

NEW CHURCH *Life*

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

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2019



Fifty-one years ago Bishop Willard D. Pendleton spoke at a Charter Day banquet about the growing challenges facing the Academy of the New Church, and the hope the Academy represents in a desperate world. The issues – and the hope – still resonate. (Page 395)

NEW CHURCH LIFE (USPS 378-180)

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New Church Life

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

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and donations.*

In This Issue

Editorials (page 389) include:

- *Deliver Us From Evil*: We are reminded daily – from public shootings to private tragedies – that we are surrounded by evil. We cast about for prevention but must also remember that all of our challenges have spiritual roots, which must especially be addressed. But we always have the comfort from the Lord: “They that be with us are more than they that be with them.”
- *Gaining Wisdom*: We are encouraged to seek wisdom – not as a measure of intelligence but of our regeneration. It comes as we learn the Lord’s truth, in innocence and humility, then live that truth in goodness from the Lord.

Fifty-one years ago the Rt. Rev. Willard D. Pendleton responded extemporaneously to talks by several Charter Day banquet speakers on “What the Academy Means to Me.” Bishop Pendleton is fondly remembered for his ability to summarize the essence of challenges facing the Church and Academy, and his message here about the Academy being “the hope of the future” in an increasingly hostile world still resonates across the years. (Page 395)

In a sermon, *Becoming an Angel*, the Rt. Rev. David H. Lindrooth uses the story of Jacob’s dream beside a ladder reaching to heaven as an image of “how the Lord is constantly working secretly from within the depths of our souls, lifting us, gently reforming us.” And, “While we can prepare our minds and lives for Him to enter into us, it is He alone who has the power to change us.” But, “This truth can be totally unrecognizable when we are immersed in the daily concerns of a worldly life.” (Page 399)

In a sermon on *The Idolatry of Logic*, the Rev. Scott I. Frazier uses the story of Deborah to show how the power of the Lord can deliver us from particular evils or falsities. “At its worst,” he says, “the idolatry of logic places our own thinking above the Lord, which places our own intellect above the Lord and leads to darkness and confusion.” But, “If we can summon our awe for the Divine and simply and humbly listen to the Lord in His Word and just understand what we understand and try to do it, we will be living the life the Lord wants.” (Page 405)

Next year we will celebrate at the General Church Retreat the 250th anniversary of the birth of the New Church in heaven, with the Lord sending His disciples to proclaim that “the Lord God Jesus Christ reigns.” As part of our preparation the Rev. Kenneth J. Alden reflects as well on the 250th anniversary of the Brief Exposition, which prepared the way for *True Christian Religion*. When the *Brief Exposition* was published, “the angelic heaven . . . appeared of a deep scarlet color with the most beautiful flowers.” (Page 411)

The Rev. Christopher A. Barber, unique among General Church ministers for his personal connection to slavery through his ancestors, offers a scholarly reflection on slavery and the New Church – including his disappointment with the passivity then of church leaders. This was in contrast to the antislavery movement in England, with several strong New Church leaders. Mr. Barber’s article is quite lengthy but well worth reading. (Page 416) Meanwhile, two Life Lines items also comment on “The New Church and Slavery.” (Page 472)

The Rev. Walter E. Orthwein reviews a new book by the Rev. Dr. Reuben P. Bell, *Intelligent Default: Swedenborg’s Theistic Science and the Problem of Organic Form*, which casts a whole new “intelligent” light on the theory of evolution. The book coincides with a Bryn Athyn College symposium on Theistic Science, October 12. (Page 447)

Memories of Academy Secondary Schools graduates are sealed in the annual yearbooks – a tradition that began in 1923. Marvin Clymer, Digital Collections Supervisor at the Swedenborg Library, has established a digital record of the entire collection. He also captures the history in his article, including: a list of local advertisers; the first year color was used; and which class had to forego a yearbook because of a deficit from the year before. (Page 451)

Church News, beginning on page 455, includes:

- General Church Retreat: Call for Sessions
- Upcoming Charter Day events
- New academic year at Bryn Athyn College
- The new school year at the Academy Secondary Schools
- Regional Clergy Meetings in Australia
- The British Academy Summer School
- Symposium at Bryn Athyn College on Theistic Science
- New books from the Swedenborg Scientific Association
- News From Heaven on video

Editorials

DELIVER US FROM EVIL

Throughout all of history we have been plagued by evil – from the crucifixion to today’s headlines and news alerts, from international terrorism to the abuse of a child. All of it has human expression. And all of it is from hell.

Just the names evoke the horrors of our past: Iwo Jima, Normandy, Auschwitz, 9/11. Now we have our own: Sandy Hook, Stoneham, Las Vegas, Orlando. To the litany we have just added a food festival in California, El Paso, Texas, Dayton, Ohio, and perhaps more since.

Despair is echoed in cries for gun control, more attention to mental health, security, our wayward culture. The anguished cry is “Do something!” The challenge is to build consensus over what to do. We have always had guns, but not the carnage, the hatred, the alienation. Calm and probing discussion is overdue. We need to look outside of ourselves, but also within.

It is easy to blame the moral drift of society since removing God from public schools in the United States, but that did not remove responsibility from the home. We need to start with recognizing that all of our challenges have spiritual roots, and that the general decline of religion in people’s lives and awareness gives the hells the access they crave.

When we go to the Word we see what is at the root of tensions that forever plague humanity: love of the Lord and the neighbor vs. love of self and the world. We are called upon to focus first on our own lives – through regeneration – and then to influence the world within our own sphere in whatever ways we can. We can’t just look to government, politics and leaders. Solutions are up to all of us.

First, we have to recognize where evil comes from. “It is the evil spirits with us who produce it and at the same time cause us to believe that it comes from us.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 761)

John the Baptist was born before the Lord came on earth because his mission was personal repentance, which opens the way to the Lord and heaven – the ultimate deliverance from evil. “If a person shuns evil as a sin, he comes into the good opposite to the evil. The good opposite to the evil which is meant by murder is the good of love towards the neighbor.” (*Life* 70)

We are all charged – individually and as a church – to resist evil in all of its

forms. As we fight against it we are regenerated by the Lord and His kingdom is further – and inexorably – established in hearts and minds throughout the earth.

It is fair to wonder how a life of faith and charity can be established in such a hostile environment, but with the Lord all things are possible. We witness the destructive and demoralizing power of evil but know the power of the Lord is always greater. The ultimate question is whether we have the courage and faith to fight under His banner – because He depends on our help.

Evil, of course, is never the Lord's will. It is permitted for the sake of our freedom and only that good may come of it. That good is sometimes hard to see, and the transcendent power of good may be even harder to accept in the midst of tragedy. But the Lord's will is not seen in what happens in the world but in the opportunities and choices presented to reject the evil and build on the good. That is what lasts.

This is where we need to develop spiritual conscience through regeneration. This is one of the goals of New Church education and should be a personal goal for each of us. The Lord is building His Church on earth – with our help. And that Church is the ultimate protection from all the evil that assails us.

It is easy to get discouraged as horrors assault us. But the Lord always offers hope. When Elijah complained that he alone remained faithful, the Lord said to him: "I have left 7,000 in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed to Baal." And when Elisha's servant was terrified by the hordes of enemies surrounding his master, Elisha assured him: "They that be with us are more than they that be with them." And the servant's spiritual eyes were opened to see all the horses and chariots gathered to save them.

This is the comforting perspective the Lord offers for the world we live in. We may be surrounded by evil and witness new and more threatening manifestations closing in on us. But even with the decline in faith, those who be with us – who still follow the Lord and trust in Him – are more than those against us and have greater power. We have serious work to do, but that effort will be bolstered by the faith that good from the Lord will always triumph.

(BMH)

GAINING WISDOM

"Wisdom" is a high-sounding word – few of us would presume to call ourselves wise – and yet, since we were created to become angels, wisdom is what our Creator intends for us. But how do we acquire it? It is not just a matter of esoteric knowledge or intellectual prowess, but of what we love and how we live.

It is the life of religion that imparts wisdom to those who persevere in

it. It involves learning and understanding the truths of revelation and living accordingly. So wisdom is a by-product of regeneration. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." (*Matthew* 5:8) "True human wisdom consists in perceiving the existence of God, the nature of God, and what pertains to God." (*Apocalypse Revealed* 243)

The Lord starts us on the path to wisdom in childhood by giving us innate curiosity and delight in **knowledge**. A child's sense of wonder is excited by the forms of wisdom that abound in nature, and the impressions those forms make upon the mind provide a foundation for future understanding of the spiritual things they represent. We receive "Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood," as the title of Wordsworth's poem says.

The sphere of **innocence** that envelops little children is also a gift from the Lord. External though a child's innocence is, it provides good ground in which seeds of wisdom drawn from the letter of the Word can take root. In their innocence, before their rational mind is opened and they begin to question and challenge everything, children respond to the stories and lessons from the Word with delight.

The child's "innocence of ignorance" is a preview of the deeper, more perfect "innocence of wisdom" that an adult can come into, which is why the Lord said that we must become like little children in order to enter the kingdom of heaven. (*Matthew* 18:2) When Solomon became king, he confessed: "Now, O Lord my God, You have made Your servant king instead of my father David, but I am a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. (*I Kings* 3:7)

The key word here is **humility**. Children, small and weak and ignorant, can't help but know how in need of guidance and help they are; a wise adult acknowledges the same thing, but on a deeper, spiritual level. "Real innocence resides solely in wisdom, and wisdom consists in behaving towards the Lord in the ways that young children do towards their parents, yet with the good of love and faith as the motivation." (*Arcana Coelestia* 6107)

Real innocence is the heart of real wisdom, which "consists in our seeing in the light of heaven that what we know, understand, and have wisdom about is like a drop compared to the ocean of what we do not know, do not understand, and are not wise about. It is hardly anything at all." (*True Christian Religion* 387)

Truly human intelligence grows as we "meditate daily on the Word of God" (one of Swedenborg's "Rules of Life") and see its spiritual truths confirmed by natural knowledge and experience. By reflecting upon the relation between the spiritual and the natural, we "cultivate the rational," which is one of the prerequisites for becoming New Church. (*Apocalypse Explained* 732)

But knowledge and understanding alone do not equal wisdom; to be wise is to **see the truth**. This **perception** comes from love – love of the truth; love

of the Lord; love of other people because there is goodness in them from the Lord; and love of being of service to others. It is love that opens the eye of faith to "see truth in the light of truth," which is the light of heaven. (*New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine* 9)

And finally, wisdom comes to us as we actually **live by the truth** we know and understand and see. The Lord gave Solomon "a wise and understanding heart" because Solomon prayed, not for riches and honor and a long life (although the Lord gave him those too), but for the wisdom he needed to rule the Lord's people wisely. (*I Kings* 3:9-14)

Doing what we know to be right – that is wisdom. How simple it is! And yet, because of our waywardness, what an arduous journey it is for us to get there.

(WEO)

Letters to the Editors

Letters may be sent to the Editors of *New Church Life* at
Box 743, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009
or e-mailed to Bruce.Henderson@newchurch.org.

Yes, It's Important!

To The Editors:

Thank you for reprinting the excellent article by Dr. Gregory Baker, *Is Bryn Athyn College Important to the New Church*, (*New Church Life*, May/June 2019). I encourage everyone to read it, either for the first time or again, and share it with those who do not receive *New Church Life*.

In our efforts to increase the enrollment of the College I hope we are not neglecting our core purpose.

As Dr. Baker states: "This is an opportunity to create rational, knowledgeable citizens of the Lord's New Church." And, "Contemporary ideas are tested against the Heavenly Doctrines. Questions are raised, ideas discussed." Finally, ". . . 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."

I assume this is done in every Religion class, but what about other subjects where the professor has no previous knowledge of the Heavenly Doctrines? How can there be meaningful discussion without the necessary background?

I would like to add that in no way are my questions meant to imply or suggest that there are professors teaching at Bryn Athyn College of the New Church who are not experts in their fields of instruction.

Karen G. Heinrichs
Rochester, Michigan

A Good Question

To The Editors

Surely, every human infant, every soul, is a designed work of God, a Divine purpose on its way to fulfillment. When the infinite love of God gives the breath of life to each infant born, He opens yet another eternal pathway to the fulfillment of His central purpose: a heaven of overwhelming love and happiness for all humanity.

Who will choose to stand in the way of God's purpose?

Who will not support and sustain a life once granted by the Lord?

Who will say that their choice should take precedence over the will of Him who lovingly grants them every second of their own life?

And, who will disregard His command: "Thou shalt not kill?"

These seem like good questions to be considered by anyone who may be concerned.

Martin E. Klein
Boynton Beach, Florida

The Final Test

To The Editors:

Thank you to the Rev. Robert S. Jungé for his insightful paper, *Cramming for Our Finals*, (*New Church Life*, July/August 2019). He has certainly lived a long time in this world since his wife, Vera, left it. My journey as a widow is substantially less, but even the 16 1/2 years he's not been in the natural world I have never doubted his being with me.

Before my husband, David, died he told me he would be with me and I sense his presence many times, especially at my saddest. I talk to him a lot. I think we are truly blessed we have the teachings to comfort us when our hearts are sad. Every day I wake I miss him so much, but every day I wake I know I'm a day closer to being with him.

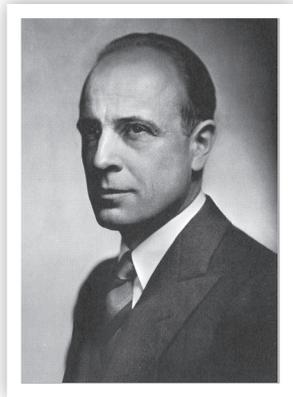
The intriguing thing I've found is now that I have four adult sons, four daughters-in-law and seven grandchildren leaving this world will be hard because I'll be leaving them behind. But I guess that is the circle of life that we are in. Thank you again, Rev. Jungé, for your lovely insights.

Rev. Julie Conaron
Willow Grove, Pennsylvania

CHARTER DAY PERSPECTIVE

What Does the Academy Mean to Me?

The Hope of the Future



The Rt. Rev. Willard D. Pendleton

(Editor's note: The theme of the Charter Day banquet in 1968 was "What Does the Academy Mean to Me?" with a variety of speakers on the subject. Following are extemporaneous remarks concluding the program by the Rt. Rev. Willard D. Pendleton, Chancellor of the Academy, which were transcribed from a tape recording. His message still resonates across 51 years.)

The question is: What does the Academy mean to me? The Academy to me means many things. It means many happy memories of my student years in the institution. It means my years of preparation in the Theological School for the work of the priesthood, where I studied under truly great minds. It means many happy years serving as a teacher in the Academy, and the delightful rapport that a teacher may have with young people. It means uncountable

hours of administrative work devoted to planning for the unprecedented student enrollment that we enjoy today.

So the Academy means many things to me today. But more than anything else, the Academy means to me THE HOPE OF THE FUTURE.

To say that this institution, this relatively insignificant institution is the hope of the future, seems highly presumptuous. When compared with the great multiversities of the world, what is the Academy of the New Church? Yet did I not believe this with all my heart I would not be on this platform tonight.

I was very much impressed by something I read the other day which was written by one of the keenest observers of the political and intellectual climate of our time. This man said that society today, whether it knows it or not, stands upon the brink of nihilism, that is, belief in nothing. What did he mean?

To understand what he meant we must reflect for the moment on the state of the world in which we are living. Let us not have any illusions concerning this; and if we had any illusions a few years ago we should have fewer today. For we are witnesses to a tremendous social upheaval that the Writings prognosticated more than 200 years ago.

What is said in the Writings is that the Christian Church is dead. It is this that is being said by Christian theologians at this day. What is more, they are deeply concerned, for they know that what they are witnessing is the rapid disintegration of the influence that the organized Christian Church has exercised over the minds and lives of men.

What is involved here is the dissolution of the moral values that for almost 2,000 years the church has sustained.

What we are actually witnessing, therefore, is the increasing lack of respect for any authority – for Divine authority and for any properly constituted human authority; but as New Churchmen we should have no difficulty in understanding why this is so.

What we are contending with is a deadly persuasion. It has taken the form of existentialism. Ten years ago existentialism, as a philosophy, was not known in this country, and in all probability there are relatively few who can so much as pronounce the word at this day. Yet if, as a philosophy, it is not generally understood, it has had a tremendous impact on our lives.

What the modern existentialists are telling us is that there is no God, that there is no significant purpose in life; and if you think I am exaggerating, read some of their works. As you read, observe the key words that leap out on almost every page. These words are anxiety, despair, death and nothingness. This is a grim outlook, and it was this that the writer, of whom I spoke, referred when he said that we stand on the brink of nihilism.

As expressed by some existentialists, there is only one basic question: that is, whether on balance, life is worth living. To this there must be an answer,

but the answer is not being found. Some say we must go back to primitive Christianity, but there is no return to the past. Life can only go forward. We can no more go back to the faith of the past than we could go back to the faith of our childhood.

But if we are to go forward with any assurance we must have faith; that is, faith in something besides ourselves, for man does not live by bread alone. To believe that we can work out our own destiny without the aid of Divine guidance is to believe in a fool's paradise. This is the trap of materialism, the cruel illusion that is fostered by the dream of the affluent society.

Now, I believe in the Academy because I believe that the Academy has within its possession the faith of the future. The Writings, although given to an unsuspecting and unbelieving world, open the way to the future. Not only do they unearth the hidden truths of the Old and New Testaments, but they reveal entirely new vistas of spiritual thought and understanding. Here we will find the meaning and purpose of life, and having put our hand to the plough, let us not look backward.

Do not misunderstand me. I am not speaking here of the Academy as an institution; howbeit, were it not an institution the Academy could not exist. What I am speaking of is the faith, the vision, and the ideals of the Academy. Let me say to you, therefore, that if you wish to contribute to the renewal of faith and hope among men, you will find your opportunity in the support of the Academy.

What this Academy needs is men and women of commitment, men and women who are capable of seeing beyond the personalities and limitations of the institution. What we need is that band of warriors who, under the leadership of Gideon, did not stop to drink as they crossed a stream, but in their eagerness for the battle lapped water like a dog in full pursuit of its quarry.

What we need, both now and in the future, is dedication. The Academy is here today, and you and I are here tonight, because in the past dedicated people gave their lives to it. They did not ask what the Academy could do for them; they asked what they could do for the Academy.

This is your opportunity. This is the opportunity which, if it should fail

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through lack of dedication, may not come again for generations. Let us ask ourselves, therefore, why are we here? I devoutly hope that we are here because we believe in what we are doing. What we are doing is providing an educational instrumentality by which those whom providence has entrusted to us may be led to perceive the Lord in His Divine Human. This is the vision of the General Church, and this is the vision of the Academy.

As I look out the window of my office and see these young people walking across the campus, I say to myself: this is good. I say this is good because I know that these young people are the future of the Academy. Moreover, I have faith in these young people because, although they belong to a restless generation, they are seeking for values. It is this, above all

else, that the Academy has to offer them.

Let us not, therefore, be discouraged by the signs of the times, nor influenced by the self-defeating philosophies of the market place. Let us hold to the charter purpose of this institution, which is to propagate the Heavenly Doctrines. That is what we are here for, and we will never admit to a lesser purpose.

What we have in this institution is what the world so desperately needs. It needs it as it has never needed it before. And although it may be a long time in coming, this is no reason for doubt.

Is it not said in the Writings that the New Church will at first be with a few while provision is being made for its growth among many? You are that few, and this is your opportunity to serve all mankind through the support of the Academy of the New Church.

Becoming an Angel

The Rt. Rev. David H. Lindrooth

Lessons: *Genesis* 28 (portions); *Isaiah* 40: 1-5; *True Christian Religion* 24 (portions).

Surely the Lord is in this place and I did not know it (Genesis 28: 17)

This morning we look at three parts of the Jacob narrative that illustrate the Lord's operation in our lives as He reforms us from sensory oriented human beings into angels who can live happily with Him to eternity in heaven.

We enter the story in a desert night. Jacob had lain down on the dirt and rested his head on a stone. While sleeping, he had the most amazing dream. He was at the foot of a ladder that went up to heaven with angels ascending and descending from where he lay. When he awoke he recognized that the dream was prophetic. It was as if a window had opened showing the secret, inner realm of heaven with all its beauty and the attentive care offered by the Lord and His angels. It must have been amazing to recognize that all of this was present and alive within the drab exterior of Jacob's life as a simple shepherd as he wandered in the parched desert.

It is a wonderful story. For us today, the story not only illustrates the wonders of heaven that the Lord is leading us toward but shows us something of how the Lord is constantly working secretly from within the depths of our souls, lifting us, gently reforming us. The dream captures the Lord's careful, miraculous operation that helps us to grow into the angelic life that He offers all of us in the life to come. The point is that even when life seems drab and we are left feeling alone, the Lord is within, working every moment for our eternal welfare and happiness.

The dream is an illustration of the passage in *Arcana Coelestia* 8455: "Everything that befalls us moves us toward an end that is good." Or to put it another way, Divine Providence is constantly at work in our lives nurturing and securing for us a happiness that will satisfy us to eternity.

The vision reminds us of the miracle of spiritual life, that the Lord is constantly flowing into our lives, so fully and completely that, in the words of *True Christianity* 8: "Everything good, that is truly good and that exists in us

While we can prepare our minds and lives for Him to enter into us, it is He alone who has the power to change us. This truth can be totally unrecognizable when we are immersed in the daily concerns of a worldly life.

and is done by us, is from God.” Or, in the words of *Psalms* 127:1: “Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it.”

These passages articulate the truth that – whether we believe it or not – we completely depend on the Lord for His power to grow spiritually. While we can prepare our minds and lives for Him to enter into us, it is He alone who has the power to change us.

This truth can be totally unrecognizable when we are immersed in the daily concerns of a worldly life. When caught up in trying to pay bills, take care of physical needs of ourselves and our loved ones, the Lord can seem

so distant that we forget to look for His presence in our lives. In our story, the dream seemed to awaken Jacob. He echoes this with his sudden realization: “Surely the Lord is in this place and I did not know it.” And, “How awesome is this place, it is none other than the house of God and this is the gate of heaven.” (*Genesis* 28: 17)

Perhaps part of the power offered by the New Church is that it promotes a similar recognition – that the Lord actually never distances Himself from us, especially in regard to our own progress and development as human beings. The truth is that nothing good in our lives happens independently from the instrumentality and immediate presence of God.

Our lesson from *True Christianity* 24 speaks of uncovering secrets of how the Lord, through the spiritual world, is constantly interacting with the world of nature. We can see it with the technology that offers us the incredible ability to view the early formation of a baby in a mother’s womb. We can see cells as they repeatedly divide; we can observe them gradually differentiating and forming all the parts of a perfect little human body with all its organs, its faculties of sight and sensation!

External observation could lead us to conclude that those cells are acting on their own initiative – but how can that be true? Deeper thinking leads us to recognize there has to be some quiet (Divine), interior, organizing Force that is responsible. The New Church teaches that when one takes an interior perspective, the whole of the natural universe “is like a stage on which proofs are constantly being demonstrated that God exists and that there is one God.” (*Ibid.* 12)

None of the organic growth of anything living on earth happens without influx from the Divine. This is true on earth, and it is equally true for the development of a person's spiritual nature. It is helpful to recognize the source of our spiritual growth and remember that our angelic bodies are constantly being formed and shaped by our Heavenly Father, the Divine Author of all humanity.

Shortly after Jacob's dream of the ladder, he has another remarkable encounter with angels. He is crossing the brook Jabbock and preparing to meet his estranged brother, Esau. He had sent everyone ahead and was

alone when again, at night, he was met by an angel who wrestled with him until morning. When dawn came and the angel desired to break free, Jacob wouldn't let him go without demanding a blessing. The angel then blessed him and changed his name to "Israel" – a name associated with struggle. The angel also dislocated Jacob's hip, causing him to limp for the rest of his life.

This curious story is also told in the Jacob narrative because its internal sense adds important information about the Lord's miraculous creative work that forms and shapes us into angels. It is particularly referencing how He develops our spiritual minds, enabling the powers of angelic reason.

We are taught that Jacob's limp is an illustration of those times when our spiritual growth is incomplete and our truths are lacking in their power. It speaks of those in-between times when we have not yet fully developed a clear sense of direction and purpose for the truths that we have learned in life. Without that clear sense of purpose, these truths are weak.

When a concept of truth lacks a firm connection with the intended good that it is designed to perform, that truth is going to be halting and lame. Similarly, muscle tissue that is separated from bone makes it difficult to walk. Anytime there is separation between goodness and the truths we have learned, that separation causes our spiritual progress to be halting and unsteady. So, while the spiritual progress certainly continues, it is a sign that the Lord still has work to do within. He is still at work connecting our thinking from the Word with clearer insights of how to serve the Lord and others.

The story of Jacob's limp appears here as a reminder that as we grow spiritually, we will encounter times of indecision and uncertainty. It is a part of

It is helpful to recognize the source of our spiritual growth and remember that our angelic bodies are constantly being formed and shaped by our Heavenly Father, the Divine Author of all humanity.

I suspect this concept applies to our church as well. The New Church is a church that stresses individual freedom and inquiry into all facets of faith. This free investigation can lead to divergent ideas and conflicting opinions about how the church should be progressing with its efforts.

the narrative to let us know that this is okay, and that it is a part of the process of becoming a spiritually motivated human being. Again, it is important to remember that it is the Lord alone who is doing this work within our minds and hearts.

Clearly this is also, in part, a message about the need to be patient. It is helpful to remember to be patient when we experience this internal struggle resulting from lack of insight. While we can feel the strong desire to move forward, we stumble because we simply are uncertain how to do it. This is as natural a part of our adult spiritual development as it is for a toddler to stumble and halt while learning how to walk. Spiritual growth and the clear, steady insights that come from truths that are wrapped with good always take time.

I suspect this concept applies to our church as well. The New Church is a church that stresses individual freedom and inquiry into all facets of faith. This free investigation can lead to divergent ideas and conflicting opinions about how the church should be progressing with its efforts. The truths that are being contemplated are not always tightly connected with the good benefits that they offer.

The church in these states, like Jacob in the story, shows something of a limp. It can be there even when we recognize the general direction in which the church is called to go. We still limp because that recognition lacks the enlightenment of the specific applications drawn from a more mature spiritual love.

Again, the story seems to call us to exercise patience and recognize that in the long view, the Lord is still at work, guiding and gradually aligning our efforts to understand truths so that we can clearly see the goods they may bring forth. It is a reminder that while we are directed to pray that the Lord's Church be established on earth, His work of opening our eyes, guiding our hearts and gently building the common bonds that form the basis of His Church all take time and are part of a greater organic process.

But spiritual life in this world isn't always characterized by limping. That

is just an intermediate state. The limp resolves itself as the Lord continues to work in our lives. Eventually the connections between the truths we learn and the goodness that is served by those truths are better recognized. These connections offer states of brilliant spiritual light that bring insights, guidance and wisdom.

Think of a moment when you were struck by an insight that changed your life permanently for the better. Maybe you met a stranger and suddenly you recognized that this stranger would become your spouse – a flash of brilliant insight, feeling as if by chance, but bringing so much value that it could not possibly be due to simple random happenstance. Or maybe you were struck by an idea that led you into a new career or field that, while you could never have planned yourself, has given you and others immeasurable satisfaction.

These moments of recognition can strike us with wonder and a sense of awe and they feel like they are gifts given freely by the Lord – as if we had no role in their appearing in our lives at all! Yet these insights have more connectivity to our spiritual progress than we might see on the surface. For these moments are not random, but are also the product of the Lord, working from within, arranging, creating and forming us step-by-step for heaven.

This aspect of our spiritual growth is also captured in the Jacob story later in the book of *Genesis*. Now Jacob is an old man. Years earlier, he had lost his beloved son, Joseph, when Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery out of hatred and jealousy. As the story unfolds Joseph becomes the de-facto manager of Egypt, helping it accumulate great wealth and storehouses filled with grain.

Eventually, a famine brings the brothers to Egypt where they encounter Joseph (whom they don't recognize) and from whom they purchase grain. But Joseph recognizes them. When they return home and open their sacks of grain, the brothers discover silver in the mouths of the sacks – what appears to be their money returned to them. They are stunned by the presence of the money in the sacks and worry that they will be thought of as thieves.

The internal sense of the story shows us again that this is really about our human minds as they are developed by the Lord and the deepening connections that He is making between the truths we learn from the Word and their applications toward a good life. The sudden presence of the money in the sacks represents these sudden, unexpected flashes of insight that become more common as the Lord more tightly bundles our rational thinking together with the desires for good. These valuable insights are characteristic of a person's growth as it moves beyond the limping stage into a stage of deeper connection. The Lord's purpose of this greater clarity is to better help us serve others.

The story draws two points to our attention. First is that the silver, which represents new truths and insights in our lives, is suddenly present in our lives due to what can only be seen as an act of God. When the brothers return

The pattern of a person's spiritual growth is organic. It is gradual. And it is a breathtakingly beautiful process for a human being to become an angel – a person living in the spiritual world, happy and useful to eternity in the Lord's kingdom.

to Egypt later to purchase more grain, they try to return this silver but the Egyptian in charge of the accounting clearly states that the money is theirs to keep. This is to remind us that the wisdom that the Lord offers is truly a gift from Him and as such is more useful than any insights we might generate on our own.

The second point to the story is that the silver was found in the grain. This points out the reality that new ideas and insights come into being through the context of our efforts to serve others from love. The sacks of grain represent our efforts at charitable action. This is helpful to remember when we are looking for what is next in our lives. Through this story, the Lord reminds us if we are looking for

leadership and wondering what is next in our lives, we can find His guidance by looking among what is represented by the sacks – looking among our efforts to serve Him in ways that help other people.

The pattern of a person's spiritual growth is organic. It is gradual. And it is a breathtakingly beautiful process for a human being to become an angel – a person living in the spiritual world, happy and useful to eternity in the Lord's kingdom. Our task is to prepare the way by turning to the Lord in His Word, learning the truths there that He presents to us, and diligently seeking to apply them to life.

In that effort, the Lord comes to us, takes us by the hand and lifts us up. As Jesus said: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live." And "whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die." (*John 11:25*)

Amen.



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The Idolatry of Logic

A Sermon by the Rev. Scott I. Frazier

Lessons: *Judges 4* (portions); *Arcana Coelestia* 8753

“Now Deborah, a prophet, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading Israel at that time.”

The story of Deborah is difficult to understand. Like all the judges, Deborah shows us how the power of the Lord can deliver us from a particular evil or falsity, but the Heavenly Doctrines do not have much directly to say about Deborah. They do offer many indirect clues through the rich collection of people, places and things mentioned in our story in chapter four and repeated in chapter five.

Repeated stories are important ones: the creation story is told twice, Saul and then David are each anointed twice, and the birth of Jesus is told twice. It is also a story about women acting on their own, like Rebekah or Mary, which makes it even more notable.

In the light of the Heavenly Doctrines, the story of Deborah – along with Barak and Jael - is about overcoming the idolatry of logic. At first we are oppressed by our own ability to logically twist truths and justify falsities. Then, Deborah shows us to turn to the Lord with awe. (*Arcana Coelestia* 8753) Second, Barak (as enlightened truth) chases away falsities, and finally Jael disposes of justification itself through innocence and humility.

By “the idolatry of logic” we mean valuing more that truth “makes sense” than that the truth is Divine. This can lead us to think that if a truth doesn’t make sense to us, we have the authority to discard it. The Heavenly Doctrines do tell us that we should temporarily set teachings aside if we don’t understand them, but the idolatry of logic discards those teachings entirely, happy to see them go.

It isn’t a lack of understanding, it is a refusal to accept something we don’t like. At its worst, the idolatry of logic places our own thinking above the Lord, which places our own intellect above the Lord and leads to darkness and confusion. Very soon, unchecked, the idolatry of logic leads to false justifications of every dark desire with all the misery and despair that go with

Our story describes a time when we are oppressed by the idolatry of logic. This is a state when we have let truths matter chiefly because we understand them, not because the Lord says them. If you seek meaning from your own intellect and will, you are trapped.

indulging them. (*Ibid.* 2851).

We all know what it feels like to encounter an unpleasant truth. When we listen to a person or idea with which we disagree, suddenly summoned to mind come all the reasons we need not listen, all the reasons we are allowed to dislike and discount them. If it is a doctrinal debate, we quickly become sure they are misrepresenting the truth. Especially when we read clear statements from the Word, we can twist and writhe, evoking “context,” “tone,” refusing to believe the Word and blaming the Word for not making sense. When the Word tells us our affections are invisible, or we are inclined to every evil, or that hell is eternal, we claim these ideas “don’t make sense” – but because our “sense” obeys our will.

Regarding the permanence of hell, we may say, “but He is a God of love” or “I don’t understand how they wouldn’t eventually change.” The worst part is that we call forth truths to prove our point. If we use the truths this way, though, they are no longer ruling our lives – our own power of logic and justification reigns. (*Divine Providence* 117)

Most of the time, the reasonableness of the truths of the Word is a good thing; we are used to taking comfort from how sensible the Lord can be, how truths can be beautifully arranged in our minds and lives, how we can derive joy in learning and using truths in ways that we see as reasonable and rational.

We should keep this notion and the Lord wants us to see His truths as logical, but “logic” is not the defining or essential quality of truth; its Divine authority from Divine love is its defining quality. Because it is from Divine love and wisdom, the truths we see should appear logical and reasonable, but if they don’t, that is our problem; those truths remain Divine all the same. It is not their job to convince us of their validity. To think so is to make an idol of our own logic.

Our story describes a time when we are oppressed by the idolatry of logic. This is a state when we have let truths matter chiefly because we understand them, not because the Lord says them. If you seek meaning from your own intellect and will, you are trapped.

No truth seems dependable (because we can assemble other truths to defeat it), and we lose our way because any disagreeable truth we encounter we can just declare “unreasonable” or “it doesn’t make sense,” and so we have nothing. (*Arcana Coelestia* 627)

If we decide what is true, what keeps us from deciding the opposite is true? Idolatry of logic robs us of the Lord’s power; we can’t fight temptations if we don’t rely on the Lord’s truths, and we can’t submit to the Lord’s truths if we only treat them as reasonable ideas. (*Conjugal Love* 232)

Our story opens with Jabin, king of the Canaanites, oppressing Israel. Canaanites, when they run rampant, show us preferring external things, empty things, over meaning and significance and principle. If we decide what is true, what is logical, then no idea is capital ‘T’ true, and we have to provide all the authority – which we can’t.

On his own, Jabin is a life of “going-through-the-motions,” being in a rut, a life of weight loss and utility bills and human prudence – a quietly miserable life. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1167) Any truth that asks us to be more is unpalatable, and Jabin demands we reject it.

Jabin keeps us oppressed through his general, Sisera. He commands 900 chariots of iron, so we know he commands all the natural facts of life, all the little arguments we tell ourselves to keep ourselves oppressed: “I’m too busy”; “Nobody else thinks this”; “I don’t know how it works.” He keeps us from a life of reflection and interior joy. Sisera is not the natural facts of life, but the faculty of justification, our ability to arrange data – and truths - to suit ourselves. (*Arcana Coelestia* 3391, *Apocalypse Revealed* 501)

So what does the Lord send us? He sends us a judge, a heroine, an idea that will free us from the idolatry of our own logic: Deborah. She is described as a “wife of naggidoth,” which is not the name of her husband, but a mysterious word meaning “torches” or “shining” or some other flame-like notion. In a culture where women were usually defined by the men they married, Deborah is married to fire.

Also, whereas everyone else in the story is given a local, tribal identity, Deborah is described as a “mother in Israel” – a title given to no other woman in the Word. She is neither Naphtalite nor Canaanite nor Kenite, and she has no children mentioned. Imagine Barak, a man of war, hearing that “Deborah, wife of fire, mother in Israel” is coming to speak with him.

Finally, she is actively described as “judging” – a rare function normally associated with Moses and Samuel, the two most important non-royal leaders in the Old Testament. This was a woman used to settling disputes and issuing orders. She spoke for the Lord.

In chapter five she calls forth the power of Divine Good, and the power of heaven in natural things. (*Arcana Coelestia* 2781, 4240) In Deborah we are

reminded that the truth is not ours, that the Word is the awesome living truth, that the Lord is not the Lord because He “makes sense” but because He is the source of reality – including our ability to see the truth – to see anything, really. Deborah, as the heavenly within the natural (*Ibid.* 4240), is the gift of awe; our ability to glimpse the Divine, to see something much greater than ourselves and revere it.

Deborah commands Barak to raise an army and battle Sisera, but he demurs, demanding Deborah go with him as a condition of his help. She agrees but warns him that his lack of courage means that Barak will not secure the final victory; a woman will.

Barak’s name means “lightning,” the ability of truth to shine in our lives. While this is a wonderful and even vital element in our lives, the ability of truth to shine in our lives cannot defeat justification. We all know that truth can be twisted to serve our own desires and seeing the power of truth is no defense against us claiming those truths as our own to dispose as we see fit. For example, the truth that hell is eternal is not convincing if we refuse to be convinced – and the Lord will not force us to see this truth against our will. Barak is correct that he cannot defeat Sisera without Deborah; we need to bring the respect and awe we feel towards the authority of the Word. (*Arcana Coelestia* 4241)

In the ensuing battle, Barak does defeat the Canaanite army of Jabin lead by Sisera, despite all the iron chariots. The Canaanites are our loud, external lives that can spin out of control while Barak and the Israelites are the life of principle and religion, a life governed by reflection, purpose and humility. We know truth has the power to dispel falsities, and his victory is just that; if we choose, truth can govern our natural lives. Consider our realization that we pay bills or shop for food in order to serve the neighbor, not ourselves. We may forget this truth, but when called to mind, spiritual truth can govern our loud, natural lives if we let it.

But Sisera escapes. We are still under threat of the idolatry of logic. Just because we lead a life of principles does not mean we don’t claim those principles as of our own design.

This brings us to Jael, who shows us how the Lord wants us to overcome justification and the idolatry of logic: by worship, innocence and simple truths.

After being defeated, Sisera comes to Jael’s tent as an ally. She welcomes him in. He asks for water, and she offers him milk. Then while he sleeps, she kills him with a tent spike.

Let’s examine Jael more closely. As neither Canaanite nor Israelite, she is the simple truth that we know we have mixed motives and affections that make some truths more appealing than others and the humility we have when we acknowledge this. We may love to tell the truth, but for all the right

reasons? Certainly not. We may feel joy at sharing what we have, but there is always a darker collection of desires clinging to those noble aims.

Jael is us, trying to do the basic right thing while realizing we have a jumble of motivations – or justifications – in the back of our mind. Why do you brush your teeth? Why do you pass the salt? Why do you hug your children? Jael just knows that we do.

Imagine this common woman, during a time of war and conflict and shifting loyalties, greeting a defeated but dangerous general at her tent. What should she do? What should we do? Don't argue with him, don't fight with him, don't think you can defeat your own ability to twist things. Jael in her tent, offering milk, shows us that we should welcome justification with innocence, even humility. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1616) We should admit that yes – we twist things and always will. We have to keep this ability, and we need it for freedom and rationality.

Don't fight justification – lull it to sleep. Welcome it into your tent – this is being humble in worship, acknowledging we always twist truths. Offer justification – the milk of innocence, the willingness to follow what the Lord says and not focus on what we prefer or think. When we find ourselves twisting and turning, denying unpleasant truths, pause and note, and watch the justification happen. “Huh – so I'm doing that.”

Admit we see it differently than the Word, admit that we see it two or three different ways. Admit that we are fundamentally irrational and yet lovable. How terrible and terrifying it can be to see this in ourselves, but take a good look. Sisera is in the tent, and we can't defeat him, not if we play his game of rationalizations and logic. The Lord knows this is uncomfortable, He knows it will be upsetting, but stick with humility and innocence. Rather than waste energy on exploring and explaining all your reasons and why you aren't at fault and why it matters, put it aside. Focus instead on following the Lord. You don't need to explain why you do that.

When Jael puts a tent spike through Sisera, say, “I'm not in charge.” We can still rationalize and justify. We will still disagree and prefer some truths over others. Let that be. If we can summon our awe for the Divine and simply and humbly listen to the Lord in His Word and just understand what we understand and try to do it, we will be living the life the Lord wants.

If we can summon our awe for the Divine and simply and humbly listen to the Lord in His Word and just understand what we understand and try to do it, we will be living the life the Lord wants.

After Sisera is dead Barak shows up at the tent, truth visiting after falsity. If you accept, for example, that hell is eternal, your acceptance of this truth will lead you to new truths and a better understanding of the Lord. Logic will only get us so far – living the truth in humility, as best we can, brings enlightenment. (*Sacred Scripture* 57) Israel is free – we are free to live the truth we understand – even if we don't like it, and to rest our happiness in obedience to the Lord's. This happiness will not run out. (*Divine Providence* 311)

In closing, logic is a powerful gift from the Lord. If we take our ability to reason, however, enslave it to our own preferences, and use it to erode our own conviction in the Lord's Word, insisting that we decide what is true, we will be miserable, and we will spread that misery.

The solution is to cooperate with the Lord in three steps: We acknowledge the Divine and feel awe – this is Deborah. We then chase falsities away with truths linked to that awe – this is Barak. Finally, we dispose of the power of false justifications, not with reason, but with simple obedience and innocence, and discover new truths in the process.

I have not departed from Your judgments, For You Yourself have taught me.
How sweet are Your words to my taste, Sweeter than honey to my mouth!
Through Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way.
(*Psalms* 119: 102-104)

Amen



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A Brief Exposition and the Scarlet, Flowery Skies in Heaven

The Rev. Kenneth J. Alden

Next year in June at the General Church Retreat we will be celebrating the 250th anniversary of an event that took place in the spiritual world: the Lord sending out His twelve disciples to proclaim that He reigns and that those who come to the marriage supper of the Lamb are blessed. (See *True Christian Religion* 791)

But this event did not take place without preparation nor without context. In 2007 we marked the 250th anniversary of the Last Judgment with a conference on the ramifications of that event for the world and the heavens. What about the quarter-millennial anniversaries of other events, such as of the publication of *Divine Love and Wisdom* (2013) and *Divine Providence* (2014), *Apocalypse Revealed* (2016), or *Married Love* last year?

Although we may have missed the chance to celebrate those 250th anniversaries, we have two more to celebrate in the current year: the publication of the short *Summaria Expositio Doctrinae Novae Ecclesiae* and of the even shorter *De Commercio Animae et Corporis*, known as *A Brief Exposition of the Doctrine of the New Church* and *Interaction Between the Soul and the Body*, respectively. Here I will dwell on the first of these.

In the one-page *Sketch of an Ecclesiastical History of the New Church* we find this remarkable statement:

When the *Brief Exposition* was published, the angelic heaven from the east to the west, and from the south to the north, appeared of a deep scarlet color with the most beautiful flowers. This took place before myself, and before the kings of Denmark and others. At another time it appeared flamey, most beautiful.

In the spiritual world there was inscribed on all these books: *The Lord's Advent*. The same I also wrote by command on two copies in Holland.

Such a copy was found! A letter to the editor of *New Church Life* assures its

readers "the keeper of the Department of Printed Books at the British Museum has informed me, in answer to my inquiry, that the copy of *Summaria Expositio* (*Brief Exposition*), with the autograph inscription. "*Hic liber est Adventus Domini, Scriptum ex mandato,*" [This book is the Advent of the Lord, written by command] is safe and is now in its place in the Library." (*New Church Life* 1946, p. 562)

Although many articles have discussed the exact meaning of this inscription, at the very least its placement on this book and not another raises the questions: Why this book? What's it about?

Setting aside the speculative question, we can find the answer to the second one in the book itself:

Several works and tracts having been published by me, during some years past, concerning the New Jerusalem, by which is meant the New Church about to be established by the Lord; and the book of *Revelation* having been revealed, I have come to a determination to bring to light the entire doctrine of that church in its fullness. But, as this is a work of some years, I have thought it advisable to draw up some sketch thereof, in order that a general idea may first be formed of that church and its doctrine; because when general principles precede, each and every thing will afterwards appear extant in its breadth in light, for these enter into generals, as things homogenous into their receptacles. This compendium, however, is not designed for critical examination, but is only offered to the world by way of information, as its contents will be fully demonstrated in the work itself. (*Brief Exposition* 1)

What this little work was to do, therefore, was prepare the way for *True Christian Religion*, which would bring to light the whole doctrine.

As was the case with *Apocalypse Revealed*, with *A Brief Exposition* the Lord saw fit to include at the beginning a presentation from Roman Catholic and Protestant documents their doctrinal positions on selected topics, here relating to "justification," that is, to how people deserving of eternal death and suffering for sin are reconciled to God by the blood of Christ. From there, the book turns to its stated purpose, and outlines, in what look like numbered chapters, a proposal for "the larger work."

Although *True Christian Religion* will differ from what is proposed, here it states that there will be three parts. In the first part are the subjects of most of the chapters of *True Christian Religion*. The four chapters of the second part seem to line up most closely with the last chapter of *True Christian Religion*, while the third part bears no resemblance to any chapters in the final work. Rather, it seems to describe the contents of *A Brief Exposition*.

This begs the question: "Did the publication of *A Brief Exposition* sufficiently accomplish what was proposed for the third part to *True Christian Religion* that there was no need to write it?" (Although the memorabilia appended to the chapters throughout *True Christian Religion* could be considered to be

the proposed “third part,” since they recount disputes in which traditional Christian doctrines are contrasted with those of the New Church, I wonder if they really “fully demonstrate” the contents of *A Brief Exposition*, as quoted in No.1 above. Put another way, if *A Brief Exposition* was “not designed for critical examination,” in what way are the memorabilia more so?)

Here is that proposal:

THE THIRD PART will point out the Disagreements between the dogmas of the present church, and those of the New Church. But we will dwell a little upon these now, because it is believed both by the clergy and laity that the present church is in the light itself of the Gospel and in its truths, which cannot possibly be disproved, overturned, or controverted, not even by an angel if one should descend from heaven: neither does the present church see any otherwise, because it has withdrawn the understanding from faith, and yet has confirmed its dogmas by a kind of sight beneath the understanding, for falsities may there be confirmed even so as to appear like truths; and falsities there confirmed acquire a fallacious light, before which the light of truth appears as thick darkness. For this reason we shall here dwell a little upon this subject, mentioning the disagreements, and illustrating them by brief remarks, that such as have not their understanding closed by a blind faith, may see them as at first in twilight, and afterwards as in morning light, and at length, in the work itself, as in the light of day. The disagreements in general are as follows. (*Brief Exposition* 16)

Whether *A Brief Exposition* carries the whole burden of the proposed third part, or simply declares the disagreements in a general way, one suspects that the declaration served – and still serves – a vital use if it is one of the main burdens of a book that was labelled, *The Advent of the Lord*. Indeed, the removal of falsity is key to the establishment of the New Church, as we read in *Apocalypse Revealed* 547:

It is of the Lord's Divine providence that the church be at first among few and that it gradually grow to be among more, because the falsities of the previous church must first be removed. For truths cannot be accepted before then, inasmuch as truths accepted and implanted before falsities have been removed do not remain.

Over the next few pages of *A Brief Exposition*, four points are made showing how Roman Catholic and Protestant doctrine are in agreement about a Trinity of Divine Persons, original sin from Adam, and how faith alone brings Christ's merit to bear in taking away the penalty of that sin. This discussion culminates in the fifth point: "The whole system of Theology in the Christian world, at this day, is founded on an idea of Three Gods, arising from the doctrine of a Trinity of Persons."

In the sixth point it shows that all those doctrines can be seen to be in error if one only rejects the idea of three Gods and instead receives the idea of One God in whom is the Divine Trinity. The seventh point states that with this rejection, a truly saving faith can be acknowledged and received – "faith in one

God, united with good works." (*Brief Exposition* 41) The eighth point states the familiar particulars of New Church faith:

"I. That there is One God in Whom is the Divine Trinity, and He is the Lord Jesus Christ. II. Saving Faith is to believe in Him. III. Evils ought to be shunned, because they are of the devil, and from the devil. IV. Goods ought to be done, because they are of God, and from God. V. And they ought to be done by man as of himself, but it is to be believed that they are from the Lord, with him and through him." (*Ibid.* 43, repeated at n. 117 and *True Christian Religion* 3)

And although these points were published the year before in *Conjugal Love*, here truths about the One God, the Lord Jesus Christ, are pointedly presented in contrast to the notion of three gods that is integral to a false idea of faith and salvation. With the Lord's own light revealed in contrast to the dark, we can appreciate why "the Advent of the Lord" suits this book.

Toward the end of *A Brief Exposition* we find three points that are in keeping with its burden of pointing out the disagreements between the former and the new doctrines:

Unless the New Church be established by the Lord, no one can be saved; and this is meant by these words, "Unless those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved." (*Matthew* 24:22) (*Brief Exposition* 91)

The opening and rejection of the dogmas of faith of the present church, and the revelation and reception of the tenets of the faith of the New Church, is meant by these words in *Revelation*: "He that sat upon the throne said, Behold I make all things new; and He said unto me, Write, for these words are true and faithful." (21:5) (*Ibid.* 95)

The faith of the New Church cannot by any means be together with the faith of the former church, and if they are together, such a collision and conflict will take place that everything of the Church with man will perish." (*Ibid.* 102)

Although we are weary of polarization in politics and church affairs, shedding light on these doctrinal disagreements is said to be absolutely necessary. It is necessary (from last to first): 3. lest the church be destroyed; 2. for making all things new (the theme of the 2020 Retreat); and 1. For the salvation of anyone. Perhaps this little book's role in this work explains why it got so much attention in the spiritual world, as we have already seen. But there is more!

Once *A Brief Exposition* was published in Amsterdam, waves were made not only in Europe but also in the spiritual world. In one of those "memorable relations" mentioned earlier, in which the disagreements between the old and the new doctrine are explored, we find this mention of *A Brief Exposition*:

I came into the spirit; and I heard certain spirits conversing, who said, "O that we

might be permitted to talk with the innovator who has thrown among the leaders of the church that apple of discord after which so many of the laity have been running, and which they have picked up and held up for us to look at." By that apple they meant the little work, entitled, *A Brief Exposition of the Doctrine of the New Church*. And they said, "It is certainly a schismatical writing, such as no man ever before conceived of." And then I heard one of them exclaim, "Schismatical? It is heretical!" But some of those beside him said, "Hush! Hold your tongue! It is not heretical; he gives an abundance of quotations from the Word; and to these our neophytes, by whom we mean the laity, give heed and assent." (*True Christian Religion* 112)

The way in which *A Brief Exposition* prepared the way for the reception of *True Christian Religion* was not only by drawing up a sketch of the doctrine of the New Church in a way that centers on the Lord as the One God, but also by quoting false doctrines which had been "confirmed even so as to appear as truths" and "mentioning the disagreements" between these and the doctrine of the New Church so that those whose minds have not "closed by a blind faith, may see them as at first in twilight, and afterwards as in morning light."

It was 250 years ago that this book was published and "the angelic heaven from the east to the west, and from the south to the north, appeared of a deep scarlet color with the most beautiful flowers." It may have been in 1769 or the next year, in 1770, that "at another time" the heavens appeared flamey and most beautiful, and on "all these books" in the spiritual world were inscribed "the Lord's Advent." Likewise, the exact year of the dispute in the spiritual world, quoted above from *True Christian Religion* is uncertain.

What we can be certain of is that this remarkable little book was inscribed, "*Hic liber est Adventus Domini, Scriptum ex mandato*," and that it received a remarkable amount of attention in the spiritual world. Surely this is reason enough to examine its contents, estimate its importance, and celebrate its publication in this year of its 250th anniversary.



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200 Years and 100 Miles

Doctrine's Failure to Settle the Slavery

Debate in the New Church

The Rev. Christopher A. Barber



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An attempt to reason with a man confirmed in error confirms him only the more strongly. – William Henry Holcombe (1855)

Joseph and Anne Barber are my ancestors. They were born cursed. This curse was not placed upon them by any practitioner of hoodoo but was established and institutionalized by the most insidious of human foes: dominion. Joseph and Anne were born in southern Maryland in 1810 and 1815 respectively into one of our nation's greatest shames: slavery. They lived just over 100 miles from my New Jersey birthplace.

By the time they were born, the 9th United States Congress had passed “an act to prohibit the importation of slaves into any port or place within the jurisdiction of the United States.” Despite this, slavery within the country was

1 Image reproduced from Whittier, 1837

still active and expanding. It would continue to do so until its abolition.

Joseph and Anne were born in St. Mary's County where, in 1810, 90% of blacks were slaves. (Marks, 1987) This was the height of slavery in Maryland. (Carter S. B., 2006) That state's slaves were not freed by the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation, which excluded Maryland. Freedom would not become a reality for its slaves for another 22 months when the state passed a new constitution prohibiting slavery, thus ending a centuries-old practice there. (Spivack, 2013)

My forebears' skin was their curse in this land and their heritage sealed their status as human chattel. Men, women and children were condemned to lives of servitude under an unholy institution perpetuated by wicked practitioners who prized labor over liberty. I am grateful to the Almighty that I was born a Barber now and here and not a Barber then and there.

Today I am blessed with an education, autonomy over my way of life, and the dignity of having my humanity honored by my government and my church. I must remember that these blessings should not be taken for granted, because they were withheld from people like me in the past. Joseph and Anne are painful reminders of that.

The New Church Enters the Debate

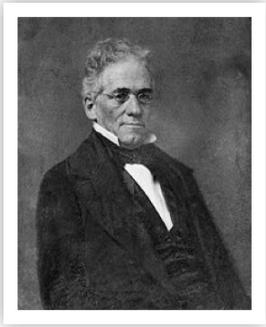
Looking into the annals of New Church history in the mid-19th century before the fury of the Civil War turns up many uncomfortable examples of Swedenborgian division over black slavery. Few New Church leaders spoke out against it before the war. For some laypeople, the silence was deafening – alarmingly so. As one reader lamented:

The almost or quite universal silence of N.C. periodicals on this important subject has been matter of grief and astonishment to me, and for this reason I have hitherto neglected to patronize any of them. . . . I have long entertained painful fears that I should not live to see the N.C. waking up to this momentous subject (being already far advanced in life). (C-, 1852, pp. 283-284)

Some (Northerners especially) saw slavery as a great wrong, and wondered why their church, armed with the new dispensation, did not speak out against the wickedness of slavery. Others (Southerners especially), whether or not they agreed with the institution, were glad for the matter to stay outside of the realm of New Church discourse.

Although New Church people had examined in print the “negro character” (Glen, 1813) and Africans, and commented lightly on the institution of slavery², it was not until the Rev. George Bush (1796-1859) grappled with the subject in 1852 in his popular periodical *New Church Repository* that the true nature

2 cf. various New Church periodicals at brynathyn.edu/swedenborg-library/new-church-digital-collections/



of the divide among New Church people came to light. The six-part series *Aphorisms on Slavery and Abolition*, ran from April-September 1852. Bush concluded that slavery was not only an evil institution, but that there was “an immediate duty of emancipation incumbent upon the holder of slaves” (Bush, 1852a, p. 389), and that slaveholders have a “duty of entering at once upon the incipency of an emancipating process.” (*Ibid.*)

Bush was not the first New Church authority to write on the subject. The Rev. Richard de Charms (1796-1864) wrote on it shortly before in a pamphlet called *A Discourse on the True Nature of Freedom and Slavery* (1850). Although New Church historian C. T. Odhner assessed de Charms as taking “a strong ground against African slavery” (Odhner, 1904, p. 574), Bush found that de Charms prevaricated and as a result failed to conclude against slavery as strongly as necessary to effect meaningful change. For example, de Charms teaches in his pamphlet that slavery is an *evil* at every level of human existence (de Charms, 1850, p. 20) – a conclusion echoed later by Bush – but might not be a *sin* for the Southerners³ (pp. 29-30). Bush said on this presentation:

That this proposition is not devoid of truth, we are free to admit, while, at the same time, we are forced to regard it as a truth so much diluted by the excusatory elements with which it is mixed, as very seriously to prevent any erosive effect that it might otherwise have upon the consciences of those for whom it was, or at least, ought to have been, intended. (Bush, 1852c, p. 218)

Or, as he put it more bluntly:

We do not perceive that Mr. de Charms' reasoning meets the demands of an awakened conscience, or would be very apt to awaken a sleeping one.

With de Charms serving as a model of philosophical exploration of the issue, Bush came to a stronger conclusion in favor of anti-slavery action. Their writing came at a time when the slavery debate was roaring. This national division was mirrored within the community of people who held to the New Church.

Swedenborgians: Reluctant Participants

Though there are examples of discussions and publications exploring slavery, the New Church remained, so far as the outside world could see, relatively

³ This phenomenon of evil without sin echoes Swedenborg's presentation of polygamy for non-Christians in *Conjugal Love* 349

disengaged. The New Church response to slavery can be summed up with the following 1853 report on religious and ecclesiastical activity regarding slavery issued by the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, which ironically delivered a similar assessment of Bush as Bush had delivered of de Charms:

Swedenborgians

“The New Church,” or the “Church of the New Jerusalem,” commonly known as the Swedenborgian Church, as such, neither has done, so far as we can learn, nor is doing anything with reference to American slavery, excepting to let it alone with all their might. As a reason for it, we are told that the principles of the Church are such as to favor but little *associated action* among its members. The editor of *The Anglo-American New Church Repository and Monthly Review* (Rev. George Bush) has, in several numbers of the periodical, discussed the subject of slavery as if he were feeling after the truth; and his cautious, inquiring, half-digested essays appear to have met with severe condemnation on the part of his brethren, North and South. He seems to have been honestly desirous that the subject should be discussed in his Church, but he cannot find, it would appear, any one to second his efforts.

The “New Churchmen,” as a body, are evidently disposed to acquiesce passively in the system of slavery, as in their opinion a providential allotment, although some of their number go so far as to *justify* it. We believe, however, such cases are rare, except at the South.

We should gather from the discussions above alluded to, that the talented editor holds to the original, intrinsic, and radical wrong involved in the system, to the nullity of all claims to property in men, and to the obligation of the immediate mental surrender of all such claims. He would lay the axe at the root of the *traffic*, but has no conception of the duty of immediate manumission. Notwithstanding this, he is constitutionally, and from principle, in favor of AGITATION; and would be glad if we do not misapprehend him, of never giving it up until the evil is agitated out of the land. If, as is claimed by this church, “all life is an emanation of Love,” how can they for a moment justify, palliate, or neglect to oppose a system which dooms so large a portion of their fellow countrymen to a condition which is the emanation of hate, tyranny, ignorance and brutality. (*American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society*, 1853, pp. 104-105)

This review of the New Church’s lukewarm response to slavery seems quite harsh. It’s easy to get defensive and to dismiss the report as uninformed, biased and invalid, especially because it runs counter to the standard script regarding the New Church’s central role in the abolition of the slave trade. (cf. Henderson, 2011) However, a closer look at the literature, articles and editorials available at the time shows that this evaluation, at least in the United States, is very accurate. When Rev. Bush started publishing his assessment of the institution of slavery, his readers responded strongly from *both* sides of the debate, and many called for the discussion to end completely.

Discord in the New Church

It is hard to believe that there was even a debate on something that we today regard as so immoral, inhumane and patently unchristian. This bemused retrospection calls to mind a reflection offered by the well-known American slave-become-intellectual, politician, author and activist, Frederick Douglass (c. 1818-1895) in his famous speech, *The Meaning of July Fourth For the Negro* (1852) delivered three months after Bush began publishing *Aphorisms*. Douglass, referencing the divisive nature of slavery, called on an already historical event which also once vexed the nation: whether the colonies ought to pursue independence from the British crown. Douglass said:

To say now that America was right, and England wrong, is exceedingly easy. Everybody can say it; the dastard, not less than the noble brave, can flippantly discourse on the tyranny of England towards the American Colonies. It is fashionable to do so; but there was a time when to pronounce against England, and in favor of the cause of the colonies, tried men's souls. They who did so were accounted in their day, plotters of mischief, agitators and rebels, dangerous men. To side with the right, against the wrong, with the weak against the strong, and with the oppressed against the oppressor! (Douglass, 1999, p. 190)

Douglass was right. Americans generally look back favorably on the cause of the American Revolution. The court of public opinion has come to a consensus on that issue and the case is now closed. The same can be said now of slavery. Imagine how Douglass would feel if he could see that the question that once vexed people of his time was now seen as a simple matter. He dedicated his life to securing the reality that today we take for granted.

To say now that abolition was right, and slavery wrong, is exceedingly easy. Everybody can say it; lowlifes, not less than national heroes, can easily condemn the institution of slavery and the poor treatment of black people in America. It's the popular opinion. But there was a time – when Joseph and Anne Barber and their children were alive – when to pronounce against slavery and in favor of abolition tried men's souls. They who did so were called mischievous, agitators, and unbrotherly, dangerous men. This was certainly the case for Rev. Bush when he published his reflections on slavery. He was met with statements such as these:

Mischief:

I appreciate the position you take, and individually, I can say, that thus far I detect nothing in your remarks in the least offensive. But still, pardon my candor if I express the belief that the discussion will do infinite mischief to the cause of the New Church in the South. (J—, 1852, p. 276)

Now, my dear sir, if you are content to rest the subject upon that ground, I think you will see that your "aphorisms" and comments are unnecessary, calculated to do no good, but much mischief. (J—, 1852, p. 277)

If our views were the same as those of the Northern people on this subject, we have still to object to foreign interference in an institution peculiar to the South, the meddling with which has already done great mischief to both master and slave. (Anonymous correspondent 1, 1852, pp. 418-419)

Agitation:

The responsibility rests with the slaveholders of the South, and any attempt to agitate this matter by our Northern brethren, seems to us as unjustifiable interference with our own concerns. I fear that much harm will be done, if this agitation is permitted to enter within the peaceful precincts of the New Church, and I deprecate such a career of distraction as one of the greatest calamities that can befall the Church at this juncture." (W—, 1852, p. 273)

The fury of the tempest has passed from the bosom of the deep, but its waters are yet agitated to its lowest caverns. Now, in all candor, I appeal to your enlightened judgment to decide whether this be a propitious time to broach a subject so delicate? (J—, 1852, p. 275)

I perceive by the last No. of the Repository, that all who do not give timely notice to the contrary, will be expected to subscribe the coming year. Having for some time past resolved to subscribe for no publication that agitates slavery or the Maine Law⁴, I must decline the Repository at present. (Anonymous correspondent 2, 1852, p. 561)

Unbrotherly:

In view of the extreme uncharitableness, and in some cases it would almost seem malignancy, displayed in the war against this system, it would be strange indeed if Southerners should tolerate anything directly tending to *keep up the excitement* and "*furnish aid and comfort*" to those whom they regard as their deadly enemies. . . . While our Southern brethren are ready and willing to *converse* upon the subject in a spirit of brotherly love, they will not and they ought not to submit to a *public arraignment*, and that too, at the call of those who have no personal knowledge, and sometimes even desire to have none, of the practical workings of the system. It is most astonishing that Northern men, so many of them, "cannot see any harm in discussion." . . . Thus, instead of influencing the minds of our Southern brethren upon the subject of "Slavery," you will be likely to cut yourself off altogether from communication with them, if you should continue to discuss the subject. (Anonymous correspondent 3, 1852, pp. 422-423)

From our modern perspective, these responses against Bush's efforts might seem surprising, especially when we consider the ever-present theme of freedom in the Doctrines of the New Church – the same doctrines to which each of the above writers were committed:

Each individual has this freedom [to think and do evil] given him by the Lord. . . .

The seed that is sown in freedom lasts; but what is sown under compulsion does

4 The "Maine Law" was one of the first prohibition laws passed in the United States.

not, because compulsion is not in accordance with the person's will, but with the will of the one who compels him. This, too, is why freely offered worship is pleasing to the Lord, but not worship under compulsion. For freely offered worship is inspired by love, but worship under compulsion is not. (*New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* 143, Chadwick translation, emphasis added)

No one is reformed by threats and punishments, because they compel. . . . **The internal self wishes to be in freedom and loves freedom, for freedom is bound up with a person's love or life**, as we have shown above. Consequently, **when that freedom feels itself to be compelled, it withdraws into itself, so to speak, and turns away, and regards the compulsion as its enemy.** Indeed, the love which constitutes the person's life is provoked, and causes the person to think that he is then not his own person, consequently that he has no life of his own. (*Divine Providence* 136, Rogers translation, emphasis added)

And many others.

Despite what might seem to be a logical application of the doctrine of freedom to the subject of chattel slavery, Bush's contemporaries were not of one mind that he was correct and that slavery ought to be abolished. In fact, some worked hard to show that the doctrines disagreed with abolition and supported the enslavement of Africans.

A Matter of Life and Death

While this debate raged on in the printed pages of New Church scholarship, black Americans were fighting for their lives. Freeborn blacks in the North advocated for their enslaved kinfolk. Freed and escaped slaves spoke out in public forums, taking up their experience as arms against the institution. Many secretly organized to bring as many as possible out of bondage by means of the "Underground Railroad." Still, in 1850 more than three million blacks remained bound to masters in the United States (DeBow, 1854), some of whom became infamous for the drastic measures they took to wrest themselves and their loved ones from the vice of slavery.

The world of slavery was filled with heartache such as hell only can parallel. The denial of education, the indignity of the auction block, the trauma of families sundered by commercial sales and divisions of inheritances, the horror of corporal punishment and execution, poor living conditions, overworking, the sexual abuse of both female and male slaves (Foster, 2011), and all-around subjection to various other indignities reminded blacks that they were property and nothing more – mere extensions of the wills of their masters existing only to be used or discarded as whim, fortune, lust or convenience might dictate.

Conditions were so horrendous under slavery that runaway slaves became a national concern. The federal law called the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793 was

An 1851 Poster

CAUTION!!

COLORED PEOPLE OF BOSTON, ONE & ALL

You are hereby respectively **CAUTIONED**
and advised to avoid conversing with

WATCHMEN AND POLICE OFFICERS OF BOSTON

For since the recent **ORDER OF THE MAYOR &**
ALDERMEN, they are empowered to act as

KIDNAPPERS and SLAVE CATCHERS

And they have already been actually employed in **KIDNAPPING,**
CATCHING AND KEEPING SLAVES. Therefore, if you value
your **LIBERTY,** And the **WELFARE OF THE FUGITIVES**
among you, Shun them in every possible manner, and as so many
HOUNDS of the track of the most unfortunate of your race.

Keep a Sharp Lookout for

KIDNAPPERS, and have TOP EYE open.

April 24, 1851

passed to force free states to return runaway slaves to their masters. This law lost its effectiveness as free states established bureaucratic delays and refused to return runaways.

In 1850 a new Fugitive Slave Act was passed to issue harsh penalties on government officials who did not arrest and restore runaway slaves to their masters. In addition, because of the denial of due process to those accused of being runaways, many free blacks were also kidnapped and sold into slavery in the South. (Wilson, 2009) Response to the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 became a kind a litmus test for whether one was an ally or an enemy in the cause of abolition. One *Repository* reader mentions it in an unusually emotive letter to Bush in September 1852:

My Brother: I am overmuch rejoiced to know that there is one New Church minister [who] feels it his duty to God and his down-trodden children, the slave, as to raise his voice in their behalf, and show the slaveholders their sins. I have almost despaired of ever living to see any of the New Church ministers taking a stand in behalf of the Lord's oppressed children.

O my brother, how at variance is the spirit of the Heavenly Doctrines with the practice of many of those who profess them. I feel grieved at heart to think that this is the case. I am happy to know there are some grand exceptions in this section of the country, who are not afraid to speak out on the heaven-daring sin. How any New Churchman can reconcile the holding of his fellow-man as property, is a mystery to me. I have long since come to the conclusion that it is not my duty to give any support to any man, directly or indirectly, that tells me that it is a New Church duty to obey the Fugitive Slave Law.

I wish you to understand me that these exceptions are not New Church ministers, for I do not know of one except yourself that has opened his mouth for the poor bond man. You will not call me ultra when I say that I am an abolitionist, and for speedy abolition. I care not what caste, creed, or color slavery may assume; I am for its total abolition. Whether it is personal or political, mental or intellectual, or spiritual, I am for its immediate abolition. I enter into no compromise with slavery. I am for justice in the name of humanity, and according to the law of the living God. Is not this according to the Golden Rule, to do unto others as we would have them do unto us, if we were in like circumstances? (Anonymous correspondent 4, 1852, p. 422)

This letter, to my modern mind, is a very refreshing read. When I think of my ancestors who were this author's contemporaries, it is reassuring to know that there were people who felt so strongly against slavery on their behalf that they put pen to paper in this manner. Not only was the abolitionist spirit alive in activists and legislators, but it was active in laypeople as well. I imagine Bush was gratified to read this letter; however, I know not all of his readers would have been. Many readers were Southerners and were practitioners of the institution, some of whom mentioned their slaves in letters to the *Repository*:

"You at the North, I fear, do not understand the character of the institution which you condemn so unsparingly as a great wrong done to society, and to the negro race. I venture to say, if you were to spend six months in Carolina, and to witness the operations of slavery, (as it is called,) your opinion of it would be materially changed. Perhaps Providence originally designed that a portion of mankind should serve another portion of it for the special benefit of the former portion. Who shall say? At any rate, as a New Churchman, **I cannot perceive, under existing circumstances, that I am doing any wrong in holding slaves;** but I will not, as I said, argue the matter, for I think it is one of those topics, the discussion of which does not belong to the New Church." (W—, 1852, p. 274)

"You write very sweetly to your Southern friends, who I hope will be still your friends. I am sorry myself the subject of slavery was introduced by you. **I have my own slaves in every Sunday, and read to and pray with them.** We live in affection together. And I confess I do not want any external church besides my own family circle. If the church is anywhere it is in its purest form in the sanctified married state of regenerate man and wife, children and servants. Here there can be Baptism and the Lord's Supper. At least I have no scruple about administering either. I don't admit slavery even to be an evil, but on the contrary consistent with perfect order. There is an orderly and happy and maybe a heavenly trine in parents, children and servants." (Anonymous correspondent 5, 1852, p. 419)

It surprised me to learn that there were proud slave-owning New Church people. One even referred to slavery as a “medicine”! (H—, 1852, p. 471) Before encountering these two individuals the only slave-owning New Church person I had heard of was Robert Carter III (1727-1804), who is notable for orchestrating the largest manumission of slaves in the United States prior to the Civil War. (Wolfe, 2017) Carter, though, readily claimed by New Church historians as an example of the impact of the Church on notable people’s lives, was the exception rather than the rule when it came to Swedenborgians and the institution of slavery.

My surprise at the presence of New Church slaveholding might seem to be the result of my modern mind and expectations; however, a letter published in 1852 showed that even contemporaries of the above slaveholders were unaware that any New Church person could reconcile their New Church faith with the owning of human property.

It was not until I saw the number for the present month, that I was fully aware of the fact of the existence of a New Church slaveholder. I knew that there were intelligent receivers in the Southern States, but concluded they were chiefly in the cities, and of the non-slaveholding population. That appears to have been the opinion of New Churchmen in this region, as far as I have become acquainted with them.

Doubtless the wish in this case, as in a thousand others, has been father to the thought. And now that the anomaly is brought to light, what shall we do? Shall we unite with those in the North in uncharitable denunciation, and un-christianize every brother who sustains this unhappy relation, or shall we unite with the proslavery party, and tolerate, extenuate, or justify the institution, only dissuading from its abuse?

It would seem impossible for a New Churchman to do either one or the other. For the teachings of the church both in its spirit and letter are, if not equally, certainly as directly against one as the other. There appears but one alternative for the church, or rather its recipients, either to continue our death-like slumbers upon the brink of the volcano, ominously threatening to overwhelm us with its burning lava in one universal ruin, or to buckle on the armor of truths and goods, so richly supplied in the Holy Word, as opened and unfolded by the descent of the Holy City from God out of Heaven, as you proposed and have happily begun. I cannot bring myself to believe that the brethren in the South will persist in the indulgence of that extreme sensitiveness and alarm at the proposed investigation. (“*A Northern Newchurchman*”, 1852, p. 423)

I understand this man’s conundrum. It is very likely that the pro- and anti-slavery Swedenborgians had more in common than they had at odds, but how could they continue as brethren when they each held irreconcilable perspectives on this matter? There was no simple answer to this problem, and the situation would get even more complicated with the introduction of new heresies.

Doctrine Applied

If adherents to the New Church today were to conduct a doctrinal review of slavery, I expect not a single thesis would posit that it was an acceptable institution. Some, I imagine, would review how slavery has happened as a permission of the Divine, but I doubt any would present slavery as an outcome of providence. I would expect to see a host of passages applied to the discussion – passages on freedom and compulsion, love to the neighbor, heaven and willing service, dominion and love of self, and perhaps even the nature of Africans. Others would extend the exploration beyond the historical and examine the current state of human trafficking in the world. I feel confident in this: all would use these doctrines to condemn the institution, none would support it. Yet, as the letters above show, where today there is unity on this subject, before was division.

Thousands of pages of Divine revelation for the New Church were no match for the vexed question of the 19th century in the United States: black slavery. None of the canon of Swedenborgian theology could put to rest the peculiar institution – neither *Secrets of Heaven*, nor *Heaven and Hell*, nor *New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine*, nor *Last Judgment*, nor *White Horse*, nor *Earths in the Universe*, nor the *Doctrines of the Lord*, *Sacred Scripture*, *Life*, and *Faith*, nor *Continuation of the Last Judgment*, nor *Divine Love and Wisdom*, nor *Divine Providence*, nor *Apocalypse Revealed*, nor *Conjugal Love*, nor *Brief Exposition*, nor *True Christian Religion*, nor the Old and New Testaments. Not even the *totality* of all of these sacred texts could deliver a definitive response to how any New Church person was to regard the practice of black slavery. The church, just as the nation, remained vexed.

But for those who endured the indignities of slavery the answer was clear enough — manumission, abolition, or escape – whatever it was, they were not chattel. Bondage could not be allowed to persist. They, their families and friends – their people were still held as property within an oppressive system founded on racism simple and sophisticated. Simplicity found justification in the difference in skin color, in history and tradition and mere spurious superiority. Sophistication found justification in crank philosophy and pseudo-science. It found justification in heretical contortions of Scripture and in selective readings of church doctrines.

In 1860, William Lloyd Garrison, a radical anti-slavery activist and advocate for the oppressed, conveyed this failure of Christian charity and common sense with inflammatory language in a pamphlet published by the American Anti-Slavery Society, which he founded in 1833 (Groleau, Mizell, & Benedict, 1998):

The one great, distinctive, all-conquering sin in America is its system of chattel

slavery – co-existent with the settlement of the country – for a considerable time universally diffused, at first, tolerated as a necessary evil, subsequently, deplored as a calamity, now defended in every slave State as a most beneficent institution, upheld by natural and revealed religion.

The victims of this terrible system being of African extraction, it has engendered and established a complexional caste, unknown to European civilization; pervading all parts of the United States like a malaria-tainted atmosphere; in its development, more malignant at North than at the South; poisoning the life-blood of the most refined and the most depraved alike; and making the remotest connection with the colored race a leprous taint. Its spirit is as brutal as it is unnatural; as mean as it is wicked; as relentless as it is monstrous. It is capable of committing any outrage upon the person, mind or estate of the negro, whether bond or free. It carries with it the venom of the rattlesnake, the rapacity of the wolf, the fury of the tiger. It is “set on fire of hell,” and the flame is never quenched.

No religious creed, no form of worship, no evangelical discipline, no heretical liberality, either mitigates or restrains it. Christian and Infidel, Calvinist and Universalist, Trinitarian and Unitarian, Episcopalian and Methodist, Baptist and **Swedenborgian**, Old School and New School Presbyterian, Orthodox and Hicksite Quaker, all are infected by it, and equally ready to make an innocent natural distinction the badge of eternal infamy, and a warrant for the most cruel proscription. As a nation sows, so shall it also reap. The retributive justice of God was never more strikingly manifested than in this all-pervading negrophobia, the dreadful consequence of chattel slavery. (Garrison, 1860, pp. 5-6)

Garrison’s inclusion of Swedenborgians in this lineup of the infected – his implication that New Church people are complicit in the perpetuation of black slavery and the marginalization, brutalization and dehumanization of people of African extraction – might seem unwarranted, but Christianity everywhere, even the New Christianity, played a role in sanctioning the institution.

Christianity became a means of buttressing the institution. Biblical examinations were put to this task such as the influential Pastor Thornton Stringfellow’s (1788-1869) *Brief Examination of Scripture Testimony on the Institution of Slavery* (1841) and *Scriptural and Statistical Views in Favor of Slavery* (1856) which concluded that slavery was a dictate of providence and that the South was as burdened by being masters as were the slaves in their bondage.

There was even an edition of the Bible in circulation among slaveowners that was edited in order to minimize the themes of freedom and emphasize subservience and servitude. (Little, 2018) It was called “Select Parts of the Holy Bible for the use of the Negro Slaves in the British West-India Islands” (1807). The New Church was not immune to similar interpretations and twistings of Scripture.

Dr. William Henry Holcombe

One prolific Swedenborgian writer became the foremost champion of what he saw as a New Church doctrine of black slavery. Dr. William Henry Holcombe (1825-1893), a Virginian with a medical degree from the University of Pennsylvania (Fortier, 1914) was at the time of Bush's articles in charge of the medical well-being of 225 slaves in Louisiana. (Holcombe, 1852) At the time, Holcombe was a young energetic man of 27 and he was against black slavery, as seen in a letter he sent to a friend preserved in the Archives of the Academy of the New Church:



The physical welfare of 225 unfortunate human beings is no inconsiderable thing, and opportunities of making kindly and elevating mental and moral impressions on them sometimes occur, although greatly restricted by the jealous watchfulness of overseers and the generally illiberal sentiment of the community.

I have seen slavery, I suppose, in its worst forms, for all concede that its evils are especially conspicuous on the plantations where the owners do not reside, and the salary and good name of the overseer depends on the size of the crops. I have seen nothing in the system to reconcile me to it – but indeed everything quite the reverse – I heartily concur in Dr. Bush's articles on the subject which have been appearing of late in the N. C. Repository. (Holcombe, 1852)

This sentiment is not entirely out of place for Holcombe, given that his mother had been so taken with abolitionist sentiment that his parents manumitted their slaves (Boericke & Tafel, 1894) and relocated “beyond the reach of [slavery's] evil influence.” (Holcombe, 1892, p. 40) It is possible, therefore, that in 1852 he still entertained some of his parents' abolitionist notions, even though by 1855 he seemed to resent any connection of his father's beliefs on the matter to his own (Holcombe, 1855, p. 88).

Holcombe admits privately that he was a supporter of Bush and his efforts, but in less than a decade's time his beliefs changed completely. The complexity of his beliefs and how they change over time makes him a fascinating case study.

What caused him to change his perspective, I cannot say: however, his published works are of a very different character than his private sentiments offered above. Holcombe became by his own admission “one of the original secessionists and a strong Southern sympathizer” (Carter C. G., 1920, p. 183), and an ardent supporter of the institution of slavery. He demonstrated this in his writing on Southern values and pride and the virtues and necessities of slavery. His support of slavery was presented from three angles: medical, political and theological.

Holcombe wrote on slavery from a medical and psychological perspective in his 1861 article *Characteristics and Capabilities of the Negro Race*:

The negro is not a white man with a black skin, but if not a distinct species, at least a permanent variety of the human race. He has physical, ethnical and psychological peculiarities which differentiate him from all other races of men; and it is by these and not by *a priori* theories of any kind, that his moral, social and political status is to be determined.

These physical peculiarities, which, I hope, have not proved too tedious to my reader, are of vast importance in forming a just scientific estimate of the present condition and probable future of the African race. They prove the hopeless physical and mental inferiority of that race to the Caucasian type; they prove the negro to be organically constituted – to be an agricultural laborer in tropical climates – a strong animal machine, admirably adapted to subjugate the torrid zone to the culture and interests of the civilized world, under the supervision and by the impulsion of a superior type of man.

Feebleness of will and childish inferiority of intellect, combined with strong animal propensities, are the keys to the psychology of the African race. . . . The “dignity of labor” is an idea which has never yet entered the brain of the African. His conception of liberty, in the great majority of cases, does not transcend the idea of freedom from work.

Laziness is therefore a prime feature in negro character and lies at the bottom of the necessity for slavery. If negroes would work as spiritedly and progress as rapidly as free white laborers, emancipation would not only be possible and proper, but inevitable. Negroes may be trained to systematic toil, but they will generally abandon it when the impulsive power is withdrawn. Those mighty Southern exports – cotton, rice, sugar and tobacco – are produced by the white man’s will operating through the muscles of the negro, in species of labor where his own are unavailable.

The negro is easily mesmerized, very easily impressed by the superior volitional energy of the white man. This is indeed the secret of their obedience and subservience in the South; the whip has very little to do with their subjugation, and is used quite as often to protect them from each other as to render them dutiful to their masters. There is in the negro an instinctive sense of his own hopeless inferiority to the white man, and a strong natural feeling of the perfect propriety of a reasonable and just subordination.

This apathy or feebleness of will makes them easily managed; they are readily subdued by corporeal punishment, and, as is generally the case with white children, the chastisement, instead of leaving them sulky and revengeful, puts them into the best imaginable humor both with themselves and master. Very few Northern people know this or understand the reason of it. (Holcombe, 1861b, pp. 401, 403-404)

On and on he goes for page after white supremacist page of pseudoscientific pontification. It is shocking to read and it is hard to believe that this was penned by one who took the doctrines of the New Jerusalem to

heart. Holcombe could not see the evils in the institution of slavery. Instead, wherever there were systemic problems, he held that they were the results of the inferiority of the enslaved, not the limitations of the institution.

I can't help thinking of Joseph and Anne and their children. Holcombe was talking about them. And if he was talking about them, he was also talking about me. As a child of a black mother and a white father, I am discussed by Holcombe as being a mulatto:

Mulattoes, or half-breeds, are uniformly more feeble than either of the original stocks. They are shorter lived and more liable to all kinds of diseases, especially consumption. They do not re-produce their species so prolifically as the parent breeds, and exhibit a tendency to die out or become exhausted, either by sterility or by gradual reversion to the original black type. This tendency is not sufficiently marked to constitute them hybrids in the scientific sense of that term, but enough so to prove that the negro, if not a distinct species of man, is at least a permanent variety of the human race. (Holcombe, 1861b, p. 403)

Holcombe endeavors to classify non-whites as subhuman and a separate species across his publications that touch on this subject. This sentiment can be seen in an earlier work of New Church collateral literature, *Cosmogonia*⁵ (1813) by the Rev. Hugh White (d. 1827). White muses on topics of scientific import from a mind shaped by New Church theology. He presents under the heading, "Concerning the Origin of the Human Race, whether White, Black, or Copper Colored," his theory that the races were created separate and should therefore be kept separate:

The vulgar people, from misunderstanding Moses, have firmly concluded that blacks, copper-colored and whites, all originated from a single pair of the human race; and in order to prove their doctrine, they allege the power of the Supreme Being could have made it so. Have not men often ascribed to the Divinity, attributes which he possesses not? His power extends not to the compass of contradiction. We might as well say that his power would make corn spring of wheat, and tall oaks and poplars originate from onions or leeks, as allege that he could make all the colors of the human race come of one pair.

Let us believe of God according to our experience of His works in the continuous course of His orderly providence. Call all the present existing human race to prove before a judge and jury, that ever they saw a white couple produce blacks or Indians, or that Indians or blacks ever generated whites. Nay, go back to the siege of Troy and make inquisition in this matter, it will terminate in the negative, that never any such productions have been seen.

Is it not reasonable to believe that the Divinity gave existence to different colors of the human race in his primitive creation of them, when we see from all experience,

5 Note: The publication information on the original pamphlet says this was published in 1830, however the historian C. Th. Odhner lists this as a typo (1904, p. 240).

he preserves these colors distinct and unmixed, where males and females of different colors do not associate in coetion (sic). His providence, or continued creation is the best explanative of his primitive creation. Those who are fond to ascribe all the human race to a single primitive couple, might, with equal propriety, ascribe to the same origin the countless millions of rational beings, inhabitants of the planets of our solar system, and the countless worlds in the immense expanse of space.

Those who have believed that all the human race originated from a single male and female, have been much perplexed in their peopling of the western continent. They have imagined ships driven out of their courses at sea, and North-West passages from Europe were necessary to effect their end. And they resorted to the imaginary change, that time and place must have wrought in producing the copper color.

None of these things would be necessary, were the true origin of man known. Moreover, neither time nor place can convert whites into negroes or Indians or change the latter into the likeness of the former. The space of 3,000 years has not changed a European into an Indian or negro; nor would the space of 3,000 be able to effect it. Pine as soon shall be converted into oak. Let none here object that negroes have produced Albinos or white offspring. The whiteness of these productions participates nothing of the genuine white color of the Europeans, but originates from a morbid state of the blood and flesh. Moreover the negro form or shape testifies plainly that these Albinos are of the African extraction. Their lips, their eyes, their noses, etc. are dissimilar to the whites.

And thus the Divine power operating at different places on the globe at the same instant of time, no doubt produced the various families of whites, blacks, copper-colored, etc. Which distinctions by the providence of the Creator have been preserved distinct, and eternally would remain so, if voluntary mixtures were not made by promiscuous coetion. (White, 1813, pp. 30-31, 33)

Whether Holcombe was impacted by White's doctrine which he founds loosely on the doctrine of correspondences, I cannot say. I have not been able to find any mention of White in his works, but it was not an uncommon belief at the time that Africans were an inferior or separate race.

One important New Churchman, James Glen, a former slaveowner himself, who is noted in New Church history for bringing the doctrines to North America, wrote harshly about black people in 1812. He observed in a letter to the New Church periodical *Intellectual Repository* that black people are naturally sexually immoral, hedonistic, dishonest, and are of such a quality that they have limited capacity to receive spiritual ideas. This sets black people apart from those of other races.

This line of thinking predates Darwinian evolution and was pervasive in Europe and the United States. (Richards, 1997) It is likely that Holcombe found confirmation of these beliefs in various sources, including Holcombe's beloved *Southern Literary Messenger*, which published copious amounts of white racial, social and biological supremacist editorials and articles – some

written by Holcombe himself, who was published 20 times in the journal over four decades.

Holcombe wrote on African slavery in the context of political theory as well. This was publicly distributed in his pamphlet, *The Alternative: A Separate Nationality, or The Africanization of the South* (Holcombe, 1860), later republished as the headlining article in the following year's February issue of the *Southern Literary Messenger* (1861a):

The Northern mind has become thoroughly anti-slavery in sentiment. Even those who contend for our constitutional rights share in the universal opinion that slavery is a great moral and social evil. Those who have adopted the pro-slavery view are exceedingly few in numbers and are regarded by the mass of Northern people as more fanatical than the most extreme Abolitionist. The press, the pulpit, the rostrum of the North are clamorous with declamation against us and our institutions. Slavery is considered not only immoral but debasing to both owner and owned. It is, they say, a relic of barbarism and a disgrace to an enlightened people. We are not regarded as equals but are merely tolerated, as persons whom they in their wisdom may possibly reform and improve. Churches refuse us participation in religious rites, and a baleful element of religious hate adds fuel to the fire of political dissension. From present appearances, the North will before very long be unanimous in opinion, and if it has the power or can invent the means, it will be ready to reduce the South to the condition of Haiti and Jamaica⁶, and expect the approval of God upon the atrocity.

It is unquestionably true, although it be upon false issues, that the sympathies of the civilized world are united against us. The name of slavery is hateful to the ears of freemen and of those who desire to be free. The wise and just subordination of an inferior to a superior race, is rashly confounded with the old systems of oppression and tyranny, which stain the pages of history and have excited the righteous indignation of the world. We are supposed to have proved recreant to the great principles and examples of the liberators of mankind. It is almost impossible at present to disabuse the public mind of Europe and of the North of this shallow prejudice. In the meantime, whilst carrying out the designs of Providence in relation to the negro race, we must rest for a while under a cloud of obloquy and abuse. Let us be faithful to our sublime trust, and future ages will appreciate the grandeur and glory of our mission.

To the professed Abolitionists, that motley crew of men who should be women and of women who should be men; who see in Fred Douglass a hero and in John Brown a martyr, whose venom is proportioned to their ignorance, as some animals are said to be fiercest in the dark; and who are ready to perpetrate the blackest crimes in the name of liberty and under the garb of virtue, we have nothing to say. (Holcombe, 1860, pp. 2-3, 13)

Holcombe's fire comes through very clearly in this document. Over

6 Both of which had experienced slave revolts; Haiti's was the only successful slave-revolt in history (Sheridan, 1982).

the course of about 10 years Holcombe's beliefs on slavery had undergone a seismic shift. This can be seen in his 1852 letter quoted above, and in his personal journal from 1855 preserved in the archives at the University of North Carolina, wherein he vacillates between



detesting slavery almost as much as he detests Northern abolitionists, and supporting slavery and resenting any implication that he would think otherwise. In his diary he muses to himself:

I am a great favorite with the free negroes and they show it by burdening me with professional responsibilities. They have all heard that my father liberated his negroes and presume that I have inherited a mania for African emancipation – a very great error – for I think that Cuffey Jrs and Srs⁷ well-dressed, well-fed, hoe in hand in a Cotton field with the driver behind them – make one of the prettiest pictures of civil and social life. (Holcombe, 1855, p. 88)

Another feature of his journal is a surprising amount of reflection on the nature of the Northerners and the Southerners. It is very evident that Holcombe has a great deal of Southern pride. This shows in his document here as well as in his autobiography (1892) and his many poems portraying southern vignettes. (cf. Holcombe, 1872) Could the mounting tension between North and South have led Holcombe to latch on to slavery in part as a matter of Southern pride?

Of Holcombe's works regarding slavery, his 1861 pamphlet *Suggestions as to the Spiritual Philosophy of African Slavery Addressed to the Members and Friends of the Church of the New Jerusalem* is the most troubling and relevant to this study. Holcombe applies various teachings and concepts from the Heavenly Doctrines to support and promote African slavery. His arguments make liberal use of a host of doctrines from Swedenborg:

There are profound differences in the interior life, or spiritual constitution, of different races of men, which give rise to a necessity for the use of widely different means for their regeneration. . . . Human nature is not therefore the same everywhere, and at all times. Celestial, spiritual, and natural are very different forms or forces, and call for very different outward surroundings. [Swedenborg] says that the African is of the celestial type. Grossly sensual and barbarian as he evidently is in his outward nature, the "remains" which lie imbedded in his spiritual structure are of the celestial order. . . . Proofs of his innate celestial genius are apparent in his

7 Cuffy (spelled also Cuffey and Kofi) was a slave in Guyana who led a 10-month rebellion of over 2,000 slaves in 1763. He became known as a national hero for his efforts. (Scott, 2007)

ineradicable childishness – his light-heartedness, simplicity, credulity and timidity – in his passion for music and dancing, in his forgiving temper, and in that beautiful willingness to serve, which psychologically distinguishes him from almost all other races.

The sins of the antediluvians were represented outwardly, and wrought those anatomical changes, which are attributed by natural philosophers to climatic and other influences. The black skin, the wooly hair, the thick lips, the shallow skull, the flat nose, the offensive smell, and other peculiarities approaching the animal tribes, were imposed gradually on the antediluvian form, as correspondences to the brutalizing operations going on in the soul. . . . I think the aborigines of America were also descendants of the celestial men of the first church. All perversions are of two kinds – those of the will or the affections, and those of the understanding or the intellect. Perversions of charity would be represented by a lurid red, copper, or bronze color, and perversions of truth by a dark or black color.

The separation of faith and charity was the beginning of the end of the church. Is it not curious that the vast black and red races of the world lay for so many centuries hidden away in two remote, widely separated, and almost unknown continents? Did it not represent the fact that the celestial element was closed to, or eliminated from, the psychological consciousness of the rest of the race? Were not their discovery and exploration part of the steps preparatory to the descent of the New Jerusalem, and the establishment of the New Zion?

By African slavery the sensual-corporeal principle of the African is brought into obedience and subjection to the natural or scientific plane of the white man's life. The white man wills and thinks for him, determines his outgoings and his incomings, his food, his clothing, his sleep, his work, etc. He compels him to do uses under a rational and scientific supervision. He makes him obedient as a child, partly by affectionate control, partly by the fear of corporeal punishment. What is the result? His sensual-corporeal is adjoined as a servant to the regenerate natural of the white man and receives influx through it.

Now we affirm, without fear of contradiction from any intelligent New Churchman, that African slavery is an institution which is to play an important part in the reconstruction of society upon true and heavenly principles. African slavery provides, as we have clearly shown, a channel for the descent of celestial influences into the world, such as have never before been known or experienced. (Holcombe, 1861b, pp. 2-5, 7, 20)

The entire pamphlet is an incredible display of selective application of doctrine to a social institution. It, along with many other writings by Holcombe, is available online⁸. My initial readthrough of Holcombe's *Suggestions* was a difficult exercise, I admit. It was shocking to me to see the doctrines applied in this manner to a morally bankrupt institution which hurt my family and so many others and continues to have ripples into the modern world. What

8 <https://tinyurl.com/y8a5vtzs>

happened, I wonder, to that 27-year-old in Louisiana who desired closeness with the poor slaves under his care. I felt for *that* Holcombe.

B. W. H.

Holcombe, though he is arguably the strongest promoter of a Swedenborgian foundation for African slavery, was not the only proponent willing to publicly demonstrate doctrinal support. During the flurry of discussion in the Repository in 1852 one known only by the initials B.W.H. penned a long-form correspondence, *Swedenborg on Slavery*. It recognizes that Swedenborg does not address the issue directly; however, he is convinced that the spirit of the Doctrines is opposed to abolitionists. (H—, 1852, p. 470) B.W.H. relies on a modern application of the Old Testament laws which Swedenborg suggests are optional, abrogated, and to be observed and done. (*Arcana Coelestia* 9349)

He also makes use of teaching regarding labors in the other world to strengthen his claims and to take jabs at “engineers of under-ground railroads.” B.W.H. then, after noting Swedenborg’s recognition of servants in heaven, explores a loose parallel between Africans coming to America and wicked people in this world transitioning to their hell in the next:

Swedenborg everywhere teaches that what occurs or exists on the terrestrial earth, corresponds with something in the spiritual world; and the actions of men on the former represent the action of spirits in the latter. Thus we may arrive at the terrestrial origin of African slavery. The Africans, so far as visited in their own country, are the most useless tenants of the most fertile tract of the universe. They have permitted a continent to go to waste on their hands, by setting at naught the duty of performing uses, as essential to their physical comfort and spiritual culture. Thus they long ago wrought out slavery for themselves.

For a long time they made war upon each other to gratify the hellish propensity of feasting on the flesh of those made captive. Some captives were retained and made to work according to the above description of what occurs in the hells. These were eaten by their captors as soon as the chances of war furnished a new supply. The only way of mitigating the doom which they thus brought upon themselves, was by opening new countries and creating such a demand for their physical labor as would call for their shipment to regions foreign from their own. Under the auspices of the Divine Providence, such an outlet was provided.

The slave captain was a fierce and cruel instrument, but none other could have met the exigency. Admit the necessity of deportation, and the more christianized the country to which they were carried, the greater the blessing to them. That country was the American Colonies. Here they have increased and multiplied. They have become elevated in the scale of humanity, under the beneficial operation of labor and Christian instruction. In the beginning of their servitude, they represented slaves in the hells – compelled to labor on account of an unwillingness and neglect to perform uses. They are gradually approximating to a correspondence with the heavenly condition of serving from love. (H—, 1852, pp. 470-471)

Many of the points above are problematic, however the sentiment is clear. Africans have themselves to blame for being enslaved, and the Lord is using white slavers to enact His will regarding them. B.W.H. and Holcombe are aligned in their presentation of the providential force behind the institution. We know from his letter cited above that Holcombe was a reader of the Repository at this time. Was he influenced by B.W.H.? Another similarity between them is the denial of “inalienable rights.” From B.W.H.:

Men are not born free; neither are they born men. So they are not born equal; either physically, or mentally, or spiritually. The child of a confirmed murderer, adulterer, or drunkard, comes into the world with hereditary tendencies which make him, mentally and spiritually, more feeble than a child of opposite parentage; while the child of a consumptive is born with a hereditary physical inequality. **Neither is liberty abstractly an inalienable right,** or there could be no conventional, personal restraints, established by civil compact. Liberty, in a secular sense, is the enjoyment of civil equality by all who are parties to the social compact. The social compact is itself an abridgement of abstract liberty.

These are mere alphabetical truths, but greatly lost sight of by the anti-slavery philosophers. The slave, as to the state, has logically no rights, because he is not a party to the civil compact. Yet practically he has rights, because the State compels the master to the performance of proper and necessary duties, and protects the slave from arbitrary violence, and cruel or inhuman treatment. Beyond this the slave must protect himself by good conduct and subordination. **This very good conduct and subordination is what Christianity requires of him as a probationary discipline. It requires the same of all. Hence, in the last analysis, the slave and the master are upon the same spiritual footing.** (H—, 1852, p. 471)

And echoed by Holcombe in *Suggestions*:

Notice now in this connection that the African mind, properly speaking, has never had a political existence. Its sole political life has been found in the perversions and inversions of the patriarchal system. If it could this day be miraculously restored to its original standpoint, whence it could work out its interior organic life, it would neither know nor learn anything of political rights, privileges, or principles. That whole sphere of thought, so natural and delightful to other races, is entirely foreign to its nature. Negro attempts at political organization, outside of the controlling or modifying sphere of the white race, must necessarily be failures and farces. When we refuse the Negro political equality, **we deny him no right which he ever possessed,** or could ever of himself obtain, and we withhold from him the means of inflicting great injury upon himself and others. (Holcombe, 1861c, p. 20)

And even more clearly in *The Alternative*:

In opposition to the prevailing sentiment of the North, we believe that men are created neither free nor equal. They are born unequal in physical and mental endowments, and no possible circumstances or culture could ever raise the negro race to any genuine equality with the white. Man is born dependent, and the very first step in civilization was for one man to enslave another. A state of slavery has been a disciplinary ordeal to every people who have ever developed

beyond the savage condition. Those who cannot be reduced to bondage, like the American Indian, perish in their isolated and defiant barbarism. Freedom is the last result, the crowning glory of the long and difficult evolution of human society. Few nations have yet attained to that lofty standard.

Man has no "inalienable rights"— not even those of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." If the life he leads, the liberty he enjoys, and the happiness he pursues, are not consistent with the order and well-being of society, he may righteously be deprived of them all. Instead of that "glittering generality," which might serve as a motto for the wildest anarchy, the truth is, that men and races of men have certain natural capacities and duties, and the right to use the one and discharge the other. **That government is the best, and its people the happiest, not in which all are free and equal, but in which equal races are free, and the inferior race is wisely and humanely subordinated to the superior, whilst both are controlled by the sacred bonds of reciprocal duty.** (Holcombe, 1860, p. 83)

Whether or not Holcombe was influenced by B.W.H., this racist pro-slavery sentiment was present within the minds of New Church laypeople and scholars. These authors are just a sampling of pro-slavery New Church people who twisted the teachings of the Heavenly Doctrines of the New Jerusalem to buttress a hellish institution. They were the origin of what are arguably the worst heresies in the history of the New Church.

The Road to Hell . . .

The development of this heresy was possible, even demonstrable from the pages of Doctrine, because doctrine alone cannot secure truth. Doctrine leads to truth when explored with charity and within the confines of the genuine truths of the Word. Those teachings which are clear on the printed page must govern the exploration of what is not explicitly addressed. And still, Holcombe, B.W.H., Glenn, White, and others of the Antebellum New Church priesthood and laity fell into racist proslavery mindsets and believed that it was not a matter of personal preference or economics, but all part of the Divine plan. This was possible because of a dynamic explained by the doctrines called *persuasion*:

Persuasions immensely increase when men mingle truths with cupidities, or make them favor the loves of self and of the world; for then in a thousand ways they pervert them and force them into agreement. For who that has imbibed or framed for himself a false principle does not confirm it by much that he has learned; and even from the Word? Is there any heresy that does not thus lay hold of things to confirm it? and even force, and in diverse ways explain and distort, things that are not in agreement, so that they may not disagree? (*Arcana Coelestia* 794, Potts translation)

As to the first point, that there is nothing that we cannot rationalize, and we can rationalize falsity more easily than truth, is there anything that we cannot justify? Especially when atheists can "prove" that God is not the creator of the

universe, but that Nature is her own creatress; that religion is nothing but chains for simple people and commoners; that we are animals and die the way they do? And especially when they can prove there is nothing wrong with adultery or with surreptitious theft, fraud and deceptive plots, and that shrewdness is intelligence and malice is wisdom?

We all justify our own heresies. Are there not volumes full of proofs of the two primary heresies in Christendom? Make up 10 heresies, as obscure as you like, ask clever people to prove them, and they will prove them all. If you then look at them solely on the basis of their proofs, will you not be seeing false things as true? Given the fact that anything false may shine in our earthly self because of its superficialities and illusions, while truth shines only in our spiritual self, we can see that what is false is easier to prove than what is true. (*Divine Providence* 318, Dole translation)

Were those New Church people who supported slavery “bad” people? It’s not my place to say. I have spent a great deal of time studying Holcombe, and I get the impression that he was a good man who loved his family, was dedicated to his profession, and did what he thought was right. Even so, I think he and others were wrong and did villainy in their lives by supporting, promoting, and perpetuating black slavery.

I don’t know how each of the people discussed in this paper ended up regarding this issue, but you might like to know that Holcombe changed his views on slavery. Even though he was the strongest apologist for New Church support of slavery, he saw that he was wrong. He details his change of heart in a letter written in 1880.

An incident occurred during the war which made a lasting impression. I was living at Natchez, Mississippi, during the Federal occupation; I was one of the original secessionists and a strong Southern sympathizer, and of course I was in states of great suffering and tribulation of all sorts.

One day I was thrown into a state of extraordinary excitement. A friend of mine had shot a negro man, his slave, who was attempting to escape to the Federals, wounding him severely. The Federals learning the fact, arrested my friend and had him in irons on a gunboat to be tried for attempt to kill. I was exceedingly vexed with my friend, who had manifested the worst features of the old slave-holding spirit in shooting the slave, but I was still more indignant with the Federals, who asserted jurisdiction over the case and threatened to punish one crime by another still more serious. That, you know, was the true Confederate standpoint.

The incident produced such a storm in my mind that I could not attend to my practice, and I shut myself in my bedroom in an agony of contending emotions. I knew the whole question turned upon slavery, its defense or its overthrow; which was right? On a sudden I thought of laying the whole matter before the Lord and praying for an answer through His Word. I knelt down and prayed as earnestly as I ever have done in my life, confessed my utter inability to find the truth for myself,

threw all upon the Christ – die Comforter – begged for a word of command or advice, and solemnly vowed to abide by His answer forever.

I then said the Lord's Prayer with the Bible shut upon the chair before me. Reverently I opened it at random and laid my finger on a verse. It was this: "*Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?*" (Isaiah 57:6)

A great light and peace came into my mind in a moment. I let go of the selfhood on that question forever. I went to my work with a light heart, and soon afterward took the oath of allegiance to the United States, and have been the strongest imaginable friend of the freedom and progress of the black man ever since. (Carter, 1920, p. 183)

This retelling of the event seems a little romanticized, and I'm doubting that he really became black people's "strongest imaginable friend"; still, it shows that someone who had been so committed to one way of seeing the issue of slavery – a man who incidentally ministered to the brother of Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederacy (O'Brien, 2004, p. 1069) – came to see it in another way entirely. According to his retelling, this event took place during the Civil War⁹, so it would only have been at most two years since he published his *Suggestions as to the Spiritual Philosophy of African Slavery*.

I have not been able to locate any public retraction of his sentiments in this paper, and it seems that memorials issued after his death left this chapter out of his accomplishments and controversies, choosing instead to question his easy adoption of fads and quackery, rather than condemn his pro-slavery heresies. He has also been immortalized in the pages of histories of medicine and intellectuals in the South. There was more to him than his slavery efforts. Still, he stands as a warning to current and future adherents to the New Church that we must hold our conclusions lightly and be humble in our application to social issues not clear in doctrine.

These racist and proslavery heresies ought to be taught as a matter of course in New Church theological schools and remembered by all priests and readers as a warning that our innovative minds can make mountains out of molehills and can blot out the sun. The more learned we become, the more potential there is to bend the doctrines from their spirit and apply them in ways that they cannot in principle support. Even though the Heavenly Doctrines are from the Lord, they have been put to use to support this deadly institution. The New Church was not immune to the machinations of the loves of self and of the world.

9 Natchez was occupied by Union troops beginning in 1862. The story involves a slave, which presumes pre-emancipation proclamation, which was issued January 1863.

Conclusion

To me the greatest insult about New Church racist and proslavery heresies is that they are determined on the basis of something outside a person's control. Treatment based on skin color is as unmerited as treatment based on parentage. It is just as unmerited as securities and restrictions rooted in biological sex. To subjugate or uplift someone based on markers not of their making rests at the very heart of prejudice. Ability makes more sense as a judge. A speech delivered by former slave Sojourner Truth in 1851, a year before Bush's *Aphorisms*, comes to mind:

I am a woman's rights. I have as much muscle as any man, and can do as much work as any man. I have plowed and reaped and husked and chopped and mowed, and can any man do more than that? I have heard much about the sexes being equal; I can carry as much as any man, and can eat as much too, if I can get it. I am as strong as any man that is now.

Truth fought for equality on multiple fronts.

I have wondered throughout this examination; would this church defend me if I were born enslaved? Maybe this speculation isn't useful. After all, Swedenborg warns against reflecting on temporal impossibilities (*cf. True Christian Religion* 31), and Jesus says not to worry about tomorrow. (*Matthew* 6:34) Presumably we also are not to dwell on yesterday and yesterdays that could have been; let the dead bury their dead! (*Luke* 9:60)!

Still, probing the problems of the past can point to patterns and provide perspective on the predicaments of the present. I don't need to imagine hypotheticals and alternate histories. Joseph and Anne Barber were there. They lived it. And the Swedenborgians of the day were divided about whether they, and their children, and their grandchildren, and their great grandchildren, and their great-great-greats **and I** should be free. Whether or not we have rights. Whether we are human or are merely beasts of burden.

It must be noted that doctrine did not solve this problem for Swedenborgians. There was no smoking gun passage that put to rest the debate. There was no paper that brought everyone to their senses and unified believers. The debate ended with a surrender – not by any scholar but by a General. It ended with a proclamation – not by any priest but by a President. It was signed and sealed – not in ink but in blood. It was not the Doctrines that settled the matter, but rather, a war.

If slavery is immoral and runs counter to the Lord's kingdom, it follows that the trends of culture as seen in the trajectory of history were more aligned with the Divine than the scholars and adherents to the church specific. If that was true in the mid-19th century then it could be true again today and forevermore. What was it that divided our denomination then? What is it that divides our church now? What will divide us in the future? Is there, as Bush

phrased it, an “intrinsic evil that inheres” in all of them? (*cf.* 1852, p. 418)

Today we regard so positively those abolitionists and men and women who were willing to speak up against slavery. We are justifiably proud of the role the New Church played in influencing abolitionists in the world. I wonder if we are aware that we are praising the *progressive* voice when we claim these men and women as representing the best of what the New Church has to offer.

For all the insight we have into the nature of the Lord, heaven and hell, salvation and human nature that we have in the Doctrines, they could not have been used by either side to defeat the other. This is because slavery is not a matter of doctrine but is primarily social. But it needed to be informed by doctrine. Natural interests and limitations left room for heresies designed to uphold the institution just the same as it produced doctrines to bring it to an end.

Today we look on the former as reprehensible and the latter as correct – nay self-evident! But how much is that because history has dictated the answer to us? At the time, they both seemed compelling. Both made use of doctrine, logic, history and “common sense.” Both came from learned doctrinal scholars and trusted friends of the New Church. Both claimed to keep the Lord and His will in mind. But they couldn’t both be correct. If the Doctrines can be bent to support this issue which we see now to be wicked, what are the checks we have on other divisive doctrinal conclusions? Is it charity? Utility? Fairness? Compassion? Equality?

I honestly don’t know – whatever checks there are or ought to be, Joseph and Anne did not benefit from them. What I do know is I’m glad I was born now and here, and that history has settled what doctrine couldn’t, because 200 years isn’t that long ago, and 100 miles isn’t that far away.

SONNET TO LIBERTY

They tell me, LIBERTY! that, in thy name,
 I may not plead for all the human race:
 That some are born to bondage and disgrace,
 Some to a heritage of wo and shame,
 And some to power supreme, and glorious fame.
 With my whole soul, I spurn the doctrine base,
 And, as an equal brotherhood, embrace
 All people, and for all fair freedom claim!
 Know this, O man! whate’r thy earthly fate –
 GOD NEVER MADE A TYRANT NOR A SLAVE:
 Wo, then, to those who dare to desecrate
 His glorious image! – for all He gave
 Eternal rights, which none may violate;
 And by a mighty hand th’ oppressed He yet shall save.

W. L. Garrison ¹⁰

¹⁰ Garrison, 1860, p. 12

For more reading on the New Church's complex relationship with black slavery, see Block (1932) and the Rev. Dr. James F. Lawrence's forthcoming paper, *Slavery in the American Context: Wadström, Swedenborgians, and an Abolitionist Myth*, which provides a more objective and thorough survey of the many players in the discussion. You can also read his article on George Bush at *Swedenborg.com* (2016). For more reading on the life of slaves in their own words, see *I Was Born a Slave: An Anthology of Classic Slave Narratives*. (Taylor, 1999)

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BOOK REVIEW

Intelligent Default:

Swedenborg's Theistic Science and the Problem of Organic Form

By the Rev. Dr. Reuben P. Bell

Review by the Rev. Walter E. Orthwein

For anyone who has wished for new light on the theory of evolution, and a resolution of the never-ending argument over it, the Rev. Dr. Reuben P. Bell's new book, *Intelligent Default*, should be a welcome addition to the discussion.

I also think this book, in addition to being a deep work of New Church scholarship, may, in the long run, turn out to be very fruitful in terms of growing the Church. Ours is a scientific age and needs a new philosophy and a new religion to guide it as it explores the new frontiers of science. The theory of *Intelligent Default* is a significant contribution to the fulfillment of this need.

The purpose of the book is to lay the groundwork for a theistic model of evolution which is also scientifically rigorous and respectable. Dr. Bell finds the knowledge and tools to support such a model in the theology of the New Church, the new philosophy based upon Swedenborg's works (scientific, philosophical and theological), and the discoveries of modern science (including biology and quantum physics).

Swedenborg's intention in his theistic model of nature was "to explain natural phenomena according to objective scientific rules and laws, but to explain how these phenomena reflect the operation of an internal, spiritual cause. This axiom – that natural things have spiritual causes – lies at the base of theistic science. As a theistic model, it necessarily starts from a different perspective, but could nonetheless inform any corner of scientific inquiry."

"This is not a short course in evolution," Dr. Bell notes. "There is no short

course. The term 'Neo-Darwinian Synthesis' was applied to the modern paradigm of evolutionary biology in all honesty – it was a synthesis of 20th century zoology, botany, taxonomy, genetics, geology, paleontology, chemistry, molecular biology and physics, as they converged on the theory of evolution. A comprehensive understanding of the 21st century catechism for organic evolution requires a proficiency in all these disciplines. There is no royal road to evolution. This is the perennial limitation on arguments for or against the theory."

In his book, Dr. Bell has "put together a collection of powerful ideas that I believe can inform the current debate over the outrageous premise that nature did not create itself but is the product of a transcendent intelligence. That this premise might be outrageous to scientists of this day is a commentary on our time. Swedenborg warned of the insanity of naturalism 250 years ago, but his principles and method also supply the remedy for it."

He observes that, "the idea of Divine design in nature is not new; it is an intuitive concept that has appeared and reappeared from antiquity to the present day." And he traces the philosophical development (the evolution of the idea of evolution) through the centuries, from Plato and Aristotle to modern philosophers, along with references to a wide assortment of other writers, including William Blake and Jewish mystics.

Dr. Bell observes that the prevailing theory of evolution "makes sense, and it is *essentially* true, because it explains a lot of what we observe in nature. But as with any theory, it has certain limitations. Political and religious pressure having been brought to bear on evolutionary scientists for their views, normal discussion of these limitations has been cut off," leaving us with "a mine-field of controversy."

A major problem, in the wake of Darwin's theory, has been that those who believe in God and spiritual reality, and at the same time support the scientific exploration and understanding of nature, have been faced with two main choices – "simplistic religion or dogmatic scientific materialism" – neither of which is satisfying.

Darwinism implies atheism. Nature created itself, and life evolved by a process of random mutation and natural selection. There is no need or room for God in the picture. One can choose to believe in God, but there is nothing in the Darwinian theory of evolution that requires any Divine operation, and certainly no explanation of *how* God may have been involved. Darwinism makes God extraneous, as Darwin himself realized and as many proponents of Darwinism have stated very emphatically (Richard Dawkins being just one well-known example).

Creationism, on the other hand, posits God as Creator but is based on a literal reading of the Bible's creation story and is unscientific. It is therefore

unsatisfying to New Church people because we know that the creation story is not intended to be taken literally but is a Divine allegory of the spiritual process of regeneration. Moreover, we know from science that the earth is more than a few thousand years old, and that forms of life on earth evolve.

A third alternative, **Intelligent Design**, is an attempt to let people of faith have their cake and eat it too – that is, maintain their belief in God while still applying the scientific method to the study of nature. Critics say ID is simply creationism in disguise, but Dr. Bell rejects that criticism, noting that creationism is Biblically based while ID is not, but "is founded on scientific, empirical observations."

The problem Dr. Bell sees with Intelligent Design is that while it leaves the possibility of Divine agency open, it offers no "alternate mechanism" to natural selection. It can't explain *how* the Divine is involved in creation, much less why it is absolutely essential to the process. It is this lack that Dr. Bell's theory seeks to remedy.

Drawing upon the scientific, philosophical and theological works of Swedenborg, **Intelligent Default** explains that the spiritual life flowing into natural matter from God accommodates itself to the natural conditions it finds there, according to the laws of nature that determine the conditions of the natural recipients. This influx of spiritual life is what drives the process of creating and evolving natural forms, without at all violating the laws of nature that govern them from without.

"Form is imposed on nature by the higher form inherent in the spiritual substance flowing in" – namely, the Human Form Divine. "Forms in nature are not by accident, and they are not designed. Forms – emerging, evolving, developing forms – display a default setting for matter in this world, determined by the mechanisms described above. It is intelligent design to be sure, because it comes from 'somewhere else,' and it is wise!"

Because God is Divinely *Human*, the most perfect and complete of all forms is the human form. It is this form that evolution strives toward at every level of creation, the supreme expression of it being our own finite human form which is "made in the image of God." "Evolution of new forms and adaptation of existing forms to changing conditions, occur in the crucible of the 'randomness' of nature, into which, at its inmost level, flows the template of Divine human form."

"The human form is the 'default setting' in the natural world," Dr. Bell states. "It enters into nature at the inmost level of matter, and "as successive forms are compounded in a series, from finer to grosser, to meet the needs of reality at each level from spiritual to natural. The 'default' is what results from the necessities that local conditions and interactions with other matter impose on the emerging form. These conditions are what we observe to be physical

'laws,' nothing more and nothing less. There is no magic required."

Having been trained as a zoologist and as a theologian, Dr. Bell is well qualified to formulate a theory of theistic evolution that incorporates both disciplines. He holds B.S. and M.S. degrees in zoology from the University of Tulsa, and a Doctor of Osteopathy from the Oklahoma State University College of Osteopathic Medicine. He is board certified in Osteopathic general practice and integrative holistic medicine, has practiced geriatric medicine and end-of-life care, and continues to practice traditional osteopathy. He has served as Associate Professor of Family Medicine and Director of Medical Humanities at the University of New England College of Osteopathic Medicine in Biddeford, Maine, where he also taught in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies.

He was ordained into the ministry after earning a Master of Divinity degree at Bryn Athyn College of the New Church Theological School, and also taught biology at the College for a number of years. He earned a Ph.D. in Theological Studies from the Graduate Theological Foundation in association with Oxford University, Christ Church College. He is pastor of the Church of the New Jerusalem in Bath, Maine.

Dr. Bell notes that he was classically trained in zoology by a "patron saint" of the neo-Darwinian synthesis. "I got my evolutionary doctrine almost from the horse's mouth, so to speak," he says. "But I was never taught that this doctrine was perfect or sacrosanct; there are holes in it, and until it became dangerous to acknowledge them, we just accepted these limitations as the challenges to an elegant work in progress." He blames the popular media for casting the story of evolution as "a colossal collision of faiths."

The thesis Dr. Bell presents is complex, incorporating many subjects and strands of thought, and it is difficult to sum up in a brief review – in other words, read the book. It is clearly written, and although the subject is deep, it is presented in a lively and I would say even entertaining way, with many striking observations, quotations, charts, definitions and comments along the way.

It also contains a number of very helpful summaries, such as a list of the basic principles of the new theory, and a list of Swedenborg's main scientific works (13 of them), with dates and brief comments. There are also eight appendices, including an essay on "Swedenborg's Mind" by Dr. Bell, another on his *Doctrine of Correspondences*, and a collection of passages from Swedenborg's works on his *Doctrine of Correspondences* and *A Synopsis of Swedenborg's Theological Writings*.

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The Academy Yearbook Tradition

Marvin Clymer

One of the highlights of graduating from high school is enjoying the photographs, articles and personal notes in the annual yearbook – a meaningful summary of the hard work, accomplishments, friends and fun of senior year. The tradition began with scrapbooks of notes, artwork, poetry and other memorabilia, which took on greater relevance and popularity with the advent of photography in the mid-1800s. Professional photographers created portraits of individuals and classes which were then bound into artistic albums for students to purchase.

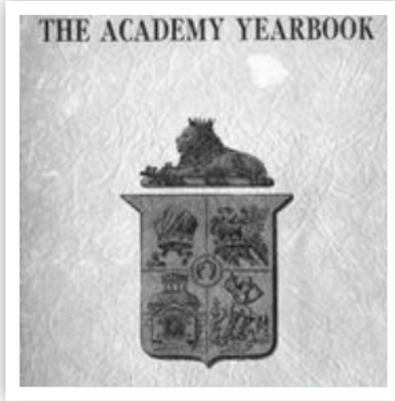
The Beginning

The first Academy of the New Church yearbook appeared in 1923 and was called the “Boys Academy Year Book.” Created by members of the Boys Academy, it focused primarily on the activities of the Boys School. The next two annual books were products of the Phi Alpha fraternity and, as you would expect, concentrated on life of the dormitory boys.

After skipping a year, the *Year Book of the Academy Schools* appeared in 1927 as “The Voice of the Campus,” representing the Boys Academy, Girls Seminary, College and Theological School. Besides highlighting the seniors, the 69-page book included the other classes, faculty, student organizations, sports and even alumni groups.

Despite small changes made each year, the basic formula for yearbook design at the Academy has remained relatively constant for almost a century. The early yearbooks emphasized articles, poetry and drawings to describe the activities of the school. Over the years, photographs have become more prominent and text has been reduced since “a picture is worth a thousand words.”

Early photographs showed buildings and groups of unidentified students and teachers. Individuals in group photos were first labelled in 1937. Senior portraits with articles began in 1946. These formal portraits were replaced



1928 Cover

in 1969 by casual photographs which could better reflect the personalities and interests of the seniors – an approach which has continued until the present time. More recently, groups of images show senior connections to family and friends.

Though color was used on covers of the earliest books, black and white images were the only option for ANC yearbooks until the first color photos appeared in 2008 – transforming the appearance and appeal of yearbooks since then.

The production of yearbooks, number of pages, physical size and covers has varied over the years as a result of the national economy, wars, school finances and fiscal shortfalls from preceding years. The last year to graduate without a yearbook was the class of 1952, due to the deficit left by the 1951 yearbook. Instead, the class of 1952 was only permitted to print a single sheet with their banner and portraits of the class members.

Beginning with the first Academy yearbook, each edition has usually been dedicated to a teacher, administrator or staff member who had won the affection of the graduating class. That person might have been still active in the school, recently retired or a new resident of the spiritual world. Sometimes the honor came from a sudden loss which had shocked the school, such as the deaths of Danny Goodenough, Melinda Nemitz, Mauro de Padua and Marah Boyesen. In addition to recognizing their contributions to the school, the dedications contributed to the healing process on the campus.

Since the Academy has expected yearbooks to be self-supporting, their creators have reached out to businesses and individuals willing to pay for advertising and space for personal notes. Early yearbooks display an interesting collection of companies, such as:

- Asplundh Tree Expert Company
- John Boatman – Shorthorn Cattle and Fruit Growing
- Boericke & Tafel – Homeopathic Pharmacy
- Harold Thorp Carswell – Registered Architect
- Fred J. Cooper – Jeweler by Birth
- Genzlinger's Store
- Heath's Little Store – Larger Than Ever
- Lechner & Schoenberger Co. – Pianos & Players
- Swain Nelson & Sons Co. – Landscape Producers
- Pitcairn Aviation – Charter Flights

Raytharn Farm – Pure Bred Royal Belgium Horses
 Rope & Odhner – Cinematographers
 D. F. Rose – Complete Line of Electric Appliances
 Synnestvedt and Leonard – Contractors and Builders
 Synnestvedt & Synnestvedt – General Insurance
 White's General Store

While yearbooks soon became an established tradition in the Academy high school, they did not catch on in the College. Early yearbooks included the College since it was largely an extension of the high school: occupying the same buildings, sharing the same teachers and known as the Academy of the New Church College.

The construction of Pendleton Hall in 1968 and the College dormitories created a separate college campus and a new sense of identity, but it was still primarily a two-year college which did not contribute to a cohesive class which could celebrate graduation after four years of study together. The College created just four yearbooks, from 1984 through 1987. Now that Bryn Athyn College is widely accepted as a four-year college, perhaps the yearbook will be reborn.

Some schools have moved to interactive, digital yearbooks with links to other sources and the ability to sign or comment in books with a mobile device.

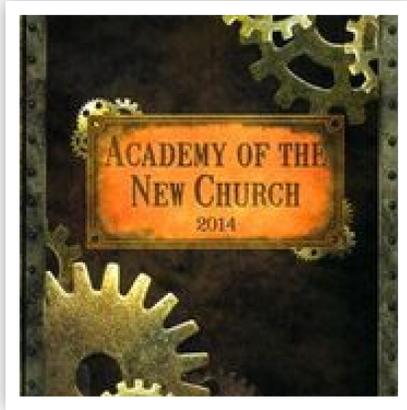
Preservation and Digitization

As windows into the academic and social life of the Academy, yearbooks have been collected for many years by the Swedenborg Library. To preserve them, the best copies are stored in a climate-controlled vault. Additional copies are kept in the Permanent Reserve section for use in the Library. If there are more copies, they are available for circulation by Library patrons. Some years are represented by only one or two copies, others have many copies. Yearbooks with hard covers tend to hold up better under regular use than those with soft covers, of course. The Library is interested in more copies of yearbooks in good condition without extensive handwritten notes.

In order to aid in their preservation and provide greater access to the Academy yearbooks, the Library began a digitization project in 2009 to scan yearbooks and photograph class banners for the



Social Page 1930



2014 Cover

Charter Day reunion classes each year. The goal was to scan all the Academy yearbooks within 10 years. We are pleased to announce that the project has been completed right on schedule, just in time for Charter Day.

The full collection of 86 yearbooks, from 1923 to 2019, can be found online in the Swedenborg Library New Church Digital Collections. Students who once attended the Academy no longer need to search through boxes of books in the basement or attic to find photos

of their classmates and friends from long ago to help reminisce about their younger years. People interested in their family history now can see tantalizing glimpses into the early lives of their parents, grandparents, relatives and family friends – wherever they happen to live around the world.

Besides Academy yearbooks, the New Church Digital Collections contain fascinating photographs, documents, journals and articles about Emanuel Swedenborg and the early history of the New Church, Academy of the New Church and Bryn Athyn College. More than 145,000 pages of New Church history are available with a few clicks of your mouse at www.swedenborglibrary.org/digital.

To view Academy yearbooks just select: *Archives*> *Academy of the New Church*> *Yearbooks*. Look under Bryn Athyn College for college yearbooks. It is easy to browse through the Collections or do keyword searches for specific subjects. For questions about using the New Church Digital Collections you may contact Marvin Clymer at marvin.clymer@brynathyn.edu or 267-502-2533.



Marvin Clymer is the Digital Collections Supervisor at Swedenborg Library of Bryn Athyn College. He was Editor of the 1969 Academy of the New Church Yearbook. His wife, Wendy (Twining), works on the Academy Girls School staff. They live in Willow Grove, Pennsylvania.

Church News

Compiled by Bruce Henderson

GENERAL CHURCH RETREAT: CALL FOR SESSIONS

The Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr., Executive Bishop

The Rev. Eric H. Carswell, Host Pastor

Planning continues on the General Church Retreat 2020 (aka Assembly) that will take place in Bryn Athyn from June 18-21, 2020. Applications for sessions are being received. This is the heart of the Retreat – what people can expect to experience when they attend.

We are looking for a good balance of content-oriented presentations and discussions (wisdom); sessions aimed at support, caring and connectivity (love); and activities focused on crafts, movement and service (use).

Selections will be based on the following criteria:

- Connection to the overall theme: "Behold I make all things new" – a way forward focused on the Lord and a life of useful service. (Note that every session need not directly reference the theme.)
- A clear foundation in the teachings of the New Church, and perceived fit within the General Church.
- Variety and balance of subject-matter within the overall program. Examples include spiritual growth, outreach doctrinal inquiry, accessibility for people relatively new to the New Church, marriage, parenting, and so on.
- Variety and balance of emphasis within the overall program: Love (worship, support, community, ministry); Wisdom (learning, studying, sharing truths); Use (applying teachings, serving others, activity).
- How this session brings spiritual concepts into life.
- Ability to generate healthy discussion.
- Perceived interest to the participants.

Please feel warmly invited to submit an application that reflects any of these modes of engagement to www.gcretreat2020.org.

CHARTER DAY

This year's Charter Day celebration – October 3-7 – will be highlighted by the Bryn Athyn Cathedral Centennial Celebration and Centenary Service, and the dedication of the new Bryn Athyn College Center. Among special events are:

Thursday, October 3:

Ongoing through the weekend: An art exhibit featuring the works of **Jency Latta** in the Swedenborg Library and an art exhibit for reunion class artists in the Fine Arts Building, with an opening reception 4-7 pm. Tours of the Bryn Athyn Cathedral, Glencairn Museum and Cairnwood Estate will continue through Sunday. Various College and Secondary Schools sporting events are scheduled for Friday and Saturday.

Friday, October 4:

- Cathedral address by the **Rev. Mark Pendleton** (11 am)
- Theta Alpha luncheon, featuring “Stories of Adoption” and Secondary Schools dancers. (12 pm)
- Bryn Athyn College Kite Day (1-4 pm)
- Dedication of the Bryn Athyn College Center, followed by a reception and tours (4-5:30 pm)
- Coffee with the Secondary Schools Principals and tours with student ambassadors (2-4 pm)
- Bryn Athyn College Alumni and Friends Reception at the College Center (7:30-9:30 pm)

Saturday, October 5:

- Bryn Athyn Cathedral Centennial Celebration, featuring a variety of craftsmen and an organ demonstration (8:30 am-12:45 pm)
- Bob Eidse Run/Walk (registration 8-8:45 am, Run at 9 am)
- ANC Tailgate Party at 1 pm followed by football game at 2 pm
- Charter Day Banquet at Asplundh Field House (7-9 pm). Program by Bryn Athyn College
- Mix & Mingle, ages 21 and up, at Cairnwood Estate (9 pm to midnight)

Sunday, October 6:

- Cathedral Centenary Service, honoring the 100th anniversary of the dedication (11 am)
- Deka Tea at Glenn Hall lounge (1-2:30 pm)

Monday, October 7:

- Annual Student Scholarship Golf Outing, Philmont Country Club.

BRYN ATHYN COLLEGE: THE NEW ACADEMIC YEAR

The Master of Science in Special Education (with a concentration on literacy) launched this summer after earning approval from the Pennsylvania Department of Education last year. The Middle States Commission on Higher Education also recently approved Bryn Athyn College's application for an accredited online delivery format of the 10-month program. Spearheaded by **Dr. Kelly Ballard**, the Master of Science in Special Education emphasizes the skills necessary to support students with language-based learning differences. In July, Bryn Athyn College welcomed its first MSpEd cohort of 10 eager graduate students.

New Major Offers an Exciting Option for Math Students

Undergraduate students interested in science, technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM) will benefit from the new Bachelor of Science in mathematics offered by the College. In conjunction with the pre-existing computer science minor, the mathematics major meets the pressing demand of students interested in pursuing STEM-related careers.

Professional Development Grant Supports Student Exploration of Purposeful Vocation

Bryn Athyn College was the recent recipient of a professional development award from the Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education (NetVUE), which is supported by the Council of Independent Colleges and Lilly Endowment, Inc. This \$9,559 grant is intended to strengthen the intellectual and theological exploration of vocation, or calling, by supporting the professional development of faculty and staff.

Bryn Athyn College's 2019-20 professional development program will focus on developing a shared vision for supporting student exploration of vocation in a way that is enriched by New Church beliefs. The program will include a reading and discussion group, as well as a series of on-campus workshops led by presenters on best practices when educating for vocation.

The primary goal of the program is to facilitate a cross-campus dialogue that ultimately results in the clarification of Bryn Athyn College's philosophy of vocation, in order to further encourage students' mission-based exploration of purpose, service and use.

College Center Celebrates Grand Opening on Charter Day

Bryn Athyn College looks forward to the dedication and grand opening of the much-anticipated College Center on Charter Day, October 4. As a central hub on campus, the College Center will provide students a recreational gathering place where they can exercise, enjoy the café, or relax in one of the media rooms.

This new building will also support Bryn Athyn College's academic programming, providing offices and classrooms, a dance studio, and a health center. With beautiful conference rooms and open gathering spaces, the College Center will be available for conferences and rentals, creating a new channel of income that will support Bryn Athyn College's financial health.

Above all, this new building provides a place to create connections, enriching the vibrant student life on campus. All are invited to attend the College Center's opening celebrations.

New Athletic Director David Leach Joins Bryn Athyn College

Most recently the Senior Associate Director of Athletics at the University of Pennsylvania, **David Leach** joined Bryn Athyn College with 25 years of collegiate athletic and recreation administration. Prior to his experience at Penn, he served similar roles at Princeton University and Saint Joseph's University.

He holds an MEd from Temple University and attended the Wharton Leadership Academy at the University of Pennsylvania. He is thrilled to bring his wealth of experience to Bryn Athyn College, believing that a strong athletics program can teach student-athletes invaluable life lessons, enhance their health and well-being, and strengthen the relationship with the surrounding community as part of the mission of the College.

ACADEMY SECONDARY SCHOOLS 2019-2020

James M. Adams - Managing Director

Kira R. Schadegg - Girls School Principal

Jeremy T. Irwin - Boys School Principal

Enrollment projections for the 2019-2020 school year:

Girls School		Boys School	
Seniors	27	Seniors	40
Juniors	21	Juniors	40
Sophomores	17	Sophomores	23
Freshmen	20	Freshmen	28
Total	85		131
Dorm	15	Dorm	28
Day	70	Day	103

New programs:

This year we will discontinue the Honors Humanities as a Dual Enrollment course. Instead, we are partnering with Bryn Athyn College to offer a program of Early College. This will include 13 courses, including Public Speaking, Introduction to Psychology, Introduction to Cultural Anthropology, Introduction to Philosophy, and Introduction to Politics and Governance. This program will be available to seniors who may take up to three credits each term.

Faculty changes in the Girls School:

The Girls School said good-bye to **Gail Cooper**. Affectionately known as “Magistra,” Gail’s first ANC gig was teaching Latin to boys from 1973 to 1975. As she raised her family she kept her ties with ANC by working as accompanist, teaching music and as musical director of the musical. She returned to full-time teaching in 1991, teaching Latin and music.

Since 1991 she served on numerous committees, as assistant AKM advisor, freshman class advisor, department chair and marshal. She helped to edit the textbook she uses, became a Gurian trainer and earned two Master’s Degrees. Gail has always been a huge proponent of professional development and she has led by example.

She has long been an advocate for student travel as the laboratory for world languages. Many students – and adults – have traveled to Italy with her. Whenever Gail has been asked to MC an event or to speak at the Charter Day banquet or even graduation her reply has always been, “I am happy to do that for you!” Our parting words to her are “Well done good and faithful servant.”

Lisa Knight is unsure of the total number of years she has taught at ANC but she thinks it is 21! She taught part time with two breaks since 1983, which included three terms at the College. Regardless of the number of years Lisa’s eye for beauty has always greatly benefited our school – whether she is teaching drawing or painting. Whether the class is sophomores, juniors or seniors she

brings her own style to the mezzanine in the Fine Arts Building.

Lisa has provided invaluable guidance in the huge project of decorating the walls of our schools with art by alumnae and New Church women artists. She has given a gift to ANC that will last for many years. Every student or faculty member who enjoys the art in our halls will have Lisa to thank for the beauty.

Natasha Keys began working at ANC in 2011 as an English Second Language teacher. She was the department head for our ESL program when it was moved from student support. This year she came full circle by moving ESL back under student support when she took over the department.

While she may have only been head of support for a single year she was a force to be reckoned with as she fearlessly streamlined the department. She also stepped in to teach strength training when we needed her. The girls loved interacting with her in this venue. We wish her well in Arizona.

Angella Irwin taught yoga to the girls in PE for the past two years. She moved the level of rigor up and the girls really challenged themselves in their level of fitness as a result. She is moving to Maryland to be with her fiancé and support him in his next steps. We will miss her and wish her every happiness in her married life.

While the Girls School is not welcoming any new teachers, several are moving from part time to full time this year. **Martha Odhner** is adding Honors Chemistry to her course load and **Abby Synnestvedt** will be picking up the art classes vacated by Lisa Knight, as well as working in student support and senior seminar.

Other changes include: **Bonnie Hodgell** is the new department head for English. **Sarah Cooper Waelchli** is the new department head for World Language. **Emily Latta Klippenstein** is adding Latin 3 to her two sections of Ancient History. **Michaela Boyesen** is the senior class advisor. **Erica Stine** is head of student support and freshman class advisor. **Mary Williams** is teaching English 9, which is a skills level, co-ed English.

Turf Athletic Field for the Girls School Athletic Program

With tremendous thanks to **Eileen Glenn** and family, the Girls School will begin construction on a new turf field during the school year. If we obtain permitting, construction will start in November and will be completed for the lacrosse season next spring. If permitting is delayed we will start construction after the lacrosse season and the field will be completed for the field hockey season in 2020.

The theme for the year is: **Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart.** (Psalm 31:24) There is a sense of excitement in the Girls School about the coming school year that is invigorating.





SUMMER CAMP OLYMPICS
(Photos by Cole Lambertus and Bruce Cronlund)





Faculty changes in the Boys School:

We wish **Ian Cole** and his family well with their move to Colorado.

Some other internal changes include: **Ben Cole** taking over the bulk of the Latin program; **Jeremy Fehon** taking over Freshman boys Introductory Physical Science; **Baird Kistner** becoming the Freshman Class Advisor; and **Keith Gruber** taking on Assistant Yearbook Advisorship.

Summer Renovations

- We installed LED lighting in our Fine Arts Building. (This was thanks to a very generous grant from the Glencairn Foundation.)
- We replaced the overhead fixtures in the hallways of the second floor of de Charms Hall, which provides dramatically improved lighting. This was especially important as we continue to install on walls a collection of art created by male New Church artists.
- The smaller, more eastward gym in the Asplundh Field House received a full floor replacement due to water damage. This afforded us an opportunity to reorient some portions of the gym which should make athletic contests and spectating more enjoyable and safer. (We are grateful for donations to make these changes possible.)
- We also received a donation to install air conditioning in the Benade Hall Auditorium which will make a tremendous difference for our students, faculty, staff and alumni. (We are grateful for donations received for this project.)

ANC Summer Programs included:

- A faculty, students and friends trip to Iceland.
- The 8th annual Performing Arts Camp and a production of Madagascar Jr.
- The annual ANC Summer Camp, with 82 students. (See photos on page 461.)
- Tools 4 Life Camp. (See photos on page 464)
- An ANC Dance Intensive Program, with 22 students from ANC or the Bryn Athyn Church School, and four from other schools. These included one 7th grader, five 8th graders, six 9th graders, four 10th graders, four 11th graders and six 12th graders.

REGIONAL CLERGY MEETINGS IN AUSTRALIA*The Rev. Todd J. Beiswenger*

I don't know about other ministers but when I signed up for Theological School I actually got pretty much what I was expecting: learning the doctrine of the church. However, as time passes I'm starting to think that one course that was missing in my education was event planning. It seems to be an essential job duty in the priesthood.

In the time leading up to the clergy meetings, we sorted out accommodations, transportation, meals, presentations, various meet-ups with others, as well as some outings in and around Sydney. It was pretty amazing that everything went according to plan: flights arrived on time, luggage wasn't lost. The most nervous I got was wondering if the Koreans were going to wander off on their own and get lost. But, to the best of my knowledge, it never happened.

Here's what did happen: we did get an interesting presentation from the **Rt. Rev. David Lindrooth** giving us a bit of insight into people who are inquiring about the church through *newchurch.org*. He showed us a map of the United States illustrating just how few and far between our congregations are, and that for 98% of the people who inquire through the website there is no congregation close enough for them to participate. The General Church has always been spread pretty thin outside of a few cities, but it seems this will only be even more so in the future.

The Rt. Rev. Peter Buss Jr. gave a presentation on *Providence and the Church*, reassuring us that everything is happening to plan, and believe it or not, there are no surprises for the Lord. However, we have to pay attention to what is happening around us in order to cooperate fully with the Lord's plan.

The Rev. John Jin, regional pastor for Asia, spoke about the problem of idol worship in Asia. This has been an issue for a long time, and we see it as a regular struggle in the Old Testament stories. John said it is still a big issue in China, Japan and Korea. He talked about the other challenges and opportunities in China, including the difficulty of teaching religion there.

The Rev. Gyu Yang from Korea and the **Rev. Shiro Matsumoto** from Japan spoke independently of how they are trying to reach out to their countrymen. What struck me was the similarity of approach. Both were coming at it from the afterlife angle, with Shiro giving a short presentation on his translation efforts into Japanese. Rev. Yang told a story of how he created a presentation on the afterlife to give at retirement centers. He eventually took it to a Christian conference but got kicked out because it wasn't mainstream Christian.

However, there was a twist of fate when a couple of years later he reapplied to the conference and the person processing the applications had attended one

of his presentations at the retirement center and was moved by it, so he said Rev Yang is in! Every year since, he gets to present the New Church view of the afterlife at this Christian conference.

We also invited the **Rev. David Millar** to join in the meetings and present his *Logopraxis* approach to reading and applying the Writings to life. Since church attendance is declining around the world, new approaches such as this can be used as a different gate to bring people to the Word – which, after all, is our goal.

However, as is usually the case with such meetings, some of the most valuable interactions happen outside the presentations, and these sessions were no exception. One of the challenging aspects to General Church employment in Australasia is the isolation, so it is rejuvenating to put on an event and make friends with others who are in a similar situation – even if the event planning training has been a trial by fire!



The pastors in Australasia: Back row, left to right: Sachio Nakata, David Millar, Gyu Yang, Howard Thompson, Peter Buss, David Lindrooth, Todd Beiswnger. Front row: Seung Kim, Soon Lee, Nang Kim, Dong Yang, John Jin, Chi Yoon, Dick Keyworth.

BRITISH ACADEMY SUMMER CAMP

(Reprinted from the September *Newsletter for the General Church in Great Britain*)

The Rev. Louis Synnestevedt

It was a delight to be invited to my first BASS experience. One thing that took me by surprise was the fiery devotion to the tradition (in the most positive sense) of the British Academy. I observed the absolute dedication shown by everyone, students and staff alike, to the lasting connections made within this

community of church and neighbor.

The event took place July 14-27 at the lovely Purley Chase Centre, located about 100 miles northwest of London. The stately mansion, with its tall trees and enchanting gardens, has a long New Church history, being owned by the General Conference Church and used by the British Academy for innumerable decades. The Centre has been modernized and extended in recent years. Into this setting came 39 young people from Europe, the United States and as far away as India!

The program consisted of worship, morning and evening; classes with instruction from the Word and New Church doctrine; field trips which included Cadbury World, Coventry Cathedral and Stratford-upon-Avon (not to mention a tour of London and Michael Church following the close of BASS), and a variety of other classes on topics including personal development, our place in the greater environment, and much else.

There were lots of opportunities for walking, visiting, games and fun. What follows is a sampling of reports from this year's Summer School in the words of participants:

"BASS has been a great time for me. It's been very good to see the perspectives of others and to discuss those perspectives with them. The classes have been incredible. I've learned a great deal while I've been here and have been confirmed in still more."

"BASS is a very new experience for me. I saw the angels in human form. Whenever I am in need, they were there to help me and comfort me. I came to know about Divine providence and Divine love. The studies gave me a new outlook on love and relationships and how they could be. Thank you to everyone in BASS."

"We all quickly realized the safety provided at Purley Chase. Everyone can be completely comfortable with themselves and can engage with the teachers and each other without fear of judgment."

"Fun BASS experiences: Puzzles. Toblerone (4.5 kilos). 4:30 am walk to the bluff for the sunrise. We stacked people and bean bags into a tower in the game room – with a lot of failures and laughter."

"This year has been full of good discussions with varying opinions, but ultimately we respected each other and I took something away from every one of them. "

"The connections I've made at BASS will last me a lifetime. Not only have I been able to further connect with my graduating class members, but with people from all over the world. Whether we're exploring London or just playing, [you know] this group has become my family and I will never forget my time with them."

"It's hard to explain BASS in one little letter, but I'll try to sum it up. There

was loads of joy, happiness and connection. But within those feelings there were lots of tears and drama. Drama is never fun but I think through the bad and sorrow we became more and more connected and in touch with people and within ourselves. I've never felt so close to people whom I've only met two weeks ago. And with people I already knew since birth, I got to know a deeper side to them that I will cherish forever. Thank you, BASS, for helping me break out of my shell and other people's shells. 'Stars can't shine without darkness.' With those tears come happiness and good things."

"This happens every year at BASS: you meet people whom you have never seen in your life and by the end of these magical two weeks you make lifelong friends and relationships. After only two weeks you feel that you have known these wonderful people your whole life. It's just full of positive possibilities."

"This is my third year and each time I have come there has been a feeling of love and unity between all the students. When I'm here, I strive to be the most loving and caring person I can be. But it isn't only at BASS. I've noticed the following year I am a more loving and caring person."

"BASS has presented me with many ideas that challenge my thinking and progress [of] our knowledge, as well as making new bonds with amazing young people."

"I got the chance every morning, every afternoon and every night to sit and reflect on who I am. I got to see all the good and all the bad in me. I now have the tools for how to change the bad and for that I am forever grateful."

"I really enjoyed meeting all these wonderful people – the best two weeks of my life so far. All of the activities done, all the amazing and interesting lessons and, of course, the never-failing warm welcome of the Purley staff. Thank you to everyone who made BASS possible this year."



SWEDENBORG SCIENTIFIC ASSOCIATION
THEISTIC SCIENCE SYMPOSIUM

This Symposium will be held in Pendleton Hall of Bryn Athyn College, Saturday, October 12, from 9 am to 5 pm.

The theme is: *Breaking the Shell: Connecting the Spiritual Cascade to the Physical with New Church Science*. It is presented by the Swedenborg Scientific Association (host) and the Theistic Science Group. Free registration is requested at <http://swedenborg-philosophy.org>.

The agenda includes:

- Welcome by the **Rev. Dr. Reuben Bell**, president of the Swedenborg Scientific Association
- Introduction by **Ron Horvath**, chairman of the Theistic Science Group
- **The Rev. Dr. Reuben Bell** – The Emergence of Organic Forms (Q&A)
- **The Rev. Andy Heilman** – Introduction to Discrete Degrees in New Church Science
- **Dr. Ian Thompson** – Enneads of Spiritual and Physical Sub-degrees
- **Rev. Andy Heilman and Dr. Ian Thompson** – Q&A
- **Dr. Stephen Smith** — Puzzles and Fine Tuning in Physics and Biology (Q&A)
- **Dr. Ian Thompson** – A Mechanism for Spiritual Influx into the Physical (the Nexus) (Q&A)
- Panel discussion moderated by **Dr. Dan Synnestvedt**
- Summary remarks by **Ron Horvath**

(See a review of the new book by the **Rev. Dr. Reuben Bell**, *Intelligent Default: Swedenborg's Theistic Science and the Problem of Organic Form*, on page "Intelligent Default:" on page 447.)

NEW BOOKS FROM THE SWEDENBORG SCIENTIFIC ASSOCIATION

Available at swedenborg-philosophy.org, Cathedral Bookstore, and Amazon.com.

Intelligent Default: Swedenborg's Theistic Science and the Problem of Organic Form, Reuben P. Bell

Swedenborg believed that if his scientific principles . . . behaved according to Enlightenment rules for doing science, and if their underlying spiritual principles showed the same consistency of logic and reason, then he could present an intellectually defensible science for his time and for the future.

This study supports this claim. Choosing the discipline of organic evolution as our subject, we will use Swedenborg's doctrines and method to address this

perennial biological problem. The elegant science of our day stands ready to be applied to a plausible theistic science of final cause and spiritual influence.

On Common Salt: That is Mined, Crystal, Sea, or Spring Salt, Emanuel Swedenborg, translated by Michael V. David with J. Durban Odhner, Consultant and Editor

Why a book about salt in the 18th century? Because salt was the number-one commodity in the world, and Emanuel Swedenborg, with his interest in mining and manufacturing, was inspired to write the definitive textbook on the subject.

On Common Salt was not a “minor work” in Swedenborg’s day. It was a definitive scientific reference on the many ways that the world produced salt, with detailed descriptions of the various technologies behind its production. It was an essential book on an essential mineral of the pre-industrial world. This brings a fascinating new perspective to another of Swedenborg’s many scientific works.

Daedalus Hyperboreus The Nordic Inventor, Emanuel Swedenborg’s Scientific Journal (with foldouts), translated by Göran Appelgren, edited by Staffan Rodhe

Daedalus Hyperboreus was the first ever scientific journal in Sweden (1716-18) and one of the first in Europe. Swedenborg himself wrote the majority of the 38 articles. Sometimes he has used Polhem’s notes and letters, and at times has carefully studied Polhem’s machines in action.

In many of the articles he also describes his own inventions and experiments. They deal with such things as the construction of a flying machine, ship-building, methods to establish the longitude at sea or to find the proportion between the volume of geometrical bodies. Staffan Rodhe, editor

2019-2020 - ***The Natural Basis of Spiritual Reality*** edited reprint, ***Principles of Chemistry*** reprint, ***Swedenborg, Fourier and the America of the 1840s*** reprint.

NEWS FROM HEAVEN

Earlier this year the Swedenborg Foundation added a new feature to *Swedenborg & Life* on the *offTheLeftEye* YouTube channel, called *News From Heaven*. The response has been very positive, with the number of video comments received on a weekly basis doubling since the series launched.

Now this *News From Heaven* can be seen twice a week on the YouTube channel – Thursdays at 12:30 pm and Saturdays at 11 am.

Life Lines

THE NEW CHURCH AND SLAVERY

The Rev. Chris Barber, who teaches Religion in the Academy Secondary Schools, is unique among General Church ministers. He has a personal connection to slavery through his ancestors, who were born into slavery in Maryland in the early 1800s. That drives his article on page 416: *200 Years and 100 Miles – Doctrine’s Failure to Settle the Slavery Debate in the New Church*.

The story is long, well-researched and heartfelt. It may be uncomfortable for some and perhaps controversial, but it is worthy of attention and respect. Chris laments that New Church leaders in this country were not more involved and outspoken in denouncing slavery. He cites “uncomfortable examples” of them being disengaged and passive. He does acknowledge the positive influence of the Writings in England, where several New Church men led the first real antislavery movement, and notes: “We are justifiably proud of the role the New Church played in influencing abolitionists in the world.”

Whatever influence the Writings had in this country, there is no doubt that much of the antislavery sentiment was fomented in churches – as was true of the rabble-rousing spirit leading up to the Revolutionary War.

A new book by one of my favorite historians, David McCullough – *The Pioneers* – tells one of the stories. It’s about the Northwest Territory – the first expansion beyond the original 13 colonies, ceded by England as part of the Treaty of Paris after the war. This land, provided for veterans of the war and their families, was to become Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin.

An enterprising Massachusetts minister, Manasseh Cutler, was instrumental in opening up this vast territory with three binding conditions:

1. Freedom of religion
2. Free universal education
3. Prohibition of slavery

At this time slavery existed in every one of the 13 states, so the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, in McCullough’s words, “would prove to be one of the most far-reaching acts of Congress in the history of the country.”

There is no record of whether Cutler ever read Swedenborg or was influenced by the Writings. But McCullough does refer in his book to the

“legendary” Johnny Appleseed, who “committed himself to supplying settlers with apple seeds or young trees, while at the same time he spread the gospel according to the Swedish theologian Emanuel Swedenborg.” (McCullough visited Bryn Athyn and its landmark buildings several years ago with the Massachusetts Historical Society, and learned much about Swedenborg.)

But is it possible the New Church did play a key role in the abolition of slavery – not only in America but throughout the world?

In 2007 a major conference was held in Bryn Athyn in observance of the 250th anniversary of the Last Judgment in the spiritual world: *The World Transformed – Swedenborg and the Last Judgment*. One presenter was Brian Henderson, then professor of history at Bryn Athyn College, now Director of Glencairn Museum. His address, included in a collection from the conference, was: *From Thought to Action: The Last Judgment, Swedenborg and the Antislavery Movement*. (This is one of many references in Chris Barber’s paper.)

Slavery was virtually unchanged throughout the world for 4,000 years. It was not an American phenomenon and was so prevalent that it was an anomaly for any country not to practice it. What is surprising, Brian said, is how quickly it all came to an end – although it survives in some small parts of the world. Why this moment in history? We can’t draw an absolute cause and effect but, he suggested, “it’s important to reflect on these questions” in the light of the Last Judgment.

Where there had been no significant antislavery movement, it sprang up simultaneously in England, America and France. The real turning point was in England in the 1780s, led by several New Churchmen. Over the course of the 19th century slavery – virtually unchallenged before 1757 – was abolished in the western world.

What happened to force this change? “Prior to the Last Judgment ‘much of the communication between heaven and the world . . . was intercepted’ (*Continuation of the Last Judgment* 8) which resulted in people losing the ability to both recognize and distinguish between truth and falsity and freely choose between good and evil. By means of the Last Judgment, the equilibrium between heaven and hell was restored, clearing the air, as it were, for the Lord’s influx to again flow freely into the world and restore men’s freedom.” People again could be enlightened and reformed.

Brian adds: “One of the important effects of the Last Judgment was that the evils present in the world, such as slavery, could be more easily recognized and that people could freely choose what was true and good. Swedenborg tells us that the Last Judgment brought one era to an end and allowed a new era to begin.” Within 30 years “a society was organized in England for the express purpose of eliminating slavery. Within a century slavery had been legally abolished throughout the western world.”

Brian's paper includes a lengthy section on "The Swedenborgian Influence on the British Antislavery Movement," which may have rippled through America as well. That does not let the New Church leaders who disappointed Chris Barber off the hook, but the overall effect was positive.

Brian's conclusion is important: "As we recognize the 250th anniversary of the Last Judgment in the spiritual world, it is important to inquire and reflect on the many changes that have occurred, and do occur, as the result of the Lord's influx being able to flow uninhibited into the natural world, restoring our free ability to distinguish and choose between good and evil.

"Almost immediately after the Last Judgment, dedicated individuals suddenly began to recognize that the evil of slavery, an evil that had remained virtually unchallenged most of its history, was not immovable. And so they worked tirelessly to bring it to an end. The second half of the 18th century marked a critical shift from individual antislavery thought to organized group antislavery action, and ultimately to the legal abolition of slavery.

"While New Church men and women cannot claim to have started the antislavery movement, there were individuals . . . who were inspired by the Writings of Swedenborg and played a critical role in the antislavery movement."

Those individuals have an honored place in history. But let's also be grateful for the influences of the Last Judgment and the Lord's providence.

(BMH)

THE MOMENT CONTINUES

In his paper on *The Last Judgment, Swedenborg and the Antislavery Movement*, Brian Henderson suggests: "There is important research to be done by New Church scholars to continue to discover the vital role that the Writings played in inspiring men and women to take up the fight against slavery in England, in the United States, and elsewhere in the world."

Chris Barber's extensive research into the experience of his ancestors with slavery and his disappointment with the passivity of New Church ministers and leaders at that time is just one example of such research. There is more.

The Rev. Dr. James F. Lawrence, a member of the Swedenborg Foundation Board of Directors and Dean of the Center for Swedenborgian Studies in Berkeley, California, has his own contribution: *A World Apart: The American Antislavery Issue*.

The Foundation promotes his essay as "the fruit of a year-and-a-half of research in the 25,000-item research collection of the North American Swedenborgian Church. In the 19th century pamphlets, tracts, serial periodicals, sermons, reports and personal correspondence a story is slowly uncovered revealing what Swedenborgians thought, said and did regarding the

appalling slavery tragedy. A saga rich with both courage and shame it is well worth reading and understanding.”

The Swedenborg Foundation also has published a book: *The Moment is Now: Carl Bernhard Wadström’s Revolutionary Voice on Human Trafficking and the Abolition of the American Slave Trade*. This is part of the Swedenborgian Studies scholarly series, edited by Anders Hallengren.

Hallengren is a former Harvard history fellow and past vice president and president of the Swedenborg Society in London, England. He has published several books on Swedenborgian thought, and is renowned for his Nobel essay: *Nelson Mandela and the Rainbow of Culture*.

Wadström was a contemporary of Swedenborg – a scientist who also served on Sweden’s prestigious Board of Mines. In 1787 he was commissioned by the king of Sweden to lead an expedition to West Africa to assess the possibility of establishing a Swedish colony there. (No Swedish colony was established, but the New Church is thriving there.) Once he arrived, Wadström was so horrified by the slave trade that he devoted the rest of his life to ending it.

His life and legacy were explored in an international conference on Human Rights and the Abolition of Slavery held in London in 2015. The book is a distillation of that conference.

The moment is now – and the moment continues.

(BMH)

INNER VISION

*It is not wisdom to be only wise
And on the inward vision close the eyes.*
–George Santayana

In His first coming, the Lord healed people’s blindness, miraculously illustrating His power to restore people’s sight of spiritual truth and the beauty of heaven, which was His ultimate goal.

Helen Keller understood this well. She lost her sight as a young child, and never regained it, but that loss did not prevent her from having a strong inner vision of the Lord and His kingdom. In fact, her faith grew and became perhaps even greater than if she had regained her natural sight. She considered herself more blessed than some who could see what she could not see in the world outside her, but who could not see what she did see inwardly.

As useful and delightful as natural vision is, its full use and delight is unrealized without spiritual sight, that is, the kind of understanding the light of heaven, which is truth, gives. Sight without insight is incomplete.

Are the things seen with the eye of faith delusions, as some would say,

or is the failure to see them due to a kind of blindness? Who is worse off: someone with perfect vision, but who views human beings as only a species of animal, or someone who has lost her sight but who clearly perceives that human beings are created in the image of God?

Outer sight or the absence of it is easily demonstrated, but the only certain proof of inner sight is the experience itself. As the blind man healed by the Lord said to those who doubted his claim: "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." (*John 9:25*)

In the teachings of the New Church, the Lord has revealed plainly and in great detail the inner reality that people have always glimpsed and yearned to see more clearly. It was these teachings that gave Helen Keller sight of the inner beauty of creation, which, as she testified, surpassed its outer beauty that she could no longer see.

(WEO)

ENGRAVED UPON THE HEART

The more the Lord's kingdom is formed within us, the easier it will be for us to have an inward vision of it. The many distractions of life in this world make it difficult to be aware of the heaven within, but the more we meditate upon the Word of God the more likely it is that it will become apparent to us. "Seek and you shall find."

The kingdom of heaven is implanted within us gradually as the thoughts and feelings that oppose it are removed. "Precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little, there a little." (*Isaiah 28:10*)

One of the features of the Lord's Word is how *repetitive* it is. We see this in the Old Testament, the New Testament, and in the Heavenly Doctrine. Each new revelation is built upon the one before, revealing the ancient truth more deeply, more fully, more clearly.

This is why making church attendance *habitual* is so important. Yes, you'll hear the same truths over and over and over again — that's the point. In this way they are impressed ever more deeply upon the mind and can become part of your very being.

The Lord's Law – the order of heavenly life – is not just "written on the heart," it is engraved upon it. And as that process progresses, we become more and more immune to making for ourselves a graven image of some imaginary god to worship.

(WEO)

JUDGE NOT?

Sometimes it's a challenge to appraise historical figures who mix virtue with vice. Such was Benjamin Franklin, diplomat, author, inventor and key to the founding of the United States as a constitutional republic. Some see him as a hero – a man skilled in the art of compromise that was so fundamental to establishing an independent nation. He was optimistic, genial and kind, champion of the working and middle class, and committed to living a useful life. But he was not faithful to his wife or all the maxims he espoused. We need to be honest about him. But he's also an example of why we are commanded to "judge not" and to look for the good in people, not only their failings.

A fascinating and highly readable biography by Walter Isaacson – *Benjamin Franklin: An American Life* – captures the complexities of the man. It's an admiring but honest portrayal.

Isaacson introduces Franklin as "the founding father who winks at us . . . made of flesh rather than marble." But while he enjoyed the vicissitudes of life – more than say the buttoned-up John Adams – his core beliefs focused on a good and useful life.

He was one of many prominent men of his age familiar with Swedenborg. And while we cannot know how much he was influenced by what he read, there are encouraging signs.

Isaacson says Franklin's morality "was built on a sincere belief in leading a virtuous life, serving the country he loved, and hoping to achieve salvation through good works. That led him to make the link between private virtue and civic virtue, and to suspect, based on the meager evidence he could muster about God's will, that these earthly virtues were linked to heavenly ones as well. As he put it in the motto for the library he founded, "To pour forth benefits for the common good is divine."

Isaacson suggests: "Whatever view one takes, it is useful to engage anew with Franklin, for in doing so we are grappling with a fundamental issue: How does one live a life that is useful, virtuous, worthy, moral and spiritually meaningful? For that matter, which of these attributes is most important? These are questions just as vital for a self-satisfied age as they were for a revolutionary one." Indeed.

Although Franklin never joined a church "he decided that religious practices were beneficial because they encouraged good behavior and a moral society. So he began to embrace a morally fortified brand of deism that held God was best served by doing good works and helping other people. It was a philosophy that led him to denounce much of the doctrine of the Puritans and other Calvinists, who preached that salvation came through God's grace alone and could not be earned by doing good deeds."

He was “a prophet of tolerance” and believed “the purpose of religion should be to make men better and to improve society, and any sect or creed that did so was fine by him.”

On providence: Franklin “admitted that many find it contradictory to believe both that God is infinitely powerful and that men have free will . . . But if God is indeed all powerful, Franklin reasoned, He surely is able to find a way to give the creatures He made in His image some of His free will.”

On the life of charity Franklin said: “I have more dependence on works than faith.” And: “I think vital religion has always suffered when orthodoxy is more regarded than virtue. And the Scripture assures me that at the last day we shall not be examined by what we *thought* but what we did – that we *did* good to our fellow creatures.”

On faith alone: “Faith is recommended as a means of producing morality. That from such faith alone salvation may be expected appears to me to be neither a Christian doctrine nor a reasonable one.”

On his vision for education: A new academy he proposed, “should not train scholars merely to glorify God or to seek learning for its own sake. Instead what we should be cultivating is an inclination joined with an ability to serve mankind, one’s country, friends and family. (This) should be the great aim and end of all learning.”

Also: “I believe in one God, Creator of the Universe. That He governs it by His Providence. That He ought to be worshipped. That the most acceptable service we render to Him is doing good to His other children.”

Benjamin Franklin was the patriarch of the Founding Fathers. He was not known to pray publicly or attend church, “Yet he thought it useful to remind this assembly of demigods that they were in the presence of a God far greater, and that history was watching as well.”

His most enduring quote is from the Constitutional Convention: “With the convention groping as it were to find political truth, how has it happened that we have not hitherto once thought of applying to the Father of lights to illuminate our understanding?” Then he added, in a passage destined to be his legacy: “The longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth – that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid?”

So what are we to make of Benjamin Franklin all these years later? A certain amount of judgment is necessary in assessing character, especially in public figures, as long as we are not judging spiritual states. But we should also keep in mind the “blindness” of the Lord and His angels to people’s faults and failures and looking to the good in everyone.

Fred Rogers – the beloved Mr. Rogers, television’s mentor for children – said it well: “I believe that appreciation is a holy thing – that when we look

for what's best in a person we happen to be with at the moment, we're doing what God does all the time. So in loving and appreciating our neighbor, we're participating in something sacred."

(BMH)

INQUIRING MINDS

One thing we can all agree on about Benjamin Franklin: he was a life-long learner with an insatiable curiosity. Like Leonardo da Vinci. And Emanuel Swedenborg.

Franklin famously discovered electricity with a kite in a thunder storm, invented bifocals, the lightning rod, the Franklin stove and swim fins. As a scientist Swedenborg was far ahead of his time with a prototype "flying machine" and submarine, a hearing aid and fire extinguisher, and how the body's circulatory system worked. And his insatiable need to know extended into his spiritual experiences.

He often mentions strange sights and sounds in the spiritual world, or seeing angels or spirits engaged in discussion, and drawing near because he wanted to know what was meant by these phenomena or what the spirits were talking about. Thus his knowledge of the spiritual world was enriched. And, consequently, so are we.

He called himself simply a "servant of the Lord." But his observations, thoughts and questions were his own, driven by his inquiring mind. He was intensely interested not only in what was happening around him but what it all meant. His search was not motivated by simple curiosity but in discovering and understanding spiritual truth. This is all part of what made him uniquely qualified for this calling.

We are blessed with the fruit of all this inquiry – the spiritual truth revealed by the Lord through Swedenborg to lead our lives. But we have to develop our own interest in learning to really hear this truth and apply it in our lives. The more indifferent we are, the less we hear and the less we benefit.

The Lord is always speaking to us in His Word. Sermons and classes expound on the teachings. But we can only hear what is being said to us if we also bring our own inquiring mind.

(BMH)

IS HEAVEN "INCLUSIVE?"

Yes and no. Yes, because Divine love is the very life of heaven, and that love seeks to draw everyone to it. The angels rejoice over every lost sheep that is found, every prodigal son that returns, every sinner that repents. There is a place in heaven for every person. In that sense, heaven is inclusive of all.

But the very love that makes heaven inclusive makes it exclusive of any influences which are opposed to that love and which would destroy the good and true and useful things that make it heaven.

It's not just that the angels turn away from evil, which of course they do, but that hell excludes the things that make heaven. We are told, for instance, that there is no place in heaven for polygamy – because "the love of a married couple is a heavenly love, which cannot exist except between two persons; and association with more than one wife excludes the heavenly element in that love." (*Continuation of the Last Judgment* 72)

In the spiritual world people sort themselves out and form communities with those of a similar disposition. It's the same in this world, but the outcome is not as clear cut and settled because in this world we are all in the process of choosing between heaven and hell, and subject to influences from both.

The church on earth is not heaven, but it exists to bring the life of heaven into the world, as much as possible. Those who may be further along in the process of regeneration should be aware of how imperfect they still are, and thus feel compassion toward others who are struggling with their own spiritual infirmities.

If we have received something of the joy of heaven in our lives, we should know it was not through any merit of our own but a gift from the Lord, and wish to share it with others – if only they truly want to join a community dedicated to the worship and way of life that makes that joy possible.

The gates of the New Jerusalem are always open, "but there shall by no means enter into it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life." (*Revelation* 21:27) Let us all pray that we will be among them.

(WEO)

GEORGE WILL'S ATHEISM

It came as a bit of a shock to learn that George Will is an atheist. I have read and admired his columns for many years, and never realized that. His new book, *The Conservative Sensibility*, has a chapter on "conservatism without theism," something which, as I understand conservatism, is impossible. I agree with this comment from a review of the book I read:

"Mr. Will's conclusion, that an outlook bereft of God lends itself easily to a conservative sensibility, leaves me unconvinced. No form of conservatism can thrive long without recourse to a morality stemming from outside the sphere of nature and experience. If man came from the unknown mists and writes his own moral rules, he can be counted on to ignore whatever limits we may tell him circumscribe his nature."

But then at the end of the column, the reviewer, Barton Swaim, noted something that made him "wonder if Mr. Will's conviction on this point is less than rock-solid" – namely his "remarkable acknowledgment" that: "There is a human impulse, so powerful and ubiquitous as to be properly termed natural, to postulate intentionality – mind – behind anything beautiful."

Theism has its paradoxes to deal with, but so does atheism. And what a strange paradox George Will's observation reveals. Human beings – entirely *natural* creatures, allegedly – nevertheless have an impulse to ascribe something *supernatural* – namely mind, purpose and intelligence – to the beauty they see in creation. It's natural for human beings to believe in, look for, and discern the supernatural!

But the paradox vanishes if, in fact, human nature is more than natural, and if the material world does indeed stem from, contain and represent a spiritual world. That truth has been perceived throughout the ages and lies at the heart of the perennial wisdom of mankind.

And what is it that impresses this truth upon our minds? It is beauty – "anything beautiful," as George Will wrote – that mysterious, transcendent, ineffable something that's hard to define, but the presence of which is perceived and can't be denied.

Speaking of the perennial wisdom of mankind, here is a quotation from Augustine's *The City of God*, with which the Rev. Dr. Reuben P. Bell begins his new book on *Intelligent Default*:

Plotinus the Platonist proves by means of the blossoms and leaves that from the Supreme God, whose beauty is invisible and ineffable, Providence reaches down to the things of earth here below. He points out that these frail and mortal objects could not be endowed with a beauty so immaculate and so exquisitely wrought, did they not issue from the Divinity which endlessly pervades all things with its invisible and unchanging beauty."

(WEO)

THE FREEDOM FROM RELIGION FOUNDATION

Along with the tantalizing stream of commercials for new prescription drugs and their wonderful side effects, perhaps you've seen the ad on television for the Freedom From Religion Foundation.

In the ad, Harvard Professor Stephen Pinker, "one of the world's premier intellectuals," says: "The world has become a better place as reason has been overcoming superstition and tribalism. But the values of the Enlightenment are under attack. Please join me in supporting the Freedom From Religion Foundation to ensure that our government is driven not by religion, but by reason."

A spokesperson expresses hope that the organization's campaign "prompts

secular Americans of all stripes to join FFRF at a critical time, as religious zealots are occupying our highest offices and courts.”

I was relieved to hear that superstition and tribalism are giving way to reason, since I had just watched the evening news and that wasn't the impression I had gotten. On the other hand, it was alarming to learn that religious zealots are occupying our highest offices and courts. Not sure who these may be, but I guess it's obvious that a surfeit of religion is what's destroying civilization. Good to know the FFRF is working to remedy the problem,

As for the values of the Enlightenment, they're a mixed bag. If the ones that culminated in the French Revolution's Reign of Terror are encountering resistance, well, I think we'll survive. I am happy, though, that the Enlightenment's scruple against believing something just because it was announced by some authority – one of the world's premier intellectuals, for instance – is still in effect.

(WEO)

SAVING GRACE

A recent trip to the Berkshires in western Massachusetts included a visit to the Norman Rockwell Museum in Stockbridge. It's no wonder Rockwell loved this bucolic region of New England. It's the perfect backdrop for his iconic portraits of Americana – all those *Saturday Evening Post* covers of the 1950s and '60s that mirrored the values of the era.

My mother kept a scrapbook of these covers and Rockwell's illustrations have been treasured by fans who saw in them the kind, decent, hard-working citizens who represent the heartland of America. In these slices of ordinary life Rockwell found meaning. He captured in them a spirit of optimism, hope, contentment. Yes, this was how it was and how life should be.

There was, of course, a counterpoint to the Mom-and-apple-pie simplicity that exploded in the '60s. For all the traditional values that sustained us there were festering issues that still plague and divide us. But judging from crowds of another era drawn to Rockwell's vision it still resonates. The values are enduring. So is the hope.

Everyone has favorites among the Rockwell collection: the classic *Four Freedoms* (Speech, Worship, from Want and from Fear); the



Homecoming GI; *The Gossips*; the young man waiting with his Dad for a bus to go off to college (*Breaking Home Ties*); *The Runaway* (a tiny boy at a lunch counter with a hefty policeman); and *Easter Morning* (a guilty looking man in pajamas hiding behind his newspaper as his well-dressed family heads off to church). You probably have your own.

But the illustration voted the all-time Rockwell favorite is *Saying Grace* – a grandmother and grandson pausing to say grace and thank God for their simple meal in a simple restaurant as curious table partners look on. There is great power in this simple portrayal of faith.

Are we likely to see such a scene play out today? Would people still vote for this as their all-time Norman Rockwell favorite?

Let us pray.

(BMH)

SAVING FAITH

A recent article in *The Wall Street Journal*, “Where Did All the Faith Go?” laments the loss of religion in the lives of our young people and what that portends for our future. Faith began to fade, the article claims, when God and church were banished from public schools in the United States almost 60 years ago – and subsequently from the public square. Religion has been receding ever since from our lives, our culture, our consciousness.

Beyond the public schools, most of the oldest and most revered colleges and universities in the country have long since abandoned their church affiliations and religious convictions. They are progressively “woke” and humanistic but spiritually asleep and adrift.

But across from this sad divide there is hope. Ever since the Academy of the New Church began offering its Summer Camp to rising eighth and ninth graders decades ago the religious focus has been central – and very popular. This year’s attendees continued the enthusiasm and rated religion – again – as a favorite part of camp.

One mom proudly told a friend that her son went to the Tools 4 Life Camp for older students without a strong personal religious conviction. He came home bursting with news: his life had been transformed; the camp had changed his life. “I wasn’t sure about God before I went,” he confessed. “Now there is no doubt!”

So, “Where did all the faith go?” Well, it isn’t all gone. There is hope.

(BMH)



ADVANCEMENT

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"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Matthew 6:21



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