

NEW CHURCH *Life*

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

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2026



Focus on New Church Education

Religion is the core of the curriculum in our General Church schools, illustrated by this scene at the Kainon School in South Africa. See how General Church Education is supporting New Church education in all of its schools. (Page 352)



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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://newchurch.org/connect/subscriptions/new.church.life>. All issues can be researched back to 1881 at www.heavenlydoctrines.org.

In This Issue

Editorials (page 321) include:

- *Test of Faith*: Dystopian assumptions about where this world is headed may test our own faith. But if we truly believe in the Lord's love, leading and providence, we cannot help but be optimistic – and patient.
- *Making the Bishop's Vision a Reality*: The call to all of us in the church – *Here I am. Send me.* – depends a lot on the examples we set. The most important of all is protecting and preserving conjugal love.

In a provocative, thoughtful and loving essay, the Rev. Mark Allais asks: *What is love, actually?* It is not just a feeling inside of us, he says. "It is not something you carry around inside your chest that comes and goes. Love is your life, the animating warmth that makes everything in you move," and is essentially "the heat of your life." (Page 332)

In a sermon – *Prayer for Others: Goodwill in Action* – the Rev. Mark Pendleton looks at the power of prayer – for ourselves and for other people. Prayer, he says, "is talking with God and listening for answers. When we reach out in prayer for others it may open a doorway that helps us see how we can help in more tangible ways." (page 337)

In his Memorial Address for the Rev. Dr. Erik E. Sandstrom, the Rev. Jeremy Simons describes a man devoted to the church and devoted to his family. He loved doctrine, he loved teaching and preaching, but never as the spokesman; he just wanted what was said and taught to be remembered. The theme of his beliefs, he said, "is that all things can be explained through the Heavenly Doctrine, that all things come together to advance the Lord's purpose for the human race, and that the New Church cannot and will not fail." (Page 346)

As a new school year begins in our American and Canadian schools, the directors of General Church Education – Greg Henderson and Rebekah Russell – illustrate how the office supports New Church education wherever it is planted. Religion is the cornerstone of the curriculum at all levels, and in all schools, as "GCED continues to build on what has been done and develop

new ways to support the teachers who bring this education to life for their students.” Page 352)

In 2003, before Bryn Athyn College launched a campaign for rapid growth that has since required readjustment and repurposing, Dr. Gregory Baker – now retired as Professor Emeritus – wrote an article for *New Church Life: Is Bryn Athyn College Important to the New Church?* That article is reprinted for its enduring relevance – with faith that the College is the ideal place for evangelization among students with newly developing rational and inquiring minds. (Page 358)

Writing *From the Bishop’s Office*, the Rt. Rev. David Lindrooth promotes the concept of simply *Allowing the Lord’s Message of Eternal Life to Lead Us*. He uses the story of a woman walking a long distance in the heat of the day to fetch water, and amazed that Jesus would offer her – a Samaritan – a drink of water. What He was offering, of course, was the “living water” that would leave her – and all of us – never thirsting. (Page 363)

In a study of *Amalek* and the *Amalekites Today*, the Rev. Michael Gladish acknowledges that the world – and the Word – are filled with ugly people and terrible atrocities. What are we to make of all this in the Word? How does it all apply to our own lives? He shows how the teachings from the internal sense clearly explain what our response – and responsibility – should be. “We are all a mix of good and evil,” he says. “The best we can do is to read the Word with an understanding of its spiritual sense, and diligently inquire what is most likely to benefit the community of nations.” (Page 366)

Illustrations of what the Rev. Gladish is talking about with the Amakites, and other challenging stories in the Word, may be found in his own new book, *Looking Deeper into the Bible*. This collection of 36 sermons helps us to see beyond the often disturbing literal sense to spiritual meanings that makes sense of it all for our own lives. (Page 379)

The Rev. Grant Odhner writes about *Knowing Through Walking*, using the familiar quote from *Divine Providence* about “a knowledge of the way from walking in it, and a walking in the way through a knowledge of it.” We know the way and the Lord is leading; we just need to stay on course and keep walking. (Page 381)

Church News (page 385) includes:

- A report on the General Church Regional Clergy Meetings in Bryn Athyn
- Previews of the new school year in Bryn Athyn College and the Academy Secondary Schools
- Fond farewells to the Rev. Grant and Sarah Odhner in the United Kingdom
- The tradition of the Good Deed Tree in the Toronto New Church School

Editorials

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

TEST OF FAITH

One of the great tests of our New Church faith is truly trusting in the Lord: confident that despite the appearances of a failing and flailing world, His love, wisdom and providence are always leading, and that the Holy City New Jerusalem really is descending upon earth.

It is easy to be discouraged. The New Church – created in heaven on June 19, 1770 – has a strong and passionate core but has not grown appreciably in a world desperate for its peace and purpose. New Church education, the best hope of the church with each succeeding generation, has a strong and vital mission but is struggling for survival on many levels.

The world is in the endless throes of the Last Judgment and must be cleansed of all the lingering false doctrine before the Lord's new revelation can be universally acknowledged and embraced.

Meanwhile people view the future “through a glass darkly” – dystopian and hopeless. Science sees nature drifting relentlessly into chaos and decay. Books and movies and social media wallow in pessimism – projecting a world spiraling downward. Futurists shake their heads, certain that the best of times are behind us.

But the Lord is telling us, for all time: “*Behold, I make all things new.*”

As a civilization we are always making new things, developing new ways to make our lives better, healthier and more advanced – while the needs of the spirit languish.

We are warned in *Matthew 6:24*:

No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and Mammon.

The crowds worshiping at the altar of materialism overwhelm the downward trend in churches of all faiths. Pop psychologists call this modern-day Mammon *The Machine* – a Frankenstein grown beyond our control. We live with haunting images of *1984* and *Brave New World* – surrendering to the siren song of worldly possessions and instant gratification. Yes, we know that the New Church is descending and that the Lord is preparing the way: so why

does the world seem to be getting worse, not better?

The Second Coming just doesn't feel all that new or promising – yet. In this world, the measure of time challenges our patience. But remember the Children of Israel suffering generations of slavery in Egypt, then enduring 40 years of challenge in the wilderness before finally arriving at the Promised Land. We know the journey and the impatience. Our lives are fraught with the daily challenges of regeneration and the choices of who and what we will exalt and follow. Still and always it comes down to God or Mammon. Loving the Lord or the world. Serving self or the neighbor.

The blessing is that we always have hope – as long as our hope and trust are in the Lord. In the church we are privileged in this trying world with revelation grounded in the hope of the Lord. With His Second Coming, we know His love, His purpose, and His providence. There is nothing vague or naïve about all this. This hope is rooted in the harsh realities of this world, including the prolonged consummation of the former church. But we know the dragon will not prevail – that the Lord's kingdom will.

If we get caught up in wondering where this world is headed, we are reassured with the sure knowledge that it is not the dystopian wasteland Hollywood envisions, and that the arc of the Lord's providence is forever bending toward the reign of a church that has "hitherto never existed upon the earth." While the nightly news may tell us otherwise, we know that the Lord is bringing His Church down upon the earth, among willing minds and loving hearts: with order, not chaos; hope, not despair.

The Lord says to us – for all time:

These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me you might have peace.

In the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer,

for I have overcome the world. (John 16:33)

Note the tenses: we *will* have tribulation, but he has overcome the world, and that in Him we will find the peace we long for.

This peace, this hope, are not bestowed without responsibility. We have our own choices to make, our own roles in sustaining and assuring the future of this church. We are privileged to be a part of this church, but with that opportunity comes responsibility.

This test of faith is a gnawing challenge for those whose confidence is often left doubting and questioning – not guided by the new revelation from the Lord. As New Church men and women we may still question and wonder but should never be pessimistic about where the Lord is leading His Church and our world.

The first test of our faith is that it must be active. The church exists and

grows as it takes root in our daily lives – as we live what we believe. That means being involved in the life of the church, reading and praying in the quiet of our rooms and our lives, being kind, responsible, useful. It means supporting the church as best we can – not just by giving and volunteering, but by supporting and also holding accountable our boards and leaders.

So, the test of our faith is not trying but reassuring. The world invites pessimism. The church – and the Lord – should lift us up with optimism. There is much progress and overcoming still to come. We have no idea how long it will take for the New Jerusalem to fully descend on earth – generations, maybe centuries. But we are blessed and grateful to be a part of it, to have a role in the abiding hope and faith for the future of the church – of the world.

We are sustained with the assurance of *Jeremiah* – for the church and for each of us:

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord; thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you a future and hope.
(*Jeremiah 29:11*)

(BMH)

MAKING THE BISHOP'S VISION A REALITY

Most churches in North America and many other places have been shrinking alarmingly over the past 15 years or so. While the General Church has actually grown during that period, the demographics are not encouraging, and most General Church congregations have been seeing declines in attendance.

Bishop Peter Buss's plans for the coming years are described in a new vision for the church introduced earlier this year: "*Send Me*" - *Live Your Faith in Ways that Bring Blessing*. He asks:

What would make the next chapter of your life, your story, more meaningful, more full of blessing, more Lord-centered and full of purpose? More a reflection of THE Book of Life? I want to see the church filled with people like you who are making a difference, who know they're needed and from love can make a difference —ordinary people living their faith in simple ways. I want to see all of us in this church listening for the Lord's voice and responding, "Here I am. Send me."

What needs to happen for this vision to become a reality?

One way to look at this is to ask how the membership can respond and what the most important responses might be.

There are many statements throughout the Heavenly Doctrine about what is most important and most fundamental to the life of the church.

Almost anyone could probably list what these might be. But when we then ask what they imply for how we say, *“Here I am. Send me,”* the answer is more complicated.

The most obvious answer to the question is about keeping the Ten Commandments, and especially the Two Great Commandments about love for the Lord and the neighbor. A church that makes these things their rules of life is continually saying, *“Here I am. Send me.”* This is naturally the central program of the church, as it ought to be.

Another in this list would be the shunning of evils as sins, for *“to refrain from evils as sins is the essence of Christian religion,”* (Divine Providence 239) and *“the first thing of charity is to shun evils.”* (True Christian Religion 535)

Following from this a most important aspect of saying, *“Here I am, Send me,”* is to live a useful life, because *“a charitable life consists in performing useful service.”* (Arcana Coelestia 8253)

All of these suggestions for making the vision a reality are essential, and no vision could succeed without these elements. At the same time, all of these are consistently advocated and taught across the church, and by many outside the church as well. They face little or no resistance within the church.

When Swedenborg wished to know the nature of the peoples on other planets throughout the universe he was led to observe and question them in the spiritual world about their worship of God – and reported basically that all of them worship the same Lord whom we know.

Interestingly, however, when the Lord wished to communicate the nature of the peoples of the Most Ancient Church, and how people changed in the following ages up to the present, He inspired Swedenborg with a desire to visit them in their heavens and ask them about their marriages. This is described in *Conjugal Love* 75-81.

The state of conjugal love among them was especially indicative of the nature of the church with them, because we are told that *“everyone possesses conjugal love according to the state of the church in them.”* (Conjugal Love 240)

Many passages tell us that the love in marriage is

“the fundamental love of all celestial, spiritual, and consequently natural loves.” (Conjugal Love 65) They also say that *“the human inclination towards marriage goes hand in hand with religion at every step. Every little step and every stride away from religion or towards religion is also a step or stride away from or towards the conjugal inclination that is peculiar and proper to a Christian person.”* (Conjugal Love 80)

Teachings like this suggest that the state of marriage in a group is an

important indication of the state of the church.

The fact that conjugal love is said to be the “*fundamental love*” does not mean that it is the foremost, primary, or most important love. Rather it means that it is an ultimate expression of love to the Lord and love to the neighbor – loves that *are* the most important loves. (*Apocalypse Explained* 995.2) The same is true of the uses that we perform.

Because of this, we are told that these two things have an amazing effect on our lives. We read:

Hidden deep within the desires of every angel’s heart there is a kind of current that draws his or her mind to do something. In that activity the mind finds its peace and satisfaction. This peace and satisfaction then condition the mind to be receptive to the love of being useful that flows in from the Lord. Receiving this love leads to the true heavenly happiness that gives life to the joys of heaven. (True Christianity 735)

And similarly:

Into conjugal love have been gathered all joys and all delights, from the first to the last of them. All the delights a person feels, of whatever kind, have to do with his love. Love reveals itself through delights; indeed, it exists and lives through them. (Conjugal Love 68)

This happiness is why conjugal love is said to be “*the essential atmosphere of heaven.*” (*Conjugal Love* 54) You would expect that atmosphere to be love to the Lord, but “*true conjugal love in its first essence is love to the Lord,*” (*Apocalypse Explained* 995.2), being its ultimate expression both in heaven and in the world.

These kinds of ultimates are the answer to the Bishop’s question stated above: “*What would make the next chapter of your life, your story, more meaningful, more full of blessing, more Lord-centered and full of purpose?*”

All of the happiness in the world is connected to uses, and to marriage especially, because “*of the excellence of the use it serves, surpassing that of all other loves. The use it serves is the propagation of the human race and so of the angelic heaven.*” (*Conjugal love* 68)

As with most things, the inverse is also true. The inability or unwillingness to engage in useful service causes unhappiness. The same is even more true when the elements of conjugal love are absent. People can be perfectly happy in this world without a partner, but they can’t be happy without a love and respect for marriage itself. Ideologies that disrespect marriage are the cause of real suffering and discontent. These are significant issues in the church, because unlike most other central messages that the church conveys, there is continual cultural resistance to the teachings of the Word about marriage, gender, and sexuality.

How can the Bishop’s vision become a reality? There needs to be a shared

love, belief in, and practice of the teachings of the Heavenly Doctrine with respect to 1) love to the Lord and charity to the neighbor, 2) a genuine commitment to shun evils as sins and 3) live a useful life, and 4) a renewed dedication to the ideals of conjugal love.

These, of course, have been the goals of the church from the beginning, and no church initiative is likely to change everything all at once. It is hard to know whether renewed emphasis on these or other values, such as reading the Word, will cause a noticeable change in the church organization. Still, we support our leadership in reaffirming these important goals to help bring unity to the response: *“Here I am. Send me.”*

(JFS)

Letters to the Editors

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

A Confusion of Names

To The Editors:

For many years “the Writings” has been the collective term used in the General Church for the works written by the earthly scribe, Emanuel Swedenborg, writing on behalf of the Lord, the Divine Author. Now in recent years, a new term, “the Heavenly Doctrines,” has been added and is being used more frequently in the General Church, sometimes alone, sometimes in conjunction with “the Writings.”

While Swedenborg does occasionally speak, probably in letters, of “my writings,” there is probably some justification for the term “the Writings.” However, I find the term “the Heavenly Doctrines” confusing, for where does that leave the beautiful work “*The New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine*” (NJHD)? This is a single work, not encompassing all the books written by Swedenborg.

Added to these two terms, used to describe the works written by the Lord’s earthly scribe, Swedenborg, various branches of the New Church have added further terms to describe the same works. So now we have a confusing number of collective terms used as titles to describe the same works, all of which are in constant use, such as: the Writings, the Heavenly Doctrines, the Third Testament, the New Word, the Word, even Swedenborg’s Works, Swedenborg’s Books and Swedenborg’s Writings. These three latter terms should never be used in the General Church or the Lord’s New Church, where there is a firm belief that these works were written by the Lord as Divine Author with Swedenborg merely the earthly scribe.

The solution to the problem of finding a collective term that embraces all the works written by Swedenborg on behalf of the Lord can be found in *Apocalypse Revealed* 707:3,4,5. My *Swedenborg Society* publication of

Apocalypse Revealed subdivides n. 707 as shown but other publications do not note these subdivisions. I have included them here for ease of reading.

“707 3: “In chapter XII in *Zechariah* there is described in the spiritual sense:

- That the Lord is *going to form a New Church*. (verse 1)
- That there will no longer be any understanding of truth, except with those who are in the Word, and who belong to the New Church, (4)
- And that then *[there will be] a New Church from the Lord*. (10)

(707:4) That for the New Church *there will be a Word*, and this will be *opened to them* (verse 1), that those who belong to the New Church are to be purified and taught by the Lord.”

(707:5) It is established that in the Prophet [Zechariah] the same things were said concerning the last state of the present Church [i.e. the Church in Swedenborg’s day] and concerning the first state of the New Church [i.e. “our” New Church].”

In my view, the choice of an inclusive name for all the works penned by Swedenborg should rest upon the words used in 707:4 above: “That for the New Church there will be a *Word*.”

What need is there for any one of the cluster of human-made names such as the Writings, the Third Testament, The Heavenly Doctrines, and so forth when the Lord, the Divine Author of all the works, has told us the name – namely “Word”?

The New Church is to have “a Word”; we are not to have Writings or Third Testaments or Swedenborg’s books; we are to have “a Word.” Can we not use the name that the Lord has given to the works, to the New Church, to those of us who are the current custodians of this God-given treasure, whose pages, whose teachings are “that those who belong to the New Church are to be purified and taught by the Lord?”

Apocalypse Revealed Chapter 21 gives further information about the New Church and how it is to be named:

“ . . . That after it [the Last Judgment] by means of the New Heaven there is going to come into existence a New Church on earth, which will worship the Only Lord. . . . Its conjunction with the Lord . . . A description of it as to intelligence derived from the Word . . . as to the doctrine thence . . . and as to its every quality.”

Number 882 [verse 3]: “The Lord out of love speaking and declaring the glad tidings that He Himself is now going to be present with men (people) in His Divine Human.”

(22) “ . . . in this Church there will not be any external separated from what is internal, because the Lord Himself in His Divine Human, from Whom

is everything of the Church, is the only One being approached, worshipped and adored.”

(23) “. . . that the men (people) will not be in the love of self and in self-derived intelligence and consequently in natural light only but in spiritual light out of the Divine truth of the Word from the Only Lord.”

(26) “. . . no others are received into the New Church which is the New Jerusalem, but those who believe in the Lord and live in accordance with His precepts in the Word.”

(No. 886: 5) “. . . that a new heaven with a new land, and a new Church which is to be called the New Jerusalem, is going to be created, and that they know these things for certain and will remember them, because the Lord Himself has testified it . . . and by ‘these words . . . are true and trustworthy’ is signified that they are to be believed, because the Lord has testified it.”

Do we take sufficient heed of the name that the Only Lord has instructed us to give to His New Church? Is our church to be called “the New Jerusalem Church” as per the Lord’s instruction, or is “General Church of the New Jerusalem” sufficiently close? I am aware that before my time, probably in my parents’ earlier life, there was debate on whether the words “General Church of . . .” should be included in the name, lest the New Church on earth assume total ownership of the Lord’s True New Church on earth. In my view we should be courageous and obedient enough to follow the Lord’s instruction and name our church as He has instructed us: The New Jerusalem Church.

Unless we of the General Church achieve what the Lord is telling us in the above quoted numbers, I fear we will not advance and become part of that New Church that is called the New Jerusalem.

“However, in the Lord’s New Church, the New Jerusalem, there is described the understanding of the Word with those who are in the doctrine of the New Jerusalem and in a life in accordance therewith. With them the Word shines as it were when it is being read. It shines from the Lord by means of the spiritual sense, because the Lord is the Word, and the spiritual sense is in the light of heaven that proceeds from the Lord as the Sun.” (Apocalypse Revealed 897:11)

Heulwen M. Ridgway
Canberra, Australia

Heavenly Doctrine

Concerning the term “Heavenly Doctrine”:

The term “Heavenly Doctrine” is not a new one, but one that has been

commonly used in *New Church Life* from the 1880s to the present. It may be appearing more frequently in recent years because it is the term most frequently used by Swedenborg to refer to New Church teachings. In the General Church we do call these teachings “the Word,” but other terms like “the Writings,” “the theological works of Emanuel Swedenborg,” the “teachings of the New Church,” and others are used when they seem to fit the context. Yes, there is the chance of confusing the term “Heavenly Doctrine” with the book *New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine*, but that very title is an explanation of why we should refer to this new revelation as the “Heavenly Doctrine,” as Swedenborg writes in #7 of that work:

But I proceed to the doctrine itself, which is for the New Church, and which is called **Heavenly Doctrine**, because it was revealed to me out of heaven; to deliver this doctrine is the design of the present book.

Here are some other examples of Swedenborg using the term Heavenly Doctrine to refer to the Writings:

“By ‘the new heaven and the new earth’ they understand a new church; by ‘the city Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven’ they understand its **Heavenly Doctrine** revealed by the Lord.” (*Heaven and Hell* 307)

“It was perceived that many of the English will receive the **Heavenly Doctrine**, and thereby come into the New Jerusalem; because they are such that they receive the truths of faith more easily than others, and see them in interior light.” (*Last Judgment - posthumous* 4)

“I have spoken with them concerning the Lord from the **Heavenly Doctrine**; and they acknowledged the truths, and were affected.” (*Ibid.* 21)

“The Africans are more receptive of the **Heavenly Doctrine** than others on the earth, because they freely receive the doctrine concerning the Lord, and have it as if implanted in themselves that God will altogether appear as a man.” (*Ibid.* 117)

“It has been announced, that, somewhere amongst the nations, there begins to take place a revelation from heaven; that is, that spirits and angels speak with them, and teach **Heavenly Doctrine**, and especially concerning the Lord; and that those there embrace it, and that thus a new Church from heaven is rising up.” (*Spiritual Experiences* 4770)

“I have likewise seen bright horses and chariots of fire, when some were taken up into heaven, which was a sign that they were then instructed in the truths of **Heavenly Doctrine**.” (*White Horse* 3)

The Rev. Jeremy F. Simons
Spiritual Editor
New Church Life

Concerning AI

To The Editors:

First of all, I thank the editors for another fine issue of *New Church Life*. There was much in the July/August issue to enjoy and to reflect on. Here, I want to respond to the Rev. Todd Beiswinger’s warning about two of the abuses that AI (Artificial Intelligence) makes possible: allurements of the flesh and phantasy. I would like to broaden his warning by giving attention to the second table of the Ten Commandments.

- AI is used to slander, threaten and humiliate others (a form of murder).
- It is used to not only allure, but also makes pornography readily accessible, including its most hideous forms (forms of adultery).
- AI is used to scam people (a form of stealing).
- It is used to deceive people (a form of bearing false witness).
- AI is used to encourage an unhealthy desire for worldly things (covetousness).

With all the potential and actual abuses of AI, it is important to reflect on two teachings that apply to this problem. The first is that for every use there is the possibility and reality of abuses (note the plural). AI is incredibly useful in many ways, and so are its abuses. Still, as the second teaching states, the abuse does not negate the use.

The difficult task is to use legal, legislative, moral and spiritual means to uphold the uses of AI and to thwart its abuses.

The Rev. Prescott A. Rogers
Waxhaw, North Carolina

What Is Love, Actually?

The Rev. Mark B. Allais

*“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”
(Matthew 6:21; Conjugal Love 34)*

There is a question I suspect most of us stopped asking a long time ago, not because we found the answer, but because it felt embarrassing to admit we didn't have one.

What is love? Not what love does. Not what it looks like from the outside. Not an example of it, or a memory of it. The thing itself. What is it?

If you turn inward right now and try to hold a clear idea of it, not a feeling, not a behavior, not a word, what do you find? Most people find something they can almost grasp, but not quite. Something that's unmistakably there but won't hold still long enough to be examined. You reach for it, and it dissolves.

Here is what I want to suggest: that experience of not-quite-grasping is not a failure. It is actually pointing you toward something true about what love is.

The Reason Love Won't Hold Still

There is a distinction in New Christian thought that I keep returning to because it explains so much of what goes wrong in the spiritual life.

Love is not a thing of light. It is a thing of heat. Our rational minds – the part of us that forms ideas, makes distinctions, assesses situations, and evaluates behavior – operate in light. It is built for clarity. It can hold a concept, turn it around, and examine it from every angle. This is its natural home, and it's genuinely good at it.

But love is warmth. It moves before it explains itself. It is felt before it is known. And a faculty built for perceiving light cannot directly perceive heat. When the rational mind tries to look directly at love, it finds nothing it can hold, and it draws one of two wrong conclusions. Either love is nothing, because there

Love is warmth. It moves before it explains itself. It is felt before it is known.

is no clear idea to grasp. Or love is just a sensation, something that flows in through the emotions and doesn't really mean anything.

Both conclusions are wrong. Both come from using the wrong instrument on the wrong object.

Love Is Your Life

Here is what love actually is, and it is bigger than we usually imagine. Love is not a feeling you have. It is not something you carry around inside your chest that comes and goes depending on the day. Love is your life, the animating warmth that makes everything in you move. Every thought you have, every word you speak, every action you take is downstream from whatever it is you love. Remove it, and the machinery keeps running for a while, you still meet your obligations, still do the things you're supposed to do, but something essential has gone. Anyone who has lost something or someone they deeply loved, or who has been through a season of real emptiness, knows exactly what this feels like. The lights are still on, but nobody's home.

And when love arrives, when you fall in love with a person, or a calling, or a way of seeing the world, everything quickens. Thought becomes alive. Even difficult tasks feel meaningful. The warmth has arrived, and everything it touches comes alive with it.

This is not philosophy. It is a description. You have already lived it.

So here is the question that follows: if love is the warmth that generates everything in you, then what is actually generating your life right now? What is the warmth that is driving your thoughts, your words, your choices? Not officially. Not aspirationally. Actually.

That is the question the spiritual life is really asking. And it is a harder question than it sounds.

What We Do Instead

Because love cannot be directly seen or held, we do something very predictable. We move to what can be seen. We move to behavior. To words. To performance. To the external things we can assess, measure, and report back on.

And honestly, who can blame us? It makes sense. The rational mind is very good at assessing externals. So, it starts to build its account of love from the outside in. Did I include that person? Did I say the kind thing? Did I show up when it was hard? Did I give when I didn't have to?

All of those things matter. But here is the problem: every single one of them can be done without any interior warmth at all.

You can include people while quietly resenting their presence. You can

say the kind thing because you know you're supposed to. You can show up physically while being a thousand miles away inside. You can give in a way that generates obligation rather than genuine benefit. You can protect others from a desire to feel needed rather than a desire for their good.

Think about the list of things we say love should look like. Inclusion. Valuing the person. Protecting others. Being present. Listening. Forgiving. Patience. Kindness. Generosity. Acceptance. These are all real. These are all things love genuinely does when it is moving in someone.

But they are the shape love takes when it flows outward. They are not love itself. And the moment we treat them as love itself, the moment we start measuring ourselves against the list, we have moved love entirely into the domain of the rational mind, where it can be assessed, scored and performed.

The uncomfortable question underneath the list is this: which of these things am I doing from genuine warmth, and which am I doing because I know this is what love is supposed to look like?

That question cannot be answered by examining the behavior. It requires looking somewhere else entirely.

Holding Love at Arm's Length

There is a particular experience I want to name, because I think it is more common than we admit.

You know what love should look like. You have the framework, the principles, the theological understanding. You can articulate quite clearly what genuine charity requires in a given situation. And yet, you are never quite ready to act from it. There is always more to think through first. More to weigh. More conditions to evaluate. Does this person actually need this? Am I the right person to help? Is this really what they need, or just what they want? What if it makes things worse?

The discernment never quite resolves into warmth. The assessment never quite finishes. And so, we do nothing, and the love never quite arrives at anyone. This is what it looks like when the understanding holds love at arm's length in the name of doing it properly, too sacred to do it wrong.

It feels like wisdom. It has good reasons attached to it. It can even produce genuine-sounding theological language. But what it is is sophisticated avoidance. The mind keeps love in the zone where it is comfortable, the zone of ideas and assessment and evaluation, and never lets it cross over into the zone where it becomes warmth that actually moves toward someone.

I want to be gentle here because I don't think this is usually conscious. It is what happens when we have genuinely come to believe that thinking carefully is the same thing as loving carefully. It is what happens when light has been

asked to do the work that only heat can do.

When Discernment Becomes a Shield

There is a teaching in New Christian thought about what's sometimes called discriminating charity, the idea that genuine love is not naive, that it requires wisdom, that not every act that looks like help actually serves the other person's real good. This is true and important.

But the natural mind, driven by the proprium, has a way of taking this teaching and turning it outward, using it as a tool for managing other people rather than examining itself.

The real question discriminating charity asks is inward: *What am I actually doing here, and why? Is what I'm calling love genuinely serving this person's good, or is it serving my comfort, my reputation, my desire to feel generous, my desire to feel superior, or my idea of what their life should be?* The discrimination is meant to be pointed at your own motives, your own loves, your own propensity to dress up self-interest in charitable clothing.

But the mind externalizes it. And suddenly, the question is not, "Am I loving well?" but *rather*, "Does this person deserve my love?" The difficulty gets transferred outward. The self escapes examination. And you end up doing less genuine charity while feeling more principled about it, because you have a framework from the Word that helps you justify the withholding.

If you have ever found yourself thinking carefully about whether someone has earned your care, your patience, your forgiveness, your inclusion, and the answer kept coming back no, it is worth asking honestly: Is the discrimination pointed inward at your own love, or outward at the other person's worthiness?

What Actually Changes

Here is the hopeful part, and I mean this, not as a tidy resolution but as something that is actually available. Love is not something you manufacture. You cannot produce warmth by thinking correctly about it or trying harder to feel it. Warmth is received, not generated. The whole of New Christian thought on regeneration rests on this: all life flows in. We are receivers, not sources. The animating heat in every human being is, at its origin, the Divine love itself flowing into the vessel of a human life and becoming that person's own.

This means the movement is not: think better, then feel warmer, then act more lovingly. The movement is: turn toward the source, allow the warmth to actually land in you, and then act from what you have genuinely received rather than what you are performing.

The Word – Scripture – is given for exactly this. Not to fill the

understanding with better information about love. Not to give you a more sophisticated account of what love looks like. But to reach, by shining a light through the understanding, onto the love of self. By seeing the proprium for what it is and beginning to seek a different warmth. To gradually redirect what you actually find yourself wanting, caring about, and moving toward.

Real self-examination, not the checklist kind of measuring yourself to what you think love should look like, but the honest kind of seeing your proprium, looking at what is actually warming you. Not with shame, because shame doesn't come from the Lord. With honesty, because the Lord already sees your interior face. You are not telling Him something new when you look honestly at yourself. You are choosing to see what He already sees and to begin working with that awareness rather than ignoring it or working around it.

The Question Worth Living With

So – what is love? It is the warmth that animates everything in you. It is the heat of your life, heavenly or hellish. It cannot be directly seen by the rational mind, which is why the rational mind keeps trying to substitute something it can see, behavior, words, performance, assessment, and calling that love instead.

And the invitation of the spiritual life is not to think more carefully about love. It is to stop holding it at arm's length. To let the warmth that flows from the Lord actually land in you, move through you, and reach the person in front of you, not because you have finally decided they qualify, not because you have thoroughly evaluated the situation, not because you have satisfied the understanding that this is the correct thing to do. But because something in you is genuinely warm toward them. And that warmth, however small, is the real thing. That is where love actually lives.

Here is the question to carry with you: Where in your life right now is the understanding keeping love in the assessment phase, and what would it look like to let the warmth actually move?



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Prayer for Others: Goodwill in Action

The Rev. Mark D. Pendleton

Readings: Matthew 5:1-2, 43-48; John 17:1-2, 11, 26

The subject of prayer for others is talked about and practiced across the spectrum of faith traditions. It has even been studied in the realm of science – to see what beneficial effects it might have on those who are prayed for.

These things should come as no surprise to us, as prayer for others has roots that reach deep into our spiritual psyche – related as it is to goodwill and a spirit of charity.

What is prayer? Prayer is talking with God and listening for answers, as the Lord shifts our perspective, our thinking, and our ways of seeing toward ends in view, goals, hopes and dreams that we deeply care about.

Prayer for *others* is talking with God on behalf of, or for the sake of, our neighbor, as we wish them well and in some cases wonder how we can usefully adjust ourselves to their state, and/or reach out to help.

If we look at the Scriptures, it seems clear that we are encouraged to pray for others. Jesus said:

Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and *pray for those* who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. (*Matthew 5:44-46; italics in this and following quotes indicate emphasis added.*)

Again, He said:

Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and *pray for those* who spitefully use you. And just as you want people to do to you, [do also to them]. (*Luke 6:27-28, 31*)

The idea of prayer for others comes to us as well from the example of

people in Scripture. We read:

Then all the people said to Samuel, “Pray for your servants to the Lord that we may not die.” Then Samuel said to the people, “Far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to *pray for you*.” (1 Samuel 12:19, 23)

In 1 Kings 13:6, King Jeroboam’s hand had withered, and he said to the man of God:

“Please pray for me, that my hand may be restored. So, the man of God *entreated the Lord*, and the King’s hand was restored to him and became as before.”

And in Jeremiah 42:1-4 we read:

Then all the people said to Jeremiah: “Please pray for us to the Lord, that He may show us the way in which we should walk and the thing we should do.” Then Jeremiah the prophet said to them: “Indeed, *I will pray to the Lord* according to your words.”

The idea of prayer for others comes from the example of the Lord Himself while He was alive on earth:

The Lord said to Simon Peter: “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you. . . . But *I have prayed for you*, that your faith should not fail.” (Luke 22:31-32)

In John 17, Jesus prayed for others for two thirds of that chapter. And while He hung on the cross, He prayed for His enemies: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” (Luke 23:24) (Interestingly, we are told that in doing this He was praying “*for all people* in the whole world.” – *Secrets of Heaven* 1690)

Finally, the idea of prayer for others is couched in the Lord’s Prayer itself, from beginning to end:

Our Father, who art in the heavens . . .
Give *us* this day our daily bread.
And forgive *us* our debts, as *we* forgive our debtors.
And lead *us* not into temptation,
But deliver *us* from evil. (Matthew 6:9, 11-13)

The Lord’s Prayer is a prayer for oneself. But far more than that it is a prayer for others – and for all people throughout the world and the universe.

In the theology of the New Church, there is a striking – even challenging – teaching, which says: “There are those who think they deserve heaven because

of their earnest prayers, and yet *they pray, not for others, much less for all people*, but only for themselves.” (*Spiritual Experiences 1850*) Not that prayer for ourselves is a bad thing; it’s just that the practice of prayer from a heart of goodwill tends to reach beyond self to include others.

Why do the Scriptures and the theology of the New Church encourage us to pray for others? The answer seems to be: because it’s one part of what genuine love and a spirit of charity do; it’s part of loving our neighbor.

Think of the Scripture: “*He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good.*” Picture the sun of our earth rising in the east, pushing warmth and light ahead of itself. That warmth and light spread out across the land, available to all people without exception. That’s the way it is with all genuine love: genuine love and goodwill only want what’s best for all people, and to treat them well in the wisest ways possible.

Prayer for others is one way that love does these things. It is a natural, spontaneous outcropping or manifestation of goodwill. It is one way that goodwill becomes active, shows itself, expresses itself, demonstrates itself, and is realized. Prayer for others is one way of expressing goodwill from the heart toward someone we love, and even toward someone we don’t feel very loving toward. It allows love to flow freely from the Lord through us to others – like a river flowing freely through the mountains and forests and plains on its way to the sea, rather than being stopped up by a log jam.

Where there is genuine love and goodwill, there is likely to be prayer for others – whether it’s consciously thought or spoken, or happens silently within our minds and hearts – because goodwill and the spirit of charity *care*, and they reach out to help where and when they can.

One of the things we are told about love or goodwill is that it’s always interceding for others whom it loves. The word “intercede” means to step in, get involved, and intervene on behalf of someone else; also, to plead or petition on their behalf.

I think of a husband who loves his wife. Because he loves her, he wants her to be kindly received and well-treated by others. He may not say it in so many words, but he often thinks it and silently hopes for it. In these ways he is regularly entreating it and interceding for her. (*Secrets of Heaven 8573:2*)

The same thing is true for any mother who loves her child. She has been bonded to that child since conception and since she first held that child in her arms. She only wants what is good, especially when the child is hurting or in trouble. She is “there” for that child – thinking, wondering from motherly love and tenderness how she can best reach out and help. In her heart she intercedes for her child night and day.

The same is true of charitable people toward their neighbors and their friends. True love is always interceding, and in that sense it is always praying on

behalf of others. It is what true, regenerating love does. (*Apocalypse Explained* 644:23)

Think about it: we can't always reach out to, communicate with, or help someone we long to serve. Maybe they live far away and are inaccessible. Or maybe they are unreceptive of our help and support.

Think of a father who dearly loves his teenage son or daughter, but things just aren't working in their relationship. He wants to bridge the gap in any way he can but isn't able to do so. Praying for his child is a way that this father's heart can express itself. It can also bring comfort, consolation, and even hope to him.

Or think of the sheer number of people we might wish to reach out to and help – five, ten, even hundreds, thousands or millions of people in our country whom we don't even know, or who are all around the world. Our hearts go out to them. We want to help. But we know it's not possible to reach and serve so many.

But there is one way that our love can gather them in and express itself to every last one of them: it can wish them well through prayer. In fact, under certain circumstances, prayer may be the *only* way we have to reach out to others in an internal gesture of kindness and support.

One of the things prayer for others can do is help us gain clarity on how we might best help and support someone or some group of people we're praying for. Remember, prayer is talking with God and listening for answers. So, when we reach out in prayer for others, it may open a doorway that helps us see how we can help in more tangible ways.

Prayer for others can also help us when we are experiencing difficulty in a relationship – times when we're having ugly feelings or untrue thoughts toward someone else. Getting to a place of goodwill and praying for the other person can help lift us out of that ugly, untruthful state of mind, rise above destructive thoughts and feelings, and enter a more balanced, heavenly frame of mind toward our neighbor. In that case, the goodness of the Lord drives out the cancer that may be in our hearts and keeps it at bay.

When we pray for others, what can we pray for?

Since prayer for others is part of genuine love, my understanding is that we can pray for anything our hearts truly and deeply desire for them – especially things that have enduring meaning and value. (*Secrets of Heaven* 2535, *Apocalypse Explained* 325:8,10; *Apocalypse*

Prayer is talking with God and listening for answers. So, when we reach out in prayer for others, it may open a doorway that helps us see how we can help in more tangible ways.

Revealed 376; True Christianity 539. See also “A Note About These Passages” at the end of this sermon.)

If we look to Scripture as a guide, here are some of the things we might pray for:

- We might pray for another person’s good and well-being. (*Apocalypse Explained 325:8; Apocalypse Revealed 376*)
- We might pray for anything that could contribute to their salvation. (*Apocalypse Explained 825:10*)
- We might pray that the Lord would show them the way to walk and what they should do. (*Jeremiah 42:3*)
- “Give them this day their daily bread,” we might pray. “And forgive them their debts, as they forgive their debtors. And lead them not into temptation, but deliver them from evil.” (*Matthew 6:11-13*)

And if we boil down the Lord’s own prayer for others from *John 17* and *Luke 22*, here’s how it might sound as a prayer on our part for someone else:

*Lord, keep this person through Your name,
That they may be one as You are One,
[And] that they may have Your joy fulfilled in themselves.
Keep them from the evil one.
Sanctify them by Your truth.
Help them believe in You
That they may be one in You,
[That You may be in them,]
[And] that they may be made perfect.
[Help them] know that You have [been] sent, and [that You] have loved them.
I desire that they may be with You where You are, and that they may
behold Your glory.
I pray that their faith should not fail.*

These are just a few of the things we can pray for – for other people – couched in the Lord’s Prayer, the words of Scripture, and the words and example of the Lord Himself. They embrace an endless number and variety of things that we can pray for on behalf of others.

So it seems that we are encouraged in Scripture and our theology to pray for others. And when the word of God uses the word “prayer,” maybe what it’s talking about is something really quite simple – even commonplace. Maybe

what the Lord calls prayer, we call thinking about others outside of ourselves, thinking of others with their welfare in mind, or being concerned for them – wanting things to go well for them, and hoping that they *will* go well. When we say to someone else, “I’m *thinking* of you,” maybe that’s another way of saying, “I’m *praying* for you.”

Is thinking of someone else from the heart, and wishing and hoping for their welfare, something we do spontaneously? Sure it is. And is it something we could consciously decide to do on behalf of someone else? Again, “Yes.” Maybe prayer for others is just that simple.

Well, what does prayer for others accomplish in the life of the person we pray for? Can it help them in some way?

We know that one of the ways angels or spirits are able to help us is when the spiritual aura around them meets and touches our spiritual aura. At that point, heavenly feelings and desires pass from them to us, and heavenly thoughts are born. Could a similar thing happen between us and others whom we pray for? Could the spiritual aura that is around each one of us, formed in part from our feelings, thoughts and good wishes, be able – *under the Lord’s determination, direction and auspices* – to reach out and touch the spiritual aura of someone else we pray for, positively affecting their being and their life for good? It’s a good question.

But if this kind of touch and communication through spiritual auras are possible between us and others we pray for, I believe it would, as already indicated, happen under the Lord’s determination, direction and auspices, not our own – and also according to the other person’s state of receptivity. (See *Secrets of Heaven* 6478, 1392, 8494 at the end, 10130:3, and *True Christianity* 433:2)

And can prayer for someone else help that person heal from disease or injury?

Well, we know there is power in the mind-body connection, and that a good, healthy, positive outlook can help promote physical health. Well, if it’s possible for our state of heart and mind to positively affect the spiritual, mental or emotional state of others around us through the touching of spiritual auras, is it possible that prayer for others could potentially help them heal better or more quickly? This, too, is a good question.

But whether it can or can’t, I believe that if science someday proves

Maybe what the Lord calls prayer, we call thinking about others outside of ourselves, with their welfare in mind, or wanting things to go well for them, and hoping that they will go well.

convincingly that people who are prayed for heal better or more quickly than people who are not prayed for, the teachings of our theology seem to offer an explanation for how it happens.

Over the years, I have known people who seemed to dismiss the idea of praying for others, and may have decided for themselves not to do so, based on a belief that prayer does not benefit those who are prayed for. Yet making a decision to pray or not to pray for others – based on that question and supposition alone – seems to miss the main point. Praying for others is an expression of goodwill. It is one way that goodwill becomes active, shows itself, expresses itself, demonstrates itself, and is realized. So, a decision not to pray for others, based on a belief that it doesn't help the person who is prayed for, may be like placing a log jam in an otherwise free flowing river of goodwill.

One final thought: Over the years, I have found that prayer for others is a surprisingly effective aid either for getting to sleep, or getting back to sleep after waking in the middle of the night.

I'm from a family of nine kids. Sometimes when I wake up in the middle of the night, my mind starts racing and I can't get back to sleep. So, I'll use the time to pray for individuals in my family, beginning with my Dad and Mom, and working my way down. And I've never made it more than halfway down the list before I've fallen asleep.

This has been so consistently true that I've thought it unfair to the *bottom* half of my family that I don't get to them! So sometimes I start at the bottom and work my way up. And again, I've never made it more than halfway up the list before I've fallen asleep!

I imagine one of the reasons for this is that prayer for others may get a person out of him- or herself, and allow a chance to settle down so they can sleep. I've even told the kids in my religion classes about this and some come back and say: "What you suggested really works!"

So in summary, prayer for others is something the Lord encourages us to do. It is something people in Scripture and even the Lord Himself did while on earth. It's an integral part of love and goodwill toward our neighbor. It's one way that regenerating love becomes active, shows itself, manifests itself, demonstrates itself, and is realized toward people we love, and even toward people we don't feel very loving toward. It is something that's a help to our own heart and mind, and it may benefit people we pray for by supporting them spiritually, mentally, emotionally, or even physically.

This week, try praying for others. Pray for friends, relatives and those in need. Pray for those you love, and for those you don't feel very loving toward. Pray for people you do or don't know around the globe. Try praying for others, see what it's like, and see what happens.

Our Father, who art in the heavens . . .
Give *us* this day our daily bread.
And forgive *us* our debts, as *we* forgive our debtors.
And lead *us* not into temptation,
But deliver *us* from evil.

Amen.



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(A Note About These Passages: These passages speak about the kinds of things people tend to pray for when they are living what is described as “a life of love and faith,” and also about the idea that some prayers are “not heard” by the Lord. This raises an important practical question: how should we understand and apply these teachings, especially when it comes to educating children?

Certainly, these ideas can be used in educational settings, helping people of all ages grow, develop, and mature in their life of prayer. But what, for example, about a five-year-old girl who prays for a new bike for Christmas? Is she mistaken or somehow wrong in doing so? Or are the teachings simply pointing to something else—namely, that such a prayer may or may not be granted, and that as she grows, learns, and matures in a life of love and faith, her prayers will naturally deepen, take on a different shape, become more closely aligned with spiritual life, and increasingly be “heard” by the Lord?

This leads to an important educational concern. Depending on how these teachings are introduced and explained, could people—especially the young—begin to feel uncertain or even afraid to pray, worried that they might “get it wrong”? In other words, could an overly cautious or premature application of these teachings unintentionally discourage prayer, or constrain a developing prayer life that would otherwise grow and mature along healthy spiritual lines?

Should the five-year-old be told not to pray for a bike? Or would it be better for her parents to encourage her to pray freely, and let her prayer find its own place with the Lord? Or is there a wise and loving middle way—one that honors both her present simplicity and her future growth?

None of this is to suggest that we should ignore these teachings or avoid helping people understand the nature of prayer in a life of love and faith. Rather, it may simply be a question of timing and approach—how and when these teachings are best introduced with wisdom, care, and encouragement along the way.)



Rev. Dr. Erik Emanuel Sandstrom

February 23, 1942 – June 13, 2026

A Memorial Service by the Rev. Jeremy F. Simons

*Readings: Psalm 110:1-4; Psalm 122:1,2-6,7; Heaven and Hell 393;
Arcana Coelestia 3648*

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem, they shall rest who love you. (Psalm 122)

Erik Sandstrom had a deep love for the New Jerusalem and he prayed daily for its peace. He passed peacefully into the spiritual world early on Saturday morning, June 13. His passing was somewhat unexpected because although he was suffering from cancer he had been up and around in the weeks before, attending events with Lynn-Del, had only been in the hospital for a week or so, and was expected to come home.

He leaves behind his beloved wife Lynn-Del (Walter), his four children Kerstin, Liane, Alexander and Ryan, along with their spouses, and 12 grandchildren. Also, his siblings Mary (Cooper), Harald, Lisa (Buss) and Eva (Lexie), and their spouses and children. He joins his parents and brother Alfred in the spiritual world, as well as two grandchildren, Cade and Daniel, who died in infancy.

We are told that after we are awakened in the next life by angels, we are greeted by our family and friends who have preceded us there.

I have heard many people who had just come from the world overjoyed to see their friends again, and their friends overjoyed that they had arrived. (Heaven and Hell 494)

Erik has spent his lifetime learning about and teaching about the things of heaven. It is interesting to speculate on how he is finding it and what kind of conversations he is having with his father, who passed away in 2007, and who had a similarly brilliant interest in and understanding of these things.

Erik's attraction to the ministry began in childhood. He said that since he had the same name as his father it only made sense to his child-mind that he should follow in his footsteps. But he also had an intense interest in what was said in church and in the things that his father read to him and told him.

Erik was the fourth of six children born to the Rev. Erik Sandstrom and his wife Bernice Stroh, preceded by Mary, Harald and Alfred, and followed by Lisa and Eva. He was baptized in Stockholm, Sweden, by the Rev. Gustaf Baekstrom in 1942. His earliest memories are of the end of World War II in 1945 – soldiers in uniform, blackout curtains on windows, ration cards, and one day the adults being ecstatically happy about something that he didn't understand: the war's end.

He loved his beautiful home in Ensta, Sweden, just north of Stockholm, but in 1955, when he was 13, his father became pastor in London. Erik recalled that he lost much: *"pals, girls that I liked, the forests and berg-knolls, crevices and trees that we scampered up like apes."*

He had to learn to speak English and was put back a grade until he caught up. He spent all of his teen years in London, and when he finished Secondary School at Tooting Bec with his O Levels at 16, and A Levels at 18, with high marks, he was told that he qualified to go to Oxford or Cambridge. But his goal was Bryn Athyn and Theological School, so he passed up these opportunities and boarded the USS United States to come to the United States by boat.

He had always known that he would come to Bryn Athyn to school, since his parents met there and his older siblings all attended school there. His arrival in 1961 was memorable, being welcomed and celebrated by relatives like the (Cairns) Hendersons and (Andrew) Kleins, and new friends. He said: *"I can't think of a happier meeting and greeting welcome to Bryn Athyn. My long-held goal, my destination from childhood, a Shangri-La of ideals."*

He first noticed Lynn-Del Walter in the summer of 1962 at the General Assembly where they worked together making food, and she had a memorably outspoken reaction to some food that had spoiled. A few years later she did the make-up for his face when he was in the Christmas Tableaux, and he asked her out.

Between those events he graduated from the Academy College with a

Religion and Philosophy degree, took a detour from his goal of being a minister by going to Penn State for two years and getting a degree in psychology, and faced the prospect of being drafted in 1966 and going to Viet Nam.

With a college degree, however, he was offered the option of joining the Peace Corps, then only in its fifth year. He passed all the tests, and within a few months found himself in the Marshall Islands, on tiny Mili Atoll, located closer to both the equator and International Dateline in the Pacific than any other island, 3,000 miles from both Hawaii and the Philippines, and visited only by boats that dropped off the mail and supplies every three months.

He lived in a thatch hut beside a turquoise lagoon, taught English in a thatch school, and operated a crucial weather station, sending coded information over the radio at noon and 6:00 pm every day. He said it was the most beautiful place he had ever been, second only to his childhood home in Ensta, Sweden. He learned to speak Marshallese and increased his life-long love for indigenous peoples all over the world.

He returned to Theological School in Bryn Athyn in 1968, married Lynn-Del on September 11, 1970, and was ordained into the ministry on May 23, 1971. Their first assignment was in Toronto, where Kerstin was born, and after a year they were sent to London, where Liane, then Alexander, then Ryan were born.

He was back at the Michael Church, living in the same house – 135 Mantilla Road – that was the scene of many happy years as a teen-ager, having left barely 10 years before. In those days it was a strong, well-read society, with a great interest in the Heavenly Doctrine. He was quite involved with the Swedenborg Society and other groups in London.

Since he was fluent in Swedish, and also in several other languages, including Dutch, French and German, plus Latin, he traveled and gave services in Europe. His visits to Holland gave rise to a story he liked to tell about one of his services there. He was fluent in Dutch but sometimes mispronounced words. In a sermon he mispronounced the term for “uses” so that it came out as “cocktails.” The congregation was much amused as he told them that heaven is a kingdom of cocktails, that we are all born for cocktails, and that there are more cocktails in heaven than on earth. Sometimes he would return from a trip to Sweden and unwittingly talk to the children in Swedish – drawing guffaws or blank stares until he realized what he had said.

In 1981 he was called to be pastor of the Hurstville Society in Sydney, Australia. The children by then were between three and 10 years old, so they all have strong memories of life there. They spent seven years in that amazing land before returning to Bryn Athyn in 1988.

Erik served as an instructor in the College and Theological School, as visiting pastor to the New Jersey circle and the Stockholm Society in Sweden, as Head of the Religion and Sacred Languages Division in the College, as

Director of the Swedenborgiana Library and from 2007 to 2011 as the editor of *New Church Life*. He increased his educational qualifications as well, receiving a Doctorate degree from Temple University with a thesis on modern Christology.

He was a true scholar and produced numerous original studies, articles for *New Church Life*, the *New Philosophy*, and other works. He was an expert in Swedenborgiana. One of his favorite passages was *De Verbo* 6 in which Swedenborg heard angelic conversations on

the arcana concerning the Lord, redemption, regeneration, providence and other similar things . . . after which it was given me to understand that I could not utter nor describe them by any spiritual or celestial expression, but that nevertheless they could be described even to their rational comprehension by words of natural language. And it was told me that there is not any Divine arcanum which may not be perceived, and even expressed naturally, although more generally and imperfectly.

He devoted his life to finding ways to express these miraculous secrets. He was especially ready to rise up and vigorously announce and defend the Divinity and authority of the text of the Heavenly Doctrine – and this with an abundance of teachings from that text in which the Lord points to its very Divinity and authority. In announcing his passing his nephew, the Rt. Rev. Bishop Peter M. Buss Jr., quoted another one of his often-repeated passages:

I proceed to the doctrine itself, which is for the New Church, and which is called HEAVENLY DOCTRINE, because it was revealed to me out of heaven; to deliver this doctrine is the design of the present book. (Heavenly Doctrine 7)

In fact, Erik's last message to the General Church clergy on their listserve, sent a week before his passing, was related to this:

It is important to stress that the Church is the Lord's. Every Church is established by Revelation first, then the members "constitute" the church while the Lord makes it a church.

In other words, we members attach ourselves to the teachings of Revelation by accepting and practicing them, and the Lord then works with that to create His church.

Erik did many memorable studies, but when asked what he would most like to be remembered for he came up with an interesting list, among which were these:

1. That Swedenborg was in mortal danger. He could have been burned at

the stake or made to publicly recant while printing the Arcana Coelestia. He met publishers in secret. Why? The Last Judgment was still pending and so the Arcana could be profaned, its author persecuted.

- 2. That Lisbon's earthquake on November 1, 1755, fulfilled Matthew 24:8 about "earthquakes in divers places" and saved Swedenborg's life, safeguarding the Second Coming.*
- 3. That the Seven Years War 1756-1763, the first global war in history, fulfilled Matthew 24:6 about "wars and rumors of war" and set the Last Judgment of 1757 afoot in the World of Spirits.*
- 4. That all miracles and unexplained structures worldwide are examples of the science of sciences (the doctrine of correspondences) and how creation happens – the pyramids, Stonehenge, etc.*

There were others as well, but the theme is that all things can be explained through the Heavenly Doctrine, that all things come together to advance the Lord's purpose for the human race, and that the New Church cannot and will not fail.

He was a beloved pastor and teacher, much requested as an advisor by theologs, and warm and caring in following the careers of his former students. But when asked what he was most proud of in his life, his answer was clear:

"A happy marriage and a great family. Everything I love inwardly Lynn-Del has outwardly – across the board – from church to music. . . . I am most grateful for four genius kids, all of them very versatile, all-rounders in skill and contribution and ability. And cosmopolitan world-trotters to boot. I am as proud as can be for their married partners and 12 stellar grandkids, with Cade and Daniel in heaven already."



He was also very happy about the artistic ability in the family, both his siblings and children, and also musical ability. He could play the piano and loved Chopin. He considered careers in both art and music. Since childhood he had a fascination with cars and also with the world's indigenous peoples, from native Americans to Pacific Islanders.

He will no doubt continue to pursue these interests in the spiritual world, and is just as surely watching over Lynn-Del, his children and grandchildren as they pursue their own interests. He frequently stated, however, that his goal was simply to serve: *"I want to be forgotten as the spokesperson but remembered for what was said."*

He will not be forgotten. The Sandstrom family has benefited the church and its clergy for years, and the tradition continues with Ryan, currently pastor in Ivyland, not to mention nephews Erik, Jared and Peter Buss.

*"I want to be forgotten
as the spokesperson but
remembered for what
was said."*

Today we remember his life and we offer our prayers that he may find happiness to eternity in the Lord's kingdom. We give thanks for his time with us, for his beautiful and talented family, and for his truly significant impact on our church.

"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem, they shall rest who love you." Psalm 122

How General Church Education Supports New Church Education

Gregory D. Henderson and Rebekah B. Russell
Directors of General Church Education

Many of you have heard of General Church Education (GCED), a department of the General Church once called the Office of Education. Earlier this year, GCED was invited to give a presentation at Cairnwood Village in Bryn Athyn to share how it supports New Church education in our General Church schools. This was followed by a request to develop an article for *New Church Life* based on that talk. The presentation was essentially divided into two parts. The first part described how GCED supports what teachers teach, and the second described how GCED supports teachers in how they teach.

This presentation – and this article – describe the work that GCED does to support New Church education in the schools. However, under the direction of Rachel Glenn, it should be noted that GCED also supports Sunday Schools, young families, homeschoolers and others through Bible stories, Sunday School lessons, videos and many other resources that teach about the Lord from a New Church perspective. (Editor's note: An article by Rachel Glenn about her work with General Church Education will appear in the next issue.)

Part I: What Teachers Teach

Update of the Religion Curriculum

One of the key ways in which GCED supports the work of our teachers is through the General Church curriculum. This is built upon decades worth of work, dating all the way back to the 1926 Curriculum Wheel and perhaps even further than that. It contains more than 300 units spread across subjects like science, history, language arts and, of course, religion.

Each of these units includes the skills and content to be delivered to the students as well as guiding ideas and a doctrinal framework. Each year, GCED leads an update on a portion of the curriculum. This work is done by teachers from our various schools representing different grade levels.

This past year there were two update projects. The first was a refresh of the religion curriculum for the primary grades. A committee of six teachers worked to make all of these units richer and more accessible. This included revising and expanding the content as well as improving references and connected

materials. Religion is the cornerstone of our curriculum, and it is important to give it new attention on a regular basis. We are grateful for the work put in by this committee.

Integrating Spiritual Elements into the Curriculum

The second curriculum project had a broader scope. Among the tools attached to our curriculum are four collections of spiritual elements. One collection describes spiritual goals related to each subject taught. Another lists affections that should be nurtured at different ages. A third includes spiritual concepts that can be covered in subjects outside of religion class. The fourth focuses on spiritual habits for students to develop.

While these collections were developed at different times over the past 30 years, they each map their elements across the same 10 doctrines. This past year four teams of teachers connected these collections with each of the 333 units in the curriculum. These connections were then listed directly in the units, providing the teachers with prompts for where they could be integrated into their day-to-day teaching.

Religion is the cornerstone of our curriculum, and it is important to give it new attention on a regular basis.

Curriculum Guides for African Schools

In addition to the eight schools in North America there are also three General Church schools in Africa: Kainon in South Africa and Tema and Asakraka in Ghana. Because of nationally imposed curricula and other factors, these schools cannot use the General Church curriculum in the same way that the schools in the United States and Canada can.



Jane Edmunds, former head mistress of the Kainon School, has recently begun developing a series of documents to address this issue. These curriculum

guides lay out the connection points between the two curricula, indicating which areas in a national curriculum can be integrated with which New Church concepts. Jane has also been sharing these guides during training sessions with each of the three faculties.

Part II: How Teachers Teach

GCED Led Professional Development

Another way GCED supports the schools is through teacher professional development. One model for this support is for representatives of GCED to travel to the schools to present on various topics to the faculty. Past presentations have covered secular topics such as student focus and learning targets, as well as distinctive New Church subjects such as an overview of William Benade's book *Conversations on Education*

***Growth of the Mind* Recordings**

One unique professional development project GCED shared this past year focused on *Growth of the Mind*. We were able to edit audio files from Bishop George de Charms's 1962 college course into a series of 10-minute recordings, one for each grade level from kindergarten to eighth grade. We then attached a set of slides to each recording to add visuals to the presentations before sharing them with all of our teachers.

Our hope is that these short videos may increase teachers' awareness of the important concepts included in *Growth of the Mind* and perhaps inspire some to go back to this important New Church text.

New Church Teacher Competency Modules

You may remember reading in past issues of *New Church Life* about a series of recordings created by Scott Daum called the **New Church Teacher Competency** program. These recordings began with an overview of New Church teachings and educational philosophy and then dove into topics such as influx, conscience, innocence and human development.

A few years ago, the General Church partnered with a professional training company to develop a set of 10 online training modules based on Scott's recordings. All the teachers in our North American schools, as well as at the Academy of the New Church Secondary Schools, are working their way through these modules.

In addition to individual teachers completing these, some schools are also using faculty meetings to discuss the covered material in a group setting. These modules and discussions can help our teachers integrate New Church

teachings into their lessons.

Gatherings

GCED has a long history of organizing and putting on professional gatherings for the General Church schools. There has been a resurgence of interest from the schools to make these happen again, so we have developed a schedule in which teacher in-services occur every four years, off-set by a bigger event we call Education Conferences that also occur every four years on a different cycle. This way, there is a gathering of sorts every two years.

Teacher in-services are focused on the General Church schools with multi-grade classrooms and take place at one of these schools. The most recent one was held in the fall of the 2024-25 school year at the Pittsburgh New Church School. While it is not typical for a school to both host the meetings and run the program, the PNCS faculty were excited to share with the other faculties what they had learned about supporting students with learning differences such as dyslexia, dysgraphia, and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

In addition to learning a lot of great information, the in-service provided teachers with the opportunity to collaborate, get to know each other, and share support with other New Church teachers in similar teaching situations. There was also time for some fun and entertainment at a lovely dinner event at the end of the first day. We look forward to the next one which will take place in the 2028-2029 school year at a different school.

The larger gathering of teachers that GCED organizes is called the GCED Education Conference held in Bryn Athyn. All the GC North American schools are invited to this two-day event held after school is out in June. Like an in-service but with a wider selection of workshops and activities, a GCED conference brings together the larger group of teachers for plenary sessions, workshops, grade level meetings and more.

Teachers have an opportunity to share aspects of their program with others – teaching each other new learning techniques, sharing ideas in education, and application of both secular and New Church education ideas in the classroom. Again, the informal interactions between teachers, as well as seeing so many others who are doing the same work, provide valuable experiences for the participants.

Teacher Support and Observation

A major role that GCED plays in the General Church is organizing and running the Teacher Career System. Through his system, current teachers are regularly observed by a member of GCED or one of the 11 Senior Teachers in the system.

When teachers start out, they are considered Apprentice level teachers and receive two observations a year for three to five years. In addition, either Greg or Rebekah is in touch with them regularly to answer questions, provide feedback, and guide them through this stage.

After a series of successful observations and progress made in their teaching, they can apply to become a Career level teacher. They still receive regular observations but not as frequently as an Apprentice level teacher does.

Teacher Recruitment

In 2023, GC leadership identified five major areas in the organization around which initiatives would be formed. One of the initiatives is focused on the current and upcoming need for new teachers based on expected retirements of current teachers in the next 10 years. One goal of this initiative was to create a pipeline of teachers who would be prepared to take the places of those leaving.

To that end, the position of a teacher (and minister) recruiter was developed, and Baird Kistner was hired to fill that position. One of his tasks is to find potential teaching candidates and connect them with the New Church schools outside of Bryn Athyn when positions open.

To provide potential teachers with experience in a New Church school, Baird is overseeing a paid teacher internship program developed to provide Bryn Athyn College of the New Church (BACNC) juniors and seniors to spend a week in one of the smaller church schools. Two students applied for this internship and were accepted in the 2026-2027 school year and had good experiences in classrooms at the Oak Arbor New Church School and Washington New Church School. Baird plans to expand this program in the future to include inviting college students in education who do not attend BACNC.

Graduate Certificate in New Church Education

BACNC and the General Church are pleased to announce a new graduate certificate program designed for teachers who wish to deepen their knowledge of the New Church, New Church education, and the application of these principles in their classrooms. This program consists of five courses that provide teachers of all levels with a balance of New Church philosophy, history and practical application that will provide them with inspiring ideas and experiences to enrich their day-to-day work in the classroom.

The first course is offered in summer 2027. The next four courses are offered online during the following winter term and spring terms of the 2027-28 and 2028-29 school years. There are plans for this to become an ongoing certificate program offered every two years.

This program is made possible by the generous support of donors and foundations

who are committed to the mission of New Church education. Upon successful completion of all program requirements, participants will receive a Certificate in New Church Education, granted by BACNC. College faculty members Sarah Wong, Angela Rose, and Sarah and Grant Odhner will teach the courses.

Conclusion

New Church education has been a primary use of the General Church for many years. Over time and through the work of the many individuals who have worked at GCED in the past, GCED continues to build on what was done and develop new ways to support the teachers who are bringing this education to life for their students.

We can see what is the nature of the education of little children in heaven, namely, that by means of the intelligence of truth and the wisdom of good they are introduced into the angelic life, which is love to the Lord, and mutual love, in which loves there is innocence.
(Arcana Coelestia 2309)

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Is Bryn Athyn College Important to the New Church?

Gregory L. Baker
Professor Emeritus, Bryn Athyn College

(Reprinted from New Church Life, February 2003)

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

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

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

New Church education at the secondary level must deal more closely with the trends and fashions of current society. The secular curricular subjects are more complex. Relations between boys and girls become a prominent feature as the young people struggle to make the transition from childhood to the beginnings of adulthood. All the while we try to preserve the freedom of the students by helping them to abide in states from which they can make good choices for their natural and spiritual development.

The state of the secondary school student is sometimes referred to as the New Testament state. In other words, the thrust of New Church secondary education is a moral education, indeed a Christian education in the very best sense of the term.

Perhaps simplistically, I am suggesting that the fundamental difference between New Church elementary and secondary education, and the education

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

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

Let us consider the nature of revelation. Revelation is given by God to man in the context of a certain period of history, a certain culture. Thus, while each revelation contains eternal truths, those truths are presented or clothed in the language and the context of the times in which they are given. While the eternal truths of a given revelation can be corrupted, as at the Council of Nicea in 325 AD, we also recognize that subsequent generations can have deeper insights and see further applications of these truths than their forebears, such as evidenced in modern ecumenism. Yet there are limitations to understanding, and if a church reaches those limitations, a new revelation, such as given in the Second Coming, is indicated. A new revelation provides a discretely larger spiritual data base from which to make spiritual progress.

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

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

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

The college years are therefore the time when students can, in various

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

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

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

Contemporary ideas are tested against the Heavenly Doctrines. Questions are raised, ideas discussed. "The pursuit of truth is pre-eminent," says Dr. Dan Synnestvedt, professor of philosophy. The general plan of creation, of the relationships between God, man and nature begin to appear. The study of science provides another language, beyond the spoken and written languages of conventional revelation, in which God can speak to man.

Not only does the Lord provide for the structure and processes of nature, He also provides that these things can be evident to us. "Protein structure and function can reveal God's intentions operating," says Dr. Allen Bedford, professor of chemistry.

And in student life, Bryn Athyn College seeks to promote what New Church education at all levels strives for; the preservation of students' freedom to make choices that lead to responsibility, use and spirituality. This is especially important at the college level where students give serious thought to life issues and relationships.

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

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

these academic and life experiences.

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

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

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

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

Thus, not only is the student a stronger thinker in the upper years, he or she is also exposed to the kinds of knowledges that give a deeper reality and certainty to the general concepts and plan that came before. At this writing, students may explore this deeper reality at the College in its six baccalaureate programs: Biology, Education, English, History, Interdisciplinary studies and Religion. Graduates of these majors carry to graduate school or careers an extra strength of purpose, an enhanced sense of the unity and meaning of human existence.

Whether a student attends Bryn Athyn College for one year, two years, or four years, the College always has progressively more to offer. No matter what their time with us, students take with them the framework of a strong beginning for their adult life. In time these gifts may be carried back to their individual church societies in the form of commitment to church uses, in intellectual understanding of the doctrines, and in intelligent application of charity toward the neighbor.

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

We come to our faith in the New Christianity in a variety of ways: providential discovery of the Writings, by birth and cultural assimilation in the Church, by private reading and contemplation. But how marvelous it is to have the opportunity to develop a strong doctrinal framework and scholarly understanding in discussion with New Church professors who are active and knowledgeable in their fields. These are the gifts that Bryn Athyn College offers the New Church, gifts that the Church can use to grow in numbers and in depth. These are the gifts that our College offers – ultimately – to all of humanity.

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(Editor's note: Also worthy of attention is a memorable Boynton Beach Retreat Banquet Address delivered by Dr. Kristin King, then President of Bryn Athyn College, in the March/April 2014 *New Church Life*, page 149. She said: "I believe we have made the case, and will keep making it, that the *right kind* of growth strengthens mission, and that devoted New Church faculty members should be listened to when they attest to the quality of the New Church education taking place in their classrooms.")



FROM THE BISHOP'S OFFICE

Allowing the Lord's Message of Eternal Life to Lead us.

Rt. Rev. David H. Lindrooth

A woman who had lived a very difficult life walked the half mile from her home to the well in the hottest part of the day to fetch water. She lived in the village of Sychar and was a Samaritan. While preparing to draw water out of the well – which required a lot of effort as the water was at least 75 feet below the surface – she was approached by Jesus, whom she recognized as being Jewish.

Jesus asked her for a drink of the water. She was surprised by this since she knew that the Jewish people of the day avoided the area because they regarded any contact or interactions between Samaritans as being unclean. Of course, Jesus saw the situation from the perspective of the One Who loves all His created children. He was intentional in breaching the taboos against the Samaritan woman whom He wanted to reach with His message offering her heavenly life.

He quickly turned the conversation from the water that was far below at the bottom of the well to the “living water” that He was offering her with his teachings, when He said: “*Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I give him will never thirst.*” (John 3:13)

The woman saw immediately that this was no ordinary man and no regular teacher. While the Lord didn't mince words about the difficulties of her life, nor about the problems of the Samaritan form of religion, the woman quickly recognized that the Lord was the Messiah. She affirmatively listened to His

message which she could see was deep and healing even though it challenged the natural circumstances of her life. (*John 4:26*)

This story applies equally to each of us today. The Lord's truths found in His Word often challenge the external assumptions we make about our lives and what makes us happy. But at the same time, they are deeply healing and carry within the messages concern for our eternal welfare. Can we listen to the Lord and allow Him to teach us about what is right and wrong, and what choices serve our spiritual welfare, knowing that He has our best interests in mind?

The story is a powerful reminder for us that we are not the source of our own life or our happiness. When we look for ideas, to make decisions about our life on earth, we can easily forget that and focus on self and our short-term, worldly happiness. But no purely materialistic outlook can stand the test of time. Everything purely natural is time-bound and short-sighted. Often, these worldly perspectives are blind to the realities of heaven, eternal life, and to what really brings happiness.

This purely natural thinking is warned about early in *True Christianity* (*True Christian Religion*):

*Be very careful . . . not to convince yourself that you are alive from yourself; do not think you are wise, have faith, are loving, perceive truth, or will or do what is good from yourself. As people do convince themselves of these things, they cast their mind down from heaven to earth and change from being spiritual to being oriented to nature, their own senses, and their own body. They close the higher regions of their mind. Doing so blinds them to everything having to do with God, heaven, or the church. Then whatever they happen to think, reason, or say on these subjects is ridiculous, because they are in the dark. At the same time, ironically, they gain greater confidence in the wisdom of their perspective. Since the higher regions of their mind are closed, where the true light of life makes its home, a lower region of their mind opens up that is attuned only to the glimmer of the world. (*True Christianity 40*)*

The woman at the well wasn't intentionally ignoring truths from the Word. She just didn't know enough to understand how the teachings applied to her life. And as a result, she was trying to make do with false external ideas of what would bring her happiness. But like the woman, we need to intentionally seek the true, heavenly oriented wisdom when we seek a life of happiness.

This passage from *True Christianity* is a powerful reminder that these truths, found in the Word, are the "living water" mentioned to the woman at the well. Our wisdom has life when it comes from the Lord by means of the Word – because it is then derived from the life from the Lord Who transcends

natural life. This wisdom is in line with a quote at the beginning of the *Gospel of John*: “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God,*” and then, “*in Him was Life, and that Life was the light of man.*” (John 1:1,4)

This represents a radically different approach to thinking from what our world culture commonly offers. From a New Church perspective, our powers of thought all come from the Lord, flowing through the spiritual world. We, as human beings, are simply receivers of those thoughts. To make the mistake that we are the source of our thoughts inserts us into the thick darkness brought on by a materialistic approach to life, and it blinds us to the light coming from God and His Kingdom.

It is wonderful to think of the woman at the well and see her enthusiasm for “the water springing up to everlasting life.” She implores the Lord to give her this water that she may not thirst or need to come to the well to draw the water. If we hold that perspective of recognizing our need for the truth that introduces us to eternal happiness, then we can embrace the teachings the Lord gives us that shed light on our need to change and grow to be more angelic. And like the woman at the well we can embrace a new life that brings the peace and happiness of heaven – a life that we will never find on our own.

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Amalek and the Amalekites Today

The Rev. Michael D. Gladish

Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you were coming out of Egypt, how he met you on the way and attacked your rear ranks, all the stragglers at your rear, when you were tired and weary; and he did not fear God. Therefore it shall be, when the Lord your God has given you rest from your enemies all around, in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess as an inheritance, that you will blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. You shall not forget. (Deuteronomy 25:17-19)

In the Word of the Old Testament, it is common to read passages in which God orders the complete annihilation of certain people in the land of Canaan. Of course, the Israelites are not always successful, and they are sometimes punished by these very people for their own apostasy, but even so, the Lord does, apparently, predict that when they learn and obey as He has intended, they WILL complete the work of destroying every vestige of their old enemies.

The passage quoted above from *Deuteronomy* is a good example, and other passages – such as in *Exodus 17* and *1 Samuel 15* – affirm the command to destroy every living thing, including women and children, and all their livestock: *forever, no matter how long it takes*.

All of this is surprisingly relevant in our contemporary geopolitical climate, as there are, for example, Jewish and Christian leaders who continue to cite these passages to justify perpetual war against perceived enemies in the Middle East.¹ We can't go into details here, lest we be distracted from the real meaning of these passages. In any case, it's complicated! But at least we can be aware of an insidious temptation to use the Bible to justify modern political ideologies.

The point of the teachings, of course, is that the references are all about our spiritual enemies – not our natural, political enemies. Yes, *literally* they are about specific people in the Biblical world, but we know from hundreds of other passages, and especially from the clear-eyed study of correspondences,² that we

¹For example, in a speech in October, 2023, the prime minister of Israel cited *1 Samuel 15*, as justification for his war against Hamas and the Palestinians generally, looking to their complete annihilation.

cannot take them at face value today, or we will end up with a huge assortment of impossible situations, not to mention vile persecutions of totally innocent people.

Even the passages in the New Testament that condemn various sects, like the Scribes and Pharisees, need to be understood as condemning the attitudes and ideas they represent, not specific people in our world today, many of whom may be model citizens, despite some historical name or title.

So, who were these Amalekites, and what did they represent?

The record shows that they were particularly nasty, opportunistic people. But they were also very clever at pretending to be good, harmless and friendly people. Typically, they would rather not confront an enemy directly in a pitched battle, but would engage in a kind of guerilla warfare, preying on the weak and vulnerable stragglers among their adversaries, like wolves seeking to isolate the young or old from a herd of cattle, making them easy victims. But the fact that they were among the native inhabitants of the land of Canaan meant that they had to be conquered or driven out in order for the Israelites to inherit their land.

Sound familiar? Something similar happened in North and South America, where native populations were either conquered or driven out to make room for European settlers. In the United States this was even referred to as the “manifest destiny” of the country.³ But that doesn’t mean what the settlers did was right. Nor would the conquest of Canaan today be right or just, even though it was done in Biblical times under the authority of the Lord, for reasons that most people simply don’t understand.

The truth is that God used the worldly and self-centered character of the people in those times to tell a story with deep and significant *spiritual* meaning, which has only emerged relatively recently from enlightened study of the Scriptures and their symbolism.⁴ In fact, the Amalekites, the Ammorites, the Hivites, Jebusites and other native inhabitants of Canaan and the nearby regions were not really any worse than the Israelites, who themselves were capable of gross deceptions and atrocities even among themselves.⁵

But in the representative language of Scripture this conquest was

²“Correspondence” is a term that refers to the spiritual counterpart of any natural thing, as illustrated in the expression, “I see,” meaning “I understand,” or the word, “light,” meaning “truth.”

³Manifest Destiny was the 19th century belief that the United States was divinely destined to expand across the North American continent, a belief that drove territorial expansion and the displacement of Native Americans.

⁴Specifically, in the profound spiritual teachings penned by Emanuel Swedenborg in the 18th century.

permitted in order to inform future generations (that's us!) of deeply spiritual and psychological truths, primarily that the selfish and worldly dispositions of our own personal heredity must be conquered or driven out of our daily lives in order for us to inherit the heavenly life represented by the rich and bountiful land of Canaan.

The Representative Language of Scripture

The concept of Canaan as representative of heaven is not new. Christian hymns and novels have long cast it in such allegorical terms.⁶ What is new is that the specific meaning of almost every detail in Scripture can now be understood in psychological and spiritual terms, so that all the bitterness, prejudice and warfare of the literal sense can be rightly applied in our own lives, individually, as we fight the battles for our internal health and welfare.

In these battles, the Amalekites are emblematic of a certain devious and hypocritical spirit that can affect us all. It is particularly dangerous because it is so subtle. In fact, although these ancient people represented falsity, it was not flagrant falsity, but a kind of falsity arising from interior evil, concealed in a person's will and consequent thinking, "not a trace of it being apparent outwardly in our actions, speech or face." (*Arcana Coelestia* 8593)⁷

This is particularly insidious because it is so difficult to see and confront. Yet it drives nearly all of our hatred and resentment of other people, almost the way our autonomic nervous system, centered in the cerebellum, activates

In the representative language of Scripture this conquest was permitted to inform future generations of deeply spiritual and psychological truths, that the selfish and worldly dispositions of our own heredity must be conquered for us to inherit the heavenly life represented by the land of Canaan.

⁵ Jacob, for example, cheated Esau out of his inheritance (*Genesis* 27), all the tribes of Israel participated in a massive slaughter of members of their own tribe of Benjamin (*Judges* 20), and even the "great" King David had a man killed so that he could justify his adultery with that man's wife (*2 Samuel* 11). Many more examples could be given. The symbolism of many hateful and confusing passages of Scripture is explained in a book of sermons by the present author: *Looking Deeper into the Bible*.

⁶ *Pilgrim's Progress*, for example, by John Bunyan, first published in 1678.

the involuntary systems of our bodies. (*Ibid.*) A particularly telling passage in that same reference describes the spirits of such people who associate with us this way:

Those hellish demons never attack a person openly, or when he can offer strong resistance, but when it is seen that the person is slipping and may therefore give in. At this point they are suddenly at hand and give him a shove so that he falls completely. This is also represented by Amalek's coming up to attack Israel (in Exodus 17:8-9), as well as at a later time when the children of Israel set themselves against Jehovah and were afraid of the nations in the land of Canaan.

When we look at the Old Testament stories about the Amalekites – particularly the stern, repeated commandments to destroy them – in this light, we can see that the real message is not about persecuting any “other” people, least of all in our world today; rather it is about dealing with our own sinister inclination to justify ourselves in doing what we want to do, regardless of the consequences or the rule of heavenly law. And what are we supposed to do about this? How can we possibly confront such a surreptitious enemy, let alone destroy it? When you think about it you can see that this would be almost like destroying a part of ourselves – almost like rejecting a part of our own identity.

One story in the Word gives us important guidance. In *Exodus 17:8-16*, we read about a particular battle with some of the Amalekites in which Israel's victory depended on Moses standing at the top of a hill overlooking the scene and holding his hands high with “the rod of God” in one hand. This was the same rod he had used to intimidate the Pharaoh of Egypt, doing all sorts of miracles, and finally causing the waters of the Red Sea to part so that they could cross on dry ground as they left for “the promised land.” But what does a rod have to do with any of this?

Well, it's a symbol of power! The modern equivalent is built on the Latin word, *fascis*, which is a bundle of rods with an axe, or possibly an eagle on top, originally a symbol of authority in ancient Rome carried by officials to signify power and control. It's the origin of the word, “fascism,” adopted by, among others, Benito Mussolini as he rose to power in 20th century Europe. But it also shows up in the U.S. House of Representatives and even the Lincoln Memorial, where it is used to represent strength, unity and the authority of the state.

The point in Scripture is that the rod corresponds to the power of revealed

⁷ *Divine Providence* #251:4 makes it clear that although “things similar to the Biblical wars are represented in the wars of the present day... it is not known in this world which kingdoms in Christendom represent the Moabites, the Ammonites (and so on)” because the real spiritual states of people in this world cannot be known with any certainty. Nevertheless, as we note a little later, the evils themselves *can and must* be seen for what they are.

truth, specifically the knowledge of information that we can't get on our own, or by thinking from the way things appear outwardly. Remember the "rod and staff" of the Lord as our Shepherd in the *23rd Psalm*? It's the same idea: protection from harm by knowing what is really true, and being empowered to act on that truth.

In the present context, the truth is that we can't trust our own feelings or sense of things apart from spiritual guidance about who or what is affecting us. We're too invested in those feelings, and they can easily overwhelm us – not necessarily all at once, but little by little, wearing us down as they call attention to our weaknesses, bad judgments and insecurities. So we are obliged to go to the Word – the whole of the Word – recognizing even in passages such as *Deuteronomy 32:35*, *Romans 12:19* and *Hebrews 10:30* that "vengeance belongs (only) to the Lord," or to the Prophets, as in *Isaiah 1:16-17*, where we are taught to seek justice (not condemnation) and reprove the oppressor (not kill him).

Of course we also have the words of Christ Himself, where He spoke "as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (*Matthew 7:29*), teaching that vengeance and retribution are never acceptable, and that we are obliged to love, do good to, and even pray for those who spitefully use and persecute us (*Matthew 5:38-45*). It's not complicated, but it is challenging, because our natural inclination, like that of the Jews in the Old Testament, is to see the causes of all our troubles in other people.

Why, then, Does God Permit Such Hateful Teaching?

To return to the point about the abuse of Scripture, it is remarkable not only that Christian ministers and politicians (not to mention ordinary folks) can use Bible stories to justify what they want to do, but that the stories are written in a way that gives the appearance of that very justification! Again, *Exodus 17* ends with this statement: "*The Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.*" *Deuteronomy 25:19* says; "*You will blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. You shall not forget!*" And *1 Samuel 15:3* says: "*Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have. And do not spare them. But kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and ass.*"

Why does the Lord leave us with such raw, hateful rhetoric in a book that is supposed to guide us in our path to peace, fulfillment, and, ultimately, heaven?! Can we really be that nasty and expect God to be pleased?

NO! Of course not! But here's the thing. All revelation from God is communicated (it has to be communicated) to people in terms that they can understand, usually through the agency of people living in that very culture. So if genuine charity, or the perception of interior wisdom is impossible because

of the fallen state of a given people, they have to be taught by command, and the commandments are given for their own preservation until such time as they – or others who read about it – can be taught more rationally and perceptively.

This hardly justifies such horrible treatment of anybody, anywhere, but it does provide a way of comprehending it. As we read in the book about Divine providence:

It is not because of Divine providence that wars happen, because wars are inseparable from murder, plunder, violence, cruelty, and other appalling evils that are diametrically opposed to Christian charity. However, it is absolutely necessary that they be permitted, because since the earliest people, the times meant by Adam and his wife (see #241), our life's love has become basically a love of controlling others, ultimately everyone, and of gaining possession of the world's wealth, ultimately all of it. These two loves cannot be kept in chains as long as it is the intent of Divine providence that we act freely and rationally,⁸ as already explained in #71-97.

There is also the fact that if it were not for this permission, the Lord could not lead us out of our evil, so we could not be reformed and saved. That is, unless evils were allowed to surface, we would not see them and therefore would not acknowledge them; so we could not be induced to resist them. That is why evils cannot be suppressed by some exercise of Divine providence. If they were, they would stay closed in, and like the diseases called cancer and gangrene, would spread and devour everything that is alive and human. (Divine Providence 251)

Importantly, however, although evils have to be seen to be recognized and acknowledged,

This does not mean that we have to act out our evils in order to bring them to light, but that we need to look carefully not only at our actions but also at our thoughts, at what we would do if it were not for our fear of the laws and of disgrace. (Ibid. 278)

This latter is a lengthy passage that explains how seeing evils outside of us and in history can help us to recognize them in ourselves, so that we can do something about them. So, it is in the stories of Israel's genocidal wars in the Old Testament, where we see clearly that perennial vengeance actually does no good, even though it is said to be commanded by God.

Wait. No good? Wouldn't it have been good for the Jews if they actually had wiped out all their enemies? Well, maybe, in the short term. But think about the fear and resentment of all the other people in the region. Think

⁸That is, according to our own sense of what is reasonable (DP 74).

about the selfish love of dominating over these people, and where that could lead going forward. In *The New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* we read about the love of self:

If we despise our neighbors or regard people as our enemies for merely disagreeing with us or not showing us reverence or respect, our life is a life of self-love. If for similar slights we hate our neighbors and persecute them, then we are even more deeply entrenched in self-love. *And if we burn with vengeance against them and crave their destruction, our self-love is stronger still; people with this attitude eventually love being cruel.* (#68)

All this can manifest itself in pretty gruesome ways, so it's useful to contemplate how it might possibly relate to ourselves in an otherwise civilized world. Even in our own times there are such atrocities being committed in some places around the world that, as they say on news broadcasts: "Warning: some of the images in this report may be difficult to watch." Difficult indeed! Cold-blooded murder, calculated destruction of schools and hospitals, indiscriminate bombing of residential neighborhoods, and much more, too horrible to mention. How in the world can we see or learn anything about *ourselves* in these circumstances?

The answer is that these are the actual, natural consequences of the selfish, hateful, prejudiced attitudes that lie behind them, and the truth is that if these attitudes are not restrained by conscience or the fear of consequences, the cruelty inherent in them is actually limitless.

For example, we understand that the fifth of the Ten Commandments is not only about murder, it's about hatred, and hatred leads to murder if it's unrestrained. In fact, it is *spiritual murder*. So, when we see it in the world around us, it behooves us to think about how it might appear in our own lives.

Further, as we well know from personal experience, cruelty in one person or group tends to inspire a response in kind, which is why there has been almost perpetual war in the Middle East for thousands – yes, thousands – of years.⁹

In any case, another key to this story is the fact that Israel could only conquer Amalek by the power of the Lord – and at His command. As the Lord said to Moses in *Exodus 17:14*: "I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." And in *1 Samuel 15*, He said again: "I will punish what Amalek did to Israel" on the way up from Egypt. In other words, it is not up to any nation to decide for itself how any other nation will be treated, it is up to the Lord. And there is no way the voice of the Lord is telling any nation on this earth today that it should utterly destroy any other nation or people.

⁹That is, according to our own sense of what is reasonable (DP 74).

The truth is that although

all wars [even today], regardless of the civil issues involved, portray states of the church in heaven and are corresponding images. . . . In this world, no one knows what countries in Christendom are the equivalents of the Moabites and the Ammonites, the Syrians and the Philistines, the Chaldeans and the Assyrians, and the other nations against whom the Israelites waged war, but their equivalents do exist. (Divine Providence 251:3-4)

Again, how can we know the good ones from the bad? The teaching is, *we can't*. We are all a mix of good and evil, and we are all victims of campaigns of falsity and disinformation by people in positions of influence or authority. The best we can do is to read the Word with an understanding of its *spiritual sense*, and diligently inquire, comparing our sources of information, as to what is most likely to benefit the whole community of nations, not just one, whether it be our own or one of our favorites.

Whereas we cannot spiritually judge the people, we can and must judge the evils themselves, or, as the doctrine explains, society itself would collapse. (*Conjugal Love* 523) Extortion or vengeance by one nation over another will never result in peaceful, heavenly relations, let alone the long-term material or economic prosperity of that nation. We are all bound together on this fragile planet, and we depend on one another to overcome the common enemies of selfishness and greed.

Other Spiritual Influences

Here's a new thought, brought to us, once again, by the Lord through Swedenborg in the 18th century. Believe it or not, we are all under the influence of people (spirits) living in the spiritual world – in the life after death. These people don't necessarily know us by name, but they are affiliated with us through the affections they hold in common with us, and they reinforce those affections in us.

Cartoon caricatures illustrate this by showing little angels and devils standing at our shoulders, whispering in our ears what they want us to think, say or do. But the situation is real – a little like the self-reinforcing silos of information we get through the Internet today, thanks to the algorithms designed to capture and hold our attention on what we ourselves bring to the platform, often appealing for donations or selling us related merchandise in the process.

We depend on the influences from the spiritual world – not the Internet! – for our very life. They are our link – or part of the linkage – from our material

world to heaven or hell, and so ultimately to God Himself (either supporting or negating our choices). They tend to confirm our opinions, and help us feel good about ourselves. But this confirmation isn't always a benefit.

And so, the Lord in His Divine providence has created our minds so that the real freedom we enjoy comes from the independence of our thoughts from our affections, and the fact that we can discipline ourselves to think about things that we don't naturally or intuitively like. What this means, practically speaking, is that we can compel ourselves to read, hear and understand things that are *not* in harmony with our preconceived feelings, and we can change our behavior accordingly, which results in new, different influences coming into our minds, including what we sometimes call "a new will in the understanding" – that is, a new attitude and a new way of life that is an improvement over what we had before.

That said, imagine being caught up in the influences coming from hell as opposed to those from heaven. That little devil on your shoulder can easily dominate your attention and keep you from hearing what the angel on the other side has to say. So, apart from the cartoon representations of them, how can we tell the difference? How can we tell the truth from the falsity, the good from the evil, especially when the evil spirits work so hard to deceive us?¹⁰

The answer is in knowing and understanding objectively what is good and what is evil, as explained particularly in both the literal and spiritual senses of the Ten Commandments in *Exodus 20*. That way, we can know for sure who is communicating with us. Included in the list of evils are profanation, scorn, contempt, hatred, murder, adultery, false witness, theft and avarice, among other things, so when we are informed by any of these attitudes or behaviors, we can know we're tuned in to the wrong broadcast.

By the way, it will certainly feel as if all these ideas are coming from within ourselves, but the fact is that nothing in our minds comes from within: all our thoughts and feelings come from sources outside of us, which we adopt as if they were our own. We read:

If we believed – as is truly the case – that everything good and true comes from the Lord and everything evil and false comes from hell, then we would not claim the goodness as our own and make it self-serving or claim the evil as our own and make ourselves guilty of it. (Arcana Coelestia 6206, Heaven and Hell 302, Divine Providence 320, etc.)

Rather we would truly rejoice in the fact that we can choose how we will think and feel by selecting from the influences impinging on us: selecting from

¹⁰ For insightful examples, see the novel, *The Screwtape Letters* by C.S. Lewis, first published in 1942

the Internet, selecting from the news we see on television, selecting from the books we read and podcasts we listen to, selecting, ultimately, from the spirit of malice or the spirit of compassion. Yes, we need to be aware of opposing arguments and feelings; we learn, after all, from contrasts. But it's a matter of emphasis, and the evils are permitted to enhance the perception of good.¹¹

Getting back to the temptation to use – or rather abuse – the Scriptures to justify a modern-day attack on anyone for any reason, it's not hard to see the evil in that desire, and if we have the courage to do so, it's not hard to overcome that temptation by choosing understanding, compassion, respect, humility and diplomacy instead. Yes, we may be called upon to defend ourselves or our country, even the innocent victims in another country, against various evils, but there is no way we can take a 3,000-year-old dictate about specific people at that time out of context to condone wholesale murder and destruction of anyone anywhere today.

In Conclusion

There are many other teachings in the Word, besides the ones on Amalek, that have been and continue to be applied by nominal Christians to justify bigotry and even “crusades” against people they don't like and for the most part don't understand, and who appear to pose a threat to them. For example, prophecies in *Isaiah 40-42* and *Jeremiah 31* about the restoration of Israel to the land of Canaan, may be taken to support the modern conquest of the land and its repopulation by Jews from around the world, when, in fact, they have nothing to do with the nation of Israel today. They are all about the restoration of integrity in our spiritual lives through the Lord's own work within us to overcome our inherent selfish and worldly loves.

In *Revelation 17*, we read about the great whore, or harlot, of Babylon, which, because of its wealth and power, has often been associated with the Catholic Church. And yes, to the extent that organization manifests these excesses we can see it represented in this imagery. But the real point in John's vision is not to condemn any organization, but rather the ideas and attitudes represented in it.

So, even in the revelation for the New Church, dreadful things are sometimes said about Catholics, Protestants, Quakers, Jews and other ethnic groups, but the real point is not to condemn the people, least of all individuals who belong to these groups, but the evils and falsities that are represented in their ideas, teachings, or ways of life.

Are these groups the same today as they were 250 years ago, when

¹¹ The author has a sermon about this, preached in Sarver and in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania in 2025.

Swedenborg was writing? Maybe. Maybe not.¹² What matters is that we can see in history how these evils and falsities might show up for us. And we can examine ourselves in the light of that information to make the necessary corrections.

In sum, we can, with the Lord's help and according to His instruction, wipe out the Amalekites and all of the other enemies lurking in the land of our own internal, spiritual lives. It is not going to happen in a day or a year, but "little by little," as we read in *Exodus 23:20* and *Deuteronomy 7:22*, "*lest the beasts of the field become too numerous for [us].*"

As horrible as they are, they serve a purpose, which is to provide for the management of even worse, even more horrible animal-like attitudes that lie even more deeply concealed in the secret places of our minds. At least they represent an enemy we can see and confront as they try to pick away at our resolve to practice a heavenly life.

Divine revelation is never given to justify any sort of atrocities, even though, in the context of history, we can understand how it might seem that way – or even have been that way for a moment in time. But what we are really given to learn from Divine revelation is not about other people, but about ourselves. It is given to address spiritual causes, and not just natural effects, and these causes all lie within the realm of the human mind or spirit. So, whether we are reading about Amalekites, or Philistines, or Scribes or Pharisees, Mohammedans (Muslims), Catholics or Jews, the message is the same: we must not look outwardly, except to identify traits and characteristics. Rather we are to look within, and let the Lord teach us by examples, illustrations and especially by contrasts with the evils and falsities that are represented by various nations and people in all the Scriptures.

Does this mean we have nothing to say or do about those who in social or political life commit the atrocities represented by the Amalekites, or by any of those who persecute others? No! Of course not. We ought to do everything in our power to eradicate, or at the very least, mitigate those atrocities. And we can't do this alone. So it is important – no, critical – that we invest the necessary time and energy in discovering not only the often complicated truths of geopolitical life, but, more urgently, that we know and understand the clear teachings of revelation about the evils that lead to international crime and terror, and that we support one another in exposing these evils in those who derive their authority from our affirmation, in short, our votes.

If this seems like a contradiction of the main point of this essay, remember,

¹²A particular teaching about this in *Apocalypse Explained* 764 makes the point that most of the rot in organized religion comes from the hierarchy and not from the ordinary members, who often don't even understand what their leaders are saying, but know very well in themselves the importance of a good life.

it's not about condemning any other person or entity outside of ourselves. It's about seeing evil (greed, scorn, contempt, false witness, adultery, hatred, vengeance, etc.) for what it is outside of ourselves, so that we can recognize it within ourselves, and support one another in doing something about it.

We are, in fact, obliged to "love our enemies," even to "do good to those who spitefully use us and persecute us" (*Matthew 5:44*), but we are clearly taught that this love and this good consists in promoting what is good in them, as well as ourselves, as we read in *The New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* 100:

Many people believe that love toward the neighbor consists in giving to the poor, bringing help to the needy, and doing good to everyone. But charity consists in acting prudently, and with the intention that good may come of it. If anyone gives help to a poor or needy wrongdoer, he does harm to the neighbor through him. For the help he gives strengthens him in evil and supplies him with the resources to do harm to others. The opposite is the case if he gives help to the good. (See also Arcana Coelestia 3820 and 8120)

Clearly, these passages imply the necessity of seeing and making judgments about the character of people outside of ourselves, so that we can have genuine charity in our relations with them. This is explained in the well-known teaching of *Conjugal Love* 523, where we read:

The Lord says, "Judge not, that you be not condemned." (*Matthew 7:1*) This cannot in the least mean judging of someone's moral and civil life in the world, but judging of someone's spiritual and heavenly life. Who does not see that if people were not allowed to judge of the moral life of those dwelling with them in the world, society would collapse? What would become of society if there were no public courts of law, and if no one was permitted to have his judgment of another? But to judge what the inner mind or soul is like within, thus what a person's spiritual state is and so his fate after death – of this one is not permitted to judge, because it is known to the Lord alone.

*It's not about
condemning anyone
outside of ourselves.
It's about seeing evil
for what it is outside of
ourselves, so that we
can recognize it within
ourselves, and support
one another in doing
something about it.*

This is also expounded at some length in the teachings about the six classes of the neighbor listed in *Matthew 25*: the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and the prisoner. These designations all represent states of human need that we can recognize in others as well as ourselves, not so that we can criticize, much less persecute them, but so that we can serve them appropriately in the interests of heavenly life. (*Arcana Coelestia* 7259-7263)

That said, we need to be sure in our civil and moral (i.e., outward) lives, that we are actually living according to our faith, condemning what is evil and promoting what is good, not only in ourselves, but in the world around us. Otherwise, what's the point of having any interaction with our neighbors or the institutions they represent?

We need to be sure in our civil and moral lives that we are actually living according to our faith, condemning what is evil and promoting what is good, not only in ourselves, but in the world around us.



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Book Review

Looking Deeper into the Bible

The Rev. Michael D. Gladish

When you do something that you think is useful for other people, you like them to know about it, right? Well, then, please forgive this eponymous review, but I really want to share the good news about a book I wrote, and that the General Church published late last year.

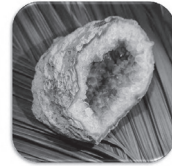
Looking Deeper into the Bible is a collection of 36 sermons written in an easy-to-read, contemporary style in order to, as it says on the cover, “make sense of seriously problematic themes and passages in Sacred Scripture.” The geode on the cover neatly illustrates the concept: what can look really crude and worthless on the outside can reflect spectacular beauty on the inside, when the contents are properly understood.

So, in the book, I have taken a close look at a wide range of stories and teachings in the Word, and explained, from a New Church perspective, how things in the literal sense that can seem confusing or even wrong actually have deep, enlightening significance and relevance in their *spiritual* sense.

For example, here are a few of the chapter titles:

- Innocent Victims in the Word
- How Cain got away with Killing Abel
- The Destruction of Everyone and Everything in Jericho
- Samson’s Revenge against the Philistines
- Slavery in the Bible
- What? No Marriage in Heaven?
- Polygamy in the Bible
- Women Subject to their Husbands
- The Parable of the Unjust Steward (injustice rewarded)
- Incredible devastation in the Apocalypse

Curious? Check it out. We’ve sold a bunch already, and several wrote generous reviews for the flyleaf and the back cover.



Looking Deeper Into the Bible

Making Sense of Seriously Problematic
Themes and Passages in Sacred Scripture

by the Rev. Michael Gladish

The book is divided into three main sections:

- I. Death and Destruction in the Bible
- II. Moral and Philosophical Problems
- III. Challenges to Science and Logic

Each section addresses issues and concerns that have so troubled many people that they simply reject it, not seeing any value in it, or even worse, making a mockery of it. But as we know, the love and wisdom in the Word are profound, and essential for our spiritual well-being; we just have to “look deeper” into it to see how.

Because of the feedback I have received from those who have read this book, I believe it can help, and I can particularly recommend it as a thoughtful gift for a skeptical friend, for anyone who wants to believe but who has difficulty understanding the Word, and for those who struggle to understand its deeper meanings. Removing barriers to understanding is a first step and Looking Deeper can be a guide to open a door into a whole new understanding of the love and beauty waiting in the Word.

The book is available at some local churches, at the Cathedral Bookroom in Bryn Athyn, on Amazon.com, and at the online General Church Bookstore at <https://newchurchbooks.com/product/looking-deeper-into-the-bible/>. The suggested price is \$18, plus tax and postage.

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Knowing Through Walking

The Rev. Grant H. Odhner

No one becomes an angel . . . unless they carry with them from the world something of an angelic character. And in this character there is present a knowledge of the way from walking in it, and a walking in the way through a knowledge of it. (Divine Providence 60)

How we respect people whose mellow character exudes a “knowledge of the way from walking in it, and a walking in the way through a knowledge of it”! We love such people because this is the angelic character.

People like this give us hope. They have muddled along many paths. They’ve stumbled, gone off course, have stood, looking this way and that, in indecision and desperation. But they have persevered and returned.

Strangely though, as much as we admire hard experience, and its net effect for the person who has “overcome,” this doesn’t make us eager to set out for ourselves on the chilly, uncertain roads that separate us from our destination. Often, it makes us want to curl up tighter in our meager blanket before the fire, and dream of the day when we’ll “arrive.”

This is foolish and we know it. But why is it so difficult to leave the security of our past, or present – even when they are not so good.? Why is it so difficult to actually change our life – to live the truth – when yet this is clearly the only road to greater happiness?

Fortunately, neither the Lord nor hell allows us to remain sedentary. We are pushed out into the street. Hell cruelly withdraws from us our present satisfactions and offers us greater and greater risk. The Lord permits this so that He can challenge us onward:

Stand in the ways and look, and ask for the ancient paths where the good way is, and walk in it; then you will find rest for your souls. (Jeremiah 6:16)

Obey My voice, and I will be your God . . . and walk in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you. (Jeremiah 7:23)

He even says: “Follow Me. Where I am going you know, and the way you know.” (John 14)

And though we may respond, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?” the fact is we do know the way: we just haven’t walked in it enough to have confidence in it. Perhaps we’re scared that we’ll get lost if we strike out. Or afraid that what we have now won’t be replaced by something better.

We do know the way. Not all the details, to be sure; we can get those only by walking in it.

Wonderfully, the more *living* knowledge we get from walking, the easier it is to make our way. Walking and knowledge “stoke” each other: they proceed hand in hand, supporting and encouraging each other to the goal.

So set out! The Lord is with you! He loves you too much to “do it all for you” or to save you the pain that choice may bring! *“The way you know.”* Lay His Word up in your heart and set out! And then, as you walk, if you listen carefully . . .

*Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying,
“This is the way, walk in it.” (Isaiah 30:2)*



THE REV. GRANT H. ODHNER has just concluded serving as National Pastor for the United Kingdom and as pastor of Michael Church in London, England. He and his wife, Sarah (Bruell), have returned to the United States. Contact: pastor.grant.odhner@gmail.com

A Curious Statement

The Rt. Rev. Brian W. Keith

In a *True Christian Religion* memorable relation (159:7) we find a very curious statement. Swedenborg and some angels are trying to explain aspects of God to some apparently evil spirits, and at one point make the following passing comment: “God is not a mere word of three letters.” An English reader, as several translators do, would naturally pass this by as self-evident. So, what’s the issue? Well, the Writings were written in Latin, and the Latin word for God is *Deus* – four letters, not three. The Latin phrase is “*Deus non sit vox trium syllabarum.*”

John Chadwick, in his translation, footnotes this passage with a creative solution: “This is a puzzling expression, since God in Latin is *Deus*; but as the conversation took place in the spiritual world, it may refer to a word in the spiritual language.”

William C. Dick translates the phrase uniquely, apparently solving the problem: “God (*Elohim*) is not a mere word of three syllables.” He inserts “*Elohim*,” the Hebrew name for God, and translates “*syllaba*” as “syllable” rather than “letter.” (One could also suggest Swedenborg might have been thinking of “*Jehovah*,” the well-known three syllable Latin and English word for the Divine. Although complicating this solution is that many modern translators use *Yahweh*, two syllables, to represent it in English.)

The challenge with this solution is that while classical Latin dictionaries allow “*syllaba*” to be translated as “syllable,” the Chadwick-Rose Lexicon which covers the Neo-Latin of the Writings, only gives one option as “a single sign in script, a letter.” Is this definitive, or was Swedenborg lapsing back into classical Latin here?

Another intricate solution proffered is that “*Jehovah*” is four letters in Hebrew – יהוה -- but one of them is repeated, so there are only the three distinct letters.

And perhaps most remotely, someone suggested Swedenborg was thinking of another Latin form of *Deus*, perhaps *Dei*, which is genitive, or *Deo*, which is dative and ablative. However, the structure of the sentence virtually requires the nominative case – *Deus*.

What's the answer to this curiosity? We just don't know; or, rather, no one can say with certainty. Isn't it wonderful that the Lord has left such an intriguing statement for us to ponder?



THE RT. REV. BRIAN W. KEITH, Bishop Emeritus of the General Church, lives in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, with his wife, Gretchen (Umberger). Contact: *Brian.Keith@newchurch.org*

Church News

Compiled By Bruce Henderson

BRYN ATHYN COLLEGE PREVIEW: 2026-27

Sean Connelly, President

Dr. Marcy Latta, Chief Academic Officer

Rev. Scott Frazier, Dean of the Theological School

Amy Buick, Chief Development Officer, Institutional Advancement

Accreditation

Bryn Athyn College is pleased to announce that this past March 2026, Middle States Commission on Higher Education reaffirmed the College's accreditation and confirmed compliance with Standard VII: Governance, Leadership and Administration. The College is grateful to the monitoring report team and all who contributed to this important achievement. The next full evaluation visit is scheduled for 2029-30.

Faculty Acknowledgements

Bryn Athyn College honors the outstanding service of four longtime faculty members. **Dr. Dan Synnestvedt**, Professor of Philosophy, retired after 37 years of excellence in teaching, scholarship and service; and **Dr. Greg Rose**, Associate Professor of History and Political Science, retired after 21 years of deeply impactful teaching. Both have been granted emeritus status in recognition of their distinguished contributions to the College.

The College also welcomes **Dr. Charles "Chuck" Ebert** to emeritus status. Although he retired from the College in 2005, Dr. Ebert has continued to teach, advise students, serve on the College Executive Committee, and contribute generously to the College and its mission.

After 24 years of teaching and directing in the performing arts, **Jessica Bostock** is departing from the College, leaving a lasting legacy in its dance and theatre programs. **Dr. Edward J. Higgins** is also departing after 14 years of dedicated service in the sciences, where he played a significant role in the Biology and pre-Nursing programs. We are deeply grateful to all five for the many ways they have enriched the College community.

Service Milestones

Please join in celebrating the faculty and staff whose milestone years of service have shaped the Bryn Athyn College experience for generations of students:

15 Years - **Sarah Wong**

20 Years - **Michelle Chapin, Marvin Clymer, Dr. Stella Evans, Dr. Eugene Potapov**

25 Years - **Dr. Fredrik Bryntesson, Rev. Matthew Genzlinger**

Faculty Research and Publications

Peer-Reviewed Article: Bryn Athyn College professors Dr. Fredrik Bryntesson and **Robin Cooper**, together with retired U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service biologist Chuck Hunter, published a peer-reviewed article documenting the history of efforts to protect Ivory-billed Woodpeckers along Florida's Chipola River.

Bryntesson is continuing this research, investigating historical Ivory-billed Woodpecker sightings along South Carolina's Wadmacon Creek and their connection to the establishment of the Santee Sanctuary in 1936-38. His research draws on archival primary sources, published literature, historical maps and field research. A manuscript coauthored with Cooper, Hunter and retired South Carolina biologist John Cely is in preparation for submission to a peer-reviewed journal.

Book Publication – Dr. Aram Yardumian, Associate Professor of Anthropology, has written *Listening to Eternity*, a portrait of Swedish composer Tommie Haglund and the spiritual experiences behind his music. Signed copies are available through the College's Campus Store: www.brynathyn.edu/store.

Field Research – This past spring, the College hosted Pennypack Ecological Restoration Trust (PERT) for an educational program on supporting native bees. College science instructor **Grace Rose McMackin** presented her field research on the vital role of wild bees in local ecosystems. The College is proud to be a Bee City USA Campus Affiliate and to partner with PERT in promoting native pollinators and environmental stewardship.

Student Research

Mayzie Braun (English and Communications) – presented at Lycoming Undergraduate Humanities Conference. Conference journal publication 2020-2023.

Maya Earnest-Hunsiker (Psychology) – co-authored a Pilot Study Comparing

QEEG brain activity for a two-dimensional vs. Virtual Reality-based Concussion Training Module.

Serena Elphick (Psychology) - coauthored a Pilot Study Investigating the Effects of Photobiomodulation (PBM) and Virtual Reality (RV) Inventories to Remediate ADHD Symptoms in Adults.

Hall of Fame Project

As the College approaches its 150th Anniversary, we are pleased to launch an effort to preserve and showcase our history and heritage – including tributes to student accomplishments, Distinguished Alumni Awardees, and champions of leadership, innovation and philanthropy in New Church higher education. We begin with the following records of accomplishment:

Athletic Hall of Fame – Nine student names added to team point club banners and trophies

Men's Hockey: **Aidan Esack**, 102 points (2021–2025)

Women's Basketball: **Alayna Day**, 1,131 points (2023–25)

Men's Basketball

Will Little, 1,089 points (2022–25)

Keith Bullock Jr., 1,009 points (2023–25)

Jakir Hampton, 1,221 points (2023–25)

Jalen Jackson, 1,533 points (2023–25)

Most Outstanding Female Athlete Award & Trophy

Kira Bradley (2025); **Zhymani Smith** (2025)

Most Outstanding Male Athlete & Larry E. Spaulding Memorial Trophy

Jakir Hampton (2025)

Undergraduate Curricular Developments

Minor in Environmental Ethics and Sustainability: New for 2026–27, this interdisciplinary minor combines environmental science with ethical, social and practical perspectives on sustainability. Students explore ecology, resource management, environmental ethics and stewardship while developing skills for responsible leadership and civic engagement.

Graduate Curricular Developments

Graduate Certificate in New Church Education: Beginning in summer 2027, the Graduate Certificate in New Church Education will equip educators to deepen their understanding of New Church educational thought and bring its principles meaningfully into classroom practice. Designed especially for those serving in New Church schools, the program integrates doctrinal foundations, perspectives on human development, educational history and theory, curriculum and practical methods, and the spiritual work of educators.

Campus Life Initiatives

At a college our size, campus life isn't just something students experience -- it's something the whole community builds together. From Holy Supper at the Cathedral to weekly after-chapel lunches, faculty-mentored clubs to staff-hosted socials, this past year reflected the close-knit belonging that makes Bryn Athyn College special.

- Weekly Chapel and College Community Luncheon
- College Community Holy Supper at Bryn Athyn Cathedral
- 75+ student life events, trips and outings
- 15 student clubs with faculty or alumni mentors
- Nine *Socrates Café* discussion group meetups
- 215+ attendees at the Student Government Association Pancake Breakfast
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention Campus Walk Team
- Pennypack Ecological Restoration Trust Earth Day Trail Race Team
- Ice cream socials hosted by the Swedenborg Library

Public events hosted by the Swedenborg Library

- Garden talk by **Carol Traveny**
- Native Tree talk and planting by **Lynette Saunders**
- Poetry Open Mic Night with the **Rev. Coleman Glenn**

Student Recruitment

We are strengthening enrollment by reconnecting with New Church communities, reaching students in the regional secondary schools in our backyard, and making Bryn Athyn more affordable. President Connelly continued New Church outreach this summer at the British Academy Summer School and Jacob's Creek Family Retreat. We are also grateful to be working

with ANC Secondary Schools, helping introduce more students to the College through Admissions and Tools for Life.

For students who may be discovering the College for the first time, we are reaching out to regional secondary schools, inviting students to campus, and giving them a chance to experience the College firsthand. Our Presidential, Founders and Deans Scholarships, together with New Church Grant funding provided by the General Church of the New Jerusalem, can reduce tuition and housing costs by as much as 55% for qualifying students.

Whether students come for a one-year experience, an Associate of Arts degree before continuing into a specialized program, or a full baccalaureate degree, there's a distinctive and valuable path at Bryn Athyn for them. Students encounter our world-class faculty, experience our Ethical Foundations Honors Program, become part of a close community, and receive an education that prepares them for a truly useful life.

Tools for Life Summer Camp

Now in its second year hosted by the College, Tools for Life welcomed 27 campers – rising high school juniors and seniors. Attendance in 2027 is expected to grow thanks to earlier coordination with Academy of the New Church Secondary Schools, General Church schools, and other partner institutions.

Institutional Advancement

This past year included meeting and surpassing goals in philanthropy and social media reach. The year ahead focuses on deeper engagement with alumni, parents and friends – including the launch of *Nunc Licet eNews*, an annual scholarship/fellowship campaign, and a rebrand of our Giving Societies for the upcoming 150th Anniversary. Highlights include:

- \$4,369,614 in contributions, including annual fund, restricted gifts, and realized bequests
- New named, fully endowed faculty research fund: *Margaret and Gregory Baker Science and Religion Research Fund*. The College is deeply grateful to the Bakers for establishing and endowing the **Margaret and Gregory Baker Science and Religion Research Fund** to support faculty research. It is the fourth research fund held at the College, joining the **Sherri Rumer Cooper, E.**



Bruce Glenn, and Martha Gyllenhaal funds.

- First campus bench naming and dedication, honoring **Carina Heinrichs** (BA '09), by **Rev. Christopher and Annika Barber** and the **Heinrichs** family
- Graduating Class Legacy Gift dedication and check presentation: three hammocks for campus
- 250+ alumni and friends on campus for Charter Day's Alumni Awards Reception and State-of-the-College Brunch
- Seven President and Faculty visits, including Cairnwood Village, Kempton New Church Autumn Weekends, Washington New Church, Oak Arbor Church, Olivet New Church, and Glenview New Church
- Two State-of-the-College meetings with Emeriti Faculty
- Four State-of-the-College meetings with Student Government/Resident Assistants
- Faculty Colloquium Series featuring Dr. Dan Synnestevedt, introduced by **Rev. Stephen Cole** – record 100+ attendees
- Lifelong Learning program launch: Python Programming workshop with **Dr. Neil Simonetti**
- College Chorale "A Cappella" Study Break performance with **Dr. Graham Bier**
- Graduation Family Reception and Pre-Commencement Breakfast in the Brickman Center
- Campus Store eCommerce launch, including 30 branded items
- Brand/logo updates: College Primary and Secondary Wordmarks, Official College Seal, 1877 Crest, Theological School logo, and Student Government logo
- New web pages: Student Academic Achievement Awards, Distinguished Alumni Awards, Student Government Association,

Graduating Class Gift Campaign, and a searchable Calendar of Events with RSVP capability

- Social media (Aug. 1, 2025–Aug. 1, 2026):
 - o Facebook: 593,623 views; 2,631 followers (60 net-new)
 - o Instagram: 44,059 views (90-day sample, May–July); 1,675 followers
 - o LinkedIn: 21,433 impressions; 1,866 followers

(See photos on page 401)

ACADEMY SECONDARY SCHOOLS PREVIEW: 2026-27

James M. Adams - Managing Director

Erica O. Stine - Girls School Principal

Jeremy T. Irwin - Boys School Principal

On December 1, 2025, we announced that **Erica Stine** was unanimously affirmed by our ANCSS Board Committee and ANC Trustees as the Girls School Principal. **Jim Adams** is continuing on as Managing Director. Principals Erica Stine and **Jeremy Irwin** report to Jim Adams as Managing Director, who in turn reports to the Board of Trustees. Please know that we are always willing to have a conversation if you have any questions or concerns about our school.

Enrollment projections for the 2026-2027 school year: (as of July 2026)

Girls School		Boys School	
Seniors	20	Seniors	28
Juniors	19	Juniors	23
Sophomores	17	Sophomores	22
Freshman	20	Freshman	25
Dorm	6	Dorm	18
Day	70	Day	80
TOTAL	76	TOTAL	98

TOTAL Enrollment as of July 2026: 174 (Students are still in the admissions process)

TOTAL enrollment projected: 180

Changes for the Coming Year

We are happy to report that our Compass Program (school within a school) that we launched last year with a pilot program of three students is expanding. We have 10 students enrolled for the coming school year.

Flexibility Without Disruption

- Our Compass Program allows us to introduce innovative curriculum options without requiring wholesale changes to the existing school structure.
- It operates semi-autonomously, meaning current courses, schedules, and faculty responsibilities remain unaffected.
- Students enrolled in the Compass Program are still fully integrated into the school community, participating in activities like sports, performing arts and clubs.
- This program is overseen by **Mary Heinrichs Williams** under direction of our Principals.

Expanding Educational Opportunities

- This model accommodates students interested in trades, dual enrollment with colleges, internships, or alternative learning approaches.
- By offering flexibility in scheduling and curriculum, we can serve students across a wide spectrum of academic abilities and interests.

Alignment with Mission

- The project-based learning-focused Compass Program aligns beautifully with ANC's emphasis on use, charity and a values-centered approach grounded in the Ten Commandments.
- It allows students to see education as a pathway to meaningful work and service, resonating with the teachings of the New Church.

Retirement

We wish a happy retirement to our wonderful Instructional Technologist, **Hayley Gunther**, who has been a vital part of the ANCSS team for more than a decade. From enhancing education through technology to supporting teachers and students and live streaming our chapel services, Hayley's tech wizardry has left a lasting impact on our campus. We are so excited for her to enjoy this new chapter filled with quality time with her grandchildren and family. Thank you for your years of dedication, Hayley!

Staffing Changes

- **John Thygeson** and **Chris Groh** are taking over the bulk of the duties previously managed by Hayley Gunther.
- **Elizabeth Fuller** will continue as Registrar and is stepping away from the Girls School Assistant Principal role.
- **Cheryl Cooper** is stepping away from Director of Student Support and is taking on the role of Girls School Assistant Principal.
- **Megan Boyesen** is taking on the role of Director of Student Support.
- **Eyvind Boyesen** is stepping away from PE and Health Department Head and some teaching duties and is taking on the role of Boys School Athletic Director.
- **Hilary Bryntesson** is taking on the role of PE and Health Department Head.
- **Sarah Waelchli** is stepping into the partially resurrected role of Director of Studies.

(See photos on page 400)

ANC Summer Camp

Megan Boyesen

We look back on an absolutely wonderful ANC Summer Camp with 75

phenomenal kids. Coming from 10 different states, plus Canada and Norway, we had an awesome crew of campers who will be remembered for their kindness, positive attitudes and incredible engagement and participation in everything they did.

With 31 classes from which to choose their eight-course schedule, campers had a wide variety of experiences, while making many new friends. The loving and supportive energy of our 12 incredible camp counselors made camp an extraordinary and memorable experience for all of us! We can't wait to do it all again next summer: July 11-16, 2027.

GENERAL CHURCH REGIONAL CLERGY MEETINGS – 2026

The Rev. Jeremy F. Simons

This year the clergy meetings were held on a regional basis rather than having ministers all gather in Bryn Athyn. The schedule for the meetings was:

Midwest US/Western US/Canada - January 27-29, 2026 – Toronto, Canada

South Africa/Brazil - February 17-19, 2026 – Westville, South Africa

Europe - March 10-12, 2026 – Stockholm, Sweden

Eastern US - April 7-9, 2026 – Mitchellville, Maryland

Asia/Australia - May 12-14, 2026 - Tokyo, Japan

Bryn Athyn - June 23-25, 2026

West Africa - August 11-13, 2026 – Togoville, Togo

Summary of the Meetings in Bryn Athyn

“Send Me” Live Your Faith in Ways that Bring Blessing – Vision presentation by **Bishop Peter M. Buss Jr.**

The Church Is from the Word, and is Such as is Its Understanding of The Word (Sacred Scripture 76) – The **Rev. Eric H. Carswell**. This paper discussed philosophies of translation, specifically philosophies that result in translations that are more challenging or less challenging for readers to understand.

Spiritual Care – The **Rev. John L. Odhner**. *How Do We Teach Love?* Presenting some teachings about the doctrine of charity to clarify our goals in our teaching and to explore possible ways of teaching it better.

AI: Practical Uses and Doctrinal Considerations – The **Rev. Coleman S. Glenn**. How I have found Large Language Models (LLM's) to be useful in my work,

highlighting some of the key doctrines that have come to mind as I reflect on the place of AI in today's world and specifically in the work of a pastor.

Witness to the Afterlife: What Swedenborg and Near-Death Experiences Reveal About Life After Death – The **Rev. Grant R. Schnarr**. Discussion of an upcoming book about near-death experiences.

Making the Second Coming Known! – The **Rt. Rev. Bradley D. Heinrichs**. What if we challenged ourselves as a church to make known our belief that the Second Coming has already happened just as the Lord promised, and that the teachings He shares with us in this revelation of the spiritual sense of the Word can transform lives in amazing ways!

Appearances: Dangerous Windows to Trueness – The **Rev. Scott I. Frazier**. What is the proper understanding of appearance? This study is an attempt to wrap my arms around appearance in all its uses in the Heavenly Doctrine. I have concluded that appearances are: ubiquitous, dangerous, confirmable, required, real, and the window to trueness.

Correcting the Myth of June Nineteenth, 1770 – The **Rev. Kenneth J. Alden**. A discussion of the meaning of what happened on that day, and how we ought to describe and celebrate it.

Fifty Years of the New Church in West Africa – The **Rev. Jeremy F. Simons**. As the United States marks the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence in 1776, we also celebrate the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Academy of the New Church in 1876. This year is also an anniversary of sorts for the General Church in West Africa. Today there are 28 General Church congregations, 29 members of the clergy, and two elementary schools K-9 in West Africa.

The Internal and External Man: New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine 36-46 and How to Not Lose Oneself in an Increasingly Fraught Communications Landscape- The **Rev. Christopher Augustus Barber**. These numbers are a glorious interchange with portals to a host of doctrines elucidating what makes us human and how to live life to the fullest. Knowing these teachings can empower a person to stay present and true to their values and worth in a world where attention has become a commodity, identity increasingly mediated through technology, and even traditionally human forms of expression can now be simulated by machines.

Cultivating A Healthy Faith – Reflections by the **Rt. Rev. David H. Lindrooth**. How healthy is the faith that we promote in the General Church? What can we as priests do to better understand and support the health of the New Church faith that is given to us in the Heavenly Doctrine? People new to the New Church often wonder why there aren't millions of members of the General Church after they discover that its teachings are so compelling. How do we help newcomers discover the powerful connection that the Lord builds in our lives as we turn to the Lord as vessels in our interactions with Him in His church? How can we better promote the marriage of Good and Truth in every aspect of the life of the church? Surely any steps we take in this direction will contribute to the health of the faith of the Lord's church on earth.

FOND FAREWELLS

Michael Church in London, England, and the Colchester Group said emotional goodbyes this summer to the **Rev. Grant and Sarah Odhner**, as they completed five years of service in the United Kingdom and returned to the United States. Grant has been pastor of Michael Church and National Pastor for the United Kingdom. Sarah has been a busy and involved pastor's wife and provided musical accompaniment for services and events.

For Michael Church, **Nancy Warwick** writes about a New Church Day service on June 21, with many people attending.

"The Sunday School children, under **Cheryl Wiltshire's** tender guidance, decorated delicious red and white cookies for us to enjoy, and we served glasses of fizz with which to toast our dear Pastor Grant and his wife Sarah. There was a rather tearful speech to which both Grant and Sarah gave gracious, heartfelt replies and we sang, *"The Lord Upon You Send His Blessing."*

"For Sarah it also fulfilled a long-held wish to live once again in the country of her birth and childhood. It's been a happy five years. The stars aligned so that Grant could be here to serve as our Pastor and Sarah could be in England, which very much helped her in gaining her doctorate.

"But the time had come for the Odhners to return to their children and grandchildren and their lovely home in America. So we bade them farewell and presented them with a wooden bowl made of cherry wood and a serving board made from walnut wood. Both gifts were carved from trees grown in Hertfordshire, the county of Sarah's birth. We also have commissioned **Kerry Burniston** to paint them a picture of an English walled garden, to remind them of their time here." (See photo on page 401)

Writing from Colchester **Anne Glover** and **Kathy Wyncoll** report on a New Church Day service led by Grant, accompanied by Sarah on piano.

“In Sunday School the children worked hard on a 3D model of the Holy City, New Jerusalem, complete with jewels. Each of the 12 doors opened to reveal a verse from the Word which they had chosen to put in. After the service there was a toast to New Church Day and also to the Odnerns, followed by the singing of *Our Glorious Church and Here’s to Our Friends*.

“Then came the presentation of some farewell gifts from the Colchester Group. First, two aprons – Grant’s featuring British birds and Sarah’s musical instruments. Each apron had been personalized with their names, courtesy of our very own embroiderer Josephine. Next was a book about Jumbo, Colchester’s famous water tower, and finally a wall clock which, returning to the birdy theme, chimes with various birdsongs.

“Before driving back to London, the Odnerns kindly collected three boxes to go in their shipping container to the States. With the sale of the church in Colchester, several locals have been storing old documents and photographs from the building in their homes. Given that this wasn’t a good, long-term solution, most precious, historical items were packed up and eventually will find their way to the Bryn Athyn (Academy) Archives, where they will be cared for in a proper storage facility.”

THE GOOD DEED TREE

*Emily Crampton, Principal
Toronto New Church School*

(Reprinted with permission from the summer Newsletter of the Olivet Society)

To close out the school year I would like to share one of our traditions: the Good Deed Tree.

I believe this is one of the things that makes Olivet special. In many places education focuses on mistakes: you forgot to carry the one, you missed a capital letter, or your stance was incorrect. Here, before we begin a new week, we take time to recognize what our students did well the previous week.

When a teacher sees a student demonstrate good character, she writes it on a piece of fruit, and the student then adds it to our Good Deed Tree. There is also a deeper meaning behind this tradition, and if the Rev. Todd Beiswenger will forgive me for stepping slightly into his lane, I’d like to explain why this matters so much.

Above the tree are the words, “*By their fruits you will know them.*” These words come from a longer passage:

| *You will know them by their fruits. Do people gather grapes from*

thornbushes or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore, by their fruits you will know them. (Matthew 7:16-20)

There is a saying: “When someone shows you who they are, believe him.” We often hear these words after someone has revealed his thorns and hurt us. But at Olivet we want our students to show the world that they are kind, caring and compassionate people. We want them to be known by the good fruit they produce.

The fruits gathered in my bucket each week do not represent all the kind things our students do for one another. They simply highlight a moment that stood out. If we gave out fruit every time a student offered to hold the door, helped a classmate, or assisted a younger student, the basket would be overflowing – and we would be in chapel for hours, reading them all off.

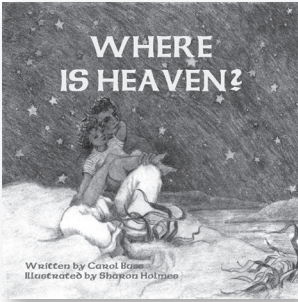
Mahatma Ghandi is credited with saying:

Your beliefs become your thoughts, your thoughts become your words, your words become your actions, your actions become your habits, your habits become your values, and your values become your destiny.

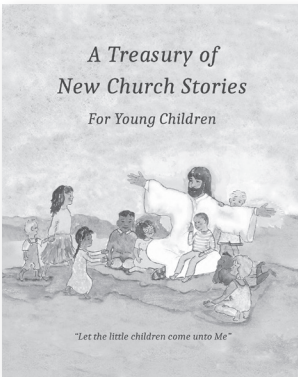
The good deeds we celebrate may seem small, but they help shape habits. Those habits become character, and character shapes the kind of people our students will become. That is why this tradition matters. It reminds us that every act of kindness, every moment of service, and every good choice is another piece of fruit that tells the world who we truly are.

Book Buzzes

Listen to the Writings as Audiobooks: Download and listen as you go about your day! Try free audio versions of standard translations of many books of the Writings by searching NewChurchAudio.org under Event Type: Audiobook. Or see the Publishing/Bookstores section of Swedenborg.com (Audio/Video category) for the modern Swedenborg Foundation translations of *Divine Providence*, *Heaven and Hell*, *True Christianity* or *Divine Love and Wisdom*.

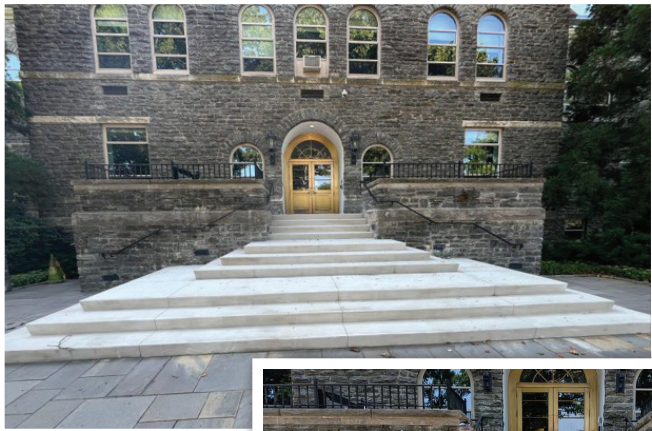


Where Is Heaven? is one of the most beautiful and touching New Church picture books for children. In longtime teacher Carol Buss's simple language, each page tells something wonderful about heaven, with gorgeous illustrations and detailed illustrated borders by Sharon Holmes. Available at NewChurchBooks.com.



A Treasury of New Church Stories for Young Children is a beautifully illustrated collection of the beloved children's storybooks that have been created over the last few decades, including 'The Lord Gives Us Everything,' 'Becoming an Angel,' 'The Little Lost Lamb,' 'The Lord's Prayer,' 'This Is the Day,' and many more. A great gift for children or grandchildren! Available at NewChurchBooks.com.

ACADEMY SECONDARY SCHOOLS



Renovation to
Benade Hall steps



Hayley Gunther Farewell



Performing Arts
Camp 2026
Disney Frozen Jr.



ANC Summer Camp



Sarah and Grant Odhner model the distinctive aprons given them as farewell gifts in London and Colchester – one featuring birds of the United Kingdom, the other musical instruments.



Dr. Dan Synnestvedt, now Professor Emeritus, at a Faculty Colloquium Series in April on aspects of the American Constitution.



Senior Research Poster Reception: Prince Dziekpor and Grace Welsch receive the Erland J. Brock Science Award from Dr. Edward Higgins.



Run Club students had a strong finish at the Pennypack Ecological Restoration Trust Earth Day Trail Run in April. From left, Naida Navarro, Benjamin Evans, Adrianna Storck, Ian Kistner.



Academic Achievement Award winners: Makenna Lindsay and Margaret Stine receiving the Theta Alpha International Award from Dr. Sarah Wong.

Life Lines

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

LIKE NO OTHERS IN THE WORLD

All over North America a surge of energy overwhelms the summer lull in school and college campuses. Yellow school buses clog roads again. Students and teachers, burdened with purpose and backpacks, funnel into classrooms. Barely noticed amid the swirl is the reopening of our General Church schools, the Academy Secondary Schools, Bryn Athyn College and its Theological School. But although their mission is just a ripple in the tide of global education it is unique because there are no other schools like this in the world. No others teach both the natural and the spiritual levels of the mind, the importance of developing a spiritual conscience, the preparation for lives of use in this world and in heaven. That is why these schools must survive and grow.

Back in 1958, when the tiny but distinctive Academy College shared Benade Hall with the Secondary Schools, Dean E. Bruce Glenn told the Glenview, Illinois, chapter of Theta Alpha that the College was not the best in the country but it was the most important. It could not compete with the depth of other college offerings but forever stands apart because it is unique.

It is the most important college in the world, he said, because it is the only one doing what it does. "If Harvard, or the University of Chicago, or any other college in the country failed," he said, "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."

The College, not yet 100 years old, was surviving but not growing. It had moved into Pendleton Hall across Tomlinson Road from Benade Hall in the late 1960s, with dreams of becoming a New Church University. With the new century came an ambitious surge in campus buildings, programs and enrollment. A strategic plan in 2006 projected enrollments of 1,500 in the College, 400-500 in the Secondary Schools. But financial realities forced a dramatic realignment, cutbacks and repurposing. The College is still struggling but persevering. So are most of our General Church schools. We cannot give up on them because there is nothing in the world to replace what they do in

offering the world what it so desperately needs.

There was a burst of enthusiasm for New Church schools in England and the United States in the 1800s. All but the Academy and General Church schools failed because of financial pressures or lost distinctiveness. Many of the pressures today are the same. Schools are expensive to run. New Church birth rates are declining. Parents are less inclined to send children to the Academy Schools, for whatever reasons. The Academy Secondary Schools have regained financial stability but still are not what they used to be. Bryn Athyn College of the New Church is repurposing its strategies but not its mission. There is hope, but fingers crossed.

Bryn Athyn Church School and Kempton School remain strong and viable, but other General Church schools – in the United States, Canada and South Africa – are struggling to survive. Most are opening their doors to non-New Church families. Some have gotten creative with survival skills, such as the Pittsburgh New Church School making a name for itself in teaching students with dyslexia, and the Oak Arbor School in Rochester, Michigan, has been partnering with the Montessori program.

Bishop N. D. Pendleton warned in 1924 – more than 100 years ago – that the growth of the church and its schools must be slow and patient, trusting not in zealous dreams but the sure guidance of Divine providence. We have a treasure of dedicated teachers, administrators and parents doing all they can to keep our schools viable and growing – unique and essential work. And we must hold on to this jewel of New Church education – especially the administrators and boards we look to for leadership.

The New Church and New Church education are still the largely unknown hope of a desperate world, searching for answers we are blessed to know from revelation. So, we keep that hope alive because no other schools or colleges in the country – in the world – do what we do. We know what we are up against but never lose that hope because we trust in the Lord.

*These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me you might have peace.
In the world you will have tribulation: but be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world. (John 16:33)*

(BMH)

CONTINUING NEW CHURCH EDUCATION

The beauty of New Church education is that it does not end with a diploma or degree. It goes on throughout our lives – indeed, to eternity.

Among the many giants of New Church education with Bruce Glenn was

Donnette Rose Alfelt, a wise and beloved teacher in the Academy Girls School in the late 1900s. She was best known for her distinctive courses – *Choices and Formative Years* – which helped students prepare for life after high school and epitomized the very best of New Church education.

In 1990 she gave a talk to the Academy Secondary Schools Honor Society – *The University of the Natural World* – which was published in the November/December 2019 issue of *New Church Life*.

Like repentance New Church education is a lifetime process – often challenging, testing what we believe in and what we stand for, helping us to define what we truly love and to realize where all of this is taking us. Here are excerpts from her insights into lifelong New Church education:

•

All of us attend the same school. Living in the natural world is nothing but a prep university for eternity. All human beings are accepted at the University of the Natural World regardless of SAT scores or financial ability. The All-Wise Administrator recognizes the potential of each of us and continually provides us with opportunities to develop to the fullest.

All of us in this room are students at UNW though none of us enjoys all of the courses or takes full advantage of all of the opportunities available to us. We are all guilty of not always paying attention or doing our homework and of sometimes goofing off. Our cries and complaints are similar.

I hear ANC students saying such things as: “It’s not fair that we have homework over the weekend,” or “School has nothing to do with real life.”

You might find yourself saying similar things after you leave this school – as I did. Such as: “Life is much too hard. I can’t possibly get through this crisis.” Or, “This is not the course I wanted to take.” And if you think school has nothing to do with real life, think again.

What is this elusive “real life” that some of you think you’ll find when you leave high school, and that college students think they’ll find when they leave college, and that young singles think they’ll find when they get married, and young marrieds think when they have more money, or when the baby starts sleeping through the night or gets over chicken pox or into school or out of school or out of the house or married or after retirement, and so on and on?

What is this “real life” that’s always going on at someone else’s house or someone else’s perfect life? It sure isn’t here and now! Or is it?

Of course, in the highest sense real life is our life in the next world, but the Lord did put us here first for very good reasons. Our entire earthly life consists of a series of choices that will finally determine where we will live, with whom, what our homes will look like, what we will look like, and what

we will be doing.

In high school you may not always pay attention in class or may let your homework go, thinking you can make it up on the final exam. Young and old alike tend to think that we will show our love and trust in God when we face some future challenge. We all tend to feel that daily living is filled with insignificant irritants that don't count that much – but of course they do.

The Lord asks us to love our neighbor as our self: to love one another as He has loved us. He explains in so many ways that this is the key: looking to Him and the good in others. He asks us to practice this, as the child practices times tables and the high school student practices French vocabulary. Our daily choices are the pop quizzes at UNW.

School is a series of problems to solve and so is life. When we have problems with school, money, strained relationships or disappointments, they all provide us with opportunities to practice making unselfish choices.

Every generation that goes through the school system learns some of the same things their grandparents did. When your grandmother was in school 8 times 8 was 64 and it still is. It's different at UNW because the answers have to do with intent and application, and the answers differ for each student.

Of course, the source for finding the answers is the same. To follow God's teachings is always correct. But how we raise our families, cope with illness, do our jobs, will never be the same for someone else. There will forever be new books written on how to be happy, get rich, raise children, run a school or run a country. But there will never be a final answer to any of these questions.

This will never happen because human beings are changing and complex, and though we may need the same things, we will give and receive them in different ways, and only we can know our motives.

What makes heaven heavenly is that it is filled with individuals who act from love and truth. At UNW we are to practice doing this and it may take many forms. Even Republicans and Democrats can be acting from the same concerns and motives.

One of the most wonderful parts of UNW is that we are continually changing roles so that we can practice charity from different points of view. We are the student and then we are the teacher. We are the child and then we are the parent. We are the healthy and then we are the sick. We are the secure and then we are frightened. We are the caretakers and we are the lost. We are your teachers and you may become ours.

How do we handle these many roles and tests? We flunk some and do well in others. We learn from every encounter, disappointment and triumph. This is all part of the curriculum and we excel some days and fail others. But pass or fail, we always can learn things to help us through the next challenge.

Someday you may look back on high school with regrets. At UNW students

have regrets: things they wish they had or had not done. But guilt is not what God wants us to feel as we look back. If we look back with regret it means we are looking back with new understanding – from another place, in another course. We were different people then. We were different people yesterday. If we had it to do over again, perhaps we would do it differently because we have had more experience or courses in living. So we build on what we've done and look to the future with new skills, insight and resolve.

If we believe that shunning evil is important and is the road to real happiness that God wills for us, we will try to do it even when it interferes with our plans – or seems to. The hells would have us believe we are justified in behaving selfishly if other people do – that dishonesty is OK or even necessary in a dishonest world. But the hells lie and we add to the problem when we listen to them.

If we believe marriage is sacred but allow ourselves to be influenced by those who mock or compromise it, it means we are willing to settle for less than an A, less than the perfect love God wants for us in exchange for a temporary or counterfeit feeling.

The only way we are going to pass the exams and find ourselves in the right place when we leave UNW is when we finally get it. That all we have to do is shun evils as sins against God so that we can do good from Him and His angels. A lifetime job, but that's it – that's all.

Our job is to work on our homework every day. Cramming for the final on our death bed isn't going to work. Remember the motto at UNW: *Hodie Non Cras* – Today not Tomorrow.

•

Donnette Alfelt's beloved husband Lennart passed away in 1981, leaving her a widow for almost 40 years. During that long, trying period she not only taught teenage students but found many ways to meet the challenges of the University of the Natural World. She raised a strong family. She led comfort groups for widows and widowers. She wrote booklets that keep her legacy alive: *Comfort and Hope for Widows and Widowers*, *When a Spouse Dies*, *From the Top of the Yardstick* and *Nobody Dies*. She "graduated" *cum laude* from UNW just before Christmas in 2020 – no doubt to a happy reunion.

(BMH)

THANKS, WE NEEDED THAT

Spain may have won soccer's World Cup in New Jersey on July 19, after a memorable tournament played out across towns and cities all over the United

States, as well as Canada and Mexico. But ordinary, transported people were winners too: the thousands who came from all over the world, in native attire and brimming with friendship; and Americans everywhere, who defied their expectations and embraced them all with the good will of the heartland.

They came from Norway and Scotland, France and Portugal, Argentina and England, Columbia and Morocco, Cape Verde and Ghana. And they came with some foreboding, prepped by a media to expect a dark place, filled with crime and oppression. What they found were good-hearted people everywhere, smiling, open, welcoming, giving and proud. They loved all that was new and unexpected: free refills, Ranch dressing, air conditioning. But what they loved most were the people.

My wife and I certainly have found that in extensive travels – a basic goodness in people, pride in their countries, and proud to share their food, their history, their culture. We happened to be out of the country for several days during the tournament and found on an isolated island the same basic goodness in shops and on buses, in restaurants and airport lines.

We were also in Paris 20 years ago when the World Cup played out there and the city was alive with international celebration. Crowds filled public squares with giant TV screens, the air alive with shouts and cheers. We rode in a Metro car with Belgians at one end, Dutch at the other, all dressed in the colors of their countries and singing joyfully to each other. Everywhere – as in America this year – was a spirit of love and good will.

It took me back to the classic discovery of America's inherent goodness by French writer Alexis de Tocqueville, who traveled all over the new nation in 1831 and discovered its emerging soul. This was the aftermath of the American and French Revolutions, which had similar aspirations but conflicting outcomes, because America put its faith in the people, and the people responded. It was this simple, and this profound, for de Tocqueville:

Not until I went into the churches of America and heard her pulpits aflame with righteousness did I understand the secret of her genius and power. America is great because she is good. If America ceases to be good, America will cease to be great. Many years later Neil Diamond put the words to music for Frank Sinatra: "The things I see about me . . . But especially the people, that's America to me."

And that is true, not just in America during the World Cup, but throughout much of the world – where there are problems and tensions to be sure, where people can choose hell over heaven and spread its evil influence. But the goodness is always there and reassuring.

We are all the Lord's children, whatever our circumstances, forever loved by Him. And everywhere we see that love reflected in kindness, in smiles, in

reaching out to neighbors and strangers. This is the Lord's Church spreading throughout the world. We all got a taste of that in the joyous theater of the World Cup. We needed that.

(BMH)

SETTING THE EXAMPLE

Just as we were warmed by the radiating sphere of the World Cup, we are assaulted every day by the coarsening of our culture. Movies and television are X-rated, social media revel in pornography, and all around us conversations are punctuated with profanity.

But even back in the chaste 1950s, when codes were clear and people more easily offended, my father, the Rev. W. Cairns Henderson, was moved to write an editorial in *New Church Life* on the curse of cursing:

Because they are laws for angels and men the Ten Commandments reach from the highest heaven to the ultimates of life on earth. Thus the precept, "*Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain,*" does forbid profanity, swearing in general, and all use of obscene language. And there is, perhaps, no other ultimate prohibition in the Decalogue that is so generally disregarded. From fo'c'sle to fraternity house, from factory to farmyard, the Lord's sacred names are taken in vain daily; and men who would not know how to utter them in worship use them freely to scoff and jeer, to vent their impatience and angry passions.

Swearing is an insidious habit which, the Writings tell us, may have an embarrassing carry-over into the spiritual world after death. Young people seem to acquire the habit imitatively, from a mistaken notion that it is a sign of full-blooded masculinity. Actually, it is a sign of intellectual and emotional immaturity.

In cold fact. If such feelings must be expressed, swearing does nothing for a man that a good vocabulary effectively used would not do better. At best it is a crutch for the inarticulate. Frequently it is nothing more than a sulfurous smokescreen behind which to retreat in disorder when worsted in rational argument.

But the habit becomes especially serious when it involves misuse of the Lord's Divine names. Daily we pray: "*Hallowed be Thy name.*" Yet the fact remains that, as far as we are concerned, the Lord's name will be hallowed only as we keep it holy. . . . For the fact is that

we cannot love the Lord and at the same time use His sacred names to express anger, irritation, incredulity or contempt.

We cannot love the neighbor and at the same time consign him to the infernal regions, or ask God to condemn him the moment he crosses us. We can plead, of course, that it is just a habit, that we really do not mean what we are saying. But it may then be asked whether it is the mark of a rational man to say habitually what he does not mean.

The proprium even rebels against the restraints religion would have it accept. But religion and practice cannot be kept in separate and unrelated compartments; and there is safety only in practical hallowing of the Lord's name, bearing in mind that that it includes all that is from Him.

•

That the commandment not to take the Lord's name in vain is so blatantly ignored is a discouraging commentary on modern society, but we are not helpless in the values we cling to. The Lord gives us hope in descriptions in the Writings about the speech of angels – the kind of speech we should all aspire to. We read in *Secrets of Heaven* 1759:

Spirits who are midway between heavenly and spiritual have a sweet kind of language that flows like the gentlest of breezes, caressing the listening ear and softening the actual words. The reason for the fluidity and charm of their speech is that the heavenly goodness present in their thoughts has the same qualities, and that there is no discrepancy between their words and their thoughts. All sweet-sounding harmony in the other life comes from goodness and charity.

Swedenborg tells of a man new to the spiritual world who was used to confrontation and speaking from anger, and who expected the same in return, but was reduced to tears by angels speaking to him from pure love.

That is the power of love, and that is the heavenly model for our own speech. The Writings also tell us that the easiest way to become an angel in heaven is simply to work at being an angel on earth. That begins with how we speak to each other.

(BMH)

Announcements

BAPTISMS

Baptism was instituted for a sign that a person is of the Church, and for a memorial that he is to be regenerated; for the washing of baptism is a spiritual washing, which is regeneration. (New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine 202)

Amaro, Ezra Michael

At Blackfoot, Idaho, July 20, 2026,
son of Brendan and Marivic Lopez
Amaro, Rev. Jean A. Atta officiating.

Blanco, Rosa

At Kitchener, Ontario, Canada,
July 4, 2026, Rev. Mark B. Allais
officiating.

Heiter, Brynlee Ann

At Kempton, Pennsylvania, July
12, 2026, daughter of Matthew and
Sheila McQueen Heiter, Rev. Lawson
M. Smith officiating.

Konan, Affoue Blanche Emmanuella

At Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire,
June 7, 2026, Rev. Bab Moise
officiating.

Kouakou, Yao Samson

At Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire,
June 7, 2026, Rev. Bab Moise
officiating.

Olson, Callahan Edward

At Edina, Minnesota, August 1,
2026, son of Curt and Mara Metroka
Olson, Rev. Mark D. Pendleton
officiating.

Papa Nouveau, Onzem

At Scottsdale, Arizona, May 24,
2026, Rev. Jean A. Atta officiating.

Popovic, Nenad Mike

At Kitchener, Ontario, Canada,
July 4, 2026, Rev. Mark B. Allais
officiating.

Schorran, Illya

At Boynton Beach, Florida, May 17,
2026, daughter of the Rev. Justin
and Denali Schorran, the Ret. Rev.
Bradley D. Heinrichs officiating.

Smith, Winfrey Celeste

At Kempton, Pennsylvania, July 10,
2026, daughter of Dale and Tovah
King Smith, Rev. Olaf Hauptmann
officiating.

Taylor, Francina Elizabeth

At Westville, Durban, KwaZulu-
Natal, South Africa, May 17, 2026,
Rev. Joel C. Glenn officiating.

Taylor, Jonathan Maclaren

At Westville, Durban, KwaZulu-
Natal, South Africa, May 17, 2026,
Rev. Joel C. Glenn officiating.

Vakhilt, Aiden

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, June 7, 2026, son of Edward Wolf and Tanya Vakhilt, Rev. Derek P. Elphick officiating.

Vakhilt, Kenneth

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, June 7, 2026, son of Edward Wolf and Tanya Vakhilt, Rev. Derek P. Elphick officiating.

BETROTHAL

The marriage of good and truth is from the marriage of the Lord with the Church, and this from the marriage of love and wisdom in the Lord; for good pertains to love, and truth to wisdom. (Divine Providence 21)

Cole-Buss, James B. Cole and

Camryn Alix Buss

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, June 7, 2026, Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr. officiating.

MARRIAGES

The delights of conjugal love surpass the delights of all other loves, and conjugal love also gives delight to these other loves according as it is present and at the same time united with them. (Conjugal Love 68)

Brannon-Casey, Michael Brannon and Catherine Casey

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, July 18, 2026, Rev. Michael D. Gladish officiating.

Heinrichs-King, Deacon Bradley Heinrichs and Hannah Mejer King

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, June 27, 2026, Rev. Scott I. Frazier officiating.

Buss-Gerritsen, Andreas Michael Buss and Christine Marie Gerritsen

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, July 10, 2026, Rev. Charles E. Blair officiating.

Silfies-Heiter, Justin Andrew Silfies and Abigail Rose Heiter

At Kempton, Pennsylvania, July 18, 2026, Rev. Lawson M. Smith officiating.

Frazier-Di Joseph, Hans Christian Frazier and Taylor Marie Di Joseph

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, June 12, 2026, Rev. Barry C. Halterman officiating.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

IN MEMORIAM

And behold, I come quickly and My reward is with Me, to give to everyone according to his work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last. Blessed are those who do His commandments that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. (Revelation 22:12-14)

Coffin, Gael Pendleton

July 6, 2026, of Bryn Athyn,
Pennsylvania. 88

Echols, Patricia Gailey

July 18, 2026, of Las Vegas, Nevada.
91

Cooper, Penn Torrey

August 8, 2026, of New Tripoli,
Pennsylvania. 67

Millam, Doris Ann Brickman

July 8, 2026, of Boynton Beach,
Florida. 93

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