New Church commencement address delivered 100 years ago – on June 16, 1911 – by John Pitcairn. His subject was “Progress.” The 100 years since have given us more “progress” than any century in history, and his doctrinal perspective about “True Progress” still is relevant. Thank you to Marvin Clymer in the Swedenborg Library for uncovering this address in the 1911 Journal of Education.

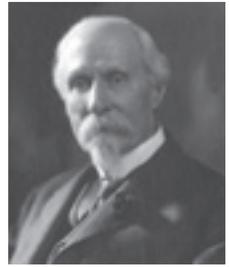
The subject I have chosen for the address of this occasion is Progress. We live in a wonderful age; an age such as the world never before has known. In all the ages that history records, there has been no conquest of the forces of nature such as the past hundred years have witnessed. The application of steam, the enormous increase in commerce between all nations, the floating palaces that ply the seas, the network of railways that covers the land, the telegraph, the telephone, the wireless system, the conquest of the air, with innumerable other wonderful inventions, furthermore, the greater political and religious freedom enjoyed by the masses of the people – all of these are called progress and are hailed as evidences of an approaching period of human development when universal peace and the brotherhood of man shall reign.

Even New Churchmen are found sharing in this belief. In the light of the Heavenly Doctrine of the New Church, does this advance of human achievement during the past hundred years warrant the conclusion claimed for it? Or are its promises a delusive picture that will not stand the test of revealed truth or of enlightened reason?

Let us examine this question in the light of the Doctrines: We are taught that “All things in the heavens and in the hells are now reduced into order; and all thinking which either favors Divine things, or opposes them, flows in thence; from the heavens, all that is in harmony with Divine things; and from the hells, all that is opposed to them.” And we read further that, “Since the Last Judgment spiritual liberty has been restored to man.”

In the same connection Swedenborg says: “I have often conversed with the angels about the state of the Church hereafter. They said that they do not know things to come, for the knowledge of things to come belongs to the Lord alone; but that they do know that the slavery and captivity in which the man of the Church was formerly, is removed; and now from restored liberty, he can better perceive interior truths, if he wills it: but they have slender hope of the men of the Christian world.”

True progress is a progress of the whole man – not a progress of his material achievements alone. Thus it is a progress on the moral plane, and still more on the spiritual, which is the plane of man’s will and understanding. Unless there is progression here, there can be no real progress.



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We thus see that the former state of slavery and captivity is removed, so that man can better perceive internal truths, if he will. But the question remains: *Will the man of the world do this?*

That the increased light on the material plane, and the consequent developments enumerated in the opening of this address, are the result of the Last Judgment we cannot doubt; but is there progress in the genuine meaning of the word?

True progress is a progress of the whole man – not a progress of his material achievements alone. Thus it is a progress on the moral plane, and still more on the spiritual, which is the plane of man’s will and understanding. Unless there is progression here – that is, advance in the will – there can be no real progress, since all that man does proceeds from his will.

Progress, therefore, involves the emendation or regeneration of the will. The will, or the loves and affections of man, before regeneration, is evil from heredity. Therefore, man must be born again, or regenerated; and he is regenerated by means of the truths of Revelation received into his understanding, or into the intellectual part of his mind, and gradually lived. This is the process of regeneration.

There are three degrees of the mind of man: the natural, the spiritual and the celestial – of which the world in general, and the great expounders of science in particular, are ignorant. Science, and the progression in science, pertain to the natural degree; intelligence, to the spiritual degree; and wisdom, to the celestial degree of the mind. A man may have science and no intelligence; he may have intelligence, and but little wisdom. He has intelligence if he makes his life conform to the truths that he has in his mind; he has wisdom if he loves, and without hesitation lives, the truths of revelation.

For progress to be genuine and not spurious, there must be progress in intelligence and wisdom; that is, love to God and love toward the neighbor. Has the astounding material and scientific achievement mentioned in the beginning of this address increased love to God and to the neighbor? Are

Has our astounding material and scientific achievement increased love to God and to the neighbor? Are avarice, dishonesty, immorality, selfishness, less than they were 100 years ago?

avarice, dishonesty, immorality, selfishness, less than they were 100 years ago?

We are told to “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge just judgment.” (John 7:24) “The outside of the cup and the platter may be clean, but within they may be full of extortion and excess.” (Matt. 23: 25-28) That “Light is come into the world,” in the revelation of the New Church, we know, but we also know that “men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are

evil.” For progress to be genuine, revealed truth must be acknowledged and lived. If revealed truth is not received and lived, hereditary evil increases with each succeeding generation. This is the teaching of our Doctrines.

A recent work (*Is Mankind Advancing?* By Mrs. John Martin) analyzing our civilization, claims that we have made no real progress since the days of ancient Greece. Modern civilization, says this writer, is “like a runaway locomotive going at tremendous speed on a wrong track. . . . Many modern inventions, instead of being sources of pride, should be occasions to us of deepest humiliation; and others are only suggestive of the varied misery whose existence demanded their invention. Thus ingenious firearms witness to burglary and need of self-defense, and the sleepless hatred between men; varieties of medicine indicate new varieties of diseases, while surgery points to the failure of the whole science of medicine.”

And the same writer asks: “Are men of a more developed type, more intelligent, healthier, more moral, and *made* so by our vast improvements in the material conditions of life?” In answer, we read that very much of our modern activity is “sound and fury signifying nothing.”

The writer is equally emphatic in denying any substantial *moral* progress; feeling, with (Henry Thomas) Buckle, that in the matter of ethical theory, advance not only has not taken place, but is not possible. “To do good to others; to sacrifice for their benefit your own wishes; to love your neighbor as yourself; to forgive our enemies; to restrain your passions; to honor your

With all this progress, there also has come an increase in the rejection of the Word and the denial of God. There has come an almost entire devotion of the thought and will to the comforts and pleasures of the world. Science, instead of being the servant for the development of men in intelligence and wisdom, is now the master.

parents; to respect those who are over you;” these, and a few others, according to Buckle, are the sole essentials of morals, “and they have been known for thousands of years.”

In the matter of moral practice, can it be contended that the present age is supreme? On the contrary, the writer I quote asserts that we are not as honest, as temperate, as just, as brave or as public spirited as the ancient Greeks.

This remarkable analysis may seem somewhat pessimistic, but it is fully confirmed in the revelation given to the New Church. There has been progress – progress in the knowledge and application of the forces of nature, progress in wealth and comfort – but there is another side to the picture.

With all this progress, there also has come an increase in the rejection of the Word and the denial of God. There has come an almost entire devotion of the thought and will to the comforts and pleasures of the world. Science, instead of being the servant for the development of men in intelligence and wisdom, is now the master.

True order is reversed: the tendency no longer is to worship God, but to worship science. This is the teaching of the work on *Divine Wisdom*, where we read: “Such is the genius of learning, which is self-conceit, that it can confirm everything that is false, even to make it appear to itself and others to be true.” (DW 11)

That this picture is not overdrawn is evidenced by the high priest of scientific medicine, (Russian biologist Ilya) Metchnikoff, who, with a host of followers, boldly advocates the total banishment of God and the worship of science. “To understand human nature,” says Metchnikoff, “it is necessary, first, to give an account of the origin of man. This question has preoccupied mankind for ages, and for a long time it was believed that a solution was to be found in religious dogmas. Man was regarded as being of supernatural origin,

the result of a special creation. Scientific criticism has shown that there is no ground for such conclusion.” (*The Nature of Man*)

He then proceeds to prove, in an elaborate argument, his contention for the origin of man from a highly developed ape. To quote again: “The idea of a future life is supported by not a single fact, while there is much evidence against it.”

“It is easy to see why the advance of knowledge has diminished the number of believers in the persistence of consciousness after death, and that complete annihilation at death is the conception accepted by the vast majority or enlightened persons.”

“Science, confident of its methods, has quietly continued to work. Little by little, the answers to some of the questions that have been set have begun to appear. Whence do we come, science has been asked unceasingly. Is not man a being unlike other beings, made in the image of God, animated with the Divine breath, and immortal? No, science answers. Man is a kind of miscarriage of an ape, endowed with profound intelligence, and capable of great progress. His brain is the seat of processes that are very complex, and much higher than those of other animals, but these functions are incompatible with the existence of an immortal soul. Death brings absolute extinction.”

Again, “As soon as we come to believe that the solution to the problems of human happiness will not come from religions, nor from systems of metaphysical philosophy, but from exact science alone, the obstacles to progress will be removed.”

The position of this eminent scientist – a position which well expresses the dominant thought of the modern scientific world – is finally summed up in the words: “If it be true that man can live by faith alone, the faith must be in the power of science.”

Two years ago, while in Europe, I had some personal experience of this atheistic and self-conceited sphere of thought when, in conversation with a famous eye specialist, I was calmly informed that the Creator had bungled in making the eye, which, he said, was a very defective organ, and that he could have done much better himself. This conceit and atheism are largely characteristic of the learned world today.

The Writings say that: “The learned who are skilled in natural history, anatomy, botany, and other branches of human learning . . . say in their hearts that all these things are from nature and not from the Divine, and this for the reason that they believe in nothing but what they can see with their eyes, and touch with their hands; for they cannot see these things from the light of heaven, but detain their minds in things terrestrial, almost like the animals of the earth, to which they also compare themselves.” (AE 559)

“Those who had been in scientific only, and thence got the name of being

learned, are sometimes more stupid than those who have been skilled in no knowledges.” (AC 4156)

“It is a common and known thing that the learned have less belief in life after death than the simple: the reason is that they consult scientifics, which they possess in greater abundance than others, from a negative principle, and thereby destroy in themselves intuition from an interior principle; and when this is destroyed, they no longer see anything from the light of heaven, but from the light of the world, for scientifics are in the light of the world, and if not illuminated by the light of heaven induce darkness, however it appears otherwise to themselves.” (AC 4760)

“The vast number of the learned in the European world at this day at very heart are atheists.” (AC 9394) Of their fate it is said: “The learned were collected to the number of 300, and the option was given them as to which way they should go; and 260 entered the way of folly, and only 40 the way of wisdom. . . . So many and of such quality are learned fools who are in natural light (only).” (DW 1)

In what striking contrast is our illustrious Swedenborg, who followed the way of wisdom, acknowledging God and revelation, who penetrated the interiors of nature and gave to the world a true philosophy, even before he entered the domain of theology.

We can thus see the danger of infestation from the learning of the present day. This danger was fully realized by the founders of the Academy, and it was the earnest desire to guard the youth of our Church from the false theories and conclusions so prevalent in the learned world.

That science is essential and not to be despised, we all know; but what I have endeavored to show is that it should be the servant and not the master. We may plunder the Egyptians, but we should pray to be “led forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of servant.” Science should serve the rational; the rational, the spiritual; the spiritual, the celestial, for we are taught in AC 1465: “Order itself is that the celestial, through the spiritual, should enter into the rational, and thus into the scientific . . . and unless this order is observed, there is never any wisdom.”

And in AC 911: “The order is for the celestial things to rule spiritual things; through these, natural things, and through these again, corporeal things. But when corporeal and natural things dominate over spiritual and celestial, order is destroyed; and when order is destroyed, there is an image of hell; and, therefore, order is restored by the Lord, through regeneration; and when it has been restored, there is an image of heaven.”

The truth is, we live in a Godless age, and indeed, “there is but slender hope for the men of the Christian world.” The whole tendency of the great universities and schools – of the leaders of thought and of the scientists who

Science or knowledge may be a blessing or a curse; it may serve either God or mammon. If knowledge be a servant of the higher degrees of the mind, it serves God and is a blessing; but if it be a servant of the loves of self and the world, it serves the devil and is a curse.

are doing such great things – is materialistic. In a recent conversation with a gentleman who, for 20 years, had been intimately associated with the most eminent leaders in the development and application of the electric current, I was told that – without exception – they were all atheists.

Science or knowledge may be a blessing or a curse; it may serve either God or mammon. If knowledge be a servant of the higher degrees of the mind, it serves God and is a blessing; but if it be a servant of the loves of self and the world, it serves the devil and is a curse.

“What does it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” It was the recognition of this truth, and the recognition of the spirit that dominates modern learning, that led the founders of the Academy to see the necessity for distinctive New Church education; that led them to establish a school where science is, indeed, cultivated, but cultivated as a handmaid and minister to general knowledge and acknowledgment of God, and where nature is regarded as a mirror reflecting the wonders of the Divine Love and Wisdom.

You who have the great privilege of attending this school are in a unique position. You can here acquire that which cannot be attained in any other school of the world. Here you may learn the true order of creation; you may acquire a knowledge of discrete degrees, which is likened to a key for opening the causes of things, and without which knowledge there is no real intelligence.

Here the scientific, the rational and the intellectual are placed in their true order and relation, and you are guarded from the fallacies of the world which close the understanding, while yet being taught the facts of science, to serve the understanding. Here the rational mind is developed. Here you are taught heavenly truths which, if lived, will make you an inhabitant of heaven and a useful citizen of the world. The school is established, the means are at your disposal, and it is for each one of you to profit by what has been provided.

My age and experience in the world may permit me to offer some suggestions: Let your attitude be affirmative to what is taught, for “the affirmative must be first with the man who is being regenerated.” (AC 2923:2)

“Doubts, and sometimes even also negative things, are excited by the spirits who are adjoined to man, but in proportion as affection prevails, he is led to the affirmative, and is at the same time confirmed in truths by those doubts.” (AC 4096:6)

“They who are in the affirmative – that is, with whom the affirmative universally reigns – reject the fallacious scruples that are against truths, and if there is anything they do not apprehend, they reject it to the sides, and say that as yet they do not understand it, and still remain in the faith of truth.” (AC 6479)

Much is said in the Writings of the affirmative principle, and of the importance of cultivating it. The question may be asked: How is it to be cultivated?

The affirmative principle is an attitude of the will, and obedience is the most potent means of cultivating it. For the sake of order, both in heaven and on earth, no one should do his own will. The child should be under absolute obedience to the parent; the pupil to the teacher; and the adult, to the Lord.

In illustration of this necessity for obedience, I may be pardoned if I refer to some personal experience. I had the good fortune to have a father who required absolute obedience. The necessities of the case required me to leave home at the early age of 14 years. I obtained employment in the office of the General Superintendent of the Pennsylvania Railroad. The railway service, like the army, requires absolute obedience to authority; and I may add that the great majority of accidents and disasters are the result of disobedience of the official rules and regulations.

I always have been thankful for this early training, which has been of inestimable value throughout life. There can be no real success in life if the principle of obedience is disregarded.

When I was advanced to the position of superintendent, I, in my turn, required absolute obedience. The result was a successful management. Again, when I became general manager of a railway, I selected for positions of authority those who knew how to obey; for no one should be placed in authority who, as a subordinate, has been unwilling to obey. And not only in the army and the railway, but in all the varied uses of life, the same principle, the same necessity for obedience, holds good.

It should begin in the family with absolute obedience to the parent; it should prevail in the school; it should be carried into every organized work in the world. If this spirit is lacking, disorder, and frequently calamity, result. This is well known in the case of railways, and from personal observation, I know that a number of disastrous factory and warehouse fires have been directly traceable to disobedience of orders – a disobedience probably the outgrowth of disregard for obedience in early years.

No capable employer will knowingly employ a disobedient character; still less, advance him to a position of authority. In fact, the self-willed violator of order is a nuisance and to prevent general demoralization by his contaminating influence, is usually expelled from the organization with which he has been connected.

You see, then, that even in the world, on the natural plane, the necessity for obedience and order is fully recognized. I almost feel like I should apologize for bringing the illustration down to so external a plane. Higher motives, I doubt not, will govern you, and you will see what great importance obedience is in the formation of character, and how necessary it is to cultivate the affirmative principle, which can spring solely from the spirit of obedience.

The absence of a spirit of affirmation to revealed truth – this it is that almost universally characterizes the learned world, and this, despite all the appearance of external progress, is drawing that world more and more into denial of God and of the future life.

The Schools of the Academy exist to the end that this spirit of affirmation, thus lost to the world, may be implanted in those placed under our care, that they may learn to look to the Lord, to listen to His Divine Revelation, and to grow in the spirit of obedience, from which alone comes true progress and success.

*The graduates of the Class of 1911 were: Ruth Armstrong, Gladys Blackman, Constance Burnham, Bella Campbell, Hellen Colley, Edith Cranch, Creda Glenn, Winfred Jungé, Janet Lindrooth, Anna Niedere, Beata Roschman, Evangeline Roschman and Donald F. Rose.*

# Camp Menucha

## near Portland, Oregon

August 20-23, 2011

The Northwest New Church District, the Light for Life New Church (Seattle) and Northern Rockies New Church invite you to join us at **Camp Menucha** near Portland, OR, on August 20, 21, 22, 23 (Saturday PM to Tuesday AM) this summer.

The camp focus will be **A New Freedom in Human Life**. We hope you'll take part in our talks and discussions, as well as good food, informal fun, singing and worship. The Revs. Martie Johnson, Ethan McCardell and Dan Goodenough will present their thoughts and lead discussions on topics about a new inner freedom, how it affects us personally, and what it means for our relationships, for society and for world cultures.

*How does spiritual freedom impact our daily lives?*

*Does spiritual freedom make organized religion seem irrelevant?*

*What is the relationship between spiritual freedom and civil responsibility?*

*Why are some people prepared to die for civil freedom and others not?*

*How do the hells work to undermine spiritual freedom?*

\* \* \* \* \*

Please send requests for information to Peggy Andrews at gpeg12@comcast.net or PO Box 99, Corbett, OR 97019.

[www.Menucha.org](http://www.Menucha.org)

# Producing Spiritual Offspring: The Greatest Commission

*A summary of thoughts and passages presented  
at a meeting of the General Church Western Clergy  
by the Rev. Garry B. Walsh  
Boulder New Church, February 1, 2011*

**W**e might say that the literal sense of the Lord's Word, the Word of the Old and New Testament Scriptures, begins and ends with "Great Commissions." In the Genesis creation story we find the Lord giving mankind a command. There is no indication that this command should not remain in place for all time.

*"Then God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'" (Genesis 1: 28)*

The practical implication of this "commission" seems obvious. The Lord is promoting the ideal in which men and women join together as husband and wife. And, with the Lord's blessing, they go on to become the parents of as many children as providence and earthly circumstances allow. We are taught that the Lord's purpose in creation is a heaven from the human race (*Divine Providence* 27). Therefore, a function of adult married life is to work with the Lord in opening the door for more future angels to come into the world.

The second "Great Commission" was delivered by the Lord to His disciples at the very end of His earthly ministry: *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."* (*Matthew* 28: 19)

Again, like the "commission" given in Genesis, the message here seems clear. Those who have heard the Lord's teachings and have had His truths resonate in their hearts, are to go out to help more people hear that truth and therefore become disciples themselves. Here is what the Lord says in *Apocalypse Explained* 33:

"For the Lord loves everyone, and, from love, wills that His glory – that is Divine truth – may be in them all." This also the Lord teaches in John:

*"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples."* (15: 7, 8)

To understand better the primary message that the Lord would like our help in spreading to the world, we look at *Doctrine of the Lord* 46: 2:

The reason why the Lord told the disciples to baptize into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit is because there is in the Lord a trine, or trinity; for there is the Divine which is called the Father, the Divine Human which is called the Son, and the Divine Proceeding which is called the Holy Spirit. The Divine which is the Father and the Divine which is the Son is the originating Divine; and the Divine Proceeding which is the Holy Spirit is the operating Divine. There is no other Divine proceeding from the Lord than the Divine which is Himself.

Through this passage we see that *a*, or perhaps *the*, primary purpose of evangelization efforts should be proclaiming the clear message that there is only one God, who created and loves all humanity. Along with this is an explicit renouncing for the false doctrine of the three separate persons in the Trinity, as it often exists within the broader Christian community.

Now, because we know that every idea given to us by the Lord is by definition in harmony with every other idea given by Him, we are left to conclude that a similar harmony exists between the applications of the first commission, “*be fruitful and multiply*,” and the second commission, “*go therefore and make disciples of all the nations*.”

With this in mind we consider the following when it comes to our individual ability to follow the first of these commissions. As we know, the window in life in which people might sensibly become parents is relatively narrow. For some loving couples this window provides for a large family. For others, even though the desire is there, the opportunity to become earthly parents never materializes. Given the idea that the Lord’s message is universal, we are called on to question whether the first “Great Commission” – the call to, “*be fruitful and multiply*” – might have broader application than simply the birth into this world of natural children.

This question leads to an examination of the Lord’s teachings on what He describes as “spiritual offspring.” In *Conjugal Love* 44 we are introduced to a scene in which newcomers into the spiritual world are being taught some of the basic principles of life there. An angel helps explain that in the spiritual world, although men are men completely and women are women completely, that it is not natural children but *spiritual* children that are born of their marriages. Later in *Conjugal Love* (51 ff) we learn that “spiritual things are born of their marriages.” In *True Christian Religion* 377 we are taught further that “spiritual offspring are concepts of goodness and truth.”

The consequence of these and other related teachings seems to be that, while the bringing into this world of natural offspring is strongly encouraged,

the bringing forth of spiritual offspring is just as much encouraged. In fact, angelic life has the procreation of these spiritual offspring as a central, if not *the* central focus. And, what these spiritual offspring are, we are taught, are expressions of the marriage of goodness and truth. Or, spiritual offspring are the things talked about and put into practice that show what goodness and truth united look like in action.

Whether a person is married or not, or in the child-bearing phase of life in this world or not, the call for producing spiritual offspring exists. We can all build our lives around the active expression of the marriage of goodness and truth. There is no earthly environment where this cannot and should not be taking place. This includes all those occasions in which it is possible for us to follow the Lord's command to go out and evangelize.

What we also discover through the Lord's teachings is that these "Great Commissions" to produce natural and spiritual offspring, as well as to go out and evangelize, apply to each person individually, and they also apply to the Church collectively. Indeed, in *Conjugal Love 121* the Lord explicitly speaks about the spiritual offspring that come from the marriage of the Lord and His Church. We can take this to mean that as a church collective we are both to support the institutions and marriage and the family, *and* we are, also collectively, to work on producing spiritual offspring – including through the active work of evangelization.

With all this said, there is no need for tension to exist between the more family and education focused people of the Church and those who are focused more on evangelization. They are both expected and essentially harmonious outcomes of the "Great Commissions" that the Lord has given us. It seems that the values of each focus are readily expressible in the other.

The spiritual offspring brought forward through each person by the Lord should exhibit both the love for marriage and family, and the desire to share the Lord's teachings about these things with others. As the Lord says in John 15: 8: "*By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.*"



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The Rev. Garry B. Walsh was ordained in 2001 and into the second degree in 2002. He has served as Assistant to the Pastor in Oak Arbor, Michigan, and Visiting Minister to the Cleveland (Ohio) Circle, Pastor of the Hurstville Society in Australia, pastor of the Washington DC Society and Principal of the Washington New Church School. He is Pastor of the Phoenix New Church in Arizona. He and his wife, Laurel (Smith), live in Phoenix with their three daughters.

# The Golden Fruit of the Mountain

*A parable by the Rev. Stephen D. Cole*

Once upon a time, there was a woodcutter named John, who lived at the edge of a great forest. One day while gathering wood, he stopped at the edge of a clearing to admire the view and to eat his humble bread. No sooner had he sat down than into the clearing strode a tall stranger clad in long and flowing robes.

As the stranger approached, and as he seemed a pleasant fellow, John bid him come and share his bread. This the stranger did. As they ate, the tall man flourished from the folds of his robe a golden fruit and cut a thin slice, offering it to John. As he put it into his mouth, he found it the most delightful thing that he had ever tasted, having at once the sweetness of honey, the smoothness of butter, and the sharpness of a pomegranate.

“Oh whence,” he cried out to the stranger, “shall I get more of this fruit?”

The tall man paused and then he said, “I will give thee this fruit if thou wilt pledge to come with me to the top of yonder mountain, whence this fruit hath come, and where it groweth in abundance.”

John replied without hesitation, “This will I gladly do.”

The stranger looked at him thoughtfully and said, “But thou must not do it lightly. Look thou at the path to the mountain, consider what may chance along the way, and this having done, make thy solemn promise that, if I give thee the fruit, thou wilt come with me to the very top of the mountain.”

John took a moment to consider. He could see the path winding through the trees and up onto the side of the mountain. But it did not look like that long a path, nor that high a mountain. So he turned to the man and said, “That not looketh to be hard.”

And the man spoke again, “But mayhap the way is harder than it looks?”

“It cannot be all that hard,” replied John.

“And perchance the mountain is higher than thou hast thought?”

“But I can see the top from here!”

“And if thy taste for the fruit shall begin to wane?”

“Now I know thou art in jest,” said John, “for no man could ever lose his taste for such fruit.”

“So dost thou then promise that whatever the path may bring to thee,

thou wilt continue on the way; and that however the fruit may taste to thee, thou wilt go on all the way to the top?"

"This I pledge with all my heart," answered John.

So the stranger handed him the fruit and they set upon their way.

At first the way was easy, the forest was pleasant, and the slices of fruit that John would sample from time to time tasted, if anything, better than the first.

But by and by, the path turned into farther parts of the forest, into which John had never ventured. Indeed, to call the track a path at that point was to give it perhaps too much of a name. Dead trees had tumbled across the way and the ground was soft and marshy. Yet the stranger continued on with a spring in his step that belied the constant hazards. John began to feel aggrieved, for he had thought himself as fit as any. How can it be so easy for the stranger, he grumbled to himself, when it has grown so difficult for me?

As the day lengthened and the shadows grew, John came to wonder when they would leave off the relentless pace for some nourishment and rest. Still the stranger's pace slackened ne'er a beat.

Soon John found he could barely see to follow and it became as dark as the inside of a hollow log on a moonless night. He called to the stranger to halt awhile to let him come up again, but the stranger's voice came back heartlessly: "I am yet with thee, come forward, do not stop."

John burned with resentment as he stumbled and ran into obstacles he could not see. At length he tripped and could not rise and fell into a deep slumber despite himself.

As he awoke in the morning, he found he had been sleeping in the mud at the edge of a clearing. Within the clearing itself, but still in the shelter of a great branch, the stranger rested on a soft bed of pine boughs. Just as John had lifted his eyes to gaze upon the scene, he caught a flash of motion across the way. As he arose and made toward it, he saw the form of an old and shriveled man, some hermit of the forest, it would seem. The man eyed him cautiously.

"I hope thou wilt not be tellin' me thou hast been following that one," he whined, with a jerk of his thumb toward the stranger.

"Though I'm not thinking it is thy concern, I'll tell thee that I have been," replied John.

"My concern, it mayn't be," the man continued, "but concern it should be to thee, what with all those he hath led astray."

"Good sire, what meanest thou?"

"I myself, one time out of mind, came into this wood at his behest. And many more have come since, poor lost souls who wander the labyrinth of this waste."

"Did he leave you here? Would he not lead you out?"

"Oh, he would have had us follow him, but that was more frightful than

the wandering here.”

“But had you not come on your oaths that you would continue after him?”

“Tis sure, we plighted our troth with him, but falsely extorted, is it not so? For surely he bewitched us with that magic fruit of his. And did he not make light of the troubles we would face? Should we be bound by such promises?”

“Yet neither did you follow for the sweetness of the fruit itself?”

“Speak to me not of the accursed fruit! Wittest thou not that the enchantment thereof doth fade? We have found much better even here in this forest.” With this the hermit turned and shuffled away.

And John did find himself doubting for a twinkling whether the allure of the fruit was still as strong. But despite the aches and bruises of the night before, he felt better for having slept. He would not let the complaining of a sour old man deter him from his quest for the golden fruit.

The stranger by this time had risen, and without another word, he led the way to a path that went out the other side of the clearing.

This day and night were worse than the first. And although the next morning brought them clear of the forest, John was dismayed at what the morning light showed him of his fruit. From golden, it had come to be a pale yellow with spots of brown, and its sweetness had paled as well. It was still as pleasant a fruit as John had ever known, and yet he felt it lacking.

As the sun ascended, so did they make their way up the mountain, not by a straight or direct path, for John now saw that this would be too steep. Instead they crossed hither and yon on the bare face of the mountain.

At first the mountain path struck John as better than the forest, for now he could see the goal of the journey – the top of the path. But as the day went on and the sun burned down with no respite, John began to long for the cool glades of the forest. He now sucked at the fruit in vain, for there was but scant juice within it. And what few drops he could glean were bitter and seemed to dry his mouth, not refresh it.

The sight of the top of the mountain, however, sustained him through the day. And when the sun was nearly set, they approached the crest of the trail. But as they crossed the last few steps, John fell back and wept. For the crest was not the top of the mountain. It only showed the towering peak that still lay before them.

As John threw the golden fruit from him, he hurled his words at the stranger: “Thou hast deceived me! It is indeed as the old man said. The fruit is worthless. The way is impossible.”

“I warned thee,” the stranger replied simply.

“I remember none of that! Surely thou wast filling my head with glorious illusions.”

“I warned thee,“ he simply said again.

“Nay, but thou gavest me no hint of the trials I would face.”

“But thou didst promise for the sake of the fruit.”

“I have now no want for the fruit.”

“This is as may be, but thou didst promise me.”

John sat on a stone and thought. The thought of the fruit now sickened him and he knew with all the certainty of his heart that he would never reach the top. But the stranger spoke one truth: he had promised to follow. And so, although he felt that he had been deceived and swindled, he rose and announced: “I will follow, sire.”

The stranger smiled faintly and said, “Perhaps you will regain your taste for the fruit.”

John sadly rejoined, “This can never be. But as my word is my bond, I will follow.”

The journey went still many days, and yet the path grew gentler, great trees overhung the way, the sun now more forgiving. And from the time of John’s new avowal, his loathing for the fruit did begin to abate.

And then came the day when he almost thought that, just out of curiosity, he might like to taste it again. No sooner had this occurred to him, than the stranger reached into his sack and plucked out a new fruit. It did not look so golden as before, nor, when he tasted it, was it any more than just so faintly pleasant.

As the days lengthened, however, the juices of the fruit became ever more tasty. The color of the fruit increased. Finally, at about the same time as John realized that they could ascend the final peak of the mountain by a path whose existence he could never have guessed, he began to suspect that the fruit was even sweeter and more golden than he had ever imagined before.

And though we might wish to hear what came to pass when John found his way to the garden of golden fruit, that story must wait our own arrival there.



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The Rev. Stephen D. Cole was ordained in 1977 and into the second degree in 1978. He has been a minister in Ohio, Detroit and San Diego. He is Assistant Professor of Religion and Philosophy in Bryn Athyn College and of Theology in the Theological School. He is also head of the Religion Major at the College. He has his wife, Jennifer (Smith), live in Bryn Athyn and have eight children.



## Rev. James H. (Jay) Barry

### *Forty Years of Preparation*

Some seeds germinate quickly, some more slowly. For Jay Barry, a seed about becoming a minister was planted when he was just 12 years old. That seed blossomed 40 years later when he left a successful career and entered the Theological School. But during all those long years, the vine was connected to the seed and the dream was nurtured.

Jay was born in Glenview, Illinois, where his great grandfather John Headsten had been a New Church minister in Chicago. His family moved to Phoenix, Arizona, when he was three. He remembers the Revs. Harold Cranch, Geoffrey Howard and Doug Taylor coming to give services in a YMCA, and being attracted to the *Summaries of General Doctrine* in the old liturgy.

He particularly recalls being inspired at age 12 by a talk Doug Taylor gave on the global scope of New Church teachings. That was the beginning. Since it was another 40 years before the seed bore fruit he says, “I guess you could say I’m a late bloomer (but) I consider the intervening years as necessary preparation.”

He says the single greatest influence on his inclinations since his late teen years was recognizing the unique beauty of the internal sense of the Word. “As I matured, I also recognized that the core teachings and values of the New

Church are a God-given compass for any person to use for guidance through difficult times. We have much more than just a beautiful teaching in the New Church: the Lord has given us *a way of life* based on real spiritual practice.”

As all these thoughts and feelings were stirring, he owned and operated a small contracting firm in New York City for 22 years. “I worked with a variety of interesting and dynamic professional people during these years. Though I was shy as a child and a young man, my years in business allowed me to develop people and leadership skills that I hope I can use to serve the Church in the ministry.”

By the time he decided to enter Theological School in 2004, he says, “I had always felt that I was participating in the spiritual life while engaged in business. Being ordained is just a continuation of what began many years before.”

One of the experiences in Theological School that he cherishes is a course taught by Bishop Brian Keith on Memorial Addresses, which “had a lasting effect on me. By means of this class, the student is introduced to the healing power of the Heavenly Doctrines during a time of loss.”

Another key experience in his training was a class taught by Bishop Tom Kline on Family Systems, “which introduced me to a profound concept: a minister, unlike others, is admitted into the heart of the family system through his vocation; therefore, he has a unique and important responsibility.”

He enjoys preaching in many venues, creating opportunities to support and encourage others in the spiritual life, and pastoral work with the elderly and dying.

One of the highlights of his new career is “having the time to study – a requirement for preaching. Many take this for granted, but this was not available to me until I left my business and moved to Bryn Athyn in 2009. I find working with people of all ages very satisfying, particularly when teaching.”

One of the challenges in Bryn Athyn, he finds, “is developing a model for delivering pastoral care to a large number of people on a consistent basis. My hope is that I will remain healthy and continue to learn and grow, and my goal is to serve the Church with both vision and pragmatic application of doctrine.”

Jay and his wife, Barbara, have three children: Matthew, 21, Renee, 19, and Diana, 18. He also has two children from a previous marriage, Noelle, 31, who has blessed his family with a grandson, and Colleen, 29.

Among his interests, he loves architecture, classical music (Debussy is a favorite), and all things Islamic. He and Barbara have enjoyed occasional travels to Europe and recently savored a visit to Cordoba, Spain, to see the Great Mosque. He still dreams of visiting the Blue Mosque in Istanbul, and other religious sites in Syria and Iran.

What you might be surprised to know about him is that he loves Chinese

and Japanese poetry (in English), which he has read since he was a teenager.

His favorite passage is AC 2034.7: “From the time of the first promise (spoken of in Genesis 3:15) the faith of love in the Lord who was to come effected conjunction. But when there was no longer any faith of love remaining in the whole world, then the Lord came and united the Human Essence to the Divine Essence, so that they were altogether one, as He Himself clearly says; and at the same time He taught the way of truth, that everyone who should believe in Him – that is, who should love Him and the things that are His, and who should be in His love which is love toward the universal human race, thus in love toward the neighbor – should be conjoined and saved.”

# Change Your Thinking, Change Your Life

*A sermon by the Rev. James H. (Jay) Barry*

Early in the Lord's public ministry, He was visiting Galilee, and after attracting the attention of large crowds, he departed and went into a deserted place. We pick up the story from the book of Luke:

And the crowd sought Him and came to Him, and tried to keep Him from leaving...And He said to them: I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent..." Luke 4:42-43

The Lord was announcing a new age in human history. It was to be an age where the spirit of the law would be revealed. It was to be an age where "an eye for an eye" would be replaced with "love your enemies." It was to be an age which would not depend on nation or nationality, but would extend to all corners of the earth: "A light to lighten the gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel." (Luke 2:32)

It was to be an age where the invisible, unknowable Jehovah would be approachable in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Most importantly, it was to be an age that would begin with a call for people to look within themselves. "*For this purpose I have been sent...*" The Lord's purpose, prepared by John the Baptist, was a call to repentance.

## **CHANGE YOUR THINKING**

*Metanoia* is an important word in Greek – the original language of the New Testament – and it means *to change the mind*. In English, it is translated as *repentance*. So when the Lord said: "Repent, the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17), and "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, believe in the gospel" (Mark: 1:14), and when we read in *Luke*: "Jesus said to the Apostles, that they should preach in His name repentance and remission of sins among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24 47), He was articulating His central message: *change your mind, change your thinking, stop what you are doing and hear the good news of spiritual life*.

We are taught in the *Heavenly Doctrines* that this message was delivered at a critical time in human history, when "there was no longer any faith of love remaining in the whole world. (*Arcana Coelestia* 2034.7) His birth changed the

world, for He overcame all the temptations of the world during His life, right up to His last breath, and by doing so, He gave us the possibility for spiritual growth and change. He could do this because He was the messiah, the Christ, God with us, and Jehovah was His very soul. This was the Lord's inner work.

But his outer work, His message, was a call to repentance, a call for us to look within and change our ways.

### **THE LORD AS COUNSELOR**

The Lord was a Counselor: "Wonderful, Counselor...Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6) He modeled a technique which counselors use today that encourages people to look at their thinking errors, for it is these which can cause much suffering. This is part of His call to help us to change our thinking and repent.

One such person the Lord encountered was Nicodemus, himself a teacher and ruler of the Jews. He came to the Lord at night, afraid that his peers would discover his interest in this controversial prophet. We can see the Lord correcting a thinking error during the course of their meeting.

Nicodemus came to the Lord sincerely: "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God." (John 3:2). Nicodemus did not understand the distinction between natural things of the body, and spiritual things of heaven.

The Lord said to him: "Do not marvel that I said to you: You must be born again. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit. (John 3:7,6) The lesson remains profound to this day: spirit and flesh are different, and the kingdom of God is of the spirit. Being born again means spiritual transformation, not worldly transformation.

Another encounter was when a crowd came to Jesus, troubled by some recent events. In one, Galileans had been killed, and their blood had been mingled with ritual sacrifices. In another, a tower fell in Jerusalem and killed 18 innocent people. Before the people who had come to Jesus even spoke, He answered them:

"Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered such things? I tell you no, but unless you repent, you will likewise perish. Or those 18 people on whom the tower at Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men to dwell in Jerusalem? I tell you no, but unless you repent you will likewise perish." (Luke 13:2-5)

The Lord was correcting their way of thinking about misfortunes that befall others. The people who approached Him thought the people suffered and died because they were more evil. He answered them in no uncertain

terms: keep the focus on yourself, on your own work of repentance, for upon this your eternal well being and happiness depend.

The Lord pointed out how easy it is for us to fall into the error of judging others, to compare them to ourselves. Sometimes we make summary judgments without thinking at all, and the Lord sternly warns us against this. He wants us to examine ourselves, first and foremost, and remember the unfinished work of repentance in our lives.

#### THE HALLWAY AND THE HOUSE

In *True Christian Religion* we read: “True repentance is examining, not only the actions of one’s life, but also the intentions of one’s will.” (TCR 532) This encourages us to examine our thinking processes and examine our deeper motives. Continuing in *True Christian Religion*:

...acts are done by the understanding and will; for man speaks from his thought, and acts from his will; therefore speech is the thought speaking, and action is the will acting. As this [is] the source of words and deeds, it follows indubitably that it is will and thought that sin, when the body sins. (*ibid*)

Thinking leads to action; they are connected but also separate. Wrong thinking leads to wrong action. This is exactly where the Lord comes in, and the purpose behind His intervention in human history. First, He wants us to change our thinking, and second, He leads us to heaven and Himself. These are the basics of spiritual life: first reformation, next, regeneration, or being born again.

The *Heavenly Doctrines* illustrate this with the design of a house, where the hallway is the human understanding, and the house itself is the human will. “The will is the very house in which the man dwells, and the understanding is the hall through which he goes in and out.” (*ibid*)

Looking at this model, the Lord meets you and me in the hallway of our minds. This is the starting point of His Divine intervention in our lives. This is where instruction takes place, where ideas are presented, where possible choices are pondered. This is where the consequences of our actions can be anticipated and examined, *before* they are carried out.

This illustration is a good example of a way the *Heavenly Doctrines* help us examine ourselves better, so we can avoid actions that we will later regret. In the largest context, our eternal salvation depends upon what happens in the hallway, for our choices there lead us to how we live our lives, and this determines our eternal lot.

Our last example is the story of the woman who was caught in the act of adultery, brought before an angry crowd who were ready to stone her to death

in public. The Lord stepped between the woman and the crowd, and after a quiet pause, He said: "Let he who is without sin cast the first stone." (Luke 8:7)  
Reading further from *Luke*:

Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus...saw no one but the woman, He said: "Woman, where are your accusers? Has no one condemned you?" She said: "No one, Lord." "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more." (Luke 8:10-11)

The Lord stepped into the hallway of their understanding, before harmful actions were carried out. He turned the crowd back toward their consciences. But the intervention was not only for the crowd, it was also for the woman. With the justice and mercy of Divine truth and love, He showed her the wrong she had committed, and presented her with the possibility that she could start a new life from that very moment, and never again return to a life of evil.

#### **THE TIME IS FULFILLED: CHANGE YOUR LIFE**

The Lord said: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the Gospel." (Mark 1: 15) For the kingdom of God to dwell among us, it has to dwell within us. It must enter our minds, and our hearts. It is like asking the Lord to re-build the hallway and the house we live in. He prepares us throughout our lives. It is the aim of His Divine Providence in every relationship, every experience, even every thought. It is not outside of us, it is within, not flesh, but spirit. It is called the *church*.

Our affirmative attitude toward repentance is the key first step, for by means of it, the church is established in our hearts. We read:

There are many means by which man, as he progresses in his early years, is *prepared* for the church and introduced into it; but the means whereby the church is *established* in man are acts of repentance...which are all things which cause man not to commit evils, which are sins against God...true repentance must be repentance of the will and of the thought. Thus, repentance is the first of the church. (TCR 510)

#### **PARTNERSHIP, NOT JUDGMENT**

Repentance is the central theme that the Lord delivers. He wants us to look at our thinking, and change our ways. By turning away from evil, He establishes the Church within us. This message is renewed in our day throughout the beautiful teachings of the New Church, which shine a beautiful light of Divine Truth from the Threefold Word into the hallway of our understanding. By means of this light, we are better able to see the patterns in our lives which lead

to suffering – for ourselves and for others. By rejecting the evil in ourselves, we move toward a world where love of God and love of the neighbor reign supreme.

This message of repentance is not judgmental; it is an encouraging appeal for partnership in a new way of thinking and a new life. “I must preach the kingdom of God...because for this purpose I have been sent...” (Luke 4:42-43)

Readings: Mark 1:1-5; Matthew 9:10-13; TCR 580

# Why I Believe

*Jennica S. Nobre*

A couple of years ago a number of my family members announced that they were atheists. This came as quite a surprise to me because up until this point they had been active church members and seemingly firm believers in God.

At first I went through a state of denial, telling myself that this was just a healthy exercise in testing their faith, or coming to understand what the New Church truths mean in a context that is separated from what they were taught. As time went by I heard more and more declarations that they indeed identified themselves as atheists, and found that they had indeed diverged significantly from the beliefs I had previously thought we shared.

They were on a journey all their own, they liked it, and I realized that I did not have a bird's-eye view of their process, nor did I know where they were headed. I was close, and still am close, to these individuals and as the reality of their new philosophy sunk in and I realized how radically different their world view was from mine, I began to have a serious personal crisis of faith.

I felt left out. Here they were starting with a blank slate, letting go of all prior beliefs and seeing what life looks and feels like with a completely new filter. I heard many a personal revelation and new idea, and new understandings vs. old understandings. It all seemed rather euphoric and my big question was: Why do I still believe in the old ideas that they have thrown out? By the time I could voice this question, I was in a full-fledged state of doubt.

Doubt is a very uncomfortable state for me. States of confirmed faith or denied faith seem much easier to deal with because the state of doubt is a state of constant questioning. I had no rock of truth to stand on or build a personal philosophy from. With doubt there are no answers, only questions, and I felt desperate. I would spend days bombarded with internal questions comparing what I understood of the atheist philosophy and my New Church philosophy. It was difficult because my husband and some of my friends were obviously uncomfortable with my doubt and I wished I could just come to a conclusion.

I knew I really wanted to find my way to a strong New Church faith, but I was also willing to let it all go if that philosophy no longer fit. I was resentful that I was going through this agonizing process of doubting. I had nowhere to turn, but just wallowed in my own misery. Previously I had found relief in prayer and scripture, but they are completely pointless if indeed there is no God. It felt like the seed of doubt had stolen away all the meaning of my life.

But that was not true.

I instinctively knew that the doubt had only gotten in because my faith was not strong, and I had to find out why I wanted to believe in the teachings of the New Church, and what was keeping me from knowing they are true. I had to find a rock; my own personal ground zero; a truth I know is true and do not question even a little bit. For me it came not from heaven, but from hell.

The teachings of the New Church on married partners have always been dear to me, though they too got thrown into the doubting pot. The ideas that one man is created for one woman and they live together for eternity as conjugal partners, that fornication does not add to the married partners spiritual life, and that adultery is a terrible sin are all truths I hold today to be very sacred. When I became aware of an extramarital relationship between people I knew, I felt something I hadn't felt in a long time – conviction. I knew in my heart that adultery is wrong, that marriage is sacred. And I felt no doubt.

It was invigorating finally to have a rock. I used it as a home base. If the Writings of the New Church and the Bible teach these truths and I believed them, then perhaps other things the New Church teaches were true as well. I began stacking other truths on my rock, and at first they would all get knocked off by some doubt. But I kept coming back to my rock, the one thing I just could not deny, and eventually the truths didn't fall off anymore.

I want to rewind a bit to remark upon a couple of other things that became clear to me while all of this was going on. I asked myself, "What does life feel like?" When I put on my atheist hat and lived in a meaningless world where everything happens by coincidence without any higher meaning life felt like, well, sometimes fun, scientifically interesting, but mostly sort of dull. There was nothing that would feed me for very long. When I put on my New Church hat, life felt full of promise, continual exploration and revelation, chock full of meaning and profundity, peace and love, and true happiness. Which one feels more alive? Is my answer not obvious?

I also came to the realization that there are as many philosophies as people on the Earth, and absolutely nobody can tell me which one is true. I have to figure out which one works for me. In order to do that I needed a compass. I found that a sense of inner peace was just the thing. Whenever I confronted a question or issue, I found that whatever brought me the greatest sense of inner peace was my answer. It had nothing to do with what was "correct" or "provable"; it simply added to a sense of peace and tranquility in my life. That works for me.

All of these things together – my rock, my concept of what life feels like, and my compass – came together, and led me forward to a strong faith in God and the New Church. It is only similar to the faith that I had before the years during which I doubted. God is here and many of the truths are the same, but

I believe not because everyone around me does, but because I love what God teaches through the Bible and the Writings. It makes sense to me, it brings me peace in my life, and with a strong faith I feel truly alive.

I do not, however, want to leave out mention of my atheist friends. With my personal rediscovery and confirmation of faith I have found complete peace with the fact that everyone needs to follow his or her own path. I personally do not agree with their philosophy, but I know that they are following their inner guide. They are doing what makes sense to them and that is the highest good that any one of us can attain.

The New Church teaches that to do what one understands to be good is in fact loving the Lord! Even if what you truly believe is that there is no God and you must look to the world for truth and guidance! Nobody can be served by living externally other than they are internally. God will meet all people where they are.

Doubt is a wonderful thing. It helped me look at life a whole new way, gain compassion and understanding for those who see things other ways, and uncover a strong sense of conviction that is my Faith.



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

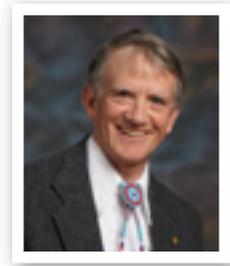
Jennica S. Nobre grew up in Glenview, Illinois, and lives in Bryn Athyn with her husband, Calebe, and two children, Zion and Solomon. In addition to mothering, she teaches Biology classes part time and leads naturalist programs at the Pennypack Ecological Restoration Trust.

This article originally appeared on New Church Perspective ([www.newchurchperspective.com](http://www.newchurchperspective.com)) as part of a series on doubt.

# Church News

## WESTERN CLERGY MEETINGS

A dozen ministers scattered throughout the western United States met at the New Church of Boulder Valley, Colorado, in mid-winter, led by the Rev. Daniel W. Goodenough, Western Regional Pastor.



The theme of the meetings, Dan says, “was renewing our focus on the Lord, and from that strong beginning we enjoyed three intense days of study, discussion, growing personal friendship, mutual spiritual support and collegial fun.”

The ministers began asking for such a meeting back in September. Since there was no budget for such an event, they planned it on their own and committed to covering their own travel and expenses. Some congregations were able to help with costs, and an unexpected contribution from a couple in the area made a big difference. Members of the Boulder congregation graciously hosted the ministers.

All 12 made presentations and we hope to present several of them in *New Church Life*. We begin in this issue with a study on *The Two Great Commissions and Spiritual Offspring* by the Rev. Garry Walsh of Phoenix, Arizona. (Page 150)

Other presentations included:

- The Rev. Glenn Alden, Tucson, Arizona: Questions about faith alone attitudes led to a broader discussion about the role of the Church, ministers and individuals in life situations
- The Rev. Glenn (Mac) Frazier, Austin, Texas: *Messages of Good and Truth in the Work of Evangelization*
- The Rev. Dan Goodenough: *Accommodate, Not Manipulate*
- The Rev. Willard Heinrichs, visiting pastor to groups and circles: Comparing the three stages in the World of Spirits with the history of the New Church
- Bishop Brian Keith: General Church issues, from budgets to communication
- The Rev. David Lindrooth, General Church Outreach: *Evangelization and Emerging Churches*
- The Rev. Ethan McCardell, Seattle, Washington: Integrating

effective pastoral leadership style with personal spiritual growth and regeneration

- The Rev. Mark Perry, San Diego, California: The values of mentoring
- The Rev. David Roth, Boulder, Colorado: *Thoughts on Pornography*
- The Rev. Ronald Schnarr, Boulder: *Messages of Evangelization from the New Testament Infilled*

### **AUSTIN LAUNCH**

The New Way Church, led by Pastor Mac Frazier, officially launched as a New Church congregation in Austin, Texas, on February 27, after several preparatory services.

This new congregation is meeting in a dance studio for Sunday services at 10 a.m., and also in other parts of the city to build community and provide community service. For more information and to subscribe to their free e-mail newsletter, go to [www.NewWayAustin.org](http://www.NewWayAustin.org). You can write to the pastor, [Mac@NewWayAustin.org](mailto:Mac@NewWayAustin.org).

### **INTEGRATING SCIENCE AND SPIRITUALITY**

The Swedenborg Center of Concord, Massachusetts, is sponsoring a series of presentations and discussions on *Integrating Science and Spirituality*. The programs are open to the public and are taking place at the Harvey Wheeler Center, adjacent to the New Church of Concord.

Congregation member George Gantz is spearheading the series which is designed “to help participants explore the range of scientific and religious thinking and to consider the relevance and implications of new scientific findings to our beliefs about spirituality. While the public debate and media coverage continue to pit science and religion against each other through mischaracterizations and inflammatory rhetoric, there is a lively and growing dialogue among scientists and religious scholars on the complementarity of science and spiritual modes of thought.”

The topics for the series are:

May 2 – *What is Truth*: George Gantz

May 16 – *New Understandings in Biology*: Rev. Dr. Reuben Bell

June 6 – *The Human Brain, Natural and Spiritual*: Dr. Justin Jungé

For more information, see [www.swedenborgcenterconcord.org](http://www.swedenborgcenterconcord.org).

### **BRITISH ACADEMY SUMMER SCHOOL**

The British Academy Summer School is scheduled July 24 to August 6 at the Purley Chase Center. This year’s team of teachers includes: the Rev. Mauro de

Padua, religion teacher at the Academy of the New Church in Bryn Athyn; the Revs. Fred Elphick and Alan Lewin from the United Kingdom; Burt and Rae Friesen, retired science teachers from the Academy; and Colchester Pastor Olaf Hauptmann. For more information see [www.newchurchuk.org](http://www.newchurchuk.org).

### **CHANGES AT INFORMATION SWEDENBORG**

The Rev. Brad Heinrichs, pastor of the Caryndale congregation in Kitchener, Ontario, Canada, and chairman of Information Swedenborg Inc., announced in a report on the April 9 annual meeting that challenging economic times are forcing changes.

He said the past year “has been an exciting one in many ways under the leadership of our Executive Director Liz Lichti. She has successfully brought us into the digital world with the creation of a blog, an electronic newsletter, a Facebook page, Skype meetings and a revamped website.

“This has significantly broadened our reach and has allowed us to bring many more people into contact with the wonderful teachings of the Lord.”

Unfortunately, he said, the interest attracted through the internet has not attracted enough financial support to remain viable, and the General Church in Canada, by far its largest supporter, has been forced to make difficult decisions as to how to allocate its resources most effectively.

GCIC has decided to switch its funding from ISI to a coordinated Outreach program “that will try to reach not only people interested in Swedenborg’s thought and philosophy, but also those looking specifically for a new religion.”

The plan is to have the GCIC Outreach program coordinator maintain the ISI website and contacts, with the hope that “if there is increased interest in ISI both financially and in volunteerism, then we could easily get things up and running again.” There will still be a line item in the GCIC budget for anyone who would like to contribute to this use.

Brad praised Liz for the work she has done to accomplish the mission of ISI “to promote, publicize and attract public interest in the Theological Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg.” He expressed confidence that GCIC “will do all it can to keep ISI a viable entity” and the hope that “in the future ISI will once again be able to flourish.”

### **100 YEARS AGO**

The Academy Commencement Address for 1911 by John Pitcairn is republished on page 140. Under Church News in *New Church Life* that year also is a report of the dedication of the New Library.

“On Sunday, April 9, at 4 o’clock, the new library building was dedicated. For the week previous the librarian, Mr. E. F. Stroh, had been directing the removal of the books from the College building with the very efficient and

enthusiastic aid of a number of the college students, rapidly carrying out arrangements previously planned, so that the books found their place in their new home with the greatest order and dispatch, and Saturday night found everything in readiness for the service on Sunday.

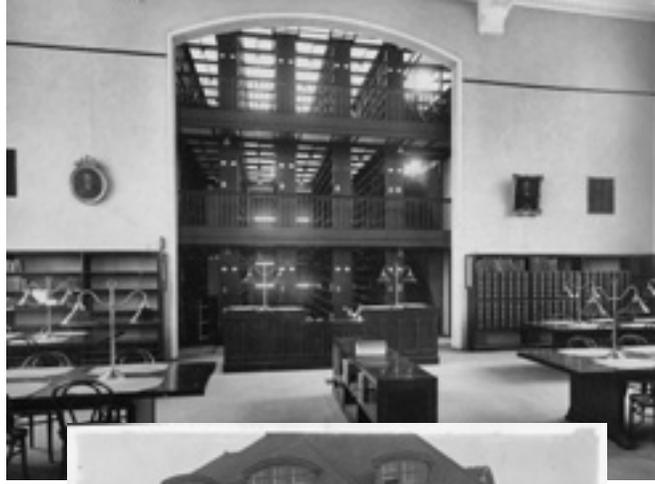
“The impressive ceremonies took place in the beautiful Reading Room, which possessed a wonderful expansiveness, absorbing without evidence of crowding a seemingly endless stream of people. When all were seated the faculty entered, and Bishop W.F. Pendleton and Rev. C.E. Doering conducted services at the desk, behind which a temporary altar had been placed.

“After the reading and responsive service there followed an address by the Bishop on the uses for which books and libraries had been created, and of their especial uses to us, enlarging particularly upon the thought that all books center around the Word of God, being written either to confirm or to attack some truth contained therein.

“The Bishop afterward announced the desire of Mr. John Pitcairn to make a formal presentation of his great gift to the Academy, and in a few appropriate words Mr. Pitcairn gave the building, free of all encumbrance, into the keeping of the institution.

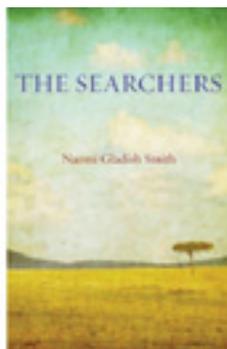
“The dedication followed, in which the building was solemnly devoted to the uses of the Lord’s New Church. . . . Everyone interested in the Academy and the work it is doing, will rejoice that, in the Providence of God, its invaluable collection of books and archives has been provided with so secure and permanent a home, and feel grateful to Mr. Pitcairn who instrumentality made its establishment possible.”

If you would like to see more photos of the Old Library, please go to: [www.brynathyn.edu/academics/swedenborg-library/digital-collections.html](http://www.brynathyn.edu/academics/swedenborg-library/digital-collections.html) then select Digital Collections> Archives> Academy of the New Church> Academy in Bryn Athyn> Buildings> Library.



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# Book Reviews



## The Searchers

By Naomi Gladish Smith

**A ‘Novel’ Approach to Swedenborg:** *The Searchers*, the third book in Naomi Gladish Smith’s acclaimed series about souls in the afterlife, follows a new group of seekers on their journey to heaven – or hell. Inspired by Emanuel Swedenborg’s descriptions of the afterlife, Smith paints a vivid picture of the world of spirits, a spiritual zone between heaven and hell where inner truths are revealed. In the beginning, it’s so much like earth that people often don’t realize they have died.

In *The Searchers*, the reader is reintroduced to Kate Douglas, who spent a lifetime on earth teaching young students, and who in death finds herself at the Academy, a school for new arrivals in the afterlife. Barely accustomed to her new existence, she’s confronted with the soul of her troubled nephew Dan, who took his own life. But even as Kate tries to help Dan face his inner demons, she must deal with her own issues: her helplessness at watching her husband Howard, still on earth and dying of a degenerative disease; her attraction to Frank; and an assignment to guide a particularly difficult new arrival named Janet. Their fates intertwine as they learn about this new world and ultimately discover hard truths about themselves.

This book will be enjoyed by people of all faith traditions – or no faith – who have an interest in the afterlife.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Naomi Gladish Smith, a former teacher, is the author of *The Arrivals* (2004) and *The Wanderers* (2007), which are both Swedenborgian novels, and numerous essays and short stories that have been published in the annual anthology *Chrysalis Reader*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *Interludes Magazine* and a

Editor’s note: The reviews of four books recently published by the Swedenborg Foundation are reprinted with their permission and our appreciation. These are written for a general audience. The books may be ordered from the Foundation, [www.swedenborg.com](http://www.swedenborg.com) and from the Cathedral Book Room in Bryn Athyn, [bookstore@newchurch.org](mailto:bookstore@newchurch.org).

*Journal of the American Medical Association* anthology. She is also a regular contributor to WBEZ, the National Public Radio station in Chicago, Illinois. She divides her time – with husband Bob – between Glenview, Illinois, and Lake Worth, Florida.



## The Guardian Angel Diary

By the Rev. Grant R. Schnarr

Do guardian angels exist? Can they help us overcome life's most difficult obstacles? New Church minister and life-coach Grant Schnarr draws together the voices of young people he has met and counseled to weave a fictional tale of love, fear and hope. *The Guardian Angel Diary* blends the

search and struggle to find meaning in this life with captivating glimpses into what heaven, and those who help us along the way, may be like.

Sixteen-year-old Nicole Bealart is a typical teenager, living in a world of homework, school plays and her own imagination – a world turned upside-down when she is diagnosed with brain cancer.

Her father, who never dealt with her mother's death from lung cancer six years earlier, begins drinking heavily. Nicole is left to care for herself and her younger brother, Luke, while juggling school and her growing fears about her own mortality.

Seeking answers, she begins writing a journal that becomes a vehicle for her to communicate with her guardian angel. As she approaches the date of an operation that may either save her life or end it, her inner and outer worlds collide and combine to give her a new understanding of family, friendship and life.

This fictional tale offers insight, inspiration and hope as Nicole, with the help of her inner guardian angel, grows in her understanding and in the power of love, determination and the strength that resides in each of our hearts. *The Guardian Angel Diary* is a story that will stay with you long after you turn the last page and change the way you look at life and the potential of life beyond.

### A TESTIMONIAL

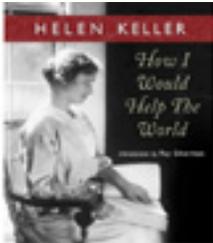
Dr. Mehmet Oz says: "Speaking with your guardian angel is just the kind of medicine we should be prescribing more often. Learn to tap into the wisdom

and grace of your own guardian angel through the spiritual journey of this exceptional young woman.”

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

The Rev. Grant Schnarr is a teacher, certified life coach and pastor of the Creekside Church in Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania, and a teacher at Bryn Athyn College. He is the author of several books on spiritual growth and recovery, including *The Art of Spiritual Warfare, You Can Believe, Return to the Promised Land, Spiritual Recovery* and *Wisdom*, co-edited with the Rev. Erik Buss.

Editor's note: This review was written by Jocelyn Kelly of Kelly & Hall Book Publicity in Marblehead, Massachusetts.



## Helen Keller: How I Would Help the World

Introduction by Rev. Dr. Ray Silverman

*How I Would Help the World* is the spiritual autobiography of celebrated humanitarian Helen Keller (1880-1968). Despite loss of sight, hearing and normal speech at 19 months of age, she went on to inspire millions as a graduate of Radcliffe College (Latin, German, French, *belles-lettres*), author of 12 books, a celebrated speaker in 39 countries, and an advocate for the rights of women and the disabled.

A 2010 Internet poll ranked Helen Keller #1 on the list of Top Ten Extraordinary People With Disabilities – a list that includes Ludwig von Beethoven and Stephen Hawking. A Gallup poll found her among the Most Widely Admired People of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

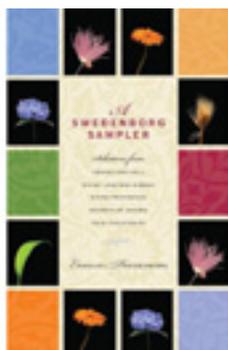
Keller's eloquent words and courageous spirit shine forth in this timeless book of wisdom, with an Introduction, plus parallel passages, by the Rev. Dr. Ray Silverman. Here, in this rediscovered work, she shares her heart – and where it is that she found the inspiration and guidance that kept her going in the darkest of times, both personally and professionally.

She was well into mid-life when she experienced the Great American Depression of the 1930s. One of her many admirers, author and humorist Mark Twain, wrote: “She doesn't just know merely things, she is splendidly familiar with the meanings of them. Her pages are electric with light.”

The book is filled with beautiful black-and-white photographs of Helen at different stages of life. It will be a welcome discovery for readers who already know of Helen, and will serve as an inspirational introduction for those who do not.

Library Journal comments: “Keller’s writing is always a marvel of lucidity, and Silverman adds to the store of our understanding of her and her faith.”

This is an excellent little empowerment bible to carry around – an excellent gift.



## A Swedenborg Sampler

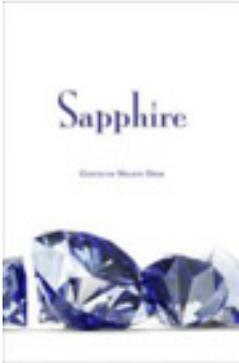
Selections from *Heaven and Hell*, *Divine Love and Wisdom*, *Divine Providence*, *True Christianity* and *Secrets of Heaven* –  
Translated by the Rev. George F. Dole, Lisa Hyatt Cooper and the Rev. Dr Jonathan S. Rose

Swedish scholar and theologian Emanuel Swedenborg spent his life exploring both the physical sciences and the spiritual realms in his quest to understand the secrets of the human soul. In the process, he left volumes of writings that continue to inspire seekers today.

For new readers of Swedenborg, the challenge is knowing where to start and what to read. This volume offers a taste of some of his most powerful writings, now available in new, contemporary translations.

Emanuel Swedenborg (1688 – 1772) was a Swedish scientist, nobleman and theologian who spent his life investigating the mysteries of the soul. Born in Stockholm to a staunchly Lutheran family, he graduated from the University of Uppsala and then traveled to England, Holland, France and Germany to study the leading scientists of the time. He gained favor with Sweden’s King Charles XII, who gave him the position of overseer of the Swedish mining industry.

Between 1743 and 1745 he began to have visions of heaven, hell and Jesus Christ which resulted in a stream of books about the nature of God, the afterlife and the inner meaning of the Bible. He devoted the last decades of his life to studying Scripture and presenting his own unique theology to the world.



# Sapphire

By Gertrude Nelson Diem

Possibly God needs your love more than you need His. He has a greater capacity to need. Have you ever thought of that? No, I had never thought of that. It was an intriguing idea, and by the end of her short book *Sapphire*, Gertrude Nelson Diem had convinced me it was true. But along the way she raised questions even more challenging that I'm pondering still.

The paradox at the heart of *Sapphire* is this: The first thing love requires is an object outside itself. God is love, so His need for an object is absolute, but He is also infinite, so where does He find something other than Himself to love? The existence of anything outside the Infinite is both impossible and necessary. Human autonomy is both impossible and necessary.

Diem uses a flawed sapphire to stand for this God-given autonomy, independence, self-determination. On one side of the fault that runs through the heart of the sapphire stands the Garden of Eden, Abel with his offering, and the Son of God. On the other side stands wilderness, Cain with "the limp, dead stems of his rejected offering," and the Son of Man.

Friends have asked me what kind of book *Sapphire* is. I have difficulty answering them. It's fiction, and it has a plot, but the plot is not the point. It's too short for a novel but much too weighty for a novelette. It's almost a work of philosophy, if philosophy admits of vivid, wild imagery and paradoxical monologue. At any rate there are characters, and one of the characters is an alien named Rohoo.

It is through Rohoo that Diem asks an important question on which she herself seems to have found satisfaction but which is still hanging for me. That question is how we as sapphire beings are to live our lives in the tension between the two realms of oneness with God and autonomy.

She makes it clear that the solution does not lie in mixing the two sides. As she has Rohoo say: "From the one side, the Garden presses, from the other side, the wilderness. Heaven and hell press; good and evil press! Is there not the appearance of profanation – the sacrilege of serving both God and the devil? But you, most benevolent One, have made my mind to form the thought that here there is no profanation.

The profane is to make opposites into a one – alike, lukewarm. In *Sapphire*, I see that there is a new state which sharpens the difference as never before, because neither is rejected. Rather, they are held apart. This clearly renders

the cold influence colder, and the hot hotter. Or as God reassures another character, “What is important is that you never acted from your hate.”

The solution to the puzzle lies somehow in the separation of the intellect from the will: “Now my mind perceives an answer,” says Rohoo, “to my question as to how the sapphire man of this planet attains the state of justice between his angel side and his demonic. Is it not by avoiding the earnest action? To be earnest is infantile. It is to act unilaterally. One is either earnestly good or earnestly bad. One is simplistic! . . . To do good, laughing, is to say, ‘Only God is good! Who am I to seem to be doing this good thing?’ To do evil, laughing, is to say to God, ‘Only for infinite You do I show what I would like to have done.’ But laughing!”

I don’t understand yet, but the validity and worth of the message in the parts I do understand convince me there’s treasure for me to discover hiding in the murkier passages of this book.

Reviewed by Lisa Hyatt Cooper, translator of the New Century Edition *Secrets of Heaven* for the Swedenborg Foundation

Publisher’s note: *Sapphire* has been published posthumously. It is a highly symbolic and philosophical science-fiction adventure that, while it may not appeal to all readers, offers some fascinating thoughts and feelings to ponder. It is a work that calls for more than one reading. What does shine through is its author’s deep love for Swedenborgian symbolism, and for the concept that God desires a loving union with each of us, despite our flaws. *Sapphire* is available from [www.fountainpublishing.com](http://www.fountainpublishing.com) where you can read more reviews and some sample text from the book. It is also available at the New Church Bookstore in Bryn Athyn.

## New Church Services Online

Bryn Athyn Cathedral has begun live streaming its Family and Adult Services at [www.ustream.tv/channel/brynathynservice](http://www.ustream.tv/channel/brynathynservice). You can also link to the services through the Bryn Athyn Church and Cathedral websites, [www.brynathynchurch.org](http://www.brynathynchurch.org) and [www.brynathyncathedral.org](http://www.brynathyncathedral.org). The Family Service starts broadcasting on Sunday at 9:40 a.m. Eastern time, and the Adult Service beginning at 10:40 a.m.

The cathedral staff has been experimenting with lighting, sound and camera angles, and the feedback from those viewing the services has been very positive. The cameras are not obtrusive, are operated remotely, and do not take anything away from the flow of the services.

In addition to live viewing, the hope is to have services archived so they may be viewed online at any time. Some of the services have been archived already and they are working on a permanent solution.

This is an exciting project that allows people anywhere in the world to participate in a live cathedral service. This should be especially valuable to people who are isolated or otherwise unable to get to a church service. Jim Adams, Director of the Cathedral, welcomes your feedback at [Jim.Adams@bacathedral.org](mailto:Jim.Adams@bacathedral.org).

Also available online are live services from the New Church of Boulder Valley, Colorado, broadcast at 10:30 a.m. Mountain time at [www.bouldernewchurch.org](http://www.bouldernewchurch.org).

You can also see live sermon-only versions of New Church LIVE services at [www.newchurch.org/activities/newchurchlive](http://www.newchurch.org/activities/newchurchlive).

# Life Lines

## **FOUR CENTURIES LATER**

This year is the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the most famous book in the English language, the King James Version of the Bible. It has been printed more than a billion times and still leads best-seller lists every year. Throughout the world it remains the focus of faith – and controversy.

It took seven years of dedicated labor by 47 of the most learned men of England to produce that first edition in 1611. It not only is a faithful transcribing of the Word of God, but has had enormous influence on our language, literature and poetry.

As the product of a committee – unlike the Writings – it is remarkable for its consistency. Debora Shuger, distinguished professor of English at UCLA, was quoted as saying: “What has always struck me about it is its faithfulness to the Greek and Hebrew originals. You can find errors and question interpretations, but these were translators who heard the poetry, the underlying feeling, and stayed true to it throughout.”

The KJV was meant to be the official biblical standard and do away with all disputes, but people of different faiths – without the revelation of the internal sense – interpret it in their own ways.

A columnist in *The Philadelphia Inquirer* noted: “All religious people, and all members of political parties, have a right to their sacred texts and their ways of reading them. All churches, and all political parties, have a right to seek new members. But all sides, in furthering their aims, have forgotten love of neighbor. The violence of today’s political discourse reminds us of how beautiful, how wise, and how little heeded the King James Bible is today.”

(BMH)

## **A REVOLUTIONARY TEXT**

A King James Edition of the Bible has been on display with other historic Bibles at the Old Christ Church in Philadelphia through the end of May. There it is also considered a radical text that helped to sow the seeds of the American Revolution.

The Rev. Timothy Safford of the Old Christ Church said that once the colonists were able to read the Bible in English for themselves, they discovered that “humankind is free because freedom is an inalienable right endowed by their divine maker.”

On July 4, 1776, as the nation’s founders approved the Declaration of Independence, the vestry of this venerable church voted treasonously to scratch the name of “his Most Gracious Sovereign Lord King George” from its Book of Common Prayer.

British monarchs long had feared that allowing their subjects to read the Bible in English might instill in them dangerous ideas of religious autonomy – even democracy.

King James had no idea what he was unleashing with the translation and its impact over 400 years. Yet nowhere, said Rev. Safford, “did James’ decision to give God’s Word to the masses play out more than in the American colonies.”  
(BMH)

### **HISTORY, WRITTEN BY FREE CHOICE**

Early in the “Arab Spring” uprisings against tyranny in the Middle East, Michael Novak, author of *The Universal Hunger for Liberty: Why the Clash of Civilizations Is Not Inevitable*, noted in an essay in *The Wall Street Journal*:

“Every story in the Bible, Hebrew and Christian, is the story of a choice made freely in the often hidden will of each individual. From Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden choosing whether or not to pick and eat of the apple on the one tree reserved to God, to King David choosing in one chapter to be faithful to his Lord, and in another not to be, the suspense in every book of the Bible is: What will the individual choose next? In other words, in the mind of the Creator, the arena that matters is within the human will. Lord Acton used his own metaphor: the pursuit of liberty is the golden thread that ties together all human history.”

He added: “James Madison, the chief architect of the U.S. Constitution and father of our Bill of Rights, defined religion as ‘the duty we owe to our Creator and the manner of discharging it, (which) can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force or violence.’ This duty is inalienable – no one else can fulfill it, not one’s family nor civil society nor state – and grounded in the singular conscience of each individual. In that duty is the basis of individual human rights.”

(BMH)

### **HOGWARTS AND THE ACADEMY**

I liked Alan Jacobs book about C.S. Lewis (*The Narnian*) very much, so I was interested to read his latest, a book of essays entitled *Wayfaring*. Several were about J.K. Rowling and the Harry Potter books, which he sees as having a strong moral compass and being “always on the side of life.” I was especially

struck by how much Jacobs' thoughts on the significance of the boarding school Harry attended apply also to the Academy of the New Church:

“Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry is as central to these stories as Harry Potter himself. J.K. Rowling sees that school – a school like Hogwarts, anyway – can be loved not as an alternative to friends and family but rather as a means of solidifying and clarifying one's love of friends and family.

“In these books, children who pass through the barrier at Platform Nine and Three-Quarters and board the Hogwarts Express are indeed in some sense leaving their family, and that not only is frightening for them but is also, for their parents, ‘like a little bereavement.’ But those parents had also attended Hogwarts and their characters had been formed there, so we can also say that by sending their children to Hogwarts they strengthen bonds among the family members.... Likewise, the intensity of life at Hogwarts means that the friendships formed there are of particular intimacy.” (Alan Jacobs, *Wayfaring*, p. 75-76)

(WEO)

### WHAT USE IS IT?

The doctrine of use gives us a very practical way of considering the worth of anything. But applying it properly does take some thought. In general, there are uses for the body (food, clothing, etc.), uses for the mind (education, books and other forms of disseminating knowledge), and uses for the soul (worship, prayer, meditating on the Word).

What we need to do is consider individual uses in the context of this whole hierarchy of uses, otherwise we run the danger of giving more importance to a lesser use than a greater one. For instance, our occupation is certainly our use, but not our *only* use; and it would be a misuse of the doctrine if it were interpreted to rationalize working such long hours that we neglect our relationship with our family.

The value and true “usefulness” of anything depends on how well it serves the universal end in creation, a heaven from the human race. The supreme use of our individual lives is to regenerate; all our activities are truly useful in relation to how well they serve that overarching use of our lives on earth. We want to avoid being like Martha in the Gospel story – so busy that we neglect the most important thing of all.

(WEO)

## **THE USE OF MARRIAGE**

We say that the greatest of all uses is our regeneration, since heaven is the Divine purpose behind creation, but the Writings also say that the love that unites the souls of a man and a woman in marriage is the highest and most delightful of all loves because its use (the propagation of the human race) is the greatest.

These two uses – regeneration and marriage – make a one because regeneration *is* a marriage: the joining together of love and wisdom in a person. This is why in Scripture heaven is compared to a wedding.

Marriage is a kind of “mutual regeneration” pact, in which the wife’s will and the husband’s wisdom are united in what amounts to a new, more perfect human being: one angel. This joining together of goodness and truth between the married partners makes the church, and heaven, with them.

(WEO)

## **WITH GOD ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE**

Anyone reading the previous paragraph might well feel a sense of tremendous inadequacy. This is all so idealistic! So pure, so perfect, so profound! And what are we? Just an ordinary couple, trying to cope with life, trying to do our best. It’s practically a miracle these days if a couple manages to stay married at all, much less live together happily ever after. It’s true: a marriage of souls, heaven, one angel.... it’s all very ideal; far removed from the realities of this world. But the Lord’s kingdom is not of this world, and with Him all things are possible. Even heaven.

(WEO)

## **BUT NOT IN AN INSTANT**

Neither heaven nor a marriage of souls is attained without going through temptation combats. We are in this for the long haul. “Seek, and you shall find.” “He who endures to the end will be saved.” And: “Do not fear, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” (Matthew 7:7, 10:22, Luke 12:32)

(WEO)