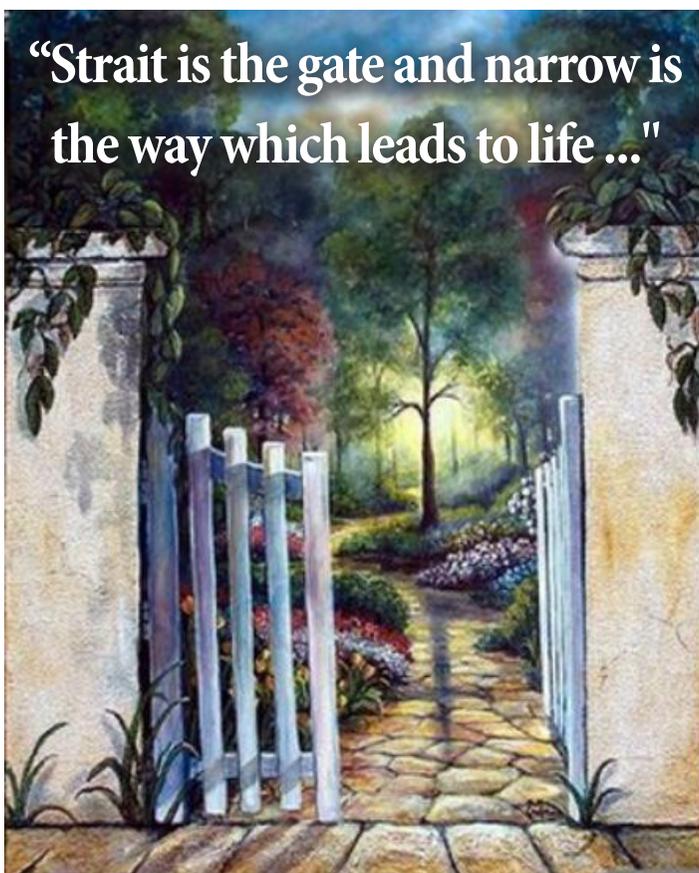


NEW CHURCH *Life*

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

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2021



In the first of a three-part series on Church Growth, the Rev. Michael Gladish ponders how this familiar teaching about the strait gate and the few who find it relates to the challenge of growing the New Church. (Page 18)

NEW CHURCH LIFE (USPS 378-180)

PUBLISHED BIMONTHLY BY

THE GENERAL CHURCH OF THE NEW JERUSALEM

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Postmaster: Send address changes to: New Church Life, PO Box 708, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009 or e-mail:
datacenter@anc-gc.org

New Church Life

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

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In This Issue

Editorials (page 4) include:

- *The Previous Year is Under Further Review* – Tempting as it may be to “throw a penalty flag” at 2020, overturn this dismal year with a “review” and start over, we can look back with a simple question: what does the Lord want us to learn from all this? There are always lessons to be learned from our trials, temptations and challenges that can actually make us grateful and better people for the experience.
- *The Principle of Vaccines* – The coronavirus vaccine we’ve all been waiting for also illustrates a spiritual principle about “the evil forms of use” – how the Lord can use evil to combat other evils. The principle is actually one that is used universally in education to help children “meet challenges and overcome problems in life by simulating them in safe settings.”

Bryn Athyn College 2020 graduates finally got the graduation in November they had been promised when the May ceremony was cancelled by COVID-19. Former Dean and history professor Brian Henderson recognized their own trials during this challenging year, drawing on his own experiences for *The Lessons of Adversity*. He asked them to remember “that challenges merely provide an opportunity to see new paths forward not previously seen.” And to remember that “you don’t face these challenges and uncertainties unequipped nor alone.” (Page 12)

The Rev. Michael Gladish launches the first of three sermons on Church Growth with *Where it Starts*. We may be discouraged with our slow growth but: “Only the Lord can grow His Church. And He will do so just insofar as the falsities of the former church are removed from our lives and the new heaven grows in strength and numbers as a result of our commitment to Him.” (Page 18)

Growing the New Church means staying true to its doctrine and what the Church stands for. In a sermon on *The Essentials of the New Church* the Rt. Rev. David Lindrooth says two characteristics – “that the Lord is God of heaven

and earth, whose humanity is Divine” and that those “are conjoined to Him by a life according to the Ten Commandments” are the “two witnesses” of what it means to be truly “New Church.” (Page 24)

In a message “From the Bishop’s Office,” the Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr. says that turning to the threefold-Word “as the source and foundation of all that we do” is a core value of the General Church – and should be a core value in our own lives as well. “If we are to remain a ‘house founded on the rock,’” he says, “then everything that we do will be evaluated against the teachings of the Word, every new thing we consider doing will be researched in the Word, and everything we teach will be seen to come from the Word.” (Page 29)

The Memorial Service for the Rev. Frank S. Rose – viewed by more than 750 people around the world – was as unique as he was in his ministry. Friends and family members contributed tributes and memories, including original songs and a slide show. The Rev. Nathan Gladish, pastor of the Sunrise Chapel in Tucson, Arizona, where Frank served for many years, thanked the Lord “for the gift of Frank Rose . . . with such love and wisdom and productivity that has enriched us all. Thank You for the many connections he initiated that remain a part of his legacy, a part of our lives, woven together with love.” (Page 32. See photos on page 84 and Life Line tributes on page 85.)

The current General Church Journey Program focuses on the story of Joseph and its lessons about *Resilience*. The Rev. John Odhner preached a sermon at the conclusion of the series on *Blessing Others* – about the lessons we can learn from hardships that help us to be more compassionate, grateful and useful to others. (Page 45)

With the birthday of Emanuel Swedenborg on January 29 we celebrate his spiritual calling. But in an article – *Seeking Greater Engagement: Swedenborg’s Efforts to Find an Audience* – the Swedenborg Foundation’s Alexis Vega-Singer and the Rev. Dr. Jonathan S. Rose tell of his frustration in getting people to pay attention to this new revelation. He learned he could not just publish anonymously and hope for the best but “finally found a combination of publishing and public engagement which ensured that the conversation he had hoped to begin was underway.” (Page 52)

The Rev. Jeremy Simons asks, *Is It Safe to Speak with Spirits?* He notes that: “The enormous popularity of the wonderful *offTheLeftEye* YouTube channel, and its fascinating explanations of what the Heavenly Doctrine teaches about the spiritual world, have aroused new interest in our relationship with that world.” He cautions: “We are all surrounded by angels and spirits, and they play an enormous role in our lives. But they are no more aware of us than we are of them, and direct contact with them holds no advantage for us.” (Page 57)

February in the United States includes the observance of Presidents' Day and Erik Martin offers a stirring tribute to the faith of the Founding Fathers in *Perspectives on Providence*. (Page 74)

Church News includes:

- Latest news on pastoral moves
- Highlights from the delayed Bryn Athyn College commencement with a list of the graduates
- A report on the Church in Asia, coping with the extraordinary challenges of this pandemic year
- Continued growth of the New Christian Bible Study website
- Theta Alpha scholarships
- The Washington New Church School is seeking students with inquiring minds for a new White Horse Academy
- Plans for a one-day Boynton Beach Retreat

Editorials

THE PREVIOUS YEAR IS UNDER FURTHER REVIEW

Amid all the wishes for a happy new year on January 1 was a heartfelt “good riddance” to 2020. From the COVID-19 pandemic that upended – and ended – lives all over the world to an undercurrent of violence, hostility and division, it was a trying year. But we can’t just call for a review, overturn a penalty, and start over.

C.S. Lewis, who evolved from bitter atheist to one of the noblest champions of Christianity in the mid-20th century, observed: “God allows us to experience the low points of life in order to teach us lessons that we could learn in no other way.”

When we experience those low points – from personal to global – we are challenged to learn from them as part of our spiritual growth and regeneration. It is always good to ask ourselves: what is the Lord trying to teach us here?

As usual, the Word abounds with lessons. The current General Church Journey Campaign focuses on the story of Joseph and his brothers to teach us about resilience. Resilience is all about coping with the stresses and challenges of life and emerging all the better from the tests. Joseph is the perfect illustration: sold into slavery by his jealous brothers, thrown into prison for a crime he did not commit, but maintaining trust in the Lord, gaining the favor of the Pharaoh, and rising to second-in-command in all of Egypt. When he was finally reconciled with his brothers many years later, he was able to say to them: “You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good.” He had learned the lesson because he kept the faith.

In a sermon concluding the series in Bryn Athyn this past fall (page 45) the Rev. John Odhner says: “Resilience comes from trusting the Lord and staying connected with Him.” Joseph could have given up in despair. He was abandoned, victimized, left without hope. But he triumphed because he was resilient, with an unwavering trust in the Lord. That’s the lesson we are all challenged to learn – sometimes over and over.

Brian Henderson, former history professor at Bryn Athyn College, now Director of Glencairn Museum, had a powerful message about *The Lessons of Adversity* for the College’s 2020 graduates at their delayed commencement in

November. It's really a lesson for all of us who have lived through the trials of the past year. (See page 12 for Brian's address.) "The hard reality," he said, is that "despite our hopes and plans, life will continue to present moments of uncertainty – moments when all that we expected and planned for are challenged."

He offered his own example. Two years ago he woke up with a fever and thought he had the flu. Within days he was paralyzed from the chest down and faced the prospect of living the rest of his life in a wheelchair. A lot of hard work and dedicated support restored him to near normalcy and he is walking again. He does not look back on all of this as a bitter victim, but says amazingly: "I can with all confidence say that I am grateful for this experience" – for the love and kindness shown to him and his family and for the lessons he learned that "allowed me to grow and hopefully to become a better person."

This is remarkable but not uncommon. Many people in dire circumstances – tortured in prison, tormented by illness, scarred by accidents – have come through their trials with a surprisingly similar sense of gratitude and a spiritual sense of meaning in their experience.

The story of Jacob fleeing Esau after stealing his birthright is a familiar example. Jacob was afraid for his life. When he slept in the wilderness he dreamed of angels ascending and descending a ladder between heaven and earth, and he heard the voice of the Lord, saying: "Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go." That is a promise for all of us as we face our own challenges. And we can come to that same sense of gratitude if we awaken to Jacob's realization: "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it."

Another powerful example from more recent times is Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, the great Russian writer who exposed the horrors of communism through his own dehumanizing experience in *The Gulag Archipelago*. He felt he was able to endure so much suffering because: "It was only when I lay there on rotting prison straw that I sensed within myself the first stirring of good." In that stark exposure to evil he could nourish his soul at last and say without hesitation: "Bless you prison, for having been in my life!"

Solzhenitsyn also had some powerful words when accepting an award in Philadelphia in 1983. Much of his life was consumed with studying what had gone wrong with his country – how "a ruinous revolution swallowed up 60 million of our people" and destroyed the hopes of his fellow citizens. He could only conclude: "Men have forgotten God. That is why all this has happened." Just look around us – at all the people who have "forgotten God" and would lead us astray – and to all those who find God in the depths of their despair and discover hope.

The Lord always offers hope – that in the midst of the trials and temptations

of our regeneration, “My yoke is easy and My burden light.”

Consider the children of Israel, wandering in the wilderness for 40 years and losing hope of ever finding their promised land. When they neared the end of their journey, Moses reminded them – and reminds us: “Remember the long way that the Lord your God has led you these 40 years in the wilderness, in order to humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep His commandments.” (*Deuteronomy* 8:2)

Men were sent to spy out this new land “flowing with milk and honey.” Some saw giants and were afraid. Joshua and Caleb saw opportunity and went forward. They believed the Lord’s promise that He would deliver them. They looked back at all they had been through and found the blessings that come from trusting the Lord and following Him.

Brian Henderson had a final lesson for the Bryn Athyn College graduates that resonates with all of us as well: “Remember that challenges merely provide an opportunity to see new paths forward not previously seen. And remember that you don’t face these challenges and uncertainties unequipped nor alone. Look within yourself for the foundation that you have established here, draw upon the strength and support of your community, and allow yourself to be transformed and to see that new path forward.”

We cannot just “throw a flag” and overturn a bad year, a bad experience, but we can subject it all “to further review,” grow from it and give ourselves another chance. The lessons we are asked to learn through adversity can be transformative, helping us to become better people to our neighbors: humility, kindness, forgiveness, love, patience, gratitude, non-judging, acceptance, resilience, giving up control, looking for the good in others, seeking the Lord and trusting in Him.

Peace has within it confidence in the Lord, that He directs all things, and provides all things, and that He leads to a good end. When we believe these things about Him we are at peace, since we fear nothing, and no anxiety about things to come disturbs us. How far we attain this state depends on how far we come to love the Lord. (*Arcana Coelestia* 8455)

(BMH)

THE PRINCIPLE OF VACCINES

The coronavirus vaccine that has been anticipated worldwide since the spring of 2020 is an illustration of a fascinating spiritual principle.

We are told that the Lord did not create evil, but that evil came about through humanity’s misuse of free will. (*Divine Love and Wisdom* 264) Similarly, diseases and other harmful things did not exist from creation, but came about through an influx from hell, once hell came into being. (*Arcana Coelestia* 5711)

The fascinating spiritual principle is that once evil comes into existence

it can be of service to combat other evils. One aspect of this is what are called “evil forms of use”:

We call things that are harmful to mankind forms of use because they are of use to evil people in doing evil, and **for the reason also that they are helpful for absorbing malignancies, and so also as remedies.** (*Divine Love and Wisdom* 336 – Rogers)

The idea that evil is useful in combatting evil may not seem to be that helpful, since two wrongs do not make a right. Still, violence is sometimes necessary to quell violence, and cunning to combat cunning. The use of snake venom in creating antivenin is an amazing example of what is possible. The principle is nowhere more clearly seen than in the development of vaccines.

A vaccine typically contains an agent that resembles a disease-causing microorganism and is often made from weakened or killed forms of the microbe, its toxins, or one of its surface proteins. The agent stimulates the body’s immune system to recognize the agent as a threat, destroy it, and to further recognize and destroy any of the microorganisms associated with that agent that it may encounter in the future. (*Wikipedia*)

As we see from the variety of different coronavirus vaccines that have been developed, the immune response can be stimulated in different ways, but all of them have in common the fact that they enable the body to recognize the disease-causing agent.

The principle here is one that is universally used in education, which is that we ready children to meet challenges and overcome problems in life by simulating them in safe settings. Religious education, such as New Church education, works in the same way. The presentation of the challenges associated with our weaknesses and evil is a key part of it, as the Rev. James Cooper explained in 1986:

To the people who created New Church education our New Church schools were an obvious application of teachings found throughout the Heavenly Doctrines. It was like discovering a cure for a crippling childhood disease. It is not necessarily of direct benefit to adults, but would you knowingly withhold it from your children? Adults did not need the polio vaccine for themselves, but because adults saw to it that their children were vaccinated, we have essentially eliminated that disease in the past 30 years.” (*New Church Education*, by Rev. James P. Cooper, *New Church Life* 1986)

Just as effective vaccines are hard to produce, it is not easy to educate new generations in ways that adequately prepare them for their roles in life. It is even harder to teach them to see and appreciate the miracle of the New Church in a world where it is a minority view. The effectiveness will necessarily vary.

I am moved by the efforts of so many people to mitigate the coronavirus pandemic by the skillful use of this universal principle. It shows what is possible when people unite in a cause, even against a truly global pandemic.

(JFS)

Letters to the Editors

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

A Train of Benefits

To The Editors:

Many thanks to the Rt. Rev. David H. Lindrooth for his insightful article – *Who Does the Lord Invite to Participate in the New Church? And Why Does He Invite Them?* (*New Church Life*, September/October 2020). He shows the advantages and usefulness that people from different cultures, backgrounds and interests bring to the New Church. Also, as he says, the variations in wisdom and insight of these people can help all of us on our paths to our eternal homes.

Arcana Coelestia 4222 adds an interesting aspect for me:

As regards the correspondence of the Grand Man with the things that are applicable to a person, it is a correspondence with all . . . a person's organs, members and viscera, and this so perfect that there is not a single organ or member in the body, nor any part in an organ or member, nor even any particle of a part, with which there is not correspondence. . . . All these things both in general and in particular correspond most exactly to the Grand Man, and to so many heavens, as it were, therein. For the heaven of the Lord is distinguished in like manner into lesser heavens, and these into heavens still less, and these into least, and finally into angels, each one of whom is a little heaven corresponding to the greatest. These heavens are quite distinct from one another, each one belonging to its own general heaven, and the general heavens to the most general, or whole, which is the Grand Man.

Number 4223 says that the heavens mentioned in 4222 correspond "chiefly to the functions of these viscera or organs."

So each body particle is distinct but contributes to an organ or member and thence to the whole human body; likewise, each distinct angel contributes to a distinct series of heavens, and so contributes to the Grand Man. As I see it, each person who is interested in and lives according to the New Church truths is distinct from any other New Church person, each person contributing his or her unique understanding to the whole New Church.

It is encouraging to know of the interest in the teachings of the New Church shown by people of different cultures. Each of these people will enrich the Church with different wisdom and insights for the benefit of new pockets of interest, of church communities, of the General Church, of the New Church as a whole and, by correspondence, will also benefit the heavens and the Grand Man. For me, it is mind-blowing to think of the train of benefit that a single person in the New Church, culturally new or from a traditional background, can bring, starting from just one individual, to the Church, to the multiple heavens, and to the Grand Man.

For a long time I have been interested in *Arcana Coelestia* 4222 and what is said about the correspondences of parts of the body from particles of a part to a whole human body, and from a single angel through multiple heavens to the Grand Man. However, before reading David's article I had not thought that the passage could also apply to individual members of the New Church and to the contributions of people from different cultures. I believe this article is very important for the General Church when the organization and individuals need to open doors and hearts to different cultures.

Heulwen M. Ridgway
Canberra, Australia

Clarity of the Holy Supper

To The Editors:

Please pass on to the Rev. Kurt P. Nemitz my appreciation for his letter in the September/October 2020 *New Church Life*, "The Substances Matter in the Holy Supper."

I'm a convert to the New Church, having been raised in the Baptist faith, then leaving all churches in my mid-20s.

In my mid-30s, I discovered the Compendium of Swedenborg's Writings in a tiny library in Junction City, Oregon. My access to an understanding of Swedenborg has been a mostly solitary journey although I enjoyed a connection to a community in Corbett, Oregon, when I lived in that area years ago.

My gratitude for Rev. Nemitz's letter springs from the fact that I've endured years of confused thinking regarding the Holy Supper. The beliefs embraced in my childhood/early teens have a way of sticking in my mind, obscuring the assimilation of new understanding. I've visited a multitude of churches and witnessed an equal number of observances of Holy Supper, none of which made sense to me until I joined the New Church. To this day though, I have to

pull out my little index card where I've written the purpose of the Sacraments and the use of Holy Supper, to read over, in my effort to clear my mind of the confusion stubbornly clinging in my memory.

Rev. Nemitz's letter is another of the aids I dearly need in my ongoing desire to understand the Divine use of Holy Supper observation. I've had a feeling the use of particular substances used in this sacrament are significantly important, but it's been a vague knowing. Wonderful to receive the clarity expressed in Rev. Nemitz's letter!

I'm so thankful to receive these bimonthly issues of *New Church Life* which I add to my daily devotional time. I found the sermon by the Rev. Mark D. Pendleton, *The Roots of Racism*, deeply insightful also, among all the offerings on this subject.

Thank you for all the work you do and thank the Lord for making your work successful.

Nancy Lindman
Hoodsport, Washington

A Clarification

To The Editors:

I enjoyed reading Gregory Baker's view expressed in his letter, *The Longer View*, in the September/October 2020 *New Church Life*. He is certainly taking the longer view and I sincerely hope he is right! I am, however, a little concerned that by quoting me (*A Broader View*, March/April 2020) as the basis for his long-term view readers may get the wrong idea of what I was actually saying, as he has quoted me out of context, true though my statement was!

Mr. Baker is correct in quoting me as saying, "the human race is the seminary, basis and support of the heavens." (*Last Judgment* 10 and *Doctrine of the Holy Scripture* 34) However, that statement should not be taken to imply that I believe (as apparently do many others in the New Church, including Mr. Baker) that the human race is the only human race in the universe, nor that it would always be so, for I went on to say:

I wonder if we assume that the terms "men" (homo) and "human race" only refer to this earth and that the human race on our earth will always exist regardless of what we do . . . The truth is that the Writings make it very clear that "men" and "human race" apply to all the other earths as well as our own. We also need to remember that in *Last Judgment* 10 it is stated that the human race on one earth may perish if that race separates itself entirely from the Divine, but the human race would still continue on other earths.

Nowhere do the Writings define human race as being homo sapiens on this earth. It should, I think, also be of concern that the human race on this earth is increasingly separating itself from the Divine. The very way of life of the “western world,” to which all developing countries also aspire, is based on love of self, now being reflected in so many ways, e.g. climate change, and the way in which the COVID-19 virus is being handled, lack of a true religion, sexual immorality, and so on.

Name withheld from online publication by request
Canberra, Australia

BRYN ATHYN COLLEGE OF THE NEW CHURCH
COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS

The Lessons of Adversity

Brian D. Henderson

November 14, 2020

Introduction by President Brian Blair: I am pleased to introduce our commencement speaker, Brian Henderson. He is the Director of Glencairn Museum where he has served so admirably in building connections to the museum's precious collections with thousands of adults and children.

His enthusiasm for historical subjects and spiritual perspective is contagious. Anyone who has had the opportunity to know him has come away with a new appreciation of the subjects he has taught. His leadership and vision with Glencairn Museum have made it a highly respected institution worldwide.

Before Mr. Henderson became Director of Glencairn Museum, he served more than 20 years as an educator and administrator at Bryn Athyn College. He was a very popular history professor, administrator and head coach of the men's ice hockey team. As a teacher, his passion for history has been marked by his ability to bring it to life and make it relevant for students.

Even though he now works at Glencairn, he still finds time to lecture occasionally at Bryn Athyn College and has been a major supporter of our Building Arts program.

He holds history degrees from Penn State and Villanova Universities. He has been married for 28 years to Becky Henderson who serves as program coordinator of the Bryn Athyn College Theological School and is very proud of his daughters, Ashley and Taylor.

Graduates, let me begin by offering you a heartfelt, yet regrettably belated congratulations on your graduation. Each of us here today and those celebrating you from home are proud of you and what you have accomplished,

culminating in this, your graduation.

We all recognize that the end of your collegiate experience did not go according to plan, and that you continue to face uncertainty – living within the health risks of a global pandemic as our society wrestles with deep-seated social issues and political tensions, and that you face the adversity of a job market impacted by economic challenges.

And yet, despite these challenges within an uncertain world, here you are, having demonstrated resolve and perseverance, being recognized, honored and celebrated for what you have achieved, as you so well deserve.

There is a lesson here; one that I hope you will take forward with you.

For the hard reality is, despite our hopes and plans, life will continue to present moments of uncertainty – moments when all that we expected and planned for are challenged.

In these moments, I encourage you to look within yourself – to the foundation that you have built during your time here through the knowledges and skills gained; the new concepts and perspectives you have confronted and embraced; the spiritual values that you have committed to during your time as part of this Bryn Athyn community; and your relationship with the Lord.

There may be times, however, when the uncertainties you face seem so great, that the obstacles to your preconceived plans seem so insurmountable, that looking deep within yourself is not enough to help you see a clear path forward.

It is in those moments that I encourage you to look outside of yourself for strength and support – to the community that has invested in you these past four years: your friends, student life leaders, coaches, professors and other mentors. What you have built during your time here – both the foundation within you and the community of good, caring people that you have built – is now a part of you, to be forever taken with you as you continue to grow and move forward in your life.

As you reflect on your experience here at Bryn Athyn College, my hope is that you see this as its greatest gift – an experience that I hope has transformed you – a foundation of knowledge, skills and spiritual values; and a community

There is a lesson here;
one that I hope you will
take forward with you.
For the hard reality is,
despite our hopes and
plans, life will continue
to present moments of
uncertainty – moments
when all that we
expected and planned
for are challenged.

I am grateful for this experience (a serious health crisis) . . . and the lessons I have learned have been transformational, and have allowed me to grow and hopefully become a better person.

of lifelong friends and mentors who will forever provide the strength and support on which you can draw and who will lift you up when you face those moments of uncertainty, challenge and doubt – when life suddenly doesn't go according to plan.

I hope that you will indulge me, for just a moment, in a personal story from my recent life. When I sat where you are today, I had a plan, and was extremely blessed to have that plan unfold much as I hoped and dreamed. I married my high school and college love; we were blessed with two incredible daughters; I was fortunate

to be given the opportunity to be part of this faculty for two decades, where I was enriched by countless relationships with students like yourself, many of whom have now become dear, lifelong friends. And then I was afforded the opportunity to apply the skills and experiences I gained here as a member of this faculty to my current role as Director of Glencairn Museum; as all the while my marriage deepened and our children became young adults.

And then a little more than two years ago, I woke up with a fever. Over the course of the coming days and weeks, suddenly I thought my life's plan had shattered in the face of sudden and unexpected uncertainty. What started as a fever ultimately led to functional paralysis from the chest down. An autoimmune response to West Nile virus entering my brain and spinal cord led to my body destroying its own motor nerves – a response so uncommon that no doctor could give me a definitive answer as to my long-term prognosis, other than it was quite likely that I could be looking at life-long wheelchair dependency.

I am not embarrassed to admit that there were more days than not during those months in the hospital and after I first returned home that I lost my battle with doubt, struggling to cling to hope in the face of the uncertainty I faced as I perceived my hopes, dreams, expectations and plans to be threatened.

But as I stand here today, I can with all confidence say that I am grateful for this experience. I am grateful because the overwhelming outpouring of support from my family, loved ones, and this community; the profound kindness of physical therapists and nurses; and the lessons I have learned from them have been transformational, and have allowed me to grow and hopefully become a better person.

I often reflect on the lessons drilled into me by Maureen, my physical therapist and now friend: focus on what you can do and not on what you believe you can't; live simply, prioritizing the people, relationships and values that truly matter; be kind; find peace in the present, but never settle.

My wife Becky and I often reflect on the lifelong memories of transformational moments borne from a seemingly simple kind word or action by someone not intending to create a moment, but rather who was simply acting in kindness because that is who they are and the way they live their life.

It is this opportunity for transformation that I hope you have experienced here as part of the Bryn Athyn College community. It is the knowledge, lessons and spiritual values that you have embraced, and the enduring relationships that you have built that you will take forward, and which will be the wellspring from which you can draw the strength that can lift you up when you face those moments of uncertainty and the challenges of the unknown moving forward in your life.

I am confident that you have gained the competencies and skills necessary through your study and hard work here at Bryn Athyn College to prepare you for the exciting, successful careers you have ahead of you. But my wish is that you take a moment to reflect on just how much more you have been a part of and have gained – from your friends, classmates, teammates, coaches, professors and other mentors. Because the Bryn Athyn College experience lies deeper than the mere mastery of your chosen disciplinary course of study.

This preparation will serve you well as you move into the workforce or graduate study. But it is what lies beneath this that I hope has been transformational, preparing you not only for your chosen career, but encouraging you to be better employees, managers, significant others, spouses, parents and active citizens in your community – and will provide support and strength when you face those moments of doubt and uncertainty when your plans are altered.

I recently asked a few of your professors the “one thing” they most hoped you will take away from your disciplinary course of study here at Bryn Athyn College. Here are just a few of the answers I received:

This preparation will serve you well . . . but it is what lies beneath this that I hope has been transformational . . . and will provide support and strength when you face those moments of doubt and uncertainty when your plans are altered.

I ask you to remember that challenges merely provide an opportunity to see new paths forward not previously seen. And remember that you don't face these challenges and uncertainties unequipped nor alone.

- The ability to apply learned knowledge to solve new problems
 - To embrace the joy and delight in learning
 - To understand the countless ways language expresses shared values and inspires better selves
 - To recognize that we limit others by defining them merely by how we see them
 - To appreciate the vast variety of human experience not only across the contemporary landscape, but through history, and to thereby develop empathy
- To cultivate a meaningful, spiritual and empathetic understanding of the human condition
 - To see others as spiritual beings, each with unique gifts to offer
 - To recognize that we are each works in progress and that the Lord is working one-on-one with each of us to gently purify our hearts
 - To understand that there is a spiritual reality that transcends the appearances and cares of the natural world
 - To appreciate the power and veracity of the Lord's Word and the Teachings for the New Church in helping you to lead a life of use and happiness

These are but a few of the gifts you have received and are taking with you, along with the academic skills developed in the classroom, the life lessons learned on the playing field, the enrichment you have received from time spent with friends, and the advice you have taken away from conversations with your professors and mentors, even when you weren't quite sure what led you to knock on her or his door.

You will face challenges in your life ahead. You will face moments of doubt and uncertainty when forces beyond your control appear to threaten your plans and expectations. But I ask you to remember that challenges merely provide an opportunity to see new paths forward not previously seen. And remember that you don't face these challenges and uncertainties unequipped nor alone. Look within yourself for the foundation that you have established here, draw upon the strength and support of your community, and allow yourself to be transformed and to see that new path forward.

For as you leave Bryn Athyn, you take this – your community – with you. As Dean Closterman so eloquently said last spring at your academic achievement awards, “angelic community is not constrained or defined by physical space or natural time. Instead, it is the nature of angels’ thinking and the stirrings of their hearts that bring them close to each other and forge real and meaningful connection.” This is the meaning of community I hope you have experienced here and take with you.

And if I could leave you with four brief words of advice, words which have become so helpful to me in my recent life: live simply; be kind.

I wish you heartfelt congratulations on your achievements and on your graduation, and I wish you well in the myriad ways you will enrich the lives of others as you move forward on your journey.

Congratulations.



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Church Growth: Where it Starts

First of Three Sermons by the Rev. Michael D. Gladish

Lessons: *Genesis 17:1-9; Matthew 7:1-14; Apocalypse Revealed 547*

Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. – *Matthew 7:13-14*

We have been trying to grow the New Church for more than 200 years now, certainly not long in the face of eternity, but one might have thought, with all the billions of people in the world, we would have had greater success than has been the case. Of course, we don't know people's spiritual states, but surely New Church growth must be measured in some way by commitment to the Lord in His Second Coming, so anything short of that doesn't really count.

And the Writings do imply that the Church will grow, but they never quite say how large. The main teaching about this is in explanation of *Revelation 12*, where the woman clothed with the sun is given wings of a great eagle and flies into the wilderness to be "nourished for a time, times and half a time" from the presence of the serpent. (See vv. 6 and 14) This, we are informed, represents the New Church being preserved among a few "while provision is made for it to exist as has been provided," that is, among many more. (*Apocalypse Revealed 546*)

But it is notable that the teaching does not specify slow or rapid growth, only that "the church should at first be among a few, and that it should successively (gradually?) increase among many." And this will be so because in order for the truths of the New Church to be accepted, "the falsities of the former church must first be removed." (*Ibid. 547*)

Surely this does not only mean the falsities among other people whom we might see as potential converts. There are falsities in our own lives, too, and if we operate on false premises, we are sure to get poor results. In any case, only

the Lord can grow His Church, so our most important responsibility is to grow our faith in Him. And since there is no faith without charity, and charity wants to help people . . . well, you get the point: when we are true to our faith, the Church will grow.

In this connection there is a popular misunderstanding (uh, oh! – a falsity?) in the New Church arising out of the well-known prophecy of the dream in *Daniel 2*, involving a great image representing all the churches in the history of the world. In the dream this image was struck and smashed by a stone cut out without hands, which then “became a great mountain [rock] and filled the whole earth” (v 35).

This also, we are taught, represents the New Church, but there are two things that are critical to understand about the way it is presented here. First, the stone is not the New Church; it is the truth about the Lord Himself, the Rock upon which the Church must be founded. And second, the earth is not the natural world: it represents the Church.

Thus, the meaning of the dream is not that the New Church will grow, but that the truth of faith in the Lord will grow until it fills this New Church. (See *True Christian Religion* 788) This is not to say that the Church will not grow. It will, and more importantly “it will endure forever,” but only as the falsities of the former church are removed.

So let’s look carefully at the verses from the Sermon on the Mount where the Lord talks about the strait gate and the narrow way. Clearly this is about the life that leads to heaven or hell, and again, there is a common misunderstanding about this in the Church (uh, oh! – another falsity?), to the effect that the narrow way, the way to heaven, is difficult. But if that word appears in your version of *Matthew* it’s a mistranslation. The word really is “strait,” or as we might say, constricted. And why is it constricted? Because it’s not well trodden; it’s not the popular way, not the beaten path. (See *Heaven and Hell* 534)

When a path – particularly a path through the woods – is not well used it tends to become overgrown. And yes, this may make it difficult to find, but that’s not the point of the teaching. The point is that the path to heaven involves self-constraint, or as we say, self-discipline. We have to keep our focus on the Lord and not allow ourselves to get distracted by all the worries and allurements of the world.

Remember Peter, walking on the water in a stormy sea. He was fine until he took his eyes off the Lord and began to worry about the wind and waves. Remember, too, the Lord said: “*Come to Me*, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and *I will give you rest*. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me . . . for My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” (*Matthew* 11:28-30)

But look again at the verse about the broad and narrow ways. The Lord doesn’t say there are many who *could* or *might* go in by the wide gate and

We read that the Church exists specifically only where the Lord is known and the Word is truly understood. This is the New Church.

the broad way, but rather that there are many who *do* go in there, in contrast to the few who even *find* the strait gate and the narrow way. This is not a conditional statement, but is put forth as a simple truth, and so, presumably, applies to the New Church as well as any other.

But surely, you might say, the “many” and the “few” are words that have a spiritual meaning and are not

just to be taken literally. Well, yes. No doubt. But it is at least curious that these words are not expounded in the Writings, except to say that “many” is a word often applied to truths, because truths are multiplied without number. On the other hand, the Writings say a lot about the few people who:

- Believe in the Lord
- Believe that life flows in from the Lord
- Undergo any real temptations
- Believe that they will live after death
- Do not want to domineer and possess all things of others, or
- Are even regenerated, least of all to the celestial degree

Although some of these statements are clearly made with reference to the state of the Christian Church in decline prior to the Last Judgment, the fact is that considering the whole world’s population they all apply today just as much as they did when they were written. So what we have in the doctrine essentially is an affirmation of the Lord’s words in *Matthew*, indicating that there will always be few who find the strait gate and the narrow way, compared to the many who don’t, or who, finding it, disparage it or decline to enter into it.

In any case, all this is consistent with the teaching that the Lord’s Church exists with everyone who believes in God and shuns evils as sins against Him, however they understand Him.

Considering the spiritual equilibrium between heaven and hell, this could be about half the world’s population. (See *Heaven and Hell* 589-600, esp. 593) But narrowing it down even further, we read that the Church exists *specifically* only where the Lord is known and the Word is truly understood.

This is the New Church and it is compared to the heart and lungs in the greater body of the universal church. (See *Sacred Scripture* 105) The heart and lungs not only make up a small percentage of the whole body, either by weight

or by volume, but the general body is in serious trouble if they grow out of proportion to their proper role in that body. In short, they don't have to be big to do their work, but they do have to be healthy and strong.

Even the oft-quoted teaching in *Arcana Coelestia* 9925 about evangelization, that it “involves declaring the truth about the Lord, about His coming, and about the things of which He is the author, namely, things that belong to salvation and eternal life,” has to be understood in its proper context. That is the explanation

of the spiritual meaning of Aaron's ministry inside the tabernacle, which is translated in at least one version of the Writings as preaching the gospel. Yes, of course this can and should be done outside the Church, too, but it is noteworthy that the context of that specific teaching is within the Church. (So, are we “in the church”? Well, let's put it this way: the *Heavenly Doctrine* is our invitation: it's up to us whether we accept that invitation or not.)

But what are we getting at here? What is the Lord really telling us about evangelism and church growth?

First of all, He is not saying we shouldn't share our faith. Far from it. There are many teachings that emphasize our responsibility to share the love and wisdom we have from Him, and to share it as broadly as possible wherever there is an affirmative response. The next sermon in this series will address that process in some detail.

Meanwhile, the Lord warns us not to expect too much of others. The teachings about the slow and modest growth of the New Church are not intended to be depressing or discouraging, but to prepare us realistically for what will or won't happen when we do.

The critical point today is what we should expect of ourselves, because the real responsibility for the growth of the Church is actually within us who are – hopefully, at least to some extent – already in the Church. After all, if the heart and lungs are not healthy the whole body suffers. In fact, heaven itself suffers since we have the special role of providing a physical basis or foundation for the loves and wisdom of the angels. And by the way, remember that passage about why the growth of the Church will be slow – because the falsities of the former church have to be removed first. There is a second reason given in that same passage, namely, that the Church will grow on earth as it grows in

We don't prepare for heaven, we *are prepared*, and that preparation is done by the Lord. We can no more think our way into heaven than we can take the initiative to act our way in.

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the heavens, and that growth depends on us doing our part to be prepared for one of those heavens.

This is important, too: we don't prepare for heaven, we *are prepared*, and that preparation is done by the Lord. We can no more think our way into heaven than we can take the initiative to act our way in. The Lord Himself is the way, the truth and the life. He alone can change our loves to make us acceptable in heaven.

Our job is to take Him seriously and do what He says *because He says it*. Not because it will make us happier or more successful; not because it will

make us more worthy, or grow the Church, or even so that we can be a blessing to others; only because we are willing to turn our lives over to Him and so let Him reform and regenerate us.

This is not easy. Perhaps some of you have had the privilege of visiting or even nursing someone in his or her last days on this earth. Most people when they get to that point are really ready to go. If nothing else they just want to get it over with, to have an end of their suffering. But the body clings to life in this world and does not want to let go.

Well, it's not something we like to think about, but the truth is, it's exactly the same in every one of our spiritual lives every day. The loves of self and the world do not want to let go. They cling with all their might – and with the daily encouragement of evil spirits from hell – to a sense of entitlement, wisdom and personal virtue. They resist anything that requires real emotional, intellectual or physical sacrifice. In short, that thing we call the proprium really is a big deal, and it takes a load of discipline to bring it under control.

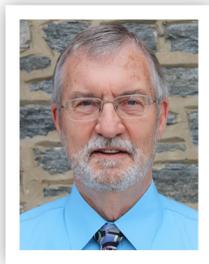
Can we do it? Can anyone do it? Well, frankly, no. We can't. But the Lord is good, and wise, and all-powerful. What is impossible for us is entirely possible for Him. So, He can break that proprium down and give us new life according to His Word if we let Him. Our job, our responsibility, is very simple: it is to focus our attention as much as possible on Him, not to worry about our own lives (what we shall eat, or what we shall drink, and what we shall put on – naturally or spiritually); in fact, not even to be concerned about whether we are really on the way to heaven or not, but rather to devote ourselves as unselfconsciously as we possibly can to learning and accepting His teachings into our working lives.

In the end, this is the only way the Church will grow. In any case it is the only aspect of church growth that is truly under our control. We can be kind and generous, we can contribute in a hundred different ways to the Church as an institution, and we can share the teachings every-where we go, but again, only the Lord can grow His Church. And He will do so just insofar as the falsities of the former church are removed from our lives and the new heaven grows in strength and numbers as a result of our commitment to Him.

Amen.

Only the Lord can grow His Church. And He will do so just insofar as the falsities of the former church are removed from our lives and the new heaven grows in strength and numbers as a result of our commitment to Him.

(Coming next in the March/April issue – Church Growth: How it Works)



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The Essentials of the New Church

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

Lessons: *Matthew*: 19:16-30; *Revelation* 11: 1-12; *True Christianity* 369

“And I will give power to My two witnesses.” (*Revelation* 11:3)

What are the things you hold as essential to your life and existence? What are those parts of life that are so important and vital that you can't imagine yourself being you unless they were present defining parts of your life? Think of them as a sort of spiritual DNA – reflected in every aspect of your life.

There are a lot of possible answers and each with its own merits: health, spouse, family, friends, community. Also, your job, ability to be useful, faith, church, freedom of choice, rationality, ability to love. Each of these categories enables a person to be more human in a variety of ways, and so it is easy to see the value of each.

But what about the Church? What is the spiritual DNA of the New Church? What are the qualities that define the very essence of the New Church and from which comes its true identity? What are the qualities that comprise the religion's spiritual DNA – that are present in every act so that it reflects a life of New Christian faith?

Apocalypse Revealed – which describes in detail the birth of the New Church – teaches that there are two such essential characteristics that are at the core of the Lord's new and budding presence on earth. While there are volumes of teachings describing the theology and its applications in various parts of life, it is very helpful to see it all boiled down to just two united concepts, because they stand as organizational pillars bringing stability, power and eternal life to the organization.

These two characteristics are: first, “that the Lord is God of heaven and earth, whose humanity is Divine,” and second, that those “are conjoined to Him by a life according with the Ten Commandments.” (*Apocalypse Revealed* 490)

These two concepts are figuratively spoken of in *Revelation* as “the two witnesses.” They are called the two witnesses because they are the key descriptors that bear witness to what it means to be “New Church.”

It is worth noting that we – either as individuals or as a community – can make tremendous efforts at being a church, at understanding the theology, at working on getting to heaven, but if either of these essentials is missing, we will struggle.

If we ignore the first witness, by a lack of focus on the Lord as the Divine Human, Almighty God, then we will ultimately turn to something else as a false god. That god might be ego, it might be material possessions, it might be longing for power or position over others. One negative aspect of the presence of these false gods is that they always generate a sense of emptiness and fear that simply are not present when the Lord is there to fill the void.

If we ignore the second witness, the Ten Commandments, then we fail to structure our lives to be spiritually useful and to receive heavenly life. Again, without that structure, we remain spiritually hungry and lacking in true spiritually motivated definition, form and direction.

It is also important to realize that both are required. If one witness is missing in life, the other is rendered impotent and inert. Turning to the Divine Human as the all-powerful God of everything that happens in heaven and earth, and the resulting effort to live according to the commandments, are so tightly connected that they are like the soul within the body.

The importance of focusing on both witnesses and their impact in life is dealt with in the Gospels with the story of the rich young ruler. The young man asked: “Good teacher, what good thing should I do that I might inherit eternal life?” The first part of the Lord’s answer sounds perfectly reasonable for the reply was completely in the context of the whole narrative of the Scriptures. The Lord said: “Keep the Commandments.” Over and over again the Word calls for compliance with the Ten Commandments because they provide the framework for a spiritual life. One might say they are the most basic definition for how people should act if they are going to be human in the Lord’s eyes.

These two characteristics, “that the Lord is God of heaven and earth, whose humanity is Divine,” and that those “are conjoined to Him by a life according with the Ten Commandments” are “the two witnesses” to what it means to be “New Church.”

The Lord is essentially using His interaction with the rich young ruler to remind us that we can be ensnared by impure, selfish motives while outwardly exhibiting a shell of doctrinal truths taught by the commandments. This is a warning for the New Church!

But we see the story deepening when the ruler continues by saying that he has kept all the commandments from his youth. The Lord then responds with a more challenging answer: “Sell all you have, give to the poor and then you will have treasure in heaven.” This answer isn’t really a reference to a person’s net worth. It is a reference to the other essential witness for the Church.

The Lord was challenging the place of our *proprium* – the feeling that we own our lives, thoughts, insights, feelings and even material possessions. He is reminding us of how easily our ego can replace the Lord and His presence in our lives. Stunningly, the Lord is asking the young man to let go of the conviction that his *proprial*

sense of self-life is anything real, in favor of recognizing that everything in our lives is from the Lord and is to be used to serve Him and others.

The Lord is teaching us that one of the keys to spiritual life is to recognize that the feeling of life as our own, while helping us think and feel like human beings, is also nothing more than an appearance that does not truly reflect the deeper truth of our absolute dependence on Him for life.

This dichotomy of feeling our self-life while recognizing that everything is from the Lord is a key distinction recognized in heaven. We are taught that the wiser angels living in the more interior celestial heaven have not only a stronger experience of life being their own, but at the same time experience greater recognition that all life actually is from the Lord Himself.

Going back to the story, the Lord is essentially using His interaction with the rich young ruler to remind us that we can be ensnared by impure, selfish motives while outwardly exhibiting a shell of doctrinal truths taught by the commandments. And that while we might be living according to the letter of the law, we fall to the temptation of using that law to create a smokescreen, hiding motives that block out heavenly life, spiritual happiness and salvation.

This is a warning for the New Church! The warning deepens when we read that the rich young ruler leaves in anguish because he is not able to comply with the Lord’s request to sell his possessions.

When he left, the disciples ask: “Who then can be saved?” The Lord

answered with two points. First: “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” Again, not a specific reference to wealth, but a statement about how powerful the pull is from proprium to believe that we are the origin and owners of everything in our lives. And second, saying: “With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” The Lord was teaching that if He is not acknowledged to be at the heart of our every effort at faith, that faith is going to be weak, self-serving and ultimately misleading.

The Lord puts it another way in the gospel of *John* by saying: “Abide in Me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in Me.” (*John* 15:4) It could be said that a lifetime challenge offered by the faith of the New Church is work toward humbly acknowledging that we are completely dependent on the Lord in every aspect on our lives.

Now let’s return to the Two Witnesses in *Revelation* because they represent the underlying truths addressed in the story of the rich young ruler. One is acknowledging that the Lord is the God of Heaven and Earth and that His Human is Divine; while the other is keeping the commandments.

The point is that the Lord wants us to think of them as “witnesses” in our lives. They are the driving forces of true faith. When properly positioned, these simple concepts direct attention to and “testify” or communicate the message that the Lord is the center and cause of our thoughts, actions and motivations.

By using the word “witness,” the Lord is asking for an approach to life that communicates the spiritual truth that starts with the words: “With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” This is a simple way of stating our total reliance on the Lord for everything in life. Using that reliance to configure a life reflective of the Lord’s order is what makes the New Church a church.

If we look elsewhere for power and inspiration, if we take credit for our own actions and successes, if we configure our religion, our principles, our doctrine on anything other than a desire to share the Lord’s eternal love through His truths provided by His Word, in short, we have nothing.

The purpose of a church is to offer our lives as a testimony, allowing others to see the Lord shining with His love through a life according to His truths. We read:

For works to be done by the Lord, and not by the person, two things are necessary: first, the Lord’s Divine must be acknowledged, also that He is the God of heaven and earth even as to the Human, and that every good that is good is from Him; and secondly, that the person must live according to the commandments of the Decalogue by abstaining from those evils that are there forbidden. (*Apocalypse Explained* 934)

The Lord is clear about this: to underline the teaching that we, of ourselves,

The purpose of a church is to offer our lives as a testimony, allowing others to see the Lord shining with His love through a life according to His truths.

can do nothing that is good. The Lord is asking for our full and complete cooperation. This is true for our abilities, our skills, our insights, our wisdom, our uses, our joys, our faith, our paths – everything without exception, even including our religious beliefs.

When we pursue doctrine and the understanding of the Word, we should be careful that that doctrine testifies of the nature of an all-loving Divinely Human and All-Powerful God.

And so we are taught that for the Rich Ruler:

“To sell all that he had” signifies that a person should relinquish the things of their religion, which are traditions . . . and also should relinquish the things that are one’s own [proprium], which were loving self and the world more than God, and thus leading himself; and “to follow the Lord” signifies to acknowledge Him only and to be led by Him. (*Ibid.* 934)

Why does the Lord ask for such surrender? It is clear that this surrender of even one’s own predefined notions of faith is clearly required as a part of the process of entering into true faith. This is stated simply and clearly: “He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.” (*Matthew* 10:36)

When we are willing to formulate our goals, our plans and our strategies for life such that they bear witness of the Lord as the One God of heaven and earth, and configure that life on the template of the Ten Commandments, then as a result we become human in the Lord’s eyes.

Such surrendering unexpectedly opens our minds to inspiration and enlightenment in ways that we couldn’t possibly create on our own. And with that freedom, we can truly testify, and tell the story that the Lord has come to save, to raise people up, and to give them eternal life.

Amen.



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FROM THE BISHOP'S OFFICE

A Life Founded on the Word: A Core Value



The Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr.

A core value for an organization is designed to have overarching reach. Each one defines the character of the organization and serves as an operating parameter guiding all decisions. Over time we are likely to reflect on the core values of the General Church in this column, not just at an organizational level, but also as a calling to each of us in our personal lives.

The first of eight core values of the General Church reads as follows: “Turning to the threefold-Word as the source and foundation of all that we do.” An earlier version states it this way: “The Old Testament, New Testament and Heavenly Doctrines are the Word of God and form the foundation for all that we do.”

For our church to be successful it is vital that we turn to the Word as our guide in all things. We have the lesson of ancient Israel under Josiah before they rediscovered the *Book of the Law* and learned to their horror how out of alignment with its dictates they were. (*2 Kings* 22-23) On the positive side, we have the counsel given to Joshua years before: “This *Book of the Law* shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.” (*Joshua* 1:8)

We note further that a revelation is given from the Lord at the beginning of each church, by which that church is established. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 3786:2) The church among the ancient Israelites was founded on the Word delivered to them on Mount Sinai – not just the fact that the Lord spoke it, but that they responded, “All that the Lord has spoken we will do and be obedient.” (*Exodus* 24:7)

For our church to be successful it is vital that we turn to the Word as our guide in all things.

Similarly, the Lord closed out His Sermon on the Mount with the words: “Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock.” (*Matthew 7:24*) Carrying on this theme there is the literal foundation of the Holy City New Jerusalem, embedded with all kinds

of precious stones. These foundations stand for “the doctrines of the church [which teach] how a person is to believe and live.” (*Apocalypse Revealed* 902)

Let’s take a deeper look at the Lord’s call to be a house founded upon the rock. In its full version in *Matthew*, we read:

Whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock; and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. (*Matthew 7:24-25*)

The rock upon which the house is founded represents “those things that are in the Word.” (*Apocalypse Explained* 411) It is also said to symbolize “divine truth received by the soul and heart.” (*Apocalypse Explained* 644) Finally, it stands for the Lord Himself as to the truth that He teaches, and which He is. (*Ibid.*)

In contrast, the “sand” upon which the foolish man built his house represents truths received only in the memory, which are intermingled with false ideas, and therefore give no cohesive basis on which to make life decisions. (*Ibid.*) They represent the multitude of facts we might know, but again which do not come together into any solid forms. They’re just scattered pieces of information in our minds. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 2850)

The message is readily apparent: as a church we are to learn from the Word the things the Lord wants us to know – the ways He would have us organize our activities, what He says a church should be and do, how we are to conduct our worship services, and what we are to teach. If we are to remain a “house founded on the rock,” then everything that we do will be evaluated against the teachings of the Word, every new thing we consider doing will be researched in the Word, and everything we teach will be seen to come from the Word.

Simple as it sounds, we know that churches, just like individual people, are “tested” by the trials and tribulations of life, pictured for us in the rains, wind and floods that beat upon the house founded upon the rock. But if we continue to foster the habit of going to the Word for guidance, and then doing what we believe the Lord tells us to do in His Word, our church “will not fall, because it is founded upon the rock.” (*Matthew 7:25*)

All that is on the organizational level. Most of the time, however, we hear these words from the Lord as applying to our personal lives. As we turn our minds in that direction, we can reflect on the following teaching that brings the church down to the personal level. After reminding us that a church is determined by the “wholeness and purity of its doctrine” it continues:

But in the case of the particular church which exists in the individual, it is not doctrine which establishes and makes it, but faith and life in accordance with faith. Likewise, it is not the Word which establishes and makes the particular church in the case of each person, but faith in accordance with truths, and life in accordance with the kinds of good which they draw from this source and apply to themselves. (*True Christian Religion* 245)

In this we come back to the ancient Israelites at Mount Sinai, focusing on each one of the multitude and imagining ourselves among them proclaiming the words: “All that the Lord has spoken, we will do and be obedient.” (*Exodus* 24:7) Or we can aspire to the faith of Peter, who was praised by the Lord after he professed his faith: “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah . . . I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” (*Matthew* 16:17-18)

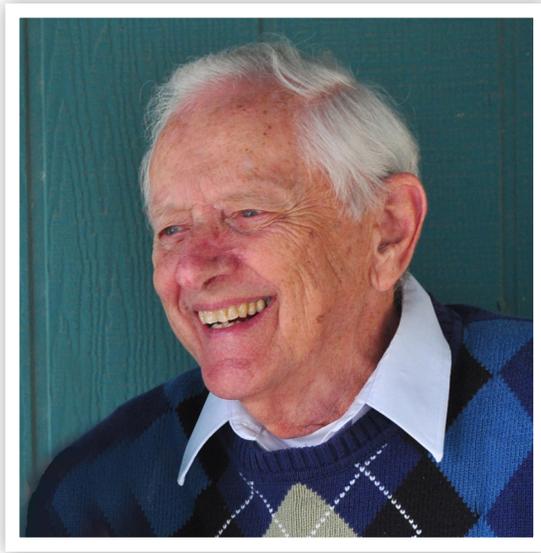
In a very real sense, this core value of the church – that we turn to the Word in all that we do – will only define it to the level that the people of the church embrace it. We do so by hearing the Lord’s constant call to let His truths guide our own lives. We also do so by supporting the church, even challenging the church at times, to make organizational decisions in keeping with the dictates of the Word.

If we are to remain a “house founded on the rock,” then everything that we do will be evaluated against the teachings of the Word, every new thing we consider doing will be researched in the Word, and everything we teach will be seen to come from the Word.

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MEMORIAL SERVICE

The Rev. Frank S. Rose



The Rev. Nathan D. Gladish, Pastor

Sunrise Chapel, Tucson, Arizona, October 26, 2020

Below are excerpts from the Memorial Celebration for Frank Rose, who passed into the spiritual world on October 15 at age 93. The service was live-streamed to more than 750 viewers around the world. See photos on page 84 and Life Lines tributes on page 85.

Welcome: Nathan Gladish

Louise, family, friends. Welcome to Sunrise Chapel, “the church with the heavenly view.” That’s what Frank called it, not just because of the panoramic view of the Catalina mountain range outside, but because of the view of heavenly spiritual life inside: inside us, this chapel, the teachings of

the Bible and those given to us through Emanuel Swedenborg for the New Church.

It's so good to be here. To celebrate a wonderful man, a devoted husband and father, grandfather, great-grandfather, a friend to many, not just here but around the world, for so many years. It's very important to the family to have you here. They share your love.

The slide show we've been watching was done by Owen Rose – many pictures from his artwork, other interests, and family. Just a beautiful opportunity for us to reflect on Frank's productivity and his connection with so many people.

How are you? How are you about this opportunity to be together and to think about Frank? That's a very important question. It's changed my life in many ways. Three words that give an opportunity to look at somebody more deeply than a casual "What's up?"

This is a question Frank asked individuals and groups over 50 years of ministry. "How are you?" I know I'm feeling rather tender – a lot of sadness. I'm also feeling excitement for Frank, waking up to a new life.

"How are you?" When Frank asked that question, he didn't just wait to tell you how he was. Most of the time we didn't really know how he was because he was interested in hearing how you are, in this moment. Toward the end of his life, he led a small spiritual growth group, mostly online – first from a chair, then from a hospital bed in his home. The last task he had written for himself was to be patient, and he said, "I'm having a hard time with this."

He wanted to connect with his family, with this group, and with others, to say: "I'm having a hard time letting go of all the friends and connections I have. I know it's going to be good on the other side, but still this is the hardest task." It was the deepest sharing I think I've ever heard Frank witness to – very meaningful and touching.

We're invited to think of heaven as a place of meaningful connection. We read: "There is a communication in heaven that involves everyone. The intelligence and wisdom of one individual is shared with another. Heaven is where everyone shares everything of value." We share something of value in knowing and loving and learning from Frank.

I invite you to join with me as I open the Word on the beautiful rock altar that has been a wonderful center of prayer and spiritual growth and learning over 30 years. When I do this I think of the reflection Frank provided so many times: "I will lift up my eyes to the mountains, from whence comes my help. My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth."

O Lord Jesus Christ, the one God of heaven and earth, we thank You for gathering us in this space, as well as in the hearts and minds of people around the world, to celebrate the life of Frank Rose and to be in touch with Your love,

as You share it with each of us, so that we can have a sense – a heavenly sense – of sharing what is of value with each other, with You, and extend that to our beloved friend, Frank. (The Lord’s Prayer followed.)

Betsy B. Gladish, long-time member of Sunrise Chapel and friend of Frank and Louise, offered several readings, including *John* 11:25-26, *Heaven and Hell* 445 and *Secrets of Heaven* 3957. She concluded with a passage translated by the Rev. Dr. George F. Dole, which the Rev. Dr. Jonathan Rose happened to be editing just a few hours before his father passed: “What is spiritual wears what is physical the way we wear clothes. The reason for comparing the bodily organism that the soul wears to a piece of clothing is that the body clothes the soul, and then the soul takes the body off and sheds it . . . when it crosses by death from the earthly world into its spiritual world.”

Jonathan S. Rose:

Frank S. Rose was born in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, on September 11, 1927, the ninth child of 12 to Marjorie Wells and Donald Frank Rose. Throughout his life he was part of the General Church of the New Jerusalem, which is devoted to the teachings of Swedenborg and the Old and New Testaments. Almost a century ago, when he was young, this church was certainly vibrant, but mainly focused on its own community. It maintained a strong membrane around itself and could still consider people new who had been around for only 30 years or had an unfamiliar last name. Growth was sought primarily from within by way of large families and church schools.

Frank grew up in one of these large families, in the worldwide headquarters of the organization, and attended the full range of these local schools, from kindergarten to a Master’s in Divinity – and *loved it*. He felt truly inspired by his education; he was literally a cheerleader of his high school. Two teachers he found particularly inspiring – the Rev. Karl Alden and Otho Heilman – were unusually devoted to connecting with others outside the fold and inviting them in.

One summer he worked in a recycling center, came upon a discarded box of almost new oil paints, took them home, and taught himself to paint. From that humble beginning, painting became a huge part of his life. I don’t know how many paintings he created but it must be in the thousands.

He married a woman he met at Bryn Athyn College, Louise Barry of Glenview, Illinois, and they had six adorable children: Jonathan, Alan, Elizabeth, Jeremy, Owen and Charles, who was met only by his mother as he died within hours of his birth. Louise and Frank shared a deep love, forged in 65 years of marriage.

Frank was energetic, artistic, talented, intelligent and fearless about

reaching out to strangers. After a year and a half in the military just after the Second World War, he became a minister and was ordained in 1952, retiring in 2003 after 51 years.

He spent the first 30 years of his professional life being (a) a traveling minister in the United Kingdom; then (b) pastor and principal of a church school in Colchester, Essex, England; (c) pastor and principal of a church school in Caryndale, in southern Ontario, Canada; and (d) a teacher back at Bryn Athyn College.

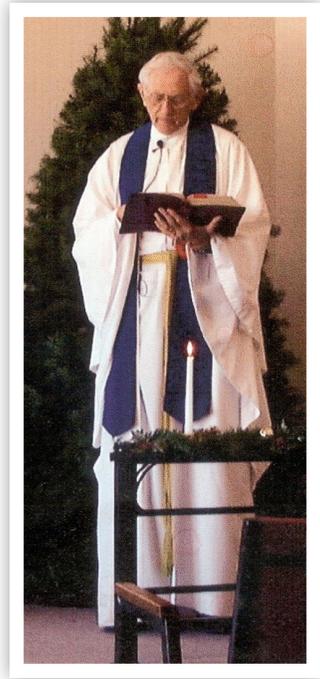
Along the way, to strengthen a scattered flock, in his spare time he started numerous camps in each of these countries, first for young people, then for all ages. The first of these was modeled on his education in Bryn Athyn. In response to later feedback from campers, to food for the mind these camps added food for the heart as well, such as sharing groups to better connect people with each other.

Over these years he also took counseling training, collaborated with Louise more and more in his ministry, and switched his artistic medium from oils to watercolors, with the help of a brilliant teacher named Jack Reid.

Throughout the first 30 years of his ministry he continued to evangelize in every way he could think of. He cultivated an ability to form deep connections with people of all kinds, quickly, but still had to admit that *not one person* joined the church as a result of his three decades of efforts. Yet he didn't give up.

A lifelong learner with a voracious appetite, in his mid-50s he took a course on church growth from the Schuller Institute in California. He felt reinvigorated and set out to find a small, already existing General Church group that was ready to embrace change and was located in a populous area. Tucson fit the bill. To his lasting delight, the group said yes, and Louise and Frank moved there in 1982, starting the second grand phase of his ministry.

Brainstorming and team building led to a new name, Sunrise Chapel, and countless improvements to their existing property and approach. Newcomers responded well and they quickly outgrew their former building. By 1987 they raised funds, matched by the General Church, and established a beautiful building in a growing part of town on a busy thoroughfare.



Sunrise Chapel took down its protective membrane, so to speak, and became an open, welcoming environment. (See Frank's book, *Growth Pains and Pleasures*.) Core insights were that the congregation is the unit of growth; the group as a whole has to make a commitment to growth and to take every decision with the needs of the newcomer uppermost in mind. A key goal was to meet people's spiritual needs, especially through the message on Sunday and various forms connecting with each other.

Sunrise Chapel turned outward and devoted itself to serving the wider community, with spiritual growth groups, weddings, funerals, AA meetings, events and much more. It was not all smooth sailing, but Sunrise Chapel experienced real growth, exposed thousands to the teachings of Swedenborg, and changed many people's lives – including Frank's. He later wrote that nothing in his life was as satisfying as the 21 years he and Louise spent serving Sunrise Chapel.

His ministry didn't end when he retired. He continued to teach and preach and perform weddings and funerals, and just finished co-leading his last spiritual growth group eight days before he died. His retirement held some interesting surprises. A church activity suggested by a parishioner introduced him to hiking; hiking led him to explore the astounding beauty of the Catalina range, including its mysterious, colorful wildflowers; and his love of nature brought him to lead plant walks, give lectures and slideshows, connect with scholars and publish books, first with his paintings and then with his photographs of the flowers, including tiny wonders almost invisible to the naked eye. His plant books made him well known in the area, and he would be recognized and warmly greeted by strangers on the trail. He led plant walks and hikes until August 2019.

Meanwhile, his family continued to grow. At the time of his death he left behind his wife, five living children and their spouses, 13 grandchildren and their partners, and 11 great-grandchildren, for a total of 48 in this world. He is also survived by his older sister, Sylvia Cooper, and his younger sister, Donnette Alfelt.

In just the last year or so, toward the end of his 92nd year, he started to run out of energy. He suffered from pancytopenia, an incurable condition of various causes that impoverishes all three types of blood cells. It was no doubt a trial for him to lose the preternatural energy that had sustained him through nine decades, but he kept his lovingkindness and sense of humor to the end. He had little physical pain but felt intense grief over the impending loss of connection with so many people he loves. (A whole heaven of angels was unlikely to feel complete to him without Louise and other loved ones he was about to leave behind.)

Cared for at home by his wife, daughter, sons, and a granddaughter, he

spent his last days in a hospital bed in the dining room, with a wonderful view of the Catalina mountains. Love poured in by many different means.

On October 15, Pastor Nathan Gladish came by, as he did almost daily. Frank was by this point breathing hard, as if he was running a race. Nathan concluded the visit by giving Frank and Louise a hands-on blessing together. Minutes later, Frank's breathing stilled, his struggling body came to peace; and although we couldn't see it, we've been taught that his spirit rose up, in a youthful, healthy spiritual body, to feel and see the presence of the Lord in a new way, greet friends and family who had gone before, embrace the son he had never met, and get to work for the causes he loves, surrounded by mountains and flowers that are even more alive and beautiful than these.

There followed a video of **Chelsea Rose Odhner** – daughter of Jonathan and granddaughter of Frank – a musician and composer, singing a song she wrote for Frank after visiting him a few weeks before he died. The song, *Mountain Blessing*, includes these words:

It's time for you to go up to the mountain
So that you may become the mountain . . .
And I will bow to the mountain
For you are in the air
In the whirl of the wind and the sudden silence too
And when I am held by the mountain
I'll know I'm held by you
Just as it held you

Alan Rose:

How do you measure success in life? We all have different hopes and goals, but there are some common achievements that most would agree are indicative of a life well spent. I would like to describe some of the areas in which Frank Rose was especially successful.

Family: Frank would ask couples whose wedding he was about to perform what their long-term goals were for their relationship. Recently he said that he was living the dream for every one of them. It was inspiring to see how much fun he had with Louise after 65 years of marriage, and their deep love for each other was obvious every day. His five children are all doing well in life, love him very much, and wanted to spend as much time with him as possible. His was the very definition of a happy family.

Career: Frank found his calling as a pastor; it suited him perfectly and he got really, really good at it. He was a gifted public speaker, and his sermons – uplifting, relevant, motivating, engaging and flawlessly delivered – were in a league of their own. This building is a testament to his vision, determination

and dedication to church growth.

Health: Frank's excellent health until very recently is pretty compelling evidence that ice cream is good for you after all. His physique was not that of a bodybuilder, but he was strong enough to hike the Grand Canyon rim-to-rim in a single day at the age of 73, and to continue hiking in the mountains multiple times a week well into his 90s.

Helping Others: If part of our purpose on this earth is to benefit others, Frank succeeded in that regard more than anyone else I know. All the people on whose lives he had a positive impact must number in the tens of thousands. All the people in Colchester, Caryndale, Bryn Athyn and Tucson church societies. All the participants in the British Academy Summer School, Maple and Laurel camps. All the students in the schools where he was principal, or the classes he taught. All of the nature lovers on the plant walks he led, who heard the talks he gave, and who have read his books. All the people he counseled. All the participants in the weddings he officiated. Everyone who has a painting of his hanging in their home.

His Legacy: Those paintings will last for many years, as will all the books he published. People for decades to come will be grateful to him for helping them identify a plant or see it in a new way, for greater enjoyment from the drive up to Summerhaven, or for building Sunrise Chapel. There will be lasting impacts through the work done by, and behavior of, his offspring, and theirs. The world has been made better in innumerable ways by Frank having been in it.

Finance: One measure of success is money, and some would say Frank was not very successful in that regard because he was not wealthy. I would argue that his lack of concern about money is the ultimate financial success. He said he makes more than he needs, so why worry about it? That disinterest spared him all the stress and focus on material things often associated with obsessing over money.

What made Frank so successful? He made things look effortless, and he had many natural talents, but his success was not just a matter of good luck. His relationships thrived because he fed them with attention and was very warm and accepting. His two simple rules of parenting (Love your kids. Don't hurt them) gave his children the freedom and security to explore and develop their own interests. His keen sense of humor made him fun to be around. He knew the value of a good story and how to tell one. He seemed happiest when his mind was active, which was most of the time, so that even his relaxation involved mentally challenging games.

He was constantly thinking about ways to improve things and was quite willing to innovate, re-evaluate, and dump whatever was not working. He saw the value in learning from others regardless of who or where they are. He was

comfortable wearing the mantle of leadership, and his gentle style made people want to follow him. Even though we are deeply saddened by his passing, we can also celebrate all his successes throughout a long life well lived.

Jeremy Rose:

Frank Rose's life obviously branched out in many different directions and reached many different kinds of people. What is the common thread? One answer is "light." His paintings are all detailed studies in light; his sermons provided enlightenment; he loved plants and how they made matter out of light; and his light-hearted humor never failed. There was a clarity in everything he did. And like light, it spread in all directions, it carried warmth with it, and it continues even after the light source is extinguished.

You could call Frank Rose a minister, a scientist, a healer, a teacher and an artist. And you see that in his children: Jonathan the minister; Alan the scientist; Liz the nurse; me the teacher; Owen the painter – we are all the light of Frank Rose, refracted in five ways. The refraction continues with grandchildren – in artists like Alanna, Marin and Eva; in teachers like Julia and Ella; in scientists like Grant and Alec; in healers like Kayla and Chelsea. The light rays continue to spread outwards.

I think of something my son-in-law Brandon said. In college, he was a political science major, but then he turned to special education, and when I asked him about that shift, he said: "I decided that instead of helping a lot of people a little bit, I wanted to help a few people a lot." That's a rational tradeoff: reach many people on a surface level, or a few people in depth.

Or there's the Frank Rose way: figure out how to reach a lot of people in depth. Reading the hundreds of messages we have received from many sources, it's clear he did that. Some messages are from people who knew him a long time; they were bathed in that light their whole life. Quite a few from people he met just once or twice, but those encounters stayed with them.

It helped that he loved meeting new people so much and was so good at finding a connection with anyone. Some children are raised with the rule, "Don't talk to strangers." I was raised by a father who showed me that talking to strangers is an infinitely enriching experience.

His sermons usually included fascinating little life stories: "There was a woman who . . ." Perhaps if you heard those sermons you wondered who those people were. Sometimes it was us, his family members; many times it was his dental hygienist or someone he sat next to on a plane. Every encounter counted.

His paintings are the embodiment of reaching many people in meaningful ways. Every painting was crafted with hours and hours of great care, each one unique, and now there are thousands of them hanging in homes all over the

world, like rays of light reaching near and far.

I want to talk about what it was like being raised by him. Many people were raised by famous parents who neglected their own children, who were so focused on reaching the masses that they rarely turned the light toward their own family. That was not the case with us. A few months before he passed, he wrote detailed messages to us, each one different from the rest, showing us that he knew us well and he loved us deeply.

Some of you have been in groups with Frank and know his favorite way to start, asking everyone: “Who are you and how are you?” What you may not know is that he has been asking those questions of us in family meetings for more than 50 years. He never stopped getting to know us, and never stopped caring for how we were doing, even when his own health was fading.

So we – the minister, the scientist, the healer, the teacher and the painter – got together and we made a song. Some of it was filmed in this building, some in Maryland, Minnesota, California and Pennsylvania, and it was expertly edited by my brother Owen. We finished it for Frank’s 93rd birthday in September – and yes, he did get to see it. The song is called *Let Me Be Frank*. Among the lyrics:

Let me sit in church and hear you preach
 Let me learn all that you have to teach
 Let me meet your friends on mountain tops
 Take me on a plant walk that never stops
 Show me landscapes I can dwell within
 Show me flowers as small as a pin
 Show me beauty in my fellow man
 Let me feel inspired by God’s great plan
 Let me be Frank, let me be Frank
 Let me be Frank with you.

David Lindrooth:

Hello, Louise. This is a sacred time and I’m so grateful to be sharing it with you. I’m also grateful because I know there are people in Sweden, the United Kingdom, Italy, Australia, on the East Coast, in California – all over the world there are people celebrating Frank right now.

When you feel that feeling inside because you’ve lost that friend, that feeling is connected with Frank. That’s a living feeling, not just a memory. That is Frank living with you, and your love connecting with his love, and it is real.

One consistent feature of heaven described in New Church theology is the exquisite overwhelming beauty of heavenly surroundings. It’s a paradise of flowering meadows, forests of stunning trees, mountains teeming with wildlife. And we are taught that all this beauty isn’t random or accidental;

it's the product of shared consciousness of people who are now angels gathered in communities. Their environment is a collective reflection of their shared states of being. So this community is based on mutual love and is reflected in the beauty of their external surroundings. And regarding this heavenly biosphere in particular, the plants are configured to reflect the wisdom and intelligence of those in the community.

A passage in *Heaven and Hell* notes the connection of the botany of heaven with the intelligence of its viewers: "Those who are intelligent are given to experience gardens and paradises full of trees and where flowers of every kind are seen. All is of such beauty as to defy description. In this beauty wander those who are intelligent, gathering flowers and weaving garlands with which they adorn little children."



This passage pretty much describes Frank to a ‘T’. And while I can’t imagine him having the patience to weave garlands, I can think of him conveying his interest in using everything about that spiritual-natural paradise to share something that’s really special with children and adults – pretty much anybody who’s willing to listen.

Frank, the highly intelligent, botanist-artist-priest who loved sharing the exquisite wilderness paradise of the Catalina mountains is launching into discovering the beauty of this heavenly life, so that he can share it with friends. He loved natural beauty on earth because of its perfect representation of the heavenly realities of love and wisdom, and because it was the ideal platform to build spiritual community with others.

Another part of the beauty of nature that I think captivated Frank was its life, particularly its growth and resilience. It served as the perfect metaphor for human spiritual growth that really drove his interests in church.

From the perspective of one who had the incredible privilege of being mentored by Frank over more than three decades, the underlying quality that defined his ministry was the desire to cultivate growth in every aspect of his work.

On the individual level, this meant interacting with people one-on-one – with couples or in small groups – establishing the conditions where they could grow spiritually. To him, success was defined by helping them move toward

becoming more spiritually connected with others, experiencing greater peace and the inner joy that springs from eternal life.

Frank's interest in the organizational aspects of church also reflected his focus on the different aspects of growth. He clearly saw that the objective of the church was to create a community that uses theology to equip people and prepare them for heavenly life. Again and again he would point this out to fellow clergy – that the purposes of the church were not to ensure that people understood doctrinal purity but rather it was to help them experience heaven. His wish was that people could participate in a church that offered a growing number of people the chance to experience that life as defined through the doctrinal lens of the New Church. He was clear that theology was a means to an end rather than the end itself.

So throughout his life in the ministry, Frank was a consistent voice asking his colleagues to think about what organizational shifts could occur to help more people better experience the life offered through his church. I believe his impact was far more than he imagined. For the church today, though still with its challenges, is far different from the church where he began. No small testimony to the impact he has had are the bushels of cards and notes that have floated into the Rose family since his passing.

In heaven, one's surroundings are really a shared extension of oneself. We can well imagine that Frank is wasting no time before he gathers a group of old friends and wanders with them into the hills with a magnifying glass and note pad in his pocket so that he can share his discoveries with others.

As I was flying out here I felt anxiety about what it was going to be like to visit a Tucson without Frank. Were the mountains, the church building, the local places where we shared so many memories together – were they all going to be tinged with grief and emptiness?

While I certainly feel the loss, my experience was totally different. Here in Sunrise Chapel, where every square foot bears his indelible fingerprint, I feel his presence. And in the mountains where we've spent so many hours wandering, I feel his loving, living soul. He is here, everywhere, an integral part of this community.

And Louise, I can feel your soul woven into this tapestry as well. With that, I am deeply grateful. And as Nathan has said so many times from this chancel: "I will lift up my eyes to the mountain, from whence comes my help. My help comes from the Lord, who made the heavens and the earth."

Betsy Gladish:

I offer my love and my blessings to the entire Rose family. Thank you for sharing Frank with us for so many years. They were glorious years. With Louise ever by his side, they created a place where people could be themselves, Sunrise

Chapel, the church with the heavenly view. It was encouraged from all of us to be family, where everyone had a place at the table: spiritual growth groups that connected us all, Arizona Mountain Camp and Friday hikes where adults and children connected with God, with nature, with each other, and with their higher selves.

Frank woke us up to the idea of growing spiritually here on earth. We learned about choices: living with negativity in the basement of our minds, or with God's help lifting ourselves up towards the light, to the higher parts of our mind. Calm and kind, warm and wise and witty, Frank and Louise were a team and found a place in our family. They showed us how to love each other, through their seamless examples. Listening, encouraging and teaching. We were taught the importance of personal freedom by them, but sometimes I just wanted Frank to tell me what I should do.

(She described a 45-year battle with arthritis and desperately asking Frank what she should do. His simple, genuine "I don't know" freed her from guilt and worry.) What is important is the present moment and how we live with our hearts wide open for God's love and light, so we can pass it on to others. Frank taught me that. He is still blessing me, still loving me, still teaching me. My cup is filled with gratitude for this priceless pastor and his priceless wife, Louise. I will carry them in my heart forever.

Ken Lee told of being a part of the Tucson congregation since 1969, with five pastors and struggling. Then Frank and Louise came and turned everything around, beginning with the building of Sunrise Chapel. "And so here we sit in a piece of his artwork. That's a blessing. And he blesses us still."

On a recording **Stephanie Kuhl** read a letter from her father, **Denis**, who partnered with Frank in Canada on the Maple Leaf Academy. Frank had launched the camp in the late '60s and asked Denis – then working in Philadelphia – to join the staff. He changed jobs, moved back to his hometown of Kitchener, Ontario, "starting a sojourn of 25 years with Maple and a long friendship with my new dear friend. I have always acknowledged Frank as the architect of New Church camps."

"He listened to the young people and created a safe, sacred space where so many teens accessed their religion and faith in a deeply personal way, as well as it was a fun place to acquire the leadership and social skills to build their self-confidence and self-worth. This has been a legacy for more than 50 years and will continue to be so for years to come.

"Frank was a strong role model, as husband, father, priest and friend. We honor him today and feel blessed in knowing him. I picture him now sitting on a log in the woods with an easel and paints, at peace in his magic spot."

Nathan Gladish:

O Lord our Savior Jesus Christ, thank You for the gift of Frank S. Rose, in this world. For starting his life here, with such love and wisdom and productivity that has a part of our lives, woven together with love.

Lord, we ask You to bless us as You have blessed Frank. And with You Lord, because we know that You are the real source of love and tenderness and compassion and wisdom, overflowing. Help us to enter into Your life with joy, in this world and in the days to come in the heavenly life. “May the Lord bless you and keep you, may the Lord cause His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you, may the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.”

The service concluded with a video set to Beethoven’s *Ode to Joy* – a favorite of Frank’s – featuring photos from his life, his artwork and photos of his beloved flowers.

(You can view the entire service, including music, videos and slide show at www.sunrisechapel.org.)

Resilience: Blessing Others

A Sermon by the Rev. John L. Odhner

Note: This sermon in the Bryn Athyn Cathedral on October 25 was the last in a series of five for the Journey Program, Resilience, based on the story of Joseph in *Genesis*.)

“Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a well.” (*Genesis* 49:22)

Over the past few weeks, we have been considering *Resilience* – the ability to survive difficult times and bounce back. We have been following the story of Joseph in the Old Testament. Joseph was torn from his family, almost killed, sold as a slave, later thrown in prison for a crime he didn’t commit, and then faced a seven-year famine. Yet Joseph was resilient. He not only survived but thrived during these difficult times. Some of the things that helped Joseph to be resilient can also help us. For the close of this series I will review previous parts of the story.

Be mindful of the Lord’s love and plans for us

One thing that helped Joseph be ready for the difficulties he would face in the future was the coat of many colors that his father had given him as a sign of his great love. Every day he wore that coat he could remember that his father loved him. We, too, can be mindful of the Lord’s love for us.

The Lord has given us many reminders of His love in His Word. You can think of that coat of many colors as being all the passages in the Word that tell us how much the Lord loves us. “I have loved you with an everlasting love. Therefore with loving kindness I have drawn you.” (*Jeremiah* 31:3)

Take these passages like a coat of many colors and put them in your mind; wear them; take them with you wherever you go to remind you that the Lord loves you. This may make it easier to get through difficult times.

We also see the Lord’s love in the world around us. If you are here in this cathedral, when you walk out the door look at the beautiful colors of the trees, or flowers and sunsets. The Lord has given the whole world this coat of many colors as a reminder of His love.

Joseph's dreams also helped him prepare for difficult times. The Lord gave him a vision that everything would turn out well. He would be with his family, and they would love and honor him.

The Lord gives us dreams too. He has given us a vision of His purpose and goal for us. He wants us to be in heaven with Him. He wants you to be surrounded by people whom you love and who love you. That's why He created heaven and wants to bring you there. This vision of eternal happiness is the dream that He wants us to keep in mind.

Let him who wishes to be eternally happy know and believe that he will live after death. Let him think of this and keep it in mind, for it is the truth. (*Secrets of Heaven* 8939)

So our first practice for becoming resilient is to be mindful that the Lord loves us and has a plan for our future.

Re-see your challenges

When Joseph was sold as a slave it may have seemed his life could not be worse, but then he was thrown in prison for a crime he did not commit. Joseph could have given in to despair, but instead he saw slavery and prison as opportunities to do the best he could. Even though he was stuck in prison the Word says that the Lord was with him and everything he did prospered.

When the butler and baker in prison were sad because they didn't understand their dreams or what was happening to them, Joseph told them: "Do not interpretations belong to God?" When we feel depressed because we've accepted a negative interpretation of our situation, we can step back and say: "How does the Lord see this situation?" "In the world you will have trouble," He says, "but take heart, I have overcome the world." (*John* 16:33)

Although the Lord has great plans for us, He allows us to go through failure and suffering because every failure is an opportunity to learn a better way and to change, and every time of suffering is an opportunity to discover compassion. The Lord promised Israel He would give them the Valley of Trouble as a Door of Hope (*Hosea* 2:15) and we can re-see our struggles and pain as a Valley of Shadow that leads to dwelling in the House of the Lord forever. (*Psalms* 23)

Practicing gratitude

So, we can gain resilience by being mindful of the Lord's love and His plans for us, and also by re-seeing our struggles as opportunities. A third practice helping us gain resilience is calling to mind the Lord's blessings. Just as Joseph stored up grain during seven years of plenty that they could draw out again during the seven years of famine, the Lord is constantly storing up within us all

the good states we go through and all the truths we have embraced. From the time we were little babies the Lord has been storing up states of innocence, trust, peace and goodwill in the depths of our minds. He gets us through the hard times by drawing from that storehouse to nourish and encourage us.

Sometimes while supporting couples through difficult times, my wife and I have invited them to tell the story of how they fell in love, or to describe their wedding day. Often these memories give them an opportunity to relive those states of joy and peace they had at an earlier time, which the Lord had stored up for them.

We also have asked couples to say all the things they appreciate about their partner. This not only makes it easier to work on problems, but sometimes even makes the problems simply evaporate. The same is true in many other situations. Expressing gratitude, especially for those who give us trouble, is a good way to rise above the pettiness that so often poisons our relationships.

Gratitude has the same effect on our relationship with the Lord. Feelings of bitterness, resentment and abandonment can be softened, if not dispelled, by remembering the good the Lord has done for us, and the good things he has stored up for us in heaven. “Bless the Lord, oh my soul, and forget not all His benefits.” (*Psalms* 103:2)

Showing compassion

Our fourth resilience practice is to have compassion. Joseph’s brothers hated him and wanted to kill him, but instead sold him as a slave. After living for years as a slave and prisoner and then finally becoming a ruler in Egypt, Joseph’s 10 brothers came down to Egypt to buy food during the famine. They didn’t recognize Joseph. He had changed from a stripling teenage shepherd into a majestic ruler of Egypt, speaking Egyptian and wearing Egyptian clothes.

But Joseph recognized his brothers and immediately started a plan to see his brother Benjamin again. Joseph spoke to his brothers harshly and took one of them, Simeon, as a hostage, demanding that the other brothers go back home with the food they had bought, and return to Egypt with Benjamin.

From the time we were little babies the Lord has been storing up states of innocence, trust, peace and goodwill in the depths of our minds. He gets us through the hard times by drawing from that storehouse to nourish and encourage us.

Eventually the brothers came back with Benjamin and then Joseph framed Benjamin as a thief who had supposedly stolen Joseph's silver cup. As punishment, Joseph said, Benjamin would have to remain in Egypt as a slave, while the brothers were to return home without him.

Twenty-three years earlier Judah was the one who had suggested selling Joseph as a slave. This had ruined Joseph's life and broken their father Jacob's heart. Now they were faced with Benjamin similarly becoming a slave, and Judah knew their father would die of grief. Out of compassion for their father, and compassion for Benjamin, Judah offered to become a slave in Benjamin's place, so that Benjamin could go home to their father.

Judah's show of compassion moved Joseph deeply. He broke down and wept. He revealed himself as their long-lost brother and forgave them for hating him and selling him as a slave. Judah's compassion toward Benjamin and their father, as well as Joseph's compassion for his brothers and father, brought about a reconciliation. The family could be together again, as Joseph's dream had predicted.

Was Joseph slow to forgive?

Biblical scholars are uncertain about what Joseph was thinking and feeling when he asked his brothers to go home, leaving Benjamin behind in Egypt. Some say that he was having trouble forgiving his brothers and didn't really want to see them again. Only the youngest, Benjamin, had not been part of their betrayal all those years earlier, so of course he did not need to be forgiven. But when Judah showed compassion on Benjamin and offered to take his place as a slave, they say, Joseph was surprised and was moved to forgive the brothers he could not forgive sooner.

Another possibility is that Joseph had long since forgiven his brothers, since as a ruler in Egypt he had seen the blessings that the Lord had brought him and he had forgotten his earlier troubles with his father's family. Perhaps Joseph was not at all surprised to see his brothers after 22 years because the Lord had told him in the beginning in his dreams that he would be reconciled and rejoined to his family. Joseph all along would have been hoping and longing for this reunion, but he knew it could not happen if his brothers still hated him and wanted him dead.

If Joseph wanted reconciliation with his brothers, then sending them home without Benjamin would not have been a pretext for getting rid of them but rather a test to see whether they had changed. By making Benjamin a slave before their very eyes Joseph was able to recreate the event when Joseph suffered the same fate and he could see they had compassion for Benjamin that they had not had for Joseph earlier. Knowing they had changed, Joseph was able now to reveal himself and reunite the family. Thus it was not so much

a change of heart on Joseph's part as a change in Judah and his brothers that brought about the reconciliation.

We may never know whether Joseph was limited by a typical human inability to forgive his brothers fully, or whether his heart reflected a more divine ability to have compassion for all people at all times. Yet on a deeper level we can see that Joseph represents the Lord, and the Lord always has compassion. Even while He was being crucified He said: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." (*Luke 23:34*)

Whether having compassion comes easily for us or with years of practice and effort, as is often the case when words spoken with anger, bitterness or contempt have separated us from our fellow human beings, that vital part of our resilience and reconciliation is the compassion we are able to feel when others are suffering.

Providing for others

After (1) being mindful of the Lord's presence and purpose; (2) reframing our problems as opportunities; (3) practicing gratitude; and (4) showing compassion; our fifth means of growing in resilience is to provide for others. As soon as Joseph had revealed himself to his brothers, he told them he would provide for them during the remaining years of famine and afterwards. They could bring their families and their parents from Canaan down to Egypt and live in the best part of the land where all their needs would be met. Joseph continued to provide food for all the Egyptians so they could continue to thrive even during the famine.

A familiar description of love is feeling the joy of another as joy in oneself (*Divine Love and Wisdom 47*), to desire another's happiness just as much or more than our own. A corollary is that when others are suffering, we feel their pain and grief. So, more love means not only feeling another's joy as our own, but also wanting to give to another everything of our own. We want to serve them, be useful to them. We want to use all our resources to make the lives of others better.

Another passage describes three essentials of love. The first is to love others outside of oneself; next, to want to be united with them; and finally, to want to make them happy from ourselves. (*True Christianity 43*) We can see the desire to be united to others in Joseph's wanting to reunite with his brothers and father. What follows is a desire to make them happy, which Joseph did by using all his resources to make their lives better.

When Joseph was a slave, it was a lowly job. Yet he did his work faithfully and honestly, so he was successful with that work. Later, being supervisor of a few prisoners was not a glorious job, but he did it the best he could. Those small jobs were preparation for the much more important work he would be

A tree that survives heat and drought pictures the resilience that gets us through difficult times. Clearly this resilience comes from trusting the Lord and staying connected with Him. It is His strength and blessing that causes us to be fruitful.

doing as a ruler of Egypt, saving many lives, not to mention providing for the future of Israel as a nation.

In the parable of the talents the Lord spoke of servants who were faithful in a few things:

Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over 10 cities. (*Luke 19:15-19*)

Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things; I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord. (*Matthew 25:20-23*)

So it was with Joseph. He was faithful over a few things, and the Lord made him ruler over many things. Likewise, we may feel relatively un-useful, too young, too old, or too unemployed for meaningful work, or

too isolated for meaningful relationships. Yet if we can be faithful in a few very little things, the time will come when the Lord will open the doors of heaven and shower us with opportunities to cooperate in His work and experience His joy in serving others, with no thought of gaining something in return.

When Jacob was on his death bed, there was little he could do for his children. Yet he could say a few kind words to them, a very little but with a series of consequences that still continue. To Joseph, he said: "Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a well." This calls to mind a prophecy:

Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord. And whose hope is the Lord. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots by the river, and will not fear when heat comes. But its leaf will be green, and will not be anxious in the year of drought, nor will cease from bearing fruit. (*Jeremiah 17:7-8*)

A tree that survives heat and drought pictures the resilience that gets us through difficult times. Clearly this resilience comes from trusting the Lord and staying connected with Him. It is His strength and blessing that causes us to be fruitful. The Lord is the vine and we are the branches. If we abide in Him we bear much fruit. Joseph, too, became a fruitful bough because he trusted and hoped in the Lord. Jacob said in effect to Joseph: the Lord has blessed you in many ways, so you have in turn become a blessing to me.

By the God of your father who will help you, and by the Almighty who will bless you with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lies beneath, blessings

of the breasts and of the womb. The blessings of your father have excelled the blessings of my ancestors, up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills. They shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him who was chosen from his brothers. (*Genesis 49:25-26*)

When the Lord was in the world, He underwent temptations and through them overcame the hells and became one with the Divine love that was in Him from birth. It was that Divine love which gave Him such resilience and strength against the hells. Through His efforts and suffering He became a blessing to all humankind. If we remain connected to the Lord, He will bless us and help us to be a blessing to others.



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Seeking Greater Engagement: Swedenborg's Efforts to Find an Audience

Alexis Vega-Singer and Jonathan S. Rose

Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772) had bright hope for the future of humankind and felt driven to share what he had learned in the spiritual world.¹ But how could he foster a heaven on earth if he failed to engage with anyone here? In 1769 he wrote:

I am obliged by my conscience to make these things known. What good is it for one person to know something unless what that person knows, others too may come to know? Otherwise, gathering knowledge is like collecting and storing valuables in a vault and only looking at them now and then and counting them over, without any intention of ever making use of them. It is a form of spiritual avarice. (*Soul-Body Interaction* 18:2)

In order to disseminate what had been revealed to him, Swedenborg embarked on an ambitious program of publishing and raising awareness of the spiritual world, with frustrating results at first, but increasing success as time went on. This article outlines his efforts from 1749 to 1764.

1. *Secrets of Heaven*

After Swedenborg's spiritual awakening, he turned to writing biblical exegesis and theology. In 1749 he began anonymously publishing what was to be his magnum opus, *Secrets of Heaven*. This ambitious undertaking began with a startlingly new explanation of the inner meaning of the first chapter of *Genesis*, expanded its exegesis through the rest of that Bible book, and continued through *Exodus* as well, growing into a multivolume series in the process.

These volumes were published in London. The state of the art of printing

1 This article is adapted from the Rev. Dr. Jonathan S. Rose's introduction to the recently released NCE volume *The Shorter Works of 1763*, 15–107, published by the Swedenborg Foundation.

in Sweden was well behind that of London and Amsterdam, and religious restrictions on publishing would not have allowed him to print these theological works there. It would also have been much harder for him to maintain his authorial anonymity in his home country, where he was a well-known figure.

When Swedenborg completed *Secrets of Heaven*, volume 1, in September 1749, copies were sent out internationally for review and notices were placed in two London journals. Sales were poor, however, and there was little in the way of reviews to drum up interest.² Swedenborg discussed the poor sales with angels in the spiritual world, who, although surprised, said that it was appropriate that only those who live by their faith would be open to this message. (*Spiritual Experiences* 4422)

This early lack of response may have increased Swedenborg's sense of urgency to get the word out as widely as possible, so that the small percentage of people who were ready for the message might have a chance of finding it. Swedenborg and his publisher redoubled their efforts to attract the British public when the second volume of *Secrets of Heaven* was published,³ but they were still not reaching the target audience. Once all eight volumes were in print, it was time to change tack.

2. Publishing the Works of 1758

In 1758 Swedenborg issued five significantly smaller titles: *Heaven and Hell*, *New Jerusalem*, *Last Judgment*, *White Horse*, and *Other Planets*. Their total page count was about the same as an average volume of *Secrets of Heaven*. This reduction in the length of his works is a remarkable change in strategy. Since these works of 1758 were heavily oriented toward *Secrets of Heaven*, we can reasonably conclude that he was discouraged by the response to that work and that he shifted to issuing shorter books in the hope that they would catch the attention of potential readers of his magnum opus.

His publisher placed notices in London newspapers; Swedenborg's efforts (still anonymous) were then concentrated primarily on the potential audience in Great Britain, particularly religious and secular leaders there. He arranged for distribution of free copies of his works of 1758 to all the British archbishops, bishops, members of the House of Lords in the British Parliament, and priests at Oxford University, but was disappointed by a lack of response.

2 As far as we know, *Secrets of Heaven* garnered only two contemporary reviews. A single review of volume 1 appeared in 1750 (*Neue Zeitungen* 1750, 313–316); the work was not reviewed again as a whole or in part until a decade later, four years after the last of eight volumes had appeared (*Neue theologische Bibliothek* 1760, 515–527).

3 For details on these efforts, see *The Shorter Works of 1763*, 44–47.

From statements Swedenborg made in manuscripts, we can conclude that the silence of British leaders led to disappointing sales, and those sales convinced him in 1759 that his latest approach too was not sufficient. It is worthy of note that some four years later, after Swedenborg had published works in 1763 and 1764, he reported an interaction in the spiritual world in which a recently deceased British bishop admitted to thwarting Swedenborg's efforts in the late 1750s. (*Spiritual Experiences* 6098:2, 6101:2, 4)

3. Revealing His Identity

Although in the case of Swedenborg's earlier theological works the marketing role fell to his publisher, in 1760 we see Swedenborg himself taking the lead. In late February or early March he initiated a new plan that necessitated the sacrifice of his anonymity. It had a new target – leaders of the *Swedish* clergy and nobility – and consisted of two tactics: distributing books personally and evoking interest in them by conversing more freely about his spiritual experiences.

At the beginning of this period, Count Carl Gustaf Tessin (1695–1770), a former politician and advisor to Queen Lovisa Ulrika (1720–1782), visited Swedenborg to discuss his book *Heaven and Hell*. During their conversation, Swedenborg described the spiritual experiences that he had been having for 16 years. He related that he had recently spent the day in the spiritual world with a mutual acquaintance of theirs who had died the week before, Count Carl Didrik Ehrenpreus (1692–1760).

According to Swedenborg, Ehrenpreus was already playing a prominent role in the spiritual world and had quickly come into a deeper understanding than before. Tessin shared the details of this visit with another nobleman, who went on to write about Swedenborg's "communication with the dead whenever he chooses," and from there it appears that Swedenborg's spiritual experiences went viral, 1700s style. Swedenborg became a topic of conversation in Stockholm and began discussing his books and spiritual experiences with numerous members of the Swedish clergy and nobility.

This clearly indicates not an accidental release of information, but a planned and deliberately executed campaign on Swedenborg's part to sacrifice his anonymity in order to take advantage of his many connections with the upper echelon in Sweden. Although this was in some ways costly to his reputation, the opportunity to talk face-to-face with people and tell stories of mutual friends who had passed on must have given this particular approach some advantages over the British campaign.

These efforts, however, seem to have had little lasting effect. Although ending his anonymity did allow him to commence a conversation about his theology in Sweden, the resulting publicity did not achieve all that he desired.

This may help explain why he changed his publishing program once again after 1762.

4. Publishing the Works of 1763 and Increasing Visibility

The shorter works that Swedenborg published in 1763 once again constituted a new approach and a new effort to increase the world's engagement with his theology. Swedenborg's manuscripts and published works give evidence of experimentation and change in several ways at this time, including still further reducing the length of his works and deemphasizing *Secrets of Heaven* in cross-references. This time, he tried something even more innovative: he issued two sets of works at the same time, apparently with different audiences in mind.

In the preface to *The Lord*, Swedenborg included a list of nine projected works, four whose titles began with *Teachings*, and four whose titles began with *Angelic Wisdom* instead (although he ultimately decided not to publish two of these works). We can observe the differences between, for example, *Teachings for the New Jerusalem on the Lord and Angelic Wisdom about Divine Love and Wisdom*. Both are ostensibly about God, and yet the former quotes Scripture 45 times as much as the latter.

The works labeled *Teachings* make frequent use of Christian terms such as *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit* and quote from the Christian Creeds; the works labeled *Angelic Wisdom* speak instead of "God," "the Divine," and "the Divine-Human One" and rely heavily on argumentation and analogy. The underlying teachings are consistent, but the tone and manner are quite different.

Given Swedenborg's two target audiences at the time, it seems sound to conjecture that the works labeled *Teachings* were initially intended for leaders among the clergy, whereas the works labeled *Angelic Wisdom* were oriented more toward the nobility. Of course, the ultimate goal was to spread the good news to everyone on Earth; but given their wide spheres of influence, civic and ecclesiastical authorities were targeted as an efficient first step in this direction.

Swedenborg must have sent *The Lord, Sacred Scripture, Life, Faith, and Supplements* collectively to a number of journals as well, because five reviews appeared, in German, English, French and Swedish. A few came to fairly negative conclusions about the veracity of Swedenborg's claims and, indeed, his sanity, but a Swedish review, written by Carl Christoffer Gjörwell (1731–1811), the young, progressive royal librarian, was more objective, even if not wholeheartedly supportive.⁴

In addition, Swedenborg took the remarkable approach of giving his new works to kings and queens; as far as we know, he had not done this with his

4 Details of these reviews can be found in *The Shorter Works of 1763*, 82–88.

theological works before. Swedenborg presented the shorter works of 1763, *Divine Love and Wisdom*, and *Divine Providence* to Frederick V, king of Denmark (1723–1766) and to King Adolf Frederick (1710–1771) and Queen Lovisa Ulrika of Sweden. It seems that his gift was well-received; the king extended an invitation for Swedenborg to dine with the Swedish royal family. In attendance at this dinner were the king and queen; their four children; five present or former members of the Privy Council including Count Tessin; and Swedenborg. The topic of conversation the whole evening was Swedenborg's spiritual experiences.

A week and a half later, Gjørwell paid a visit to Swedenborg at his home for the purpose of officially requesting copies of his latest published works for the Royal Library and to learn more about Swedenborg's works. Gjørwell wrote a formal, signed account of his visit, in which he discusses the main themes of Swedenborg's program: (1) his drive to pass along the "new light" of his revelations, (2) his sharing of some "news from the other world" about a mutual acquaintance who had recently passed away, and (3) his supplying copies to Sweden's chief libraries and most prominent bishops.

Though these elements of his program are now familiar to us, the dynamic visible in this meeting with Gjørwell is new. Whereas all the effort and energy had to this point been going out from Swedenborg over and over again, here at last someone has instead come to him, asking for his works.

Gjørwell's visit marks a turning point in the history of Swedenborg's dissemination campaign. From now on, it would not be unidirectional; increasingly in the years and, beyond his lifetime, in the decades ahead, interested readers and thinkers would seek out his works. He had finally found a combination of publishing and public engagement which ensured that the conversation he had hoped to begin was underway.

Is it Safe to Speak with Spirits?

Communication with Angels and Spirits in the New Church

The Rev. Jeremy F. Simons

Is it safe to speak with spirits? This isn't a question that is often asked within the General Church. An awareness of the negative publicity and harmful effects caused by Spiritism and its association with Swedenborg in our history, especially in the 19th century, has led to strongly negative attitudes toward communication with spirits within the church. The answer to the question is: *"No it is not safe, not by any stretch of the imagination."*

But things have changed in recent years. The enormous popularity of the wonderful *offTheLeftEye* YouTube channel, and its fascinating explanations of what the Heavenly Doctrine teaches about the spiritual world, have aroused new interest in our relationship with that world. With more than 100,000 subscribers and hundreds of videos – most with thousands of views and some with more than a million views – the teachings of the Writings are being shared all over the world.

People previously unacquainted with Swedenborg naturally wonder if other people might be able to access the spiritual world, to speak with spirits and angels. What is more, people who have had spiritual experiences, and people who continue to have them – even people who call themselves mediums – chime in and add to the discussion of the videos. In response to these questions, Curtis Childs, Jonathan Rose and others have worked to explain what the Writings teach on the topic of spirit communication in a number of different videos. The pages of *New Church Life* seem like another good venue for the discussion.

What is the danger?

When dealing with an unknown caller or an unknown place people know that not all contacts are safe. There are people who wish our harm, or who

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would use us for their own purposes. Probably the best-known passage that addresses the danger is this one:

Talking with spirits is rarely allowed nowadays, though, because it is dangerous. The spirits then actually know that they are with us, which otherwise they would not; and evil spirits by nature harbor a murderous hatred for us and crave nothing less than our total destruction, body and soul. . . . There are some people who lead solitary lives who sometimes hear spirits talking with them without risk; but the Lord keeps these spirits a little space away so that they do not know they are with these individuals. Most spirits, you see, are not aware that there is any other world than the one they are living in or therefore that there are people anywhere else. So we are not allowed to talk back to them, since if we did, they would know. (*Heaven and Hell* 249)

This lets us know that spirits generally do not know that they are with us, that many people do have spiritual experiences without harm, but that speaking with spirits risks establishing a communication that can be harmful and is therefore “not allowed.”

But that is not the end of the story. We are told that people can experience several different kinds of visions:

Visions are of two kinds: Divine and diabolic. Divine visions are produced by representative appearances in heaven, while diabolic visions are produced by magical arts in hell. There are in addition hallucinatory visions, which are the delusions of a distraught mind. (*Divine Providence* 134)

So some visions may be good, others evil, and others simply delusional. What is more, it is difficult for people to distinguish these because spirits can be deceitful:

How deceitful the devil's gang is, can never be expressed in words. During temptations they simulate not only angels, but indeed, even the Lord, feigning them in every way in keeping with the person's fantasies. . . . Moreover, when so disguised, he breathes in suitable feelings that seem either good, or evil, and manipulates them in a remarkable way, skillfully bending them toward evil. He sees clearly how the feeling is developing, constantly striving to bend it toward evil. (*Spiritual Experiences* 617)

Other passages also describe the dangers:

It is clear how dangerous it is on this planet, when spirits speak with people, or

people listen to spirits operating in them... (T)hey are not only persuaded that it is the holy spirit [speaking], but are also aroused and incited toward wicked acts. For almost the whole world of spirits is wicked, and fanatical, and eager with all their effort to obsess mankind. (*Ibid.* 3781)

Faith in the Lord is a protection from evil spirits.

In the above passage the following words belong at the end of the first sentence: *“if they do not have faith in the Lord. If they have faith, it does no harm, for the Lord liberates them.”* This

makes a huge difference! This passage is then seeming to say that, for those who have true faith, speaking with spirits does no harm. Another passage puts this same idea in an interesting way:

Those who do not entertain objections against the higher knowledge of faith are safe from evil spirits. . . . Because I was abiding in the higher knowledge of faith, it was not permitted to entertain objections. They said that then they have nothing by which they can lead – saying also, by which they can mislead – for by their objections they very much mislead mankind. If they utter only a single objection then it matters not how many confirming truths there are, they are nothing. For people are then carried along by their desires, which produce fantasies, and then they willingly allow objections to enter, a single one of which carries more weight with them than a thousand confirmations. (*Ibid.* 3614)

If we love the teachings of the Word, and entertain no objections within ourselves to those teachings, then evil spirits have nothing with which to mislead us. This passage is not specifically about communication with spirits, but it may apply.

The truth is that the Heavenly Doctrine is very clear about the fact that people were created with the ability to communicate with spirits and angels:

The human being has been created by the Lord in such a way that while living in the body he could at the same time talk to spirits and angels, as actually happened in most ancient times; for being a spirit clothed with a body he is one among them. But because, after a period of time, people have so immersed themselves in bodily and worldly interests that they hardly care about anything different, that path has therefore been closed. But as soon as the bodily interests in which a person is immersed retire into the background, the path is opened, and he finds himself among spirits and shares his life with them. (*Arcana Coelestia* 69)

According to this, humanity lost this ability, or the path has been

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closed, because we have become so materialistic and have departed from a true faith in the Lord. Still, the suggestion here is that this path can be re-opened.

Biblical prohibitions

Because of our fallen nature, the Judeo-Christian religions have been especially zealous about forbidding speaking with spirits:

Give no regard to mediums and familiar spirits; do not seek after them, to be defiled

by them: I am the Lord your God. (*Leviticus* 19:31)

A man or a woman who is a medium, or who has familiar spirits, shall surely be put to death; they shall stone them with stones. Their blood shall be upon them. (*Ibid.* 20:27)

There shall not be found among you anyone . . . who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the Lord, and because of these abominations the Lord your God drives them out from before you. (*Deuteronomy* 18:9-12)

The New Testament, however, takes a slightly different tone:

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. (*1 John* 4:1-3)

That is, if you speak with spirits, make sure you have the right ones. What happened between the Old Testament and *1 John*? One answer is that the Lord came into the world, casting out demons, and restoring the equilibrium between heaven and hell. Before His coming it was possible for spirits to literally take over a person's body in this world against their will:

There are also spirits (who) enter our bodies and take over all its senses, talking through our mouths and acting through our limbs. It seems to them entirely as though everything of ours were theirs. These are the spirits that possess people; but they have been cast into hell by the Lord and moved decisively away; so possession like this no longer occurs nowadays. (*Heaven and Hell* 257)

But this passage also points out that spirits can still possess our minds:

(Evil spirits strive to) take control of him interiorly, that is to say, of the life

belonging to his thoughts and affections. Very many people are under their control at the present day, for at the present day interior obsession takes place, but not exterior obsession as in former times . . . [4] Those lethal spirits attempt above all to dissolve all internal restraints, which are the affections for what is good and true, right and fair; fear of God's law; and a sense of shame at doing harm to society and one's country. Once those internal restraints have been dissolved a person is obsessed by spirits of this kind. (*Arcana Coelestia* 4793)

A major difference between these two kinds of possession is that external possession could happen completely against the person's will, whereas this latter kind happens with our cooperation.

The Word was written by people who were in contact with the spiritual world.

The Word was written by people who were spoken to or inspired from the spiritual world. If there was no communication of this kind there would be no Scriptures. Swedenborg is not alone in this, although the nature of the revelation and the inspiration has varied. In any case the fact remains that this communication is possible:

Communication with spirits is possible, though rarely with angels of heaven, and it has been granted to many for centuries. (*Divine Providence* 135)

The communications from heaven, or rather, from the Lord, that make up the Word are extremely powerful, and there are a number of reasons given in the Writings as to why these communications are unique. Although many people are able to communicate with the spiritual world, and many more have had various types of spiritual experiences – such as vivid dreams, the hearing of voices, near-death experiences, and visions – the Writings tell us about specific rules that govern how these kinds of things happen. Here are a few.

1. Most spiritual communications are harmless, beneficial, comforting and brief.

Anyone who looks into this will quickly find that it is not uncommon for people to have brief spiritual experiences. People have vivid dreams of loved ones who have passed away. When awake they sometimes see them briefly, hear their voice, or feel their presence. In deeply stressful times, or in severe illnesses, it is not uncommon to experience angelic help in some way. Near-death experiences are also well known and documented. These are by far the most common kinds of spiritual experiences that people have.

When communication is granted, spirits speak with a person in the person's mother tongue, and only a few words. But those who speak with the Lord's permission never say anything that takes away the freedom of reason, nor do they teach, for the Lord alone teaches, by means of the Word. (*Divine Providence* 135)

It is striking that most contacts of this kind do not involve words, or involve very few words. Yet they make a lasting impression. But why don't they teach? Why wouldn't our loved ones explain heaven to us?

2. Angels do not teach.

This is not what we would expect, and many do not accept this. After all, the angels in Scripture do teach, and seers and mediums have claimed to speak from the wisdom of their angel guides from antiquity to the present day. Yet the Writings are consistent on this point:

“No spirit or angel is allowed to instruct anyone on this earth in Divine truths. Rather, the Lord Himself instructs everyone by means of the Word, and He instructs a person to the degree that the person receives goodness from the Lord in his will, which in turn depends on the degree to which he abstains from evils because they are sins. (*De Verbo* 13)

Communication with the dead would produce the same effect as miracles, namely that a person would be persuaded and forced into worship for a short time. But because this divests a person of his rationality, and at the same time shuts in his evils, the internal spell or bond is broken, and the imprisoned evils burst forth, accompanied by blasphemy and profanation. But this occurs only when spirits inject some dogma of religion, which is never done by any good spirit, still less by any angel of heaven. (*Divine Providence* 134)

The reason given here is that instruction by a spiritual entity is so persuasive that a person's spiritual freedom is at risk, convincing us without actually changing us. Therefore good spirits and angels are unwilling to teach us. There are other reasons given as well.

3. The spirits with us are those who agree with us.

The laws of spiritual association mean that the spirits most closely associated with us are ones who think the way that we do. This means that if they speak with us they will tell us what we want to hear.

As soon as spirits begin to speak with a person they come out of their spiritual state into the person's natural state, and they then know that they are with a person and enter into the thoughts of his affection, and speak with him from those thoughts. They can enter in no other way, for all joining is by like affection and thought, while differences separate. For this reason the speaking spirit must be in the same beliefs as the person is, whether they be true or false. He stirs them up, and through his affection strongly confirms them. (*Apocalypse Explained* 1182.4)

There are both good and bad spirits with every person, but the good are unwilling to speak. Therefore speaking with congenial, seemingly wise spiritual companions, is not likely to lead in a good direction over the long term:

Whenever a spirit from like affection favors a person's thoughts or beliefs, one leads the other as the blind lead the blind until both fall into the pit. The magicians in

Egypt and in Babylon, who were called wise because they talked with spirits, were like this. This is how the worship of God with them was changed into the worship of demons, and the church perished. For this reason such communication was forbidden to the sons of Israel under penalty of death. (*Ibid.* 1182.4)

The spirits with us also adopt our false convictions, whatever those may be, as has been borne out for me by much experience. They adopt our delusions not only on public and private issues but also on spiritual questions of faith. Plainly, then, when spirits are with people who subscribe to heresies, to fallacies and delusions regarding religious truth, and to outright falsities, the spirits buy into the same bad thinking and do not waver from it a hair's breadth. (*Secrets of Heaven* 5860)

In addition to this, spirits lie:

When spirits begin to speak with a person, one must take care not to believe them at all, for almost everything they say, they have made up, and they are lying. If for example they are allowed to tell what heaven is like, and how matters stand in the heavens, they would tell so many lies, with great assurance, that the person would be astounded. (*Spiritual Experiences* 1622)

4. Instruction by spirits is actually inferior to instruction by the Word.

People suppose they would be more enlightened and wiser if they had a direct revelation through speech with spirits and angels, but the opposite is the case. Enlightenment by means of the Word comes by an inner path, while enlightenment by direct revelation comes by a path from without. . . . A mediated revelation effected through the Word is better than a direct revelation effected through spirits. (*De Verbo* 13)

This seems to be the opposite of what we would think. Isn't an inner path exactly what happens when spirits speak with us? But the meaning here is that by "*inner path*" is meant one that is through the will. That is, the inner path is that we learn what we wish to learn in freedom. By contrast the direct voice of a spiritual teacher is outside of our will, and it is by its very nature compelling. By "*a mediated revelation*" is meant something written or spoken that we can pay attention to or not as we wish. It leads us in freedom.

5. It is different with those who are led by the Lord.

It is otherwise with those who are led by the Lord. He leads those who love truths. They are enlightened when they read the Word – for the Lord is in the Word, and speaks with everyone according to their apprehension. When such hear the speech of spirits, as they sometimes do, they are not taught but led, and this with such precaution that the person is left to himself. But people are enlightened variously, each according to the quality of their affection and consequent intelligence. (*Apocalypse Explained* 1183)

What does it mean to be "*not taught but led*"? It means that the person is not receiving information but encouragement, and not from spirits who are

The spirits and angels with us are continually communicating with us, but this happens in a way that is normally imperceptible to us.

aware of him and wish him to follow them, but from spirits who love the Lord and communicate the sphere of wishing to follow what the Word teaches.

The spirits and angels with us are continually communicating with us, but this happens in a way that is normally imperceptible to us.

The state of spirits and angels is a spiritual one, while that of people is a natural one.

These two states are affiliated only through

correspondences, and affiliation through correspondences causes them to be present together in affections, but not as regards thoughts. Consequently, one knows nothing of the other. (*Apocalypse Revealed* 943.3)

As people regenerate and become wiser they change and become closer to these spirits and angels, and their communication becomes more profound. Not that they hear their voices, but that their thoughts become more in tune with what the Word teaches, rise to a higher plane, and are closer to those of the angels.

These kinds of things vary from person to person and place to place. In some parts of the world people tend to be more devout, to think about and love the Lord more than in other places. Many passages state that the peoples of Africa are especially this way, and that for this reason they receive revelations from the Lord. (*Supplements* 76, *True Christianity* 840) These are apparently personal and private revelations, as there is little evidence of religious movements built on specific claims of this type. But in ancient times, and even in more recent times, there have been communications from heaven that have formed the basis of ancient religions and mythologies around the world.

The subjective feeling, however, that we are in true faith and are therefore immune to the dangers of evil spirits is not a way around this. In the first place our judgment as to whether we are dealing with good or evil spirits is likely to be in error. We are told:

Spirits induce so strong a persuasion that it is the Lord Himself who speaks and who commands, that a person cannot but believe and obey. (*Spiritual Diary* 1622)

So we are certain to be fooled right from the start. On top of that, the very fact that spirits are willing to speak to us at all in anything other than a brief encounter is evidence that they are not good. Not to mention the fact that anything that they tell us will be what we want to hear and may be untrue. There is not a way around this, unless of course we are a revelator.

6. Divine revelation, or the giving of the Word of God, is something completely different.

It may seem inconsistent that Moses, who communicated regularly with a spiritual entity, should have laid down such harsh laws about contact with spiritual entities. Similarly, it may seem inconsistent that Swedenborg warns so strongly against this kind of communication.

Accepting these prohibitions depends on our willingness to view what they wrote as an entirely different category: Divine revelation, or the Word of God, a special class of information that is believed to come

directly from the Lord Himself. Swedenborg repeatedly claimed that he received nothing from angels or spirits, but only from the Lord alone. He said that he received it while reading the Word, and that this revelation constitutes the coming of the Lord:

Such immediate revelation is granted at this day because this is what is meant by the Coming of the Lord. (*Heaven and Hell* 1)

I have not received anything that pertains to the doctrines of the New Church from any angel, but from the Lord alone, while I read the Word. (*True Christianity* 779)

This was Swedenborg's claim, made in many passages. Accepting it means that we see these works as authoritative with respect to the nature of spiritual experiences. It means that although we acknowledge a wide variety of spiritual phenomena, and know that many things of this type are harmless, comforting and beneficial, there is no wisdom to be gained by the practice of spiritualism.

Is it safe to speak with spirits?

This isn't a question that is often asked within the General Church today. In the 19th century, however, it was a vexing problem in the church. Accounts of it fill the pages of New Church periodicals and histories, and even the pages of *New Church Life*. Spiritism in various countries in Europe played a major role in the end of the church in those countries.

It is worth reminding ourselves that spiritism and spiritualism are much larger movements than Swedenborgianism, with many practitioners who

We are all surrounded by angels and spirits, and they play an enormous role in our lives. But they are no more aware of us than we are of them, and except as noted above, direct contact with them holds no advantages for us.

regard Swedenborg as the father of both movements. As Swedenborg becomes better known through efforts like *offTheLeftEye* it is interesting to see how many people there are who have learned about Swedenborg through those movements. Through those eyes Swedenborg is one among many seers and mediums who can tell us about spiritual phenomena.

In the General Church, however, the Heavenly Doctrine is not seen as one among many sources of information about spiritual things. It is seen as part of the Lord's Word, as the true source of knowledge about heaven and how to love the neighbor. We are all surrounded by angels and spirits, and they play an enormous role in our lives. But they are no more aware of us than we are of them, and except as noted above, direct contact with them holds no advantages for us.



The Rev. Jeremy F. Simons is semi-retired and serves as Chaplain of Bryn Athyn Cathedral and Spiritual Editor of *New Church Life*. He served as pastor of Bryn Athyn Church and previously in Glenview, Illinois, and Kempton, Pennsylvania. He and his wife, Allyn (Edmonds), live in Bryn Athyn, Contact: Jeremy.Simons@brynathynchurch.org

Perspectives on Providence

Erik Martin

After the *Hamilton* film came out last summer, I went down a bit of a rabbit hole, listening to Ron Chernow's *George Washington* biography, his *Hamilton* biography, Sarah Vowell's *Lafayette* biography, Benjamin Franklin's autobiography, watching the amazing HBO *John Adams* miniseries, and reading a lot of letters.

One of the things that strikes me is how religious beliefs and how we talk about them have changed since then. Sometimes the Founding Fathers are presented as not particularly religious. Very often the term "deist" is used with the implication that it means someone with an abstract philosophical idea of a God -- a God without an active role in the progress of an individual or a nation. But that's not an accurate description of any of the beliefs of the Founding Fathers.

The most prominent Founding Father who called himself a "deist" was Benjamin Franklin. He was attacked as an atheist for calling himself that, but here's how he described what that meant in his autobiography:

I never was without some religious principles. I never doubted, for instance, the existence of the Deity; that he made the world, and governed it by his providence; that the most acceptable service of God was the doing good to man; that our souls are immortal; and that all crime will be punished, and virtue rewarded, either here or hereafter.

To understand more about what Franklin means by providence, there is a speech he gave at the Constitutional Convention, after it had been trying to agree on the principles of the Constitution for about a month with little progress, so he was proposing starting their sessions with a prayer. Here's an excerpt of what he said in Philadelphia on June 28, 1787, as recorded by Madison:

In this situation of this Assembly, groping as it were in the dark to find political truth, and scarce able to distinguish it when presented to us, how has it happened, Sir, that we have not hitherto once thought of humbly applying to the Father of

It's this palpable sense of Divine Providence that always strikes me as so prominent in the thinking of all of the [Founding Fathers], certainly most of all in George Washington, who was constantly bringing it up.

lights to illuminate our understandings?

In the beginning of the Contest with G. Britain, when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayer in this room for the divine protection. Our prayers, Sir, were heard, and they were graciously answered. All of us who were engaged in the struggle must have observed frequent instances of a superintending providence in our favor.

To that kind providence we owe this happy opportunity of consulting in peace on the means of establishing our future national felicity. And have we now forgotten that powerful friend? Or do we imagine that we no longer need his assistance? I have lived, Sir, a long time, and 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?

It's this palpable sense of Divine Providence that always strikes me as so prominent in the thinking of all of them, certainly most of all in George Washington, who was constantly bringing it up. Two years into the Revolutionary War, he wrote to Brigadier General Nelson:

The hand of providence has been so conspicuous in all this that he must be worse than an infidel that lacks faith, and more wicked that has not gratitude to acknowledge his obligations; but it will be time enough for me to turn preacher when my present appointment ceases; and therefore, I shall add no more on the Doctrine of Providence.

On the very unlikely circumstances of the discovery of the plot of Benedict Arnold against Washington, he wrote in his General Orders:

The providential train of circumstances which led to it affords the most convincing proof that the Liberties of America are the object of divine Protection.

In preparing for Yorktown, he wrote to Congress,

I take particular pleasure in acknowledging that the interposing Hand of Heaven, in the various instances of our extensive preparation for this operation, has been most conspicuous and remarkable.

And after the surrender at Yorktown his orders read:

The commander-in-chief earnestly recommends that the troops not on duty should universally attend with that seriousness of deportment and gratitude of heart which the recognition of such reiterated and astonishing interposition of providence demands of us.

There are far too many examples to quote, but Washington probably most concisely stated his sentiments on the subject in his first Inaugural Address:

No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the Invisible Hand which conducts the affairs of men more than the people of the United States. Every step by which they have advanced to the character of an independent nation seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency.

The things Washington says about providence encapsulate the **first property** of the idea of it, that I think they all believed: that God intercedes in the affairs of humanity to advance those things that benefit humanity; and in the case of America, one such thing was the idea of a free and democratic society as a model for the world.

John Adams also made a similar statement:

I always consider the settlement of America with reverence and wonder, as the opening of a grand scene and design in providence, for the illumination of the ignorant and the emancipation of the slavish part of mankind all over the earth.

Of course, the most famous American statement about providence was Thomas Jefferson's in the Declaration of Independence:

And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.

I think maybe some modern readers see that and think it's a platitude. But this was a year into the war, and it certainly wasn't a platitude.

In Jefferson's first Inaugural Address he also mentioned that all the various forms in which religion was practiced in the nation included "*acknowledging and adoring an overruling providence.*" But the most interesting thing to me that he said about providence was what he wrote in his last letter to his son as parting words before he died:

Adore God. Reverence and cherish your parents. Love your neighbor as yourself, and your country more than yourself. Be Just. Be True. Murmur not at the ways of providence. So shall the life into which you have entered, be the portal to one of eternal and ineffable bliss.

Murmur not at the ways of providence.

And in a letter to John Page he wrote:

The most fortunate of us, in our journey through life, frequently meet with calamities and misfortunes which may greatly afflict us; and, to fortify our minds against the attacks of these calamities and misfortunes should be one of the principal studies and endeavors of our lives. The only method of doing this is to assume a perfect resignation to the Divine will, to consider that whatever does happen, must happen; and that, by our uneasiness, we cannot prevent the blow before it does fall, but we may add to its force after it has fallen.

As he was about to embark on writing the *Federalist Papers*, Alexander Hamilton wrote to his publisher: “For my own part, I sincerely esteem it a system which without the finger of God, never could have been suggested and agreed upon by such a diversity of interests.”

These words hold a lot of weight from someone who grieved his whole life from the death of his wife at a very young age. But it also raises the **second property** of the idea of providence: that providence operates in ways that we don't will for ourselves; and that when it does, all we can necessarily know is that that is what must be.

I started this with Franklin invoking providence to guide the collection of minds trying to craft a Constitution. Of course, a number of months later, they did come out of Independence Hall having agreed -- unanimously -- on a Constitution which would go on to be, and remains, the longest-used written Constitution in the world. On his return to New York, as he was about to embark on writing the *Federalist Papers*, Alexander Hamilton wrote to his publisher:

For my own part, I sincerely esteem it a system which without the finger of God, never could have been suggested and agreed upon by such a diversity of interests.

Similarly, from the Pennsylvania delegation to the Constitutional Convention, Benjamin Rush wrote:

I do not believe that the Constitution was the offspring of inspiration, but I am as satisfied that it is as much the work of a Divine Providence as any of the miracles recorded in the Old and New Testament.

Several others from the Convention made similar statements, but probably most noteworthy is James Madison's, since he wrote his in one of our founding documents, *Federalist #37*:

The real wonder is that so many difficulties should have been surmounted, and surmounted with a unanimity almost as unprecedented as it must have been unexpected. It is impossible for any man of candor to reflect on this circumstance without partaking of the astonishment. It is impossible for the man of pious reflection not to perceive in it a finger of that Almighty hand which has been so frequently and signally extended to our relief in the critical stages of the revolution.

These statements define a **third property** of the idea of Divine Providence, in that they imply that Providence must act, at least in part, through the mind

of man; otherwise it would make no sense to attribute to providence what happens in a meeting of mortal minds.

It would feel like a slight to leave out Abraham Lincoln, since he's the only U.S. President to rival Washington's obsession with providence. He wrote much on it during the Civil War, but the most gut-wrenching is this passage from his second Inaugural Address:

Both read the same Bible and pray to the same God; and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces; but let us judge not that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered; that of neither has been answered fully.

The Almighty has His own purposes. "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!" If we shall suppose that American Slavery is one of those offences which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South, this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offence came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a Living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope -- fervently do we pray -- that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue, until all the wealth piled by the bond-man's 250 years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash, shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said "the judgments of the Lord, are true and righteous altogether"

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan -- to achieve and cherish a lasting peace among ourselves and with the world. to do all which may achieve and cherish a just, and a lasting peace, among ourselves, and with the world, all nations."

This might be a **fourth property** of the idea of providence, that it seeks Justice. Hamilton wrote something that perhaps expands on this idea in a letter to an unknown recipient in 1804:

Arraign not the dispensations of providence, they must be founded in wisdom and goodness; and when they do not suit us, it must be because there is some fault in

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ourselves which deserves chastisement; or because there is a kind intent, to correct in us some vice or failing, of which, perhaps, we may not be conscious; or because the general plan requires that we should suffer partial ill. In this situation it is our duty to cultivate resignation, and even humility, bearing in mind, in the language of the poet, "that it was pride which lost the blest abodes."

But this perhaps has more to do with the second property. Hamilton being someone who knew loss like Jefferson, this has much in common with "*murmur not at the ways of providence.*" The kind correction that Hamilton talks about may be somewhat distinct from the bloody justice that Lincoln refers to.

All of this is of interest to me because in my personal faith the idea of providence is likewise central to my conception of the world. And because this same country as these men noted the role of Providence in its creation and preservation through calamity, is in a situation that once again is seen by many as being on a path toward calamity.

If we navigate all the potential hazards surrounding the transfer of power at hand in the given moment, the portents and indications of degradation of democracy, discourse, reason, civility and other essential virtues still loom just as large, and I don't personally see a path that would appear to reverse those degradations no matter what democratic choices we to make. Of course, no one said that such paths are supposed to be visible to me, but still the lack of a visible path concerns a lot of people and indicates to them an approaching end of American democracy.

So when I think of what providence has in store for the nation, I think about these properties that the Founding Fathers seemed to refer to, and which I believe they probably describe accurately.

First, that so long as the country still has great good to offer the world, both in being a model for good, and in how we tangibly serve the world for good, then providence must surely preserve it.

Second, that the way providence acts is through the minds of people; through their virtues, through their wisdom, through their compassion, that providence protects those things like it protected George Washington when he was riding like a maniac across the battlefield of the Battle Monmouth. It protects those things so that they can have influence toward the wise and just and compassionate outcome that benefits humanity. But the virtues have to exist to be protected.

So the question becomes how much good and how much virtue, and how much potential for good in the world does the nation have? In the grand scheme of the universe, is it worth protecting? It's hard for me to imagine it's not, which is why it's hard for me to imagine that the nation isn't worth divine preservation. But as for the other properties, I think of the words of Jefferson:

"I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just; that his justice cannot sleep forever." Those words turned out to be a portent, and they still seem to apply.

But the ultimate property of the idea of providence is that it always works for the good of humanity, whether we like or understand the path that leads that way or not. That's why I think Jefferson's advice to "murmur not at the ways of providence," and "to assume a perfect resignation to the Divine will, to consider that whatever does happen, must happen" is sound, and seems like the state of mind most proper to me.

My faith certainly doesn't exist for the purpose of avoiding anxiety, but I can quite easily imagine how much greater my anxiety for the nation would be without it. Lincoln faced far greater immediate calamity when he said these words during the Civil War, but they still resonate with me now in the tenuous state of the country as it appears to me:

If it were not for my firm belief in an overruling providence, it would be difficult for me, in the midst of such complications of affairs, to keep my reason on its seat. But I am confident that the Almighty has His plans, and will work them out; and, whether we see it or not, they will be the best for us.



Erik Martin is a 1988 graduate of the Academy Boys School and earned an Associate Degree from Bryn Athyn College in 1990. He and his wife, Rachel (Genzlinger), live in Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania, where he works as a technical consultant. Contact: development@erikmartin.com

The ultimate property of the idea of providence is that it always works for the good of humanity, whether we like or understand the path that leads that way or not. That's why I think Jefferson's advice to "murmur not at the ways of providence," is sound.

Church News

Compiled by Bruce Henderson

BRYN ATHYN COLLEGE GRADUATION

When Bryn Athyn College's 143rd commencement was cancelled in May by the COVID-19 pandemic, President **Brian Blair** promised the seniors the traditional graduation experience they deserved. It had to be postponed again in September but finally took place on a mild and sunny Saturday afternoon, November 14. (See photos on page 83.)

In welcoming a limited crowd of graduates, families and friends to the outdoor ceremony, President Blair praised the graduates: "COVID became a rallying point for them despite the inconveniences and interruptions caused during this difficult time. They never lost their passion or joy in celebrating their accomplishments and thus inspired us all."

The commencement address by **Brian Henderson**, former faculty member and now Director of Glencairn Museum, related the graduates' challenges during the pandemic lockdown and the lessons they have learned in their college experience to renewed resilience and trusting in the Lord. He told of his own experience within the past two years of suffering a sudden and severe medical trauma that left him, at one point, facing the rest of his life in a wheelchair. Now he has returned to near-normalcy and told the graduates why he is "grateful for this experience" – and for all he learned about "The Lessons of Adversity." (See page 12.)

Valedictorian **Zachary Brock** noted that the strength of his class lay in the diversity of their personalities and backgrounds and their similarities of wanting to improve the world around them. He said: "We learned that many of us are here today so that we can go out into the world and help other people. Whether it's through nursing, teaching, counseling, rehabilitating or business-ing we're a class that wants to make a difference in other people's lives."

There were 54 graduates receiving Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees – 14 of them *cum laude*. Of the 54, 39 were able to be present at this delayed ceremony. Here is a list of the graduates: (* indicates *cum laude*; ** indicates the valedictorian)

Jissed R. Algeria	Brittany G. Gunther*
Francines G. Almonte	R. Aaliya Gunther*
Chelsea M. Barcliff	Eric Higgins*
Alyssa Bosler	Alexis A. Juritsch
Shauna M. Breen	Redate S. Kibret*
Robert Breitner*	Edward Krystopowicz
Zachary C. Brock* **	Rachel LaCroix
Khayla Bundy	Julion S. Lever
Dakiyah C. Burgin	Vojtech Luza
Cody J. Castor	Christopher M. Mitchell Jr.
Kiley P. Clay*	Timothy J. Mullin*
Kayla M. Colon	John D. Newman
Peter M. Comas	Alexander Pafford
Bradley M. DePasquale	Edgard Rodriguez Gutierrez
Hannah Dewees*	Kyla H. Rogers
Margaret Echols*	Nikita Smirnov*
Rachel E. Elphick*	Cody A. Smith
Chantal A. Farmer*	Sarah Smith
Maddison L. Foley	Maya R. Synnstedt
Hannah C. Fox	Isaac Syre
Amber D. Gandy	Alexander H. Tan
Alejandra I. Garcia	Okoye M. Taylor
Angel L. Gerena	Wendy Tepoz-Pacio
Erin I. Gibson	Ricky Tran
Rose V. Glass*	Virginia L. Wallace
Amanda L. Gleason	Allison J. Warren
Benjamin D. Griffiths	Logan A. Wolf

PASTORAL CHANGES

The Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr.

I am pleased to announce two pastoral placements for the United Kingdom, effective July 1, 2021. **The Rev. Erik Buss** has accepted a role of Senior/National Pastor throughout the UK, based in Colchester. **The Rev. Grant Odhner** has accepted an assisting pastoral role in the UK, based in London. Of note is that these placements were primarily orchestrated by **Assistant Bishop David Lindrooth** on behalf of the Bishop's Office, in partnership with the **Rev. Göran Appelgren**, who serves as Regional Pastor for Europe.

We wish well to the Church there, as it works with these experienced, capable pastors to envision a hopeful future of worship and spiritual life together. As can be expected, these moves trigger pastoral placement processes in Bryn Athyn, where Erik is serving as Assistant Pastor, and Bryn Athyn College Theological School, where Grant is a core faculty member.

The Rev. Derek P. Elphick has been nominated to the position of Head Pastor of Bryn Athyn Church, succeeding the **Rev. Eric H. Carswell**, who is retiring at the end of this church year (June 30, 2021).

Derek was overwhelmingly affirmed during a large society meeting for that purpose on November 11, 2020. Warm congratulations to Derek and his wife, Gay. The Elphicks will move to Bryn Athyn in time for Derek to assume his new duties on July 1, 2021.

We will share news of these and other pastoral moves as it becomes known.

THE CHURCH IN ASIA

The Rev. John Jin

This New Church is the crown of all the churches which have up to now existed upon earth. (*True Christian Religion* 786)

Although 2020 was a very challenging year indeed, we continued to forge ahead with the goal of supporting our neighbors in Asia to “better understand and live the Lord’s teachings in the Heavenly Doctrines, by being part of the Lord’s community and by sharing that happiness with their neighbors.” As we close out the year 2020 with the hopeful prayer that 2021 will be a little easier on everyone, we would like to share some brief updates:

Asia New Church Revival Project

The Asia New Church has faced serious challenges for some time. From slowly dwindling membership to decreasing interest and passion for the Heavenly Doctrines, as well as issues in teamwork and lack of engagement at various levels, there was a real sense of crisis. This resulted in lack of community

energy and even a loss of sharing a common goal. In response, the church leadership gathered through a series of video conferences to discuss how to tackle these challenges.

In the past, pastors and congregations came together and participated in pastor-centered communities, with a focus on studying the Lord's revelation. Upon inspecting these challenges, however, we realized we needed to pay more attention and do better with relevant life applications. Churches are heavenly communities on earth where we get to practice loving each other through useful service. But we realized we were not doing this as well as we had intended, often letting our egos get in the way.

Therefore, the leadership decided we needed to get back to the basics and change the way we did things. We settled on promoting a program called the "Project," in which the entire Asia New Church participated. The "Project," currently being tested in the United States, Korea, Japan and China, is turning attention and energy into uniting its congregants to focused, useful service projects that extend its reach.

For example, **Pastor John Jin** is working with a female church member in California, creating YouTube content to share the Heavenly Doctrine with a wider community. He is also working with church members in Japan and China to develop comic books in the anime style for adults, based on *Heaven and Hell* and *Spiritual Experiences*. In these ways, they are making the Heavenly Doctrine more accessible and approachable for the wider community, focused on how to live a useful life.

Everyone involved is learning a great deal and they have enjoyed reigniting their passion for the church. Moreover, our leadership is learning to be more open to new ideas and to work hand-in-hand with their congregants to rediscover new ways of respecting and working with one another, essentially learning to better love one another.

China Mission Conference

Since 2018, the *China Mission Conference* has gathered annually, initially driven by one person's efforts to now make a much more systematic, sustainable, organized effort. At first, we focused on reaching young people and those without any Christian background. Recently, we have discussed how to support the mission and reach the "gentiles," not only in China but also in Korea and Japan. We will continue to investigate how to best do our missionary work through our Spiritual Leader Training.

New Church Theological School

The Reverends John Jin and Andy Dibb continue diligently to train the ministers in Asia – two in Korea and four in China. We are excited that from

this work we now have one young man from China who has officially applied to the Bryn Athyn College Theological School.

Translation Work

In 2020, we have been quite productive! We have successfully translated the following:

- *Arcana Coelestia*, vol. 4-6, and *Conjugal Love* (revised) into Chinese
- *Arcana Coelestia* 1 and *Apocalypse Explained* 2 into Korean

In Japan, Swedenborg Press celebrated its 10th year anniversary.

Spiritual Communities and Outreach

In Shanghai, Chinese New Church members are openly meeting face-to-face. Although they are still carrying out online meetings for book studies, translation work and doctrine study groups, they are actively engaging in various ways, especially through these smaller groups.

Furthermore, the Swedenborg Research Center (using the acronym SRC instead of a church name) has taken charge of creating a website (swedenborgstudy.org) to maintain a Chinese, online New Church library of materials. It has uploaded translations of the Writings, secondary books, online discussion materials, audio materials as well as new reader guides. It will also provide materials that compare Swedenborg's teachings with other traditional teachings to promote visits by those who seek more intellectually stimulating aspects.

Korea

As we announced at our dedication service, the Korean New Church is moving forward with its "tent-making" mission. However, the Korean economic recession has resulted in decreased rent profit and increased debt. The congregation is putting in a lot of effort into slowly but steadily paying down its debt.

The good news is that the Korean New Church is continuing to grow and be productive in various ways, including translation work as well as training ministers through the Theological School. For example, they have successfully translated *Apocalypse Explained* 2 and 3, and *Arcana Coelestia* 1 will soon be published. For its work in reaching young people, they are developing video and audio materials and using social media.

Japan

Although the Japanese New Church is not very active, small groups gather in

Tokyo, Kyoto and Okinawa. Members continue to work on new and updated translations and have created audio materials as well.

Treasurer's Note

The year 2020 brought on too many challenges, both here in the United States as well as all over the world. Therefore, we decided to not ask for donations this year with the hope and prayer that "Peace be with you." (*John 20:19*)

NEW CHRISTIAN BIBLE STUDY

Steve David

Yesterday, I got this email: "I LOVE your website!"

That writer is not alone. Last year, more than four million people visited the New Christian Bible Study site, up 47% from the previous year. They come from all points of the compass. They use our site in many languages – reading the Word and the Writings. Most are repeat visitors. They're Bible readers, and they've found a place where they can learn about the real, relevant, inner power of the Word. That's a really exciting thing!

If you can help support the New Christian Bible Study project this year, we will work hard to put your donation to good use. (Click the "Donate" button at the bottom of the home page, www.newchristianbiblestudy.org.)

Here's what's on our drawing-board, that your contribution will support:

- *Writings for Everyone* – This is our big push to get all of Swedenborg's published theological works online in all the major languages, all linked up and matched to good translations of the Word. We have more than 400 instances online, and we have work queued up in French, Japanese, Malayalam, English and Italian, and pipelines active in half a dozen more languages, too.
- *Explain the Word (Chapter Summaries)* – We want visitors to be able to see a summary for any chapter of the Word they're reading. The summaries need to be modern, accessible, well-researched and thought-provoking. We've had great luck in getting some excellent ones already from a variety of authors, and we're about 30% of the way through. For some good recent examples, browse *Psalms* explanations by the **Rev. Julian Duckworth**, or those on the *Gospel of Mark* by the **Rev. Dr. Ray Silverman**.
- *Explain the Word (Word Meanings); easier ways to explore topics in the Writings; more translations of the Word; a clearinghouse of links to New Church discussion groups, and much more.*

Financial support is really important for us and we offer a big thank-you to everyone who has helped. The same gratitude goes to all the people who make in-kind donations of time and creativity, too – writing, proofing, scanning, providing photos or artwork to illustrate stories, helping with translations, providing advice. It's truly been a broad New Church effort and it's a fun thing to be part of.

THETA ALPHA SCHOLARSHIPS

Two education scholarships will be offered for the 2021-22 school year. This annual award is given to support women attending Bryn Athyn College of the New Church who desire to become New Church teachers and declare Education as a major or minor (or Interdisciplinary Degree).

The annual scholarship award amount is \$2,100 (\$700 paid directly to the College at the beginning of each trimester), for up to two recipients. One award is for an incoming freshman the other is for a current Bryn Athyn College of the New Church Education student. The award may be used toward tuition, fees and/or books.

Three scholarships are available to women students of Bryn Athyn College of the New Church who have a 3.0 GPA and are studying Religion (major, minor, ID) or MARS program or are international students. There are two \$2,000 and one \$1,000 scholarship awarded to eligible recipients who exemplify the teachings of the New Church. These are annual merit-based scholarships that can be used for tuition, college fees, books or supplies.

Two scholarships are available to women attending Bryn Athyn College of the New Church earning a Master's Degree and having a 3.0 GPA or higher. Each annual award is \$2,000 (paid directly to the College at the beginning of each trimester). These are annual merit-based scholarships that can be used for tuition, college fees, books or supplies.

Applications are due February 12, 2021 and the Master's application due April 1st, 2021. To apply: email ancdaughters@gmail.com or call Sarah Wong at BAC 267-502-6085 or see BAC website www.brynathyn.edu).

ANC Scholarships

Two annual scholarships are offered for the 2021-2020 school year in the amount of \$2,500 for up to two young women who exemplify the teachings of the New Church. The scholarship may be used toward tuition, books or fees. These are annual merit- and need-based scholarships and may be applied for yearly.

Applications are due March 1, 2021. To apply: email ancdaughters@gmail.com for applications.

KEMPTON PROJECT

For information about the Kempton Project's new edition of the New Church translation of the Word, please use this website: www.thesacredscripture/TheWord.

SEEKING STUDENTS WITH INQUIRING MINDS

The Rev. Brian Smith

The Washington New Church School is pleased to announce our young and growing new high school – The White Horse Academy. Our vision is to serve students near and far who would like to have an individualized, New Church, high school education. We are harnessing the power of the internet to connect our students with both live and recorded classes and, as important, with each other.

When accepted into the program, students and parents meet with their education coach to formulate their individualized plan of study, which will include the necessary courses to earn a high school diploma, as well as a plan for experiential learning and the development of a portfolio showcasing the student's skills, knowledge and service to community.

If you are or have a rising high schooler please contact us. We would love to share more details about our program with you.

We are excited to build a network around our vision of individualized, New Church education for our students. If you are someone who loves creative education and raising children in the New Church we would be thrilled to be in touch with you, even if your high school years are long behind you. If you have a talent that you love sharing with others and are familiar with tools such as Zoom or Office 365, or are willing to learn new skills, contact us. We want to make you part of our team. Call or email us. We look forward to hearing from you.

Education Coach: Jana.Sprinkle@washnewchurch.org; 410-220-9003
Principal: Brian.Smith@washnewchurch.org; 301-850-3029

BOYNTON BEACH RETREAT IS BACK!

The popular Boynton Beach Retreat, previously cancelled for 2021, will conduct a one-day virtual session from 1:00-4:00 p.m. on March 14. This will be a joint effort with the Swedenborg Foundation's offTheLeftEye program.

The tentative program includes:

- Worship led by **Pastor Alan Cowley**
- Session One: **Curtis Childs** and the **Rev. Dr. Jonathan Rose**, two of the primary presenters of *offTheLeftEye*

- Session Two: **Dr. Jim de Maine**, a very popular previous presenter and author of the new book, *Facing Death: Finding Dignity, Hope and Healing at the End*
- Session Three: Curtis and Jonathan will wrap up the program

This event is virtual and open to all who wish to participate. There are no registration fees. This will be the first day of Daylight Saving Time, so check your clocks.

BRYN ATHYN COLLEGE COVID COMMENCEMENT

Photos by Serena Sutton



Celebrating



Proud parents, Beth and Jon Brock, with son Zachary, class valedictorian



A unique class photo with masked graduates



The procession



Signs of our times



The outdoor venue, in front of the College Center



Who are these masked graduates?



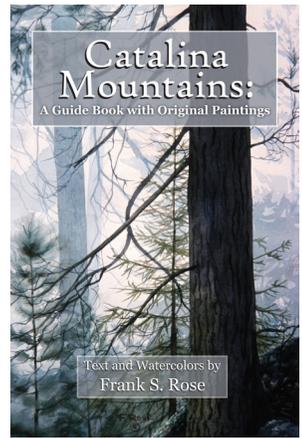
Frank's artwork



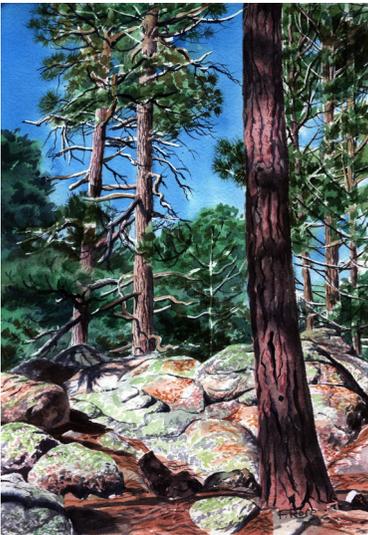
Using a magnifying glass to explore tiny flowers



Frank hiking and smiling – the two go together



The cover for one of his three books



More of his artwork



Some of the mountain flowers he loved

Life Lines

FRANK ROSE'S MAGICAL TOUCH

In 1967, when I was a freshman at the Academy, I thought that I knew the whole Donald and Marjorie Rose family. Four Rose families lived within a few hundred yards of my home, and I grew up with many of the Rose children as friends. But at school chapel one morning I learned that I did not know Donald and Marjorie's two youngest sons, Frank and Don. Both were ministers serving overseas during my childhood. In 1967 Frank was 40, Don was 36, and they teamed up to give us a presentation about the books of the Writings that made an impression on me that I will never forget. I thought: "Who are these people?"

At the time Frank was still running the British Academy Summer School, which some students in my class attended and advertised as "wonderful." In 1968 Frank and Louise moved to Kitchener, and promptly founded the Maple Leaf Academy Summer School, which also got good reviews. So, when Frank started the Laurel Leaf Academy near Pittsburgh in 1971 virtually everyone in my age group signed up.

The camps were popular because they made religion fun, and also because they taught small group techniques for discussing the Doctrines that were very helpful. Soon, however, Frank and his brother-in-law Larry Soneson added something else, a variety of ways of sharing and discussing things in what became "family groups."

Although these sharing groups were controversial, over the years they have had a very real impact on the way that meetings are run and that many classes are held all over the Church. Learning to take turns going around the room, and not interrupting or contradicting other people's statements, has become normal in many settings. Similarly, answering the question, "How are you?" in these groups has led to many people being able to share their thoughts and feelings honestly and without embarrassment – all thanks to Frank and Larry.

But maybe Frank's biggest influence on me happened after he became pastor in Tucson in 1982, where he and Louise built the Sunrise Chapel in 1986. He hosted several clergy seminars there where he showed us his evangelization methods and coached us in preaching. The way that he did things was both encouraging and impressive. It seemed like everything he touched was done

with genius and good will, with an amazing attention to detail. The beautiful Sunrise Chapel is a testament to that work.

Of course, Frank did many more things than I am mentioning here, and his engaging personality and leadership style were a huge part of everything he did. Together with his brother Don he had a positive influence on my life and on the lives of a great many people. His memorial service led by the Rev. Nathan Gladish, and reported on elsewhere in this issue, was a moving and appropriate tribute to his remarkable life.

(JFS)

SMALL WONDERS

The Memorial Service for the Rev. Frank S. Rose (page 32) was unique and encompassing because that's the way he was. There were just so many facets to Frank's ministry – a ministry that extended well beyond the pulpit and left indelible impressions, from intimate settings to hiking trails.

One theme that coursed through all the sermons and classes, summer camps and spiritual growth groups, nature hikes and lectures was evangelization – both within the church and outside of it. He passionately wanted to grow the church. He wanted people to know and understand the Lord's truth and the Lord's creation – where it is ultimated – and to be drawn to Him. He worked at learning how to grow churches, put it all into practice at the Sunrise Chapel in Tucson, Arizona, and encouraged other ministers.

And yet, son Jonathan – who has helped take evangelization to a new level with the Swedenborg Foundation's enormously popular *offTheLeftEye* videos – said in his eulogy for Frank: "Throughout the first 30 years of his ministry he continued to evangelize in every way he could think of. He cultivated an ability to form deep connections with people of all kinds, quickly, but still had to admit that *not one person* joined the church as a result of his three decades of efforts. Yet he didn't give up."

That is both sad and inspiring. It is sad that he never saw the tangible result of a new name on the membership roll. But as Jonathan said, he never gave up, and he never stopped smiling and reaching out.

Imagine Emanuel Swedenborg being discouraged – and he was – that people weren't immediately attracted to this new revelation he had given his life to and believed in so completely. He trusted in the Lord and didn't give up either.

And Frank left lasting relationships. Even people who had just met him on a trail or heard him speak will never forget what he meant in their lives. The walls of hundreds – maybe thousands – of homes throughout the world are graced with one of his paintings of nature and are forever blessed. The

connections never die.

So, yes, I would say that Frank Rose has grown the church – maybe not in numbers of people sitting in the pews each Sunday, but in the hearts of all the many lives he forever touched. That is where the Lord’s Church really grows – within our hearts.

One of Frank’s three books on art and flowers, treasured by so many friends, is *Small Wonders*. And that is his legacy: “small wonders” in hearts and minds and lives all over the world. We’ll remember him always with that welcoming smile and an invitation to adventure – spiritual and natural. And that’s what we reflect back to him: smiles and eternal gratitude.

(BMH)

ROBERT KLEIN: MOST DEVOTED VOLUNTEER

Over the past 60 years and longer, Bob Klein – who passed into the spiritual world on December 7, 2020 – has been very significant in the progress of New Church audio recording. Alongside a successful career as a chemical engineer, he and his wife Laurie devoted countless hours to volunteer work. Bob has been an ambulance driver, a church usher, a builder of BACT sets, and teamed up with Laurie in projects – from Friday Supper committees, to book sales, to evangelization efforts. But the volunteer role that he most enjoyed, and where he had the greatest impact, was in sound recording.

He began working under Kenneth Synnstedt in the late 1950s and early 1960s and continued right up into this year. His ability to adapt to the rapid technical changes that took place in the field over that time was impressive. He has been recognized repeatedly for this work and has probably been the church’s most outstanding volunteer over the past 50 years.

Most recently he has been working with Michelle Rose at New Church Audio, and she, like Carol Brannon before her, and others before her, has been struck by the care that he put into this volunteer work. For example, Michelle writes:

“The word that comes to mind most with Bob is ‘devotion.’ He worked SO hard when some recordings of sermons didn’t work out. He would take a lot of care to fix it so people could hear the best version possible. Or taking the time to amplify each person’s question in a doctrinal class (sometimes they are almost inaudible in the original recording).

“He could gingerly repair cassette tapes and rig creative fixes for problematic reels. He was quite resourceful that way. He also kept meticulous records, typing up index cards for each recording for his reference. Those index cards have come in handy many times, for information that is not yet in the database.

“One moment he told me about was a church service in Glenview that he found on



a reel. The minister's voice was drowned out for a few seconds by a low-flying plane, back when the nearby Naval Air Station was active. Bob was able to find the same words read from another service and splice them in. Only Bob would have thought of that and taken the time to do it.”

The Sound Recording Committee was established by Kenneth Synnestvedt in 1948, when on January 30, the first tape recording for the General Church was made – a recording of Bishop Acton's address to the Bryn Athyn Society at its celebration of Swedenborg's birthday. Since that time Bob has been involved with this committee over almost its entire lifespan, and saw its use mature and grow along with the rapid technological advances that have been made since the 1940s.

Now called New Church Audio, it makes recordings of sermons, classes and other events from across the church available on its website. Much of this is thanks to Bob's tireless efforts to record, correct and digitize this material. We owe him a debt of gratitude, along with other volunteers and employees who have worked in this use.

(JFS)

THE KEY TO RESILIENCE

The current General Church Journey Program is *Resilience*, based on the *Genesis* story of Joseph and his brothers. It's one of the more dramatic stories in the Word.

When Joseph, the favorite son of Jacob, is given a coat of many colors his jealous brothers plot to kill him but instead sell him into slavery in Egypt. Joseph endures hardships, including being imprisoned for a crime he did not commit. But he finds favor with the Pharaoh and rises to second-in-command in Egypt. Years later he is reunited with his unsuspecting brothers when they come to buy grain during a seven-year famine. They do not recognize him, and he does not reveal himself until they have been tested.

Throughout this tale – as with everything in the Word – are lessons for our own lives. Central here is the importance of resilience – of overcoming challenges by staying connected with the Lord and trusting in Him. Resilience is important to our growth and regeneration.

A sermon by the Rev. John L. Odhner (page 45) – *Resilience: Blessing Others* – wrapped up this series in Bryn Athyn with teachings about how the

Lord stores up states of innocence, trust, peace and goodwill in our minds from the time we are infants. These remains are what help us get through hard times – to become resilient and fruitful.

Joseph and his brothers were reconciled, but it must have been tenuous because when their father, Jacob, died, Joseph came up from Egypt to mourn with them and they were afraid that he would hate them “for all the evil which we did unto him.”

They sent a message to Joseph: “Thy father did command before he died, saying: ‘So shall we say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespasses of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil; and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father.’ And Joseph wept when they spoke unto him. And his brethren also went out and fell down before his face; and they said, ‘Behold, we be thy servants.’”

Then come some of the most memorable and powerful lessons in the Word. Joseph first says to his brothers: “Fear not, for am I in the place of God?” And then the ultimate in forgiveness and resilience: “But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.” (*Genesis* 50:16-20)

He told them again not to be afraid, and “he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.”

This is what resilience is all about – for Joseph, for his brothers, for all of us. Joseph always knew – no matter the trials of being banished from his family and enduring the pain of slavery and imprisonment – that the Lord was with him. He trusted in Him and taught us all that while experiences in life may appear as evil against us, the Lord means it for good to save us all.

(BMH)

SWEDENBORG’S HOME IN HEAVEN

I am a fan of podcasts, and one that I have especially enjoyed is “*Inside offTheLeftEye*,” a podcast done by Chelsea Rose Odhner in which she interviews Jonathan Rose, Curtis Childs and others associated with the *offTheLeftEye* productions. The September 27, 2020 episode – *Go-To Spiritual Tools and Swedenborg’s New Address in Heaven* – speculated about Swedenborg’s home in heaven, on the basis of his entries in the *Journal of Dreams*, written in 1744, just as his spiritual eyes were being opened.

In the Writings themselves Swedenborg often speaks of his home, of things that he saw from its windows, of leaving it to visit a place in heaven, and of returning to it afterwards. (See *Apocalypse Revealed* 875, *Conjugal Love* 293, 415, 522, *True Christianity* 77, 504) It is unclear whether he is speaking about his home in this world or in the next, although it seems to be the former,

and in either case he says little about it. He does also once make a reference to “the society in which I am” (*Spiritual Experiences* 6012) but this is ambiguous as well.

So the accounts in his *Journal of Dreams*, discussed in this podcast, stand out. It is interesting to speculate as to whether they actually describe his place in the next life, or if they are about the progress of his work, which is how he himself interprets them.

The first entry is about a dream on the night of June 15-16, 1744:

I came to a very lovely grove, planted everywhere with the most beautiful fig trees in fine growth and order. . . . The grove was surrounded with moats, except on the side where I was. I wanted to pass over a foot bridge, which was high, and with earth and grass on the top, but I dared not on account of the danger. (204)

At some distance from it I saw a large and quite beautiful palace with wings, where, it seemed to me, I desired to take lodgings in order to have the prospect of the grove and the moats always in view. A window was open far down in one of the wings, and I thought I should like to have my room there. (205)

Apparently, Swedenborg’s desire was communicated to those in charge, because the next entry, dated June 20-21, has them discussing his request for admission:

It seemed that a deliberation was going on as to whether I should be admitted to the society there, or to one of their councils. My father came out and said to me that what I had written about Providence was the finest. (206)

It seems that Swedenborg’s father lived there and came out to encourage him. Three months later the palace is mentioned again, on the night of September 29-30:

This was on Saturday night before Sunday. I beheld the gable-end of the most beautiful palace that anyone could see, and the midst of it was shining like the sun. I was told that it had been resolved in the society that I was to become a member, as it were an immortal, which no one had ever been before, unless he had died and lived [again]; others said that there were several [in that state]. (243)

This is evidently the same palace that he saw in June, and it is now even more beautiful than it was before. They had accepted him, and Swedenborg remarks that this had never before happened to someone still living in the world. Curiously, “others said that there were several [in that state].”

This palace was then Swedenborg’s new address, because he says:

Afterwards somebody said that he would pay me a visit at 10 o'clock, but he did not know where I lived. I replied that, as it then seemed to me, I lived in the gable-end of that palace. (244)

An aspect of this that interests me is that it suggests that his ideal living situation is a room in a large palace. One difference between Eden and the New

Jerusalem is that one is a garden and the other a city, one with few people, the other with many. Swedenborg's placing himself in "*the gable-end*" of a palace describes a living situation with many people in a single large building – more urban than rural, and yet with the pleasing views of water and groves of figs that he spoke about when he first saw it.

We do not know if this actually describes his spiritual address from then on, or if this is the place that he calls "*home*" in so many passages. He himself interprets these things as having reference to the progress of his understanding and spirit in the works that he was then engaged in.

His physical address and situation in the spiritual world are of little real importance, but it is still satisfying to think about. People love to think about their homes, and of the places that they might like to live, so it is pleasant to think about people we love and where they are living, whether in this life or the next. Many thanks to "*Inside offTheLeftEye*" and the fascinating discussion of this topic.

(JFS)

I'LL TAKE 'SWEDENBORG' FOR \$500, ALEX

When Alex Trebek, popular face of the *Jeopardy!* TV game show died in early November fans all over the world felt they had lost a friend. The affable host had been a welcome guest in dens and living rooms for 37 years. He is mourned as a kind and decent man, never full of himself as many celebrities are. He just wanted to be remembered as "a nice guy."

Viewers loved to match wits with contestants on an entertaining and enlightening range of subjects, always posing their answers in the form of questions. Over all these years at least four clues focused on Emanuel Swedenborg.

In one category, *Touched by An Angel*, the clue read: "This 18th century Swedish scientist who had visions of angels gave his name to a Christian mystic movement." One contestant rang in with the right question: "Who is Swedenborg?"

Now Alex Trebek, the man with all the answers, no doubt has a lot of questions of his own and is learning a lot of new answers – including the fact that Swedenborg was not a mystic.

Picture an angel "host" testing him: "This 18th century theologian and revelator wrote the best guidebook ever for where everyone ends up: *Heaven and Hell*."

Trebek would answer right away: "Who is Emanuel Swedenborg?" – quickly followed by: "Where can I find him?"

(BMH)

LINCOLN AND SWEDENBORG

The month of February in the United States includes Presidents' Day – originally to honor the birthdays of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, now celebrating all presidents.

Washington and Lincoln deserved to be singled out. Not only were they the two most distinguished of our presidents but our most religious. They regularly invoked God and His providence in their leadership. Lincoln said unabashedly: "I am busily engaged in the study of the Bible. I believe it is God's Word because it finds me where I am." But, curiously, he is the only American president who never joined a church.

He went to church regularly with his wife, but never joined, and we are left to speculate on the reasons. We know that he was a reader of Swedenborg, had several friends who were followers, and that he seemed to be influenced – especially in his view of providence. He probably was more acquainted with Swedenborg and what was revealed through him than any president before or since. But how did that affect his view on churches in general?

He did have reservations about the Christianity of his world and offered this telling conviction:

I have never united myself to any church, because I have found difficulty in giving my assent, without mental reservations, to the long, complicated statements of Christian doctrine which characterize their Articles of Belief and Confessions of Faith. When any church will inscribe over its altar, as its sole qualification for membership, the Master's condensed statement of the substance of both Law and Gospel: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself," that church will I join with all my heart and with all my soul.

We have no way of knowing if Lincoln ever read *Arcana Coelestia* 1799, but its teaching surely would have resonated with him: (New Century Edition translation)

(3) The Lord does not differentiate religious movements by their doctrine but by the way their members live what is taught. All doctrine – if it is true doctrine – looks to a life of love as its fundamental principle. What is the point of doctrine but to teach us how to be human?

(4) In the Christian world, it is doctrine that differentiates churches. Doctrine is the basis on which people call themselves Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist, and other names as well. These names grew out of doctrine alone, which would never happen if we considered love for the Lord and charity for our neighbor the chief concern of faith. If we did, those distinctions would simply be differences of opinion on the mysteries of faith.

True Christians would leave such issues up to the individual and the individual's conscience. In their heart they would say, "A person who lives as a Christian – who

lives as the Lord teaches – is a real Christian.” One church would come out of all the different churches, and all disagreement due to doctrine alone would vanish. Even the hatred of one denomination for another would melt away in a moment, and the Lord’s kingdom would come on earth.

(BMH)

2020: THE LAST WORD

The past year was consumed with the COVID-19 pandemic – lockdowns, face masks, social distancing, isolation, and a tragic number of deaths. The year ended with renewed spiking, restrictions, anxiety – and a desperate hope for new vaccines. The Word is full of messages of comfort and hope for times like these. Here is one resonating verse from Psalm 57:

Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in Thee; yea, in the shadow of Thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast.

(BMH)

Announcements

BAPTISMS

The innocence of the Lord flows into angels of the third heaven, where all are in innocence of wisdom; passes on through the lowest heavens, but only through the innocent affections of angels there; and so descends directly and indirectly into little children. (Conjugal Love 396)

Adams, Cade Kindred – At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, November 21, 2020 (born September 23, 2020), son of Michael and Beth Adams, Rev. Eric H. Carswell officiating.

Alden, Simone Elisabeth – At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, November 8, 2020 (born October 16, 2020), daughter of Micah and Tania Alden, Rev. Erik J. Buss officiating.

Buick, Annette Beatrice – At Kempton, Pennsylvania, November 7, 2020 (born October 26, 2020), daughter of Wade and Maraika Buick, Rev. Brett D. Buick officiating.

Carr, Gianna James – At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, October 12, 2020 (born April 3, 2020), daughter of Kyle and Christina Carr, Rev. Charles E. Blair officiating.

Cole, Adah Llywenan – At Kempton, Pennsylvania, June 13, 2020 (born April 27, 2020), daughter of John and Alexandra Cole, Rev. Stephen D. Cole officiating.

D'Alonzo, Lincoln Charles – At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, October 25, 2020 (born July 9, 2020), son of Adam and Amy D'Alonzo, Rev. Charles E. Blair officiating.

Elder, Otto Merit – At Rochester, Michigan, November 4, 2020 (born November 19, 2019), son of Christian and Carling Elder, Rev. Derek P. Elphick officiating.

Genzlinger, Tahlia Katharine – At Kempton, Pennsylvania, October 17, 2020 (born October 8, 2020), daughter of Matthew and Eliza Genzlinger, Rev. Stephen D. Cole officiating.

Lorefice, Everett Henry – At Blue Bell, Pennsylvania, November 22, 2020 (born February 3, 2020), son of Matthew and Jillian Lorefice, Rev. Charles E. Blair officiating.

CONFIRMATIONS

I will meditate on Your precepts and contemplate Your ways. I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your Word. Give me understanding and I shall keep Your law; indeed, I shall observe it with my whole heart. (Psalm 119:15,16)

King, Hayden Jesse – At Kempton, Pennsylvania, October 18, 2020, Rt. Rev. Bradley D. Heinrichs officiating.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

MARRIAGES

When married partners love each other tenderly, they think of eternity in regard to the marriage covenant, and not at all of its being terminated by death. (Conjugal Love 216)

Burnick-Boegly, William Lee Burnick and Alexandra Beth Boegly – At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, November 21, 2020, Rev. Jeremy F. Simons officiating.

King-Heinrichs, Kendal Scott King and Linnea Heinrichs – At Kempton, Pennsylvania, November 28, 2020, Rt. Rev. Bradley D. Heinrichs officiating.

Sawyer-Wombwell, Joshua Charles Sawyer and Alexa Marie Wombwell – At Asheville, North Carolina, October 31, 2020, Rev. Prescott A. Rogers officiating.

Soucie-Penkava, Luke Soucie and Kayla Penkava – At Glenview, Illinois, October 10, 2020, Rev. Mark D. Pendleton officiating.

MEMORIALS

A person lives as a person after death. The Lord, who is Jehovah from eternity and the Creator of the Universe, has provided that the condition of a person who conjoins himself with Him by living according to His commandments be more blessed and happy after death than his condition before it in the world. (Conjugal Love 28)

Acton, John Thomas Broadbridge – December 21, 2020, of Jenkintown, Pennsylvania. 92.

Alfelt, Mildred Donnette Rose – December 22, 2020, of Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania. 91.

Asplundh, Edward Boyd – January 14, 2021, of Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania. 94.

Asplundh, Edward Kessel – December 31, 2020, of Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania. 88.

Evans, Suzanne Funk – November 14, 2020, of Kempton, Pennsylvania. 53.

Fiske, Lois Schinler – May 2, 2020, of Lake in the Hills, Illinois. 62.

Gladish, Elizabeth Barnitz – January 4, 2021, of Tucson, Arizona. 76.

Gurney, Howard Buckingham – December 23, 2020, of Rochester, Michigan. 89.

Harer, Gloria Asplundh – December 21, 2020, of Glenview, Illinois. 96.

Heinrichs, Miriam Smith – February 6, 2020, of Boynton Beach, Florida. 90.

Jarvi, Helen* – August 2, 2020, of Minneapolis, Minnesota. 89.

Johns, Robert Hughes – January 1, 2021, of Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania. 89.

Klein, Robert Franklin – December 7, 2020, of Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania. 89.

Klein, Rev. Dr. Theodore – August 8, 2020, of West Roxbury, Massachusetts. 79.

Norman, Daniel James – May 8, 2020, of McGregor, Texas. 41.

Schnarr, Muriel Elizabeth Wallace – November 6, 2020, of Brampton, Ontario, Canada. 84.

Walsh, Glenn F. – October 26, 2020, of Delanson, New York. 69.

Young, Cecilia Francina – October 9, 2020, of Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. 104.

* This name was spelled incorrectly in the September/October 2020 *New Church Life*. Our apologies.



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



New Church

OFFICES Bryn Athyn, PA 19009

PUBLISHED BY General Church of the New Jerusalem

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SUBSCRIPTIONS New Church Life, Box 708, Bryn Athyn, PA, 19009
\$30 for any address, \$5.00 a single copy

TELEPHONE 267-502-4990

New Church Life

Published bimonthly by
the General Church of the New Jerusalem
Box 743, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009
U.S.A.

www.newchurch.org
www.newchurchlife.org
January/February 2021

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
LANGHORNE, PA
PERMIT NO. 81