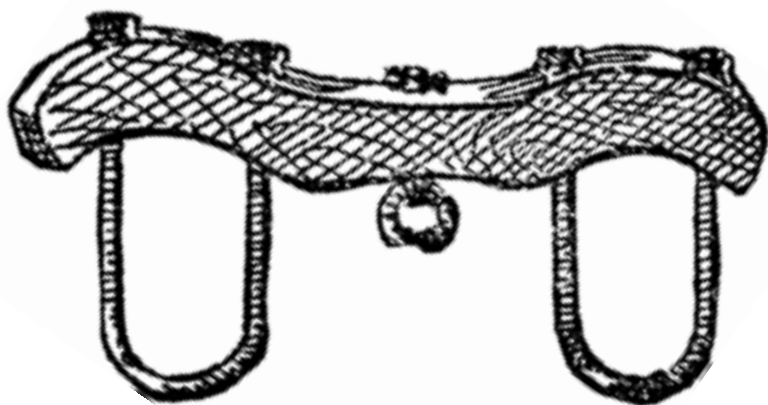


NEW CHURCH *Life*

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

JULY/AUGUST 2011



Finding Satisfaction in Life

Finding purpose in life is a challenge but in two sermons on Jeremiah the Rev. Jeremy Simons says the secret is being true to what the Lord teaches—and His yoke is easy. See pages 218 and 222.

NEW CHURCH LIFE (USPS 378-180)

PUBLISHED BIMONTHLY BY

THE GENERAL CHURCH OF THE NEW JERUSALEM

Bruce Henderson, Managing Editor

Rev. Walter Orthwein, Spiritual Editor

SUBSCRIPTION: \$30 TO ANY ADDRESS. Single copy \$5.00

Postmaster: Send address changes to: New Church Life, PO Box 45, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009

e-mail: datacenter@anc-gc.org

New Church Life

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

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NOTES ON THIS ISSUE

In his opening address to the General Assembly in Bryn Athyn in June, Bishop Tom Kline spoke about “Helping People Grow Closer to the Lord God Jesus Christ in His Second Coming.” The beauty of the Second Coming is that we can form a relationship with the Lord as a loving God who wants only our eternal happiness. Our mission – as a church and as individuals – comes down to repentance and the Two Great Commandments: to love the Lord with all our soul and our neighbor as ourselves. This address was greeted with a prolonged standing ovation. (We will present more from the Assembly in future issues.)

In back-to-back sermons on Jeremiah’s mission and investment in the future, the Rev. Jeremy Simons examines just what it takes to find satisfaction in life. It isn’t all about achievement, accomplishment and success. It is about developing a purpose and mission in life, which comes from the Lord’s presence with us through living what the Lord teaches. The calling is a challenge, although as the Lord assures us, “My yoke is easy.”

Esther Yardumian-Smyth’s commencement address to the Academy Class of 2011 turned out to be a sublime “last lecture” – her touching and inspiring farewell after 17 years of teaching in the Girls School. “Mrs. Esther,” as she was fondly known, left an indelible impression on hundreds of girls (and boys) – in the English classroom, in Glenn Hall where she was head housemother, in theatrical productions, and in promoting a civil, moral and spiritual life. Her commencement address rings with the mantras and messages of her unique New Church teaching and earned her a prolonged standing ovation of gratitude.

The ordination and inauguration of six second-career men into the ministry illustrates the guiding hand of the Lord’s Providence. The Rev. Dr. Andrew Dibb, Dean of the Theological School, preached a sermon at the ordination service about how the Lord knew us before he formed us – and the lesson for all of us in these six men being led from other successful careers into the ministry. We are also happy to print the Declarations of Faith and Purpose of these new ministers of the General Church.

Our series on Introducing Our Ministers continues with the Rev. Thane Glenn, a second-career minister who has also held onto his first career – teaching English and writing in Bryn Athyn College of the New Church – and now enriches that vocation by teaching Religion and offering other pastoral services in the College.

In an essay from New Church Perspective, the Rev. Brian Smith examines *The Uneasy Alliance of Faith and Doubt* as the culmination of a series of essays



At the inauguration and ordination service in Bryn Athyn, May 22, 2011, left to right: Rev. Dr. Andrew Dibb, the new Revs. Howard Thompson, Ryan Sandström, Todd Beiswenger, Pearse Frazier, Calvin Odhner and Stephen Muires, and the Rt. Rev. Thomas Kline.

on doubt – and shows how doubt can help to refine and strengthen our faith.

The Rev. Coleman Glenn reviews a popular new book, *Johnny Appleseed: The Man, The Myth and the American Story* by Howard Means. The book has received generally favorable national attention. New Church men and women may quibble or even cringe at some of Means' statements, but Coleman says he does get a lot of things right and helps to promote Johnny Appleseed as an ambassador for Swedenborg.

Al Lindsay, a member of the General Church Board of Directors from Sarver in western Pennsylvania, wrote a challenging letter to his fellow Board members about our responsibilities to the Church – to spread the Word and support its uses. With Mr. Lindsay's permission we are reprinting his letter because of the powerful things it has to say to all of us about our relationship and duty to the Church we love.

Raymond David of California asks: *What kind of a person do you want to be?* This brief article nicely complements Rev. Jeremy Simons' sermons on satisfaction in life because we were put on this earth for a purpose – a large part of which is learning to be angels in heaven.

The Office of Education, with the General Church and the Academy, has launched a Lifelong Learning Program in Bryn Athyn with evening and summer classes for anyone interested. Now Scott Daum, Coordinator for New Church Education, is inviting people throughout the Church to sign up for a class that will be offered over the internet.

CORRECTIONS

Due to a glitch in the printing, some copies of the July-August issue of *New Church Life* went out with two or more blank pages. If this happened with your issue and you did not yet receive a replacement, please let us know and we will get a complete copy to you. (Please contact Bruce.Henderson@anc-gc.org 267-502-2526 or Kristine.Medley@newchurch.org 267-502-4901)

In the notice about online services, the Family Service from the Bryn Athyn Cathedral starts broadcasting at 9:10 a.m. Sunday, with the service beginning at 9:30.

In the list of graduates at the end of John Pitcairn's 1911 Academy Commencement Address, the last letter was dropped from the name of Anna Niederer.

Editorials

Is God's Love Really 'Unconditional?'

The assertion that "God's love is unconditional" is made so frequently that it's easy to get the impression that about all there is to know about Divine love is that there are no strings attached. The problem is, there are strings attached – that is, other truths concerning our relationship with the Lord.

It is true that "He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good." (Matthew 5:45) But that truth, beautiful as it is, becomes misleading when separated from the whole body of truth of which it is a part.

The other half of the equation is that His love must be *received*; and there are definitely *conditions* for its reception. The Ten Commandments, and all the precepts of the Word, are the "conditions."

Love, the Writings explain, must be reciprocal if the two parties are to be conjoined by it, which is what the Lord seeks so that He might give us life in all its fullness and joy.

The question, therefore, is not whether God loves us – that is a given – but whether we love Him; and the answer is disturbingly practical: "If you love Me, keep My commandments." (John 14:15) Talk about an inconvenient truth!

How perverse it would be, then, to use the infinite generosity of Divine love to rationalize acting contrary to the very laws of order derived from that love for the sake of making us receptive to it.

Some of the conditions the Lord has set forth in His Word for our reception of the love and life He seeks to give us will at times seem opposed to the happiness we desire. In fact, they *will be* opposed to it, because the kind of love the Lord seeks to give us is purer than our natural loves. We cannot receive it without going through temptation combats – fighting against our own natural inclination toward disorder. But the Lord will assist us in these struggles, and in the end the happiness He wills for us will far surpass the ephemeral earthly pleasures we seek for ourselves.

The particular temptations each person has to deal with vary, but no one is "without sin" and thus in a position to condemn anyone else. "*If you, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?*" (Psalm 130:3) But not condemning someone is not the same as saying what he is doing is not wrong.

The Lord, certainly, condemns no one; but He does tell us to repent.

Notice the two parts to what He told the woman taken in adultery: “*Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.*” (John 8:11) He didn’t say adultery was all right. That would not have helped that woman, and it would make it easier for others to be drawn into that sin.

The Lord loves everyone, just they are, but He also seeks to change us into something better than we are. Loving us doesn’t mean He loves the things in our character – the evils inherent in our natural heredity – which are opposed to the order of life into which His love can flow.

The Lord’s love for us is like the love of parents for their children. They love them even when they misbehave, but *because* they love them and are concerned for their happiness parents constantly impose conditions on their children’s behavior to help them develop into good and true human beings.

The Lord turns away from no one. *He* never shuts the door to heaven. But for us to enter in and be comfortable there our lives must be re-ordered and brought into harmony with the life of heaven.

Ironically, the practical effect of a simplistic and unbalanced application of the truth that God’s love is “unconditional” is to justify and further entrench states which are contrary to the rules of life the Lord has established for the sole purpose of making us receptive of His love.

The Lord’s love is perfect, infinite and all-embracing. The only conditions limiting it are in us, but if we persevere in our efforts to live by His Word He will bring us into the genuine freedom and boundless joy of His kingdom.

(WEO)

The Reality of Hell

Most people are confident and comfortable believing in God and heaven. They aren’t so sure about hell.

Current best-sellers touting the promise of heaven include *Heaven Is for Real: A Little Boy’s Astounding Story of His Trip to Heaven and Back* and *Love Wins: A Book About Heaven, Hell and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived* by popular evangelical preacher Rob Bell.

There aren’t any best-sellers yet from sinners who came back from hell – although the tabloid media would love that.

Once *Heaven and Hell* becomes the best-seller it deserves to be, millions of people will have the truth they seek. Until then most Christians are left with just the literal sense of the Word, various human interpretations, their own imagination and perception.

Rob Bell's book has become popular with many Christians who have trouble reconciling a loving God with eternal torment in hell. A rallying point came at a Christian art show where one of the pieces included a quote from Gandhi, and someone attached a note: "Reality check. He's in hell."

Bell and his followers are offended by the concept of a God who condemns people to eternal suffering – especially someone like Gandhi, whose only "sin" was not being born Christian. They want their God to be "more humane," so Bell promotes a vision where everyone goes to heaven, no matter the quality of his life and loves.

But this offends a lot of traditional Christians who believe what the Bible teaches about redemption and repentance. They're pleased that Bell and others preach living a good life, but don't like him giving tacit permission to sinners to indulge their evil loves and still be welcomed into heaven. It is as though Bell is throwing hell out with the hellfire – and maybe absolving people of the need for any faith at all.

Christians have been debating judgment and atonement for 2,000 years, with only their own instincts and the interpretations of sincere but mortal leaders to guide them. They clearly love God, understand that we must be in freedom to choose whether or not to follow Him, and embrace the concept that in the afterlife at least – and at last – there is justice. But without the revealed internal sense of the Word, they flounder at reconciling a loving God with a hell so contrary to everything He represents.

How blessed we are in this confused world with what has been revealed to us about God and life after death through Swedenborg. We know that everyone is born for heaven and can get there just by believing in God and living a good life from conscience. And we know that God loves us enough to leave us in freedom to accept or reject Him – free to choose heaven or hell.

We know that heaven and hell are not places of abstract mystery because we've all been there. We've all glimpsed heaven in moments of peace, beauty and innocence. We've all felt the presence of hell in anger, lust, deceit, greed, ill will. We know that heaven and hell are not remote, alien places. They are within us.

We know that the biblical fire and brimstone of hell are not literal but represent burning hatred and cruelty – that those in hell do not literally burn to eternity but revel in their burning animosities. And we know that no one is condemned to hell but freely chooses it as the spiritual home of his or her spirit. In fact, spirits in hell just stay where they already have chosen to be in this life.

Mark Twain liked to joke that heaven is for weekdays and hell for weekends, but we know that angels cannot tolerate hell and find it repulsive. Evil spirits allowed into heaven – because they feel entitled – quickly find it insufferable

and flee back to what they really love. That is what is meant in the parable in Luke of the rich man in hell and the beggar Lazarus in heaven – that there is “a great gulf fixed” between them.

Most Christians have only that image of burning pits in hell and so struggle with the concept of people forever tormented. It is so much easier to comprehend when we know the true nature of hell, that the hells are as numerous and diverse as the heavens, and that they exist only because its inhabitants freely choose and love to be there. They choose it throughout their lives on earth by rejecting God and heaven. They recognize it and embrace it as their home. It is eternal only because they want it to be.

Answering the call of the Great Commission and spreading the Word of the Second Coming means helping others to understand the reality of heaven and hell, and the free choices that lead to each.

People need to know that feelings of hell within us can be overcome with shame and regret, with prayer and determination to do better – with repentance. They need to know that as anger, hate, selfishness, adultery and deceit become a way of life, without regret or remorse, the more the choice is made to “make my bed in hell.” And they need to know and believe that the more we repent, the closer we are to heaven.

They need doctrinal assurance that while hell is doing all it can to seduce us, the Lord is constantly striving to lift everyone to heaven. Both are pressing for us to choose. The Lord assures that all of us get to heaven – but are allowed to opt for hell. It is our choice.

(BMH)

Perspectives on Hell

In *Paradise Lost* John Milton talks about “the hell within” – as though it is not some faraway, mysterious place. William James contemplated that “the hell to be endured hereafter is no worse than the hell we make for ourselves by habitually fashioning our characters in the wrong way.”

Some years ago a convict in Ohio wrote a letter to the judge who had sentenced him about what prison was really like. Just substitute “hell” every time he says “prison,” and it’s a perceptive description of hell as well:

“Prison is where one ceases to live and merely tries to exist as best he can in an unbearably noisy atmosphere. It is a place of frustration and futility, a place of little hope and much hopelessness.

“Prison is too many days without beauty or the sound of honest laughter,

too much time in emotional and spiritual darkness, a place where true smiles are rare and kindness almost nonexistent.

“Prison is a nothingness of days and nights that never change, a place where only those who have existed there can ever know what a living hell it is.”

He does not complain of torture or “hellfire” – just “too many days without beauty,” of “little hope and much hopelessness.” He seems to have come to terms with the fact that this “hell” is a natural consequence of his choices, and that he – and everyone – is free to choose better.

(BMH)

The Limits That Free

There are two kinds of freedom, heavenly and infernal, and from the perspective of either one the other looks like servitude. The angels perceive that the devils are slaves to their own lusts and the falsities that excuse them; the devils imagine that angels’ lives are intolerably restricted by the laws of heaven.

What the devils do not understand is that the order of heaven that limits the angels’ conduct, and even their thought, is the very thing that keeps them in a state of freedom.

When we consider what freedom actually is, we can see that the loose “freedom” of hell is an illusion, while the circumscribed freedom of heaven is authentic.

All freedom is of love. Heavenly freedom is the expression of good loves; hellish freedom expresses evil loves. When the loves we wish to act on agree with Divine order, which is Reality itself, then we are free. This is why the freedom of heaven is real.

Very simply, being free is being able to do what you want to do. Therefore, we can never know real freedom as long as we wish to act contrary to the order of Reality itself, since – in the long run, at least – this is impossible.

By the order of Reality itself we mean the spiritual order of human life established by Divine love acting through Divine wisdom, as well as the corresponding natural order.

The harm that results from going against the real order of things is more or less obvious on the physical plane of life: defying gravity, for instance, is not a good idea. But the consequences of acting contrary to the *spiritual* order that governs human life, though perhaps not so immediately apparent, are even worse.

It has been said in the Church that no one really breaks the Ten Commandments; the order of life they represent persists whether we observe it or not. We can only break ourselves against them.

These spiritual laws are no more arbitrary or legalistic than the law of gravity; they simply reflect what *is*. They were mandated by God solely for the sake of making us free and happy.

In our rebellious, natural state, they seem burdensome and restrictive, and we must force ourselves to obey them. But gradually, as we grow in understanding of them and why they are necessary – and as we enter more and more into the order of life they represent and discover the happiness this brings – we realize that the Lord’s yoke is easy and His burden light, and that the “strait and narrow path” is the one that leads to the fulfillment of our heart’s desire. And we will be thankful for the limits the Lord has set on us, or rather on the evils that would prevent us from becoming the free and happy human beings He created us to be.

(WEO)



A NEW CHURCH TRANSLATION OF THE WORD

We are happy to announce the publication of the first New Church translation of the whole Sacred Scripture in English. It became available June 19th, with a companion booklet which explains the reasons why we

need a New Church translation, as well as some of the things a New Church translation can convey to the reader.

At the General Assembly we gave a presentation describing this revision of the Sacred Scripture done in the light of the Writings, and why this is necessary for the New Church. For those who could not make it to the Assembly, most of the content of the presentation appears in the companion booklet which comes with each book.

The price for ordering is \$25, plus postage. *Please note: Because of the size of the book you might wish to find a ride for your order.*

For orders/questions e-mail kporders@kncs.org, or call Denise Hendricks 610.756.3564, or Kate Pitcairn, 610.756.6140 x 208

Payment should be sent to Denise or Kate, and checks can be made to KNCS, with the notation on the memo line, publication fund. Kempton Project, c/o KNCS, P.O Box 140, Kempton, PA 19529.

The Revisers: Rev. Stephen Cole, Rev. Andrew Heilman, Roy Odhner, Kate Pitcairn and Rev. Lawson Smith

Letters to the Editors

The Holy Supper Elements: What is the Essence?

To The Editors:

Is it reasonable to force persons suffering from alcoholism to consume alcohol in order to receive communion? Is it reasonable to deny them Holy Supper if they abstain?

Some members of the General Church clergy have concluded that only wine and no alternative should be served during communion. This places individuals suffering from the disease of alcoholism in a terrible situation. Do they break their abstinence from alcohol and risk severe consequences in order to participate in communion, the “most holy act of worship”?

I don't doubt the sincerity of the clergy who have concluded that the use of wine is imperative. However, I also don't doubt the sincerity of devout early members of the Church who ardently believed that the use of any alcohol was wrong.

What is the essence of communion? Does it depend on the physical bread and fluid consumed? Or is it what occurs in the mind of the person participating in the sacrament? Symbolism is important, but not essential. Isn't the essential aspect of communion the attempt by the individual to approach the Lord by ordering his or her life and taking small steps toward reformation and regeneration?

It seems to me that what is ideal is being confused with what is essential. Yes, there are important reasons why wine is the ideal fluid. But is it essential? Consuming water or unfermented grape juice may not be the ideal symbol, but it is still a valuable symbol.

My wife and I have New Church friends who suffer from alcoholism and who carefully abstain from any consumption. In January we participated in the happy event of spiritual renewal during Eldergarten where a highlight was attending church with friends from across the country. Communion was an important part of that event.

During the service one of our friends was confronted with the choice of either participating in communion or breaking his long abstinence from alcohol and risking the consequences. He broke his abstinence. This was a terrible thing for his church to do to him. By the way, another of our friends who lived in a society where alcohol was required, simply stopped going to communion services altogether.

If only wine is provided, how can alcoholics participate? Could they come

forward and accept the bread, but not accept the wine? This seems more disruptive to the symbolism of the sacrament and to their mental process than the alternative of providing water or grape juice.

I can only conclude that requiring the consumption of alcohol as a condition of receiving Holy Supper, the most holy act of worship, is wrong. No matter how closely reasoned the argument, the bottom line is that ministers who do this are not helping people attain regeneration, but are obstructing it.

Asking a priest to do something he thinks is not ideal seems to pale in comparison to asking an alcoholic to risk his or her physical and mental health. With all due respect to the priest, it is what is happening in the mind of the communicant that is essential. Forcing the consumption of alcohol or keeping alcoholics away from communion is destructive.

Should there be a General Church policy assuring the availability of communion? I respectfully suggest that there should.

Kent Fuller
Glenview, Illinois

Read the Lord's Word and Follow

To The Editors:

Re *Put No Faith in Councils* by the Rev. Frank Rose, May/June 2011 *New Church Life*, page 125:

Some years ago, I decided it was high time to begin a systematic and thorough reading of the Heavenly Doctrines instead of a book here and there. At that time, I was aware of the feelings that the usual fermented wine and unleavened bread offered at Holy Supper seemed unkind to many in the church and to newcomers. I had to wonder along with them, "Certainly the Lord wants everyone to take part, doesn't He? After all, He loves us and wants what is best for us." These thoughts are in the back of my mind while I read my devotional reading each day.

Is it easy to read the Lord's Word? No. As one dear friend is fond of pointing out, "Learning to read the Lord's Word is like learning to use a new computer program or a new electronic device. If you try to work these things the way *you* think they should work, not much goes well. You have to step back and learn to think like their designer, and then the light goes on, and you can work the device or do the job."

Reading the Lord's Word is the same. His whole aim is our eternal welfare. He has the system in place that will lead us to the eternal peace and joy of

working in His kingdom. However, it will only work *if* we will put aside our worldly agendas and learn to think His Way and do His Will.

Over the years – just reading, not doing a doctrinal study – it has seemed that when the Lord talks about the Holy Supper, He tells us that the wine represents His Truth, and the bread represents His Good. These are the elements to be used in the Holy Supper. Over and over, He explains in some detail their correspondence, and why that correspondence is essential.

The Lord spends a lot of pages in the Heavenly Doctrines giving us the spiritual meaning of the Old and New Testaments. It is obvious that He is serious about correspondences. We need to be as well. If fermented wine and unleavened bread are what need to be served for Holy Supper, the question arises, “What if someone can’t have wine or bread without getting sick? That isn’t fair.” We may not like it, or be comfortable with the idea, but perhaps our eternal welfare is far more involved than our worldly ideas of fair.

The Lord also tells us, over and over again, that we are to read His Word. We are to obey and live by His Ten Commandments. We are to shun doing evils, because they are sins against Him. Over and over He tells us these are the basic things we are to do: Read His Word. Live right because He tells us to, not for some reward. Over and over He tells us.

He shows us the many troubles the Children of Israel fell into when they ignored Him. He shows us how the Catholics, when the common people lost His Word, they also lost the wine in the Holy Supper. He shows us how the Protestants put faith alone over everything, and they got lost, too. We can read. We are to read. We are to live what He teaches, even when we don’t like it.

Is it easy to read the Lord’s Word? No. Thankfully, I find it easier to read His Word than almost all other instruction manuals. Does anyone find shunning evils not painful? No. It’s a torment in mind and body. And yet, with the effort to put Him first, the Lord does shine through. He puts our thoughts in order. He warms us with His peace.

Marcia Clifford
Grand Rapids, Michigan

The Teachings Are Clear

To The Editors:

Re *Put No Faith in Councils* by the Rev. Frank S. Rose:

Indeed, what intelligent person would disagree with the Lord's instruction found in *True Christian Religion* 489? But isn't it a contradiction to suggest that finite beings can decide on the elements to be used in the Holy Supper?

In *Arcana Coelestia* 2342 we are informed by the Lord that leaven corresponds to evil from which what is false comes.

When the Lord at the Last Supper with His disciples offer the bread, He said, "This is My body, which is given for you." By the Lord's body is meant the Divine Human. The Divine Human is the Divine Good and Truth of the Divine Love and Wisdom. The very nature of the Divine Love is to give what is Its own, for the well-being of the ones to whom it is given.

We therefore ask, could this be represented by anything other than unleavened bread, the pure and unadulterated Divine Good?

As the Lord beholds us from Good by means of Truth, it is for us to look to Him from the Truth for the sake of Good. This takes place by repentance, when we shun, by means of the truth, the evils of our proprial loves which rise up against it.

As we know, this is what is meant by the combat of temptations, which we endure in the work of our regeneration. This is represented by the process of fermentation, which takes place in order that the noble wine might be produced.

By the way, there is no such thing as unfermented wine, which some people refer to. This is a contradiction of terms. To offer people anything else than unleavened bread and wine would be to offer anything but what the Lord wills for us.

With regard, however, to those who are unable to take the wine due to bodily conditions, I suggest that they take hold of the chalice. The Lord by means of His Omnipotence is able to accept. The same also applies to those who do not have the means available. The Lord is aware of what they would do if they had the means.

The reason for partaking is in keeping with the teachings from the Word: all things proceed from primes, through ultimates, to intermediates.

Rev. Norman E. Riley
Hatboro, Pennsylvania

No Alternatives Are Prescribed

To The Editors:

Something is prescribed when it is ordered or commanded.

Frank Rose stated in his letter to the editor that the clergy “could not find any passage specifically prescribing the elements of the Holy Supper” (*New Church Life*, May/June 2011, p.125). Is that true? It would be nice if we could simply answer yes or no. It is true that the Writings do not specifically state you must use **unleavened** bread and **fermented** wine. It is also true that the Writings **do** prescribe the elements of the Holy Supper. Here is a passage from the *Apocalypse Explained* stating that bread and wine were commanded:

It is clearly evident that “flesh” here means the own [proprium] of the Lord’s Divine Human, which is the Divine good of the Divine love, and is that which is called in the Holy Supper the body. ... And as “bread and wine” have the same signification as “flesh and blood” – “bread” meaning the Divine good, and “wine” the Divine truth – therefore these were commanded (*mandata*) in place of flesh and blood. (AE 1082.2 cf. AC23165.3, 3813.2, 1037.9, and AE 376.25)

The reader, no doubt, has observed that the above passages do not “specifically” mention “unleavened” and “fermented,” yet that is their intended meaning! How do we know this? We look at the context. For example:

Vinum (wine) the Latin, as in English, is commonly used in reference to a “fermented” drink, so the adjective “fermented” is not needed.

When the Writings say that the bread and wine were commanded, they are referring to the Last Supper where the Lord said, “Do this in remembrance of Me” (Lk. 22: 19; 1 Cor. 11: 24, 25). The Last Supper was a Passover meal (see TCR 703 and TCR 704), and in that context, unleavened bread and fermented wine were used.

Why didn’t Swedenborg specify that the bread was “unleavened” and the wine “fermented?” It was unnecessary. The common practice of the day was to use unleavened bread and fermented wine in the Holy Supper service. Swedenborg’s readers knew this without explanation.

There are a host of other teachings that corroborate the fact that the proper elements of the Holy Supper are unleavened bread and fermented wine. Unfortunately, there is not enough space to detail them now. My point is this:

The elements of the Holy Supper (bread and wine) are in fact prescribed, and if we look at the context of what the Writings say about the Holy Supper it is obvious that these elements are supposed to be unleavened bread and fermented wine.

Perhaps this evidence is less direct and explicit than what we would like to see, but it is the evidence we are given. Nor should it be simply dismissed.

Our worship, the Lord tells us, should be from His Word. (See AC 10707, cf. AC 10543, 10247, 10603 and AE 69.) So we look to the Lord's Word and ask: "Where in the Writings are alternative elements prescribed?" "Where in the Writings are the correspondences of water or grape juice mentioned in connection with the Sacrament of the Holy Supper?"

The subject of the proper elements of the Holy Supper has been discussed for many years. If such teachings existed they would have been brought to our attention.

Bill Clifford
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Hardly Hypocrisy

To The Editors:

I would like to add to one of the points made by the Rev. Walter Orthwein in his editorial from the May/June issue, *Let's Pretend*, page 123, regarding the need for civil discourse when we have disagreements in the Church. In leading up to this conclusion, he noted two very different states that could be at work when a person acts in a more upright or virtuous way than he feels.

Someone who acts well outwardly from a desire to fool others or gain advantage over them is acting hypocritically. But a person who has some evil affections but fights them and acts well "from a sincere wish to be better than he is" is not being a hypocrite.

Rev. Orthwein made this distinction and then properly moved on to his main point. But I think it's worth noting that "not acting hypocritically" is an understatement. In fact, acting better than you feel is at the heart of regeneration.

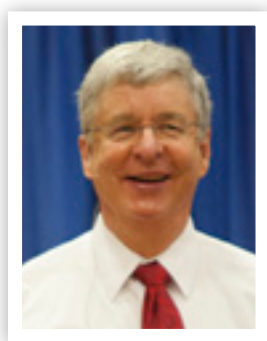
In any new cycle of regeneration, we try to suppress our own evil loves by refusing to act on them, and instead act in ways that open us to the Lord, who can then replace those loves with better ones. If we were to dismiss this as hypocrisy, we would never escape our own evils, never change, and never allow the Lord to flow in and act in us.

Tom David
Grafton, Massachusetts

Helping People Grow Closer to the Lord God Jesus Christ in His Second Coming

Rt. Rev. Thomas L. Kline

Opening Address to the General Assembly, June 23, 2011



Today I want to talk about the most important subject for the Church – the Lord God Jesus Christ in His Second Coming. We are told in the Writings, “the idea of God constitutes the inmost of thought with all who have religion, for all things of religion and all things of worship look to God.” There are many passages that say our idea of God is the most important in the Church. The point is that if we can just get our relationship with the Lord straight, we don’t have to worry about the Church. That is the Church. As individuals, if we can do that, and also love the neighbor with all of our heart, the Church is going to grow. It will grow in our life. It will grow throughout the world.

A lot of passages talk about the idea of God, but what about our relationship with God? There’s an old joke that when all the Swedenborgians get to heaven, they go to the lecture about God. Everybody else follows the sign that says, “Come and meet God.” You can’t *learn* your way to the Lord. It’s important, and you have to learn or you won’t know who He is, but our relationship with Him is the most important thing.

Many passages in the Writings speak of the union of the Lord with the angels and of the angels with the Lord, so it’s the relationship. The words “conjunction” or “union” can also be translated “relationship with the Lord.” So it’s not just learning about Him. Imagine if you learned everything about your spouse, but you never really had a relationship with him or her. You need to learn about the person and then go forward and invite the relationship.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not die, but have everlasting life.”

Editor’s note: Much appreciation to Ken and Alaine York of Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania for providing the transcription of Bishop Kline’s address from a voice-recognition computer program. Alaine has just retired as the Bishop’s administrative assistant.

Years ago, when I was pastor of the Bryn Athyn Society, I took my staff to the Schuler Institute – Bob Schuler’s Crystal Cathedral in California – for a five-day seminar. There were probably a thousand Christian pastors there, all different denominations. And it was all about love – how God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. God is loving, God is loving, God is loving.

On Saturday night I told my staff: “Here is the problem. We are going to church tomorrow. The minister, Schuler’s assistant, is going to be handicapped by the old Christian doctrine of the atonement.” Asked, “What’s the atonement?” I said, “Here was the human race, and here was God. The human race turned from God. Adam and Eve in the garden disobeyed God. They ate of the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden. What did God do? According the Christian theology, God then turned from the human race. Not only did He turn, but He could not be reconciled with them. He was angry with them. He condemned them to eternal damnation.

“You wonder how this could be. Why would a loving God not go after us and try to get us back? But no, Christian theology (and not all Christians believe this, but they are stuck with the theology) says that God could not be reconciled with the human race unless something happened, unless somebody paid the price. Somebody needed to suffer, and since it was an infinite sin against God, somebody had to suffer infinitely. No human being could possibly pay that price to appease that anger.”

Who would want to worship a God like that, with so much anger, I was asked? “So God loved the world? No, God was so *angry* with the world. So Christian theology teaches that He sent His Son to suffer on the cross so that His anger could be appeased, and if we believe in Christ, then we receive His merit and God will forgive us. Anyone else is condemned to everlasting hellfire and gnashing of teeth.”

I said, “Listen tomorrow. Loving as the sermon is going to be, he’s got to touch on that a little bit. He will be handcuffed because he can’t really get into his theology. He wants to talk about a loving God, but if he goes any deeper, he’s going to have to get into the terrible idea of the atonement, which has no basis in scripture.”

So we went to church on Sunday, and I’m beaming with pride, just waiting for atonement to come up. But the minister began, “What I am going to say today is very controversial. It’s new. I’ve been thinking about this for years, and some of you are actually going to be so upset at what I say that you’re going to get up and leave. But I have been thinking about the traditional Christian doctrine.” And he said, “Who could believe in a God that angry? Who would want to follow such a God? Who would want somebody as a friend, that if someone sinned against them that they would be so angry that they couldn’t

be reconciled until somebody paid the price? They would turn away forever, and condemn them to everlasting punishment. Who could worship such a God?"

He actually said that is a terrible idea. If you had friends like that, you would give them counseling and anger management tools. And how can we then image our minds in the image of that God? Maybe that's why atrocities have been created in the name of Christianity – people going throughout the world killing others because they feel justified by their anger.

Then he said, "I've got a new idea. I haven't worked it out yet, but here's the beginning. God has to be a God of pure love, with not an angry bone in His body. That's the God that we can worship and found our life in that image. God came into the world not because He was so angry that someone had to pay the price, but because we had turned from Him. He came into the world because He loves us, as it says 'for God so loved the world.' He came after us, as you would come after a child who had wandered. God came into the world not because of anger."

And I was sitting there kind of embarrassed because I'm looking for the doctrine of atonement and this guy is giving good New Church doctrine. And then the crowning touch, my final defeat that morning, he said, "I haven't worked this out yet, but I feel that God came into the world not to appease the anger of the Father, but He came into the world to put away the power of the hells that attacked the human race."

And I was one of those people so upset, I got up and left! (laughter)

(By the way, I wrote to that minister and told him if he was struggling with these ideas, I had something to talk to him about – a systematic theology with a scriptural base that shows a true idea of God.)

My point is that I don't want to say that this is a new idea of God. It is *not* a new idea of God. That *is* the idea of God. We don't have a new idea of God in our church; we have *the* idea that is taught in scripture. Imagine how the Lord feels, with millions of people in the world feeling that He is somehow schizophrenic, part of Him angry, part of Him wanting to forgive, and they can only be reconciled by pain and suffering. God is a God of infinite love. We turned from Him. He followed us, every step of the way, because He loves us. He came not pay a price, but to fight off the power of the hells, as any loving parent would do, and as Jesus constantly speaks in everything He teaches.

The other is a horrendous idea of God, say the Writings. This is not what the Writings teach. This is not what all churches believe. But this is the theology they are handicapped by if they go a bit deeper. I would hate to be a Christian preacher who could talk about the love of God, but once I got into the Easter story I'd have to get into the anger issues and the price of the infinite suffering on the cross to appease the anger of the Father.

Here is what the Writings say about errors of the traditional doctrine of the atonement: (TCR 132)

1. Believing that the Lord's suffering on the cross was redemption itself is a fundamental error on the part of the church. [This is not what the New Church teaches.]

2. God the Father was angry at the human race, so He not only moved us away from Himself but tossed us into eternal damnation and cut off communication with us. [Does that sound like a loving Father? Do you want to put yourself in that image? Think how the New Church idea changes that. Think of a father in a family feeling his anger is justified. Have you ever felt that way: "Somebody needs to pay the price!" Or, "Of course I'm angry about what's going on in the Church!" Calm that anger from hell. It is not in the image of God.] Nevertheless, because He is gracious, He convinced His Son to come down to take on a limited damnation on Himself and ritually purge the Father's anger. After that happened, the Father was appeased. That is traditional Christian doctrine. If you don't believe that, go and ask somebody, "Why did Jesus have to suffer on the cross?"

3. It is horrendous to attribute these qualities to God. Attitudes and actions of that kind belong to a wicked person, not a virtuous one.

4. Surely though, everyone with decent reasoning enlightened by the Word can see that God is compassion and mercy itself; He is absolute love and absolute goodness. These qualities are His essence.

My question for us at this Assembly is: Can we accept that in our lives, in our relationship with God? Can we accept totally this vision of the Lord Jesus Christ in His Second Coming? Or – I say this seriously – is it too good to be true?

When I was assistant pastor in Bryn Athyn I did a lot of counseling. These are New Church people: "Well, surely God is angry with me. He's turned away from me because of what I've done." Falling into the trap of the old Christian idea of God.

And I heard this often: "If God knew all the bad things I've done in my life, He would be gone." I love the irony of that. They somehow feel that God doesn't already know everything.

"But if God knew the bad things and the thoughts I have in my mind, He wouldn't want to have anything to do with me."

There is a lot of counseling that has to take place.

A young man said, "I lost my virginity. He will not allow me to have conjugal love."

One young man had given up on the Church. "What's the use? I might just as well go out and sin."

I started counseling by saying "No. You can restore your virginity. There

There are tribulations in the Church, but this Assembly is about good news. The Lord's only goal is to make you happy for eternity. There are no games, no conditions. His only goal is to make you happy for eternity, and His preference would be that you spend it with Him.

But He will even let you go somewhere else if you want to. His love is unconditional.

is nothing you can do that the Lord won't forgive you. He forgives you before you ask. He forgives if you accept His forgiveness. That's called repentance." I kept on going on with positive things, and what did he do? He just got up and left. He ran out of my office! I didn't know what I'd done wrong. He came back in an hour and said, "Don't do that to anyone ever again." I said, "What did I do?" He said, "When you feel really bad about yourself, positive things are very confrontive. They're hard to take. I couldn't accept all those things all at once. Be more gentle next time." Isn't that amazing?

"I can't take the Holy Supper because I have so many sins in my life." The irony that only those are invited to come to the Holy Supper who come to it worthily. Well,

I'm a sinner so I can't come. No, if you're a sinner, you're worthy to come to the Holy Supper. In fact, the greater your sin, the more you should be there. Imagine saying, "I'm so sick I can't take the penicillin, I'll hurt the penicillin."

How many people have thought, "Holy Supper is coming and I can't take it this month because I've done such bad things." No, that's when you sit in the front row!

I have actually been told, "I cannot touch the Word" (because of the New Church doctrine of profanation). "If I touch the Word, because I'm such a sinner, I'll hurt the Word of God."

That's the old Christian idea with us. Are we willing to accept the true idea of God?

And finally I have heard this over and over: "What about the sin against the Holy Spirit?" That's the unforgivable sin, so there must be *something* that makes God so angry that He can't get over it.

In his introduction, Rev. Jeremy Simons mentioned tribulations in the Church. But this Assembly is about good news! We're here for good news. The Lord's only goal is to make you happy for eternity. There are no games, no conditions. His only goal is to make you happy for eternity, and His preference would be that you spend it with Him. But He will even let you go somewhere else if you want to. His love is unconditional. He is on your side!

When you're in great trouble, there is Somebody. He's the closest friend no matter what you did, is always there for you – seven times seventy. "I failed again, Lord." I tell kids that when you do something wrong, the Lord rolls up

His sleeves and comes with a smile and says, “Let’s get to work.” And then you fail again, and you fail again, and you fail again. Seventy times, He is still there. He never winces.

Picture the closest, most constant friend you could ever have. No matter what you do, that person would be there, saying, “OK, let’s get to work. We’re going to restore you. It’s going to be a hard journey back, but I’m here for you every step of the way.” That’s the God we worship. No games. No “if you do this, I’ll pay the price over there.” He is genuinely with you.

The sin against the Holy Spirit – the unforgivable sin: What is that? The Holy Spirit is the Lord’s operation. If you cut off the Lord’s operation in your life, He can’t help you. It’s the one sin. It’s called denial.

I’ve done a lot of alcohol counseling. If an alcoholic is not willing to ask for help, there is nothing you can do. You can send him to meetings, you can do all sorts of things, but until he is willing to say, “I’m an alcoholic and I need help,” there is nothing you can do. It’s not that your love isn’t there. It’s not that you don’t care about him, but until he is willing to take responsibility – accepting the Holy Spirit, the spirit of healing – if he’s rejecting, that forgiveness isn’t there. The Lord forgives you before you ask.

And how do you ask? Through repentance. Already He’s forgiven you, but are you ready to receive that? Are you willing to say, “Lord, I’m a sinner, and I’m going to stop doing this. Please help me.” That’s the crucial part. As soon as they ask for help, they’re ready to go.

When Lazarus came out of the cave, Jesus could have said all sorts of things. He said to Lazarus, “Come out,” then to his friends, “Loose him.” But he couldn’t say, “Loose him” until Lazarus stood up and came out. So the first command is, “Come out.” If you have a friend who is in deep trouble, he needs to come out, and then you can loose him. It does no good to help loose him if he is not willing to come out the cave.

Now how can a Christian believe in the atonement when Jesus clearly teaches the story of the prodigal son? Jesus is teaching this for us, not just to “the Christian Church.” This is so *we* can accept the true idea of God. So if you feel, “I can’t go to church this week because I’ve sinned,” think of it: “The prodigal son came to himself” – that was the turning point.

The Lord can’t help you until you begin repentance. You have to hear the Word of God and then the bones come together with a rattling and shaking. That’s called repentance. It is life changing. *“He came to himself and he said, ‘I will arise and go to my father and say to him, father I have sinned against heaven before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me one of your hired servants.’”*

That was the turning point in his life. Then the Lord could reach out. I think if we really see the details of this story, the father had been there the

In the parable of the prodigal son, we need to hear the older son lecture because there is an older son part of us saying, "It's too good to be true. You're not that kind, not that loving of a God." Yes He is, in your life. There is nothing you can do that will turn God away from you in the slightest.

whole journey with his son, even when he was eating the pigs' food. The father followed him the whole way. He never left the son. But the father had to wait for this moment, a revelation where the man came to his senses. Then he could help him. But notice this, so beautifully: he came to his father "*when he was a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.*"

Imagine God turning away when we turn. God didn't turn! God was right there the whole way. And when we turn in the slightest then God rushes in, hugs us, and says, "Let's celebrate."

I love the part of the story about the older brother, because that's really what this story is about, not the younger son. Of course the younger son was forgiven as soon as he began repentance and could accept the forgiveness of God. But it's the older son this is about, because part of us says, "That's not fair! He should be punished. Let's have a party, but he has to go to jail first. He's got to pay you back – all the money. Somebody's got to pay the price. It's too good to be true."

I think Jesus put that older son in here because there is an older son part of us. In our own lives we say, "No, it can't be that good. Lord, I sinned, and I sinned again and I did it again and again. I still have the same sin and you're still willing to forgive me. It can't be that true." And it is. So he gives a lecture to the older son, and you need to hear the older son lecture because there is an older son part of us saying, "It's too good to be true. You're not that kind, not that loving of a God." Yes He is, in your life. There is nothing you can do that will turn God away from you in the slightest.

And now, the shortest sentence in the Bible: "Jesus wept." What a beautiful image of God that He gave us. He cries when we hurt. Jesus wept – in the story of Lazarus, and later on He wept when he saw the city, Jerusalem. He looked up at the city, at people with palm branches, all happy, and He is crying, not for joy and not because the city is so evil. He is weeping because He loves them so much. The Writings say this is love grieving. He looked at that city and He saw its sins and he grieved for the people because He loved them so much. That's the kind of God He is.

A mother lost her little baby once, and she wept. Somebody was able to tell her that God wept as well. Did the baby die because the mother had done some evil? Did the baby die because of a punishment involved? No. The Lord wept infinitely over that pain. The Lord wants us to have that image burned into our

minds – that He weeps for us because He loves us so much. Isn't that amazing? The infinite God of heaven and earth wants to let you know that He cries for you when you're hurting. What a powerful picture of God. And again, this is not a new idea of God. This is the idea of God that has always been there in the Word. Not the New Christianity, it's the True Christianity.

Our mission is to get this message out to the world, because there are millions of people out there, like that minister in the Crystal Cathedral, who know this is true, but they need to have the theology behind it. They need the guidance. They know the old idea of God being angry is false. Get the message out.

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him...”

The Lord wants to sup with you. That's one of the most intimate things you can do, to sit in a room with somebody. That's what married couples do. That's what young dating couples do. When you finally get to the dinner, the Lord wants to be with you privately, in your upper room.

And why do I include this passage: *“And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn”?*

What's that got to do with this? There is no room in the inn. He made a large upper room, furnished and prepared, for the disciples to eat the Holy Supper. And when He came on earth, there was no room in the inn. The room wasn't furnished and prepared. That's why He came on earth. He came to build a room in your mind where you can sup with Him. It is furnished and prepared. All you've got to do is walk up the steps. Are you willing to walk up those steps and sup with Him? He's waiting. Today!

It is furnished and prepared. That room wasn't there before He came on earth. That's why He came on earth – to build the upper chamber of your mind, where you can sup with Him.

Do you believe this? If you have faith as a mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain move from here to there and it will move. Are you willing to accept this statement? The infinite God, Creator of heaven and the earth, says nothing is impossible for you. Nothing.

I look at our new college buildings. That was a dream to build those buildings. Nothing is impossible. Let's have a university in every state in this country. The Lord's Church deserves that. Nothing is impossible. Don't think small; think big!

How can you see the Lord God Jesus Christ?

It is interesting, all the different images you get. Some people in the New Church say, “I picture the Word. That's the Lord.” They see a book. That's OK, by the way. I feel a little sorry if your picture is just a book, but that's

If you really want to have a relationship with the Lord, you have to hear the trumpet. You have to turn. Imagine what it's like not just to know about the Lord Jesus Christ, but to be able to look into His eyes and see the fire of His love there, with a two-edged sword coming out that will fight for you. That's the Second Coming of the Lord. The Lord wants you to grow in your faith.

a beginning. How do you see the Lord God Jesus Christ? The disciple John, on the very last page of the gospel of John, sees the image of the Lord ascending up into heaven. He has a human form. He is Jesus, the man he lived with for three years. It was a physical image of a human being, that's how John saw the Lord. That's a beginning, to see the Lord as to person, as your friend.

People have asked, "Should I think of the Lord as my friend?" One of Swedenborg's favorite hymns that he sang by himself was, "Jesus is My Friend." Is it OK to think of Jesus as your friend, a personal idea of the Lord Jesus Christ. But then it transforms. John, now an old

man, maybe 60 years have gone by and he's on the Isle of Patmos. His eyes are opened and he hears the trumpet. He turns around and he's got this picture of Jesus Christ in his mind. He doesn't hesitate for a second. He knows that is the Lord Jesus Christ. Does the Lord look like that? This is a picture of His qualities, His essence.

Imagine if a person took a photograph of you, and then did a painting of your inner qualities? What do they look like? Whether they look alike, outside or the inside, it's two different pictures. And the Lord wants you to grow into this relationship with Him. This is the Second Coming.

We all have the first coming in our lives as children. Paul, in Corinthians, says to the growing churches, "You can't keep feeding them baby food. If the church is going to grow, you've got to give them adult food, real food." We find that in ourselves with our own young people and in our own lives. We eat baby food. I know the Ten Commandments. I know the Rules of Life. What more do I need? I don't need to read the Writings. I don't need to go any deeper. If I can just keep the Ten Commandments and the Two Great Commandments, everything is great in my life. That's baby food.

And that's a beginning. But if you really want to have a relationship with the Lord, you have to go deeper. You have to hear the trumpet. You have to turn. Imagine what it's like not just to know about the Lord Jesus Christ, but to be able to look into His eyes and see the fire of His love there, with a two-edged sword coming out that will fight for you, or to be a surgeon's scalpel to do delicate surgery on your soul, or to see His feet of brass or the stars in His hand. That's the Second Coming of the Lord. The Lord wants you to grow in

your faith.

Don't just rely on baby food. It's good in the beginning. We've got to have that with our newcomers. I just love New Church Live. People say, "Well, New Church Live is just watering down the doctrines. Anybody's going to come to church there." Well, I met a lady there who had been coming for about six months and she said to me, "Well, it's time I've got to start reading the green books." And I said innocently, "What green books?" And she said, "I think they call them the Writings, and it's about time I start doing that."

Thank you, New Church Live. We have to let people eat baby food in the beginning. You don't give little babies steak. They're going to choke on it. You have to give them baby food. But as they grow, you have to give them real food, and that is to see the Lord in His Second Coming, the growth of your faith.

So someone says, "OK, Mr. Kline, I'm still on the baby food. I see the Lord as to person. I don't see His essence. I'm not on that level."

There's a passage in *True Christian Religion* where there are angel boys and their teacher in heaven is saying, "Look at those dead horses falling down." And they ask, "Why are there dead horses there falling down?" The answer is, "Those are people who think of the Lord only as to His person." Baby food people, and they appear like dead horses. And the boys are horrified. They say, "Are we like dead horses, because we think about the Lord as to person?" And the teacher says, "No, you are still boys and cannot think otherwise, but I have perceived in your affection for knowing and understanding that this being spiritual, you have thought spiritually."

I like to say to people, if you're just as good as the little boys in heaven, that's pretty good! If your picture of the Lord is still of a book or of the Palestinian Jesus Christ, and you're thinking spiritually, you've caught up with the little boys in heaven and that's good. You're not a dead horse. Any idea you have of the Lord is on your pathway to heaven.

Our mission to the world: There are a lot of issues and tribulation in the Church. Are we going to grow? What can we do to grow? The young man came to the Lord and said, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" And the Lord said just two things: All you need to worry about: love the Lord with all your heart and soul, and your neighbor as yourself.

Our mission to the world: There are issues and tribulations in the Church. Are we going to grow? What can we do to grow? The young man came to the Lord and said, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" And the Lord said just two things: Love the Lord with all your heart and soul, and your neighbor as yourself.

I went to the Swedenborg Colloquium last year. Everyone was talking about how the Church needs to be structured this way or that. We need to do this or that. Peter Rhodes got up and said, “You know, maybe what we ought to do to grow the church is just repent. If every individual in this room repents and does their own personal work, that’s what we can do to help the Lord in the growth of His Church. Get our stuff out of the way so the Lord can flow down, and then we can go and serve the neighbor. And if we serve the neighbor we have an outlet for the Lord to flow in.”

If everybody in the Church can just do those two things, we don’t need to worry about anything else. That’s what the Lord told the young man. That’s how important this message is. We’re not talking about the neighbor today. When the Lord sent out His disciples on the 19th of June they only had one message. It’s incredible. The whole work had just been written, and suppose you as a human being said, OK, we’re going to send out the disciples throughout the whole world and we’re going to summarize the Church. My summary would have been a 45-minute lecture. But they took one message:

The Lord Jesus Christ reigns, whose kingdom shall be for ages and ages.

If we can just, as the people in this room, accept the Lord’s love, do the work of repentance, reformation and regeneration in our own lives, we can change the world. I firmly believe that. Are we willing to believe and receive this idea of the Lord as is now revealed in His Second Coming, or is it too good to be true in our lives and other lives, and are we willing to spread that love to the neighbor around us?

That will change the world.

General Assembly DVD

DVDs of the 2011 General Assembly are available for purchase. The packages include:

- The three plenary sessions – \$25
- Individual day (plenary and select workshops) – \$40
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Before I Formed You

*An Ordination Sermon by the Rev. Dr. Andrew M.T. Dibb
Bryn Athyn Cathedral – May 22, 2011*

This is the day that the Lord has made; we will be glad and rejoice in it. This morning six men have come forward to declare their faith in the Lord and to receive the signs of inauguration and ordination into the priesthood of the New Church. Each of these six men feels called by the Lord to work in His vineyard and bring forth the good wine of true doctrine. This morning they are set apart, but in many ways they are simply an example of each of us.

Swedenborg once commented that he had been prepared for his work from the time of his childhood onwards. Every detail of his life led him to that work, step by step down the years until the Lord was able to reveal Himself and the work began. It was similar with Jeremiah the prophet. He was born in a particular place at a particular moment of history and, when the Lord spoke to him, he confirmed an ongoing preparation for the work of being a prophet in Judah.

And so it is with each one of us. Most of us are not called to be ministers, revelators or prophets, but we are called to be other things, to be husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, lawyers, doctors, insurance clerks, plumbers, electricians, teachers and a vast array of occupations. No matter what we are called on to do, the Lord in His Divine Providence was as active in placing us there as He is in calling a priest or prophet.

In our lessons we read about the call to Jeremiah. The Lord said:

Before I formed you in the belly, I knew you, and before you came forth out of the womb I sanctified you, and I ordained you a prophet to the nations. (Jeremiah 1:5)

The Lord's Divine Providence is the constant presence and activity of the Lord with us throughout the course of our lives. Before we are conceived, He sees and provides for "the rudiments of things that have yet to exist" and constantly lays down a framework so that those things may come to exist (AC 6491). Before He formed us "in the belly" He knew us. And as we came forth from the womb He sanctified us, and ordained us as prophets to the nations. In the book for the New Church, *Secrets of Heaven*, or *Arcana Coelestia* 6491 we read:

Once birth has taken place each thing in succession is prepared with a view to the next and for the benefit of the next, so that a perfectly formed person may develop and at length be such as can receive heaven.

There is no moment in our lives when the Divine Providence is not active. The Lord's active presence "lasts to the end of our life, and then to all eternity." (DP 331)

We can get a sense of this working of Divine Providence as we look back over the course of our lives. What has brought us to this point? The answer for each one of us would be complicated. There is always a mixture of good things and things not so good. There are happy times when we are decisive and know exactly what we are going to do next, and other times when we have no idea of what is going to happen. There are times when we feel inspired about the choices in front of us and other times when they feel downright depressing.

Yet at each minute of this process, the Divine Providence is working to bring about the best end possible for each of us.

The nature of the Lord's leading is that each person is in complete spiritual freedom to follow Him. The first law of Divine Providence is that people should "act in freedom according to reason." To provide for this, the Lord has given us the appearance that our life is completely our own. We do not feel the Lord flowing into us with His life. We do not feel the leading of Providence. We do not feel the presence of the spirits around us connecting us to heaven. We feel our life entirely as if it is our own. It is given to us as a gift by the Lord, to do with as we will.

This puts us in the position where we can cooperate with the Lord. We decide how to respond to Him, and if for natural causes the choice is taken away from us, we decide how we will respond to this loss. Each one of us has been guided to our place in life by Providence and by the decisions we make. If we made different decisions, then Providence would have led us elsewhere and given us a new set of decisions that take us farther along the path to heaven.

Take our six newly ordained ministers. Each of them in his adult years was involved in some useful and meaningful work, no different from most of the people in this cathedral. They were at that point in life because that is where providence had led them and, by cooperating with providence, they had made decisions which resulted in them being there. When as adults they encountered the teachings of the New Church they had to make a decision. To believe or not to believe, to read and reflect about their readings or not.

The Lord's providence guides all people toward the truth, and yet we have to decide if we are willing to embrace that truth. It is up to us to develop an affection for it, to find ways of expressing it in our daily lives by the things we think and do. Whether we feel called to the ministry or not, the Lord gives each of us this task. His providence constantly calls on us to act in freedom according to our reason, according to our best understanding and most clearly thought out logic.

When we feel pulled in a certain direction by our interests and affections,

we may feel that we are unworthy of the call. A young man may wonder if he'll make a good husband and father. An older woman may wonder if she has the right skill set to take on the promotion she's been offered at work. Yet the Lord in His Divine Providence is with us even at these crucial times.

Consider Jeremiah: when he was called by the Lord he said: "Behold I cannot speak, I am but a child." Moses said a similar thing when He was called by the Lord, and Swedenborg, we are told, had a noticeable speech impediment. We all have failings, weaknesses that could prevent us from fulfilling the work stretching out before us.

But the Lord in His providence has other plans. He touched Jeremiah's mouth and said, "Behold, I have put My words in your mouth." He gave Aaron to Moses to speak for him, and to Swedenborg He gave a pen and printing press so that his impediment did not matter.

The Lord calls each of us to our tasks in life. While He doesn't give us the skills we need to accomplish them, He gives us the ability to cultivate and hone those skills until we eventually use them with ease. This is true for all people. Part of cooperating with the Lord is developing the gifts He has given us. He doesn't make us patient, assiduous or wise, but He makes it possible to become those things.

When we are unsure of our abilities to perform the task the Lord gives us, we can take comfort from the words the Lord spoke to the twelve disciples before sending them out to preach:

And when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what you shall speak; for it shall be given you in that same hour what you shall speak. (Matt 10:19)

Take no thought... for it shall be given you ... what you shall speak. The Lord gives us all that we need. And yet we receive the gift of His providential leading as we cooperate with Him. How is that we sometimes know the exact right thing to say or do? The inspiration comes from the Lord, yet it only comes as we look for ways of dealing well with other people. The Lord leads us in freedom.

As we think about the teachings of Divine Providence, and as we reflect on the willingness of these six men who have come before the Lord, there is a lesson for each of us. The Lord calls every person to perform useful service to others. How we do that is largely up to us. But if we cooperate with the Lord in developing our skills to perform that service, then He will bless us, He will touch our lips and give us what to speak. And we shall live and speak from Him.

This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it. Let us make it be a day of rejoicing that six men have committed themselves in service to the Lord, and let us also make it be a day of recommitment for each one of us to the work, whatever it be, that the Lord in His providence has led

us to, for the Lord has been working in all our lives from before we are born to bring us to this point. As He said:

Before I formed you in the belly I knew you;

And before you came forth out of the womb I sanctified you a prophet to the nations.

Lessons: Jeremiah 1:4-10 Matthew 10:16-20 AC 6491



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The Rev. Dr. Andrew M.T. Dibb is Dean of the Theological School of Bryn Athyn College of the New Church. He was born in South Africa and was ordained in 1984 and into the second degree in 1986. He has served as Assistant to the Pastor in Kitchener, Canada; Pastor of the Transvaal Society in South Africa and Director of Education for the General Church Mission in South Africa; Pastor of the New Church Buccleuch and Visiting Pastor in South Africa; and Dean of the South African Theological School. As Dean of the Theological School he teaches there and in the College. He and his wife, Cara (Glenn), live in Willow Grove, Pennsylvania, and have three grown children.

New Regional Pastor

The Rev. David Roth has agreed to become the next regional pastor for the Western United States, succeeding the Rev. Daniel Goodenough, who has stepped down after excellent service to the district. Dan will continue to visit groups in the Northern Rockies from his home in Wyoming.

David will provide support for the clergy and congregations in this region of the United States. He will also join the Advisory Committee which considers pastoral moves and other clergy personnel issues.

Since this is an add-on to his responsibilities as pastor of the Boulder New Church, the Rev. David Lindrooth will provide additional help, especially because of the church plants in Seattle and Austin.

Declarations of Faith and Purpose

May 22, 2011 – Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania



TODD BEISWENGER

I believe in a loving, merciful, rational God, the Lord God Jesus Christ who is the one God, period. He is the one source of love and wisdom, who did not create evil. He gave humanity free will, and with that our humanity chose to create evil. As such the Lord has established the New Church as the crown of all churches to save His people. I believe that all religions lead to salvation, and that if we are not saved, it is our own choosing.



PEARSE FRAZIER

I believe in one God, and He is the Lord God Jesus Christ. He created us so that He may bless us and bring us joy, but He left us in freedom to choose whether to receive or reject His blessing. True faith, believing in Him, means living according to His Word. His Word teaches us that all evil is from hell and should be shunned. Further, all good is from the Lord and should be done. If we were to only recognize and live by this, how happy we would be. We must do these things as if on our own, but we should acknowledge that it is really the Lord working through us.

“Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing before your face, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.”



STEPHEN MUIRES

LORD: I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Lord of heaven and earth. (AC 8331; Matthew 28:18) I believe He is one with God the creator and that His spirit flows into all things and all people, on all planets. (TCR 5, 143; AC 7477)

PEOPLE: I believe the human race is the growing ground of heaven, heaven being a reality here and now, inside us. (HH 385) I believe human beings are spirits clothed with a body, and that regeneration is bringing our external life into alignment with the deep life of our spirit. (TCR 583; Luke 11:36) I believe that the Lord, when He was on earth, paved the path of our regeneration through His glorification, and so made possible the salvation of

the entire human race. (AC 10057) I believe that the Lord's intended dwelling place is in our hearts, (AC 9634; Rev. 3:20), because we are all children of God. (John 1:12)

THE WORD: I believe that the Second Coming of the Lord through the works of Swedenborg has re-filled the Bible with holiness and life, making a direct connection to the Lord possible. I believe that in this sense the works of Swedenborg are likewise the Word of God. (AC 9410)

THE CHURCH: I believe that the New Church is the rock that fills the whole earth, as told in the book of Daniel, and that this prophecy, like the Second Coming, has already happened and is happening now. (AE 179.9, 411.4, 1029.5; Daniel. 2:35) I believe that the New Church is the community of people of all religions or beliefs who address a Higher Being for guidance, and who live a life of integrity, goodness and love. (DP 330; HH 318) I believe that God is love. (DLW 4)

PRIEST: Finally, as a newly ordained priest, I believe that a man of God is a man of the heart. Lord, help me be a man of God. (AC 252)



CALVIN ODHNER

I firmly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ who came into the world to save the human race and made His Human Divine. I believe the purpose of all creation is to make a heaven from the human race. I believe that the Word is holy and that the Lord has made His Second Coming by revealing the internal sense of His Word through the Heavenly Doctrines. I believe in the gradual process of regeneration through the shunning of evils as sins. I believe in the eternity of marriage and that the Lord provides for our care down to the last detail of our lives through His universal and constant Divine Providence. I believe that when my physical body dies I will be placed in the spiritual world according to my affections. Lord it is my intention as a minister of your Church on earth, to:

Follow Your Ten Commandments

Search for Your truth

And apply this truth in my daily interactions

Lord I believe; help thou mine unbelief.



RYAN SANDSTRÖM

I believe in the One God, who is the Lord Jesus Christ our Creator and Redeemer who out of His Infinite Love came into this world in order to subjugate the power of hell, redeem mankind and glorify His Human. I believe in the Sacred Scriptures and Heavenly Doctrine of the New Jerusalem, which are the source of life, the way to heaven. I believe in a life of repentance and reformation by taking up our cross and following the Lord in His Word; this is what our regeneration consists of. I believe God works into our lives by means of His Word, and from this we receive eternal life. His love in our lives teaches us of loving others as He has loved us.



HOWARD THOMPSON

I believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is the one God of heaven and earth, that in Him is the Divine Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

I believe that the Old Testament, the New Testament and the Heavenly Doctrines are means by which heaven is joined to those in whom the good of love and charity is present. (AC 10355)

I believe that the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is not a literal event to occur at some future date in the physical world. I believe that the Second Coming already occurred in the spiritual world and that the coming of the Lord continues to happen every moment in the minds of those who turn toward Him and allow their spiritual eyes to be opened. (TCR 772, AC 2405.8)

I have seen the Lord acting in my life and yet, like the youthful Samuel, I did not know that it was the Lord who was calling me. I believe that I have been called to share the truth that heaven is real and the Lord has freed us to experience a heavenly existence in this world and the next.

PRAYER: Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer.

Jeremiah's Mission

Finding Satisfaction in Life

First of Two Sermons by the Rev. Jeremy F. Simons

*Then I said, "I will not make mention of Him, nor speak anymore in His name."
But His Word was in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I was
weary of holding it back, and I could not. – Jeremiah 20:9*

Jeremiah's mission in life was not easy for him. The things he said and did were not popular or well received. But when he thought about abandoning his calling, he couldn't do it. The Lord's words in him were "like a burning fire shut up in (his) bones." He was driven by the task that he was sent to do and couldn't turn his back.

Did Jeremiah have a satisfying life? Was he a happy man? There isn't much question that he spent much of his life in frustration and pain. He was unsuccessful in persuading Judah to change its ways, and the things he urged them to do – such as to surrender to Babylon – resulted in endless derision and even imprisonment. He was openly contradicted by other prophets.

There is no way of knowing how Jeremiah felt but he is the classic example of what the Lord spoke about in the Sermon on the Mount: *Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so persecuted the prophets who were before you.* (Matthew 5: 11,12)

What do you need to do to find satisfaction in life? Another prophet asked the question this way: "Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy?" (Isaiah 55:2) He is saying that people expend money and effort searching for satisfaction, but too often what they desire does not end up being satisfying.

His answer is to listen to the Lord and to serve Him: "And let your soul delight itself in abundance. Incline your ear and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live." (Isaiah 55:3) He is saying that this is where true satisfaction lies.

Jeremiah obeyed that call and made it his life mission, and although it was a source of pain and suffering it was the focus of his entire life. It is important to listen to Isaiah, to pay attention to Jeremiah's example, and to develop a sense of purpose and mission in your life if you wish to find fulfillment.

We are told: "It is the purpose he serves that makes every angel an angel. The pleasure of service carries him along, as a favorable current does a ship, and confers upon him everlasting peace and the rest peace gives." (TCR 694) Another passage says that all things and people that are loved "are loved for their

goodness and the purpose they serve. Good and purpose are one.” (TCR 646)

Finding a worthwhile purpose or mission that you love is not necessarily easy. Nor is fulfilling it. Jeremiah is an excellent example of how hard this can be. It is common for people to have unrealized goals in life. Many people put enormous effort into causes and dreams that sometimes bear little fruit, as far as they can tell. They may wonder if it would be better to abandon them.

The story of Jeremiah’s bonds and yokes illustrates the kind of obstacles people sometimes face as they pursue justice and their life goals or mission.

Old Testament prophets often illustrated their messages by doing unusual things to portray what they were saying. When the Lord told Jeremiah to wear bonds and yokes, He was telling him to act out Judah’s coming servitude to the king of Babylon. The message was that the people had done wrong and needed to change their ways. Since they would not change their ways it was impossible to escape bondage in Babylon.

This was not a popular message, and Jeremiah was persecuted, punished and imprisoned for voicing it. Most difficult, though, was that his message often was convincingly refuted by people such as Hananiah.

Hananiah was a prophet as well, and he had a message that was far more hopeful than Jeremiah’s. Taking Jeremiah’s yoke and breaking it was powerfully symbolic to the people – and they immediately grasped the meaning. Jeremiah could do nothing but hope that Hananiah’s message was true.

Of course, it was not true. Hananiah was teaching a lie to appeal to people’s desires, giving them false hope. Other prophets came up with similarly crowd-pleasing proclamations, such as that there will be peace because the Lord will never abandon His people. (Jeremiah 14:13)

Jeremiah’s message was seen as lacking in hope and not trusting in the Lord – a bitter irony since the people’s abandonment of the Lord was the whole reason for their situation.

Jeremiah’s advice to them was to surrender to the king of Babylon, not because this was a good thing but because the alternative was total destruction. And he was not without hope, saying that someday people would return and the nation would be rebuilt. He even said in a later chapter: “It shall come to pass in that day,” says the Lord of hosts, “that I will break his yoke from your neck, and I will burst your bonds.” (Jeremiah 30:5)

Despite this, Jeremiah was reviled and his message was unpopular. The Heavenly Doctrines explain that false ideas are often more easily demonstrated and more readily believed than true statements. (DP 318) This is because false ideas are usually based on the way things appear and to appeal to obvious truths – such as that the Lord loves His people and will protect them, or that He does not exist because He did not protect them, or simply that He does not exist because He cannot be seen. But the truth is frequently counter-intuitive,

Satisfaction in life comes from being true to what the Lord teaches, and not being deceived by seemingly more popular ideas.

sometimes unpleasant, and often unpopular.

Satisfaction in life comes from being true to what the Lord teaches, and not being deceived by seemingly more popular ideas.

Martin Luther King is an example of someone who pursued an unpopular mission of justice in a unique way. Not only was the cause of racial equality hazardous to pursue, but the way he approached it through non-violent resistance was unorthodox and met with opposition even among people committed to racial justice. Yet now it is seen as a brilliant strategy consistent with the highest principles of integrity.

The cause of the New Church is our own example of something of enormous value which so far has experienced very limited visible success.

Lack of success causes people to rethink what they are doing, and often to doubt whether they are doing the right thing. This is healthy because people often fail to do the right thing, and they do need to reconsider. But when the cause is right and the methods are appropriate, then uncertainty about the truth is an obstacle that needs to be overcome.

The uncertainty that people often experience is one of the primary roadblocks to achieving their goal. When Hananiah broke Jeremiah's yoke, he seemed to hesitate and to wonder if his original message was correct. He said, "Amen! The Lord do so; the Lord perform your words which you have prophesied." But soon the Lord confirmed that Jeremiah was not mistaken. Hananiah was lying. As we read in our lesson from the Arcana, doubt about the end in view is one of the primary features of the anxiety and bad feelings that people have about what they are doing – a state that is called temptation. (AC 1820) People understandably want to have confidence and reassurance. Criticism and disagreement place your goals in doubt, and they need to be resolved or overcome if you are to make satisfying progress.

You might expect that satisfaction in life can only come with achievement and accomplishment, and it is true that such longing is inherent in every purpose and desire. But satisfaction actually has much more modest requirements. "*A feeling of certainty about the outcome precedes and is part of victory.*" This means that if you are confident that what you believe is right and what you are doing will accomplish a worthwhile goal, then fulfillment is close at hand.

Even if you fail to reach your goal and feel that your efforts are unsatisfying, the long-term reality may be different, as Jeremiah's example shows. The Lord sustained him in his work, despite his apparent lack of success, and there is a very interesting feature to this.

Satisfaction in life really comes from the Lord's presence with you, and your ability to receive His constant presence. But how does this happen? "*How the Divine proceeding, which is the very and only life, can be in things created and*

finite, shall now be told. This life applies itself not to the person, but only to uses in the person. Uses themselves, viewed in themselves, are spiritual; while the forms of use, such as the part of the body, are natural.” (Divine Love 4:2)

This is saying that the Lord’s presence with you is in your actions, your efforts, the things you do, the uses themselves in which you are engaged. He is in the function itself, and by means of this He is present with you. This means that it is not so much the results but the activity that receives His life – and that this is where satisfaction lies.

This is why we are told that *“angelic life consists of worthwhile, thoughtful actions, actions that are useful to others, and that all the happiness angels have is found in service, derives from service, and is proportional to service.”* (Heaven and Hell 403)

Jeremiah’s yokes and bonds were about service to the king of Babylon and illustrate the servitude of people whose goals are self-centered and materialistic. (AC 3542:4) Freedom and satisfaction are only possible by having a purpose in life that goes beyond such goals. You then take off Babylon’s yoke and put on the Lord’s: *“When the Lord is freeing a person from the yoke and dominion of evil, conflict arises. But once he has been set free, that is, been regenerated, he is led by the Lord through angels so gently that no yoke or dominion exists at all, for he is being led by what is joyful and pleasing, he is being loved, and he is being shown respect. That is what the Lord teaches in Matthew, ‘My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.’”* (AC 905)

When a person doesn’t have something useful as his ultimate purpose and intention, he is not free. Jeremiah faced opposition in his life, but he had the Lords’ Word in his heart like a burning fire shut up in his bones. He had a mission so strong that he couldn’t hold it back. He was sustained by the Lord, and he was a free man. In part two of this series, we will see how Jeremiah invested in his mission by preparing for the future.

May each of us find a sense of purpose like this and find ways to dedicate our lives to serving the Lord. *“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and My burden is light.”* (Matthew 11:28-30)

Lessons: Jeremiah 20: 8,9 – 27: 2,12,14,15 – 28: 2,8-17, AC 1820

Satisfaction in life really comes from the Lord’s presence with you, and your ability to receive His constant presence . . . in your actions, your efforts, the things you do, the uses themselves in which you are engaged.

Jeremiah Invests in The Future

Finding Satisfaction in Life

Second of Two Sermons by the Rev. Jeremy F. Simons

So I bought the field from Hanamel, the son of my uncle who was in Anothoth, and weighed out to him the money – 17 shekels of silver. – Jeremiah 32:9

Jeremiah's investment in land outside Jerusalem showed a confidence in Israel's future. It is an ironic confidence, because he had just finished telling the king that it was hopeless to resist the Babylonians, who were besieging the city, and that the king and all of Jerusalem would be taken captive to Babylon. King Zedekiah was so angry at this that he locked Jeremiah up in the court of the prison.

Yet even as Jeremiah was pronouncing no hope, he was making investments. He invested in Jerusalem at its darkest hour, buying a plot of land just outside the city. The message was that even though present times were not good, the Lord would prevail. His prediction was that *"houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land."*

People show confidence in things by investing resources, time and effort in them. Investing wisely can greatly increase your satisfaction in life.

Jeremiah had a mission that provoked opposition, and a confidence in the future that seems misplaced – and these two aspects of his story hold profound lessons about finding satisfaction in life.

Investments are a serious matter. When you invest in something, you can lose what you put into it – whether that is money, time, effort or emotion. It is important to be able to trust that whatever you invest in is worth what you put into it.

You will naturally be reluctant to do it if it seems your contribution will be wasted and your investment lost. When the stock market is going down people look for other places to put their money. A territory that is being invaded is one of the last places where a person would want to buy land.

It was a foolish time for Jeremiah to be buying land in Judah. He understood their situation. He was in prison because his gloomy predictions were discouraging the people. If things turned out as he predicted, all records of his transaction would likely be lost in the invasion, and the property would be in the hands of the enemy anyway. So why did he buy the land?

His point was simply that someday Israel would make it through this trouble and properties again would be possessed within its borders.

In actual fact, the darkest hour sometimes can be one of the best times to make an investment. Everyone knows that someone brilliant enough, or lucky enough, to put substantial funds into the stock market at its lowest point can make a fortune.

The key is somehow to know or guess that a recovery is on the way, before others do. In truth, the real key is to have confidence and belief in what is right and true. It is about wisdom, about recognizing value and acting on it. It is about counting the cost and investing your love and your efforts in what is truly valuable.

Jeremiah was able to buy this field for only 17 shekels of silver, a very low price. David paid Araunah 50 shekels for a threshing floor (2 Samuel 24:24), and Abraham paid Ephron 400 shekels for a field (Genesis 23:16).

The real reason for this price was a spiritual one. Seventeen has a particular meaning, and it lies at the heart of Jeremiah's reason for the purchase. The number 17 "*represents the onset of temptation and at the same time the end of temptation, which is liberation.*" (AC 755) That is, it stands for the beginning of hard times, but hard times that can serve your regeneration and which will eventually come to an end.

The number expresses what the Jews were about to undergo – 70 years of captivity in Babylon that would test and reaffirm their allegiance to the Lord, before their eventual return.

The number has this meaning in other stories as well. This was the age of Joseph when he was sold into captivity in Egypt, where he struggled, but eventually became a ruler. (Genesis 37) This was also the day of the month in the Noah story when the Flood began (Genesis 7:11), resulting in the end of life on earth – but its restoration and renewal through Noah and his family.

The effort for good in these situations is a goodness that is initially challenged and even rejected, but which struggles and eventually succeeds. Jeremiah's investment would eventually bear fruit, despite an unpromising beginning.

You can even see this in the lives of young people. At 17 years of age, people normally don't know what their life work will be, who or whether they will marry, or where they will live as adults. They are uncertain about further education. Most importantly, they are unaware of – and thankfully oblivious to – the hardships they may face in the next few years in the challenges of their education, employment, future marriage and family, health and beliefs. Yet at 17 they are at the edge of many decisions that will profoundly affect their lives.

Like the 17-year-old Joseph, like Noah on the 17th day of the month, and like Jeremiah as he pays the 17 shekels, many things are just about to happen to 17-year-olds – and they won't necessarily be easy or enjoyable. But good things will happen also and the results can be very good – better than they could ever

imagine – depending on the nature of their investment.

A 17-year-old who puts his investment and desire into the right things, and who makes good decisions based on them, can reap incredible rewards as life progresses and he takes on its challenges. Every young person knows this and generally looks forward with hope and enthusiasm.

But what appears to be important and true – and a worthwhile investment – to a teenager is often different from what would actually be best for him or her. This is why Jeremiah was unpopular, and why his purchase seemed foolish.

Jeremiah's investment is the investment that the church asks everyone to make. What kind of confidence do you have that the teachings of the New Church hold the solutions to the problems facing the human race and to your own personal struggles?

These things represent the way that the truth often appears to our unregenerate selves.

Jeremiah's purchase represents participation in the preservation of the Lord's Church (*Prophets and Psalms*). A field stands for doctrine and those who receive that doctrine, and so it stands for the church – the community of those who follow the Lord. (AC 368) To purchase the field means to believe in the church and to live by the truths it teaches, or to make it your own. (AC 6458).

The statement that Jeremiah was making was that survival in the coming trouble depended on belief in the Lord and a willingness to do His will. This was exactly

the belief that the people of Judah had rejected, and this was the true cause of all their problems. Naturally this investment in those circumstances would appear to be futile.

Jeremiah's investment, of course, is the investment that the church asks everyone to make. What kind of confidence do you have that the teachings of the New Church hold the solutions to the problems facing the human race? What kind of confidence do you have that the solutions given in the Word are the solutions to your own personal struggles?

What are you willing to invest to make these solutions take effect? How much are you affected by the fact that others may not see these things as the remedy to our problems?

History is full of accounts of social movements that began with a few individuals who courageously took unpopular stands, and suffered for them, but who have been vindicated by the course of history. The struggles against slavery and for civil rights, and many struggles for freedom, seemed destined to amount to nothing in their beginnings.

We see these dynamics throughout the world. When a nation is in crisis people hold back and are reluctant to invest. The same is true in your personal

life, in your marriage, family and occupation. If these don't seem to be going well you might be reluctant to invest time and energy, whereas if you are committed to them your investment may bear fruit.

The people of Judah had a curious faith in the Lord in the last days of their kingdom. Despite centuries of acting as though they didn't believe in their god, they suddenly developed an unshakeable faith when they were genuinely threatened. As noted in the previous sermon, Hananiah falsely prophesied that Jehovah would "*break the yoke of Babylon from off their necks*" (Jeremiah 28:11), and others prophesied that there would be peace – but there was no peace. (Jeremiah 6:14) Jerusalem's subsequent defeat crushed this faith.

Bad things do happen, and if you are inclined to base your beliefs on the way things appear to be, you may also be inclined to give up on the true solutions to life's difficulties. True faith requires a long-term investment in living as the Lord teaches. This faith is relatively untroubled by an apparent lack of success, because it is not about worldly success but about service to others.

This is the kind of confidence that Jeremiah's investment is about. This is the kind of investment parents would wish their 17-year-olds to be making, developing the habits, knowledge and desire to serve the Lord to the best of their ability and with all their heart.

A lack of worldly success may make you doubt the worth of what you believe in. New Church teachings are not widely recognized as true. It is understandable that people would lack confidence that they represent a future hope of the world. Still, it is important that there be people who do have this confidence, who are willing to invest in the future that they promise, who are willing to buy that field.

Confidence itself is a powerful force. Confidence in the stock market causes it to increase in value. Confidence in government helps it to be successful. If the people of Judah had really been confident in the Lord they would never have been defeated. People who belong to the organized church need to have confidence in its teachings, and they develop and maintain that confidence by studying and practicing those teachings, and investing in them.

Jeremiah's prophecies were fulfilled, just as he stated them. And after 70 years the Jews were released, they returned to Israel and "*houses and fields and vineyards*" were, in fact, "*possessed again in this land.*"

Satisfaction in life comes from being dedicated to a purpose and investing your love and effort in it. Whether you are apparently successful or unsuccessful, the effort to do what is right and follow the Lord will always bear fruit.

Our message in these sermons is that satisfaction in life comes from being dedicated to a purpose and investing your love and effort in it. Whether you are apparently successful or unsuccessful, whether everyone else agrees that your investment is wise, the effort to do what is right and follow the Lord will always bear fruit.

The Lord is leading the human race, and we can have confidence that whatever happens He will not fail. As we read, *“People in the stream of providence are being carried along constantly toward happier things, whatever appearance the means may present.”* (AC 8478)

This story of Jeremiah, and the field that he bought, urges us to trust in the Lord, to be in that stream of providence, and not to be afraid to invest in the things that have lasting value.

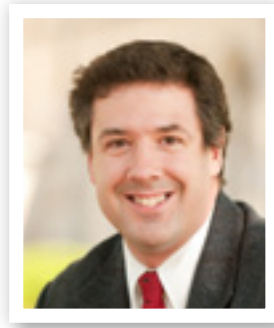
Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. (Matthew 6:33)

Lessons: Jeremiah 32: 2-15, AC 755, AC 8478



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The Rev. Jeremy F. Simons was ordained in 1982 and into the second degree in 1983. He has been Assistant to the Pastor and Pastor of the Kempton Society in Pennsylvania and Principal of its New Church School, Assistant Pastor of the Immanuel Church in Glenview and Principal of the Immanuel Church School, and Assistant Pastor in Bryn Athyn. He is Pastor of the Bryn Athyn Society, where he lives with his wife, Allyn (Edmonds).



Rev. Dr. Thane Glenn

Making a Difference – as Teacher and Minister

Unlike other men who have given up careers to enter the ministry, Thane Glenn has been able to continue teaching in Bryn Athyn College of the New Church and to enhance that career now as a minister of the General Church.

Thane has been an assistant professor of English and Writing at the College since 1998. Now he also teaches Religion and is looking forward to serving as part-time Chaplain in the fall.

No one should be surprised with Thane's love of teaching English, writing and the doctrines. His parents, Bruce and Vera Glenn, were teachers and lovers of literature and writing in both the Secondary Schools and the College, and were doctrinal scholars in their own right. Both have written extensively on New Church education and other studies. Bruce Glenn also was Dean of the College. So Thane is carrying on a rich family tradition – and elevated it with his ordination as a priest of the Church.

Growing up in Bryn Athyn, he was steeped in New Church education, graduating from the elementary school in 1986, the Academy Boys School in 1990 and receiving an Associate Degree from the College in 1992. He went on to earn a BA in English from Washington College in 1994, an MA in English from the University of Pittsburgh in 1998 and a PhD in English from Temple University in 2006. Then he added that Masters in Divinity from the Academy

Theological School and was ordained into the first degree in 2009.

Thane says, “I first felt drawn to the ministry as a senior in high school. I loved the General Church and I loved the ideals in the teachings for the New Church. Something stirred in me when I thought about becoming a minister.”

Other dreams diverted him for a while – from rock star, to writer, finally the call to be a teacher. “Gradually, through my teaching experiences at Bryn Athyn College, I learned to appreciate the variety, passions and concerns of others. I learned to love watching the Lord work in my life and in the lives of those around me. And I realized that working with others in their spiritual lives lay close to my heart.”

For a number of years he led weekly spiritual growth groups, as well as teen and adult groups at church camps. He was part of a team that put together weekly groups and vesper experiences for teens and young adults – called The Sunday Night Thing – for several years.

“I saw what a difference these experiences made in people’s lives, and I decided to take the next step in making this kind of work part of my daily life.” So after considering the possibility for a number of years, he applied to Theological School in 2005.

He did his practicum in San Diego under the Rev. Mark Perry. “A message that Mark repeated over and over again was how important it is for people to know that they are loved. That’s really stayed with me. Jesus told us that the essence of His message is and was the injunction to love our Lord and love our neighbor.”

Swedenborg, Thane says, makes a distinction, with love of the neighbor often phrased as love toward (*erga*) those around us, whereas love of the Lord is often phrased as love into, within, or in our God. “I take this to mean that loving the Lord is about partaking in, gratefully placing ourselves in His love, and I believe that we become better able to reflect love toward those around us when we experience ourselves in God’s infinite love. Or, as Mark would say, people need to know that they’re loved. I try to remember to make this the basis of the message I pass on.”

Thane feels blessed to work at Bryn Athyn College of the New Church where “I am continually awestruck at the thoughtfulness, insightfulness, compassion and devotion of the faculty. And I am continually renewed by the energy, engagement and abilities of the students.

“Since the influx two years ago of a greater number of students without background in Swedenborg’s teachings, the College as a community has faced some real challenges in understanding who we are and in learning how to regard each other. What I’ve found is that the ideas of the New Church come to life in a new way when they become part of a dynamic conversation –

sometimes contentious – on what faith is, on what we are called to live out in our lives.”

Another important part of Thane’s life has been music. He especially loves choral music – “the beauty of voices blending in close harmonies” – and has written a lot of his own music, including large-scale choral pieces. Gilbert and Sullivan fans enjoyed seeing him as an enthusiastic member of the chorus in a spring production of *Princess Ida*. He also looks for opportunities to play his guitar and dabble in other instruments.

As a relatively new homeowner he’s discovering the joy of working on his property, including laying a patio, growing blueberries and coaxing chestnut seedlings toward maturity.

He has many favorite passages in the Writings. “Having recently taught *The True Christian Religion*, I was struck anew by how combative some of the theology seems to be. Stepping back to look at the whole picture, I see that the combativeness comes from a kind of urgent, compassionate plea to uproot ideas and assumptions about God that keep us from entering freely into a relationship with Him.

“I love the way this plea is articulated near the beginning of the text, where Swedenborg calls it ‘madness’ to ‘think, even more to believe, and still more to teach, that God can damn anyone, curse anyone, cast anyone into hell, predestine any soul to eternal death, avenge wrongs, be angry, or punish anyone. He cannot even turn His face away from a person, nor look upon him with a stern countenance.’ (TCR 56)”

When I Fall, I Will Arise

A Sermon by the Rev. Thane Glenn

Every once in a while, in the midst of our everyday concerns, uncertainties and anxieties, God reaches out to us through His Word, and speaks a message so clear and so simple, that we can't help but remember He is with us always.

For me, one of those messages comes through the text drawn from prophet Micah's words to the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. But before we look at those words, let's consider why the Lord might be asking us to think about them this morning.

It is so easy for many of us to get into stretches of our lives when we feel like everything is off track. Maybe we're frustrated that our children seem to be making unhealthy decisions. Maybe every conversation seems to turn into an argument. Maybe it's a cold stretch with our husband or wife: *everything he does is an irritation to me... I just can't seem to make myself interested in what she cares about.* Maybe we just seem to be at odds with everyone at work. Maybe we're discouraged with how little progress we seem to be making: *I can't stop making critical comments... I have no motivation to do kind things.*

Everything seems off track.

When Micah was prophesying to the people of Israel and Judah, everything seemed way off track. There was no hope of stopping the massive Assyrian armies gathering on their borders. In their own land, the governors were corrupt, and the desperate people were turning on each other. It seemed as if everyone was ready to push his neighbor into a pit for some selfish gain. Consider the opening sentence of our reading today:

The faithful person has perished from the earth, and there is not one upright [person] among men. (Micah 7:2)

We know this feeling. There's not *one* upright person. We might tell ourselves, I'm not getting along with *anybody*. I *never* seem to treat other people as kindly as I want to. Everything is off track.

But let's remember the closing sentence of the same reading:

Do not rejoice over me, O my enemy; when I fall, I will arise. (Micah 7:8)

What might be the message of this text?

Our reading from *Arcana Coelestia* suggests that this passage from Micah is a description of the temptations that rise up against us. And listen, again, to the way in which the situation is described. Micah warns:

Guard the doors of your mouth from her who lies in your bosom. ...son

dishonors father, daughter rises against her mother.... A person's enemies are the people of his own household. (Micah 7:5-6)

Sometimes it can feel, especially when we're fighting temptation, as if members of our household are against us – our children, our spouse. *Why won't they get along better with me? Why isn't she more considerate?*

The Lord tells us in His teachings for a New Church that these words are not literal, but they are talking about things that we cling to as closely as we might cling to our children or spouse. These are *attitudes, ideas and habits* we hold onto as fiercely as we might defend the members of our own family, even when they irritate or frustrate us.

What are these things that cling to us and keep us down because something in us doesn't want to let go of them? I like the way *Arcana Caelestia* puts it in another passage on temptations. What are these things? The passage says that they are “false assumptions” and the “living delight in [evil]” which springs from them. (*Arcana Caelestia* §5037)

The false assumptions we carry around in our heads and the delight in evil that comes from those assumptions – unexamined. These are the things that come up in our temptations and do everything they can to knock us down, set a snare for us, trap us in that pit where everything seems off track.

I want to spend a few minutes talking about these *false assumptions* and *delights in evil*. What do they look like?

Some of these false assumptions are what we might call false conscience. When we're in temptation, the hell in us drags up before us the shameful thoughts we've entertained and the harmful things we've said or done. And maybe thoughts like these pass through our heads: *This is all my fault. I'll never change. What use am I to anybody?*

Listen to the lie in those statements – the way they stop us from making an honest, balanced appraisal of the situation. They are false assumptions. But don't we sometimes get a perverse, miserable delight in the *certainty* of such statements? *I'm no use to anybody!* False assumptions lead to living delight (however miserable) in evil. And once we get in that mindset, they cling to us and entrap us.

And, of course, we know they get a lot worse than that. Think of the teenage girl who says to herself, “I know I'm not supposed to say mean things about someone behind her back, but she *deserves* it!” It's a false assumption – and if she lets it cling to her, it will have her in the pit of mean-spirited gossip. A false assumption leading to a living delight in evil.

Or think of the man in mid-career who slips into the belief that he doesn't *need* to tell his wife about the secret friendship he's pursuing with a female coworker. It's a false assumption, and it's one that could easily drag him into the mire of the helplessly compulsive delight that is adultery.

Or think of the woman who gets mistakenly credited for a project idea that actually came from her co-worker. A day goes by, and she tells herself that it's too late to correct her supervisor's wrong impression; it would just be awkward for both of them. That's a false assumption: it might seem relatively harmless, but the more it clings to her, the more it will sink her into the habit of double-talk and half-truths.

Every one of us undergoes temptations like these. And our revelation tells us that they are a necessary part of our path. We read in *Arcana Caelestia* that "no one can be regenerated" – that is, no one can become a spiritually thoughtful, purposeful person – "unless he undergoes temptations." (*Arcana Caelestia* 5036) And yes, part of temptation is having to face up to the chaos and disarray created by what we've said or done. It can be very painful, overwhelming.

But the final word of Micah's message, in the midst of all the despair he speaks, is that our Lord will not leave us in a pit:

Do not rejoice over me, O my enemy; when I fall, I will arise!

Remember how Jesus Christ challenged the Pharisees before He healed the man with a withered hand.

What man is there among you [He said] who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out. (Matthew 12:11)

I think we can sometimes hear this story and only hear Christ arguing for why it's legitimate for Him to heal on the Sabbath – and we miss the bigger point. When we're in that pit, we can't imagine *anyone* would want to help us out. I think that Christ is making the promise that our Divine Human God will not leave us in a pit of temptation.

Let's go back to the image. Probably very few of us have worked with sheep, but perhaps we can picture an animal of some sort when trapped. It's not pretty. Panicked, wild, bleating, stupidly kicking its legs, fighting the one trying to free it. Our primary reaction to the fallen sheep might be annoyance. *Why is this dumb animal not letting me help it?!* And yet, as Christ says, if it were our sheep, we would lay hold of it and lift it out. What Jesus Christ is saying is that if *we* would pull the sheep out of the pit, will not then our Lord lift us out of our pit?

And so a man in desperate need of healing walked into the synagogue with a withered hand. Think of sitting there that day. Would we be willing to admit that our first reaction to his deformity might be revulsion? Might we discreetly move away from him? This is the point: that panicked sheep, that deformed man – this is what we all look like in temptation.

Here's another passage from *Arcana Caelestia* about temptation. Listen to how graphic this description is. See if you can identify with any of it:

...when a person undergoes temptation unclean spirits are near him and

round about him. They activate the evils and falsities residing with him; and they also confine him to these, increasing them to the point where he reaches despair. So it is that the person dwells at such times amid uncleanness and squalor....

One may also compare the state in which temptation takes place to a person's condition when he falls among robbers. When he gets away his hair is disheveled, his face is rough, and his clothes are torn. If he yields in temptation he remains in that state; but if he overcomes in temptation his condition is happy and peaceful once he has attended to his face, combed his hair, and changed his clothes. (*Arcana Caelestia* 5346)

This is what temptation looks like. Everything in our lives feels off track. We are in spiritual squalor. Our face is rough, our clothes torn. Who would want to help us out? And Jesus Christ says, *Stretch out your hand. I will not leave you comfortless.* He will lift us out. Can we have similar compassion on our neighbors when they struggle with their own messy temptations?

I want to close with one more passage from the teachings for the New Church and a final thought, from *The New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine*:

The person who lives a life of charity and faith does the work of repentance daily.... For a person of himself continually lapses, but he is continually raised by the Lord, and led to good. (*The New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine* 163)

A little bit later, the same work tells us that the only way we can fight the overwhelm of temptation, the sense that everything is hopelessly off track, is with truths of our Lord's Word. (191) The only way we can see through those false assumptions that entrap us in a living delight in evil is by going to Lord in prayer and reflection.

We go to His Word – again and again. It can take a lot of patience – that freeing answer may not come right away. We listen for His voice.

And isn't this what we're doing here this morning? In the words of the prophet Micah:

Therefore I will look to the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; My God will hear me. Do not rejoice over me, O my enemy; when I fall, I will arise! (Micah 7:7-8)

Lessons: Micah 7: 2-8, Matthew 12: 9-13, AC 4843:4

Passing the Torch: Let Your Light So Shine...

Academy Secondary Schools Commencement Address *Esther Yardumian-Smyth*

*That time of year thou
mayest in me behold*

*When yellow leaves, or
none, or few do hang*

*Upon those boughs
which shake against the
cold;*

*Bare, ruined choirs,
where late the sweet
birds sang;*

*In me, thou see'st the
twilight of such day*

*As after sunset fadeth in
the west*

*Which, by and by, black
night doth take away,*

*Death's second self, that
seals up all in rest.*

*In me, thou see'st the
glowing of such fire,*

*As on the ashes of his
youth doth lie*

*As the death-bed
whereon it must expire,*

*Consumed with that
which it was nourished
by*

*This thou perceiv'st,
which makes thy love
more strong*

*To love that well, which
thou must leave ere
long.*

The speaker of this poem is approaching the end of his life, evident in the poignant metaphors of late autumn, sunset and the ashes of a fire after the last of the embers have burned away.

The silent listener whom he addresses is someone close to him, who comes to realize that she is about to lose him, and because of that imminent loss, now loves him all the more.

Shakespeare well-intended for his *Sonnet* to raise the awareness of its reader or listener. And it certainly has become more meaningful to me as I breathe in the final few moments of my career here. But in a more relevant way, it offers an illuminating message to the graduating seniors of the class of 2011. Well, for that matter, to everyone here this morning.

Why is it that when something is coming to an end, it becomes more compelling to us; if we are soon to part from each other, we somehow feel more connected?

In the clinching final line of the sonnet, *To love that well, which thou must leave ere long*, we are all reminded to take nothing and no one for granted – ever!

Let's suppose this is possible: that we wake up tomorrow morning and God is standing over our beds. We know it's God. And He tells us that this is our last day on the earth. Likely, we would race around during the day to let everyone close to us know how much they mean to us and how much we love them. Why don't we do that now?! And every other "now"?

These are not just words on a page, people! We need to get them inside us, by living them!

This is one of the more striking lessons that senior boys and girls have learned this year – that *Life is Ephemeral*. They have been encouraged to value their classmates, their gifts from the Lord, and the fleeting moments that make up their high

school experience. They have been exhorted to look at each other in ways that suggest each has something for the other to appreciate, share, exchange, enjoy, respect and applaud.

Seniors, would you believe that the first day of your last year in high school began 6,528 *hours* ago! Before you math whizzes start computing, that equals 272 days. Although those days and hours that you spent sitting in class and chapel, or working on your Senior Projects, Fine Arts and Performing Arts portfolios, or maybe even your Hamlet LOGS may have seemed interminable while you were in them, at some point, perhaps even at this moment, you will look back on your time here and wonder how it went so very quickly.

Now, of those 6,000-odd hours since school began, you have spent a mere 125.4 of them in Senior English. That's it! Is it any wonder then that I want everything that's coming to me?! If I had to condense the content of those 8,848 precious minutes into these next few, what are the most significant lessons that I hope you hold with you in your hearts, minds and souls?

Well, on the first day of English class in Benade 301, there is a quotation written on the chalkboard – a quotation borrowed from the brilliant Irish playwright, George Bernard Shaw, which is no doubt familiar to many, in which he forthrightly contends:

...the true joy in life is being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being a force of nature, instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances, complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.

That first day's class concluded this means that by sitting on the couch in a querulous drone of "woe is me, what about me, why me..." you will find nothing but misery. On the other hand, in being useful, you will find everything of happiness and fulfillment.

But that then begs the questions: What *do we* have to contribute? How can we know what is our "mighty purpose"?

That the Lord made us the way that He intended for us to be, that He endowed each of us with the talents and abilities that He intended for us to have, can neither be understood nor embraced unless we are first taught to be grateful for those very gifts. In other words, we must accept God's love and live our lives in evidence of that acceptance.

What this further means is that we should not look around ourselves in

That the Lord made us the way that He intended for us to be, that He endowed each of us with the talents and abilities that He intended for us to have, can be neither understood nor embraced unless we are first taught to be grateful for those very gifts. In other words, we must accept God's love and live our lives in evidence of that acceptance.

envy, wishing to be like everyone else: “Why didn’t I get...?” “How come she has?” “Why is he so much better at...?” Or worse, “Even what I did get isn’t enough!” Instead, we must thank the Lord for His benefits by using them well. His gift to us is what we are; our thanks to Him is what we become.

One of the most valuable results of education is gaining the ability to make ourselves do the thing that we have to do, when it ought to be done, whether we like it or not. Work because that work is its own reward, and it will build in us both integrity and a true estimation of our abilities.

We must thank the Lord for His benefits by using them well. His gift to us is what we are; our thanks to Him is what we become.

We arrive at a “just estimate” of ourselves by frequent self-examination and a continual obedience to what we know to be right and true without concern for what others may think or say or do. Nothing should be done solely to gain approval or acceptance, reward or recognition.

The reason to learn is because you don’t know what you don’t know until you know it – because you don’t know what it is that you might be missing if you don’t learn it! But once you know it, then you may determine whether you like it or not, whether you are good at it or not. We will be better able to discover our *purpose* if we invest ourselves wholeheartedly into everything that we do.

In fact, that *is* our *purpose*!

Shaw’s quotation makes the emphatic declaration: *I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work, the more I live!*

Class of 2011, during your time here at the Academy, you have been exposed to inestimable volumes of ideas and facts in the Sciences, in Math, Religion, Languages, Fine Arts, Performing Arts, Physical Education – all of which has included the teaching of morals and what is and is not upright behavior. You will now *Go Forward* to further your educations in college, or to establish your credentials in the workplace, or to search for what your talents and abilities are in other arenas of life. Who knows but that you may become CEOs, or professional athletes, or concert pianists, or perhaps even educators. Through these varied pursuits, you will have opportunities to impact your communities, your countries and your world.

But your profession will not be the measure of your true character. What you do when there is no reward, no remuneration, no accolades will be evidence of that. Your true character will be reflected in your integrity, your wisdom and your charity.

As Shaw confirms, our lives belong to the whole community, and it is our responsibility to do for it whatever we can.

This room is filled with people who believe in each one of you – those who

have devoted their lives to giving you every opportunity to have, identify and use the Lord's gifts and to become men and women of character and virtue.

To begin, there is a distinguished group of administrators seated on this dais behind me, each of whom has been, in part, responsible for the flourishing of your interests and talents: Chancellor Tom Kline, Vice Chancellor Eric Carswell, the Principals of the Girls and Boys Schools, Mrs. Susan Odhner and Mr. Jeremy Irwin, and our Commencement Marshal, and Latin Queen, *Magistra* Gail Cooper.

And we go on to the supportive, if anxious, Academy underclassmen who are finely be-decked in their full-dress panoply and whose day awaits.

And to your faithful family members and festive friends, who are here to cheer you on to even greater heights and to celebrate with you.

Most importantly to your loving and self-sacrificing parents, who have been responsible for steering you in the right direction to use all of those God-given talents, and who generously gave much of that care over to the Academy for the length of time that you have been here.

And never to be forgotten, your beloved teachers, whose unflinching devotion to your education will be remembered in various ways throughout your lifetimes.

And especially to your senior class advisors: my erstwhile officemate, Mrs. Kira Schadegg, and Rev. Maura dePadua. I guarantee that you have no bigger fans here today than these educators.

And certainly not to overlook the staffs of Glenn and Stuart Halls for the incalculable number of hours that have been invested in each of you in your dormitories. And I will speak for both dorms when I offer our thankfulness to all of you parents who have entrusted the Academy and the dorm staffs with the safety and well-being of your sons and daughters. The honor that you have conferred upon us in so doing has never been taken lightly.

I'd also like to salute Dr. Phil Feerrar, (also retiring), whose contributions to the Academy in all ways have been unmatched, and whose magnanimity to this class of seniors and to all the other classes before theirs over 22 years has been both prodigious and profound.

And now to me. Before we part for good and all, I remember my own parents' wish for me to be a graduate of the Girls School and the Academy's need to truncate that prospect. When I was necessarily expelled in 1968, this podium was the *last* place I thought I would one day be. The choices I had

Your profession will not be the measure of your true character. What you do when there is no reward, no remuneration, no accolades will be evidence of that. Your true character will be reflected in your integrity, your wisdom and your charity.

made took me as far from this honor as can be imagined.

But no matter what proverbial gutter I found myself in, no matter the vicissitudes I encountered in that veritable charybdis, no matter that I repeatedly failed the Lord, He never for a single moment failed me. He was ever-preparing me in His own fashion for a time when I would use all of that “field work” to inform my role as teacher and Housemother in the very place I had eschewed as a teenager.

It was only when I was able to have a “just estimate” of myself and to assume responsibility for my character defects and misguided behavior that the hand of Providence led me right back to the school I had so ignominiously left years before.

I consider myself blessed to have been so well received by the Academy, by this faculty, and by the many students whom I have taught in my years here. I am equally fortunate that I stayed long enough to have known, taught, enjoyed and been part of the class of 2011, and to be, in a symbolic way, graduating with them today.

We teach best what we most need to learn!

Back to that first day of Senior English those thousands of hours ago, to Shaw’s final words written on the chalkboard:

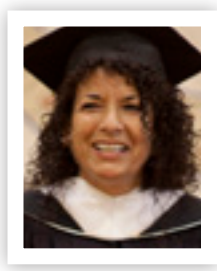
Life is no brief candle to me! It is rather a splendid torch, which I have got hold of for the moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible, before handing it on to future generations.

My moment in time bearing the torch is over. I must now hand it off to all of you departing seniors – that you may make it burn as brightly as possible as you carry it into your own futures and before it becomes your time to pass it on.

So despite how ephemeral senior year is, or how fleeting life itself is, we have an Eternity of Time to live it. Don’t miss one single second. Get everything that’s coming to you and give all of it back.

After all, today is...*another beautiful day in Paradise!*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Esther Yardumian-Smyth has taught Senior English in the Academy Girls School from 1994-2011, has served as Head Housemother of Glenn Hall, has directed Secondary Schools theatrical productions, and has mentored students in many ways – from Oratorical and valedictory speeches to admonitions to exhibit good manners and not chew gum in public. She received a prolonged standing ovation for this farewell address, given at the Academy Secondary Schools Commencement on May 28, 2011, in Bryn Athyn. Esther and her husband, Brian, have retired to South Carolina.

The Uneasy Alliance of Faith and Doubt

Rev. Brian D. Smith

I feel overwhelmed by all the different ways I could respond to the subject of doubt. It engages me theologically, psychologically, culturally and personally. It is one of the greatest tools in the hand of the Creator and also one of the most painful and afflicting experiences in the human heart.

I think of the topic very broadly. We don't just doubt the existence of the Creator, but we doubt His power, His purpose and His presence. We doubt ourselves, and whether we can be saved. We doubt each other. We doubt whether evil exists. We doubt whether love exists. We doubt whether we are spiritual beings. We doubt our abilities, we doubt our motives. We doubt our choices – our marriages, our careers, our parenting, our politics. We doubt our safety, our future, our happiness.

I will begin personally.

My work of preaching brings me satisfaction. It also brings me a type of discomfort not found anywhere else. I've tried to put my finger on what this is. It's not just the stresses associated with working with people or anxiety about being evaluated. It's not just the discomfort which comes with presuming to stand up and preach in a culture which doesn't like "preachyness."

I think it is a discomfort in standing so close when the Lord is speaking.

At times the only thing that allows me to go out on chancel is knowing that I'm going to read from the Word. Whatever else happens, at least I know people will hear the Word of the Lord read. If my sermon fails to illuminate anything, still the worship service will not be a complete loss.

This isn't just self-deprecation, or a questioning of my abilities (although that is there, too). I'm trying to speak of my awe (and terror) at the Lord's words.

Preaching brings me into acute awareness of the Lord speaking with His people. He speaks to the soul. He asks about what we most deeply love. He challenges our most hidden thoughts. He seeks to wake up the part of us which is above the taste of chicken wings and the buzz from lattes.

The Creator of the universe is asking for our full attention and complete obedience so that He can draw us out of the hellish state we are born into. This is too much to bear.

Can't we get a little more distance? Can't we find a place where the "voice as of many waters" is more of a rumble in the background than the thunderous

sound of Niagara when we are close enough to feel the spray? (Rev. 1.15)

Doubt can offer us this distance.

My point is not to emphasize the unique place of preaching, but just to notice my personal desire to be allowed to move further away – something which is difficult when publicly reading the Word every week. But it's not just preachers who hear the Lord's Word; this is an experience many people have. God is extremely confrontational when we listen to what He has to say.

But He is also incredibly silent when we walk away. Doubt is the opportunity which ensures our freedom. Our raw, overwhelming freedom from God.

Doubt refines. It is at the center of the spiritual growth crucible called temptations (AC 1820, 2338, TCR 596). We cannot move closer to God without the tearing experiences of doubt at every step (AC 59). There are no slaves in heaven.

A beautiful statement in *Arcana Coelestia* explains that all introduction of truth into a person's mind is accompanied with the introduction of doubts (AC 7298). Truths rammed into the mind without the shoe-horn of doubt have no flexibility. Ideas stuck in our minds without a process of doubt have no extension or proportion. "Inherited" rather than personally digested ideas are the ones we tend to be least reasonable about and most reactive about when we try to apply them in life.

Wrestle with an idea for years, testing, doubting; alternatively dropping and defending. That is an idea which you understand and can truly use. You know how to apply it in different situations. You have a sense of balance. You have a sense of reserve.

The rigid, fearful, and reactive "trust" we place in defending an unexamined idea fed to us from childhood is nothing compared with the deep and quiet confidence we find in principles which we have fought against and for more than a lifetime. But the fact that God puts doubt to great use does not mean that it deserves the attention and acclaim it receives.

It is foolish of our society to extol the function of doubt and cynicism.

Doubt only exists in opposition. It feeds off propositions of truth. It does nothing but endlessly argue and tear at anything and everything held up as possibly offering value.

"I propose to marry you, to remain faithful to you, to spend a lifetime working with you."

"I propose to work in this profession, to toil to serve these purposes to add value to the world."

"I propose to give birth to this child and to care for this child for a lifetime, in whatever way she needs to the end of my strength."

Doubt refines. It is at the center of the spiritual growth crucible called temptations. We cannot move closer to God without the tearing experiences of doubt at every step. There are no slaves in heaven.

“I propose to open the door to God. To search to know Him, to understand His will and walk His path as best as I can understand it.”

Thanks to doubt, we are guaranteed that no serious or meaningful endeavor will go forward without stiff opposition, criticism, ridicule, despair and fear. And even though this doubting is useful I would hesitate to call it a virtue, let alone the greatest virtue. Faithfulness, commitment and perseverance are better ways to measure the character of a person than his ability to find arguments against.

I’m not trying to send the message that “you aren’t believing hard enough, just shut your eyes tighter, and believe more.” The doubts we experience can be very compelling and challenging.

But, I am cautioning against the idea that the effort to push through doubt is necessarily blind, naïve, or unthinking.

I don’t believe that there is an “answer” which allows us to avoid the process of doubt. But there are practices which I think are valuable to apply in religious doubt.

1. We can cultivate our love of truth (AC 6047). This involves looking, reading, listening and searching for good ideas which are effective at making life better for ourselves and others. Sometimes when doubts arise, we will have a good answer in rebuttal. Other times our own thinking will be changed or at least enriched by the competing idea. Either way, it is our commitment to truth which will help our thinking improve.

2. We can make the Word of the Lord our starting premise. “The Word” means different things to different people. In a broad sense, it is that which we trust to be the source of truth from God. For many people, this source is the Old and New Testaments. I would be extremely suspicious of anyone who claimed that he understood the whole of this book perfectly without confusion or doubt. This is not what is asked of us. We will certainly be unclear and experience doubt about many of the teachings in the Word. At these times, we can acknowledge the confusion about the teachings while retaining a commitment to the Word. The alternative is to bring the validity of the Word itself into question. In the first case, we may sit with confusion about many teachings for our whole lives, but we will continue to learn from the Word. In the second case, we are making a very significant choice to undermine our opportunity to hear from God.

3. We can recognize that thought is secondary to will. Our loves will drive and distort our thinking in order to justify and support these loves. I think this is a key idea of the New Church. We are able to consider ideas which

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I don't believe there is an "answer" which allows us to avoid the process of doubt. But there are practices which I think are valuable to apply in religious doubt: We can cultivate our love of truth; we can make the Word of the Lord our starting premise; and we can recognize that thought is secondary to will.

are in opposition to some of our loves, but this is not easy and will not last long without a commitment to those ideas above the natural commitment we feel to the things we love. This is a key to religious faith and doubt because the two essential things of religion involve both the will and the thought. On the thought side, we are to acknowledge the Divine as the center of life and on the will side we are to live and love according to His precepts (HH 319, DP 328, 253, TCR 692). Without both, we don't move forward. I mention this combination of thought and will because we tend to think of doubt as merely an intellectual questioning.

Whereas in reality if we are to successfully move through doubts, we have to realize that our beliefs are interconnected with our loves, motivations and manner of living.

We do not find strong, comfortable, enduring faith in God outside of a lifelong commitment to live in accordance with His will. Without coming into the pattern and likeness of God, we don't experience the presence of God.

I believe that these three practices or insights, combined with patience and humility, will lead to a growing trust in the Lord's presence, purpose and significance in our lives. But, lest I end on an unrealistically confident note, I'd like to turn to Mark 9.

The many brands, versions and types of doubt (religious and otherwise) are an almost constant source of challenge in my life. And so I love the brief story in Mark of the man wrestling with doubt and belief. He has a growing awareness of the limits of his faith, but also a desperate desire to trust the Lord to help his son. For me this story expresses human hope and effort reaching for God and also the helplessness and weakness of that same human condition. It makes perfect sense that the man is described as crying out *with tears* in his voice, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The Rev. Brian D. Smith is Assistant to the Pastor of the Olivet Church in Toronto, Canada. He and his wife, Janine (Gladish), have a son, Kai, and are expecting another child this summer. Brian helps to oversee the online project, New Church Perspective.

Editor's note: This article originally appeared on New Church Perspective (www.newchurchperspective.com) as part of a series on doubt.

A Letter to General Church Board Members

A Challenge to Our Commitment to The Church from Al Lindsay

Editor's note: Following is an edited version of a letter sent by Al Lindsay, Sarver, Pennsylvania, to his fellow members of the General Church Board of Directors prior to their meeting in May. Reprinted with permission.

In the last several months we have received some disquieting news about our financial situation. There have been communications from Board members and the Administration of the Church about our significant budget deficit. The suggestion has been made that our Budget Committee should make hard decisions which involve cutting costs. The word “drastic” had been used.

I concur that hard decisions should be made and drastic action is necessary. I think, however, we are moving in exactly the wrong direction.

For some time we have been paying lip service to the notion that we should be emphasizing the revenue side as opposed to the expense side of the budget. Put differently, we aren't raising enough money to support the uses that the Board and the Bishop believe are essential for the growth and the future of the Church. We pay lip service to this concept, but I don't think we are truly addressing it.

I believe that ultimately the hard decision we have to make is whether we believe in this church or not. Do we believe that Swedenborg was the purveyor of a Divine Revelation or was he simply a very clever Swede? Do we believe that this revelation was the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ and is to benefit all mankind, or is this supposed revelation generally the exclusive property of a very small group of people, most of whom live in the suburban Philadelphia area?

If we believe in the Second Advent, then two things should become readily apparent to us. First, the failure to spread

If we believe in the Second Advent, then two things should become readily apparent. First, the failure to spread the Church beyond the tiny group of people who are even aware of Swedenborg is intolerable. Second, the failure of our membership to support the Church and its uses financially is shameful.

the Church beyond the tiny group of people who are even aware of Swedenborg is intolerable. Second, the failure of our membership to support the Church and its uses financially is shameful.

I have learned in the last several years that the culture in our church is such that the mere discussion of contributing to the Church is not for polite conversation. Indeed, to many of our members the idea of a minister discussing the spiritual value of contributing to the Lord's uses from the pulpit is unthinkable.

It needs to be discussed.

First of all, as a practical matter, we can talk about cutting expenses all we want. We can never fix the problem this way. We have allowed ourselves to take solace in the existence of what we perceive to be a large endowment to fund our uses. We have learned that it is a finite amount of money; indeed, it is diminishing. Meanwhile, juxtaposed against this specific sum is an ever-growing number of entitlements, from our employees to our societies, which have become accustomed to grants from the Church to continue their uses. We can cut all we wish but, with the present structure, eventually the endowment will run out.

There has been a lot of talk about being good stewards of the Church. I believe that we on the Board have been lulled into believing that being good stewards of an endowment fund is the same thing as being good stewards of the Church. It is not. It is my position that to be good stewards of the Church we need to be strong voices in changing the culture of the Church.

To a large extent the financial crisis we are in is illusory. We have been told that the wealth of the membership of the Church is such that if we participated in percentage giving – practically any percentage giving – there would be enough to cover all of our uses and replenish our endowment, with money to spare. Meanwhile, our most recent bishops – Bishop Kline, Bishop Buss and Bishop King – have addressed the spiritual value of tithing: contributing 10% of our gross income to support the Church's uses.

If we on the Board would support the positions taken by our last three bishops, we would not be discussing, as stewards of the Church, what budget cuts we would be making. We would be discussing how to be good stewards of a substantial surplus that we would be committing to the growth and health of the Church throughout the world.

Still, we are reluctant to speak to it. I fear that our reluctance is based on our lack of commitment to our doctrines. We are willing to enjoy discussing the doctrines as an intellectual exercise but we are not committed to the cause in our hearts. As a recent convert to our faith, I am no authority on our doctrine. In my brief tenure as a reader, however, I have reached the inescapable conclusion that ours is a doctrine of love – of the heart, not the intellect.

Commitment is important. Indeed it is everything. Probably the fastest growing religion in our country is Mormonism. Far be it for me to criticize any doctrine, but I find theirs to be very difficult. Nonetheless, they grow. I believe they grow because they are committed to their religion. They sacrifice for their religion. Their religion impacts their everyday lives.

I believe that deep down inside, in places we don't want to talk about, our membership *wants* to be asked to sacrifice. Our membership *needs* to be asked to sacrifice. Will we have the courage to make that request?

But there is a catch. In order for us to speak to it, we must do it. As Development Director Wayne Parker has put it, if the pastor and the treasurer of a society don't tithe, the congregation won't tithe. Thus we have to make the individual decision whether or not we want to take this quantum leap. We talk the talk, but are we willing to walk the walk.

By not speaking to the issue of financial commitment, not only are we failing to support the Church financially, we are also depriving our membership of the joy of that commitment, that connection with the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe if our members committed in this very basic way, their commitment will grow in many other ways.

A hundred years ago, when Bishop W.F. Pendleton drafted *Principle of the Academy No. 12*, the theory was that our Church was not ripe for expansion, because people were so committed to other religions and our religion would be attacked as being radically different. Therefore, our evangelization was confined mostly to our schools. Whatever validity that notion may have had then, it certainly has none now.

The financial strains we are going through are not peculiar by any means to our faith. But now is the time that we move forward and commit ourselves to the growth of the Church. By cutting our budget in the very fields which would allow that growth, we are doing exactly the opposite.

There is an old saying: "People will pay for what they love." Where do we love?

With these things in mind, I think the Board should commit to go in a different direction by resolving:

- to move forward boldly and enthusiastically with the initiatives designed to bring a million new people into meaningful contact with the Writings
- that we launch a new initiative to have our operations supported, not by income from an endowment fund, but through current contributions
- that the income from the endowment fund be used not for operations but as a safety net if at any time we are unable to fund operations through current contributions
- that the members of the Church, including Board members and clergy, be encouraged to engage in percentage giving, not because the Church needs the

money but as a spiritual practice

- that we as Board members commit to percentage giving, including tithing, which is 10% of gross income
- that our clergy, in keeping with the position of the last three bishops, shall preach the value of percentage giving and participate in it as an example to the laity

So, fellow Board members, if you want drastic, there it is. I think that now is the precise time for drastic action. To paraphrase Lincoln, the dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate for the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulties, but we must rise with the occasion. We must think anew and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves, and then we shall save our Church.

I ask you to consider what our legacy will be. What will our grandchildren and great grandchildren say about us and our commitment to the Church?

What will be written about us a 100 years from now and how we acted in this time of supposed peril?

I can imagine an excerpt, written in some publication 100 years from now: *The Rise and Fall of Swedenborgianism in America*. By that time the General Church, if we continue in the direction we are going, will be mentioned, but not prominently. Can you imagine reading the following?

At the point in time when evangelization would have been received by many Christians disillusioned with their own denominations, the General Church was poised to take maximum advantage of the situation. It had a huge endowment fund, the income of which could have been used to supplement their contributions. Potential contributors were wealthy and the future looked very bright.

Unfortunately, the culture of the General Church would not support such aggressive action. The members were addicted to the notion that their regular contributions were not required or needed. They felt they could have everything from income from the endowment. Of course, this was wishful thinking. The endowment, due to fixed costs which were increasing exponentially, was quickly diminished to nothing.

At that precise point when aggressive action would have saved the Church, the leadership of the Church, including its Board of Directors, hesitated, faltered and retreated. They went along with the prevailing culture and, as a result, the endowment fund was quickly exhausted and the membership of the Church, with no deep, emotional commitment to the Church, simply wandered away.

I ask you to consider what our legacy will be. What will our grandchildren and great grandchildren say about us and our commitment to the Church? What will be written about us 100 years from now and how we acted in this time of supposed peril?

There are certain remnants at this time of the General Church which can be seen. There is a small college in Huntington Valley, Pennsylvania, in what was once called Bryn Athyn. It can be determined that the present college once had Swedenborgian roots by reading about the history of the area.

Across the street from the college is a lovely cathedral, which was once the center of the Church. It, however, has fallen into disrepair. The owner of the building, the Montgomery County Historical Society, has started a fund drive to fix the broken stained glass windows. Until recently it had been a nondenominational church and was used for functions such as weddings.

I don't have much time left on this Board. I know that I have been outspoken in my criticism of our Church's culture. I have come to see myself as a donkey braying in the wind, having little impact. But I am convinced that there are others, and I urge them to speak out.

This is a needless retreat. This is a foolish retreat. Nonetheless, I am well aware of how strong our culture of non-giving is. I wistfully suppose that when the Church fails as stated above – **and it will** if we continue with this uncommitted culture – there will be a footnote to the above, and it will read as follows:

Nonetheless, there were those among them who spoke out against the retreat. They urged the Church to move forward fearlessly and boldly, with great commitment to the cause of the Second Coming.

As stated in Isaiah 35: 3, 4: *Strengthen the weak hands, And make firm the feeble knees, Say to those who are fearful-hearted, "Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, With the recompense of God; He will come and save you."*

Shall we be like Joshua and Caleb, who saw a Promised Land flowing with milk and honey, or shall we join the voices of the 10 other spies who only saw giants that they feared were far too powerful to overcome?

The fields are already ripe for harvest. Why stand we here idle?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alexander (Al) Lindsay Jr. graduated from the Academy Boys School in 1964, from Washington & Jefferson College in 1968 and from the University of Pittsburgh Law School in 1971. He returned to Pitt in 1992 as an adjunct professor teaching Trial Advocacy. In 1972 he became the first full-time Assistant District Attorney in Butler County and made a name for himself investigating and prosecuting public corruption. He also served as Assistant U.S. Attorney for Western Pennsylvania. Since 1980 he has been in private practice. Al is serving his second term on the General Church Board of Directors. He is married to Trish (Waddell) and they have six grown children.

What Kind of a Person Do You Want to Be?

Raymond David

This question may seem strange to you, but there are a lot of ways to look at it. I'd like to look briefly at a few of them. Think about what kind of people you like to be with: extroverts, loud, aggressive, entertaining, leaders of the pack? Or introverts, quiet people who hardly talk, sit in a corner and watch the others? What is the *quality* that attracts you? And *why* does it attract you? Consider whether those are qualities you would like to have and why.

You might want to consider the purpose you have in your mind – or perhaps not fully in mind, but mostly at heart? – for reacting to certain personalities and situations. We certainly do have a wide variety of purposes. We want to make a living. We want to be educated, to appear smart. We want to be liked. We'd sometimes like to be famous. We'd like to be honest, trustworthy, brave, clean and reverent. Or at least we'd like people to think about us that way. And sometimes we want to rebel and be bad, to forget all the rules and regulations, the high aspirations, the goals.

Think about someone whom you admire and the qualities in that person that bring you to admiration. Honesty? Kindness? Wealth? Fame? A person of his/her word? Education? Manners? Physical beauty? Ambition? What is it that attracts you?

Then, consider how you might acquire the qualities you admire. There are so many differing qualities that one might consider. And then we might also want to consider how that person acquired those qualities. Should we follow? Can we follow? Or consider what that person does with those qualities; how does she/he use them?

Of course, we cannot have another person's experience. How that person responded to whatever experience led him or her to a choice of personal quality is not within my range of resolution. But for me to acquire what I perceive as that quality is within possibility. If I really want it, I can have it. Maybe not physical beauty, but each of the others, yes, up to a point at least.

What we know is that we are put into this world for a purpose. Let's try to keep that purpose in mind. We are in this world to learn how to be angels of heaven. Are we angels? No, we would not still be here if we were already angels.

We know that much. But how do we go about finishing the job? What do we still lack?

Swedenborg states that you will live in the next life to eternity with people very much like yourself. Is that a delightful prospect, or terrifying? That's worth thinking about, too. In other words, when you really think about it, do you *like* yourself?

Our whole purpose in this world is really to answer those questions, maybe framed a little differently, but, basically: Who am I? Who do I want to be?

The Lord created this world as a special place in which we are not forced to acknowledge Him, believe in Him, or love Him. He has created this entire physical world so that we may be free to become whatever we choose. We can become angels or we can become devils. The Lord did this because we cannot be happy as angels unless that is our choice. And He wants above all else for us to be happy.

Religion lays out various rules for becoming fit for heaven. As Jesus said to the young man who asked what good thing he should do to inherit eternal life: "Keep the commandments."

Raymond David lives in La Crescenta, California.

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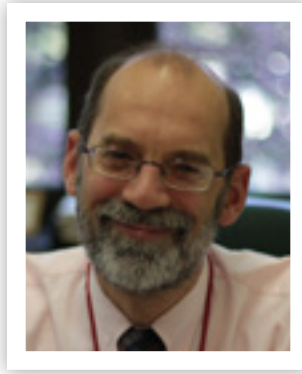


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Lifelong Learning



R. Scott Daum, Coordinator for New Church Education

In mid-October 2009 the Office of Education partnered with the General Church and Academy of the New Church to create non-credit adult education – the Lifelong Learning Program – with four courses. (Our current summer offerings are listed on the Bryn Athyn College and Academy Secondary Schools websites. The shorter web address is www.ancss.org/continue.) Each course met for an hour-and-a-half and two hours once a week, Monday through Thursday, for five consecutive weeks.

The Office of Education established the offerings and the Academy and General Church provided the space. We charged \$75 for each class and paid each teacher \$250, plus \$35 for each student above the enrollment level of eight. After expenses, the Office of Education gave 35% of the proceeds to the Academy Scholarship Fund and the remainder went to Office of Education projects, particularly to supporting General Church teacher professional development.

That fall we canceled one course (badminton) because we needed a minimum of four students. We had about 40 students in three courses: religion (TCR), literature and drawing. We surveyed students at the end and got a clear message that they wanted more.

Since then we have offered courses in the fall, winter, spring, and even a few during the summer. We have delivered 33 classes, served just more than 300 students, and raised more than \$10,000. Religion, literature and yoga courses have been the most popular, and we have offered history, philosophy, computer and other art courses. We have even had sacred geometry and tap

dancing! Who takes these courses? Eighty percent of our students are women between the ages of 45 and 65.

So here is the next step in our evolution. We would like to expand beyond Bryn Athyn by offering classes over the phone and through the computer using a webinar format. In January we hope to deliver a book discussion course on Anne Tyler's *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*. We would meet through phone/computer on January 9, 16, 23, 30 and February 5 from 7 to 8:30 p.m. EDT. Each evening we will discuss two chapters of the 10-chapter novel. Participants will receive questions in advance to guide their weekly reading and to prepare for the discussion. Students would also be able to continue conversations on a Wikispace.

If you are interested in participating in this pilot project, please contact me at scott.daum@newchurch.org. You must have a computer to participate, but do not let the technology scare you. We will set up a practice session or two with each interested individual before the first class to build some comfort with the format and to try to avoid glitches during the sessions. Because this is a pilot program the cost will only be \$40 for the five sessions, and we will require a minimum of four participants.

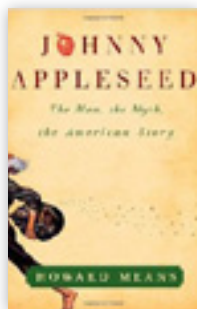
A much-respected General Church minister once told me he felt this book would be an excellent novel on which to center a Journey Campaign, and I wholeheartedly agree. Here's the blurb we placed on the websites in the fall of 2009:

Critics generally consider *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* to be among Anne Tyler's best work. It won the PEN/Faulkner Award for fiction and was nominated for a National Book Critics Circle award and the 1983 Pulitzer Prize. The story spans several decades in the history of the fictional Tull family of Baltimore, Maryland. The narrative begins with 85-year-old Pearl Tull, blind and on her deathbed, attempting to reconcile with her role as a deserted wife and single parent. Told from alternating points of view, the novel is ultimately about how growing up in an unconventional and sometimes turbulent family affected three children in very different ways.

It's a fascinating story and brilliantly written, so come help us expand our program's scope and join the fun. Never stop learning!

Johnny Appleseed: The Man, the Myth and the American Story

Reviewed by the Rev. Coleman Glenn



Howard Means's new biography of John Chapman (aka Johnny Appleseed) has been garnering publicity since its publication on April 12, including generally favorable reviews in *The Wall Street Journal* and the *Boston Globe*, and an interview with the author on NPR's *All Things Considered*. The reviews all discuss the book's focus on John Chapman's Swedenborgianism as the driving force behind his itinerant lifestyle.

Means calls Chapman "the New Church's most famous North American disciple." That's disputable: Helen Keller was a New Church disciple, and a search for her name results in more than triple the number of hits for Johnny Appleseed. But Chapman may have been the more ardent evangelist of the two, and his Swedenborgianism may be more widely known.

Before getting around to the New Church content, a few thoughts on the book as a whole. According to Means, there are scant trustworthy historical records when it comes to who John Chapman really was. We have stories and legends, as well as transaction records of his land dealings, but few reliable first-hand accounts exist. This probably helps explain why a large portion of the book discusses life in the frontier and the lives of Chapman's contemporaries rather than focusing on Chapman himself.

Although some of these forays seem awfully tangential—there are nearly five pages devoted to the story of Benjamin Thompson Jr., whose only connection to Chapman is that he was first cousin to Chapman's mother Elizabeth—they do provide a good picture of the kind of world that Chapman inhabited. It was a remarkably violent world, in which people routinely lost body parts in barroom brawls, and the picture makes Chapman's gentleness all the more remarkable.

The best parts of the book focus on the way that John Chapman the man became Johnny Appleseed the legend—something that began to take place almost as soon as Chapman arrived in Warren, Pennsylvania, in 1797. Over the years, John Chapman became John Appleseed and finally Johnny Appleseed, and his legend continued to develop in the years after his death in 1845: from

his first appearance on the national scene in a *Harper's Magazine* article in 1871, to the 1948 Disney animated adaptation of his story, through various incarnations as environmentalist, pacifist and even economist. The real John Chapman seems mostly lost in the legend—but that seems to have been true even in his own time.

What is certain about John Chapman is his devotion to spreading the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg. Along with his apple seeds, he spread chapters from the Heavenly Doctrines wherever he went, famously declaring them to be “good news fresh from heaven.” Means writes,

Apples certainly made Chapman famous. They gave him his nickname and committed him to American folklore and mythology. But what animated him, what gave his mind and actions depth and texture, was a dead Swedish metallurgist-turned-mystic and would-be holy man named Emanuel Swedenborg.

The phrase “would-be holy man” makes me cringe—Swedenborg would have been the first to confess that he was not holy—but the gist of the statement is right: the driving force behind Chapman’s wanderings seems to have been a dedication to spreading the New Church.

To understand Chapman, you have to understand Swedenborg. And while Means gets a lot of things right in his presentation of New Church teachings, there are a few errors—some minor, and a few major. This is not too surprising—he relies on second- and third-hand accounts of people who were children when Chapman visited their families, and even their parents whom Chapman visited probably didn’t understand a lot of the religious talk that came from Johnny.

Means does get a lot of things right. His description of the New Church concepts of heaven and hell (pages 107-108) is accurate: they contain things similar to what we find on earth (e.g. houses, trees, gardens, etc.), and we make our home in one or the other based on what we love and how we live.

But there are a few points of doctrine that Means doesn’t get quite right. On page 121, he writes, “Swedenborg dismissed the Holy Ghost.” This is puzzling. While Swedenborg denies that the Holy Spirit is a separate person of God, he does not deny that the Holy Spirit exists and is active. Rather than being a separate person, the Holy Spirit is God’s influence and activity. But Means does explain correctly that Swedenborg wrote about a trinity *within* the one Person of God, Jesus Christ.

The bigger errors come in a misunderstanding of the New Church view of asceticism and of marriage. Means quotes Chapman’s *Fort Wayne Sentinel* obituary: He was a follower of Swedenbough [sic], and devoutly believed that the more he endured in this world the less he would have to suffer and the greater would be his happiness hereafter.

If Chapman did believe that earthly suffering was earning him eternal

happiness, he didn't get that idea from the Writings. *Arcana Coelestia* 1947 talks about the meaning of Psalm 15, which discusses the good man as swearing to "afflict himself":

"Affliction" does not mean that we should plunge ourselves into poverty and wretchedness, or that we should renounce all bodily delights, for in this way evil is not mastered and subjugated; and moreover some other evil may be aroused, namely, a sense of merit on account of the renunciation; and besides, man's freedom suffers, in which alone, as in ground, the good and truth of faith can be inseminated.

If Chapman was as devoted to the Writings as he seems to have been, he would have been well aware of this teaching. He would have hated the idea that he was "meriting" heaven by making himself miserable. Means is probably much closer to the truth when he speculates that perhaps Chapman was emulating the people of the Most Ancient Church, the golden age that was represented by Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. The people of that age lived in harmony with nature, and they saw the presence of God's life in everything. In all likelihood, Chapman was not living in the wild in order to *suffer*; he was living in the wild because in some ways that's where he could see heaven on earth.

And yet Means writes, in relating a story of Chapman dismissing a Universalist (i.e. all are saved) tract, "He hadn't denied himself the pleasures of children or the joys of the flesh in this world for that!" The implication, it seems, is that Chapman's Swedenborgianism not only led him to some idea of meritorious suffering, but also to a life of celibacy.

And it's here—and in other areas related to marriage – that Means shows the biggest misunderstanding of New Church doctrine. Abstinence until marriage is considered a virtue in the New Church, but complete celibacy – i.e. never marrying – is not. True, Swedenborg himself never married, and there's certainly no sin in that. But neither is it virtuous.

Conjugal Love (or *Married Love*) states in no uncertain terms, "The state of marriage is to be preferred to a state of celibacy." (CL 156) While it may be true that Chapman told people he stayed with that he had a future wife waiting for him in heaven, this could as easily have been an expression of Chapman's trust that eventually he would be married – whether in this world or in the next—as a result of some sort of prophetic vision compelling him to *avoid* marriage in this world, although it is true that he told his hosts that he had visions of spirits.

What Chapman almost certainly did *not* tell any of his hosts was that he had two virgins waiting for him in the spirit world whom he would marry. If he did say this, it directly contradicted everything in the doctrines that he risked his life to promote. And yet Means reports this as equally plausible as the

stories of Chapman telling his listeners that he would marry one girl. Means writes,

Like Swedenborg (or as Swedenborg was understood), Chapman was in frequent “spiritual intercourse” with departed spirits – in Chapman’s instance, two spirits of “the female gender, who consoled him with the news that they were to be his wives in the future state, should he keep himself from all entangling alliances in this.”

First of all—and I don’t think Means intended this—it should be noted that Swedenborg’s “spiritual intercourse” has nothing to do with sexual intercourse—it simply means “interaction,” and modern translators have it as such. In any case, it’s unfortunate that Means relates this story of Chapman’s “future wives” without any comment on how repugnant this idea would be to a Swedenborgian. An entire chapter of *Conjugal Love* is devoted to explaining why polygamy is sinful and why true marriage can exist only between one man and one woman. In the chapter of *Heaven and Hell* on marriages in heaven, Swedenborg writes:

The angels declare that marrying several wives is wholly contrary to Divine order, and that they know this from several reasons, one of which is that as soon as they think of marriage with more than one they are alienated from internal blessedness and heavenly happiness, and become like drunken men, because good is separated from its truth in them. (HH 379)

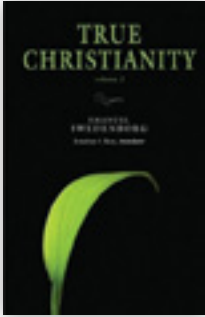
The story of Chapman expecting to marry two wives, then, is extremely suspect, and the repeated reference to it mars the book.

But these errors are not original with Means; he repeats them from the various stories and legends that sprung up around Chapman. And they are, in fact, a good illustration of one of Means’ main points: that it is difficult to separate the stories and legends from the man himself.

I do wish Means had run his manuscript by someone more familiar with New Church teachings—a few of the more blatant errors could have been caught. And for myself I wish he’d done less to paint Swedenborgianism as one more eccentricity, as a religion of the past. (One particularly cringe-inducing passage reads, “Of all the survivors [of the religious upheavals on the frontier], almost none is more obscure today, yet more representative of nearly everything that was going on in those early decades of the 19th century, than the Church of the New Jerusalem”).

Still, the book in the main does succeed in doing what it sets out to do: providing an entertaining and engaging look at the (often distant) relationship between the real-life John Chapman and the legendary Johnny Appleseed.

Book Review



True Christianity, Volume 2 The Portable New Century Edition

By Emanuel Swedenborg

Translated by Rev. Dr. Jonathan S. Rose

Published by the Swedenborg Foundation

In the final years of his life, Emanuel Swedenborg wrote *True Christianity*, an opus that served both to contextualize his theology within contemporary Christianity and to serve as a road map for the new spiritual age that would follow. This second volume covers such topics as freedom of choice, repentance, the transformation of a person's inner being during spiritual awakening, the rites of baptism and Holy Supper and the Second Coming of the Lord.

This new translation is part of the New Century Edition of the Works of Emanuel Swedenborg, an ongoing project to render Swedenborg's theological works in clear, contemporary language that reflects the simple and engaging style of the original Latin. The portable edition contains the text of the New Translation Edition translation, but not the annotations or other supplementary materials found in the deluxe edition.

This is the first time that the Swedenborg Foundation is releasing the text of a New Century Edition translation in advance of the deluxe edition, which will also include a translator's preface, notes explaining historical points in the text, and an index to both volumes. The deluxe edition will be released in early 2012.

Emanuel Swedenborg was an 18th century scientist, engineer, politician, philosopher and prolific writer on scientific, philosophical and theological subjects. Rev. Dr. Jonathan Rose has worked for years in the study of Neo-Latin and in Swedenborgian research. He is a series editor and translator for the New Century.

Editor's note: This review is reprinted with its permission and our appreciation. The book may be ordered from the Foundation, www.swedenborg.org and from the Cathedral Book Room in Bryn Athyn, bookstore@newchurch.org.

Church News

COLLEGE PRESIDENT



The Academy Board of Trustees has enthusiastically affirmed Chancellor Thomas Kline's nomination of Dr. Kristin King as President of Bryn Athyn College of the New Church. Dr. King had been serving as Interim President of the College since last summer. During this time, Chancellor Kline said, "She has earned the confidence of students, faculty, trustees, colleagues and the broader community. Her dedication to New Church education, her intelligence, her work ethic and her personal integrity combine to make her the best possible choice to lead Bryn Athyn College. She has demonstrated a willingness and ability to face significant challenges thoughtfully and decisively."

COLLEGE/THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL COMMENCEMENT

The Theological School graduated six second-career men on May 21 with Master of Divinity degrees, and Bryn Athyn College had its largest baccalaureate class ever. Of the 30 graduating students, 24 earned bachelor of arts degrees and six earned bachelor of science degrees. The Theological School graduates were ordained and inaugurated into the first degree of the ministry the following day in the cathedral. The new ministers of the General Church, with their assignments, are:

- **Todd Beiswenger**, Huntingdon Valley, PA – Australia (serving in Ivyland, Pennsylvania, while awaiting his visa)
- **Pearse Frazier**, Bryn Athyn – Kempton, PA
- **Stephen Muires**, Copenhagen Denmark – Sweden
- **Calvin Odhner**, Lenhartsville, PA – Toronto, Canada
- **Ryan Sandström**, Bryn Athyn – Mitchellville, MD
- **Howard Thompson**, Bryn Athyn – Bryn Athyn

Hilary Bryntesson of Bryn Athyn and Jane Edmunds of South Africa were awarded Master of Arts in Religious Studies degrees. A posthumous Honorary Degree was awarded to Gordon Jorgenson of Toronto, Canada, who was close to completing the program when he passed on to the spiritual world earlier in the year. The College also awarded 18 Associate in Arts degrees. Members of the graduating classes represented 10 states and eight countries: Canada, Denmark, Ghana, Lesotho, Nepal, South Africa, South Korea and the United States. The commencement address was given by Eli Echols, a 1996 graduate of the Boys School and 2000 graduate of the College, who is an attorney in

Atlanta, Georgia, with an immigration law firm.

ACADEMY SECONDARY SCHOOLS COMMENCEMENT

The Secondary Schools graduated 75 students on May 28 – 38 from the Girls School and 37 from the Boys School. They represented 11 states and three countries – Canada, China and the United States. The commencement speaker was Esther Yardumian-Smyth, a legendary English teacher, theatrical director and head housemother of Glenn Hall who retired after 17 years with the Girls School. You can read her address on page 234.



PURLEY CHASE

The Rev. Alan Lewin is planning two events at Purley Chase in the fall. An All-Age Weekend September 23-25 will include practical sessions for adults and young people. They will be asked to consider such things as how to present ideas from the Writings that affect our lives to church visitors and on the website. The Purley Chase Adults weekend November 15-17 will focus on the Doctrine of Degrees and how they help us to understand how life works.

NEW SOCIETIES IN KENYA

Late in May Assistant Bishop Brian W. Keith sent letters to two churches in Kenya welcoming them as new societies of the General Church. They are the New Church Etoro, led by the Rev. Samson Abuga, and the New Church Riounde, led by the Rev. Khalid Rangi. The letters said that the growth of these congregations “is an inspiration to many throughout the Church” and may “the New Church grow in Kenya and throughout the world, that an increasing number of people may hear (the Lord) speak to us in His wonderful Revelation and follow Him in the uses and joys of life.”



THE LAST JUDGMENT: THE WORLD TRANSFORMED

In 2007 The Cole Foundation and Bryn Athyn College of the New Church sponsored a two-day conference in Bryn Athyn: *The World Transformed: The Impact of the Last Judgment on Human Knowledge and Values*. Now the papers presented at that conference have been published in an impressive 800-page book: *The World Transformed: Swedenborg and the Last Judgment*. Michael H. Hogan chaired the event and Dr. Dan A. Synnestvedt of the College was the general editor for the book. A promotion for the book from the Bryn Athyn College Press says:

“The Last Judgment, not an earthly cataclysm but a spiritual judgment, was like a drop of water falling into a pond, and we have been living through the rippling consequences of those momentous spiritual events ever since.

“*The World Transformed* reveals new interpretations of the spiritual state of America, Europe, Africa, the Middle East and China, the profound changes in the lives of children, women and people of color since 1757 and has reflections upon the developments in mathematics, natural science and philosophy.

“The themes that unite the chapters of the book are the same as the powerful forces that vie with one another for supremacy in the human race and in each individual: freedom and slavery; understanding and ignorance; altruism and egoism; spirituality and materialism; hope and despair. Ideas for future work leaven the whole work.”

In the Preface, the then 98-year-old Rev. Erik Sandström is quoted as saying: “The Last Judgment Conference was the best conference I have attended, and I hope there will be many more of the same high quality. The [New] Church would need that as an injection again and again.”

The book is available for \$45 from the Bryn Athyn Cathedral Bookstore, <http://store.newchurch.org>.

Council of the Clergy

Following the General Assembly in Bryn Athyn, 18 new ministers were elected to the Council of the Clergy.

Nine of those elected were:

- Todd Beiswenger
- Pearse Frazier
- Stephen Muire
- Calvin Odhner
- Ryan Sandström
- Ron Schnarr
- Brian Smith
- Malcolm Smith
- Howard Thompson

The other nine, all from Africa, were:

- Honore A. Aka
- Edward Akotey
- Ablam Amouzouvi
- Guillaume Anato
- Evariste Daligou Dakouri
- Moise G. Doukourou
- Henry-Joel K. Kouhoui
- Cyprien K. Mangoua
- Nicks Marisa

Clergy Resolution

At the General Church clergy meetings after the General Assembly, the ministers approved the following resolution, as a response to a resolution passed the previous year. The vote on this new resolution was 78 in favor, five opposed and two abstentions.

“The clergy would like to acknowledge and appreciate the efforts taken by the Episcopal Office to address many of the concerns regarding the direction of the General Church and Bryn Athyn College. Challenges still remain, but we have seen progress and support the Bishop in his continuing work of improvement, and we encourage our Bishop to let the Heavenly Doctrine more and more visibly lead the Church.”

Life Lines

GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANTS

The General Church and the Academy of the New Church lost two valued, lifetime employees in the spring whose dedication and contributions live on.

Ian Henderson, who passed on to the spiritual world in April, was a devoted employee of the General Church and Academy for 43 years. He served as Controller for both organizations and worked to make life easier for treasurers throughout the Church. In his Memorial Address, the Rev. Prescott Rogers said:

“The testimony from those people who had the privilege of working with Ian or of benefiting from his work is strong and universal. Ian was a tireless, dedicated and impassioned employee, striving to do what he could to fulfill the duties of the job. . . . He did his work both humbly and with confidence, a combination that is rare.

“As he was committed to his marriage and his family, Ian was committed to his work, especially since he was dedicated to the mission and vision of the General Church and the Academy. As he was always proud of his family, he was proud of his religion, his church and New Church education – glad to serve them as he could.”

Aubrey Odhner (Mrs. Sanfrid Odhner), who passed on in May, had a memorable career as Girls School Principal and teacher and was also a driving force in reviving and elevating the Academy Museum. Her first report as Principal in 1982 captures her effervescent spirit:

“Next February 9th the Academy Girls School will celebrate its 100th anniversary. This is a ripe old age for a mortal woman; she shows some signs of having lived for 100 years – some wrinkles which can be smoothed out, some blemishes which will fade with time. She has lived through revolution and civil war and therefore may carry some battle scars for a long, long time. But miraculously the Girls School is no ordinary mortal; there is a force within her which continually revitalizes and restores her.

“This soul of the Girls School is the very essence of beauty. The Writings tell us that all beauty is from good in which there is innocence, that spiritual beauty is an affection for interior truth, and that the marriage union of good and truth is the origin of conjugal love.

“We do want to inspire our girls with the distinct individual and personal hope of conjugal love, but it is the inspiration of conjugal love in its origin (that is) the soul of the Girls School.

“Her life expectancy is ages of ages. Experience makes her grow younger.

We picture her like those in heaven who continually advance toward the springtime of life – ‘to a spring more and more delightful and happy the more thousands of years they live.’”

(BMH)

HAUNTING ECHOES

Much of the world, well beyond the United Kingdom, was captivated with the April wedding of Prince William and Catherine Middleton. There were many overtones from the wedding of William’s parents, Prince Charles and Princess Diana, which also enthralled the masses.

We all know what became of that wedding, but still it is worth recalling what the Archbishop of Canterbury said to them then about marriage – a view that resonates with our convictions:

“There is an ancient Christian tradition that every bride and groom on their wedding days are regarded as a royal couple . . . kings and queens of creation.

“On a wedding day it is made clear that God does not intend us to be puppets but chooses to work through us, and especially through our marriages, to create the future of the world.

“A marriage that really works is one which works for others. Marriage has both a private face and a public importance. If we solved all our economic problems and failed to build loving families, it would profit us nothing, because the family is the place where the future is created, good and full of love – or deformed.”

(BMH)

THE ROYAL WEDDING

A “fairy tale” wedding it may have been but realistically what are the odds they will live happily ever after? Perhaps, though, like the fairy tales of old, this one represents an even greater reality, which somehow, despite all the skepticism born of experience in this imperfect world, keeps reasserting itself, like beams of sunlight breaking through the clouds to brighten a gray world.

So I say: this was a glorious occasion, full of joy and beauty and meaning; meaning which, even if not fully comprehended, struck a chord in people and affected them deeply.

It was an impressive *representation* of the beauty of marriage, and a much-needed reminder that above the clouds of doubt the sun of heaven continues to shine, and that conjugal love, rare as it may be in our world, is eternal; and that in a moment, whenever it is raised up anew, all the dismal evidence against it suddenly seems tawdry and unimportant.

The dream of marriage may seem unrealistic in the world today, but this

says more about the state of the world than it does about the value of marriage; and in the larger context of Reality Itself nothing is more real – and worthy of celebrating to the nth degree.

(WEO)

THE WISDOM OF THE AGES

The truths of the New Church are both new and very, very old. Just as Isaac reopened the wells dug by Abraham which the Philistines had stopped up (Genesis 26:18), so the Lord, in the Heavenly Doctrine of the New Jerusalem, has revealed anew truths which once were known and loved but which had long been forgotten. Knowledge of conjugal love is a prime example. It was known to the ancients, but that wisdom was lost. Still, faint echoes remained.

This explains why we heard, amid the beautiful antique prayers and admonitions spoken by the priests at the royal wedding, so many thoughts, from the wisdom of the ages, which agree with the teachings of the New Church concerning marriage. (The words of the Dean of Westminster Abbey, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London are easily found online. See also the latest *Marriage Moats* from Lori Odhner).

For example, from the prayers: *“bestow, we beseech thee, upon these two persons the heritage and gift of children, and grant that they may see their children Christianly and virtuously brought up to Thy praise and honor. ... O God, who hast taught us that it should never be lawful to put asunder those whom Thou by Matrimony hadst made one we beseech Thee to direct, sanctify and govern both our hearts and bodies, in the ways of Thy laws, and in the works of Thy commandments.”*

So William and Catherine were told at their wedding that children are a gift from God and are the purpose of marriage, that they are to be brought up as virtuous and faithful Christians, and that they should stay married and be faithful to each other.

Ancient truths, but as valuable as ever.

(WEO)

“WHAT’S A HEAVEN FOR?”

One can’t help wondering how many in that large congregation in Westminster Abbey actually take these ideals seriously anymore. But who really knows what is in people’s hearts, in this or any other age? And in a certain sense, what does it matter? Ideals always transcend the state of the world, which is all the more reason to proclaim them boldly, gladly and with the hope and expectation that some will be moved by them and that they will gradually take root in the lives of many. As Robert Browning wrote: “A man’s reach should exceed his grasp, or what’s a heaven for?”

(WEO)

A MESSAGE FROM THE ANGLICAN BISHOP OF LONDON

“Many are full of fear for the future of the prospects of our world but the message of the celebrations in this country and far beyond its shores is the right one – this is a joyful day! It is good that people in every continent are able to share in these celebrations because this is, as every wedding day should be, a day of hope.”

And he repeated the sentiment of the Archbishop of Canterbury from the wedding of Charles and Diana: “In a sense every wedding is a royal wedding with the bride and the groom as king and queen of creation, making a new life together so that life can flow through them into the future.”

(WEO)

FAIRY TALES HAVE HAPPY ENDINGS

Stephen Hawking, one of the most renowned scientists in the world, says any concept of heaven and an afterlife is just “a fairy story.”

Hawking has been confined to a wheelchair, unable to move or speak, for almost 50 years, but has been a major voice in physics, including his 1988 best seller, *A Brief History of Time*.

Like many “learned” men, he’s convinced that science will win the battle with religion “because it works.” He believes the solar system – and everything in it – could be created without God because of the laws of nature, although he can’t explain where those laws came from. And he says of the death he does not fear: “I regard the brain as a computer which will stop working when its components fail. There is no heaven or afterlife for broken-down computers. That is a fairy story for people afraid of the dark.”

Hawking has found answers to many mysteries in his studies of science. But he is in for his biggest discovery yet when that “computer” mind of his shuts own – and he discovers that he wasn’t so brilliant after all.

(BMH)

JUDGE NOT...

Some years ago a poll in Iowa asked people if they thought they were going to heaven or hell – and if they knew anyone they felt was going to hell. Most were sure they were headed for heaven. Only 5 percent said they expected to end up in hell. But 31 percent were sure they knew someone who would end up there.

(BMH)

NO HELL? NO THANKS.

With all of the growing speculation that there is no hell – that everyone just goes to heaven, no matter what – one national commentator said: “If Adolf Hitler is in heaven, I’m not going.”

(BMH)

PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS, ANIMALS ARE PEOPLE DEPARTMENT

“Dolphins,” researchers report, “are people too.” And the reason for the dolphins’ promotion? They have been observed checking themselves out in a mirror, demonstrating that they are self-conscious. Well, good for them, although I doubt they’re any more human than an incredibly conceited parakeet I once knew. He was not only fascinated by his image in his little mirror, but from the way he kept pecking it I think he had some self-esteem issues. What could be more human than that? Anyway, human or not, dolphins seem to be having more fun than a lot of people!

(WEO)

The Academy Of The New Church Theological School, Bryn Athyn College and Secondary Schools Calendar One Hundred and Thirty Fifth School Year

		2011		
August	17-21	Wed-Sat		College RA training
	18	Thu		College Faculty Retreat
	20	Sat		College PAC members arrive on campus
	22	Mon		College International (Non-North American) students arrive on campus
	23	Tues	12-6:00	College New Students (US and Canada) arrive on campus
			6:00 pm	College – Barbeque Dinner with new students and parents
	24-30	Wed-Tues		College New Student Orientation
	28	Sun	12-6:00	Returning College Students return to campus; ANC resident students arrive on campus
	29	Mon	8-5:00	Registration for all College students; Secondary Schools registration/orientation for all students
	30	Tue	8-11:00	Secondary Schools 1 st Term Classes begin
		12-4:00	Final Registration for College students with outstanding issues	
		6:00	College Service afternoon	
31	Wed	8:10	College President's Dinner and Address (Glencairn)	
			College and Theological School Fall Term classes begin	
September	5	Mon		Labor Day Holiday
October	7	Fri	8:00 am	Charter Day: Annual Meeting of ANC Corporation (MPAC)
			10:30 am	Service (Cathedral)
			9:00 pm	Dance (Dining Hall)
	8	Sat	7:00 pm	Banquet (Asplundh Field House)
	10	Mon		Charter Day Holiday Secondary Schools
	24-28	Mon-Fri		College and Theological School registration for Winter Term
November	11	Fri		College and Theological School Fall Term classes end
	14	Mon		College reading day
	15-18	Tue-Fri		College and Theological School exams; Fall Term ends after exams
	16-18	Wed-Fri		Secondary Schools 1st Term exams. Term ends after exams
	22,22	Mon,Tue		Secondary Schools Experiential Learning (Fr-Jr)/Senior Trip
	23-27	Wed-Sun		Secondary Schools Thanksgiving break
	27	Sun		College, Theological School and Secondary Schools resident students return
28	Mon		College, Theological School Winter Term classes begin; Secondary Schools 2 nd Term classes begin	
December	16	Fri		College and Theological School Christmas vacation begins following afternoon classes; Secondary Schools Christmas vacation begins at Noon

2012					
January	2	Mon			College, Theological School and Secondary Schools resident students return
	3	Tue			College, Theological School and Secondary Schools classes resume
	16	Mon			College, Theological School Martin Luther King, Jr. In school observance; Secondary Schools holiday
	17	Tue			Secondary Schools – use Monday Schedule
	23-27	Mon-Fri			College and Theological School registration for Spring Term
February	17	Fri			College and Theological School Winter Term classes end
	20	Mon			College and Theological School Presidents' Day Holiday – Reading Day; Secondary Schools holiday
	21-24	Tue-Fri			College and Theological School exams; Winter Term ends after exams
	29-Mar 2	Wed-Fri			Secondary Schools 2 nd Term exams; Term ends after exams
March	3-11				College and Theological School and Secondary Schools spring break
	11	Sun			College and Theological School and Secondary Schools resident students return
	12	Mon			College and Theological School Spring Term classes begin; Secondary Schools 3 rd Term classes begin
April	6	Fri			College and Theological School Good Friday holiday
	6-9	Fri-Mon			Secondary Schools Easter Break
	9-13	Mon-Fri			College Pre-registration for declared majors
	23-27	Mon-Fri			College Pre-registration for undeclared majors
May	7	Sat		1:00 pm	Semiannual Meeting of ANC Corporation (Pendleton Hall Auditorium)
	18	Fri			College and Theological School Spring Term classes end
	21-24	Mon-Thu			College and Theological School exams
	25	Fri		6:30 pm	College and Theological School Graduation Dinner and Dance (Cairnwood Estate)
	26	Sat		10:00 am	College and Theological School Graduation (MPAC)
	29-31	Tue-Thu			Secondary Schools 3 rd Term exams
June	1	Fri		6:30 pm	Secondary Schools Senior Dinner and Graduation Dance (Glencairn)
	2	Sat		10:00 am	Secondary Schools Graduation (Asplundh Field House)

New Church Life

Published bimonthly by
the General Church of the New Jerusalem
Bryn Athyn, PA 19009
U.S.A.

www.newchurch.org
www.newchurchlife.org
July / August 2011



OFFICES Bryn Athyn, PA 19009

PUBLISHED BY General Church of the New Jerusalem

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SUBSCRIPTIONS New Church Life, Box 45, Bryn Athyn, PA
\$30 for any address, \$5.00 a single copy

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