

NEW CHURCH *Life*

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

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2024



REST FOR YOUR SOUL

*“Come unto Me, all you who labor,
and I will give you rest.”
Our rest is in the Lord.
(Page 10)*

**NEW CHURCH LIFE (USPS 378-180)
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New Church Life

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

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In This Issue

Editorials (page 3) include:

- *Blessed are the Peacemakers*: We long for peace, we work for peace – in our lives, our world, our church. Peace remains elusive but there is always hope. While the world is ever ravaged by war, we are encouraged to begin the crusade for peace in our own lives where the peace of heaven may prevail. That begins with each of us – where the church lives.
- *Swedenborg's Wife*: We all know that Emanuel Swedenborg never married, but not because he didn't want to or had opportunities. In providence, he was able to devote his life to his calling. There is some evidence that he knew who his wife in heaven would be. Whether or not that is true, we can be sure that Swedenborg and his wife are enjoying the blessings of conjugal love in heaven.

In a sermon, the Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr. cites many examples in the Word of the Lord promising *Rest for your Soul*. He says: "We want life to work out. We want peace, contentment between us and those in our lives, purpose and meaning, the end of strife. All these things can be ours to the extent that we make our nest before His altars, take up His yoke, and remember to magnify Him. For then we truly will have 'rest for our souls.'" (Page 10)

In a sermon on *Preparing for Eternal Life*, the Rev. James P. Cooper makes the case that New Church education plays a key role. "The purpose of the New church school is to cooperate with the New Church home in preparing the student's understanding so that he may enter freely into the mysteries of faith in the light of understanding from the three-fold Word." And, "The more genuine truth from the Word that a person knows, the more prepared he is to receive influx from the Lord, so an education based on Divine Truth makes the path to heaven easier." (Page 15)

Writing From the Bishop's Office the Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr. talks about what it means to enter the stream of providence and be guided to heaven. But it's not always a comfortable ride. "It's true that life is cyclical and changing

in nature. We go through seasons, cold states and warm states, enlightened and confused times, new beginnings symbolized by seedtime, and times of blessing symbolized by harvest. In contrast to the constancy of the Lord, our lives are ever-fluctuating.” But the course of the stream of providence is sure. (Page 21)

The Rev. Daniel W. Heinrichs spent all of his years as a much-loved pastor – as well as the long years of his retirement – preparing people for the life of heaven by living that life in this world. Now he is happily experiencing that life himself, reunited with his wife, Mim. In a touching Resurrection Address, the Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Sr. – who shared common roots with Dan as a pastor in South Africa – pays tribute to his work ethic and his impact in the lives of a great many grateful people. (Page 25)

Part of the legacy of the late Rev. Kurt Horigan Asplundh is a book discovered in his computer: *Living the Good Life – Seven Principles That Can Change the Way We Live Our Lives*. This is the Kurt Asplundh we all remember as a gentle, dedicated teacher, always helping us to understand the Lord’s teachings to make our own lives easier. (Page 30)

Another legacy book is a comprehensive biography of Emanuel Swedenborg by the late Jane Williams-Hogan: *The Making of a Modern Visionary – Emanuel Swedenborg, Eyewitness to the Apocalypse*. Dr. Hogan, a renowned professor Sociology at Bryn Athyn College, spent years researching this book, including trips to Sweden. The book is still being edited by family and friends. In this issue we offer her Foreword, to be followed by the Introduction in the March/April issue, and a full review when the book is published. (Page 34)

Church News (page 45) includes:

- A preview of the upcoming General Church Assembly in June
- Highlights from the October meeting of the Academy Board of Trustees
- Information on nominations for the Glencairn Award
- An Autumn All Age Weekend in Colchester, England
- *River of Light*: Excerpts from a letter by Helen Keller on her devotion to Swedenborg, just before publishing her book, *My Religion*
- A New Church Teen Weekend in Kempton, Pennsylvania
- A comprehensive update on the New Church Mission in Asia

Editorials

Bruce M. Henderson and the Rev. Jeremy F. Simons

BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS

Peace is a universal longing. We seek peace in our lives, our communities, our church, our country, our world. But we are cursed with war – the personal conflicts of our own temptations and regeneration, and wars that assault whole nations and threaten peace throughout the world.

The ultimate peace we crave is in heaven with the Lord. This is where He can – at last – “deliver us from evil.” There are many battles to be fought to get there. We just need to be clear-eyed about what they are, what they mean, and what we need to do to “win” that peace.

You would think we would learn from the wars that plague our civilization. Throughout 3,500 years of recorded history, only 268 have been completely free of war somewhere in the world. There is a sad futility to the concept that wars are necessary and are decided by who kills the most on the other side, but we cannot stop. That is because wars are rooted not only in the hearts of evil men, but in the continuing combat between good and evil in the spiritual world that manifests itself in our natural world.

We are blessed with teachings from the Lord about good and evil – about our freedom to choose either, and why we must know evil to shun it and choose to follow the Lord – to choose heaven.

We are blessed also that many of the great warriors leading combat against tyranny have not gloried in war but hated it. It was their commitment to peace that led them to fight evil on a grand scale. General Dwight Eisenhower, for instance, led the Allies to victory in Europe in World War II, then championed the rebuilding of Germany and Japan as peaceful nations, negotiated an end to the Korean War, and led the delicate diplomacy to avoid a nuclear holocaust in the Cold War. But he fretted that his presidency was a failure because he had not been able to secure “a permanent peace with justice.” That dream remains elusive – and will as long as we live suspended between good and evil in this world.

But hope prevails. It was after the devastating Battle of Gettysburg in the Civil War that President Abraham Lincoln so eloquently reflected in his Gettysburg Address both the nobility and futility of war – and the mournful hope that attends all wars: “that these men shall not have died in vain.”

All of the fallen will not have died in vain only when we address the spiritual as well as the earthly causes of war. We are taught that everything that happens in this world – including war – has its roots in the spiritual world. The conflicts we all face – in temptations, in the daily battles of will and temperament – are just writ large in wars between nations.

Throughout history war brings out the best and worst of the human spirit. We see bravery, courage, commitment, love of country and ultimate sacrifice. We also witness depravity, brutality, hatred and wantonness. All of these are attributes of the spiritual combat at the root of war: good vs. evil, love of the world vs. love of the Lord, heaven vs. hell.

That is why Jesus, when He was sending out His disciples and warning them of the persecutions they would face in His name, said: “*Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.*” (Matthew 1:34) We are also called to wield that sword of the Lord’s truth in our lives against the insidious power of the hells – to fight our own wars, but with Him.

As we are taught in *Divine Providence* 251, (NCE):

It is not because of divine providence that wars happen, because wars are inseparable from murder, plunder, violence, cruelty, and other appalling evils that are diametrically opposed to Christian caring. However, it is absolutely necessary that they be permitted, because since the earliest people . . . our life’s love has become basically a love of controlling others and gaining possession of the world’s wealth. These two loves cannot be kept in chains as long as it is the intent of divine providence that we act freely and rationally. Were it not for this permission, the Lord could not lead us out of our evil, so we could not be reformed and saved. Unless evils were allowed to surface, we would not see them . . . so we could not be induced to resist them. That is why evils [such as wars] cannot be suppressed by some exercise of divine providence. If they were, they would stay closed in, and like the disease of cancer would spread and devour everything that is alive and human.

From birth, each of us is like a little hell in constant conflict with heaven. The Lord cannot rescue any of us from our hell unless we see that we are in it and want to be rescued.

This is why the ultimate prayer against the long sad history of war is that

eventually we reach the point: *“They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.”* (Isaiah 2:4)

But that will happen only when we fight and win our own wars – and when the “wars” of the Last Judgment are ended in the spiritual world.

One of the hard lessons of the Sermon on the Mount – for all of us – is this:

Ye have heard that it must be said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies. Bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven. (Matthew 5:43-45)

This sentiment was echoed by Martin Luther King Jr. in our war against discrimination:

Have we come to such an impasse in the modern world that we must love our enemies – or else? The chain reaction of evil – hate begetting hate, wars producing more wars – must be broken, or else we shall be plunged into the abyss of annihilation.

The Lord gives us the example – loving all of us and trying to raise everyone to heaven but leaving us in freedom to choose. That is the model. We must go to war in our own lives against evil so that the peace of heaven may prevail. And it all begins within each of us, where the church lives.

The prayer of St. Francis of Assisi still resonates across all faiths:

*Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace.
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
and where there is sadness, joy.*

Not only are we to “seek peace and pursue it,” but to love peace and model it in our lives.

In the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said: *“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.”* (Matthew 5:9) We are all called to be peacemakers. We are all called to heaven by living the life of heaven.

This is where we invest the hope: *“Deliver us from evil.”*

This is: *“The peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you.”* (John 14:27) This is: *“The peace of God which passeth all understanding.”* (Philippians 4:7)

This is the peace we pray for and long for in our lives. This is the heaven we yearn for but first must strive for. It is the peace that “has within it trust in the Lord, that he governs all things, and provides all things, and leads to an end that is good.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 8455)

(BMH)

SWEDENBORG’S WIFE

Swedenborg’s birthday on January 29th is an opportunity to discuss aspects of his life that shed light on his history and character.

For example, if we find ourselves hesitant to believe that the work on *Conjugal Love* was divinely revealed, we might be understandably skeptical about a life-long bachelor’s thoughts and advice on marriage. But those who do accept the treasures of this much-loved book at face value see Swedenborg not as recounting what he had learned through his own relationships, but rather what he had heard and seen in heaven, revealed by the Lord.

Whatever our opinion is on this, it is still useful to understand his story. His bachelorhood does not mean that Swedenborg was never close to being married or was uninterested in marriage. He had many good friendships with both men and women and had a strong attraction to and a high regard for the female sex. He was once even promised in marriage, although it did not work out. After his death there were rumors, whether true or not, that Swedenborg had told friends who his wife was to be in the spiritual world.

Here is one account of his frustrated attempt to marry:

“Once in his youth Swedenborg was on the road to matrimony, King Charles XII having recommended the famous Polhem to give him his daughter,” wrote General Christian Tuxen, after having talked with Swedenborg on the subject. The reference seems to have been to Maria, the oldest of four sisters. However, Maria apparently had a suitor whom she preferred, and in the summer of 1718, while Swedenborg was helping Polhem with the canal works at Trollhattan, Maria announced her engagement to the king’s chamberlain. M. L. Manderstrom. Emanuel, writing to his brother-in-law Erik Benzeliu, makes the remark:

‘I wonder what people are saying about this, inasmuch as she was promised to me; his other daughter is, to my mind, much prettier.’ This reference was to 15-year-old Emerentia, whom Swedenborg reportedly loved and failed to win.”¹

Another account gives more details.

Swedenborg is said to have “conceived a violent passion for Polhem’s second daughter, Emerentia” but as “she could not be persuaded to enter into an engagement; her father, who loved Swedenborg very much, gave him a written claim upon her in the future, in the hope that when older she would become more yielding, and this contract her father obliged her to sign. She fretted, however, about it so much every day that her brother, Chamberlain Gabriel Polhem, was moved with compassion, and purloined the contract from Swedenborg, whose only comfort consisted in daily perusing it, and who therefore quickly missed his treasure. His sorrow at his loss was so evident that her father insisted on knowing the cause; when by an exercise of his authority he was willing to have his lost document restored to him. But when Swedenborg himself saw her grief, he voluntarily relinquished his right; and he left the house with a solemn oath, never again to let his thoughts settle upon any woman, and still less to enter into any other engagement; whereupon he commenced his travels abroad.” ²

This happened in 1718, when Swedenborg was 30 years old. Despite several letters from family members urging him to find a wife (one from his brother-in-law, Pastor Unge, exhorts him to “muster up courage,” and seek a suitable wife) it seems that Swedenborg mostly stuck to his oath during his lifetime. (*Tafel, Documents 1, p. 349*) He also ended his relationship with the whole Polhem family, with which he had been quite close. Later in life, however, he seems to have resumed friendly relations with them. A note at the end of the above quote about his failed engagement reads:

It may be worth recording that assessor Swedenborg assured the daughters and sons-in-law of Emerentia Polhem, when they visited him in his garden, that he conversed with their departed mother (who died in 1759) as often as he pleased. ³

Despite his vow one account names him as a suitor to another woman eight years later:

Evidence is brought to light that Swedenborg did not at once renounce marriage when he learned that Emerentia Polhem preferred another; he was also a suitor at age 38 for the hand of a bishop’s daughter. But after the second young lady turned him down, he rented an apartment, hired a servant, and settled down to his life-long studies with an air of finality. ⁴

We have no knowledge of other attempts at marriage. In his eulogy delivered in the House of Nobles in 1772 Samuel Sandels says:

*Swedenborg remained during the whole of his life unmarried. But this was not owing to any indifference to the sex; for he esteemed the company of a fine and intelligent woman as one of the purest sources of delight; but his profound studies required that in his house there should be perfect stillness both day and night. He, therefore, preferred being alone.*⁵

The Heavenly Doctrine is clear about the importance of marriage, stating that *“all the blessings of heaven flow from the delights of conjugal love, like sweet waters from a sweetly gushing spring.”* (Conjugal Love 316) It is even said that *“to the degree that a person’s conjugal love wanes and is lost, his character approaches that of an animal.”* (Ibid. 230) Like many others he surely took comfort in the truth that *“for people who desire truly conjugal love, the Lord provides a similar partner, and if one is not found on earth, He provides one in heaven.”* (Ibid. 209)

There is a story, which is not much more than a rumor since it appeared long after Swedenborg’s death, that he told people who his wife in heaven was going to be. Rudolph Tafel mentions it in his *“Documents”*:

“A peculiar interest is connected with the name of Gyllenborg from the circumstance, that one of Swedenborg’s biographers, Dr. J. J. Garth’s Wilkinson, declares on the authority of the late Charles Augustus Tulk, M. P., that ‘Swedenborg was in the habit of saying that he had seen in the spiritual world his future wife, who was waiting there for him, and that she had been known in the world as a Countess Gyllenborg.’

“If there is any truth in this statement, it can apply only to Elisabeth Stjerncrona, the wife of Count Frederic Gyllenborg: for Swedenborg, as we have seen above, called not only her husband, but also her brother, his friends, as early as 1733; from which it would follow that he was intimately acquainted with her family. Additional probability is furnished for the truth of this account by the character of this lady herself, of whom the Swedish ‘Biografiskt Lexicon’ declares that she was ‘a lady possessed of eminent qualities of heart and mind,’ and had published anonymously a work under this title: ‘Mary’s better part, or the one thing needful, containing instructions and exhortations on the various topics of the Christian faith, and on our duties and obligations, with contemplations, in the words of Scripture, for the simple.’ This work is highly praised by all

*who have perused it, and the deeply religious sentiment pervading the two large quarto volumes, all the teachings of which are drawn from the letter of the Word of God, and lead to the worship of the God-Man Messiah, may be supposed to have touched a sympathetic chord in the heart of him through whom the Lord has revealed to mankind the spiritual sense of the Sacred Scripture.”*⁶

Elizabeth died in 1769, 10 years after Frederick Gyllenborg, whose character is fully described in *The Spiritual Diary*. According to biographer William White, Tulk “probably had this anecdote through his father from Hartley, or some of Swedenborg’s English friends.” It was communicated to Wilkinson in the 1840s, some 70 years after Swedenborg’s passing.⁷

We do not know whether this is truth, rumor or just speculation, but whatever it is we can be sure that Swedenborg does have a wife in heaven and that they are happy. We can also be sure that the things written in *Conjugial Love* are not based on his own experiences in this world but on the things revealed to him by the Lord in the spiritual world.

¹ Cyriel O. Sigstedt, *New Church Life* 1959, p. 35

² Rudolph Tafel, *Documents Concerning Swedenborg, Volume 1* p. 52

³ Ibid.

⁴ Cyriel Sigstedt, *The Swedenborg Epic*, p. 105; *New Church Life* 1982, p. 22

⁵ Tafel Documents, Vol 1 p. 30

⁶ Tafel Documents, Vol. I, p. 700

⁷ William White, *Emanuel Swedenborg, his Life and Writings*, London, 1867, p. 500

(JFS)

Rest for Your Soul

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

Readings: Psalm 84:2-4; Luke 1:46-49; Matthew 11:28-30; Arcana Coelestia 2930; Apocalypse Explained 386:19.

My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. (Psalm 84:2)

Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (Matthew 11:29)

Examples of devotion. As we know, the Word contains powerful testimonies of people not unlike you and me, who find ourselves in deep need for the Lord. One is David, the Psalmist, who wrote these words while he was oppressed by King Saul, fleeing for his life:

*My soul thirsts for You;
My flesh longs for You
In a dry and thirsty land
Where there is no water.
So I have looked for You in the sanctuary,
To see Your power and Your glory. (Psalm 63:1-2)*

“My soul thirsts for You.” I wonder how often we have reached that stage. It’s when the chips are way down and life seems to be dealing too many unfair blows. I picture parents experiencing a health crisis for their child, the forlorn feeling when a key relationship seems irrevocably broken, or someone in a state of feeling extremely overwhelmed. Each of us, given a few moments, likely could remember those times in our lives. It could even be right now. We resonate with the words of the Psalmist because it’s then that we too desperately need the Lord; we yearn for a sense of His loving, providential care.

A second story comes with Peter, one of the Lord’s disciples, who seems to exemplify the dynamics of faith. At the time he was watching the Lord deliver

a particularly strident message to a skeptical crowd. Predictably it says, “*many . . . went back and walked with Him no more.*” (John 6:66) They had heard enough and were done. But the Lord used that context masterfully. He turned to His 12 disciples and issued a direct challenge to them: “*Do you also want to go away?*” It was Peter who responded with words of clear faith and conviction: “*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.*” (John 6:68)

I wonder how many people we know in today’s skeptical world where religion is often not seen as needed or particularly useful, who turn away. Yet we are invited to respond as Peter did, we who may have come to know deep down that life is better with the Lord in it. Is it true for you, that at some point you crossed that bridge of faith such that Peter’s question is your question?

Sometimes, at least for me, it comes almost like a wakeup call, when I’m trying to do things on my own, so to speak, and it doesn’t work out so well. And I’m reminded, as so many of us are, that it is simply not possible for me to succeed without the Lord’s help. We can’t do it without Him. “*Lord, to whom shall we go? . . . We have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*” (John 6:68-69)

A third story comes in the context of much brighter times of life – the blessings and treasured moments. We call to mind the response of Mary at the annunciation, when the angel informed her that she would be the mother of Jesus. Most of us can recite her words by heart:

*My soul magnifies the Lord,
And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.
For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant;
For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.”
(Luke 1:47-48)*

Sometimes we feel blessed, even to the level of our souls – filled with gratitude to the Lord for His goodness and mercy. It comes, does it not, when we feel loved and able to love close family members, when majorly stressful situations resolve themselves, when births happen, when we have those moments of looking back and seeing the gently steering hand of providence leading us to this point in life, which is indeed very good.

*I wonder how many people
we know in today’s
skeptical world where
religion is often not seen
as needed or particularly
useful, who turn away. Yet
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as Peter did, we who may
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down that **life is better
with the Lord in it.***

A life connected to the Lord. Our theme today is a life connected to the Lord. That is what all three of these people, and all the people in the examples we've considered, reflect. There is a soul longing – a deep human need – for the Lord in our lives. We can, of course, choose to deny it, to attempt life without the Lord in it. But most of us can attest to the fact that it isn't the best way to live. And even for those of us who would consider ourselves faithful, who are regularly engaged in going to worship or who have long since made the commitment to a spiritual path, don't we also need reminders from time to time that life is really, deeply, much better when we feel connected to the Lord?

An unmistakable theme from the readings we heard from the Lord's Word is the soul:

- *My soul longs, yes even faints for the courts of the Lord.*
(Psalm 84:1)
- *Come unto Me all you who labor and are heavy laden . . . and you will find rest for your souls.* (Matthew 11:28,29)
- *My soul magnifies the Lord.* (Luke 1:47)
- *You shall love the Lord Your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.* (Deuteronomy 6:5)

We also heard about the soul being the real “us”; as one teaching puts it, “*a person's inner self acting in the world by means of the body and imparting life to the body.*” (Arcana Coelestia 6054)

What is amazing about these statements is that they are not just testimonies, examples of what we should strive for in our own lives. Rather they contain specific directives for us; they describe for us not only the end state but the path to get there – the path to a deeper devotion to the Lord. Let's look at some of those steps we can take – one for each of the quotes we just heard about the soul.

“My soul longs . . . ” Psalm 84 presents an amazing image of life in the presence of the Lord. We encounter the beautiful image of a nest, with a swallow laying her young right before the altars of the Lord. Carrying that message home, the psalm concludes: “*Blessed are those who dwell in Your house; they will still be praising You.*” (84:4)

We learn from the Heavenly Doctrines that a nest is a symbol for a way of living. (Apocalypse Explained 411:23) There's a choice involved – *choosing* to live in the presence of the Lord. We make our home near Him. That could mean going to church literally to be near His altars. It means praying regularly. It means recognizing that the Lord is the One from whom all blessings and goodness flow. It means considering the Lord's perspectives and hopes for our

lives, generally and in the moments when key choices are made.

One other teaching can give depth to this choice. Following the theme of the young hatched in that nest before the Lord's altars we learn of children raised in heaven, and all children really, who are "under the Lord's auspices." (*Conjugal Love* 411, *Heaven and Hell* 277:4) *Auspices* is an interesting word which means care and watchful safeguarding. We picture this tender oversight by the Lord – His protection and guidance as they grow. And the key ingredient that allows for it is innocence – the willingness to be led.

So with us, it is this willingness to be led that connects our lives, consciously and pervasively to the Lord. Listen to this choice as it exists in the ideal, as something we can all strive for:

Every day they are taught of the Lord what to do and to speak . . . ; for evils being removed they are continually under the Lord's auspices, and in enlightenment. They are led and taught . . . by influx. . . . And when they act from this influx, they appear to act from themselves, but nevertheless they acknowledge in heart that it is from the Lord. (Apocalypse Explained 825:3)

The fundamental choice is to live in the presence of the Lord – to place ourselves under His auspices or loving care. Such can be our state, at least in growing measure, by the simple choice to include the Lord consciously in our lives.

"Take My yoke upon you." Next comes one of the most beautiful invitations from the Lord in the Word: *"Come unto Me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."* (*Matthew* 11:28) As we know, that saying of the Lord references a yoke. *"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me."* But it's not a difficult task, for the Lord is careful to add: *"My yoke is easy and My burden is light."* This, we hear, is what it takes to *"find rest for our souls."* (*Matthew* 11:28-30)

At play here is the abiding truth that we are wise to go with the Lord's plan for our lives. We are reminded of the Lord's ways, His yoke or burden that He lays on us. These are His commandments, which may at times seem arduous and a heavy ask. But flip it around and consider what the Lord is saying. He wants our lives to work! He wants us to find rest for our souls. No conflict, little stress, protection from guilt or the fear of being discovered or exposed in some way.

A favorite saying of mine is that people can find out the hard way or the easy way that the Lord's way works! Forgiveness really does restore broken relationships. Giving of our time and energy to be a source of blessing in the lives of others, no matter how small the action, does indeed fold back on us in positive ways. Living within the confines of the Ten Commandments frees us

and finds us living lives of true purpose. Treating other people the way we want to be treated leads to mutually beneficial relationships founded on integrity and trust.

All these things are the Lord's yoke – the burden of obedience that He places before us. (See *Heaven and Hell* 359, 533) Not in a demanding or austere way, but with love, gently and kindly inviting us to see what leads to the kind of experience that we want in the deepest parts of our souls.

“My soul magnifies the Lord.” Let's return to Mary and her words of praise, for in them we find a third directive, or invitation, in how to more consciously live a life connected to the Lord. She said, in response to one of the most profound blessings a human being can experience: *“My soul magnifies the Lord.”* Again, there's a choice at play. There's a fundamental submission to the Lord in terms of His will for her life. There's also a deep acknowledgment that this blessing is purely and only the Lord's doing.

Along these lines, we learn that “blessing” the Lord, which is what Mary was doing, “means the acknowledgment, glorification, and thanksgiving, that all good and truth, and from this heaven and eternal happiness, are for those who receive” them from the Lord. (*Apocalypse Explained* 344)

But what does that mean for our choices? The calling is to thank the Lord for the good things that happen. Not only do we submit to His ways, His yoke, but whenever good things happen as a result, when the seas part in a way we thought impossible, when a new life is born into this world, when we let it sink in how awesome it is to have the people we have in our lives, are we willing to let our souls magnify the Lord? Gratitude takes determined effort, until it becomes a habit, which finds us praising the Lord every single day for some good thing that we know, in our very souls, He caused.

“With all your soul.” We come, finally, to the first great commandment, which is a fitting way to conclude our message. We know the directive: to love the Lord with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength – with all we've got. It's not an accident that there are three parts to this commitment. *“With all our heart”* is the love – the openness of heart to let the Lord in. -- pumping to the end, with all your strength, that has to do with putting our love into action – doing the things that love dictates to demonstrate our devotion to the Lord.

I want to rest, however, on the second part of it: “with all your soul.” Soul here has to do with the understanding part of our minds. (*Arcana Coelestia* 2930) There's a longing to learn – in this case about the Lord. (*Apocalypse Explained* 386:19)

In the New Church we're offered a beautiful picture of the Lord. We

know that He is a loving God, an all-powerful Creator and Provider, who is understandable and approachable. He is intimately aware of our thoughts and the directions of our life, and He's working in so many ways to shape our lives so that good things will result – not only in this life, but to eternity in heaven. That's the kind of care He has for every single person that He has created. Isn't that the kind of God we all want to believe in?

There's a beautiful teaching which gives a poignant image along these lines. It's talking about a man – a husband and father as it turns out – who discovers for the first time a true and beautiful concept about the Lord. It says:

If he saw a picture of one Divine person with rays of heavenly light around his head, with the label: 'This is our God, at once Creator, Redeemer and Regenerator, and so Savior.' Would not a wise man kiss such a picture and take it home in his pocket, so that his own mind, and those of his wife, children and household, might take pleasure in looking at it? (True Christian Religion 296)

Everything we've considered here is about consciously and consistently choosing to live a life connected to the Lord. The invitation is to pay attention on the deepest levels of our being, our souls, to our heartfelt longings. We want life to work out. We want peace, contentment between us and those in our lives, purpose and meaning, the ending of strife. We want to be inspired by a vision much larger than ourselves. We want the stream of providence to guide us to all that is good.

All these things can be ours to the extent that we make our nest before His altars, take up His yoke, and remember to magnify Him. For then we truly will have "rest for our souls." Amen.



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Preparing for Eternal Life: The Role of New Church Education

A Sermon by the Rev. James P. Cooper

Lessons: Isaiah 11:6-9; Luke 14:1-14; Arcana Coelestia 1495:2

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

Once, while Swedenborg was in the spiritual world, he was shown a tableaux or representation of what the New Church was as to its spirit and life. The New Church was shown to him as a magnificent temple, its entrance a single pearl and the Word open and illuminated upon its pulpit. Over the doorway to this temple the Latin words, *nunc licet*, were engraved. These words mean, “now it is permitted” and they represent that in the New Church it is permitted for each person to explore, think about and understand all the doctrines of the church, even those that had been held as mysteries in previous churches. They mean that not only is it permitted, but it is intended that all people should read and understand the Word in its letter and spirit for themselves, without the need for priests to tell them what they should believe.

The Doctrine of the Sacred Scripture tells us that, “the Lord teaches everyone by means of the Word, and He teaches from those truths which the man already has.” (# 26:2) The more genuine truth from the Word that a person knows, the more prepared he is to receive influx from the Lord, so an education based on Divine Truth derived from the letter of the Word makes the path to heaven easier.

We read further: “*The Word in the sense of the letter is in its fullness, in its holiness, and in its power; and because the Lord is the Word (for He is the all of the Word), it follows that He is most of all present in the sense of the letter, and that from it He teaches and enlightens people.*” (Ibid. 50)

This is key to our understanding of the true nature of the New Church now being established by the Lord, for it tells us that He requires us to learn truths from the three-fold Word in order to prepare ourselves for the life of heaven. The Lord does not want us just to accept what others tell us, but to learn His truth for ourselves. The process of learning the Lord's truth as taught in the Word is a life-long process, for the Word is a well of living water that can never be emptied. This process of learning how to serve the Lord by serving the neighbor is New Church education.

The Lord came on earth to teach men, women and children. He taught for about three years, and many of His lectures have been recorded and are available for our study in the New Testament. For example, in the brief lesson from *Luke*, He taught by performing a miracle (healing the man with dropsy), by analogy (to our own practice of inviting guests into our home), and by a parable (where He told of guests being seated at a feast according to their importance).

The Lord frequently used parables to describe His new spiritual truths in terms of what were common to His audience. He argued with and enraged the scribes and pharisees. He taught by example, by opposition, and asking questions. Every teacher and parent should search the Old and New Testaments for guidance in how to teach the eternal truths to the children in their charge, rather than putting their faith in the popular gimmick of the moment.

New Church education is intended to be an extension of the home, but we may ask, "What are the characteristics of a New Church home?" We might say that the ideal New Church home is one in which the children are protected in innocence until they can be gently led out of their states of innocence into wisdom; a home without strife; a home without fear; a home where the Lord is always in the heart, and the Word always on the lips.

As beautiful and ideal as this may seem to us, it is simply not possible in the circumstances we are faced with today. We have to cope with an information explosion that has introduced pre-school children to international tension. We also have to face the fact that while it may be ideal for the mother to teach little children and girls, and the father to teach the young men (see *Conjugial Love* 176), most parents are not qualified to teach all the subjects that our children need to know to make a living. So, while we recognize the ideal of children being raised and taught in such an ideal New Church home, and that the primary responsibility for their education rests with the parents (not the school), we also recognize that parents need professional help in providing New Church education for their children.

This concept was developed in the early days of the New Church. The New Church school was to be an extension of the ideal New Church home, *whether or not that ideal New Church home actually existed*. What it really means is

that there must be mutual cooperation and support between the home and the school. The school operates on the principle that the parents have placed the child in the New Church school because they want something special for that child and are willing to make the extra effort to provide that kind of education.

There is a danger that parents may feel that because their children are in a religious school they are therefore freed from the responsibility to teach them morality or discipline. The Word clearly teaches that parents are responsible for teaching their children the Ten Commandments, and about the reality of the spiritual world. However, a New Church school sets out to assist the parents in doing this, and desires to cooperate fully in this important job, but the school is not to take away parental responsibility. This obligates the school to inform the parents of its program and obligates the parents to pay attention to what is happening in the school.

There is also the obligation of public support of the school and the teachers. It is destructive of the use of education for students to hear their parents and others enthusiastically criticizing their teachers. It teaches them the false idea that proper adult conversation centers around finding fault with other people and fosters this kind of discussion among the students. It is very difficult to teach children who have been taught to disregard their teacher and their school.

In the same vein, teachers must support the parents by speaking about them with respect. If all adults, both teachers and parents, involved in a school can maintain a public stance of supporting each other in the important use of educating children, and make the necessary comments and criticisms in private to the appropriate individuals, then a New Church school can become closer to being an extension of the ideal New Church home, and it will benefit from the spirit of charity and cooperation engendered.

The three-fold Word is the center of New Church education. For this reason, each school day includes reading from the Word, for the beginning of a day qualifies and affects all the events that follow. It is also an important symbol that we order our lives around this simple ritual – to actually spend the time to reflect on the Word each day. It is our hope that this will establish a life-long habit of daily going to the Word for comfort and instruction.

Students may also receive regular religious instruction from a pastor. These meetings provide opportunities for several important things to happen: There can be formal instruction in the doctrines of the Church. There can be questions and discussion. There is the chance for the pastor to get to know the children as individuals, for the children to know the pastor, and for a pastoral relationship to begin and grow that will last for many years.

However, the most important thing that happens in a religion class is that the students learn to *read the Word with understanding*. And as they learn from

the Word itself, they begin to see things in it that apply to their own lives, and they can speak freely about God and morality without fear of embarrassment. They learn spiritual laws and find that they can answer their own questions by applying those laws to their individual situation.

Through religion classes, they become people who know how to read the Word to find the answers to their problems; they learn spiritual laws that they can apply to their own lives; they become spiritually free because they have the power to change the course of their lives through knowledge and understanding of spiritual truths.

The foundations for New Church education are laid at home as the parents teach their child to say the Lord's Prayer, to say grace before meals, to come to church regularly, and to obey the Ten Commandments. The walls and the roof are built upon the foundation in the primary grades, where, in the sphere of the home and the teacher as a mother, they learn age-appropriate songs and passages from Scripture. In this sphere of love and safety during their first years, children are affected with many lovely and gentle truths about the Lord and worship. These things remain with them throughout their lives and are some of the "remains" that the Lord uses to regenerate them.

We all know that "remains" are important, that they are implanted by the Lord, that everyone has them, that they counterbalance our hereditary evils and that they help us get ready for heaven. But how do they do these things? "Remains" are the glue that sticks truths into our minds. This applies to everyone of every age. You cannot receive truth unless you can be affected by it, or, unless you have an affection for it. Once you have the affection for truth which is a gift from the Lord, you then have the ability to acquire truth for yourself.

We all know that there is an infinite variety of truths. They do not come to us by accident or magic. We must seek them out for ourselves, and the selection of which truths we seek out is a reflection of our own character and freedom of choice.

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If you wish to prepare yourself for life in the world, you must seek out natural truths that relate to your chosen field. If you wish to prepare yourself for life in the spiritual world, you must seek out spiritual truths. The natural truths you need come from a great variety of sources, but the spiritual truths you need to prepare for a life in heaven come from but one source, and that is, of course, the Word – in its letter, and in its internal sense.

It becomes obvious then, that learning how to read the Word with understanding becomes one of the most important tasks of human life, and because it is an exercise which requires both skill in reading and a degree of reason, it cannot be taught in the lower grades. The affection for reading the Word can (and must) be established in the first years of school, but the skill itself cannot. That comes with instruction and practice, later when the student's mind is ready for it.

But schools are expensive and time consuming. Why do we go to all that trouble and expense? Because the doctrines of the New Church clearly teach that the only purpose of life in this world is to prepare ourselves and our children for life in the spiritual world. The Word has been Divinely provided to us for that reason, and it is our obligation to do everything in our power to learn its secrets. New Church schools give powerful support to those who seek to enter into spiritual truths.

Nunc licet. Now it is permitted to enter into the mysteries of faith with understanding. The purpose of the New Church school is to cooperate with the New Church home in preparing the student's understanding so that he may freely enter into the mysteries of faith in the light of understanding from the three-fold Word. Therefore, it is right and proper that we make this effort to lead ourselves and our children according to the ways provided by the Lord in His Word.

Speaking as the Divine Truth Itself, Jesus taught us:

I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. (John 14:6)

Amen.



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FROM THE BISHOP'S OFFICE

Entering the Stream of Providence

The Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr.

Within the New Church faith is the foundational concept of process. We are regenerated or reborn spiritually over time. We learn from mistakes and make new beginnings. We develop through the process of applying ourselves and reflecting on what will help us do better. We progress through the stages of life, from childhood to early adulthood, often to marriage and raising a family, to the more advanced stages of life, all with opportunity for cyclical change and maturation.

Behind it all is the Lord, silently guiding us by His providence, “the way a hidden stream or favorable current carries a boat.” (*Divine Providence* 186) The phrase “stream of providence” is used in an often-quoted passage of the Writings:

People *in the stream of providence* are being carried along constantly toward happier things, whatever appearance the means may present. Those in the stream of providence are people who trust in the Divine and ascribe everything to Him. (emphasis added, *Arcana Coelestia* 8478:4)

For generations of New Church people these words have brought comfort and reassurance, even in the hardest of life circumstances, for they speak of a relationship with a God who “is leading toward an end that is good.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 8455)

I personally love the way the Lord presents Himself in the *Book of Revelation*, which goes hand-in-hand with these reflections of providence:

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." (Revelation 1:8; cf. Revelation 22:13)

There's a constancy and timelessness to the Lord that is captured in these phrases. They invite the conclusion that the Lord is always available to us, and always able to help as the Almighty.

Notice, however, a phrase that comes directly after this phrase as it appears at the end of the book: *"Blessed are those who do His commandments."* (Revelation 22:14) There is a cooperative role that we play in receiving the positive effects of the Lord's providence. He will always do the silent guiding, helping us in ways that are, as one passage puts it, "infinite in number and infinite in variety." (Divine Providence 335; cf. *Arcana Coelestia* 4063:3) But the way He leads is by requiring our participation.

In keeping with the theme of time and timelessness, I draw your attention to a phrase from Scripture that conveys a truth well known to us. It's the promise of the Lord coming out of the flood story:

While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease. (Genesis 8:22)

It's true that life is cyclical and changing in nature. We go through seasons, cold states and warm states, enlightened and confused times, new beginnings symbolized by seedtime, and times of blessing symbolized by harvest. In contrast to the constancy of the Lord, our lives are ever-fluctuating.

But this too is in the stream of providence. Not only do we find dimension and joy in changes of state, but we learn and grow in that process. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 8018) Note the way this reality is stated in *Heaven and Hell*, reminiscent of that prediction of our lives coming out of the flood story:

The angels added that their changes of state are not caused by the Lord, since the Lord as a sun is unceasingly flowing in with heat and light, that is, with love and wisdom; but the cause is in themselves, in that they love what is their own, and this continually leads them away. This was illustrated by comparison with the sun of the world, that the cause of the changes of state of heat and cold and of light and shade, year by year and day by day, is not in that sun, since it stands unchanged, but the cause is in the earth. (Heaven and Hell 158)

The reality that stands out to me in this testimony of the angels is their

acknowledgment of self will. A truth about life is that all of us make poor choices at times and experience the negative consequences. While not all the negative things about life come as a result of our flawed choices, we know that many of them do. Either through selfishness which brings hurt, or lack of trust which brings anxiety, or failure of effort which brings loss, or inattention which breeds relational distance, our intermittent failure brings about negative change.

But a blessing about the way the Lord leads us is that we can always make a fresh start. We can learn from any failure and choose wiser ways of acting. We can apologize, try harder, pray for greater levels of trust, and resolve to pay attention to what matters.

In this regard I share with you some powerful doctrinal statements coming out of the phrase “new beginnings” – which is what we are talking about here.

The first is a statement about the Lord and the fact that He is constantly leading us to these new beginnings:

Every smallest fraction of a moment of a person's life entails a chain of consequences extending into eternity. Indeed every one is like a new beginning to those that follow. (Arcana Coelestia 3854:3)

I find this passage to be incredibly reassuring, in that it tells us that we can always try again, and that the Lord is the one who is constantly offering that very option.

We know, however, that sometimes self-examination and repentance are needed. Sometimes coming face-to-face with patterns of failure, called in the Word evil, leads us to turn to the Lord for help. Many readers will be familiar with the four steps of repentance which are:

Examining oneself, recognizing and acknowledging one's sins, praying to the Lord, and *beginning a new life*. (*True Christian Religion* 530)

Note also a related teaching regarding the habit of self-examination and acknowledgment of one's sins. This, we read, “is easy for one person and difficult for another,” depending on their habit, or lack of diligence, in doing these things. This is a fascinating and fun teaching to read, using a variety of analogies from running, to laboring in a field, to learning a craft, to engaging in the spiritual devotion of prayer. The point is that all of these things become easy and habitual through the consistent practice of them. So with repentance, which in turn leads to those positive new beginnings.

A third “new beginning” teaching comes in a thematic consideration of time. Recall the phrase, “*day and night shall not cease.*” (*Genesis* 8:22) Built into the very fabric of our lives is the series of days and nights called a week, together with all the changes of state that happen to us in the course of any given one of them. Note what is said in this context regarding the symbolism

of the *eighth* day, or the turning of the corner into a new week:

‘*The eighth day*’ means a complete state, from which a new beginning then commences.” (Arcana Coelestia 9659:2)

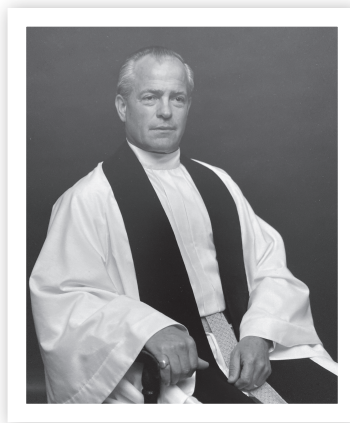
Many of us find personal inspiration in the dawn of a new day, in the start of a new week – on a Sunday as I mark it – in the very construct of a calendar that is in perpetual motion by the Lord’s own design. It is beautiful that the Lord commanded a day of rest and religious observance at the beginning of each week, or each new cycle. Each one, by the Lord’s design, affords us the opportunity to make a new beginning in some meaningful way, thereby entering the stream of the Lord’s providence.

We close with a powerful reflection by someone who, to all appearances, was in the stream of the Lord’s providence. This is the Psalmist who was inspired to reflect on this same theme of time, of changes, of seasons, all experienced under the auspices of the Lord:

*The Lord is your keeper;
The Lord is your shade at your right hand.
The sun shall not strike you by day,
Nor the moon by night.*

*The Lord shall preserve you from all evil;
He shall preserve your soul.
The Lord shall preserve your going out and your coming in
From this time forth, and even forevermore.
(Psalm 121:5-8)*

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A Resurrection Address for the Rev. Daniel W. Heinrichs

The Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Sr.

If Dan himself were giving a resurrection address, you can be fairly sure that 80% of the content would be reflections on teachings from the Word on the subject of eternal life, waking up into the spiritual world, the Divine Providence leading us, or such teachings as true marriage, how to live a good life, the human mind, and on the Lord Himself. It was a characteristic of the man that when we reflect on eternal life, we hear what the Word has to say, first and foremost.

So, in honor of his way, let us spend a few moments thinking of the life to which he has gone. By now he has been fully awake in that world for some days. When he awoke, would Mim be by his side? It seems almost certain, since she was never away from his thoughts, and thought brings presence there. We can only imagine what joy they both felt when they welcomed each other again.

The Lord caused Swedenborg to write: “The manifestation of the Lord in Person, and the introduction (of me) by the Lord into the spiritual world, both as to sight and as to hearing and speech, surpasses all miracles; for we do not read anywhere in history that such interaction with angels and spirits has been granted from the creation of the world. For I am daily with angels there, even as I am in the world with people; and now for 27 years.” (*Athasian Creed*)

This does not mean that the introduction of Swedenborg into the spiritual world is the greatest miracle – far from it. It is better than a miracle, because

without his introduction into the spiritual world, not only would we not know all that we do in the Writings for the New Church about heaven and hell and the world of spirits, but the Lord could not have revealed the truths He did about His providence, eternal married love, and the human mind about the differences between natural and heavenly life. None of these things would make sense unless we put them into the context of eternity. These things Dan taught all his life, and he loved to introduce them into most conversations.

And now we can reflect on what his and Mim's eternal lives are at their beginning and how they will be forever. He will not be surprised or fearful when he learns that he is in that world. He will expect to regain his youth and strength; perhaps it will happen more quickly because he knows it is going to happen.

Mim, who has been in heaven, will be with him, perhaps, as he goes through the world of spirits, meeting friends and relatives, his father and mother, and many others. She will rejoice as his spiritual mind opens so that he sees clearly the truths of heavenly life in ways that his mind on this earth simply could not, as he gains the wisdom that the Lord has already implanted in him while on earth but awaited for eternity to emerge. He used to talk to Mim in heaven while he was still on the earth, now he can actually have conversations.

So let us stop there and return to his life on earth. Growing up on a farm in the Kitchener area (in Ontario, Canada) he had responsibilities very young, since his father and older brother were away at the war. Then he attended the school in Bryn Athyn and went back to Canada and did a number of energetic jobs.

He met Mim, and two years afterward decided that she was the woman he wanted to marry. Her father asked if he was a "doer," because he had no time for people who just talked of doing. Dan was a doer *par excellence*. In fact, his daughter says, he was a "can-doer," and he used his great energy to make things happen.

He was ordained in 1957 and sent to South Africa to assist the Rev. Wynn Acton as pastor of the Durban (now Westville) society and as a traveling minister through the congregations, mainly Zulu, in the country. In Durban he found a generation of young people growing up, and he made it his goal to instruct them in the New Church. There were the 'Young Marrieds,' (there are four of them still living, and Willard Mansfield sent a tribute from them), the college and high school students. He gathered them into discussion groups and taught them most carefully – as only Dan could do.

From those people the congregation grew to become a strong force. He also spent untold hours teaching newcomers, so that several of them became strong members. Two of them were John and Sonia Snoep, who spent an hour

each Friday afternoon for months with him, learning about the doctrines.

When he became pastor the school was only three grades. Dan wanted to expand it into a full elementary school with seven grades, so he used what I called the “Dan Heinrichs method” to accomplish this. The method was that he was persistent but extremely patient. He took his time, heard all the objections and worked to eliminate them. He gained the support of positive people who were leaders in the congregation and enlisted their help, and slowly he got the support of the great majority of the congregation.

He spent the time necessary – months – presenting the vision of New Church education. I recall one New Church Day banquet where there were three talks – church, home and school – showing the way each supports and strengthens the other. Finally, the decision was taken to add one grade a year to the school – up to grade seven.

Many parents thought that the school was too small for their children to learn the sports that they would need in high school, but Dan got lots of volunteers. Renee Schuurman, a finalist at Wimbledon in doubles, and a semi-finalist in singles, taught tennis, and John Snoep, a South African champion swimmer and indeed South African record holder, taught swimming.

Many others brought their talents in cricket, rugby and so on and they were all volunteers. So was Sonia Snoep, who every morning came to the church to play the organ for chapel; and there were many who taught such things as music, art and other subjects.

But the church property in Durban was far too small for a school, so again the “Dan Heinrichs method” was used to lead us to find a property in Westville which could be used. The Durban property was zoned for commercial use, and with the help of Martin Buss, a very competent man in property development, it was sold for enough money to buy 34 acres in Westville and to build a complex.

Here again Dan showed his talents in a different way. He put well over half the congregation on different committees, planning the whole complex, and thus ensuring that people had a stake in the project. It became “their” project. In fact, the congregation actually built the school building.

Dan worked on the church with a very talented architect and New Church man, John Frost. He instructed John in the principles of the New Church and how they might fit into the actual construction. First, they needed a rock for the altar, and they tramped over seven miles of quarry, looking for the perfect stone – and they found it.

Then the building rose from the entrance to the chancel, and the windows were light and at the top, becoming glazed, and finally amber as they descended. It was a square, with the chancel in the corner, and as you entered, your mind was drawn to the massive stone of the altar. The underneath of

the roof was of huge beams, joined together crosswise, giving a sense of great strength to the structure. The building was not expensive, but it was powerful.

That complex is now home to more than 100 elementary school students, and as many in a pre-school. As a testimony to his work, the society named the church hall the “Dan Heinrichs Hall,” and invited Dan and Mim to fly back to South Africa for the re-naming ceremony.

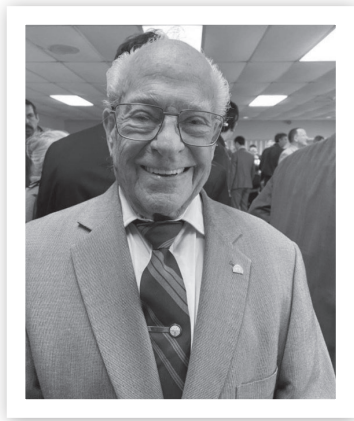
Dan then went on to serve in Ohio and Maryland, and finally Florida. Here he repeated his Durban experience and moved the congregation from Miami to Boynton Beach. The land was overgrown, and his son-in-law remembers the many days that they both spent physically razing the vegetation and cleaning the house.

Again, using the Dan Heinrichs method, he led them slowly and persistently until it was a happy move, and dozens of people moved from Bryn Athyn and Glenview to retire there. His son-in-law also mentions that as he was traveling, he allowed others to do things in Boynton differently than he would, despite being a strong-minded and determined person.

Dan worked hard, in all his employment life and in retirement. His daughter Freya says: “My dad was someone who embraced life to the fullest no matter where he was or what he was doing. . . . He lived a life of service . . . No matter the hour or the day, no matter the inconvenience or financial cost to himself, if someone needed something . . . Dan did not think twice before dropping everything and coming to the assistance of the person in need.”

And he loved the teachings of the Lord’s Second Coming, and the New Church totally. He devoted his life to teaching about it, and people noticed how often he turned conversations round to talking about it.

His son Brad says: “He was a man of integrity, a man of his word, sincere,



Dan Heinrichs was a man of integrity, a man of his word, sincere, warm, generous, and he loved to be around people and share stories about life and could fill the room with his hearty laugh.

warm, generous, and he loved to be around people and share stories about life and could fill the room with his hearty laugh.”

Another person said: “(He) was a legend in the church and will be remembered and honored as a good man and the ultimate ambassador for the Church.” Another added: “He set a high bar in terms of commitment to the revelation of the Lord’s Second Coming. A true believer, he was unassailably convinced that the ‘miracle of miracles’ actually happened.”

As he grew older, his son said: “I saw an increasing humility and gentleness of spirit come forth which is what my children and grandchildren got to see. . . . He was always filled with gratitude to the Lord for being a part of the New Church, having the Heavenly Doctrine at his disposal, and for his beautiful wife who served the church he loved along by his side.”

And now he is with her, taking their last journey toward their heavenly home. The love he felt for her on earth will be increased beyond measure in the Lord’s heavenly kingdom. And their usefulness, side by side, will continue into eternity.

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Living the Good Life

Seven Principles that Can Change the Way We Live Our Lives

Bruce Henderson

This wonderful new book by the late Rev. Kurt Horigan Asplundh almost never happened. As his wife, Martha, tells the story, she got a call in the spring of 2022 from Michelle Rose, head of New Church Audio, asking: “Where’s the book?”

Martha didn’t know what she was talking about. Michelle directed her to a June 23, 2000, recording of her husband giving an Assembly presentation on *Living the Good Life* and promising to write a book on the subject.

With some technical help, Martha found the book in his computer and set the work in motion to get it published.

A **Foreward** written by Kurt and Martha’s good friend, the Rev. Walter Orthwein, reads:

It stands to reason that the best ideas about what constitutes a good life are to be found in the Word of God, who is Life itself and the source of all that is good and true, useful and happy. These qualities define the kind of life the Lord intends for each of us, that is, one that prepares us for eternal life in heaven.

In this book on *The Good Life* the Rev. Kurt Horigan Asplundh presents, in simple, clear language, seven principles drawn from the Lord’s Word to help us as we cooperate with Him in bringing the peace and happiness of heaven more and more into our lives even in this world. As we are taught, those are received into heaven who have received heaven in themselves during their life in the world.

This short book, filled with very practical ideas on how to live, illustrates the fact that the doctrine of the New Church is a doctrine

of life. It is not just about abstract, esoteric subjects, but about how to live here and now, day by day.

Mr. Asplundh's ability to explain profound spiritual truths so simply and clearly is the result of his own lifetime of studying, preaching and teaching the Lord's Word – and living it. For he taught not just with words, but by example by his own living of the good life.

Kurt was a thoughtful, soft-spoken man, whose wisdom, good judgment and desire to be of use to others were so evident that his words, spoken and written, carried great weight in the Council of the Clergy and elsewhere.

His interest in people, his talent as a wordsmith, and his sharp sense of humor are reflected in the wonderful poems he wrote for birthdays, anniversaries, retirements and various other occasions over many years. His ability to apply doctrine to life also shone in the memorial addresses he gave in countless resurrection services.

And he was a modest man. The manuscript for this book was found by his wife, Martha, after his death in a large notebook filled with articles Kurt had written but never got around to publishing. I felt very honored when Martha asked me to read this one to see if it needed any editing. It didn't.

Mr. Asplundh begins his **Introduction** with:

“In the spiritual world into which every person comes after death, it is not asked what your belief has been, or what your doctrine has been, but what your life has been.” (*Divine Providence* 101:3) “What kind of life have you lived?” This is the important question for the kind of life we live in the world forms the basis of our eternal life.

This book is about living the good life – living the kind of life that will prepare us for heaven.

Here are the seven principles, each treated in a separate chapter:

1. **My life in this world is a preparation for eternal life.** This principle affects my *priorities*.

2. **I am born with hereditary inclinations to love myself and the benefits and pleasures of the natural world.** This principle demands that I examine my *motives*.
3. **I have freedom to choose the life I will live.** This principle involves learning to make good *choices*.
4. **I can shun evils as sins against God.** This principle shows me how to live a life of *repentance*.
5. **The life of charity is to serve others from the love of use.** This principle directs me to live a life of *use*.
6. **I need to act as if of myself but to acknowledge that all life is from the Lord.** This principle helps me to understand the relationship between my prudence and the Lord's *providence*.
7. **My success in life is measured by what I learn to love rather than what I earn or what I do.** This principle defines the nature of a truly *successful life*.

Each chapter includes pertinent doctrine and applications to life, along with meaningful commentaries. Each concludes with several questions to get us focused on how all of this shows up in our own lives and choices.

Mr. Asplundh's book springs from his own strong convictions and humble spirit, with simple but direct teachings that can help us all in "*living the good life*" that leads to heaven. Still the loving, dedicated, gentle teacher, he concludes his **Introduction**:

I urge everyone to continue looking in the Word itself for the principles of life. The Word of the Lord is the source of heavenly light and Divine guidance.

The heavenly Doctrine gives this admonition and this promise: "Cease, therefore, from asking in yourself, 'What are the good works that I must do, or what good must I do to receive eternal life?' Only cease from evils as sins and look to the Lord, and the Lord will teach and lead you." (*Apocalypse Explained* 979:2)

We are told that good works are "all things that a man does, writes, preaches, and even speaks, not from self but from the Lord." Moreover,

the doctrine adds, the person who lives the laws of his religion “is daily taught by the Lord what he must do and what he must say . . . for when evils are removed he is continually under the Lord’s guidance and in enlightenment.” (*Apocalypse Explained* 825:3)

This book is a treasured part of the legacy of a great and much-loved friend, pastor and servant of the Church. It is available from the General Church Book Center for \$8.



The Making of a Modern Visionary: Emanuel Swedenborg, Eyewitness to the Apocalypse

A Biography

Dr. Jane K. Williams-Hogan

Dr. Jane Kintner Williams-Hogan, who taught at Bryn Athyn College from 1975 until her passing in 2018, had her doctoral degree in Sociology. She studied and wrote this biography over 20 years, she learned Swedish, and she could read Emanuel's hand. She immersed herself in Swedish history and culture. Jane viewed the world as a strong believer that the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg were the Second Coming of the Lord. As such, the books held the most important teachings since the Old and New Testaments. But she also viewed the world as a sociologist who believed in Divine Providence. Her studies led her to believe that the Lord prepared Sweden, Emanuel's parents, and Emanuel himself so he could reveal the Second Coming. Swedenborg willingly became the servant of the Lord. She shows these things in her unusual biography of

Emanuel Swedenborg that gives some new and some old information in a new light. It is her husband, Michael Hogan's, dear hope that the book will finally be published by the spring of 2024. (*Suzy S. Laidlaw*)

Editors' note: Before her death in 2018, Jane K. Williams-Hogan had written an extensive biography of Emanuel Swedenborg, now in production. Below is her slightly condensed Foreword to the book. In the March/April issue we will follow with her Introduction. Once the book is finished, we will publish a review.

Author's Foreword

For 2,000 years Christianity has offered two particularly unique and powerful images: the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the apocalypse He foretold in the Gospels, elaborately described by John on the Isle of Patmos. Easter celebrates the risen Lord and the power of eternal life after the cross and death. Faith in the risen Lord defines Christianity. However, integral to that faith is the promise made by Jesus Christ to come again. The book of *Revelation* spells out the conditions of His return.

The apocalypse, as witnessed by John, entailed a judgment and the Second Coming of Christ. The unfolding of his vision portrays many wonders, such as: "One like the Son of Man"; the failings of the seven churches; loosening the seven seals of the scroll; four horsemen bringing conquest, war and death; holy martyrs; earthquakes, tumult and stars falling from heaven; silence in heaven; sounding of seven trumpets; the woman clothed with the sun crying out to give birth; a great dragon with seven heads who wished to devour her child; that child caught up to God; war breaking out in heaven between Michael's angels and the dragon's angels, with Michael prevailing and the dragon cast out of heaven; people marked with the sign of the beast and some with the name of God; seven angels pouring out the seven last plagues; the fall of Babylon; Christ on a white horse; defeat of the beast; Satan bound for 1,000 years; the 1,000 year reign of the saints with Christ; the throne of judgment; the new heaven and new earth; descent of the holy city New Jerusalem; and finally the tabernacle of God with humanity making all things new.

The Christian world has pondered John's visions ever since. What do they mean? How will they take place? When and where will they happen? *Revelation* ends with: "He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming quickly.' Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Despite the fact that two millennia have passed, these visions – each bringing both hope and fear – have not come about on earth as expected.

Those waiting for the apocalypse in the natural world have been

disappointed. Of course, they claim, it could come at any time. Clearly many Christians await with a sense of fear, awe and dread but cannot dismiss it. Many do not stop waiting because so much of Christianity is bound up with the Last Judgment and the Second Coming. To abandon the prophecy of the apocalypse is to move beyond the essence of Christianity itself. It is to challenge the truth of the Redeemer and His promise to return.

This unfulfilled prophecy has created a predicament for the Christian world, causing many to stop waiting for a day that may never come. This may lead to doubt the divinity of Christ and eternal life. They may remain nominally Christian, accepting some of the ethical principles spoken by Jesus Christ, but are no longer committed to the entire vision.

THE UNFULFILLED PROPHECY—POSSIBLE APPROACHES

One approach to the prophecies seen by John is that they are true and will come to pass in this world just as he foretold: God will judge the living and the dead and the empirical world will be destroyed. Another approach is to claim that the events he “foresaw” were simply not true and will never happen; that they are not true revelations from God, only images from an overactive imagination.

The first approach encourages Christians to scan the horizon for signs and symbols, and to prepare for the fateful day – and some Christians take this path. The second approach dismisses the prophecy and the other constraints of Christianity and is associated with agnosticism and atheism – approaches gaining in the Christian world.

There is a third approach – that the visions of the apocalypse are true, a revelation from God, but will come to pass in the heavens, not on earth. This perspective assumes that the prophecy of John, like the whole of the Bible, is the Word of God and therefore is true, timeless and eternal, speaking from the spirit to the spirit about spiritual things. This approach validates John’s visions but applies different criteria for understanding them and judging whether the events have come to pass or not.

This is both modern and rational: modern because one hallmark of modernity is penetration of the external, visible world through the discovery of underlying rational principles that govern its real, but often invisible, foundations. This is true of physics, chemistry and other physical sciences, but also the social sciences, particularly psychology and sociology. These sciences ask us to assume the existence of invisible structures that obey scientific laws and account for and explain the empirical world in which we live. If we can accept the invisible in nature, and believe those structures are ordered, is it any more difficult to accept the unseen in the realm of spirit and believe that its

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processes are also orderly?

Modern visionaries must assume that similar rational rules give structure to the invisible world of spirit and must seek to understand the real beneath the surface of things. They must seek the inner, internal or spiritual in the literal, external and natural. Spirit speaks to and explains spirit, according to rational principles, just as nature speaks to and explains nature, according to rational principles.

THE MODERN VISIONARY

An assumption is that something identifiable constitutes a modern visionary, who somehow differs from visionaries of old. In order to explore the

distinctions, past visionaries will be identified as “traditional.”

This book asserts that Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) was a modern visionary. This is based not only on his being born at the beginning of the modern era but that his visionary practices differed markedly from Old Testament prophets, evangelists and Christian saints. He also said that his religious message was specifically meant for modern people who need to reflect on what is true before they can assent to it.

The essence of Swedenborg's claim is that he found (was given) the key to unlocking the principles of spiritual order – learning to explain the spiritual world on its own rational terms. He was a spiritual scientist. Thus, the broad outlines of his life and visionary activities chart the essential characteristics of a modern visionary. His life development, decisions and practices provide more than just a rubric to the meaning of modern visionary and bring the concept to life.

TRADITIONAL AND MODERN VISIONARIES

However, before turning to Swedenborg's biography, it is essential to orient the reader to the sociological paradigm that informs it. Both modern and traditional visionaries are rooted in this duality. What are their characteristics and how do they differ? What necessitated the development of a new visionary form?

The discipline of sociology emerged at the end of the 18th century and

the dawn of the 19th when intellectuals tried to come to grips with cataclysmic shifts in social expectations brought about by the French and Industrial Revolutions. It seemed as if one way of life, their social pattern, was replaced, almost overnight, by another. The old pattern of hierarchical, communal, affective, personally structured relationships was replaced by egalitarian, individual, rational and impersonal structures.

Ferdinand Tönnies (1855-1936) captured the dichotomy with his concepts of “*gemeinschaft*” and “*gesellschaft*” – community and society. But dichotomies established by other sociologists also informed Max Weber’s (1864-1920) “enchanted” and “disenchanted” worlds, or Emile Durkheim’s (1857-1919) “mechanical” and “organic” forms of social solidarity.

The distinction between modern and traditional social structures is at the core of the sociological perspective. They are fundamentally different responses to Weber’s question in his essay “*Science as a Vocation*.”¹ For him the “only question of importance for us is: ‘What shall we do and how shall we live?’”² This is the human question and how it is answered shapes the structure and content of all human life. This is a religious question about salvation, proper only to human beings. Unlike animals, they must determine and choose how to live. To be human it is not enough for the body to grow and unfold, which requires the presence of others. Only in this way does an infant learn to walk, talk and interact. In such socialization, a “self” emerges. However, the place and importance of that self largely depends on surrounding social and cultural norms.

Traditional and modern societies view the emerging self differently. In traditional societies, social processes subordinate self to the group. Female infanticide is a good example of the intimate connection between the power of the group to confer legitimacy in traditional cultures by the granting or denying of the right to life.

In modern societies, the individual is so important that a defining characteristic is the institutionalization of social norms to protect the developing person from the most intimate social group: the family. A person in

¹ “Science as a Vocation” (German: *Wissenschaft als Beruf*) is the text of a lecture given in 1917 or 1918 at Munich University by German sociologist Max Weber. It has been published in multiple compilations of Weber’s works in English and German, including: Weber, Max (1946). “Science as Vocation”, in From Max Weber, tr. and ed. by H. H. Gerth, and C. Wright Mills. New York: Free press.

² According to Richard Swedberg and Ola Agevall in *The Max Weber Dictionary: Key Words and Central Concepts* under the keywords of “Tolstoy’s Question,” “Weber refers to Tolstoy’s central question “What shall we do and how shall we live?” as an example of the importance for human beings of choosing which values to organize their lives around... Weber was deeply impressed by the uncompromising manner in which Tolstoy lived his life.”

modern society has a legitimate right to life for no other reason that he or she is a person. As this person grows and develops, social and cultural norms are transmitted, but it is up to the individual to determine, “what to do, and how to live.” The question of salvation has been personalized and individualized.

This disturbed Weber. He feared the consequences of living a meaningful human life in a totally rational, disenchanted world, in which no aspect of life is “set apart” as sacred, that values no thing and no way, but all things and all ways. In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905), he describes the chilling inheritance of modern individuals, “specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart, this nullity imagines that it has attained a level of civilization never before achieved.” (Weber, 1905, 182)

In modern society, charismatic endowment as the means of salvation is supplanted by rational calculation. According to Weber, rational discipline emerges as the sole key to mastery of the world. The scientific method becomes the standard means to access the truth of the world, invalidating other ways of knowing. Science can penetrate nature, but not value – or what is “good.” It can present what is true about a value system, but does not provide the tools to choose between one system or another. While science is a universal method, it does not lead to the creation of a universal ethic. Science is a means to discover how the empirical world works, but it cannot tell us what to do. It cannot tell us what is “good.”

Thus, when action in a modern scientific culture is “stripped of its religious and ethical meaning” it is like sport. Charisma, which Weber identifies as the “quality of a few,” yields to rational calculation, a skill open to many. Yet, just when the means of salvation becomes available to everyone, the meaning or reality of salvation becomes blurred and seems to disappear.

What is required is a universal ethic comparable to and compatible with modern science. However, such a universal ethic must be sought along another path -- prophecy or revelation. We are back to the question of whether or not there is a visionary form compatible with modernity; or is all visionary activity traditional?

TRADITIONAL VISIONARY

A traditional visionary speaks for people of particular time and place. Moses was such a visionary. He was “called” by God to lead his people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt to the Promised Land. Moses was not a universal prophet. He was not called to speak for the Egyptians, or the tribes who dwelt in the land of Canaan. He was called by God only to keep the covenant with the Jews.

God called to him out of the burning bush in Midian where he was, “a stranger in a strange land.” (*Exodus* 2:22) He was asked to return to Egypt, to

work signs and miracles to force the Pharaoh to let the enslaved Israelites go. Moses was a reluctant prophet, who complained to God that he was “slow of speech and slow of tongue.” Armed with a rod that could do wonders, and with his brother Aaron as a mouthpiece, he succeeded in his mission. He brought the people to the border of the Promised Land.

The people’s lack of faith resulted in 40 years of wandering in the desert. During that time Moses received the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone; and dictated the law that would shape the ways of the Jewish people for many centuries. He led the remnant to the gateway of the land that he could never enter. He was a prophet for a specific people, with a specific mission. He was an ethical prophet for the nation of Israel, adapting God’s universal message to the needs of a particular people, not a prophet with a universal message.

Jesus Christ began with a mission to those same chosen people. He said, “it was written, but I say unto you.” He spoke to a particular people, at a particular time, and in a particular place. He came as the Messiah to redeem Israel. When the mission failed, He was crucified. As He predicted, on the third day He rose from the dead and became Christ, the universal prophet. After His resurrection, He told his disciples to, “go and preach to all nations” the message of the risen Lord, to preach repentance and the remission of sins. His universal message of salvation was heard in many lands around the world. Christ was, in many ways, the model for Weber’s charismatic leader.

CHARISMA – TRADITIONAL AND MODERN

Charisma is the dynamic element of Weber’s theory of action. He defines charisma as a personal gift and the recipient “is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman; or at least exceptional powers or qualities.” (Weber, 1964, 358) This person is the locus of charisma. All religions begin in “charismatic moments,” tending to occur in times of profound distress when existing structures cannot satisfy human longing for salvation.

Men and women may be open to new answers to “what shall we do and how shall we live?” Answering visionaries or prophets break with the past and articulate new solutions. The personal nature of charismatic authority makes it highly unstable and Weber suggests that pure charisma may exist only in the moment of origination.

Breaking with the past was necessary to give form to the new religious movement, but it also has the effect of deadening the original inspiration. According to Daniel Bell: “With the progress of science and technology, man has stopped believing in magical powers, spirits and demons; he has lost his sense of prophecy and, above all, his sense of the sacred. Reality has become

dreary, flat and utilitarian, leaving a great void in the souls of men, which they seek to fill by furious activity and through various devices and substitutes.” (Bell, 1977, 422)

Christianity was a religious movement born in traditional society, and as it became successively routine, it led to the modern world characterized by “rationalization and intellectualization and above all, ‘by the disenchantment of the world,’” (Gerth & Mills, 1958, 155), a world that Weber says still requires some possibility of charisma as the foundation of legitimacy.

But the impersonality and rationality of the modern system of authority allows little room for the personal nature of charisma conceptualized by Weber. Although he understood the tremendous structural differences between traditional and modern society, he never gave up on the essentially personal nature of charisma. While modern individuals continue to be fascinated by personally charismatic figures that burst into their rationally ordered world, such figures also fill them either with horror and dread or a sense of amusement. Hitler, Stalin and Mao personify our sense of horror, and television evangelists personify our sense of the ridiculous.³

MODERN VISIONARY

Emanuel Swedenborg was not a charismatic leader although he claims to have had extraordinary experiences. He maintained that through God’s divine mercy, he was given the ability to be with spirits and angels. In his first work, *Secrets of Heaven* (1749), he wrote:

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

In fact, during the 27-year period that he claimed these extraordinary powers he never attempted to gain a personal following, either in his native Sweden, or anywhere in Europe. For 19 years he published his religious works anonymously, then in 1768 he signed *Marriage Love*, “Emanuel Swedenborg, A Swede.” At the back, he listed all the books he had published and several that he planned to write.

³ Although I am using the term “charismatic” for these men, the term “Caesaristic,” developed by Franz Neumann, might be more appropriate. Caesarism is a form of authority that sees power for power’s sake, but the ideology is always subordinate to the grab for power. Caesarism inevitably requires a secret security force to maintain itself. The sanctity of the individual or freedom of thought is utterly alien to Caesaristic rule.

He wrote in his last work *True Christianity* that he was called only to write and publish what he saw, heard and experienced:

Since the Lord cannot manifest himself in person, as shown just above, and nevertheless has foretold that he was to come and establish a new church, which is the New Jerusalem, it follows that he will do this by means of a man who is able not only to receive these doctrines in the understanding but also to publish them by the press. (True Christianity 779)

While Swedenborg did talk to individuals about his religious writings, particularly after he became known as their author in the early 1760s, he never brought up the subject, only responding to questions about his books or what they taught. He would discuss them with people who showed a genuine interest but was reluctant to engage in conversations of mere curiosity. He was not chosen to speak to a particular people, at a particular time, in a particular place.

He wrote in Latin (the universal language of the day) and published his religious works in London and Amsterdam -- the two most free and cosmopolitan cities of the 18th century. From them his religious writings soon circled the globe, taken to Russia, the Americas and Australia in the 1780s.

Another distinguishing characteristic of his visionary experience were life-altering dreams he experienced over 18 months -- particularly intense between March and October of 1744. He recorded his dreams in a private journal -- *The Journal of Dreams*. He did not simply record his dreams; he analyzed them. In fact, this may be the first book of dream analysis ever recorded. It was an integral part of the process of self-analysis or self-examination, in which he came face to face with his inner affections and motivations. Lurking behind the exterior of a hard-driving natural philosopher and civil servant, he confronted his enormous hubris, deeply entrenched self-love, and a profound contempt and disdain for others. He cried when he realized he had not "loved."

Through this journey of inner revelation, he saw glimpses of the Divine, whom he believed was aiding him. He believed that witnessing the horrible revelations of his inner character gave him the opportunity to reject the persona he had created in his life. After much struggle and temptation, he chose to be a different kind of man. He chose humility over hubris, to love others more than himself, and to serve God above all else.

While countless other prophets have had dreams, and John on the Isle of Patmos recorded his, Swedenborg's recording and analysis of his dreams became a model for his interpretation of the Scriptures.

His reaction and reflection on his dreams is thoroughly modern: rational and reflective. His dreams presented him with revelatory data; he could have

ignored them or rejected their message. He chose instead to alter his life course. He was not commanded to do so; rather he saw the opportunity and freely chose it. His choice unlocked the key to his own soul; he abandoned his academic search for the “soul” because he had found his own, with the grace of God.

What is amazing in his story is that after these wrenching revelations, the externals of his life changed very little. He did abandon his philosophical project and began to develop the tools necessary for his new undertaking: revealing the inner meaning of the Bible. Visions were not enough. He needed to re-tool his linguistic skills. He began a “dictionary” of correspondences, recorded his extraordinary experiences, and wrote several drafts of the inner meaning of *Genesis*, the story of creation.

He neither immediately set out to preach a new message, nor dashed off his new interpretation in a trance. He methodically prepared himself. He wrote thousands of pages before producing his first volume of *Heavenly Secrets* in 1749. He even continued with the Board of Mines until 1747, when he was offered its presidency. He chose to resign instead. All of this bears the hallmarks of rationality, reflectivity and freedom, and fit the modern paradigm.

Since personal charismatic figures evoke either fear or pathos in modern skeptics, they cannot call modern rational people to action. The question is: what form can charisma take in the modern world that freely calls individuals to action, while conforming to the requirements of impersonality and rationality? I argue that this form is the “charisma of the book.”⁴

Therefore, Swedenborg *wrote* this new revelation. He did not speak it. He did not preach it. He *published* it. He sold his books like any other author and gave away review copies. While no doubt burning inside with “all things new,” he chose the modern approach to sharing his vision, allowing it to compete in the marketplace of ideas, where it still does 250 years later.

The fact that his works quietly circled the globe so soon after his death is remarkable and speaks to their universality. They shaped the faith of people all over the world. Initially written in Latin, they have been translated into many languages, including Finish, Japanese, Zulu and Twi.

The fact that the works of an 18th century Swedish noble have not only been translated into these languages but that their moral and spiritual message resonates with such a variety of cultural groups suggest they may carry a universal ethic, revealing the underlying structure of spirit, just as science reveals the underlying structure of matter. If so, they may play a substantially more significant role in the history of humanity than science itself.

⁴ The New Church in a Disenchanted World, University of Pennsylvania, 1985.

This book invites you to walk with Swedenborg on his journey, exploring the aspects of his life that gave him the tools to become a modern visionary. What was Christian Europe like that Swedenborg felt called to open the seals on the book of Revelation? Why was he born on the fringe of Europe, in the intensely Lutheran country of Sweden? How did his childhood prepare him for his life choice to become a scientific-modern-visionary? Why was he an inveterate traveler? Why did he struggle to find a productive role in Sweden? What called him to write volumes on cosmology and anatomy? What does his dream journal reveal? What manner of prophet was he? Why explore his gardens? Finally, how can we, as individuals, come to terms with Swedenborg as revelator of the spiritual structure of our modern lives?

*This book invites
you to walk with
Swedenborg on his
journey, exploring
the aspects of his life
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tools to become a
modern visionary.*

Coming in March/April: The Introduction to this book.

Church News

Compiled by Bruce Henderson

GENERAL CHURCH ASSEMBLY

June 27-30, 2024

Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, USA

Our team is thrilled to be planning what we hope will be an engaging, uplifting opportunity for friendship and connection within our international church community at the General Church Assembly. We are offering a robust plenary and workshop schedule with presentations, small groups, panels, and break outs. Enjoy clergy, women and men, friends, and members present on topics like parenting, marriage, spiritual growth, doctrine, artificial intelligence, women's programming, conflict, grief, use, death, and more. Join us for worship, vespers, holy supper, and a whole community worship on Sunday to conclude our time together. Our spiritual and social offerings will be enriched by live music by singers and musicians from around the world.

Please enjoy our *schedule:

Thursday: Registration at the Bryn Athyn College Brickman Center: enjoy “Philly foods” like water ice, TastyKakes, and soft pretzels; collect your registration packet and swag; and check into your housing at Bryn Athyn College (available for an additional fee). Later that evening enjoy a mini Landmark in Lights in the Historic District - see the illuminated Glencairn Museum and Cairnwood Estate, and enjoy light drinks and snacks at the Bryn Athyn Cathedral.

Friday and Saturday – both days are similar except for the social events after dinner (bold print below).

Adults	Post High School – Young Adult	Teen	Children
Morning Physical Activity or Meditation	Morning Physical Activity or Meditation	Prep for drop off (after breakfast)	Prep for drop off (after breakfast)
Grab-and-go breakfast	Grab-and-go breakfast	Grab-and-go breakfast	Grab-and-go breakfast
Adult worship	Adult worship	Worship	Worship
Workshop	Workshop	Cooking class, games, team building, field day	Arts and crafts, games, play time, field day
Community lunch	Community lunch	Community lunch	Community lunch
Workshop	Workshop	Doctrinal discussion, community service project, outdoor adventure	Religion lesson, live animal visit, scavenger hunt
Workshop	Workshop		
Community dinner	Community dinner	Community dinner	Community dinner
Friday - Campus Fun Fest with live music, yard games, bouncy houses, snacks, and drinks Saturday – Summer Soiree in the newly reopened Glencairn Museum with pop up music, trips to the tower and visiting in the Great Hall and Cloister	Friday - Campus Fun Fest with live music, yard games, bouncy houses, snacks, and drinks Fire and Friendship at Scott and Nicole Frazier's Saturday – Glow in the Dark Frisbee Golf Summer Soiree in the newly reopened Glencairn Museum	Friday - Campus Fun Fest with live music, yard games, bouncy houses, snacks, and drinks Saturday – Mini golf, pickleball, snacks, games, and swimming	Friday - Campus Fun Fest with live music, yard games, bouncy houses, snacks, and drinks

Sunday

Grab-and-go breakfast followed by Community Worship with special music at the beautiful Bryn Athyn Cathedral.

*Schedule subject to change
www.gcassembly2024.org
Registration opens in February.

We hope to see you in June,
The Assembly Team
Nicole Bau-Madsen,
Emily Hasen,
Nina Dewees, Lana Tang



ACADEMY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Highlights from the meeting of October 14, 2023

Chancellor

The Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr., Chancellor of the Academy, and the **Rev. Eric H. Carswell**, President of Bryn Athyn College, met with the College Faculty Council to discuss methods and impacts of substantial budgetary adjustments required by the Board. Chancellor Buss is working on a Statement of Institutional Commitment as part of a proposed gift to the College. He has also begun to work on a review of the leadership needs at the Academy Secondary Schools.

Vice Chair

Dr. Charles Lindsay detailed ongoing work of the Ad Hoc Governance Committee rising out of the accreditation process. The committee focused on three areas:

1. Changing the powers and functions of the College Board Committee to a bylaws mandated executive committee
2. Recognizing and formalizing the role of the faculty in shared governance
3. Better defining the two roles of the Chancellor

Significant proposed bylaws changes will be presented to the Board for review and discussion before presentation to the Corporation.

Bryn Athyn College

Work was ongoing to present a balanced and sustainable budget for the College for FY 25. The Division III sports program and most faculty positions will be retained, noting that the College spends less on instructional costs than the benchmark.

There was extensive discussion on the need for a strategic plan, focusing on what the College “intends to do well” and considering what it needs to do less of, as well as the budgetary decisions that need to be made through that lens.

Academy Secondary Schools

The number of inquiries, tours and applications is up for next year. Dorm arrangements are working well. The new school nurse, **Kerry Zwierczyski**, RN, and Housing Coordinator **Keith Gruber**, have been exceptional.

Treasurer

With an evaluation of private investments, the endowment is expected to show a positive return, but the Academy has been running deficits (endowment payout over the recommended 5% ceiling) since 2007. It worsened in FY23. Since 2022 contributions, particularly to Bryn Athyn College, have dropped substantially, after several very generous years.

Glencairn Museum

The Museum was scheduled to reopen the day after Thanksgiving. Although the renovation work that closed the Museum for more than a year became more expensive than planned, Glencairn expects to pay off its loan in a timely fashion, while maintaining and broadening its mission programs.

Cairnwood Estate

For the third year in a row Cairnwood had a budget surplus in FY23. For several reasons it is facing a tougher market. Efforts to obtain a liquor license continue.

Glencairn Awards

Glencairn Awards for 2023 were given to: **Bradley and Andrea Cranch, Hannah Cranch, Jane Edmunds, Geraldo and Scarrain** (posthumously) **Gomes, Bruce Henderson, Carroll Odhner, Sarah Bruell Odhner, Kate Pitcairn, Janice Roscoe, Brannon Smith and Cece Umberger.**

GLENCAIRN AWARD NOMINATIONS

In 2023, The Academy of the New Church proudly re-instituted the Glencairn Award Program. (Award recipients for 2023 appeared under Church News in the November/December 2023 issue of *New Church Life*.)

On January 4, 2024, the Glencairn Award Committee began accepting written nominations for the 2024 award. The award is given to a teacher or a member of a New Church community for outstanding achievements and/or contributions in these fields: religion, science, education, the arts, literature, or community service.

As provided in the gift that funds the award, such achievements are the sole criteria for the award. It may not be given as compensation for service or as a supplement to salary or based on the financial needs of the recipient.

All nominations must be made on a nomination application, which may be requested by sending an email or letter to the Academy's Secretary-General Counsel, Phillip R. Zuber, Esq.: P.O. Box 711, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009-0731; emailing Phillip.zuber@anc-gc.org; or telephoning 267-502-2417.

All nominations and any other information provided about the nominee will be kept in strict confidence by the Committee.

The deadline for submission of applications for the 2024 award is March 29, 2024.

AUTUMN ALL AGE WEEKEND

Kathy Wyncoll

I'm sure many of you who attend All Age Weekends [in Colchester, England] especially appreciate the warmth and loving care experienced at Purley Chase. But there are many ways to care for one's neighbor and the most recent event, held in October, explored these under the theme, *Spiritual Care for the Neighbor*. **Karin Baynes**, as organizer, had done a brilliant job and the theme ran seamlessly throughout the weekend.

Most people managed to arrive in time for Friday's evening meal, despite the appallingly wet weather. **Stuart Baynes** (who was also our efficient treasurer) led us in two ice breakers. Our knowledge of Bible characters was tested in a fun way, as was guessing which fun fact belonged to which person in the room. And yes, husband **Geoff** did used to be a disc jockey many moons ago! But do you know who used to work for the White House?

On Saturday, the teenagers and younger children had willing volunteers to lead them in sessions, while the adults enjoyed the **Rev. Grant Odhner's** talk on Caring for the Lord in Others, and the **Rev. Erik Buss's** on *Helping the Hurting*.

Karin Baynes and **Frits Bot** are both lay professional spiritual caregivers and explained how they can be of service to others in this capacity, as well as offering a chance to watch how this can work in practice.

Of course, at regular intervals there was plenty of food. A walk to the nearby quarry helped work up our appetites for even more food and was great fun, despite the muddy conditions. Elizabeth and I both confess to a poor sense of direction, so I guess heading back together was bound to get us lost. A phone call to Erik soon put us back on the right path, so it seems ministers can be rather good at guiding us on a natural, as well as a spiritual level!

With all the outdoor sogginess, the hoped-for evening bonfire had to be cancelled, but an indoor log fire was a more than adequate substitute. The young people had fun toasting marshmallows and the campfire song book was handed round for some hearty singing. Those who had decided to watch the rugby match between South Africa and England in the bar had no idea what they were missing, but they too had fun, of course.

Sunday's Holy Supper service, conducted by **Bishop David Lindrooth**, was a beautiful and moving occasion. And we had a new friend come and

join us. She has been attending some of Erik's Zoom classes and services and it was so lovely to meet her in person. **Andrew Bruell** then gathered us all together for the formal group photo and there was time for a feedback session and another walk before lunch. Geoff and I met a small flock of sheep and discovered they too will agree to being photographed if you adopt a gentle and encouraging tone.

All too soon it was time to say our goodbyes and pack up the cars for the drive home. With bodies and spirits duly fed, we were glad we had come and were already looking forward to the next event. We hope to see you there!

RIVER OF LIGHT

(The following is reprinted from the *Newsletter of the New Church in the United Kingdom*, February 2023.)

In 1926, deaf and blind American author **Helen Keller** received a letter from the Rev. Paul Sperry asking if she would consider writing a book about Swedenborg. Here is an extract from her reply:

Of one thing I am sure. Any effort is worthwhile that brings comfort to limited, struggling human beings in a dark, self-centered age; and Swedenborg's message has meant so much to me! It has given color and reality and unity to my thought of the life to come; it has exalted my ideas of love, truth and usefulness; it has been my strongest incitement to overcome limitations.

The atmosphere Swedenborg creates absorbs me completely. His slightest phrase is significant for me. His Divine Love and Wisdom is a fountain of life I am always happy to be near. I find in it a happy rest from the noisy insanity of the outer world with its many words of little meaning and actions of little worth.

I bury my fingers in this great river of light that is higher than all stars, deeper than the silence which enfolds me. It alone is great, while all else is small, fragmentary. Were I but capable of interpreting for others one-half of the stimulating thoughts and noble sentiments that are buried in Swedenborg's Writings, I should help them more than I am ever likely to in any other way.

Helen Keller's book, *My Religion*, was published in 1927.

NEW CHURCH TEEN WEEKEND IN KEMPTON

Naomi Reid, Chaperone

Last fall's 2023 New Church Teen Youth Weekend was held in scenic Kempton, Pennsylvania, amid rolling hills, Hawk Mountain, The Pinnacle and Leaser Lake. Even the long drive from Canada was beautiful as the fall leaves were out in full color.

The youth weekend actually started on Thursday, October 26, for those teens and drivers able to make it early. We got to hike up Hawk Mountain, enjoy a go-kart outing and tour the Kempton New Church high school. The school has been renovated to include a fully outfitted science lab and large classrooms. There were a number of ceiling-mounted projectors and smart boards in some classrooms and a community room, which is sometimes used for children's services and other functions. The money for this school addition was made possible through fund-raising efforts of the Kempton New Church Society.

There were 54 young people attending the youth weekend along with their ministers, chaperones and drivers from seven New Church societies in the United States and Canada. There were 27 from Kempton, with their ministers and hosts (**the Rev. Brett and Karla Buick and the Rev. Calvin and Liza Heinrichs**). Seven teens attended from Kitchener, Ontario with the **Rev. Justin Schorran** and drivers (**Justin and Denali Schorran and Laura Hill**). Six teens attended from Pittsburgh with the **Rev. Jared Buss** with his wife, **Justine**, and their four children and chaperone/driver **Burgundy Smith**. Six teens came from Bryn Athyn with their drivers, **Brooke Brown and Emily Hasen**). Three attended from Mitchellville, Maryland, with chaperone/driver **Gillian Frazier**. Three teens from Toronto attended with their driver and chaperone, **John and Naomi Reid**, and two from Glenview school principal/chaperone **Phil Parker**.

The religious theme for the weekend was "Discriminate Charity." Each of the ministers helping with the weekend took turns teaching and leading discussions on the theme through their classes, evening vespers services and Sunday morning worship service. This helped us to think through what it means to be prudent when it comes to charity. We were taught what the Lord's Word, as well as the Writings given through Emanuel Swedenborg, teach on this relevant topic. The story from the Lord's Word of the man who was robbed and left for dead was used to think about who was willing to help him.

To help us think through what it means to exercise discriminate charity we were given a quote from the Writings: "It is a common opinion at this day, that every man is equally the neighbor, and that benefits are to be conferred on

everyone who needs assistance, but it is in the interest of Christian prudence to examine well the quality of a man's life, and to exercise charity to him accordingly. (*New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* 85)

When we consider what it means to act prudently (wisely) in being charitable, Mr. Buick shared this quote from *True Christian Religion* 459.14: "A man may do evil by deeds of kindness. . . . For example . . . if one rescues a robber from prison and shows him the way to a forest, saying to himself, it is not my fault that he commits robbery, I have given assistance to the man". Another point highlighted from *True Christian Religion* 120: "If one lives for a time with robbers and pirates, he finally becomes like them, or if one lives with adulterers and harlots he soon thinks nothing of adultery; or if he mingles with outlaws he soon thinks nothing of doing violence to anyone. For all evils are contagious." This is an important idea to consider when deciding who we choose as our close friends.

After the doctrinal class on Saturday morning, everyone went to the Kempton Community Center to help trim and remove the plastic protective casing from young trees. Because there were so many hardworking teens, the work was finished earlier than expected, so the teens played volleyball or went for a walk on the grounds. Fortunately, we were blessed with warm "summer" weather, even though this weekend was late into the fall.

In addition to the sound ideas shared from the Lord's Word and the Writings, the weekend was packed with fun activities including get-to-know-you games and a variety of fun team competitions led by Calvin Heinrichs, canoeing, kayaking, volleyball, walks, a BBQ at Leaser Lake, and wonderful breakfasts from our host families (the Buicks and Heinrichs). On Friday for dinner we had the largest pizza ever (30 inches!) which was not only huge but delicious. On Saturday after dodgeball and showers, the teens had fun decorating a variety of cigar boxes. The end results were impressive!

On Sunday morning the Kempton Church, with overflow seating, was packed with people. As I sat there in church after experiencing this wonderful youth weekend, I thought to myself, wouldn't it be nice if all of our New Churches could experience being packed every Sunday morning? Perhaps someday this will be our reality!

ASIAN NEW CHURCH MISSION

The Rev. John Jin, Regional Pastor for Asia

"The Church is the foundation of heaven." (Arcana Coelestia 4060)

Our mission in Asia has as its goal: **"Asians learn heavenly doctrines and live according to those teachings to form a heavenly community and live**

happily within it.” In the meantime, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all of you who have given endless trust and support for helping this mission voluntarily.

What’s New?

The Asian New Church Revival project, which started last year, is developing, and growing more in-depth and substantially. For example, the Asian ministers discussed at the Oceania General Church clergy meeting in Seoul, Korea: “How can our church create the New Church taught by Heavenly Doctrine? What can pastors do on the spot to help church members?”.

- A church that forms a heavenly community and within which its members live a heavenly life
- To this end, how can we create a “church where love for neighbors comes first”?
- A church where youth can participate
- Evangelism using advancing IT, artificial intelligence, and audio-visual materials
- The true nature of the New Church taught by Heavenly Doctrine and how to apply it in the church

In addition to this:

- 1) A study on the organization and system of a New Church tailored to Asians based on Heavenly Doctrine, especially a study on the newly launched Chinese New Church.
- 2) Other than Korea, Japan and China, where else in Asia can new developments be pioneered through missionary work? Among them, we selected Eastern Malaysia as the most likely location and began basic research.
- 3) The Asian New Church should develop the existing Western-style church into a new model that considers the state of mind and religious background of Asians. For example, a church that takes the early ancient church as a role model and puts charity first based on Heavenly Doctrine for Gentile Mission.

The China New Church

As you know from the news and media, it is very difficult for mainland China

to maintain religious beliefs. Public religious activities are subject to many risks and restrictions. Nevertheless, those who want to live according to the Heavenly Doctrines in China are willing to take all risks and act according to their faith and conscience. Thanks to this, even though its membership is extremely small compared to the total population, it has achieved remarkable results and is doubling its growth momentum. Here, with a humble heart, we introduce some of the achievements.

Sunday worship was started publicly – first, as a pilot, with church members living in the Shanghai area gathered together in one place every Sunday to worship, and at the same time, the service was broadcast through live streaming, allowing more people to participate. Many people from China and abroad participate in the worship service. In 2024, efforts are being made to try new things in various regions, starting with the Beijing region.

The Theological School: Currently, two people are studying in the ministry course and more than 30 in the lay leadership course. Unfortunately, although Chinese authorities have banned the use of network, the organizing team has wisely and courageously attempted to overcome this and continue and is progressing well. I plan to finish the first course before May 24 and start the advanced course again in June.

Discussion group meeting: There are many different group activities taking place online or offline in various places during the week. It is divided into groups of Chinese people not only in the mainland but also overseas, and the number of participants reaches about 500 people. They are growing into a group that helps each other beyond the level of simply studying or discussing doctrine.

Translation and Publishing: Most of the Heavenly Doctrine translations (first translations) have been completed. Since last year we have started working on correcting errors in the translation and refining the sentences, and we are seeing a lot of progress. The translated version is posted on *NewChristianbiblestudy.org* and various websites in China. We also print and send books to people who want to read them. However, publishing is not possible due to government regulations. Meanwhile, all books published by the New Church are posted on the website. In addition, work on translating and publishing this is in progress. This will serve as the New Church library.

Outreach Activities: In addition to personal outreach, videos, audio, live streams, blogs, cartoons and YouTube, we are using all possible methods to

reach as many people as we can. In particular, with the help of General Church Outreach, other New Churches, and **Curtis Childs**, we are seeing great results by translating and editing already developed materials to suit the Chinese situation. In addition, many New Church computer experts in China are actively conducting research and discussion on: “How can we use the latest IT technology for outreach to evangelize our young people?”

The Korea New Church

Develop sermons and doctrinal studies applicable to daily life. (Rev. Soon C. Lee) Sermons and doctrinal studies so far have tended to be biased toward theory. Therefore, the rationality or wisdom of church members was not developed. To improve this, the sermon focuses on researching and developing a way to obey the doctrine and further live a life of love, and also focuses on researching and developing the study of the doctrine to go in the same direction.

Bringing New Technology to Outreach. (Rev. Dong Y. Yang) Using artificial intelligence and new IT technologies, we develop ways to promote the Heavenly Doctrines more effectively and have a positive impact with a small number of people and resources.

Young Generation Mission. (Rev Hyun J. Yang) To this end, we develop and announce websites, videos, audio, etc., that introduce the Heavenly Doctrines that young people and new generations can be interested in.

The Theological School: The Korean Theological School trained two ministers and one lay leadership trainer. Both courses focus not only on doctrine but also on how to apply it to our daily lives. As a result, we are seeing good results in which affection for truth and goodness is doubling.

The Japan New Church

A visiting church rather than a sitting and waiting church. (Rev. Shiro Matsumoto) The Tokyo New Church is devoted to developing heavenly community to be a visiting church rather than a sitting and waiting church. For example, Sunday services are not only relayed across the country, but also discussions are held, and sermons are made into cartoons and sent to church members.

The Rev. Sachio Nakato: We are still unable to see much of an effect due to Japanese sentiment and university authorities' restrictions, but we are still

trying various methods until we achieve good results.

Build cell communities that have the characteristics of the New Church: A group centered on lay people with no external pressure. **The Rev. Sakae Seiich** is involved in an online community. They meet once a month through Zoom to study the Word and are contemplating how to apply it in real life. So far, things have been going well in a very free atmosphere. The participants formed a consensus that there would be great hope for the world in the future if a church like this was built, and they began to discuss how to develop it.

Although the Asia Mission faces many challenges, we are growing step by step with hope under the Divine mercy of the Lord. I'd like to make one request: Our New Church members in China are especially in a very difficult situation as you know from the world news. Please pray for them.

Life Lines

Bruce M. Henderson and the Rev. Jeremy F. Simons

OUR FATHER/MY PRAYER

When we say the Lord's Prayer – alone in our bedrooms or with others in church – the pronouns are plural: “Our Father . . . give us . . . forgive us . . . as we forgive . . . lead us . . . deliver us.” But it is also an intensely personal prayer. And it works both ways.

When the Lord taught us His prayer in the Sermon on the Mount, He prefaced:

And when thou pray, though shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of man. Verily, I say unto you, they shall have their reward.

But thou, when you pray, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to the Father which is in secret, and thy Father, who sees in secret, shall reward thee openly. (Matthew 6:5-6)

The Lord's Prayer is both purposefully inclusive and profoundly personal. Even when we say it alone, it is a communal prayer; we think not only of ourselves but all those we look to as fellow travelers in our journey,

We may also wonder how we – individually and collectively – live up to the vision, “as in heaven so upon the earth,” when so much of this earth seems far removed from heaven; or, “deliver us from evil,” when there seems little hope of escaping its infection.

But the Lord's Prayer is aspirational. We pray for what we want ourselves and the world to be – and for what we are willing to work toward. It is like the Pledge of Allegiance for Americans. We have not yet secured “liberty and

justice for all,” but that remains the aspiration of “we the people.” It is what good citizens strive to live and model to lend hope to the dream.

Whether in our own minds or in pews on Sundays, we may rattle off the Lord’s Prayer with little thought or commitment to what we are saying. Swedenborg said that the more he studied the Word, the more his mind was filled with arcana as he said the prayer. We may never experience that degree of insight on this earth, but the more reverence and reflection we give to the prayer in its recitation – especially by saying it slowly, deliberately, thoughtfully – the more meaningful and transformative it will be.

The Lord’s Prayer is one of the first things we learned as infants. It will be one of the last things heard at our memorial services. It is a power and a promise that stays with us throughout our lives on this earth – and into the next.

It is **His Prayer**, perfectly constructed for us, wherever we are in our lives. It is **Our Prayer**, always there to guide our lives and aspirations. And for each of us, it is **My Prayer** – the grounding for our lives. Individually and collectively, the **Lord’s Prayer** connects us to Him. Let us give that prayer – each day – the honor and sanctity it deserves.

(BMH)

HONORING SWEDENBORG

This January 29th we honor the 336th birthday of Emanuel Swedenborg. We do so with a sense of gratitude and perspective.

We revere Swedenborg for his commitment and dedication to the great work he was called to do. We admire him for never trying to start a church on his own, and for never seeking to attract personal attention – even going out of his way to avoid that attention. He humbly professed to be nothing more than a “servant of the Lord,” transcribing the revelation he was carefully prepared to receive for all mankind.

We honor him best by responding to the Great Commission at the end of the book of *Matthew*: “Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations . . . to observe all things whatsoever I have commended you.”

We are all called to share the gift, given by the Lord through Swedenborg – to take up the mission of the *Parable of the Sower*, spreading seeds as we can so that the Lord can nurture those that fall “in good ground.”

Many in the church have answered that call with books and pamphlets, videos and testimony. We know that people all over the world are being reached and affected. Only the Lord knows what seeds will bear fruit. And that is worth our effort.

Among those answering the call were two devoted students of Swedenborg

– in different realms: the late Rev. Kurt Horigan Asplundh and the late Dr. Jane Williams-Hogan. Kurt Asplundh was a beloved pastor, teacher and – in retirement – editor of *New Church Life*. Jane was a renowned professor of Sociology at Bryn Athyn College, who devoted years of research – in Bryn Athyn and Sweden – into the life of Swedenborg.

You can read about the gifts that are part of their legacies in this issue – books they worked on before leaving this world, to extend the reach of their passion and scholarship beyond their careers on earth.

Mr. Asplundh left in his computer – discovered by his wife, Martha, after his passing – a wonderful, comforting book: *Living the Good Life: Seven Principles That Can Change the Way We Live Our Lives*. This book is so true to the gentle spirit with which he led us for so many years – a practical guide to using the Lord’s Word to improve our own lives. You can read about it on page 30.

Jane’s book is the opus of her life’s work, an extensive biography: *The Making of a Modern Visionary: Emanuel Swedenborg, Eyewitness to the Apocalypse*. This tome is still in production, carried on by dedicated friends and family. We offer her extensive Foreword on page 34, to be followed in the March/April issue with her Introduction. Once the book is published, we plan to offer a comprehensive review.

This book will be a massive contribution to the study of Swedenborg’s life and impact on the world – which, in the Lord’s providence, will continue as the New Church continually descends “from God out of heaven.”

We honor Emanuel Swedenborg best by appreciating these contributions toward extending the work of this great servant – which encourage us all to keep planting the seeds.

(BMH)

MEASURING UP

The seventh principle in the Rev. Kurt Ho. Asplundh’s book – *Living the Good Life: Seven Principles That Can Change the Way We live Our Lives* – states: “My success in life is measured by what I learn to love rather than what I earn or what I do.”

Measuring is a good term, rather than judging – especially judging others. We often measure ourselves and others by what we accomplish in the world, whereas, Kurt says, “the Lord measures people by what they have learned to love.” We have the humbling lesson in the Word of the disciples squabbling about which of them would be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And the Lord rebuking them: “He who is greatest in heaven is the one who serves.”

We live lives of use by living lives of service – serving the Lord and our

neighbor. That service may be humble, or it may be exalted, but the Lord sees only the love that motivates us, whether as leaders or followers.

All of us are called to leadership, in one way or another, and all of us are called to follow. We lead our own lives, with all the loves and choices that go into that. We may have leadership responsibilities in our families, our communities, our church. We are all challenged to lead by example, in the way we live our lives – and that may be the most subtle but important opportunity of all.

We are followers also. We follow first the Lord but choose to follow other leaders. We are guided by what we love and value in choosing the leaders of our government, our professions, our church. We are inspired and grateful that the best leaders – at any level – seek first to serve as much as to lead, and to be led themselves by the Lord.

Leadership these days – at any level – is about coping with change in an increasingly challenging world. It is about casting a vision that will inspire followers, offering a clear sense of where you are headed and how to get there, all rooted in values that people can unite behind. We measure our leaders – whether they be politicians, executives or bishops – by whether they do the right things, for the right reasons. And we need to hold ourselves to the same standard.

Good leadership begins with the power of the Lord working through us to serve Him. It is a challenge and a responsibility. But primarily it is an opportunity that can be devoted to service or exploited for personal gain.

The ultimate leader, in Jim Collins' iconic book, *Good to Great*, is the "Level Five Leader" – a person of strong will and purpose, coupled with humility. It is commitment to a vision without ego.

The qualities we admire and respect in leaders inspire us to contribute to a shared vision, to look for the best in others and not judge, to treat everyone with patience and kindness, to set the example of serving and following the Lord.

Leaders often disappoint us, at many levels – because of ego, lack of courage to "do the right thing," or misplaced values. We may disappoint ourselves at times, for similar reasons. But before we hold our leaders accountable, we have to look to ourselves. Where are we going? Who do we follow. And why? How do we measure up?

Our success – whether leading with authority or by example – and the success of those we choose to follow, is measured by what we love. And the greatest among us – whether humble or exalted – are those who serve.

(BMH)

THE END OF ROMANCE?

Valentine's Day seems to be waning in popularity. According to polling data, the number of Americans who planned to celebrate it has decreased from 63% in 2007 to 52% in 2023. (*Statista.com*) This coincides with similar declines in such things as the popularity of love songs, romantic movies, and even the percentage of 12th graders who have ever been on a date.

Most Christian denominations do not see romance as an especially central aspect of a religious life. While morality is taught and marriage is valued, the fact that celibacy is seen as a more chaste and pure state of life than marriage puts romance at a disadvantage. In the New Church, by contrast, the love in marriage is said to be *"celestial, spiritual, holy, pure and clean, more than any other love that is found in angels of heaven or people of the church."* (*Conjugal Love* 71)

Even among church members, however, conjugal love, or married love, is often seen as an extra ingredient, or a kind of bonus, on top of the love of the neighbor and of the Lord that make up the happiness of heaven. Yet the Heavenly Doctrine is clear that this love is *"the fundamental of all the loves of heaven."* (*Conjugal Love* 65) It is even said that *"Heaven and the church are with all who are in true conjugal love and with no others. For heaven and the church are the marriage of good and truth, from which is conjugal love."* (*Apocalypse Explained* 999)

Happily, since this love is not just a relationship with another, but is a love for and obedience to the principles and behaviors that make up the happiness of marriage, it can be present even with people who are not currently experiencing the happiness of marriage. Still, most people pray for this love, which can only come from the Lord Himself. So, trends in this world that seem to show a decline in interest are not good news.

For example:

Since 1996, there's been a noticeable decline of love songs on the Billboard Hot 100. In 1996, 14 of the songs on the year end chart were love songs. In more recent years there have typically been only one or two. (Where Is The Love? A Generation Without Love Songs, by Lamar Dawson, Huffington Post, Feb 6, 2017)

Traditional romance films have become an endangered species. Is this because Hollywood doesn't think they'll sell, or is it a reflection of social evolution? (Where Have All the Romantic Movies Gone? Graham Fuller, 20 January 2020, theculturetrip.com)

The percentage of 12th graders who had ever gone on a date fell from 84% in 1990 to 63% in 2016. Teen dating has hit record lows in recent decades. (October 7, 2017, Psychology Today)

Of course, trends like these have their good side too, since romantic movies often contain objectionable material, and dating itself is not necessarily a sign of the love of marriage. Maybe teens socialize in groups more than in previous generations.

There are other seemingly opposite trends that may tell a different story, such as a remarkable increase in the sale of romance novels: “*While the rest of the publishing market reels, physical sales of romance books are up more than 50 percent over the past year alone.*” (*Freakonomics, Romance Novels, Dec 3, 2023 by Zachary Crockett*) But this also may just be due to the proliferation of Kindles and self-publishing.

Trends like these come and go, and it is often impossible to know their causes and what they mean. Whatever their causes and meanings, however, all of them relate to the state of the church, whether directly or indirectly.

Even if Valentine’s Day is less popular than it was, this can change at any time. The main thing, though, is that romance and conjugal love are things that are experienced individually and subjectively regardless of trends. Like religion itself there is no need to follow the crowd.

(JFS)

GREAT MINDS

We hear it all the time: “Great minds think alike.” But it’s not true. Great minds think differently – that’s what makes them great. They also prompt us to think. Here are just a few examples:

Albert Einstein

Einstein was one of the most brilliant minds the world has ever known. But like all great thinkers, he realized there was always more that he did not know and was ever curious to keep on discovering. He encouraged life-long learning as the best way to stay young:

Do not grow old, no matter how long you live. Never cease to stand like curious children before the great mystery into which you were born.

The wonderful vision we have of heaven, given to us by the Lord through

Swedenborg, is that heaven is not a boring life of floating on clouds but of continually learning and doing – and being grateful – to eternity. Einstein must be very happy.

Isaac Asimov

Asimov was something of a populist intellect. His day job was professor of biochemistry. But he was one of the most prolific and accomplished writers of all time. He wrote or edited more than 500 books and some 90,000 letters. He is best known for science fiction, but also wrote scholarly guides to the Bible and Shakespeare, great tomes on history, and murder mysteries.

I had the happy experience of being seated with him years ago when he gave a speech in Philadelphia on “The Population Explosion,” where he amused us by dashing off witty limericks on napkins that he handed out to waitresses.

This was about 50 years ago but he was worried even then about where this world was headed. In one prescient quote, that haunts us still, he said:

The saddest aspect of life right now is that science gathers knowledge faster than society gathers wisdom.

He would be even more alarmed now. And it isn’t science fiction.

Norman Cousins

Cousins was the thoughtful editor of *The Saturday Review* for 30 years (1942 to 1972), still remembered and appreciated as a wise and humble man. He was a deep thinker with a common-man appeal, who fretted about our culture – even then – and the slippery slopes we can’t seem to avoid. Consider this warning about pornography, which was relatively innocent then compared to the ubiquitous and insidious scourge it is today:

The trouble with this wide-open pornography is not that it corrupts but that it desensitizes; not that it unleashes passions but that it cripples emotions; not that it encourages a mature attitude but that it is a reversion to infantile obsessions; not that it removes the blinders but that it distorts the view. Prowess is proclaimed but love is denied. What we have is not liberation but dehumanization.

Consider these warnings in light of today’s young people tethered to iPhones and TikTok, let alone the pervasive pornography just a click away on every computer.

We are ever challenged to value sensitivity in the face of desensitizing technology, to hail moral conscience over surrender to our passions, to remove blinders focused only on “what’s in” to see the revealed truth of what always is.

Keep looking for great minds.

(BMH)

READ THE BOOK

A popular recent movie – *After Death* – is really a documentary about near death experiences. It comes from Angel Studios, known for earnest movies about faith and patriotism, such as *Sound of Freedom*.

The movie is described on one website as “a gripping film that explores the afterlife based on real near-death experiences, conveyed by scientists, authors and survivors.”

Feedback from viewers ranged from skeptical and cynical to true believers who felt touched – but still yearn for “proof.”

One said: “I never really quite get the grasp on the fascination with this kind of thing. People are NEAR death – not dead. With all we’ve learned about the chemicals that flood the brain in such moments it’s become clearer and clearer that whatever people think they see or experience (it’s oftentimes unpleasant and not the heaven or hell variety) is what is occurring in these moments of near death. I’d pay more attention if someone was actually dead for a day, then returned within 24 hours of observation to share with the class.”

To which, one wit answered: “Like Jesus? He was dead for three days!”

Another comment: “*After Death* could gain a lot by interviewing more people who ask compelling, thoughtful questions about dying. Unfortunately, the film leaves us with more questions than answers.”

It is always encouraging that people still are questioning, want to know more and still seek “proof” about the afterlife. Let us hope we all can help in their searching. As we know, Emanuel Swedenborg was not “dead for a day,” but was allowed to experience heaven and hell directly over many years and wrote a compelling account in *Heaven and Hell*. That is the only eyewitness “proof” we have.

How often do we hear people say: “Well, I liked the movie – but the book was better.”

That couldn’t be more true about *After Death*. Read the book.

(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 lower heavens, but only through the innocent affections of angels there; and so descends directly and indirectly into little children. (Conjugal Love 396)

Borthwick, Holly Lorraine

At Sudbury, Massachusetts, June 4, 2023 (born April 20, 2018), daughter of Eric and Rhaina Echols Borthwick, Rev. Nathan D. Gladish officiating.

Borthwick, Soren Martin

At Sudbury, Massachusetts, June 4, 2023 (born April 20, 2018), son of Eric and Rhaina Echols Borthwick, Rev. Nathan D. Gladish officiating.

Boyce, Sylvie Autumn

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, May 24, 2023 (born November 6, 2022), daughter of Tyler and Rachel Gladish Boyce, Rev. Nathan D. Gladish officiating.

Chen, Haochuan

At London, United Kingdom, October 29, 2023, Rev. Grant H. Odhner officiating.

Cotton, Peter Keith

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, November 12, 2023, Rev. Jeremy F. Simons officiating.

Glenn, Anne Grace Hurd

At Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania, December 11, 2023, Rev. Coleman C. Glenn officiating.

Hyatt, Spring Mikaela

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, November 19, 2023 (born May 15, 2021), daughter of Jason and Kendall Ayers Hyatt, Rev. Solomon J. Keal officiating.

Jett, Penelope

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, June 4, 2023 (born April 20, 2021), daughter of Edward and Krissy Andrews Jett, Rev. Elmo K. Acton officiating.

King, Elswyth

At Kempton, Pennsylvania, October 28, 2023 (born October 10, 2023), son of Kendal Scott King and Linnae Heinrichs King, Rt. Rev. Bradley D. Heinrichs officiating.

MacFarlane, Theresa Lynn

At Kitchener, Ontario, Canada, November 6, 2023, Rev. Justin E. Schorran officiating.

Machado, Frank Covas

At Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania, October 25, 2023, Rev. Jeffrey O. Smith officiating.

Machado, Helca de Melo

At Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania, October 25, 2023, Rev. Jeffrey O. Smith officiating.

Morgan, Muriel Monique

At Mancetter, Warwickshire, United Kingdom, October 20, 2023, Rev. Erik J. Buss officiating.

Morgan, Paul

At Mancetter, Warwickshire, United Kingdom, October 20, 2023, Rev. Erik J. Buss officiating.

Norfo, Ember Raine

At Kempton, Pennsylvania, November 26, 2023 (born May 20, 2023), daughter of Raymond and Eden Zecher Norfo, Rev. Brett D. Buick officiating.

Tovar, Tarras

At Stockholm, Sweden, May 21, 2023, Rev. Göran R. Appelgren officiating.

van der Merwe,**Bradley Buss Rowan**

At St. Marks, Isle of Man, November 5, 2023 (born October 28, 2023), son of Eric and Amanda Buss van der Merwe, Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr. 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)*

Judson, Laif Brighton

At Kempton, Pennsylvania, November 26, 2023, Rev. Brett D. Buick officiating.

Lewis, Logan Alan

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, October 28, 2023, Rev. Charles E. Blair officiating.

BETROTHAL

It is proper on earth for a priest to perform betrothals and to hear, receive and conform and consecrate the consent. The consent is the essential element in marriage, and the rest of the things that follow are its formalities. (Conjugial Love 21:4)

Asplundh-Acton, Wayne Burnham

Asplundh and McKenna Rae

Acton At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania,
October 26, 2023, Rev. Elmo K.
Acton officiating.

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. (Conjugial Love 216)

Acton-Banc, Eric Benjamin

Acton and Natalie Denise Banc

At Glenview, Illinois, September
2, 2023, Rev. Elmo K. Acton
officiating.

**Buval-Gladish, Daniel J. Buval and
Laura Gladish**

At La Balata, Martinique, June
24, 2023, Rev. Nathan D. Gladish
officiating.

**Haney—Shevlin-Mattozzi, Charles
Silvester Haney IV and Maria Rose
Shevlin-Mattozzi**

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania,
September 15, 2023, Rev. Charles E.
Blair officiating.

Herder-Boyesen, Robert Reece

**Herder and Michaela Dagny
Boyesen**

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania,
November 25, 2023, Rev. Elmo K.
Acton officiating.

**Ho Felipe-Warwick, Thiago Chang
Ho Felipe and Steffica Elizabeth
Warwick**

At London, Lambeth, United
Kingdom, Rev. Grant H. Odhner
officiating.

**Lewis-Shihadeh, Logan Alan Lewis
and Jennifer Lynne Shihadeh**

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania,
October 28, 2023, Rev. Charles E.
Blair officiating.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Syre-Rogers, Isaac David Syre and
Kyla Heather Rogers**

At North Bennington, Vermont,
October 8, 2022, Rev. Elmo K.
Acton officiating.

**Woollard-Lake, Paul Woollard and
Rebecca Zoe Lake**

At Colchester, Essex, United
Kingdom. June 22, 2023, Rev. Erik J.
Buss officiating.

IN MEMORIAM

*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)*

Baltazar, Lydia

September 13, 2023, of San Diego,
California. 85

Hunsaker, Robert Burns, Jr.

December 15, 2023, of Kempton,
Pennsylvania. 94

Eidse, Edna May Simpson

October 17, 2023, of Grunthal,
Manitoba, Canada. 104

Lehman, Katherine Doering

November 22, 2023, of Pottstown,
Pennsylvania. 85

Goerwitz, Richard Leonard, Jr.

October 15, 2023, of Bryn Athyn,
Pennsylvania. 90

Parker, Karl Edward

May 4, 2023, of Calistoga,
California. 69

Graham, Leone Asplundh

November 14, 2023, of Bryn Athyn,
Pennsylvania. 89

Parker, Sylvia Dorothy

December 2, 2023, of Bryn Athyn,
Pennsylvania. 88

Gurney, Cade Glenn

November 26, 2023, of Bryn Athyn,
Pennsylvania. 30

Pellani, Sandra Lois Rogers

December 10, 2023, of Feasterville,
Pennsylvania. 70

Heinrichs, Rev. Daniel Winthrop

November 9, 2023, of Boynton
Beach, Florida. 94

Rickards, James E. Jr.

November 2, 2023, of
Philadelphia. 85

Rosenberg, Gary Glen

October 19, 2023, of Wayne,
Michigan. 80

Weaver, Theresa Georgette

May, 18, 2023, of San Diego,
California. 92

Stewart,

Murielle Fidele Mary Plouffe

November 28, 2023, of Kitchener,
Ontario, Canada. 74

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