

NEW CHURCH *Life*

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

MAY/JUNE 2019



Curse of the Dragon, Salvation on a White Horse

The book of *Revelation* – and all that we celebrate on the 19th of June – are all about the threat of the dragon in our lives and what leads us to salvation. See sermons by the Rev. Jeremy F. Simons, *The Curse of the Dragon*, (page 223), and the Rev. Erik J. Buss, *What Do We Think About the Word?'* (Page 229)

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

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GENERAL CHURCH ASSEMBLY 2020: JUNE 18-21, 2020

As previously announced, Bryn Athyn Church will host a General Church Assembly from Thursday, June 18 to Sunday, June 21, 2020. We are grateful to the Academy Secondary Schools and Bryn Athyn College for making facilities available for this purpose. This gathering commemorates the 250th anniversary of the launch of the New Church, as recorded in *True Christian Religion*.

Previous announcements have solicited input as to what would inspire people to attend. Ideas being considered are: a variety of presentation and discussion formats; strands within the Assembly – such as parenting in New Church ways in today’s world, the New Church around the world, young adults, or the retirement years; and how to be more outward focused as a church. Please keep the ideas coming. You can send thoughts to gcassembly2020@newchurch.org.

To be announced soon is a guiding theme for the Assembly. Ideas being contemplated harken back to our roots, as well as focusing on ways we are called to serve today. Announcing a theme will allow for a call for presentations leading up to Christmas 2019, followed by programming announcements in late January 2020. More information will follow here, and through General Church email newsletters. To subscribe to those email communications, please contact gcadvancement@newchurch.org.

Peter M. Buss Jr., Executive Bishop-elect
Eric H. Carswell, Pastor – Bryn Athyn Church

In This Issue

Editorials (page 183) include:

- *The Church in the Mirror*: At the 19th of June we celebrate the birth of the New Church “coming down from God out of heaven.” But “The Church” is not just the organization of the General Church. Nor is it the building where we worship. The Lord is building His Church within each of us, according to our relationship with Him, so when we ask how the Church is growing we really need to be looking at ourselves.
- *The Woman Clothed with the Sun* is part of the rich symbolism in the Word that is especially important to the New Church. Understanding all that symbolism is key to appreciating the beautiful promise of the New Church descending into a needy world and our grateful hearts.

On July 1 a new administration will lead the General Church, headed by the Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr. as Executive Bishop and the Rt. Revs. Bradley D. Heinrichs and David H. Lindrooth as Assistant Bishops. Beginning on page 189, read the new bishops’ Declarations of Faith and Purpose; the ordination sermon by Bishop Buss at Bishop Heinrich’s ordination, *Knowing Your Path and Walking in It*; and the ordination sermon given by Bishop Lindrooth, *From Use, In Use and For Use*.

Scott Daum, Coordinator of New Church Education for the General Church, presents *A Project for Teachers New to New Church Educational Philosophy*. Not all teachers hired these days are trained as New Church educators, so this is an effort to bridge the gap. As Scott points out: “A New Church teacher is looking at the world through a Swedenborgian lens, and the greater knowledge and understanding the teacher has of Swedenborgian theology and the stories of the Old and New Testaments, the more effective s/he can be in providing a distinctly New Church education.” (Page 208)

As a companion piece to this project aimed at maintaining the integrity of New Church education we are happy to reprint from the February 2003 *New Church Life* an article from Gregory Baker: *Is Bryn Athyn College Important to the New Church?* Dr. Baker, now retired, then was a professor of mathematics and physics at the College. And this was before the current expansion of new buildings and an influx of students new to New Church education at this level.

His insights and convictions still are relevant to the mission and goals of the College. (Page 218)

In a 19th of June sermon, *The Curse of the Dragon*, the Rev. Jeremy F. Simons warns against “the siren song of sensual reasoning” – trusting in our own reason and senses instead of the Lord and the Word. “The curse of the dragon,” he says, “is our tendency to fall prey to the arguments based on sensual reasoning that defeat the truths of the Word and support immoral and atheistic things in our life. This is the danger that the Writings call ‘faith alone’ and it is more powerful today than ever.” (Page 223)

In another 19th of June sermon, *How Do We Think About the Word?*, the Rev. Erik J. Buss draws attention to the book of *Revelation* and all that it has to say especially to the New Church and its followers. “The book of Revelation,” he says, “is full of amazing things, which are prophecies of a future state of Christianity. New Church teachings tell us that these images are symbols of the development of the New Church and of the challenges her members will face.” (Page 229)

We all are asked to support the uses of the General Church and the Academy of the New Church and the Rt. Rev. Brian W. Keith, outgoing Executive Bishop of the General Church, provides *A Doctrinal Framework* for doing so. An overriding perspective is that “because all good things come to us from the Lord, our contributions are really returning to the Lord that which is His. Thus ‘a gift from the people is a gift from the Lord.’” (Page 235)

In an article *About the Lord’s Law for Perpetual Creation* Vance Genzlinger makes the case that the doctrines of trinities, degrees, correspondences and influx are fundamental to our faith, our church, and our lives. (Page 239)

Church News, beginning on page 248, includes:

- An episcopal visit to the Ivory Coast and Benin for multiple ordinations (with photos)
- The latest ministerial changes in the Church
- A spring break Bryn Athyn College service trip to the Boynton Beach New Church in Florida (with photos)
- The 10th anniversary of NewChurch LIVE
- A report on a *Finding Hope* event in Bryn Athyn
- A report on an Academy Board of Trustees meeting
- Plans for a new high school at the Washington New Church
- A new undertaking – the Grand Human Project
- An update on the New Christian Bible Study website
- The annual meeting of the Swedenborg Foundation
- Plans for the Jacob’s Creek Family Retreat, the Maple Leaf Academy, and the Living Waters Family Camps

Editorials

THE CHURCH IN THE MIRROR

And I saw the Holy City, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. (*Revelation 21:2*)

This is the vision we treasure as we celebrate the birth of the New Church on the 19th of June. We love the Church and we love our church buildings, however grand or humble. We love and support the organizational form of the General Church of the New Jerusalem. But none of this is “the Church.” The Church coming down from God out of heaven is descending directly into our lives and becomes more and more a church as we internalize it by loving and living its truth.

The bride represents this new church, “adorned” with a new understanding of spiritual truth, preparing to be conjoined with the Lord. On a personal level we can think of the bride as a new and fuller love of the Lord, now that we can see and know Him as a visible God. He is giving us a new spiritual understanding to guide our lives.

The New Church is being established in heaven and descending to earth as people learn, love and live these new spiritual truths. And we, of course, are left in freedom to accept or reject His gift – to build His Church within us or ignore it.

The message is that we all need to look inside ourselves at times and ponder where we are amid the visions and revelation culminating in that “new church descending” for us and within us:

- Tempted by the dragon who wants to destroy this church
- Seduced by the siren song of Babylon, with no love or understanding of the Lord
- Or fighting with Michael and his angels to drive out the dragon so that we can live in the peace and love of heaven

“Where we are” should focus not so much on where “the church” is but where we are in relation to it. We see the bright promise of the New Church for all people and worry that our church organization does not seem to be growing – certainly not in proportion to the world’s need for it. But what may sometimes seem to be glib advice – Be The Church – really gets to the heart of

where the church is and where it is going.

One of our core teachings is: “All religion has relation to life, and the life of religion is to do good.” (*Life* 1) That makes it personal. Then there is this: “Worship does not consist in prayers and in external devotion, but in a life of charity.” (*Apocalypse Explained* 325) And finally: “Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” (*Matthew* 5:16)

It all comes down to us. Each of us is building the Lord’s Church on earth by the way we live our lives. Sharing the Lord’s truth is the supreme act of charity.

This is what gives meaning to our lives and faith – not truth or doctrine alone but how we put it to use in our lives. The Two Great Commandments are to love the Lord with all our heart, our soul and our mind, and love our neighbor as ourselves. “On these commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” *Heavenly Doctrine* 9 says: “The whole of Sacred Scripture is nothing else than the doctrine of love and charity.” And *Secrets of Heaven* 1799 tells us: “It is doctrine that separates churches” and that “if we considered love for the Lord and charity for our neighbor the chief concern of faith” those distinctions would melt away “and the Lord’s kingdom would come on earth.”

That’s what it’s all about – finding the common ground of heaven simply in loving the Lord and loving our neighbor. We love the Lord when we keep His commandments and “feed His sheep” by loving and serving our neighbor. Those are the building blocks of the church within us.

Leo Tolstoy, best known for *War and Peace*, was a reader of Swedenborg who wrote unabashedly about his Christian faith, and his work, *The Kingdom of God is Within You*, greatly influenced both Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King. He said simply: “To grow spiritually, and to help others grow spiritually, is the meaning of life.”

American essayist and philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson, also greatly influenced by Swedenborg, observed: “The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well.”

We make that difference by building the church within us by living the truths descending to us. Consider:

Everyone who leads a good life, in charity and faith, is a church. (*Arcana Coelestia* 6637)

The church exists in people who love the Lord, love their neighbor as themselves, have a conscience, and oppose hatred. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1844)

The Lord’s Church is spread over the whole globe, and therefore is universal. All are in it who live a good life according to their own religious belief. (*Heaven and Hell* 328)

The Church of the Lord is not here or there, but everywhere. It is within those places where the Church is, as well as places outside of the Church, where people's lives are formed according to the principles of charity. So it is that the Church of the Lord is spread throughout the whole earth and yet that it is one; for when life constitutes the Church, and not doctrine separate from life, then the Church is one. The Church of the Lord is everywhere in the world, although it is specifically where the Lord is acknowledged and where the Word is. (*Arcana Coelestia* 8152)

So, how is "the Church" growing? Beyond looking at numbers, we need to make it personal: How is it growing within me?

(BMH)

THE WOMAN CLOTHED WITH THE SUN

One of the remarkable features of the New Church is the richness and beauty of its symbolism. There is tremendous vitality and power in the emblems of its faith because they are drawn from the Word of the Lord, especially the book of *Revelation*, where we find the seven golden lampstands, the white horse, the holy city New Jerusalem – and this especially striking one from the 12th chapter:

Now a great wonder appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.

The Church may at times seem to be a staid, formal organization, devoted to poring over old books and discussing trifling details of doctrine, ritual and tradition. But the vision of the woman clothed with the sun reminds us of how splendid the Church actually is, how vital the issues it struggles with are, and how diabolical and relentless the evils and falsities that seek to destroy it are.

The woman is luminous, splendid, regal – a wonder to behold! But she is vulnerable, also: in pain as she labors to give birth, and threatened by an enraged seven-headed dragon, who stands before her waiting to devour her child as soon as it is born. The dragon was "in her face," as we might say today.

The New Church is represented by a woman because women are the primary recipients of conjugal love, men receiving it through them. That love, the most sublime of all the loves of heaven, seeks to be united with wisdom, and is thus the spiritual essence of religion and of the Church. And, in fact, everything that makes us human.

The New Church and conjugal love are inextricably conjoined. The New Church holds forth the promise that conjugal love "will be raised up anew by the Lord" in His second advent. "For that love is of the Lord alone and is with those who are made spiritual by Him through the Word." (*Conjugal Love* 81) Serving the Lord in the process of making us spiritual by means of His Word, and thus restoring the heavenly ideal of marriage . . . it is for this cause that the New Church exists.

In fact, everything that exists, in heaven and on earth, was created from a marriage of goodness and truth, and for the sake of that marriage. It is in every part of the Lord's Word, and therefore in the Church since the Church is formed by the Word and was established to preach and teach the Word. "The Church, as a whole and in every part, is a marriage of goodness and truth." (*True Christian Religion* 624.3)

So, the New Church does not just sanction marriage but at its core *is* a marriage. And is therefore rightly represented by "a woman," meaning, in the spiritual sense, "the spiritual affection of truth, from which the Church is a Church." (*Apocalypse Explained* 707) The power, beauty and pervasiveness of that affection in the life of the Church is represented by the woman being "clothed with the sun."

To be "clothed with the sun" means to live in the sphere of Divine love that emanates from the Lord, who appears as the sun in heaven. The warmth of that love opens the mind to a perception of heavenly truth and beauty, as the warmth of the natural sun causes flowers to open, whose fragrance then fills the air. This is the spiritual condition the New Church looks toward and fosters. It is not just a matter of knowing that we should love the Lord and our neighbors, but *seeing* and being moved by the beauty of that truth, and the love it makes possible, and acting accordingly. When we "live and move and have our being" in the Lord, then we, too, will be "clothed with the sun."

"With the moon under her feet" signifies the church with those who believe in charity and practice it, but whose understanding of spiritual things is limited by natural appearances. "Their light is but a reflected light, which can receive falsities as well as truths if only there seems to be good in the falsities." (*Apocalypse Explained* 708) I think this describes many in the post-Christian, pre-New Church world of today. They mean well, but their charity lacks discernment; and good intentions are no guarantee of good results.

"And upon her head a crown of twelve stars" pictures the wisdom and intelligence fostered by the doctrinal truths of the New Church, which are a guide to all the goods and truths contained in the Word ("twelve" signifying "all").

And remember, the Church is *in us*. Belonging to an organization in the world is an important expression and support for the Church in our hearts and minds, but the Church is primarily a mental and spiritual state. In the course of our spiritual development, we go through states typical of those represented by each of the preceding Churches, and, if we endure to the end, our final state will be that of the New Church – "the crown of all the Churches that have hitherto existed on the earth." (*True Christian Religion* 787)

A mind ordered and governed by the spiritual truths of the Lord's Word, the crowning revelation of which is the Heavenly Doctrine of the New Church,

will emerge victorious from the temptation combats incited by the hells. "Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. . . . Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life." (*Revelation 2:10*)

A crown is a symbol of victory and of governing power. Those who win the battle over their own lower nature, and thus become able to reign in and govern their own base passions from a higher love and a higher reason, become fit to receive heaven's shining crown. Salvation is the crowning achievement of a life dedicated to living by the Lord's Word; or we might say, living up to it.

"And being with child, she cried, travailing in birth, and pained to bring forth." Her child represents the emerging doctrine of the New Church, which is "from the good of celestial love." (*Apocalypse Explained* 710a) Here we have an amazing representation of the Heavenly Doctrine. What more living and human image of it could there be than a newborn baby?

In both advents of the Lord, the miraculous birth of a child was given as a sign. The prophet Isaiah foretold His first advent when he said: "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given! And the government will be upon His shoulder, and His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." (*Isaiah 9:6*) And when He was born in Bethlehem, the angel proclaimed: "There is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger." (*Luke 2:10-12*)

The Lord's second advent, foretold in the Apostle John's prophetic vision, also involves a birth, by the woman clothed with the sun, who "bore a male child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron." The child is specifically identified as "male" because it represents the doctrine from the Word that forms the New Church in us. (*Apocalypse Explained* 725a)

And again, as in the case of the Lord's physical birth in Bethlehem, an enraged enemy is waiting to pounce upon and destroy that which had been born. In the first case, Herod slaughtered the infants in Bethlehem in an attempt to destroy the infant Lord, the Word made flesh; in the second advent, the dragon of evil and falsity attempts to destroy a body of doctrine that conveys the spiritual sense of the Word.

The "war" that broke out "in heaven" when the New Church was born there is over. The woman and her child were saved, and the dragon was cast down to the earth, where (as we see in *Revelation 13*) it is "adored" and continues to inspire attacks upon attempts to restore truly Christian religion as the New Jerusalem "comes down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."

And so, in this world, the spiritual war between good and evil rages on, and attacks upon the teachings of the New Church, and especially the effort

to live by them, are inevitable. Michael and his angels will fight for us, the remaining faithful from the former Church and the simple good in the world around us will lend support, but the birth pangs of the New Church are not over by any means.

Increasing numbers of Christians have abandoned the religion, and those who remain faithful are under attack around the world. The New Christian Church on earth is small and weak. Conjugal love is so rare it is hardly known that such a love exists. And the dragon must be thrilled by the "new normal" regarding marriage and procreation.

Our cause is anything but lost, though. "You will be hated by all for My name's sake, but he who endures to the end shall be saved." (*Matthew 10:22*) Let us pray that our eyes may be opened to see the chariots on the hills around us, and that we may be strengthened by the sound of the disciples the Lord sent forth in the spiritual world on the 19th of June, 1770, to proclaim the Gospel that "the Lord God Jesus Christ reigns!" (*True Christian Religion 791*)
(WEO)

Declarations of Faith and Purpose

Note: Following are the Declarations of Faith and Purpose by the Rt. Rev. Bradley D. Heinrichs and the Rt. Rev. David H. Lindrooth at their ordinations into the third degree of the priesthood; the sermon preached by the Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr. at the ordination of Bishop Heinrichs; and the sermon preached by Bishop Lindrooth at his ordination. See photos on pages 260 and 261.

The Rt. Rev. Bradley D. Heinrichs

January 13, 2019

I believe that the Lord from eternity, who is Jehovah, came into the world to subjugate the hells and to glorify His Human. Without this no mortal could have been saved, and those are saved who believe in Him. (cf. *True Christian Religion 2*)

I believe that the Lord God, the Savior Jesus Christ, is the one God of heaven and earth and that in Him is a Divine trinity of perfect love, wisdom and use. I will earnestly seek to love the Lord with all my heart, soul, mind and strength by keeping His commandments. He alone will I recognize as my Lord and my God. (cf. *True Christian Religion 167; Divine Love and Wisdom 230; Matthew 22:37; John 20:28*)

I believe that the New Church is the crown of all the churches that have hitherto existed on the earth, because it is to worship one visible God, Who is all powerful, all knowing, everywhere present, and can be pictured as a man spreading forth His hands and inviting all who are willing into His arms. (cf. *True Christian Religion 787, 49*)

I believe that evils should not be done, because they are of the devil and from the devil, and that shunning evils as sins against the Lord is the first principle of charity, and consequently that repenting from sins is the first step and the primary duty of the Church in order that sins may be forgiven. (cf. *True Christian Religion 3, 510:2; Charity 1*)

I believe that goods must be done because they are of God and from God and that the second principle of charity is that good deeds should be done because they are useful to the neighbor and necessary for the welfare of society. (cf. *True Christian Religion* 3; *Charity* 13)

I believe that genuine Christian charity must be discriminate, intelligent and prudent lest a person out of ignorance enables what is evil and hurtful. Thus, that there should always be a perfect balance of mercy and judgment and of good and truth in order to treat our neighbor in a way that is truly loving and just. (cf. *Charity* 50-51; *New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* 84-85; *Psalms* 25:10, 85:10)

I believe that the quality of the Church is according to the soundness and purity of its doctrine from the Word, and that the Church becomes established when the truth is not merely understood but lived as well, for all religion is of life and the life of religion is to do that which is good. (cf. *True Christian Religion* 245; *Life* 1)

I believe in the eternity of marriage and that the conjugal union of one man with one wife is the precious jewel of human life and the repository of the Christian religion, and that truly Conjugal Love can only exist in a marriage if the Lord is the center of it. In order for the New Church to thrive and for Conjugal Love to be restored once again upon this earth we must hold these ideals as sacred and defend them with zeal. (cf. *Conjugal Love* 457, 70, 80:2, 81:5)

I believe that women and men are created to be entirely equal, deliberately distinct, and completely conjunctive, and consequently that there are different roles and duties appropriate to each. To the extent that we as a Church can honor the unique feminine and masculine abilities given by the Lord to each and learn to work together in a way that is faithful to the teachings in the Heavenly Doctrines, the Church will be blessed by the Lord and flourish. (cf. *Genesis* 1, 2; *Conjugal Love* 32-33, 90-91, 125, 157-169, 193-195)

I believe that a heaven from the human race is the essential end of the Lord's Divine providence and consequently having children, educating them in the light of the Word, and raising them to become angels of heaven are the primary uses in marriage. (cf. *Genesis* 1:28; *Conjugal Love* 387, 183:4-5; *Arcana Coelestia* 2039)

In order to achieve this primary goal in the Lord's creation, we must teach our children the Lord's words diligently, and talk of them in our houses, when we walk by the way, when we lie down and when we rise up, so that when they reach adulthood they may enter into the mysteries of faith with understanding and go through the gates and into the Holy City to dwell in

the house of the Lord forever. (cf. *Deuteronomy* 6:4-9; *True Christian Religion* 508; *Revelation* 22:14; *Psalms* 23:6)

I believe the Heavenly Doctrines for the New Church are in fact the promised Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in conjunction with the Old and New Testaments, complete the Lord's Divine Revelation to His people. They are the power and great glory of the Lord shining through the clouds and enlightening the minds and hearts of His children. (cf. *True Christian Religion* 776-780; *Matthew* 24:30)

I will strive to maintain the affirmative attitude that leads to all intelligence and wisdom, by believing that the truths in the Lord's Word are true, simply because He said them. I believe that collectively we must be willing to take a stand for the covenant and defend those truths in the face of social mores that would relegate them to being out of date, culturally bound, or even in error. In contrast, may we simply say together with one voice: "**All that the Lord has spoken we will do and hear!**" (cf. *Arcana Coelestia* 2568:4; *II Kings* 23:2-3; *Exodus* 24:7)

Even with all her faults and challenges, I believe that at the present day, the General Church of the New Jerusalem is still the best organization in the world for bringing the life-changing truths of the Sacred Scriptures and the Heavenly Doctrines to those around us, and that evangelization is a vital use to the healthy establishment of the New Church, and I will dedicate my life to spreading the good news. However, it will not take place in a moment, but gradually, and only to the extent that the falsities of the former churches are set aside. (cf. *Arcana Coelestia* 9925; *Matthew* 5:14-16, 13:3-8, 28:19-20; *True Christian Religion* 784)

I believe that the priesthood is charged to be a military service against evils and falsities, and must lead the Church to be militant against all those false ideas and evil practices that ultimately will destroy all peace in the Church and on earth. (cf. *Apocalypse Explained* 734:14, 365:42)

I believe that priests are called to observe the changes of state in the Church and when necessary act as watchmen and sound the trumpet of truth when they identify dangerous trends that would bring harm to the Church. Then, as shepherds, they should gently lead their flock to safety by instructing them in the teachings of the New Church and guiding them to live a life of good in accordance with those healing truths. (cf. *Arcana Coelestia* 10134:11, 10974, 10978; *Ezekiel* 33:7)

I believe priests can be prone to a lust for power and dominion flamed by the fire of a selfish love of ruling over others and controlling them, and that this evil must be vigorously shunned along with the pride in one's own intelligence, and I commit myself to doing this diligently. (cf. *Apocalypse*

Revealed 717, 737:2, 759:1-2; *Arcana Coelestia* 9375:2, 9965, 10244, 934:3)

I believe that there is a particular enlightenment, perception, disposition and instruction from the Lord that is meant to guide the priest in his work, and that if there is a genuine care for the salvation of souls from the good of love to the Lord, humility before Him, and an innocent willingness to follow where He leads, that then the priest will become a good shepherd of the flock. (cf. *True Christian Religion* 155; *Arcana Coelestia* 9954:6-8; *Life* 39; *Matthew* 23:8-12; *New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* 315)

I acknowledge that I am a stiff-necked person, hard of heart, and that of myself I am utterly unworthy, even vile and filthy, but that the Lord from His infinite mercy continually withdraws and holds me back from hell and allows me to be a suitable instrument in His hands to help slay the dragon and serve the people of His New Church. I realize that without God I can do nothing, but I firmly believe that with God all things are possible. (cf. *Exodus* 33:5; *Mark* 3:5; *Arcana Coelestia* 1594:4; *John* 15:5; *Matthew* 19:23)

I will strive to perform my duties as a Bishop of the General Church honestly, justly and faithfully, and will always seek to turn people's hearts to the Lord alone. I will continually try to do justly, love mercy and walk humbly with my God that He may guide me in my work. When He calls me in the night, I will answer, "**Speak Lord for your servant hears.**" (cf. *Charity* 160; *Micah* 6:8; *I Samuel* 3:9)

I acknowledge as I take on this new office that I am but a little child and do not know how to go out or how to come in, and I pray that He will give me a wise and understanding heart to discern between good and evil so that I might ably serve the people of His Church. I will not be anxious and trust that even with my inadequacies that the Lord in His Divine providence will lead to an end that is good for His New Church where there will be no more death, sorrow, crying or pain, for the former things have passed away and He has made all things new. (cf. *I Kings* 3:7-12; *Arcana Coelestia* 8455, 8478; *Revelation* 21:5)

I thank the Lord for the capacity to act from freedom according to reason, and to compel myself to do what is good and speak what is true, even when I am not inclined to do so. It is my prayer that I may cultivate the obedient and receptive attitude of Isaiah, to do the Lord's will and not my own, so that whenever I hear the Lord call me to serve His New Church, saying: "**Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?**" that I may humbly answer, "**Here am I! Send me.**" (cf. *Divine Providence* 71; *Arcana Coelestia* 1937; *Isaiah* 6:8)

Contact: pastor@carmelnewchurch.org

The Rt. Rev. David H. Lindrooth

January 20, 2019

The Lord

I believe God is infinite love and mercy itself. (*True Christian Religion* 651) Therefore, God is life itself. (*Divine Love and Wisdom* 4) That infinite love takes its perfect form in divine wisdom as a soul is with a divinely human body – the Lord God Jesus Christ, the Divine Human; Who as to His soul is love and as to His body is wisdom, and His spirit is His impact He has on all creation.

The Lord's infinite Divine purpose for existence is to create others outside of Himself who are human, who reflect His image and likeness, and who, in freedom, can respond to His will, so that He can bless them and give them peace. (*Divine Providence* 27) And so, the nature of His love is creative and positive, and there is nothing in it that is hurtful, angry, vengeful or contains the least shred of negativity. (*Arcana Coelestia* 10431) The Lord's goal therefore is to regenerate, redeem, heal and help us grow to eternity in a joyful partnership with Him. In order to do this, He invites us to follow Him.

The Word

I believe that the Lord gave the Word as the principal means through which humans discover and receive His Divine guidance to a good life. The Old and New Testaments reveal all the genuine truths necessary for the life that leads to heaven. But in many of these stories the essential Divine life is hidden beneath the surface like great treasure buried in a field. The Old and New Testaments were written in this way so that the stories could reach people and motivate them to respond to God's invitation in any state of mind, no matter how distant they might be from Him.

At the dawn of the New Church, I believe that the Lord brought forth a New Revelation, the Heavenly Doctrine that is rational and offers clear explanation of those stories, showing the immutable truths that before the Second Coming were hidden to humankind. I believe that these Heavenly Doctrines are the Word and constitute "the Lord's coming in the clouds with great glory" as described in *Matthew* 24.

I understand this new revelation clarifies the Lord's loving nature, how He reaches us, blesses us and how we respond to His call. In its pages, we see the spiritual world, the nature of heaven and hell, and how human life continues, largely uninterrupted after the death of the body. Here, the Lord teaches about

the equal yet complementary nature of male and female, and how God creates marriage as a special partnership between the two that is the source of inmost joy – a partnership which can continue after a couple passes from one world into the next.

The Life of Charity

I believe that religion is of no value unless grounded in the life of charity. (*Last Judgment Posthumous* 270) We are taught that the first step in that life is to examine one's own behaviors in the light of teachings such as the Ten Commandments, with the prayerful question of what needs to change. I believe that the Lord with His love and power over hell offers us His strength to shun the evil destructive forces of lust and negativity, to forgive us and set us on a path toward heaven. I want to say something about this power. I believe it is His power that creates new life and what helps us grow. It is the power that allows us to see when we otherwise would be blind. It is the power that holds back the forces of hell in the darkness of night when nothing else could rescue us.

The Church

I believe that the Lord is now establishing His New Church on earth to be a community where people look to the Lord's Word for wisdom on how to worship, grow, live, cooperate and serve together in partnership with heaven.

The church is not a closed organization, it is a vibrant, living, growing movement that constantly seeks to share the wisdom the Lord gives us with others for the purpose of salvation. Our church is a church where "we freely give for freely we have received." (*Matthew* 10:8)

While I do not believe it is required to be a member of this church to find happiness or live the life of heaven, I am convinced that the purpose and mission of the New Church are critical for the spiritual health of humanity and for the relationship it offers with the Lord and His heavens. The existence of an established New Church organization on earth, therefore, is critical for the health and survival of humankind. I believe the Lord calls people to participate in His Church as He did with His disciples, saying: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (*Matthew* 28:19)

My Purpose

I have been deeply blessed by my years of service as a priest in the New Church. My call to serve as a bishop focuses my uses more on helping to lead and

facilitate a healthy growing General Church organization. It is my goal to help cultivate our ability to present the Lord in daily life through the use of timeless yet practical truths that connect with heavenly life. To that end, I will turn to the Lord in His Word first for guidance. I will also rely on the counsel and the rich variety of dialogue offered by both clergy and the many participants of this church. I will use that guidance to cooperate with both priests and lay people as we work together to build a strengthened presence of the Lord's kingdom on earth. And so, to that end, I recognize that I need your help and your wisdom as a friend and participant in this church. I thank my wife for her willingness to walk this new journey with me, and my children and my family for their support that has helped me in so many ways.

Contact: David.Lindrooth@newchurch.org

Knowing Your Path and Walking in It

A Sermon by the Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr

*Delivered at the Ordination of the Rt. Rev. Bradley D. Heinrichs
Carmel New Church, Caryndale, Ontario, Canada*

January 13, 2019

Lessons: *Psalm 25:1-10; True Christian Religion 243, 245*

All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth, to such as keep His covenant and His testimonies. (*Psalm 25:10*)

Heaven is granted only to those who know the way to it and walk in that way.
(*Divine Providence 60*)

Pathways

Many of us have experienced the joy of hiking or running along beautiful trails. We walk down many a sidewalk. Along roads that take us to various destinations. In many parts of our lives, pathways are a baseline reality. We get from one place to another on these pathways.

Our focus today is on the paths that the Lord leads us down, referencing specifically the saying from the *Psalms*: “All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth, to such as keep His covenant and His testimonies.” (*Psalm 25:10*) All the paths of the Lord lead to happiness, and eventually to heaven.

When considering the paths of the Lord in Scripture, two slightly contrasting images emerge. One relates to a singular path that all of us are invited to walk. In the opening chapter of Joshua we are called to let the *Book of the Law* be our guide in all things, striving not to turn from it to the right hand or the left, that we may prosper wherever we go. (*Joshua 1:7*)

Isaiah talks of a “Highway of Holiness” which will lead people through a blossoming wilderness. On that highway the blind will see; the deaf will hear;

there will be happiness and rejoicing; and people will come to perceive the glory of the Lord. (*Isaiah* 35:4,8) Similarly there is “the voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.’” (*Isaiah* 40:3; *Mark* 1:3) And, of course, there is the Lord’s own claim: “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” (*John* 14:6)

In all these places the call is to the way of living organized by the truth that the Lord offers. It’s a collective way. The same principles apply to all. People are looking to the same God, hearing the same teachings, and discovering some of the same realities as they walk. As we read in the Heavenly Doctrines: “Heaven is granted only to those who know the way to it and walk in that way.” (*Divine Providence* 60)

But a singular way is not always what we see in the Word. “**All the paths** of the Lord are mercy and truth to such as keep His covenant and His testimonies.” (*Psalms* 25:10) If we look around in the Scriptures, we notice that there are twelve gates into the Holy City New Jerusalem, presumably accessed from different destinations or pathways. (See *Revelation* 21:12) Similarly we read: “All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord” – another image presuming people coming from many different directions to a central point. Add to that what we are told about people in the next life who have been prepared for heaven:

The Lord then takes each angel [as such people are then called] to his or her community. This happens in various ways, sometimes by winding paths. No angel knows the paths along which they are taken, only the Lord. When they arrive at their own communities, their inner natures are opened, and since they are in harmony with the inner natures of the angels who are members of that community, they are recognized instantly and accepted with joy. (*Heaven and Hell* 519)

In these cases the message is not so much about the one common path, but about our uniqueness. We know that each person within a church is unlike any other person. We all come to this place, to the Church, with our own story and personality. We have our individual needs, and the things that we alone can offer. In fact, one of the joyful things about a community of people is that variety of human beings that make it. We’re even taught that adding new unique people can increase the perfection of the whole. (See *Heaven and Hell* 71)

So we have messages about a common path that all of us are called to walk, and the unique way that each of us does so. I would like to suggest that this is what a church is all about, and it is something the General Church should continue to embrace. We have teachings to which all of us are invited to subscribe. We also have teachings that consistently reinforce our unique way of contributing to the Lord’s kingdom. It is important for us to understand that balance, so that we can receive the most from the Church and give the

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most of ourselves to it – or to the world by means of it.

The Word

Let's focus first on some of the things that bind us together. The General Church has, since its beginnings, drawn its message holistically from the Word. We have a core principle that the Old Testament, New Testament and Heavenly Doctrines are the Word of God and the foundation of all that we do. We read earlier that “the church depends on the Word” (*True Christian Religion* 243); also that it is “the wholeness and purity” of the church's teaching from the Word, or its collective understanding of the Word that “establishes the church.” (*Ibid.*

245) We can and should put energy into a common understanding of the Word – the larger themes of the Word that we hear repeatedly and come to perceive as characteristic and thematic.

A calling to all people who find value in the messages they receive from this church is to consider the source for themselves. As this passage continues, what really establishes the Church is individual people who embrace those themes – whose faith and way of living are founded on their own understanding of the Word as taught in the Church. (*Ibid.*)

The Church from the Word describes the pathway that leads to heaven – the one we are not to turn from, to the right or the left; the Highway of Holiness. It describes what is in bounds for our lives, and what is out of bounds. There is commonality here, even as we are encouraged to explore our own unique understanding of the Word and draw particular meaning from it that speaks to our own issues and choices. This is “His covenant and His testimonies” that bring together the variety of people walking their unique paths. (*Psalms* 25:10)

The Lord

From that Word we gain a common understanding of our God. He is “the Lord God the Savior Jesus Christ” (*True Christian Religion* 2,3); “the visible God in whom is the invisible” (*Ibid.* 339); “the one God of heaven and earth.” (*Apocalypse Revealed* 469:6) He is infinitely loving and wise. (*Divine Love and Wisdom* 29) “He governs all things and provides all things and leads toward

an end that is good.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 8455) He knows everything there is to know about us. (See *True Christian Religion* 59) He is merciful and always willing to work with us, no matter how far we may have strayed. (*Ibid.* 539:2)

Implied for our lives is devotion to that vision of our God. Again, there is something common and uniting here. It’s okay that we have our unique way of approaching Him, or our unique story of how He helps us in our lives. That is what the Lord does, and what He expects to be true for us. But it is the same Lord working within the same laws of providence who leads us down the paths of our lives.

Covenant

Then there is the Lord’s covenant and His testimonies. Again, some elements will be common to us all. All of us are called to obey the Ten Commandments – and to understand their many levels of meaning for our lives. That means we have the spiritual responsibility not to harm others with our words or in our actions, to honor marriage as the Lord set it up, to speak the truth at all times, and to control our wants.

All of us are called to be honorable, or people of integrity, in all facets of our lives. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 2915) We do so by allowing the Lord to form internal bonds within us – the bonds of conscience – which keep us on His path. (*Ibid.* 1944) No matter how varied the applications may be in our personal lives there is a common code, a common set of principles which should define our lives. We come to the Church to be reminded of those very things – the things which bind us together.

Uniqueness

But what of our uniqueness? Have you noticed that even as we have been speaking of the things that are common to us all we can’t escape allusions to our uniqueness? We worship the same Lord, but He leads us individually. We turn to the same Word and we hear the same messages from it, but they manifest in our lives in a great variety of ways.

As we consider the faith of the New Church we discover over and over

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Consider the concept of the Grand Man . . . All the many types of people who love the Lord and wish to serve others from Him are part of that universal human form. But just as there are countless parts of our bodies, each with its unique function, so the Lord gathers many different types of human beings together into one supremely functional whole.

again that the Lord wants this to be the case. We need not turn any further than the pervasive doctrine of usefulness to see this truth. All of us are called to be useful – but the very premise is that we will not do it in the same way.

Consider the concept of the Grand Man or the Universal Human taught in the Heavenly Doctrines. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 4225) All the many types of people who love the Lord and wish to serve others from Him are part of that universal human form. But just as there are countless parts of our bodies, each with its unique function, so the Lord gathers many different types of human beings together into one supremely functional whole. We learn that “no one person’s goodness [or way of being useful] is ever exactly like another’s.” (*Ibid.* 3986) Even so, we read, “The Lord makes a unified whole out of those varying individuals.” (*Ibid.* 5962:3)

Consider the world that we know, and how we all function within it.

There are people who build the houses we live in, but only a few of us actually do that building. There are people who collect our trash, and we can be grateful that they do, since it is unlikely high on the list of things we personally would choose to do professionally. Other people prepare and serve food. Still others make and sell goods. How often have you reflected with gratitude at the care of a skilled doctor or nurse, or of a police officer, or of a trained counselor?

We could also consider what makes a congregation like this one work: priests doing their part, musicians theirs, board members serving as stewards, someone rising to the use of treasurer, volunteers keeping everything going. It doesn’t work if we all do the same thing, but it works wonderfully well when we all give of our best to the whole.

A passage in *Conjugal Love* 324 describes this reality in a beautiful way:

The angelic heaven hangs together as a unified whole, yet it exhibits an infinite variety, in that no two people there are ever entirely alike – not in their souls and minds, nor in their affections, perceptions and consequent thoughts, nor in

their inclinations and consequent intentions, nor in the sounds of their voices, facial features, physical characteristics, gestures or manner of walk. But still, even though there are millions of them, they have been organized and are continually being organized by the Lord into a single body, in which there is complete unanimity and harmony. This would not be possible except for the fact that all those various sorts of people are led, universally and individually, by the same one God. That is what we mean here by variety.

Implications

All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth to such as keep His covenant and His testimonies. There are things which bind us together in the Church, and there is a constant calling by the Lord to serve in our unique ways.

One key message for us today is to consider those timeless realities that bind us together: the vision of the Lord, a devotion to the Word as it is now revealed, a commitment to honor the Ten Commandments, and to lead honorable, conscience-bound lives.

What time will you carve out today, or this week, to consider the Lord God the Savior Jesus Christ? How will you learn more about Him? What will you pray to Him? What strength will you draw from Him to help you live the life that He calls you to live?

How much, or how little, of the Word of the Lord will you access this coming week? Will you make time for some devotional reading? Will you seek out and place one more key Scripture in plain sight within your home? What recitation from your childhood will you reflect on? What blessing before meals could you choose to say?

And what about those testimonies of the Lord? Certainly there are ways you can rededicate yourself to one of the Ten Commandments, by being more truthful, more devoted, less hurtful with your words and actions. Is there an example of integrity and honorableness that you can particularly note this week, and seek to emulate?

Another key message for today relates to your unique path. And for many there's a varied set of children who are part of your family. Can you reflect this week on your particular ways of contributing to the wellbeing of others? What

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are your gifts, and how can you give the glory to the Lord by putting them to greater use for the ones you love? Are you able to reflect this week on where the Lord is leading you – and willing to hear Him urging you to take the next bold step in discovering the reason He put you on this earth?

In that *Psalms* that has been our focus is a beautiful prayer which can sum up all that we have considered today. As you hear it again, I invite you to consider the Church which at once binds us together, and also helps us to discover our uniqueness:

Show me Your ways, O Lord; teach Me your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me. For you are the God of my salvation; on You I wait all the day. (*Psalms* 25:4)

Amen.



The Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr., who has served as Assistant to the Bishop of the General Church, the Rt. Rev. Brian W. Keith, will assume the role of Executive Bishop on July 1. He and his wife, Teresa (Farrington) live in Bryn Athyn. Contact: peter.buss.jr@newchurch.org

From Use, in Use, for Use

A Sermon by the Rt. Rev. David H. Lindrooth

*Bishop Lindrooth preached this sermon after his ordination
into the third degree in the Bryn Athyn Cathedral*

January 20, 2019

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.
(*Matthew 5:6*)

What if we, as human beings, were as aware of our need for spiritual nourishment as we are for natural food and drink? What if, after hours of active living, we were consumed with pangs of spiritual hunger for our spiritual selves, in the same way our physical hunger would kick in after an active day without food? Angels do get hungry, but they know that the Lord will provide just the right spiritual food they need to keep their angelic selves healthy and functioning.

But what if we intensely felt spiritual hunger pangs when we were so deprived of spiritual food that we were experiencing what we might call a spiritual famine – times when we felt such a lack of spiritual nourishment that our spiritual bodies were wasting away? If we experienced our spiritual hunger in this way, what would we do about it? If we observed others wasting away from spiritual starvation, how would we choose to respond?

The story we read of the widow and her son who were starving to death in a famine is symbolic of this exact situation.

Famine is a spiritual metaphor for our states of suffering in times when we lack the Lord's love and wisdom that He wishes for us through a religious life. Famine can be so great that we feel like we are dead inside because we don't know how to satisfy the legitimate spiritual cravings coming from our souls – feelings that originate with the Lord Himself. It represents times when we know we are struggling, but we don't know what to do about it.

I chose this story because it seems to characterize the world we live in today. Hunger and famine certainly exist on our planet. People still die from a lack of available food – a sad fact in our modern world. But isn't it true, if we

Hunger and famine certainly exist on our planet. People still die from a lack of available food. But isn't it true that as many people die each year in our culture from "spiritual famine" as from starvation?

really looked at it, that as many people die each year in our culture from "spiritual famine" as from starvation?

There are stories in the Word that teach about spiritual deprivation and the harm it causes to human beings. What one notices is that in each story there is some lack – not caused by natural disaster but by human beings making poor choices.

We see one illustration of this frustration when the Israelites were gathered at the foot of Sinai while the Ten Commandments were given. Having forgotten the miracles that were happening at the top of the

mountain, they were worshipping the image of a calf made of gold -- and later eating that gold.

In another example Jesus asks who would feed a hungry child a stone when he or she is asking for bread?

In the story we read in our lesson, the deprivation was represented by a famine brought on because King Ahab was trying to stamp out the worship of Jehovah in favor of an image carved out of a stone – Baal.

Each of these analogies in the Scriptures alludes to different states of spiritual famine we can go through. First, the golden calf speaks of a state of mind when we make external pleasure or self-centered delight a false god or an end goal of our life. It is as if we are so focused on bowing down to that external pleasure that we lose all consciousness of what God wishes for us – as seen by Jehovah on the mountain next door. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 10407)

Next, the analogy from the New Testament – the swapping of a child's bread for a stone – represents a state of mind where we are plotting and pursuing purely materialistic ends, forcing the thought that these materialistic goals could actually feed our spirit. (See *True Christian Religion* 342, *Arcana Coelestia* 1690)

Finally, the famine in our story – a famine caused by the worship of Baal – is noted because Baal represents the false idea that we can act on any self-indulgent feeling we want, as long as we can say with our lips that we believe in a god. This faith-alone behavior is often unwittingly promoted by religion today, leaving people thinking that they are fed when they are receiving nothing of spiritual value. (See *Apocalypse Revealed* 132)

It is heartbreaking to see people dying like this because it all seems so

incredibly unnecessary. The book *Married Love* speaks of the hellish delight experienced from a lust of adultery, calling it the “pleasure of insanity.” (*Married Love* 442) Why “insane”? Because from a spiritual perspective, chasing after evil delights doesn’t help a person connect with life or happiness. The reality is that any action seeking that kind of pleasure is spiritually starving oneself and damaging to others. It makes no rational sense.

So, what is spiritual food and how do we get this “bread of life”? One wonderful passage describes it this way: “Angels do not feed on material food, which is the food for that body which a person carries around in the world. Rather [they] hunger for the kind of food that nourishes their minds, and this, which is called spiritual food, consists in understanding what is true and in having a wise discernment of what is good. And what is amazing, angels are nourished with this food.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 5576)

The food angels eat is essentially a most delicious embodiment of “truth” and “discernment of that which is good.” All the variety of foods in their world represent the many concepts of truth and the varying ability to see and do good actions that help other people. In heaven, the Lord is the sole source of this food, with His love and wisdom being the food itself.

We get a picture of just how creatively spectacular this food is when Jesus asked the disciples to feed 5,000 hungry people with only five loaves and two fish. His words to them show us that the “food” that sustains us spiritually comes only from Him: “I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.” (*John* 6:51)

This miracle of feeding the 5,000 is strikingly similar to the miracle that occurred with Elijah and the widow. Essentially, it is the same petition that initiates each miracle. In each the message is: “Give of what little food you have and you will receive much.” Or to quote from the Sermon on the Mount: “Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you

All the variety of foods in (the angels’) world represent the many concepts of truth and the varying ability to see and do good actions that help other people. In heaven, the Lord is the soul source of this food, with His love and wisdom being the food itself.

This is the principle of all true spiritual nourishment. All angels receive their food in proportion to their actions – in the measure that they use what they know and love to help others. And without that use, there is no fulfillment and no reality.

use, it will be measured back to you.”
(*Luke 6:38*)

This is the principle of all true spiritual nourishment. All angels receive their food in proportion to their actions – in the measure that they use what they know and love to help others. And without that use, there is no fulfillment and no reality. In heaven, angels are very much aware of this. Heaven, therefore, is called a “kingdom of useful service.”

As we read in our lesson: “Angels never feel happier than when they are informing and teaching spirits that stream in from the world, or when they are ministering to people [on earth]. The happiness they find in all this is more than can possibly be described.

. . . Consequently, angelic happiness

consists in use, stems from use, and is proportionate to use, that is, to the good deeds of love and charity.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 454)

By contrast, the passage also teaches that angels view a life of idleness as “shameful, repulsive and nauseating.”

Focusing back on the story of Elijah and the widow, the spiritual lesson is a slightly more specific message about how we can be fed spiritually when we feel a state of depravation and need, and we don’t know how to change it. It speaks to those times when we don’t feel like angels, and we are not sure what to do about it. It might be a time when we open our eyes and see that we have slid emotionally into a really bad place. Maybe it is a time when our egotistic impulses are getting the better of us. Or maybe we feel we just feel drained by private fears and worldly concerns that just won’t go away.

The message about the widow is for us when we feel as if we are down to our last little bit of spiritual life, beginning to wonder if we can go on, and feeling lost.

These are times when we need to be raised up by a little miracle. When we feel like this, we don’t need some big complicated answer. The Lord asks us to just use a little of what we have left in a simple act of obedience. Just a simple act – it doesn’t have to feel like much or even that it will solve everything. It is just a small step forward.

The point is that simple obedience is an external motivator, a superficial

willingness to do something, not because we are excited about it, but because it is the right thing to do. And when we are willing to act, even in small ways, because it is the right thing to do, that is enough to start being fed by the Lord. We can think of the petition in the Lord's Prayer: "Give us this day our daily bread" – meaning give us enough, just enough, to get through today. And He does.

This is the food the Lord was speaking about when He said: "He who eats this bread will live forever." (*John 6:38*) Action and service, motivated by the truth, no matter how small, are the key in being satisfied by the Lord's love and wisdom when we are in a spiritual famine. Through our willingness to act, the Lord immediately comes to us as our gentle shepherd and feeds us our daily bread. He will never leave us or forget us for He loves us with everything that He is.

This brings us to the Church and why I chose this sermon for today. Our church offers spiritual fulfilment, healing and joy, that come through our actions connected with the Word. This church exists to help people be spiritually fed by the Lord – fed through spiritually informed ways of serving the Lord's Spiritual Kingdom.

As in heaven, the true fulfilment offered by our church consists in use, comes from use and is proportionate to the uses we serve. The Lord, as Divine love, wishes that everyone finds that spiritual fulfilment. He wants no one to go hungry. And so, could that be a call for our church to band together, to go out and do what we can to help end spiritual hunger?

Amen.



The Rt. Rev. David H. Lindrooth assumes his role as Assistant to the Bishop of the General Church on July 1. Most recently he has served the church as Director of Outreach. He and his wife, Aven (Pendleton), live in Bryn Athyn. Contact: David.Lindrooth@newchurch.org.

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Project for Teachers New to New Church Educational Philosophy

R. Scott Daum

Coordinator of New Church Education

I work at General Church Education, and we have embarked on a project that I'm really enjoying. Our goal is to create a pathway to Career Level status in the General Church Teacher Career System for those who want to teach in the system but are not able to attend the Bryn Athyn College's Education Division program and have had limited exposure to the New Church and its educational philosophy.

Colleagues and friends suggested it would be useful to share some of the thinking that's gone into the project. What follows is a slightly edited version of an introduction to the project we shared with the administrators of all General Church-related schools in North America. The piece ends abruptly, but there will be a summary paragraph explaining why.

We are not starting from scratch in this endeavor. We will rely heavily on the work Jill Rogers, Kay Alden, the Rev. Eric Carswell and others did in developing a plan for New Church Certification in the early 2000s. They created thorough and thoughtful lists of "New Church Competencies" or "New Church Teaching Competencies," and these will serve as a foundational resource for us.

Rebekah Russell and I will lead the project, and we will be conferring with members of Bryn Athyn College's Education Division and with administrators from the Academy and General Church Schools.

First, I want to note some circumstances that have led us to this project. Bryn Athyn College no longer offers New Church Certification. It only did this for a few years, and it ended around 2008 when the College's Education Division had to make major adjustments to its curriculum to meet Pennsylvania state educational requirements. There had also been a proposal to promote New

Church Certification with a financial incentive, but it was never adopted by the General Church or Academy Boards.

In recent years, General Church Schools have had to hire teachers with limited knowledge about the organization, and the Educational Leadership Team (ELT) – administrators at the Academy and General Church Schools – understandably feel teachers without a firm grasp of New Church teachings and its educational philosophy, and without a personal commitment to New Church principles, should not advance to Career Level status in the General Church Teacher Career System. After all, how can anyone offer New Church education without knowledge of the New Church and its educational philosophy? Bishop-elect Peter Buss Jr. has taken note of this and has thus encouraged the project.

I would like to begin with this point: Just as the Lord's Providence is concerned for the eternal welfare of every human being, one of the postulates from which a New Church teacher operates is to look to what is eternal. Where a common goal of secular education is to prepare students to be good citizens of their country, New Church teachers want to cooperate with the Lord in laying the foundation for a heavenly life in the Lord's Kingdom.

This does not mean a New Church teacher ignores the secular goal; quite the contrary. However, a New Church teacher is attentive to the reality of "spiritual character." This is reflected in this passage from *Divine Love and Wisdom* 333: "Forms of use for receiving a **spiritual character** from the Lord are all matters having to do with religion and so with worship, thus which teach an acknowledgment and knowledge of God, and a knowledge and acknowledgment of goodness and truth, and consequently eternal life. These are similarly learned like other disciplines from **parents, teachers**, sermons and books, and especially through efforts to pursue a life in accordance with them." (Emphasis added.)

From this we can deduce that some of the goals and the substance of New Church education are the "acknowledgment and knowledge of God, and a knowledge and acknowledgment of goodness and truth, and consequently eternal life." I will talk more about this later.

When we say in the Lord's Prayer, "Thy will be done," a New Church

Just as the Lord's Providence is concerned for the eternal welfare of every human being, one of the postulates from which a New Church teacher operates is to look to what is eternal.

When a New Church teacher looks at a student, s/he sees a potential angel, not just an individual to be trained for the national or even global workforce. This is part of what it means to look to what is eternal, and New Church teachers know they have a part to play in the Lord's eternal plan.

teacher, taking an eternal view, wants to play his/her part in the Lord's eternal plan. And what is that plan? We know from *Divine Providence* 27 that the Lord's purpose in creation, His end, is a "heaven from the human race," and from *True Christian Religion* 13: "The universe is a work connected as one thing from beginning to end because God had a single purpose in creating it: an angelic heaven populated by the human race."

Looking at multiple passages like these that follow, we know that His greatest desire is to bring everyone to Him in heaven:

As has been stated, the Lord's life is Divine love, that is, a love towards the entire human race, which love is such that His will is to bring eternal salvation, if possible, to the whole of it, that is, to all people. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1803)

He wishes to be joined to the human race, and to impart eternal life and happiness to it. (*Arcana Coelestia* 7550)

Thus, all are predestined to heaven, and no one for hell. (*Divine Providence* 329 begins with this sentence)

With teachings like these in mind, when a New Church teacher looks at a student, s/he sees a potential angel, not just an individual to be trained for the national or even global workforce. This is part of what it means to look to what is eternal, and New Church teachers know they have a part to play in the Lord's eternal plan.

One can see from such teachings why Bishop William Benade defined New Church education as preparation for heaven, why Bishop N. D. Pendleton and Bishop George de Charms defined it as preparation for regeneration, and why Bishop-elect Peter Buss Jr. defines it as "introducing young people to the Lord and the things of spiritual life." While the former two definitions are more like goals of New Church education, all three of them necessitate an "eternal view" from its educators.

Bishops Willard Pendleton and George de Charms both praised the work of secular educators, but both had cautionary words regarding the

public educational system. They acknowledged that there were schools which were really dedicated to promoting moral and ethical lifestyles and had high academic standards, but they saw with the separation of church and state that religiously oriented discussions have become essentially banned in classrooms.

Five days a week all the subjects of this world are being interpreted for children without any connection to God and the reality of spiritual life. The philosophy of secular humanism, in which God is totally removed from the equation of life, is essentially the doctrine of the public system. For many children the only time they hear about God is for an hour or two on the Sunday that they might attend church.

The perils of this are obvious to the person who believes that everything in this physical universe reflects some spiritual reality, that “the universe is a work connected as one thing.” At best a child is going to be slightly confused by these two separate and sometimes conflicting educations.

Consider the following:

Anyone who is clearheaded can see that every single thing in the natural creation has a connection with what is true and good, and from this can recognize that the whole natural creation is a theatre in which the Lord's kingdom is represented.
(*Arcana Coelestia* 4409)

Unless a right idea of these things [there's a spiritual and natural world, each with a sun; there's a correspondence between the things in these worlds, and there's an order into which all things in both worlds were created] be first of all obtained, the human mind, from mere ignorance of them, may easily conceive the idea of creation of the universe by nature, and yet assert on ecclesiastical authority alone that nature was created by God; but because it knows not how, if it continues to examine the matter more closely, it falls into naturalism, which denies God. (*True Christian Religion* 75(7))

This latter passage expresses a potential danger parents face if they are solely relying on the public system to deliver their children's education, and we can see from Swedenborg's disparaging remarks about “the learned” that the philosophy of secular humanism had gained a foothold in education even in his day. A New Church teacher knows the former passage and teaches accordingly. The potential difference is more than striking.

Returning to the definition of New Church education, I mentioned three different ones above. So, which one is correct? I like to tell this story. When I served as Principal of the Boys School, I asked many, many people to give me their personal definition of New Church education, and I never heard any two that were the same. In fact, some of them were dramatically different. If one weren't cognizant of New Church theology, one might have thought one was hearing answers to entirely different questions. In my opinion the diversity of the responses is a reflection on the breadth and depth of the subject; however,

A New Church teacher is looking at the world through a Swedenborgian lens, and the greater knowledge and understanding the teacher has of Swedenborgian theology and the stories of the Old and New Testaments ... the more effective s/he can be in providing a distinctly New Church education.

multiple definitions have caused some confusion for people new to the theology.

Some other definitions that have been popular are these three:

1. New Church education is preparation for a good and useful life in this world and the next.
2. Bishop George de Charms also said: "We define education as the rational control and direction of a child's environment so that the child's mind may be disposed to the reception of Divine Love and Divine Wisdom from the Lord."
3. And Professor Bruce Glenn's definition: "New Church education is the ordering and interpreting of knowledges from truths enunciated in the Heavenly Doctrines."

They are all valid, and I would like to elaborate on Bruce Glenn's briefly because I think the notion

of "interpreting" the world from a specific set of teachings and values is something with which everyone can relate, regardless to the degree in which they are familiar with New Church theology.

With the explosion of global communications, we have become much more aware of the variety of cultures than we were even 10 years ago. We know that a person living the faith of a Roman Catholic is going to view the end (or purpose), cause and effect of the events of life differently than someone living the faith of a Muslim, or a Buddhist, an agnostic, a secular humanist, an atheist.

A New Church teacher is looking at the world through a Swedenborgian lens, and the greater knowledge and understanding the teacher has of Swedenborgian theology and the stories of the Old and New Testaments – we refer to these as the triune or three-fold Word – the more effective s/he can be in providing a distinctly New Church education.

Understanding the quote above about natural creation being a theater representing the Lord's Kingdom would be an example of a teaching providing the New Church or Swedenborgian lens. Therefore, a New Church teacher needs to be committed to ongoing study of New Church theology.

No one enters the system with complete and perfect knowledge of the theology, and no one leaves it with perfect knowledge, but all should be committed to increasing the breadth and depth of their understanding and applying it to their teaching.

Even the most experienced New Church educators would suggest that New Church education and its philosophy are still in its infancy stage. The first two paragraphs of the *Rationale for New Church Teacher Certification* – originally penned by members of the Office of Education in 2004 – indicate the truth of this:

Throughout the history of New Church education an assumption has been made that if a teacher is a member of the New Church, they are automatically a New Church teacher.

In part this is true because they have been exposed to New Church teachings to varying degrees and are teaching in an environment that has distinctive New Church education as its mission. [*They have some degree of a Swedenborgian lens.*] To at least some extent, every teacher feels an obligation, if not a calling, to teach in the light of the triune Word

However, actual New Church methodology and classroom management [*and I would suggest other aspects of education*] have not been defined clearly enough so as to assess how well teachers actually do teach in light of doctrinal understanding or manage their classroom with doctrinal concepts in mind. And although New Church curriculum has come a long way in recent years, it has not been formally overseen nor is there a mechanism for tracking its implementation.

I include these paragraphs because while this project is aimed specifically to assist teachers new to New Church educational philosophy, everyone in the system could benefit from it. The king/queen-pins of New Church education who put the proposal for New Church Teacher Certification together certainly believed this, and I know working on the project has been enlightening to me, and I have been somewhat thoughtfully involved in the system for 40+ years.

While not a definition of New Church education, the Alden Model – formulated by Kay Alden, former chair of the Education Division at Bryn Athyn College – is a description of what happens in a New Church school. In 2010 the ELT adopted this as a general standard for New Church schools, and

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it has been a part of orientation process General Church Education provides to all teachers entering the Teacher Career System in a full-time capacity. Here is a summary of the model:

A New Church school looks to the Lord in His Three-fold Word as the foundation and guide for everything that goes on within its walls. In a New Church school, the teachers teach from and about the doctrines of the New Church. They employ and impart the skill of connecting spiritual and natural knowledge with the end that they are participating with the Lord in the development of truly rational human beings, people who will choose to live good and useful lives in this world and the next one.

One of the reasons I include this is because the first two sentences allude to the “Swedenborgian lens” and the last sentence speaks to the “eternal view,” the two key points in what I have written so far. I have started with these two points because I believe that’s what General Church and Academy school administrators want in their faculty members: people who want/desire/love to take the eternal view of education and continuously develop that Swedenborgian lens through which they will deliver their teaching.

I say “want/desire/love” because knowledge of the eternal view and knowledge for the lens is not enough. Another postulate for a New Church teacher is this: knowledge without love is somewhat dead. It’s like light in winter that has no warmth; nothing can flourish when light is separated from its heat. As stated in the *Rationale* above, administrators want to assume “to at least some extent, every teacher feels an obligation, if not a calling, to teach in the light of the triune Word.”

Earlier in this introduction I mentioned acknowledgment and knowledge of God and a knowledge and acknowledgment of goodness and truth as some of the goals and the substance of New Church education. I want to elaborate on that by looking at *Divine Providence* 333.

I have a few reasons for doing this. One is that this passage begins with information connected to the “eternal view.” Even though the omnipotent Lord of creation desires heaven for everyone, the reality is that some people choose hell, and this passage gives a general overview on the two different paths, the one to heaven and the one to hell.

Another reason I want to look at this number is because it has significant implications for New Church education, its goals and substance.

A third reason is to illustrate one of the most important “competencies” of a New Church teacher, and that is to read passages and see application to education, to form the Swedenborgian lens. So, here’s the passage:

The operation of the Divine Providence for the salvation of people is said to begin at their births and to continue right on to the end of their lives. . . . Thus the Divine Providence is unceasing in the work of saving people. However, no more can be

saved than desire to be saved, and only those desire to be saved who acknowledge God and are led by Him; but those do not desire to be saved who do not acknowledge God and who lead themselves; for these give no thought to eternal life and salvation, while the others do.

We can see the eternal view of Divine Providence in the first two lines, and I feel compelled to mention how comforting I find the second line: “Thus the Divine Providence is unceasing in the work of saving people.” New Church teachers want to play their part in the Lord’s end, and what is that part? I think the remaining lines in that passage give us good clues.

The Lord can’t bring people to heaven against their will. A person must have the desire to be saved in order to be saved. The only people who have this desire are those who acknowledge God and are led by him. Isn’t it true that to acknowledge God you need to have some knowledge about Him and how He operates, and to be led by Him, don’t you have to know what He expects of you? This type of knowledge is some of the core substance of New Church education.

The passage contrasts people who desire to be saved with those who don’t. The latter do not acknowledge God and lead themselves. They don’t give any thought to eternal life and salvation.

A New Church education will certainly provide knowledge and exercise thought about these latter two things, and it will distinguish between the good kind of “leading ourselves” vs. the kind of “leading ourselves” that keeps us from salvation. It will provide us with knowledge about salvation itself: “From what do we need to be saved?” A secular education by itself will not address these vital topics and may even operate against them.

People are not born with a knowledge of these things: God, salvation, eternal life, goodness and truth. Consider these two passages:

Among [the secrets of heaven] is this, that a human being is not taught immediately from heaven but mediately. . . . A knowledge of religion does not come to a human being from oneself, but through another who has either learned it from the Word or by tradition from others who have learned it, as that there is a God, that there are a

Isn’t it true that to acknowledge God you need to have some knowledge about Him and how He operates, and to be led by Him, don’t you have to know what He expects of you? This type of knowledge is some of the core substance of New Church education.

heaven and a hell, that there is a life after death, and that God must be worshipped in order that a person may be made happy. (*Divine Providence* 254)

For the fact of the matter is that nobody is ever born into any truth at all, not even into any natural truth, such as the commandments not to steal, nor to kill, nor to commit adultery, and so on. Still less is one born into any spiritual truth, such as the truth that there is a God, that a person has an inner being which will live after death; and so, of oneself such a person does not know anything whatever of that which has to do with eternal life. Every commandment and truth has to be learned by the individual, and if one did not learn them one would be far worse than any animal. (*Arcana Coelestia* 3175)

These excerpts give us a general guide to the work we do as New Church teachers, and since everything in the created physical universe serves a use – more on the topic of use later – and reflects something spiritual, we can tie all secular knowledge to something spiritual. The New Church teacher wants to make as many meaningful connections as possible because none of us is interested in our students being far worse than any animal.

Heaven and Hell 502 also emphasizes the absolute necessity of instruction in preparing for a heavenly existence: “For one can be prepared for heaven only by means of cognitions of good and truth, that is, only by means of instruction, since one can know what spiritual good and truth are, and what evil and falsity are, which are their opposites, only by being taught.”

The same number goes on to tell us about some of the things that need to be taught and again emphasizes the necessity of instruction from the “eternal view”: “But **no one** can [live justly and honestly for the sake of the Divine, and not for the sake of self and the world] **until one has been taught**, for example, that there is a God, that there is a heaven and a hell, that there is a life after death, that God ought to be loved above all things, and the neighbor as oneself, and that the things in the Word ought to be believed because the Word is Divine. **Without a knowledge and acknowledgment of these things a person is unable to think spiritually; . . . All this makes clear . . . that no one can be prepared for heaven except by means of instruction.**” (Emphasis added.)

These aren’t the only numbers that speak to the substance and importance of a New Church education. Here are two more passages to consider, and there are others as well:

Arcana Coelestia 1661(2): “No people can ever fight against evils and falsities until they have learned to know what evil and falsity are, and therefore not until they have been instructed.” From this we can deduce that a New Church teacher isn’t solely teaching about what’s good and truth. A knowledge of what is evil and false is also critical.

Arcana Coelestia 44: “People, like the earth, can produce nothing good unless knowledges of faith are first sown in them, whereby they may know what

is to be believed and done.” Ultimately, New Church teachers are instructing about faith and a life according to faith.

Some might say this is the work of ministers, not teachers, but let’s look at one last passage – and there are others that echo this one (like the very first passage I quoted in this introduction, Divine Love and Wisdom 33): *Arcana Coelestia* 5135 (2): ”From infancy until childhood, and sometimes till early adulthood, by instruction from **parents and teachers**, a person is imbued with goods and truths. For he or she then learns them with avidity and believes them in simplicity.” (Emphasis added.) While the Lord is the one who regenerates the individual, ministers, parents, teachers and students all have a role to play.

This brings me to the abrupt conclusion I noted in the opening paragraph. After all, there is so much more to say about New Church education. I haven’t used any of these words yet: freedom, rationality, proprium, remains, conscience, habits, innocence, influx, facts as vessels leading to intelligence and wisdom, affections, spheres, order, accommodation, mediate good, degrees of the mind, or the as-of-self – and all of them play a major role in New Church educational thinking. Including them would have made for a very lengthy article.

My colleagues, friends, and I had three specific reasons for submitting this article:

1. To let you know about the project being worked on by General Church Education.
2. To have you ponder the question, “What is New Church education?”
3. To have you reflect on the potential worth of New Church education.

I hope you have found it useful regarding these three things, and we intend to have a full outline of the project completed by the start of the next school year, along with some completed teaching modules.



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Is Bryn Athyn College Important to the New Church?

Gregory L. Baker

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Each generation of New Church men and women needs to ask the following fundamental question: Are we, as a church, putting our resources and time into those endeavors that will help the Church grow in geographical, numerical, intellectual and spiritual strength? One of those important endeavors is Bryn Athyn College of the New Church. Therefore we need to ask how our college promotes a better church.

From its inception, the membership of the General Church has held to the importance of distinctive New Church education for its progeny. New Church education has been seen as a “fruitful field for evangelization” – especially for the offspring of church members.

In our elementary schools, we present the wonders of the Lord’s creation, both spiritual and natural, as a unity. We attempt to integrate all the various parts of the curriculum into one seamless garment of spiritual and natural truth. Teachers are helping their young charges to understand the world around them and arrange that reality in some sort of primitive schema whereby the child can make sense of what he or she experiences. Our elementary schools also serve to protect states of innocence in an increasingly morally ambivalent world. Thus we build remains while preserving tender states.

New Church education at the secondary level must deal more closely with the trends and fashions of current society. The secular curricular subjects are more complex. Relations between boys and girls become a prominent feature as young people struggle to make the transition from childhood to the beginnings of adulthood.

All the while we try to preserve the freedom of the students by helping them to abide in states from which they can make good choices for their natural and spiritual development. The state of the secondary school student is sometimes referred to as the “New Testament” state. In other words, the thrust of New Church secondary education is a moral education, indeed a Christian

education in the very best sense of the term.

Perhaps simplistically, I am suggesting that the fundamental difference between New Church elementary and secondary education, and the education found at other religious schools, is the philosophical background of the faculties.

Most religious schools endeavor to preserve innocence, create an understanding of the spiritual life, and build moral character in their students. However, by virtue of their knowledge of the Heavenly Doctrines, particularly about Remains and Conjugal Love, New Church faculty members are able to have more insight into the states of students, and more clarity of vision in the description of the life of the spirit. Thus, in New Church elementary and secondary education, we do what other religious schools do, but we have significant tools (the Writings) to do it better.

At the college level New Church education has the opportunity to seek a larger goal.

Let us consider the nature of revelation. It is given by God to man in the context of a certain period of history, a certain culture. Thus, while each revelation contains eternal truths, those truths are presented or clothed in the language and the context of the times in which they are given. While the eternal truths of a given revelation can be corrupted, as at the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D., we also recognize that subsequent generations can have deeper insights and see further applications of these truths than their forebearers, such as evidenced in modern ecumenism.

Yet there are limitations to understanding, and if a church reaches those limitations, a new revelation, such as given in the Second Coming, is indicated. A new revelation provides a discretely larger spiritual data base from which to make spiritual progress.

The revelation given through Emanuel Swedenborg – the Writings – was given to humanity at a certain time in history: the 18th century. This was a time of enormous growth in religious freedom, economic expansion and scientific development. It was the beginning of the modern scientific age. Furthermore, the revelator was himself a scientist who wrote in a then-modern voice. We often say that the Writings are a “rational” revelation. It is the “rational” nature of this revelation that provides the connection with the college state.

The central fact is that in the late teenage years the responsible rational mind starts to open. (See *True Christian Religion* 106, 525; *Arcana Coelestia* 2280) The frantic uncertainties and emotional roller-coaster states of the teenage years gradually give way to a more considered approach to life. Students are ready to understand the structures and processes of creation in a way that goes well beyond mere calculation or lip service to the well-known and fundamental Divinely revealed duality of good and truth.

Intellectually and practically, the college years provide a golden opportunity to lay a rational, high-level foundation for the rest of this life and the eternal life beyond. This is an opportunity to create rational, knowledgeable citizens of the Lord's New Church.

Thus, the college student, with a newly developing rational mind, is in a new position to connect with the rational revelation given to the New Church.

The college years are therefore the time when students can, in various stages, gain a rational worldview of natural and spiritual life. They are able to contemplate the Lord's plan for their eventual salvation, understand the structure of natural creation and its correspondence with the spiritual world, see the universality of this structure on all levels, and sense the marvelous preservation of freedom that is built into the whole. And all of this can happen while the student is in a state of idealism, unfettered by significant practical concerns of family and employment.

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Bryn Athyn College of the New Church exists for the realization of this goal. In the first two years, the college provides the opportunity for a broad education in the liberal arts. Through introductory courses in various secular fields and religion, the college outlines a structure on which the student can build a philosophy of life.

Contemporary ideas are tested against the Heavenly Doctrines. Questions are raised, ideas discussed. "The pursuit of truth is pre-eminent," says Dr. Dan Synnestvedt, professor of philosophy.

The general plan of creation – of the relationships between God, man and nature – begins to appear. The study of science provides another language, beyond the spoken and written languages of conventional revelation, in which God can speak to man. Not only does the Lord provide for the structure and processes of nature, He also provides that these things can be evident to us. "Protein structure and function can reveal God's intentions operating," says Dr. Allen Bedford, professor of chemistry.

In student life, Bryn Athyn College seeks to promote what New Church

education at all levels strives for: the preservation of students' freedom to make choices that lead to responsibility, use and spirituality. This is especially important at the college level where students give serious thought to life issues and relationships.

In their conversations with fellow students and faculty advisors, the students of Bryn Athyn College are encouraged to explore these issues from a vantage point that includes both spiritual and natural dimensions. Students who join us for one or two years derive significant foundational strengths from these academic and life experiences.

As students move into the upper years of college two new features emerge.

First, the rational mind that started to open and be stimulated in the early college years is functioning at a much higher level. A recollection of our own experiences of college days provides verification. Thoughts turn to the choice of an academic major, a profession and, possibly, a conjugal partner. Life becomes more serious; we think more deeply; we see consequences beyond our college days. The student in the upper years of college is more rational, more serious, and more involved in the future.

Second, the upper years of college are a time of concentration in a particular area of study. The introductory ideas and broad knowledge presented in the earlier years are now examined in detail and in depth. For example, for the biology major, introductory courses in physics, chemistry, biology and mathematics give way to deeper studies, such as organic chemistry, biochemistry, genetics, quantum chemistry, molecular biology, environmental simulation, population modeling, and so forth.

We sometimes say that "God is in the details" and the study of these fields provides plenty of illustration. Understanding the intricacies of these areas gives the student, with a positive vision of the Divine, multiple exemplars of the order and wonder of creation.

Thus, not only is the student a stronger thinker in the upper years, he or she also is exposed to the kinds of knowledges that give a deeper reality and certainty to the general concepts and plan that came before. At this writing, students may explore this deeper reality at the College in its six baccalaureate programs, Biology, Education, English, History, Interdisciplinary studies and Religion. [Editor's note: The College now has more than 17 tracks and

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major programs for the baccalaureate degree.] Graduates of these majors carry to graduate school or careers an extra strength of purpose, an enhanced sense of the unity and meaning of human existence.

Whether a student attends Bryn Athyn College for one year, two years, or four years, the College always has progressively more to offer. No matter what their time with us, students take

with them the framework of a strong beginning for their adult life. In time these gifts may be carried back to their individual church societies in the form of commitment to church uses, in intellectual understanding of the Doctrines, and in intelligent application of charity toward the neighbor.

Finally, we note that the college years provide an exceptional opportunity for those who are not traditional New Church students to learn about the truths of the Second Coming in a structured and sympathetic way. Bryn Athyn College is committed to encouraging seekers to become students and join in the process of understanding the Lord and His creation as revealed in the Heavenly Doctrines. The college state is an ideal one for evangelization.

We come to our faith in the New Christianity in variety of ways: providential discovery of the Writings, by birth and cultural assimilation in the Church, by private reading and contemplation. But how marvelous it is to have the opportunity to develop a strong doctrinal framework and scholarly understanding in discussion with New Church professors who are active and knowledgeable in their fields.

These are the gifts that Bryn Athyn College offers the New Church, gifts that the Church can use to grow in numbers and in depth. These are the gifts that our college offers – ultimately – to all of humanity.



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The Curse of the Dragon

The Rev. Jeremy F. Simons

A Sermon About the Siren Song of Sensual Reasoning

Lessons: *Revelation* 12:13-17, 20:1-3; *Secrets of Heaven*, 229, 231, 232; *Apocalypse Revealed* 56

So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. (*Revelation* 12:15)

The Woman-Clothed-with-the-Sun was not trying to fight the dragon. She was only trying to escape. But the dragon came after her and tried to drown her in a river of water coming from its mouth.

This is how a lot of us may feel in the midst of the social and religious debates going on today. We aren't trying to win, just escape.

The imagery of our text describes the drama of spiritual conflict. The story is about a flood of reasoning looking to discredit and weaken the truth, and to support its opposite. According to New Church teachings the things meant by this flood influence the lives of every one of us.

Our topic today is the meaning of the dragon's flood, how it appears, and what it does. Our topic is especially how to escape from it – what is meant by the wings given to the woman, which she uses to fly away, and also how the earth helps the woman by absorbing the flood.

The dilemma is summarized in our lesson from *Secrets of Heaven*:

A single evil afflicted not only the earliest church, before the Flood, but also the ancient church, after the Flood, and the Jewish church, and then the new church or the church among non-Jews that came after the Lord's arrival into the world, just as it afflicts the modern church. It is the evil of not believing the Lord or the Word but trusting oneself and one's senses. (*Secrets of Heaven* 231)

Not believing the Lord or the Word but trusting oneself and one's senses: this is the evil that is the dragon, and the information that he trusts in and uses to advance his cause is the flood.

People in the church are sometimes confused about what the dragon is and what is so bad about him. In the Writings the dragon is most frequently

Not believing the Lord or the Word but trusting oneself and one's senses. This is the evil that is the dragon, and the information that he trusts in and uses to advance his cause is the flood.

identified as people caught up in “faith alone.”

The dragon here means people who are caught up in faith alone and who reject works of the Law as not saving, and I have had this attested several times by personal experience in the spiritual world. I have seen many thousands of such people assembled into companies, and at a distance then they looked like a dragon with a long tail, which seemed to be covered with thorn-like spikes, symbolizing falsities. I also once saw a still bigger dragon, which arched its back and extended its tail up to the sky in an effort to draw down the stars from there. I thus had it visually shown to me that these and no others are the people meant by the dragon. (*Apocalypse Revealed* 537)

What is “faith alone”?

The imagery is chilling, but what isn't clear is exactly what is meant by the term “faith alone.” On its face it means the idea that we are saved by what we believe, and that what we actually do in life is not the key to salvation.

The problem with this is that it is unlikely that you will ever meet any religious person who will say that the way you live is not important. Many New Church people familiar with these teachings have concluded that they no longer apply today.

But “faith alone” is a larger category than this gives it credit for. If we understand what it is really about we will see that it does describe the issues we face.

Faith alone is the doctrine of the atonement.

Specifically, what the New Church calls faith alone is the classic Christian doctrine of the atonement. It is described in *Wikipedia*:

Atonement refers to the forgiving or pardoning of sin in general and original sin in particular through the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus.

That is, Jesus took on our punishment, and if we believe in Him our own sins are forgiven, and we are saved. This doctrine, or some version of it, continues to be the official understanding of all Christian churches. This is the almost universal Christian answer to the question: “*What did Jesus do to save us?*”

This does mean that, for those who believe this doctrine, keeping the

Commandments is not the most important thing. It also means that non-Christians are not saved, even if they lead good lives. It also assumes three distinct persons in the Godhead. These are the things that New Church teachings condemn when speaking of this doctrine, calling it the dragon.

Without a real understanding of the Word all of us are prone to fall for the arguments of the dragon.

Faith alone is not living your religion.

But there is more to it than that. Faith alone is the key issue that all modern religions share. Before the Flood described in *Genesis*, the earliest people, the people of the Most Ancient Church called Adam and Eve, were intuitively good people. Since that time people are not naturally good, but we can learn to be good. So all religions since ancient times are about following teachings and practices to become better people.

The issue that immediately arises is that people might learn what religion teaches but fail to practice it. This is faith alone. The issue with the atonement doctrine is that it allows this to happen because it describes the mechanism of salvation in terms other than how people live their lives.

Faith alone is being led by sensual reasoning.

There is even more to it than that. This is where we begin to see what the dragon is, and why he is so dangerous.

We read that “*a single evil has afflicted the church*” since ancient times. “*It is the evil of not believing the Lord or the Word but trusting oneself and one’s senses.*” (*Secrets of Heaven* 231)

Trusting one’s self and one’s senses is to be led by sensual truth – the visible, provable truths of the natural world, by what we can see and easily grasp.

It was revealed to me who are meant by the dragon in Revelation. They are those who reason about divine truth on the basis of the natural sciences, thus on the basis of such things as are in nature, and who for the purpose of corroborating their conclusions, make use of the literal sense of the Word, which they twist into agreement. (*Spiritual Experiences* 4760)

The things these people have real confidence in are those demonstrated by the physical and social sciences. They then apply this kind of information to every area of life, including religion.

The connection with faith alone is that when we don’t actually follow the Word in our lives we are inevitably led by this kind of sensual truth.

The reason that this is called a dragon is because the dragon is none other than “*that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan*” (*Revelation* 20:2) from the

Garden of Eden. He induced Adam and Eve to believe the information of their senses, rather than what the Lord told them. This is *eating of the tree*.

The reason that he is now a dragon and not just a serpent is that dragons can fly. We read:

“The dragon” means in general those who are more or less natural, and yet are in a knowledge of spiritual things from the Word, because “serpents” stand for the sensual things in a person, and so for sensual people. Therefore “the dragon,” which is a flying serpent, signifies the sensual person who yet flies towards heaven in that he talks and thinks from the Word or from doctrine from the Word. (*Apocalypse Explained* 714.5)

The serpent in the Garden of Eden appealed to common sense. The dragon quotes the Word, yet he thinks purely naturally and sensually.

The appeal of sensual reasoning

Sensual reasoning has tremendous appeal. “Sensual people are able to reason sharply and skillfully, because their thinking is so close to their speech as to be practically in it. . . . They also have great skill at defending things that are false. They base their reasoning on mistaken impressions from the senses that the public finds captivating and convincing.” (*True Christianity* 565)

The mistaken impressions from the senses that the public finds captivating and convincing are such a thing as appeals to success, to common sense and fairness, and skepticism about the authority of revealed truth. Think of sensual reasoning as the things that you would expect to be credibly asserted and accepted in the national news.

In its own realm there is nothing wrong with this approach – it is about facts and causes as they are believed by the average person. But when it flies up into the realm of spiritual things it becomes a dragon. We read:

When we are under the sway of the world and our bodies, (that is, when we think sensually) we say in our hearts, “As for faith and its ramifications, if my senses do not teach me to see, or if facts do not teach me to understand, I refuse to believe.” In confirmation, we remind ourselves that what holds true on the earthly plane cannot conflict with spiritual realities. So our senses teach us about heavenly and divine affairs. (*Secrets of Heaven* 128)

This is all part of what the Heavenly Doctrine calls faith alone, and it is the dragon. Most of us are prone to fall for arguments based on this approach. These arguments are the flood from the dragon’s mouth, hoping to carry away the woman.

The earth helped the woman.

Fortunately, not everyone falls for these arguments. “*The earth helped the woman*”:

This means that the church, in which there are also dragons, rendered assistance, and did not accept their keen reasonings respecting faith alone. (*Apocalypse Explained* 767)

Not everyone falls for these arguments, and there are many people who help the cause from all religions and walks of life. But the more important solution to this flood is what we read in our lesson:

“The earth helped the woman” . . . symbolically means that the multitude of reasonings flowing from falsities that followers of the dragon put forward come to nothing in the face of the spiritual truths rationally understood that are advanced by the Michaels of whom the New Church is formed. (*Apocalypse Revealed* 564)

The solution is “*spiritual truths rationally understood*.” That is, the solution is for people to read the Word, to study it, to gain a genuine and deep understanding of what it teaches, and to live by it. Ironically, this approach – involving the extensive study of doctrine – is sometimes criticized as “faith alone” by people who see a common-sense approach as more useful than “*book learning*” – which can sometimes seem like counting angels on the head of a pin. But it is just the opposite. Without a real understanding of the Word all of us are prone to fall for the arguments of the dragon.

The same is meant by the eagle’s wings that the woman was given to enable her to escape the flood. They stand for “*the spiritual intelligence and circumspection which the Lord gives to those who are of that church*” (*Apocalypse Explained* 756) and its protection while it is still among a few.

There shall be no more curse.

The curse of the dragon is our tendency to fall prey to the arguments based on sensual reasoning that defeat the truths of the Word and support immoral and atheistic things in our life. This is the danger that the Writings call “faith alone” and it is more powerful today than ever.

But *spiritual truths, rationally understood*, defeat that dragon. They answer our spiritual questions, they nourish our soul, and they lead us to live a loving

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and useful life. They take away the curse, which was pronounced on the serpent in *Genesis* 3. So it says in *Revelation* 22:

And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. And they shall reign forever and ever.

These are the “*Michaels of whom the New Church is formed*” who not only escape from the dragon, but lay hold of him, “cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more. . . . Blessed are those who do the Lord’s commandments, that they may have power in the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.” (*Revelation* 20, 22)

Amen.



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How Do We Think About the Word?

A Sermon by the Rev. Erik J. Buss

Lessons: *Revelation* 13; 19:11-16; *Apocalypse Explained* 815; *Apocalypse Revealed* 82

The Book of *Revelation* is full of amazing images, which are prophecies of a future state of Christianity. We see powerful images of good in its glory with shining colors, and of evil with all its monstrous hideousness, of conflict, of turmoil, and of eventual victory. Most people know these are metaphors that will not happen literally. New Church teachings tell us that these images are symbols of the development of the New Church and of the challenges her members will face.

Today we'll look at one set of images: the beasts from the sea and from the earth. One has the number of the beast – 666 – one of mythical signs of evil in Western culture. These images stand for two beasts we face as we try to live a spiritual life, and they have to do with how we view the Lord's Word.

Our view of the authority of the Word is one of three essential elements of New Church belief. The first one is a belief in the Lord Jesus Christ as the one God. The second is that living a good life – not doing evil and doing good – is the path to salvation. The third is that the Word is a source of authority outside ourselves that we depend on so that we do not become god of our own life. We are not the decider; the Lord is.

These three beliefs are like a tripod.

The Book of *Revelation* is full of amazing images, which are prophecies of a future state of Christianity. New Church teachings tell us that these images are symbols of the development of the New Church and of the challenges her members will face.

We need all, or the whole thing collapses. The beasts symbolize two attitudes that undermine our belief in the Word. One beast stands for a way lay people tend to think, and the other one is a trap that clergy and scholars tend toward.

The beast from the sea – the one that laity tend toward – is to make experience and our own reasonings more important than the Word. The beast depicts “reasoning from the natural self confirming the separation of faith from life.” (*Apocalypse Explained* 774)

This beast had the body of a leopard, bear’s feet, and seven heads like lions. It’s an image of an animal that could not function. Big bear paws would make running fast or climbing high into trees impossible, and seven heads would render making decisions impossible. It’s hard enough at times making decisions with one head! This is an image of how poorly this approach to the Word works, and of how monstrous-looking our decisions can become.

This beast means rationalizing, thinking through issues from experience, but in the process ignoring or undermining revelation. When we do that we tend to let ourselves off the hook with reasoning like this: the Lord loves me and would not want me to feel unhappy; this commandment would make me feel unhappy, so He must not have meant this to apply to me in this way. We can see right away that this is poor reasoning, but it is the sort of justifying we do whenever we do what’s wrong.

When we think from experience we can follow popular culture and accept anyone regardless of his or her personal moral life. Accepting can be good, but only up to a point. Past that point it allows, and even encourages, evil. The same is true of the idea that anything two consenting adults do is okay. That’s not what the Lord teaches, yet it can certainly feel like the easiest way to get along in the world, which can make us want to come up with reasons why it’s true.

It is vital that we think things through, and to do this we rely on our experience. One of the biggest dangers of religion in the past has been people’s blindly accepting what churches said, ignoring the fact that it didn’t make sense, that it didn’t accord with all the rest of their experience, or with the Word. One of the fundamental gifts the Lord has given us is the ability to think and one of the key elements of human decision-making is our own experiences.

The issue, then, is not *if* we use our experience, but *how much value we place in it* – what’s the ultimate authority? The people who worshiped this beast said: “Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?” This illustrates our experience becoming something that nothing can make war on in our minds, that nothing can contradict. Then we are in trouble.

We can’t expect things to fit with our experience all the time. Even when we accept a revelation, some things don’t make sense. That’s the nature of revelation – it tends to push us deeper, to think about things we never

thought about in ways that we've never considered. So we will be confused at times.

Every now and then we say: "Now I understand. How could I have missed that!" And then there will be other things all of us don't understand. The question is, what is our assumption when something does not make sense? "I'm sure this is true. I'm sure the Lord is saying something good here, but I can't see it"? Or is our attitude more negative: "This can't be right; something's messed up here"?

The Lord tells us how to help things when we have this problem. We are to assume that since other things the Lord teaches made sense so we believe this does too, even though we can't see it yet. We assume it is and act based on it, because probably it will make sense down the line. Or are we going to use it as an excuse? Will we say, "Well I'm not that spiritual," or "That doesn't make sense"?

New Church teachings say that this relying on experience too much involves "denial of the Lord's Divine Human, and doctrine of the church not [being] drawn from the Word, but from self-derived intelligence." (*Apocalypse Revealed* 566, 571) That's a pretty strong statement, and it goes back to what is the authority in our lives.

If we hear things we don't like we can say that the minister interpreted it badly, which could certainly be true. It is healthy to have doubts about what we can't understand. But, ultimately, we need to place authority in the Word, in something bigger than we are or we make ourselves into a god – self-derived intelligence becomes the source of light in our life.

Ironically, if we don't make the Word the authority we let popular culture define our spiritual standards. The irony of this is that we think we are thinking for ourselves when we deny the Word, but in truth either revelation or the culture around us determines our values.

It is inevitable that in some ways our culture is going to deeply influence our values; we're products of our culture, like it or not. But it can affect us

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too much. So if culture is uptight about divorce, we are too, and if it is lax, we are too. If culture is chauvinistic we are too; if there is lots of anti-male rhetoric, we engage in that also.

The issues being played out today are respect for women and for anyone oppressed, and respecting those who see things differently than we do. Those are really important topics to be concerned about. It would be easy in our zeal to focus on those and in doing so put our cultural need ahead of the

Lord's Word. And if in doing so we deny the authority of the Word then we can do real damage to our souls because we cut ourselves off from the very truth that heals us.

Allowing culture to determine our values brings us back to the teaching about denying the Lord's Divine nature: When we get caught up in an issue we can say that what the Lord said does not have authority, but our own experience does. In practical terms, then the Lord is not our God. And in fact, every time we do what's wrong something has taken God's place.

We say, in effect, that my experience, my senses, say this would be enjoyable, so we do it. This story, then, is not talking about some philosophical approach to the Word, but to a challenge every one of us faces daily.

So the Lord is asking us to what extent we are willing to let the Word be the standard bearer of truth, and for how we view the world. If the Lord says something on an issue that is not politically correct are we willing to be different – persecuted even – as we stand up for that truth?

That's the one beast – the beast from the sea – that the laity tend to give into. Now we look at the challenges clergy (and scholars) face. This error is to make the Word say what they want to so they can have power. Instead of disregarding what they don't like in the Word, they manipulate it. It's so easy to say, "That's not what it meant. This passage is really trying to say this," and in doing so change or undermine a clear teaching.

The whole common belief in the Christian world that we are saved by faith apart from what we do is an example of this approach. It simply can't be supported by a just use of all the passages. This is what is meant when it is said that this beast made fire come from heaven. When we use the Word to make a self-serving point, it can seem like God is speaking, but it's actually a point in favor of that experiential desire people have.

A particular weakness of clergy and scholars is that they tend to confirm

teachings as they have been interpreted by laity, because that way they gain power or influence. A great way to power is to tell people what they want to hear; people in this way become willing to consider you the authority. And now a minister could start to tell them to do things they would not have thought to do. This is what is meant by the mark of the beast – 666.

The priest, by manipulating the truth, becomes the definer of right and wrong. If he had been willing to disagree at first, to take stands based on the truth, he would never get into this situation, because he would encourage people to step back and compare his teaching to that of the Word. But by feeding them what they want he lulls the congregation to sleep, and so controls them.

“He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.” Here is a picture of people dominated by a defined orthodoxy, put in a box by clergy who want control. This is clearly the worst evil of the two in that it manipulates and perverts what is holy.

So if we step back a bit we can see two ways all of us regularly are going to be tempted to push away the authority of the Word in our lives. 1) Ignore it if it does not fit with our experience. Or 2) twist it to make it say what we want.

When we think in these terms, it is so obviously wrong. If the Lord gave us truth, it is much bigger than we are and we need to approach it humbly. We need to take off our sandals as Moses did when he approached the burning bush, acknowledging that we walk on holy ground. (Exodus 3:5) Yet it is also true that we are human. At times we all reinterpret the Word to suit ourselves; we are going to let our experience guide us in ways that are not useful. So we need to ask how these approaches show up in our lives and make the journey back to making the Lord and His Word the true authority.

The Lord gives another image several times in *Revelation*, and that is of a rider on a white horse. That image also means our view of the Word, one the Lord wants us to have. He wants us to see the Word as shining white. He wants us to see that the Lord who gives us the Word has eyes like a flame of fire, which means that every truth He gives us is an expression of Divine love. His garments are covered in blood, which is an acknowledgment that parts of

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Scripture are hard to understand and also that people have done violence to the Word with their treatment of it. But most of all, unlike the other beasts, the Lord is riding on the horse because the Word reveals Him. Both in Scripture, and by revealing the inner meaning of the Word in the New Church, the Lord shows us who He is, what He wants us to do and why, and how each of those teachings are actually requests of love, or laws of love.

We could all ask on a regular basis what we need to do to make the Word an authority in our lives. Is there a truth that we really know and in our deeper self accept to be true but which we've dismissed, or not given enough weight in our life? Is there something we don't understand that we're ignoring or manipulating because it is uncomfortable?

We can pray to reach the state in which we see the Word as the most precious thing in our lives, something we don't want to go a day without engaging with because there we find the God of heaven and earth.

Consider this *Psalm* that talks about ways we can be ashamed of the Word, something which makes us want to ignore it or reinterpret it. It also talks about trusting that what the Lord says is true: "To You, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O my God, I trust in You; let me not be ashamed; let not my enemies triumph over me. Indeed, let no one who waits on You be ashamed; let those be ashamed who deal treacherously without cause. Show me Your ways, O Lord; teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; on You I wait all the day." (*Psalm 25:1*)



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A Doctrinal Framework for Giving to the Church and Academy

The Rt. Rev. Brian W. Keith

For the ancient Israelites, their religion could be reduced to two realms: following the extensive laws governing behavior and human interactions, and sacrificial offerings of worship. Most sacrifices were required as payments or duties to Jehovah. The first fruits of the land were to acknowledge Jehovah as the source of their food; some were contractual recognitions whenever Jehovah fulfilled a vow; sin offerings were to make one ritualistically clean again; and guilt offerings were fines imposed when laws had been transgressed. In addition, there were free will offerings, given to Jehovah for no particular purpose. It was the free will offerings that built the tabernacle and provided the means for worship. (See *Exodus* 25:1-9)

There is a parallel to this in the teachings of the New Church. Charity and faith are often paired – faith being what we believe and charity being what we do about it. Much of charity involves our employment or usefulness to others, or our duties or responsibilities to others and to the Lord. But there is also an area of charity that is like the free will offerings – the benefactions of charity. Benefactions,

mean such acts of assistance as are given apart from . . . obligations. These are called benefactions because doing them is a matter of free choice and pleasure . . . giving to the poor, relieving the needy, caring for widows and orphans, contributing to the building of hospitals, infirmaries, asylums, orphans' homes, **and especially of churches, and to their decorations and income.** But most of these things are not properly matters of charity, but extraneous to it. (*True Christian Religion* 425, emphasis added)

Now, to call giving to the church “extraneous” makes it sound like it is unimportant, trivial. That is not something our treasurers or contribution heads want to hear!

It is true that contributions, whether financial or volunteer time, are not

Much of charity involves our employment or usefulness to others, or our duties or responsibilities to others and the Lord. But there is also an area of charity that is like the free will offerings – the benefactions of charity.

mandated. And we are warned that if we place merit in them – thinking that we are “good” because of them, or somehow purified by means of them – it harms our spiritual life. (See *Charity* 210; *True Christian Religion* 426) For example, if one does “not refrain from evils as sins against God, then all those good works are not good. They are either hypocritical or merit-seeking, for evil is still inwardly present in them” (*Divine Providence* 326:8), “because one does them from oneself and not from the Lord.” (*Life* 24)

Presumably, attempts to solicit funds or recruit volunteers, which appeal to self rather than use, would not be healthy in the life of a congregation.

Using guilt or excessive persuasion probably does not encourage people to give for the right reasons. Even worse would be to suggest that giving to the church could assure a heavenly existence. The first Christian Church profited

by promises of heavenly joys made to those who enrich monasteries and swell their treasuries, calling their gifts “good works,” in themselves sacred, and also merits. . . . Especially do they plot against the wealthy when they are ill, and they also inspire in them then a terror of hell and so extort legacies from them, promising sacrifices of the mass for their souls according to the value of their bequest, and thereby a gradual delivery from the place of torment they call purgatory so as to enter into heaven. (*Apocalypse Revealed* 784)

The reaction against this was a key element in the Protestant Reformation – where they recognized that people cannot buy their way into heaven. Unfortunately, they went to the false extreme of claiming people can do nothing toward their salvation, resulting in the doctrine of salvation by faith alone.

But even as giving of time and money must be freely offered, can risk seeking credit for oneself, and cannot guarantee a heavenly afterlife, it can still be a useful, if not essential, part of one’s overall spiritual life. Consider this teaching:

There are still other general uses, such as contributing proper offerings and dues to the ministry of the church, and such good works become uses of charity so far as the church is loved as the neighbor in a higher degree. (*Divine Love and Wisdom* 11:5)

The Heavenly Doctrines also add:

these very deeds . . . are inwardly good if the person shuns evils as sins (such as fraud, adultery, hatred, blasphemy, and other like evils), because in this case he does them from the Lord, and they are said to be “done in God.” (*John* 3:19-21; *Life* 24; see *Charity* 17)

So, if someone is faithfully practicing genuine charity by performing his/her uses well, repenting, reading the Word and all else that comprises a genuinely charitable life, then benefactions to the Church or Academy enhance or complete one’s spiritual life. They become like free-will gifts at Christmas or birthdays – tokens of the underlying affection that exists between people and wonderful outward expressions of their love. The relationship is not based on the gifts, but they cement it and send a powerful message to others.

Life itself	Charity	Conscience
Faith	Mercy	States of holiness (in worship)
Freedom	Innocence	Peace
Rationality	Affections for good	Eternal salvation
Ability to understand the Word	Ability to love others	

Curiously, one might think that the Writings would speak to the importance of giving gifts to others. There is the statement about the importance of exchanging gifts or pledges after consent for marriage is given. These are “affirmations, testifications, first favors and treasures” of the mutual agreement to form one life out of two. (*Conjugal Love* 300) They are not the essentials of marriage, but they wonderfully strengthen it and give it outward expression. But beyond this, the Writings speak of gifts being primarily what the Lord gives to us!

Among the many things specifically listed as gifts to us, here is a sampling:

While many more gifts, and more

So, if someone is faithfully practicing genuine charity by performing his/her uses well, repenting, reading the Word and all else that comprises a genuinely charitable life, then benefactions to the Church or Academy enhance or complete one’s spiritual life

significant gifts, are given by the Lord to us, what we symbolically return through our contributions is some recognition of our appreciation and love. This was the basis for the ancient tradition of not appearing before a king or a prophet without a gift. This was why Saul was hesitant to go to Samuel, seeking help in finding his lost donkeys (*I Samuel 9:7*), and it was the natural reason why the Wise Men brought gifts at the Lord's birth. We are told that,

the signification of "not being seen empty," or without a gift, as being a testification on account of the reception of good, and, thanksgiving; for the gifts that were offered to Jehovah signified such things as are offered by a person from the heart unto the Lord, and are accepted by the Lord. (*Arcana Coelestia* 9293)

We are also told that because all good things come to us from the Lord, our contributions are really returning to the Lord that which is His. Thus "a gift from people is a gift from the Lord." (*Arcana Coelestia* 10093:3) Meaning, that our gifts to the Church and Academy are a way to thank the Lord and recognize all that He does in our lives. This is why we set a basket out at worship services and bring it forward during the service. It is a heartfelt act of worshipping the Lord.

One last point about gift giving: When we donate we become part of something larger than ourselves. As the Writings note: "To send gifts means, symbolically, to consociate by love and friendship because a gift consociates; for it gives rise to love and creates friendship." (*Apocalypse Revealed* 508; see also *Apocalypse Explained* 661) When we contribute for spiritually good reasons, we are joined with the Lord and all those who participate. It draws us closer to our neighbors in the Church and Academy, supporting them in their spiritual journeys also.

So, while we do have to be careful about elevating benefactions of charity to charity itself, there are tremendous benefits in free will offerings. They are expressions of love. They are good works to the extent one is engaged in the regenerative process. They remind us of what the Lord has given and continually gives us. And they join us with the Lord and others who would follow Him in His second coming.



The Rt. Rev. Brian W. Keith retires as Executive Bishop of the General Church as of June 30, 2019. He and his wife, Gretchen (Umberger), live in Bryn Athyn. Contact: Brian.Keith@newchurch.org.

About the Lord's Law for Perpetual Creation

Trinities, Degrees, Correspondences and Influx

Vance Genzlinger

The Lord has but one law that governs all that He does. But that law is made up of four parts, described below. It is impossible to have any one of these parts without having the other three, just as in natural physics it is impossible to have a force without motion, velocity and direction.

It was an understanding of these four laws and their application to the heavens, the internal sense of His Word, and many other Swedenborgian teachings, that led me to believe in my heart that the Swedenborgian religion is the Lord's current path to mankind on earth. (See the Post Script at the end for more on this.)

Why are these four truths important?

First: Trinities, degrees, correspondences and influx collectively describe the process used by our Lord to do everything that He does. He uses these truths to create and maintain the heavens and earths of His universe and everything in them. He uses them to put Himself into the inspired parts of the Bible. He uses them to inspire mankind to see His rational nature, and through that sight to love Him as their Divine Human Lord.

Second: Our Lord tells us, through His prophet Emanuel Swedenborg, in the Third Testament of His Word, that you cannot completely understand Him and all that He has created without understanding His trinities of discrete degrees, that are driven by correspondences and influx from Him as defined in *Divine Love and Wisdom*:

The purpose of this volume is to uncover causes and from their standpoint view effects, and thus dispel the darkness which envelopes the person of the church in regard to God, to the Lord, and to those Divine matters in general which are called spiritual. (# 188)

To understand God, His Word, and everything in His universe, man must understand discrete and continuous degrees. (paraphrased from *Arcana Coelestia* 3691[2]); *Heaven and Hell* 38; *Divine Love and Wisdom* 184-187)

Third: Trinities, degrees, correspondences and influx should be the cornerstone of our study of the Lord, His heavenly kingdom, the inner meanings of His Word, or any other spiritual subject.

Fourth: Our Lord also tells us that we of European descent are mostly of a spiritual genius. We are rational people who regenerate from truth to good, i.e. we learn and reflect on truths before we compel ourselves to live by them and only then learn to love them. The entire *Arcana Coelestia* exposition of the book of *Exodus* is about this method of regeneration. Contrast this with what God tells us about most people of African descent. They are of celestial genius who regenerate from good to truth, i.e. they perceive the good in truths and from it they learn to love the truths.

Fifth: New Church people must understand these concepts well enough to use them while discussing the Lord's Trinity, the internal senses of His Word, and heaven with rational searchers, who are those who need our teachings the most, if the Lord's Church on earth is to grow.

Sixth: These teachings seem to have been overlooked by many of those writing research papers on difficult doctrinal problems, e.g. kingdoms vs. heavens, evolution, miracles, human mind, spiritual vs. natural substances, time and space, and the very nature of God.

Introduction

Our Lord has told us in *Divine Love and Wisdom* and other places that He is in the form of a trinity of discrete degrees known as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, that are His end, cause and effect respectively. He has created and continues to create everything in His universe in His image, from the Grand Man of Heaven to mankind and the smallest things in His physical world by using the process, i.e. the truths described in what follows.

The Lord says: "Nobody can truly know Him or His universe or the causes of anything without understanding discrete and continuous degrees and all that they imply." He also says: "Every created thing is in the form of a trinity consisting of three discrete degrees. Each degree corresponds to and is made from the next more interior degree. Influxes from God work through these correspondences to provide the go power to energize these degrees. Each

discrete degree element has within it two continuous degrees that, in turn, have within them another trinity of discrete degrees.” (Paraphrased from quotes give above and below.)

Understanding the Lord’s perpetual creationism – His continuous recreation of all that He creates – starts with understanding the trinities within Him.

Trinities:

Since God is in the form of a trinity, and everything in His creation is in His image, it follows that everything He creates is in the form of a trinity from the greatest trinities in God to the smallest trinity in a grain of sand. Some

God:	Father Divine Love Divine Essence Divine Itself Lord *God as seen through the Spiritual Sun	Son Divine Wisdom Divine Form Divine Human Heaven Spiritual World	Holy Spirit Divine Useful Endeavor Divine Activity Divine Proceeding Earth Natural World
Heaven:	Inmost Celestial	Intermediate Spiritual	Outermost Natural
Meanings of God’s Word:	God	Celestial/Spiritual	Literal
Logistical Relationships:	End Purpose Endeavor	Cause Means Force	Effect Result Motion

important trinities are:

Everything created by God has within it a true trinity, made of three discrete degrees which correspond to each other and are powered by influx from the Lord. All these trinities contain the logical relationships given above.

I will start this and most future articles with the most overall trinity: God (Lord), spiritual world (heaven), natural world (earth).

Discrete and Continuous Degrees

No one is able, without knowledge of discrete and continuous degrees (including their implied trinities, correspondences and influxes), to understand the state of man, and the state of his elevation and approach to the Lord. (*Divine Providence* 32:3)

Unless one procures a knowledge of both kinds of degrees, he cannot have an idea of the interiors and exteriors of man, thus neither of the soul and the body, nor of causes and effects. Nor can he have an idea of the distinction between the heavens, nor of the wisdom of the angels in the heavens; nor can he have any idea of correspondences, of representatives, of order, thus he cannot have an idea of those things which are of order, both in the natural world and the spiritual world, thus scarcely of any just idea of anything. (*Last Judgment Posthumous* 303-309).

There are continuous degrees and there are discrete degrees. Both are in every form in the spiritual world and in the natural world. (*Divine Love and Wisdom* 11)

Each discrete degree contains continuous degrees . . . degrees of both kinds exist in all things . . . indeed, one kind cannot exist without the other. (*Ibid.* 236)

Discrete Degrees

Discrete degrees are distinct levels of existence or distinct things that cannot exist without each other. Degrees are formed from influx in this order: first degree (highest or inmost), second degree (middle) and third or last/ultimate degree (lowest or outmost).

The first degree is the essence of the other two, giving them life. The third degree is the form of the other two, allowing them to live. The middle or intermediate degree is the essence of the third and the form of the first.

Discrete degrees exist in successive order (highest to lowest) and, at the same time, in simultaneous order (inmost to outmost). The third degree (the ultimate) is the base, container and complex of the other two degrees, and the fullness and the power of everything that exist in the third degree.

We find in everything created, in the grandest and in the most infinitesimal, a trinity of these three elements (i.e. discrete degrees): end, cause and effect. There is nothing created that does not have in it these three elements. (*Divine Love and Wisdom* 154)

The end produces the cause, and through the cause produces the effect. (*Ibid.* 189)

“The end is everything in the cause, and through the cause it is everything in the effect.” (*Ibid.* 197) Notice that the end produces the cause and also is in the cause, similarly the cause produces and is in the effect. This end, cause, effect relationship is energized by influx from the Lord through correspondences that are defined in *Arcana Coelestia* 4044.

The existence of these three – end, cause and effect – in each and all things that have

been created can also be seen from the fact that effects, which are called last ends, become anew first ends in unbroken succession extending from their origin which is the Lord the Creator, to their last, which is the conjunction of mankind with Him. That all last ends become anew first ends is apparent from this, that there is nothing so inert and lifeless that it has in it no capability of producing an effect. (*Divine Love and Wisdom* 172; see also end of *Arcana Coelestia* 4524 and beginning of 4525)

All discrete degrees are in the form of a trinity; there are always three of them. The term “discrete degrees” means a whole lot more than the trinity of three discretely different – totally different – things. There is no continuous – such as from hot to cold – relationship between two adjacent discrete degrees. Discrete degrees also mean that each of the three degrees is related as end, cause and effect. There cannot be one degree without the other two.

The inmost degree is within the intermediate degree and the intermediate degree is within the outermost degree. This means that the inmost degree is the very substance from which the intermediate degree is made. Similarly, the intermediate degree is the substance from which the outermost degree is made.

Knowledge of discrete degrees is the key to laying open the causes of things and entering into them. . . . Without that knowledge, the objects and subjects of both worlds appear . . . to have nothing in them beyond whatever is visible to the eye. (*Divine Love and Wisdom* 184 [1])

Continuous Degrees

Continuous degrees are sometimes called degrees of breadth. They are described by the example of temperature that can vary through an infinite number of steps from hot (presence of Divine Love) to cold (absence of Divine Love). Continuous degrees must be of two degrees, cause and effect or substance and form. (*Last Judgment Posthumous* 303-308). Scientists consider only these two degrees.

But there is another type of continuous degrees that can be illustrated by the heart and lung system. In the human body, the heart is continuously connected to the lungs by the arteries carrying good blood and the veins carrying bad blood. The heart system in the human body of the natural world corresponds to the celestial kingdom of the Grand Man of heaven and the lungs correspond to the spiritual kingdom. They in turn correspond, respectively, to the Divine Love and Divine Wisdom of the Lord.

The use of the heart system is to give the human body life. The use of the celestial kingdom is to give the Grand Man of heaven life, and the use of the Lord’s Divine Love is to give the Lord life. There is a similar correspondence between the human body’s lungs, the spiritual kingdom and the Lord’s Divine Truth. Whenever the Lord’s third testament refers to the heart and lungs it

means the heart system and the lung system (including the arteries and veins) which makes them continuous degrees, not discrete degrees.

There are societies of angels corresponding to the arteries and veins. Celestial-spiritual angel societies (arteries), in the celestial kingdom, help the celestial kingdom angels communicate with the spiritual kingdom angels through the spiritual-celestial angel societies (veins) in the spiritual kingdom.

Each continuous degree has within it another set of discrete degrees.

Correspondences

The three elements of every trinity of discrete degrees are in correspondence. The outermost element corresponds to the intermediate element, and the intermediate element corresponds to the inmost element. Everything in the natural world corresponds to everything in the spiritual world, and everything in the spiritual world corresponds to everything in the Lord.

This correspondence can be found in the use that the corresponding elements have in their respective environments. For example, if the use of water, in the literal sense of an inspired Bible story, is to cleanse the body, then the use in its spiritual sense is to cleanse the regenerating person's soul. However, if the use of water is to drown evil souls on earth, as with the flood in the story of Noah, the use of water in the spiritual sense is to drown, i.e. to remove evil from the world of spirits at the Last Judgment of the Most Ancient Church.

A correspondence defines the relationship between one degree or level of a thing with the next more interior thing. They resonate by means of the use of the verb that describes them. It is influx from the Lord that makes this correspondence work.

Influx

There are two kinds of influx from the Lord into the natural world: immediate and mediate influx. Influx, or inflowing, is always from its source: from the Lord or from hell. Influx moves in one direction: from highest things to lowest things, or from inmost things to outmost things. (See details in *Divine Love and Wisdom* 205)

Prior to the advent, Divine influx was conveyed into the natural degree indirectly through the angelic heaven, but after the advent it flowed directly from the Lord into the natural degree. (*Ibid.* 233.2)

Immediate Influx

Influx is according to efflux. "There is an influx of good and truth from the Lord through the internal man into the external man, and through the external there must be an efflux, namely into the life, that is, in the exercise of charity."

(*Arcana Coelestia* 5828)

If you bottle up good things that are flowing in from the Lord, you can't receive more good things. The good needs to flow through you into action. A positive human decision followed by action is the answer to the questions: Am I going to do good to my neighbor? Will this make room for the Lord to flow into my life?

Immediate influx is directly from the Lord through the human celestial or spiritual kingdom soul, and from there into the human natural kingdom (earthly soul), and from there into life. This is the tool the Lord uses to guide our spiritual lives through His Divine Providence.

Mediate Influx

Mediate influx works through discrete degrees. It goes from the Lord into man's spiritual soul by means of celestial, spiritual and natural heaven angels, and from there into the three discrete degrees of man's natural mind (soul, mind, brain). Mediate influx also goes through the three discrete degrees of spiritual substances into three discrete degrees of natural world matter (which I believe to be energy, waves and particles).

The Lord uses these influxes to steer the uses of everything in His universe. It operates on every trinity through their discrete degrees. It makes sure that each element of each degree of each trinity is in correspondence with its next more interior element. It is the tool God uses to steer evolution into forming all the beautiful minerals, plants and animals that serve mankind. It is the tool the Lord uses to make the Grand Man of heaven in the form of the Lord's Divine Human and the human body in the form of heaven.

In short, mediate influx provides the go power that makes the inner degree of everything in the universe resonate, i.e. correspond with its intermediate degree and the intermediate degree to resonate with its outer degree.

Mediate Influx takes place through correspondent relationships and cannot take place through a continuum. (*Divine Love and Wisdom* 88)

Summary

The Writings say that you cannot understand anything about God, His universe, or His triune Word without understanding the trinity of discrete degrees and their imbedded continuous degrees. The Writings also say that God himself is a trinity of three discrete degree, and that everything in His universe is formed into a trinity of three (not two or four) discrete degrees and that each discrete degree has within it continuous degrees.

The Lord created the universe and everything in it by means of the sun that is in the spiritual world because that sun is the first emanation of His Divine love

and wisdom. . . We find in everything created, in the grandest and in the most infinitesimal, three elements – end, cause and effect. There is nothing created that does not have these three elements. . . . In the sun, the first emanation of Divine Love and Wisdom, is found the ends in all things. In the spiritual world are found the causes of all things. In the natural world are found the effects of all things.”
(*Divine Love and Wisdom* 154)

These teachings are at the heart of what makes Swedenborgianism the only rational religion for human beings who are now entering the rational adult state. They are so important to our understanding of God, His universes, and His Threefold Word that these ideas should be included in frequent doctrinal classes and religion classes given in all levels of our New Church schools.

The Rt. Rev. George de Charms anticipated a new science based on truths from the Writings in his article, “Is there a New Church Science?” (*New Church Life* July 1976) In part of its last paragraph he says:

“What we are here suggesting as a ‘new science’ is to recognize that the primary function of science is the discovery of the use for the sake of which all scientific data exist. Why have they been so created? What is the Divine purpose in their creation? In the answer to this question alone lies the inner truth concerning them. That this may be discovered, one must keep the mind open, even in the laboratory, to the secret operation of the Divine providence in all things of nature.

“So, thinking one must feel unsatisfied with a purposeless mechanism, one must search for the ultimate reality which is the use for the sake of which all things have been created. . . . To reason from the inner truth will, we contend, produce a ‘new science’ without in the least underestimating the importance of the facts, and without distorting them. It will be a science that freely admits the thought of providence to enter into the laboratory, to guide one’s reasoning in search of the inner truth concerning nature. It will revolutionize all scientific thinking in accord with the Lord’s promise at His Second Advent to ‘make all things new.’”

The basic truths discussed above are to this new science what calculus is to natural science.

Vance Genzlinger: For more information on these teachings see my article,



About God and Science, in the July-December 2010 *New Philosophy* or view it online at www.swedenborg-philosophy.org, and search on Vance Genzlinger.

When I graduated from the Academy of the New Church in 1947, I believed in a vague concept called God, and that He was the power behind creation of heaven for the good, hell for the evil, and earth for us

to prepare for a life to eternity in one or the other. But I did not believe that Swedenborg's Writings and the New Church were anything special. Nothing made rational sense to me at that time. I was told to believe that the Bible stories had spiritual meanings, that Jesus was immaculately conceived, that miracles like parting the Red Sea were used to achieve God's purposes. But I wasn't told anything about how He did these things.

I had a brush with other religions while in college, in the Army, and during the early years of my married life. I learned that Baptists only had to believe that Jesus was their personal savior, and that Catholics only had to confess their sins to a priest to achieve forgiveness and salvation, both irrational concepts.

Providence got me to Detroit with a beautiful wife, five great children and a career in computers that I also loved. It also got me to study the book *Creation* by the Rev. Dr. Hugo Lj. Odhner, *Divine Love and Wisdom*, the Rev. Norman Reuter's class on "The Internal Sense of the Word," and "The Science of Exposition" by the Rt Rev. W. F. Pendleton.

I finally started understanding God and His rules discussed above that led to my believing that Swedenborgianism is the only truly rational religion that paves the way for mankind as it evolves into its rational state of adulthood. Fifteen years after I graduated from ANC, I was finally convinced that the Writings truly were the rational Third Testament of the Lord's Word. A short time later my wife and five children were baptized, and I was confirmed into the General Church of the New Jerusalem.

Now in my golden years, I am writing articles on doctrinal subjects that have troubled me for a long time. This article is prerequisite for all of them. My viewpoint is as an engineer, computer system designer and business man rather than as a theologian.

My next article will be on "Two Kingdoms, Three Heavens and Innumerable Societies." (Vance Genzlinger lives in retirement in Philadelphia. Contact: vance@genzlinger.com)

Church News

Compiled by Bruce Henderson

ORDINATIONS IN THE IVORY COAST AND BENIN

Rt. Rev. Brian W. Keith

In April Gretchen and I traveled to the Ivory Coast and Benin so I could officiate at ordinations and provide general support.

It was a grand celebration in the Ivory Coast, with four inaugurations into the first degree of the priesthood and one ordination into the second degree. (Unfortunately, one candidate was sick and unable to attend. He will be inaugurated in August when both assistant bishops will be there for the West African clergy meetings.)

On the Saturday before the ordinations they held a graduation service from their theological school. This is a full three-year residency program. **The Rev. Erik Buss** was present to deliver the address. He spoke of what the students had received and how they now could go forth and serve the Lord and the people.

On Sunday, at the ordination worship service, there was the usual band and multiple choirs from several of their congregations. (They have experienced rather explosive growth. There are now 15 congregations holding weekly worship, with two more expected to start by the end of the year.)

With many songs and some dancing throughout, the celebratory atmosphere was loud and powerful. The declarations of faith, the awarding of the ordination certificates (a desired addition to the service in West Africa), and sermon focused attention on the Lord's leading of His New Church – all in about a three-hour service!

An interesting feature is that a number of the students in the school are anticipating forming their own congregations, independent of the General Church. Thus, of the four inaugurated only one will be a General Church priest. This is not unusual in the Ivory Coast. I once met with the retired

bishop of the Methodist Church for the entire Ivory Coast. He told me that approximately 35% of their growth came from independent pastors bringing their congregations into the Methodist Church. And we have recently had three congregations join us! These non-General Church priests will be teaching the Heavenly Doctrines and might eventually join with us once they have developed congregations.

Also interesting was that a local religion reporter was present. From that we had two full pages – with photographs – in a weekly newspaper that is widely distributed throughout the country. I saw it prominently displayed on the newspaper racks in the airport.

The next weekend we were in Benin for one inauguration, **Martin Ahotosse**, who had been trained in the Ivory Coast, and was at the graduation ceremonies. They are just getting started there. **The Rev. Guillaume Anato** has land, the walls of a church building, and several supporting structures on the property. He is planning big, as the structure is slightly larger than any other of our church buildings in West Africa. And the **Rev. Sylvain Agnes**, who is the leader of the General Church in the Ivory Coast, was also there and vigorously promoted contributing to complete the church roof and floor.

It is wonderful to see the reception of the New Church in West Africa. Their dedication to teaching the doctrines of the New Church is palpable, an outgrowth of their theological training. And the joy and excitement around their worship services touches the heart. Let us pray the Lord can continue to build His Church there.

(See photos on page 264.)

MINISTERIAL CHANGES

At the New Church Buccleuch in Johannesburg, South Africa, where the **Rev. Mark B. Allais** has been called to be the pastor of the Carmel Church in Caryndale, Ontario, Canada, the appointment of a new pastor has been delayed for a year. Meanwhile, Buccleuch will be served by visiting ministers, hopefully for four to six weeks at a time. **The Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Sr.** is scheduled to begin a stint in November.

The Sower's Chapel in Freeport, Pennsylvania, where the **Rev. Derrick A. M. Lumsden** has retired to go into private business, will also be served by visiting ministers for the time being.

At the Glenview New Church in Illinois the **Rev. Elmo K. Acton**, who had been serving in Oak Arbor, Michigan, has been appointed assistant to the pastor. He replaces the **Rev. Mac Frazier**, who becomes the new pastor of the Washington New Church in Mitchellville, Maryland.

A SPRING BREAK SERVICE TRIP TO BOYNTON BEACH

Rev. Alan M. Cowley

Pastor, The New Church at Boynton Beach, Florida

On Friday, March 1, the Swedenborg Library posted a short video on Facebook saying: “It’s March and it’s still snowing.” Meanwhile, 12 Bryn Athyn College students had escaped the snow, crammed into a van, and headed south to Florida for spring break.

Most college students who plan trips to Florida for spring break are thinking about partying on the beach. While they did enjoy some good beach time, the main purpose of this trip was to serve one of our churches, The New Church at Boynton Beach. As its pastor, let me say how grateful we are, both for the quality of the work they did and for the quality of the young men and women who did the work.

Organized and led by **Calvin Heinrichs**, who will soon begin training for the ministry at Bryn Athyn College Theological School, these students cheerfully spent 6-7 hours a day working hard on revitalizing our landscaping. They helped to clear a forested area infested with invasive Brazilian Peppers. They replanted several beds around the property. They weeded and trimmed all of the rest of the property. And they cleaned and organized the church’s garage, which nearly brought tears to our in-house landscaper’s eyes. The garage, used for our landscaping equipment, had become a toss-all storage room. It was a mess – but not anymore!

A couple of anecdotes illustrate the kind of young people who came here. On the first day, I was interviewing someone for a job in my office while the students were replanting one of the beds outside my window. The interviewee kept looking out the window, then looking back with a smile. I asked her, “What?” She replied, “I’m enamored by them! They are just all so happy!”

Yes, they were elbows deep in dirt, shovels in hand, singing along to a country song, and dancing while they worked. It was a real joy to watch and brought to mind *Arcana Coelestia* 454: “Angelic happiness is in use, from use, and according to use, that is, it is according to the goods of love and of charity.”

That Thursday evening I finished a class at the church about 9 p.m. I was thirsty, but wanted something other than water, so I thought I could pop into the kitchen where the young adults were staying for a glass of orange juice. I knocked before opening the door and there they were seated in a circle with the Lord’s Word open on the table in their midst.

Hyun-Jin Yang, one of the five freshmen Theological School students, was leading them in an evening vespers service. He looked up and asked if I’d like to join them for worship. Yes, please! And if that was not inspiring

enough, the topic of their worship was how they could do their best to make sure that this service trip was “truly charitable.”

They read several lessons on the concept that true charity does not have “any thought of reward” within it. They discussed how the enjoyment of their work may or may not get in the way of thinking from more pure motives, and really wanting to “do good for the sake of good.”

Their week wrapped up on Sunday morning, joining the society for church before loading into the van. Our congregation was so blessed to have their youthful sphere adding to the joy of our worship and fellowship experience. I estimate that their service trip contribution would amount to \$12,000 to \$15,000 in labor. Our church grounds look wonderful, and our cup is overflowing with gratitude.

Thank you to all the students who spent most of their spring break “laboring in the Lord’s vineyard” by laboring in our gardens. It truly was a blessing to host. They give our little church a lot of hope for the future, knowing that they will be part of it, whether here in Boynton Beach or somewhere else in the world.

Finally, I would like to thank all of the anonymous donors who helped to finance their trip, as well as all of the volunteers from the New Church at Boynton Beach.

I had a great time in Boynton Beach and I’m happy with the work we were able to do. But what I most appreciated about the trip was the time the group got to spend together. When school gets very busy, it can be difficult to spend time with people outside an academic environment. This trip provided a wonderful opportunity to spend time with my friends outside of that environment. I now feel closer to a lot of those people because of our shared experience. It has been really awesome to visit a different New Church congregation as well, and to see what the Lord is doing there for us. The church is beautiful, the people are great, and the things happening there are wonderful. I certainly look forward to my next visit.

Justin Schorran

10TH ANNIVERSARY OF NEWCHURCH LIVE

The Rev. Chuck Blair, Pastor

This year marks the 10-year anniversary of NewChurch LIVE. Launched a decade ago with an opening service at the Mitchell Performing Arts Center in Bryn Athyn, we have since grown into a thriving congregation.

The journey over these 10 years includes countless highs and lows. There is no way of avoiding the simple truth that growing a church is deeply challenging. “Church” in this particular time of American history is no easy sell. So challenges fall across the board from attracting new people, to assimilating them into community, to finances, to staffing. The list goes on.

Yet, with all that in mind, we are a thriving congregation. While firm numbers remain difficult to tabulate with 100% accuracy, we will hit an all-time average Sunday attendance as we close this fiscal year. That average will close somewhere north of 250 each Sunday. That means our overall congregation numbers approximately 800 adults and children. For perspective: a recent *Christian Century* article noted that churches in the United States currently include, on average, 70 active participants, adults and children.

To drill down into those numbers more specifically, who do we draw? Our average age is 35. Most of our new folks come from a Catholic background. Most have roots in Northeast Philadelphia. More than half attend online on Sundays. Our Board of Directors reflects this makeup, with 70% being first generation New Church.

To share a Sunday snapshot, it brings a smile to look at a recent service we hosted on addiction. The service, and the day itself, included many powerful moments:

1. A pre-service planning team of a dozen souls who have traveled the path of addiction or supported those struggling with the disease
2. A Friday chapel for students at the Bryn Athyn College led by a young husband who is just beginning his journey of healing
3. An opening to the Sunday service itself with a welcome from a family who call Arkansas home
4. Three guest speakers who told beautifully of their journeys
5. Lunch-with-the-Pastor, a monthly program we host for new families, that drew 24 right after church
6. Two service teams that day who traveled to Philly, serving at St. Francis Inn and The Ronald McDonald House

That, as a pastor, is the type of day we do best because in ways very small and imperfect, it is our effort to take the Lord’s lead in simply “being the church.”

An obvious question looking back at the first 10 years is: “What about the next 10?” This remains a critical question not just for NewChurch LIVE but for all churches.

It starts here: technology is changing everything, at least in how church is done in the Philadelphia area.

The impact of technology that we witness:

1. ALL churches are now online. Before someone decides to attend church, they will view both the church website and one or more online services. The foyer is not what people see when they enter the building anymore; it is what they experience online. And likewise important, people can attend, via the web, any one of countless churches any given Sunday.
2. An increasing percent of the Sunday congregation joins via LiveStream
3. Many watch at other times during the week or listen via Podcast
4. Many watch while they are engaged in a second activity, ranging from exercise to yard work
5. Many who watch online are young families who find it easier than dressing their children and driving them to church

For me, it is sad that so much of congregational life has shifted online. Yet, that is the world we live in. The idea that the pendulum will swing back toward face-to-face community I believe to be mistaken although I would certainly welcome it. Technology and its disruptions are here to stay.

The good news is that we are working diligently at positioning NewChurch LIVE to serve in this new territory.

To serve in that new territory, pastoral leadership looks somewhat different than the traditional model. All models of pastoral leadership start with the unquestioned premise that we are here to serve the Lord. And from there two options open.

Option one is to see a congregation as a gathered community that the pastor serves. Option two is to see the pastor’s role as joining *with* the congregation to see out, to serve outside its immediate walls. We chose the second option.

It means the secret to our success – which of course assumes a great deal! – is this teamwork embedded into our ethos. This “working together” means we seek to employ teams around everything we do. We seek to honor all voices. And it means we clearly focus on humbly serving, as God gives us to see it, our brothers and sisters who are struggling locally.

Maybe in the end, that is it, that is what deserves the most note on this our 10-year anniversary: that we have served as best we can.

FINDING HOPE

Bronwen Henry

More than 125 people came out for the *Finding Hope 2019 Conference* on April 6 in Bryn Athyn. This extraordinary event was organized by Bryn Athyn Church in collaboration with NewChurch LIVE, Growth Opportunity Center, Gloria Dei Church and Abington-Jefferson Hospital. More than half of the attendees were not previously connected to Bryn Athyn Church.

The morning began with a touching musical offering by Academy of the New Church students, followed by a keynote with Dr. Sandra Bloom, exploring the impact of childhood trauma and strategies of healing from trauma.

There were opportunities for workshops on art therapy, movement, journaling, the impact of addiction, suicide awareness, healthy relationships, belonging, and specific support for challenges attendees are facing.

The day wrapped up with the group joining more than 250 people in the Out of Darkness Walk and planting a Finding Hope tree at Lower Moreland High School. (There are other Finding Hope trees from previous events planted at Bryn Athyn Cathedral, Gloria Dei Church and Abington-Jefferson Health.)

Here are a few reflections from attendees:

The fact that you are doing this event, having these conversations, and connecting with various other organizations and communities – that in itself is a HUGE success.

I am heartened by the courage, compassion and goodwill emanating from the speakers and event planners.

Very thoughtful programming and offerings. Dr. Bloom was a highlight – relevant and informed.

You can view a recording of the keynote by Dr. Bloom at www.brynathynchurch.org and at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8_1dVDtykLc

There will be groups forming to continue the conversation. Contact *Bronwen Henry*, Finding Hope and Small Group Coordinator: smallgroups@brynathynchurch.org or 215-947-6225 x271.

ACADEMY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

(Highlights of the March 20, 2019 meeting)

Brent McCurdy was unanimously re-elected as Vice Chair of the Board.

The Board approved two new members of the Cairnwood Board of Governors: **Meg Rohtla** and **Sean Connelly**.

A subcommittee of the Finance Committee is working with Bryn Athyn

College President **Brian Blair** and Secondary Schools Managing Director **Jim Adams** to explore ways to reduce budget deficits.

Accidental breakage of a sprinkler head caused extensive damage to the floor of the new gym in the Asplundh Field House. Because of insurance coverage the maximum financial exposure for the Academy is \$10,000.

(Highlights of the April 17, 2019 meeting)

There is a growing sense that we may need to limit deficits and endowment reduction. The College may need to put off finalizing its budget until enrollment numbers are certain, by the end of the summer.

Vice Chair **Brent McCurdy** reported that an Ad Hoc College Enrollment Committee is supporting the College in following the advice of a consultant.

The College Faculty Council is seeking more communication with the Board to facilitate understanding and shared governance.

The Board accepted a committee recommendation that they not reopen the Academy's rental policy since conditions leading to the policy have not significantly changed.

A NEW HIGH SCHOOL IN WASHINGTON

Reprinted from the April 2019 Newsletter of the Washington New Church

Our hiring committee for the high school has recommended, and received board approval, to hire the **Rev. Judah Synnestvedt** to take the lead in launching our new high school program. In addition to an M.Div. and a range of other academic interests and skills, Judah's experience includes working with coaching methodologies and participating in a cooperative homeschooling model for his own high school education.

Judah has a love for teaching and developing tools to help people use religious truth to meet their practical needs in life. This love has led him to work with General Church Outreach in the development of a multi-media platform for online ministry, starting with a podcast as the near feature.

This means he has already been thinking about coaching and online education platforms, which is part of the reason our high school program appealed to him. However, it also means that we will only have half his time, as General Church Outreach retains the other half.

Judah, his wife **Lydia**, and their three children will be moving to the area in June so that he can be an on-site presence for the fledging years of the high school.

THE GRAND HUMAN PROJECT

Luke David

Creative Executive

The Media Outreach division of the General Church is producing some new online content, and wants to know what you think:

1. **The Spiritable Podcast:** Hosted by **Luke David** and **Richard Glenn**, including a variety of interesting guests, this video podcast explores everyday life issues with a grounded, spiritual perspective, and does not shy away from a bit of comedy and laughter. This podcast is especially good for young adults, the spiritually curious, or perhaps the spiritually bored. Look up "Spiritable" on YouTube or anywhere you find podcasts, such as Spotify, iTunes, Tune-in, etc. (<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL2Q25M2ImIrzvdZsr2M-tWGF1hVfKukFY>)
2. **The Grand Human Project:** Outreach's Facebook page that produces lots of videos and inspirational messages with a fresh new voice. It should show up first in a Facebook search. Grand Human Project Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/grandhuman> (we're also on Instagram and Twitter) Grand Human Project YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCM8oWrWoUDfpQW4kcmrZG6Q>
3. **phoneitforward.org**, a relationship building tool using New Church philosophy as it's backbone to promote ongoing friendships.
4. **Hidden Things in Heaven Podcast:** Hosted by **Judah Synnestvedt**, this podcast goes on a detailed, verse-by-verse exploration of Genesis, alongside highlights from Arcana Coelestia. It's for anyone who wants to apply the Word to their life through a deeper biblical and scriptural study. Find it on iTunes: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/hidden-things-of-heaven/id1398597353?mt=2>

Check it all out, have fun, tell your friends, and let us know what you think. Send us your feedback or questions at grandhumanproject@gmail.com

NEW CHRISTIAN BIBLE STUDY

Steve David

At the New Christian Bible Study, we've been rolling out several new features. You've probably seen some of them, but here are a few recent high spots:

- The Bible "slider" study tools panel now offers tabs for related Bible words and phrases, related verses from elsewhere in the Word,

more related commentary, better-organized links to Swedenborg's explanatory works, and links to Biblical Sunday-school-type resources for parents and teachers.

- We just added a new Swedenborg "slider," with inbound links, parallel passages and related commentary. It's a great toolset for people who want to explore his (extensive) theological works.
- We've improved the user interface where Bible word/phrase symbolism is explained.
- We've updated the Japanese UI.
- We've added five Spanish translations of Swedenborg's works, and two more each in Zulu and Czech.
- We've improved the Notes and Bookmarks functions, as part of the study tools we offer.

We've added lots of other things, too. Please visit the site: newchristianbiblestudy.org. It keeps getting better, and more and more people are finding it and coming back. It's good!

SWEDENBORG FOUNDATION

The annual meeting of the Swedenborg Foundation, May 4 in the Glencairn Museum in Bryn Athyn, included a live taping of a special feature from the *OffTheLeftEye* YouTube channel.

Elected to the Board of Directors were:

- **The Rev. Cory Bradford-Watts**, minister of the Swedenborgian Online Community (swedenborgiancommunity.org) and the Church of the Good Shepherd in Kitchener, Ontario, Canada.
- **Carl Goodlove**, an executive and leadership ontological coach for senior leadership and teams and previous CEO and owner of an engineering firm. He discovered Emanuel Swedenborg through the *OffTheLeftEye* videos and found the Writings "the metaphysical equivalent of the holy grail."
- **Chad Odhner**, Bryn Athyn, a practicing attorney and assistant general counsel for the National Board of Medical Examiners. Prior to law school he had worked as a summer intern at the Swedenborg Foundation.
- **Soni Soneson Werner**, retired associate professor emerita at Bryn Athyn College, where she taught psychology for 21 years. She volunteers as a mediator and conflict coach for both the Convention Church and General Church.
- **Kathy Tafel**, a long-time member of the Board, is unable to continue. **Peter D. Toot** will finish out her term. He has served previously for 12

years on the Board and is serving as Board Secretary.

A reception following the meeting featured book signings by: **Bruce Henderson**, *A New Key to the Bible*, and **E. Kent Rogers**, *Seven Days of Spiritual Evolution*.

SUMMER CAMPS

The annual **Jacob's Creek Family Retreat** is set for July 21-24 in Western Pennsylvania. The theme is *Sacraments and Rites*, focusing on baptism and the holy supper, considered to be the two holiest acts of worship.

The pastoral staff is headed again by the **Rev. Matthew Genzlinger**, assisted by **Rev. Scott Frazier** and **Rt. Rev. Brad Heinrichs**. Camp directors again are **Blake and Paul Messman** and **Jamie and Julie Uber**.

For information on registration, directions, costs, etc., check out the new website: www.jacobscreekretreat.org. You can also "friend" the Retreat on its Facebook page: facebook.com/JacobsCreekFamilyCamp and contact camp leaders by email at jacobscreekfamilyretreat@gmail.com.

The **Maple Leaf Academy**, a New Church camp for teenagers, is scheduled for June 27 to July 3 at the Ecology Retreat Centre near Orangeville, Ontario, Canada. The theme is *Renewal*. For information contact Stephanie Kuhl, Camp Director: stephkuhl@live.ca or by telephone 519-895-1891.

The **Maple Leaf Reunion** for former Maple Leaf Academy campers, is set for July 3-6. Same site and contact information.

The seventh annual **Living Waters Family Camp** will be held July 11-14 in Paisley, Ontario. The theme is *War and Peace* – not the novel but what the Word and the Heavenly Doctrines have to say about the interplay between war and peace. For information email the pastor, the **Rt. Rev. Brad D. Heinrichs**: pastor@carmelnewchurch.org or call 519-748-5802.

SAVE THE DATE FOR THE NEXT SWEDENBORGIAN/NEW CHURCH WOMEN'S GATHERING

Gathering Leaves 2020, an international retreat for all Swedenborgian/New Church women, is scheduled for August 28-31 at Purley Chase Centre, Warwickshire, United Kingdom.

The event will include Divine worship in all its forms, talks, discussion groups, sister circles, circle dancing, country trail walking, meditation, yoga, arts and crafts, and a day-trip outing. As many attendees will be traveling long distances, extra dates either side of the event have been blocked out at Purley Chase to accommodate travel schedules. Further information to follow, including how to register.

BRYN ATHYN COLLEGE SERVICE TRIP TO BOYNTON BEACH
(See accompanying article on page 250)



Bennett Buick leads a crew out onto church grounds



Justin Schorran with a load of new plants



The beautified entrance to the church



YoungHee and Jonathan Carr fixing a wheelbarrow



Bennett Buick and his accomplice



The service crew, left to right, front row: Devon Heinrichs, Anwyn Brock, Tess Brown, Denali Heinrichs, Alerica Tait, Jonathan Carr; Top, left to right: Bennett Buick, Justin Schorran, YoungHee, HyunJin Yang, Liza Heinrichs, Calvin Heinrichs

ORDINATION OF THE RT. REV. BRADLEY D. HEINRICHS
 Carmel New Church, Caryndale, Ontario, Canada – January 13, 2019



Visiting ministers, back row, left to right: Nathan Cole, David Lindrooth, Jared Buss, Peter Buss, Matthew Genzlinger, Derrick Lumsden. Front, left to right: Brett Buick, Jim Cooper, Dan Heinrichs, Brad Heinrichs, Scott Frazier



Cathy and Brad Heinrichs on the Carmel New Church Chancel



Brad and Cathy, front center, with visiting ministers, family and friends



Bishops Peter Buss and Brad Heinrichs

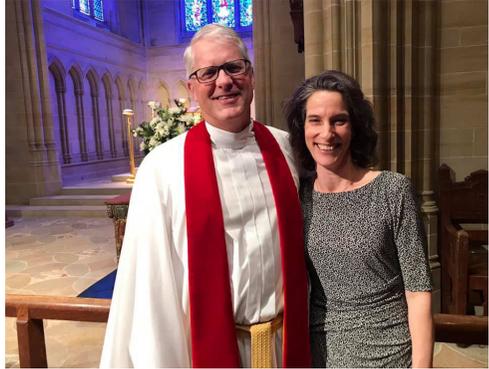


Brad and Cathy with extended family: Back row – Deacon Heinrichs, Bradley Heinrichs, Joram Heinrichs, Calvin Heinrichs. Middle row – Cathy Heinrichs, Linnea Heinrichs, Reyana Heinrichs, Liza (Junge) Heinrichs. Front row – Bob and Karen Heinrichs, Dan Heinrichs, Mary (Heinrichs) Williams, Denali Heinrichs, Brielle Williams

ORDINATION OF THE RT. REV. DAVID H. LINDROOTH
Bryn Athyn Cathedral – January 20, 2019



Bishop Peter Buss and the newly ordained Bishop David Lindrooth



David and Aven on the chancel



The Lindrooth family, left to right: Anna, Daniel, David, Aven, Carina, Erik, Kerstin, James



Teresa and Peter Buss with David and Aven Lindrooth



The Word on the Cathedral chancel prior to the ordination

ORDINATIONS IN THE IVORY COAST AND BENIN
(Photos courtesy of Gretchen U. Keith)



The Rev. Erik J. Buss and Bishop Brian W. Keith with graduates and wives in the Ivory Coast: left to right Jean Louis Nguessan Akissi and his fiancée, Gabriel Amarie and Veronique Sie, Anselme Beugre, Patrick and Jeanne Loba, Etienne Mogue and Marie Colette Beugre



Flag bearers lead the procession in the Ivory Coast



The Rev. Martin Cokou Ahotesse with Bishop Brian W. Keith during his ordination in Benin



On the chancel for ordinations in the Ivory Coast



The Rev. Erik J. Buss and Bishop Brian W. Keith, center, with graduates and Ministers in the Ivory Coast



The Rev. Erik J. Buss, center, with Ivory Coast graduates, left to right: Jean Louis Nguessan Akissi, Gabriel Amarie Sie, Laurent Kouadio Abo, Anselme Beugre, Patrick Loba, and Martin Cokou Ahotesse



The congregation procession to the ordination service in the Ivory Coast



The Rev. Guillaume Anato, left, with the Rev. Martin Ahotesse and Bishop Brian W. Keith in Benin

Life Lines

A NEW CHURCH WORLD VIEW

This is graduation season for New Church education in North America – our General Church schools, the Academy Secondary Schools and Bryn Athyn College of the New Church. The goal at all levels is to prepare young people for useful lives in this world and the next. The hope is that students from New Church homes especially will join the Church and carry it into their lives. We also have to hope that all of our graduates, whether new to the Church or not, and whether they join the Church or not, will always be guided through a New Church lens – a way of seeing and understanding the world and their place in it from a spiritual perspective.

It is not unique for a school or college to promote a life of purpose and service. These are common goals. What is unique about New Church education is that we see all of this also as preparation for a never-ending life of use and service in heaven.

In an article on page 208 about a project for teachers new to New Church educational philosophy, Scott Daum notes that while we share the secular goals of education we also focus on developing spiritual character. This is what will last and serve us to eternity.

He notes: “Five days a week all the subjects of this world are being interpreted for children without any connection to God and the reality of spiritual life. The philosophy of secular humanism, in which God is totally removed from the equation of life, is essentially the doctrine of the public system. For many children the only time they hear about God is for an hour or two on the Sunday they might attend church.”

Even that is happening less and less frequently. We used to be able to take for granted that virtually all children grew up with basic Bible literacy – at least knowing about Adam and Eve, Noah and the Ark, David and Goliath. Not anymore.

Scott adds: “A New Church teacher is looking at the world through a Swedenborgian lens, and the greater knowledge the teacher has of Swedenborgian theology and the stories of the Old and New Testaments . . . the more effective s/he can be in providing a distinctly New Church education.”

In another article – *Is Bryn Athyn College Important to the New Church?*

– reprinted from 2003 on page 218 because of its continuing relevance – Gregory Baker observes: “Intellectually and practically the college years provide a golden opportunity to lay a rational, high-level foundation for the rest of this life and the eternal life beyond. This is an opportunity to create rational, knowledgeable citizens of the Lord’s New Church.”

Through various introductory courses in religion – which are very popular with new students – he says: “The college outlines a structure on which the student can build a philosophy of life.”

That is the gift of New Church education: a philosophy guided through that New Church lens. And what does that vision help our students see and understand, to serve them in this world and the next?

They should have a clear sense of who God is – that He is knowable and visible, loving each of us and always trying to raise us to heaven, but leaving us in freedom.

They should have a comforting sense of the reality of life after death, that we are choosing heaven or hell throughout our lives, and that God’s purpose – a heaven from the human race – gives purpose to our own lives.

They should have some understanding of the Lord’s love operating through His providence, always leading toward a good end no matter the circumstance, and looking to what is eternal, not temporal.

They will all be tested and challenged by life and the presence of evil in the world. But hopefully they will draw on their New Church world view with a growing sense of calm, of optimism, of trust.

We are told in Isaiah: “This is the way, walk in it.” But there are a lot of detours along the route, and we are easily misled. A New Church education helps us stay true to “the way.”

The great lesson of life, the great lesson of New Church education, is simply to trust in the Lord’s leadership in our lives. This is a guiding summary of a New Church world view:

Very different is the case with those who trust in the Divine. These, notwithstanding they have care for the morrow, still have it not, because they do not think of the morrow with solicitude, still less with anxiety. Unruffled in their spirit whether they obtain the objects of their desire or not; and they do not grieve over the loss of them, being content with their lot. If they become rich, they do not set their heart on riches; if they are raised to honors, they do not regard themselves as more worthy than others; if they become poor, they are not made sad; if their circumstances are mean, they are not dejected. They know that for those who trust in the Divine all things advance toward a happy state to eternity, and that whatever befalls them in time is still conducive thereto. (*Arcana Coelestia* 8478)

(BMH)

PARENTING 101

In the aftermath of a recent college admissions scandal in the United States, with wealthy parents paying significant “bribes” to get their children into prestige universities, a television personality quipped: “I tell my children all the time: my job is to get you into heaven, not Harvard.”

(BMH)

A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH

Religion is not just a matter of belief, but of life. In fact, it is a matter of life and death: the death of the old self, mired in self-interest and natural gratification, and the resurrection of a new self which is truly human and more fully receptive of life from the Divine.

Of course, religious practice stems from religious belief, so belief does come first, in time though not in importance. Our steps alternate between left and right – faith and charity, belief and practice. As we walk along the path of life, what we believe directs our steps, and the more steps we take, the more our belief (faith) will be refined and strengthened. Living according to the Lord's Word deepens our understanding of it.

Religion brings the spiritual down to earth, and in so doing it elevates the earth – including the “earth” in us, the natural part of our being – and fills it with life and meaning that transcends the merely natural. Actually, it's not “religion” that does this, but the Lord, who is Life Itself, and who was born and died on earth so that we might have life and have it “more abundantly.” (*John 10:10*)

Religion, at its best and truest, is a response to the Lord – a loving, affirmative, trusting, grateful response. We can get an idea of how transformative such a response is by observing how the earth is transformed when it awakens from winter in the springtime when seeds buried in the cold ground come to life.

The physical forms life takes on in the natural world are temporary, but life itself is eternal. For those who “die in the Lord” (*Revelation 14:13*) the death of the body is the gateway to eternal life. The Lord illustrated this by His own death and resurrection. “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it brings forth much fruit.” (*John 12:24*)

(WEO)

BURNT SACRIFICE

The daunting reconstruction of the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris has begun. But more than an iconic cathedral needs to be rebuilt. So does the Christian faith it once symbolized.

As flames consumed much of this landmark cathedral – “the soul of Paris” – during Holy Week devastated mourners watched in shock across the River Seine and quietly began singing *Ave Maria* and *Salve Regina* through their tears. That was their instinct – to recall the touchstones of their neglected faith. Like the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States, and so many other tragedies that have shaken whole countries to their core – a smoldering Notre Dame brought people together in both grief and hope. And that may be the beginning of something good coming out of all this – the leading of Divine providence.

Notre Dame has stood for 850 years in the heart of Paris – and what once was the heart of Europe as an iconic symbol of Christianity. But like so many of the old castles and museums on tourists’ lists, it had become more a treasure of the past than a living church. It has been a magnet for the 12 million tourists drawn to it each summer, and a source of pride for Parisians – but more for its history, architecture and art than as a symbol of their faith.

It survived the French Revolution and the Nazi occupation of World War II, although it was a victim of the cultural revolution rooted in the French Enlightenment and two world wars, where Christianity was among the collateral damage. Throughout France, Europe and the “modern” West, there has been a relentless effort to replace Christianity with secularism – the “religion” of multiculturalism and faith based in reason and science, not God.

Notre Dame has been a proud relic, but more for tourists snapping selfies these days than worshippers keeping the flame of Christianity alive. But the tears over what has been lost may help to revive the spirit of this proud cathedral as it is reconstructed. Hopefully it will be reborn not just for its majesty but its meaning.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn lamented that the decline and failure of his beloved Russia through the 20th century was basically because “they had forgotten God.” That is the threat throughout an increasingly secular world, still wallowing in the fallout of the Last Judgment – from Notre Dame through various nations and churches, and down into our own lives. The counterpoint of hope lies in the Second Coming.

The challenge in building Notre Dame anew begins with appreciating its founding vision and 100 years of loving construction, then recreating a masterpiece that will not only inspire tourists but reignite a connection with God that redeems what was lost in the ashes.

(BMH)

A NOTRE DAME-BRYN ATHYN CONNECTION

A few days after the Notre Dame fire, the Glencairn Museum in Bryn Athyn

posted on Facebook a connection with Notre Dame that doubtless will play a big part in its restoration.

It noted that the late Andrew Tallon, associate professor of art at Vassar College and an innovative scholar of French Gothic art and architecture, had done a laser survey of the Bryn Athyn Cathedral and Glencairn Museum in 2014. This created three-dimensional maps of the infrastructure, which will be invaluable if any reconstruction is ever needed.

And Tallon, who did not live to see the heartache of Notre Dame, may have been one of its saviors because he had done a similar laser survey there, which will be a primary resource in its reconstruction.

An article in *The Atlantic* noted: "Andrew Tallon will not reappear among the living, but the work he put into recording stone and wood as it was built by countless hands over time may restore that creation."

You can read a fascinating article about the laser scans of the Bryn Athyn Cathedral and Glencairn Museum – linked on the museum website – at: <http://ow.ly/luxD30os2Ke>

(BMH)

AN OPEN MIND

Human knowledge is always expanding. New facts, new circumstances, new problems to be solved are always emerging. Our understanding of the world and of the natural issues of life in it is therefore always evolving. But spiritual wisdom is eternal, constant and perennial.

The distinctly human concerns of life are the same now as they were in Shakespeare's day. The insights of ancient philosophers are just as relevant now as they were 2,000 years ago, as is the truth expressed by the Psalmist a thousand years before that: "O Lord . . . Your Word is true from the beginning, and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever."

We often hear about the importance of having an open mind. But open to what? A truly open mind is open, not just to the natural world and knowledge acquired from it, but to heaven and the ability

its light gives us. Without the light of spiritual truth we would not be able to order and interpret natural knowledge properly, because the origin of the natural world is spiritual, as is the purpose for which it was created – namely, a heaven from the human race.

(WEO)

WISDOM'S STARTING POINT

There is a widespread belief that the more knowledgeable and rational a person is, the more well-founded and enlightened that person's worldview and

opinions will be. But this is manifestly untrue. Two people, each one intelligent, well-educated and adept at reasoning, may have very different ideas of what is and what should be: of ultimate reality, the meaning of life, and how to solve the world's problems.

What is it that distinguishes them? It is the premise, the assumption, that they begin with. This is not the product of reason but is something that is simply accepted as obvious. All logic begins this way. We may debate about how best to preserve and expand civil liberty, for example, but the truth that liberty is a good thing is simply assumed. It is assumed because we love to be free, and from that love we perceive that liberty is desirable and to be sought. But since not all our loves are good, we need to check our assumptions. This one is confirmed by the Lord's own words: "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (*John* 8:31)

Wisdom stems from the heart. "The fear (or 'awe') of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all those who do His commandments." (*Psalms* 111:10)

The Writings speak of the importance of the "affirmative principle." It doesn't mean "wishful thinking," or "the power of positive thinking" (optimism), or "seeing the world through rose-colored glasses." The affirmative principle is a basic truth or law that underlies all good judgment and fruitful thought – *namely, to believe that something is true because the Lord has said it in His Word.*

Those who think from the negative principle believe nothing unless they are convinced by what is of reason and memory-knowledge; nay, by what is of sense. Those who think from the affirmative principle believe that things are true because the Lord has said so in the Word. Those who are in the negative say they will believe when they are persuaded by reason and knowledge, but they will never believe. Indeed, they would not believe if they were to be convinced by the bodily senses of sight, hearing, and touch, for they would always form new reasonings against such things, and would thus end by completely extinguishing **all faith, and turning the light of the rational into darkness.**

But those who are in the affirmative, that is, who believe that things are true because the Lord has said so, are continually being confirmed, and their ideas enlightened and strengthened, by what is of reason and memory-knowledge, and even by what is of sense. (*Arcana Coelestia* 2588, slightly condensed).

(WEO)

THE ROOTS OF LEADERSHIP

A new book by noted historian Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Leadership in Turbulent Times*, pays tribute to four American Presidents who were tested by

personal and political crises but triumphed because they were natural leaders with clear vision and resolute character: Abraham Lincoln, Teddy Roosevelt, Franklin Roosevelt and Lyndon Johnson. All of them, significantly, were guided – to greater or lesser degree – by faith in God and His providence.

Indeed, the United States was founded on religious faith and principles. The Founders concluded the Declaration of Independence by pledging their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor “with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine providence.”

George Washington said he could not conceive of governing without the Bible. He prayed after his inauguration in 1789: “Almighty God, we make our earnest prayer that Thou wilt keep the United States in Thy holy protection.” And James Madison boldly stated: “We have staked the whole of our political institutions on the capacity of mankind to govern themselves according to the Ten Commandments.”

Most Americans want their leaders to have religious faith – as long as it is kept separate from their political roles. Presidents may call for prayer and God’s blessings in times of crisis but will not be as candid as Lincoln in the depths of the Civil War: “I have been driven to my knees by the overriding conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My own wisdom and that of all about me seem insufficient for the day.”

Lincoln, who never joined a church but was a devout reader of the Bible – and of Swedenborg – openly confessed that he was “busily engaged in the study of the Bible. I believe it is God’s Word because it finds me where I am.”

Goodwin says Lincoln worried that memories of the Revolutionary War and the nation’s founding were fading and that this history should be read as regularly and reverently as the Bible.

When the storm clouds of the Civil War were brewing, Lincoln warned that “a house divided against itself cannot stand” – knowing that everyone would be familiar with the biblical reference. That was also true of Lyndon Johnson, dealing with the long fallout of racial strife in the 1960s, when he quoted *Isaiah*: “Come, let us reason together.”

Teddy Roosevelt overcame a sickly childhood with his father’s relentless encouragement to develop his physical, intellectual and spiritual character. He later wrote: “Leaders in any field need more than anything else to know the needs of the human soul” – best addressed from faith.

When Franklin Roosevelt was left an invalid by polio – before becoming President – he experienced a “spiritual transformation” while recuperating with other victims. He learned that humility is “the greatest virtue” and that if we don’t learn it on our own “the Lord will surely teach it to us by humiliation.” He purged the elitism he had grown up with and was greatly loved for his empathy.

Just before his inauguration in the throes of the Depression he invited his cabinet to a prayer service, saying: "A thought of God is the right way to start off my administration. It will be the means to bring us out of the depths of despair." He improvised the opening line of his Inaugural Address: "This is a national day of consecration." Goodwin called his address "a civil sermon" about "the larger purposes" that would bind the nation together "as a sacred obligation."

She praises Lincoln for coupling a fervent desire to lead with a passion to serve – guided by the character formed by his faith. That combined force, she says, "has not only enriched subsequent leaders but has provided our people with a moral compass to guide us. Such leadership offers us humanity, purpose and wisdom, not in turbulent times alone, but also in our everyday lives."

Whatever the country, whatever the challenges, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord." (*Psalm 33:12*)

(BMH)

HOW COULD SWEDENBORG WRITE *CONJUGIAL LOVE* WITHOUT BEING MARRIED?

Occasionally people wonder how Swedenborg, being unmarried, could write a book, *Conjugal Love*, full of deep wisdom about marriage. But I think a better question is: how could he have written it if he *had* been married?

The wisdom contained in this book is Divine, not from Swedenborg, but from the Lord. And yet, since the Writings are addressed to the rational mind, it was necessary for Swedenborg's rational mind to be engaged in the writing of them. Swedenborg was not merely a scribe, but composed the ideas set forth in the books and drew upon his own knowledge to illustrate them (such as his knowledge of human anatomy).

His mind was enlightened and guided by the Lord, but Swedenborg was tasked with expressing the spiritual truths revealed to him in language that could be understood by people on earth, while at the same time keeping his own ideas out of the works. He was a "spiritual fisherman," as he said, who was providentially prepared by his natural abilities, wide interest in and investigation of natural truths, and spiritual experiences to convey the spiritual truths that were revealed to him in a manner accommodated to the rational understanding of the readers. (*Influx 20*)

The years of academic study, spiritual experiences and reflection upon them that went into that book and the rest of the Writings required tremendous amounts of uninterrupted alone time; not to mention the process of writing them and getting them published (which involved traveling to London and Amsterdam).

If Swedenborg had been married, there would have been continual conflict between the responsibilities of his family life and those of being a "spiritual fisherman." Swedenborg could not have satisfied both sets of requirements simultaneously. He could have written a good book of practical wisdom while being a good husband, but not the unique, Divinely inspired work of revelation needed to restore the spiritual love of marriage to the world.

(WEO)

THE GATE IS ALWAYS OPEN

Any *Jeopardy!* contestant could tell Alex Trebek that Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was the best-selling American book in the 19th century. Only readers of *New Church Life* might be able to name the number-two book: *The Gates Ajar* by Elizabeth Stuart Phelps.

That's because the Rev. Jeremy Simons pointed this out in his article, *Some Examples of the Effects of the Last Judgment*, in this year's April/May issue. Phelps wrote her book in 1868 as a comfort for women, especially, who had lost sons, brothers, husbands and fathers in the Civil War.

The Gates Ajar is the story of a woman grieving over the loss of her brother in the war. She doesn't get the sympathy she seeks from friends, even her pastor, and is losing her faith. She turns to a widowed aunt who offers an inspiring vision of heaven, which Phelps claimed was divinely inspired. Jeremy says her inspiration came from reading *Heaven and Hell*. Not only was one woman comforted by the story but the whole nation.

Countless Americans in the North and South were devastated by the horrific losses of the Civil War and were not helped by traditional harsh Calvinist beliefs about the afterlife so they eagerly embraced a more comforting vision. *The Gates Ajar* pictured a heaven where people keep their physical shapes and personalities, where families are reunited and live with all the comforts of normal life. There was such hunger for this view of heaven that the book sold more than 100,000 copies in the United States and England and was translated into four languages.

Phelps capitalized by writing two more books, *Between the Gates* and *Beyond the Gates*, which continued the theme but weren't sequels because they didn't follow the same story and characters. But they were also enormously popular. Indeed, there followed a wave of more than 80 books on the afterlife as people sought more for their faith than their churches were offering.

Because we all suffer the loss of loved ones, and because we all know we will die, everyone wants answers about life after death. Polls consistently show that most people of almost any religious faith believe in life after death. It's no wonder the comfort offered by *The Gates Ajar* was embraced so widely. It was just what a grieving nation needed.

Would that *Heaven and Hell* was as universally accepted. But the Lord's providence was leading people in freedom after the Civil War, as it is now. We know that anyone whose mind is open and receptive can perceive spiritual truth. That's what happened with *The Gates Ajar*. That's what seems to be happening with the surging popularity of the Swedenborg Foundation's *OffTheLeftEye* videos, attracting seekers all over the world. In my own experience, many people from different faiths who have read my book, *Window to Eternity*, have told me: "This isn't what my church teaches about life after death, but it's what I've always believed."

The Lord is leading and we do what we can to help. The "gate" is always ajar and welcoming.

(BMH)

VARIETY IN THE CHURCH

The human body is composed of various distinct organs, each of which contributes to the perfection of the whole. This arrangement corresponds to that of the "Grand Man" of heaven, composed of various societies, each with its own distinct use that contributes to the health of heaven as a whole.

It is similar regarding the New Church on earth. As a spiritual entity it is universal, affecting and potentially including everyone in the world, and encompassing various forms of worship and other uses.

Our particular organization, however – the General Church of the New Jerusalem – is not the whole of the New Church. It has its own distinct character formed by the principles upon which it was founded, beginning with the authority of the Writings, and the particular uses it has dedicated itself to promoting, especially New Church education and marriage inspired by the truths revealed in *Conjugal Love*.

The General Church was founded upon a strong belief that, although Swedenborg was the instrument by means of which the new revelation was given, it is not the product of his genius or even the wisdom of angels but is from the Lord alone and is His Word, equally with the Old and New Testaments, although in a different form. That belief permeates the General Church and distinguishes it from other branches of the New Church.

The uses the General Church serves are vital to the establishment of the New Church on earth, and no other branch of the Church is as interested in them and as well equipped to perform them.

There is variety in heaven, and within each society of heaven; but the variety within a particular society is more limited than within heaven as a whole. Variety *within limits* strengthens and perfects. The General Church occupies a very small niche in the world of religion, but for all who cherish it,

few though they may be, it is invaluable and irreplaceable.

Small entities may have an importance far beyond their size. The Lord spoke with a "still, small voice" that was more powerful than all the noise raging around Elijah. The Lord changed the world with twelve disciples. He compared heaven to a tiny mustard seed, a treasure hid in a field, a lost coin, a single talent. The General Church may be small in terms of numbers, and unimportant (in fact, practically invisible) in the eyes of the world, but it serves a use to the New Church, and thus to all humanity, which is absolutely vital and which no other organization is prepared to serve.

(WEO)

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“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

Matthew 6



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