

NEW CHURCH *Life*

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

JULY/AUGUST 2025



— The Gift of New Church Education —

New Church education is likened in a sermon to “the pearl of great price.” We are challenged to do all we can to preserve and protect this precious gift. (Page 296) *(These students at the Washington New Church School personify the gift.)*



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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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New Church Life is available online back to 2006 at <https://new-church.org/connect/subscriptions/new.church.life>. All issues can be researched back to 1881 at www.heavenlydoctrines.org.

In This Issue

Editorials (page 284) include:

- *New Church Education and the Church*: If the founders of New Church education could return today, what would they think of what has become of their dream? They might be disappointed that many of our schools are struggling but would not be dismayed. This “pearl of great price” holds its value and its promise.
- *The Swedenborg Foundation*: The Foundation, with its rich history of publication – including the New Century Edition of the Writings – and its breakthrough *offTheLeftEye* videos – along with the New Christian Bible Study website, all help in the mission of spreading the church.

In a sermon – *New Church Education: The Gift of “The Pearl of Great Price”* – the Rev. Eric Carswell says this gift that we give our children is invaluable. But it depends on how we keep faith with the investment – not only in our schools but in our own lives. (Page 296)

In a sermon – *Savior and Redeemer* – the Rev. N. Bruce Rogers says the Lord “is justly called a savior. For through religion it is He who can save us from our self-centered and materialistic native selves and bolster our better, more angelic selves, to become worthy of the name Christian.” (Page 302)

Writing From The Bishop’s Office, the Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr. talks about the 70 sent out by Jesus in *John 19:1-17* “to every city and place where He would come” to prepare the way. We should consider ourselves among those called by the Lord, with our own ways of serving Him and our neighbors and “being agents for the Lord in the blessing of others.” (Page 306)

In his Commencement Address for the Academy Secondary Schools, Greg Henderson talked about the foundation as the most important part of building a home, and that their New Church education at the Academy has given them the foundation for their lives – because it is built on a rock. Drawing attention

to all the class banners overlooking the graduation, he said: “If the graduates with the oldest banners on this wall could be here today, I imagine they would tell you how important the distinctive foundation is that you had a chance to build here at the Academy.” (Page 310)

In *The Call to Translation in the General Church*, the Rev. Kenneth Alden reviews the history of this Charter purpose in the Church and the Academy, looks at today’s needs and the continued “calling” – with some concern but abiding hope. “Over the last half century,” he warns, “learning Latin has become much less a priority in the general population, in the Academy Secondary Schools, and even in the Theological School.” (Page 314)

One of the gifts given to the New Church is that we worship “one visible God, in whom is the invisible.” The Rev. Jared Buss tells us that He is visible because He has shown us in His revelation what to look for and how to be guided by Him. (Page 321)

Stoicism is a philosophy of life practiced by such ancient philosophers as Marcus Aurelius, Seneca and Epictetus. Basically, it teaches the practice of not being enslaved by our emotions but developing control over them. This, says the Rev. Howard Thompson, is consistent with teachings in the Writings that true freedom comes from being led by the Lord. (Page 324)

The Lord invites us in *Isaiah* to come to Him and promises what will happen for us when we do. But, says the Rev. Erik Buss, “to be fed we have to incline our ear,” which means moving closer to Him by doing His will and changing our behavior. (Page 328)

Church News (page 343) includes:

- Bryn Athyn College Commencement and Awards
- Academy Secondary Schools Commencement and Awards
- Pastoral moves within the church
- Farewells and Looking Forward in Colchester
- Progress on the new school and church office complex in Bryn Athyn
- A Great Lakes Regional Youth Weekend
- Doctrinal Enrichment Day in Washington

Note: An article promoted in May/June with “a new vision for Bryn Athyn College” could not be completed in time for this issue. Watch for further announcements.

Editorials

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

NEW CHURCH EDUCATION AND THE CHURCH

We know the dream. It took form around a lunch table in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on January 14, 1874, when John Pitcairn, Walter Childs, William Henry Benade and Franklin Ballou cast a new vision for the church. They were firmly committed to the Writings as part of the Word and worried that the New Church (Convention) was becoming “more liberal and ecumenically minded.” And so the split.

The dream quickly expanded with the Academy Movement and formation of the General Church. A logical extension of the dream was a full commitment to New Church education as “an essential use of the church” – countering the influences of the “corrupted” Christian church. Indeed, New Church schools were to be the “growth engine” of the church – however slow and deliberate that growth was expected to be. And it has been frustratingly slow and deliberate. But if these founders came back today to check on how their dream was progressing, what would we tell them? Would they be pleased or disappointed?

As we prepare to launch another year of New Church education in North America, the dream is still alive but struggling. The challenge is ever more insistent: how do we remain true to the dream without compromising it? The Academy – Boys and Girls Schools, College and Theological School – and our General Church schools have grown from modest beginnings, but now they are struggling for survival and challenged to maintain their distinctiveness. Teachers and administrators join a long line of noble champions of New Church education, and we are forever blessed by their contributions. But most of our schools are challenged – with finances, enrollment, sustainability. As “growth engines” for the church, growth is less assured, but we still are invested in the dream.

In this issue there is a sermon by the Rev. Eric Carswell, who has a long

history with New Church education at all levels: *New Church Education: The Gift of 'The Pearl of Great Price.'* (Page 284) It speaks eloquently of the gift that New Church education is to the church – and the world – and speaks passionately to the challenges we face.

He sees New Church education as that “pearl of great price” – the gift we give to future generations and our investment in the future of the church, and the future of the world. The question becomes insistent: is New Church education assuring the growth and impact of the church as much as it once did?

Our elementary schools are still inspiring havens of innocence. They embody why the Lord admonished His disciples: “*Let the little children come unto Me.*” The religious experience in the Academy Secondary Schools and Bryn Athyn College seems well received, even among those new to it. But as a visiting consultant told the Principal of the Boys School years ago: “You do everything right here – but then you just let them walk away.” He couldn’t imagine why any religious institution would do this.

Yes, our students are given a solid foundation in spiritual principles to guide their lives. But then we leave them in freedom. We hope they take all they have learned – in chapel, in religion classes, in the whole experience of their schools – into their lives and the life of the church. The trends are not encouraging as it seems more and more of our young people are “walking away” and apparently leaving the church behind.

It often is said that the church is only as strong as the next generation, and we cannot afford to let any generation lapse – not to see and heed the calling of the Lord’s true church on earth and for our lives. Our children are forever our hope for the future, which is why we invest in New Church education. We cannot judge our young people, of course, but as a church we must be aware and proactive to the challenges.

One of the lessons for Rev. Carswell’s sermon was *Arcana Coelestia* 10225:1-5, which describes the four states of our lives: the ages of innocence; instruction (5 to 20), understanding (20 to 60), and the innocence of wisdom, from 60 and beyond.

It’s that third state that concerns us: what happens after New Church education? This state is described in the Writings as “the Ishmael rational . . . a wild-ass state.” We know the type because we’ve been there: confident, self-assured, but not yet wise. This is not a putdown, just part of the process of growth. That same state was there years ago though when almost all Academy graduates joined the church. Now very few do. And fewer and fewer Academy graduates are choosing Bryn Athyn College. Hopefully they still consider themselves New Church and will choose New Church education for their own children. And hopefully more will be attracted to our College, with a refined mission and sense of itself.

This is a challenge almost all churches are facing: keeping their young people connected and involved. Many have active youth groups that make a difference. We have made attempts, including the Young Adult Connection that offered hope a generation ago but fell victim to budget pressures. Popular summer camps, weekend gatherings for young people, and a steady core of young adult supporters remain encouraging.

Cultural changes are significant. Families are smaller. Young people are generally less inclined to join churches, although there are hopeful signs. Years ago it was assumed that children of New Church parents – even in outlying societies – would attend the Academy and become strong church members. Young people today are different, and we must modify our assumptions. They are tethered to phones and laptops, with powerful influences we never had to face. But that only makes the cause of sustaining and growing the church and its influence through New Church education all the more insistent.

Rev. Carswell notes in his sermon that the “Ishmael rational” state is where real understanding begins because young people are starting to think for themselves. Part of that growth is that their beliefs are not their own “until the inner levels of the mind are opened to heaven.” There is hope in the process.

So, the real work of New Church education does not end with graduation but continues throughout life and into heaven. Adult life becomes the church’s classroom. And we hope that our schools and teachers continue to help our young people to know the Lord and bring a world view of use and purpose to their lives that makes them good and useful people.

Our New Church schools are essential because they do what no others can: teach the spiritual as well as the natural within each of us, which is so much in need in this floundering world. We are zealous to share the gift we have – sometimes trying too hard in the College and Secondary Schools, which has created financial strains. Bishop N.D. Pendleton warned early on that the growth of our schools must be slow and must come from New Church families. We’ve tested the boundaries – for raw numbers and for “seekers” – and still search for balance.

The late Professor E. Bruce Glenn, then Dean of the Academy College and one of a long line of giants of New Church education, gave a memorable talk to the Glenview Chapter of Theta Alpha in 1968: *The Academy College – The Choices Ahead*. This was when the College still was small but daring to dream. He said:

I do not believe that the Academy College is the best college in the country, but I do believe it is the most important. As the most important, it behooves us to make it the best we can. It is very easy to see why it is not the best. We have limitations of size, of viewpoints, we have problems of many kinds; and yet I also believe truly that it is

the most important – not just for the church – it’s obviously the most important for the church because it’s the only one. But I believe that it is the most important college in the country for the world. If Harvard, or the University of Chicago, or any other college in the country failed, there would be others to take its place. But if the Academy College were to fail, there would be nothing in the foreseeable future to replace it.

Now, Bryn Athyn College is desperately trying to save itself, after well-intentioned but unrealistic plans for growth led to financial crisis. So are the Secondary Schools and many of our church schools also struggling to survive. Each is essential because no one else does what they do. No one else so prepares young people – spiritually and naturally – to be of real use in this world and the next.

The same is true of our church. We believe it began descending from heaven on June 19, 1770, as “the crown of all churches” – not to make us special or privileged but for us to feel grateful, blessed and called. And if the church is to achieve its destiny as “the crown of all churches that have ever existed,” New Church education is essential to the process.

That call is for all of us to keep our schools viable and growing – because they have to be. And the call is to the church as well – with us and within us – to do all we can to value and support them, and to keep our young people connected and engaged. We invest years of New Church education in their future – and the church’s future. The work is never done.

In his seminal book on New Church education, the late Bishop Willard D. Pendleton calls it *Education for Use*. He emphasizes how important it is for these schools to develop spiritual as well as moral conscience as guiding forces in this needy world. Yes, the church and our schools are statistically small and may seem insignificant. But this is the only church in the world teaching the Lord’s new revelation, and its schools are the only ones in the world teaching in that new light – so desperately needed in this ominous darkness.

Like Bruce Glenn’s view of the College, all of our schools do what no others do – teaching the spiritual as well as the natural within us, recognizing that the spiritual mind is for all eternity. They promote and develop in young minds a spiritual world view that helps them evaluate challenges within a spiritual – as well as natural – context, to know that our choices have eternal consequences, and that we really need to know the Lord to be led by Him.

This matters more than ever in a world and culture so adrift from spiritual moorings, advocating for self-indulgence, crass materialism and moral relativism. The world badly needs what New Church education teaches – and what New Church graduates can put to use to make a difference.

So, if the founders could return, they might be disappointed that the schools are struggling but they would not be dismayed. They know that this

“pearl of great price” is a gift to the world that will always be protected because no other schools do what they do – and what they do is critical to the hope of the world. They would want us to be patient, as the Lord is ever patient. They would doubtless tell us not to give up and not to give in. And they might remind us that the process of forming a pearl begins with an oyster responding to an irritation within its shell, facing the challenges and doing the work to make of its work something of great value and sustainable – something worth investing in and protecting.

Yes, in the world, we are a tiny church, with tiny schools and a tiny college – a tiny gem of New Church education, but a pearl of great price. And no one does what we do – what we and the world need so badly. Our founders surely would tell us be resolute – and to keep faith with a dream that has no horizon.

(BMH)

THE SWEDENBORG FOUNDATION

While churches of all kinds, including the New Church, face declining attendance and membership throughout North America and Europe, online offerings have been enjoying increasing engagement for more than a decade. This has been notably true of the Swedenborg Foundation’s *offTheLeftEye* video offerings and is also true of the *New Christian Bible Study* website, and others as well, including those from the General Church.

The Swedenborg Foundation in the United States and the Swedenborg Society in Great Britain have been the two largest publishers of the Heavenly Doctrine since the early 1800s. While they have reliably published these works ever since, their efforts to reach an audience larger than the memberships of the various Swedenborgian denominations have not been especially successful. In recent decades, however, this has been changing, and it makes us wonder what the long-term effects might be on denominational participation and memberships.

The change in the Swedenborg Foundation began in the years leading up to 2000, as it embarked on a retranslation of the Writings called the *New Century Edition*. This developed into a significant marketing campaign and a refocus on publishing material directly from the Heavenly Doctrine. Around 2010 this in turn included an emphasis on making this material available at low cost or no cost online. Soon this included the *Heaven and Hell* Facebook page and *offTheLeftEye* on YouTube, where the *New Century Edition* translations were read, studied and explained by Curtis Childs, the Rev. Dr. Jonathan Rose and others.

Since 2011 *offTheLeftEye* has built a large viewership, with more than 1,700 videos, 177,000 subscribers and millions of views. Remarkably, the numbers grow every year, with the number of views over just the past year growing from 14.7 million in 2023 to 17.4 million in 2024. Similarly, online reactions, likes, comments, replies and shares have all roughly doubled from 2023 to 2024. The comments are amazingly positive, saying things like: “*This is the most life-changing truth I have ever heard;*” and “*Swedenborg has given me a fresh new perspective on the Bible.*”

These videos, and other platforms like the New Christian Bible Study website, are informing and inspiring people all over the world, forming a thoughtful and engaged online community. It is unclear, however, if this will have a direct impact on the various Swedenborgian churches worldwide. It may be similar to the fact that while there are thousands of amazing videos available about the events of history and the facts of science, they would not be expected to impact the number of science or history majors in colleges, or contributions to universities where these subjects are studied. While they are surely related and mutually beneficial, they are not the same thing.

Publishing houses like the Swedenborg Foundation and the Swedenborg Society have a different purpose than the churches do. The Foundation seeks to inform and inspire the world with Swedenborg’s spiritually uplifting perspectives on this life and the life hereafter. The point is to get the message out. A church, on the other hand, is focused on gathering people together for the purpose of worship, instruction and mutual support. Whereas the Swedenborg Foundation publishes and distributes the books written by Swedenborg, as well as collateral works, and also works to educate people about them online and in other ways, it does not form communities with leaders or ministers for the purpose of worship and instruction. It does not perform sacraments, conduct or host weddings or funerals, offer counseling, or provide social services.

Although their missions differ, Swedenborgian churches and publishers need each other and benefit from mutual cooperation. Churches depend on published books, video and audio. Publishers depend on financial support from church members, the existence of an educated and committed resource for staff and membership, as well as Latin scholars and the expertise of the clergy.

At the 2024 Assembly in Bryn Athyn Curtis Childs spoke about steps toward building a more robust online presence than we have today – looking forward to the time when we have a hundred video channels like *offTheLeftEye*. With a greater cohort of sources there can be responses back and forth from each, a variety of voices, a greater sense of an alive and vibrant community, and the building of greater credibility.

Some new initiatives from *offTheLeftEye* include the creation of an

offTheLeftEye Network that looks for more specific audiences, such as those that focus purely on references from the Old and New Testaments, on the afterlife, or on phenomena like near-death experiences. There is also the hope for more immersive experiences like last year's General Church Assembly.

One thing that people often ask is why *offTheLeftEye* does not specifically advertise or reference churches for those interested in the Heavenly Doctrine. The day may come when they do that, but for the present the Foundation is sensitive to the need to remain independent of the churches and uninvolved in their differences.

There are numerous organizations all over the world with a connection to the Heavenly Doctrine and an interest in passing this good news on to others. Some appear to be more effective than others at any given point in time, but each has its role. They are like the parts of the Grand Man, all with a part to play in the Lord's purpose of building a heaven from the human race.

(JFS)

Letter to the Editors

Letters to the Editors may be sent to:
Editors of *New Church Life*
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Swedenborg Confirms: No Evolution in Creation of Humans

To The Editors:

In the January/February *New Church Life*, my cousin, Donald Ridgway, ponders the concept of evolution (*Searching for Answers About the First Humans on Earth*) and says that for him it is “a real conundrum, as Darwin’s evolutionary theories always left man with animal parents.” He concludes by asking: “Is there any new evidence? Or should we follow the “wise” words of the Rev. Dr. Hugo Odhner that we should be “Bold in our ignorance”?

I am convinced that there are answers in places of the Writings that would be helpful to Don; namely, a small book published by the Swedenborg Society and also approximately the same wording at the end of *Apocalypse Explained*. I am well aware of Don’s and Dr. Odhner’s predicaments as my university studies had convinced me that, considering the whole internal structure of early creatures right up to later mammals was almost identical to human beings, Darwin with his theory of evolution was definitely the answer to the conundrum and that the parents of the first humans could only have been animals, which was not a happy conclusion for me either.

But I was wrong! At that stage I was living in Durban, South Africa, and the pastor of the Society was the Rev. A. Wynne Acton, a good friend of my parents. He was a backup translator to the Rev. E. C. Mongredien, who was translating some of Swedenborg’s Latin manuscripts into English. The conversations that Wynne had with my parents often turned to the translation of the manuscripts and I was an eager listener with quite a good Latin background.

It was not long before I realized that there could be an answer to

the conundrum in some of the Latin manuscripts that the Revs. Mongredien and Acton were translating. Working from the Latin manuscripts, Rev. Mongredien translated them into English and the Swedenborg Society published them in a small book, *On The Divine Love and on The Divine Wisdom*, of which I own a copy. (This is not to be confused with the better known *Angelic Wisdom Concerning The Divine Love and The Divine Wisdom* which was published in the original Latin by Swedenborg in Amsterdam in 1763.) There is an introductory note saying that the book is a reprint of the translation into English of *De Divino Amore* and *De Divina Sapientia* made by Rev. Mongredien in 1942. This small book was previously published as *Doctrine of Uses*.

The first-named work, the small book that I possess, is in two sections. The first is subtitled, *The Divine Love* and the second, *The Divine Wisdom*. In these two sections there are passages that either directly or indirectly indicate how the Lord created both the universe and human beings – namely that He created human beings directly and not in a Darwinian-type evolution from apes or other animals.

In other words, humans were created by the Lord directly and would not have had animal parents. At least, that is my understanding of what stood out for me, particularly in the passages quoted below. The numbers are as they appear in the work. I quote only passages that show directly how the Lord created human beings and omit those that only indirectly show their creation. I also include a passage from *Apocalypse Explained* that is referred to in a footnote to a passage in the small SS book.

(X 27) There are . . . in the animal kingdom two general kingdoms, one, beasts of the earth, the other, birds of the air . . . the souls of animals are natural affections, and the souls of plants are uses of affections.

(X1 31) If any form were without discrete degrees, there would be nothing interiorly in it to constitute a cause or a soul.

(*Apocalypse Explained* 1199) That every animal has a soul is a well-known fact; for animals live, and life is the soul. . . . But the difference is this, that in the spiritual world they have an apparent existence . . . so that they are appearances of affections. [On the other hand, human beings have a soul that lives to eternity.]

(XX) The Lord in creating the universe prepared for Himself all intermediaries from the first even to the last, by which at every stage to bring uses into existence.

(XX1 61) The Divine Love, which is Life Itself, proceeding from Him Who is its fountain, namely the Lord, bears in its bosom no other purpose than to create and form images and likenesses of Itself, which are human beings, and from human beings angels, and in addition to clothe with a corresponding body affections of every kind, which are animals. All these forms, the perfect

as well as those that are not perfect, are forms of love and are alike as far as their life in externals is concerned: this consists in desiring to make various movements, to walk about, to perform various actions, to see, hear, smell, taste and feel, to eat and drink, to congregate with their like and to propagate their kind; but the perfect differ from the imperfect in respect of their life in internals which consists in desiring to think, will, speak, know, understand, be wise, and to find delight and blessedness in doing these things. Forms of this kind are men and angels: the others are the very many varieties of animal life. In order that these faculties may each come into effect and into its use, they have been made out of created substances and matters, and have been marvelously organized.

(111 80) It is because there are three degrees in man that the heavens are of three degrees, for the heavens consist of men who have become angels . . . and because at that time those three degrees are open. . . . Now because man at his first beginning is such a dwelling-place of the Lord . . . and because at that time those three degrees are open . . . therefore extension cannot be into any other form than the human form.

(81) In the case of human beings the degrees of life are three in number; in the case of animals, however, there is only the lowest degree, not the two higher ones; consequently, the first beginnings of their life are not receptacles for the Lord's love and wisdom, but only receptacles for natural affection and natural knowledge, into which latter indeed they are born.

(100) . . . because every human being enjoys this double respiration (respiration of the body and of the spirit), one within the other, he can think rationally from his Understanding, indeed spiritually too; and can thereby be differentiated from animals; and furthermore that he can be enlightened in respect of his Understanding, be raised into heaven and breathe with angels, and so be reformed and regenerated. . . . In animals . . . there are both general and particular pulsations and respirations, but in their case, what is external and what is internal are both natural, whereas, in the case of human beings, what is external is natural but what is internal is spiritual.

(111, 3) *Nor, except in man, can the angelic mind be procreated, and, by means of procreations, be multiplied.* Anyone can easily see that there does not take place, nor could there take place, any procreation of angelic minds except in, and from out of, those who dwell in the ultimate (or "outermost") work of creation, the earth. . . . The same would be the case with angels if they were to be created in that world. But in addition to this, there does not take place with angels, nor could there take place with them, any other procreating and resultant multiplying than a spiritual one, and this is a procreating and multiplying of love and wisdom, such as takes place also in the souls of men who are being born anew or regenerated . . . thus, there can be a multiplying of

human beings, and thereby of angels.

(112, 4) *It is owing to spirits and angels having been men, that they are able to continue existing and to live forever.* This is because the angel or spirit, in virtue of his having been first born a human being on earth, has that in him which continues to exist. From these things it now follows that the angelic heaven, which was the end-in-view of creation, could not otherwise come into being; thus that mankind is its seminary and source of supply.

(V111, 106, 107) **There does not exist, nor can there exist, any angel or spirit who has not been born a human being in the world.**

(106) That all who are in heaven, or whoever were in heaven, were first born as human beings and became angels after a life spent in the world . . . and that this is according to Divine Order.

(1) *There is in man an angelic mind.*

(2) *It is not possible for such a mind to be formed except in a man.*

(3) *Nor, except in man, can it be procreated, and, by means of procreation, be multiplied.*

(6) *And thus heaven, which was the end-in-view of creation, can come into existence.*

(107, 1) *There is in man an angelic mind.* It is well known in Christendom that man is born for heaven, and also that if a man lives well he will go to heaven, there to be associated with angels as one of them: furthermore, that he has been given a soul or mind which is of such a nature and which will live forever . . . the reason the mind then comes also into angelic wisdom is that its higher degrees of life are then opened.

(108, 2) *It is not possible for such a mind to be formed except in a man.*

(165, 5) *Souls of life, and living souls, and vegetative souls are, by the life that is from the Lord, animated through their uses and according to them.* By “souls of life” are meant men and angels: by “living souls” are meant animals, which moreover are called “living souls” in the Word: and by “vegetative souls” are meant trees and plants of every kind.

To me, the passage above shows a major distinction between human beings and animals in showing that human beings, animals, and trees and plants each have a different and unique form of soul. With such a distinction at the critical spiritual level, it shows that human beings could not have evolved from animals or any other life form; animals could not have offspring with a different form of soul. Similarly, the souls of animals and the souls of trees and plants are distinguished.

To me 165 (5) above shows the greatest distinction between human beings, animals and vegetation. Perhaps Darwin and the adherents to his theory of evolution were mistaken in their conclusions that animals without souls that lived to eternity could bear offspring that had souls that did live to

eternity. This for the reason that they were misled by the similarity of human beings, animals and some earlier life forms at the natural level only and they were not considering the possibility of a higher, spiritual level with an enduring soul. Or perhaps the thought of a soul within the natural form never occurred to Darwin and co.

(168) The angelic idea of the universe created by the Lord is like this:

God is the Center, and He is a Man: unless He were a Man, creation would not have been possible: the Lord from eternity is that God.

Of creation: The Lord from Eternity, or God, by means of His Divine that proceeds forth, has created the universe and all things in it: and because the Divine that proceeds forth is also Life Itself, all things have been created out of Life and by means of Life...

As can be seen from the numbering, I have omitted many passages from the small book, *On The Divine Love and on The Divine Wisdom*. Also, even in the passages that I have selected, I have chosen only particular sections. However, those sections are sufficient to convince me that the first human beings could not have had animal parents as the similarities or differences in the animal compared to the spirit or angel are insignificant in comparison with the spiritual which is lacking in the animal but prominent in the spirit and angel.

Swedenborg, on behalf of the Lord, has pointed out the critical spiritual differences between animals and human beings in their minds, that is their souls. Also that animals or other life forms which are lacking the spiritual degree in their minds cannot procreate offspring with spiritual minds. Therefore, no human being, by definition having a spiritual mind, can have an animal parent which, also by definition, lacks a spiritual mind.

Although *On The Divine Love and on the Divine Wisdom* is only a small book, it contains a great deal more information than the passages I have quoted and I believe that it is an invaluable part of New Church religious literature, particularly of the so-called "unpublished" works of the Writings.

However, when I read through the *Apocalypse Explained*, I discovered that toward the end of Volume 6, the last section has the title *The Divine Love and The Divine Wisdom*, which is apparently another translation of the small book by almost the same name that came from the translation of the manuscripts by the Revs. Mongredien and Acton. Without the time-consuming effort of reading both the small book and the *Apocalypse Explained* addition together, both seem to be the same, except for some difference in style of English language.

Heulwen Ridgway
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New Church Education: The Gift of ‘The Pearl of Great Price’

A Sermon by the Rev. Eric H. Carswell

Lessons: Deuteronomy 31:7-13; Mark 10:13-16; Arcana Coelestia 10225:1-5

Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them. (Mark 10:14)

We know quite well that the Lord has warned us about the unhappiness that comes from being too self-centered in our daily concerns and priorities. He has also warned us about the unhappiness that comes from being too focused on natural concerns and material things.

All of us can imagine the thoughts possibly going through the minds of the disciples as they saw parents bringing their little children to Jesus. Perhaps they were thinking that He is much too important to have time for these children. Perhaps they were feeling overloaded with the noisy chatter of children as many adults waited to see this man who had done such wonderful miracles.

Whatever was going on in their minds, they decided they should shoo away the parents and their children. The gospel of *Mark* describes them as rebuking the parents for coming to Jesus with children.

But their priorities were not the Lord's priorities. He was greatly displeased with what they were doing. What do you think Jesus looked like when He was “greatly displeased”? He was unhappy with the disciples because they did not realize how important children are. He told them: “*Let the little children come to Me.*”

The Lord would say the same to each of us. He is not happy when self-centered and worldly priorities stand in the way of a person doing what is truly best for the children and young people growing up in this world.

*Those who cannot feel something of **heavenly happiness and peace** while in the world will not be able to miraculously receive that happiness and peace after death.*

One of the values of community, in its broad sense, is the strength and consistency it can bring to raising children and young people. Certainly, parents have the primary responsibility, but they do not have sole responsibility. Each of us, through our interactions with children and young people, can help them along the path of life. Each of us can help them develop a sense of responsibility, enjoyment in a job well done, and an awareness of how much our choices affect others.

Given the fact that many children tend to feel their own parents have an extraordinarily narrow view of reality, there are times when another adult apparently has even more power to be an influence for good in a child's life than his parents do. We as a group of adults can help all the children and young people we teach through church and school to lead happier and more productive lives. In a very real sense, we can help the children and young people to come to the Lord. We can help them to recognize the Lord's presence in daily life and the importance of living according to what He has taught us. We can help them come to see what is represented by the pearl of great price and help foster a desire to obtain it for themselves.

The Lord began His parable with the words: "*The Kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls.*" When the Lord spoke of the kingdom of heaven, He did not refer just to a future state we may experience some day in heaven. The Lord's kingdom includes both the life of heaven and the life of the Lord's church on earth. (*Arcana Coelestia* 5886:4)

With each of us, heaven with us and the quality of our lives in this world are the same thing. The state which will be heaven for us should also be the state of life on earth which we look toward. Those who cannot feel something of heavenly happiness and peace while in the world will not be able to miraculously receive that happiness and peace after death.

In our culture that tends to be so external, focusing more on the material possessions that a person has acquired than anything deeper, it is important to remind children and young people that the true source of happiness does not come from the outside. It comes from within a person. It depends on the fundamental spiritual quality of their life. It depends on what people are willing to dedicate themselves to,

*In our culture that tends to be so external, focusing more on material possessions than anything deeper, it is important to remind young people that the true source of happiness does not come from the outside. **It comes from within.***

what they are willing to sacrifice for. Each of our lives can be a living testimony to far deeper and more lasting values than a materialistic culture might foster.

The single individual spoken of in the *Parable of the Pearl of Great Price* was a businessman who bought and sold pearls for his living. He represents anyone who learns and uses what the Lord teaches us in His Word. The knowledge from the Word that a person needs to guide his life is like the gold and silver that a merchant would gain from his trade.

We as adults are responsible for our own learning. We can read and with effort grow in understanding. We are responsible for whether we choose to attend classes or church on Sunday. But this is not true for children and young people. Unless they are encouraged to develop a habit of reading for themselves, they will never begin. Few children or young people would choose to attend church given any kind of choice.

Beyond these personal and family matters, there is the far broader opportunity to learn what this and other New Church congregations have provided for the young through formal New Church education. This education seeks to offer not just religious truths, but also a broad view of natural truth as well, organized and presented to best reveal the Lord's presence and activity within the world around us. This broad base of knowledge supporting the idea of the Lord is a fabulously valuable heritage that we can help pass on to the coming generations of developing minds.

The merchant in the parable devoted himself to seeking beautiful pearls. These represent the sight of truth that can emerge in a person's mind when he thinks carefully about what the Lord has revealed in His Word. Just as a pearl is composed of many layers surrounding a central particle, so also will the ideas in our minds be ordered into layers.

The fundamental truths of religion will be at the center of each of our thoughts. Surrounding each fundamental idea there will be related truths that are progressively less universal in their application. Gathered and given order by the Lord these different levels of truth will be organized into a single spiritual form in our minds, like that of a beautiful pearl. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 3057:2, *Doctrine of Faith* 35)

While any individual is capable of coming to something of this order by himself, everyone benefits tremendously from the help of those who have already seen this order for themselves and can help guide the growing mind to see it more rapidly and clearly.

The lesson from *Arcana Coelestia* 10225 observed that starting with the 20th year, or after high school, an important change takes place. "At this time belief begins; for belief is not a person's own until he has confirmed what he believes with ideas that are the product of his own thinking."

If we think all the essential developments are completed through high

school, we are in error. Both personal belief and the inner spiritual battles that define us in adult life begin after the natural rational plane of our minds is open and functioning. For many of us this took place in college, which may or may not support the foundations of the New Church built earlier.

We can help young people to be like merchants seeking beautiful pearls by teaching them what is true, helping to train them to think and make responsible decisions for themselves. As children and young people engage in this never-ending process, they will learn many things, and if they seek to guide the choices of their daily life by what they have learned, they will gain an ever-increasing understanding of what the life of religion is all about.

Gradually they will come to recognize the most important concept of all true Christianity. They will see the pearl of great price, which represents a living, personal knowledge of our Lord and God. (*Apocalypse Revealed* 727)

Note that the Lord's parable doesn't say that the merchant was single-mindedly seeking this once-in-a-lifetime pearl. Perhaps there is a sense that it found the merchant rather than the reverse. The merchant was just doing his job. We and the young people under our care likewise spend much of our lives working with daily challenges that seem only remotely related to our concept of the Lord.

How important is our concept of the Lord? Its importance can hardly be overstressed. Without an idea of the Lord as He really is, there is nothing of genuine religion, and without at least something of genuine religion in its rudimentary form, it is impossible to have a productive and happy life.

The doctrine of the Lord is always the central doctrine of the church. Our understanding of its various aspects colors our sight of every other doctrine. For example: Often we make decisions that express our trust in the Lord's care for us. Certainly, we know of the Lord, but how do we express our acknowledgment of His all-pervading influence in our lives? How does our acknowledgment of Him affect what we do each day of our lives? Responsible decision making is not an easy thing to learn, and probably more is learned by example than by lecture. How do our lives reflect a trust in the Lord and a sense of His importance to the young people who watch us so closely?

Obviously, anyone can memorize facts from the Word about the Lord. But such memorization by itself affects little. Mere intellectual sight of truth enriches us spiritually just about as much as window shopping in jewelry stores enriches us naturally. In the Lord's parable the merchant was not content to have merely found the pearl of great price. He went and sold all that he had and bought that pearl. Knowledge concerning the Lord is nothing without the acknowledgment of Him in a good life.

Certainly, we and the young people under our care need to know about the Lord before we can acknowledge Him, but there is no power for us in

mere knowledge until it becomes acknowledgment and finally genuine faith. (*Arcana Coelestia* 10083:2) Though a part of our mind rebels against the idea, nothing that we do is genuinely or fully good and nothing that we know will be genuinely or fully true without an acknowledgment of the Lord.

This acknowledgment is said to be the first of all things of spiritual life and the most essential thing of heaven and the church. (*Arcana Coelestia* 10083:6) As the Lord said: “*He who believes in Me has everlasting life.*” (*John* 6:47)

Genuine acknowledgment of the Lord is not easy. To buy the pearl of great price the merchant had to sell all that he had. The act of selling all his previous possessions presents an image of how we must reject all the worldly and selfish loves that stand in the way of a full acknowledgment of the Lord. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1044:3) Heavenly life cannot be received unless we can remove from our minds all the thoughts and desires that would lead us away from the Lord and heaven.

Unfortunately, this includes many things that we enjoy and have a significant place in our day-to-day lives. The Lord spoke of this appearance when He said: “*He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.*” (*Matthew* 10:29)

Sometimes it seems that so much of what we like to do must be rejected if we are to fulfill the Lord’s commands. The reality, of course, is that rejecting many of the thoughts and attitudes that we accept as our own is the only means to receive eternal life – a life so much happier and more peaceful than merely natural life that it is inconceivable.

To reject the life that comes naturally to us we must be led by the Lord in His Word to recognize and shun the hells as they seek to influence our thoughts and acts. Their ideas must be recognized and not given power by our acceptance of them. Needless to say, there is much that we can do to help children and young people to recognize their bad habits and also realizing they are capable of changing these habits.

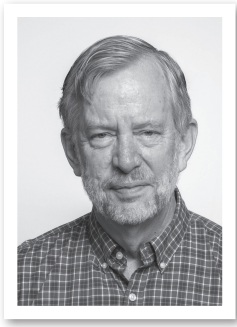
The need for the knowledge and acknowledgment of the Lord as the spiritual truth is illustrated by the parable of the pearl of great price. How do we seek this pearl in our lives?

The Lord’s parable was addressed to all people as the way to receive the blessing of heaven. Each of us certainly has responsibility for

The need for the knowledge and acknowledgment of the Lord as the spiritual truth is illustrated by the parable of the pearl of great price. How do we seek this pearl in our lives?

our own spiritual development, but we can also recognize the important job we have helping the children and young people in our care to come to know the Lord, follow Him, and trust in His care.

If we help in this work, we are helping the children and young people to find that pearl of great price for themselves. We are helping them to come to the Lord just as He wanted the children to come to Him when He was in the world that He might take them up in His arms and bless them. May we do what we can so that the Lord may also bless the generations that follow us. Amen.



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Savior and Redeemer

A Sermon by the Rev. N. Bruce Rogers

Lessons: Isaiah 60:1-16; John 4:5-42; Married Love 129

All good Christians are raised to believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is their Savior and Redeemer. The question is: Savior from what? Redeemer from what? And how? By what means?

Consider the human condition: We are born single-minded. Like Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, as long as we are well fed, rested and comfortable, we are happy. In time, however, we begin to realize the difference between what is permitted and what is forbidden, between what we want to do and what we are obliged to do. We eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and we become as a result double-minded, torn between pleasing others and pleasing ourselves, between our love for our parents and others and our love for ourselves. We develop, in essence, two personalities: our good self that we show to others, and our bad self that we learn to hide from them, at least as much as we are able to.

The renowned writer Robert Louis Stevenson captured this division in his famous story, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Dr. Henry Jekyll is depicted as an upstanding member of society, respected and successful, but plagued with evil urges. Tired of suppressing these urges, he concocts a potion to separate his good self from his evil self, and the result is the appearance of Mr. Edward Hyde, a wicked and dangerous alter-ego. And so the story comes to an unfortunate end.

Mr. Hyde is well-named, as he represents a side in all of us that we learn to hide from others, a side that is self-centered and greedy, in contrast to our better self that is unselfish and altruistic.

This duality was also noted by Dr. Sigmund Freud, the father of modern psychiatry. He distinguished the human psyche into three elements: the id, superego, and ego. According to Freud, the id is the seat of our primitive and animal urges, which we may identify with the natural self or will. The superego is a later development, described as a moral conscience formed by the socialization of the self. And the ego is the conscious part of the self that mediates between the id and superego, which we may identify with the human intellect.

This is the human condition, and it becomes most evident in the case of adolescents when they are old enough to know the difference between right and wrong but have yet to gain complete control over their native selves. For generally speaking, no one is more altruistic and selfless than the teenager; while at the same time no one is more self-centered and materialistic.

We enter adulthood, then, double-minded, with, as it were, two personalities, one that we show to the world, and one that we keep hidden.

But, as in the case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, this division is untenable. For the fact is that the two selves, the two personalities, are not compatible. The good self is ashamed of and embarrassed by the bad self, and the bad self resents and chafes under the reproaches and restraints of the good self. Eventually one must overcome the other.

It is this division that Christian religion serves to address. To the will of the good self it adds the will of God. Therefore, the Lord taught His disciples to pray: *“Our Father, who are in heaven. Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”*

“Not my will, but your will be done,” is the prayer of the good Christian, and in so praying he or she strengthens the good self to persevere and in the same measure weakens the bad self. That is why we bow our heads and kneel in prayer. It is an act of submission. A symbol of subordination. The humble posture of a servant seeking to be directed and guided by his or her Lord.

So it is that the Lord is justly called a savior. For through religion it is He who can save us from our self-centered and materialistic native selves and bolster our better, more angelic selves, to become worthy of the name Christian.

And so the Lord is not only our Savior, but also our Redeemer. In Scripture, to redeem means to rescue. To rescue from evil, to rescue from harm, to rescue from enemies, but spiritually, to rescue from the hells.

We have with us, spiritually, influences from the spiritual world. Good spirits and angels influence our better selves, and evil spirits and devils influence our bad selves. It is the Lord who rescues us from the latter, and He does so by means of His Word. Thus, He becomes, not only our Savior, but also our Redeemer.

So it is that the Lord is justly called a savior. For through religion it is He who can save us from our self-centered and materialistic native selves and bolster our better, more angelic selves, to become worthy of the name Christian.

In His Word He teaches us the difference between right and wrong. He teaches us not to worship worldly goods and powers, but spiritual and heavenly ones. His precepts are summed up in the Ten Commandments, found in the 20th chapter of book of *Exodus*, and again in the fifth chapter of *Deuteronomy*. In His advent the Lord later pronounced the two great commandments: the command to love the Lord with all one's heart and soul, repeating the great Shema found in *Deuteronomy* 6:4,5, and the command to love the neighbor as much as oneself, repeating it from the one found in *Leviticus* 19:1; *Matthew* 22:37-39; *Mark* 23:30,31; *Luke* 10:27. And to these, then, He added a new commandment, that we love one another as He has loved us. (*John* 13:34) This is, indeed, the distinctly Christian commandment.

It is by these commandments and others like them that the Lord redeems us from the power of the hells and thus from the snares of our merely natural, self-centered and materialistic selves. In so doing, He, in effect, saves us from ourselves. For the false notion – the supremely false notion – insinuated by evil spirits, is that our native self is our true self and that we cannot change. You are what you are! That is what they wish you to believe. For if that is what you believe, you will then surrender to whatever harmful way of life the hells can inspire you to.

Here is a remarkable statement found in Divine Providence 320:

If a person were to believe, as is the truth, that all goodness and truth originate from the Lord, and all evil and falsity from hell, he would not assign goodness to himself and make it deserving of merit, nor assign evil to himself and make himself guilty of it.

In other words, our true self is not our bad self, nor is it our good self. Our badness originates from hell, over which we have no power. And our goodness originates from the Lord, inspired through the heavens, over which we have no power. Our true self lies in between, in the equilibrium between the two, in the freedom that the equilibrium makes possible. Our true self eventually results then from the choices we make, choices made in freedom, made in accordance with what we know and believe to be good and true on the one hand, and sinful and false on the other. We are, in short, what we determine ourselves to be through the decisions and commitments we make.

If these decisions and commitments are informed by the Word, that is to say, if they are made in conformity with Scriptural and Divinely inspired doctrines, they turn us away from our bad selves and toward our good selves, until eventually the good self becomes our true self.

The part of religion is to call us to repentance, to reject the urges and

mistaken values of our merely natural selves and to embrace instead the virtues and nobility of our better selves. Especially is this true of Christian religion. Christian religion began with John the Baptist's call to repentance, and it has remained the call ever since. It is through repentance that the Lord can turn us away from our self-centered and material selves to an altruistic and spiritual self, and in so doing redeem us and save us from the power of the hells.

He is our Savior and Redeemer, if we let Him be so. Here is another statement from *Divine Providence* 333:

We say that the operation of Divine providence to save a person begins at his birth and continues to the end of his life. To understand this one must know that the Lord sees what a person's character is, and foresees what the person wills it to be, thus what it will be.

The Lord foresees what a person wills his character to be, thus what it will be.

It is not true, therefore, that we are what we are by nature and cannot change. Spiritually, we are what we choose to be, and the choice is ever before us, until at last, in the end, we become, even as we were in our infancy, for good or for ill, single-minded once again.



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FROM THE BISHOP'S OFFICE

Seventy Sent Out

The Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr.

In the gospel of *Luke*, we encounter a story of 70 people being sent out: 70 people who were attracted in some ways to the ministry of the Lord Jesus, whom He appointed to go out two-by-two as forerunners to the cities He Himself was about to visit. (*Luke 10:1-17*)

I find it inspiring to consider who these people were. We don't know of course – whether they were all men or included women; whether they were all Jews or came from different ethnic backgrounds; from a variety of occupations and social strata, or all similar to the fishermen who make up the bulk of the 12. What we do know is that they were responsive to the Lord's call, that they carried it out with diligence, and returned with joy at the effect they were able to have. I invite each of us to think of ourselves amongst those called by the Lord.

The number 70 is significant. In the Heavenly Doctrines we learn that it stands for what is holy (*Apocalypse Explained* 430:2 among others), for love that “knows no limits” (*Arcana Coelestia* 433), for things that are “eternal and timeless.” (*Ibid.*) Each of us, then, is called to be among those who are open to what is holy, eternal and timeless, and receive from the Lord love and energy for goodness that knows no limits. We are invited to be among the figurative 70 who willingly respond to the Lord's call to be of service.

The Lord's call. Let's focus for a moment on that call. I draw attention to a beautiful passage from *Apocalypse Revealed* explaining the words: “*Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying . . . ‘Come and gather together for the supper of the great God.’*” Here is the powerful explanation:

This symbolizes the Lord, out of Divine love and so out of Divine zeal, calling all people who have a spiritual affection for truth and think about heaven, and summoning them to the New Church and to conjunction with Himself, thus to eternal life. (n. 831)

I love the focus on the Lord's love, and His energy to reach out to every human being He creates, summoning them to eternal life. Talk about a love that knows no limits, that is eternal and timeless! Can we absorb just a bit the voice of the Lord, the angel in the sun, ardently desiring to bless the people of the world, to bless us and those we love, with some of the wisdom of what leads to happiness, with some of the comfort and hope that brings meaning to life?

But note the sending out of the 70 and recall that we are figuratively among them to the extent we are responsive. We know that the Lord flows directly into the hearts and minds of everyone and makes Himself available to us. We also know that His system of blessing is indirect, by inspiring each of us to care for others – to be a source of service and blessing at His hands. (See *Conjugal Love* 391, *True Christian Religion* 457:3) Again, can we hear the ardent love that drives this system, urging each of us to be among the 70 sent out to love and care and serve from Him?

Responding. Let's remind ourselves of the parts of us that are responsive. We can recall a beautiful *Psalm* which inspires that responsiveness. By example the Psalmist says: "Give to the LORD glory and strength. Give to the LORD the glory due His name." (*Psalm* 96:7-8) He goes on to talk about "the good news of His salvation," and "His wonders among all peoples." (96:2,3). It reminds me of the passage exhorting us to "affirm a belief in God" saying "there is no shortage of support for it" if we have eyes willing to see it. (*True Christian Religion* 12:10)

Then there is a passage about "those who are awake." (*Apocalypse Explained* 1006) To be awake is to be responsive to the Lord's call, to be open to the opportunities for service that He places before us, even to be willing and attuned to His voice of conscience calling us to repentance or change for the purpose of our usefulness and eternal welfare.

The request. The 70 who were appointed were sent out to tell people about the Lord or to share the gospel. Specifically, they were asked to say that the kingdom of God has come near you. They were to heal, and they were to speak peace to those in the houses they visited.

This is an evangelistic commission to be sure. In a slight tangent, I don't believe the Lord is limiting His calling to the specific role of sharing His messages with others. I believe He is calling each of us to care about our own ways of serving. Each of us, we could agree, has been prepared, or is being prepared, for our version of usefulness, our ways of being agents for the Lord

in the blessing of others.

What I hear the Lord saying, however, is that there is a common formula or ingredient list in our actions, at least in this scripture that we are focusing on today. All of us are asked to communicate *“Peace to this house.”* (Luke 10:5) We read: *“Speaking peaceably is wishing another person well.”* (Arcana Coelestia 4681) We can do that.

What if we added the spiritual dimension to peace, which is that true peace comes in connection with the Lord and living the life that He calls us to? Can we care about that dimension of people’s lives, and encourage a focus on it by means of our interactions? A simple conversation that references the Lord and invites contemplation of His will could be just what someone else needs to find peace. A favorite quote could be a blessing as well: *“Be still and know that I am God.”* (Psalm 46:10) *“Peace has confidence in the Lord.”* (Arcana Coelestia 8455)

There are other opportunities to be among the 70, if we’re willing to see them. It might take some homework in the form of contemplation, but each of us has been touched by some truth made known to us through the revelation of the Lord’s Second Coming. What are some of those gems? We’ve already talked about the Lord’s love and His providential care, and surely you could give testimony to some of the ways He has led you in His providence, blessed you as you look back over your life. Or it could be a vision of life after death and the reality of continuation that we know about.

What an amazing gift, as we know, to be able to talk with people about seeing loved ones again, about the dynamic life that awaits those in heaven who can feel renewed energy to serve, new chapters of life to enjoy with those closest to them. Can we offer those beautiful truths when people need to hear them?

What I hope we can see is that we are able to share the good news of the Lord. All of us can share some version of the kingdom and the gospel – the formula of peace with others in our lives when the opportunity presents itself.

Joy in the process. Let’s come to the end of the story. *“Then the 70 returned with joy, saying, ‘Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.’”* (Luke 10:17) We read in the Heavenly Doctrines: *“All joy is a characteristic of love.”* (Arcana Coelestia 8672; cf. *Apocalypse Explained* 660) We read also about angels: *“Nothing is more delightful and blessed to the angels than to instruct those who come from the earth into the other life.”* (Arcana Coelestia 2284) And how many of us have felt the inherent joy of being useful, of having the opportunity to help another? We read: *“Nothing gives them greater happiness than the performance of useful services.”* (Arcana Coelestia 6325)

There is inherent joy in responding to the Lord’s call to be of service. The things of the kingdom do indeed bring deep peace and health to people’s lives.

The principles of action that the Lord commands actually bring health to our marriages and friendships. The devotions of worship really do calm the spirit and center us on how to be a follower of the Lord.

In summary, there is the Lord's ardent love for us to care about the things of eternal life. We are among the 70 appointed, with energy and messages that come from Him that can be a blessing to others. Are we willing to listen to that call, and to go out – today, this week, in the coming months – with messages meaningful to us that could be meaningful to others? What specifically is He asking you to do for the people in your life, or the people who cross your path? And to the extent you respond, what joy will come?

There is inherent joy in responding to the Lord's call to be of service.

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Building a Foundation for Life

Gregory D. Henderson

It is an honor to represent the families of today's graduates and speak to you this morning.

Working at an elementary school gave me several chances to witness groups of kindergartners being dropped off for their first day of school. And yes, it is true, there are sometimes tears. And yes, the crying is mostly done by the parents. Those poor parents, being asked to let go of their cute little bundles of perfect potential.

Now, I have never had the chance to see students being dropped off for their first day of high school, but I have been told that it is quite different. Apparently, there are no tears. In fact, someone tried to tell me that at times the cars don't even come to a complete stop. "You see," they explained, "by that point, we parents know exactly what we are dropping off. And we are just excited that there are people willing to take them."

I don't buy it. Despite the common perception of what raising teenagers is like, I'll admit it: I have loved the chance to be a parent of high schoolers. And being an Academy parent is to be provided with countless opportunities to see our children grow in so many ways:

We cheered them on the fields, courts and rinks. Applauded them on the stage. Supported them when they didn't get that part in the play or when championship runs fell short – and when they didn't. We were wowed by their artwork, impressed by their writing, and waved good-bye to them as they flew off to other continents.

We welcomed our kids home from Delta Mu trips full of memories, pride and maybe a little dirt. And then photographed them outside the Cathedral all cleaned up and ready for their big dance. (Don't worry security – we had permission, I swear!)

And these are just the things we parents saw. Graduates, I can only imagine what your lists of experiences, challenges and adventures look like.

And now, comes what? Job? College then job? Career? Maybe family? Amazing lives of one kind or another, I am sure.

And as these lives are unfolding, you may notice some things. First,

Schoolology may drop out of your bookmarks, then numbers like 161 may begin to lose all of their meaning, and you may even catch yourself eating lunch later and later in the day – maybe even as late as, I don't know, 11:30 or dare I suggest it, noon. And somewhere along the way you will realize that when people ask you where you went to school, they are asking about what college you attended not what high school.

It may feel like life will be drawing you away from these high school years. And, if that is the case, then did all those experiences, everything you learned, actually matter? What was the point?

Well, imagine if you will, a particular day in that amazing future life that will unfold before you. You have just bought your first house and invited your friends to see it. They will ooh and ah over your modern kitchen and tell you how cozy your living room feels. Maybe they even explore upstairs. Seemingly the only place no one will bother to visit is the basement.

You will think this is odd because just before you closed on the house you had a home inspector come to the property and he spent nearly all of his time down there. But you see, that was because he, unlike your friends, understood that what would make your home a quality house is mostly in the basement. Down there he could see, among other things, how sound your foundation was. He knows that a quality structure needs a quality foundation.

Have you ever seen a house get built from scratch? It seems like for the longest time all they are doing is moving dirt from one place to another. What are they doing all that time? They are properly preparing and constructing the foundation.

I would suggest that this is what you have been doing these past four years. You have been collecting and building a foundational understanding -- of the world, of life, of yourselves. And what an incredible opportunity you had by doing that work here at the Academy, a school which can include the true perspective of all these things. Where your teachers had the opportunity to teach you about the true meaning and purpose of life. What a difference to have the understanding you built rest upon these foundational ideas.

*What you have been doing these past four years is **collecting and building a foundational understanding - of the world, of life, of yourselves.** And what an incredible opportunity you had by doing that work here at the Academy.*

So, your home inspector will be wise to spend so much attention on your future basement. I wonder how much time you will spend down there. Some of you may only go down there occasionally to bring up the holiday decorations, grab a drink from the extra fridge, or a tool from the workbench, or maybe you will use it just to seek shelter from a big storm. Similarly, we are often only conscious of what we received from our New Church educations in times of stress, or when something in our lives needs fixing or when we have an extra thirst for something more. Or maybe it will take a special occasion like a Charter Day visit to remind you of what you learned here. But the solid ideas – they are always there, seen or not, supporting what comes next.

Or maybe you plan to practically live in your basement, in your man cave or female equivalent. In that case, I would direct your attention to the men and women sitting in the section over here. They have the chance metaphorically to do just that – to spend every day living and breathing the mission of New Church education. And I think it would be a real disappointment if at least one of you did not end up sitting over there with them at some point. Or perhaps, I will selfishly add, working at one of our elementary schools.

You know, it is hard to spend time in this room [the large gym in the Asplundh Field House] without being distracted by the display of banners on the wall. I'll admit, though, it is a bit unsettling to see just how quickly my class banner is moving up and to the left. It really is an impressive collection. How many hundreds of recipients of an Academy education are represented on that wall? How many lives – each built upon an ANC foundation? Some of them are here with us today – siblings, friends, parents, grandparents.

The graduates who belong to the banners in that highest lefthand corner are not here though. It's not because they don't care. They have just had another kind of commencement. But if they could be here, I imagine that they especially, with their newfound perspective, even more than any of us, would tell you how important the distinctive foundation is that you had the chance to build here at the Academy.

After all, it was a wise man who built his house on the rock. It did not fall.

Congratulations class of 2025.

*If the graduates with the oldest banners on this wall could be here today, I imagine they would tell you how important the **distinctive foundation is that you had the chance to build here at the Academy.***

We have cherished all the chances to see you grow over these last four years.

Please forgive us if we tear up just a little again today – like we did when you started kindergarten.

We hope your foundations serve you well. And we can't wait to see the stories you build upon them.

Thank you.



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The Call to Translation in the General Church

The Rev. Kenneth J. Alden.

Beginnings

The General Church Translation Committee was established in 1968 in answer to a calling. The use of translation had largely been left to other bodies, and the General Church was recognizing that it could ably take up uses important to the life of the church which had been underserved.

The new chairman, the Rev. Norbert H. Rogers, wrote that previously General Church members had done translation work largely on their own initiative and in their spare time. Translating the Heavenly Doctrine, he said, is for the instruction and worship of the church. Thanks to its association with the Academy of the New Church, competence in both doctrine and Latin among its priesthood and members, made the General Church uniquely suited to respond to this use in an organized way.¹

The work ahead included the improvement of existing translations, standardizing the quality of translation, and making new translations of good quality. "For this there needs to be planning: the setting of standards and schedules; the selection of works to be translated according to the needs of the church; the assignment of translation work and the commissioning of qualified translators; and provision for systematic review of new translation before it is accepted for publication."²

Establishing the Translation Committee answered the call to these uses. The committee knew it would take years to bridge from aspiration to fulfillment. They had to attract and mentor personnel for the committee and for translation. They needed funding for salaries and publication. A calling is always an interplay of needs in the church, and inclination and ability to respond to those needs. The chairman called on the whole church to be concerned with the need to develop its translating potential.³

¹Norbert H. Rogers, "General Church Translation Committee," *New Church Life*, LXXXVIII (March 1968), 116-118.

² *Ibid.*, p. 117.

³ Norbert H. Rogers, "Translation Committee" *New Church Life*, XCI (April 1971) 199.

Initial Focus

Mr. Rogers, representing the General Church, addressed an international seminar in 1970 for translators and publishers of Swedenborg's works, sponsored by the Swedenborg Society in London. He saw potential for joint projects, and for efforts that complement and supplement one another, rather than compete or reduplicate.

He outlined three main objectives of translation: for scholars, for New Church people, and for popular appeal, each with its own basic requirements.

"The need of scholars is for a most exact translation with standardized rendition of words and phrases, that in so far as is possible they may know precisely what was said in the Latin, with the least possible intrusion of the translator's ideas of what is meant. The need of New Church people, on the other hand, is for a doctrinally correct translation presented in as readable style as is possible. And a popular appeal translation needs to present the leading principles and teachings of the Writings in brief, simple and clear form in the current idiom."⁴

At the time, Mr. Rogers set aside the first use, as scholars were the smallest group and the most capable of reading Latin for themselves. He dismissed, as well, aiming for popular appeal since it involved more adaptation and paraphrasing than actual translation, in such products as pamphlets, articles and stories. It was the middle use, that of meeting the needs of New Church people, that he saw as the need to which the Church should respond.

He saw New Church readers as having a knowledge and acceptance of basic and distinctive New Church doctrine along with a desire to broaden and deepen their understanding of it. He envisioned New Church people seeking a translation that is both doctrinally correct and as readable as possible. He said: "By far the majority of the reading public is ill equipped to cope with the pedantic circumlocution of [the] Latin-style English" often found in translations made for a generation that was more familiar with Latin.⁵ He concluded: "The need to translate the Writings for New Church people is a continuing need. We cannot expect, nor are we to attempt, to translate the Writings for all time. We should rather concentrate our efforts at any given time to translate in the best possible way for the present and immediate future."⁶

At the same time, he held that certain aspects of Divine revelation must be retained, and therefore that the Writings will never be easy reading.

Mr. Rogers also described several issues involved in staying true

⁴ Norbert H. Rogers, "On Translating the Writings," *New Church Life*, XCI (March 1971) 118.

⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 119-120.

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 120.

to the doctrine when making decisions in translation. This led to another conclusion: “For a doctrinally sound translation of the Writings, the translator must be well versed in Latin, and he must also have extensive knowledge and understanding of what the Writings teach. Indeed, he should have a degree of enlightenment in these things. In view of what the Writings teach about the enlightenment of the clergy (*True Christian Religion* 146, 155), in my opinion a translator of the Writings should be none other than a well-trained and experienced minister of the New Church who also has training and experience in Latin.”⁷

Six years later a new chairman of the committee, the Rev. N. Bruce Rogers, in an address to the Joint Council of the General Church (Council of the Clergy and Board of Directors), refined the calling of the committee. A report in *New Church Life* touched on his points: “In the past we have relied primarily upon others. Good Latin editions and definitive texts are basic to superior translations. No translation can be better than the text that it proposes to translate.”

After pointing out that the Swedenborg Society had been experiencing increasing difficulty in funding their projects, he said: “This is an important use for the General Church and indeed for the whole church. . . . The work of improving Latin texts and translating those texts is directly related to the understanding of the Word [which makes a church to be a church].”

He saw the Academy as assuring the General Church of a “a continuous and faithful line of editors and translators. No other English-speaking body is as fortunate. . . . It is past time we got into this work, formally and with continuous commitment.”⁸

Indeed, the Rev. N. Bruce Rogers was instrumental in developing and employing the talents of Academy graduates in support of the translation work then in progress and to follow. Under his leadership the General Church Translation Committee has made it a practice to base translation on a fresh critical Latin edition – a carefully examined Latin text with critical apparatus, detailing suspected printer’s errors in first editions, slips of the pen or alternate readings in hard-to-read manuscripts drafted in haste, etc. He was also the primary editor and translator of many of the works listed below.

Accomplishments

Over the last 57 years, the General Church Translation Committee has overseen critical Latin editions of the following:

⁷ Ibid. p. 122.

⁸ Norbert H. Rogers, “Joint Council,” *New Church Life*, XCVII (June 1977) 299-300.

De Telluribus in Universo (three versions in parallel, mimeograph 1980)
Experientiae Spirituales (including the indexes, 1983-1997)
Delitiae Sapientiae De Amore Conjugaliali (1995)
Tria Opuscula (1997)
Sapientia Angelica De Divino Amore et De Divina Sapientia (1999)
Sapientia Angelica De Divina Providentia (2003)
Apocalypsis Revelata (2007- 2010)
Vera Christiana Religio (2009)
Quatuor Doctrinae Novae Hierosolymae (2014)

Translations published under its aegis include these titles:

Conjugal Love/Married Love (1995)
Three Short Works (1997)
Spiritual Experiences (1998-2013 and digital and online publication of the Indexes, 2022)
Divine Love and Wisdom (1999)
Divine Providence (2003)
Apocalypse Revealed (2007-2010)
Four Doctrines (2014)

The Interaction of the Soul and Body, another completed translation, awaits the translator's remarks before proceeding to publication.

The translation committee has also provided support for the Swedenborg Society's translation of *Arcana Coelestia*, (1983-1999), and has published several articles and papers relating to translation, among them being the *New Church Life* articles and reports cited above and "The Translator's Corner" in *New Philosophy* (1980-2003), edited by the Rev. J. Durban Odhner, who also edited and translated most of *Spiritual Experiences*.

The committee engaged promising students in various translating projects, some of whom participated in producing the publications mentioned above, not to mention for the Swedenborg Foundation's New Century Edition.

What is today's interplay among needs, interests and abilities?

Today's Needs

Over the last half century, learning Latin has become much less of a priority in the general population, in the Academy Secondary Schools, and even in the Theological School. During this time both the Swedenborg Society and the Swedenborg Foundation have invested considerable scholarly expertise in bringing readable translations to the general public.

Another trend that has developed over the last half century is new interest

in the Heavenly Doctrine around the world. Social media and efforts like *offTheLeftEye* and New Christian Bible Study are reaching millions, bringing an acquaintance with Swedenborg and the revelation made through him. English is the most widely-known second language in the world, allowing these efforts to reach people in many lands.

Today people around the world who can read the Heavenly Doctrine in English want to read and share its truths in their native languages. Since few know Latin, their translation efforts often rely on making translations from English into their first language. While contemporary, readable translations have their place in that process, they typically prioritize variety of expression over consistency of vocabulary. A single Latin word may be translated multiple ways in the same paragraph to capture variations in meaning according to the translator's sense of the context. Like whisper-down-the-lane, a translation from Latin through English to a native language could compound errors.

The Translation Committee is considering the possibility that, along with a more colloquial translation, translators from English need a precise translation, in which the vocabulary and phrasing are consistent and faithful to the underlying Latin, and where the translator trusts the intelligence of the reader to discern variations in meaning from context and so refrains from intruding his own perception of the meaning.

Thus, a faithful literal translation may not only serve those pursuing doctrinal precision, but the international church as well. Prioritizing consistent vocabulary over fashionable expression and a grade-school reading level could also lend itself to computer-assisted revision in the future. It can be an enduring investment. Current work on *Doctrine of Charity* is entertaining this possibility.

The General Church's Strengths

The growing membership of the General Church outside of the first-language English-speaking world testifies to the church's doctrinal commitment and to new members' embrace of that doctrine. Its doctrine is that the Writings are more than a brilliant 18th century visionary's observations and insights.

They are the Word – a Divine revelation of the Lord in His Second Coming, the crown of revelations committed to human language for all future generations. This doctrine gives the General Church a unique ability to respond to a general need in the world at large by providing an accurate translation that lets the Writings speak for themselves to those less literate in Latin.

In the past, reverence for the Latin text of the Heavenly Doctrine led the high schools of the General Church to teach Latin. This in turn produced capable students who were brought into the work of the Translation Committee in its early days. Some of these served not only the translation work of the General

Church but also the Swedenborg Society and the Swedenborg Foundation.

Although the Academy Secondary Schools no longer offer Latin, the Kempton New Church School still does, and the General Church still has an Academy-educated population with a range of experience with Latin. It also has the Bryn Athyn College of the New Church and Theological School that can still feed the interest of potential translators. The crop of young people nurtured by the translation committee in its early years is now at retirement age. There is a great need to engage and mentor a new generation of students of Latin.

The Academy's Charter purpose of propagating the Heavenly Doctrine nourishes our hope that nurturing capable translators with a deep love for the Lord's Word is still a strength of the General Church that will grow.

The deep respect for the text of the Heavenly Doctrine which characterizes the General Church equips it for careful examination of the Latin text as a basis for translation. As we continue our practice of first producing a critical Latin edition, a use is seen in more thoroughly examining deletions in the manuscript, as well as the text itself.

The current work on *De Charitate* includes reproducing (in footnotes) all deletions and translating the more significant ones. Looking at Swedenborg's writing process has given clues to the intended direction of difficult readings. We find that what was struck out still expresses ideas that are true.

Since the General Church has a long history of acknowledging theological books and letters published posthumously as being part of the Second Coming, it also holds a unique place among publishers today. Both the Swedenborg Foundation and the Swedenborg Society in the last half century or more have left the posthumous space open, and the General Church has responded with the work on *Spiritual Experiences* and *Three Short Works*, and currently on *Doctrine of Charity*. Also, for more than a decade, Latin students from the Secondary Schools and College have been hired to transcribe the manuscripts of *Apocalypse Explained*. Their work will become a resource for the first critical Latin edition to give extensive attention to the draft manuscript as well as the fair copy written out for typesetting.

Present Calling

The call that the General Church Translation Committee is hearing today combines needs, inclinations and abilities. There is a niche to fill which calls to the heart and strengths of the General Church. Recognition of the need for consistent translation faithful to the Latin has grown, both because our priests and members need more support for limited Latin ability, and because there is more demand around the world for translation from English. The need for translation of the posthumously published works has been left to the

General Church, as has been the production of critical Latin editions of the manuscripts of these works.

The General Church's reverence for what the Lord's servant has written from Him makes the General Church uniquely qualified to answer this call. The General Church is also in the best position to educate and mentor future translators of the Heavenly Doctrine who appreciate its Divine origin. We can make a significant and lasting investment in the future of translation of all kinds, including those for an international audience.

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A Visible God

The Rev. Jared J. Buss

(Reprinted from The Reporter of the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, New Church)

In the teachings of the New Church we are told that this church will worship “one visible God.” (*True Christian Religion* 787) But to wonder what this actually means would be a forgivable thing – because God sure doesn’t seem to be visible. At least not in the ordinary sense of the word.

Related to this wonderment is the thought that the Lord made Himself visible to a handful of people in historic Palestine – and to no one else. “A handful” here means several thousand, but that’s still a tiny number compared to the billions of people who have never had the opportunity to lay their eyes on Jesus Christ. Why don’t we get to see Him? Why did those people in ancient Judea get to see Him when we don’t? Is the fact that He was visible to them supposed to be good enough for us?

The Gospel makes it clear that Jesus was entirely “real.” People could touch Him. He got hungry. He needed to sleep. Of course, these things aren’t actually measures of reality. God was real before He was born on earth. He is and always has been reality itself. (See *True Christian Religion* 18) But to us – in ordinary speech, anyway – “real” means that you can see it and touch it. A real person is a person with a body like our bodies. The Lord made Himself real in that sense. His feet, like ours, got dusty and needed to be washed.

But all of that changed after He rose from death. After His resurrection, “reality” no longer restricted Him. He entered rooms without opening any doors. (*John* 20:19, 26) When the disciples who had walked with Him to Emmaus recognized who He was, He immediately vanished from their sight. (*Luke* 24:31)

The way the teachings of the New Church put it is that after His resurrection, “His body was no longer material, but Divine substantial.” (*Doctrine of the Lord* 35.10) His body had become more than ours are. That doesn’t mean that He was any less real – a Divine substance is surely more real than a material substance. To prove that He was still real, He showed His disciples the wounds on His body and ate before their eyes. (*Luke* 24:39-43) But His body no longer obeyed the laws of what we call reality.

In a passage about the Lord’s second coming, *True Christian Religion* 777 says:

The reason why He will not appear [again] in person is that after His ascension into heaven He is in His glorified Human; and in this He cannot appear to any person, unless He has first opened the eyes of their spirit.

This passage goes on to point out that when He showed Himself to the disciples after His resurrection, “*He first opened their eyes.*” (Luke 24:31) So He has become something that our ordinary, natural eyes cannot see. And that’s because our eyes are flawed (or at least finite) organs. We can’t even look directly at the sun: the light is too much for us. The Lord in His glorified Human is far brighter than the sun. Our physical eyes simply cannot behold that kind of brightness. Only our spiritual eyes – which are superior organs, though still finite – have even a chance of seeing Him. The point is that the Lord has become too real for our physical eyes to see.

The miracle of the incarnation is that God Himself took on a body and a humanity that were so low, so coarse, and so ordinary that people could see Him even with their physical eyes. Those qualities -- low, coarse, and ordinary – are not proper to God. He made Himself that way so that even our knuckleheaded, earthbound natural minds could get Him and call Him “real.” But He also glorified the humanity that He’d taken on; He made it proper to Himself. By the time that process was complete, He’d become more than our physical eyes can see. He had become too bright, too glorious, too Divine. So, after the resurrection, His disciples couldn’t see Him unless He opened the eyes of their spirits.

Yet we are also told that He took His body with Him from the tomb and up into heaven. In *Luke 24:51* we read:

And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven.

That glorified Human that ascended into heaven and can only be seen with the eyes of the spirit is the same as the Lord who was crucified – the same as the Lord who ate fish and honey before the disciples. (Luke 24:42, 43) He’s become too real for our natural eyes to see, but our natural minds can still “see” Him, because He’s so like something our eyes have seen. He is still the same Lord who was seen by the physical eyes of those people in Palestine all those years ago.

The New Church is to worship “one visible God, in whom is the invisible.” (*True Christian Religion* 787) He is visible to us because we’ve been shown what to look for. He is the same Lord who showed Himself before the eyes of His

disciples on Easter morning. And it doesn't matter that we'll never see Him with our own physical eyes – the eyes that can see Him, even today, are far more discerning.

*The New Church is to worship “**one visible God, in whom is the invisible.**” He is visible to us because we’ve been shown what to look for.*



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Swedenborg and Stoicism

The Rev. Howard A. Thompson

(Reprinted from the Roseville Newsletter in Australia)

This may seem an obscure diversion for a New Church minister, but I hope you will indulge me.

In early 2023 I engaged a solicitor to help with a legal issue. During our meeting we were discussing faith and he mentioned that he was a Stoic. I am not a philosopher, nor have I ever studied philosophy, so when someone mentions “stoic” all I can think of is the common dictionary definition: “not affected by or showing passion or feeling.” But this definition didn’t seem to align with the person I was speaking with, nor did it seem aligned with the descriptions of his spiritual practice. So, a seed was planted to take a deeper look at what it means to be a Stoic.

Like any seed, this one sat dormant in the soil of my mind for months, only occasionally pushing to the surface and reminding me that I needed to give it some attention. Eventually, the seed germinated and broke through. I read some articles about Stoicism online and found a useful YouTube channel. These led me to order two books: *Meditations* by Marcus Aurelius and *Letters from a Stoic* by Seneca. For those familiar with the Stoics, Epictetus is next. The reading was fascinating and I would like to share some of what I took away from it.

When I heard the word “stoic” I could only think “non-emotional, unfeeling.” Apparently, this is a common response, the same as what my wife had when she overheard me discussing Stoicism with our son. Ryan Holiday, in the introduction to his book *The Daily Stoic*, notes:

“Except to the most avid seekers of wisdom, Stoicism is either unknown or misunderstood. Indeed, it would be hard to find a word dealt a greater injustice at the hands of the English language than Stoic.”

To the average person, this vibrant, action-oriented and paradigm-shifting way of living has become shorthand for “emotionlessness.” Given the fact that the mere mention of philosophy makes most people nervous or bored, “Stoic philosophy” on the surface sounds like the last thing anyone would want to learn about, let alone urgently need in the course of daily life.

What a sad fate for a philosophy that even one of its occasional critics, Arthur Schopenhauer, would describe as “the highest point to which man can attain by the mere use of his faculty of reason.”

Far from advocating for a life devoid of emotions, the core Stoic teachings emphasize not the absence of emotions but a mastery over them, advocating for a life led by reason and virtue. Central to Stoic philosophy is the belief that while we cannot control external events, we can control our reactions to them, thereby maintaining our tranquility and freedom from the disturbances we so often allow external events to cause.

Marcus Aurelius, a Roman Emperor and Stoic philosopher, captures this essence in his meditations: “Understand at last that you have something in you more powerful and divine than what causes the bodily passions and pulls you like a mere puppet. What thoughts now occupy my mind? Is it not fear, suspicion, desire, or something like that?” This underlines the Stoic view that emotions are not to be eradicated but understood and governed by the higher faculties of the mind, specifically reason.

Epictetus, another towering figure in Stoicism, further clarifies this position in his Discourses: “It is not events that disturb people, it is their judgments concerning them.” Here, he emphasizes that emotions themselves are not problematic; rather, it is our judgments about external events that cause distress. Stoicism teaches that by examining and changing our judgments, we can maintain composure in the face of the exigencies of life.

Seneca, a Roman Stoic philosopher, offers a practical application of this philosophy in his letters to Lucilius: “If you wish to be loved, love.” He illustrates that Stoicism does not reject emotions but guides one to engage with them in a rational manner. Love, an emotion, is presented not as something to be suppressed but as a virtue to be cultivated wisely.

Stoicism, therefore, does not call for a life stripped of emotions but for a life where one is not enslaved by them. It teaches the development of an inner citadel, a mental fortress that allows one to observe emotions without being swept away by them. This is a path of wisdom where one recognizes the presence of emotions but chooses actions based on reason and virtue.

The Stoic practice of *premeditatio malorum* – reflecting on the things that could go wrong or could be taken from us – further demonstrates this balance. By contemplating potential

*Stoicism does not call for a life stripped of emotions but for a life where one is not **enslaved** by them. It teaches the development of an **inner citadel** that allows one to **observe emotions without being swept away by them.***

misfortunes, Stoics prepare themselves emotionally and intellectually to face challenges without panic or distress, thereby exercising control over their reactions. Of course, even the practice of *premeditatio malorum* needs to be done with reason and rationality in order to avoid anxiety and worry.

Stoicism's approach to emotions is nuanced and profound. It acknowledges the natural human experience of emotions but champions the idea that true freedom and happiness come from not being controlled by these emotions. Through the teachings of Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus, and Seneca, we see a consistent message: emotions are to be understood, moderated and aligned with reason and virtue, leading to a life of tranquility and resilience. Stoicism, therefore, does not espouse emotional suppression but emotional intelligence and mastery.

If this concept sounds familiar, it is likely due to New Church teaching that true freedom comes from not being controlled by negative emotions. Swedenborg emphasizes the importance of being led by the Lord, which leads to a state of freedom. In his Writings, he describes how enslavement occurs when cravings and falsity rule over us, leading us to believe we are enjoying freedom when, in reality, we are not. Only when we are regenerated and led by a love for what is good and true can we experience true freedom. Consider how the above teachings from Stoics resonate with teaching for the New Church in *Secrets of Heaven* 892:

*The New Church teaches that **true freedom** comes from not being controlled by negative emotions. Swedenborg emphasizes the importance of **being led by the Lord**, which leads to a state of freedom.*

We first come into a state of freedom after we have regenerated; until then, we are in a state of slavery. Enslavement occurs when cravings and falsity rule over us; freedom results when a fondness for what is good and true takes charge. As long as we are enslaved, we have no perception of the actual state of affairs. The first perception dawns when we come into freedom. We never come into a free condition until we have regenerated and until the Lord leads us by means of a love for what is good and true. Once we arrive there, we are able to see and perceive for the first time what liberty is, because we then realize what life is and what true pleasure in life and happiness are. Up to

that time, we do not even know what goodness is, and occasionally we refer to the height of evil as the greatest good. When people who enjoy a state of freedom given by the Lord observe a life of perverted desire and false thinking, and particularly when they sense it, they are as horrified as if they saw hell gaping open before their very eyes.



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The Lord's Invitation

The Rev. Erik J. Buss

(Reprinted from the June Newsletter for the United Kingdom)

In the book of *Isaiah*, the Lord offers an invitation to come to Him and the promise of what happens when we do. It is an exuberant invitation that I think is particularly pertinent to the Church in the United Kingdom at this time. I am struck by the warmth and intensity of the Lord's statements about His desire to bring goodness to our lives.

The Lord begins with offering gifts.

Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. (Isaiah 55:1)

Everyone is invited to receive free blessings, symbolized by water, wine and milk. Not some people, not only the lucky people, but you for whom life has sometimes been difficult. The Lord knows we don't have the price, so He offers everyone gifts freely. Not only are these gifts freely given, but they are also the truths that set us free. He invites everyone to be fed, to replenish themselves.

But to be fed we have to incline our ear. That means moving toward the Lord, coming to Him by doing His will and changing our behavior. He urges us to step up to the challenge of moving away from what is not helping us, so that we can receive His blessing.

Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance. Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you. (55:2-3)

The Lord offers the promise of abundance and then provides the conditions for receiving it. It is never fun to confront our selfish behavior, but if we can do it, with the awareness of the peace, hope and joy it brings, that can change our perspective.

We like to think we know what works and does not, but the Lord reminds us that He sees so much that we don't:

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says Jehovah. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." (55:8-9)

Life throws us many unexpected challenges. The Lord, however, is never surprised. He is looking from a higher level and foresees all these bends in the road. He will guide us through it all if we let Him. We see the road in front of us, but from on high He sees both the road and the goal He is leading us to.

Because He sees all that is happening, His actions and His words have a power to accomplish anything.

For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it. (55:10-11)

I love the power with which His will rolls forth here. It will indeed conquer. Many of our efforts come to nothing, but that is not so with the Lord. He sends out His truth and it absolutely does accomplish what He intends. What He intends is not necessarily what we intend. He sees entirely differently than we humans do, but His will shall be accomplished. Notice how many times “shall” is used. It will happen!

The Lord closes this chapter by promising us delight:

For you shall go out with joy, and be led out with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break forth into singing before you, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress tree, and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle tree; and it shall be to Jehovah for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off. (55:12-13)

In this image, the whole world is breaking into rejoicing. The Lord wants us to believe that this can happen for us and for our Church.

Daily life can feel hard and in many ways it is. The Lord’s message to us here is that He is offering us an alternative, one that can be ours for free, to the degree that we devote ourselves to His way.



THE REV. ERIK J. BUSS has just completed four years of service as National Pastor for the United Kingdom and Pastor for the Colchester New Church. On July 1 he became Pastor of the Oak Arbor congregation in Rochester, Michigan, where he lives with his wife, Ann (Gladish). Contact: erikjbuss@gmail.com

Life Lines

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

A PLACE PREPARED

We glimpse the omniscience and omnipresence of the Lord throughout all of His creation. Thanks to the Hubble and James Webb telescopes we are humbled to witness His presence extending throughout the universe – light years farther than Galileo could ever have imagined. And atomic microscopes take us inside invisible atoms to understand the basic building blocks of all creation – testing the limits of our imagination.

It is all mind-boggling stuff. We are dazzled to look up on a clear night and see hundreds of twinkling stars. But what we can see of the universe – so far – actually extends to millions of galaxies. The light we have captured from the most distant star yet discovered has taken 28 billion light years to get to earth. It is all beyond human comprehension, but it is within every manifestation of His creation.

Perhaps even harder to grasp is His presence within every one of us. Consider that on this earth alone, there are some 8.2 billion people. This year we will add 50 million births and lose 23 million through death, for a net gain of 27 million. Project back through all of history for the billions already in the spiritual world. And project forward into an endless future of more and more billions. Then remember that every single person – however obscure his or her life may be – has “a place prepared” in heaven or hell, which will never be filled. And the Lord is present with every single one of us – throughout all time -- with His love and providence guiding every moment of our lives. He knows and cares for each of us – completely.

We are one with the Psalmist and the Gospels:

O Lord, Thou hast searched me, and known me, Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, Thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain it. (Psalm 139:1-4, 6)

When I consider the heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and stars which Thou hast ordained; what is man that Thou art mindful of him? (Psalm 8:3-4)

And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. (Matthew 28:29)

I go to prepare a place for you. (John 14:2)

Such knowledge indeed is too wonderful – especially for doubters. They look with blinders and see only random illustrations of science. Emanuel Swedenborg was first a scientist but came to understand: *“The universe is like a stage in which proofs of heaven are constantly being demonstrated that God exists and that there is one God.” (True Christianity 12)*

Swedenborg also wrote in *Arcana Coelestia* 6698:

I have talked to spirits about how a person may come to believe that the universe contains more than one terrestrial world from the fact that the visible universe is lit by such a countless number of stars and is so vast, and yet is solely a means serving the ultimate end of creation . . . being the heavenly kingdom in which the Divine can dwell. For the visible universe exists as the means for planets to come into being and have people on them from whom the heavenly kingdom may be formed. How can anyone ever think that so vast a means has been created for an end so small and limited as it would be if only one planet were inhabited and heaven were formed of this alone?

But discounting the mind-boggling implications of all of the universe flowing into the spiritual world – every day – let’s go back to just this world for perspective. If 23 million people are dying on earth this year, that’s about 63,000 a day. Many of these occur naturally and there is time to prepare. But many are sudden and unexpected. Imagine the chaos this would create on earth – long lines of anxious people, delays, impatience, frustration. But each of us – no matter the circumstances – is met by angels in a sphere of love. And they don’t have to prepare for us because we reveal ourselves. Then we are led by our own loves to the homes we have fashioned in heaven or hell through our lives on earth.

It is comforting to know that every person who has ever lived and ever will live – on this earth and throughout the Lord’s creation – has “a place prepared” in heaven or hell that is the perfect home for our spirit. And, we are assured, the heaven we live for “will never be shut and is so vast as to surpass belief” (*Arcana Coelestia* 3631)

All of this defies our mortal imagination – but not our sense of awe and gratitude.

All things bright and beautiful, All creatures great and small,

All things wise and wonderful, The Lord God made them all.

(Cecil Alexander)

All things were made by Him, and without Him

was not anything made that was made. (John 1:3)

With God all things are possible. Without Him, nothing is.

(BMH)

PLANTING SEEDS: I

A Life Line in the May/June issue – *Initiative and Example* – told of an obituary in *The Economist* sent to me by Denis de Chazal, who lives in Montreal. The obituary was a eulogy to British neurophysiologist Peter Fenwick, considered a world expert on near-death experiences.

Fenwick had scoffed at the credibility of such experiences until one of his patients had a compelling episode. Fenwick was later featured in a BBC documentary which brought in an avalanche of experiencers – and turned his practice in a whole new direction, including a best-selling book, *The Art of Dying*.

Denis sent a letter to the editor of *The Economist* in appreciation of Dr. Fenwick and the obituary, and added: “I would also mention the insights found in the book, *Heaven and Hell*, which gives an even fuller testimony of the reality and practical nature of the human spirit after death.”

The letter was not published, but Ann Wroe, the Obituaries editor, wrote a thank-you note to Denis, saying in part: “We are of one mind on the subject of the soul. I wrote Peter Fenwick’s obituary partly to encourage readers to think about it, and about the truth (as you and I believe it) of what occurs beyond physical death. Thank you for reminding me about Swedenborg. I read him many years ago and will now seek him out again.”

Denis immediately sent her a copy of *Heaven and Hell* and quickly received the following email from Ms. Wroe, which, he confessed, “is music to my ears.”

She wrote: “Heaven and Hell arrived yesterday, and I’m so grateful to you for it! Although I was in the office and should have been working, I did a lot of dipping in and was completely fascinated. Thank you for your generosity, and with warmest wishes.”

Denis had no idea how the book might be received. We never do. We look for such opportunities wherever they arise and figure it is worth taking a chance to make a difference in at least one person’s life. It is always worth

taking a chance to plant a seed – and then see what might blossom under the care of Divine providence.

(BMH)

PLANTING SEEDS: II

We all have to deal with the soul-searching question at some point in our lives: “Why does God let it happen?” It may be a personal tragedy. It may be something in the news that adds anguish to empathy. But the question is nagging and insistent.

We are blessed in the church with the teachings of *Divine Providence* – that God is always all powerful and loving and never wishes tragedy on anyone. He permits it for our essential freedom and bends our lives always toward a good end. Still, the pain is real – especially for those whose faith is tested by doubt:

One of those is Karl Rove, a political commentator and strategist, who writes a column in *The Wall Street Journal*. The one he wrote on April 30 had nothing to do with politics and everything to do with faith in God.

It was headlined *A Daughter Dies Too Young* and told of a wonderful young woman – “the daughter I never had” – who died of cancer at age 38, with a loving husband, young twins, a wonderful career and “everything to live for.”

Karl flew to be with the family by her bedside. He described that after her long, draining battle with cancer, suddenly the pain and fear were gone and “there was a calmness about her.” She told her six-year-old twins how much she loved them and that she would be “their angel in heaven.”

She accepted her fate. Karl Rove did not. “Her death has left me shaken. An ancient question hit me with tremendous force: Why does a loving and all-powerful God allow bad things to happen to good people, especially one so young?”

That is the question that tests everyone’s faith. Rabbi Harold Kushner, who wrote the best-seller *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* 50 years ago said it is the one question that haunts everyone’s faith. The book was his attempt to answer the question after he and his wife had a child ravaged by a disease that took his life as a young teenager. Kushner did not have the benefit of *Divine Providence* but comes close in this book to perceiving the true nature of God – that He is not in the tragedy but in the endless love in its wake.

Karl Rove sought comfort in *The Problem of Pain* by C.S. Lewis, but found it “too philosophical, too antiseptic, too distant,” and providing little comfort. He did better with *A Grief Observed*, which Lewis wrote after his wife died young of cancer. Rove connected with the pain and the book helped him process his own grief. But he’s still suffering, still wrestling with doubt.

Just after reading his column, I received emails from two friends

recommending that I send him my book: *Why Does God Let it Happen?* One was Mark Wyncoll, Director of Advancement for the General Church, copying me with an email sent to Mr. Rove expressing sympathy and recommending my book as a short read directly related to his topic. He included a link to my book on Amazon.

Karl Rove responded with a brief email: “Many thanks – awfully nice of you and appreciate the suggestion.”

But he did not stop there. Mark got a note a few days later – hand signed and addressed – which thanked him for reaching out and gave some touching highlights from the memorial service for his “lost daughter.” He added: “I’ve taken the liberty of sharing your message to me with the families. Thanks again for it. It meant a lot.”

It’s good to make such a meaningful connection and I commend Mark for the effort. Who knows what may come of it, if only for the comfort of one grieving man and perhaps many others. But there is more.

A few days after Mr. Rove’s column, the *Journal* published a response from a father coping with a similar tragedy – the sudden loss of his 27-year-old son: *How to Make Sense of an Unspeakable Tragedy*.

He said that even though he didn’t believe his son had suffered, he couldn’t help but ask: “How does a benevolent God let this happen?” It is a question that echoes every day throughout the world. And it is the one question we in the church can answer with some confidence – and should always be looking to share.

This grieving Dad was also turning to books for solace: Jerry Sitter’s *A Grace Disguised*, Viktor Frankl’s *Man’s Search for Meaning*, Daniel Hans’s *God on the Witness Stand*, and Craig Groeschel’s *Hope in the Dark*. He added:

“Why does God let such things happen? I can’t know for sure, and I pray for those taken too soon and their devastated families. But I have learned that the brokenness of this world and the attending pain can transform those on earth, molding those who suffer into kinder, gentler, more compassionate people. The positive path takes work, but I believe we’re divinely made better for choosing it. And perhaps it offers a glimpse into the answer.”

The *Journal* offers readers an opportunity to respond online, and many did – both to Karl Rove and this grieving father. One suggested the book, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, so I took the opportunity to recommend my own book, noting that Rabbi Kushner called it “the best consideration of God’s role in tragedy from a traditional perspective that I have ever read.” (The rabbi graciously allowed us to use this endorsement on the cover of the book.)

I also sent a sympathetic email to Karl Rove, with a digital copy of my

book attached, and a note about Rabbi Kushner's endorsement. I got a similar personal response to the one Mark Wyncoll received. There was no indication that he is reading the book, but he has it and hopefully it will bring some measure of understanding and comfort.

Who knows if any of these efforts to sow seeds will bear fruit? But there's nothing to lose and potentially a lot to gain – just in offering solace to hurting, grieving people and perhaps helping them to understand why God “lets it happen.”

(BMH)

HEAVEN AND HELL AS A MIRROR

Many people consider *The Wall Street Journal* primarily a business-and-politics newspaper, and it is that, but it also offers thoughtful commentaries on religion, education, the arts – and such personal faith issues as Karl Rove's. Another recent example was *Fyodor Dostoevsky's Struggle With Faith*. And that struggle has roots in his reading of Swedenborg.

In 1859 Dostoevsky was sent to Siberia as a political prisoner. A friend gave him a copy of the New Testament, curiously the only book allowed for prisoners. He said this is what sustained him through his adversity and led him to faith.

Writing later about his despair, he explained that “at such moments we thirst for faith like parched grass,” and find it at last because “truth becomes evident in unhappiness.”

The faith he found “resembled not an unshakable conviction but a struggle with doubt.” Karl Rove and that grieving father know such doubt – and how it helps lead them to hope. Dostoevsky called himself “a child of disbelief and doubt.”

This tortured struggle is evident in his novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*, and its hero, Ivan, who “accepts that amoral natural laws govern everything and that good and evil are social conventions. But he can't relinquish a belief in transcendent, absolute mortality. His whole being tells him that not all standards are mere convention; some things, such as child abuse, are plainly wrong.”

Dostoevsky's spokesman, Father Zosima, assures Ivan that even if he never finds faith, he will never give up searching for it. And he tells him to “thank the Creator who has given you a lofty heart capable of such suffering and of seeking for higher things, for our dwelling is in the heavens.”

This search for faith through doubt echoes through human nature and is Dostoevsky's trademark. It underlies his classic *Crime and Punishment*, which is said to have been written after he had read Swedenborg's *Heaven and Hell*. He was taken by the concept of eternal consequences for our choices and that we are not judged after death but judge ourselves.

This is a dense and complex novel but reduced to its fundamentals it is the story of Rodian Raskolnikov, who convinces himself that he is doing the world a favor by killing Svidrigailov, a menacing and evil man, whom the world will never miss. But Raskolnikov is tortured by his conscience and the consequences of what he has done.

This is a morality play on a grand scale – in many ways beyond our experience. But true to the art of great literature, it touches on moral ambiguities, justice and human nature – and the overriding perspective of faith and drawing clear lines between good and evil.

All of this was roiling in Dostoevsky's mind, awakened to a whole new perspective of heaven or hell as the inevitable consequence of our choices on earth. Yes, Raskolnikov could justify ridding the world of such an evil man – but who was he to take this on himself? How do we honestly judge our own loves and choices?

Our own *Book of Life* is not writ so large as *Crime and Punishment*, but we all must contemplate eternity as the eternal home for our own choices. This is the “art” that we come to glimpse ourselves in the portrayal of literary characters and their dilemmas. Our faith in the revelation given to us through Swedenborg surely helps. Dostoevsky's tortured path to faith is extreme, and his introduction to Swedenborg – on beyond *Heaven and Hell* – may well have been his salvation.

Many commentaries have been written about Swedenborg's influence on Dostoevsky. You can find a lengthy article at SwedenborgStudy.com by Polish Nobel Prize-winning author Czeslaw Milosz on *Dostoevsky and Swedenborg*.

Crime and Punishment endures as a literary classic because it is seated in the human soul – and nothing casts more light on that, as he found, than the revelation given to us in the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg.

(BMH)

THE SEAL OF CONFESSION

The Seal of Confession, also known as the Sacramental Seal, is a fundamental principle in Christianity that prohibits priests from revealing any information learned during confession. This principle has been in the news this year because of a new law in the state of Washington:

The secrecy of the confessional in the Roman Catholic Church is so sacrosanct that any priest who violates it is automatically excommunicated.

In Washington State, a new law requiring clergy to break the seal when child abuse has been revealed has kindled a heated battle involving

the state, the Roman Catholic Church and the Justice Department.

*Clergy are considered mandated reporters in a majority of states, meaning they are legally obligated to report to authorities if they suspect a child is being abused. In most states, however, the state reserves protections for the clergy-penitent relationship. In seven states, including New Hampshire and West Virginia, there is no such exception. (In Tennessee, the privilege is denied only in cases of child sexual abuse.)*¹

This is especially an issue for Roman Catholics, but the Seal of Confession is also practiced among many Protestants, such as the Anglicans. What does the New Church teach about this?

The practice of confession before a priest is mentioned positively in *True Christian Religion*, but it is not mandated, and nothing at all is said about a priest's obligation to keep the confession a secret, much less a secret from law enforcement.

There is no need for us to list our sins before the Lord. . . . The reason we do not need to list our sins before the Lord is that we searched them out within ourselves and saw them, and therefore they are present before the Lord because they are present before us. The Lord was leading us in our self-examination; He disclosed our sins; He inspired our grief and, along with it, the motivation to stop doing them and to begin a new life. . . . It does no harm, though, for people who are weighed down by a heavy conscience to lighten their load by listing their sins before a minister of the church, for the sake of absolution. Doing so introduces them to the habit of examining themselves and reflecting on their daily evils. Nevertheless, this type of confession is earthly in nature, whereas the confession described above is spiritual. (True Christianity 539)

The benefit of confessing sins to another person – in this case a minister of the church – is to unburden our conscience and to gain the habit of self-examination. This passage also mentions “absolution” or forgiveness, although the Writings are clear that neither a priest nor anyone else can actually absolve people of their sins.

Another passage speaks favorably of how Catholics approach confession, contrasting it with what happens in Protestant churches, where confession is not the tradition and where self-examination is therefore seldom practiced:

¹“New Law Requires Priests to Break Seal of Confession to Report Child Abuse” New York Times, by Ruth Graham, May 8, 2025

I asked some Roman Catholics about their acts of confession before their ministers and whether they experienced inner resistance to confession. They answered that after they were initiated into it, they were not afraid to list their misdeeds before a confessor who was not severe. They even felt some pleasure in compiling their list, and would laugh when they said some of the lighter things out loud, although they would state the serious ones a little more timidly. Every year, at the time established by custom of years past, they would go back willingly again. After absolution, they would celebrate. They also mentioned that they regarded as impure any people who were unwilling to disclose the uncleanness in their hearts. (True Christianity 562)

Passages like these have led people to ask why the New Church does not practice this kind of confession before a priest. The answer has usually been that people do in fact do this, and that ministers do have conversations like this with people. Such conversations can happen between any two people, not just with priests, and something like this often happens in sharing groups, 12-step groups, and in discussions with therapists, family members, friends and elsewhere. The point is to be willing to examine ourselves and admit our faults as part of the process of change.

Nowhere in any of these teachings is there mention of a sacrosanct obligation of confidentiality before the law. While lawyers and therapists may have legal obligations of this nature the Heavenly Doctrine does not suggest anything similar for clergy. There is therefore no conflict with their obligations as mandated reporters. Nor are there any teachings that give priests the ability to grant absolution. On the contrary, we read:

Anyone sound in mind may see and appreciate that a mere human being cannot absolve any sin at all, because no sin is absolved except through the development of a new life, that is, through being regenerated by the Lord. Regeneration continues right on to the end of a person's life in the world, and after that for evermore. (Arcana Coelestia 9410.4)

So, the “Seal of Confession” is not a fundamental principle of Christianity according to New Church teaching. It is important to expose and remove evils, not hide them. While there are many situations where confidentiality is useful and necessary, the cover-up of clear evils is not among them.

(JFS)

A HAUNTING CALLING

The Rev. Kenneth Alden writes on the essential calling for translation in the General Church and the Academy (page 314) that dates back to the Academy Charter in 1879. That calling is all the more insistent – maybe even desperate – as the foundational teaching of Latin recedes in Academy schools.

Going back to the formation of the General Church Translation Committee in 1968, the call was for “the whole church to be concerned with the need to develop its translating potential.” We have always had complete translations of the Writings – notably that set of faded green books in many a New Church bookcase – but the demand continues for translations that are “both doctrinally correct and as readable as possible.”

The work has gone on among a few dedicated and largely unsung translators, along with the New Century Edition of the Swedenborg Foundation. All of them – mostly ministers – are supremely dedicated to their craft. Some are volunteering their time and talent.

In 2010 I was invited by the Swedenborg Foundation to the International Swedenborg Publishers Conference at the Swedenborg House in London, England. I was there to talk about my newly published book, *Why Does God Let it Happen?* And I was privileged to witness the commitment of translators from all over the world. Particularly impressive was a group of eight Ukrainians – mostly women and all volunteers – who worked tirelessly out of their homes to translate as many books of the Writings as they could. They really were responding to a calling.

I remember one of the translators cautioning that the word “translator” has its root in the word for “assassin.” I can’t vouch for that but the message was clear: translators must always be painstakingly careful not to “kill” or harm the meaning of the original text while striving for more modern language. This is not easy work and we must be grateful for all these lonely, dedicated hours.

Mr. Alden notes that over the last half century, learning Latin has become much less of a priority in the general population, in the Academy Secondary Schools and even in the Theological School. Last year Latin fell victim to budget cuts in the Secondary Schools – after being integral to the curriculum since the founding. Budgets are an ominous pressure in all organizations that test priorities, but the hope must be that Latin will be restored as quickly as possible.

He continues: “The Academy’s Charter purpose of propagating the Heavenly Doctrine nourishes our hope that nurturing capable translators with a deep love for the Lord’s Word is still a strength of the General Church that will grow.” We share the hope – but as they say, “Hope is not a strategy.” There must be commitment as well to heed the calling.

Coincidentally, while I was writing this, I saw that Latin is thriving at one

of the private schools in the area, where 24 students were honored for their work – from beginning Latin to prose, poetry and reading comprehension. This is typical of such schools – just heeding the call to classical education, not the need to translate Swedenborg.

The “calling” in the General Church and the Academy is still insistent. May it not sound so much like just an echo from the past.

(BMH)

REMEMBER THE SABBATH

*Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work
But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God . . .
Whereby the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it.
(Exodus 2:8-11)*

This is one of the Ten Commandments. It is not a suggestion. As with thou shalt not kill or steal or commit adultery, it is an absolute. But less and less is it taken seriously in a culture retreating from religion. For most people Sunday is for football, golf, picnics, leisure – anything but church. But it is still a commandment, and it means a lot more than just going to church on Sunday.

The seventh day of creation was deemed a day of rest -- a day off from our labors and a time to focus on what is really important in life. We don't have to go to church to do that although it surely helps to focus our attention.

Remembering the sabbath is more of a call to the mind than the body. Yes, we are not to do any of the work that engages us through our work week. The Lord was constantly being tempted and judged while on earth for the healing miracles He performed on the sabbath day – as though it was forbidden to do good works on this holy day. Remembering the sabbath has everything to do with living our faith – on this day above all. We are called upon not just to focus our minds by going to church, but to use that time to listen, to reflect and to resolve.

The Lord says to us in *John 14:15*: “If you love Me keep My commandments.” Of course that includes remembering the sabbath. And that is only meaningful if we take what we have learned and thought about into our lives in service to the Lord and our neighbors.

We “remember the sabbath” by reading, listening, reflecting and doing so that we may be better people. The whole intent and experience are beautifully captured in one of our hymns:

“Lord, make me a dwelling place for You.”

(BMH)



THE NEW CHURCH DAY PAGEANT IN THE BRYN ATHYN CATHEDRAL

A violent thunderstorm forced the New Church Day Pageant inside the Cathedral at 7:30 p.m. The people came out to bright sunshine and this beautiful rainbow arcing over the Cathedral. Below are some scenes from the Pageant:



ACADEMY SECONDARY SCHOOLS COMMENCEMENT



Commencement speaker
Gregory Henderson



The Class of 2025 Banner



The Senior Procession



The Seniors sing their Class Song

HONORARY GIRLS AND BOYS SCHOOL DIPLOMAS



Jessica Johns



Brian Llewellyn



Diana Mergen



Dan Weissler



Jacqueline Klippenstein

Church News

Compiled by Bruce M. Henderson

BRYN ATHYN COLLEGE COMMENCEMENT AND AWARDS

At the 148th Commencement of Bryn Athyn College of the New Church, 80 students were awarded degrees:

- Eight Associate of Arts (one *cum laude*)
- Fifty-four Bachelor of Arts (17 *cum laude*)
- Eleven Bachelor Science (six *cum laude*)
- Two Master of Arts in Religious Studies (one *cum laude*)
- One Graduate Certificate of Divinity
- Four Master of Divinity

All of the undergraduates were from the United States, except for one from Canada and one from South Africa. They represented nine states: Delaware, Florida, Maryland, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania and Virginia.

The commencement speaker was **Mary Heinrichs Williams**, mother of two *cum laude* Bachelor of Arts recipients, **Declan** and **Rafe**.

Mary has been a communications specialist for more than three decades in both the College and the Academy Secondary Schools. At the College she teaches graduate-level Speech Communication, undergraduate Business Communication Writing, and coaches sermon delivery for theologs. She also teaches English in the Academy Secondary Schools and heads New Church Audio, where she curates weekly podcasts. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Communication from the University of Miami and a Master of Arts in Organizational Communication and Leadership from Marist College.

In her commencement address, she spoke extemporaneously as a mother and teacher. As President **Sean Connelly** noted in his Farewell:

Mary shared that readiness is not about having the perfect plan or polished tools. Rather, it's about having our spirit prepared to meet any circumstance that arises.

The Lord helps us see valuable approaches to overcoming our challenges.

Mary also reminded us that the Lord's Providence bends everything

to the best possible outcome – and no matter what happens, it can be used for our eternal well-being.

Graduates and Awards

Associate of Arts (* *cum laude*)

Bethany K. Buick, New Tripoli, PA
Bryan Choute, Philadelphia, PA
Alayna Day, Reading, PA
Brian A. Frazier, Bryn Athyn, PA

Cassidy Kazaku, Jamison, PA.
Shannah W. McQueen*, Kempton, PA
Darlene Nunez, Philadelphia, PA
Enrico Romano, Ambler, PA

Bachelor of Arts (* *cum laude*)

Shane M. Avelar, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada
Aida Barry, Bronx, New York
Anthony P. Basile, Endicott, NY
Troy A. Billingslea, Mount Wolf, PA
Tegan S. Blair, Huntingdon Valley, PA
Zachary C. Bocker, Tawas City, MI
Aronel E. Brennan, Horsham, PA
Sarah Brodsky*, Huntingdon Valley, PA
Anthony D. Caristo*, Abington, PA
Hunter Daum*, Huntingdon Valley, PA
Serina DeBella, Holland, PA
Justin J. Delgado, Philadelphia, PA
Dominic J. Dipierro, Monroe Township, NJ
Aidan W. Esack, Hatboro, PA
Dylan J. Fesmire, Horsham, PA
Sean Ford, Philadelphia, PA
Siobhan R. Frazier, Bryn Athyn, PA
Trajan H. Frazier*, Bryn Athyn, PA
Jarvis S. Friesen, Bryn Athyn, PA
Laban G. Genzlinger*, Kempton, PA
Shea N. Gormley, Huntingdon Valley, PA
Jakir Hampton, Smyrna, DE

Kamiayah Jennings, Allentown, PA
Thea C Keal*, Huntingdon Valley, PA
Daniel E. Kees*, Huntingdon Valley, PA
Ivan P. Khalil*, Willow Grove, PA
Tyler A. Korman, Villanova, PA
Jacob Koy, Philadelphia, PA
Magnus O. Lawing, Bryn Athyn, PA
Justin Lykunov, Feasterville, PA
Hailey Magilton, Philadelphia, PA
Miguel A. Martins, Philadelphia, PA
Ciara K. McFeely, Warminster, PA
Chloe M. Munyon, Levittown, PA
Matai L. Muse, North Wales, PA
Hayden O'Hara*, Huntingdon Valley, PA
Chloe M. Panicker*, Philadelphia, PA
Winston J. Roth*, Bryn Athyn, PA
Natalie R. Shaw, West Decatur, PA
Kayla G. Smith*, Jarrettsville, MD
Zhymani D. Smith*, Hampton, VA
Xion A. Spence, E. Stroudsburg, PA
Maria L. Storck*, Philadelphia, PA
Ryan R. Thach, Philadelphia, PA

Callum J. Homber, Johannesburg, S. Africa **Yasmin N. Tuzcu**, Huntingdon Valley, PA
Montrell D. Horsey, Edgewood, MD **Jamal N. White**, Flourtown, PA
Lauren M. Hughes*, Bryn Athyn, PA **Declan L. Williams***, Bryn Athyn, PA
Katherine E. Hyatt, Bryn Athyn, PA **Rafe J. Williams***, Bryn Athyn, PA
Jalen Jackson, Brick, NJ **Aidan York**, Portland, OR

Bachelor of Science (* cum laude)

Keren A. Abraham*, Philadelphia, PA **Kylie J. Scarpiello**, Bensalem, PA
Lily K.T. DeAngelis*, Buckingham, PA **Amber J. Souffrant**, Miramar, FL
Alexis C. Ewer*, Bensalem, PA **Vanessa Squares**, Philadelphia, PA
Britney F. Fils, Union, NJ **Joseline Tiapaya Cerón**, Philadelphia, PA
Jenna M. Hartshaw, Downingtown, PA **Miguel, E. Torres III**, Allentown, PA
Danielle A. Linder*, Philadelphia, PA

The valedictorians were **Alexis (Ace) Ewer** and **Rafe Williams**

Master of Arts in Religious Studies

Shauna S. Brennan, Las Vegas, NV **Anne Grace Glenn***, Huntingdon Valley

Graduate Certificate of Divinity

Frederick N. Bot, Breda, Netherlands

Master of Divinity

Olaf Hauptmann, Denmark **Douglas Daniel Calvo Naranjo**
Huntingdon Valley, PA
Thomas J. Jackson, Bryn Athyn, PA **Eric Sjödin**, Stockholm, Sweden

The valedictorian was **Erik Sjödin**

Scholarships and Awards

Faculty Council Awards

Keren Abraham

Laban Genzlinger
Rafe Williams

Department Awards

Arts

Chloe Panicker

Biology

Zachary Bocker
Alexis Ewer

Business (Gerald Hurst Award)

Sarah Brodsky
Trajan Frazier

Computer Science/Mathematics

Daniel Kees

History and Social Sciences

Anthony Caristo
Hunter Daum
Winston Roth

Language and Literature

Thea Keal

Religion

Laban Genzlinger

Psychology

Lauren Hughes
Kayla Smith

Major Athletic Awards

Male Student Athlete of the Year

Jakir Hampton

Female Student Athletes of the Year

Zhymani Smith

Kira Bradkey

Male Rookie of the Year

Miles Shepard

Female Rookie of the Year

Xola Wade

Scholar Athlete Male

Rafe Williams

Scholar Athlete Female

Malia Bullock

Comeback Player of the Year

Vanessa Squares

ACADEMY SECONDARY SCHOOLS GRADUATION AND AWARDS

At the 148th commencement for the Academy Secondary Schools on June 7, 2925, 44 seniors were granted diplomas, including 19 in the Girls School (seven with honors) and 25 in the Boys School (10 with honors). All the graduates were from the United States, except for one from Nepal; and all hailed from Pennsylvania, except for one each from Illinois, Michigan, Missouri, New York and Washington.

The commencement speaker was **Gregory D. Henderson**, former eighth-grade teacher and Principal at Bryn Athyn Church School, now co-director of General Church Education. He told the graduates that the foundation is the most important part of building a house, and that the Academy has given them a firm foundation for the rest of their lives. (See page 296)

See graduation photos on page 342.

Graduates and Awards

The Girls School (* With Honors)

Georgia Barry – Rochester, MI

Ava Dolan – Cheltenham, PA

Adah Flenders – Willow Grove, PA

Josie Fowler* – Carversville, PA

Erika D. Frazier – Huntingdon Valley, PA

Jamie Madara – Philadelphia, PA

Ayla R. Mergen – Huntingdon Valley, PA

Cassidy Moore* – Huntingdon Valley, PA

Solana I. Navarro – Bryn Athyn, PA

Nevaeh Pierce – Philadelphia, PA

Hannah R. Fritz – Elkins Park, PA
Isabella Furness – Hatboro, PA
Deryn Genzlinger* – Bryn Athyn, PA

Morgan Henderson* – Bryn Athyn, PA
Ellery C. Johns* – Huntingdon Valley, PA

Yvonne P. Prue* – Harleysville, PA
Olivia J. Schriver – Philadelphia, PA
Ariadne Vlachodionysopoulos
Philadelphia, PA
Omega Wade* – Huntingdon Valley, PA

The valedictorian was **Josie Fowler**

The Boys School (* *With Honors*)

Caleb Alston-Nelson – Philadelphia, PA
Atila Andiç – Bryn Athyn, PA
Aharon Bloshuk – Bangor, PA
Coleman Boyesen* – Bryn Athyn, PA
Duncan C. Childs – Bryn Athyn, PA
Lorenzo Colón* – Philadelphia, PA
Paxton Cooper* – Bryn Athyn, PA
Braden Corwell – Abington, PA
Rick Dean – Yardley, PA
Padraic H. Frazier* – Bryn Athyn, PA
Kent J.B. Fuller* – Huntingdon Valley, PA
Cade B. Henderson – Bryn Athyn, PA
Henry O. Hogan – Bryn Athyn, PA

Lamar Joseph – West Chester, NY
Ragner Kaage* – Chicago, IL
Joaquim Klippenstein – Platte City, MO
Vincent McCabe – Southampton, PA
Dag R. Odhner* – Bryn Athyn, PA
Evan M. Rogers – Kirtipur, Nepal
Zachary Ruth* – Hatboro, PA
Jeffrey C. Simons* – Bryn Athyn, PA
Kahjeer Sledge – Philadelphia, PA
Calvin Smith – Bryn Athyn, PA
Julian Stebbing – Washougal, WA
Alec Synnestvedt – Huntingdon Valley, PA

The valedictorian was **Dag Odhner**

Academic and Athletic Awards

Honorary Girls School Diplomas

Jacqueline Klippenstein
Jessica Johns
Diana Mergen

Honorary Boys School Diplomas

Brian Llewellyn
Ray Weissler

Theta Alpha Awards

Isabella Furness (silver)

Yvonne Prue (silver)

Boys School Faculty Awards

Kent Fuller (silver)

Dag Odhner (silver)

Senior Science Awards

Omega Wade

Dag Odhner

Emilie K. Asplundh Performing Arts Awards

Tait Asplundh

Isabel Waelchli

Faculty Commendations

Girls School

Josie Fowler, Isabella Furness, Ayla Mergen, Nevaeh Pierce, Yvonne Prue, Omegas Wade

Boys School

Aharon Bloshuk, Coleman Boyesen, Lorenzo Colon, Paxton Cooper, Braden Corwell, Padraic Frazier, Kent Fuller, Dag Odhner, Jeffrey Simons

Delta Mu Community Service Awards

(100+ Hours) **Paxton Cooper, Kent Fuller, Dag Odhner**

(200+ Hours) **Yvonne Prue, Padraic Frazier**

Sports Awards

Marah P. Boyesen Award: **Morgan Henderson**

Elaine S. Asplundh Award: **Ellery Johns**

Stanley F. Ebert Award: **Coleman Boyesen**

Payson Lyman Award: **Vincent McCabe**

PASTORAL MOVES

Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr.

As of July 1, 2025, the following people will start new positions:

- **Erik Buss** becomes Pastor of the Oak Arbor Church and School. He will also take on the role of Residency Program Coordinator, a new program designed to structure the support of newly ordained priests within their first two years of service.
- **Grant Odhner** is stepping up to take on the role of National Pastor within the United Kingdom for his final year of service there.
- **Steven Gunther** becomes Assistant to the Pastor of Bryn Athyn Church.
- **Olaf Hauptman** becomes Pastor of Boston New Church.
- **TJ Jackson** becomes Assistant to the Pastor of Oak Arbor Church and School.
- **Daniel Calvo** becomes Assistant to the Pastor of Pittsburgh New Church and School.
- **Eric Sjödin**, after inauguration and ordination on June 15, becomes Assistant to the Pastor of the Stockholm Society.
- **Sylvain Agnes** becomes the Regional Pastor for West Africa.
- **Evariste Dakouri** becomes National Pastor for Côte d'Ivoire.
- **Samuel Lompo**, while remaining National Pastor of Burkina Faso, has moved his base of operations from Ouagadougou to Fada.
- **Patrick Loba** is moving to Jacqueville in Côte d'Ivoire.
- **Roger Kladie** has moved to Bassam in Côte d'Ivoire.
- **Rene Lassme** is moving to Bobby in Côte d'Ivoire.
- **Frits Bot** of the Netherlands has received his first Certificate from the Bryn Athyn College Theological School and has been authorized as a Candidate.

Implied in there are some retirements:

- **Rev. Martin Gyamfi** is stepping down as Regional Pastor for the West African subregion. He will continue in an advisory role, working with Sylvain and providing support to the church in Ghana.
- **Rev. Andrew Heilman** has relinquished his post as Bishop's Representative in Brazil, after many years of faithfully building up the church there. The **Rt. Rev. Brad Heinrichs** currently serves as Supervisor for our activities in Brazil.
- **Rev. Dr. Andrew Dibb** retiring as Dean of the Theological School, but continuing to teach some courses, and traveling four times to serve within the United Kingdom.
- **Rev. Dr. Ray Silverman**, retiring as Associate Professor of Religion at Bryn Athyn College of the New Church.

COLCHESTER FAREWELLS

Our church society in Colchester, England, is coping with significant change – and looking ahead with optimism and resolve.

After four years of service, the **Rev. Erik J. Buss** and his wife, **Ann**, departed in June to lead the Oak Arbor congregation in Rochester, Michigan, as of July 1.

After many fond farewells – both planned and impromptu – Erik said in the June Newsletter of the New Church UK:

It is stunning to me that we have been in the UK for only four years. This country and her people have seeped into our being so much that moving back to the U.S., in many ways, feels like going to a strange land. We love the English countryside, the lovely walks, the wonderful culture, the charming towns, and the green grass all winter! And far more, we value all of you, who are the reason why we are here. Your love for the Lord's Word and the Lord's Church is so powerful and beautiful. Your perseverance and willingness to serve the Church is admirable.

We have made many changes as a church. Ann and I feel that we too have been changed by England. It has been a pleasure and a privilege. We will miss you very much.

Do you remember July of 2021? I do! We arrived in the middle of Covid, quarantined for 10 days and then set about building a life and a community with you. It was a daring adventure we embarked on together; to build and hope when everyone was retreating and fearing.

Erik reflected on a number of milestones:

- A much-improved online presence
- “The best Newsletter in the church,” thanks especially to **Anne Glover**
- Improved events for young people
- A dignified goodbye to the Colchester New Church, sold 100 years after its dedication
- Progress toward becoming one unified church in the United Kingdom
- The Global Healthy Churches Project, helping us move forward

“We have done all these things with grace and dignity,” he said, “and seemingly without rancor. This is actually more important to me than all the rest. It’s not been easy dealing with so much change, especially when it is driven by questions about our ability to survive. But you have been constructive and kind. I believe the angels are looking down on us with smiles and saying: ‘Well done, good and faithful servants.’”

In a farewell to the Busses, Anne Glover thanked Erik for his “thoughtful and direct application of New Church teachings to everyday life. This difficult period for Colchester and the British Church has been mitigated by your

positivity and your desire to keep us all moving forward.”

She commended Anne for her hospitality, magnificent contributions to the Newsletter and her beautiful art work, for providing space in the manse for church services, and supporting all of the church groups, with the many miles of travel involved. “Your presence and thoughtful questions have been a lovely contribution to our church life.”

All Ages Weekend

This popular annual event at Purley Chase May 9-11 attracted 44 children, young people and adults. It began with the Revs. Grant Odhner and Erik Buss leading a study of Gideon in Judges 6 and 7, including the historical context, his character and travels, then the doubts, fears and reluctance and how he overcame these to achieve great deeds.

While adults enjoyed an afternoon walk, youngsters enjoyed a Children’s Olympics, with King Charles (portrayed by **Mark Wiltshire**) handing out medals.

The concluding adult session focused on church plans for the future, including updates from **Bishop David Lindrooth** and **Jane Enis** (Healthy Church Match), **Mark Burniston** (congregational growth), **Andrew Bruell** (younger adult online survey), and Mark Wiltshire (creating social media content).

The weekend was particularly poignant, being the last event attended by Erik and Anne Buss before leaving for Oak Arbor. Many fond farewells echoed through lingering goodbyes.

Global Healthy Churches

Project manager Jane Enis reported on her visit: “The theme for the weekend was a wonderful reminder of the power of faith in overcoming great difficulties. . . . The UK project team and I used this opportunity to meet before the weekend, connect with one another, strategize and share our ongoing work with those who attended the weekend. We focused on developing our six-week priorities, working toward our five-year goal.”

Pastoral Support

As noted in the pastoral moves reported by the **Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr.**, the **Rev. Dr. Andrew Dibb**, who has just retired as Dean of the Bryn Athyn College Theological School, will travel to the United Kingdom several times in the coming year with his wife, **Cara**, to help with preaching, classes and such events as the All Ages Weekend.

NEW SCHOOL AND OFFICES IN BRYN ATHYN



The entrance to the new School/Society Building

The Bryn Athyn Church School and Society Offices are moving into an impressive new building complex, set to be ready for the new school year.

The eighth grade was the last to finish its schooling in the adjacent complex, which has served the community since the 1960s. The eighth graders graduated in a beautiful and emotional setting in the old Society Building on May 30. The following Monday – June 2 – the enormous process began of moving the school and offices into the new building. And demolition began on the old buildings, which will make way for playing fields and parking.

As the finishing touches are applied inside the new complex and landscaping is completed on the grounds, the office staff is moving in this summer. Everything will be ready for an exciting school opening on August 28.

Many church members outside of Bryn Athyn will remember attending the General Assembly in the old Society Building last year – and can look forward to enjoying the new complex whenever the next Assembly is scheduled in Bryn Athyn.

GREAT LAKES REGIONAL YOUTH WEEKEND – MAY 2025

Naomi Reid

Olivet New Church – Youth Weekend Chaperone

Eighteen youth and 10 adults (pastors/chaperones/drivers) attended the Youth Weekend May 9-11, 2025, at the Somerset Beach Campground, an hour west of Ann Arbor, Michigan. The weekend was hosted by the **Rev. Elmo Acton**, assistant pastor of the Glenview New Church Society.

Participants came from five New Church societies in the United States and Canada including: Glenview, Illinois, (**Phil Parker and Brent Smith**); Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, (the **Rev. Jared Buss and Burgandy Smith**); Oak Arbor, Michigan (**Denielle Schnarr**); Caryndale, Kitchener, Ontario (**Cailin Hill**); and Olivet New Church, Toronto (**Rev. Todd Beiswenger and John and Naomi Reid**).

The large, private and relatively affordable campground has all the amenities any group could ever want, including a communal use meeting/dining room with a large fireplace and large windows overlooking the lake. On either side of the large meeting room are separate areas for men and women with four rooms per side – each with eight beds and a private washroom. There was a large kitchen, so we prepared all of our meals. A huge thank you to Phil Parker and Brent Smith for taking care of the menu, food shopping and meal preparation.

On Saturday afternoon the teens chose among such activities as zip lining, a hike around the lake, canoeing and swimming. Just before dinner, the teens got to design their own “heavenly garden,” with all pieces designed and 3D printed by John Reid. They included a gazebo, park bench, water fountain, lamp stand, arbor and a bridge. They were indeed heavenly!

Saturday classes and Sunday church services were held in the meeting room by the ministers present. Thank you also to Rev. Todd Beiswenger for leading the singing and playing guitar. After dinner came volleyball and basketball in the large air-conditioned gym. Evening vespers services were held around a campfire by the lake. At our second vespers service, Rev. Beiswenger even had some help from two talented teens playing their ukuleles.

Before the weekend started, the teens weren’t told the camp theme because the presenters didn’t want to give away the punch line. The presenters, (as former teens), are like all adults who know the basic trouble that plagues most teens: they think they know everything and everybody else knows nothing. As a result, the goal of the weekend was to try to show them in the Word, and in the world of science, that we can easily be deceived by our physical senses and as a result throw our spirituality away.

We see this throughout the Word. Isaac is tricked when Jacob wears a disguise to steal Esau’s blessing. Isaac *hears* Jacob, but *feels* Esau, and makes

a bad choice. Adam and Eve *see* that the fruit looks pleasing to the eye and choose poorly. Today there are lots of videos demonstrating that we can be deceived by our senses. We can prove it! So, these stories from the Word can be strengthened by being able to see that even the natural world agrees that we can make our eyes see things that aren't there, taste things that don't exist, feel pain when we weren't touched, and hear sounds that were never made. It's pretty amazing! If only Adam and Eve knew not to trust their senses when it came to matters of faith!

Then they got to watch an old episode of *The Twilight Zone* titled, *The Howling Man*, that was used to spark discussion along the same lines. Suffice to say there was some deceiving going on, along with a twist ending that left the audience with much to talk about!

The final chapel left the students with two questions: "How do you hear the Lord's voice," and "Who are you listening to?" As you might imagine, the goal was to nudge them to hear the Lord's voice and listen to Him as opposed to the thoughts and opinions they are likely to find on social media.

Aside from worship and fun times, a few special moments come to mind. A highlight for me and others was listening to all of the teens as they sat around the fireplace singing a variety of beautiful hymns and other songs in harmony. I wish I could have recorded all of their lovely singing. It is noteworthy that they chose to do this on their own. I also appreciated the kind attitude I witnessed between the older and younger teens. Since I brought the "heavenly garden" craft, I enjoyed all of the effort the teens put into making their projects beautiful. I could see they were pleased with what they were able to make and since it was a Mother's Day weekend, some of their mothers may have ended up with their projects.

Overall the weekend went well, which is a credit not just to the staff, but the kids participating. I could see they had plenty of time for conversations to get to know each other better. **They really were a pleasure to get to know and spend time with, and if the New Church is to be judged by them, we are in good shape!**

Thank you to all of the parents who sent their teens and to all the adults who helped make the camp a success. Also, a special thank you to the General Church in Canada and the Glenview New Church for the financial support that made this event possible. I really do believe the Lord's work is done during these weekends.

I want to close by sharing our Canada to the U.S. border crossing story. There was only one car in front of us, so we didn't have a long wait. When we pulled up, we handed over the passports and parent-signed affidavits for the teens, so they could cross into the States with us.

When asked, we told the border agent that we were attending a religious

youth retreat. He could easily see from the signed affidavits that we would only be in the States for the weekend. He asked my husband how we all knew each other and he explained that we attend the same church. He pushed further and asked my husband what he does for the youth weekend and he said he was a driver. Then he asked what he does for the church and he said he was the property manager. But then he surprised us with a “trick” question that many traditional Christians may actually have the right answer to. He asked us what does Romans 6:23 say? My husband answered honestly that he didn’t actually know. Then the border guard encouraged us to “look it up” and wished us a great weekend.

Well, when we could, we looked up the quote, which says: “*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*”

In the New Church, we know this to be true, and it was really nice to be met with a fellow Christian who knew and believed this too and wasn’t afraid to share it with us in spite of his official position as a border agent. What else should we be learning while we spend our time on this earth!

Spending time understanding and applying what we learn from the Word – and also learning the deeper spiritual applications to our lives – while we live on this earth is a good use of our time. Thanks to the U.S. customs officer for this important reminder. Will he ever know that he made an impact? Yes, someday he will.

DOCTRINAL ENRICHMENT DAY

Another example of young people’s engagement with the church was reported in *The Echo*, the newsletter of the Washington New Church in Mitchellville, Maryland. It was a *Doctrinal Enrichment Day* May 24 hosted by **Joram Heinrichs** and **Jordan Brunne**.

The event was begun several years ago by Joram’s brother **Calvin**, now pastor of the Kansas City Circle in Missouri. The day is devoted to discussing topics about the Lord and also enjoying fun activities. This was Joram’s second time hosting – and the first in Washington. It attracted 17 young adults, including some from Bryn Athyn and Kempton.

A typical *Doctrinal Enrichment Day* begins with worship, led by the **Rev. Brian Smith**, followed by discussion and lunch, then games and sports in the afternoon, and an evening dinner in a local restaurant.

The morning worship focused on the story of Moses and the burning bush, followed by a discussion of prayer – even in the midst of busy, distracted lives.

Joram reports that the day was a great success because “we have a group of young adults who are about the Lord and want to make the effort to meet others who think the same way; and secondly, the society who helped to host and did all the background work to help the day run as smoothly as it did.” He looks forward to more of these in the future.

Announcements

ORDINATIONS, First Degree

And I will give you pastors according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding. (Jeremiah 3:15)

Calvo Naranjo, Douglas Daniel

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, June 1, 2025, Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr. officiating.

Sjödin, Eric

At Stockholm, Sweden, June 15, 2025, Rt. Rev. David H. Lindrooth officiating.

Jackson, Thomas Jonathan

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, June 1, 2025, Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr. officiating.

BAPTISMS

Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it. (Mark 10:13-15)

Baltazar, Mia

At San Diego, California, June 1, 2019, daughter of Mark and Angeli DeGuzman Baltazar, Rev. C. Mark Perry officiating. Delayed report.

Cole, Peregrine Benaiah

At Kempton, Pennsylvania, May 11, 2025, son of Nathan and Vera King Cole, Rev. Stephen D. Cole officiating.

Bamba, Myriam Leslie

At Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, March 30, 2024, Rev. Cyprien K. Mangoua officiating. Delayed report.

Dje Bi Dje, Medard

At Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, April 3, 2021, Rev. Cyprien K. Mangoua officiating. Delayed report.

Gboh, Massie

At Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, April 13, 2025, Rev. Cyprien K. Mangoua officiating.

Irie Lou Balefai, Leticia Peniel

At Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, April 3, 2021, Rev. Cyprien K. Mangoua officiating. Delayed report.

Koffi, Franck Issac

At Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, April 3, 2021, Rev. Cyprien K. Mangoua officiating. Delayed report.

Kouadio, Guillaome Yves

At Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, April 13, 2025, Rev. Cyprien K. Mangoua officiating.

Loko, Andrea

At Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, April 3, 2021, Rev. Cyprien K. Mangoua officiating. Delayed report.

Mohr, Cody Michael

At. East Windsor, New Jersey, May 17, 2025, son of Michael and Ashley Mohr, Rev. Charles E. Blair officiating.

Mohr, Karly Elizabeth

At. East Windsor, New Jersey, May 17, 2025, son of Michael and Ashley Mohr, Rev. Charles E. Blair officiating.

Nohon Banhi, Richmond

At Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, April 16, 2022, Rev. Cyprien K. Mangoua officiating. Delayed report.

Ore Aya, Christine

At Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, March 30, 2024, Rev. Cyprien K. Mangoua officiating. Delayed report.

Oulai Nonh, Grace Victoire

At Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, April 3, 2021, Rev. Cyprien K. Mangoua officiating. Delayed report.

Oulai Tosseta, Yannich Jr.

At Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, April 3, 2021, Rev. Cyprien K. Mangoua officiating. Delayed report.

Santiago, Breanna R.

At San Diego, California, May 3, 2025, daughter of Brett Santiago and Annabel Cruz Ranches, Rev. C. Mark Perry officiating.

Tra Bi, Boha Arnaud

At Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, April 16, 2022, Rev. Cyprien K. Mangoua officiating. Delayed report.

Turner, Thomas Mycerinus

At London, United Kingdom June 1, 2025, Rev. Grant H. Odhner officiating.

Vandergrift, Beau M.

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, May 18, 2025, son of Michael and Stephanie Vandergrift, Rev. Charles E. Blair officiating.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

van der Merwe, Lorelai Jane Erica

At Ballasalla, Isle of Man, April 15, 2025, daughter of Eric and Amanda Buss van der Merwe, Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr. officiating.

Quizon, Geovanni Ranches

At San Diego, California, May 3, 2025, son of Genesis Baltazar and Annabel Cruz Ranches, Rev. C. Mark Perry officiating.

Wijkander, Keith

At Stockholm, Sweden, May 11, 2025, Rev. Göran R. Appelgren officiating.

MARRIAGES

Love truly conjugal is from the Lord alone, and exists with those who are in the conjunction of good and truth from the Lord. When two minds are conjoined as to be one mind, there is love between them. (Apocalypse Explained 983)

Austin-Gleason, Angus Austin and Alyse Gleason

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, May 24, 2025, Rev. Steven P. Gunther officiating.

Fritch-Christman, Oliver Elijah Fritch and Chaslyn Shey Christman

At Kempton, Pennsylvania, June 8, 2025, Rev. Lawson M. Smith officiating.

Brown-Cook, Michael C. Brown and Michelle Cook

At Sarver, Pennsylvania, May 25, 2025, Rev. Charles E. Blair officiating.

Kruse-Ramirez, Alex Michael Kruse and Michalé Marie Ramirez

At San Diego, California, May 10, 2025, Rev. C. Mark Perry officiating.

IN MEMORIAM

Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if there not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.
(John 14:1-3)

Alexander, Don

May 27, 2025, of Miami, Florida. 75

Cooper, Leesa Violet Kloc

February 15, 2025, of New Tripoli,
Pennsylvania. 63

Erdman, Enoch Hendricks

April 10, 2025, of Kitchener,
Ontario, Canada. 93

Gladish, Gabrielle Howard

Marh 31, 2025, of Lebanon, Ohio. 98

Gyllenhaal, Martha (Marcie)

Elizabeth Cavagnare

June 13, 2025, of Gloucester,
Massachusetts. 78

Gyllenhaal, Marion Louise Down

March 11, 2025, of Bryn Athyn,
Pennsylvania. 95

Halterman, Doris Acton

June 9, 2025, of Bryn Athyn,
Pennsylvania. 89

Heinrichs, Elizabeth Ann Waters

April 14, 2025, of Kitchener,
Ontario, Canada. 73

King, Alan Cedric

June 6, 2025, of Bryn Athyn,
Pennsylvania. 76

Lau, Werner Karl

March 16, 2025, of Glenview,
Illinois. 98

Moorhead, (Frederick) Lee

February 18, 2025, of Bryn Athyn,
Pennsylvania. 76

Schnarr, Arthur Willard Jr. (Terry)

February 6, 2025, of Kitchener,
Ontario, Canada. 72

Soderberg, Justin Gary

March 12, 2021, of Seattle,
Washington. 68
Delayed report.

Wille, Marylin McQueen

April 4, 2025, of Glenview, Illinois.
95

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