

# NEW CHURCH *Life*

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

**SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2012**



## *'O Precious Sign...'*

How is the Academy Girls School faculty trying to make *Conjugal Love* more relevant and meaningful in today's challenging classroom? (Page 441) Also see editorials of *Defining Marriage* in New Church terms and *The Distinctiveness of New Church Gender Education*. (Page 423)

NEW CHURCH LIFE (USPS 378-180)

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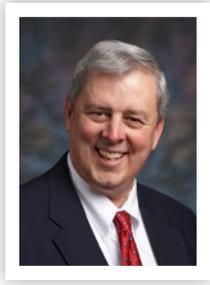
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# New Church Life

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

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## Bishop Affirmation Vote

As has been announced, the Rt. Rev. Thomas Kline will retire as Executive Bishop of the General Church on June 30, 2013. At their meetings in June 2012 the General Church Council of the Clergy nominated the Rt. Rev. Brian W. Keith as the next Executive Bishop of the General Church. The Board of Directors of the General Church then affirmed that decision.

In the next two months, all signed members of the General Church will have the opportunity to cast a vote of affirmation or non-affirmation. In September, members can expect to receive a letter and ballot in the mail, which will also include instructions on how to vote online if you wish.

Election Services Corporation is the company conducting the vote.

If you have questions concerning this process, contact:

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## IN THIS ISSUE

In a sequence of editorials on *Defining Marriage* in New Church terms and the efforts in our culture toward *Redefining Marriage* beyond centuries of practice and belief, Spiritual Editor the Rev. Walter E. Orthwein says: “The New Church offers the deepest and most comprehensive view of marriage ever published, including its Divine origin and essence. The light from this revelation is needed now more than ever, as the society around us debates what exactly it is that constitutes marriage.” (Page 423)

Susan O. Odhner, Principal of the Academy Girls School, writes about a two-year faculty study aimed at making the vital teaching of *Conjugal Love* more relevant and meaningful in today’s challenging classroom. The goal is that girls from any life experience can feel the Lord’s love and leading in their lives and be confident in pursuing the ideals of conjugal love. (Page 441) An editorial also looks at the broader issues in *The Distinctiveness of New Church Gender Education*. (Page 423)

The Rev. Kenneth J. Alden offers a comprehensive report on the Council of the Clergy meetings in June, including the process that resulted in the nomination of the Rt. Rev. Brian W. Keith as the next Executive Bishop of the General Church. This report also has summaries of the major papers presented and discussed. Several of these will be published in future issues of *New Church Life*. (Page 447) This report is preceded by a worship service at the Council meetings led by the Rev. Lawson M. Smith on *Brothers Dwelling in Unity*. (Page 444)

A sermon by the Rev. N. Bruce Rogers, *‘Render to God’: Religion and the Civil State*, offers a compelling context for United States citizens for the upcoming presidential election. He summarizes doctrinal teachings on such issues as abortion, capital punishment, marriage and freedom of religion, leaving people to make their own judgments. But he says that “New Church voters need to pay attention to the values and moral principles of candidates for public office, to support those whom they can judge to be truly God-fearing, who will champion the moral tenets of religion and the free expression of them, who will not only ‘render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s’ but also ‘render to God the things that are God’s.’” (Page 435)

In the second of a three-part series, *Who Trusts in the Lord Shall Be as a Tree Planted by the Waters*, E. Kent Rogers focuses on who goes to heaven and who goes to hell. He concludes that we all have heaven and hell within us, and that the Lord saves all people. (Page 465)

As part of a continuing series on ministers of the Church, in this issue we introduce the Rev. Matthew L. Genzlinger, Pastor of the Concord New Church outside of Boston, Massachusetts. Matthew did not always know where his journey was taking him as he entered the ministry but now is on a mission with his congregation in *Building a Church* – by building it within the hearts and minds of each person. (Page 482) He also offers the first of a two-part study on *Believing in the Heavenly Doctrine*. (Page 486)

In the New Church Day banquet address at the Westville New Church in Durban, South Africa, Candice Edmunds tells how her New Church faith was put to the test as a Psychology Honors student at the University of Cape Town. After some challenging experiences she found that “New Church teachings have given me the freedom and the tools to think for myself and to make sense of the world, without contradicting other knowledge that I am learning as I grow into adulthood.” (Page 497)

In an essay originally written for *New Church Perspective* last year while still a student in the Theological School, the Rev. Solomon J. Keal explains how his interest was piqued to study not just the doctrinal differences that separate us from other religions but to consider what we have in common with other Christians, faith by faith. (Page 493)

Tom David, a member of the Concord New Church, looks at *Our Attitude Toward Evil*. What exactly is evil, why do we need to fight against it, and what is the best way to do so? “To sin against God,” he says, “is not so much to hurt Him directly, but to tell the One who created you, ‘Go away, I don’t need any help from you.’ It’s to spurn a love more perfect than we can imagine in favor of our own desires.” (Page 502)

“Amen.” It’s a simple word that we speak and hear every day. To the Rev. Stephen D. Cole, it is “the sound of truth.” (Page 479)

Church News includes: a report from the European Assembly in Purley Chase, England, by Nina D. Kline, with a flavor of the doctrinal depth and social delights, including photographs; new principals taking over the New Church schools in Toronto and Washington; photos of attractive renovations in the buildings of the Academy of the New Church Secondary Schools; what to look for in the all new New Church Bookstore; a preview of Eldergarten 2013; and more. (Page 507)

# Editorials

## DEFINING MARRIAGE

The New Church offers the deepest and most comprehensive view of marriage ever published, including its Divine origin and essence. The light from this revelation is needed now more than ever, as the society around us debates what exactly it is that constitutes marriage.

The New Church view is that the only true definition of marriage is the one given by the God who created us male and female, and did so specifically for the sake of marriage. “God created man in His own image...male and female created He them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, be fruitful, and multiply...” (Genesis 1.27-28)

“Have you not read, that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and the two shall be one flesh?” (*Matthew 19:4-5*)

Human beings are made in the image and likeness of God, who is the one and only self-existing Human. That image, impressed upon the human soul, is what makes us human. The physical body apart from the human spirit that formed it is no different than an animal’s body. In fact, people in whom the spiritual mind is entirely closed, and who have thus cut themselves off from the source of their humanity, are worse than animals, which are incapable of violating the order of their lives.

It is similar regarding marriage – if it is separated from the Divine and human essence of marriage, the soul of marriage, it is no longer truly a marriage, which is a uniquely human state of life. Marriage is the joining together of two distinct and complementary forms of human being, the male and the female, which were created expressly for that purpose.

The marriage of male and female mirrors the Divine marriage of love and wisdom in the Lord. Together, the married couple forms one complete image and likeness of God: one angel. That combination of male and female, and only that combination, has the potential of bringing forth new human life.

Because of the natural limitations and imperfections of this world, not every couple is able to have natural offspring, but the potential exists only between a man and a woman. That arrangement agrees with the Divine purpose in creating us male and female and the purpose for which marriage was decreed.

Moreover, the Writings tell us that every couple can produce spiritual offspring – new states of goodness, understanding, usefulness and joy. These

spiritual offspring are engendered by the complementary oneness of a man and a woman who have given their lives to each other and been joined together in marriage.

So there is more to the propagation of the human race than physical reproduction; marriage propagates our very humanity, the distinctive spiritual qualities that make us human. This deepest and most complete relationship possible to human beings propagates heaven in us, and in our world.

The love and wisdom a husband and wife receive separately from God, each in his and her distinct way, are one in Him, and seek to be reunited. That reunion is what binds them together in marriage, drawing them closer to the Lord and to each other.

The opening of their minds to God, who is infinite and eternal, never ceases; and as each new level in their minds – or rather, the conjoined mind they increasingly share between them – is opened, they enter into new, more interior, more living degrees of oneness; and ever more deeply into heaven.

Marriage is not just a static condition, but a dynamic relationship that continues to eternity in which a man and a woman help each other in furthering their regeneration. In the process the man becomes more truly a male and more fully a husband, and the wife more truly female and fully a wife, and they both become more fully human. (*See Conjugal Love 200 and 432*)

Marriage, therefore, is much more than a social, legal or financial arrangement. In a marriage, two human beings participate in the whole scheme of creation. It has cosmic and eternal significance, and can only be truly understood in terms of that larger context.

There are two worlds, spiritual and natural, and they are as intimately connected as the spirit and the body in a person. We are inhabitants of both worlds. Just as a person's body acts in response to the affections and thoughts of the mind, so the natural world is acted upon by the spiritual world. The spiritual is the world of *causes*, the natural consists of *effects* produced by the spiritual flowing into it. The natural world as a whole exists from the spiritual world. Should the influx of life from the Lord through the spiritual world ever cease, the natural world would cease to exist.

It is only within this larger context that we can understand what marriage is. Natural marriage is one of the effects produced by the influx of the spiritual into the natural; the spiritual, in this case, being the sphere of conjugal love that radiates from the Lord and fills the heavens and the earth. "The love which flows in from the Lord and which exists between good and truth in heaven, is turned into conjugal love on the earth, and this by correspondence." (*Arcana Coelestia 8904*)

On the natural level, marriage involves various civil laws and social customs, as well as the physical union of husband and wife. Society supports

marriage in various ways, including legal requirements and financial benefits, because it is beneficial to society. These things are not the essentials of marriage, and they alone do not constitute marriage, but they are needed to protect and support the soul of marriage in this world. Apart from the spiritual essence, without the holiness, the various legal and financial aspects of marriage are hollow and meaningless. The states of individual marriages vary widely, of course; no marriage on earth is as pure as one in heaven. But it is fundamentally important that the recognized form of marriage on earth be based on the full reality of marriage, the spiritual reality as well as natural. Thus the hope and possibility for each individual marriage to grow ever closer to the heavenly ideal is ultimated and enshrined in the externals of marriage in the natural world. It is this that gives marriage its specialness, vitality and beneficial power.

Human beings are capable of separating the natural from the spiritual, and from their fallen heredity are continually inclined to do so, but this is to “put asunder what God has joined together.” The effect of legally sanctioning the divorce of marriage from its spiritual essence will deprive society of the most vital benefits of marriage. This is what the truths of religion, and their echoes in moral and civil law, are intended to prevent.

(WEO)

### **REDEFINING MARRIAGE**

Because the teachings of the New Church on marriage are so extremely deep and clear and comprehensive – and because the proposed revision of marriage now being debated is so obviously contrary to them – it might seem that there’s little need to say much on the subject in the Church.

Sadly, that is not the case. The relentless propaganda from the world around us is taking its toll even in our church, especially among young people. We must not, by our reticence, give them the impression that there’s nothing wrong with what’s being proposed, or that the issue isn’t very important.

Even outside the Church the growing acceptance of the plan to subvert and profane marriage is amazing because most people oppose it – many on religious grounds, of course, but also instinctively and from common sense.

What the long-range consequences of such a change – the most radical social innovation in human history – will be, no one knows. But anyone who has any appreciation at all of how vital marriage is to human life and society can see the potential for disaster in changing it so fundamentally.

If there was ever a time for society to stop and think very, very carefully before rushing into something, this is it. Once the change is made, it will be impossible to undo it.

(WEO)

## 'I GRIEVED IN SPIRIT'

From *Conjugal Love* 80:

Every step and every move made from religion and into religion is also a step and a move made from the conjugal which is peculiar and proper to the Christian, and into the conjugal.

To the question, "What is that conjugal?" the angel said, "It is the desire to live with one wife alone; and a Christian has this desire according to his religion."

After this I grieved in spirit that marriages, which in the ancient Ages had been most holy, are so hopelessly changed into adulteries. And the angel said: "It is the same at this day with religion; for the Lord says: "In the consummation of the age there shall be the abomination of desolation foretold by Daniel. And there shall be great affliction, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world." (*Matthew* 24:15, 21)

"The abomination of desolation" signifies the falsification and deprivation of all truth; "affliction" signifies the state of the Church infested by evils and falsities; and the "consummation of the age," of which these words are spoken, signifies the last time or end of the Church. The end is now; for there is no truth left which has not been falsified, and falsification of truth is spiritual whoredom which acts as one with natural whoredom because they cleave together.

We can see, then, that the simultaneous rise of atheism and decline of marriage we are witnessing in our time is no accident.

(WEO)

## THE DISTINCTIVENESS OF NEW CHURCH GENDER EDUCATION

Remember that amusing best-seller in 2004 that was supposed to help men and women understand each other better: *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*. At least John Gray was onto something: Men and women are innately different.

But confusion reigns here on earth where Mars and Venus intersect. In today's culture of political correctness, everything is considered gender neutral. Men and women must be treated as though they are exactly the same. They may be biologically different, but that's all.

Well, we don't need Gray's guide to help us understand the opposite sex. And we certainly don't need that blind insistence that there are no real differences in men's and women's brains and minds. We just need the Word and the Writings. And one of the important ways that New Church education is truly distinctive is in the way we understand and honor the differences.

We have the foundational teaching in *Genesis* 1:27: "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." In the Writings we come to understand how masculine and

feminine brains and minds are completely distinct from each other and absolutely complementary. They come together most perfectly in the conjugal husband and wife as one angel.

This is what is taught from kindergarten through Theological School. In his seminal book on New Church education – *Education For Use* – the Rt. Rev. Willard D. Pendleton writes extensively on the differences between the masculine and feminine minds in the light of the Writings. He emphasizes why we feel it is so important to tailor education for boys and girls, especially at the high school level where the rational mind is developing.

Bishop Pendleton writes: “In the educational world of today [this was 1985] scant recognition is paid to the differences between the sexes. The reason for this is that few educators believe that there is an essential distinction between the masculine and feminine minds. They grant that there are biological and emotional differences which should be taken into consideration in any educational program, but they do not believe that these have any bearing on the learning process.” He states, “We hold that what is learned may have a very different orientation in the mind of a woman than in the mind of a man,” and that “this difference should be addressed.”

New Church education always has recognized and addressed these differences – on both the natural and spiritual planes – which is one significant way that it is truly distinctive in the world. However, when Bishop Pendleton was writing, the assumption was that the educational system was geared more toward boys than girls, and that we were recognizing the need for tailoring education for girls also.

Now the assumptions are virtually reversed. The traditional educational system is seen as favoring the learning style of girls to the detriment of boys with different needs who are not being reached and so become problems in the classroom. A best-seller in 2000, *The War Against Boys*, argued that too many boys are being left behind in schools, which contributes to the cultural fallout of too many disrespected and uninvolved men.

In a recent column in *The New York Times*, David Brooks wrote that Henry V, one of Shakespeare’s most appealing characters, was “rambunctious when young and courageous when older,” but that he never would have risen to such accomplishment if he had gone to a modern American school. Beginning in nursery school there would be notes going home about his disruptive behavior, then hints that his parents should consider medication for his attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

A more recent example than Henry V is the late Steve Jobs, the brilliant founder of the Apple computer and pioneer of the personal computer revolution, who was always in trouble in school and headed for a wasted life until one teacher realized he had a different learning style and – he says

gratefully – “saved my life.”

New Church education has always been ahead of the curve in recognizing and teaching to the differences in the masculine and feminine minds – separately and together, as appropriate. But it takes constant attention to curriculum and the demands of a changing culture to maximize its effectiveness.

An example is the study undertaken in the Girls School of the Academy of the New Church to make the teaching of *Conjugal Love* relevant and meaningful to girls whose life experiences may leave them feeling that these ideals are not for them. (See the article by Principal Sue Odhner on page 441.)

Early in the summer, Michael Gurian, an internationally known expert who has written 25 best-selling books on gender education, came to the Academy to talk about his crusade for teaching to the differences in boys’ and girls’ learning styles. His institute is training teachers all over the world, although he is up against an educational culture in the United States that is so committed to gender neutrality it won’t even recognize clear science in the differences in the male and female brain.

Gurian says, for instance, that it’s clear boys and girls approach science very differently and that teachers would be able to reach them more effectively by accommodating to their learning styles. Just a few years ago Larry Summers was run out as President of Harvard University for daring to suggest at an economics conference that low representation of women scientists at universities might relate to innate differences between the sexes, which set off worldwide condemnation for academic sacrilege. Confusion persists.

So Gurian was delighted to find the Academy on the leading edge of what science is beginning to recognize about complementary gender education. The Academy is continuing to work with his institute in becoming a model school – and no doubt our own clear teachings about the masculine and feminine minds will also enrich his own understanding and his influence in the world of education. Hopefully he will discover – and help others to realize – that there is more to their model of ideal education.

Bishop Pendleton beautifully articulates our doctrinal commitment continually developing and refining our distinctive educational system for boys and girls. It was true when he said in 1985 – and even more so today – that “at no time in history has the confusion between the two sexes been more apparent than it is at this day. We are living in a society which in many respects has lost its way. Nowhere is this more clearly illustrated than in the loss of perception of what is involved in the masculine and feminine relationship.”

The Church stands for and honors those separate and complementary natures. New Church education is unique in nurturing these differences. It is indeed The Model for the world.

(BMH)

# Letters to the Editors

## *Regarding the Soul*

To The Editors:

On page 305 of May/June 2012 *New Church Life*, Spiritual Editor the Rev. Walter Orthwein raises these intriguing points: "... regarding the soul. What is it and where is it exactly? Hard to say, but we know it exists."

### **We know it exists**

Probably many of us in the New Church have spoken to inquirers about the reality of the soul or taken comfort at times of bereavement in passages such as *Arcana Coelestia* 6054:

As regards the soul of which it is said that it will live after death, it is nothing else than the man himself who lives within the body, that is, the interior man who in this world acts through the body, and who causes the body to live. This man, when loosed from the body, is called a spirit, and then appears in a complete human form. This then is the soul of man which lives after death.

It is central to our New Church faith to know that our soul lives after death but what is it and where is it exactly?

### **What is it?**

...in the spiritual sense by 'soul' is meant the life of the truth which is of faith, and of the good which is of charity; and in general the man himself, as to his spirit, which lives after death. *Arcana Coelestia* 7021

...the soul signifies the life of the affection of good and truth. *Ibid* 2930:4:

...by the soul is signified the life of faith from charity. *Ibid* 9213:3

These are seemingly abstract teachings but the soul is not abstract as shown by the following passages:

The soul is a real substance. *Ibid* 927e

Man's very spirit or soul is the interior man that lives after death; and it is organic, for it is adjoined to the body while the man is living in this world. *Ibid* 1594:5

The soul is a real and organic substance; it is so real that we are told that we should care for it, and we are told why:

...a man should care for it [the soul] not for its own sake, but for the sake of the uses he may perform in both worlds. *Ibid* 5949:2

By caring for our soul, that is, by our life, we influence the quality of our soul:

...there is one only Life, that of the Lord, which flows into all, but is variously

received, and indeed according to the quality which a man has induced on his soul by his life....While a man lives in the world he induces a form on the purest substances of his interiors, so that it may be said that he forms his soul, that is, its quality... *Ibid* 5847

Bringing these teachings together, we now know that the soul is the life or interior man which gives life to the body on earth and lives to eternity. It is the life of the affection of good and truth, and the life of faith from charity. So by shunning evils as sins against God, and living the life of good and truth and of faith from charity, we are able to influence the quality of our soul.

**Where is it exactly?**

We are told where the soul is in the following passage:

*Divine Love and Wisdom* 14e: “There can be no soul without its body, nor a body without its soul...It is an error springing from fallacies to suppose that the soul can exist without a body and can exercise thought and wisdom; for the soul of every man is in a spiritual body after it has cast off the material coverings which it carried around in the world.”

So we now know that the soul is in the spiritual body, but where in the spiritual body is it to be found?

The clue to its whereabouts is in *Divine Love and Wisdom* 394: “Man’s soul, which lives after death, is his spirit, and it is man in complete form; the soul of this form is the will and understanding and the soul of these is love and wisdom from the Lord. These two faculties are what constitute man’s life, which is from the Lord alone.”

If, after death, the soul is in the spiritual body in complete human form, we can know that it constitutes the life in every part, and in every particle of every part, of the spiritual body, as previously of the natural body. That is, love and wisdom, from which are will and understanding, comprise the soul, and these are in complete human form in every particle of the spiritual body.

*Heulwen M. Ridgway*  
 Canberra, Australia

*Thoughts Regarding an Emergent Church*

To The Editors:

The Writings through Swedenborg are: the Word of the Lord explained with authority, the Authority of the Lord. Therefore, the Writings must also be the Word of the Lord. By His Word He declares with certainty that He is the Lord Jesus Christ; that He is the God of heaven and earth; that we are to love Him with all our minds, hearts and strength; and that we are to love our neighbors as ourselves. The Word of the Lord IS! It is ageless and unchanging.

There is no ratio between created man and infinite God – the *Word*.

So, the concept that man, by an exchange of finite ideas, might *emerge* with something better than God’s Word must be erroneous.

The May/June article about The Emergent Movement seems to summarize itself by saying that, “...as part of the emergent movement, everyone’s voice is valid.” I think that could only be true for discussing how we should apply the Word of God to our lives. There is, in fact, only *one* voice that is truly valid. He has given us leave to dispute that fact so that we may choose (or reject) Him in freedom. But, man-made opinions aside, we will one day be examined according to *His* Word!

*Martin Klein*  
Lake Worth, Florida

### *Teachings on the ‘Church Specific’*

To The Editors:

I write in response to the letter in the July/August 2012 issue by the Rev. Frank Rose, *There is No ‘Specific Church.’*

As Mr. Rose suggests, if you search in the Writings you won’t find the term “church specific.” In the Lord’s sight there is one universal church resembling a single individual. It consists of all in the whole world who “live in good according to their religious system.” (*New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine* 246)

However, many passages teach that there is within that church, just as there is in each individual person, a fountain of life – the heart and lungs. Just as the many parts of the human body have their life from the heart and lungs, so too, “the human race that is outside the church where the Word is gets its life in the same way and constitutes the members of that person.” (*Heaven and Hell* 308)

This is where we get the term “church specific.” The Lord’s Church “is everywhere in the whole world, although *specifically* it is where the Lord is acknowledged and where the Word is.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 10765) By the Word here we mean the Heavenly Doctrine as well as the Old and New Testaments.

Somewhere on earth there must be those who receive the newly revealed Word and base their lives on it. These constitute the “heart and lungs” of the living church. “If this medium of conjunction were not in the world conjunction with heaven would perish and...that very humanity which consociates man with man; consequently evil and falsity would be in full possession, whereby one society would perish after another.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 10452: 3; *Sacred Scripture* 104; *Heaven and Hell* 305)

How important it is, then, that there are people on earth who receive and follow the Word as it is revealed in the Heavenly Doctrine. These provide the crucial link of conjunction with heaven and the Lord by which salvation is possible. “It is sufficient that a church possessing the Word exist somewhere on earth, even if it consists of relatively few people. By means of it the Lord is still present throughout the whole world, and by it heaven is joined to the human race” (*De Verbo* 17; *True Christian Religion* 267; *Sacred Scripture* 104)

People are not part of the church simply because they have been born into it or have joined an earthly organization but only those who are regenerated by the Lord, that is, “who live according to the truths therein, thus who lead a life of love and of faith.” This is the call to all those who have been led, in Providence, to the New Church.

*The Rev. Kurt Horigan Asplundh*  
Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania

(Further on the Church see: *One Kingdom* by the Rev. Erik Sandstrom – *New Church Life* 1971 p. 491ff, and *The Nature of the Church Specific* by the Rev. Geoffrey Howard – *New Church Life* 1977 p. 268ff)

## *A ‘Must Read’ in the Church*

To The Editors:

In this era of painful and dramatic cost-cutting and budget-slashing necessities throughout the Church, it is comforting to know that one – and only one – official publication for the Church and indeed the Academy, still survives and thrives with important news, fresh insights and thoughtful editorials.

As re-dedicated and devoted readers of the new *New Church Life* we find ourselves returning again and again to the pages of this unique and important publication. We read *New Church Life* cover-to-cover. We both find the editorials particularly thought-provoking, often historical, and speaking to those specific issues in each of our lives that remind us who we are, where we’ve come from, and why we are here on this earth.

The articles are fresh and always of interest. And the addition of *Life Lines* adds real value. It has not gone unnoticed that even the recorded *Announcements* section – the official record of the Church – at the end of each publication includes beautiful quotations from the Threefold Word under each subheading.

Recently, we have heard rumors that *New Church Life* may be somewhat curtailed due to the high cost of printing and distribution vis-à-vis the number

of subscribers. If this is true, and recognizing that it is possible to continue this publication with a much lower cost in a digital format only, we simply caution those who may make these hard decisions to delay such a consideration for the immediate future.

It would be our guess that the majority of *New Church Life* subscribers are middle-aged or older; often neophytes to the computer age. While this might be an acceptable way to go in the future, the risk to rebuilding a fresh readership and a trusting relationship is too great for now, especially with the ups-and-downs during the last several years. It is most probable that the majority of the people who read *New Church Life* are also those who have been life-long contributors to our institutions.

As editors of the one regularly-sanctioned publication left in our institutions, you are to be congratulated on an outstanding bi-monthly offering that truly reflects New Church thought and up-to-date happenings throughout all our institutions. It is truly our hope that this publication thrives to become a must read for every New Church man and woman.

*Peter and Christine Boericke*  
Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania

### *When Someone 'Passes On'*

To The Editors:

I wish that when someone leaves this world and goes to the spiritual world, we wouldn't say, "He (or she) passed away." It sounds like this person no longer exists.

We could say, "he has gone (or passed on) to the spiritual world," or something similar.

When someone goes to Australia we don't say he passed away.

*Charis P. Cole*  
Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania

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# “Render to God” Religion and the Civil State

*A Sermon by the Rev. N. Bruce Rogers*

Shortly before His crucifixion, the Lord spent several days in the Temple precincts teaching the people, to the great annoyance of the Jewish Council. “Behold,” they said when He arrived in Jerusalem riding on a donkey, with crowds of people lining his path and strewing it with garments and palm branches to keep the dust from His feet. “Behold,” they said, “the world has gone after Him!” (*John 12:19*) And they conspired to trap Him in His words by posing questions to Him that they thought would be difficult for Him to answer in the hearing of the people.

One of these questions was to ask Him whether it was lawful to pay taxes to Caesar. (*Mark 12:17, Matthew 22:21, Luke 20:25*) The Pharisees and Herodians – members of the Council – thought either to discredit the Lord in the eyes of the people or to get Him arrested by the Roman governor. They thought that if the Lord replied that it was lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, the people would regard Him as a traitor to the Jewish people, who at that time were subject to the Romans. Or on the other hand, that if He replied it was not lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, the Roman governor would arrest and imprison Him as attempting to lead an insurrection.

But the Lord replied by asking for a Roman coin. “Whose image and inscription is found on this coin,” He asked. And the Pharisees and Herodians were forced to reply, “Caesar’s.” Their challenge thus foiled, the Lord went on to declare, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”

In so saying, the Lord drew a distinction between the obligations of the civil state and the obligations of religion. Yes, it is lawful to pay the taxes levied by lawful governments. In *True Christian Religion* 430 we are told that it is in fact an expression of charity to willingly and cheerfully pay them. For they contribute to the public good. No community of people, large or small, can manage its goals or meet its needs without a government, and no government can continue without material support. Even in the theocratic state of ancient Israel in the time of Moses, a governmental civil structure was needed to rule the people and to judge their disputes. (*Exodus 18:14-26*)

Does this represent a separation of church and state? In the pre-Advent churches, the church and civil state were one, with one head and one law.

A separation of church and state does not mean a separation of *religion* and state. Though separate as to government, the state, we are told [in the Writings], is to be organized and managed by God-fearing civil officials.

(*Arcana Coelestia* 6148:3-6) But it is clear from a section found toward the end of *Arcana Coelestia* (*The Secrets of Heaven*), repeated in *The New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine*, that in the modern world a separation of church and state is proper and expected. (*Arcana Coelestia* 10789-10806; *New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* 311-325). The section is titled, “Ecclesiastical and Civil Government,” and it distinguishes between civil officials and priests of the church.

A separation of church and state, however, does not mean a separation of *religion* and state. Though separate as to government, the state, we are told, is to be organized and managed by God-fearing civil officials. (*Arcana Coelestia* 10792, 10804; *New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* 313, 323) In the same section we find also the statement that “all justice that is justice is Divine,” a statement made in connection with civil government. (*Arcana Coelestia* 10803; *New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* 322)

How, then, are God-fearing officials to be appointed? In a democracy, officials are elected, and whether these officials are God-fearing or not is, in the final analysis, up to the voters. To assure themselves of the candidates’ character, voters have an obligation not only to inform themselves of the candidates’ campaigns and promises for the civil state, but also to pay attention to their values and moral principles. The welfare of the state requires both a successful management of its civil affairs and the presence of the Divine.

“Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people He has chosen as His own inheritance.” (*Psalms* 33:12) So sang the Psalmist in ancient Israel, and his words are as true today. For a nation’s chosen representatives reflect the morality of the people on the one hand, and lead and influence it on the other. There is no divorcing the two. Whether liberal or conservative, elected officials represent their constituents, not only in respect to their political leanings, but also in respect to their character.

Many issues are simply civil matters, matters independent of religion. But others are moral issues, which deserve to be evaluated in the light of religious tenets. Some of these issues are the following:

***Right-to-life issues: Abortion:***

Right-to-life issues are among the leading issues talked about and argued about in the country today, as they have been for some considerable time. In 1973, the United States Supreme Court settled the case of *Roe v. Wade* by legalizing induced abortion. The question is: was it a moral decision? To weigh this, we need to set aside personal inclination and turn to revelation for judgment.

The Old Testament does not address the issue directly, and indirectly it seems to value harm to the mother over the death of the unborn child. (*Exodus 21:22-25*) The New Testament does not address the issue at all, though Christian moralists have consistently condemned it, as does the Roman Catholic Church to this day, which teaches that it is never lawful to kill the innocent.

More and better instruction is found in the Heavenly Doctrines for the New Christian Church. The leading number occurs at the end of the book *Divine Love and Wisdom* (no. 432). It denies the idea that “the human being exists in its complete form from its first origin or commencement.” However, it says that “the rudimentary or initial form of the human being in the womb after conception...originates from a spiritual essence,” and that “the primitive brain of the unborn child contains recipient vessels of love and wisdom from the Lord.”

“So then,” the number concludes, “because love and wisdom are the essence of what it is to be human – since love and wisdom in their essence are the Lord, and this initial form of a person is their recipient vessel – it follows that this initial form has within it a continual effort toward the human form, which it also gradually assumes.”

We may infer from this that even if the life of the unborn child is not its own life, still it is human life, receptive of love and wisdom from the Lord. We may infer as well that in the voting booth, New Church men and women ought to look for legislators and judges who reverence God and have respect for human life, even in its primitive form.

To assure themselves of the candidates' character, voters have an obligation not only to inform themselves of the candidates' campaigns and promises for the civil state, but also to pay attention to their values and moral principles. The welfare of the state requires both a successful management of its civil affairs and the presence of the Divine.

To this we may add, regarding abortion, that the right of self-defense may be applicable when the mother's life is imperiled, and perhaps also in cases of rape or incest; but as Scripture and the Doctrines are silent on this, the decision must be left to people's individual judgment and conscience.

**Right to life issues: Capital punishment.** A second right-to-life issue concerns the right of the state to put criminals to death, even criminals convicted of the most heinous crimes. If we are commanded by God not to kill, what right does the state have to execute a death sentence? But such an interpretation misunderstands the Old Testament commandment, which forbids *unlawful* killing. Indeed, the Old Testament clearly prescribes the death penalty for a variety of crimes: for murder, for adultery, for incest, for kidnapping, for witchcraft, for striking a parent, for cursing a parent, and for a number of other offenses, many of which we would regard today as too extreme to be implemented. As for the New Testament, it only indirectly seems to support the use of capital punishment. But it does not anywhere forbid it.

Like many others today, more than a few New Church men and women have concluded that the death penalty is an outmoded form of punishment. Yet the Heavenly Doctrines affirm its use. In *Exodus*, chapters 20 to 23, we find a series of mandates, beginning with the Ten Commandments, which constitute what has come to be called the Covenant Code. At the end of its treatment of these chapters, the *Arcana Coelestia*, or *Secrets of Heaven*, distinguishes these mandates into three categories: those which must altogether be observed and done; those which may serve a use; and those whose use has been abrogated where the church exists today. Among the first, which are altogether to be observed and done, are the following: "He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death" (*Exodus* 21:12), and "If a man acts with premeditation against his neighbor, to kill him with guile, you shall take him from My altar, that he may die." (*Exodus* 21:14)

The intent, clearly, is to remove the murderer permanently from society. Some have argued that life imprisonment without the possibility of parole accomplishes the same end. And surely it does. Again, therefore, we may infer that in the voting booth, New Church men and women ought to look for legislators and judges who reverence God and approve, whether by capital punishment or incarceration for life, the permanent removal of willful murderers from society's midst.

**Marriage.** In the book *Conjugal Love*, also titled *Married Love*, the Heavenly Doctrines define Christian marriage as being the marriage of one man and one wife (*Conjugal Love/Married Love* 142). No one can read that book without understanding that a monogamous heterosexual marriage is "the marital union of one man with one wife," and that "the marital union of one man with one wife is the precious jewel of human life and the repository

of Christian religion.” (*Ibid* 457, 458, 466:2, 531)

Even in ancient Israel, when polygamous marriages were permitted, still marriage was understood to be between male and female. Indeed, homosexual relationships were condemned (*Leviticus* 18:22-24), for which the prescribed penalty was death. (*Leviticus* 20:13) In the early Christian Church, too, homosexuality was condemned. (*1 Corinthians* 9-11)

Neither Judaism nor Christianity today even remotely suggest that homosexuals should be put to death or harmed in any way. Nor do the Heavenly Doctrines. But in the New Church, marriage remains “the marital union of one man with one wife,” and in the voting booth, New Church men and women ought to look for legislators and judges who reverence God and who are committed to a view of marriage as being properly both monogamous and heterosexual.

***Freedom of religion.***

Much quoted in the United States today is the phrase in the Constitution saying that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion.” (Amendment 1) The word “establishment” has been interpreted to mean both an institution, such as a church or temple, and an action, such as the action of promoting a

particular religion. Not promoting a particular religion has in turn come to mean not promoting any religion. Not cited nearly as often is the following phrase in the Constitution, “or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,” meaning that Congress shall make no law prohibiting the free exercise of religion.

It seems clear that religion today is under attack. Prayer is banned from public school classrooms and exercises. Displays of the Ten Commandments are banned from public venues. More recently Christmas crèches and even Christmas trees have been banned from government property. Christmas carols are no longer to be found in many student holiday celebrations if they can be deemed to be religious in nature. Freedom of religion, in short, has

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become in too many ways and places freedom *from* religion, though how this squares with not prohibiting the free exercise of religion is never explained.

Yet we are told in the New Church that civil officials ought to be God-fearing. How can officials be God-fearing without being religious and favoring both forms and expressions of religion? Moreover, we repeat our earlier observation that a separation of church and state does not mean a separation of *religion* and state. In the voting booth, then, New Church men and women ought to look for legislators and judges who reverence God and who will champion the right of religious people and organizations to display and engage in free expressions of their religion.

**Other issues.** Right-to-life issues, marriage and freedom of religious expression are but some of the issues New Church voters need to consider if they are to render to God the things that are God's. They are perhaps the leading issues today, but there are others, which we do not have the time to consider now.

In all, the important messages are the messages of Divine revelation, and not the determinations of any particular person's interpretations of them. New Church voters ought to acquaint themselves therefore with what revelation has to say about the relation of church and state, or of religion and civil government. They need to pay attention as well to the values and moral principles of candidates for public office, to support those whom they can judge to be truly God-fearing, who will champion the moral tenets of religion and the free expression of them, who will, by the conduct of their office, not only "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's," but also "render to God the things that are God's."



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The Rev. N. Bruce Rogers was ordained in 1969, was an associate professor of Religion and Latin in Bryn Athyn College, and continues to serve part time as a General Church translator. He lives with his wife, Kirsten (Rydstrom), in Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania.

# The Challenge of Making *Conjugal Love* Relevant in Today's Classroom

*Susan O. Odhner*

I have worked for the Academy of the New Church for many years, in many capacities. I spent time in Glencairn, Cairnwood, teaching in the Girls School, and for the last five years I have had the honor of serving as the Girls School Principal.

This job is daunting and humbling at the same time. I love it. The faculty and I work hard to help our girls become morally grounded and spiritually motivated young ladies who can live in the world with integrity and confidence. One of our objectives is to help our girls cultivate and grow a working relationship with the Lord. We want them to know that He is there for them in all that they do, in good times and in bad. This vision is what gets me up in the morning and makes this job so worthwhile.

As the Principal of the Girls School I am involved in many things, including curriculum. I was aware that Senior Girls Religion, where the girls study the book *Conjugal Love*, was a good course but not perfect. Our girls were not coming away embracing the book or the course, and we wanted to know why.

The Rev. Barry Halterman, the instructor for this course, is great with the girls. He engages them in relevant conversation, and answers their questions openly and without prejudice. Barry also facilitates the help of an assistant in the classroom – a married woman who is an advocate for the girls and for him. It is a solid system and our girls are well-served within its parameters.

However, my faculty and I felt there was something missing. Girls come to the Academy from all situations. They often come from broken homes, some with a sexually active past, and often do not buy into the idealistic views presented in *Conjugal Love*. These girls feel that if they have been sexually active, or if their home life is a war zone, these high ideals could never apply to them. They come away feeling, what's the use?

We as the Girls School faculty felt that we needed to do something to help make *Conjugal Love* more relevant and applicable for these girls. We

One of our objectives is to help our girls cultivate and grow a working relationship with the Lord. We want them to know that He is there for them in all that they do, in good times and in bad.

wanted to find a way to make its challenging passages more meaningful to them. Our goal was to help them be receptive to the book and its ideals and not discouraged. How could this be accomplished?

We felt we needed to do something to help make Conjugal Love more relevant and applicable for these girls. We wanted to find a way to make its challenging passages more meaningful to them.

We came up with what we hoped would be a viable solution. Two years ago some of the faculty decided to tackle this issue head on. We created a committee of faculty members, religion teachers, and retired Girls School faculty members. We met twice a month to read *Conjugal Love* chapter by chapter, discussed what we read, and tried to find a way to make our findings relevant and user friendly for our students.

We looked at the book with the view of an adolescent girl's mind. How would she interpret the various passages and what would she find relevant in them? How could this

important book of the Writings be taught in a way that would resonate with our girls, leaving them with a sense of hope for the ideals of relationships, marriage and life?

We rolled up our sleeves beginning in 2010-11 and met two times a month when possible. As we read the book, we tried to drill down and make sense of the content from a teenager's point of view. We continued our study through the 2011-12 school year.

We stayed true to our vision during these two years, looking at how the content could be more engaging for the girls without losing the integrity and intrinsic beauty of the book itself.

We are continuing our work this school year. Our approach will be different but will still center around *Conjugal Love*. We are meeting this fall to consider what has been accomplished by reading the book. We will take our notes from the first two years (thanks to Vice Chancellor Eric Carswell, these notes were typed up every time we met), and study the main concepts. Our goal is to come up with and define at least 20 points that are key to the teaching of *Conjugal Love*.

This will be followed by more reading and studying, but this time we will be taking a secular approach. We are studying two papers written by New Church women on gender differences, sexuality and *Conjugal Love*. This will be followed by a book written by Girls School graduate, Alaina Johns Mabaso, *The Conjugal Culture*.

How could this important book of the Writings be taught in a way that would resonate with our girls, leaving them with a sense of hope for the ideals of relationships, marriage and life?

When this task has been completed, we hope to compile a booklet that can be used in any religion class that focuses on men and women and their complementary nature, on religion and most importantly, on conjugal love.

The task is large. We have spent many hours on this already and have many more to go. But the end result is so important – helping our girls to become better women, mothers and partners. We want to give them the confidence and hope that they may understand themselves better through the Lord’s Word and through this have hope and confidence to live successfully and productively in this world.

They need to know that the Lord loves them, no matter what their past looks like, and He only wants the best for them. If we can help them understand this and lead them to a better place, we will be doing our job.

Please know that we feel *Conjugal Love* is a valuable and cherished book. It has much to offer on many levels. We are not looking to change the book or the course. We are trying to help these young women connect with what is written in its pages, embrace it and use it in their lives – now and as they head out into their adult lives after the Academy.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sue Odhner graduated from the Academy Girls School in 1973 and from Bryn Athyn College of the New Church – after raising her family – in 1995. She joined the Girls School faculty then, teaching history, English and The Formative Years. She has been Principal of the Girls School since 2007 and is working on her master’s degree at Arcadia University. She and her husband Greg have four grown sons and live in Bryn Athyn.

# Brothers Dwelling in Unity

*A Worship Talk for the 2012 Council of the Clergy Meetings*  
*The Rev. Lawson M. Smith*

What unifies the Church? I have sometimes thought that it is having the Heavenly Doctrine in common. The Heavenly Doctrine does unite us, but not just by giving us a common doctrine. The clear teaching is that love to the Lord and love toward the neighbor are what unify the Church.

The Lord unifies the Church, when we let Him. We let Him when we love Him above all things, and love one another as He has loved us. We read:

In heaven there are innumerable societies, and all different, and yet they are a one, for they are all led as a one by the Lord.... In this respect the case is the same as it is with man, in whom, although there are so many viscera, and so many little viscera within the viscera, organs, and members, each one of which acts in a different way, yet all and each are governed as a one, by the one soul.... That these *can* thus act as a one comes from the fact that in heaven there is one single influx, which is received by every individual in accordance with his own genius; and this influx is an influx of affections from the Lord, from His mercy, and from His life; and notwithstanding that there is only one single influx, yet all things obey and follow as a one. This is the result of the mutual love in which are they who are in heaven. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1285:2)

In the Ancient Church, when people regarded love to the Lord and charity toward the neighbor as primary, then many churches all over the Middle East were one. There were *many* churches, because their doctrine and their ritual were different. Even in heaven, worship and doctrine differ from society to society:

...In the Lord's spiritual kingdom in the heavens... there is variety as to the things of faith, and this to such a degree that there is not one society, nor even one person in a society, that in the things of the truth of faith has an idea altogether in agreement with the ideas of others (*Ibid*3241), but nevertheless the Lord's spiritual kingdom in the heavens is a one. The reason for this is that with all there charity is the principal thing... (*Ibid*3267)

We cannot help but have differing doctrinal interpretations and applications, because we draw our doctrine out of the literal sense of the Word:

As regards the Lord's kingdom on earth, that is, His Church, the case is that because it has its doctrinal things from the literal sense of the Word, it cannot but be various and diverse in respect to these doctrinal things; that is to say, one society will profess one thing to be a truth of faith, because it is so said in the Word, and another society will profess another thing, also because it is so said; and so on.

Consequently, as the Lord's Church has its doctrinal things from the literal sense of the Word, it will everywhere differ, and this not only as to societies, but sometimes as to the individuals in a society. Nevertheless a difference in the doctrinal things of faith does not prevent the church from being one, provided there is unanimity as to willing well and doing well. (*Ibid*3451:2)

Our doctrine will always be various, even though the Lord has given us the Heavenly Doctrine and revealed the spiritual sense of the Word. To all eternity, men and angels will continue to draw somewhat different things out of the Lord's Word as to emphasis and application. But we can still be unanimous in willing well and doing well.

The General Church is becoming more various within one organization, with increasingly different ritual and doctrine from congregation to congregation. Still our *essential* doctrine will be one as long as we keep the Lord and His kingdom as our priority:

The doctrine is one when all are in mutual love, or in charity. Mutual love and charity cause them all to be a one, although they are diverse, for they make a one out of the varieties. All men, no matter how many they may be, even myriads of myriads, if they are in charity or mutual love, have one end, namely, the common good, the Lord's kingdom, and the Lord Himself... (*Ibid*1285:3)

On the other hand:

The Lord cannot possibly be present with a man whose end is his own good; man's proprium itself estranges the Lord, for thus the man twists and turns the common good of society, and that of the Church itself, and indeed the kingdom of the Lord, to himself, even to the extent that it is as if it existed for him... (*Ibid*1316:1)

The sphere of him who has regard to himself in everything, appropriates to itself and... absorbs everything that is favorable to itself, and therefore it absorbs all the delight of the surrounding spirits, and destroys all their freedom, so that such a person has to be banished from society. (*Ibid*1316:2)

To preserve freedom, we are going to need space to have even more widely different ritual and doctrine than we have today. We will probably meet other New Church people around the globe with different ritual and doctrine. The Church of Truth in Louisville might be an example. Possibly there will be a group of people who feel called to leave the General Church because the General Church either does or does not ordain women, and their doctrine and desired ritual is different, and they need freedom to worship the Lord as seems best to them.

But the Lord is saying that the Church can still be one, provided such doctrinal matter [does] not deny first principles, that is, the Lord, eternal life, and the Word; and provided it [is] not contrary to the Divine order, that is, to the precepts of the Decalogue. (*Ibid*1834:4)

The Lord lays out what our attitude and approach should be:

He who is in charity loves his neighbor, and when the neighbor differs from him in matters of belief, he excuses it provided that his neighbor lives in good and truth. (*Ibid*3267:3)

The doctrine of charity, which is the doctrine of life, was the doctrine itself in the ancient churches.... And that doctrine conjoined all churches, and thereby formed one church out of many. For they acknowledged all those as men of the church who lived in the good of charity, and called them brothers, however they might differ respecting truths, which at this day are called matters of faith. In these they instructed one another, which was among their works of charity; and they were not indignant if one did not draw near to the opinion of another, knowing that everyone receives truth so far as he is in good." (*Ibid*6628/*New Jerusalem and the Heavenly Doctrine* 9)

The Lord also presents the contrast:

Not so they who are in doctrinal things and not in charity; these contend about everything, and condemn all whoever they may be who do not speak – though they say it is to believe – as they do. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1798:5)

Let us by all means instruct each other as carefully as we can, especially for the sake of helping each other lead people to a good life and so to the Lord. Let us share passages, interpretations and applications, and vigorously debate the meaning and use of all the teachings the Lord has given us in the Scripture and the Doctrine. But let us not get indignant when one does not go along with another, but be patient, and rather say as our Lord teaches us to say: "This is my brother; I see that he worships the Lord, and is a good man." (*Ibid*2385:5)

**Readings:** *Psalm* 133: 1-3; *Matthew* 22: 37-40; *Arcana Coelestia* 2982)



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The Rev. Lawson M. Smith was ordained in 1979 and into the second degree in 1981. He has served as Pastor in Mitchellville, Maryland, and the Westville New Church in Durban, South Africa, where he was also Headmaster of the Kainon School. He is Pastor of the Kempton Society and Principal of the Kempton New Church School, and is Regional Pastor for the Northeastern United States. He and his wife, Shanon, live in Kempton, Pennsylvania.

# Council of the Clergy Meetings

*June 26-30, 2012*

*By The Rev. Kenneth J. Alden*

*With portions written by the Rev. Brian D. Smith, and with the assistance of many of the speakers and several colleagues*

The 2012 Council of the Clergy meetings had a different feel from the very start. Instead of having the meetings in March, we chose June to take advantage of Academy housing and food service for the increasing numbers of ministers from out of town. Rather than officially opening on a Monday, we began on Tuesday to allow ministers to preach in distant societies and still make the opening session.

A large committee had planned a program balanced for doctrinal discussion, pastoral application and business, interspersed with news reports from the different regions of the Church. Perhaps the most significant change that gave a new feel to the meetings was the new approach to voting on nominees for Executive Bishop. By voting for all candidates in a ranked ballot, it fostered a positive outlook and favored an atmosphere of consensus.

## **Monday, June 25**

For early arrivals, Mary Heinrichs Williams, under the aegis of the Bryn Athyn College of the New Church Theological School, offered a speech and communication workshop on sermon writing. A number of ways of structuring and presenting sermons were highlighted under the theme of preaching so as to be heard. Sermons need to be organized with *listeners* in mind. Ms. Williams stressed the value of summarizing before moving on, the importance of matching the structure to the sermon's subject and objectives, and the benefit to listeners of using a variety of ways of presenting sermons. Participants even prepared and preached sermon outlines using one of the structures she presented.

In the evening, the Rt. Rev. and Mrs. Thomas L. Kline opened their home to Council of the Clergy's members and candidates, and their wives. Warm greetings and catch-up conversations were everywhere, along with a smattering

of discussions pertaining to the pre-circulated papers and church business. The Bishop's Consistory also had its semi-monthly meeting in the living room toward the end of the evening – the one time many of the members could meet face-to-face, rather than by conference call.

## Tuesday, June 26

As last year, the plenary sessions were held in the Academy of the New Church Dining Hall, with meals served in the other wing. Bishop Kline opened the meetings with a worship service on *Hope in the Lord*. He concluded with the teaching of *Arcana Coelestia* 2535, “If the man prays from love and faith, and for only heavenly and spiritual things, there then comes forth in the prayer something like a revelation (which is manifested in the affection of him that prays) as to hope, consolation, or a certain inward joy.”

We accepted the Program Committee's plan of deferring the usual first business of accepting new members so that we could begin with something of spiritual substance. We started with the Rev. Daniel W. Goodenough introducing the subject of his pre-circulated paper, *Making Distinctions in Loving All Our Neighbors*.

Mr. Goodenough presented the parable of the landowner who paid those who worked in his vineyard the agreed-upon wage of one denary, even though some were hired early and worked all day, and others hired late, and worked only an hour. (See *Matthew* 20:1-16) He said it showed that natural-world ideas of equality are not the same as spiritual standards. Equality today is based on the idea of non-discrimination.

The key element of truth it contains is that God loves all people. When, however, a single truth predominates over other truths it becomes an idol. The Heavenly Doctrine teaches that true charity is exercised when distinctions are recognized and people or groups are served according to their individual spiritual quality. The parable of the workers in the vineyard may be a valuable way to open people's minds to the spiritual exercise of charity when their thinking has been dominated by the non-discrimination ideal.

Discussion brought out many useful thoughts, including that one must love the sinner, but not the sin, or rather, love the *good* in the sinner, but neither the sinner nor the sin. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 3701:6; *New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine* 88; *True Christian Religion* 418; *Spiritual Experiences* 2783) It was also noted that God is “No respecter of persons” (*Acts* 10:34) and Jesus was known as one who did “not regard the person of men” (*Matthew* 22:16), and yet He also says, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.” (*Revelation* 3:19)

In appreciating all the response, Mr. Goodenough said he was not surprised that the subject of homosexuality came up, but the topic goes far

beyond this question. How do you talk about homosexuality? The first thing in repentance is to acknowledge evil for what it is. At the same time we must avoid the anger, hatred and revenge seen among so many in America. We also need to talk about the ideal of the marriage of one man and one woman, and God's wisdom in creating people for this ideal.

Instead of using "discriminate" to describe what charity does, "make distinctions" conveys the point more acceptably. Nearly all mothers know that each child is different and must be treated according to his or her own character. We have to go back to the "Landowner" whose land we seek to live in, and learn of His higher kind of love, that distinguishes each and every individual in His care for them.

### **Voting Process**

The second session began with a vote to accept the following men ordained in the previous year as members of the Council of the Clergy: Kamenan Atta, Mahn Hoe Choe, Peter N. Devassy, Young Ho Jung, Solomon J. Keal, Seoung Gil Kim, Soon Cheol Lee, Shiro Matsumoto. A statement describing the purpose and procedures of the Council of the Clergy Membership committee was also discussed and approved unanimously.

The Committee to Facilitate the Clergy's Role in the Nomination of the Next Executive Bishop of the General Church presented its pre-circulated procedure for selecting a nominee:

1. Accepting the process
2. Discussing the Church's needs and candidates' qualifications
3. Voting for all candidates by ranking them on a ballot, and using the distribution of votes to retain leading candidates for the next vote
4. Repeat steps 2 and 3
5. Provide an opportunity to submit concerns about the remaining candidates, which the committee would compile and pass to the candidates
6. The next day the candidates will speak to those concerns before the whole Council
7. Repeat steps 2 and 3 until a clear nominee emerges
8. Hold a vote to affirm support from the whole Council

This procedure was accepted by a unanimous vote. The eight men nominated to be considered for the next Executive Bishop then left the room. They were: the Rev. Messrs. Göran R. Appelgren, Erik J. Buss, Peter M. Buss Jr., Eric H. Carswell, Andrew M. T. Dibb, Bradley D. Heinrichs, David H.

Lindrooth and the Rt. Rev. Brian W. Keith. After a vote to keep everything confidential until after Sunday when the Board was expected to respond to the nomination, and to keep everything relating to the discussion of concerns perpetually confidential, discussion began.

Approximately 10 men rose to speak in general terms of the needs of the Church, the clergy, and the kind of qualities needed in the next Executive Bishop. Gradually, more attention was given to the qualities of named candidates. Several men spoke to the need for information and the pitfalls for those charged with voting. By the lunch break we had heard from about 20 men.

After lunch, a new feature – Regional News – was introduced. Regional pastors were given 15 minutes to mention the pastors serving in their region, and to tell about the uses and congregations they serve.

The Rev. David C. Roth reported on the American West, where Light for Life New Church in Seattle, Washington, and New Way Church in Austin, Texas, are relatively new church plants, and Sunrise Chapel in Tucson, Arizona, and the New Church of Boulder Valley, Colorado, are relatively mature church plants. The churches in Phoenix, Arizona, and San Diego, California, were also mentioned, along with active groups in other parts of the West. He noted the “youngish, pioneering spirit” that is generally found in the region.

We resumed discussing the selection process, the needs of the Church and the potential for candidates to serve those needs. Several speakers expressed confidence that the Lord could use any one of the eight candidates to serve the Church as Executive Bishop. After six speakers a motion was made to have prayer and the first vote. A request was made to have someone speak of each of the candidates whose names had not yet been mentioned. This was honored.

Ballots with the eight names in alphabetical order were handed out with encouragement to vote for all candidates, putting a one by the first choice, two by the second, and so forth. The committee entered the results into a program on a website which could analyze the data.

After a mid-afternoon break, three electives were offered in concurrent sessions.

## **Wine and Holy Supper**

The Rev. Kenneth J. Alden presented his paper, *Drink from It, All of You: Helping Alcoholics to the Full Benefit of the Holy Supper*. He brought forward teachings that challenge the belief that the disease model of addiction implies that alcoholics are doomed to relapse if they partake of Holy Supper wine. Those who subscribe to this belief regard alcohol as the thing to be avoided, while the Word shows that drunkenness is what must be shunned, holds people accountable for doing so, and teaches that they are free to do so. While

people have no power of themselves, they do have power from the Lord.

The Heavenly Doctrine shows that all evil is expressed organically in the mind, yet those organic structures can be gradually changed through repentance. Repentance from the desires associated with drunkenness rather than avoidance of alcohol puts alcoholics in freedom to partake of Holy Supper wine.

Mr. Alden also quoted scientists in the addictions field who question the disease model of addiction because there is little scientific evidence to support it. Triggers to relapse, preparing alcoholics for safely partaking of Holy Supper wine, and the uses of doing that preparation were other topics addressed doctrinally and sometimes scientifically, as well. He invited the clergy to apply their experience with doctrine, counseling and addiction to communicating the truths that make us free – free to receive the full benefit of the Holy Supper.

In discussion, questions were raised about how this line of thinking would fit with the thinking of Alcoholics Anonymous. Some stood by the disease model of addiction and resisted most of conclusions following from the challenge to the way it is commonly understood. One minister circulated a brief paper outlining principles in support of alternatives to wine, as an accommodation. Others welcomed the paper's application of doctrine and the support drawn from science.

*Mindfulness: Experiencing Spiritual Warmth* was a presentation by the Rev. J. Clark Echols. His workshop was experiential in nature, with discussion of a collection of passages from the Writings on the doctrine of reflection, the influence of spirits, the nature of our natural minds, and the process of identifying evil loves and false thoughts. His goal was to model and teach the skill of mindfulness. This skill is based on simple practices of breathing and awareness, and his suggestion was that clergy have pressures and barriers to inner peace, judgment and enlightenment which must be guarded against through a practice of mindfulness.

One key negative influence which he identified is a type of priestly arrogance stemming from love of dominion. The inclination to dominate, along with natural world concerns, anxiety in dealing with congregants, and other challenges, create barriers and blocks in front of the work the Lord has called clergy to. A regular and skillful practice of mindfulness is a key tool for clergy (and anyone) in the process of identifying and letting go of the influence of evil spirits.

## **Church Growth**

The Rev. Louis D. Synnestvedt presented something of a sequel to his 2011 paper. This year's title was *Innocence in Government: Toward an Offspring Model of Church Growth*. He presented a gentle, creative and new approach

to thinking about church growth and the relationship between “parent” and “child” church groups. His previous paper focused on the vital importance of recognizing the Lord as head of the Church (rather than our earthly leaders) while this paper aimed to promote discussion and exploration of a church united through mutual love and worship of the Lord.

His paper stemmed from the sense of gentle innocence described in *Isaiah* 11.6 “And a little child shall lead them,” applied especially to leadership structures and decisions. His presentation included a video on the value of cultivating creativity in education. Far-ranging discussion followed as the group started to consider the possible implications and applications of the paper.

As is often the case, the time seemed inadequate. The group, which included clergy from multiple countries and age groups, started to dig into questions about how to cultivate variety and creativity in the Church around the world, while still maintaining mutually supportive (and loving) relationships as the Church continues to spread and diversify.

At the conclusion of these presentations, three more electives were offered. In one room, doctrinal topics could be raised for discussion in small groups. This allowed for follow-up discussion on Mr. Alden’s paper. In another, pastoral topics could be raised. In a third, a series of questions were provided to help us get to know one another better in brief one-on-one encounters.

At the plenary session, the vote tally was presented on a graph with no names attached. As the Rev. James P. Cooper would later explain to the Board, “The vote counting procedure . . . takes into account each preference of each voter for one candidate over another. It does so by conceptually breaking the electing down into a series of separate races between each possible pairing of the candidates, hence it is sometimes referred to as a ‘pairwise’ method. This kind of voting shows the candidates who have the broadest support, as well as those who are most preferred by certain groups.”

The graph showed three strata of candidates with one leader selected in the majority of pairings, while other candidates fell into a middle or low range. A vote determined that the leading four candidates, who would continue to be considered, were the Revs. Messrs. Appelgren, Dibb, Keith and Lindrooth.

That evening, attendees and wives were treated to dinner in Cairnwood.

### **Wednesday, June 27**

The Rev. Lawson M. Smith led worship with readings from *Psalms* 133, and *Matthew* 22:37-40, the Two Great Commandments, and many passages from the Heavenly Doctrine. He led us to consider how love makes a church, while it is inevitable that no two people will have an identical sight of doctrine. (A copy of this worship talks precedes this report.)

## Acts and Epistles

The Rev. Dr. Jonathan S. Rose introduced his pre-circulated paper, *What the Writings Say about the Acts and Epistles*, adding considerably to what the paper contained. He began with what the Writings *say* about the Acts and Epistles, noting that the General Church has based its practice on three passages published early by Swedenborg, and typified by the statement: “The books of the Word are all those which have the internal sense; but those which have not the internal sense are not the Word.... [It then lists those books and continues.] ...The rest have not the internal sense. The book of Job is an ancient book which indeed contains an internal sense, but not in series.” (*White Horse* 16) From these passages, all branches of the New Church have accepted that list of books as defining “the Word.”

Dr. Rose looked at Swedenborg’s practice: how does he *use* the Acts and Epistles in the Heavenly Doctrine? In the first 5,000 pages of the Heavenly Doctrine that Swedenborg published, there are no quotes from the Acts or Epistles. Beginning in 1764, in *Angelic Wisdom Concerning Divine Providence*, Swedenborg began quoting the Acts and Epistles, until by 1771, *True Christianity* quoted them liberally. In the latter work, in fact, the Acts and Epistles are referred to or quoted as “the Word” seven times. What are we to make of this?

Dr. Rose cited the letter to Dr. Beyer in which the Apostles’ writings are called “good books for the church” and observed that they are called “doctrinal writings.” He suggested that we might think of the Word which has an internal sense, as defined in the Heavenly Doctrine, as being “The Correspondential Word” from which all doctrine is to be drawn. He suggested, further, that the Acts and Epistles might be thought of as “The Doctrinal Word,” which served the early Christian Church as a lamp of doctrine for understanding what the Lord had taught.

Although the Acts and Epistles have been perverted as the Christian Church declined, the Lord has revealed the Heavenly Doctrine so that we can now interpret the Acts and Epistles in the light of the Gospels. He suggested that although they are less holy than the correspondential Word, they are yet accepted as the Word among Christians and ought to be reclaimed for the New Church for the truths they contain, when rightly understood.

Dr. Rose’s presentation received a warm response and the lively din of the discussion groups showed that it and the paper stimulated a lot of thought. Many of those reporting for their groups affirmed the value of the Acts and Epistles when evangelizing in the Christian community.

Some commented on the amount and kind of effort needed to educate the clergy to use these books effectively, and one mentioned the sensitivity needed

to introduce them to lay people who have not developed a taste for them. Discussion in three groups touched on the fact that the Writings state some of Paul's teachings to be false. In response to the generally positive feedback, Dr. Rose indicated that he has found the study of the Acts and Epistles to be rewarding and useful for communicating New Church doctrine.

## **Africa and Asia**

Regional News for Southern Africa was presented by the Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Sr. He gave a brief history of the Church in the region, noting the ways it was hurt among black South Africans by both the split over The Hague position on the Writings and by Apartheid. He then touched on each of the congregations in the regions and the pastors there. He noted that the Church in this region is second in numbers only to the membership of the Church in the United States. He closed by mentioning the work done on translation into Zulu by Zamokuhle Zungu, following in the footsteps of his father the Rev. Aaron B. Zungu.

The floor was opened for discussion of the remaining four candidates for the Executive Bishop nomination. Speakers sometimes strayed from the business at hand and suggested changes to our system of government or selection. People proposed imposing term limits and greater rotation of leadership so as to make the selection process less weighty, or selecting a bishop and his assistant(s) so as to produce a balanced team and capitalize on the varied talents of the nominees.

After lunch, the Rev. Yong (John) Jin, regional pastor for Asia, spoke of the church there. He said it is a church that cannot stand on its own, for many people and generations make up a church. He highlighted the sacrifices made by clergy and board members, including their determination not to seek financial subsidies on which they will become dependent. He outlined a plan of outreach involving house-based churches of 10 to 20 members, four or five of which would pool their resources to support a minister.

## **The Vote for Executive Bishop**

The morning's discussion of the four nominees continued, with a number of ministers offering their view of why term limits and a shorter term of office for the Executive Bishop were not good ideas. A motion to cast another ballot was made, carried and, after prayer, conducted.

The mid-afternoon session was reserved for Bishop Kline's report as Executive Bishop. Since the bishops give periodic reports during the year, the written report was brief. He stressed the importance of assuming that Facebook is a public form of communication, and that participation must be held to professional standards. He stressed that our sexual abuse policy is

“zero tolerance.” Such matters are turned over to the police.

Other topics included the leadership he provided to the Boards of the General Church and Academy and their willingness to have the priesthood set priorities on budget cuts. He said that most rumors about how our budget challenges will affect the Church and schools are false. As advice to the next Executive Bishop he said to prepare to be more religious, trust the Lord, love the people – “sheep” and “goats.” He said the job is do-able. “Don’t lose your sense of humor: angels can fly because they take themselves lightly.”

The committee overseeing the nomination process presented the results of the second ballot. The computer tallied the results in two different ways and showed the candidates ranked in the same order with the lead candidate having a majority of at least 60%. As the next step was to invite council members to submit their concerns and have the candidates respond, discussion turned to whether this was useful or necessary, and whether there was any point in having another ballot when it was unlikely that any other candidate could be selected by continuing with the planned process.

After much discussion it was voted to learn the name of the leading candidate, who was the Rt. Rev. Brian W. Keith. It was determined that we would welcome the other candidates back, and then welcome Bishop Keith, but that we would still collect “concerns” and have another session on Thursday in which they could be addressed by Bishop Keith. Then we would have a vote for people to express their support.

Activities for the remainder of the afternoon and evening included Holy Supper for clergy and wives in the small chapel at the Cathedral, and the annual meeting of the General Church Corporation. That meeting approved amendments to the bylaws which make it possible to use modern communication tools to bring people together to conduct business.

### **Thursday, June 28**

The Rev. David Roth led worship, reading from *1 Samuel 3* and *1 Kings 18* and spoke of the work of the Levites being termed “military service.”

In the plenary session, the Rev. Coleman S. Glenn introduced his paper, *Atheism*, in which he brought together passages which spoke to the many ways of asking the question: “Can an atheist who seems to live a good life go to heaven?”

We and many in our congregations know and care about people who say they are atheists. Should we treat atheism as we treat other sins? Should we reach out to atheists with more urgency than we do presently? Or does the good they do indicate that on some level they really believe in God? Without God, however, good is merely natural and carries with it no power to save.

Although Mr. Glenn’s paper touched on many truths that people turn to

for keeping hope alive that their atheistic friends will find a place in heaven, he had to conclude that almost everything he encountered on the subject in the Heavenly Doctrine points to non-salvation if a person does not believe in God. The exceptions are passages about people whose isolation on islands left them with no knowledge of God. After death, these were introduced into knowledge of the Lord and gradually led to heaven. (See *True Christian Religion* 274; *The Last Judgment (posthumous)* 129-130)

The topic resulted in animated and earnest discussion about how to reach out to atheists, patiently respecting their freedom while looking for the good in them and for true beliefs which can be built on to lead them to the acknowledgment of God which is essential to heavenly life.

At the beginning of the second session, Bishop Kline acknowledged that the General Church has asked members to give to their local congregations, so that they need less of a grant from the General Church. He encouraged clergy to all make a token contribution to both the General Church and the Theological School, to demonstrate support.

The Rev. Andrew J. Heilman reported on the New Church in Brazil, the fifth largest country in the world. He spoke of the efforts to have all of the books of the Heavenly Doctrine translated into Portuguese within the decade, typing in old translations made by Levindo de Lafayette in the 1920s, and also new translations being done by the Rev. Cristóvão Nobre.

There are four congregations in Brazil, and several groups, and most of those in the New Church found the Writings as adults. Six men are studying theology, with an ordination for one of them, Eduardo Beirith, planned in August. He assured us that the New Church will endure in Brazil because the lamp of the Heavenly Doctrine has been lit.

The main business of this session had been to give the nominees still under consideration an opportunity to respond to concerns collected by the committee since the previous day. With only one nominee under consideration, the clergy nevertheless kept to the plan. Concerns covered a range of topics from personal to process, and from communication with the clergy to challenges of the job.

While there was nothing raised that was unusual for a person in his position to address, the vote of the Council at the start of the process was to keep this session confidential. Since no motion was made to release this information, having seen how innocuous it was, nothing further can be reported.

After Bishop Keith's response to concerns, a secret ballot of affirmation was held and the results were announced: 90 "yes," 3 "no," and 1 "abstain." Bishop Keith was greeted by a standing ovation.

Discussion continued with words of congratulation and encouragement, advice and questions. Topics included the choice of assistant bishop, the

transition to new leadership, cultural pressures to ordain women, and support for the Church overseas.

## Special Reports

The session after lunch began with the Rev. Jeremy F. Simons reporting on the Church in Bryn Athyn and environs. He said the membership roll has held steady for years at about 1,000, with about the same number of children, but the category of “friends” has grown to 1,500. Combined attendance at church on Sunday is 600 to 700 people, plus about 160 for NewChurch LIVE and 90-100 for Ivyland. Bryn Athyn has been going through a process of interviewing people about what they like about the church and community, which has contributed to a more peaceful sphere.

The Rev. Lawson M. Smith, regional pastor for the rest of the Northeast United States, read a brief report on New England by the pastor in Boston, the Rev. Matthew L. Genzlinger. He spoke of the group of 25 or more who worship in Harleysville, Pennsylvania, led by the Rev. George D. McCurdy. About a third of them are newcomers.

As pastor in Kempton, Pennsylvania, he mentioned the steady enrollment of about 60 students with around 6% not yet baptized. He spoke of how much the Healthy Church Match program has helped fund the school. A small group meets in York, Pennsylvania. The congregation in Sarver, Pennsylvania, is making use of New Church Live online, as they bridge the gap between pastors. The society in Pittsburgh is making good use of a worship planning team and was delighted to have its strongest Journey program ever.

The main business for this session was to hear from priests in the central administration, and to ask questions about their reports.

The Rev. David H. Lindrooth, the Bishop’s Representative for Outreach, spoke of using the Internet and its ability to provide low-cost solutions to reach many more people with teachings for the Church. One example is that *New Church Connection* magazine now has more than 37,000 online readers. Another is that in the previous week alone almost 250,000 people viewed New Church content from the General Church’s Facebook page. Several questions involved follow-up to contacts made through the Internet, and efforts to turn contacts into members.

The Rev. Eric H. Carswell, the Bishop’s Representative for Education, spoke of our giant responsibility to the next generation and encouraged ministers to preach and teach this. Discussion touched on the changing landscape with regard to grants for schools, and on the strength schools provide to the General Church.

The Rev. Dr. Andrew M. T. Dibb, Dean of the Theological School, spoke of the challenges of training people around the world. He mentioned requests

for training from Bangladesh, Cuba and Jamaica, and spoke of theological training taking place in Japan, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Brazil and Kenya, in addition to the six students who will be attending the Bryn Athyn College of the New Church Theological School. Discussion touched on the financial stress of the Academy and its significant effects on the Theological School in terms of money and over-worked faculty.

The Rev. Eric Carswell spoke as Vice Chancellor of the Academy about the turmoil of the 2009-2010 year and said there were many good reasons for what people did, but there were mistakes as well. The climate has improved, but there is diminished opportunity for the foreseeable future. The five-year plans move us forward, but require donations to succeed.

Discussion touched on where the Dean of the Theological School can turn if he should come to an impasse with the President of the College, the changes to the tuition remission benefit for General Church and Academy employees, and support for international students.

After the last session, affected clergy were invited to a meeting with Duane D. Hyatt, General Church Treasurer, and Karen D. Stoeller, Director of Human Resources, on the changes to the retiree health care insurance benefit.

In the evening, clergy and wives went to separate dinners. The clergy dinner was held in the Dining Hall. The program consisted first, of newly-ordained ministers introducing themselves. It was delightful to hear from the Korean ministers, whose words were translated by the Rev. Jong-ui Lee. Secondly, the Rev. Martin K. Gyamfi, regional pastor of West Africa, gave the regional news, including a brief doctrinal presentation on what the Heavenly Doctrine says about Africans, and a few slides from the region.

He presented a chart showing in Côte d'Ivoire, seven priests, four groups, one theological school and four students; in Ghana, 11 priests, eight groups, one theological school, with no students at present; Togo with three priests and three groups; and in Benin, one priest and one group. In addition, the school in Asakraka has 430 students, and the one in Tema has 230. He told of 50 adults and 37 children baptized in Nigeria, and activity in Liberia.

### **Friday, June 29**

The Rev. Michael D. Gladish led worship with readings from *1 Samuel* 17 and *Apocalypse Explained* 817:6, with a discussion of Saul's dilemma: whether to trust in our sense of things, represented by the men and armor whom he knew well, or in the doctrines, represented by the shepherd boy with his sling and stones.

After worship, he reported as regional pastor for the Southeast District – a region stretching from Baltimore to Florida and west to places like Alabama, Kentucky and Tennessee. The Washington New Church has a school with

54 students, up to 22% of whom have no previous New Church background. One vision is to become a truly integrated, multiracial society. The people who enroll their children in the school after thorough interviews and classes, find the doctrine very acceptable. Boynton Beach yearns for an injection of youthfulness, while Baltimore is trying to sell their building and Atlanta is excited about a new beginning with a new pastor, the Rev. Calvin A. Odhner.

## **The Laity**

The Rev. Derek P. Elphick presented his paper, *The Laity*. He began by reviewing his previous presentations to the Council. In 2006 he challenged us with the thought that we were preaching to the choir, talking among ourselves in our congregations, and not being a church. In 2009 he challenged us to be relevant by asking what we want the laity to be doing and what we are doing to connect with people in our sermons. In his present paper he addressed the idea that we have a clergy-centric system.

He looked at what the Heavenly Doctrine teaches about priests and laymen, and found that most religious activities, such as going to church, praying, teaching, leading to good, and reading the Word, are to be done by both. Administering worship and preaching are the activities assigned exclusively to the clergy. He spoke of the uses and abuses of the clergy's enlightenment and expertise, and affirmed the laity's interest in the doctrine of life and their enlightenment from the Word that is focused on the affairs of the world.

Mr. Elphick's paper was looking to a shared-leadership model, and drew on and was illustrated by his experience with such leadership in the Oak Arbor Society in Rochester, Michigan. He suggested that lay leaders be included in the occupational, as opposed to representative, aspects of the priestly office. Running a congregation might be an example of a priest's occupational role, while writing a pastoral prayer might be an example of his representative role. He listed a number of risks of shared leadership, such as blurring the boundaries between the priesthood and laity, as well as several benefits, including an increase in the laity's understanding of the Church's teachings.

Discussion affirmed the dangers of clergy dominance and the value of an active and involved laity. Examples of successes and failures were given and the thought was embraced that the Church is the Lord's rather than belonging to either the clergy or the laity.

## **Concerns About Pornography**

In the late-morning session, the Rev. Erik J. Buss gave a presentation, *Break Free from Pornography*. He spoke of the hell that is very much present, and challenged us to think about how we are going to address it. He gave a history of the steady expansion of pornography, beginning with *Playboy Magazine* in

1953. The statistics on the inroads pornography has made in our culture and around the world were staggering and disheartening in estimating how broadly and deeply pornography's reach is in our society and how large a part of the economy, the Internet, and communications technology are involved.

A generation ago people had to look for pornography, but now people have to actively avoid it because it comes looking for them. It entraps children and introduces them to the hell of adulterers. It ensnares with the joy of the illicit, and as this becomes common, it draws people into things still more illicit to give the same rush.

He compared pornography to the forbidden degrees of adultery and their lusts which stem from the love of dominion. He said there are a lot of people involved, not of their own freewill. Pornography has been shown to be hard to quit because its "buzz" is similar to that of crack cocaine. Spiritual influences are also strong, in that cunning "siren" spirits delight in such lusts and refuse to leave. He gave a number of suggestions about what we can do to combat pornography.

He urged us to commit to working on the problem of how to break free from pornography. We need to develop a pragmatic, outrage-free attitude to dealing with it. We need to gather passages that offer solutions and talk about sex and sexual perversions. Developing a website that offers a defense would help, with material aimed at helping younger as well as older teens, with referrals to already existing, good quality websites. He suggested that when we refer people to recovery programs, we stay in touch, so that the power of the truth of the Lord's Word can be kept at the forefront of recovery. Among the many other suggestions he included education, fathers forming groups to support each other in good parenting, and chaperonage.

In the discussion many of his points were reinforced and amplified. The scope of the problem and the heavenly goods that are at stake demand that we address this assault of the hells. As Mr. Buss said in response, the loves of adultery, dominion and deceit are said in the Heavenly Doctrine to be the foremost threats to the establishment of the New Church, (see *Spiritual Experiences* 6051-53) and pornography is involved with all three. He invited priests to join an ongoing committee to further address this threat.

## Regional Reports

After lunch, the Rev. Bradley D. Heinrichs gave a report as Executive Vice President of the General Church in Canada. In the Olivet Society in Toronto were three ministers last year: the Rev. James P. Cooper, pastor, and the Rev. Brian D. Smith and the Rev. Calvin A. Odhner. Mr. Cooper, as regional pastor for Canada, gathers the Canadian pastors for monthly meetings which are useful for supporting the work of the Church.

The Carmel Church is where Mr. Heinrichs is pastor, assisted by the Rev. Nathan F. Cole. The society is celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its move from the city to the rural area of Kitchener.

He named the many other groups in Canada, including a group of Russians who read the Writings together in London, Ontario. In the west, the Dawson Creek Society is making an effort to transfer the strength of the Church from the older generation to the younger, with the pastoral help of the Rev. Coleman S. Glenn.

The Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr. reported as regional pastor for the Midwest District, perhaps the region with the fewest churches, but with a significant impact on the Church as a whole. The Cincinnati Society pastor, the Rev. J. Clark Echols, has elected to go into semi-retirement. The group is very small but is making a diligent effort to keep alive the New Church worship that has continued in their historic building for some 150 years. In Kansas City there is a dedicated group that loves to have visiting pastors.

Oak Arbor is led by the Rev. Derek P. Elphick. They are using their creativity to serve the uses of the New Church on a tight budget, including the uses of their school and the ways they wish to serve the surrounding community. They also used their beautiful facility to serve the General Church with the recent **Impact 365** seminar.

Glenview has Mr. Buss as its pastor, assisted by the Rev. Mark D. Pendleton. A big project over the last seven years has been to creatively update the uses of their long-running school to the needs of the current generation.

A bonus business session – since the nomination process concluded more efficiently than expected – included a moment of silence for the late Rev. Mauro S. de Padua and tasking volunteers to communicate with absent members and associates about this year's meetings. Discussion of whether to have plenary or regional meetings next year occupied much of the discussion, including whether regional meetings would be adequate for providing counsel with regard to an Assistant Bishop, or discussing the doctrine bearing on the gender of the priests and women's roles in the Church.

Bishop Kline announced that the Bath, Maine, society recently voted to return to being a society of the Swedenborgian Church of North America (Convention). The Rev. Jong (John) Jin announced that *True Christian Religion* had just been published in Chinese. A motion was passed to form a committee to propose a process whereby the clergy can make decisions between meetings.

## Church Uses and Leadership

Two sessions were held concurrently in the late afternoon. The Rev. Bradley D. Heinrichs highlighted his paper, *Is the General Church Specific Enough?*, and

the Rev. Charles E. Blair led a session on *Leadership Course Correction*.

Mr. Heinrichs' paper consisted almost entirely of passages from the Heavenly Doctrine, arranged under headings having to do with the definition and uses of the church specific, the uses of the New Church, the role of priests and the relationship between clergy and laity and the uses of boundaries. Among the teachings he highlighted and observations he made were:

The Church where the Word is and where the Lord is known is special because it has more interior truths. It serves as the heart and lungs do, and for this, it is better to be healthy than to be big. Having a sound understanding of the Word serves for conjunction with the angels and the Lord, and provides an internal for the much larger external found in the universal church.

The priest's role is to teach truths and lead by them to the good of life, as well as to administer the things of Divine law and worship. It is a role that is internal, relative to the laity's role, because it is concerned with the study and defense of the doctrine from the Word. It does not make priests more important, but the role is important because enlightenment is communicated because of the office. Appropriate boundaries between roles are important for keeping freedom intact for both priests and lay people.

Discussion highlighted the idea that the more we attend to the distinctive uses of the church specific, the more far-reaching will its uses be. Any light the church specific sheds is not from itself but from the Lord by way of the heavens. A key element of this use is the reading of the Word.

In response, Mr. Heinrichs reminded us that only those who have the Word and understand it can carry on the functions of the specific church. The understanding of the Word is the professional responsibility of the priesthood, and the laity's responsibility is bringing it to fruition. The laity needs the freedom to carry this out on their own.

Mr. Blair's workshop was designed not as a doctrinal presentation based on a paper but a very practical consideration of the process for making improvements after making mistakes as a leader. He shared extensively from the lessons he's learned working with NewChurch LIVE – both the inspiring and disappointing moments. He observed that there is a temptation to blame external circumstances or the mistakes of others for apparent failures. This temptation can be very dangerous if it insulates us from asking ourselves the difficult questions and making new, active decisions based on current circumstances.

He is already enjoying some of the unexpected blessings which have come in the aftermath of significant budget cutting. He finds that he has a very effective, engaged team of lay leaders who move much of the ministering work forward. He also has been coming to grips with a culture which seems to be very interested in action and process of being religious, but less interested in

regular church attendance. He asked the group to divide into small groups to wrestle with questions which challenge General Church congregations and he also used video from NewChurch LIVE to illustrate some of the points.

The Bishop's Advisory committee, consisting largely of regional pastors and charged with providing counsel on personnel matters, met in the evening, while they had a rare opportunity to meet face to face.

### **Saturday, June 30**

The Rev. J. Bhekuyise Dube led us in prayer.

The Rev. Göran R. Appelgren, regional pastor for Europe and India, mentioned that in the previous week, a major radio station in Sweden devoted 45 minutes to a very good program on the Church there. In an overview of Europe, he said there are 10 countries where the General Church has a presence – societies or individuals – but about 18 countries where some New Church activity is going on, with 14 different languages represented among them.

In Georgia, *The New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine* has been distributed in the 100s with *Heaven and Hell* soon to be published. The latter book has been published by a well-known publisher in the Czech Republic and is getting good distribution. A group in Ukraine has doubled in 10 years, and the Church in Norway is benefitting from the energy of Thomas Floyd, who discovered us two years ago. And that's just a taste of all that was and could be reported!

The Rev. Ronald D. Schnarr presented a short paper, *Evangelization from the Writings*, pairing New Testament teachings on the subject with the spiritual sense as given in the Heavenly Doctrine. He pointed out that such passages can be interpreted from two extremes – from the spiritual sense which seems to do away with the literal sense, or from the letter which almost does away with the spiritual sense. He hoped to view them together, such that the spiritual sense would fill the natural sense.

In reflecting on teachings about the Lord sending us to reap that whereon we have not labored, he brought out the importance of the Lord's preparation of people. It is those who have been prepared by the Lord for the New Church to whom we should preach, while others who are not yet prepared may, in providence, be protected from hearing of the New Church.

Other ideas that emerged were that we are to let go of unheavenly associations, and not be dragged down by them; that preaching the kingdom is preaching the Lord's authority; that we are to preach to the love of obedience, the affection for truth, etc, and not to appeal to ego, love of dominion, etc.; that the Lord grows the Church; and that if we are not evangelizing our own lives, the Lord cannot give us sheep to tend.

The discussion affirmed the Lord's role in preparing people for the New Church and the importance of teaching the Lord's authority when teaching the truths He has revealed. We still have a responsibility to evangelize widely, for we won't know who has been prepared except by their reception of the truth.

### **Final Things**

At the start of our final session the ballot results for two new members for the Council of the Clergy Membership Committee was announced: the Rev. Grant H. Odhner and the Rev. George G. Dziekpor. (This committee considers candidates for council membership and makes recommendations to the whole council.) Many topics were raised, including how we might use regional meetings, especially how we might allow for variety while also sharing some discussion or topics.

The Rev. Jeremy F. Simons led worship to close the meetings, reading from *Revelation 2:1-7* and *Apocalypse Revealed 69*.

After lunch, an optional session was available in which attorney, Jonathan Segal, led a discussion of legal issues, particularly on the subject of sexual abuse, confidentiality, and when reporting is mandatory. Concurrent with this session, others met to give further feedback on the meetings and to plan for the next clergy meetings. Meanwhile, the Rev. James P. Cooper presented the General Church Board with the nominee of the Council of the Clergy for the next Executive Bishop.

# Who Trusts in the Lord Shall be as a Tree Planted by the Waters

*Second of a Three-Part Series by E. Kent Rogers*

Editor's note: In Part I in the July-August issue, Kent Rogers laid out his "bold claim" that "The Lord is wholly responsible for our regeneration. God is active, man is passive."

## **Who Goes to Hell? Who Goes to Heaven?**

Now we come to the issue of hell. If none of us is accomplishing anything whatsoever in our salvation, why then is there a heaven and a hell? Why do some people "go to hell" and some "go to heaven"?

The first aspect of the solution to this question arises from the fact that we can't "go" to hell because we are already there. We were born there. (*Divine Providence* 83.2; 53.3; 93; 215.7; 281.2; 227.2) Not only were we born there, it is impossible for that which was born there to be raised out of hell. So all of us are, in one sense, in hell forever. Note the following:

A person's first state, which is of damnation, every person has owing to his heredity from his parents. (*Ibid*83.2)

[N]othing whatever that a person has attached to himself can be eradicated, as it has been made part of his love and at the same time of his reason...nevertheless, by their being moved aside they can appear as though eradicated...such is the case with all hereditary evil and likewise with all a person's actual evil. (*Ibid*79)

...some people in heaven...thought themselves to be without any evils...they were sent down from heaven and conveyed back into their evils, until they acknowledged that they were of themselves impelled by evils... (*Ibid*79.3)

One's own prudence persuades and affirms that all the goodness and truth in a person arises from the person, because one's own prudence is the intellectual endowment of a person flowing in from his self-love, which is the person's inherent volitional self, and a person's inherent self cannot help but make all things its own. For it cannot be raised above that. (*Ibid*316)

In the world there are angel-men and devil-men... With an angel-man all the degrees of his life are open to the Lord; but with a devil-man only the lowest degree is open, and the higher degrees are closed. ... An angel-man is continually led away from evil by the Lord, and led to good; a devil-man also is continually led away from evil by the Lord, but from a more to a less grievous evil, for he cannot be led to good. An angel-man is continually led away from hell by the Lord, and is led into heaven more and more interiorly; a devil-man is also continually led away from

hell, but from a more grievous to a milder hell, for he cannot be led into heaven.  
(*Apocalypse Explained* 1145.10)

Note that this is talking about people on earth where reformation is always a possibility, not the spiritual world. It is saying that certain “devil-men” are not able to be reformed. In my estimation, the devil-man who cannot be reformed even when on earth is not any other than the natural self which was born in the form of hell and remains so to eternity.

So our lowest, natural self is born selfish and remains such to eternity. This selfishness is hell. But it serves a use. Having known the fear and unhappiness of the worship of self, we are then able to love the joy and freedom of the Lord’s love. If we never experienced the state opposite of heaven, we’d never be able to enjoy heaven freely.

A person forced to live her entire life in a rose garden would lose the ability to smell the fragrance of a rose. She’d have no great affection for the beauty of a rose because it is all she knows. It has become common. But if her twin sister, raised in a garbage dump with stagnant pools of mosquito-infested water, piles of rotting garbage and overrun with disease-infected rats, were suddenly given to live in the rose garden, she’d realize the truth: she is now in heaven.

So we are lucky to be born into hell. And we are lucky that in one sense, we never leave hell. Whenever we begin to take the roses for granted, we are permitted to travel back to the dump. Whenever we imagine that the garden is our own, we are given to return to the dump for a wake-up call. This harks back to the state of equilibrium which we must have in order to survive.

A second aspect of the solution for who are in hell is the fact that the devils are forms of evil and falsity. The animations we call evil spirits and devils are personifications of our own selfish lusts and the falsities invented by those lusts.

A devil is the love of self personified. (*Divine Providence* 206.1)

A love of self, as we have stated, is the devil. (*Ibid.*207)

The devil himself is *nothing other* than a love of ruling from a love of self.  
(*Ibid*215.8)

The devil’s crew...are the lusts of evils and falsities. (*Ibid*35)

So when the “devil” attacks us, it is the lusts of self-love, especially the desire to rule. That our lower nature is the devil himself is confirmed by one of the most sorrowful quotes I’ve come across: “*When on the cross, [the Lord] prayed for His enemies, and so for all people in the whole world.*” (*Arcana Coelestia* 1690.1)

So let’s go back to our original question: who goes to hell? The answer we see is that nobody “goes to hell;” rather, the lowest aspect of our being, the natural, is a miniature image of hell and all the lusts and false notions that arise from that miniature hell are the devils.

## Who Goes to Heaven?

We may wonder, who then goes to heaven? As we saw above, we are all born into the love of self and a love of self in the will is unable to see any truth. It confirms its false way of seeing reality as truth and destroys all that does not conform.

Fortunately, “a person has within him three degrees of life, called natural, spiritual and celestial and these degrees **exist actually in everyone**, while animals have in them only one degree of life, which is like the lowest degree in humankind, called the natural.” (*Divine Providence* 324.1; see *Divine Love and Wisdom* chapters 3 and 5; emphasis added.)

These higher levels of our mind are God’s with us and they always are in good and truth. (*Arcana Coelestia* 978; see *Divine Providence* 321.2) Evil only ever exists on the natural level of our being. (*Ibid*321.2 and 83.3) This evil rules our decisions when the higher levels of the mind are blocked. (*Ibid*210.2 and 206.3)

The internal man is nothing else than mutual love. The human spirit itself, or soul, is the interior man which lives after death. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1994.5)

As to our natural alone, we are hell, the devil and the Lord’s enemy. As to our interior, the Lord bestows on us mutual love, or heaven.

So we are coming down to the big question: If we are unable to affect anything whatsoever in our regeneration, and the Lord does all, why does the Lord save some people to heaven and not others? And the answer is, He doesn’t. The Lord saves all people. We all are born a hell as to our natural. We all are given to heaven as to our spiritual and celestial. If up until now I haven’t written anything controversial, I am certain that now I have. So let me offer these quotes:

The end in creation is a heaven from the human race...Every person has been created to live to eternity in a blessed state. Every person has thus been created to enter into heaven. Divine love cannot but will it, and Divine wisdom cannot but provide for it. (*Divine Providence* 323)

Since it can be seen from this that Divine providence is **none other than a predestination for heaven, and cannot be changed into a different one**, we will demonstrate here that the end in creation is a heaven from the human race. (*Ibid*324)

Who goes to hell? The answer we see is that nobody ‘goes to hell;’ rather, the lowest aspect of our being, the natural, is a miniature image of hell and all the lusts and false notions that arise from that miniature hell are the devils.

[The Lord's will is] to be received by the person, to have His abode in him, and to impart to him the felicities of eternal life...Moreover, people in heaven know that the Lord accomplishes everything by willing it, and that what He wills comes to pass. (*Ibid*96.5, 6)

Simply consider a fruit tree...do not each and all of the constituents in [trees, bushes and herbs] proceed from first end to last end constantly and marvelously according to the laws of their order? Why not the primary end likewise, which is a heaven from the human race? (*Ibid*332.2)

Divine providence does all that it does out of pure mercy...because it operates with all people throughout the entire world, who are so formed that ***they cannot do anything of themselves...it leads the unjust in hell and rescues them from it.*** (*Ibid* 337)

The operation of Divine providence to save a person begins at the person's birth and continues to the end of his life, and afterward to eternity. (*Ibid*331)

The Lord is the Creator and Savior of ***all*** people. (*Ibid*330.8)

The Lord is the heavenly Father of all people, and people are His spiritual children...this means that as regards our life, He alone is our Father and that our father on earth is our father only as regards the clothing of our life, namely the body. (*Ibid*330.1) Everyone's soul comes from his father. (*Ibid*277)

Now, if our soul is from our Father, the Lord, then that soul cannot go to hell. Yet, we also have a different soul:

A person's own prudence springs from his native character, which is his nature and is called his hereditary soul. This native character is a love of self. (*Ibid*207.1)

So we are all born with two souls! One soul cannot help but go to hell, for it is hell itself. One cannot help but go to heaven for it is the essence of heaven itself.

Heaven in its totality resembles a single person, whose life or soul is the Lord. (*Ibid*326.9)

As to our natural we were all born not only in hell but as hell itself and as to our spiritual and celestial, we are all given heaven.

## **Is a Tree to Blame?**

In the Heavenly Doctrines we often read that the Lord is like the sun shining heat and light down on all forms of vegetation. Some plants use that energy to produce good fruits; some use the same to produce poisons, thorns and thistles. In this way, we read, the Lord is not responsible for evils, but the receiving vessel is.

This has always been a frustrating analogy for me. After all, it is no credit to an apple tree that it is what it is that it should be rewarded with heaven. Nor is it any fault of the poison sumac that it is what it is, that it should be condemned to hell. Can a hemlock will itself to become a rose and succeed in

If we are unable to affect anything whatsoever in our regeneration, and the Lord does all, why does the Lord save some people to heaven and not others? And the answer is, He doesn't. The Lord saves all people.

such a transformation?

But then I read:

Now because the Lord is good in its very essence, or good itself, it is apparent that evil cannot issue from the Lord or be produced by Him, but that good can be turned into evil by a recipient vessel whose form is one of evil. Such a vessel is the human being as regards his native character. (*Ibid*327)

In other words, we are all born poison sumac trees, and none of us is born an apple tree. This changes the apparent meaning of the analogy so often used in the Writings. We are not being told that certain plants – i.e. people – are good because they chose well while others are bad because they chose poorly. Rather we are being told that God is like a sun of pure love and wisdom. But when that spiritual heat and light reaches the natural element of our being, it is perverted into selfishness.

So evil and delusions arise from “us” or the lower “self.” As *Divine Providence* states, we are ourselves responsible for evil. Now this is a riddle because it is God who made us, and as I already quoted, we are powerless. So it would seem that “we” are just the vessel, the gun, but it is the man who pulled the trigger who is to blame.

## The Grand Delusion

It is a riddle, but this riddle has a solution: There is no “self” as quoted above. And actually there is also no evil: “Whatever is impelled by evil and at the same time falsity is not real.” (*Divine Providence* 19). “I” am responsible for “evil.” But “I” don't really exist, and neither does “evil.” It is like a bad dream. Once awake spiritually, we realize that evil doesn't exist except in the context of selfishness arising from “self” which is a necessary appearance, but is only an appearance. The only reality is the life of the Lord.

“How can you say evil doesn't exist? Look around!” we may say.

Spirits impelled by evil and at the same time by falsity – all of whom are in hell – do indeed have power among themselves, for an evil spirit can do evil, and also does do evil in a thousand ways. However, he can do evil to the evil only because of their evil, but cannot in the least do evil to the good. (*Ibid*19)

Evil only exists within the delusion that accompanies evil. The delusion is that human beings have self-will, self-power, self-prudence, self-choice and so an ability to choose or reject regeneration; the delusion is that God does not have all power to save; that He is unable to lead everyone and all aspects of life from within every most minute detail. If we choose to believe that there is evil and something to worry about, we are allowed to do so. We can stay in our dream, our nightmare, as long as we like. God is merciful. God knows that we need to stay inside our delusions until we grow either bored or miserable within them.

But imagine if we were able to really, truly believe that all things are perpetually and perfectly guided by the Lord even to the most minute detail according to His Divine Love and Wisdom (and this is exactly what *Divine Providence* says is true). Imagine we were able to believe fully that we are not able to do anything at all, not even choose Him, except that God impels us to do so (and this, too, is what *Divine Providence* says is true).

What if we believed that we have no inherent self, that our prudence is not real. What is left to be selfish about when there is no self? And what is left to be anxious about when God's infinite love and wisdom are running the entire show? The evil we see around us, we know is not real because it is temporal and affects only that which is temporal. In relation to eternal joy and peace, it is truly just a dream. It is not real. It only seems real when we believe in the self and that it is important. Our susceptibility to the anxiety and hell of life on earth is in proportion to our selfishness and consequent delusion and lack of faith.

That hell only exists within the delusion of self is also evidenced by the eleventh chapter of *Divine Providence* which is wonderfully titled, "A Person Is Admitted No More Interiorly into Truths of Faith and Goods of Charity than the Extent to Which He Can Be Maintained in Them to the End of His Life."

This chapter goes on to say that people are only allowed to understand and live by truths and goods when the Lord sees that they will love them for eternity and not go back to selfishness and so pervert and profane what is holy. This idea is emphasized throughout the chapter. Yet strangely, there is this description of people who profane goods and truths by adopting them at first and then rejecting them:

...after death, they are no longer human. They have life, indeed, but are continually caught up in delirious hallucinations. They seem to themselves to be flying on high, and as long as they remain in that state they play with their hallucinations, which they see as being real entities. Moreover, because they are no longer human, they are not called he or she, but it. Indeed, when presented to view in the light of heaven, they look like skeletons... (*Ibid*226)

Here is a description of those who profane in this most serious way, and

yet the rest of the chapter discusses how “the Lord admits a person no more interiorly into truths of wisdom and at the same times goods of love than the extent to which a person can be maintained in them to the end of his life.” (*Ibid*232)

How can there be those who commit a profanation that the Lord does not allow to be committed? The only explanation is that they commit it from within their natural alone. They hallucinate from within the delusions of the natural alone that they commit such sins. In other words, from their natural, they loved truths and goods and then later rejected them. And from within that natural they hallucinate to see themselves flying high, when actually the true image of the state of their natural is that of a burnt, sexless skeleton.

They are hallucinating that they have profaned, and they have indeed, but only in the natural level of their lives. They hallucinate such because the natural enjoys it. The natural loves to make itself out to be God. If the natural can profane the holiness of the Lord, well then it has power over the Lord, right? Hence the hallucination of flying high, like Lucifer.

But the Lord tells us eight numbers later and in the chapter title that this kind of profanation is not possible by Divine Law. All evil is in, from, and of the natural. The natural can't help but imagine that it profanes. But the higher two levels of the mind are held inviolate by the Lord. These two levels are where reality lies because they are where the Lord dwells. These levels of our beings are unable to profane by Divine Law.

### **Where the Tree Falls, There it Lies**

Repeatedly throughout the Heavenly Doctrines we read that once a person has died, he or she can no longer be reformed. This is given as the explanation of the phrase, “where the tree falls, so it lies.” (*Ibid*277.r) On first thought, this appears to contradict the ideas offered here. It seems to say that people go to hell and stay there forever. However, consider the following:

[The transformation of a person from a form of hell into something heavenly], however, can be done only as is comparatively the case in the grafting of trees, in which the roots remain with some portion of the trunk, but the engrafted branch nevertheless turns the sap drawn up through the old root into sap producing good fruit. (*Ibid*296.2)

A person is, indeed, owing to his seed a bad tree, but still possible is an engrafting or insertion of shoots taken from the tree of life, which turn the sap drawn from the old root into a sap producing good fruits...since the progress of Divine providence is so constant in the growth and rebirth of trees, it must be utterly constant in the reformation and rebirth or regeneration of people, who are of much more value than trees. (*Ibid*332.4)

The tree that falls is the natural self. This tree must fall, and as mentioned

If our soul is from our Father, the Lord, then that soul cannot go to hell. Yet, we also have a different soul (from the love of self). So we are all born with two souls! One soul cannot help but go to hell, for it is hell itself. One cannot help but go to heaven for it is the essence of heaven itself.

above, it is never able to be raised up above its own selfishness. So where it falls, there indeed it lies. Nevertheless, new shoots from the Tree of Life can be grafted onto the stump.

We read that people who had a selfish will continue being selfish and behaving in the same way after death of the body as they did on earth. This is because they delight in the insane pleasures of evil. But note the following: people are “cast down into their places in hell, where their delight is turned into something not delightful.” (*Ibid*324.8)

If what was once delightful is no longer delightful, why would anyone persist in such an activity and a desire for such an activity? “*The operation of the Divine providence to save a person begins at the person’s birth and continues to the end of his life, and afterward to eternity.*” (*Ibid*331.3) The Divine providence “*leads the evil and unjust in hell and rescues them from it.*” (*Ibid*337)

## Simultaneous Heaven and Hell

So what I am saying is that our natural is eternally hellish, but as to consciousness the Lord lifts us eternally into heaven by raising us out of the natural and into the spiritual and celestial degrees of our being. Consider:

The man, however, who does not suffer himself to be led to heaven and assigned there is prepared for his own place in hell. For man of himself continually tends to the lowest of the hells, but he is continually withheld by the Lord; and he who cannot be withheld is prepared for a certain place there, to which he also is assigned immediately after his departure from the world. This place is exactly opposite to one in heaven, for hell is the opposite of heaven. Therefore as the man who is now an angel has his place allotted to him in heaven according to his affection of good and truth, so the man who is a devil has his place allotted to him in hell according to his affection of evil and falsity. For two opposites, similarly arranged, are maintained in connected series over against one another. This is the inmost design of the Divine providence in regard to hell. (*Ibid*69)

I contend that the two men described above are the natural man and the spiritual man contained within one human.

Let's look at this idea of simultaneous eternal hell and eternal heaven from an alternate view:

...means follow in succession, one kind after another, from early childhood to the final period of a person's life, and after that to eternity... Later effects of results become in succession means. And because this continues to eternity, there is no final, or last concluding one. (*Ibid*335.2)

What this is saying is that there is no final destination. Our states are forever being lifted up from worse to better "like giant screws lifting a heavy rock off of the earth."

...[A]ll who think of salvation in terms of life think not of any instantaneous salvation out of mercy apart from means, but of the means of salvation into which and by which the Lord operates in accordance with the laws of His Divine providence, thus by which the Lord leads a person out of pure mercy. (*Ibid*339)

We sometimes fall into the falsity of thinking that heaven is our "final destiny." But what this quote is saying is that heaven is the ability to appreciate the means by which the Lord is ever improving us. In other words, heaven is right here, right now; it always has been; it always will be. The means are the ends. Heaven is the ability to enjoy the progression of life. And as far as I have experienced, the only way to enjoy the progression of life deeply and consistently is to know that the Lord, with perfect love and wisdom, is in charge of every detail of reality.

Again we come back to equilibrium. We are eternally tethered to hell by our natural self and its natural selfishness. But the enjoyable part of life is that by God's mercy alone, we are always flying higher and higher away from that self. It is the movement, not the destination that is heavenly. If there were no hell from which we were perpetually escaping, we'd no longer have movement. We'd no longer have heaven. We need hell to have heaven.

A kite only rises when tethered to the earth. A bird only defies gravity in flight above the earth by means of the atmosphere created by the earth's gravity. A mountain is only high in comparison with the lowlands surrounding it. And what is day without night? God's plan is perfect.

The fact that it is our movement away from self, and not a static state of separation from self that is enjoyable is evidenced by the fact that we receive great joy and delight by those things which reduce our sense of self or amplify our sense of love. When we fall in love, we have a sudden increase in sense of love and a sense of diminished selfishness. When we care for a baby, we feel great joy because the Lord suspends our selfishness to the point that we are willing to die that the baby may live. It is progress and not a final perfection that is heavenly.

Let's look at this idea of simultaneous eternal hell and eternal heaven from one final alternate view. We read that to the Lord, "*The entire future is present*

to Him, and the entire present is to Him eternal.” (*Ibid*333.3) Now each of us has had some states of mind that were embodiments of hell. And each of us has had some states of mind that were vessels of love from the Lord.

Each state of mind is eternal in the view of the Lord, which is of course the only true view. So we are in hell and heaven at the same time. And yet He unites all of these eternal “now” moments into something beautiful. And since the Lord is always leading all of us away from the hell inherent within us, and since the future is known and present to Him, when He sees us, He sees simultaneously our past hell and the future heaven that we will embody. In His eyes we must look, therefore, very much like a tree whose roots are in the dirt, and who has had beautiful flowering, fruit-bearing branches grafted onto it.

### **The Child who Dies Goes to Heaven**

Chapter 16 of *Divine Providence*, “*Everyone Can be Reformed and There is No Predestination*” (except to heaven, the first sentence of that chapter), says that God is not at fault if a person does not enter heaven. Rather, it is the person’s own fault. (*Ibid*327) I concur. For a person’s “own” is one and the same with delusion. As to our hallucinations, we do not enter heaven. Preceding this quote we read:

Everyone who dies as a little child enters into heaven, is reared and educated there as a person is in the world, and through an affection for goodness and truth is infused with wisdom and becomes an angel. The same could be the case with a person reared and educated in the world, as he has in him the same capacity as a little child. Yet the same does not turn out to be the case with many in the world, because they love the first degree of their life, called the natural degree, and are unwilling to withdraw from it and become spiritual. Moreover, regarded in itself, the natural degree of life loves only self and the world, for it is bound up with the physical senses, which likewise exist for the world. On the other hand, regarded in itself, the spiritual degree of life loves the Lord and heaven. (*Ibid*324.9)

This number begins by saying that the spiritual degree actually exists within all people from birth. So what are we seeing here? First, we see that the child in heaven and the person on earth share something in common; we assume this is the spiritual element. But the child in heaven, due to the absence of natural senses and also due to a perfect growing and learning environment of heaven evolves to love the Lord and others, but the person on earth often fails to evolve in this way because (1) we have natural senses and, (2) our parents and educators also have natural senses and if they are entwined into them, they do not provide us with an ideal environment for our spiritual development. So in other words, when a person fails to develop spiritually on earth, the child within, the spiritual element, dies or is stunted, or cut off, before it is developed. It is, in my estimation, this child who is reared in heaven.

This number is followed by a lengthy discourse on why such failures occur. The answer given is that after the Lord creates a new church on earth, it slowly becomes polluted by the self of its members and this not only results in the perversion of truth, but it also creates inescapable hereditary inclinations to evil. When this happens, the Lord creates a new church.

So taking this alone in context of the old paradigm of some go to heaven and others to hell, it would seem that damnation of some is the result of bad genes and bad environment due to being born in the wrong church at the wrong time – hardly the justice we would expect from a Lord of pure mercy. And just in case we might actually entertain this idea, the next number assures that it is an “insane heresy” to believe that people born in the wrong church or out of the church go to hell for that reason.

What makes sense to me is that as to our natural we all are hell itself and as to our spiritual, we all love the Lord and each other because the Lord’s love is present there in us, as if our own. If this love is not realized on earth, it is because we died as to our spiritual being, as a child. But in heaven it will be educated and it will blossom.

### **Solomon’s Decision**

Now, I grant that it appears in all three Testaments that there is a heaven and a hell and that some people go to heaven and some people go to hell. It is a much more obvious and easy way of interpreting the data we are given in revelation. And we may wonder, if my interpretation is correct, then why is the data offered in such a way that the other interpretation is easier and more obvious to arrive at? And finally, if there is a more obvious and easy explanation, namely that some individuals go to heaven and others go to hell, then why bother looking for any other explanation?

I’ll answer both of these questions, starting with the latter. Why look for another explanation more obtuse than that some people go to heaven, and some to hell? The revelation itself forces me to look. And I hope that the outlay of this paper illustrates why I am impelled to search for another explanation.

The revelation is very clear that we cannot do anything of ourselves. This excludes any possibility that we ourselves can choose good over evil or evil over good, which is the traditional accepted stance. Choosing is doing something and when it comes to salvation, this is doing something huge. Plus, revelation says that the Lord is pure mercy working on our behalf, to achieve the goal of saving all people. And yet there it is, a description of hell and people in it for eternity. So the two had to be reconciled and the traditional accepted stance just doesn’t add up.

Now for the other question: if this interpretation is correct, why isn’t it offered in a more obvious way? Why does it appear in all three revelations that

some people go to hell and some to heaven?

First of all, let's consider the fact that we are all born into evils of every kind and from that evil, we see life and revelation with a completely false lens. Through a false lens, it will be difficult to arrive at any real truth. Gratefully, the Lord does slowly change our heart, no thanks to ourselves. As He alters our heart, we are more and more able to see truth clearly. And yet we are forever infinitely ignorant in comparison with true Wisdom of the Lord.

So just as we used to imagine that the earth was the center of the universe and had a lot of data to support that fact, we eventually were forced to admit that this was incorrect. Likewise, I believe our interpretation of spiritual data as given in revelation will always evolve because our ignorance will never be done.

Appearances of truth serve a purpose. For a while, it is important for a child to be afraid of a stove. As she grows older, she no longer has to fear the stove, but simply pay it the care and respect it requires. And as an adult, she no longer even thinks about the danger of the stove because she has so much practice in using it properly.

So it is with a fear of hell. For a while, it is good to be afraid of going to hell. And the fact is, that if we engage in evils, we do indeed "go to" or wake up to the hell of those evils. And we may find ourselves entwined and trapped in the hell of our own desire for much, much longer than we enjoy. And those evil desires, even if pushed to the side and quieted by God, as He does do, will always remain with us eternally and so in one sense, yes, we do go to hell forever. The form of a selfishness or evil is eternally the form of hell.

Also, the Lord allows us to judge both others and ourselves to hell if that is a delusion we want to engage in. The Lord allows us to indulge in our evils and have falsities to suit those evils for as long as we still enjoy them. Yet He is always curbing us up and away from our evil desires and so delusions.

And finally, I believe God wants to challenge us. How better to teach us, His children, than like a Zen master offering his students a *koan* to be solved? A spoon-fed student has memory knowledge. A student who is forced to search and solve a riddle has true understanding. The delight of understanding is greater than the delight of knowledge. Our Father wants us to enjoy the latter delight.

Solomon is famous for his wisdom. And yet there is only one story in the Bible that reveals his wisdom. Two mothers, prostitutes, come to him for counsel. Each had a beloved son, but one of the two sons has died. Each claims the remaining son to be her own. Solomon's verdict is to divide the remaining son into equal portions and give each of the mothers a half of the remaining son. One of the women accepts the judgment as fair. The other woman cries out that she would rather relinquish her claim on the child than see it divided.

We are eternally tethered to hell by our natural self and its natural selfishness. But the enjoyable part of life is that by God's mercy alone, we are always flying higher and higher away from that self. It is the movement, not the destination that is heavenly.

She urges Solomon to give the boy to the other woman. Solomon tells his guards to give the male-child to this second woman, because her love reveals her to be the true mother.

This story is the *koan*. The dead child is the natural body which dies. The remaining boy-child is our spiritual state after death. We have two mothers, as it were, one is the affections of the natural self; the other is the affections of our spiritual self from the Lord. The natural self is willing for the spiritual life of the human race to be divided. The spiritual self is unwilling that anyone should go to hell, realizing that if one is in hell as to permanent consciousness, so we all are in hell.

The spiritual self knows the truth that we are all united in love. The spiritual self also knows that it is incapable of doing any good or loving any truth except in appearance, and even this appearance is from the Lord. And this being the case, the spiritual self knows that no human deserves heaven, nor can we do anything to "get to heaven." Therefore, it knows that if there is one angel in heaven from the human race, so all humans must eventually become angels, too. For God is not capricious.

This spiritual self is unwilling for the boy-child to be divided. She would sooner relinquish her place in heaven than see another in hell, just as the mother would sooner see the child taken from her than watch it slaughtered into two pieces. She took a risk and a loss in crying out against King Solomon's "wise" decision. She could have been killed for such a display. And surely she was going to lose her child. And yet, this was all a part of Solomon's plan. I believe God sometimes wants us to challenge and even rebel against accepted ideas when deep in our hearts we know that they are neither wise nor loving.

I have heard the accepted explanations, and they do not satisfy. The explanations were as follows: Because God does love us, He gives us freedom to accept or reject Him. In this way, love is not forced, but chosen and so real. Forced love is no love at all. And robotic, programmed love also is not true love.

Now, because we have freedom, we can abuse that freedom. We can choose

to reject our Creator's love and so reject happiness and peace. We can choose to love ourselves alone and so enter into a state of hell. We can even stay there our entire earthly life. And if we die unreformed we can never be reformed, for the time of choosing is on earth and only on earth.

All of this is permitted so that the love relationship between the Creator and certain of His creatures may be realized and true. But those in hell are happy...sort of. They are as happy as they can be. But in reality, in comparison to those in heaven, they are utterly demented and miserable.

Do you, too, see the inconsistency in this explanation? Is a love relationship between a few worth the eternal death of even one soul? Is He who is pure mercy and love capable of committing to such a version of creation and seeing it out into an eternal reality? Are we mortals, who, as the above quote stated, "so formed that [we] cannot do anything of [our]selves," actually able to make such an incomprehensibly enormous and grave decision as the one who has eternal hell or heaven lying in the balance? Would our loving Creator risk such a decision into the hands of we who are born into utter ignorance and "born into a state of damnation" and born inclined to evils of every kind?

I prefer to believe that as to our natural we are born in hell and stay in hell. As to our spiritual, we are given to experience heaven. I prefer this because it makes sense, because I read it in the Revelation, and because it bears good fruit.

**Next:** In the final part of this paper, Kent Rogers examines what is meant by "a good tree bears good fruit," as presented in *Divine Providence*, and looks at commonly perceived obstacles to the veracity of what he has presented in Parts I and II.



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kent Rogers graduated from Bryn Athyn College in 1995 with a BA in religion. He then founded the Loving Arms Mission, a not-for-profit charitable organization which raises funds for New Church orphanages. In 1999, he established New Life Children's Home in Nepal where he and his wife, Shova, have served as father and mother for the 11 children in the home for the past 13 years. They have added their own two children. In 2011, Kent's book, *12 Miracles of Spiritual Growth*, won the Bridge Book Award and has been published by the Swedenborg Foundation. On June 1, he received his MS in Mental Health from the University of Massachusetts, Boston.

# Amen, The Sound of Truth

*The Rev. Stephen D. Cole*

*“By the word of Jehovah were the heavens made; and by the breath of His mouth all their army.” (Psalm 33:6)*

The Lord spoke creation into existence. This does not mean simply that He issued commands and things then appeared out of nothing. The story of creation at the beginning of Genesis may at first sound as though it describes such a process, but closer attention reveals that it speaks of the Lord imposing order on substance that already existed.

The Heavenly Doctrine tells us that the Lord creates by rendering something of His infinity finite. (*True Christian Religion* 33) We can see something of what this means if we consider the way that we shape the unrestricted flow of air from our lungs into words. Unarticulated, the airflow is simply breath. But as we constrict it or stop it with our tongues, our teeth, and our lips, it takes on form and meaning.

When we speak, we form the words of human language. When the Lord spoke in the beginning, the Word went forth from Him to impose the order of the universe. “In the beginning was the Word.... All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made.” (*John 1:1,3*)

Some years ago, a series of fascinating articles by the Rev. Walter Orthwein explored the general subject of how the Lord, as the Word, created the universe. (*New Church Life*, 1989, pp. 315ff, 357ff, and 409ff.) In this piece, however, we will explore just one specific aspect of the creative Word: the sound of truth itself.

In spiritual speech, the sound components of words have inherent meaning. (*Apocalypse Revealed* 29) This is because when the ideas of thought flow into the correspondent organs of the spiritual body, they produce characteristic sounds. (*Arcana Coelestia* 6987:2; *Spiritual Experiences* 4865-4866)

The earliest language of this world worked in a similar way. Most modern languages, however, have lost the natural and spontaneous character of spiritual speech, although Hebrew preserves something of its quality. (*Heaven and Hell* 237)

The fundamental dichotomy of correspondences distinguishes good from truth. In the Hebrew language, the word for good is *tohv* and for truth is ‘*emeth*’ or ‘*amen*’. In both cases, the sounds convey something of the spiritual meaning, but in the case of ‘*amen*’, the form of the word meaning “truly” or “it is so,” it

is particularly striking.

Hebrew words are generally thought of as having roots composed of three consonants. But certain consonants in Hebrew are considered to be “weak” consonants, which may drop out or become assimilated into other sounds as the word appears in combination with other words or affixes. Some roots contain three “strong” consonants. Other roots may have one or two of the weak consonants.

If we set aside the weak letters in the roots in which they occur, some will be reduced so that they have only two letters, or even just one. The root of ‘amen’ is composed of the Hebrew letters *aleph-mem-nun*. But as both the *aleph* and the *nun* can be seen as weak, the core of the root really could be seen as simply the letter *mem*.

Some believe that the Hebrew letter *mem*, and thus the derivative letter “m” in our own alphabet, originated from the Egyptian hieroglyph J, which depicts waves of water. The Heavenly Doctrine relates the meaning of written Hebrew letters to the curves of their shape, but does not speak of them in terms of pictures. Whatever the origin of the shape of the Hebrew letter *mem*, however, its name does clearly come from the Hebrew word for water, *mayim*, spelled with two *mems* with the little letter *yodh* between them. And the language of the ancient Egyptians, said by the Heavenly Doctrine to employ correspondences, shares with Hebrew the use of the “m” sound in both the word for truth, *ma’at*, and the word for water, *muw*.

Water is one of the most common images in the Word standing for truth. And the gathering together of the waters, *mayim*, into seas, *yam* in Hebrew, represents a collection of knowledges, as is suggested in Isaiah: “The earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea.” (*Isaiah 11:9*)

The universal marriage of good and truth is often also reflected in the Word by the marriage of father and mother, good being like a father, and truth like a mother. (*Arcana Coelestia 3703:2*) In Hebrew, the words for father and mother, *ahv* and *aim*, are both composed of two consonants, beginning, in each case, with the letter *aleph*.

The difference, then, is in the second letter. Father thus shares its key letter, “v,” with *tohv*, the Hebrew word for good, and mother has the same key letter, “m,” as ‘amen’, truth. And we might further note that many of the world’s languages share the “m” sound for mother.

Some might attribute this to the accident that this often happens to be one of the first sounds that babies make. But, thinking spiritually, rather than in terms of accidents, one might turn this about and conclude that babies make this sound early on because of its spiritual significance.

“Amen” is the sound of truth in Hebrew. And it is one that we use

untranslated with some regularity. When we encounter it in the Word at the beginning of something that is said, it stands for the Divine Truth and confirmation from it. When it follows, it signifies not only confirmation, but also consent to what has been said. (*Apocalypse Revealed* 375) The word occurs not only in the Hebrew Scriptures, but also in the Greek of the New Testament, where the Hebrew word is spelled out in Greek letters.

The prevalence of the word *amen* in the New Testament is somewhat disguised in many translations. In the *King James Version*, it appears only 15 times, as at the end of the book of *Revelation*. But it actually occurs more than 100 times in the Greek. When we read of the Lord saying “verily” in the KJV, or “assuredly” in the *New King James Version*, the actual text says “amen.”

When we have John reporting the Lord beginning His teachings with “verily, verily” or “most assuredly,” the underlying Greek is “amen, amen.” And so too, as the New Testament carries over the Hebrew expression into Greek, likewise does the Heavenly Doctrine carry over the “amen” from both the Hebrew and the Greek.

In *Revelation* 3:14, the Lord even calls Himself “The Amen.” And He equates this there with “the faithful and true witness,” and with “the Beginning of the creation of God.” *Amen* is thus tied to the Divine Truth of the creative Word by which all things were made.

When we read or hear the word “amen,” in scripture, we can let the word slip past us, giving it little thought. Or we can realize that it stands for the Divine Truth from which the Lord teaches us, and for our confirmation and consent that it be so. When we encounter it, we are experiencing the very word that the Lord spoke to His disciples.

Saying the word “amen” in church or in personal prayer, we are forming sounds that have inherent meaning, that have a special power to connect us with spiritual realities.



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The Rev. Stephen D. Cole was ordained in 1977 and into the second degree in 1978. He has been a minister in Ohio, Detroit and San Diego. He is Assistant Professor of Religion and Philosophy in Bryn Athyn College of the New Church and of Theology in the Theological School. He is also head of the

Religion Major in the College. He and his wife, Jennifer (Smith), live in Bryn Athyn and have eight grown children.



## The Rev. Matthew L. Genzlinger

### *The Journey Toward Building the Church Within*

**M**atthew Genzlinger found himself on a journey while attending Bryn Athyn College of the New Church – which even included a cross-country bicycle trek with friends from Washington State to New Jersey. He still can't say exactly what propelled him into the ministry.

“I did not have one of those classic ‘Aha!’ moments when it became clear I wanted to be a minister.” He’s not even sure exactly what influenced the choice. “It felt more like I was floating down a river on a gradual, providential journey.”

He is proud to say he had 21 straight years of schooling in Bryn Athyn – a journey that started with preschool and led him through College and Theological School to ordination as a minister.

He started at Bryn Athyn College with an interest in psychology. “As time went on, I became more and more fascinated with the incredible insights that the Heavenly Doctrine gives into the human mind and how we experience life. What I was reading (there) was by leaps and bounds more profound, clear and useful than anything else I could get my hands on: Teachings about regeneration and the human mind being formed into the image of heaven; the fact that all thoughts and affections flow into us from the spiritual world;

Editor's note: This is part of a continuing series introducing ministers of the General Church. Next: The Rev. Garry B. Walsh, Pastor of the Phoenix New Church Society in Arizona.

and life in this world being a foundation for our experience of an eternal life in heaven.

“These teachings and more drew me ever more deeply into a realization of what the Heavenly Doctrine was and how important this gift was for the human race. My interest in psychology remained strong, but there came a point when Theological School became the only next step.”

Besides the doctrinal foundation the school gave him, he cites two general experiences that affect how he approaches the ministry.

“First, my Theological School experience left me with a profound appreciation and enthusiasm for how important the New Church and her teachings are to the life we live in the natural world.

“I entered Theological School with an intellectual love for the doctrines of the New Church, along with all the ideals they place before us. I left with a new realization that these doctrines and ideals have been given to help people form a foundation in this world that will serve them to eternity.

“Passages like this one really got me thinking about just how important the Church is in people’s lives: ‘This a man must do in the world; for such as man is in the world as to his spirit, such he remains to eternity.’ (*Divine Providence* 937)

With this key concept in mind, he wrote his Theological School dissertation on *The Use of the Natural World*. “Here I explored both New Church cosmology in general and the importance of the natural world to an individual’s eternal well-being. An enthusiasm to help people appreciate how important the life they choose to live in this world is, has had an important effect on how I approach my ministry. You might say that I like to add a healthy dose of *urgency* to people’s overall understanding of New Church doctrine. Your life in this world really does matter.”

“I also came away from Theological School with a strong desire to help people recognize that we are all part of a bigger whole. We must serve the Lord in building a strong church on earth because the church on earth is not only important for people in this world, it acts as a strong foundation for the angelic heavens.”

Theological School gave him a more child-like sense of wonder for the Heavenly Doctrine. “Thanks in large part to my teachers, mentors and friends at the time, I left Theological School with a strong doctrinal foundation *and* a sense that the Heavenly Doctrine has something magical about it.

“In my ministry today, I want to help people explore the Heavenly Doctrine with the eyes of a child. One thing I can’t stand is when people talk about the doctrine being too dry, too complicated, or too deep. Thanks to Theological School I have a real passion for helping people recognize that the books of the Heavenly Doctrine are more exciting, practical, simple, profound and inspired

than anything else out there.

“Reading the Heavenly Doctrine isn’t a task, it’s a treat; I want to help people experience this. I think that in many ways Swedenborg himself was like a little child as he explored the wonders of heaven. We should follow his lead.”

Matthew’s experience in the ministry began with one year as assistant to the pastor and religion teacher in Glenview, then the same in Kitchener. He spent three years as pastor in Colchester, England, and for the past six years has been pastor in Concord, Massachusetts, just outside of Boston. He has also enjoyed being a traveling pastor in the Midwest United States, Southern Canada, and to various groups in England.

He serves on the Bishop’s Consistory and the General Church Board. He has been on the staff of several New Church events, including family and study weekends in England, the Jacob’s Creek Family Camp and Headmaster of the British Academy Summer School.

After 11 years in the ministry, two passages have come to mean a great deal to him: “Each member of a congregation must *be a Church* if the greater Church is to exist.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 4292) And, “The church that is outside of man is the church with a number of men who have the church within them. This is meant by the Lord’s words to the Pharisees who asked when the kingdom of God would come: ‘The kingdom of God is within you.’ (*Luke 17:21*)” (*Doctrine of the Sacred Scripture* 78)

With these two passages in mind, “I’ve come to appreciate that my main use as a pastor is to encourage and inspire individuals to approach the Lord and His Word *for themselves*. I find that this is so important for me to remember with both the young and old, long-time members and newcomers. It’s not about the church ‘out there’; it’s about the church ‘in here.’

“My goal is to help people recognize that by developing their own relationship with the Lord and His Word they have the complete power to bring heaven to earth right now – regardless of what is going on around them. One of my goals is to be very careful *not* to be the middle man when it comes to people’s relationship with the Lord and His Word! The New Church is so wonderful in part because of the freedom it gives all people to approach the Lord directly for themselves.

“For this reason, by far the most satisfying part of being a pastor is having the opportunity to talk with people one-on-one about New Church teachings and how they can affect your life. I also enjoy offering classes/discussions and leading book groups, where people have the chance to really engage in the material for themselves and in an ongoing way.

“Nothing is more satisfying to me as a pastor than to see individuals have their own “aha” moment as they enter into their own living relationship with the Lord and His Word. Encouraging people in this regard and finding

new opportunities for people to experience this is what motivates me to do what I do. In fact, I believe that the future of the New Church depends on this.

“In Concord, our theme for this year is *Building a Church*. We’ll be starting with the simple yet empowering idea that, ‘Each member of a congregation must *be a Church* if the greater Church is to exist.’ (*Arcana Coelestia* 4292) I believe that our church congregations will be strong only to the extent that we understand what this means and act on it.

“This also has a very strong effect on how I view evangelization. When I meet people who are new to the Heavenly Doctrine, I don’t think about how I can bring them into ‘my’ or ‘our’ church; I think about how I can help introduce them to the Lord and His Word so that the Lord can form the Church within them.”

Matthew says wistfully of that cross-country bike ride in college that he’s looking forward to doing more of this in the future. “Perhaps next time I’ll pull a trailer with books of the Writings to hand out as I go.”

Among his hidden talents is that he used to ride and show horses, and was the lead singer and keyboard player in a band called *The Chocolate Frosted Sugar Bombs*. He still loves music and singing, and also confesses to a “strange addiction” to an old computer game, *Age of Empires*.

He says he has a new favorite passage from the Writings every day. A current one is: “If anyone should think within himself, or say to someone else, ‘Who is able to have the internal acknowledgment of truth which is faith? Not I; let me tell him how he may have it: Shun evils as sins, and come to the Lord, and you will have as much of it as you desire.’” (*Doctrine of Faith* 12)

Matthew lives in Concord with his wife, Eliza (Cole), and their four children: Laban, 9, Josiah, 6, Alana, 4, and Clara, 1.



The Genzlinger family on Mount Washington.

# Believing in the Heavenly Doctrine

*The Rev. Matthew L. Genzlinger*

Editor's note: This is the first of a two-part article.  
Part Two will appear in a future issue.

**T**he New Church believes that in the 18th century the Lord chose to give the human race a new revelation, penned by His servant, Emanuel Swedenborg. This new revelation includes more than 30 volumes of teachings about the life after death, the spiritual sense of Scripture, faith, angels, marriage, the Lord Himself, and more. This is a pretty bold statement to make! The question is: Why in the world would you or anybody else believe this? When you pick up one of these books, what is it that makes you believe that what you are reading is true and important enough to base your life on?

## **Part One: Three Ways of Presenting Truth:**

Therefore it must be established by reasons, which must afterwards be confirmed by experience, and finally by the Word. (*Divine Providence* 156)

One of the wonderful things about the Heavenly Doctrines is the fact that they present truth in a variety of different ways. A good teacher knows that in order to help his student understand a new concept it's best to approach it from a variety of different angles. The Lord is a very good teacher.

In part one of this article we will look at three different ways that the Heavenly Doctrines present the truth they contain. These are three different ways that the Heavenly Doctrines work to convince you, the reader, that what they are saying is true.

### **Rationally**

One of the unfortunate declines in religion has come as the result of people assuming that spiritual things cannot be understood. For many people *religion*, by definition, involves a belief in something that is beyond comprehension. The phrase "mystery of faith" is used to describe many religious concepts that are thought to transcend reason. Blindly believing in something that you cannot understand is thought of as a virtue in many religious circles.

This culture of blind faith has led to the propagation of many false

doctrines. Think about it: If people are not required to comprehend what they believe, then any corrupt church leader can pass off the most ridiculous fallacy as God-given truth:

The reason why these absurdities have not been seen is that they have induced a blind faith, and have thereby shut men's eyes, and stopped up their ears. Shut men's eyes and stop up their ears, that is, contrive that they do not exercise thought from any understanding, and then say whatever you please to persons on whom some idea of eternal life has been imprinted, and they will believe it; even if you should say that God is capable of being angry and of breathing vengeance; that God is capable of inflicting eternal condemnation on any one; that God wills to be moved to mercy through the blood of His Son.... But open your eyes and unstop your ears, that is, think about these things from understanding, and you will see their incongruity with the real truth. (*Doctrine of Faith* 46)

New Church doctrine is based on the premise that spiritual truths can be comprehended just as well as natural ones. The Lord wants us to believe His truth not just because we're told to, but because we understand it and see the importance of it in our lives.

New Church doctrine is based on the premise that spiritual truths can be comprehended just as well as natural ones. (*Ibid*3) The Lord wants us to believe His truth not just because we're told to, but because we understand it and see the importance of it in our lives:

"[The angels] discard the dogma that the understanding must be kept in obedience to faith, and say, 'What is this? believing when you do not see whether the thing is true?' And if somebody says that still it is to be believed, they reply, 'Do you consider yourself the Deity that I am bound to believe you; or do you think me mad enough to believe a statement in which I do not see the truth? Cause me to see it!...'The wisdom of the angels consists solely in this: that they see and comprehend everything they think about." (*Ibid*4)

Cause me to see it! This is exactly what the Heavenly Doctrine does. It works very hard not just to *declare truth*, but to *explain truth* in a way that helps you, the reader, rationally understand it.

One good example of this is the teachings about Divine Providence. When a friend is struggling we often give him the simple advice, "Trust in the Divine Providence." Good advice! However, the Lord is wise enough to know that this isn't enough. Knowing how important it is for people to understand what they

Regardless of how much sense it makes rationally, if doctrine is not drawn from and confirmed by the sense of the letter of the Word it is still corrupt. Because of this the Heavenly Doctrines are always sure to show their reader that the truth they contain is both rational and Scriptural.

believe in, the Lord gave us an entire book explaining in detail what Divine Providence is, how it works, and why it is so important for us to trust in it. A person can only genuinely trust in the Divine Providence if he comprehends in a rational way how it is working in his life.

During the last two-and-a-half centuries many people have come to believe in the Heavenly Doctrine, because it presents truth in such a clear and rational way. A well-known Swedish scientist and statesman once said, "The doctrine of Swedenborg is the most rational of all Christian doctrines." (Count A. J. Von Hopken) Elizabeth Barrett Browning said, "To my mind, the only light that has been cast on the other life is found in Swedenborg's philosophy. It explains much that was incomprehensible." One young man who was new to the Church put it very well. After reading *Divine Love and Wisdom* he sent me an email which simply said, "Wow! This makes too much sense not to be true."

Now it is permitted to enter with understanding into the mysteries of faith. (*True Christian Religion* 508)

The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. This symbolizes rational truths. (*Apocalypse Revealed* 936)

## From Scripture

In order to be genuine, all doctrine must be drawn from and confirmed by the letter of the Word:

Doctrine must be drawn from the sense of the letter of the Word, and be confirmed thereby. The reason for this is that there and not elsewhere is the Lord present with man, and enlightens him and teaches him the truths of the church. Moreover, the Lord never operates anything except in what is full, and the Word is in its fullness in the sense of the letter... If not so confirmed the truth of doctrine appears as if only man's intelligence were in it, and not the Lord's Divine wisdom; and so the doctrine would be like a house in the air, and not on the earth, and would lack a foundation. (*Doctrine of the Sacred Scripture* 53-54)

The Writings don't simply state this, they follow it.

Over the years, people have approached me, concerned that the New Church is not a Biblically based religion. They have the impression that rather than relying on the Word of God, we rely on these other books called the *Writings*.

What people need to understand is that all doctrine contained within the *Writings* is based on Scripture. In *The New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine* we are given a summary of all the various doctrines of the New Church. As a way of introduction, note what is stated about the source of this doctrine:

“To add a few words respecting the doctrine which is delivered in the following pages. This, also, is from heaven, *because it is from the spiritual sense of the Word.*” (*Ibid*7) Telling us that this doctrine is from the Word is one thing; we are also shown this. Anybody who reads the Heavenly Doctrine will soon discover that calling the New Church “non-Biblical” is absurd. The Heavenly Doctrine goes to great lengths to show you, the reader, that this doctrine is Scripturally-based, and so is true.

One of the best examples of this comes in *The Doctrine of Life*. Here the Lord presents us with the teaching that faith alone does not save a person; a person is prepared for heaven only as he works to live a good life by following the commandments. This vital New Church doctrine is explained rationally throughout the book. But on the very first page we also read this:

“Everyone who *reads the Word* perceives that religion has relation to life, and that the life of religion is to do good.” (*Life* 2) We then find nearly 50 passages from the Old and New Testaments showing that this doctrine is clearly taught in the Scriptures.

We also see this reliance of Scriptural proof when it comes to various teachings about the life after death:

That a man lives after death, is taught in the Word; as for instance, that God is not the God of the dead, but of the living (*Matthew* xxii 31); that Lazarus after death was carried into heaven, but the rich man was cast into hell (*Luke* xvi 22, 23, et seq.); that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are in heaven (*Matthew* viii 11; xxii 31, 32; *Luke* xx 37, 38); and that Jesus said to the robber, Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise (*Luke* xxiii 43) (*New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine* 228)

The same is done with the doctrine of correspondences. Whenever the Heavenly Doctrine reveals the correspondence of some specific image – like bread or wine – it confirms this correspondence by quoting vast amounts of Scripture. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 2165)

This is important. Regardless of how much sense it makes rationally, if doctrine is not drawn from and confirmed by the sense of the letter of the Word it is still corrupt. Because of this the Heavenly Doctrines are always sure to show their reader that the truth they contain is both rational *and* Scriptural.

He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of

Swedenborg himself did not hide the fact that he spoke with angels. He didn't consider this a secret, only to be revealed once people accepted his teachings on a rational basis. He led with this reality!

living water. (*John 7:37-38*)

From the first day of my calling I have not received any instruction concerning the doctrines of that church from any angel, but only from the Lord, while I was reading the Word. (*True Christian Religion 779*)

### From Experience

If you spend any time reading the Writings it won't take long before you realize that Emanuel Swedenborg makes a rather astonishing claim. He claims that the Lord opened his spiritual eyes, allowing him not only to see into

the heavens and the hells, but also to speak with angels and spirits. He was permitted to do this continuously for nearly 30 years of his life.

The Writings for the New Church are filled with descriptions of Swedenborg's spiritual experiences. Several books contain in their title the phrase, "From things heard and seen." *True Christian Religion*, *Conjugal Love*, and *The Apocalypse Revealed* all include memorable relations at the end of each chapter where a doctrine that has been rationally explained is now illustrated by these experiences. Swedenborg often states that he knows the truth of something "from actual experience." (*Arcana Coelestia* 168, 545, 987, 1378; *Sacred Scripture* 64; *Divine Love and Wisdom* 355; *Divine Providence* 34, *Last Judgment* 45)

One of the clearest examples of this is in places where the Writings talk about the life after death. In *Heaven and Hell* we are taught that immediately following their departure from this world, everybody wakes up in the spiritual world where they continue to live as people. The truth of this is explained rationally, but then also illustrated from actual experience:

"That the spirit of man, when it has been loosed from the body, is still a man and in a like form, *has been proved to me by the daily experience of many years; for I have seen such people and have listened to them a thousand times.*" (*Ibid*456) Elsewhere we read, "*I am able to speak from experience, for I have seen them, I have heard them, and I have spoken with them.*" (*Last Judgment* 56)

For some people this is the very reason not to believe in the Heavenly Doctrine! This shows them that Swedenborg was crazy or on drugs. Many New Church men and women love the Heavenly Doctrine, but are shy and even embarrassed when friends find out that their church believes that Swedenborg

spoke with angels. Before getting too embarrassed about this consider two things.

First, Swedenborg himself did not hide the fact that he spoke with angels. He didn't consider this a secret, only to be revealed once people accepted his teachings on a rational basis. He led with this reality! At the very beginning of *Arcana Coelestia* (his first published theological work) he writes:

By way of introductory remarks it can be disclosed that in the Lord's Divine mercy I have been allowed constantly and without interruption for several years now to share the experiences of spirits and angels, to listen to them speaking and to speak to them myself. I have been allowed therefore to hear and see astounding things in the next life which have never come to any man's knowledge, nor even entered his imagination. (*Ibid*5)

What is quite remarkable is that the Lord led Swedenborg to *begin* several books of the Heavenly Doctrine with this fact:

It has pleased the Lord to manifest Himself to me and to send me to teach the things which shall be of the New Church, meant by the New Jerusalem in the Apocalypse. To this end, He has opened the interiors of my mind and spirit, whereby it has been granted me to be in the spiritual world with angels and at the same time in the natural world with men, and this now for 25 years. (*Conjugal Love* 1)

The arcana revealed in the following pages relate to heaven and hell, and also to the life of man after death...Lest, therefore, such a spirit of denial, which especially prevails with those who have much worldly wisdom, should also infect and corrupt the simple in heart and the simple in faith, it has been granted me to associate with angels and to talk with them as man with man, also to see what is in the heavens and what is in the hells, and this for 13 years; so now from what I have seen and heard it has been granted me to describe these, in the hope that ignorance may thus be enlightened and unbelief dissipated. (*Heaven and Hell* 1)

The second point to consider is that Swedenborg shared these spiritual experiences despite his knowledge that people would ridicule him for it:

I am well aware that many will say that no one can possibly speak with spirits and angels so long as he lives in the body; and many will say that it is all fancy, others that I relate such things in order to gain credence, and others will make other objections. But by all this I am not deterred, for I have seen, I have heard, I have felt. (*Arcana Coelestia* 68)

Some of his friends even pressured him to leave these experiences out of the Heavenly Doctrine. Note Count A. J. Von Hopken's concern that these experiences would ruin an otherwise wonderfully rational doctrine:

I asked Swedenborg once, why he wrote and published those memorable relations, which seemed to throw so much ridicule on his doctrine, otherwise so rational; and whether it would not be best for him to keep them to himself, and not to publish them to the world? But he answered that he had orders from the Lord to publish them; and that those who might ridicule him on that account would do him injustice; for, said he, why should I, who am a man in years, render myself ridiculous

What I do know is that the Heavenly Doctrine would be much harder to believe if the Lord had not chosen to allow Swedenborg to see and experience the realities of the spiritual world, and then relate that experience to us.

for fantasies and falsehoods? (*Count A. J. Von Hopken - Documents, vol. I, p. 66*)

Much more could be said about Swedenborg's spiritual experiences. For now I would simply invite you to note that these experiences were given as an important way of convincing you, the reader, that what the Heavenly Doctrine says is true.

How do these experiences help us to believe in the Heavenly Doctrine? Do they help to bring the doctrine to life? Instead of simply understanding the truth, do they help us recognize how real it is? Do they help to draw our minds upward towards the realities of eternal life?

I don't have a perfect answer to these questions. What I do know is that the Heavenly Doctrine would be much *harder* to believe if the Lord had not chosen to allow Swedenborg to see and experience the realities of the spiritual world, and then relate that *experience* to us.

I find that in the General Church we rightly talk about how rational the Heavenly Doctrine is. The New Church is "a religion that makes sense." However, we can't forget that the Heavenly Doctrine also works to convince the reader Scripturally and through the living experiences of Emanuel Swedenborg.

The Lord is always working to help you see and accept spiritual truth in a variety of different ways. Through the Heavenly Doctrine the Lord does this by presenting His truth rationally, from the Word, and from things heard and seen. *All three of these together* make the Heavenly Doctrine an unsurpassed revelation about the Lord, His heavenly kingdom, and the eternal life that we have all been created to receive.

Part One of this article has focused on how the Heavenly Doctrine works to convince you, the reader, that what it is saying is true. In Part Two I will explore ways in which we must respond. Real belief (or you might say faith) in the Heavenly Doctrine is something that we receive internally as a gift from the Lord. What must we do in order to receive this gift?

# What Do We Have in Common With Other Christians?

*The Rev. Solomon J. Keal*

Editor's note: This essay originally appeared on [www.newchurchperspective.com](http://www.newchurchperspective.com). It was written last year when Solomon was in Theological School.

Sometimes it seems like we spend a lot of time distinguishing ourselves from other Christian *churches*, and in the process we end up distinguishing ourselves from other Christian *people*, almost as if we were somehow better people. I think this is a bit like eating of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil; believing that we know better than other people.

Swedenborg has some great things to say about this. In *Secrets of Heaven* he says, "In the Christian world it is their doctrines that cause churches to be distinct and separate, and because of these they call themselves Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists or the Reformed, and Evangelicals, among other names. It is solely by reason of their doctrines that they are called by these names. This situation would never exist if they were to make love to the Lord and charity towards the neighbor the chief thing of faith.

"In this case their doctrinal differences would be no more than shades of opinion concerning the mysteries of faith which truly Christian people would leave to individual conscience, and in their hearts would say that a person is truly a Christian when he lives as a Christian, that is, as the Lord teaches. If this were so all the different Churches would become one, and all the disagreements which stem from doctrine alone would disappear. Indeed the hatred one man holds against another would be dispelled in an instant, and the Lord's kingdom on earth would come." (*Secrets of Heaven* 1799.4)

Later on it says that if people would focus on loving other people rather than pointing out differences between people's faith, then "they would not on the basis of particular ideas about the truths of faith distinguish between and make many churches out of different groups. Instead they would speak of one church that included all leading a good life, and not only those within that part of the world where the church exists but also those outside." (*Ibid*6269.2)

If we only think about our doctrinal differences, and we don't look for

the goodness in other people, then the Writings say that we become like a person who “is quick to find fault, makes no allowances, is against all, regards everyone as being in error, is instantly prepared to rebuke, to chasten, and to punish, shows no pity.” (*Ibid*1949.2) This is the “faith alone” that we all have to be wary of in ourselves.

Jesus commanded that we should think in the following way of other people: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (*John* 13:34-35)

So with all this in mind, I'd like to spend some time looking at what we have in common with other Christian churches, rather than what our differences are. This helps me to begin to look for the goodness in other people. This helps me to love other people as the Lord loves us.

Because I grew up in the doctrinal isolation of the General Church of the New Jerusalem, I found that I didn't know very many details about other Christian churches. I didn't *really* know what they believed, how they worshiped, or how they lived their lives. The only knowledge I had was from the descriptions of other Christian churches in Swedenborg's Writings. And while these descriptions were true of the doctrine of those churches in Swedenborg's time, those churches have changed their doctrines and practices quite a bit in the last 200 or so years.

So with my self-proclaimed lack of knowledge, I thought it would be useful and fun to buy and read *The Idiot's Guide to Christianity*. I spent a good part of one summer reading that book, and noting the similarities and differences between the General Church and other Christian denominations. I readily admit that after reading this book, I am perhaps only “less of an idiot” when it comes to what there is to know about other Christian denominations. I still have a lot to learn. So I would appreciate discussion, feedback and corrections to the details that I present in this article. And now, to some of the similarities:

**Catholics** believe that the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Supper are real and not just symbolic. They recognize charity and good works as an essential part of salvation. They believe in the importance of religious education for children. They use unleavened bread in the Holy Supper. And they sprinkle water in the Baptism.

**Orthodox Christians** believe that God is present in the natural world. They worship and believe in a visible God. Some Orthodox Christians believe that Jesus' Human was made Divine.

**Episcopalians** (or Anglicans or Puritans) believe that priests can be married. They believe that something real (rather than simply symbolic) happens when people take the Holy Supper. They believe there are only the two sacraments:

Holy Supper and Baptism. Reading of the Word and the sermon are at the center of their worship ritual.

**Lutherans** have a ceremonial (rather than a supernatural) ordination of priests. They have collective (rather than individual) confession of sins in church. The congregation often sings in harmony. And they have infant baptism.

**The Reformed** (including Congregational, United Church of Christ and Unitarians) believe in hereditary evils. They believe in the constant presence and power of Divine Providence. They believe in Covenant Theology (meaning that salvation is about a mutual relationship or agreement with God.) Unitarians deny the doctrine of the Trinity of Persons!

**Presbyterians** and **7th Day Adventists** have high ideals about marriage.

**Pietists** focus on morality and charity. They believe in “gathered churches” (voluntary membership, rather than cultural or familial membership). And they focus on devotion to the Lord.

**Anabaptists** (or Brethren) encourage a spiritual discipline which discourages selfishness. They believe in the importance of service to others. And they believe that true worship is about internal rather than only external things.

**Baptists** believe in spiritual rebirth (being born again). They don’t use man-made creeds or confessions.

**Methodists** believe that salvation is possible for everyone. They believe that humans are essentially “choice” or free will. They believe that when we ask God for help, He will work to remove evils in us. They believe there are steps of regeneration. They have high standards of morality. And they originated the idea of religious camp meetings (like Laurel, Maple, Sunrise and Jacob’s Creek.)

**Quakers** (or Friends) believe that we can be enlightened directly from the Lord. They believe that everyone is predestined for heaven rather than hell. They believe that God can be born into our hearts. They, too, have different terminology for the process of salvation; referring to being “convinced” rather than being “saved” or “born again.” They believe that regeneration is a process, and that it doesn’t happen in a moment. They believe in the importance of serving others. And they believe that Jesus didn’t erase our sins.

**Pentecostals** believe in a life of piety and the importance of shunning sins. “Oneness Pentecostals” believe that Jesus Christ is the One God of heaven and earth!

**Mormons** believe in other sacred texts in addition to the Bible. Their church was also founded on a belief in new revelation. They believe that they represent the New Jerusalem. They don’t use the cross as a religious symbol. And they

believe in the eternity of marriage in heaven. They also believe that angels don't have wings.

**Millenarians** are interested in eschatology (the study of the end things: heaven, hell, the Last Judgment, the Second Coming, etc.)

**Jehovah's Witnesses** believe in the importance of regularly reading the Word.

**Christian Scientists** (Church of Christ, Scientist) believe in other sacred texts in addition to the Bible. They believe that the spiritual world is more real than the natural world. They believe that death is a transition into true reality. And they don't view the death of Jesus as an atonement for our sins.

**Charismatics** have high moral standards.

**Fundamentalists** believe in the Divine Truth of the Word, and the power of the literal sense of the Word. They believe in the importance of obeying the Ten Commandments. They are dispensationalist (which means that they believe there has been a progression of churches and revelations on this earth). They have high moral standards.

**Evangelicals** believe in spreading the Good News of the Lord's Coming. They believe there are many ways to worship and many ways to get to heaven. They believe in the concept of regeneration. And they believe in living *in* the world, but not being *of* the world.

This little study, of course, only scratches the surface of what these churches, denominations and religious movements actually believe in and live by. There are probably many more similarities that I don't even know about yet. But I find it very useful to begin to focus on what we have in common with them.

It not only helps me to look for the goodness in other people, but it also reminds me that the Lord's Second Coming and the New Church are so much bigger than just a few Swedenborgian denominations. It helps me to stay humble, and remember that the Lord is actively establishing the New Church in so many places, so many churches, and so many hearts.



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The Rev. Solomon J. Keal was ordained into the first degree of the ministry in May of this year, after receiving his Master of Divinity Degree from the Theological School of Bryn Athyn College of the New Church. He has been assigned as Assistant to the Pastor in Bryn Athyn. He lives with his wife, Tirah, and their four children in Huntingdon Valley. You can contact him at [solomon.keal@gmail.com](mailto:solomon.keal@gmail.com) or share your thoughts in a letter to *New Church Life*.

# New Church Teachings Put to the Test

*Candice Edmunds*

Editor's note: This was the New Church Day banquet address for 2012 in the Westville New Church Society, Durban, South Africa.

I am honored to be speaking to you tonight on this special occasion. I am a Psychology Honors student at the University of Cape Town. I would like to share with you some of the situations in which my New Church ways of thinking have influenced my personal and academic experiences, providing me with the tools and allowing me the freedom to make sense of the world.

Living away from home for the past four-and-a-half years, I have had to do lots of thinking. Previously, living at home and being involved in the New Church community in Westville, I had become used to the idea that most people with whom I came into contact on a regular basis shared the same beliefs as I have, or at least knew about them. However, during the past few years living away from home, and particularly this year, being a post-graduate and part of an academic community, I have encountered people with extreme opposing points of view.

Being in an academic environment surrounded by many scientific thinkers, I have often felt intimidated. Many of my colleagues believe that science is everything – that the laws of physics determine the reality of the universe. That that is all there is to it. If it cannot be scientifically proven, it cannot exist.

A few times, I have found myself tongue-tied, struggling to keep my head above water when bombarded with a multitude of scientific questions requiring rational answers. At times like these I have questioned the beliefs that have been instilled in me. Being exposed to so many diverse opinions has given me the opportunity to really put my New Church ideas to the test.

However, in my experience, the more that I thought about it, the more that I learned and the more that I was exposed to, the more I found that New Church teachings provided me with answers that made sense.

In addition to scientific thinkers, I have also come across people whose religious beliefs have completely contradicted their academic thought processes, leaving them more confused than ever. I will share one experience in particular in which I found the teachings of the New Church to be freeing and open-minded.

Early this year, in my neuropsychology seminars, I found myself faced with the daunting task of confronting one of the most profound philosophical questions – the mind-brain problem, as it is called. This involves understanding how the mental aspects of a person actually transpire from physical brain material. According to my professor, the task was straightforward – just “grapple” with the topic of how the mind and the brain relate.

We were given a quote by Francis Crick, the scientist who co-discovered the structure of the DNA molecule, and were required to form an argument around it. This quote was the crux of his book *The Astonishing Hypothesis*: “You, your joys and your sorrows, your memories and your ambitions, your sense of personal identity and free will are, in fact, nothing more than the behavior of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules.”

When I sat down to start writing this assignment, I didn’t start. Instead, I read and read, getting more confused by all the differing perspectives, to the point where I was in tears, frustrated at not being able to find a perspective in the literature that explained everything clearly and made sense. I read journal articles for about two weeks before there was even a single word on my page.

The thought crossed my mind that maybe Francis Crick was right, maybe we are no more than brain cells. Although my professor did not agree with this extreme perspective, a few of my classmates did, and could see it no other way. However, I knew instinctively that there was more to be explained. There was so much missing. But how could I possibly argue against the man who, in scientific terms, pretty much discovered the source of life?

I felt as if I had been given the task of solving the meaning of life. This is when I took a break from reading other people’s attempts at answering this question and asked myself what I really believed and what made sense.

During the process of reading widely and thinking long and hard about this topic, I found that the following points made the most sense: First, that the essence of subjective mental experiences remains personal and cannot be explained by science. This is demonstrated in the following hypothetical example. If a person is born into this world unable to see color and can only see in black and white, but grows up to learn everything there is to know about the brain processes involved in visual information processing and about physics, no amount of reasoning from the physical facts known to this person can lead him or her to know what the experience of seeing in color is actually like. In other words, unless one is able to have her own experience of actually seeing in color, she will never know what it is truly like.

Second, that it does not make sense to break down a whole into its parts. Through my New Church upbringing I have learned to view things holistically. How is it possible that a whole person, including one’s memories, ambitions and personal identity, is made up only of nerve cells? What about the rest of

I knew instinctively that there was more to be explained. There was so much missing. But how could I possibly argue against the man who, in scientific terms, pretty much discovered the source of life?

the person? What about the soul?

We all know about the nature-versus-nurture debate and we know that the way a person is raised and the environment in which he grows up is a big part of who he becomes. In line with the New Church way of thinking, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

For example, if we think about the metaphor of cutting a block of wood into smaller pieces, the sum of the pieces will always be less than the original whole because of what was lost in the sawdust. For this reason, a whole person cannot be reduced to “a vast assembly of nerve cells.”

The New Church has taught me to consider things globally. We acknowledge that the spiritual, mental and physical aspects of a person should be considered as part of an organization of dynamic relationships as they are intricately intertwined with one another, existing in pre-established coordination as created by the Lord.

The third point is that as human beings, we extract meaning from our environment and make sense of the world through our sense organs. Despite the incredible sensitivities and capabilities of the sense organs, it is important to recognize the very real limitations imposed on the completeness of the knowledge we possess about the universe.

The sense organs convert various forms of energy in the external environment into biological activity, and this is how we as humans build up our knowledge. However, we are not equipped with tools to perceive the smallest parts of information available in the universe. For example, our unassisted eyes cannot detect atoms, although we are certain that they exist. Furthermore, we have no receptors to detect electromagnetic radiation of wavelengths outside certain limits. So, in terms of the everyday human experience, we are blissfully unaware of cosmic rays, x-rays and radio waves.

As a result, the reality in which we live is fabricated by our senses. If our vision, hearing, smell, touch and taste had been tuned to different frequencies, we would experience a completely different reality. For example, very loud noises or extremely bright lights are perceived as discomfort or pain, as these frequencies are outside the range of human experience. Therefore, our knowledge of reality is partial and incomplete. Clearly, the mind-brain problem arises out of the conceptual limitations of the human mind.

The Rev. John Polkinghorne, who is also a well-known scientist and author of *The Faith of a Physicist* and *Quantum Physics and Theology: An Unexpected Kinship* states that in order to satisfy our thirst for knowledge and understanding, we must recognize that the basis for any eventual understanding of the universe transcends the limits of the physical world.

Swedenborg made particular advances in the field of biology and is generally credited with being the first to understand the cerebral cortex of the brain. However, he was not satisfied with a purely physical approach to studying humanity and the universe, which led to his contribution as a philosopher and his insight into the spiritual world.

There are passages in *Arcana Coelestia* which discuss this profound question, providing answers in line with what I have said earlier. Here is an example: “The heavenly form is amazing, and quite surpasses all human intelligence; for it is far above the ideas of the forms that a man can possibly conceive of from worldly things, even with the aid of analysis.”

Carl Jung, who was a famous psychiatrist and the founder of analytical psychology, was also a scholar of Swedenborg. He quoted the following in his book, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*: “The distinction between mind and body is an artificial dichotomy, a discrimination which is unquestionably based far more on the peculiarity of intellectual understanding than on the nature of things.” In other words, in order to provide some sort of explanation, human beings have created an artificial separation of the mind or spirit and the body or brain. This is based only on what we understand of the universe and does not reflect how things really are.

There have been many other circumstances during my time at the university, in which New Church teachings have provided me with a valuable framework which can be applied to many diverse situations. New Church teachings have given me the freedom and the tools to think for myself and to make sense of the world, without contradicting other knowledge that I am learning as I grow into adulthood.

I enjoy the balanced perspectives that the New Church allows. For example, the synchronization of science and religion as discussed earlier. Another situation in which I observed this balance in my beliefs was in discussions with my supervisor and research team on the topic of evolution. I love how the New Church focuses on the symbolism of the Bible and particularly, the Creation Story.

During these discussions, unlike some of my peers, I did not feel torn between the scientific facts of evolution and my religious beliefs. Instead, I could appreciate both aspects in perfect harmony.

Two years ago I began working as a research assistant for a retired professor and practicing psychologist. He had been writing a book about Christianity for

many years and was looking for someone whose religious viewpoint he would not offend through the ideas in his book. When I went for an interview for the position, I didn't really know what to expect, but I certainly did not think that I would end up being involved in a three-hour discussion about religion.

At first, I was slightly sceptical, wondering what he could possibly be writing about. He felt at ease with the freedom and insight of my religious thinking, and I was immediately offered the job. I soon realised that his book supported many of the New Church beliefs that separate our teachings from other religions.

The book is extremely insightful, combining psychological insight with Christian ideas. It has been a reassuring experience for me to know that someone with a deep affection for the Christian Church who has been involved with several branches of Christianity, has spent decades looking for answers and has drawn similar conclusions to the ideas that I have been blessed enough to have grown up with.

Over the past few years, as students in Cape Town who are away from our church community without the option of joining a well-established New Church group in the Western Cape, a few of us have continued to be involved in church activities whenever we get the opportunity.

Last year we met with the Rev. Mark Allais a few times, once getting together with a few other church families in Cape Town. This year, a small group of us have been meeting every week to follow the Shift program, led by Natasha Kloppers, and we hope to continue meeting on a weekly basis for the rest of the year.

Leaving the Westville community to study in Cape Town has been difficult. Although it is challenging not being able to be physically involved and present in the community, the teachings of the Church are in my heart and mind.

I feel very blessed having been given the opportunity for freedom of thought in my religious upbringing, and it is this attribute of the teachings of the New Church that I hold most dear.



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Candice Edmunds lives in Cape Town, South Africa, although she is part of the New Church Westville community. She attended Kainon Primary School in Westville, Durban, from 1996 to 2002. She graduated from Durban Girls' College and then moved to study at the University of Cape Town, pursuing majors in Psychology and Organizational Psychology. She is completing her Honors in Psychology at UCT and hopes to pursue a career in this field in the future.

# Our Attitude Toward Evil

*Tom David*

I was surprised not long ago to hear a fellow New Churchman say that “The New Church places so much emphasis on guilt.” Do we? I had never thought so. Sometimes perhaps we place too much emphasis on ideals in thought and behavior. Maybe we could use more emphasis on the fact that we’re only expected to *try* to achieve that ideal. We’re not condemned if we don’t succeed all the time. Even the angels don’t succeed all the time. So we need to know how to handle it when we fall short. But does this really rise to the level of creating a “New Church guilt”? Why this impression?

In thinking about this, it seemed that before we could talk intelligently about guilt, we would need to know what we mean by evil and sin. After all, if we’re legitimately going to feel guilty about something, it has to be about something bad that we’ve done. (The hells also love to make us feel guilty about things that are not seriously related to any fault of our own, but that’s another subject.)

So, we’ve done something bad, or omitted to do something good that we really ought to have done. Is it evil? Is it a sin? What do those words mean?

Some of the ways we could think of evil don’t make it seem too frightening:

- Just twisted good, that got its priorities reversed
- An inversion of the Lord’s order
- The ruling principle of hell, but is that so bad? There’s no eternal burning in a lake of fire, and everyone who’s there would rather stay there than go to heaven.

Or should we think of it as:

- Immensely powerful
- Cunning and sneaky
- Dedicated with all its energy to our eternal subjection and misery
- The ruling principle of a place where life consists of eternal insanity, frustration and hatred

We rarely see evil in all its naked horror and power. The Lord usually lets us see only the tip of the iceberg. Sometimes He permits people who have embraced evil to perpetrate terrible crimes against the innocent, but when we are dealing with our own evil tendencies, He withholds the worst and allows us to see only a manageable amount.

Furthermore, we’re born into evil — or at least into hereditary evil

There is one big way in which we can hurt the Lord: we can send ourselves to hell. To sin against God is not so much to hurt Him directly, but to tell the One who created you, ‘Go away, I don’t need any help from you.’ It’s to spurn a love more perfect than we can imagine in favor of our own desires.

tendencies. Each of us has allowed some of those tendencies to come into action, to become real in our lives. In a way we’re used to evil. We see it, usually only in small ways, every day.

So we have a few reasons why we may not take evil too seriously. Some passages in the Writings seem to minimize it; we rarely see it in its full force; we are accustomed to encountering it in small ways. What’s more, the hells will often disguise the nature of the evils they seek to inspire in us, and to cloak them in an appearance of good so we’ll adopt them without looking too closely.

On the other hand, look at the admonition that we often see in the Writings, that we should “shun evils as sins against God.” Now that sounds serious, and it turns up over and over and over. If all our evils are really sins against God, even the little ones, then maybe we really do need to feel scared and guilty. Maybe even though we’re trying to live a good life, our sins count more than we think and we really are going to hell.

But we’ve just moved from one question to another. If evils are sins against God, then what is a sin against God? Sins are basically evils done on purpose, with knowledge that what we are doing is wrong. But how do we do evil to God?

In one sense, you could put together a plausible case that a sin against God can’t be that big a deal. After all, we can’t really hurt the Lord directly. He’s infinitely powerful, while we’re so weak we can’t even fight off one evil spirit without His help.

How could we possibly hurt Him? Even if we were stronger – well, not to be disrespectful but He’s not easily hurt, is He? He already suffered everything it’s possible for anyone to suffer, through the attacks of the hells when He was in the world.

He came to us as the Word, and we desecrated that. He came in person, and we scorned Him, abused Him and put Him to death in one of the cruelest ways ever devised, and He kept right on loving us. So if I make an unkind wisecrack about a co-worker, or sneak something out of the store without paying, that’s somehow going to hurt Him even more?

Well, of course, we can hurt Him, but not in that way – not directly. His feelings don’t get hurt, in the sense that He doesn’t feel sorry for Himself. In

Most importantly, each of us should remember that the Lord cares nothing for what you have done in the past. He's forgiven it already. He cares only about who you are today, as you become who you will be in the future.

fact He doesn't care about His own feelings at all. It's in a different sense that we can think of Him as vulnerable. There is one big way in which we can hurt the Lord: we can send ourselves to hell.

The Lord's great love, His great wish, is not at all for Himself but for us – that we should go to

heaven, choosing it of our own free will. This brings us conjunction with Him and eternal happiness, which He wants infinitely – much more than almost anything else. When we reject Him, He is hurt in the sense that His love for us is turned away. There is nothing in this of His own feelings being hurt. Instead there is His clear vision of lost possibilities for us, of a great love that might have been, that will still flow out from Him but now will never be returned.

Furthermore, since the Lord exists with all people in all time, He can see not just the loss to the one who rejects Him but also the loss to everyone around that person and everyone in the future who is affected by that bad choice.

So to sin against God is not so much to hurt Him directly, but to tell the One who created you, "Go away, I don't need any help from you." It's to spurn a love more perfect than we can imagine in favor of our own desires: an alternative that's inferior, finite, temporary, illusory and that leads, in the end, to wretchedness.

It's that rejection of what's good, our step toward misery, that hurts. That's also why it's so much more grievous if we then turn and lead others away from good and toward evil.

Now we can begin to see why it's wrong to say that victimless crimes, along with vices such as drugs or pornography, supposedly hurt no one. Someone will say, "What my wife doesn't know won't hurt her," to excuse a bad behavior. It does, though, because that person has lessened himself. His marriage is a relationship between his wife and himself; when he invites a certain evil to be a stronger part of him, it is invited to be a stronger part of the relationship. In some small way it affects every relationship he has. Very subtly, it works to try to turn others toward hell.

That certainly sounds like there's plenty of room for strong guilt feelings in all of our lives. Maybe there should be a New Church guilt after all.

But to say that "there should be" implies that such guilt could be good or useful. Sometimes it is, and sometimes it isn't. Remember that the point of

healthy guilt is to prod us to change. We need to fight our evil tendencies so the Lord can subdue them and give us good loves in their place. Who wouldn't accept a little guilt in return for that? But if guilt leads us to give up the struggle, if it convinces us that we can't win and don't deserve to win, if we obsess about our past evils and beat ourselves up, then it gets in the way of good. It's not healthy and it's not part of the Lord's guidance.

Most importantly, each of us should remember that the Lord cares nothing for what you have done in the past. He's forgiven it already. He cares only about who you are today, as you become who you will be in the future – a future that He can clearly foresee. He cares how your good actions today will have a good effect on others. So yes, He cares a great deal about what you do today. What you do today builds and reinforces who you are and who you are becoming.

Perhaps this is what brings us back to a New Church emphasis on guilt. Evil really is a serious business. If we accept, ignore, or excuse it, it has a serious effect on us. It also has a smaller but real effect on the people around us. If it shuts out the Lord's love it even has an effect on Him. But finding evil in ourselves and having to deal with it doesn't make us evil. That's not what should make us feel guilty.

Finding evil in ourselves is normal. It's how we deal with the evil we find today, as we become aware of it in the moment, that really matters. Just enough guilt to spur us to take that moment seriously, maybe that's what a healthy New Church guilt – a guilt that leads to effort and then to hope and finally to peace – should be.

*Arcana Coelestia* 1510, 5076, 8553, 9069

*Apocalypse Explained* 970

*Doctrine of Charity* 525

*Conjugal Love* 348

*Divine Providence* 287-290, 310

*Heaven and Hell* 509, 510, 548, 573, 574, 576-580, 586

*True Christian Religion* 530

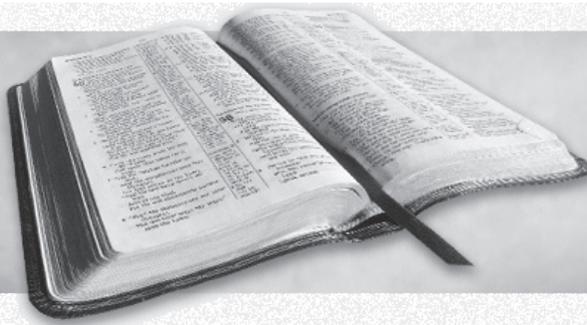
*Spiritual Experiences* 152



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tom David is the son of Joe and Pat (deMaine) David. He graduated from the Academy Boys School in 1977 and attended Bryn Athyn College until 1978. Tom and his wife Rachel (Turner) were members of the Erie Circle for many years. Since moving to the Boston area they have been active in the New Church of Concord, where Tom has served three terms on the Executive Committee. He works as an engineer in the field of shock and vibration control. He and Rachel live in Grafton, Massachusetts, and have four grown children.

Bryn Athyn College of The New Church invites you to study the Writings at a collegiate level:  
Experience and understand the wholeness of the Heavenly Doctrines



## REL 110D: INTRODUCTION TO **NEW CHURCH SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY**

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- See individual ideas in the context of the interconnected web of ideas that make up the Heavenly Doctrines.

**\*ABOUT THE COURSE:** Bryn Athyn College is offering REL110D as a three-credit, Internet-based course instructed by Rev. Amos Glenn. The text will consist of downloadable collections of passages selected from the Writings. Technology requirements include high-speed Internet access, Web-capable video camera (webcam), and a computer microphone. After consulting the members of the class, Rev. Glenn will schedule a series of opportunities for classmates to meet via real-time, audio-visual communication. These sessions are not required, but are recommended. Weekly assignments and assessments determine the pace of the course.

Registration Deadline: February 25, 2012. Cost: \$500

To register, contact Jacquie McFall:

267-502-4828 or [Jacqueline.McFall@brynathyn.edu](mailto:Jacqueline.McFall@brynathyn.edu)

# Church News

## EUROPEAN ASSEMBLY: JUST IMAGINE...

*Nina D. Kline*

Europe has many deep cultures, so it is no surprise that a European Assembly of New Church people would be a cultural feast. About 60 people gathered from 10 countries at the Purley Chase Conference Center July 13 to 15, 2012, for worship, study, music and deep fellowship.

Imagine worshipping in the new chapel at Purley Chase, led by the **Rev. Alan Lewin** from London, the **Rev. Jim Cooper** from Toronto, the **Rev. Göran Appelgren** from Stockholm, the **Rev. Fred Elphick** from London or **Bishop Tom Kline** from Bryn Athyn. We hear again the beautiful truths of the Word and the Heavenly Doctrines. We are raised up by music from a 10-person choir who have been rehearsing separately in their four different countries for several months, and come together beautifully to perform songs in three languages. Other musical interludes feature violin by **Marilyn Stroh**, accompanied by **Josephine Appelgren**.

Imagine people of different European nations studying together to seek a deeper relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, and to better understand the two senses of His Word. In appreciating the varieties of culture we represent, we see a mirror of His creation and His Love. Now and then we are treated to a recitation or a play put on by the children who are having a good time learning and playing under the leadership of **Elizabeth Kourkov** from Ukraine, **Andrew Bruell** from England and Jim Cooper from Canada. In our final formal session we hear from the people of each country about their church, and the dreams for the future in Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Holland, Russia, Ukraine and Great Britain.

Imagine the fellowship over delicious meals offered us by our hostess, **Anne Gaffney**. A kaleidoscope of shifting seating patterns shows everyone enjoying getting to know each other. We have put drawings on our name tags to reveal something about ourselves, from the little girl who drew a bar of chocolate to the urban planner who drew a whole neighborhood. One evening we divide into groups of seven for “non-competitive” games, but during a short break for some live Gilbert and Sullivan we try to quiz out the other groups about why one of the coronation swords has a blunted tip (it represents mercy, but no one knows that).

Even when the Assembly is supposed to be over we cannot part without a little ballet practice, another cup of tea with a fresh scone, and a group singing

of the 48th Psalm. We are grateful that the Lord has called all these people to the New Church and invited us to love one another. We return to our own countries with renewed dedication to the Lord and with new friendships.

### **BRYN ATHYN COLLEGE**

*Dr. Kristin King, President*

Bryn Athyn College anticipates a great year in 2012-13. New students arrived on campus Thursday, August 23, to participate in orientation activities – workshops, registration and social events – before classes began the following Wednesday.

We also welcomed some new staff: **Muriel Allen** as Human Resources Director, **Angella Irwin** as Admissions Counselor, **Justin Bowyer** as Director of Student Activities, and **Mara White** as Book Store Manager.

New academic programs include the business minor, which supports students in acquiring specific business skills complementing their major, and the sacred arts program, which is an enhancement of our studio arts offerings to include glass painting, metal forging and stone carving.

Student life is excited about supporting the development of new student-led clubs and bringing increased spirit onto campus through the growth of its athletic program.

For the past 18 months the College has been hard at work on its Self Study for accreditation. The Middle States Team comes to campus in October and February to conduct the assessment. The College continues to fulfill and develop its mission of providing New Church higher education by emphasizing the multiple perspectives of liberal arts; moral, civil and spiritual values in a New Church context; and applied learning and useful service.

### **ACADEMY SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

*James M. Adams, Managing Director*

Thanks to a very generous donation from the Asplundh Foundation students returned in late August to a newly renovated school in a welcoming and a much brighter, cleaner-looking environment.

During the summer the following areas of our schools were renovated:

- School store and front reception desk were combined and renovated
- Student support and Media Center were combined and renovated
- Second and third floor hallways of Benade Hall had new carpet installed and new paint
- Classrooms and offices in Benade Hall were painted and carpet installed



Left to right: Jane Elphick, Bethany Hyman, Mohan Hyman (with a tripod), Rev. Fred Elphick, Nina Kline



Youth Group: Emilie Elphick, Charity Warwick, Susanna Appelgren, Mattias Appelgren



Bishop Tom Kline, Nina Kline, Norman Turner, Kerry Burniston



Part of the special entertainment.

## ENGAGED

The Rev. Coleman Glenn, Pastor of the Dawson Creek Society in British Columbia, Canada, and Anne Hurd announced their engagement in August.



# BENADE HALL RENOVATIONS



The renovated school store is now combined with the Benade Hall reception desk.



Student Support and Media Center have been combined and renovated.



Second and third hallways Benade Hall received new carpet and fresh paint.



Second and third floor hallways of de Charms were painted and new lights were installed.



The Media Center features a study area for students.

in rooms that needed upgrades

- Second and third floor hallways of de Charms were painted and new lights installed
- Classrooms and offices in de Charms were painted and new carpet installed in rooms that needed upgrades
- Connector archways were painted

Please stop by if you can to see all of the changes. See photographs in this section.

### NEW PRINCIPALS

Both the Toronto and Washington New Church Schools began the 2012-13 school year with new principals.

**Toronto: Pastor James Cooper** reports that for the past three years **Sara Gatti** has been the Head Teacher for the Olivet New Church School “and has done a remarkable job.” But she asked to be relieved of these duties so she could return to her first love as a full-time classroom teacher. **The Rev. Brian Smith**, who has been Assistant to the Pastor for two years, took over as Principal on July 1.

Brian came into the job with appreciation for the long history of success in the school. He is also aware that “the school has been weathering some changes and shifts in recent years. There have been four principals in the past 10 years. Within the past four years a majority of the students now come from non-member families, and the top grade levels have been removed. Yet the school remains viable “due to the generous support of the congregation and the talented and committed faculty.”

He finds that “The school is beloved by our current parents who recognize the quality of attention, love, guidance and education which our faculty provides. Also some recognize and value the religious sphere which underlies all of our activities. In these senses, the school continues to be a tremendous success.

“How much do we strengthen and build our unique New Church mission as a school even as we move into a future which is very likely to be focused on serving non-member families?”

The school year started with a chapel service on September 4.

Also at Olivet **Karen Cooper** has taken on the duties as Program Coordinator in addition to her part-time teaching position.

**Washington: The Rev. Michael Gladish**, Pastor of the Washington New Church in Mitchellville, Maryland, also has taken on the role as Principal of the New Church School this year. “My first and overwhelming affection,” he

says, “is one of deep appreciation for the dedicated and sometimes thankless work of our just-retired Principal, **Kathy Johns.**” She is continuing to help the school as a volunteer.

Not many people in the congregation know the many challenges she faced as principal, “but I do and I am both grateful and daunted by the idea of trying to fill a modified version of that role.”

### **ACADEMY CALENDAR**

Fall term classes in Bryn Athyn College of the New Church began August 29, and in the Secondary Schools of the Academy of the New Church on August 28.

Charter Day is Friday, October 12, with events running through Monday (see below).

The Christmas break for all schools is December 21 through January 6. The spring break for Bryn Athyn College, including the Theological School is February 23 through March 10. The spring break for the Secondary Schools is March 2 – 10.

The College Graduation Dinner is scheduled for Friday, May 24, with commencement exercises on Saturday morning in the Mitchell Performing Arts Center.

The Secondary Schools Graduation dinner, dance and banner presentation will be on Friday, May 31, with graduation on Saturday at 10 a.m. in the Asplundh Field House.

### **CHARTER DAY**

The Charter Day weekend begins Thursday, October 11, with an Artist Reception and Exhibit in the Fine Arts Building and several athletic contests, and continues through Monday with the annual Student Scholarship Golf Outing.

The full schedule is available on the Bryn Athyn College and Secondary Schools websites, [www.brynathyn.edu](http://www.brynathyn.edu) and [www.ancss.org](http://www.ancss.org), which includes information about events and tickets. Here are some of the highlights:

#### **Friday, October 12**

8 am	Academy Corporation Meeting, Mitchell Performing Arts Center
10:30 am	Cathedral Service, Vice Chancellor Eric H. Carswell
12 noon	Theta Alpha Luncheon

- 7:30 – 9 pm                    Bryn Athyn College Alumni Open House, Brickman Center
- 8:30 – 11 pm                 Charter Day Dance, Secondary Schools Dining Hall
- 10 pm – 1 am                 “Totally-Great-Cause” fund-raising concert, Mitchell Performing Arts Center

**Saturday, October 13**

- 8:30 am                        Annual Bob Eidse Run/Walk
- 8:30 – 11:30 am             Glencairn Museum, gourmet omelets and more
- 9 am – 12 noon              Bryn Athyn Bounty Farm Market at the Pavilion
- 10 am – 12 noon             Secondary Schools Open House
- 2 – 4 pm, 5 – 7 pm         Academy Expo and Fundraiser
- 7:30 – 9:15 pm              Charter Day Banquet (program still to be announced as we went to press)
- 9:30 – 12:30 pm             Mix-and-Mingle concert at the Pavilion

**Sunday, October 14**

- 9:30, 10:30, 11 am        Church services
- 11 am – 12:30 pm         DEKA Tea, Glenn Hall lounge

**Monday, October 15**

- 10 am – 8 pm                Golf outing, Philmont Country Club

**THE NEW NEW CHURCH BOOKSTORE**

The New Church Bookstore, based in Bryn Athyn Cathedral, is no longer owned and operated by the General Church but has become part of Bryn Athyn Church. The new manager is **Kesley Coffin**.

Kesley says: “In my new role I intend to do everything in my power to breathe new life and vitality into the bookstore. The cornerstone of my efforts will be to switch us over to a new, web-based software system. Our online store is going to be completely redesigned for aesthetics and usability.”

Watch for further information about the bookstore’s new website and its features.

**ELDERGARTEN 2013**

The Boynton Beach Society will host its annual Eldergarten January 20 – 24 in the Duncan Conference Center in Boynton Beach, Florida. This year’s speakers will include two brought back by popular demand – the **Rev. George D. McCurdy**, Bryn Athyn, and **Brian D. Henderson** from Bryn Athyn College of the New Church – along with the **Rev. Dr. Ray L. Silverman**, also from the

College.

A letter went out in July stating that basic registration is \$200 per person, but would increase to \$225 after October 1. This includes the opening barbecue, four lunches, coffee breaks and the banquet. For those not staying with local families, room rates at the Duncan Center are the same as last year.

Private, anonymous donors again will provide the very popular evening cruise on the Inland Waterway, which attendees have enjoyed for the past several years.

As Eldergarten Director **Bob Brickman** says, “Where else could you get so much value for so little money? And don’t forget the real bargains – New Church education and fellowship.”

If you have questions about staying at the Duncan Center or want further information about anything having to do with Eldergarten, please e-mail [eldergarten@aol.com](mailto:eldergarten@aol.com).

#### **LIFE AND LIGHT IN SEATTLE**

**The Rev. Ethan McCardell**, Pastor of the Light for Life New Church in Seattle, Washington, says this growing church plant is excited to be relocating to a permanent building in Columbia City in the new year. The congregation planned a service celebrating the launch of their move on October 7.

#### **FINANCE SHIFT**

In an announcement about finance shifts in the General Church and Academy in the July-August issue (page 408) we inadvertently missed on important changes. **Tina H. Bartels** has been promoted from her position as Controller for the Academy of the New Church to a new role as Business Manager for the Academy Secondary Schools.

# Life Lines

## ‘WHEN THE LOTUS BLOOMS THE BEES WILL GATHER’

This Hindu slogan is quoted by a New Church minister on p. 393 of that great history of the New Church, *The New Church In the New World*, by Marguerite Beck Block. The minister’s point was that the New Church is more than a set of doctrines and beliefs, it is a “new life.”

“When you have had the experience,” the minister said, “you do not shout from the housetops; there is some subtle attraction that draws people to you, some subtle influence that radiates and emanates from you, and leads to you other persons who feel that here is a source of strength.”

Advertising and recruitment efforts are fine, but the best thing we can do to grow the Church is to grow it in ourselves and in our families and in our church communities. Then, as bees to a flower, those whose hearts and minds are sympathetic to, and delighted by, and prepared to assimilate what the Church has to offer will find it – often led to it in mysterious ways by the hand of providence.

What are the things that make our church a lovely and fragrant blossom? Among them are: A strong sense of the Lord’s presence and the joy of heavenly life. Reverence for the things of marriage and family life. A loving and harmonious community of people united by a shared faith. Wisdom from the Word made visible in the way we speak and live and relate to one another. A lively interest in spiritual reality and its relation to life in this world. Trust in the leading of providence. Sincerity. Honesty. Modesty. Dignity. Thoughtfulness. And perhaps the most powerful “subtle attraction” of all is a sphere of innocence.

When the Lord is in our hearts, and His truth shines in our minds, and the goodness of His kingdom is evident in what we say and do – when the sphere of heaven goes forth from our lives, individually and in community – then the lotus blooms, and the bees will gather.

(WEO)

## INREACH IS ALSO OUTREACH

The growth of the New Church, we are told, depends upon “the cultivation of the rational.” (*Apocalypse Explained* 732) How many people in our world today are prepared and willing to cultivate genuine, spiritual rationality? Whatever the answer, the more pressing question is: are we?

The rational is the middle level of the mind that connects the spiritual above with the natural below. When properly cultivated and refined, and directed by spiritual principles, it serves to bring the life and light of heaven down into the externals of natural thought, and thus into our words and deeds.

The natural in itself, apart from the spiritual, is dead; no good, no life, can come from it. It is a barren land. But when the spiritual flows into it, it is like the river that watered the Garden of Eden, and the stream that made the desert bloom. It is like the ever-deepening, healing, life-giving river of water flowing out from the temple of the Lord in Ezekiel's vision. It is the "living water" the Lord offered the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well. It is the crystal river in the New Jerusalem on whose bank the Tree of Life grows.

This is what the earth needs from the New Church – a reopening of the ancient wells of spiritual knowledge which worldly thought has stopped up, and the channels of rational application needed to bring that knowledge to the spiritual wasteland in which so many lost sheep wander.

The cultivation of the rational is the work of New Church education, of New Church families, and of each of us in our own personal lives. We must look within to find the living truth we wish to bring to the world without.

(WEO)

## HOW NOT TO GROW

An article in the July 15 *New York Times* notes that the Episcopal Church "has spent the last several decades changing and then changing some more, from a sedate pillar of the WASP establishment into one of the most self-consciously progressive Christian bodies in the United States.

As a result, today the Episcopal Church is flexible to the point of indifference on doctrine, friendly to sexual liberation in almost every form, willing to blend Christianity with other faiths, and eager to downplay theology entirely in favor of secular political causes.

Yet instead of attracting a younger, more open-minded demographic with these changes, the Episcopal Church's dying has proceeded apace. Last week, while the church's House of Bishops was approving a rite to bless same-sex unions, Episcopalian church attendance figures showed something between a decline and a collapse. In the last decade, average Sunday attendance dropped 23 percent, and not a single Episcopal diocese in the country saw churchgoing increase.

This decline is the latest chapter in a story dating to the 1960s. The trends unleashed in that era – not only the sexual revolution, but also consumerism and materialism, multiculturalism and relativism – threw all of American Christianity into crisis, and ushered in decades of debate over how to keep the nation's churches relevant and vital.

If conservative Christianity has often been compromised, liberal Christianity has simply collapsed. Practically every denomination – Methodist, Lutheran,

Presbyterian – that has tried to adapt itself to contemporary liberal values has seen an Episcopal-style plunge in church attendance.

Perhaps they should pause, amid their frantic renovations, and consider not just what they would change about historic Christianity, but what they would defend and offer uncompromisingly to the world.

Absent such a reconsideration, their fate is nearly certain: they will change, and change, and die.

The full article is at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/15/opinion/sunday/douthat-can-liberal-christianity-be-saved.html>

(WEO)

### OLYMPIC CHAMPION: DON ROSE

There was no greater champion in the Church of the Olympic Games than the late Rev. Donald L. Rose, former editor of *New Church Life*. He was passionate about the Olympics and found ways to work them into sermons, chapel talks and editorials. If you had ever heard him raving about the Olympics, can't you just hear him exclaiming during the recent Games in London, "Did you see that race last night?!"

Don grew up in the United States, studied in France, and served in Great Britain and Australia. His rooting interests were eclectic. He just loved seeing good athletes perform and embraced the international spectacle – and the best of all it stands for. We can well imagine him gushing this year over Michael Phelps, Gabby Douglas, Missy Franklin, Oscar Pistorius, Usain Bolt, Andy Murray, and scores of others.

In a 2004 editorial in *New Church Life – A Religious View of Olympic Games* – he wrote in part:

In this international event we see people taking their God-given talents and exercising them with their best efforts. We are reminded of the saying about activities in heaven. We read of foot races and games and also trials of skill to test quickness in speech, action and perception. "Those who excel receive as a reward a wreath of laurel; and there are many other ways of calling forth their latent talents." (*True Christian Religion* 745:4)

A special international occasion is described in *Conjugal Love* 103-114. Teams from nine nations entered an arena 'in high spirits . . .'

There is a section in *Doctrine of Charity* (87) about our 'neighbor in the widest sense.' That neighbor is the human race. It is good to have occasions when we focus on the whole human race, and when we do so we see the human race divided up into different countries and kingdoms. The Writings often speak of the love that motivated the Lord when He was in this world. It was a love of 'the whole human race.' He declared, 'I will draw all peoples to Myself.'

Although the Olympics Games are about competition, the opening and closing

ceremonies are for many by far the most moving ingredient. As a team marches by in distinctive uniform with distinctive flag, it is as if the entire nation were present.

...

People at the Games refer to 'the glory of the sport.' All glory really belongs to the Lord, and many athletes openly confess that when they have done their very best. There are many emotions in this event for the whole world. There is triumph and there is disappointment. There is acknowledgment of attainment, and ideally there is, even if unconsciously, an acknowledgment of a Divine Creator. For the whole earth is a theater representative of the Glory of the Lord. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 3000, 3518, 3648, 5273)

How thrilled Don would have been to hear Gabby Douglas, the effervescent 16-year-old American sprite with a smile that lit up the Olympics, who said after winning the gold medal as the Women's All-Around Gymnast: "I give all the glory to God. It's kind of a win-win situation. The glory goes up to Him, and all the blessings flow down on me."

(BMH)

### **THE PRESENCE OF CHILDREN**

Something I've often noticed on my daily (dream on) constitutionals around Bryn Athyn is the sight of young mothers walking with their children. It is a happy sight, a hopeful sight. And one that is not nearly so common in the world around us as it once was.

There are various reasons given for the declining birthrate. The presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church, for instance, has explained that her church's members value "the stewardship of the earth" too highly to have children. (How ironic: the very concern for the welfare of the planet which is apparently one of the church's hallmark virtues is having the effect of depriving the earth of future generations of Episcopalian stewards.)

The "birth dearth" and the decline of religious faith in western societies are related phenomena, joined in a downward spiral. The injunction to marry and "be fruitful and multiply" is Divine, so loss of religion leads to fewer children; and since one of the main reasons people join churches is for the sake of their children, fewer children means fewer churchgoers.

(WEO)

### **COMPASSION**

No one of good will wishes to say anything that would cause any pain or sadness to anyone burdened with disorder in their lives. We know that none of us is perfect; we all have our own demons to deal with. We all hope that the Lord will forgive and heal us, and that our fellow human beings will overlook and excuse our wrongs, as the angels do.

Compassion is a great virtue, beautifully demonstrated by the Lord, who condemned no one and who gave up His own life in the process of freeing sinners from their sins. He forgave even those who crucified Him, “for they know not what they do.”

The hells attack, the heavens never. Angels do, however, defend what is good and true. We see this portrayed in the twelfth chapter of Revelation, for instance, when the armies of heaven protected the woman clothed with the sun and her baby from the dragon and his army. The angels bear no ill will and wish no harm to those who seek to destroy the innocence and happiness of heaven – nor do they stand by and let it happen.

The Church on earth has been given truths with which to defend the good that comes from the Lord, and the people of the Church must not fail to bear witness to those truths. Compassion requires that we make available the armor needed to protect the innocent, and the antidote to heal those who have been drawn into disorder.

(WEO)

#### **WHAT WE CALL SOMETHING MATTERS**

Scientists become very concerned and object most strenuously when the word “science” is applied to theories that in their judgment are not properly scientific. They have great zeal for preserving the integrity of their profession, and rightly perceive that to stretch the limits of what is called “science” devalues and undermines an extremely useful and important discipline by sowing confusion about what science actually is.

Perhaps this comparison helps explain why those who place a high value on the institution of marriage are alarmed by the proposed broadening of the definition of it to include arrangements which, according to their understanding of what marriage actually is, cannot possibly be called by that name.

(WEO)

#### **THE BRIDGE**

Notice that in the structure of the mind set forth in the Writings the rational mind acts as a bridge between the spiritual and the natural planes of mental activity. In regard to the structure of society we also find what we might call a vertical trine, consisting of the spiritual, moral and civil, in which the middle level, the moral, serves as a bridge between the spiritual and the civil.

The rational and the moral, therefore, have much in common – they each serve to connect the higher and lower levels that meet in them, and to convey the life-giving and ordering influence of the higher into the lower. Reason and

morality, ideally, are aspects of the same thing: a bridge, or aqueduct, by means of which the pure, clean water of life from the mountaintops of heaven can be conveyed to the thirsty land below.

(WEO)

### **THE HABIT OF DEVELOPING SPIRITUALLY**

Stephen Covey, who changed the habits of millions of aspiring people throughout the world, passed away this summer at age 79. He not only influenced the success of their worldly lives but the development of their spiritual lives as well.

Covey was best known for the best-seller, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, and many popular spinoffs, such as *Living the Seven Habits* and *Principle-Centered Leadership*.

Covey was a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and was unabashed in his beliefs, but rather than proselytize for his faith he looked for themes common to all religion.

His core principles resonate with New Church beliefs because of his emphasis on living with charity, serving others, maximizing one's usefulness, not taking credit for accomplishments, being humble, and focusing on internal, spiritual development.

So many personal how-to-succeed books are focused on accomplishment. Covey shifted the focus to a life of meaning, balanced with external and internal values, and "putting first things first." Or as the most highly effective "habit" of all puts it: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (*Matthew 6: 33*)

(BMH)

### **THE PARADIGM SHIFT**

What changed Covey's life and direction was a simple, everyday experience – riding the subway as a young man in New York City. A father with several children boarded his quiet car, and the kids were so unruly that Covey asked the man to tone them down.

He answered somewhat absently, "Oh, you're right. I guess I should do something about it." Then he added, "We just came from the hospital where their mother died about an hour ago. I don't know what to think, and I guess they don't know how to handle it either."

Suddenly Covey was not thinking about his own peace disturbed but how to help people cope with what life throws at them. That got him focused on the kind of "habits" that breed success – and not only material success but internal, spiritual fulfillment as well.

The seven habits he developed include such simple but profound concepts as:

- Begin with the end in mind
- Seek first to understand, then to be understood
- Think win/win
- Put first things first

He got people and organizations all over the world focusing on meaning and mission – in their corporate and personal lives. And he set the example in his own practices. The popularity of the “Seven Habits” spawned quite an empire, including Covey retail stores in many malls that did most of their business on weekends. But those stores were closed on Sundays.

(BMH)

### LEADERSHIP BY COMPASS

In *Alice in Wonderland*, Alice is frantically chasing after the rabbit when she comes to a fork in the road. She starts to cry because she doesn’t know which way to go. The Cheshire Cat suddenly appears and asks, “Well, where are you going?” “I don’t know,” Alice wails. And the Cat answers, “Then it doesn’t matter.”

We all need to know where we are going – to “Begin with the end in mind” – to choose the right path. The end, ideally, of course, is heaven, which should always be our “true north.”

Think about the truths we strive to live by when Covey says in *Principle-Centered Leadership*: “Correct principles are like compasses: they are always pointing the way. And if we know how to read them, we won’t get lost, confused, or fooled by conflicting voices and values.

“Principles are self-evident, self-validating natural laws. They don’t change or shift. They provide ‘true north’ direction to our lives when navigating the ‘streams’ of our environments.

“Principles apply at all times in all places. They surface in the form of values, ideas, norms and teachings that uplift, ennoble, fulfill, empower and inspire people. The lesson of history is that to the degree people and civilizations have operated in harmony with correct principles, they have prospered. At the root of societal declines are foolish practices that represent violations of correct principles. How many economic disasters, intercultural conflicts, political revolutions and civil wars could have been avoided had there been greater social commitment to correct principles?”

There is a saying that when you know your values – really know and live them – there are no hard decisions.

In a personal note at the end of *Principle-Centered Leadership*, Covey says: “I believe God is the true name and source of the collective unconscious and is therefore the ultimate moral authority in the universe. The daily prayerful study of His revealed Word is the single most important and powerful discipline in life because it points our lives, like a compass, to ‘true north’ – our divine destiny.”

(BMH)

**IS THE ECONOMY REALLY THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE?**

Because of the difficult financial straits much of the world is in, fiscal policy is a main topic of debate. In the United States both major political parties are focusing on the economy as the most important issue in the coming presidential election. But is it, really?

The economy is without doubt a matter of urgent concern, but the spiritual and moral issues that many dismiss as relatively trivial are even more crucial.

The economy is part of the civil order of the country, and the civil is the “complex, containant and base” of the spiritual and moral dimensions of life from which the civil is derived, and upon which those higher degrees rest. The civil can no more be separated from the spiritual and moral, and still maintain its health and vitality, than the human body can be separated from the soul that formed it and the mind that governs it.

Far from having nothing to do with the spiritual and moral condition of the nation, the economy depends upon it. Economic woes are, at least in part, a symptom of underlying spiritual and moral disorders. Any economic improvements will be only temporary until these deeper issues of human life are resolved.

(WEO)

**‘ONLY FOR A MORAL AND RELIGIOUS PEOPLE’**

John Adams, one of the great architects of the free, stable and prosperous nation Americans have enjoyed, and which, despite all its troubles, remains as a beacon to the world, spoke most emphatically in a speech he gave in 1798 about the absolute necessity of morality and religion among the citizens if the country were to prosper:

“We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion ... Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”

Section XV of the Virginia Declaration of Rights, a forerunner of the American Declaration of Independence, written by the same main authors,

says that: “No free government or the blessings of Liberty, can be preserved to any people, but by a firm adherence to justice, moderation, temperance, frugality, and virtue, and by frequent recurrence to fundamental principles.”

Similarly, Article III of the Massachusetts Constitution, ratified four years after the Declaration of Independence, says: “The happiness of the people and the preservation of civil government essentially depend upon piety, religion and morality.”

And there are many similar examples of what the Founders had in mind for the new nation. The point is that people who cannot control themselves cannot be expected to control their government.

(WEO)

### **THE POSSIBILITY OF SELF-CONTROL**

When we speak of human beings being able to control themselves, the meaning is that the higher part of our character must control the lower elements. Spiritual thought derived from the Word must enlighten and direct natural thought. The better angels of our being, inspired by goodness received from the Lord, must counterbalance and hold sway over the passions of our lower nature.

Human liberty and fitness for self-government depend on this. And that is why religious and moral considerations should not only have a place, but the highest place, in the public square.

(WEO)

### **THE PURPOSE OF EDUCATION**

A new school year is underway throughout North America, and the goal in most high schools and colleges primarily is to prepare young people for careers. New Church education takes it a step further – to prepare young people for useful lives in this world *and* the next.

Bishop Willard D. Pendleton wrote his seminal book on New Church education – *Education for Use* – at the height of the Cold War. The rapid development of nuclear weapons and nuclear power presented the potential for great good and enormous evil.

“Civilization as we know it can reap untold benefits from nuclear power,” he wrote, “or it can all end in a matter of seconds in one great holocaust. This is a frightening realization which, as never before, emphasizes the need for an educational system which recognizes that the ultimate welfare of society is dependent upon the cultivation of a moral and spiritual conscience in the individual.” This is the goal of New Church education.

(BMH)

**'HE LOVED THE LORD'**

On a trip to California my wife and I visited the Santa Barbara Zoo. The grounds were very nice, with mountains on one side, the ocean on the other, and beautiful garden areas. There were ornamental trees planted in memory of loved ones, with little signs identifying them. One of the signs that especially caught my eye bore a name and a simple inscription: "He loved the Lord." It gave me a warm feeling and I thought what a fine epitaph that was.

What sort of person do you suppose that man was? I assume he was a good man: responsible, decent, honest, kind, forgiving, humble, and so on. Surely that's what the inscription implies. It's reasonable to think that someone of whom it can be said, "He loved the Lord," was a good man.

Which leads to the thought that if loving the Lord is a sign of goodness in a person, how great the Goodness of the One loved must be!

(WEO)