

NEW CHURCH *Life*

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

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2018

Behold the handmaid of the Lord



Mary's example of innocence and willingness to be led by the Lord – "Be it unto me according to Thy Word" – helps make way for the Lord to be born in our hearts each Christmas. See a sermon by the Rev. Howard A. Thompson, *Tell Out Your Soul*. (Page 474)

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

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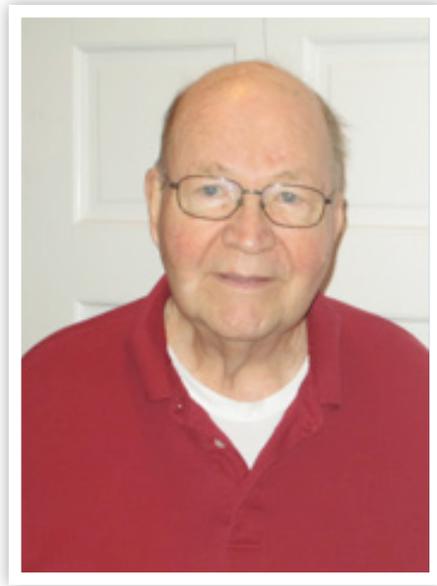
A bimonthly magazine devoted to the teachings revealed through Emanuel Swedenborg, as they relate to life.

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IN MEMORY

The Rt. Rev. Alfred Acton II



Note: The Rt. Rev. Alfred Acton II passed into the spiritual world on October 23 at age 84. He had been living in retirement with his wife, Henrietta, in Pineville, South Carolina. Below is a message sent on October 24 to Members and Friends of the Academy Family by the Rt. Rev. Brian W Keith, who then forwarded this message to the General Church, adding: "There is so much more to say about him – as a person and his work for the General Church. It's rather overwhelming to see how many subjects he wrote on and the uses he served. He was still preaching every month in South Carolina until recently. He will be dearly missed."

The Memorial Address by the Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Sr. will be published in the January/February issue of *New Church Life*.

Dear Members and Friends of the Academy Family:

The Rt. Rev. Alfred Acton II passed peacefully into the spiritual world last night. Alfie's involvement with the Academy was extensive. He taught in all the schools, including some math and science in the Secondary Schools during his time as a student in Theological School, and served as President for

seven years.

Alfie was born in 1934. He graduated from the Bryn Athyn Church School in 1949 and the Boys School in 1953. He then obtained his Junior College diploma at the Bryn Athyn College of the New Church before graduating from Haverford College with a major in Latin and minor in Greek. After two years of military service and marriage to Henrietta Gourdin in 1960, he graduated from the Theological School and was ordained in 1964.

Alfie began serving as pastor of the Sharon Church in Chicago and as assistant to the pastor in Glenview. He very quickly became administrator of the kindergarten through 10th grade schools there, in addition to teaching many subjects. In 1968 he moved to Glenview as a full assistant pastor and in 1973 he was called as pastor of Glenview, continuing to teach in the schools. Then in 1976 he was elected president of the Academy. He served until 1983 when he returned to teaching at the Academy and serving various General Church uses. In 1999 he was called as Assistant to the Bishop and served in that role until his retirement in 2004.

Alfie delved into an extensive range of topics, including New Church Education. Among his subjects were “Human Development,” “Education for Marriage,” “Opening of the Rational,” “Science and Religion,” “Environment, Education and Freedom,” “Education of Girls and Boys” and “Essentials of the Academy.” He was also a force to be reckoned with! He willingly examined and proposed changes to organizational structures. His intellectual prowess was renowned, yet his great heart for people showed through all his presentations and academic sparring. And he always sought out direction from the Lord’s three-fold Word to help people on the path to heaven.

His fundamental optimistic approach to life was seen in his 1981 report as President:

Indeed, the underlying love all those involved with the Academy have for the fundamental principles which led our founders to establish this institution still rings loudly. . . . The fact remains that we seek guiding light in our deliberations from the one source of truth present with us, the Lord God, Jesus Christ, who speaks clearly to us in the pages of His New Word. I am confident that our dedication to this first principle of the Academy will lead each of us in a spirit of genuine charity to give of ourselves for the good we cherish.

Alfie had a tremendous impact on the Academy and we will miss his stimulating and challenging leadership and scholarship. Now the Lord has use of his talents in the eternal kingdom where I’m sure he will continue his invaluable service to the church. Our thoughts and affections are with his family and friends.

The Rt. Rev. Brian W. Keith

In This Issue

Editorials (page 460) include:

- *The Real Meaning of Christmas.* Much of the meaning of Christmas has been lost to crass commercialism and we can't "put Christ back in Christmas" without a genuine revival of Christian faith – which "is exactly what the New Church envisions and exists to bring about."
- *The Christmas Gift: Peace.* The universal prayer of the Christmas season is "Peace on earth, good will toward men." But like all gifts that become meaningful when we put them to use in our lives, so we find that peace when we use what the Lord has given to us and walk in His way.

In a sermon appropriate for the American Thanksgiving season, "The Levitical Blessing," the Rt. Rev. Brian W. Keith says: "The offerings of blessing us, keeping us, having the Lord's face shine upon us, being gracious, lifting up His countenance and giving us peace are all expressions of what the Lord is constantly doing for us." (Page 463)

In a Christmas sermon, "The ONE God," the Rev. Ryan M. Sandstrom says "The Lord not only made Himself visible in His advent but He showed that He is the One God. The oneness of God is fundamental." He suggests that in our preparations for Christmas we keep the Lord Jesus Christ, the ONE and only God, as our main focal point. (Page 468)

A favorite image of the Christmas season is the innocence of Mary – "Behold the handmaiden of the Lord." The Rev. Howard A. Thompson, in a Christmas sermon, "Tell Out Your Soul," invites us to "mind your thoughts and the words you speak, nurture innocence within and make straight the path that the Lord may inflow and bless you." (Page 474)

In his Charter Day Cathedral Address, the Rev. Dr. Ray Silverman focused on "The Gratitude Effect." "Alma mater," he said, stands not for "our mother" but our "nourishing mother." And Charter Day "is not just an occasion for remembering an historical event. More importantly it is an opportunity to express gratitude to the founders for all they have done, and to render thanks for all that has been given." (Page 479)

The Charter Day Banquet featured four speakers from the Academy

Secondary Schools on *The Distinctiveness of New Church Education* in the schools. The heartfelt talks were given by faculty members the Rev. Christopher A. Barber and Martha Hyatt Odhner, recent Boys School graduate Westley Wedell, and current Girls School senior Camryn Buss. (Page 485)

Justin G. Stroh, PhD, with more than 30 years of experience as a scientist, offers his own perspective on “Evolution and Religion.” He dispels “the misconceived notion that science is inherently opposed to religion.” In layman’s language he asks: What is evolution? Is it real? And if it is real then how does it work and what is its relationship to religion? (Page 494)

Peter H. Boericke reviews a new book by Bruce Henderson – *A New Key to the Bible: Unlock its Inner Meaning and Open the Door to Your Spirit* – published by the Swedenborg Foundation. He finds the book “clearly written to attract and introduce a wider audience to the New Church,” but also “a perfect primer for our own study of the spiritual sense of the Word. It resets the stage, whets the appetite, and stimulates the mind to unlock and reopen that door.” (Page 502)

Church News (page 504) includes:

- The Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr., just confirmed as the next Executive Bishop of the General Church, offers a message of gratitude and commitment
- A report on the September meeting of the General Church Board, including some of the early planning by Bishop Buss for his administration
- A complete report of Charter Day activities
- A report on meetings of the Academy Board of Trustees and Academy Corporation
- A partnership between Bryn Athyn College and AIM Academy within a new Master of Science in Special Education, with a concentration on literacy
- An update on the continually expanding New Church Bible Study website, with several exciting developments

This issue also includes the Annual Report of the General Church Secretary (page 529), the Directory of the General Church Clergy (page 535), and the Index for the 2018 issues of *New Church Life* (page 557).

Editorials

THE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS

Even as the celebration of Christmas has gotten more and more elaborate and frenetic, Christmas itself has become increasingly devoid of meaning. From being a holy day dedicated to a specific religious observance, it has become just a vague part of a generic "holiday season." People sense that at the center of the whirlwind of festivity there is a spiritual vacuum.

In a secular society the call to make Christmas more spiritual strikes many as problematical and pointless. Christmas supposedly celebrates the birth of God on earth, but belief in God and the Divinity of Jesus has waned. And even the secular excuse for the holiday – that it's all about family life and children – is also beginning to ring hollow as marriages, births and intact families become ever rarer.

On the other hand, it might be argued that the miracle of the Lord's birth was so stupendous that no commemoration could ever do it justice. When has society's observation of Christmas ever been purely spiritual and holy?

We might also consider that although Christmas may not be perfect, at least there is widespread dissatisfaction with what it's become. The very awareness that the contemporary celebration is lacking in spirituality and that this element needs to be restored is a sign of hope that it will be. "Blessed are those who mourn (the secularization of Christmas), for they shall be comforted."

Real meaning is inherent; it can't be invented or artificially attached to something. People can, however, deprive Christmas of its meaning *for them* in the way they observe it; or they can open themselves to discover its meaning by approaching it with a sincere, humble, reverent desire to worship the Lord and rejoice in His presence.

If Christmas is to be more than a once-a-year pretend observance of a miracle in a society that no longer believes in miracles, then the redemption of Christmas must be part of a general rescuing of Christian society from the flood of materialism that has overwhelmed it. A society in which Christ is otherwise absent can't "put Christ back into Christmas."

A revival of genuine Christian faith, of course, is exactly what the New

Church envisions and exists to bring about. The teaching of the New Church does this by explaining the meaning of the Lord's birth more fully and deeply than it has ever been explained. The re-spiritualizing of Christmas will follow naturally from the general re-spiritualizing of the world that the establishment of the New Jerusalem on earth will bring to pass.

A tradition, ritual, or religious observance *means* something because it stems from, and is connected to, a reality beyond itself, and helps us experience and participate in that higher reality. It is the deeper, spiritual reality that the celebration of Christmas is a *sign of* that gives it its significance. It is the same regarding formal worship, marriage, works of art, and all such efforts to get in touch with the transcendent – just as it is the natural reality that scientific theories point to that give those theories meaning.

The essential meaning of anything is in how well it agrees with and furthers the universal purpose of all creation, which is a heaven from the human race. The celebration of the Lord's birth, sincerely observed, is therefore tremendously meaningful. Nothing could relate more to the Divine purpose of creation than the event we celebrate at Christmas; that is, the Lord's coming into the world to redeem the human race from hell and restore it to heaven.

Another word for heaven is *happiness*. When the Lord was born, the angel proclaimed: "I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." Happiness on every level of life, this is the meaning of Christmas – outwardly in the fun and merriment of the occasion, and inwardly in the wonder, joy and gratitude we feel as we ponder the meaning of the Lord's birth in our own hearts.

(WEO)

THE CHRISTMAS GIFT: PEACE

The universal prayer of the Christmas season is "Peace on earth, good will toward men." But the prayer is more than just a longing of the heart. Its promise comes with the angel bringing the shepherds "good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people" – the good news that "unto you is born this day in the City of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." After telling them they would find the babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger, "suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." (*Luke 2:8-14*)

That's the key. Before there can be peace there must be glory to God. That does not mean simply singing the praises of the Lord in church. It means following Him, living His commandments, walking in His way.

Peace is often elusive, in the world and in our lives. All around us is turmoil – war, terrorism, violence, selfishness, corruption. Good people striving to raise our hopes and our standards swim against a surging tide of human failing and cultural decline.

Whether peace is the absence of war and the presence of justice, or just the serenity of a life well lived, it is the deepest yearning of the human heart. We are one with the prophet Jeremiah, lamenting “peace, peace, when there is no peace.”

This is why Herod and John the Baptist are important to the Christmas story. The promise of peace implies some effort on our part – facing up to temptation and evil (represented by Herod), being reborn and regenerated (the calling of John), and “following His star.”

We are counseled in the *Psalms* to “seek peace and pursue it,” but here again the onus is on us: “Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good;” and only then, “seek peace, and pursue it.” (*Psalms* 34:13-14)

The Lord’s coming on earth made it possible for all of us to aspire once again to the peace of heaven, but not without effort. “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I come not to send peace, but a sword.” (*Matthew* 10:34) Again, the work of regeneration.

The peace that the Lord offers is what reigns in our minds once we have overcome the evils and falsities that tempt us. Within this gift is that ultimate peace of heaven – the Lord blessing everything heavenly within us. This “peace on earth” is received only by those truly looking to the “Prince of Peace” – believing in Him and following in His Word.

That is when the Lord says to us: “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, I give unto you.” (*John* 14:27) And, “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee.” (*Isaiah* 26:3) This is “the peace of God that passeth all understanding.” (*Philippians* 4:7) And “of His peace there shall be no end.” (*Isaiah* 9:7)

Any gift becomes meaningful only when we put it to use. That is what we are asked to do with the Christmas gift. In coming on earth – coming to live among us – the Lord showed us the way: the way of life and the way to heaven. “Heaven is granted only to those who know the way and walk in that way. No one becomes an angel unless he carries with him from the world what is angelic; a knowledge of the way from walking in it, and a walking in the way through a knowledge of it.” (*Divine Providence* 60)

(BMH)

The Levitical Blessing

A Sermon by the Rt. Rev. Brian W. Keith

Lessons: *Numbers* 3:1-8, 6:22-27; *Psalms* 103; *Arcana Coelestia* 5662:2, 3

The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you;
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.

(Numbers 6:24-26)

This blessing holds a special place in our hearts. Used at deeply emotionally times – baptism, marriage, holy supper – it conveys a power like no other. There is a poetic cast or cadence that is expansive and makes it memorable, creating a lasting impression on our hearts and minds.

Each of its three lines begins with the Lord – blessing, making His face to shine, and lifting up His countenance. Having the Lord’s name repeated in each line gives it force, as if the Lord Himself is coming down and gently touching each person in the congregation. This is strengthened by considering the “you” repeated in each phrase; in each case it is the second person singular, not plural. It is as if the Lord were personally laying on His hands – touching the heads and blessing each individual there.

The Levites used this blessing daily as people came to make burnt and other offerings at the tabernacle, and then later in the temple. The people would hand over the offering, and the Levite, a member of the priesthood, would pronounce this blessing upon them. It was a daily event – a regular reminder of the Lord’s love, presence and active involvement in their lives. Perhaps a suggestion that we should use this blessing more often in our

The offerings of blessing us, keeping us, having the Lord’s face shine upon us, being gracious, lifting up His countenance and giving us peace are all expressions of what the Lord is constantly doing for us.

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services.

What's more, in the ancient world when blessings were pronounced, they implied fulfilment to those receiving them. Thus, this and other blessings were not simply hopes or prayers for the future, but rather a firm assurance that what was promised would come

about.

So the offerings of blessing us, keeping us, having the Lord's face shine upon us, being gracious, lifting up His countenance and giving us peace are all expressions of what the Lord is constantly doing for us. He is present and creating good in us. And at Thanksgiving, considering this blessing is a way to prepare and recognize all the blessings the Lord has showered upon us.

The Lord Bless You and Keep You

Consider the blessing's first phrase, "The Lord bless you and keep you."

If we were to list all the blessings we have experienced, it could be endless. But what should we count as blessings? Our minds might turn to what we have accomplished over our years or the relative luxury we live in this western world; or perhaps thinking we should elevate our thoughts, we could think of our families or even the spiritual gifts the Lord has given us. The Heavenly Doctrines of the New Church state that:

"'blessing,' involves all and each of the things that are from the Lord, both those that are good and those that are true; thus celestial, spiritual, natural, worldly, and corporeal things." (*Arcana Coelestia* 1422)

Everything we receive in life that is good or true is from the Lord. It obviously includes spiritual riches – the guidance of the Word, the warmth and fellowship of the church, the Lord's presence and care – but it also includes the natural blessings of worldly comfort and health. Indeed, it is for this reason that our first act of worship is to render a financial offering to the Lord in thanks for all He has provided naturally. He gives us the ability to perform uses for our neighbors, and so be recompensed and enjoy the delights of this natural world. It is by recognizing our thanks when we first approach Him that we are prepared to receive His spiritual gifts.

Of course, natural blessings alone are meaningless. As the Writings note:

These, if they be a blessing, must necessarily be so from internal blessing; for this alone is blessing, because it is eternal, and is conjoined with every felicity, and is the very being of blessings. (*Ibid.* 1096; see also 8717:3)

So when natural and spiritual blessings are brought together, then all the

delights of this world can be enjoyed without guilt and in their order.

And not only is the Lord offering to bless us, but also to “keep” us. A simple word, “keep.” Yet it conveys a sense of protection and caring for us in all things. (*Apocalypse Explained* 340:11) Of His arms embracing us and keeping us from harm: for what would be the meaning of these blessings if they were not protected and perpetuated? This speaks to the entire Divine providence – the Lord’s intense and unceasing care for our lives: His gentle guiding of our thoughts and feelings; His softening of any hardships that come our way; His leading us so that whatever happens, He can create good in our lives. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 8478:3, 6303)

Yes, we will indeed see
the Lord in heaven.
And His shining face
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will be visible to us
and show us His
brilliance and wisdom.

The Lord Make His Face to Shine Upon You, and Be Gracious Unto You

But the blessing continues with, “The Lord make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you.” For the ancient Israelite, this probably evoked memories of when Moses received the Ten Commandments and then spoke to the people. Moses’ face then shone, reflecting the brilliance of the Lord. (*Exodus* 34:29-35) We can also recall when the Lord was transfigured in the New Testament: “His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light.” (*Matthew* 17:2) And we are now told that when the Lord appears in any heavenly society He is seen in angelic form “but is distinguished from others by the Divine that shines through.” (*Heaven and Hell* 55) Yes, we will indeed see the Lord in heaven. And His shining face which is promised in the Levitical blessing will be visible to us and show us His brilliance and wisdom.

But for now, His shining face can be seen in the illuminating truths of His Word. (*Apocalypse Explained* 340:11; *Arcana Coelestia* 10579:8, 3660:3) The wonderful teachings about heaven – how we, with the Lord’s help, can effect spiritual change in our lives, how the Lord providentially leads us through life, and the many other teachings that are said to be “so many mirrors of the Lord.” (*True Christian Religion* 508) Each one reflects Him and brings a clarity and direction into our daily lives.

And He will be gracious unto us. Gracious is not a word we regularly hear today. We tend to associate it with the sweeping motions of ballroom dancers, or the tactfulness of a diplomat, or a hostess who smooths the conversations,

making everyone feel at ease. Here, though, it means the Lord's love pouring forth upon us. This is especially when we are in states of sadness or failure, when others have treated us poorly or we have recognized the mistakes we have made. It is then that the Lord is gracious to us – that He embraces us with His affection, brings us comfort and gives us a sense of hope, enabling us to take those next few steps on a better path. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 5043) His kindness in never rebuking us, in never condemning us, but always carefully guiding us is a Divine graciousness, a blessing.

The Lord Lift Up His Countenance Upon You, and Give You Peace

The benediction concludes with, “The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.” Why “His countenance” when it had recently promised that the Lord's face would shine? The phrase “lift up” rather than “shine” carries the sense of the influx of Divine good rather than that of Divine truth. (*Apocalypse Explained* 340:11, 365:12) As shining is the light of truth, so lifting up is the Lord moving His entire being toward us.

As we make attempts to put off what is of hell and take the first perhaps faltering steps toward the heavenly kingdom, the Lord lifts up His countenance upon us. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1054) He sees us for what we can become. He sees our efforts and warmly accepts them. And while it is not explicitly said, we can imagine Him smiling upon us. (See *Apocalypse Explained* 412:21; *True Christian Religion* 56)

His whole bearing focuses on us – our needs, our thoughts, our feelings. He is completely present with each of us, caring for us and filling us with whatever amount of goodness we can accept. This not only is a lifting up of His countenance, but it also lifts us up.

And so it is fitting that the benediction ends with the blessing of peace. It is worthy to yearn for and strive for peace in this natural world where conflict and warfare bring so much misery and pain. Yet the peace here offered is so much more. It “immeasurably transcends” worldly security. (*Arcana Coelestia* 5662:2) Peace encompasses everything from the Lord. It can reign throughout our lives, both bringing spiritual tranquility and natural calm. When we willingly follow the Lord in His Word, then He gives us genuine, eternally lasting, peace.

One passage describes it this way:

“Peace” is charity, spiritual security, and internal rest; for when a person is in the Lord, he is in peace with his neighbor, which is charity; in protection against the hells, which is spiritual security; and when he is in peace with his neighbor, and in protection against the hells, he is in internal rest from evils and falsities. (*Apocalypse Revealed* 306)

The threefold benediction thus ends with this hope for peace because it sums up all that has gone before. The promise of eternal heavenly happiness is the Lord's goal for us, the greatest blessing He can bestow. And He is constantly leading us toward it. It is also the priceless pearl that should be our aspiration, our lode star. To receive this blessing is to be in the Lord's embrace, and having Him take our hands that He may walk with us, leading us to heavenly peace and happiness.

The promise of eternal heavenly happiness is the Lord's goal for us, the greatest blessing He can bestow.

Thus when a priest either lays his hands on an individual, or more generally raises his arms and blesses everyone in a congregation with the Levitical blessing, he is conveying what the Lord inmostly wants to bring to everyone – a blessing of happiness, of the Lord keeping us in His protective arms, of the Lord's face shining upon us with the enlightening truths of His Word, of the Lord's love being gracious in caring for us, of Him lifting up the countenance of His entire being to flow in with love, and finally, of Him giving us the eternal peace of mind that can only come as we turn to Him and walk in His paths.

This is the blessing that He offers to us. And while it usually comes at the end of a worship service, it is both a culmination and a new beginning. For with the Lord's Levitical blessing we can go forward with hope and confidence – hope for the eternal blessings promised and confidence that the Lord will provide them evermore.



The Rt. Rev. Brian W. Keith is Executive Bishop and General Pastor of the General Church; Chancellor of the Academy of the New Church; and President of the General Church in Canada, the General Church in South Africa, and of the General Church International, incorporated. He lives with his wife, Gretchen (Umberger) in Bryn Athyn. Contact: *Brian.Keith@newchurch.org*

The ONE God

A Sermon by the Rev. Ryan M. Sandstrom

Lessons: *Isaiah 9:1-7; True Christian Religion 786*

And His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6)

Take a look at our natural world, at all the things we have on this planet, all the things that were created. None of what we see could come to pass and live if it weren't for the sun. The sun gives life to our planet, and all other planets in the solar system. It is made up mostly of fire, from which we get two vital things: heat and light. Heat provides warmth. It is something we feel but don't see. There is no chance of life at all without the sun's heat. Light provides clarity, dimension and direction. It is something we see but don't feel. You could technically live without it but there would be no purpose or meaning to life. It is thanks to the heat and light from our sun that we get life.

We could talk forever about the sun's heat and its properties and advantages, and we could talk forever about the sun's light. We can talk about each of them as though they were independent of each other. But, no matter how you look at it, it is impossible to separate the two in the sun. There cannot be one without the other. It would also sound strange, let alone look strange, if we talked about a sun that is made up of just heat, and another separate sun made up of just light, yet the two make one somehow.

This is how it is when talking about the Lord. Everything about the sun applies to the Lord. No one can divide the Lord just as no one can divide the sun. We can identify certain characteristics within the Lord and discuss them separately from each other. But the Lord is always one. It matters greatly that the Lord is one, just as our sun in the sky is one.

With the Christmas season upon us it is good to be thinking about the true meaning of Christmas. What do we really celebrate and acknowledge? We can say we celebrate the Advent of our Lord, who came on earth and dwelt with us. What did that accomplish? What does this accomplishment mean to you? How does it change or affect your life?

We will go back to basics here, never losing sight of the all-important foundation of faith, which is to hold firm in the first and great commandment – that there is only One God and no others beside Him.

One main reason why He came to our earth was so He could become visible for us. We will soon learn that connection is impossible with an invisible God. He actually had been invisible many years prior to His Advent but it wasn't because He was concealing Himself; it was more because people lost sight of Him.

The Lord not only made Himself visible in His advent but He showed that He is the One God. The oneness of God is fundamental, it makes Him a focal point, something to draw all our attention to without wavering or being distracted. The oneness of the Lord is something that may be obvious for some of us, but not so for many who are hung up on the idea of a Trinity of Persons. This idea says God is made up of three separate entities: Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Each is in itself God but separate from each other, yet together they somehow make one. The Word, however, does not support this idea.

The Old Testament prophecies of His coming clearly prove the Lord's oneness and visibility. (See *Isaiah* 9:1-7) This is one of the more well-known prophecies of the Lord's Advent. We hear this passage many times around this time of year; it's even sung by choirs. The nice thing about it is that even in the literal sense it is clear that Jesus Christ is the ONE God of heaven and earth. He is not two, or three, but ONE.

We will talk about why this matters, but let's first look at some of the terms in the literal sense of this passage that really emphasize the oneness of the Lord Jesus Christ, since this is an ever-important idea. These are good points to keep in mind; add them to your arsenal; equip yourself in case you're ever up against someone trying to convince you of a Trinity of Persons.

You might find yourself in a conversation with someone trying to convert you or save you, that you must believe, and that you are doomed if you try anything different. In such cases trying to convince them otherwise is almost pointless. They can give compelling arguments based on Scripture, but luckily we have Scripture to keep us grounded in the truth.

Knowing the truth for ourselves helps us most of all in a world where old Christianity still thrives. So keep these points in mind, not to cut people down or prove them wrong, but to keep strong in your own faith against a heavily

The Lord not only made Himself visible in His advent but He showed that He is the One God. The oneness of God is fundamental.

The Lord Jesus Christ is ONE just like the Sun is one. In the Lord we can identify certain characteristics like love and wisdom, which are unique from each other just like light and heat. And just like light and heat, His love and wisdom are inseparable.

falsified doctrine.

We are looking just at the literal sense of *Isaiah* 1:1-7. It mentions the Light that shines in the darkness (which we know to be the Light of Truth), but the darkness didn't comprehend it. However, those who walked in darkness have seen great Light. If you read *John* 1:1-14 it is clear that Jesus Christ is that Light, also the Word made flesh. *Isaiah* identifies Jesus as the Son who is given and the Child who is born. Anyone would agree that this prophecy so far is all about Jesus Christ.

Isaiah then gives Him many names: Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Wonderful we know, Counselor

is clear. Let's skip to Mighty God. We are still talking about Jesus. He's not called "a God," or "one of the Gods," but THE Mighty God.

Let's suppose there were two or three Gods (God the Father and God the Holy Spirit): would Jesus Christ be mightier than they in this case? Or would they all be equally mighty? Is might something that can be shared? If so, doesn't sharing it take away from His Might? He wouldn't really be Almighty if He had to divide it up among other Gods. He would be left with only a portion of might. Would He then be a "Somewhat Mighty God?" It doesn't make sense, unless of course Jesus Christ is THE ONE and ONLY Mighty God.

Isaiah also calls Jesus the "Everlasting Father." Many times in the Gospels, even here in *Isaiah*, Jesus is often referred to as the Son, and God the Father is referred to as the Father. But here Jesus is called the Father. Not only is He called Father, He is the *Everlasting Father*. Basically He is the one and only Father. Now what about God the Father? Can there be two Fathers? It's a crazy idea, just like saying God is two or three.

Now let's add Prince of Peace to all this. It really leaves nothing else for God the Father or the Holy Spirit; clearly Jesus Christ is it all. Then top it off with the statement that "of the increase of His government there shall be no end." Jesus is limitless with power and government while God the Father and God the Holy Spirit seem to have limits now. Do those two get any power and government? Unless that is again that Jesus Christ is the ONE God.

The Lord Jesus Christ is ONE just like the Sun is one. In the Lord we

can identify certain characteristics like love and wisdom, which are unique from each other just like light and heat. And just like light and heat, His love and wisdom are inseparable. They are inseparable like the soul and body, like the Father and Son, like Jehovah and Jesus; Jehovah being the very soul of Jesus Christ.

Old Christian doctrine teaches that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are indeed separate, each in themselves God, but they are one. They explain that they are one like one team, or one unit. Any way they choose to explain it, they will always be using the word THEY, pluralizing God.

The Heavenly Doctrine makes it pretty clear that it is impossible to call Him one and think He's three. Either stick with three or one, but not both. Calling Him and thinking of Him as One is correct.

These points from *Isaiah*, not to mention countless other passages from Scripture, make it clear to anyone that Jesus Christ is the ONE God.

Now let's remember why it was so important for the Lord to come and show Himself and His Oneness. Why does it matter? (See *True Christian Religion* 786)

This number points out that connection is impossible with an invisible God, but connection is very possible with a visible God. None of us has ever actually met Jesus in person, at least not during His first Advent. But the fact that He came and physically walked on this earth makes a world of difference for us.

Notice that it works the same way with other historical figures; no one who is alive today has ever met Abraham Lincoln, or Benjamin Franklin, or Isaac Newton. But we all feel we have gotten to know them and others through written accounts and we see the life and influence they offered when they lived in this world. And it matters that they once lived on this earth and contributed their unique presence and influence.

Imagine yourself at the beach looking upon the open sea. This is the idea of an invisible God. The scene is great and big, like God is. But can you connect with Him this way? No. Now image yourself on the same open beach. You see one Man walking toward you with open arms. That's the idea of a visible God. It is still great and big, like God is. Is connection possible with Him? YES.

In your preparations for Christmas – or anytime really when you want to invite the Lord into your lives – keep the Lord Jesus Christ, the ONE and only God, as your main focal point.

Think of Jesus as THE Historical Figure who once lived on this earth and not only offered His influence and presence for all time, but provided His **Divine** influence and **Divine** presence that has filled the entire universe. Luckily for us, we get to read all about it and learn of His presence from the Word. His visibility matters to us.

Another comparison to the visible God is to imagine yourself at the beach looking upon the open sea. There is endless space to the horizon. This is the idea of an invisible God. The scene is great and big, like God is. But can you

connect with Him this way? No. Trying to connect to an invisible God is like trying to embrace the air. We still end up with nothing.

Now imagine yourself on the same open space at the beach, looking at the endless horizon. In the midst of the horizon you see one Man walking toward you with open arms. That's the idea of a visible God. It is still great and big, like God is. Is connection possible with Him? YES.

Now let's muddle things up. Imagine the same horizon, a big open space. Instead of one Man in the midst you now see three. Which one would you go to? It's no longer great and big, it's just confusing. Connection with God is way harder this way.

So this is why the oneness of God matters. Jesus Christ is the One God in Whom is the trinity (not out of Himself, but within Himself like the *soul*, *body* and *activity* of a person). This idea is what sets us apart from most other religions. But it's not that we are set apart; it's the truth that is in plain view that sets things straight.

We know Who we pray to, and we pray to Him and to Him only. It is confusing if we pray for One to intercede for the Other. The danger to this is that no one really takes into account what he does because he is calling on One to put in a good word for the Other, like he's trying to get off the hook: "I'm a sinner Lord, please speak to your Father so He can favor You and not be mad at me. Thanks."

Let's set things straight: Jehovah Himself came down on earth in Human form, also known as Jesus Christ, through the virgin birth. He came to redeem mankind. This means He gave all of us a fair chance to take up our cross and follow Him, and we can follow Him because we can see Him. He basically restored order and freedom in the minds of all people. Without this order and

freedom none of us could stand a chance against the influence of hell. We'd be lost in the darkness with no light, no truth, no direction, no focus, and no life.

So in your preparations for Christmas – or anytime really when you want to invite the Lord into your lives – keep the Lord Jesus Christ, the ONE and only God, as your main focal point. Who is He to you? Let *Isaiah* answer that for you: He is Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

Amen



The Rev. Ryan M. Sandstrom is pastor of the Ivyland New Church in Ivyland, Pennsylvania, where he lives with his wife, Daniela (Nobre), and their family. Contact: rmsandst@yahoo.com

OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY

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

REMAINS

Here we have another term around which is constructed an important doctrine. By “remains” are meant all the goods and truths, together with their attendant states, which the Lord lays down in every human mind without exception from first infancy to adult life as a basis for regeneration.

They are so called because they actually are remains of all the goods and truths which have been impressed on the mind from infancy; of the states of charity, innocence, love and mercy associated with them; and also of the states of attendant angels.

It should be noted that all remains are implanted by the Lord and that the remains essential for regeneration are given to all. We can provide experiences in which remains may be implanted, but we do not do the implanting, and much that has been thought of as the instilling of remains is really the upbuilding of habits and attitudes. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 561, 1060, 1738)

Tell Out Your Soul

A Sermon by the Rev. Howard A. Thompson

Lessons: *Psalms* 103; *Luke* 1:46-55; *Arcana Coelestia* 6107

Listen first to these words spoken by Zacharias: “Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David, as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, who have been since the world began, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us, to perform the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember His holy covenant, the oath which He swore to our father Abraham: To grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.” (*Luke* 1:68-75)

Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited and redeemed His people.
(*Luke* 1: 68)

These opening words, the inspired utterance of Zacharias, are in acknowledgment of the imminent birth of the Messiah as the Redeemer and Savior of mankind. In the Christian tradition the declaration by Zacharias is known as the Benedictus, a blessing of the Lord by men in praise and thanksgiving for His coming. As a blessing of the Lord by men this utterance brings to mind the well known verse from *Psalms* 103: “Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.”

But wait, as easily as those words come from your lips, have you ever paused to reflect on what it means for us to say, “bless the Lord”? Aren’t we, ourselves, recipients of the Lord’s blessing? How then can we bless the Lord? We are told in the Heavenly Doctrines that “to bless the Lord . . . is to sing to Him, spreading the good news of His salvation, proclaiming His wisdom and might, and so confessing and acknowledging the Lord with all our heart.”

This explanation goes on to say that “people who do this cannot help being blessed by the Lord; that is they cannot help receiving gifts that are blessings.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 1422) “Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people.”

The truth of this explanation – that people who confess and acknowledge the Lord with all their heart cannot help being blessed by the Lord – is all the more demonstrated in the words uttered by Mary from our lessons today: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior." (*Luke* 1:46, 47) These are the opening words to what we know as the Magnificat. The Magnificat and the Benedictus became the earliest Christian songs in glorification of the Lord for His advent, providing the soundtrack for a celebration of the Nativity which has been kept by Christians for many years since, and is now observed with new significance and affection in His Second Advent.

This new significance is the revelation of the inner meaning contained in every element of the Christmas story. Today we look at the symbol of innocence presented by Mary, a virgin betrothed to a man, visited by the Holy Spirit, and who will carry the Son of God. And yet, what might sound fantastic, incredible and even frightening to most is received by Mary with these simple words: "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to Your word." (*Luke* 1:38) The key to Mary's receptivity to the will of God is simple. Her innocence prepared her to receive the Lord in much the same way our innocence prepares us to receive the Lord in our hearts.

Each of us likely has an idea of innocence, apart from lack of a culpability in a criminal proceeding. The dictionary definition that most closely applies to Mary would be "free from moral wrong." Maybe your picture of innocence includes a newborn child, a "blushing bride" or a child's face on Christmas morning.

Each of these natural ideas of innocence can be useful to ponder. They may only be natural concepts but they can lead us to a truly spiritual idea of innocence. In looking beyond natural ideas, teachings for the New Church define innocence simply as "a willingness to be led by the Lord and not by oneself" (*Heaven and Hell* 341) But natural ideas of innocence can be very useful in leading us toward this more interior, inner concept.

Recently my wife and I were out shopping with dear friends. Maybe it was

The truth that people who confess and acknowledge the Lord with all their heart cannot help being blessed by the Lord is all the more demonstrated in the words uttered by Mary: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior."

As with everything that is good and true we are told that the source of innocence is the Lord. We are told that the Lord, who is innocence itself, implants innocence in us so as to affect us.

the subject I have been studying, but I was struck by just how many pregnant women I saw. Every few minutes I saw another one in the very large shop. With each pregnant woman I passed my mood and spirit seemed to lift. I felt a joy at seeing the radiance of a woman within whom was a growing life. It reminded me also of the several times I have known a woman was pregnant, often before she has even told anyone. There is something special about a pregnant woman.

In fact, there is something so special about a pregnant woman that the Lord sends special angels to

minister to a woman during pregnancy.

The heaven through which the Lord imparts conjugal love is the inmost one, whose inhabitants enjoy greater peace than all others. Peace in the heavens may be compared to spring in the world which makes everything delightful; for in origin peace is something utterly heavenly. The angels inhabiting that inmost heaven are the wisest of all, and because of their innocence they are seen by others as young children. They themselves also love young children far more than even their forebears and mothers do. They are present with infants in the womb, and through them the Lord takes care of the nourishment and proper development of infants in the womb. Thus angels from that heaven are placed in charge of those who are pregnant. (*Arcana Coelestia* 5052)

Imagine that. Angels from the inmost heaven, those angels who are closest to the Lord Himself, are sent to care for and look over pregnant women. Maybe that is why many women report feeling a certain euphoria during pregnancy (after, of course, the morning sickness wears off). But imagine what this must have been like for Mary. She not only was surrounded by these special angels but she had the Lord, who is in essence innocence itself, within her. I suspect that was a significant contributing factor to why those who searched for the Lord – the wise men and the shepherds – were able to find her.

As with everything that is good and true we are told that the source of innocence is the Lord. We are told that the Lord, who is innocence itself, implants innocence in us so as to affect us. From the Lord's teaching on *Conjugal Love*:

An atmosphere of innocence flows into little children, and through them into the parents so as to affect them. People know that little children are embodiments of innocence, but they do not know that their innocence flows in from the Lord. It

flows in from the Lord because He is the essence of innocence and nothing can flow in – because it cannot exist – except from its first origin, which is the very essence of it.” (*Conjugal Love* 395)

Further, you need only hold an infant to know that this inflow is certainly not limited to the parent of a child but can flow into anyone who comes in contact with a child. *Conjugal Love* goes on to explain that it is “principally through the instrumentality of touch” that the innocence is implanted. Once again, you need not stretch the imagination to understand this, merely hold an infant and most, if not all of us, will experience a change of state.

But, of course, children grow up. And this obvious, manifest state dissipates and recedes. Some of you may even believe it is right and proper that innocence recedes: “When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.” (*1 Corinthians* 13:11)

And as it recedes in children so it also recedes in parents: “In the measure that innocence in little children recedes, affection and conjunction are also lessened, and this progressively to the point of separation. People know that love for their little children recedes in parents in the measure that innocence recedes in the children; and it recedes to the point of the children's being separated from the home. It can be seen from this, as a clear corroboration, that it is innocence flowing in on both sides that produces the love called storge.” (*Conjugal Love* 398)

But, that innocence recedes does not mean it should recede forever. In fact, if anything, Christmas should be an opportunity to return to that state of innocence. Not only that state of innocence and peace brought about while reflecting on the innocence of the young Mary, natural mother of the Lord, and the innocence of the babe, wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger. But also that state of innocence and peace that is brought about by “a willingness to be led by the Lord and not by oneself.” For it is this willingness that draws a person nearest to the Lord.

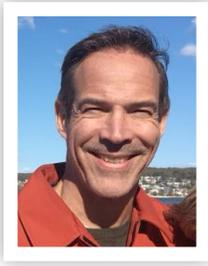
This Christmas season I invite you to mind your thoughts and the words you speak, nurture innocence within and make straight the path that the Lord may inflow and bless you. If, in innocence, you can bless the Lord and praise

This Christmas season I invite you to mind your thoughts and the words you speak, nurture innocence within and make straight the path that the Lord may inflow and bless you.

His Holy Name then you cannot help being blessed by the Lord; that is, you cannot help receiving gifts that are blessings.

The heaven through which the Lord imparts conjugal love is the inmost one, whose inhabitants enjoy greater peace than all others. Peace in the heavens may be compared to spring in the world which makes everything delightful; for in origin peace is something utterly heavenly. The angels inhabiting that inmost heaven are the wisest of all, and because of their innocence they are seen by others as young children. (*Arcana Coelestia* 5052)

Amen.



The Rev. Howard A. Thompson and his wife, Debra, have just moved to Sydney, Australia, where he is the pastor of the society for the New Church of Australasia. He had previously been the pastor in Colchester, England: Contact: revhathompson@gmail.com

OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY

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REPENTANCE

As this term is used in the Writings, it has a very different meaning from that which is attached to it elsewhere. In ordinary usage it is associated with regret for and contrition over the sins of the past. However, the Writings define repentance as confessing one's sins before God, praying humbly that they may be forgiven, and then desisting from them by leading a new life according to the precepts of charity and faith – a process which, to be effective, must be preceded by self-examination which includes the intentions and thoughts as they appear in the imagination as well as words and deeds.

Ceasing from the evils confessed is the very essence of repentance, and the teaching makes clear that the evils of which man truly repents are those which he shuns when they present themselves with delight and when he is free to commit them. (See *Apocalypse Revealed* 531)

CHARTER DAY CATHEDRAL ADDRESS

The Gratitude Effect

The Rev. Dr. Ray Silverman

Lessons: *True Christian Religion* 305-307 (excerpts); *Matthew* 7:2

Students, parents, faculty, administrators, members of the Corporation, and friends: we are grateful that you have come here today to help us celebrate Charter Day.

What is Charter Day? What are we celebrating?

This celebration recognizes the efforts of our founders to establish an educational institution which they called “The Academy of the New Church.” The Academy would be a place where young people can be educated in the light of higher truth, where the teachings of the New Church can be freely shared, and where people can be prepared for lives of useful service both in this world and in the world to come.

And so, on October 17, 1877, the founders of the Academy of the New Church submitted a charter to the Recorder of Deeds in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Two weeks later that charter was fully approved. It gave the Academy the legal right to share the teachings of the New Church, publish books, establish a library, promote education in all its forms, and “confer degrees and diplomas as other colleges and universities.”

Today, as we celebrate this moment in history, we express our gratitude to those who have gone before us, and to all who labored to lay the foundations for the educational institutions that make up this beautiful campus. For many of us, the Academy Schools and College are our “alma mater.” And when we gather on the lawn at the end of this service, we will be singing songs that pay tribute to our alma mater.

But what does that term mean? What is meant by the phrase “alma mater”? Some take it to mean, quite simply, “the school I graduated from” or “the school song.” Others, with a background in Latin, know that the word “mater” means “mother.” Perhaps, then, it means “our mother”? But the Latin word “alma” does not mean “our” – it means “nourishing.” So, the phrase “alma mater” means “nourishing mother.”

Indeed, it was the hope of our founders that the education provided

What is meant by the phrase “alma mater”? (Those) with a background in Latin, know that the word “mater” means “mother.” Perhaps, then, it means “our mother”? But the Latin word “alma” does not mean “our” – it means “nourishing.” So, the phrase “alma mater” means “nourishing mother.”

by the Academy – which includes both the Secondary Schools and the College – would be a truly nourishing one, one that would equip students with the skills necessary to become happy, productive, flourishing human beings. They envisioned a “Great House of Learning,” and later a New Church University that would not only promote academic excellence but also help students develop their spiritual potential.

Charter Day, therefore, is not just an occasion for remembering an historic event. More importantly, it is an opportunity to express gratitude to the founders for all they have done, and to render thanks for all that has been given. In one of our celebratory songs, we will be singing these words:

What name resounds more sweet than thine,
Beloved School! For gifts Divine,
For life and light received thro’ thee,
We render thanks, Academy.

It is altogether fitting and proper that we do so. As it is written in the Ten Commandments, “Honor your father and mother that your days may be long upon the land that the Lord your God is giving you.” (*Exodus* 20:12) According to the teachings of the New Church, this means, quite simply, that we are to be grateful to our parents and caregivers for the part they have played in clothing us, nourishing us, and providing a spiritual upbringing.

In a deeper sense, this applies not only to our parents and caregivers, but also to the church or religious community to which we belong. These communities nourish each of us with spiritual food just as a loving mother nourishes her children with natural food. More deeply, every person – male or female, father or mother, brother or sister – who has supported and encouraged us on our spiritual journey is to be honored. In the Writings of the New Church these people are referred to as our “community of saints.”

These “saints” are not just the famous people of history – like Mother Teresa and St. Francis of Assisi. They are also the everyday saints who are everywhere in the world. According to the teachings of the New Church, an

everyday saint is anyone who loves the Lord and does His will. As Jesus put it: “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.” (*Matthew 7:21*)

Who would you include in your community of saints? A teacher? A coach? An uncle? A grandmother? An inspiring writer? A trusted friend? The possibilities are endless.

Charter Day, therefore, is not just an occasion for remembering an historic event. More importantly, it is an opportunity to express gratitude to the founders for all they have done, and to render thanks for all that has been given. In unseen ways, the Lord has been quietly working through them to feed you with the love and wisdom that will help you live according to your highest values.

At Bryn Athyn College, when we study the commandment that asks us to honor father and mother, students are encouraged to keep a gratitude journal. Their assignment is to simply pay attention, acknowledging, appreciating and noting everything they are grateful for.

Surprisingly, they discover that an attitude of gratitude can become a habit. Instead of automatically thinking, “What’s bad about now?” their default gradually becomes, “What’s good about now?” Physiologically speaking, it makes sense. Like any muscle, if you use it, it grows stronger, and if you don’t use it, the muscle will atrophy. As they say, “use it or lose it.”

A few examples from gratitude journals might be helpful. The first comes from a student who is hesitant about the whole idea of gratitude, thinking that it would not change his life in any significant way. He writes:

At first, I didn’t think that I was going to get very much out of this exercise. So, I decided to just thank God for what I have in my life. No big deal – or so I thought. As time went on, it became easier and easier to find things that I could thank Him for. I started realizing that maybe, just maybe, I needed the quality of gratitude in my life.

During the week, as I began to ask for gratitude, I noticed my mood gradually go up and up. I started noticing when people would hold the door for me, and I felt grateful. I noticed when someone let me borrow a pencil, and I felt grateful. I noticed when someone gave me a ride to get a late-night snack, and I felt grateful.

Charter Day is not just an occasion for remembering an historic event. More importantly, it is an opportunity to express gratitude to the founders for all they have done, and to render thanks for all that has been given.

Normally, I would just notice these things, but I never felt like I truly appreciated them until I started focusing on gratitude.

What this student says is true. The more we flex that gratitude muscle, the stronger it gets. Scientific research in the area of gratitude confirms that there is, indeed, such a thing as the “gratitude effect.” Using sophisticated brain scanning techniques and physiological measurement systems, researchers can see and record what gratitude does to the brain and body.

As volunteers focus on gratitude, chemical reactions begin to take place in their bodies. Their brains become flooded with oxytocin, a neuropeptide that enhances prosocial behavior; brain imaging technology reveals higher levels of activity in the hypothalamus, the area of the brain that controls appetite, regulates body functions, and helps us maintain homeostasis. As a result, the cardio-vascular system settles down and operates smoothly.

After maintaining a gratitude practice for several weeks, the volunteers report fewer aches and pains, less depression, less anxiety, better sleep and increased energy. They feel more creative, more inquisitive, and yes – even more loving! All of this, and more, is the gratitude effect.

It is no wonder, then, that the Word of God is filled with admonitions about the importance of gratitude – especially gratitude toward the Lord. David writes: “I will thank the Lord at all times, His praise shall continually be in my mouth.” (*Psalms* 34:1) The Lord says: “Those who offer gratitude as their sacrifice are the ones who glorify Me.” (*Psalms* 50:23) The psalms teach us that the most immediate way to approach God is through the gate of thanksgiving and praise: “Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and come into His courts with praise.” (*Psalms* 100:4)

Nevertheless, it must be admitted that academic life can be challenging. Sometimes it’s difficult to stop and find things to appreciate. A college student, feeling swamped with assignments and deadlines puts it like this:

My life is busy and hectic, but it is even more so as I approach the end of the term. In addition to my regularly assigned work, the deadlines for all my tests and papers are coming up. I have been determined to do my best, but sometimes I feel that I can’t push myself any further. That’s when all these worries came up: “What if missing an assignment brings my grade down? What if I can’t get into law school because I don’t have perfect grades? If I’m not accepted into law school, will I even get any job at all?”

She then notices that her anxious thoughts are taking her on a downward spiral, even into the beginning of an anxiety attack:

As my thoughts spiral downward, I begin to think I am worthless. At those times I can’t breathe, and I break down crying. I know this is all because I am too anxious, but I can’t let go of the thought that my worries will come true if I don’t try harder.

Law school is everything. I have to get in. So, I barely sleep or eat until I finish all my work.

As she continues her journal entry, however, she describes a change that came over her. It all began when she agreed to take a drive in the country with her friend. She writes:

My friend invited me to go into the country to enjoy the beautiful scenery. It's a pretty time of year, and it sounded like it might be a good idea. Of course, I was still worried about the homework I planned to get done that day. As we were driving, I realized that I had been missing the beautiful weather all term. When I looked around, I saw the colorful trees under the blue sky. The stunning scenery reminded me that there are so many things I can enjoy in the present moment. As I began to forget my worries, feelings of joy and gratitude arose within me. Suddenly I had an epiphany: I realized that I had been focusing so much on the future that I was sacrificing my present happiness.

My dear friend was next to me, and we were eating delicious food while surrounded by a picturesque landscape. I felt as if I were in heaven and that God was with me. I thanked God for giving me a great friend and allowing me to appreciate the world He so beautifully created. All my worries were gone when I remembered that God has given me everything I need to be happy, and He always will. Law school would be wonderful, but I could be happy without it. The important thing was that there was no need to worry.

This student makes a good point. In the academic world, so filled with quizzes, tests, papers, presentations and exams, there are numerous occasions for anxiety, but just as many for rising above anxiety in order to experience inner peace. That's why taking time to focus on gratitude is so important.

It's why we are here today: to express our gratitude to the founders of the Academy; to express our gratitude to our fellow students, teachers and administrators who make an Academy education possible; to express our gratitude to our family and friends who support us in our efforts to become the finest people we can be.

All these wonderful people, taken together, comprise our "community of saints" – our "nourishing mother" – who is to be honored, for it is through

It's Charter Day. May it be a time to appreciate our alma mater. May it be a time to appreciate the founders of the Academy. May it be a time to go forth from this sacred place with gratitude in our hearts, with gratitude in our thoughts, and with gratitude in our actions.

them that the Lord communicates love and wisdom to us. It is the Lord's indirect influence on us through others.

Finally, however, we are grateful for the Lord's direct influence. This is "our Father in heaven" – the Lord Jesus Christ Who touches each of us directly through His Word. That is why those who wrote the charter and founded the Academy were inspired to begin their meals with the familiar blessing: "Oh, give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy is forever." (*Psalms* 107:1)

It's Charter Day. May it be a time to appreciate our alma mater. May it be a time for appreciating what an Academy education has done, and is doing, for us.

May it be a time to appreciate the founders of the Academy, and all those who have labored to maintain this vital educational institution.

May it be a time to go forth from this sacred place with gratitude in our hearts, with gratitude in our thoughts, and with gratitude in our actions.

And may our days be long in the land of gratitude!



The Rev. Dr. Ray Silverman is Associate Professor of Religion, English and Moral Philosophy at Bryn Athyn College. He has served in congregations in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Atlanta, Georgia. He and his wife, Star (Bruner), co-wrote *Rise Above It* and lead classes based on the book. They live in Meadowbrook, Pennsylvania. Contact: Ray.Silverman@brynathyn.edu

OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY

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REVELATION

When revelation is from the Divine, it is identical with the Word. In its ultimate form it is defined as a general vessel receptive of spiritual and celestial things, and therefore the medium through which the conjunction of heaven and earth is effected. Enlightenment is when the Word is read and perceived. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 8694, 1775)

CHARTER DAY BANQUET PROGRAM

The Distinctiveness of New Church Education in the Academy Secondary Schools

B. Erickson Odhner was the emcee for a Charter Day banquet program featuring four different perspectives on what makes the education in the Academy Secondary Schools so distinctively New Church. The four presenters, with their talks below, were:

- **Martha Hyatt Odhner**, (GS '00), teacher of Human Anatomy and Physiology
- **Westley Wedell**, a 2017 graduate of the Boys School
- **Camryn Buss**, a senior in the Girls School
- **The Rev. Christopher A. Barber** (TS MDiv '13) teacher of Religion

The Best of Both Worlds

Martha Hyatt Odhner

I am in my eighth year teaching at ANC. I taught for three years before taking a break to start a family. I've been working back up to full time over the last few years and two years ago I landed my dream job: I now teach Human Anatomy and Physiology – or as it's more affectionately known, HB – to the senior girls.

On day one, we start out with a New Church perspective on the human body. We review the existence of externals and internals. We talk about how the Word has a literal sense and a spiritual sense, and thus how external parts

of our body – hair, finger nails, skin – correspond to natural things and internal parts – heart, lungs – correspond to spiritual things.

Then we set up the idea of heaven being in the form of a human – The Grand Man. And since, as Swedenborg writes, “Everything even to the most minute corresponds to some reality in the spiritual world,” we can expect that every part of our body has a corresponding society in the Grand Man.

In fact, I tell my students, “I think I will end up residing in a tendon.” The spirits of tendons love to receive the influence of the muscle and communicate it, but do not themselves modify it, just as tendons communicate the will of the muscles to the bones but do not contract themselves.

New Church doctrine explicitly shows up in each unit. In HB, the units are divided by organ systems. Therefore, with each unit, we cover the correspondences of body parts and also describe the correlating societies in the Grand Man. The general correspondences found in each organ system highlight the more philosophical aspects of the New Church.

For example, we cover the cardiovascular system before the respiratory system, but given how interconnected the heart and lungs are – correspondentially and physiologically – we can’t talk about one without talking about the other. The heart corresponds to the will and the lungs to the understanding. The will flows into the understanding just as blood from the heart flows into the lungs. One cannot sustain life without the other.

Then we move on to the elegant parallel between our bodies and the Grand Man. The jobs of the spirits in each organ of the Grand Man line up so perfectly with the function of our natural body’s organs. There may be no better illustration of this than the digestive system. Have you ever heard the idea that our digestive tract – essentially one long tube – is not actually a part of us?

Think about that for a second. It’s just one long passageway that our body acts on and absorbs from. As it so happens, the digestive system of the Grand Man is not actually a part of heaven at all! Just as our mouths welcome food and our teeth and tongue begin the process of digestion by mechanically breaking down our food, spirits of the mouth welcome newcomers to the spiritual world and begin the process of teaching them the truths.

Some food takes a long time to be digested and absorbed, just as some spirits need more instruction before entering the Grand Man. Once broken down and deemed useful, nutrients are absorbed just as good spirits are brought into heaven. So, not only are the students getting arguably the best analogy to an organ system possible, they are also learning a little bit more about heavenly societies.

Beyond the doctrine that is embedded in my lesson plans, it also comes up naturally in class. I get lots – and I mean LOTS of questions – in HB class. The

problem is, they are almost never not on topic: “If you can be blind or deaf, is it possible to not be able to smell?” Yep. It’s called anosmia [a-NOS-mia (‘a’ as in apple)]. “Why do the nerves switch so that one side of the brain controls the opposite side of the body?” We don’t know; it could simply be an evolutionary artifact. And one student, in exasperation at trying to understand blood types: “Why would the Lord give us different types of blood?”

This question was especially fascinating. I found the answer in *Divine Love and Wisdom* 10: “Hence the unlikeness of the blood in people is as great as that of their loves, for the blood corresponds to love.” How great is that? There are far more blood grouping systems than the ABO and Rh systems, which means that we really all do have unique blood. Of course it corresponds to our ruling love!

Another student desperately wanted to know what the spirits of the womb do, even though I hadn’t included the societies of the reproductive organs in my lessons. As it turns out, the heavenly societies of the reproductive organs are celestial societies. Here is a quote from *Arcana Coelestia* 5053: “The reason why these societies are celestial is that conjugal love is the fundamental love of all loves. It also excels the rest in use, and consequently in delight; for marriages are the nurseries of the whole human race, and are also the nurseries of the Lord’s heavenly kingdom; for heaven is from the human race.”

And the societies of the womb are especially distinct, as seen in *Marriage Love* 105: “Those who have most tenderly loved children, such as mothers, are in the province of the uterus and surrounding organs, that is, the cervix or the uterus and the ovaries. Those who are there lead the sweetest and loveliest lives and are in heavenly joy above others.”

Then there are the not-so-direct ways that New Church values flow into the classroom. I want to give my students the chance to choose their priorities in life. I want them to have time to sit back and rejoice in this day the Lord has made. To that end, I have chosen to offer optional homework. Those who know me, know I could go on and on about my homework policy, but the gist of it is this: they decide whether or not to do the homework, what they want to do for homework, and anything they submit will only help their grade. My goal is for them to take care of themselves and spend time with family and friends. Life in this world is only so long; I don’t want them to miss out.

I want my students to have a loving classroom free from judgment. I feel confident that I’m achieving this when recent grads reach out to me. As this year started, over the course of about a day, I heard from three of last year’s seniors. One wanted to thank me for leaving all my Quizlet sets up because she was using them in her college anatomy and physiology course. Another wanted to tell me that in her first anatomy and physiology lab she got to observe two cadavers. And the third knew me so well, she texted with some

math questions. Did I mention that I love my job?

In creating a nurturing environment, I do my best to model charity and love of the neighbor for the girls. I offer study groups before tests, make myself available at all hours to help them, and do my best to show up for them in other areas such as sporting events, Arts Night, the plays, and even club trips. I'm also there for them emotionally. Maybe it's because I've become a mother between these two stints in my teaching career, but I've been surprised by the empathy I have for these girls. Seeing them struggle and hurt has brought me to tears; I just love them so dearly.

I want so much for these young women. I'm honored to have been given the opportunity to influence them in this pivotal part of their lives and I hope I have done my part in preparing them for a principled and useful life in the natural and spiritual worlds.

Spirituality and Purpose

Westley Wedell

It's good to be back in the sphere of the Academy. Religion was so pervasive at the Academy that it was like water to a fish. I took it for granted. I had spent nine years prior at the elementary school and four years at the Academy. It wasn't until last year that I realized how profound the ramifications of an ANC education are.

In each classroom throughout the high school, there are plaques containing the core purpose and values. The first line says: *"To prepare students for a principled and useful life in this world and the next."*

In this world, there are schools all over doing a phenomenal job preparing students for this life, and you don't have to go far to find them – just look around the Delaware Valley:

Lawrenceville, George School, Haverford, the public schools on the Main Line. We do a good job, too; however, the Academy also does a great job preparing us for the next.

When I look round at my peers in college they are doing absolutely fantastically. One of my roommates is an All-American. I have another friend who gets two hours of sleep a night juggling ROTC for the Air Force and academic studies. And I have this one friend who gave me pause, when drawing on his experience last summer doing private equity in Australia, he

said to me, “If you don’t have money in this world you are worthless.”

Going forward with my life, how do I measure myself? By the prestige of my career? Whether I make five, six, or seven figures? Or maybe it’s by the impact that I make.

I’m blessed with opportunity to pursue a number of different paths. I don’t have it all figured out, but having the Academy’s core teachings, I realize deep down that I should strive to live the most useful life I possibly can. In a world that too often feels ambiguous and lost, I have found direction through the Academy. Your material possessions are only good insofar as they are used for others.

Alumni from the Academy have not only given their resources, but also their time, their talent and their knowledge to better the world around them. The Academy offers a way through which Goldman Sachs and the Golden Rule can coexist. Where S&P not only stands for the Standard and Poor’s 500 but also Spirituality and Purpose. The Academy of the New Church has taught me that although one day I might aspire to manage hedge funds on earth, I also ought to lay up for myself treasures in heaven.

There is a philosophy that is planted during adolescence here that can bear fruit for the remainder of life into eternity. Thus, it’s not through our words alone that we share our principles, it is in the fruits of our labors that we see the mission of the Academy fulfilled, not only in this life but also in the next.

Words

Camryn Buss

I am a senior at the Academy Girls School. When I was asked to give this speech, I immediately registered that my role as a speaker was to represent the current student body. However, the question remained: what could I possibly say that could eloquently capture the purpose of the Academy while touching on the principles of doctrine in the classroom? With a couple weeks of thought, I came to realize that I actually knew exactly what I wanted to say. With nearly four years of ANC education under my belt, I realize that we have been given the incredible gift of understanding the power of words.

Our lingual development begins with a baseline arsenal of these words. Those seemingly endless vocab words hammered into our heads year after year collect in the dusty corners of our brains. Then suddenly, like magic, those

words start showing up everywhere we go. This incredulous pandemonium of colloquy galvanizes a palpable, supercilious levity. Thank you, Ms. Hodgell!

We are then taught how to apply these words as we write essays and practice public speaking, so that we know how to express ourselves articulately, even after we leave these hallways. I guess that proud old cliché that ANC students excel at writing in college may actually hold some truth.

Although knowing some extra vocab words on the SAT is a pretty handy skill to have, the real trick is learning how to control our words when it really matters. I was talking with a junior girl the other day who was anxiously wondering what types of things are appropriate to put on the Girls School message board. Is the board only used for announcements and those notorious notes written in green pen that signal a chat with the principal? This junior was asking because she wanted to write random, kind notes to her fellow students, letting them know that she sees them and that they are doing a good job.

This is how we should use our words. ANC teaches how words can connect us. Any given sentence has the power to raise another person up to the skies, or tear them down into tiny pieces. Sometimes, a spiteful comment causes just as much damage as a punch to the gut. However, watching my peers, I am amazed and grateful every day by the choices they make with their words. In my opinion, it shows that ANC is doing something right if the world is getting more people like them.

The last dimension of word-mastery is the most difficult to attain or describe. Not to go against my entire thesis here, but, in many ways, isn't language extremely limited? How do you describe things you can't see such as feelings, God, life and death? Can you really effectively qualify anything for that matter with mere word associations? Maybe not, but here, at least we are going to try.

Through religion classes and in-class discussions, ANC students chip away at these indeterminable words to get to a deeper meaning. Words such as "love," "respect" and "faith" are questioned in the classroom in order to flesh out each person's definition for themselves. Through a New Church lens, high school students critically analyze **THE** Word in order to better understand religion and correspondences. This fleet of super students is released, ready to challenge every definition they've ever been **told** to believe, in order to ultimately discover what they **do** believe.

Words. They matter more than we give them credit for. And I believe that an Academy education gives us a superior knowledge of their power. Furthermore, I might even make the claim that you all agree with me, because you wouldn't come back to **this** banquet, to **this** school, if you didn't respect what it has given to you. I know I do.

For fear of exhausting my own words, I'd like to wrap this up quickly. So, thank you for being here tonight! I encourage you all to eat and talk, but remember, speak wisely!

You Can Take It with You!

The Rev. Christopher A. Barber

On this day 11 years ago I, as a sophomore at Bryn Athyn College, stood on this stage and heralded the monumental changes that were going on across the Academy's campus. I felt captivated by the life of this institution and eagerly anticipated its expansion. I hoped that more people could be introduced to the New Church and be educated in its brilliance. Though I had already set my sights on the ministry, I could never have imagined that I would become one of those educators doing that very work of supporting the legacy of the Academy.

It warms me to see so many of you returning for your reunions and to reconnect with your *Alma Mater*. Though I have to say, in a sense none of you has really ever left because you take the Academy with you in the very foundations of your life.

It sounds like every generation of students at the Academy gets a different experience of religious education. Some worked through heftier books like *True Christian Religion* and *Divine Providence*. A bunch of you had encountered the variety and richness of the *Four Doctrines*. Others were less focused on product and study and more concerned with process and feelings. Today the religion program at the Academy covers five main subjects: *The Gospel of John*, Life After Death, Introduction to New Church Doctrine, Marital Love, and Comparative Religions.

As I was reflecting on these I found myself wondering: how would you feel sitting in religion classes at the Secondary Schools *today*?

You might be uneasy studying with freshmen when we critically examine the historical likelihood of various events in the *Gospel of John*, and whether everything happened exactly as it appears on the printed page.

You might feel anxious in junior religion when you learn about Swedenborg, realize that he was a flawed human – just as we all are – and wrestle with the nature of his connection with the Lord, and then how you personally are going to hold his Writings.

You might even become indignant in comparative religions when the

New Church is subjected to the same critical wringer as Confucianism, Islam, Buddhism, and other faiths from around the world.

Depending on your philosophy of the use of the Academy these experiences might be jarring and seem like a threat to students' acceptance of the doctrines of the New Church. They might seem like risky curricular decisions that no longer treat the Doctrines as special and distinct but rather blur the lines between them and other disciplines.

This is something that I struggle with too. It's because of the tension that exists within me between the roles I play in the classroom. As an educator, I teach these doctrines as effectively as possible, and then leave students in freedom to accept them or reject them as they see fit. As a priest, I promote a life according to these teachings. As an academic, I believe in testing these teachings, putting them into dialog and competition with other concepts and philosophies and seeing which fares better. As a New Churchman, I believe that the Doctrines will excel every time and that when approached affirmatively they shed light on how best to live and lend meaning to secular disciplines.

If you believe that the religion program at the Academy is only successful when it makes more New Church people, then yes, I see your concern. But I'm not so sure that's the true measure of success. Faith is a tricky thing. Exposure and examination do not equal acceptance. We're a school, not a faith factory.

And, as a school, the Academy is built on the affirmation that the Word of the Old and New Testaments as well as the Heavenly Doctrines of the New Jerusalem, speak for God, and that these are offered for our *whole* lives.

We are confident in this.

It is this affirmation that makes it possible for us to take our faith with us into every study. It is this affirmation that becomes our armor as we enter into hard questions, modern conundrums, and critical analyses. And it is this affirmation that empowers you to take the foundation and mission of this Academy with you wherever you go. After all, the Academy was first a school of thought before it was a school with walls.

Religion here at the Academy, as you have heard from the speakers who preceded me, extends well beyond the hours of religion class. It enters into the grasp of our anatomy – the frame that supports our spirit as we take on the joys and struggles of this world. It is behind the words that we speak and read – “and God *said* let there be light.” (*Genesis* 1:3) It is in the ethics of business exchange and money management, as well as the navigation of materials in this world and the laying up of treasures in the next.

When we study religion *apart* from other disciplines, it makes it all too easy to keep the Doctrines separate. However, when we integrate the Doctrines

as we do into all of our studies, they then become an integral part of the way we view life.

Never fear! The Word is still at the heart of all things that we do. The students know this and our chapel program especially bears witness to that. We don't preach from Darwin, Steinbeck or Greenspan. The Lord alone is our teacher. As Simon Peter offered: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the Words of eternal life." (*John* 6:68)

Many of our students go out into the world and carry on, influenced by the teachings of the New Church in ways that we'll never know. We're not entitled to know every ripple of our impact on the waters of society. Yet we can rest assured that because of the clarity of our teaching, the conviction of our faculty, the vigor of our alumni, and the rich culture of affirmation that we strive to build and perpetuate, that we demonstrate it to be possible to both believe these things and excel in our engagement in the world.

And not only is it possible, but it is preferable as it yields a powerful perspective which constantly searches for meaning and identifies ways to be useful, upstanding, charitable members of the human family.

This is the legacy of our Academy and what a gift it is to be a part of it.

OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY

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

SCIENTIFICS

Scientifics are the facts of the Word, of nature and of experience, unorganized into ideas. Thus they are merely vessels which are capable of receiving truths or falsities.

Without them we can have no ideas, and therefore neither intelligence nor wisdom.

(See *Arcana Coelestia* 9394, 9922, 3025)

Evolution and Religion: One Scientist's Perspective

Justin G. Stroh, PhD

Lessons: *True Christian Religion* 305-307 (excerpts); *Matthew* 7:2

Perhaps you have heard one or more of the following statements:

- Science is inherently opposed to religion.
- A majority of scientists are atheists and pretty much all elite scientists are atheists.
- As our scientific knowledge continues to advance, science will become increasingly larger and more important and religion will become increasingly smaller and less important.
- For the most part, science is a liberating force and religion is a controlling force.

Most people have heard at least one of these statements before. Some people even think they are a fair representation of what the aggregate of scientists truly think. Yet all of these statements are demonstrably false. It is not my purpose here to refute each of them; that would take the better part of a book to do. On the other hand, it is my purpose to discuss both evolution and random selection as it specifically relates to New Church theology. However, before I can do that I must at least preface this with a few facts on the claims above so as to understand where some of the more salient problems are coming from.

In the following I refer to “the sciences” as biology, physics, chemistry and their descendants (biochemistry, biophysics, genetics, etc.) and not to psychology, sociology, economics and the like. This is not because of any preferred distinction but rather because the biological, physical and chemical sciences are the ones that I know.

The core of the issue here is the misconceived notion that science is inherently opposed to religion; this assumption leads to all the rest. Readers of Swedenborg know that he was a scientist long before he was a theologian and

that many of his arguments hinge on scientific knowledge of the day – especially as it relates to anatomy (a biological science). There is clearly not a conflict here. However, when one opens up the window of religion to include things like biblical literalism, as dramatically expressed at the Scopes Monkey Trial of 1925, there is indeed quite a conflict.

This war between science and biblical literalism has been raging for approximately 100 years, with no evidence that resolution is anywhere near at hand. Most of it revolves around the first three chapters of *Genesis* and has led to all kinds of nonsensical arguments regarding the age of the earth being only about 10,000 years old; God making it appear that the earth is much older than 10,000 years when it isn't; and even that which I find personally insulting – young earth “scientists.” They are not scientists because they do not act as scientists, they are advocates; and that is a very important distinction.

Their opponents, the New Atheists, are just as misinformed. They argue (falsely) that most scientists are atheists and all “real” scientists – meaning scientists from prestigious institutions that have achieved high scientific honors – are atheists.

Let's look at that claim. Consider the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) – the most prestigious scientific organization in the United States. In order to obtain admission into this august body one must be nominated by a sitting member and then be approved by the organization as a whole. It counts more than 300 Nobel Laureates as members – not exactly a shabby organization.

So what do they have to say about this conflict between science and religion? On their website, the NAS library has a three-paragraph discussion on science vs. religion. For brevity, I list just the first sentence of each paragraph:

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1. Science is not the only way of knowing and understanding.
2. Acceptance of the evidence for evolution can be compatible with religious faith.
3. Science and religion are based on different aspects of human experience.

(<http://nationalacademies.org/evolution/Compatibility.html>).

This hardly sounds like an argument for atheism. However, this same group has a lot to say about why they are very much against biblical literalism (i.e. creationism and its intentionally obscured derivative “intelligent design”). As a side note, I would suggest that the vast majority of friction between science and religion comes from atheists using science as a cudgel against biblical literalists, and I understand why biblical literalists are so alarmed.

If Adam isn't a single literal man, then the whole concept of original sin (upon which much of standard Christianity depends, including the reason for the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus) is rendered false. But that is a completely different matter that does not involve New Church theology and is way too large a subject for this discussion.

Now, if scientific elites are not inherently against religion – how about most scientists (in general) are atheists? For this I refer the reader to The Pew Research Center, an excellent non-partisan research institution that is well known for its in-depth polling of various populations on a host of different subjects. It turns out that in general, approximately 4% of the American population self-identify as atheist in the commonly understood meaning of the word. (<http://www.pewforum.org/2009/11/05/scientists-and-belief/>)

On the other hand, approximately 40% of scientists self-identify as atheists. That's a ten-fold increase over the general population, which is nothing to sneeze at; but 40% does not a majority make. What about the other 60%? Indeed, many of them are agnostics but about 30% believe in a God of some sort (mostly from Judaism, Islam and Christianity).

Most people know that in the United States the general population is becoming increasingly secular, with fewer young people counting themselves religious – as demonstrated by the rise of the “Nones.” But surprisingly, from the same study it was demonstrated that exactly the opposite is the case in the sciences – that is, my younger colleagues are more likely to believe in some sort of a God than older generations of scientists. So, it's a mixed bag to be sure, but not “most scientists and all real scientists are atheists.”

I mention this, not as an exhaustive demonstration of where scientists stand in regard to religion – it doesn't even begin to scratch the surface of that subject – but rather to let the reader know that modern science is not

the enemy of religion, as some think. For until one rejects the science-as-enemy-of-religion argument, nothing of what I am about to say will make any sense.

So, in very basic terms, what is evolution? Is it real? If it is real then how does it work and what is its relationship to religion? These are the questions I wish to discuss.

First of all, evolution is not development. Some people like to “soften the blow” of evolution by arguing that it is just another term for species development; however, this is not the case. Evolution is the process by which complex biological life forms were derived from earlier simpler life forms. Another way of stating this is that all of biology (of which humans are a very small part) has been derived from a common ancestor.

There is overwhelming scientific evidence in both the areas of genetics and DNA that humans were biologically derived from lower life forms. The process by which this occurred is called natural selection (also called random selection). If that is true, then what does the process look like?

In terms of genetics (and specifically individual DNA sequences), there are many point mutations that occur between a parent's and descendant's sequences. Many of these mutations have no functional effect. However, every so often one of these mutations causes an observable change that provides some advantage to the descendant in the environment in which they live. Passing that particular mutation onto succeeding generations over a long period of time causes a change in what the organism actually is.

While completely ignoring any discussion of migration and genetic drift, that, in a grossly oversimplified nutshell, is what evolution is and how it works. That the overwhelming percentage of scientists believe in evolution is not because of some anti-theistic belief, but because it works, it consistently and accurately predicts future results when variables in an experiment are controlled for, and no one has offered a better and more consistent explanation for genetics and DNA sequences.

One final point about evolution is how these point mutations come into being; the term most often used is random selection. That is, there is no known cause for any particular mutation: they occur randomly. Now, the concept of randomness in the sciences is a really good one. Every scientist

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(myself included) uses randomness now and again as a very useful tool for getting one's arms around that which is currently unknown.

As an example, it is used extensively in clinical designs and in the testing of new hardware and software projects to great effect. The truth is that there is no such thing as a truly random analysis, but we try the best we can. As a tool, random is great. But no scientist actually believes in randomness as a principal. To do so would be to argue that there are no scientific laws, no scientific reasonings, nothing. Everything is just "random".

So, what of New Church theology in regard to evolution? Is it Theistic Evolution? No, it is not. Here is where I diverge from my religious colleagues in the sciences. Theistic Evolution as it is commonly understood today is only a baby step removed from creationism, which is demonstrably false. Theistic Evolution is the idea that a God started the process of evolution and then stood back and watched the whole

thing unfold.

There are many derivatives of this argument, but they all basically involve a distant God who wound things up, pushed the go button, and watched the outcome. What I am arguing is something quite different and (I hope) easily grasped by anyone who has a basic foundation in New Church concepts.

The first (of two) ideas that I would like to share is what I would call the "non-linear" relationship between the spiritual and the natural. What does that mean? In *Arcana Coelestia* 9350 Swedenborg writes: "THE REASONS WHY THE LORD WILLED TO BE BORN ON OUR EARTH, AND NOT ON ANOTHER. There are many reasons why it pleased the Lord to be born and to assume the Human on our earth, and not on any other, concerning which I have been informed from heaven." Further to No. 9360 he continues: "To the reasons already adduced may be added that the inhabitants, spirits and angels of our earth bear relation in the Grand Man to the external and

bodily sense, and the external and bodily sense is the ultimate, into which the interior things of life come to a close, and in which they rest as in their common receptacle. The case is similar with truth Divine in the letter, which is called 'the Word,' and which for this reason also has been given on this earth and not on another."

This is a very clear declaration that we on this planet are the ultimate – meaning the most outward-facing – humans in the universe. While this is the spiritual case, one clearly cannot make this the natural case. Are we at the outer edge of the universe? No. We are somewhere on a minor branch of the Milky Way that is just one of an unknown number of galaxies – and by the way, the Milky Way is nothing special, it's just average in size. Perhaps Swedenborg didn't know that?

Well, that's not actually of any consequence because we are not even at the outer edge of our own solar system and that system was well known in Swedenborg's day. Yet he still proclaimed it. Why? Because there was clearly no expectation that one would assume a direct linear relationship between this spiritual state and our own natural environment. This is important if and when someone asks how evolution could be true if humans are not at the pinnacle of the evolutionary chart. Again we are just one minor branch on the evolutionary tree of life and we appear in the very recent geological past.

Relating these facts to the above statement from the Writings indicates that there should be no expectation of a linear relationship between the declaration that the whole purpose of the Lord's creation is a heaven from the human race and the idea that we are not at the top (or any other special place) on the evolutionary chart.

At this point, one could argue that I am merely separating observable science from religion so why not just go all the way and give up on religion all together? That brings me to the second idea. Swedenborg writes in *Divine Providence*: "It is a Law of Divine Providence that we should not sense or feel anything of the working of Divine Providence, but that we should still know about it and acknowledge it." Slightly later, in No. 187.2 he writes:

(4) We are allowed to see divine providence from behind but not face to face, and when we are in a spiritual state, not in a materialistic state.

It is different for people who do not let any inflow in from heaven but only from this world, especially people who have become complete materialists by accepting outward appearances as absolute truth. They see no trace of divine providence from behind, or after the fact, but they do want to see it face to face, or before things happen. Since divine providence works through means, and since these means include us and this world, if people like this were to see it either face to face or behind, they would ascribe it either to themselves or to the material world and so become even more certain in their denial.

This is where New Church theology diverges from other arguments of providence that I have ever heard. It follows that the theory of evolution, far from being antagonistic toward religion, at least in terms of New Church theology, is in fact a beautiful mechanistic description of how Divine Providence operates on the workings of biology.

The reason they would come to this conclusion is that their discernment is closed upward and open only downward, closed toward heaven and open toward this world, and we cannot see divine providence from this world, only from heaven.

I have sometimes asked myself whether these people would acknowledge divine providence if their minds were opened upward and they were to see in broad daylight that the material world is essentially dead and human intelligence essentially nothing, and that the contrary appearance in each case is the result of inflow. I have realized that people who have convinced themselves of the supreme value of the physical world and human prudence would not acknowledge providence, because the earthly light that flows up from below snuffs out the spiritual light that flows down from above.

What is amazing to me is that although the laws of divine providence as they are written in Swedenborg's text clearly have humans in mind (a heaven from the human race, humans acting in freedom according to reason, etc.) it is fairly clear that these laws apply equally well to every other part of the

universe. For this discussion, that means that the laws of Divine Providence work just as well on the mechanisms of biology.

And this is where New Church theology diverges from other arguments of providence that I have ever heard. It follows from the above quote that the theory of evolution, far from being antagonistic toward religion, at least in terms of New Church theology, is in fact a beautiful mechanistic description of how Divine Providence operates on the workings of biology.

Going one step further, it is important to note from the above quote that none of this can be seen from a natural state, only from a spiritual one. Not being a theologian, I am ill prepared to defend that statement. I can only attest that in my own life, on the very few occasions that I have been able to grasp this concept of seeing divine providence from the rear and only in a spiritual state, it has been long after the fact of individual experiences when I was able to see a glimmer of why the Lord would have allowed certain experiences

to unfold in my life the way that they did.

Finally, reading the above statement from *Divine Providence* indicates that we will never be able to predict what the Lord in His divine providence will do (either microscopically in our own lives or macroscopically in the evolution of living systems). This alone makes such comparisons to science useless because all of scientific theory is about the ability to predict future events based on known physical laws of nature. So, what does that say about religion and the science of evolution?

To quote from Galileo (who himself was quoting a Catholic Cardinal): "The Bible teaches us how to go to heaven, not how the heavens go."

So, what does that say about religion and the science of evolution? To quote from Galileo (who himself was quoting a Catholic Cardinal): "The Bible teaches us how to go to heaven, not how the heavens go."



Justin Stroh obtained his Ph.D. in chemistry from the University of Illinois in 1986. Immediately upon graduation he went to work in "Big Pharma" companies where he was for 30 years a lab head in various Drug Discovery departments. He currently works as a mass spectrometry administrator at Eurofins Scientific. He and his wife live in Fort Washington, Pennsylvania. Contact: strohjustin@gmail.com

OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY

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

SCORTATORY

By this term, which is peculiar to the Writings, is meant the love of adultery when it is such that adultery is not held to be a sin, nor to be wrong and against reason, but allowable with reason. This is the opposite of conjugal love, and as that love is the essence of heaven, so is it the essence of hell. (See *Conjugal Love* 423)

BOOK REVIEW

A New Key to the Bible

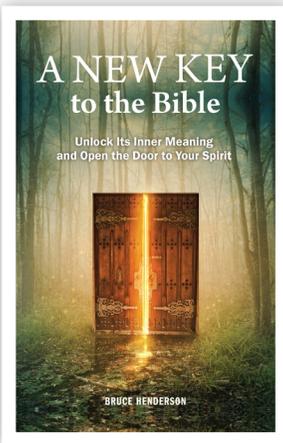
Unlock Its Inner Meaning and Open the Door to Your Spirit

By Bruce Henderson

Reviewed by Peter Boericke

Written primarily to introduce people who may be seeking a new and deeper understanding of the Bible, *A New Key to the Bible* immediately draws the reader in and sets the stage with an enticing and provocative introduction. Bruce Henderson then leads the reader chapter by chapter through a carefully selected sample of the Bible, featuring: the familiar allegorical story of creation from *Genesis*; historical events from *Exodus*; a new vision of God and the Christmas and Easter stories in the New Testament; and the mysterious and vivid imagery of *Revelation* that has baffled the Christian world ever since it was written by John almost 2000 years ago.

These powerful selections are discussed in the views of both traditional and contemporary thought before being presented in the new light of Swedenborg's clear "inner meaning" and its application to life. The author offers readers a unique look at an overview of Swedenborg's Writings – thousands of pages – in this remarkable little book of just 146 pages.



Just as he has so skillfully penned in his first two books: *Window to Eternity* (*What happens after you die?*) and *Why Does God Let It Happen?* (*Why does God permit bad things to happen to good people?*), in this book Henderson answers the question: *What is the inner meaning of the Bible and how does it relate to my life?*

Each of the nine chapters is introduced with quotations from well-known literary scholars, theologians, philosophers and scientists – quotations that help lead the reader thoughtfully into the subject to follow. This book is the last in a trilogy. All of them are thoughtful, compelling

and easy-to-read introductions to Swedenborg's Writings and New Church thought. And they provide answers to questions universally sought after.

A New Key to the Bible is clearly written to attract and introduce a wider audience to the New Church. Yet, it is more than that. It is also a perfect primer to reintroduce those in the Church who may wish to return to a more committed study of the spiritual sense of the Word. It resets the stage, whets the appetite, and stimulates the mind to unlock and reopen that door.

Published by the Swedenborg Foundation, with its primary mission to spread the Writings, New Church readers more used to the traditional New King James Version (1979) of the Bible may need minor adjustments to the many Biblical quotations from the New Revised Standard Version (1989) and new translations of the Writings. The Foundation also has adopted a more universal style of not capitalizing the Divine pronouns and of using the name of "God" rather than our more familiar "Lord."

A New Key to the Bible is an important reminder of who we are, why we were created, and the necessary steps in our spiritual journey so that we may come fully into God's Heavenly Kingdom.

The author's summary on page 72 perfectly describes both the essence of this book and of life: "This is what underlies everything in the Bible, from *Genesis* through *Revelation*: Love God. Love your neighbor. Choose life, but choose not just the life of this world. Choose spiritual life – the life of heaven, the Promised Land."

In his final chapter, Henderson beautifully concludes with God's gift to all of us: "God has given us his Word in the Bible to help us live good lives and draw close to him, but we need to read it to make the connection. What it says to us comes from that still, small voice within, connecting us with each other and with God. It transcends time and space and relates to our own spiritual journeys. When we read the Bible this way, what appears to our everyday mind and eyes as historical, worldly events and people becomes a mirror for the life of our soul. We hear the voice of God: "This is the way; walk in it." (*Isaiah* 30:21)

A New Key to the Bible is a needed, important and valuable companion to the author's other two books of introduction. It is an open invitation to the world "to 'come and see' the Bible in a whole new light."

A New Key to the Bible: Unlock Its Inner Meaning and Open the Door to Your Spirit by Bruce Henderson, published by the Swedenborg Foundation, West Chester, PA. www.Swedenborg.com (Paperback \$13.95)

To contact Peter Boericke: pboericke@verizon.net

Church News

Compiled by Bruce Henderson

THE NEXT EXECUTIVE BISHOP



(Photo: Bishops Brian W. Keith, left, and Peter M. Buss Jr.)

The Rt. Rev. Brian W. Keith, who will retire as Executive Bishop of the General Church next June 30, e-mailed this statement to General Church members on October 16:

“I am pleased to announce that the **Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr.** has been affirmed as the next Executive Bishop. He received 1,445 ‘yes’ votes, 304 ‘no’ votes, and 5 ‘abstain’ for an 82.38 affirmative percentage. Congratulations to Pete and we now look forward to his leadership, beginning July 1, 2019.”

This was accompanied by the following message from Bishop-elect Buss:

“I begin with deep gratitude for the confidence placed in me to step into the important role of Executive Bishop of the General Church. Thank you to all those who cast a vote, pro or con. It is a privilege to serve the church that I love in this significant way.

“I have been doing a great deal of visiting with people since I was nominated in June. The early emphasis of these meetings has been the clergy,

in an effort to hear their perspectives and consider who might assist me in the episcopal use. I have also begun meeting with General Church and Academy board members, as well as leaders within these two institutions, with the goal of connecting with each of them before I take office in July. Several General Church members have reached out to me too.

“Based on all those conversations some directions are starting to form in my mind. I see a lot that we can get excited about as a church – ways in which we can each do our part to serve in an organization that strives to reflect the faith of the New Church. I am also aware of the pressures and tensions that exist and look forward to finding constructive ways from the Word to address them.

“Teresa and I have the privilege of seeing the General Church around the world. We have also just experienced another Charter Day weekend at the Academy. It warms my heart to see the many good people who are providing leadership and the positive effect of our mission in people’s lives. With a collective trust in the Lord, and a commitment to serve in the light of the Word, there are bright days ahead for the General Church and the Academy. I look forward to working with so many of you to see it take shape. May the Lord bless our collective efforts.”

GENERAL CHURCH BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Assuming that favorable affirmation from the General Church membership as the next Executive Bishop, the **Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr.** said he had begun some contingency planning so that he could hit the ground running, leading up to the transition in July of next year.

Once affirmed, Bishop Buss anticipates asking for a full-time assistant bishop, rather than the current arrangement of a half-time assistant who devotes the rest of his time to leading General Church education. The board was affirmative to the concept and encouraged him to move forward with the vision, goals, resources needed and job descriptions.

Director of General Church Outreach **Rev. David Lindrooth** reported on a new internet platform goal to establish an online spiritual community, based on mutual interest and need, and built on the doctrines of the New Church. **Bergen Jungé** has been hired part time for project management in Outreach.

The budget for fiscal year 2018 finished with a \$45,000 surplus. The Office of Advancement reported a 5% increase in the number of donors this year as well as an increase in total dollars raised, including nonrecurring estate gifts and restricted contributions. The New Church Investment Fund, which includes the General Church portfolio, reported a 7.4% gain in the past year, which is close to the benchmark.

The Cairncrest Committee has recommended retaining Cairncrest for General Church offices. It is also exploring supplemental uses which could help produce income and defray costs for the Church, without compromising office use.

The Human Resource Committee presented a concept for an Employee University to further educate and support employees. A detailed project plan will be built, including costs.

ACADEMY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

At the September 19 meeting of the Academy Board of Trustees, Bryn Athyn College reported that it missed its enrollment goal of 390 students by 110 students, leading to an increased budgetary deficit. The college is analyzing how this occurred and is taking steps both to address the immediate budget gap and improve recruiting in the future.

The Academy Secondary Schools reported an enrollment of 218 students with favorable fund raising based on generous donations.

The Legal Advisory Committee recommended hiring a half-time general legal counsel to act as secretary; perform numerous legal functions; negotiate reduced legal fees when using outside firms; provide for centralization of corporate records and memory; support board committees; and advise the board on legal matters. This was approved.

ACADEMY CORPORATION

At the Charter Day meeting of the Academy Corporation, six incumbents were re-elected and six new members were elected.

Re-elected were: **Bill Buick Sr., Jessica Edmonds Duda, Leonard Gyllenhaal, Brent Hyatt, Kyle Smith** and **Phil Zuber**.

Newly elected were: **Chris Carter, Michael Carlson, Lynn Genzlinger, David Hotson, Keith Hyatt** and **Mike Morton**.

Lee Asplundh Allen is chair of the Nominating Committee for next year and **Charlie Cole** is the vice-chair.

CHARTER DAY 2018

Every year returning alumni can be heard to say, "This was the best Charter Day ever!" It was heard a lot this year. Highlights included:

- The Cathedral address by the **Rev. Dr. Ray Silverman**, *The Gratitude Effect* (see page 479) followed by enthusiastic students belting out Academy songs on the east lawn
- The stunning Alumni Art Show, sporting events and Kite Day
- The Theta Alpha luncheon, with an excellent talk by **Angela Rose**,

with an updated view of Bishop George de Charms' *Philosophy of New Church Education*. Unfortunately for *New Church Life* readers this was a PowerPoint presentation which does not lend itself to publication.

- The banquet with “the best food ever” and inspiring talks from four perspectives on *The Distinctiveness of New Church Education in the Secondary Schools*. (See page 485)
- The enduringly popular and sold-out Mix-and-Mingle at the Cairnwood Estate.
- The football tailgate party, the 24th annual student scholarship golf outing, and more.

CLASS REUNIONS

Seven reunion classes from 10th through 70th (!) enjoyed getting back together in the sphere of the Academy. They also presented these generous gifts to the Academy:

- 2008 – Senior Project in memory of **Tabitha Cannon**
- 1998 – Pottery Wheel for the Art Department
- 1988 – Gift to support the Secondary Schools Performing Arts Program
- 1978 – Senior Project Paper Mentor Honoraria Fund
- 1968 – Teacher Development Fund
- 1958 – Student Scholarship Fund
- 1948 – Student Scholarship Fund

BRYN ATHYN COLLEGE

Distinguished Alumni

Lisa Hyatt Cooper graduated from the Academy Girls School in 1972 and Bryn Athyn College in 1976. She has had a long and distinguished career as a Latin translator of the Writings for the General Church and the Swedenborg Foundation. She organized three international and interdenominational conferences for translators of Swedenborg at the College in 1988, 1992 and 1994. She has been a key member of the translating team for The New Century Edition of the Writings, published by the Swedenborg Foundation. She lives in Bryn Athyn with her husband, Kent Cooper, and they have two sons and three granddaughters.

David Hotson graduated from the Academy Boys School in 1977 and received an Associate Degree from Bryn Athyn College in 1979. He graduated with a Bachelor of Environmental Studies from the University of Waterloo in

Ontario, Canada, in 1983, where he was awarded the Ontario Association of Architecture Prize for outstanding design work. He then entered the Master of Architecture program at Yale University, where one of his classmates was Maya Lin, who designed the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, DC. He was selected by the faculty as the outstanding student in his class and was chosen to represent Yale in a traveling fellowship. Since 1987 he has been in New York City with his own firm David Hotson Architect. He married Liz Bigham in 1995.

Outstanding Volunteer

David Cooper graduated from the Academy Boys School in 1977 and received an Associate Degree from Bryn Athyn College in 1979, then earned a degree in engineering at the University of Maryland and launched a career in communications technology and software development. In 1995 he joined a colleague at Antech Systems, which grew from two employees to 140 and then merged with Digital Wave Technologies, which employees many Bryn Athyn College Alumni. He moved to Bryn Athyn in 1999 when his wife Sherri joined the Bryn Athyn College faculty as head of the Biology program. After Sherri lost a brave battle with cancer, Dave established the Sherri Rumer Cooper Memorial Research Fund to support undergraduate research at the College. He has been president of the Bryn Athyn College Alumni Association since 2013. He is a member of the Academy Corporation and its College Board Committee.

Complete biographies of all three recipients are available at www.brynathyn.edu.

ACADEMY SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Distinguished Alumni

Sierra Asplundh attended school in Bryn Athyn from elementary through high school, graduating from the Girls School in 2008. She graduated from the University of Richmond, Virginia, in 2012, with a Studio and Fine Arts degree. She was a member of the Division 1 field hockey team that won two conference championships. While at the University of Richmond she was diagnosed with cancer and began focusing on cancer support programs. In her post-graduate career she attended Bryn Athyn College, where she was a founding member of the women's lacrosse team. She has been involved with lululemon athletica which focuses people on the arts and healthy lifestyles. She lives in Brooklyn, NY, and is a manager at a lululemon brand experience in SoHo, New York City.

Emily Jane Asplundh Lemole grew up in Bryn Athyn, graduated from the Girls School in 1958 and received an Associate Degree from Bryn Athyn

College in 1960. She earned a BA in English from Denison University and a Master of Arts in Religious Studies from the Bryn Athyn College Theological School in 1999. She also studied Children's Literature at Arcadia University and Holistic Health at Rosemont College. She was ordained in 1999 as an Interfaith Minister and in 2013 as a Swedenborgian Minister in the General Convention Church. She has served on the Academy Board of Trustees, Loving Arms Mission, Bryn Athyn Church Financial Aid Committee, Lower Moreland Township Board of Commissioners, Holy Redeemer Board of Trustees, West Chester University Foundation Board and is Chairperson for the Asplundh Foundation. She and her husband, Dr. Gerald Lemole, live in Huntingdon Valley and have six children, 20 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Wade Buick grew up in Bryn Athyn and graduated from the Academy Boys School in 1998. He earned a Bachelor of Science from the United States Naval Academy in 2003 and was commissioned as an officer in the U.S. Navy. He served in the Western Pacific, offshore Iraq and Kuwait, in the Pentagon in Washington, and in Kunar Province, Afghanistan. Returning home he married Maraika Brown and earned his MBA from the University of Virginia. He worked in strategy and sales leadership at DuPont before moving to Kempton, Pennsylvania, where he is director of operations for Eastern Engineered Wood Products in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. He is a member of the General Church Board of Directors and was a founding committee member for Helping Children in Crisis, a General Church effort supporting orphans in Kenya. He and Maraika have three children and another on the way.

Grant Genzlinger also grew up in Bryn Athyn and graduated from the Academy Boys School in 1968. He earned a Bachelor of Arts from Oakland University in 1972 where he studied archaic Chinese language. He maintains a lifelong interest and has traveled extensively in China, as well as much of the world. He is board co-chair of Settlers Hospitality Group in Hawley, Pennsylvania – a collection of five hotels in the Pocono Mountains and Lehigh Valley. He and his wife, Jeanne, founded The Settlers Inn, the original property of the hospitality group, which has been rated as one of the top inns in the country. Their group includes five hotels, four restaurants and a coffee house. He has a passion for historic preservation, land conservation, sustainable agriculture and education, taking leadership roles and receiving many honors. He attributes his core beliefs to the values he gained from his family and growing up in a New Church community.

Outstanding Volunteer

Bruce Cronlund graduated from the Academy Boys School in 1985, and from Hamilton College in 1989 with a BA in English Literature with a Psychology minor. He joined the U.S. Air Force in 1990 and became a Russian linguist. He

met his wife, Molly, in the USAF Language School in Monterey, California. He has been a technology consultant for Digital Wave since 1998. Bruce has served on the Advisory Board for the Eastern Center for Arts and Technology, on the Board of Directors for the Ivyland New Church, as Assistant Scout Master in Bryn Athyn, and assistant coach for youth hockey in Bryn Athyn and Huntingdon Valley. He is a talented photographer who takes many pictures for the Academy. He asks no compensation but encourages clients to make contributions to charities of their choice. For more information, see <http://www.brucecronlund.com/about/>

Complete biographies of all five recipients are available at www.ancss.org.

Reunion Artists

In what has become a popular Charter Day tradition, a special art exhibit opened with a reception on Thursday afternoon in the Fine Arts Center (Old Library) and continued for several weeks. On hand at the opening to talk about their art were:

- **Kay Kintner Caldwell** (GS '58)
- **Dinah Rose** (GS '68)
- **Wendy Soneson** (GS '68)
- **Dianna Synnestvedt** (GS '68)
- **Nancy Synnestvedt** (GS '68)
- **Laurie Curtin** (GS '78)
- **Justin Odhner** (BS '78)
- **Donald Rose** (BS '78)
- **Jamie Synnestvedt** (BS '88)
- **Normandy Alden** (GS '98)
- **Keith Gruber** (BS '98)
- **Bronwyn Odhner** (GS '98)
- **Cathlin Grace** (GS '08)
- **Eleanor Schnarr** (GS '08)

Student Scholarship Golf Outing

The 24th Annual Student Scholarship Golf Outing at Philmont Country Club sold out again. That means two foursomes on each of the 18 holes. There was rain in the morning, cloudy skies and wet conditions throughout, but spirits were not dampened. Even before the first balls were teed up almost \$50,000 had been raised for scholarships. That brings the total for 24 years to more

than \$550,000 in scholarship funds. Thanks to generous alumni and sponsors, the planning committee and all of the golfers who made it another successful event.

A PARTNERSHIP FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION

Bryn Athyn College and AIM Academy have announced a partnership as part of the College's new Master of Science in Special Education with a concentration on literacy. With AIM Academy's cutting-edge, research-based teaching methods in literacy and language-based learning differences, the College's new master's program is at the forefront of its pre-K-8 special education teacher preparation and training.

The AIM Institute for Learning & Research was launched with AIM Academy in 2006 in Conshohocken, Pennsylvania. It provides pioneering expertise in teacher training that connects literacy research, theoretical models and classroom practices. Select Bryn Athyn College graduate students will be able to apply for AIM's teacher residency, where they can see these practices and methodologies in action in AIM Academy, a 1-12 college-prep school for students with language-based learning differences.

Bryn Athyn College is licensing content from AIM to use within its literacy course curriculum. This content is tied to the International Dyslexia Association's Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading and will address fluency, writing, reading and implementation science, supporting literacy instruction across the curriculum. Students will also have access to AIM's digital training platform that helps teachers work with student data to address literacy needs.

AIM Institute Director Pat Roberts says: "This new partnership with Bryn Athyn impacts the teacher pipeline, getting preservice and in-service teachers better prepared for working in the classrooms and being able to implement best practice in literacy across the curriculum informed by AIM's proven research-focused curriculum and training practices. Given the current literacy crisis in our country, we clearly see the importance of working with a school like Bryn Athyn College that understands the role the science of reading has in meeting the literacy needs of all readers, and we are glad to support the development of the literacy focus of this program."

The research-supported teaching methods developed by AIM complement the spiritual context that guides the Bryn Athyn College program, where students are trained to nurture the innocence of youth. They learn that the environment of their own mind – their thoughts, attitudes and feelings – influences the children in their care, and they gain tools to create the best

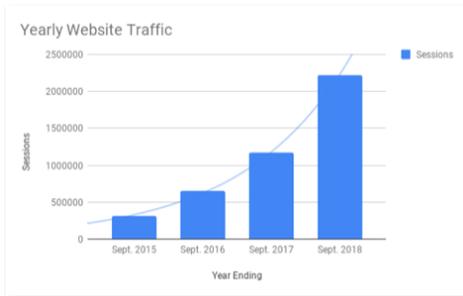
possible environment for children. This partnership brings together vital skill sets and knowledge bases to best meet the needs of young students with learning differences.

Dr. Kelly Ballard, head of the Master of Special Education Program at the College says: “I am excited to offer teachers the critical skills, knowledge and experiences required to teach literacy and support struggling readers, while fostering skills to nurture the innocence of youth within the demanding academic environments of today’s classrooms.”

The College is moving forward with the next steps in launching the program and is beginning to recruit the first graduate students in this field to begin their course of study in the summer of 2019. For more information contact Kelly.Ballard@brynathyn.edu or 267-502-2416.

NEW CHRISTIAN BIBLE STUDY UPDATE

Steve David



The Word + The Writings + Explanations = Basket Raising Off of Lamp

Traffic's up! We saw 89% growth over last year, as we pushed up well over 2.2 million annual visits. If we can keep doing this for six more years, we'll be in the big league of Bible websites.

Pathways: In April, we started offering pathways —ways that people can explore topics of interest, and easily find true ideas that they can use in their lives.

Reading Plans: In June, we rolled out another new feature – Bible reading plans. You might be thinking – wait, it's been a Bible Study site without reading plans? Well, er, yes, it was – but now you can "Read the Book of Joel in 3 Days" or "Read the New Christian Canon in 9 Months." (Hop online and try them out!)

The Writings for Everyone: With a crescendo of action in the summer, we've cleaned, imported and linked up 41 more Writings translations, bringing our total to 268. We also have 45 original Latin works, 20 translations online but still "stranded" in pdf format, and 80 more in our work queue. We had good summer help from high school and college students, working in Korean, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Serbo-Croatian, Russian, Dutch, Czech, Latin,

French and English. More and more of the Writings are online, linked to the Word and to each other, in 20 languages, spoken by more than 3.7 billion people.

International User Interfaces: We offer User Interfaces in 12 languages now, and we get help from around the worldwide church in maintaining them.

What's Happening Right Now

Rippling! What's that? If you're an English-speaking Bible reader on our site, you will have seen the blue highlighted words in the text of the Word. They link to pop-up explanations of the internal sense of those words. But, if you're a Bible reader in any other language – you've been out of luck. No words were highlighted. That wretched basket was still covering the lamp.

We've working to reliably ripple the matching of the right words and phrases from English into the other languages we offer, and then to explain them, and we've been making some of the needed breakthroughs. In mid-September, we went live with our first batch of 300+ highlighted words that occur thousands of times in the Spanish Bible texts. A week later, we added the first waves of French and Portuguese words, followed by the first 500 Italian words, and now Dutch and German.

There's more to do. We need to make our programs smarter, so we can handle ambiguous words and multi-word phrases and tackle the Asian languages. We also have to translate all the pop-up explanations, so there's still a way to go. But, this is really something, something important for the New Christian movement worldwide – if more Bible readers can start to "get" its internal sense.

Explaining the Word in 250 Years or Less. Eighty-five percent of our site traffic comes straight to Bible pages. And on most of those pages, you can click the "Study the Inner Meaning" button, and read the Writings, or read some sermons, or read some old commentary. You might get lucky and get to link to an Off the Left Eye video. But, a lot of the time, there's nothing that's very introductory, or quick, or eye-catching, or approachable. We want to change that. We want to foment a church-wide effort to explain the internal sense of each chapter in a nice, friendly, easy-to-start-with way. If we can do that and combine those explanations with the rippling of highlighted words, we will really have something special. The basket will be gone. The lamp will shine.

If *New Church Life* readers want to help, there are lots of ways to do so. And if you want to help fund the work, we can show you how to do that, too!

Can *New Church Life* readers help with the Project?

Yes! People can import sermons, write explanations, proofread, find or create photos and artwork to illustrate stories and concepts, pitch in on software

development. We very much need people to donate money to help fund the work. More and more, it's getting to be a crowd-sourced project. Check it out and get in touch! Here's a link to our "Get Involved" page: <https://newchristianbiblestudy.org/get-involved>.

Website: www.newchristianbiblestudy.org Contact for Steve David: sdavid@newchristianbiblestudy.org

NEW CHURCH VINEYARD

Subscribe to New Church Vineyard at <https://newchurchvineyard.org> to keep up with the many creative offerings for families. A current message: "The Lord leads us to find ways to help people, alerting us to opportunities to serve them. We are often unaware of this inspiration, because the Lord cherishes our freedom. But if we are open to His leading, we can recognize opportunities to help others. At times, it may even feel as if we are being tapped on the shoulder and urged to help. Learn more about the inspiration to serve others in *Alerted by the Lord*." The website's home page features many other programs.

OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY

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

SENSUAL

The sensual is the ultimate of the life of man's mind and it adheres to, and coheres with, the five bodily senses. It is the lowest of the three planes which constitute the natural degree of the mind, and it is the obscure life animating the senses of the body that perishes when man dies. The man who lives only on this plane, believing only what he can see and touch, is sensual. (See *True Christian Religion* 565; *Arcana Coelestia* 7693, 10,236; *Heavenly Doctrine* 45)

CHARTER DAY PROCESSION AND CATHEDRAL SERVICE



Academy procession led by Junior Karl Cranch and Marshal Gail Cooper



Factores President Camryn Buss and Student Council President Zach Lambertus carry Academy banners



Left to right Maggie McCabe, Emily Cooper, Emma Reuter, Fiona Hogan



Secondary Schools students singing Academy songs outside the cathedral



Cathedral filled with Academy Secondary Schools and Bryn Athyn College students



Mary Odhner snaps a selfie with Girls School friends

CHARTER DAY BANQUET AND THETA ALPHA LUNCHEON



Chancellor Brian Keith thanking reunion classes for their gifts (in the background, banquet emcee Erik Odhner)



The Charter Day banquet



The Theta Alpha luncheon



Theta Alpha luncheon speaker Angela Rose

Photos courtesy of
Bruce Cronlund,
Joy Feerrar and
Serena Sutton.



The Charter Day Team, left to right: Kaylene Glenn, Nicole Bau-Madsen, and Jahna Henderson

CHARTER DAY FUN



Ray and Star Silverman help granddaughter Ellie with her kite



Bryn Athyn Bounty



Lisa Hyatt Cooper, one of the Distinguished Alumna for Bryn Athyn College



Left to right, Emily Latta, Catie Jungé, Casey Schauder, Kimmy Allen, and Derrell Allen



Bret Bostock heads up the sold-out Mix & Mingle at Cairnwood



Corbin Larson gets into the spirit of the popular Kite Day sponsored by Bryn Athyn College

CHARTER DAY SPORTS



Nicole McCurdy makes a block in girls volleyball



Quarterback Jeb Brenfleck ready to throw



Jim Adams takes his shot at the annual Student Scholarship Golf Outing



The start of the annual Bob Eidsen Run



The Deka tent at the football tailgate



Devin Bryant picks up a gain against St. Andrews

Life Lines

THE CORNUCOPIA OF THE NEW CHURCH

In ancient times when all things in nature were seen, truly, as representing spiritual things, horns were emblems of "truths from good," which is why kings, including David and Solomon, were anointed with oil poured from a horn. The oil signified "the good of love." This is how the symbol of a *cornucopia*, the horn of plenty, originated. (*Apocalypse Explained* 316.28) It is still a familiar symbol of the harvest festival of **Thanksgiving**.

In the New Church, our spiritual cornucopia is the doctrine of the Divine Human. The truth conveyed by that doctrine was revealed by the Lord out of His Divine love, and the blessings that flow from it are copious indeed.

(WEO)

CHOOSING LOVE

We learn many of life's most indelible lessons the hard way – in the midst of tragedy or upset. The learning – and the growth – come not with what we experience but in our response. That's what happened to Scarlett Lewis, a single mom whose life was irreparably changed on December 14, 2012, when her six-year-old son, Jesse, was one of the victims of the horrific shooting in the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut.

In the shock and numbness of dealing with the tragedy that day she quickly realized that her 12-year-old son was watching her intently for signs of how to act. She knew immediately that she could not let anger and hate define her life. Even if she wasn't feeling it yet, she had to model love and forgiveness. She would never forget what happened, but when she spoke at Jesse's funeral a movement was born that has defined her life ever since: Choose love.

Scarlett gave a deeply moving talk at a NewChurch LIVE service in Bryn Athyn last year about a prescient message Jesse had scrawled on a chalk board in her kitchen the morning he later died: Nurturing – Healing – Love. This isn't the vocabulary of a six-year-old and the words were spelled phonetically, but the message was clear. And she has transformed her life to work with schools all over the country to develop programs for social and emotional support.

Scarlett returned to NewChurch LIVE recently to talk about character

traits she wants schools to instill in their children by choosing to respond – always – with love. She focused on courage – a manifestation of love and the opposite of fear. We have thousands of thoughts each day, she said – many of them subconscious. Studies show that most of them are negative and self-defeating: doubts, fears, anger, resentment.

We need to create healthy environments, in our homes and schools, where we consciously choose to respond with love, no matter how provocative or hurtful the situation. That's the way the Lord responds, and we are called to live in His image. Scarlett is convinced that the man who killed her son – along with 19 classmates, plus six teachers and administrators that day – never would have acted that way if he had grown up in a supportive, loving culture.

This, of course, is what New Church homes and New Church education are all about. We commit to teaching and preparing our children for lives of usefulness and charity in this world and the next. That means choosing love, choosing heaven. There are none of the negative thoughts in heaven that haunt us in this world because it is a kingdom of the Lord's love.

New Church education aims to model what Scarlett Lewis yearns for in schools everywhere. We have programs to promote social and emotional support – from Bryn Athyn College, through the Secondary Schools, elementary school and General Church schools – to nurture charity and oppose behaviors like bullying. No doubt she could add perspective and expertise to what we do. There is also much we could offer to enrich her mission.

My wife and I chatted with Scarlett after her presentation and she was taken with New Church concepts. She focuses on the choices we make every day – and that no matter what happens, we get to choose how we will respond. Her insistent message is: learn to choose love. She was impressed with the teaching that we are actually choosing heaven (or hell) every day of our lives through the myriad choices we make – the ultimate in choosing to live what we love.

She admitted to being discouraged at times – hearing enthusiasm but seeing no follow up. But much of her program is derived from the Bible, which keeps her optimistic: Be of good courage. Be of good cheer. Fear not. Love the Lord. Love your neighbor. She liked a comparison to the parable of the sower – that she is sowing seeds everywhere she goes. Some fall on good ground, some in poor soil, but the sower helps the Lord to work in people's lives. She has reached the lives of 1.3 million students so far – a lot of seeds being nurtured and blooming.

The perfect follow up to her NewChurch LIVE talk lies in *Divine Providence* – that the operation of the Lord's love in the world, through His providence, is also not in what happens to us but in all that follows, and that the Lord only allows evil that can be turned to good. Scarlett Lewis is a living

example, from that tragic day she lost her son to every day she works to save us all from another Sandy Hook. She never would have chosen this path. Now she would never turn away from it.

(BMH)

OUR FREEDOM, OUR CHOICE

Scarlett Lewis's *Choose Love Enrichment Movement* focuses on developing four character traits: courage, gratitude, forgiveness, compassion. Her goal is to cultivate optimism, resilience and personal responsibility in our young people.

Her website includes this mission statement: "Although we can't always choose what happens to us, we can always choose how to respond. Children can learn to choose a loving thought over an angry one. When (children) realize they have the power to positively support themselves, as well as those around them, it is empowering and perpetuates their positive actions and interactions."

That echoes the wisdom of a favorite book of mine: *Man's Search for Meaning* by Viktor Frankl. He was a Holocaust survivor who saw that people in the Nazi death camps who lost hope quickly died, while those who found meaning in their lives were more likely to survive. That is our last personal freedom before all else is lost – choosing how to respond. This was the basis for a school of psychiatry he founded: that we always have that power to choose, and within our response "lies our growth and our freedom." Also our destiny.

Those who find the most meaning in life are those who look to the Lord as its source. Scarlett Lewis recognizes that. Her approach is Bible-based and easily adaptable. That is why it resonates with people of faith, with New Church teachings and New Church education. Choosing love simply means choosing to follow the Lord – always.

(BMH)

TAKE HEED OF YOUR MINISTRY

The Great Commission at the end of the book of *Matthew* can be intimidating: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." (*Matthew* 28:19)

Yes, this was Jesus Christ charging His disciples. It is easy to suppose this is also aimed primarily at priests. After all, how are lay men and women to be "teaching and baptizing all nations"? But we are all meant to be disciples – followers of the Lord – and so also are called to encourage others to follow in His way.

In a sense, we all teach – directly or indirectly. We may do specific things to bring the church into the lives of others through active uses, or just by the

way we live our lives and impact the lives of others. We are also all sowers, like Scarlett Lewis, spreading seeds even if we are hardly aware – seeds that the Lord nurtures in others. In that sense, each of us has a ministry.

In the New Church we don't pay a lot of attention to the noncanonical books of the Bible – those without a continuous internal sense. But there is much wisdom still to be gained from these holy books. There is a section, for instance, in *1 Timothy* 4:11-16 which is headed: "Take heed of your ministry":

"These things command and teach. Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

"Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you. . . . Meditate on these things. . . . Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you save both yourself and those who hear you."

Now that's a "ministry" we all can heed.

(BMH)

ONE WAY TO MINISTER

Another little gem in *Ephesians* 4:29 not only extends a personal challenge but offers an example we all could employ in a world increasingly given to incivility and divisiveness:

"Let no evil come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to all those who hear."

(BMH)

HEROINES OF THE ACADEMY

The following remarks by Bishop N.D. Pendleton at the 1907 General Church Assembly Banquet were made in response to a toast that had been made to "the heroes of the Academy." The bishop's response gives an inspiring sense of the sphere of harmony, joy and excitement that characterized the Academy in its early days, and which obviously still inspired the people of the Academy to carry on their great project. Bishop Pendleton said:

If there were heroes in those days, there were heroines also. The assault that was made upon the Academy fell more hardly upon the women than upon the men in certain vital aspects, and the way in which those women sustained that assault, and stood by the men, causes them to be an object of reverence to us today. We revere them not only because of their faith and their loyalty, but also because of their loving hearts and sweet intelligence.

The early Academy, men and women, labored for a certain ideal of **the conjugal**. They believed with all their hearts and souls that the Lord was ready to give to His New Church a new love from heaven, and the men and women of the Academy in its early days lived in the actual expectation of that love and its realization – and I

believe it is that thought that brought about a certain condition that prevailed in the early Academy which made it unique.

Surely you will recall that there was an indefinable something present in those meetings, a kind of circumambient sphere that penetrated the minds of all in the beginning with a **sense of joy and delight**, causing their hearts to be elevated with a common exultation, and causing altogether to give attention to the things that were said. Nowhere in the world was there such a state; and it is described in the work on *Conjugal Love* as being present only in the **Garden Adramandoni**, where they walk and talk daily of conjugal love. If I mistake not, the early Academy came in touch with this sacred garden.

If, then, we younger men of the Academy regarded the men of the Academy as brave knights, certainly we looked upon the ladies of that day as so many **hearts of gold**, who gave to the men the only thing worth having, the only thing worth living and dying for, the hope of the conjugal.

(1907 New Church Life, p. 564, bold type added)

(WEO)

THE ACADEMY'S HEARTS OF GOLD

Notice the focus on conjugal love in the above comments regarding the contribution of women to the founding of the Academy. In today's parlance we speak of "the role of women," but the women who served in the founding of the Academy weren't playing a role. They were simply women with hearts full of love for the great work at hand and, from their love, a deep and living perception of what the Academy stood for. It was their gift of love to the men of the Church that inspired the men with the wisdom and strength they needed to make the Academy a reality in the world.

The Academy was not just a set of ideas, or an intellectual theory, or a new educational institution. It was, at heart, an ideal, inspired by the new heaven from which the New Jerusalem descends. More specifically, it was the ideal of conjugal love, and hope for the renewal of that love in the world, as promised by the Lord in His second advent.

The ideal of conjugal love contributed greatly to the sphere of joy and delight that was so palpable in those early days. The husbands and wives who devoted themselves to the work of the Academy especially found delight, not just in the project itself, but in the fact that they were engaged in it together. The two sexes weren't rivals jealously guarding their own territory and competing with each other, but partners who respected and delighted in each other's special contribution and the way they complemented each other.

The Academy was not just built, it was born. It was the product of the love between the men and women who brought it into the world, and the source

and focus of their mutual delight.

(WEO)

ADRAMANDONI

The name of the garden Bishop Pendleton referred to, Adramandoni, "where they walk and talk daily of conjugal love," is one of the few words of angelic language recorded by Swedenborg. He was given to understand the meaning of their language so that he could explain it in terms we could understand, but the actual words the angels use have no earthly equivalents. Each one is so full of meaning as to be beyond our comprehension, and thus he didn't bother repeating them. *Adramandoni* is a rare exception.

In his toast the bishop suggested that the early Academicians were "in touch with this sacred garden," and that this accounted for the joyous and delightful sphere that surrounded their community. It is a beautiful thought, and, I suspect, true.

(WEO)

FAITH AND THE ARTS

In his book, *The Rational Bible*, Jewish scholar Denis Prager includes an essay on "False Gods," based on the commandment: "You shall have no other gods before Me." Prager fears the "false gods" in our culture are demeaning all faith in God. – and he's right.

He writes: "As belief in God and Christianity declined in Europe in the late 19th century – and especially after World War I – classical music deteriorated, as did the other arts."

Throughout much of history, art and music celebrated God. Johann Sebastian Bach, one of the greatest composers of all time, said: "The aim and final reason of all music should be none other but the Glory of God and the recreation of the mind."

Franz Josef Haydn noted at the top of all his compositions, *in nomine Domini* ("in the name of the Lord"), and ended them with *Lauds Deo* ("Praise be to God"). Ludwig van Beethoven was not as overtly religious but considered his *Missa Solemnis* – written for the Catholic Mass – his greatest work.

Prager claims: "The death of God (pronounced by Friedrich Nietzsche in 1882) and the near-death of great art are related.

"In the West, when God dies, so does higher culture. And where secularization has become the norm, there has been a similar decline in the arts."

Look at our culture. There is still much in art and music that is uplifting, but much more that bows down shamelessly before false gods. Above every

one of his more than 200 cantatas, Bach inscribed, *Soli Deo Gloria* (“To God alone the Glory”). You won’t find that sentiment in most of today’s “recreations of the mind” – the music pulsating from car radios and the beach, or “art” that celebrates the scatological rather than the divine.

Heed the Psalmist, who was not distracted by false gods:

Oh, sing to the Lord a new song! Sing to the Lord, all the earth.

Sing to the Lord, bless His name. Proclaim

the good news of His salvation from day to day.

Declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among all people.

Psalm 96:1-3

(BMH)

TEARS OF JOY

In all the glorious history of art and music honoring God, a favorite at this time of year is George Frederic Handel’s immortal *Messiah*. It is the incarnation of the Christmas prayer: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good will toward men.” Many people uplifted by it each year consider it divinely inspired.

As we bask in its glory it is worth recalling that inspiration. The program for a *Messiah* Vespers service in the Bryn Athyn Cathedral some years ago included this inspiring summary:

“When a nobleman praised Handel as to how entertaining the *Messiah* was, Handel replied: ‘My lord, I should be sorry if I only entertained them. I wished to make them better.’

“Handel wrote his famous work in only three weeks, between August 22 and September 14, 1741, without once leaving his house. During this time, his servant brought him food, and when he returned, the meal was often left uneaten.

“While writing the *Hallelujah Chorus* his servant discovered him with tears in his eyes. He exclaimed: ‘I did think I did see all Heaven before me, and the great God Himself.’

“As Newman Flowers observes: ‘Considering the immensity of the work, and the short time involved in putting it to paper, it will remain, perhaps forever, the greatest feat in the whole history of musical composition.’

“At a *Messiah* performance in 1759, honoring his 74th birthday, Handel responded to enthusiastic applause with these words: ‘Not from me – but from heaven – comes all.’”

Remember that when you hear the *Messiah* and its *Hallelujah Chorus* in this Christmas season – with tears in your eyes.

(BMH)

IMPERSONATING GOD

The usual meaning of the word "impersonate" in our time is to imitate someone else, for entertainment or, more sinisterly, to commit fraud. But I recently ran across an archaic use of the word "impersonate" in an old New Church collateral work that struck me as curious and enlightening.

The author (Leopold Grindon) used an older, more exact sense of the word in reference to the Lord, writing that "Jesus impersonated God." I was puzzled for a moment, but then thought: yes, that's precisely what He did, and what an interesting way to put it. In this context, the word means to *personify* or make personal.

The infinite Divine in Itself is invisible and beyond our finite comprehension. In the Lord Jesus Christ, though, God assumed a human form on earth, glorified it and made it His own, thus making the Divine *personal*, so that we might know, and love, and enter into an eternal relationship with our God in His Divine Human.

Whether we say, "Jesus impersonated God," or "God impersonated Himself in Jesus," or, as it says in the Writings, "God assumed the Human," it means the same thing. Reflecting on this increases our understanding and appreciation of the great miracle we celebrate at **Christmas**.

"No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has revealed Him. . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (*John* 1:14, 18)

(WEO)

THE DIVINE HUMAN

The Lord was born on earth as a Man so that we might have a clear, definite, human idea of God. The cornerstone of all New Church thought is the "Divine Human." That phrase represents the greatest promise of an ever-increasing understanding of God ever given.

The Divine Human is the "all truth" into which the Lord in His second coming, as the Spirit of truth, guides us. (*John* 16:13) It is the first and the last, the beginning and the end, of all wisdom. It is as humble and apparently simple as a seed, and as majestic as the greatest of trees. It represents everything the New Church is and ever will be.

The Lord in His Divine Human is as innocent as the Baby away in the manger, who laid down His sweet head, and as glorious as a King charging through heaven on a white horse.

And the New Church that worships the Lord in His Divine Human is as

radiant as a woman clothed with the sun, and beautiful as a Bride adorned for her Husband.

(WEO)

GOD AND SANTA CLAUS

Atheists like to compare belief in God and spiritual reality to believing in Santa Claus – beliefs which they, as rational adults, have outgrown. It's significant, though, that while no one in adult age reaffirms the belief in Santa Claus they had as a child, it is not at all uncommon for people to reaffirm their belief in God as adults. In fact, confirmation of faith is a rite for people who are entering adulthood.

Childhood belief in Santa Claus is routinely shed as people grow up, while belief in God, with many people at least, is embraced and deepened. Converts to religious belief are typically adults. And those who lose their belief in God as adults often regain it later on as their thinking matures.

C. S. Lewis, for example, was an intelligent, extremely well-educated person who lost his belief in God as a young adult, but then regained it. His re-found faith was anything but childish. It came to him as a result of much careful thought, and a struggle of several years to overcome his doubts. It certainly wasn't the product of wishful thinking or grasping at straws in a time of trouble. In fact, he resisted accepting the faith that gradually grew in his mind. He was, he said, "a most reluctant convert."

A person's understanding of religious truths may be unenlightened and uninformed, but to reject so fundamental an aspect of human life as religion because it is often imperfectly manifested would be like rejecting the habit of eating because so many people eat too much junk food.

Those who have been persuaded by rational arguments against faith in the Divine should at least be able to see that there is a world of difference between genuine, mature religious belief and fanciful stories for children. Equating belief in God with belief in Santa Claus . . . that's what is childish.

(WEO)

THERE IS NO OTHER WAY

The end of one year and the dawning of another is a time for reflection. Holy Supper provides an opportunity for self-examination and regeneration. New Year's resolutions also help us focus on making our lives better.

There is a reason why John the Baptist is part of the Christmas story – and why he comes first. Repentance and regeneration are the only way to be "born anew" – to come into heaven. Indeed, the Writings say, "There is no other way."

The holiest day in the Jewish faith is Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement

for past sins, taken from the command in *Leviticus* 23:26-32. The Catholic Church encourages regular personal confession. All of Christianity subscribes to the calling of John the Baptist, “preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.”

Repentance may seem complex and complicated. But *True Christian Religion* 528 gives us four basic, simple steps: examine yourself; recognize and acknowledge your sins; pray to the Lord; and begin a new life.

“There is no other way.” It may seem daunting at times. And indeed it is the work of a lifetime. But the Lord is always with us, reassuring, and showing the way:

Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest for your souls.

For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light. (*Matthew* 11:28-30)

(BMH)

OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY

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

SIMILITUDE

This term occurs in the doctrine of conjugal love. It refers to likenesses of mind, both internal and external, which originate in connate inclinations modified by education, environment and the persuasions that have been imbibed. For those who properly desire conjugal love the Lord provides similitudes, in the life after death if not in this world.

The word has sometimes been thought of in the singular, and it has been supposed that a similitude is, in effect, a substitute partner provided for one whose true conjugal partner has failed to regenerate. This idea is based on the belief that conjugal pairs are created “one for one”; but there is no proof that they are so provided, the term is always used in the plural, and this idea of similitudes seems to be a mistaken one. (See *Conjugal Love* 227-229)

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*"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."
Matthew 6*



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