

# NEW CHURCH *Life*

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

**MARCH/APRIL 2015**



## The Walk to Emmaus

What does the story of the two disciples walking to Emmaus with the Lord on Easter Sunday tell us about our own journey with Him? See a sermon by the Rev. Michael D. Gladish, page 127.

*Note: There is no extra cost for the use of color on the front page.*

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# New Church Life

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

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# In This Issue

In an Easter sermon, *The Walk to Emmaus*, the Rev. Michael D. Gladish talks about the two disciples walking with the Lord on Easter Sunday – without recognizing Him at first – and how He is making Himself known to us today. Just as the disciples were trying to come to terms with what had just happened with the crucifixion, and were comforted by the Lord Himself, so an amazing thing can happen to us in times of crisis, as “Jesus Himself can draw near us and join in the conversation.” (Page 127)

When Louis Zamperini, whose amazing story is told in the book and movie, *Unbroken*, was asked if he could tell which of his fellow prisoners-of-war in a Japanese camp would survive, he said yes – those who had a good attitude. A good, heavenly attitude will always serve us well in life says the Rev. Mark D. Pendleton in a sermon: “Heaven is an attitude.” (Page 133)

This year’s Boynton Beach Retreat featured three excellent presentations: Rev. Dr. Thane Glenn on *Unity and Difference in the New Church*; Dr. D. Gregory Rose on *Culture and Politics: Arab and American*; and the Rev. Jeremy Simons on the *Blueprint for Success* in the General Church. While each stood alone they shared a common theme: overcoming differences in the pursuit of a more unified understanding. (Page 140)

In Part Two of *What is New Church Education and Why Should We Care?*, the Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr. looks at the special role of parents as the “light of the world” for the growth and development of their children. This starts with the commitment made in baptism and continues through 10 special invitations from the Lord that demonstrate the important and varied role he asks parents to play in the lives of their children. (Page 153)

Cailin Elphick spent 10 weeks last year volunteering with the Rev. Samson Abuga’s orphanage in Kenya and writes movingly about her “extraordinary ordinary moments.” She tested herself by moving outside her comfort zone and found she was well-rewarded – experiencing a whole new culture and feeling a whole new level of love. (Page 161; photos on pages 200-201)

Chelsea Rose Odhner goes back to an account in the April 1937 *New Church Life* in which the Rev. Charles E. Doering presented his seminal “Notes on the Government of the Church,” for her own reflection on *Women Priests: Freedom and Providence*. She concludes: “I believe a change in our ordination policy would be for the protection of the freedom of our members, and such an action in our church would be one grounded

in principles of use and trust in the Lord's Providence." (Page 165)

The Rev. Lawson M. Smith offers his own opinion – freely admitting his bias but also based on his understanding of the Word and the Heavenly Doctrines – on why the priesthood of the General Church should remain open to men only: *Women and the Ministry: Leading Must Come from the Word*. (Page 171)

The Rev. N. Bruce Rogers asks why anyone should join the General Church, when it is said that people of every religion can be saved and that larger churches may offer more? The answer is that the doctrines of the General Church have answers "that may be intellectually satisfying" and these are answers "that no one outside of the New Church has." (Page 174)

Among the more challenging issues in our changing culture are homosexuality and gay marriage, where the teachings of the Word are clear but contrary to an increasingly secular and tolerant culture. The Rev. Willard L.D. Heinrichs looks just at what the Word says in its literal sense: "We need to note especially what the Lord has directly taught in His Word, rather than be guided in any way by the poor example of how people in the stories of Scripture too often responded to His teaching." (Page 179)

The Rev. Kurt P. Nemitz makes *The Christian Case for Traditional Marriage*, noting teachings in the Word and the Writings that clearly uphold marriage as between one man and one woman only. We also need to be compassionate, he said, noting that, "The Lord, who is goodness itself, condemns no one who has homosexual inclinations." But, "For Jesus, marriage was sacrosanct. In truth, it was – it is – heaven." (Page 185)

The Rev. Derrick A.M. Lumsden looks at *Priorities in Parenting* as among the most important in our lives. "No one in our culture rewards great parents," he says. "It is in career and hobbies that society really acknowledges the value of a person. But in the Lord's eyes success as a parent is the greatest success you could have." (Page 190)

Church News includes: reports from the Boynton Beach Retreat, including a "General Church Overview" by the Rt. Rev. Peter Buss Jr., a banquet talk by the Rev. George D. McCurdy, and an update on the New Christian Bible Study website by Steve David; the sad passing of the Rev. Nicholas Anochi, much-loved pastor in Ghana; new programs in Bryn Athyn College, including a nursing partnership with Thomas Jefferson University and partnership in counseling psychology with Rosemont College; news about Academy Summer camps and a summer camp already held in Australia; and an invitation to the upcoming Gathering Leaves. (Page 193)

# Editorials

## ‘ALL THINGS NEW’

Springtime is the perfect metaphor for Easter. As spring struggles between the lingering chill of winter and the promise of a warming sun, we celebrate the ultimate triumph of new life springing out of barren ground – and the resurrection of the Lord that we might have eternal life also. We welcome the snowdrops, the crocuses and daffodils that light up the landscape and our hearts. And we long for deliverance from cold realities – our own temptations, the decline in our culture, the growing secularism and abject evil in the world.

Easter offers hope – for each of us and for the world. In roiling debates over morality and faith, situational ethics and political correctness, we are challenged to elevate our minds. While it is discouraging that so many people seem to be worshipping at the altars of technology and materialism, there is a growing spiritual hunger throughout the world for something true and good to believe in and live by.

We see it in the growth of the international New Church, in the wave of Christianity penetrating such spiritual wastelands as China, in the millions of people all over the world seeking answers to spiritual questions and landing on Swedenborgian websites, in the many ways we are re-energizing our own societies.

Just as winter gives way to the crowning glory of spring, we see the fall of mankind, which brought the Lord into the world, and the temptations He suffered which challenge us as well – all of it come full bloom in the hope and promise of salvation. Even the darkest day of the Lord’s life on earth – His crucifixion – offers the ultimate hope of resurrection and heaven for us all.

Indeed, the Lord’s willingness to undergo the most extreme temptation – not just the pain and ignominy of the crucifixion but the attack on what He cared about most, the salvation of the human race – speaks to His abiding love.

The eternal message of Easter is repeated in the vision in *Revelation 21* of the Holy City New Jerusalem descending from heaven, of God being ever with us and wiping away every tear, with no more death, crying or pain, for: “Behold, I make all things new.”

The Lord came on earth so that we might know Him as a visible God, with a new understanding of Divine truth. He asks us to live by that truth and be made new by it. In spite of everything that confronts and challenges us in our lives, He is always there saying to us, “Be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world.”

His enduring gift to us was simply coming on earth and becoming real for us, overcoming the hells and forever leading us with the promise: “Behold, I make all things new.”

(BMH)

### LOVE’S ‘COMMANDS’

A beautiful thing revealed by the Heavenly Doctrines in their unfolding of the internal sense of the Word is that there is a tender, loving spirit behind the stern commands that appear in Scripture.

We occasionally get a touch of this balmy spring breeze from heaven even in the letter of the Word, as in the sublime sayings of the *Sermon on the Mount*. The Writings quote such expressions to confirm the truth that the harsh statements appearing in other places in the Scriptures are only written that way in accommodation to people whose state of mind is so contrary to the gentle sphere of heaven that they would be unaffected and even angered by it. And yet that pure and peaceful spirit of truth pervades all revelation as its very soul. It is a spirit of kindness, forgiveness, comfort, encouragement and appeal to reason.

The Lord speaks to us in His Word as a wise and loving father speaks to a willful child: always out of love and compassion even when, of necessity, certain sayings must be framed in language that sounds angry and threatening. If a child is about to do something that could prove injurious or fatal – touch a hot stovetop, or run toward the edge of a cliff – an abrupt and authoritative, “No! Stop right now or you will be punished!” is needed. But there is nothing but love behind the stern command.

Again and again the Writings show how the inner quality of the Word differs from its outer appearance. Within, it is soft and loving; as pure and beautiful as dew shining on fresh green leaves and opening flowers in the morning sun; dew representing the “the truth of peace.” Outwardly, though, this inner nature of Divine truth is mostly covered over with a rough exterior.

Life in this natural world presents us with endless illustrations of the same universal principle that places a hard protective covering over the truths of revelation: the bark of a tree that contains the sap within; the rind on a piece of fruit; the rib cage that surrounds our heart and lungs; the skull in which our brain is enclosed; the walls of a house that shield those who live within it and



their possessions from the harsh elements outside; the civil laws and all the means of their enforcement that protect the lives and uses of the people from harm; the formal vows and “piece of paper” that put a protective boundary of honor, laws and customs in place around a marriage to preserve it.

Outer forms are needed to protect the more essential, living and perfect realities within. Natural language, including doctrinal formulations, serve to communicate and preserve Divine and spiritual truths in the natural world.

Let’s take just one word, “command,” as an example from Scripture of how different the spiritual sense of the Word is from the literal. To “command” means to issue a stern order that must be obeyed, and might well be shouted. In the spiritual sense of the Word, though, “command” signifies an “influx” from the Lord of goodness and truth into a person’s mind.

The Lord commands us from without, in the letter of the Word, to obey His Law, while at the same time He gently leads us from within, by the subtle, unseen influence of His providence, to love the spirit of the Law.

He orders us from without to do and not do certain things, only for the sake of creating a new order *within* us capable of receiving the life of heaven. Then we will delight in living by the Lord’s Word; and we will be no longer “servants” obeying orders but “friends” who wish nothing more than to walk with the Lord in the path of life. (See *John 15:15*)

The angels don’t command or order each other to do things. They are all united in loving the Lord and one another. They are all “on the same wave length.” They know each other’s thoughts, and perceive the meaning of them. And because the angels are grouped according to their loves, and share a common sphere formed by the Lord’s love, they not only understand each other very well but are in essential agreement. (See *Arcana Coelestia 5732*)

In this world, our loves and thoughts are not as much in tune with the Lord’s love and wisdom as the angels are. And the words we use to communicate with each other are relatively crude and clumsy, and often poorly chosen. So harmonious communication is not as easy for us now as it will be in heaven.

But still, especially in the Church – and most especially in the New Church, in which the spiritual sense of the Word has been revealed, and which is formed from within by influx from the new heaven – we should aim for spiritual oneness, based on shared perceptions of truth arising from a shared love of the Lord and of our neighbors.

The Lord prayed that His disciples “all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one.” (*John 17:21-22*)

Here we have a prayer, a most beautiful and heartfelt prayer, a Divine hope and vision for the Church. It is not a harsh command or order accompanied

by threats of punishment if not obeyed, but a prayer. A prayer that *our* oneness in Him might inspire the world to believe more deeply in His oneness with the Divine.

It is a prayer for us, and through us for the whole world. The success of our church's mission depends upon the fulfillment of this prayer that the Lord prayed for us. We, now, must turn to Him and pray for His help in finding peace among ourselves if we are to serve as instruments of peace to the world.

"Blessed are the peacemakers." The truths which the Lord has revealed in His Word are the greatest "peacemakers" of all. We and our church can be peacemakers, and know the blessing of peace ourselves, only insofar as we are ruled by the Prince of Peace; that is, freely consent to live by the truths He has taught us.

The Lord's truth comes to us from without as commandments to be obeyed, and from within as a quiet prayer that touches our hearts and draws us closer to Him and to one another. Orders from without, some of which we may perceive as "hard sayings," when obeyed become the means for establishing a new spiritual order of life within; the life and peace of heaven.

Then – when we are gathered together and made one in Him, and He is there in the midst of us – the New Church on earth, as in heaven, will live up to its name, the New Jerusalem, the "home of peace." And the Lord's Prayer, and ours for His Church, will be answered.

"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem."

(WEO)

### **HARD SAYINGS: HOMOSEXUALITY AND GAY MARRIAGE**

There was a memorable series of editorials in *New Church Life* in 1964 by the Rev. W. Cairns Henderson on "Hard Sayings" in the Church. These are teachings that are not always easy to accept and live by. They included: Dead Churches; Marriage in the Church; Divorce; Slow Growth of the Church; The Nature of Regeneration; and Earths in the Universe.

When Jesus was telling His disciples what they had to do to follow Him and to lead people to His heavenly kingdom, He challenged them: "Verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye shall have no life in you." (*John* 6: 53)

When the disciples heard this they grumbled among themselves and said: "This is a hard saying. Who can hear it?" (v. 60) Well, many could not. "From this time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him." (v. 66)

Such "hard sayings" can be a crossroads of faith: what are followers willing or unwilling to accept of their church's teachings? At times, as we have seen

with the issue of women in the ministry, some are having trouble accepting the Church's considered opinion and may be "walking away" – literally or figuratively.

Obviously in 1964 there was no need to include teachings about homosexuality as "hard sayings." The doctrine is clear – both in the Word and the Writings – and was generally accepted. Gay marriage was neither a term nor a consideration in that culture.

Times have changed – but doctrine has not.

In this issue are two articles on the subject: *What the Word Says About Homosexuality*, by the Rev. Willard Heinrichs (page 179), and *The Christian Case for Traditional Marriage*, by the Rev. Kurt Nemitz (page 185).

Mr. Heinrichs notes: "Nowhere in Scripture is there any indication, not even a whisper, that it is permissible for two of the same sex to try to become one flesh." And he adds the warning: "If we choose to allow and affirm such relationships we need to be honest with ourselves that we are going aside from all the indications of God's Word in the Old and New Testaments and are being guided by other not very reliable things, such as human reason, experience and tradition."

Mr. Nemitz says of marriage: "For Jesus, marriage was sacrosanct. In truth, it was – it is – heaven." And he adds a note of mercy: "The Lord, who is goodness itself, condemns no one who has homosexual inclinations. It is those who willfully act upon such inclinations who condemn themselves by fleeing from heaven and the Lord – 'because the Lord cannot be in anything except good.'"

Our culture today certainly is much more accepting and tolerant of homosexuality and gay marriage. In many ways this is progress from much harsher, more judgmental times.

The recent and highly acclaimed movie, *The Imitation Game*, tells the story of Alan Turing, a brilliant mathematician who led the effort to break the Germans' Enigma code in World War II. He is credited with shortening the war by a year or two and saving thousands of lives. He was a real hero. But Turing was also a homosexual at a time when this was illegal and he was cruelly persecuted. It took 50 years before he was posthumously pardoned by the queen. Such persecution and legal judgment would not happen today and we are rightly appalled at the attitudes prevailing then. But that still doesn't change doctrinal teachings about homosexuality, which are clear and immutable.

However, just as clear and immutable are teachings that the Lord loves everyone equally and unconditionally, that everyone is born for heaven, and that He is doing everything He can to raise everyone into heaven who genuinely loves and wants to be there. The Lord also commands all of us to be

merciful, loving and compassionate, and not to judge the soul of anyone.

In a cultural climate that has swung from the extreme judgment of Turing's time to people openly embracing and championing the cause of homosexuality and gay marriage, the Church must hold to clear doctrine. Those teachings see the marriage of a man and a woman as the very model of the order of heaven. But we are also called upon by our doctrines to be kind, tolerant, charitable and non-judgmental of individuals.

When some of Jesus' many followers turned away from His "hard sayings" and "walked no more with Him," He said to the remaining twelve disciples: "Will you also go away?" Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." (*John 6: 67-68*)

(BMH)

### GUEST EDITORIAL - REFLECTIONS ON PARIS

(The following was written by the Rev. Howard A. Thompson, pastor of the Colchester New Church, for the February issue of the *Newsletter for the New Church in Great Britain*. It was written in response to the terrorism that took the lives of 17 people in Paris in January and is reprinted with permission.)

We are all painfully aware of the tragic events of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of January in Paris. History has no shortage of horrible things done in the name of religion. While many teachings have been used to shed light on the incident and to help us to wrestle with the important issues of freedom of thought and action vs. respect and reverence for God and church, one teaching that came to mind for me was taken from *True Christianity 310* teaching about the Ten Commandments:

In the spiritual meaning, murders stand for all methods of killing and destroying people's souls. There are many different methods, such as turning people away from God, religion and divine worship; setting up roadblocks against such things; and persuading people to turn away from and even feel aversion to such things. All the devils and satans in hell practice these methods. People in our world who violate and prostitute the holy things of the church are connected to these devils and satans.

While I grieved for the 17 people who were murdered, I also grieved for the thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands more, who were turned further away from God because of what they witnessed being done in the name of God. This type of murder is far more prevalent.

I believe that this incident stands as a call to action. *Not* as a call to any type of violence, but as a call for us to spread a different message about God. When you discuss this situation among your family and friends, remind them of the God we know. Remind them of the nature of the God you have come to know. Maybe some of these teachings will help:

- The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. (*Psalms* 103:8)
- The Lord punishes no one, speaks harsh words to no one, still less does He bring anyone into torment. (*Arcana Coelestia* 696)
- Jehovah God, or the Lord, never curses anyone, is never angry with anyone, never leads anyone into temptation, and never punishes anybody. It is the devil's crew who do such things. Such things cannot possibly come from the fountain of mercy, peace and goodness. (*Arcana Coelestia* 245)
- The Lord never wants to hurt anyone or force anyone down into hell, not even the worst or most hostile of all His enemies. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1683)

It is all too easy for people to give up on God when the only voices they hear speaking for God are actually speaking for anything but God.

Stay with Me; do not fear. For he who seeks My life seeks your life, but with Me you shall be safe. (*I Samuel* 22:23)

#### OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY

Part of a continuing series developed by the Rev. W. Cairns Henderson, 1961-1966.

#### CONJUGIAL

One of the most important terms in our New Church vocabulary, "conjugal" is to be distinguished carefully from "conjugal." The conjugal is said to be that truth which is capable of being conjoined with good, and that good which is capable of being conjoined with truth; and conjugal love is described as the affection of good in truth and the affection of truth from good, which descends from the marriage of good and truth in heaven. Conjugal love may therefore be defined as the love of wisdom in the mind of a husband for good in the mind of his wife, and the reciprocal love of this good for that wisdom.

Thus it is not a love of the proprium of the other from what is proprial in self, but the love of that which is from the Lord in the mind of each for that which is for Him in the other. It is not achieved by the husband and wife looking to each other, but by both looking together to the Lord; for which reason it is said to go hand in hand with religion, with regeneration, and with the interior development of the church in the mind.

By the marriage of conjugal love is meant the union of two in thought and will, in good and truth, in mind and life; which union causes them to love to will and think as the other, and to dwell together in all things of life. (See *Arcana Coelestia*, 3942, 3081, 9961, 10,169)

# Letters to the Editors

## *Clarity and Challenge for the Role of Women*

To The Editors:

Forgive me for entering late into this discussion but since it appears ongoing, here is my view.

In his *Statement about Gender and the Clergy*, (*New Church Life*, November/December, 2014), Bishop Brian Keith says: “In this [discussion about gender and the clergy] as in all things of the Church, we seek the Lord’s guidance in His Word.”

In all my reading of the Writings, I have never found any guidance from the Lord regarding the acceptability of women in the priesthood. It is simply not there.

However, the Lord’s guidance for a male priesthood is there. It is to be found in Swedenborg’s *Index to the Arcana Coelestia* and repeated in the *Arcana* paragraph numbers cited there. *The Index*, under Priest, page 265, states:

“The priesthood succeeded in the family of Aaron to the sons, because they represented the Lord as to the Divine Celestial, and the Celestial Kingdom is the priests’ kingdom....The Priesthood of Aaron, of his sons, and of the Levites, is a representative of the Lord’s work of salvation in successive order, as in the three heavens....Priests represented the Lord as to Divine Good...”

The representations of the Lord have not changed and can never change, and it is the sons, the males, who bore and will always bear these representations. These representations of the Lord are there in the males as priests.

At least, these are my readings and my understandings of the Writings concerning gender in the priesthood, both of females and of males.

However, there are many ways other than the priesthood in which the Church can be served. I do think that the contribution that the women of the Church could make in serving the Church is under-estimated and under-utilized. May I suggest that at the next General Assembly, focus is given to

utilizing the untapped resources of the female 50% of the membership in ways that are fair, satisfying and productive?

Heulwen M. Ridgway (Miss)  
Canberra, Australia

### *The Time Has Come*

To The Editors:

I can appreciate and respect the leadership of the General Church for having a great deal of difficulty changing its established position of excluding ordained female clergy. Over most of my 82 years I have accepted and had no reason to question the Church's ordination policy.

However, in recent years the question has grown steadily in my mind. I have come to see through the eyes of the wife and five daughters whom the Lord sent me, and through the eyes of other women, the effect on women of an exclusively male-oriented clergy – sometimes seen as the last vestige of a formerly male-dominated world. Many women can only relate to another woman in the deepest and most intimate questions of their lives, and the Church must endeavor to meet their needs better.

While endeavoring to do our thinking from the Word we cannot ignore the world because that is where ultimate realities exist. The Lord's Word, and His Truth, are timeless and yet our understanding of them and their application to life are subject to change as time passes.

In Victorian times of the late 1800s when the "fathers of the Church" were "putting it together," so to speak, female clergy anywhere were so rare as to not even be "on the radar." Those "fathers" could not have helped looking at the doctrines, and their world, through their own lenses, formed by thousands of years of male leadership history.

Might they not have been persuaded to limit the priesthood to males simply by seeking any doctrinal points that seemed to support their world view of women at that time? More than a hundred years later we must question if the "fathers" got it right then for all time. Additionally, those times were at least a generation or more before any women even had gained the right to vote in civic or church affairs.

In General Church affairs women were only given the vote and membership in Church corporations with the incorporation of the General Church in Canada, which founding meeting in Toronto I attended in 1971. The admission of women to membership in the General Church International

came still later than that.

The time is now for the Church to take a thoughtful and merciful approach to a change that would serve and include women now feeling unserved or excluded. I now see no doctrinally compelling reason for not ordaining female clergy. In my opinion any further delay damages the Church's mission in a culturally rebalancing world.

To the minds of many thinking inquirers a policy that excludes women from the clergy is now archaic and no longer culturally tenable in 2015. I now believe that theologically trained women can lead to the good of life equally as well as men, but from their own enlightenment as women, not trying to be like men.

C. John Parker  
Etobicoke, Ontario, Canada

### *Heaven is a Habit*

To The Editors:

I was reading Bishop Peter Buss Jr.'s article, *What is New Church Education and Why Should We Care?*, in the January-February 2015 *New Church Life*, where he quoted *Arcana Coelestia* 3843: "Everyone acquires a disposition or nature from frequent practice or habit, and that practice or habit from the things he or she has learned."

But that's it! From birth to death, everyone becomes a *habit* based on what he or she has learned *and made into an automatic way of life*. Want to go to heaven? Choose what you have learned as being good and force yourself to *do* it, over and over and over, until it has become such a habit that it cannot be broken!

What a secret that is! Just make it a habit!

Martin Klein  
Palm Beach, Florida



# The Walk to Emmaus

*A Sermon by the Rev. Michael D. Gladish*

*Lessons: Luke 24:13-43; Isaiah 55:1-7; Arcana Coelestia 9412*

Now it came to pass, as He reclined at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight. (*Luke 24:30-31*)

The story of the two disciples walking to Emmaus is one of the most striking of the Lord's appearances on the day of His resurrection. It is a beautiful story, full of obvious symbolism and deep meaning for our spiritual lives today, not to mention many connections to other stories in the Word. And so, just as the disciples walked then with the Lord, we are going to walk through this story today and reflect on its powerful message about how the Lord was known to His disciples, and how He is known to us today.

We begin at *Luke 24:13* with the two disciples traveling (walking) on Easter Sunday from Jerusalem to a village called Emmaus. We do not know the meaning of the name, Emmaus, but we know that a village represents what is relatively external in our spiritual lives, since it is out in the country, beyond the larger cities that represent the principal doctrines or teachings of the Church. Jerusalem in particular was the center of the Jewish religion and culture, and so represented all the main ideas and affections associated with that religion.

The two disciples clearly were leaving all this behind as they reasoned together in their disappointment and fear about the crucifixion of their Messiah. Indeed, they couldn't even call Him their Messiah anymore, but in verse 19 just "a Man, a Prophet, mighty in word and deed..."

We can only imagine how confused and sad their conversation was as they reasoned together about all that they had seen over the weekend.

Even the fact that they were going to a village about seven miles from Jerusalem – actually 60 furlongs, or *stadia* in the original Greek – is loaded with meaning, since the number 60 can be factored down to 6 and 10. These numbers represent the labor of temptation over the "remnants" (what

remained) of the good and truth they had from the Lord's ministry among them.

Their conversation is expressed by a Greek word that really means reasoning, or even disputing. Clearly they were trying to work out in their minds what had happened, and how they could come to terms with it. *And isn't this exactly what we do when we are faced with some tragic turn of events?* Maybe a friend or family member dies or gets terribly sick; maybe we suffer some awful tragedy ourselves, or begin to doubt our own faith in the Lord: and we are inclined to turn away from our historical convictions, descending from our spiritual ideals into external, natural concerns, and reasoning, even arguing, about the Lord and His providence.

But if the reasoning is at least hopeful, genuinely seeking answers and not just being cynical, an amazing thing can happen: Jesus Himself can draw near us and join the conversation.

The name, Jesus, specifically represents the Divine love, and it stands for the saving power of that love in our lives. We may not "get it"; indeed, we may have no idea how this love is working in our lives, but if our seeking for answers is genuine it will appear to us and comfort us and begin to inform us in a way that truth alone cannot do. But clarity does not come in a moment. There is a process involved, represented by the walking, the talking, the Lord's explanations, and finally real perception based on moving personal experience.

Note the Lord's question (v. 17): "What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?" And the disciples' question in reply: "Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there...?"

Throughout the Word we read about the Lord asking people questions when it is very clear that He already knows the answers. Think of Him in the *Genesis* story asking Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" Or in Canaan asking Abraham why Sarah laughed. Or in the Gospels asking "Who touched Me?" Or, "What do you want?" Or, "Have you not known Me, Philip?"

Of course He already knows the answers, but He asks to make us think, and often to give us the opportunity to repent and change our ways. Our doctrines tell us that even in heaven when something definite is learned, it is often followed by something that raises questions or causes doubt so that the person learning it will not be compelled by external means to believe it, but can think about it and consider it and compel himself to believe it or not.

But the disciples' question was prophetic, for He had been a stranger in Jerusalem! Or rather, Jerusalem had become a stranger to Him. Yes, they had the Word; they knew the great truths of religion; but they had "made the Word of no effect through their traditions." The truth had been completely separated from the good of charity, so when Goodness Itself came to them in person

*they did not know Him.* Indeed they despised Him and rejected Him.

So the Lord asked again, “What things?” “What are you talking about?” And they told Him. (Verses 19-24) Notice again how they referred to Him as “Jesus, a Man, a Prophet, mighty in word and deed,” unwittingly signifying His Divine love, wisdom and power, which is what these names mean in their spiritual sense.

Then they referred to the chief priests and rulers of Jerusalem, signifying the perverted loves and doctrines in the church at the time, which rejected Him. The phrase, “But we were hoping...” speaks to the innocence and trust they had lost in the crucifixion, and yet very subtly suggests that a remnant of that hope may still linger.

“And besides all this, today is the third day...” Yes, come to think of it, He did say He would rise again on the third day... But where is He? What happened?

“And certain women of our company astonished us with their story...” Women in the Word represent our affections (as distinct from the thoughts of our understanding). And it is no accident that they are the first to see the angels, and even the Lord Himself. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for *they* shall see God.” It is the will that takes us to the Lord; the understanding only comes along after in support.

After listening a long time the Lord finally speaks: “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe.... Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?”

Foolish ones! Perhaps it is not as harsh as it sounds, but it was a stern rebuke. “Didn’t He tell you that all this would happen, and that He would rise again on the third day? Didn’t He tell you this repeatedly in the weeks before the crucifixion?”

But we are slow. The understanding labors long and hard to see the truth – about ourselves and about the Lord. And this labor is important, lest we be compelled, or lest we be changed so quickly that we lose our identity, our sense

Our doctrines tell us that even in heaven when something definite is learned, it is often followed by something that raises questions or causes doubt so that the person learning it will not be compelled by external means to believe it, but can think about it and consider it and compel himself to believe it or not.

of self. So, “beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.”

Here we have exactly what the New Church teaches! And so, just as the Lord opened up the Scriptures for those first disciples, He opens them again for us today – and we still don’t get it! Why not? Because we’re not ready? Because we don’t want to? Because we don’t care enough to stay with it, despite our disappointments and confusion?

But the story continues (v. 28), as “they drew near the village... and He indicated that He would have gone farther.” This is clearly not just a reference to distance; it’s an obvious metaphor: He would have told them even more!

It was as He had said before, “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.” (*John* 16:12) And so they said to Him, “Abide with us, for it is near evening, and the day is far spent.” In other words, “Slow down, take it easy; we can’t follow any more, we can’t take it all in. Stay with us. Don’t get ahead of us. Give us time. Our understanding is limited.”

“And He went in to stay with them.” What a marvelous image! And how deeply significant of the Lord’s infinite patience and merciful Divine providence. “He went in *to stay with them.*”

“And it came to pass, as He reclined at the table with them that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight.” (Verses 30-31)

To walk, in the Word, is to think from intention and involves a change of state. To stand still (or steadfast) is to maintain an intention from the will. But to sit or recline is to *live* according to that will; it is to rest content in the decisions you have made. So in the story, having walked and talked, reasoned and discussed, thought, reflected, and most of all heard the Lord’s profound explanations of everything as far as they could understand, the disciples sat down to rest and eat with the Lord. Still – incredibly – they did not know who He was until He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. And “then their eyes were opened, and they knew Him.”

Think of it. We know that the sense of smell is one of the strongest triggers of human memory, and now combined with the sight and sound and closeness of the Lord throughout that day these men were undoubtedly confronted with the powerful recollection of all the many times the Lord had broken bread with them before the crucifixion: the feeding of the 5,000, the dinners, the feasts, and all His parables involving bread or meals – even His prayer with its reference to “daily bread.” But most powerful of all must have been the memory of that last Passover meal just a few days before, where He had done the *same thing*: blessing and breaking the bread and offering it to them all saying, “Take, eat, this is My body;” and “This do in remembrance of Me.”

Now, here He was again, just as before only more wonderfully than

ever. They must have been absolutely amazed. But here's the main thing: bread represents the goodness of the Lord's love. They recognized Him in the goodness of His love! Not only in the teaching; not only in the explanations of the Scripture; not only in the reasoning with which they had begun the day, but in the humble, quiet sharing of the bread of life, the goodness of love that can unite all people with the Lord and with one another.

Truth and reasoning and understanding are all means to an end. They are important. They are necessary. They are part of the process we must go through to build the foundation in our minds for the house of our faith. But faith is not just understanding, it is the acknowledgment of truth from affection because it is true; and we see that it is true when we see the goodness within it, which also happens when we apply that truth to our lives, acting on it with sincere commitment. Then when we reflect we see that everything in our experience confirms it, even the most challenging events of our lives.

But why did the Lord then “vanish from their sight”? You know, when you labor for a long time to get some concept and you finally get it you have achieved your goal, you no longer need to look back, to second-guess yourself, to live in the understanding. Now you are free. You can live with confidence from the heart. It's not that you forget everything you have learned but in this case it was no longer necessary for the disciples to see the Lord in a natural body because they could see Him everywhere. They saw Him especially in the Scriptures in the whole history of Israel, and in their own lives as they experienced His love and wisdom daily for three years.

And so it is for us. When with understanding we see the *goodness* in the truth of the Word we see the Lord and feel His presence everywhere. He is then truly glorified, not only in Himself but in our own hearts and minds, and in our lives.

Then, looking back, the disciples “said to one another, ‘Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures for us?’ And they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together,” and

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Every time we consider the real meaning and impact of the Lord's life we can be impressed anew with the infinite power of His love and wisdom, and we can rejoice together with Him in the assurance of eternal life.

they told them everything that had happened. And then again Jesus appeared in the midst of them, saying, "Peace be to you," reassuring them and – again – eating with them: celebrating the goodness and the truth of His life with them.

Can we do this, too? Absolutely. Every time we consider the real meaning and impact of the Lord's life we can be impressed anew with the infinite power of His love and wisdom, and we can rejoice together with Him in the assurance of eternal life. For this is why He came: not to extend our wealth, influence or power in this world, but to expose

the vanity of selfishness and superficiality, in fact to "overcome the world" and restore our freedom to choose a heavenly life.

Remember, the angel told Joseph he should call the baby "Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." (*Matthew 1:21*) And so He has, and so He will if we commit to learn from Him and follow Him, and break the bread of heaven with Him in the goodness of His love.

Amen.



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# Heaven is An Attitude

*A Sermon by the Rev. Mark D. Pendleton*

*Lessons: Genesis 39 (1-2,4,6,20-23); 50:15-21; Secrets of Heaven, 2568.4, 3923.2*

**W**e are well into 2015, and at the turn of the year I was thinking of Pearl Street in downtown Boulder, Colorado.

Pearl Street isn't a street that cars drive on. It's a wide, outdoor, brick-paved, walking mall, with shops on either side and lush shade trees and benches placed down the middle.

But it's not the brick pavement, landscaping, or absence of cars that most makes it attractive. It is the type of people you meet and interact with along the way and in the shops.

Boulder is a college town nestled up against the first tier of the Rocky Mountains as they jump up out of the western plains. That means Boulder attracts people who have a young, active, energetic, athletic, outdoorsy mind set and interests. Boulder is also just far enough west to gather in a taste of "hippy," health-conscious, healthy eating-type culture. Combine these factors and what you often encounter are people who are young, physically healthy, energetic and capable, possessed of a "Can do," "Will do," "Can conquer," "It's all good" mentality that is infectious.

Don't we admire and even love people who carry that kind of indomitable spirit? Nothing gets them down! Often they even *look* more handsome or beautiful than they otherwise would because of the attitude they carry.

A good attitude is a strong and valuable asset. There are stories of people in prisoner-of-war camps – people living in some of the most challenging and cruel environments known to humankind – who were able to rise above their hardship and overcome huge mental and emotional adversity because of the attitude they carried.

A movie that came out at Christmastime – *Unbroken* – is about one such man: Louie Zamperini. He survived terrible, inhumane treatment in a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp.

Louie died last summer at age 94. Before he died, he was interviewed while the movie was being finished. He was asked: "While you were in the

prisoner-of-war camp, were you able to tell which of the prisoners were likely to survive the ordeal, and which were not?" He said, "Yes, we started to see that the people who had a good attitude – who were able to see the good in their experience – were the ones who would make it, while those who didn't weren't as likely to survive."

Joseph in the land of Egypt had that same kind of attitude. No doubt it was part of what made him a handsome man. (*Genesis 39:6*) Joseph was cast into prison for a crime he didn't commit, but he didn't let it get him down. He went to work in the prison house and became overseer of the prisoners.

Years later, after he had gotten out of prison and become the most prominent man in Egypt – second only to Pharaoh – 10 of his brothers came to buy grain in that land. At first they didn't recognize him, but after he'd made himself known, they feared he would seek revenge on them for the way they had treated him two decades before. But he answered them: "You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good – to save many people alive, as it is this day." So Joseph was a hard-working soul who was able to see the good in what he had been through.

One way we can think of heaven and even define it is in terms of *attitude*. In one sense, heaven *is* an attitude. It's an attitude you carry, born of a reforming, regenerating spirit. Heaven isn't so much about our personal successes or failures in this world – accomplishments or lack of them – as it is about the way we *look* at things, and how we *respond* to whatever comes our way. In fact, for all of the many things we leave behind in this world, our *attitude* is something we take with us into the next life, and it contributes to the good of everyone there.

So let's take a look at some of the elements spoken of in the Word and in the doctrines of our church that make up a strong, enduring, healthy, heavenly attitude. It's a kind of attitude we can experience while we are alive in this world. It's something we will carry with us into the next life. And it's something that angels wake up with every morning.

First, a heavenly attitude is a *searching* attitude. It's not one that has all the answers or engages in one-way, "I'll tell you the way it is," "I want to be heard but I'm not interested in listening," communication. Instead, it's an attitude that seeks and gathers information en route to loving and wise decision-making. Here's something from the doctrine of our church that describes this part of an angelic attitude, in terms of a "genuine affection for truth":

A genuine affection for truth consists in willing and desiring to know the real truths of faith, with a view to putting them to good use, and for the sake of the life one should lead. Those with a genuine desire for truth examine the Scriptures and pray to the Lord for enlightenment; and when they receive it, their hearts rejoice. (*Secrets of Heaven* 8993.3-4)



Being an information gatherer rather than a one-way, cock-sure-of-yourself opinion dispenser takes humility. And humility is something an angel has in spades. Reading from the doctrine of our church:

The Divine cannot flow into a proud heart, that is, into a heart full of self-love, for such a heart is hard and in the Word is called “a heart of stone.” Instead, life from the Lord flows only into a humble heart, because it is fitted to receive. And it is fitted to receive because when a heart is truly humble no self-love or love of the world stands in the way. (*Secrets of Heaven* 9377.1, 8873)

But even though angelic people are “into” information gathering, they don’t just accept whatever they hear as being gospel truth. In the New Church we are told:

Real faith is nothing else than an acknowledgment that a thing is so because it is true. People who are in real faith think and say, “This is true, and therefore I believe it.” If such people do not see the truth of a thing, they say, “I do not know whether this is true, and therefore as yet I do not believe it. How can I believe what I do not intellectually comprehend? It may be false.” (*Doctrine of Faith* 2)

Someone who is an opinion dispenser, and who can’t hear input from others or hear where others are coming from – there’s something in that person that needs to die before what is new and better can be born. An angelic attitude is one that is willing to die unto itself for the sake of something better. Jesus said:

If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. (*Matthew* 16:24-25)

This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s own life for his friends. (*John* 15:12-14)

Reading further from the doctrine of our church:

Before we can know what truth is, or be moved by goodness, the things that hinder and offer resistance must be removed. Thus the old life must die before a new one can be conceived. (*Secrets of Heaven* 18)

Jesus said, “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” (*John* 12:24)

People who are willing to die unto the less attractive parts of themselves are often people who actively *live* a life of faith. Swedenborg writes:

An angel of heaven once said to me that he had conversed with many Reformed Christians, and had heard what the character of their faith was. He related his conversation with one who was in faith separated from good deeds, and with another who was in faith not separated, and what he had heard from both. He said

that he questioned them, and they made answer. With the one who was in faith not separated from a good life, the angel spoke as follows:

**“Friend, who are you?”**

“I am a Reformed Christian.”

**“What is your doctrine and the religion you have from it?”**

“Faith and good will.”

**“These are two things?”**

“They cannot be separated.”

**“What is faith?”**

“To believe what the Word teaches.”

**“What is good will?”**

“To do what the Word teaches.”

**“Have you only believed these things, or have you also done them?”**

“I have also done them.”

The angel of heaven then looked at him, and said, “My friend, come with me, and dwell with us.” (*Doctrine of Faith* 41, 43)

So a heavenly attitude is one that is on a spiritual walk with the Lord, putting principles of truth to work in life. And what kind of life *is* that? It’s an active, energetic, hard-working life. Again, we read from the doctrine of the New Church:

In heaven, everyone is rewarded according to the nobleness of his or her use, and at the same time according to his affection for useful service. There no idler is tolerated, no lazy vagabond, no indolent boaster claiming credit for the zeal and vigor of others. But everyone must be active, skillful, attentive and diligent in his office and business, and must put honor and reward not in the first place, but in the second or third. (*Divine Love* XII, found at the end of *Apocalypse Explained*, vol. 6)

Again, Swedenborg writes:

Just in so far as we put our mind into our work and labor, from the love of it, so far we are in it as to affection and thought. And in proportion as we are in it, we are withheld from thinking of and loving vanities, and afterwards are led by the Lord to think about and love what is good. All workers who look to the Lord and shun evils as sins, shun idleness, because it is the devil’s pillow; they shun insincerity and fraud; and they shun luxury and intemperance. They are hard-working, sincere, sober, content with their lot, and work for their neighbor as they would for themselves; because in doing their work they love themselves and their neighbor in equal degree. (*Charity* 168, part of *Posthumous Theological Works*)

A person who is active, hard-working, and “into” useful service is one whose “light” shines out to the world. Jesus said:

You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before people, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (*Matthew 5:14-16*)

This idea of light shining out from us is echoed in the doctrine of our church:

As we instruct our understanding, we prepare it for the reception of light, and hence for wisdom from heaven. As we do the good deeds that belong to good will, we prepare our will for the reception of the heat of heaven, or of love. Like one who cuts a diamond, we make preparation for the splendor of light to be diffused from ourselves. (*Additions to True Christianity IV:1-3, part of Posthumous Theological Works*)

A person who connects faith with life, and whose “light” shines out to the world, is someone who is able to see, look for, and promote the goodness, truth and usefulness in others. Again we are taught:

Those who have faith that is embedded in a good life notice the goodness in others. If they see evils and falsities they excuse them, and if possible endeavor with that person to correct them. They hardly notice the evil in another person, but instead notice all the forms of goodness (or usefulness) and also the truths that are his or hers; and on the evils and falsities they place a good interpretation. They think nothing else than good of the neighbor, and speak nothing but good, and this from the Lord who is at work within a charitable spirit. [In point of fact, such people] are like the angels residing with them. (*Secrets of Heaven 1079, 1088*)

Well, as you might guess, people who are willing to die unto themselves and re-focus on a life of useful service are people who know the challenges of spiritual trial and conflict. And though at times they feel pulled in the direction of selfishness and greed (like anyone else) they are willing to engage in spiritual warfare for the sake of a good outcome. Swedenborg describes it this way:

The subject in *Genesis*, chapter 2 is heavenly (or “celestial”) people; in the previous chapter it was spiritual people who progressed to being spiritual from having been “dead”. But since people nowadays do not know what a heavenly person is, and scarcely know what a spiritual person is, or what a dead person is, let the nature of each one be presented briefly:

*Swedenborg makes two points in this comparison, then he makes this third point:*

“Dead” people, when involved in conflict, nearly always give in. And when there is no conflict, evils and falsities reign supreme within them, making them their slaves. Spiritual people are involved in conflict, but they always conquer. Heavenly (or “celestial”) people are not involved in conflict. If evils and falsities assail them, they

treat them with contempt, and are therefore called conquerors. No visible bonds restrict them, for they are free. (*Secrets of Heaven* 81)

Swedenborg also says the following about people involved in spiritual conflict over one or another part of themselves:

People who believe in God say to themselves, "With God's help I will conquer this." And they pray for it and obtain it. (*Charity* 203, part of *Posthumous Theological Works*)

Spiritual battle can be challenging and painful. It's not for the faint-hearted. At times, even a person with a good attitude may feel like the Israelites did, who felt victimized by their harsh wilderness circumstances. They might even feel inclined to give up in the struggles that they're engaged in and return to an easier, slave-like existence. Reading from *Numbers*:

So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, "If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness! Why has the Lord brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become *victims*? So they said to one another, "Let us select a leader and return to Egypt." (*Numbers* 14:1-4, emphasis added)

But a heavenly attitude won't listen to the voices of self-pity and victimization:

But Joshua and Caleb, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes; and they spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying: "The land we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. If the Lord delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us. Only do not rebel against the Lord, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the Lord is with us. Do not fear them." (*Ibid.* 14:6-9)

In the end, people possessed of a heavenly attitude are those who court a sense of hope, and who trust the Lord's leadership in their lives. Reading from the doctrine of our church:

The words of Scripture, "Lot urged the angels strongly" mean a state of temptation when a person overcomes. As has been stated, temptations involve feelings of doubt regarding the Lord's presence and mercy, and also regarding His salvation. The evil spirits who are present with a person at such times do all they can to infuse a negative outlook, but good spirits and angels from the Lord in every way disperse that doubting attitude, all the time preserving a feeling of hope and in the end strengthening an affirmative outlook. One who conquers in temptations still experiences feelings of doubt; yet he or she who allows him- or herself to be filled with hope remains steadfastly in an affirmative outlook. (*Secrets of Heaven* 2338)

And on the idea of trusting the Lord's leadership our doctrines have this to say:

Those who trust in the Divine, though concerned about the morrow, yet they are unconcerned, in that they are not anxious, let alone worried, when they give thought to the morrow. They remain even-tempered whether or not they realize desires, and they do not grieve over loss; they are content with their lot. If they become wealthy they do not become infatuated with wealth; if they are promoted to important positions they do not consider themselves better than others. If they become poor they are not made miserable either; if lowly in status they do not feel downcast. They know that for those who trust in the Divine all things are moving toward an everlasting state of happiness, and that no matter what happens at any time to them, it contributes to that state. (*Ibid.* 8478.3)

So what is it like to experience heaven on earth? And what is it like to show up at the gates of heaven, ready to enter?

Part of the answer lies in opening ourselves to the presence and power of the Lord and the angels, and doing what we can to develop a heavenly attitude. It's an attitude that wants to know the real truth about people and things in life, and rejoices when it finds it. It's an attitude of humility, yet it's no one's fool in terms of what it accepts as gospel truth. It's an attitude that is willing to die unto itself for the sake of something better; it is fully engaged in a faith walk with the Lord.

It is active, skillful, attentive, diligent and hard-working. It lets its God-given light shine – putting out for the goodness and usefulness of others as much as it does for itself. It is *relentless* in its pursuit of heavenly life – treating the forces of evil with quick and utter disdain. It refuses to function from a place of self-pity and victimization, preferring instead to place its trust and confidence in the Lord's leadership, and to dwell in a land of hope for a brighter future.

These are just a few of the many facets on the gem of a heavenly attitude. Good wishes to all of us, as we continue courting this attitude in our lives.

Amen.



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# Boynton Beach Retreat 2015

*Bruce Henderson*

This year's Boynton Beach Retreat, January 18-22, featured four sessions each by the Rev. Dr. Thane P. Glenn, Dr. D. Gregory Rose and the Rev. Jeremy F. Simons. Their presentations are summarized below.

Thane Glenn is Chaplain of Bryn Athyn College, where he teaches both English and Religion.

Greg Rose spent many years in the U.S. Air Force as an intelligence officer specializing in the Middle East, and taught at the U.S. Air Force Academy before coming to Bryn Athyn College to teach political science and history.

Jeremy Simons retired as pastor of the Bryn Athyn Church, and now serves as Chaplain at the Bryn Athyn Cathedral.

Their presentations were prepared independently but serendipitously offered something of a theme.

Thane spoke about *Unity and Difference in the New Church* – how we are all different but bring a sense of unity and belonging in our differences, and how much of the strength of the Church is in “holding differences lightly.”

Greg, who had spoken at the retreat four years ago on *Islam and Islamism*, brought a different angle with the topic of *Culture and Politics: Arab and American* – the things that distinguish and often divide us. Again, the theme was appreciating and understanding our differences so that we can have a balanced perspective.

Jeremy focused on the historic strategies of the General Church – how and why it broke with Convention and its *Blueprint for Success* in a challenging world. An underlying theme here, too, was overcoming differences in pursuit of unity.



## **Rev. Dr. Thane Glenn**

*Unity and Difference in the New Church*

As part of placing unity and difference in context, Thane noted that all of us are different in the Church but love a sense of belonging and connectedness – of unity.

This past year has been trying in many ways – globally and within the Church. There are wars and conflicts throughout the world, issues with race relations and economics in our country. In the Church people and the social media have been aflame with conflicts about women in the priesthood and homosexuality.

He offered comfort and hope from *Matthew 24*, which talks about “wars and rumors of wars,” “famines, pestilences and earthquakes in diverse places,” “the beginning of sorrows,” “false prophets” and “the love of many (waxing) cold.” But then comes the hope in verse 13: “But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.” How do we endure to the end in the face of love growing cold?

Thane said this all speaks to a world of lawlessness – devoid of the Ten Commandments – with the New Church vision of God in His Second Coming offering the solution.

So what is the New Church, and how do we help to bring that solution to the world?

He focused first on the New Church as “the crown of all churches,” worshipping one visible God. (*True Christian Religion* 787) The word translated *crown* here (Latin *corona*) can mean a crown or a garland. A crown signifies honor, distinction and authority. A garland represents a weaving together of multiple elements. Together they symbolize wisdom from love.

The perfection of heaven, he said, is in its variety – the ultimate unity of many diverse people. (*Heaven and Hell* 56-57) The crown represents the unity the Lord makes out of our differences as we worship a visible God. (Compare *True Christian Religion* 763)

Swedenborg talks about previous churches coming to an end and being both replaced and renewed. So it is with us. We need to rid ourselves of what is not serving us and restore ourselves with what is from God.

In the handout Thane quoted *True Christian Religion* 354: “The truths which make up faith are varied and to human sight appear different. ... Yet they all make one in the Lord, and are made one by the Lord. ... For the Lord links together scattered and divided truths, so to speak, into a single form.”

Because God accepts all of our differences and forges unity with them, we should perhaps hold lightly all the differences within the Church – using them to unite rather than divide us. There are obvious implications for current issues within the Church.

The lesson is that it is okay to have our differences, but that we should hold them lightly, with humility, and let God build something good out of those differences.

Because God accepts all of our differences and forges unity with them, we should perhaps hold lightly all the differences within the Church – using them to unite rather than divide us. There are obvious implications for current issues within the Church.

The crown of all churches is the Lord's crown, not ours. Churches come to an end, he said, because charity fails. Is there a lack of charity in accepting different ideas within the Church now? Where charity fails, we may cause a broken crown. The "crown of churches" can only come as we uphold

charity, and this is something we must constantly revisit.

(For a full treatment of this subject, see the article, *The Crown of All Churches: What Does That Mean?*, in the November-December 2012 issue of *New Church Life*.)

**Day Two** was devoted to how we need to be cooperating with the Lord in achieving unity through "the New Covenant."

Thane cited *Arcana Coelestia* 1812, in which the Lord, in His temptations on earth, "did not fight to become the greatest in heaven," but "fought solely so that others might become something and might be saved."

At the Passover before His crucifixion Jesus said: "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you." (*Luke* 22:20)

This "blood of the new covenant" is a "ransom" or redemption – a buying back. This concept has been the basis for the atonement theology of some branches of Christianity – buying us back from God's wrath – but nowhere do the Scriptures say this. Jesus actually redeems us *to* God, not *from* God. The "ransom" is buying us back from hell.

God's original covenant was the redemption from slavery in Exodus, and was actually ultimately accomplished with the giving of the Ten Commandments. (Compare *Exodus* 34:28) The new covenant – "to be written on our hearts," (*Jeremiah* 31:33) – lies in the new commandment to love God and to love one another – indeed, to love one another as He loves us. (*Mark* 12:30-31; *John* 13:34)

The point of all this, Thane said, is not to make Christianity a club, with some people in and some out. God is reaching out to everyone, "with fervent desire," loving our variety and seeing unity within it, especially as we worship Him and do what He loves.



The lesson is that it is okay to have our differences, but that we should hold them lightly, with humility, and let God build something good out of those differences.

**Day Three** looked at how all of this relates to the current state of Bryn Athyn College. Like the images in the Word of “all tongues” gathering to praise the Lord, (*Revelation* 7:9-10; *Isaiah* 45:23, 66:18), the College has opened itself to people of “all tongues” – all different backgrounds of doctrines or beliefs. (*Apocalypse Revealed* 282, 505) So how is this working out? How can a church – or a college – be built from “all tongues”?

With a much more diverse student body, Thane said, we are still novices in creating an atmosphere in charity of leading to the Lord, but we are progressing.

He is one of three instructors teaching the introductory religion course to all students in the College, using *The New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* as its base. People hold their faith close to their hearts, he said, and we need to welcome different perspectives while also challenging them with new ideas.

Most students new to the Church are not willing to have their faith challenged directly by Swedenborgianism, he said, but they are willing to be challenged about what is in the Bible. So he has reframed the course to focus on what the Bible is calling us to, comparing the New Church perspective, and invites the students to reason together about the differences in their perspectives.

If Jesus was willing to ask a lawyer who tempted Him (*Luke* 10:25-26) how that man read and interpreted what was written in the Law, can't we start there by carefully asking about what is in the Bible: What is your interpretation? Together instructor and students look beyond surface readings of Scripture to see what the real message of the Bible is. Then *The New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* becomes a complement to what is in the Bible. The process is sometimes messy but richly rewarding.

There are moments when we know we are failing, he said, but also moments of success. Course evaluations – which are overwhelmingly positive – include such comments as: “a vision of Christianity for all people” and “Bryn Athyn College taught me how to be a human.”

As students progress through their academic careers, he sees more unity and civility emerging. And within the vision of “all tongues,” what is hopeful is just having the conversation and hopefully leading students to a life of love and wisdom.

**Day Four** delved into the fundamental dynamics of unity and difference through the perspective of God “making all things new.”

The Two Great Commandments given in the Gospels (taken originally from *Deuteronomy* and *Leviticus*) have everything to do with unity and difference in the Church. To look to a loving God is to seek unity; to love

others as you love yourself is to learn to love the differences.

We need to trust in an all-loving God in all things of life, Thane said. To love God is to love what He loves and to follow His commandments. And at the heart of what God cherishes is our freedom; we are created to act in freedom according to reason – according to our “reading of the law.” (*Divine Providence* 70-99)

God is One and God creates variety. Similarly, we are all created differently and for unity. We all act and think differently from our understanding, but perhaps we find more unity as we learn to hold those differences lightly and in charity.

We are called upon in the *Sermon on the Mount* to “be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.” (*Matthew* 5:48) The perfection alluded to here is God making the sun to rise on the evil as well as the good, bringing rain to the just and the unjust. (*Matthew* 5:45) God is the model of perfection, and our being “perfect” is allowing for imperfections in others – holding them lightly.

The promise in *Revelation*, amid a new heaven and earth and the New Jerusalem descending, is: “Behold, I make all things new.” (*Revelation* 21:5) This is the covenant of the New Church. God’s continual creation from His infinity means that there will be a continual unfolding of variety – in ideas, in loves, in forms. (Compare *Divine Love and Wisdom* 318 and *Arcana Coelestia* 9160)

Does the New Church come more into being, Thane asked, as we learn to love our differences?

Asked about the apparent lack of charity within the Church on some issues, he said we are challenged to see that out of conflict comes a higher vision. As we go through our own temptations and regeneration, we need to hold the differences lightly, to let go of the love of dominion and having to have our own way, and to pray – for ourselves and for the Church: “Thy will be done.”

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Greg Rose in Egypt

## Dr. D. Gregory Rose

*Culture and Politics: Arab and American*

Just as our impressions of the Arab world are formed from media and stereotypes, so are their concepts of us formed by such popular TV shows as *Dallas* and *Baywatch* – cowboys, tycoons and a decadent culture. While our culture can be summarized in the acronym W.E.I.R.D. – Western, Educated,

Industrialized, Rich, Democratic – the Arab world is very different.

Culturally, it contains a variety of languages, religions and socio-economic development. Politically, it has been roiled by the recent “Arab Awakening,” but it’s too early to tell if this will lead to any significant transition. The events of 2011 spread quickly and offered hope of reform after decades of corruption and recent inflation and unemployment. But today, authoritarianism still dominates the collection of weak nation states and stateless nations. The whole region is suffering, with no solution in sight.

To generalize, we are dealing with two kinds of countries. In real nations, such as Iran and Tunisia, the

population feels some sense of common history and identity. Most of the other countries in the region are little more than “tribes with flags,” where one group dominates and excludes others, and there is little sense of a common identity.

The current ISIS threat, based in Syria and extending into Iraq, is a brutal expression of Sunni nationalism. More importantly, it is a reflection of weak states in that part of the Middle East but is ultimately unsustainable.

Some look at the world today and see a clash of civilizations between East and West, Islam and Christianity. Others see a clash within the Arab civilization as the people debate the role of religion in politics. Still others see a potential convergence of civilizations as the Arab world starts to look more “modern,” with rising literacy rates, falling fertility rates, and the concomitant rise of individualism.

**Day Two** focused on the way different cultures develop their systems of morality. Greg recommended as a useful guidebook, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion* by Jonathan Haidt. Written to help people understand the cultural and moral basis of American politics, it can also help us understand the politics and culture of other parts of the world, like the Middle East.

He cited three clusters of moral themes that societies around the world sample from when constructing moral systems:

**Autonomy** – People are unique, autonomous and free. Societies that emphasize this theme develop theories of individual rights and justice systems to protect these rights.

The current ISIS threat, based in Syria and extending into Iraq, is a brutal expression of Sunni nationalism. More importantly, it is a reflection of weak states in that part of the Middle East but is ultimately unsustainable.

**Community** – People are not just individuals; they are members of bigger units, such as families, tribes or nations. These units are important institutions of society, more than just the sum of their parts and more important than single individuals. Societies that emphasize this theme stress that the institutions should be respected and protected, and develop moral concepts such as duty, hierarchy, respect and patriotism.

**Divinity** – People aren't just autonomous individuals or members of groups but vessels holding a divine spark. Societies that emphasize this theme become concerned with actions that elevate or degrade the vessel of that divine gift. They develop concepts such as sanctity, sin, purity and pollution.

Each cluster samples from each of these themes but gives priority to different ones. The result is a variety of systems of morality. The priority in the West is to protect individual rights. In the Middle East the focus is on families and groups.

One problem, Greg said, is that people from different cultures and even subcultures (for example, liberals and conservatives in this country) have trouble understanding one another because they tend to view their opposites as “evil and/or stupid.” Our worldview tends to pull from our moral foundations. He quoted Haidt, whose book was written to get beyond labels, as saying: “Morality binds and blinds.” (Reflecting back on Thane Glenn's presentation, we tend not to hold our differences lightly.)

**Day Three** focused on an overview of Arab culture. Much of the Arab world is now urbanized but still is influenced by a “desert culture” – well depicted in the classic 1962 movie, *Lawrence of Arabia*. The most important factor in a desert culture is survival; it dictates a nomadic group-oriented lifestyle on the Arabian Peninsula, along with the modes of dress and transportation (the camel). From the emphasis on survival, several cultural elements became important, such as:

**Group Loyalty:** People live and move in groups; no one survives alone. It is a “patri-“ culture – patriarchal, male dominated; patrilineal – genealogy traced through the father; and patrilocal – when a son marries he and his wife stay with the father's group.

**Appearance of Strength:** Actually being strong would be best, but appearing to be strong is better than appearing weak. Weak groups are exploited by strong groups and do not survive. Many sons helps to provide strength and survival. The importance of avoiding shame might have developed from not wanting to lose face or appear weak.

**Hospitality:** A strong group or person can afford to be hospitable and it bolsters the appearance of strength. Information gained from guests can also aid the group.

**Eloquence:** The ability to manipulate language is important, both for its

power and its beauty. Even today, poets are the rock stars of the Arab world.

The Arab culture may appear “weird” to the West, because it is not our W.E.I.R.D., but it is how they live and think.

In **Day Four** Greg compared American and Arab values: what motivates people, how they think, and what their priorities are:

**Americans**

Individualism  
 Self-reliance  
 Mobility  
 Equality/Impartiality  
 Hard work/material gain  
 Religion/personal choice  
 Control our own lives  
 Nuclear family  
 Youth veneration  
 Direct resolution of conflict  
 Confrontation/assertive  
 Objective/logical/linear  
 Guilt avoidance

**Middle East**

Group loyalty  
 Cooperation  
 Sticking together  
 Status/Favoritism  
 Birthright/Status  
 Religion/Group label  
 Fatalism  
 Extended family  
 Age veneration  
 Intermediaries/indirect resolution  
 Harmony  
 Subjective/personal/relationships  
 Shame avoidance

These factors are at the root of the challenges in understanding each other’s cultures and building productive, trustworthy relationships. Greg concluded by mentioning three things to keep in mind during any human encounter – especially cross-cultural encounters:

- Know yourself
  - Open-mindedness
  - Empathy
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**The Rev. Jeremy F. Simons**

*Blueprint for Success*

The subheading for this series was: “What is our strategy for the future of the Church? Is it working?”

(Jeremy provided extensive, detailed handouts for each session, including such supplementary handouts as: *The Principles of the Academy*, 1899, Brief Form; *Swedenborgian Influence in 19<sup>th</sup> Century America*; and *The State of the Christian World – According to the Heavenly Doctrines*. If you would like copies contact: *Jeremy*.)



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In these talks he focused on the underlying ideas or “strategies” of the General Church. These are not the strategic planning strategies the Administration, Consistory and Board deal with, but the underlying attitudes that form the Church. Principal among these guiding principles is that the Church is always about love and charity.

The General Church came into being in response to perceived fatally flawed strategies of the New Church in the 1880s, with a whole new set of strategies.

Jeremy posed six questions “to help us make sense of what is happening in the General Church today”:

1. What were the reasons why the General Church came into existence? What were its founding strategies? Do we agree with them today?
2. What are the reasons behind, and the implications of, the General Church focus on New Church education? Has this been a good strategy? Is it still?
3. What has historically been the General Church view of the international church? How has this changed over time? What is our current strategy and what should it be?
4. How has the General Church approach to evangelization changed overtime? What is our current strategy?
5. How have populations where the Church exists changed over the past 100 years? What challenges do we face with young people and membership? What new opportunities are opening up?
6. What is our strategy with marriage and gender issues? What are the challenges for conjugal love in different church populations?

The General Church grew directly out of the theoretical framework of the Academy Movement within Convention, with two primary postulates:

1. The Writings are the Word and our supreme authority in matters of doctrine.
2. The Christian Church has come to an end; we live in a post-Christian society.

The emerging General Church strategy was “to promote the survival and growth of the organized church in a resistant culture.”

There was opposition to these “Academy” ideas within Convention, led by such men as the Rev. Thomas Worcester, a prominent New Church clergyman in Boston. One of the first to articulate the ideas that later formed the Academy Movement was the Rev. Richard de Charms, who wrote in the

1830s – “more forthrightly than any American before him” – that Swedenborg was commissioned to convey the doctrines of the New Church by the Lord, and that the doctrines “are to be received with the Lord’s authority.”

New Church education was one of the Academy strategies, but it had many supporters throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with 10 schools founded in the 1830s and ‘40s, and 52 schools having some connection with the New Church before the founding of the Academy in 1874. But there was strong opposition. Mr. Worcester not only opposed New Church education but claimed it was contrary to the teachings of the Writings.

At the time, in Jeremy’s view, the strategies of Convention were based on an optimistic view of the state of the Christian world and the expectation that it would respond to a gently accommodated vision of the New Church. So they practiced vigorous evangelization, fostered warm relations with other church bodies, restated teachings from the Writings in terms acceptable to the public, ignored teachings that they saw as out of step with society, and maintained a congregational form of church government, with leadership in the hands of the people according to democratic principles.

The early leaders of the Academy were less optimistic about the culture, seeing it as being in steep decline. Their strategies for success in this environment included:

1. The reliance on the Writings as the Word
2. A recognition that the Christian Church has come to an end
3. A rigorous, scholarly approach to doctrine
4. New Church education
5. Distinctive New Church social life
6. A modified democratic structure, which invited lay participation in all decision-making, but which reserved doctrinal decision for the clergy
7. A governance structure within the clergy that would promote strong central leadership and unity, referred to as “*three degrees of the priesthood*”

**Day Two** continued to contrast the Convention and Academy strategies, with more detail, plus quotes from early Church and Academy leaders on their own foundational convictions.

In the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the conflict over these two opposite ways of looking at what the Church should do grew more pronounced. By the 1870s, according to the Rev. Carl Th. Odhner: “The defenders of the faith drew nearer together, and began to look for means for combined and more effective resistance against the spirit of destruction which had invaded the Church.”

That is when William Henry Benade, Frank Ballou, Walter Childs and

John Pitcairn met in a Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, restaurant on January 14, 1874, to consider – in Mr. Childs’ words – “what could be done to counteract the growing influence of the negative spirit in the Church.” Out of that meeting sprang the formalization of the Academy of the New Church as a movement within Convention for the purpose of reforming the church.

**Day Three** focused on whether the founding strategies have been successful and how they should be measured.

“How successful have these strategies been over the years? Well, the General Church does still exist,” Jeremy said, “and people believe passionately in the Heavenly Doctrines worldwide. At the same time no one would claim that the denomination is growing rapidly.” He offered statistics and charts to illustrate just how we are doing.

There has never been a year of actual decline in total membership, but growth has been very slow and efforts at evangelization haven’t made as great a difference as we have hoped. New Church education still plays a significant role, but we may not be capitalizing on it enough.

Growth in the General Church has increased about 500 members every five years since 1900, but the rate has been slowing, not increasing, in the United States. New Church education has been a significant factor in maintaining stability.

In the United States, 2,167 of 3,366 (64%) General Church members are Academy or Bryn Athyn College alumni. But out of 2,456 who were baptized as children but did not attend New Church schools, only 209 have become members. About 50% of living alumni are General Church members, but this probably understates their actual participation, because many are involved without having formalized their membership.

Meanwhile, Convention membership has declined from 5,000 in 1925, to 3,000 in 1975 and barely 1,000 now, according to reports in *The Messenger*. Their strategies, he suggested, are not working.

He also offered statistics on other North American denominations, ranging from the largest – the Catholic Church, with 66.6 million – to the Episcopal Church – 14<sup>th</sup> largest, with a decline from 3.4 million in the mid-’60s to 1.9 million now. Some have been growing, such as the Southern Baptist Convention, the Mormons and the Church of God, while others – including the United Methodist Church, Evangelical Lutheran, Presbyterian and Episcopal – are declining.

On **Day Four** Jeremy looked at how the world has been changing since the founding strategies of the General Church and what our strategies should be for the future of the Church.

The religious landscape has changed dramatically in North America, and the General Church has not been immune to the cultural impact on



churches and attitudes. Many people accepted Swedenborg's vision of life after death in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but a Dominican prior was quoted in 1980: "No reasonable person can hold such a belief any longer."

Emergence from the Depression in the '30s, victory in World War II, and the prosperity of the '50s encouraged optimism and a feeling "that the General Church was a success." But now we are in a more skeptical age.

The cultural climate of the '60s brought new challenges for churches in general, as young people increasingly embraced radical and subversive ideas. But Jeremy said he grew up in the '60s hearing how well the Church was doing, with virtually no one criticizing or challenging church leaders. Obviously that has changed.

In the '80s and '90s the need for new strategies became apparent. Jeremy quoted the Rev. Lorentz Soneson in a statement to the Joint Council in 1980: "The Church has come to realize its responsibility for evangelization. The hard fact is, if we don't increase our membership, the Church will pass out of existence. In the years immediately ahead, this will undoubtedly become a major use of the General Church."

The Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss said in his response to the Assembly Confirmation Vote for Executive Bishop in 1991: "I dream of a church that will accept without fear, without concern, the call of the Lord to go out and make disciples of all nations. The Heavenly Doctrines are not ours. They are for all people. We have the opportunity to begin as 4,261 adults and their children and their friends to carry this message."

But, Jeremy said, "Evangelization efforts have not been as successful as we have hoped. Predictions of success in evangelization have been consistently frustrated, leading to increasing calls for change, new methods, new vision, new attitudes."

In this same period a decreasing number of Academy graduates are joining the Church.

"Issues of equality and social justice, especially surrounding the equal treatment of women and the acceptance of homosexuality lead many, and especially the young, to view the Church as a negative force.

Emergence from the Depression in the '30s, victory in World War II, and the prosperity of the '50s encouraged optimism and a feeling "that the General Church was a success." But now we are in a more skeptical age.

“We ask ourselves what we are doing wrong. We receive many suggestions. Our leadership, governance structures and strategies are increasingly criticized, and we explore new avenues seeking success.”

He listed seven specific challenges to traditional General Church strategies:

1. The reliance on the Writings as the Word: increasingly challenged but still firmly held in the Church
2. Recognition that the Christian Church has come to an end: always a difficult position and works against a welcoming spirit for evangelization
3. Rigorous, scholarly approach to doctrine: alive and well, but debates and controversies can leave people unsure of our direction
4. New Church education: small schools are increasingly difficult to maintain but schools in Bryn Athyn and a few other places continue to do well
5. Distinctive New Church social life: increasingly difficult in our culture and challenges to marriage are increasingly pervasive
6. Modified democratic structure: increasingly challenged by demand for democratic participation and transparent processes
7. Governance structure within the clergy: “While there are often calls for decentralization and local independence the system remains viable.”

Among positive trends he cited:

- New Church education continues to thrive.
- The collective wealth of the Church, thanks to generous contributions, has both positive and negative aspects, but has been an enormous advantage for the church and continues to allow for new programs and outreach.
- The internet, social media and the Swedenborg Foundation offer new opportunities to spread the Heavenly Doctrines.
- The international church is growing – as the founders of the Academy predicted it would.

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# What Is New Church Education and Why Should We Care? Part Two

*The Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr.*

*Assistant to the Bishop with Oversight of General Church Education*

I have often been struck by two very similar phrases in Scripture that speak about the Lord and what He expects of us. We hear, “I am the light of the world.” (*John* 8:12, 9:5) That’s not too surprising. We know that the Lord is the Source of all wisdom. We can easily grasp that He came to our world to be a beacon of truth in a very dark and confusing time.

But then the Lord turns the tables on us and says in His *Sermon on the Mount*, “You are the light of the world.” (*Matthew* 5:14) My own discomfort with these words begins with the thought that I’m not anything like the Lord; those words belong to Him, not me. But there He is telling me that I have something of value to offer. Not only that, but I have a responsibility to share my best understanding and to do things that bring the truth to life, for He says: “Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father in heaven.” (*Ibid.* 16)

This article is part two of a presentation on New Church education which focuses on the interrelated questions: “What is New Church Education, and Why Should We Care?”

Part one focused on the use itself: of bringing children to the Lord and the Lord to children; of helping children become loving, wise and useful human beings; of opening their eyes to spiritual reality; of fostering innocence; of helping them develop and live according to conscience; of forming good spiritual habits that flow spontaneously into action, and so on.

Part two focuses on who, according to the Word, is invited to participate

in this use, and some of how they are called to go about it.

As the Scripture we've focused on so far indicates, *you* are called to participate in this use. "You are the light of the world" for the children in your purview.

**On the Lord's Team.** One way to hold this is to hear the Lord inviting each of us to be a part of His team. In the creation story the Lord says: "Let



Us make man in Our own image, according to Our likeness." (*Genesis* 1:26) Many Biblical scholars have concluded that this verse refers in some way to the Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. But the Heavenly Doctrines clearly state that it is not a tri-personal God that is indicated here; rather it is the one God and the team of human beings He uses to help people choose the path that leads to heaven.

Regarding the regeneration of a person we read: "Now because this is done through the ministry of angels, it is said here, in the plural first of all, 'Let Us make man in Our image.'" (*Arcana Coelestia* 50:3) Angels are part of the "us" in this verse of *Genesis*.

This passage continues to describe what those angels do. From the Lord they "distract [us] from plunging into utter evil, and so divert [us] toward something good." When we respond, they are able to draw nearer, "[breathing into us] every kind of good and truth, as well as a horror and dread of evils and falsities."

Leading away from bad things, and inspiring good things: doesn't that sound like what parents do every single day? The powerful thing to consider here is that the Lord calls parents – and teachers and anyone else interacting with children – to be like guardian angels for the children in their care. We are invited to be a part of the Lord's team, as He leads them to grow and develop into the kind of people who can live in heaven some day.

**The Lord's job description for parents.** Let's focus first on parents in this regard. Almost everyone who has held a newborn child has felt that awesome responsibility to care for this tiny person. The love that flows in is incredibly powerful, opening the mind to the Lord as Creator, and the wisdom of turning to Him for guidance in how to be a good parent.



In many cases this leads families to seek baptism for their young child. Often by means of this experience, and also by other means, parents can become aware of their parental responsibilities, according to the Word.

I would like to point to 10 such invitations from the Lord, directed specifically to parents, to demonstrate the significant role He asks them to play in the lives of

their children as they grow:

**1. The purposes of baptism.** The first has to do with baptism itself. Specifically, the baptism process calls parents to introduce their children to the Church, so that they may be brought into the sphere of Christian life. (*True Christianity* 677) It also reminds them to help their children to “know and acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ [as their] Redeemer and Savior.” (*Ibid.* 681) Finally it calls them to prepare their children for their process of salvation or regeneration. (*Ibid.* 684)

**2. Spiritual Parents.** We also find guidance for parents is in the fourth commandment: “Honor your father and your mother.” (*Exodus* 20:12) Not only does this speak to healthy family relationships, but it also contains deeper levels of meaning when “father” and “mother” are seen symbolically. We read: “In the spiritual meaning, honoring your father and your mother refers to revering and loving God and the Church.” (*True Christianity* 306) So it is that parents are called to consistently draw attention to the Lord as Heavenly Father and the Church as a nurturing spiritual mother in their lives. They do so, among other things, by talking about the Lord, saying prayers to the Lord, and bringing their children to worship services.

**3. Protecting and maintaining.** A third responsibility that the Lord gives to parents is to “protect and maintain those who cannot protect and maintain themselves.” (*Conjugal Love* 391) The intriguing thing about this passage is that it brings us back to the fact that we are a part of the Lord’s team. It adds: “Since this cannot be done by the Lord directly in the case of living beings to whom He has bequeathed free judgment, He does it indirectly through His love implanted in fathers, mothers and nurses.” (*Ibid.*) His love given to us as parents is what inspires us to do the daily work of protecting and maintaining, from teaching safety around cars, to being advocates for them, to giving them the spiritual tools to make wise choices, and countless other things.

**4. Useful members of society.** A fourth calling to parents is to guide their children to “contribute useful services in human societies.” (*Conjugal Love* 404) Parents see the unique personalities and strengths of their children, and do many things to nurture that potential. They also can, in so many ways, foster a desire to do useful things for others – to make the world a better place.

**5. Good qualities.** Another passage in *Conjugal Love* includes a powerful list of things that parents can help their children develop: “spiritual intelligence,” “a moral life,” “virtues and good habits,” “fear (or love) of God,” and “piety of conduct or life.” (*Conjugal Love* 405)

**6. General doctrinal concepts.** While many parents do not consider themselves theologians with deep doctrinal knowledge, there is truth in the fact that each parent can be a “light of the world” for his and her children, by sharing the knowledge of the Word that they do know. For many of us, that’s

more than we often give ourselves credit for. One passage in the Heavenly Doctrines lists some of the things that the Lord asks parents to teach their children, which is within the grasp of all: “There is God, and He is one,” “He created everything,” “there is a hell and a heaven,” “people ought to pray every day... , keep the Sabbath day holy, honor their parents, and not commit adultery, kill, or steal.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 5135:3) It may not be in formal settings, but conversations about the Lord and the things of spiritual life are a wonderful way to serve in the use of New Church education. It ties in with one of the ways of framing that use, namely to open the eyes to spiritual realities.

**7. Preserving innocence.** Interestingly, the teaching that speaks to this dimension of parenting talks about it in a progressive sense, namely that a kind of childlike innocence recedes over time “as children gain knowledge and are able to act on their own independently of their parents.” (*Conjugal Love* 298) Nevertheless, the openness to being taught and guided, and the willingness to comply with parental directives, can form a powerful seedbed for an advanced type of innocence that is willing to be led and guided by the Lord. (See *Heaven and Hell* 341) The point is to do what we can to preserve an openness to what is good and useful and wholesome, and to lead away from, or even at times protect kids from, what is hurtful and destructive. This is in keeping with the guardian angel concepts we addressed earlier.

**8. A healthy concept of marriage.** You may have heard the saying, “the greatest gift a father can give to his children is to love his wife.” Without implying that all marriages are perfect or even work out, there is power in hearing the Lord’s call to parents to pass on a healthy concept of marriage to their children. This is done by parents who “shun adulteries as hellish, and love marriages as heavenly.” (*Apocalypse Explained* 1002) Certainly there is much we can model in terms of healthy interactions, even when there are disagreements. And most parents find themselves striving to provide helpful guidance on healthy relationships between the sexes as their children grow.

**9. Indelible marks of goodness.** The Heavenly Doctrines use the term “remains” or “remnant states” to describe times when something heavenly touches the life of a person. The Lord stores up that positive experience, and uses it as a storehouse of spiritual energy in the person’s life, inspiring them to want those good things again. Parents are asked to provide the environment in which many of these heavenly touches can take place. One teaching describes them as “states of love toward parents, brothers and sisters, teachers, and friends; states of charity toward the neighbor, and also of compassion on the poor and needy.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 561) It does not take much imagination to see how parents can cooperate with the Lord in this way, by leading their children to do kind things, by fostering healthy family relationships, by building warm family memories, and the like.

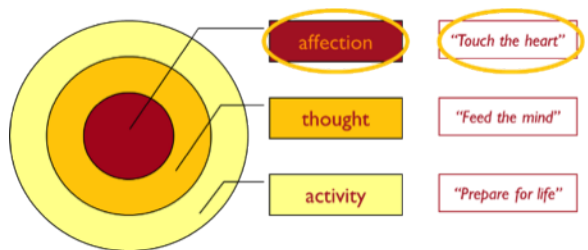
**10. Happiness to eternity.** A final teaching we turn to, relating to the role that the Lord asks parents to fill, stands as a summary of all that we have explored. It talks about the many ways parents care for their children, from feeding and clothing, to helping them become good citizens, to “introducing them to heaven through religious instruction.” It concludes, “In this way they provide for their prosperity in time, and happiness to eternity.” (*True Christianity* 305)

Gathering all these strands together, it is useful to see the value that the Lord places on the family. In His vision, parents have an incredible role to fill in the upbringing and launching of children into adult life. With humble recognition that all of us are flawed and haltingly successful in rising to this use, it is important for us to do our very best in this regard. Parents wear many hats, including that of counselor, organizer, coach, arbiter and financial advisor. It appears from these teachings that the Lord would add another hat to the mix – New Church educator.

**New Church teachers.** Speaking of educators, we know that the General Church has a rich heritage of day schools, with hundreds of people who have dedicated their professional energies to this use. Is that use spoken of in the Word?

The answer is yes. While the Heavenly Doctrines don’t mention religious schools per se, they repeatedly use the phrase “parents and teachers” in the context of religious instruction. Parents and teachers are to: “maintain children in an affirmative attitude toward anything said or taught,” (*Arcana Coelestia* 2689); help in the formation of conscience by means of guidance, (*Ibid.* 2831); inspire “love toward the neighbor and toward the Lord,” (*Ibid.* 3762); cultivate what is “decent, public-spirited and honorable,” (*Ibid.* 5126); lead children to “mend their habits,” (*Conjugal Love* 202); open the mind to “religion, worship, what is good and true, God and eternal life,” (*Divine Love and Wisdom* 333); help children “abstain from evils” as sins as taught in the Ten Commandments, (*Divine Providence* 258); live moral lives, (*True Christian Religion* 374); and be faithful and charitable. (*Ibid.* 443) Again, this is quite a daunting list, but it points to the fact that the Lord includes teachers as part of His team.

It may be useful to bring forward one of the ways of framing the use of New Church education itself, namely to help children become loving, wise and useful human beings. The teaching underlying this way of viewing education relates to the human beings we are: people who have



minds that can think, hearts that can care, and bodies that can do. It is not difficult to translate that from child to teacher.

New Church educators are people who consistently feed their minds with information that helps them to teach effectively, whose hearts are continually inspired to care for the spiritual education of children, and whose bodies work in many ways to bring their educational goals to life.

Two conclusions seem evident. One is that the Lord envisioned teachers in students' lives who would help them along in their spiritual development. Another is that there would be places where such teachers would be able to do this work. It is not difficult to find support for Sunday School classrooms and even New Church day schools based on these teachings.

**Educational methodology.** Having considered the use itself, and who is invited to participate in the use, we turn to guidance from the Word on *how* to



engage in it. Such an exploration will be cursory at best, for there are many, many teachings that bear on the subject. One gathering of such teachings, however, appears in the chapter of *Heaven and Hell* relating to “Children in Heaven.” It deals with the upbringing of children who have died in infancy or childhood, and describes in many ways how angel teachers and parents carry out their work.

In that chapter we discover many pearls of wisdom. For example, there is an attitudinal clue in the teaching, “Every child (who dies)... is accepted by the Lord.” (*Heaven and Hell* 329) The implication is that New Church parents and educators can usefully send the message to all children, “You are accepted by the Lord.” Along the same attitudinal lines, another teaching reminds us that children are works in progress. They have the “rudiments of becoming angels” and “have not yet let evil take root.” (*Ibid.* 330) The implication is that we view children as potential angels or angels in the making, who have not entirely figured out life.

Regarding those who teach, it says they are “angels who had loved children tenderly..., and had loved God as well.” (*Ibid.* 332) It appears, perhaps obviously, that the best qualifications for educators are a love for children and a love for God.

Any experienced educator, and most parents, know the truth of the next teaching: “Children have different natures...” (*Ibid.* 333) A subsequent teaching says some children “think and talk and act more gently,” and others “are not so gentle.” (*Ibid.* 339) Again, most of us could smile and nod our heads, knowing what this is talking about. It does imply that we refrain from a one-size-fits-all educational model, and it reminds us of the delightful variety



of young human beings who are trying to find their way.

Regarding the way children learn, we read that their initial focus is on “the kinds of thing they see with their eyes that particularly delight them.” (*Ibid.* 334) We learn further that “...it is as though everything were alive” to them, (*Ibid.* 338), and that “they learn by practice to walk, to do things, and to talk – even their senses, such as sight and hearing, are developed by use.” (*Ibid.* 331) The implication here is that engaged students learn the best, and that working with all their senses in the educational process is wise.

This chapter also reminds us that children are taught by “images suited to their natures,” leading us to consider what is age or state appropriate. (*Ibid.* 335) It also reminds us that with children, “nothing has closed these off, as happens with adults,” meaning there is a refreshing openness and receptivity about them. We are also reminded that they come into a “gradual awareness of what is good and true,” (*Ibid.* 336), meaning that they won’t get it all at once, and that education is a process.

A couple of other indicators: Children feed on “things that nourish their minds,” namely, “spiritual food.” (*Ibid.* 340) The implication is that the food most appropriate to the maturing spirit is spiritual food from the Lord’s Word. Angel instructors also help children “gain an identity given by the Lord,” (*Ibid.* 341), and they foster a kind of selfhood, even inspiring them to react with a healthy “that isn’t so” at times, so that “that they will not let themselves be led (eventually) by anyone but by the Lord.” (*Ibid.* 343)

Even this brief survey of teachings demonstrates the wealth of information that the Word contains on the art of teaching. The point for our purposes is to remind ourselves of the range of things that the Lord has chosen to share with us relating to this precious use. Not only does He describe the use itself, but He tells us in great detail who should be involved in it, what He asks of them, and how He advises that they go about it.

So what is New Church education and why should we care? In answer, we return to the story of the Lord surrounded by little children. Parents had brought them to Him, that He might touch them. The disciples rebuked those parents, thinking, apparently, that the Lord was too important to be bothered with children. But the Lord said, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them, for of such is the kingdom of God.” (*Mark* 10:13-16) It is readily apparent that the Lord cares deeply about the upbringing of little children – about the use of New Church education.

What is this use? My way of framing it is: Introducing young people to the Lord and the things of spiritual life, so that they can become loving, wise and useful human beings, as they choose the path that leads to heaven.

And why should we care? Because the Lord clearly invites us to do so.



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*(Illustrations courtesy of the Office of Education)*

#### **OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY**

Part of a continuing series developed by the Rev. W. Cairns Henderson, 1961-1966.

#### **CONJUNCTION**

Only in the Writings do we find the expression “conjunction with the Lord,” and find it used, not of a mystical state, but of one that may be understood rationally. A common love, thought and purpose are what bring men together; and by conjunction with the Lord is meant a state in which man, from the Lord’s love received as good in the will, and His wisdom received as truth in the understanding, is engaged finitely in the same uses as the Lord performs infinitely. It is a state in which the Lord is in man as the source of the good he wills, the truth he thinks, and the uses he does, and man is in the Lord because in good and truth which are the Lord and are from Him.

It may be useful to note the distinctions among the terms union, conjunction and consociation. Union is used of two things which together make one, and is therefore reserved for the relation of the Divine and the Human in the Lord after glorification, and for the conjugal marriage in which minds of the husband and wife make one mind.

Conjunction is used to describe the regenerate man’s relation with the Lord, in which man becomes a vessel receptive of life, whereas the Lord by union with the Divine became life itself in the Human. Consociation describes the regenerate man’s relation with the angels as with brethren. (See *True Christian Religion* 725; *Apocalypse Revealed* 818 and 819; *Arcana Coelestia* 2021; *Earths in the Universe* 64)

# Extraordinary Ordinary Moments: What Ten Weeks Volunteering in Kenya Taught Me

*Cailin Elphick*

Some of the best things in life evolve when we are miles outside of our comfort zones. I've begun to understand my innate need to push myself constantly to the edge and take giant leaps of faith.

I've been back on American soil for just over four months after volunteering for 10 weeks in Etoro, Kenya. I returned with tan lines, bruises, new scars, new perspective, gratitude, a newfound appreciation for hot water, and an expanded heart.

Life in Kenya is so different from life here in America. From their interpretation of time to the color of the dirt, Kenya has a different pulse. I miss bucket showers, eating cooked bananas, dancing to music that gets into your bones, teaching the kids yoga and art, and constantly getting caught in the rain.

I spent enough time there to actually feel settled, as if I lived there. And spending time with the kids at the Sacred Care Orphanage was one of the most enriching experiences I have ever had. These kids have each overcome hell, being found in toilets, abandoned as babies, or abused. They have lived heartache, and yet their smiles are entirely genuine and full of life.

They lead vigorous, joyful and content lives, and are incredibly well cared for by the staff at the orphanage. They taught me that hearts are built to be broken, to know the dark in order to fill it with happiness. Each person I met in Kenya further proved how true that is.

I left in August with my friend Kira Kerr, a backpack full of belongings, and a list of tasks to do for Helping Children in Crisis (HCIC) while I was there. I was equally excited and terrified for what the next few months would hold.

Samson and different members of the community here are the sole reason half these kids are even alive. Listening to him talk about them and watching him interact with them makes it clear that the support they are getting from the staff at the orphanage is grounded in respect, compassion and love.

HCIC is the organization that was lovingly created to financially support the Rev. Samson Abuga and his staff in caring for 64 orphans.

Something I've learned about travel and experiencing new cultures is that you can never be fully prepared, and there is always more going on than I know to look for, so it's best just to be open and ready, fully letting go of control and becoming a sponge to the world. That way you see, smell, hear and feel more, and I'm so grateful for this realization.

Kenya itself is a force of nature. From the moment I stepped off the plane onto the dusty red earth, things worked differently. The weather fluctuates drastically and nothing happens as planned. Everything is more organic, there is an ebb and flow to the market place, a natural

momentum to daily life. Time is an illusion, an estimate.

Likewise, the people I met are forces of nature, from the tiny women carrying giant sacks of potatoes on their heads, to the teachers with fervent concern and care for each student. But the kids were the ones teaching me the most, making the world feel more in sync. They reminded me to get busy living. And made me remember that there's nothing better than feeling thoroughly exhausted after a day of doing something you love.

One of the orphans grew up a delinquent street kid, following a path toward a life of crime in order to survive. But he was taken in and has turned his life around completely. I watched him graciously receive an award for being the top of his class. It's incredible to witness first hand the power of human connection and how all it takes is just one person to care.

Samson and different members of the community here are the sole reason half these kids are even alive. Listening to him talk about them and watching him interact with them makes it clear that the support they are getting from the staff at the orphanage is grounded in respect, compassion and love. They've shown the uncanny amount of bravery it takes to be selfless, and I am humbled to be witness to it.

It is so hard to try to portray the kids. Each of them is a different combination of nerves, love, opinions and mannerism. We tried our best to gather up as much as possible to put into paper and picture form for sponsors and supporters here in America.

Life is so different for them. Many of them spent years of their lives malnourished or abused, forced to steal just to survive. And now they are clothed, well-fed, and catching up on schooling they missed.

The teachers at their school actively help the orphans catch up and get the best grades possible. Education is the key to a successful future, and the kids are so aware of that and love learning for that reason.

Samson thinks it is crucial for the kids to know they are supported, loved and cared for, and set up with every tool possible to help them matriculate into society successfully. Every decision he makes is based on what would be best for the kids.

All of the work Kira and I did was in some way supporting Samson in these goals by helping gather information and complete tasks for HCIC. We went over excited to experience a new culture and help in whatever way we could. We had no idea the life-changing shift in perspective that would come from working with such wonderful people in such a foreign world. While in Kenya I wrote something for our blog that summarized this shift well:

I once read that universal pain, mystery and the beauty of life cannot be separated. Often the tangible world we belong to feels precariously tilted too far on its axis. We start to exist as shells, waves of light and shadow passing through for a temporary stay. We crave the unknown but feel frozen in routine. This vibration of society runs through humankind, demanding us to be partially numb to survive its gauntlet every morning.

In this numbness we constantly practice the unnatural act of hiding our hearts; we create a rhythmic void of blockades and excuses. Protecting ourselves from the beautiful harsh pain that is so necessary to grow. So many of us exist a short distance from our bodies, unwilling to face the feelings we never dare experience consciously.

We attempt to squeeze and mold our lives to what we think we want, making everything feel off kilter. Yet every evening the sun tucks itself away below the

In Kenya struggle and hardship are so common everyone has to wear them on their sleeves. There is such beauty to being honest and raw with the world.

All of humankind was created with so many intricate, complicated, layered subtleties and differences; and underneath it all, underneath our facades and judgments, it all boils down to love.

horizon and the stars peek out. Break the numbness. All it takes is starting to notice the heartbeat in your ears and the breath in the palms of your hands – sensing stillness in movement, space in tight corners, silence in noise.

Vulnerability takes immense strength and yields the simplest yet most suppressed and craved need to love and be loved. In Kenya struggle and hardship are so common everyone has to wear them on their sleeves. There is such beauty to being honest and raw with the world.

This is what Kenyan culture and working with the kids really drove home. It's an entirely different world, run by different rules and expectations. It's easy to witness developing countries from afar and feel unable to relate. But this is what the simple, minimalistic lifestyle with daily struggle brings to light.

All of humankind was created with so many intricate, complicated, layered subtleties and differences; and underneath it all, underneath our facades and judgments, it all boils down to love. We must realize hearts are built to be broken, and experiencing the cruel pulsation of struggle only opens us to live with lightness.

Love is the best gift a human can give and I will never stop wondering how I got so incredibly lucky – to be able to give and receive love from all these incredible kids. I wish that feeling upon everyone, every day, in some form. Love wins.

(See photos on pages 200-201)



**Cailin Elphick** completed two terms at Bryn Athyn College which helped her realize that she didn't need a degree for what she wanted to do. She is taking time off to save money and to be able to volunteer abroad and explore other types of career paths. She volunteered in Nepal in the summer of 2013 and in Kenya this past summer. She is pursuing yoga, nannying and working full time at AllWays Café in Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania. She is also looking into new opportunities to continue gaining

life experience through travel and non-profit/social work. Contact: [cailinnn@live.com](mailto:cailinnn@live.com)

# Women Priests: Freedom and Providence

*Chelsea Rose Odhner*

In the April 1937 issue of *New Church Life* is an account by the Rev. Charles E. Doering recalling the 1897 Assembly when Bishop W. F. Pendleton shared his seminal *Notes on the Government of the Church*.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Doering recalls:

Bishop Pendleton put it: “A spiritual government is one of influx, and natural Government is one of command.” And he urged that we do not incorporate into the organic life of the church an idea of distrust. After presenting his notes on government (which everyone who has ideas of how the church ought to be governed should read), he suggested a plan of organization, based on the uses, which is essentially the form of government we have today...Each generation, as it comes along, will need to see these principles in their application to the affairs of the church at the time – see the distinction there is between government by influx and government by command. For the church, if it is to continue to be a spiritual church, must be ruled by the idea of the former, and not the latter. (120)

I believe the principles referenced in this quote have critical application to the issue at hand. I think it is worth serious consideration whether maintaining a policy in which women are forbidden from the priesthood would be to have a government ruled by command rather than influx and so would not be in accord with the spiritual principles that are foundational to the General Church (specifically those of trust, freedom, mutual love or charity, and use in form).

When the priesthood and government were first being set up in the General Church the fact that priests would be male-only was a given – there was no need for debate. Now for the past 40 years, about every 10 years the

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<sup>1</sup> Doering’s account is worth reading in its entirety for a brief synopsis of the beginnings of the General Church. 1897 was the year that nearly all members resigned from the Church of the Academy and the General Church of the Advent of the LORD on account of the Rev. W. H. Benade’s abuse of power as Chancellor. Benade then formally withdrew from the office of Chancellor. The movement reorganized as the General Church of the New Jerusalem and elected, provisionally at first and later officially, the Rev. W.F. Pendleton to serve as Bishop. (Odhner 44-45) The General Church held its first Assembly that June, at which Bishop Pendleton gave his *Notes on the Government of the Church*. (Pendleton 107)

question of whether women can be priests has come up and undergone serious debate. Perhaps this is a slow labor in providence.

We are at a point now where we have considered it intensely yet again and have as a church put together thorough doctrinal arguments in favor and against the idea of women in ministry.

One critical idea that has come out of this most recent effort is the general acknowledgement from clergy and lay people alike that the Writings do not state explicitly that the priesthood must be male. Indeed, the very same passages that touch on the complementary natures of men and women are used to argue for and against women in the ministry. (See the papers by Jon and Karin Childs and the Rev. Solomon Keal's at <http://www.newchurchperspective.com/possible-ordination-of-women/>).

It seems the Church is more widely spread out than ever in its understanding of the doctrine relating to this issue. Freedom in how we choose to understand is essential. Though, given the widespread variance in our understanding of the teachings related to the natures and roles of men and women and the fact that it is acknowledged that the Writings never state explicitly that the members of the priesthood need be male, I am given to think that the Church reaffirming the current ordination policy as official constitutes a "ruling from without," "an external bond" on the Church.

To give the context of this claim, I will quote portions of W. F. Pendleton's *Notes on the Government of the Church*, with a few of my own brief notes. Pendleton's *Notes* begin:

The quality of a Church is according to the quality of its government, or according to the idea of government which rules within it; if a natural idea of government rules then the Church will be natural, but if government is seen under a spiritual idea, this idea reigning in all its parts, then the Church will be a spiritual Church. A true idea of government, which is a spiritual idea, is then of supreme importance to the members of the Church...

The Church is not a spiritual Church until it is under such a form of government as exists in heaven; before this it is a natural Church. The angels of heaven govern – still they do not govern, but the LORD through them. (*Arcana Coelestia* 8728) In the Church the priest is to govern, and yet he is not to govern, but the LORD through him. Government in heaven is the government of mutual love (*Heaven and Hell* 213); from mutual love springs mutual confidence, which flourishes only in an atmosphere of freedom, where external bonds have been removed. There must come a time when the Church cuts loose from external bonds, and freely trusts the LORD and the neighbor.

Heaven is ruled by influx and hell by afflux. When the Church is in evil, the LORD rules it by afflux, or from without, or from the world; but when the Church is in good, the LORD rules it by influx, or from within, or from heaven. To endeavor to rule the Church from without, to place it under bonds from the world, whether this



be done by one man or by many men, involves the belief that the Church is in evil, or under no internal bond, and that it cannot be held together unless it be held by external means. Is it not better therefore to have no external bonds, in order that the Church may be free to disperse if it be in evil, or that it may be held together by internal bonds, if it be in good? (107)

The Church seems to have lost its internal bond with regard to whether priests must be male. Is it necessary that the understanding of the priesthood be held together by external means? Perhaps a new internal bond would form around our priesthood if we were to ordain women as well as men. On the other hand, there is the fear that the Church would be in evil if we were to ordain women as ministers.

Pendleton continues:

A Church, to be spiritual, must be under the laws of the spiritual world, and not under the laws of the natural world, or laws like those in the natural world; and it is a law of the spiritual world that the removal of external bonds causes a breaking up and dispersion of the evil, and a more close drawing together of the good; this is because there is no internal bond with the evil as with the good. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1944, 5002) External bonds are removed in the other world because man is not free until he is held only by internal bonds. (*Ibid.* 6207)

Perhaps removing the external bond of the policy that women are not allowed to be priests could lead to a more close drawing together of the good in our church. If it is indeed evil for women to be priests, it would prove itself so. In either case, is it not better to hold freedom as our core guiding principle rather than fear?

The teaching is that the LORD rules the Church by internal bonds when there is charity, but by external bonds when charity is extinguished. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1011) The internal bonds are the truths of faith and of conscience; external bonds are laws and penalties. External bonds are for those who have no internal bond; and to place an external bond on the Church is a negative act that involves the assumption or fear that there is in the Church no internal bond.

External bonds are for the civil state, but the bonds of civil government should not be introduced into the government of the Church; for the Church is the LORD'S heaven upon the earth; it must therefore be under heavenly law, and the bond of heavenly law. Let the bond of the civil law come in where the civil law is approached, and let external bonds be applied where disorder confessedly exists, but do not place external bonds on the Church for fear that disorder may exist; to make fear the motive of action is to distrust Providence; to implant fear and distrust in the inmost of the government and working of the Church is to inflict a paralysis on its spiritual activities...If any movement in the Church is of the LORD, He will protect and save that which is His own, nor does He need the help of man.

No external bond should be placed upon any member or official or part of the Church; a bond so placed is a bond placed upon the whole Church. You cannot bind a part without binding the whole. You cannot bind another without binding

yourself. This is the inevitable spiritual law.

If the Church is interiorly in evil it cannot be held together, except by external bonds; but if it is in the process of being made internal by reformation and regeneration is in the way of spiritual growth – then an external bond is unnecessary and hurtful; it is better to run the hazard, yea, to suffer many evils, than to establish and confirm so great an evil as the voluntary suppression of the freedom of the Church, by introducing the principle and practice of external compulsion into its workings, whether this proceed from one man or from a number of men together. (Pendleton 108)

Consider the application of these thoughts to whether women should have freedom to pursue the profession of priest if they feel so called. Does “disorder confessedly exist” in women desiring to enter the priesthood or is there a “fear that disorder may exist” if they were to enter it? If we continue with our current ordination policy, are we not distrusting the providence that could be at play in leading women to feel a desire to enter the priesthood?

From my perspective the Church is unnecessarily suppressing the freedom of women by placing an external bond on a good, God-fearing woman in the Church who feels a personal call to ministry; perhaps the Lord is calling her to serve His Church in this world in the role of priest. The world is not the same as it was in the late 1800s; perhaps women priests weren’t needed then, but by the persistence of this issue, along with the vast changes in society over the last century, I believe God is saying women priests are needed now.

For women who are of faith and live by conscience, who are feeling an internal call from the Lord to serve in the priesthood, are we not placing an external bond on the Lord’s stirring in them by maintaining the current ordination policy?

The Church does not institute the priesthood, but the priesthood the Church. This principle, seen in a complete analysis, solves the entire question of government. The members of the Church do not impart to the priest perception, illustration, ability to govern, or endow him with any priestly gift whatsoever; hence they do not ordain him or appoint him to govern in the Church. The LORD gives them to see that the priest has these gifts from Him, and moves them to give expression to their consent that he should govern, thus to recognize him in his function to which he has been appointed by the LORD; which function he may exercise over them on their invitation to do so. (*Ibid*)

Can we recognize the Lord’s work in women who are called to the priesthood? I believe we are at a point where we must move beyond the theoretical question of whether women are capable of being priests and consider instead the implications of forbidding real individual women who feel called to the priesthood from answering that call.

Pendleton continues:

To incorporate distrust in the organic life of the body makes the Church natural, and it cannot become spiritual so long as such an incubus is laid on its internal activities. Still we have a knowledge that there is such a thing as human frailty and human weakness; we know that there is such a thing as perversion of truth and abuse of power. How far should this knowledge influence the manner and character of the organization of the Church? It is clear that this knowledge is negative, and a negative principle should never be laid as a heavy weight on the uses of a Church that is to become spiritual; all the principles and workings of a genuine Church are affirmative. A knowledge of human weakness and error, and the dangers arising therefrom – which are very great – present all the stronger reason for a plenary trust and confidence in the Mercy and Providence of the LORD. All the ills of the Church, from the most ancient times, have arisen from the conceit or persuasion that man can care for the Church. Let us beware. (*Ibid.*)

Several people have pointed out potential dangers women may face (and the Church by extension) in their undertaking the profession of priest. But “how far should this knowledge influence the manner and character of the organization of the Church?” This knowledge is negative while “all the principles and workings of a genuine Church are affirmative.” Should we not be affirming and trusting the Lord’s Providence in leading women into the use of the priesthood?

It may be said, however, in general, that the organization of the Church from use, for use, and to use, will tend to its safety and perpetuation. Use is conservative and preservative, for the LORD is present in it, and where He is there is health and perpetuity. The Church must be organized for use according to order, for order is use in form. Order without use is a dead form, and use without order does not exist; but use exists according to the love of use, and according to the perfection of the form which it takes according to order. (*Ibid.*)

I see much value in the possibility of women priests working alongside men in the uses of the priesthood as delineated in the Writings. I am of the opinion that the female mind would be useful in the work of the priesthood, both the will-oriented and intellect-oriented aspects of it. I trust that the Lord is inspiring women with unique capabilities for this work to strive for the priesthood, to be filled with a love for the use of it. And yet this use needs form.

“Order is use in form” and “use without order does not exist.” Would it not be more in keeping with charity and humility to the Lord’s Providence to give a woman access to ordination in – literally, to give order and form to – a use she loves? Perhaps even women and men working together is a “perfection of the form” of the priesthood.

If the Church be organized in use for use, according to order, there will result guards, checks, and balances, in the very nature of things, or flowing from the very form itself; and it will not become necessary to adjoin arbitrary guards, checks, and balances, for the sake of the preservation of the body. It may be that such an

organization can be gradually formed in the Church, or the Church be placed in such a position that such an organization can be allowed to grow; for a true organization is the result of growth, and is not built in a day. It is proper, however, that a beginning be made, of some kind of organization, for the sake of the uses that are to be done, and in accommodation to those uses. (*Pendleton 109*)

“The quality of a Church is according to the quality of its government.” (Pendleton 107) Should we not strive to be steadfast in having a spiritual idea rule our government? The “government in heaven is the government of mutual love (*Heaven and Hell* 213); from mutual love springs mutual confidence, which flourishes only in an atmosphere of freedom, where external bonds have been removed.” (*Ibid*)

I ask that we seriously consider whether it wouldn't be more in keeping with a heavenly idea of government to give women the freedom to pursue the profession of priest. I also suggest for consideration the idea that any necessary “guards, checks and balances” would flow naturally “from the very form itself” of the woman working in ordained ministry.

I believe a change in our ordination policy would be for the protection of the freedom of our members and such an action in our church would be one grounded in principles of use and trust in the Lord's Providence.

Perhaps as part of the growth of our church the Lord is bringing this “new thing” to bear – or perhaps not. Although I may feel personal resolve around this issue, I must surrender my idea of what would be right for the General Church to the Lord's leading. I find it helpful to remember the wise words of Gamaliel: “If this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; but if it is of God, we cannot overthrow it – lest we even be found to fight against God.” (*Acts* 5:38-39)

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# Women and the Ministry: Leading Must Come from the Word

*The Rev. Lawson M. Smith*

I have received and read some heartfelt letters advocating for women in the ministry.

I greatly appreciate the authors' love for the New Church and the people of the New Church, and the potential people of the New Church in the coming generations. Thank you for taking the time to write these warm letters.

As you can probably guess, I see things differently. In case it's any help with having an insight into why one person might take a different view, here are some thoughts.

In the Old Testament, the Lord lays down the laws very explicitly, especially in the Ten Commandments, but also in many other laws, many of which He abrogated when He came into the world, but which were necessary at the time.

In the New Testament, the Lord teaches more interior truths. "You have heard that it has been said... But I say to you..." He teaches us to love our neighbors as ourselves, explicitly and repeatedly, and He teaches, though mostly in parables, about the kingdom of heaven, which is within us.

So He begins to move away from commands: "I no longer call you servants, for the servant does not know what his lord is doing; but I have called you friends, because all things which I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and placed you, that you may go and bring forth fruit, and your fruit remain, that whatever you shall ask the Father in My name He may give to you. These things I command you, in order that you love one another." (*John 15:15-17*)

In the Heavenly Doctrine, the Lord moves even further from commands. Instead, He teaches us the reasons for things being the way they are. The spiritual history of the human race is compared to a person growing up. (*True Christian Religion* 762, *Apocalypse Explained* 641:4) When children are little, they need their parents to give them clear commands, with consistent

consequences. But as they grow up, more and more they need the reasons for things, so that they can come to see the good and the truth of what they have been taught, as of themselves, and internalize it. So the Lord, our heavenly Father, teaches us in these different ways.

To me this explains why there is no direct command in the Doctrine that women should not be ordained. Instead, I find lots of teachings that illustrate the *different* gifts that the Lord gives to and through men and women. To me, the implications are very clear, and border on a command.

It seems as though I may have a very different view of the Heavenly Doctrine than some in this debate. I believe that the Doctrine is the Lord in His Second Coming in every respect. I do not see statements that need to be set aside as merely Swedenborg speaking, or representing an undue influence of Swedenborg's day. The Lord Himself wrote the Heavenly Doctrine via Swedenborg. He could easily have made sure that Swedenborg omitted any erroneous ideas, and directed the influx of such thoughts away from him as he was writing.

While some seem to find error in *Conjugal Love* 125, I would be pleased to put it on our website as an example of a wonderful New Church teaching. After all, it clarifies a confusion common in the Christian world, showing that the man is not head of his wife as Christ is head of the Church, but both together are the Church. The man's contribution to their church may come first in time, but the wife's reception of it in conjugal love – the precious jewel of human life and the repository of the Christian religion – is no less important.

I can imagine that the Lord *may* have permitted a few *apparent* fallacies here and there, as cherubim, to protect people who are not ready to fully receive the Heavenly Doctrine from being convinced of their truth. But I would not want to be the one to say which things in the Heavenly Doctrine are “not true.” Even if something appeared not true to me, where would the problem be more likely to lie: in the Doctrine, or in me? If the Doctrine itself provides clarifying statements elsewhere, we should by all means take the teachings together in their fullness, as well as seeing how each statement serves in its own context.

I certainly acknowledge that I am biased. No matter how I strive to read just what the Lord says, no more and no less, I realize that my understanding is crammed with fallacies. Yet what am I to do? If it seems clear to me that the Lord in His Word is pointing strongly in one direction, am I to ignore this, because the culture around me does not see it this way?

What if the common cultural view is myopic, and the Doctrine is pointing out something that would be very helpful and protective to us if we could grasp it and apply it? I would actually be hurting the Church and its people if I do not stand by what the Lord seems to be saying. If I am wrong, then no doubt the Lord will gradually lead the Church (and me with it) into fuller light

as we are ready to receive it.

But the leading has to come clearly from the Word itself. So far, when I look in the Word, I see no examples of women clergy in any part of the Word, and no hints that the ordination of women would be a good thing, and instead I see lots of evidence that it would be misguided. That may be merely my bias, but it's the best I've got at present.

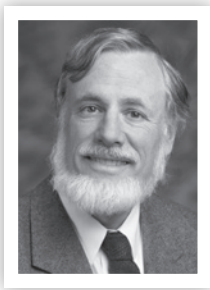
(It's also interesting that numerically, the churches that have ordained women in America have almost all continued to decline, while some of those that have not have maintained their membership. But that's just experiential, not doctrinal.)

Maybe it would be helpful if people who feel strongly that women should be ordained would become a distinct church from those who believe strongly that they should not be ordained. We could still be friends and cooperate on many uses, and each would be free to follow the Lord as they hear Him calling them.

Considering how sad and discouraged some feel about the clergy taking this position, you can imagine how sad and discouraged others would feel had the decision gone the other way. Maybe we need to give each other room to be faithful to the Lord in this matter, as we understand Him.

I'm not sure this would be the best way forward. It may be that this is not a central enough issue to be a cause for useful cell division. And the Convention already offers women ordination. But it's just a thought that has made me wonder.

Anyway, thank you very much to all for sharing your thoughts. If any would like to talk about this, I'd be glad to communicate further, in person, by phone or in writing.



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# Why Join the General Church?

*The Rev. N. Bruce Rogers*

People of every religion can be saved if they live according to the precepts of their religion and by a life of charity have received remnants of good and apparent truth. So say the Heavenly Doctrines in a number of places. (e.g., *Arcana Coelestia* 2284:4,5, 10648:1, *Heaven and Hell* 319, *Divine Providence* 254, 322, 327, 328:8, 330:3)

But if people of every religion can be saved, why then should anyone want to join the General Church? What is the point of membership in such a small church when there are much larger churches available? Or when there are other churches with a much longer history and set of traditions than the General Church?

How much more convenient for many of our members one of the local or neighborhood churches would be, if everyone of every religion can be saved? What is the point of membership in the General Church if no one needs to join it to be saved?

This is an old question that has been discussed from time to time in the Church and answers to it explored. Yet none of these answers seems to stick. One answer is that the General Church espouses the Divinity of the Writings. But that simply shifts the question to why anyone should want to accept the Writings as Divine. Membership in the General Church supposes acknowledgment of the Writings as such. The questions are inseparable.

If memory serves me, many years ago Garth Pitcairn employed an expert consultant to look for ways to draw people to the Church. And if I remember right, the consultant concluded that it would be difficult to do so in light of the teaching that everyone of every religion can be saved.

I have been prompted to revisit the subject because of a book I was given some time ago: *In the Land of Believers: An Outsider's Extraordinary Journey into the Heart of the Evangelical Church*, by Gina Welch (Metropolitan Books, Henry Holt & Company, LLC, © 2010 by Gina Welch).

I have just recently read the book. It tells of Gina Welch's experience with Jerry Falwell's Thomas Road Baptist Church, in which she participated



enough to be baptized and to take part in a mission to Alaska. Born and brought up an atheist in California, and a graduate of Yale in 2001 with a major in English, on moving East she cast about for a fit subject for a research book, finally determining on investigating Evangelicals. To quote from the inside leaf of the dust jacket:

Over the course of nearly two years, Welch immersed herself in the life and language of the devout. She learned to interpret the world like an Evangelical, weathered the death of Falwell, and embarked on a mission trip to Alaska intended to save one hundred souls. Alive to the meaning behind the music and the mind behind the slogans, Welch recognized the allure of evangelicalism, even for the godless, realizing that the congregation met needs and answered questions she didn't know she had.

In the end, on parting from the church, Gina Welch left behind people she had grown to love, and rituals and music she had grown to love – people, rituals and music that remained in her heart and thought. She left, because in spite of everything, she had found evangelical doctrines intellectually unsatisfying. Guiltily, she remained throughout the atheist she had been to begin with.

I think it clear that if Gina had been intellectually satisfied by the doctrines, she would have remained an active member of the Thomas Road Church; and this prompted me to revisit the question of membership in the General Church. It suggested to me that rituals of worship and music are for some people not enough, no matter how engaging; that family and friends, too, are not enough, no matter how well loved. For some people the doctrines must also be intellectually satisfying.

The founders of all the embodiments of the New Church were such people. In the Writings they discovered their questions answered. That includes the founders of the General Church – the so-called Academy movement – whose faithful embrace of the doctrines led to their split from the General Convention.

What were the founders' questions? And what were the answers they discovered?

Early New Church people were particularly impressed by the Writings' expositions of the Word's inner meanings in *Arcana Coelestia*, *The Apocalypse Explained* and *The Apocalypse Revealed*. They were also drawn to the new theology found in *True*

That is what the New Church, and particularly the General Church, has to offer: explanations that may be intellectually satisfying.

As a social organization, the General Church may be no better or worse than any other Christian group. But as a teaching body, it has answers that no one outside the New Church has.

*Christian Religion.* But perhaps the chief attraction was the description of the spiritual world and testification to its reality. How many people have not said or thought that they would believe if only someone could come back from the other world and bear witness to it?

That is what the New Church, and particularly the General Church, has to offer: explanations that may be intellectually satisfying.

*The Doctrine of the Sacred Scripture* distinguishes three kinds of people in the church. The first are people who love the truths of the Word and apply them to useful life endeavors, and who are thus enlightened by the Lord. Of them it is said:

The Word shines and is translucent with them because every particular in the Word contains in it a spiritual and celestial sense, and these senses exist

in the light of heaven. Consequently the Lord flows through these senses and their light into the natural sense and its light in a person. As a result, the person acknowledges truth from an inner perception, and so sees it in his thought, and this whenever he is prompted by an affection for truth because it is true. (*Sacred Scripture* 57,58)

These are the kind of people who are able to draw doctrine from the Word. (*Ibid.* 59)

The second kind of people are ones who do not draw doctrine from the Word themselves, but “first inquire whether the doctrine delivered by others and accepted by the general body accords with the Word. And to whatever accords they assent, and from whatever does not accord they dissent. ...” “But this is the case only with people who are not distracted by worldly affairs and have the sight to see.” (*Ibid.* 59)

All others, then, the third kind of people, “who live in some measure in accordance with truths, can learn from them [i.e, the first two kinds].” (*Ibid.*)

This makes clear that not everyone in the Church is expected to be expert in the Word or in doctrine drawn from it. If some people are drawn to the Church by family or friends, or by the sense of community they find in it, or because they like the rituals and music, it is enough, provided they live in accordance with what truths they know and live good lives. People who, in other words, “live according to the precepts of their religion and by a

life of charity have received remnants of good and apparent truth,” as testified at the outset of this article. Those people, too, are on the path to salvation.

At the same time, however, the description of the first two kinds of people makes clear that the Church is to be led by them, either by drawing doctrine from the Word themselves, or by verifying the doctrine drawn by the first kind of people.

The General Church has at times been accused of being an intellectual church, and as regards its leadership, admittedly it is so and must be so, if its doctrine is to remain true to the Writings from which it comes. That does not exclude people who have not the inclination or the time or the insight to draw or verify doctrine themselves. They, too, may very well be, as we said, on the path to salvation. No one has to be in the General Church to be saved; but the General Church as an organization nevertheless depends on the leadership of people who are able either to draw doctrine from the Word (including the Writings) or to verify it.

So why join the General Church? For answers. For the answers it has and teaches because of its allegiance to the Heavenly Doctrines, which we call the Writings. Answers that may be intellectually satisfactory to people who seek intellectually satisfactory answers. As a social organization, the General Church may be no better or worse than any other Christian group. But as a teaching body, it has answers that no one outside the New Church has.

Most churches teach charity. But how many know that charity itself is to do the work of ones function honestly, justly and faithfully? (*True Christian Religion* 422, *Charity* 158-172)

Most churches teach the existence of an afterlife. But how many know what the spiritual world is or what it is like, and almost everything connected with it?

Most churches teach monogamous marriage and fidelity in marriage. But how many know the real nature of the marriage bond between a man and a woman who truly love each other? And how many know that a true, internal marriage continues in the afterlife?

Earlier Christian writers supposed there to be an inner meaning to the

Even if one has not the time or temperament to seek the answers . . . still by joining the General Church one lends support to those who seek answers, not only for themselves, but for the Church as a whole.

Word of the Old Testament and some have attempted an exposition of it. But how many have been able to do so as convincingly as we find it in *Arcana Coelestia*, *The Apocalypse Explained* and *The Apocalypse Revealed*?

So why join the General Church? For answers. For intellectually satisfying answers. Even if one has not the time or temperament to seek the answers for himself or herself, still by joining the General Church one lends support to those who do seek answers, not only for themselves, but for the Church as a whole. Indeed, for mankind. Support not only financial, but support socially. There is, after all, a strength in numbers. The continued life of the General Church depends on it.



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# What the Word Says About Homosexuality

*The Rev. Willard L. D. Heinrichs*

Some years ago I produced the following to help a couple explain to their friends outside of the New Church why they believed that homosexual practices are wrong and are contrary to the teaching of Scripture and to God's order in creation.

Since these friends would not be accessing the Heavenly Doctrine, I tried to explain the matter just from the letter of the Word, except for a reference to *Conjugal Love*.

I acknowledge that this document is in no way complete or perfect. But I wonder if this general approach might be of use in talking to friends outside of the Church. Also I wonder if it might be useful with young people in the New Church who may be unfamiliar with the teachings in the Heavenly Doctrine, but might be affected by the powerful teachings from the letter of the Word. I am just suggesting one more possible approach for some of our hurting young people.

In general, I think we might put our greatest effort into inviting people to begin from as broad a view as possible of what the Lord intends in relation to marriage. We need to note especially what the Lord has directly taught in His Word, rather than be guided in any way by the poor example of how people in the stories of Scripture too often responded to His teaching.

Further, I think we need to stress **why** the Lord said what He did. Among other things, from His infinitely merciful and eternally wise perspective, He tells us not to try to form same-sex marriage or sexual relationships because they are not in agreement with the way He created us! People of the same sex do not fit together as to their souls, and were never intended to, any better than they do as to their bodies. Consider *Conjugal Love* 55:6:

There is a love of man and man, and of woman and woman; and there is a love of a man for a woman and of a woman for a man. These three pairs of loves are entirely different from each other. The love of a man and man is as the love of understanding and understanding; for man was created and thence born that he may become understanding.

We need to note especially what the Lord has directly taught in His Word, rather than be guided in any way by the poor example of how people in the stories of Scripture too often responded to His teaching.

The love of woman and woman is as the love of affection and affection, the affection being the affection of the understanding of men; for woman was created and is born to become the love of man's understanding. **These loves, that is, the love of man and man and of woman and woman, do not enter deeply into the breast, but stand without and merely touch each other; thus they do not inwardly conjoin the two....But the love between man and woman is the love between the understanding and its affection, and this enters deeply and conjoins. Such conjunction is the love itself.** [Emphasis added]

Such same-sex relationships just cannot work. "Of themselves," they cannot bear any fruit – certainly not the kind the Lord especially wants and commands. He is not able to bestow His boundless and eternal blessings on them. No "little children can come" to the

Lord as result of them, taken by themselves.

These relationships, which may seem alluring and pleasurable at first, ultimately – if not in this world then in the next – can yield only frustration and eventual bleak despair. Maybe that is just one of the reasons that so much promiscuity tends to enter in and be associated with many of these conjunctions. So the Lord, in seeking to save people from the sad results of these relationships, says in effect: "Don't do it! It does not work for Me, and it does not work for you."

In *Conjugal Love* 54:e the Lord is speaking of those who have lived a celibate life in the natural world and are now in the next life, and especially those who have lived a monastic life:

Those, both virgins and men, who in the world have been shut up in monasteries, at the conclusion of their monastic life, which continues for some time after death, are set free and discharged. They then enjoy the longed-for liberty of their desires, as to whether they wish to live a conjugal life [of one man and one wife] or not. If they desire a conjugal life, they obtain it; if not they are conveyed to those who lived in celibacy at the side of heaven; **but those who burned with forbidden/impermissible lust** (*aestuaverunt in concessa libidine*) **are thrown/cast down** (*dejiciunter*). The reason why celibates are at the side of heaven is because the sphere of perpetual celibacy infests the sphere of conjugal love, which is the sphere of heaven. That the sphere of conjugal love is the sphere of heaven, is because it descends from the heavenly marriage of the Lord and the Church. [Emphasis added]

If one wishes to learn more specifically what is meant by "forbidden" or "impermissible" lusts, read *De Conjugio* 55-57, then *Last Judgment Posthumous*

109, then *Spiritual Experiences* 5457. *Spiritual Experiences* 3895-3900 are also very revealing.

It is very clear in *Genesis* that from first creation it is in the relationship of one male and one female together as husband and wife that we especially have the “image” and “likeness” of God – what is truly and fully human in finite creation:

So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them. And God said to them,

“Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” (*Genesis* 1: 27-28)

In the day that God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female, and blessed them and called them Mankind in the day they were created. (*Ibid.* 5: 1-2)

It is affirmed by the Lord Himself that this teaching regarding the relationship between one male and one female is taken further, asserting that “these two” shall become one flesh:

Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. (*Ibid.* 2:24)

And He answered and said to them, “Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So then they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.” (*Matthew* 19:5,6; see also *Mark* 10:6-9)

Nowhere in Scripture is there any indication, not even a whisper, that it is permissible for two of the same sex to try to become one flesh. In fact, the only teachings that we can find in the Bible bearing on this kind of effort, as we know, firmly, roundly condemn it, whether in the Old Testament or Paul’s Epistles:

You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination. (*Leviticus* 18:22)

If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them. (*Ibid.* 20:13)

There shall be no ritual harlot of the daughters of Israel, or a perverted one of the sons of Israel. (*Deuteronomy* 23:17)

Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to

Nowhere in Scripture is there any indication, not even a whisper, that it is permissible for two of the same sex to try to become one flesh.

dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. (*Romans 1:24,27*)

... as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, and are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. (*Jude 1:7*)

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor Sodomites. (*I Corinthians 6:9*)

(The law is made) . . . for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine. (*I Timothy 1:10*)

Yet people will say: “But where did Jesus condemn it?” In numerous places in the Gospels the Lord clearly renewed the prohibition against adultery, and in passages in *Matthew*, chapters 5 and 19, adultery, as we know, is given as the sole ground for divorce.

But what is meant by “adultery”? Is it just unlawful relations between people of the opposite sex, one or both of whom are married to someone else? From the very beginnings of Christianity the Church has recognized that the definition of adultery is much broader than that.

Paul certainly did in his preaching against homosexual practices. What were people looking to for their definition of the adulteries that the Lord prohibits, whether it is in the Old or New Testament? There is no question but that they were relying especially on such teachings as the Lord has given in *Leviticus*, chapters 18 and 20.

If we remove that Divinely given resource on what constitutes an adulteration of the legitimate and productive female-male relationship, what basis do we then have for prohibiting a whole range of incestuous relationships, polygamy, bestiality, etc.? Without those Divine prohibitions given mainly in *Leviticus*, we lose all our guidelines for determining what is permissible in the eyes of the Lord, and what is not permissible in human sexual relationships.

Now if, in seeking to preserve our societies from spiritual and moral calamity, we still wisely choose to retain most of these Levitical prohibitions, but we drop the prohibition against homosexual practices, on what basis are we making such an exclusion when there is no indication whatsoever in all of Scripture that we should do this?

In fact, besides the already cited *Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Deuteronomy 23:17* and Paul’s *Epistles*, there is plenty of other evidence in Scripture for retaining this prohibition. In *Genesis 19:1-28* there is that powerful example



of the condemnation and destruction of the city of Sodom, because “the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly,” (*Genesis* 13:13) and “their sin was very grievous.” (*Ibid.*18:20) (See also *Judges* 19:22-23 regarding the wickedness of some in the tribe of Benjamin and the sad calamity that overtook that tribe as a result.)

Also, in later stories of the Old Testament, especially in the books of *Kings*, there are all the very negative references to sodomites in the land and even in the court of the temple, that, by Divine command, were to be driven out and their practices eradicated:

And there were also perverted persons in the land. They did according to all the abominations of the nations which the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel. (*I Kings* 14:24)

And he banished the perverted persons from the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made. (*Ibid.* 15:12)

Then he tore down the ritual booths of the perverted persons that were in the house of the Lord, where the woman wove hangings for the wooden image. (*II Kings* 23:7)

Not a few scholars of Hebrew and Greek, in years gone by, have also pointed to other references in both Testaments where they believe the practice of homosexuality, among other things, is being referred to in a somewhat veiled yet always very negative fashion.

Two and maybe more of these instances occur in *Revelation*, which is introduced in chapter one as “the revelation of Jesus Christ.” In *Revelation* 21:7- 8 we read that “he that overcomes shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”

In *Revelation* 22:15, after the Lord speaks of who may enter into the New Jerusalem, we note that “without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, idolaters, and whosoever loves and makes a lie.” Some argue

The point is to invite the inquiring person to consider seriously what the broader testimony of Scripture is in respect to "marriage." One husband with one wife is what the Lord taught and everywhere affirms, encourages and blesses. Same-sex sexual relationships, whenever they are referred to, either directly or indirectly, are always prohibited and condemned.

If we choose to allow and affirm such relationships we need to be honest with ourselves that we are going aside from all the indications of God's Word in the Old and New Testaments and are being guided by other not very reliable things, such as human reason, experience and tradition.

both from their study of language and of history that the term “dogs” may especially refer to people indulging in various kinds of sexual disorders, including homosexual practices. For a similar use of the term “dog”:

You shall not bring the hire of a harlot or the price of a dog to the house of the Lord your God for any vowed offering, for both of these are an abomination to the Lord your God. (*Deuteronomy 23:18*)

The point is to invite the inquiring person to consider seriously what the broader testimony of Scripture is in respect to “marriage.” One husband with one wife is what the Lord taught and everywhere affirms, encourages and blesses. Same-sex sexual relationships, whenever they are referred to, either directly or indirectly, are always prohibited and condemned.

If we choose to allow and affirm such relationships we need to be honest with ourselves that we are going aside from all the indications of God's Word in the Old and New Testaments and are being guided by other not

very reliable things, such as human reason, experience and tradition.

When the Lord in the world was confronted with a person caught in the act of “adultery” (whatever form that adultery might have taken, and we are not told what form it was), He, out of His Divine mercy, did not condemn her to hell, (for she was still living in this world and could still repent), but He did say: “Go and sin no more.”

Should we not seek to do likewise whenever we are confronted with adultery in any of its perverse forms, including homosexual practices in so-called same-sex relationships or unions?



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# The Christian Case for Traditional Marriage

*The Rev. Kurt P. Nemitz*

Can one accept “gay marriage” as legitimate and still imagine oneself a faithful follower of what Jesus Christ taught? Some people are trying to persuade us that it is consistent with Jesus’ teachings to accept sexual relationships between man and man and woman and woman. In fact, some even argue that it is discriminatory and unfair to deny them the right to marry. But thoughtful consideration of the word and spirit of Jesus’ teachings definitely answers: Marriage is between one man and one woman only.

Jesus’ fundamental teaching about the relationship between men and women was simple and clear:

From the beginning of the creation, God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.” (*Mark* 10: 6-9)

With these words He was affirming what was said by God about the purpose of creation in the first chapter of *Genesis*: that man was created for woman, and woman for man, and that when joined together, male and female, they are intended to form an image of God Himself and to participate in His work of creation. Consequently any other unnatural sexual conjunctions were and are “an abomination.”

And so the direct command was given to the Israelites:

You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination. . . . Therefore you shall keep My ordinance, so that you do not commit any of these abominable customs which were committed before you, and that you do not defile yourselves by them: I am the Lord your God.” (*Leviticus* 18: 22, 30)

It was because the men of Sodom committed such abomination that fire and brimstone rained down upon them from the Lord out of heaven. (*Genesis* 19: 24)

The obvious reality is that woman was and is formed for man, and man for woman, not only physically but also mentally. They were made different

For Jesus, marriage was sacrosanct. In truth, it was – it is – heaven.

so that together they can become *one flesh*, interacting, as Swedenborg has so effectively put it, like the heart and lungs. And through genuine commitment they can eventually make *one mind*, a united love and wisdom in a life lived for others.

To talk of two “likes” – two people of the same sex – marrying each other, is as nonsensical as trying to join the north poles of two magnets. To use Kipling’s words, “never the twain shall meet.”

For Jesus, marriage was sacrosanct. In truth, it was – it is – heaven. The Lord, in fact, likened heaven to marriage in parables. His early followers understood this. They understood the centrality of marriage to the Divine provision of human happiness. Consequently, Paul said in a letter to Christians in Corinth:

I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people.... Don't you know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. (I Corinthians 6: 9, 10)

What this comes down to is that there is no place in that eternal human community after death called heaven for anyone who puts his or her own personal pleasure ahead of the welfare of others. And is this not what the attempt to join a man with a man, or a woman with a woman – mentally and physically – comes down to?

Sexual love between two members of the same sex is essentially *self*-satisfying. Consequently this unnatural conjunction is both inimical to the welfare of the individual men and women involved, and is destructive of true community and the welfare of society as a whole. There would be no loving human family on earth if all were homosexuals.

So it is that while in the Word “Sodom” symbolically stands for the evil that consists in the worst form of adultery, more broadly it means every evil that stems from self-love and the dreadful things that well up out of it. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 2220:1)

But just how, one may ask, can same-sex marriage actually be bad for human beings? The answer is that it is harmful because it misuses pleasure and therefore ultimately cannot do other than bring on unhappiness.

That’s the way it is with pleasure. Pleasure – supremely sexual pleasure – in itself is good. It is a gift of God, of His Divine love. Pleasure is misused, however, whenever it doesn’t serve its God-given purpose.

Take taste: The purpose of taste is to motivate us to eat so that our bodies

may be nourished. But when people live primarily for the pleasure of eating instead of eating for the sake of living productive lives for others, things go wrong. They become obese and their health and ability to function well for each other deteriorates, as we see in our culture today. Getting fat doesn't get you happy.

Now take marriage. The fundamental purpose in marriage is the production of new human beings. The very existence of mankind depends on it. Another offspring of marriage is the development of new, caring, supportive and productive relationships between the thought-oriented mind of the husband and the affection-inspired nature of the wife. These are the spiritual offspring which keep society going. Each partner finds his or her fulfillment in giving and receiving something that the other by nature lacks and needs, and thereby something useful for them, and through them for others, is born.

I find the Heavenly Doctrine's explanation eminently logical that such natural and spiritual births are the second beautiful purpose that the sexual pleasure of marriage is intended to initiate and bring forth. This is how Swedenborg puts it in *Spiritual Experiences* 4229:

Marriage love is the fundamental of all mutual love, mutual love being that one wishes for another better than for oneself. But the tie of marriage love is closer. Not only does one experience the highest happiness in giving himself completely to his married partner, and being united as one mind, but it is also the love of preservation of the whole human race, being the mercy of the Lord toward the universal human race, which streams into marriage love, and thence with the partners, into their marriage love, the love of procreation of offspring, and the love itself of the offspring. And, moreover, they are also so created that their minds and hearts may be ever more closely united.

These endeavors to bring forth natural and spiritual offspring and to unite minds and hearts are what can make sex in the marriage of a man and a woman pure and good – indeed, what makes it heaven itself. But homosexuality can have no such results, because it occurs between intrinsically unconjoinable entities. Two hearts, or two lungs, can never make the core of a human body. Likewise a male psyche can never bring to another male that complementary quality of the feminine psyche that it needs to make it into a complete human

What this comes down to is that there is no place in that eternal human community after death called heaven for anyone who puts his or her own personal pleasure ahead of the welfare of others.

The Lord, who is goodness itself, condemns no one who has homosexual inclinations. It is those who willfully act upon such inclinations who condemn themselves by fleeing from heaven and the Lord – “Because the Lord cannot be in anything except good.”

self. Neither can a female psyche bring to another female what she needs to bring herself to true fulfillment.

Therefore the nature of homosexuality cannot but be essentially self-serving. That is simply the reality.

It is regrettable that some do not find their true other half to whom they can contribute during their life on earth. But I find Swedenborg’s testimony very consoling that in the Lord’s merciful providence single people who have sincerely desired a genuine marriage do find their longed-for partner after death and then enter into a wonderful marriage in that eternal realm where we remain as the man or woman we inwardly were here on earth. (See *Marriage Love* 54)

Moreover, the pleasures of same-sex relationships can never be those of genuine love. “Love,” as it is so lucidly put in *Divine Love and Wisdom* 47,

consists in willing what one has to be another, and in feeling the others delight as delight within oneself. That is what it is to love – *to will what one has to be another*. In contrast, to feel one’s own delight in another and not the other’s delight within oneself is not to love; for this is loving self . . . . These two types of love are diametrically opposite each other in nature. Both indeed conjoin, and to love what

one has in another – in other words, to love oneself in another – does not appear to undo that conjunction; but in fact it does so undo the conjunction that the more anyone has loved another in this way, the more the other eventually hates him. **For such a conjunction gradually becomes undone of itself, and love then turns to hatred to the degree that it does.** (Emphasis added)

It is deeply regrettable that same-sex marriage is almost glamorized today as somehow being good, when the grim reality is that homosexual relationships generally have injurious outcomes, including promiscuity and drug use.

The brimstone and fire that rained down on Sodom and Gomorrah are certainly a Divine warning of the devastating influence that such indulgence can have on human relationships and society. It is not surprising that since ancient times there have been proscriptions against homosexuality throughout the world.

Certainly the distress associated with homosexuality is not what Jesus, our God, wishes for mankind.

But, some will plead, “Aren’t there some poor souls biologically inclined to homosexuality?” Yes, perhaps so. But isn’t that the case with all that is wrong with us? By birth we are all hereditarily inclined to evils of every kind. Selfishness, as we parents sometimes ruefully observe, is in our genes. That is why Jesus said we must be born again, of the Spirit.

Through the God-given knowledge of what it is to be truly human we can and we must resist the harmful urges of our flesh and discipline our behavior, for the sake of true love and the happiness it brings – and for the sake of the welfare of all society.

Fortunately our destiny is not determined by our genes; there are three other saving factors ever present with us from our Creator: our *rationality*, our *free will* and the *all-powerful, merciful, gentle goodness of the Lord our God*.

Because the Lord, through His example, has given us the knowledge of what it is to be truly human, with His aid we can resist the harmful urges of our flesh and discipline our behavior for the sake of true love and genuine happiness – and the welfare of all around us.

That is what Jesus meant when He said we must be “born again, of water and the Spirit.” The Lord, who is goodness itself, condemns no one who has homosexual inclinations. It is those who willfully act upon such inclinations who condemn themselves by fleeing from heaven and the Lord – “Because the Lord cannot be in anything except good,” as we read in *Arcana Coelestia* 2335.

Such forbidden activities are intrinsically contrary to the loving goal of our Lord’s Divine goodness – the eternal happiness of everyone He creates – which is eventually realized in a beautiful marriage for every woman and man who prayerfully seeks one.



**The Rev. Kurt P. Nemitz** is retired and lives in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He still serves as a translator for the General Church. He was married to the late Melinda (Echols).  
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# Priorities in Parenting

*The Rev. Derrick A. M. Lumsden*

*(Reprinted with permission from New Church Perspective)*

Here are a few reflections from New Church teachings about parenthood. Since I am a father my reflections lean in that direction, but most of my thoughts apply to all parents.

From the Lord's perspective, parenting is the most important work you could be doing:

[Marriage's] use excels all other uses in creation, for by marriage is the orderly propagation of the human race and also of the angelic heaven, which is from the human race. (*Conjugal Love* 156)

Propagation is a fancy way of saying reproduction. Marriage is the Lord's mechanism for creating more people. And parenting is the Lord's mechanism for getting more angels.

I think a few implications of this passage are really counter-cultural. Today's culture holds up marriage and romantic love as the end in itself. The purpose of a relationship is personal happiness. But this passage indicates marriage exists for the sake of the children. Not that the marriage itself isn't important; marriages should outlast the children. And not that marriage isn't personally fulfilling and brings a lot of happiness. Feeling the joy of another is love, and with that comes a lot of joy and happiness.

The reason the Lord made marriage with this ability to last forever is for the sake of the children. (See *Conjugal Love* 98) I think we are culturally conditioned to see marriage and a happy relationship as the end in itself, and children are a means of fulfilling or bettering that relationship and contributing to personal happiness. But it really is the other way around. The Lord created this great potential in marriage, because the better the marriage the better off the children will be.

Another counter-cultural idea is that parenting is the first priority. No one in our culture rewards great parents. It is in career or hobbies that society really acknowledges the value of a person. But in the Lord's eyes success as a parent is the greatest success you could have. A big part of that success is the children's engagement in spiritual things and their ability to be a positive



spiritual influence on others.

As a working dad I do not think prioritizing family means I should drop work or be constantly available for my kids. What it means to me is that when there is a direct conflict between work and home, home wins. I do not involve myself in everything my family or kids do, but I do try to think through the most important things I could be doing and prioritize providing them. Do I get an “A” on follow through? Nope. But they get a lot more from me than if I didn’t hold them as a priority.

Referring back to *Conjugal Love* 156, the goal of parenting is to produce angels. Getting clarity on what parenting priorities are has helped me to make wiser choices in how I raise my children and make decisions for their well-being. For example, is it going to matter spiritually and eternally if my children never play soccer? Is it going to matter spiritually and eternally if I never read the Word with them? Which habit is going to matter more – prayer or soccer practice?

Playing soccer can and should be evaluated in the context of spiritual and moral development. And, yes, I believe soccer can contribute to these. There is a cultural tendency to evaluate activities and opportunities through the filter of “providing experiences.” I think our societal obsession with providing experiences for our children perpetuates parenting that feels like a treadmill in high gear.

I offer two simple questions to use when you are evaluating:

1. Is this activity important to their spiritual development right now?
2. Would not doing this slow their growth as a spiritual and moral person?

For most things, the answers are going to be no and no. This doesn’t mean drop it, but it does mean you *could* drop it and still get an “A” in good parenting. You have permission to simplify your family schedule.

So you may be wondering: do I think that relationships without children are less-than, or that people who are unmarried cannot contribute? No. And Yes. No, because there is a value in relationships without children. And yes, because these relationships are not fulfilling their purpose.

It may be by choice or it may be situational, but the ideal is that marriage

No one in our culture rewards great parents. It is in career or hobbies that society really acknowledges the value of a person. But in the Lord's eyes success as a parent is the greatest success you could have.

relationships contribute children for heaven. I think there is a tension here that should not be resolved. I also believe that adoption is one way that families fulfill this purpose. After all, adoption is the only mechanism by which a marriage fulfills this purpose in heaven. (*Heaven and Hell* 332, *Conjugal Love* 51)

I know there are detail-oriented types who are probably asking: but what about this particular case and this situation? Sorry, but you are going to have to do your own thinking. The nitty-gritty of parenting is a lot of work. Being a big-picture type I feel a lot of peace from getting the top priorities clarified for me. After all, parenting to produce angels is not just a goal for when they die; we need angels or “messengers” of the Lord in this world too.



**The Rev. Derrick A.M. Lumsden** is the pastor at The Sower’s Chapel in Freeport, Pennsylvania, where he lives with his wife, Eden (King), and their four boys. He had previously been pastor of The New Church Westville in Durban, South Africa. His hobbies include: dreaming of planting a church, and reading. Contact: [Derrick.Lumsden@gmail.com](mailto:Derrick.Lumsden@gmail.com)

#### OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY

Part of a continuing series developed by the Rev. W. Cairns Henderson, 1961-1966.

#### CONNATE GOOD

The word “connate” means “existing from birth”; and the term, “connate good,” is therefore used in the Writings to describe the natural good that is born with man and which in itself is a mere animal good, existing also with beasts and with nations of the worst faith and life. Connate good is characterized by the fact that it is interiorly evil. By this it is distinguished from spiritual good in the natural, which is not inborn but is acquired through regeneration, and which is said to be real natural human good, or the good of the natural.

It is this connate good that has been mistaken for genuine good by certain theories of psychology and education; theories which hold that man is inherently good and will become such fully if there is no interference with his development. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 3408)

# Church News

*Compiled by Bruce Henderson*

## **BOYNTON BEACH RETREAT**

Twenty years ago the **Rev. Fred Schnarr** founded Eldergarten in Boynton Beach, Florida, for senior members of the Church whom he fondly referred to as “students in the age of wisdom.” The idea was to provide a program of stimulating speakers and discussion, with plenty of opportunities for social life among New Church friends.

In 2011 Eldergarten outgrew the church buildings in Boynton Beach and moved to the Duncan Conference Center, which also provides rooms and meals. It also outgrew the name Eldergarten. Now the “Retreat” – held January 18-24 this year – opens the experience to a wider age group. It regularly attracts more than 100 attendees.

The speakers this year were the **Rev. Dr. Thane P. Glenn** and **Dr. D. Gregory Rose** from Bryn Athyn College, and the **Rev. Jeremy F. Simons** from the Bryn Athyn Church. Summaries of their presentations begin on page 140.

Below are reports on: a General Church overview and questions-and-answers with the **Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr.**; a banquet talk by the **Rev. George D. McCurdy**; and a presentation on the New Christian Bible Study Project by **Steve David** from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. **Phoebe Simons Tucker**, from Shelton, Connecticut, also offered a delightful session on “How to tweak your memory for sermons and classes.”

### **General Church Overview**

Bishop Buss said that the Church administration and Board of Directors are trying to be more aware of issues and opportunities, and to focus attention and energy on them.

He said the mission of the Church is “to help people live a heavenly life through the teachings of the Lord God Jesus Christ in His Second Coming,” and that we must always be asking how the Church is succeeding.



Among strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats he included:

**Strengths:** Powerful message, commitment to outreach, increasing global culture, education.

**Weaknesses:** Communication, hanging on to traditional forms, not attracting the next generation, a culture of criticism and strong opinions, need for improved professional development, our complex structure.

**Opportunities:** Spiritual guidance for children, young people who want to make the world better, technology, international potential, increased roles for women, growth of small groups.

**Threats:** Cultural environment, time, General Church perceived as out of touch, gaps between clergy and laity.

**General Church values:** Turning to the Word, developing faith and trust in providence, outreach, self-examination and repentance, participation in the life of the Church.

**Major Goals:** New Church education and equipping our young people for regeneration and a life of use; reaching out to share the truths of the Threefold Word, especially using technology; strengthen engagement with the Church, using individual gifts; clarify our purposes and values.

Among concerns and questions raised by those in attendance:

- How are church plants doing? Can we see more of them?
- Glaring lack of communication in recent years. Budget cuts forced cutbacks, but there is a cost to not communicating also (i.e. loss of trust and support). Administration, clergy, board, etc., need to be more proactive about sharing information throughout the Church.
- Cost of sending ministers to small groups when we can transmit services to them for nothing.
- General Church schools on life support: when does the Church bite the bullet? (Bishop Buss said we need an infusion of energy around New Church education. Decisions will be made at the local level; we will support societies as much as we are able.)
- Appeals for contributions are too fragmented (General Church, Bryn Athyn College, Academy Secondary Schools, local societies, etc.) They used to be coordinated so you could just write one check and designate how it was to be divided.
- Why aren't we attracting our young people? It was mentioned that a consultant told an Academy administrator that "you do a great job with religious education, but you don't close the deal." He was amazed that a religious institution would just let graduates walk away without "signing

them up” and keeping them connected and engaged.

- We need to think marketing – get rid of the name “General Church,” which doesn’t mean anything, and come up with a better symbol.

### RETREAT BANQUET

**The Rev. George D. McCurdy** gave an informal and humorous talk at the Retreat banquet, appropriately titled: *A Magnificent Room Called Remembrance*.

He said the reason why he agreed to be the banquet speaker “comes from my deep appreciation for what happens here in Boynton Beach.”

“It is a week of gathering to be with friends,” he said, “to nourish our souls and our hearts in friendship.” He likened it to Charter Day in Bryn Athyn “without the crowds.”

He said it is also time to awaken memories of past Retreats and Eldergarten in Boynton Beach. And he expressed his appreciation and amazement at “the energy, vitality and inspiration” – not only with the speakers but also the attendees.

He noted that as he was preparing this talk he and his wife, **Lois**, were enjoying a visit in Atlantic City, New Jersey. He looked out the window of their room at the second-tallest building in the state – a beautiful casino/hotel that had opened in April 2012 at a cost of \$2.6 billion. In September 2014 it was forced to close. The contrast hit him: Human efforts have no guarantees of longevity but as humans “we are built to last.” Our souls are formed at conception and will endure forever.

He shared a number of quotes from the Writings, including:

All things whatever that a man hears and sees, and by which he is affected, are, unknown to the man, insinuated as to ideas and ends into his interior memory; and they remain in it, so that not anything perishes; although the same things are obliterated in the exterior memory. Such therefore is the interior memory that there are inscribed on it all the single, nay, the most singular things that the man has ever thought, said or done, including those things which appeared to him in shadow, even the tiniest. This goes on from earliest childhood to extreme old age. The memory of all those things man retains on entering the next life, and he is gradually brought into a complete recollection of them. This is his Book of Life which is opened in the next life and according to which he is judged. (*Arcana Coelestia* 2474)

And also from the *Arcana* 3854, this excerpt:

From this we can see how greatly the man errs who believes that the Lord has not foreseen, and does not see, the veriest singulars appertaining to man, and that in



these He does not foresee and lead; when the truth is that the Lord's foresight and providence are in the very minutest of these veriest singulars connected with man, in things so minute that it is impossible by any thought to comprehend as much as one out of a hundred millions of them; for every smallest moment of man's life involves a series of consequences extending to eternity.



### THE NEW CHRISTIAN BIBLE STUDY

Steve David flew into Boynton Beach from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to update the group on The New Christian Bible Study Project, which was launched in 2013. The impetus was to help the spread of the Church by giving people throughout the world access to teachings about the internal sense of the Bible.

Steve said we all want the Church to grow but it isn't and it's time we tried something different. He noted that there are 2 billion Christians in the world and a great many of them are searching for meaning within the Bible. This is what we can deliver by providing such a gateway for their searches. And it's working. He said there are about 100,000 searches every day on the web for biblical meanings and that this site is attracting 750 hits a day from all over the world – 20,000 in just the past 30 days. The potential is enormous.

The website – [www.newchristianbiblestudy.org](http://www.newchristianbiblestudy.org) – is worth checking out and using regularly. Among its many fascinating resources are the links it provides from Bible verses to explanations in the Writings, using a variety of translations and languages.

The website includes 70 Bible translations in 45 languages, 57 of Swedenborg's works in Latin, English and other languages. It lets inquirers see Bible verses and explanations from the Writings side by side. There are many other features and an ambitious to-do list, including 210 listed ideas.

Funding support is needed and most welcome. Look for the “donate” link on the website, and contributions are tax deductible. Steve also encourages people to “like” the organization on Facebook. He is happy to answer any questions and to hear comments and suggestions: e-mail [sdavid@skymark.com](mailto:sdavid@skymark.com) or telephone 412-513-5145



### GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT

On January 23 **Bishop Brian Keith** sadly announced the passing of the **Rev. Nicholas Anochi**. Nicholas, who had been serving as pastor of the New Church Dome in Ghana, West Africa, was staying with his wife, **Victoria**, and two children in Newark, New

Jersey, when he succumbed to a brave battle against cancer. Bishop Keith had visited with him just before Christmas and said he was looking forward then to ending his medical treatments and returning to work in Ghana.

In a message to General Church employees, Bishop Keith said:

“We are all surprised and deeply saddened by this. As much as we know he will be awakening shortly and having his strength renewed, mounting up with wings like eagles, it is hard to imagine him not being with us.

“Nicholas was one of the early New Church clergy in Ghana and did tremendous work supporting its growth development there. His vision, his energy and his devotion to the New Church will be sorely missed in this world.”

Nicholas graduated from the Theological School and was ordained in 1995, then into the second degree in 1997.

### NEW PRESIDENT FOR THE COLLEGE

Academy Chancellor **Brian W. Keith** has announced that **Brian Blair** has been elected as the next President of Bryn Athyn College of the New Church. He will assume office July 1, 2015. **Dr. Kristin King** will continue her leadership of the College as President until that time. Prior to assuming office Brian is providing consulting services to the College, especially in the areas of the new business major and in seeking new avenues of fund raising, in addition to learning about the College’s academic processes and procedures.

Brian attended the Pittsburgh New Church elementary school, the Academy of the New Church Boys School for two years, and Bryn Athyn College for two years before graduating from Duquesne University with a degree in business administration. He has an extensive business resume including computer systems sales, management, recruiting, training and most recently in his own consulting firm that advises banks on risk analysis.

He has been a close advisor to AIM Academy, a school his wife, **Nancy**, and a friend established for challenged learners. Brian has also served on several General Church congregational boards, the General Church Board of Directors, and most recently on the Academy Board of Trustees. During that time he has volunteered many hours at the College in a range of areas.

Bishop Keith said: “Brian’s organizational and management skills, his fund-raising experience, and his development of new programs should be tremendous assets to the College. We look forward to his leadership.”

### PASTORAL CHANGES

The **Rt. Rev. Brian W. Keith**, Executive Bishop for the General Church, announced the following pastoral changes, to take effect July 1, 2015:

- **The Rev. Michael Cowley** – Pastor, Olivet Society, Toronto, Canada

- **The Rev. James Cooper** – Retiring as Pastor of Toronto but will continue to help out with uses in Canada and perhaps elsewhere
- **The Rev. Brian Smith** – Assistant to the Pastor, Washington New Church in Mitchellville, Maryland, and Principal of the Washington New Church School
- **The Rev. John Jin** – Stepping down as Pastor of the Korean Philadelphia Church, but will offer them part-time assistance in addition to remaining Regional Pastor of Asia and working on Korean translations

And upon successful completion of Theological School in May of this year:

- **Brett Buick** – Assistant to the Pastor, Kempton, Pennsylvania, and teaching a few courses in Bryn Athyn College of the New Church
- **Jared Buss** – Assistant to the Pastor, Toronto
- **Thomas Floyd** – Part-time assistance in Norway, Denmark and Stockholm
- **Joel Glenn** – Assistant to the Pastor, Oak Arbor, Michigan

#### NEW COLLEGE PROGRAMS

Bryn Athyn College has announced four new programs – a nursing partnership with Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia, a partnership with Rosemont College in Counseling Psychology, plus pre-law and pre-med tracks in the College.

The agreement with Jefferson allows Bryn Athyn students to continue taking liberal arts courses at the College while also earning a bachelor of science in nursing, beginning in the fall of this year.

**Dr. Allen Bedford**, Dean of Academics at Bryn Athyn, said: “We are excited to be partners with Jefferson in providing students with a strong liberal arts foundation and excellent technical training.”

Students will have a choice of dual admission – attending both schools simultaneously – or attending Bryn Athyn for the first two years and then transferring to Jefferson to complete the program in their final two years.

Beth Ann Swan, Dean of the Jefferson School of Nursing, said: “The nursing profession has increasing demands for nurses with a strong liberal arts foundation and we realize that Bryn Athyn students have what it takes. It really is a wonderful opportunity for both of our institutions to work together to prepare critical-thinking, successful nurses.”

The agreement with Rosemont College guarantees graduates of Bryn Athyn, who have earned a bachelor of science in psychology, interdisciplinary psychology or religion, admission into the Master of Arts Program in Counseling Psychology at Rosemont.





Riding the water slide



Up and away



A happy group



A sparkling night



Kids at play



I think I can...



Zip lining



Ready for adventure

CAILIN ELPHICK WITH THE CHILDREN OF THE KENYA ORPHANAGE WHERE SHE VOLUNTEERED LAST SUMMER. (SEE HER ARTICLE ON PAGE 161)







How many people do you recognize?



During a break, Jerry and Kent Fuller, with George McCurdy and Phil Smith in the background



Relaxing on a private cruise on the Intercoastal Waterway



Relaxing on a private cruise on the Intercoastal Waterway



Pearl Richter and Katie Goerwitz



George McCurdy presides at the banquet head table



The two Bobs who keep everything going:  
 Bob Brickman, left, and Bob Smith

**NEW COLLEGE PROGRAMS CONTINUED**

The new pre-law track is open to students of all majors who plan to attend law school. It is not a major or minor but a formalized list of suggested courses in preparation for law school. The advisor for this program is **Dr. D. Gregory Rose**, Associate Professor of History and Political Science.

In the pre-med track, Bryn Athyn offers many courses that satisfy requirements for admission to schools of medicine, dentistry, osteopathy, optometry, podiatry and other health-related fields. The advisor for this program is **Dr. Edward Higgins**, Assistant Professor of Biology and Chemistry.

Further information on all of these programs is available from the College and on its website: *www.brynathyn.edu*

**ACADEMY SUMMER CAMPS**

The Academy of the New Church Secondary Schools again is offering its three popular camps this summer: the ANC Summer Camp, Performing Arts Camp, and Tools 4 Life.

The Summer Camp – July 5-11 – is a week-long residential camp on the Secondary Schools campus for all current 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> graders. Its goal is to familiarize students with the Academy and the New Church religion that is its foundation.

For more than 30 years, approximately 150 students a year from North America have enjoyed classes, religious instruction, games, activities and social events, climaxing with the camp's very own Olympics.

For further information and to register contact the camp director, **Keene Blair**, at 267-229-5527 or *keene.blair@ancss.org*, or go to the Secondary Schools website, *www.ancss.org*.

The Performing Arts Camp will be held in the Mitchell Performing Arts Center June 17-26 for current 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders. Also offered is a one-day optional workshop on set design and construction, June 16.

This year's camp will offer character creation, choreography, blocking and vocal production. It will culminate with two performances of Disney's *Mulan Jr.*

For a full description and registration, go to *www.ancss.org*. For more information contact **Sarah Waelchli**: *sarah.waelchli@ancss.org*.

The Tools 4 Life camp will be July 12-18, for incoming juniors and seniors. Its goal is to help teenagers gain the tools and confidence needed to take the next steps after high school. It includes help with mentoring, networking and personal growth, community service, a career day and visits to nearby colleges.

For health forms and registration please go to the website, *www.ancss.org*. For information contact **Jennifer Allen** (267-502-4521 or *jennifer.allen@ancss.org*).

The Glencairn Museum is offering a Mythology Summer Camp in two sessions – June 15-19 and June 22-26 – for 9- and 10-year-olds.

The camp will focus on the mysteries, myths and fables of the cultures represented in the Museum's collection. Activities will include worship, archery, games, cooking and crafts.

Registration brochures have been mailed to General Church societies and circles. To register or request a brochure please contact **Leah Smith** (267-502-2993 or [leah.smith@glencairnmuseum.org](mailto:leah.smith@glencairnmuseum.org)) or **Doreen Carey** (267-502-2981 or [doreen.carey@glencairnmuseum.org](mailto:doreen.carey@glencairnmuseum.org)).

### **PHILLIP ISLAND CAMP IN AUSTRALIA**

Australia's New Church Summer Camp – held just a week after Christmas – returned to Phillip Island, a site last visited in 2012.

**Trevor Moffat** started the program with a devotional talk, “Do you hear what I hear?” This was an echo of the familiar Christmas hymn, but also was a recurring theme of the camp. Trevor said they were all there to hear God's Word but may not all come away feeling they have heard the same thing. That opened conversations throughout the week with people comparing notes on what they heard.

**David Moffat** led off the presentations with “Building with Concrete” and “The Hebrew Alphabet.” The Hebrew language does not have words to convey abstract ideas, so anything abstract has to be converted into concrete imagery. Anger, for instance, might be portrayed as “flared nostrils,” and abundance as “fatness.”

**Martin Pennington** offered a two-part session on “Paul and Swedenborg – A Shared Theology.” Paul is often associated with faith-alone theology, he said, but when Paul is read without bias he is not teaching faith alone but New Church theology.

**The Rev. Todd Beiswenger** presented “Doing Your Part,” in the context of a society often idolizing the kind of hero depicted in movies. Such images can leave us feeling inadequate, he said, because we haven't done anything heroic, when all the Lord is asking is for us to do our part. He used the human body as an illustration of each part having a function and purpose, and they all need each other to survive.

Other presentations included: “Messages of Star Wars” and “Surviving Heaven” by Todd Beiswenger; “Communities of Evil” by David Moffat; and “Happiness or Contentment” by Trevor Moffat. More information about the sessions can be found at <http://newchurch.net.au/documents/camp-2015-presentations>. Photos of camp activities appear on page 199.

## GATHERING LEAVES

Women from the various branches of the Swedenborgian Church will gather in Cincinnati, Ohio, June 4-7, at the Transfiguration Spirituality Center. The theme is *From Root to Fruit*, based on this quote from Swedenborg: “Deeds inspired by charity are alive. They are said to send roots below and yield fruit above.”

The retreat will begin with a dinner on Thursday evening, followed with presentations by women of the New Church of Australia, the General Church, General Convention, and the Lord’s New Church. They will be sharing stories about their foremothers’ accomplishments and contributions to the Church.

On Friday the group will explore the fruit of our love for the Church through current involvement. There will be a choice of workshops later in the day and a guest speaker at dinner.

Women will brainstorm on Saturday on how to help one another plant seeds for future growth and use. There will be an optional outing that afternoon to the Cincinnati Freedom Center, and celebration in the evening of time spent together.

The session will close on Sunday with worship at the historic Swedenborgian Glendale New Church.

The registration deadline is March 31 and space is limited. Registration can be done online: <http://gatheringleaves.weebly.com/gathering-leaves-2015>. For information about possible scholarships – or to support scholarships – contact **Gloria Toot**: [gtoot46.gt@gmail.com](mailto:gtoot46.gt@gmail.com).

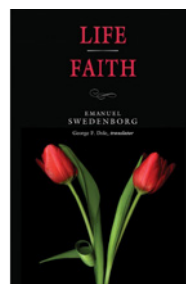
## NEW BOOKS

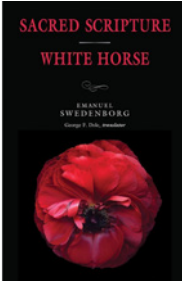
In the January-February issue we noted the publication of *The Lord*, as part of the Swedenborg Foundation’s New Century Edition series, translated by the **Rev. Dr. George F. Dole**. Now the Foundation is offering two more in the series: *Life – Faith* and *Sacred Scripture – White Horse*.

The back cover of the book *Life – Faith* states: “What does it mean to do good? What does it mean to be good? In two short works, *Life* and *Faith*, Emanuel Swedenborg explores these questions and how they can shape our spiritual lives.

“*Life* refers not to the vital force that sustains us but to the way we conduct our lives. This piece focuses on the concept of regeneration, or spiritual rebirth, as a process of consciously rejecting our own destructive impulses and internalizing divine love and goodness.

“In *Faith*, Swedenborg argues that faith is not a choice to believe things that make no rational sense. Instead,





he defines faith as an inner recognition of truth, and he emphasizes that real faith can occur only in people who love others and treat them well.

“Taken together, these two short works provide insight into a theme that pervades Swedenborg’s theology: how to open ourselves to divine love, and how to manifest that love in our actions.”

On the back cover of *Sacred Scripture – White Horse* appears: “In this pair of short works, which he originally published separately, Swedenborg describes the literal text of the Bible as a vessel for higher truth. If we look beyond the obscure and seemingly inconsistent details in Scripture, he says, we can perceive a divine love and wisdom that permeates not only the Bible but the entire universe.”

These attractive books are available through the Foundation, [www.swedenborg.com](http://www.swedenborg.com), and the New Church Bookstore, [www.newchurchbooks.com](http://www.newchurchbooks.com).

## 70<sup>TH</sup> REUNION

In the photo below, members of the Academy of the New Church class of 1944 gather for their 70<sup>th</sup> reunion at the October 2014 Charter Day celebration in Bryn Athyn. Left to right. Seated, are: **Marcia Pendleton, Yadah Alden,**



**John Alden, Eleanore Naill and Margaret Needle.** Standing are **Robert Blair, Harris Behlert, Jackie Bostock, Boyd Asplundh and Claire Glenn.**

Robert Blair notes that in February 1944 most of the men were drafted into the Armed Forces and were unable to graduate with their class.

## FOLLOW-UP ON CHINA

**Helen Ference**, an enthusiastic new member of the Church who lives in the Bryn Athyn area, told the **Rev. John Jin** that she was inspired by the report on the New Church in China in the January-February issue of *New Church Life*.

Helen discovered the Church by finding *New Church Life* online and reading **Bruce Henderson’s** book, *Window to Eternity*. She has been coming to services in the Cathedral since last November and says, “I love it.”

Through Google she found that the **Rev. Timothy’s** group in China has “a great website” and has already translated several of Swedenborg’s books into



Chinese. (Timothy's last name is withheld for security reasons.)

In an e-mail to John Jin, she said: "You probably have already seen this from their website. I am truly amazed to know that Timothy, his wife, and students were on a famous Chinese Charity TV show called "*I Dream China*" in October 2013. Back then they supported 20 students and now they have 42! It is God's work!"

#### **CORRECTION**

**The Rev. Dr. Erik E. Sandstrom** notes that in his article, *The Mystery of Swedenborg's Rules of Life*, in the January-February 2015 issue of *New Church Life*, he had labeled Queen Ulrika Elenora as the daughter of King Charles XII. The king was childless and Ulrika was in fact his younger sister.

# Life Lines

## MAPPING HEAVEN

New Church readers are happy to find references to Swedenborg sprinkled through Dr. Eben Alexander's new book, *The Map of Heaven*.

Alexander wrote the runaway best-seller, *Proof of Heaven*, after a proclaimed near-death experience transformed him from absolute denier of such phenomena to true believer. Last spring he enthralled a huge and varied audience in the Asplundh Field House in Bryn Athyn with his scientific explanations and "experience" of heaven.

Much of it was insightful about the reality of spiritual life and heaven – both helping to confirm and stimulate faith in the afterlife. But he disappointed many of his listeners with his belief in reincarnation.

Well, Alexander got a lot of exposure to the teachings of Swedenborg during his visit to Bryn Athyn and from follow-up letters. That appears to have made some impact on his thinking, although he still could use a truer "map" for his spiritual journey.

There are a lot of positives in what he presents in his new book, which he subtitles: *How Science, Religion and Ordinary People Are Proving the Afterlife*. He says, for example:

- I believe that heaven makes us human, that without a knowledge that it is where we come from and where we're going – that it is our true country – life makes no sense.
- The only way to live happily on earth is in the light of heaven.
- The one rule we need to remember is that we end up where we belong, and we are led by the amount of love we have in us, for love is the essence of heaven.

He acknowledges that Swedenborg "was the first modern scientist to treat heaven as a real place, and the first to try to map it." But he sees Swedenborg as just another gifted scientist and intellectual, not as a revelator. He is just one of a whole school of scientists and philosophers he consults for his "map of heaven." And he still clings to reincarnation, rather than let the Lord be his guide. His 12-page bibliography includes none of Swedenborg's books.

It is good to see Alexander progressing on his journey, and hopefully he is

helping his readers move along a path that informs their faith and brings them closer to Divine revelation. But as a map maker he is more of an ambitious seeker than a confident guide – more Lewis & Clark at this point than Rand McNally.

(BMH)

### **KNOWING THE WAY**

Many a lost soul seems to be wandering a spiritual wilderness like Eben Alexander, seeking a path but without a sure sense of direction. Swedenborg notes in *Spiritual Experiences* 2209 that many animals, birds and bees instinctively “know the way home” because they live in the order of their species. “Nor do they become bewildered in thick woods like man, so that they not only know the way home, but the bee even to its own hive among many. This sense is common among such as live according to order . . . Such would also be the case with man had he lived in order.”

In *Divine Providence* 60, Swedenborg says that everyone who has religion thinks about heaven and wants to go there, “but heaven is granted only to those who know the way to it and walk that way.” With such people, he says, “there is a knowledge of the way from walking in it, and a walking in the way through a knowledge of it.”

That is the “map of heaven” that Swedenborg describes. You don’t need a GPS to get there – just a life of spiritual order and walking in the way.

(BMH)

### **WHY I JOINED THE GENERAL CHURCH**

I joined the General Church because it took the doctrines very seriously, acknowledging their Divine authority. This gave the General Church a very distinctive flavor, different from other churches and even other branches of the New Church. The worship services, doctrinal classes and community life were different in a way I found very refreshing, satisfying and exciting.

It was the Academy that gave the General Church its unique perspective, intellectual vitality, and remarkable cohesiveness. By the Academy I especially mean the attitude toward the Writings and deep study of them that the Academy represents, as well as the actual schools and the training they provide for the people of the Church.

The General Church was not “inclusive” in the sense of accepting people with a broad range of attitudes, beliefs, opinions and lifestyles. To me, that approach, so typical of many churches today, amounts to not standing for anything much in particular; and if the General Church had been like that it would have held no attraction for me.

I did not, and do not, view the world through “the lens of inclusiveness.” I view it through the lens of the Word. The General Church was founded for the purpose of viewing all things in this way, through the lens of the Word.

I joined the General Church because I wanted the kind of inclusiveness it *did* represent: that is, acceptance of the Writings in their entirety as Divine, and those who shared that view.

In a word, I joined the General Church because it exists to serve the Truth.  
(WEO)

### **HERE IS WHAT MADE THE ACADEMY SPECIAL**

In a sense, I was a member of the Academy before I even learned that it still existed. I had read about it in Marguerite Beck Block’s 1932 history of the New Church, was much impressed by what I read, and wondered if the institution still existed or what had happened to it. The author of that book, by the way, was and remained Catholic, but her respect and admiration for the Academy and General Church is very clear. Here is a brief statement from the chapter on the General Church and the community in Bryn Athyn:

The thing that strikes the visitor to the Academy Schools is the fact that nothing, apparently, is done, or left undone, without a doctrinal reason. Nothing seems to be haphazard, or merely a matter of course, but everything is for the sake of a “use.” .... But there is nothing morbid about this preoccupation with doctrinal sanctions. The atmosphere is perfectly normal and wholesome. The boys and girls live in separate dormitories, but eat together, and except for the high school years the schools are coeducational.” (*The History of the New Church In The New World*, pp. 271-272)

Nothing was done without a doctrinal reason! *That’s* the General Church. To some it might seem that this would make the Church narrow-minded, hidebound, uncreative, intellectually stifling and boring. But nothing could be further from the truth .... because the doctrine in question is the Heavenly Doctrine of the New Jerusalem, consisting of Divine truths in which the Lord Himself is present: Life itself! The Light of the world! It is a subtle, complex, dynamic doctrine that relates to life in all its aspects, appeals to reason, and has in it the power to completely transform those who take it to heart and make them wiser, kinder, better human beings.

(WEO)

### **OUR OWN ACADEMY, WE PLEDGE OUR FAITH TO THEE!**

When I first came into the General Church it was very common for *Our Own Academy, Our Glorious Church* and various other toasts to the Church to be sung at almost every gathering: clergy and board meetings, banquets and social events, graduations, baptisms, weddings, home dedications, resurrection services, and of course at Charter Day events, including the Theta Alpha and

Sons of the Academy luncheons. Even private dinner parties with just a few people in a home usually included a toast to the Church, often sung.

*Our Glorious Church* is a beautiful song, with very poetic and significant lyrics. There are two tunes to which it is sung, both very fine. A number of the other church songs (mostly composed by Walter C. Childs in the 19th century), although quite witty and catchy in their day, are from another era and seem quaint now, and are being sung less and less. Times have changed, and the importance and habit of offering toasts is not so much a part of modern life as it once was.

But the quality of these songs and toasts, and the fact that there were so many of them, and that they were such a prominent part of life in our church, testifies to how central the Church was in the life of the people, and how it was brought into everything, from the most profound spiritual, intellectual and social issues to the most ordinary, everyday events.

The Church was always there, in sad times and happy, in gatherings most solemn and in occasions for enjoyment and fun. I wish the spirit of community and of how important and beautiful the Church is were as strong now. For those of us who love it, the New Church will always be .....

*First in our hearts, and when earth's life is o'er,  
First in our hearts on eternity's shore;  
Radiant Bride of the Lord we adore,  
Crown of the ages, our Church evermore!*

(WEO)

### WHERE IS GOD?

Stephen Fry, a British comedian, actor, author and hardline atheist, recently was asked by a television host what he would say if he discovered after death that God really does exist.

Fry wasn't about to fall on his knees in apologetic humility. He answered angrily: "Bone cancer in children? What's that about? How dare you? How dare you create a world to which there is such misery that is not our fault? It's not right; it's utterly, utterly evil. Why should I respect a capricious, mean-minded, stupid God who creates a world which is so full of injustice and pain?"

Well, I wonder if Fry has ever read fellow Englishman C. S. Lewis, whose own books such as *The Problem of Pain* and *A Grief Observed* chronicled his journey from disillusioned atheist to one of the greatest champions Christianity has ever known. Lewis came to see the gift of free will and its consequences in an innocent world, against the loving backdrop of God's mercy and providence for all.

But Fry's angry denial of God is understandable among those who wonder

where God is – from the bloody horrors of the Old Testament to the real-life tragedies we see every day.

Many a Christian, for instance, struggles with such biblical stories as God commanding Abraham to sacrifice his son, Isaac, or Joshua to destroy every man, woman and child in Ai. The persistent, crossroads-of-faith question – from biblical tragedies to bone cancer in children – is: how do we reconcile this pain with an all-loving, all-powerful God?

In the New Church we are blessed to have the internal sense to open our understanding and to see the consistency of a loving, merciful God in every aspect of the Word and in everything of life.

That is why there has always been a zeal in the Church to evangelize – to spread the comfort of revealed truth and to counter all the doubt, skepticism and even animosity that is out there. It is discouraging that progress has been so slow.

But the Lord knows when people will be ready and has promised: “I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of Truth is come, He will lead you into all truth.” (*John* 16:12,13)

One of the reasons the Lord came on earth is because the Word could be written down here and preserved. The printing press made that possible and the Bible continues to be the number-one best-seller in the world – every year.

Now technology is opening new opportunities to spread the revealed Word – the Spirit of Truth – to seekers all over the world. Various websites – from [www.newchurch.org](http://www.newchurch.org) to [www.heavenlydoctrines.org](http://www.heavenlydoctrines.org) – offer pathways for people seeking answers to religious questions, and the Office of Outreach responds to thousands of inquiries every year. An impressive and ambitious new website – [www.newchristianbiblestudy.org](http://www.newchristianbiblestudy.org) – lets people anywhere in the world reference any text in the Bible and see its explanation from the Writings. This website recorded 20,000 visitors in a recent 30-day span. (See a report on this website in *Church News*, page 196.)

All such efforts – including books, new videos on the Swedenborg Foundation website ([www.swedenborg.com](http://www.swedenborg.com)), and live-streamed services – are planting seeds that can help people not only understand what the Word is saying and how it applies to our lives, but to understand God, free will and providence: to understand what Stephen Fry obviously does not.

Whether those seeds fall in barren or fertile soil, the Lord is working with everyone who is willing that they may know who He is, what He is, and where He is – even and especially in times of sorrow and tragedy.

(BMH)

**THE OPPOSITE ERROR**

An observation by C. S. Lewis which is worth thinking about in regard to our church today is that “just because the middle ages erred in one direction does not mean no error in the opposite direction is possible.”

Every strength has its opposite weakness. The Church of 100 years ago had its strengths and weaknesses, and so does the Church today.

The strength of the General Church in its early days – and it was a very important and much-needed strength – was its intense focus on doctrine and its application to the life of the Church. Because the members of the Church all shared that interest, they formed a very close-knit, cohesive, spiritually grounded community. It wasn't perfect (nothing is), but it was unique on the face of the earth, unusually harmonious, useful, beautiful, and very valuable to the establishment of the New Jerusalem on earth.

The shadow side was that because of its unusual strengths it was easy for it to be self-satisfied and unconcerned with what people outside the Church thought of it. Its large endowment enabled it to act from principle without worrying about trying to be popular in order to get money from more people. This actually seems providential to me, in that it enabled the Church to concentrate on spiritual matters and act solely from principle. And it gave a sense of bigness and strength to the Church way beyond its small size, and this was good because in truth no institution on earth was as important.

On the other hand, this freedom from financial concerns made it easier for the Church to focus inwardly on its own issues and pay little attention to the world around it, and made its members feel their modest donations were unimportant.

It should also be noted that part of the reason for the Church turning away from the world was that the world – thanks to outrageously untrue, sensational and lurid newspaper accounts of the Kramph Will Case at the beginning of the 20th century – had turned away from it, falsely accusing it of immorality and mocking it. (The case finally went to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, which decided in favor of the Academy; see the account of the trial in Block's *History of the New Church in the New World*.)

But the Church has undergone a significant change in recent years; a spiritual thaw, we might say. A new spirit of humility, openness and friendliness has swept through the Church, with a desire to share the truths of the new revelation and their beneficial influence with others, and welcome them into the Church.

This development, of course, is very good. But it also has its shadow side – namely, the danger of forsaking the very qualities that made the Church so strong and built such a beautiful and important edifice of faith in the past.

It is right that we should not hide our lamp under a bushel of protective self-interest, but at the same time we must be careful to keep the lamp's fire fueled with oil, with love of the Lord's truth, and protect its flame from being extinguished by cold gusts of falsity blowing in from the world around us.

Just because the middle ages erred in one direction does not mean that no error in the opposite direction is possible. Just because the Church was once too turned inward doesn't mean it can never become too turned outward.

(WEO)

### LINCOLN'S RENEWAL PLAN

In his great work of saving the American union, Abraham Lincoln was guided by the principles set forth in the nation's founding documents: the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. He wasn't trying to reinvent America along new lines, but to call it back to the vision of liberty that gave birth to the new nation in the first place. In his new biography of Lincoln, historian Richard Brookhiser writes:

Lincoln's most important allies in these efforts were the founding fathers. They were dead. "They were a forest of giant oaks," Lincoln told the young men of Springfield, "but all the restless hurricane has swept over them." But Lincoln called them back to life for his purposes. Their principles, he maintained, were his; his solutions were theirs. He summoned the past to save the present.

(To make the founding fathers effectual allies, he first had to edit them a bit – to use the past, he had to save it from aspects of itself).

Lincoln turned the founding fathers into his fathers – and the fathers of a revitalized American liberty to come. For Lincoln, the road to the future always began in the past.... (*Founders' Son: A Life of Abraham Lincoln*, p. 6)

"*He summoned the past to save the present.*" Here, I believe, is the formula we need to restore unity and revitalize the General Church. We, too, must "summon the past to save the present." In other words, rediscover the "first principles" upon which the General Church was founded and renew our commitment to them.

These truths were derived from the Word and there is tremendous power in them. Like the truths that inspired the nation's founding fathers, they were "self-evident" to the founders of the Academy, from which the General Church evolved. But now we need a rebirth of them in the Church.

Resurrecting and reapplying past principles does not imply a return to every aspect of the Church's attitudes and policies of the past. As Brookhiser observes, Lincoln "edited" the founding fathers a bit to "save the past from aspects of itself."

But the shared reverence for, and confidence in, the Heavenly Doctrine,



and the determination to base everything the Church did on it, gave the Church a strong sense of self-identity, sharp focus and spiritual energy. This made the General Church an unusually cohesive, powerful and successful organization.

The time has come for our church to rediscover and reconnect with its roots. We need to summon the past to save the present.

(WEO)

### **BLUEPRINT FOR SUCCESS?**

This year's Boynton Beach Retreat in January offered three excellent presentations, ranging from unity and difference in the New Church to strategies past and present for the General Church, and the cultural divide between the West and the Middle East. A common theme was the need for tolerance, understanding and charity in making a stronger church and a better world. (See a summary of the presentations on page 140.)

The Rev. Jeremy Simons spoke about: *Blueprint for Success: What is our strategy for the future of the Church? Is it working?* What has worked for the Church since its founding more than 100 years ago faces a whole new landscape and challenges.

Jeremy quoted this passage from the 1988 book by Colleen McDannell and Bernhard Lang, *Heaven, A History*: "The modern heaven, exemplified by the visions of Swedenborg . . . has become the minority perspective during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Rich and detailed accounts of the afterlife, accepted in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, are labeled as absurd, crude, materialistic or sheer nonsense. 'No reasonable person can hold such a belief any longer,' stated a Dominican prior in 1981.

"While Swedenborg perceived an ever-expanding religious universe, his contemporary Immanuel Kant recognized only three ideas capable of surviving the test of reason: freedom, God and immortality. For him, Swedenborg's visions failed. 'As speculations consisting of nothing but air, they had applicable weight only in the scale of hope.' It was Kant's perspective and not Swedenborg's which would shape 20<sup>th</sup> century theological thought."

This is the insistent secular culture that challenges our strategies for successfully growing the Church. We all need to be a part of finding solutions.

(BMH)

### **HOLDING DIFFERENCES LIGHTLY**

One strategy which the Rev. Dr. Thane Glenn offered in considering issues of unity and difference in the Church is that we need to "hold our differences lightly."

He has a lot of experience with this in teaching New Church concepts to

students in Bryn Athyn College who are new to the New Church and have their own faith and convictions. It does no good to hammer them with “the truth.” What works, he says – and is a model for all of us – is not to compromise our beliefs but to “hold our differences lightly” so that people can reason together and come to a sense of common ground and unity.

Within the Church, which seems increasingly divided by differences on such issues as women in the ministry and gay marriage, that sense of reasoning together while “holding differences lightly” – in a spirit of charity – should be a model for our larger “classroom” as well.

(BMH)

### **WHAT ARE OUR EXPECTATIONS?**

Jeremy noted that one of the challenges in devising strategies for the future of the Church is that we place few expectations on our members. Many churches have clear expectations, such as annual renewal of membership with specific pledges, including tithing.

We rightly honor the principle of free will, which should be a call within each member to demonstrate commitment. A great many do. But part of our reality is that historically only about 20% of members financially support the uses of the General Church. That is free will but not what we should have a right to expect.

In his 1995 best-seller, *The Purpose-Driven Church*, the Rev. Rick Warren said: “A healthy church cannot help but grow, and an unhealthy church will never grow.”

We are challenged on many levels to manage the change and challenges confronting the Church, but this is not just the responsibility of the administration and the Board. It is for all of us. We all need to be involved in the life, growth and health of the Church – holding differences lightly, working together in charity, and doing our best to be led by the Lord.

(BMH)

### **FREE SPEECH AND ITS ABUSE**

Freedom without responsibility does not last. Preserving the right of free speech, for instance, requires that it be exercised responsibly; there is no *right* to yell “fire!” in a crowded theater.

Free speech is a “right” because our Creator endows us with the gift of thinking freely, and the ability to put our thoughts into words. This is why freedom of speech is an “inalienable” right; it follows from something inherent in human nature itself.

We have a right to use the gifts we have from the Divine, but that right is

qualified by the assumption that the Divine gave us these gifts to be used in the service of what is good and true and useful. The same God who gives us the power of speech also tells us “thou shalt not bear false witness.”

To use our faculty of free speech to insult the very One who gave it to us is ungracious, to say the least. To call this a “right” is to degrade the whole concept of rights.

And it is harmful spiritually to those who indulge in it, and to a society that encourages it. Whether someone believes in God or not this still holds true; we all, believers and non-believers alike, receive life and our human abilities from God. Non-believers are not immune to the spiritual callousness and corrosive effect of their own blasphemies.

In addition to our responsibility to our Creator, we also owe society a certain amount of consideration in the way we choose to exercise our right of free speech, since it is the civil order society maintains that protects us from those who would prevent us from speaking freely. Engaging in speech that harms the very society that protects your right of free speech is “biting the hand that feeds you.”

Blasphemy and obscene expressions of contempt for religious faith do harm society because the civil order of human life depends upon a constant influx of the *spiritual* order, formed by Divine love and wisdom, that emanates from the Divine into heaven, and through heaven into the world. Again, this is true whether anyone believes it or not.

The freedom to question, argue against, reject, and use satire to expose flaws in religious belief and practice should be protected; but vile depictions of a religious leader millions of people revere as holy is unworthy of the label “satire.” I am not a Catholic and reject various aspects of that faith, but I would never depict the pope in the obscene way that some cartoonists have for years.

It goes without saying that violence and murder are inexcusable. For many years Christians and Jews in Europe have endured such verbal and artistic assaults without resorting to violence. But words can hurt, and not everyone is so forgiving or wishy-washy in what they believe as to be indifferent when contempt is heaped upon their religion. Not everyone is “nuanced” enough to understand that what appears to be vicious slander against all he holds sacred is really just witty “satire.”

There is truth in the old saying, “the pen is mightier than the sword,” which means it should be wielded as carefully and judiciously as other weapons are.

“Everyone knows that man has the freedom to think and will just as he pleases, but not the freedom to *say* whatever he thinks, or to *do* whatever he wills; therefore the freedom that is here meant is spiritual freedom, and not natural freedom, except when the two make one.” (*Divine Providence* 71)

(WEO)



**KEITH MORLEY**

I first met Keith Morley years ago when he and Rachel came to visit our new (and forever) friends Geoffrey and Helga Childs in Michigan, while I was still the Convention pastor there. I saw in him what I regard as an ideal combination of qualities for a New Church person: worldly knowledge, ability and sophistication, along with innocence, love of truth, and boundless enthusiasm for the Heavenly Doctrine.

I recall a time, some years later, when I was a guest at Keith's and Rachel's home in Toronto. (A memorable footnote from that visit: I was to preach in the Olivet Church that weekend, and when I came down to breakfast on Sunday morning Keith and Rachel, both born in England, informed me they had just heard on the radio that Princess Diana had been killed in a car accident).

That evening, we began dinner with a toast to the Church, and Keith led the dinner conversation by bringing up one doctrinal point or question after another, as usual. Like a number of New Church men and women I have known, he was very accomplished in the world of business, but also had a keen interest in the doctrines of the Church, inspired by his love for them.

The doctrines easily lend themselves to bridging the gap between spiritual and worldly concerns because they simultaneously instill in us a simple faith in the Lord and belief in spiritual reality, appeal to rational understanding, and are always directing us toward useful applications of spiritual principles in actual life. These are the qualities Keith Morley embodied.

News of his passing into the spiritual world arrived. He will be greatly missed, especially in Toronto, but throughout the Church.

(Photo: Keith Morley – Photo by his granddaughter, Kat Gatti)

(WEO)

**COL. B. DEAN SMITH (USAF-RETIRED)**

(Following is a tribute written for Dean Smith, who passed into the spiritual world January 29, written by Gael Pendleton Coffin for the Washington (Society) *Echo*. It is reprinted with permission.)

“Dean Smith was one of the good guys. He loved the important things: his wife, Cathy, their family, his community, his church, and his country.

“A graduate of the Academy Boys School in Bryn Athyn and the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, he chose to serve in the United States Air Force as a pilot. He wore his uniform with pride, saying that he did so, first and foremost, to keep his country safe from war. During his military career, he was tapped by NASA to be a part of the astronaut program, a period chronicled in

his book, *The Fire That NASA Never Had*.

“Dean and Cathy moved to the Washington area just as plans were underway to build a new church building in Mitchellville. They were instrumental in that project and, five years later, they participated in the establishment of a New Church elementary school. They subsequently moved from Virginia to Maryland, building their lovely home in Acton Park.



Dean and Cathy Smith

“During that time and over the succeeding years, Dean served on a variety of society committees and boards, including the Acton Park Board and the Board of Trustees. He had strong beliefs, and lived them. He had strong opinions, and voiced them. And whether or not they always agreed with him, those who knew him always knew where he stood.

“Dean Smith was an integral part of the history of the society in Mitchellville and a presence in its daily life. He took a kindly interest in all the kids in the church community and called them by name. He was a good neighbor, a gracious host, a delightful story teller, and had a wonderful sense of humor. Above all, he was a beloved friend, and passing into the other world leaves a vacant spot in the hearts of all those who esteemed him.”

Dean Smith was indeed, “one of the good guys.” And it is men like Dean and Keith Morley who epitomized what it is to be a true New Church man and a “good and faithful servant” of the Lord.

(BMH)



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