

NEW CHURCH *Life*

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

MAY/JUNE 2015



The New Jerusalem

A much-loved image for New Church Day is the Holy City New Jerusalem descending from heaven, as depicted in this Academy class banner for 1951.

The Rev. Malcolm G. Smith explains what it all means. (Page 241)

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

The Rt. Rev. Brian W. Keith, Executive Bishop of the General Church, discusses three motions from the March meetings of the Board of Directors: to establish a joint lay-clergy communication committee; to seek greater clarity in decision-making in the Church; and further exploration of gender roles and restrictions in the Church. (Page 238)

As we celebrate New Church Day on the 19th of June, the Rev. Malcolm G. Smith looks at the many references to Jerusalem in the Word, and what the terms New Jerusalem and New Church mean to our church and our lives. “People in the New Church,” he says, “have the New Church in them – in their minds, in their hearts, in their lives.” (Page 241)

What can we say is really “new” about the New Church? The Rev. Daniel W. Goodenough says its newness is not from us but from the Lord, because of what He has revealed. It is new because that revelation is about making our spirits happy, not our bodies. (Page 249)

There are two distinctive holidays in the United States this time of year – Memorial Day in late May, honoring those who have died in war, and the Fourth of July, celebrating the nation’s independence. Two sermons focused on these observances also speak to universal themes about love of country, freedom and sacrifice. The Rev. James H. (Jay) Barry talks about *The Rim of Gold* – a border protecting what is good in one’s country. (Page 252) The Rev. Howard A. Thompson looks at the larger issue of *The Freedom to be New Church*. Wouldn’t it be nice, he asks, if we spent the time between the 19th of June and the 4th of July “reflecting on the freedom required to be New Church”? (Page 257)

Writing as a concerned and dedicated New Churchman, Peter Boericke looks at the issues and challenges the Church is facing: *A Wake-Up Call: Will the General Church Survive and Thrive?* The issues include: the vision – or lack of it – for the future; young adults not joining the Church; the slow growth of the Church; whether or not relevant issues are being addressed; whether New Church education is financially viable; the loss of open communication; and the “central issue” of women in the priesthood. (Page 262)

Irv Kaage, an architect in Illinois, discovered the Writings as a teenager and has spent years studying the Heavenly Doctrines. He shared his version of the “95 Theses” with the Rev. Dr. Ray Silverman of Bryn Athyn College, who was greatly impressed with Irv’s scholarship and perspective, and offers commentary for many of his “theses.” (Page 268)

Introducing Our Ministers focuses on the Rev. C. Mark Perry, pastor in San Diego, California, who has a real gift for teaching and preaching but didn't realize it until he was thrust into the role at a youth camp. It was a twisted and fascinating path that led him to the ministry, but what drew him then to the use still guides his service: loving people. (Page 277)

The Rev. Coleman S. Glenn has found a kind of *Plane Kindness* in his travels that speaks to small acts of kindness we do for each other that bring the Lord's presence – and the angels. Why are we more likely to see this face-to-face on an airplane, but not so much on the highway? There is a lesson here about the Lord's goals for each of us. (Page 283)

In a review of Naomi Smith's book about her father, the Rev. Victor Gladish – *Vas in Victor* – Vera Glenn says this tale should resonate with people in the Church who lived through the same trying circumstances during and after World War II. It is a book about the triumph of the human spirit against challenging and depressing circumstances – and emerging a victor because no bitterness or self-pity was passed on to his family. (Page 286)

Church News includes nominees for the General Church Board of Directors; New Church education beyond the schools; regional clergy meetings in Europe and Canada; a 25th anniversary celebration in Boynton Beach, Florida; a presentation by representatives of the Academy of the New Church at a Small Boarding Schools Conference on gender specific education; and information about the Jacob's Creek, Living Waters and Laurel family camps. (Page 289)

The cover: The cover illustration is the banner of the Academy Class of 1951, part of the Swedenborg Library Digital Collections: www.swedenborglibrary.org/digital. The photographer is Marvin B. Clymer, head of the digital collections for the Library.

In presenting the banner on May 19, 1951, senior class president Yorvar Synnestvedt said in part: "In our world of today, a world full of deceit, hatred and war, it is very hard to know what to believe and whom to follow. . . . In our banner we have tried to represent something we can always trust to lead us through darkness and distress, if only we will choose to follow it."

In accepting the banner on behalf of the Academy, Dean of Schools Stanley F. Ebert said in part: "This banner symbolizes your desire to leave with the Academy some visible evidence of your devotion . . . your personality, your hopes, your convictions.

"You have portrayed the path through darkness to light – the road we all must follow. The black background represents not only the state of the world but the evil states of every individual born into the world. The star reminds us that the Lord Himself came on earth for the salvation of mankind, and that His assumption of the human form was prophetic of His Second Advent.

“The clouds correspond to the letter of the Word – Divine truth accommodated to the mind of man. By this means . . . is that Golden City, New Jerusalem, brought down to earth to become a living reality in the hearts and minds of men. And fittingly you inscribe here the final word of prayers and trust – Amen.

“For the Lord in His Providence has answered our prayers. He has blessed this land of ours. He has blessed His Church. And lest we forget, Amen signifies not only truth but faith. Faith to be significant must be conjoined to charity. Charity means action. Let us then put our truth into deed – our faith into action – for the New Church must be doers and workers.”

Editorials

THE BRIGHT AND MORNING STAR

One of the most inspiring images in the Word is the Holy City New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven – the New Church descending on earth.

I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away. And I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. (*John 21:2*)

This is a beautiful vision, but it is not something for us just to witness. We are all called to play a role in establishing the New Church on earth – by establishing it first in our hearts and minds.

The Lord has been gently leading us throughout the Word to this vision. That is why the Holy City is “prepared as a bride,” because a bride represents a new, fuller love of the Lord, now seen and understood as a visible God. This is the promised “Spirit of Truth” come to lead us into all truth.

There is also a promise within this vision that after all of the battles with the evil and dragons in the world: “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death; neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away. And He that sat on the throne said, Behold I make all things new.” (*John 22:3,4*)

So this is a culmination of conflict and judgment, but also the beginning of “all things new” – a new heaven, a new church, and a new spirit within us. The New Church ultimately is not an organization but the place where God resides within each of us. It is being established in heaven and descending on earth wherever people learn and love the newly revealed truth and take it into their lives.

The shining Holy City is pure gold, representing the Lord’s pure love for all mankind. Its 12 gates of pearl illustrate one of the great promises of the New Church – that there is not just one way to know and live the truth, but that everyone who loves God, keeps His commandments, loves the neighbor and

lives a good life from conscience can enter heaven.

Our role in helping to establish this New Church goes back to The Great Commission at the end of the book of *Matthew*: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” (*Matthew 28:19,20*)

“Teaching all nations” sounds daunting – more than we may feel up to attempting. But we do that just by the way we live the truth as we know it.

Consider this challenge from Helen Keller, who had a right to feel much more limited in what she could do than most of us. Speaking at a national meeting of Swedenborgians in Washington, DC, in 1928 – and when was the last time we had a “national meeting of Swedenborgians”? – she said:

“It seems to me the New Church has a great mission in the world. The people are in need of just the message that Swedenborg gave for mankind. Instead of merely listening to that message, we should go out and teach it. I want to see the New Church put on its beautiful garments and shake itself from the dust of aloofness.”

The world is still in need of the message – just as it was on the 19th of June in 1770 when that Holy City began descending, just as it was in Helen Keller’s vision almost 90 years ago, just as it is today. We need to put on those “beautiful garments” of “a bride adorned for her husband,” shake off that aloofness that often holds us back or apart, and do what we are commanded to do in establishing this New Church: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations.”

We know we will never be alone. The vision of the New Church descending ends with the promise: “I, Jesus, have sent Mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever, let him take the water of life freely.” (*Revelation 22:16,17*)

The “bright and morning star” signifies that God “will come with a new light to herald His New Church, which is the Holy City New Jerusalem.” (*Apocalypse Revealed 954*)

The whole purpose of the Second Coming portrayed in *Revelation* and explained in the *Heavenly Doctrines* is to take away our blindness by shining a new light of truth. Then we can see and judge for ourselves what kind of spiritual life we will lead – and model for others.

We are just to take – and use – that light of the “bright and morning star.”

“Ye are the light of the world. . . . Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” (*Matthew 5:14, 16*)

(BMH)

‘THERE WAS WAR IN HEAVEN’

Did we think it would be easy, the birth of the New Church? It wasn't easy in the spiritual world. "There was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, who deceives the whole world: he was cast out onto the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." (*Revelation 12:7, 9*)

In our world today, the New Jerusalem is descending out of heaven from God, but its establishment on earth is not going unchallenged. The more known it becomes, and the stronger its influence grows, the more opposition we can expect from those under the sway of contrary spirits.

The establishment of the first Christian Church was not accomplished easily. The Lord Himself suffered and died. He wasn't crucified for being *nice*. He was crucified for speaking the truth, about Himself, and about those who hated the truth. He "spoke truth to power."

Nor did He send forth His disciples to tell people what they wanted to hear. They weren't sent to "win friends and influence people," but to call people to repentance and preach the truth. He told them what to expect: they would be persecuted; and they were, and are today in many places.

Wars and all the horrors associated with them are raging all around the globe, and these are outward effects of a spiritual war. At home we speak of "culture wars," but these are really spiritual wars between good and evil. The "great dragon who deceives the whole world" is hard at work.

Some teachings of the New Church are easy to accept. The Lord loves everyone, condemns no one. No harm that anyone may suffer is ever God's will. Charity is supreme. People of all religions can go to heaven. These truths are met with a warm welcome. When people hear them they often say, "that's what I've always believed."

But there are other truths which are more challenging. Some are downright offensive, even outrageous to the modern, materialistic, relativistic mindset. Such as: That there is a God, and only one, the Lord Jesus Christ. Or the reality of hell and human evil, and the need for everyone to repent, reform and be regenerated; and that this requires a difficult struggle with our own lower self ("temptation combats"). Or that marriage is holy and can only exist between one man and one woman. Even the existence of heaven, much less hell, is hard for many to accept.

When the Lord was on earth, His words drew many people to Him. But not all His words. Some of the things He said caused many of His disciples to say: "This is a hard saying; who can understand it?" And, "many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. Then Jesus said to the

twelve, ‘Do you also want to go away?’ But Simon Peter answered Him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.’” (*John 6:60, 66-68*)

Truth rarely has an easy time of it, not in this world. “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” (*Matthew 8:20*)

In a letter to F. C. Oetinger in 1766, Swedenborg wrote: “I am very sorry that you should have had to suffer for the translation of the book on Heaven and Hell; but what suffers more at the present day than truth itself? How few there are who see it, yea, who are willing to see it! Do not allow yourself to be discouraged thereby, but be a defender of the truth.” (*Tafel’s Documents Concerning Swedenborg*, n. 232 on p. 257)

Being a “defender of the truth” has never been easy. But we have no choice, for what is a church if not a defender of the truth? As such, the Church will increasingly find itself under siege in a world that has abandoned its faith and is falling more and more into disorder.

Do not allow yourself to be discouraged! Be a defender of the truth!

In the very Word we are called upon to defend, we are forewarned about the hardships our defense of it will bring upon us. And we are also given the promise of ultimate victory . . . if we stand firm.

“And Moses said to the people, ‘Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever.’” (*Exodus 14:13*)

“You will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved.” (*Matthew 10:22, 24:13; Mark 13:13*)

“Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.” (*Revelation 22:14-15*)

(WEO)

Letters to the Editors

Women for a Male Priesthood

To The Editors:

In her article in the March/April 2015 issue of *New Church Life*, I believe Chelsea Rose Odhner has missed the point of Bishop W.F. Pendleton's paper. Having just broken away from Bishop Benade, Bishop Pendleton was suggesting how this new General Church was to be organized by and for both the priesthood and the laity. He was suggesting and setting forth the principles upon which the government of this church would be based. Mrs. Odhner clearly sees Bishop Pendleton's principle that the freedom or the internal bond of conscience should govern the Church and the individuals within the Church.

However, Bishop Pendleton and the Heavenly Doctrines also speak of an ecclesiastical order derived from the Heavenly Doctrines which should govern the Church. That doctrine is the bond that should bind us:

Priests ought to teach the people, and to lead them by truths to the good of life, but still they ought to compel no one, since no one can be compelled to believe contrary to what he thinks from his heart to be true. He who believes otherwise than the priest, and makes no disturbance, ought to be left in peace; but he who makes disturbance, ought to be separated; for this also is of order, for the sake of which the priesthood is established. (*The New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine* 318)

Our present Bishop took counsel from the priesthood and, as a result, sent out a letter confirming that most of the clergy, after much study from the doctrine, believe that our church is best served by a masculine priesthood. I believe that there is essential unanimity among the priests on this conclusion.

In a letter to the editors in this same issue of the *Life*, Mr. John Parker says his views on women in the ministry have changed because of his wife and daughters. I wish he could tell us *what doctrine* changed his mind. The Writings teach that: "The church is a church from a life according to doctrine." (*Apocalypse Explained* 799)

The Doctrine of the Sacred Scripture says that the Church is from the Word, for the Word is Divine truth itself (n. 1-4); that the doctrine of the Church is

from the Word (n. 50-61); and that through the Word there is conjunction with the Lord (n. 62-69). However, “it is not the Word (itself) that makes the Church, but the understanding of it, and such as is the understanding of the Word among those who are in the Church, such is the Church itself.” (n. 76)

I believe that the masculine mind is more able from its understanding to draw forth doctrine because of the kind of judgment the male mind has, which women do not have. “Many people believe that women can perform the duties of men if only they are introduced into them from an early age in the way that boys are. However, women can be introduced into the exercise of these duties, but not into the judgment on which the proper performance of these duties inwardly depends.” (*Conjugal Love* 175:2)

In natural wars I would prefer to be protected by an army of men trained to be fighters rather than by women who are by nature nurturers. So, too, I would prefer to have the masculine bringing forth the truths from the Word to fight against the evils which the hells are constantly trying to get us to believe.

Some have said that truth without good or love is ineffective, and so we need women in the priesthood to bring that love or good to the male priests. But our priests are not cut off from the feminine sphere in the world, and especially from the influence of their wives (almost all are married).

There are other opinions on this subject, among women as well as men, than those expressed by the writers who favor the ordination of women into the priesthood. I would like to voice the opposite view and express the satisfaction of many women with a masculine priesthood. I believe it is important for the Church to know that there are many women in the Church who are happy to have the Church led by a masculine priesthood.

Martha L. Asplundh
Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania

A Misguided Fear

To The Editors:

Some members of the General Church Board of Directors have expressed concerns about people leaving or never becoming part of the General Church due to fact that we don't ordain women into the priesthood.

The concern about people leaving is something that I'm sure is real for all of us. I have heard many people voice this concern, especially that young people will not join a church that they perceive as sexist. This may be a valid concern. I am hoping, though, that the Board is aware of the alternate point of

view on this seemingly obvious and legitimate anxiety.

This alternate point of view is that there is no evidence that a change toward a more inclusive ordination policy has a positive effect on church membership, neither with young people nor anyone else. If anything, the evidence shows that churches that have made this change have suffered dramatic declines in membership, declines that are all the more striking when compared with the lack of such dramatic declines in most denominations that have maintained the policy of restricting ordination to men.

There may be other factors in the decline of churches, but it does seem clear that ordaining women is not a positive factor in church growth, since few denominations that ordain women are growing. And it also seems clear that the failure to ordain women does not cause churches to decline, since few of the denominations that do not ordain women have suffered the same dramatic declines that have affected so many Protestant churches.

I am concerned that the Board seems to take seriously the fear that many people will leave the Church because of our policy. Why do they take this fear seriously when the opposite seems to be demonstrably more likely?

The Rev. Jeremy F. Simons
Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania

Choosing Our As-of-Self

To The Editors:

I have been puzzled over something the Writings say and I think others have been also. The Writings say that we – all of us – are nothing but evil “as of self” and that we are born into evils. This is a bit confusing because the Lord gave us our as-of-self.

The answer is that we have two as-of-selves – one good, the other evil. The good one, which the Lord gave us, says: without the Lord I am nothing; I have no life, no power, to act, think or love. But the Lord is constantly flowing into me with His life so that I can think, love and act, and choose between good and evil.

The bad one says: I do not need God; I have life and power within myself. This is stealing from God. It is nothing but evil.

It seems as if the Writings are always talking about the bad as-of-self. But they also tell us we have the good as-of-self as we lead our lives.

The Writings seem to say even that babies are somewhat evil. But they

really don't because the Lord doesn't make evil babies. The intrinsic baby is a receptacle of life from the Lord.

Hereditary evils are necessary so that we can be in equilibrium – evil on one side, good on the other. This is so that we can go to heaven – not because we are born good but because we can choose to love and obey God.

Charis P. Cole
Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania

Remaining True to Doctrine

To The Editors:

In the March/April issue of *New Church Life*, Chelsea Rose Odhner weighed in on gender and the priesthood with an article titled, *Women Priests: Freedom and Providence*. Arguing for ordaining women on the ground of not injuring women's freedom by excluding them from the priesthood, she presented an unusual, even novel approach to the subject.

However, although citing statements by three General Church leaders published in *New Church Life* for 1897 and 1937, she cited nothing either from them or from the Heavenly Doctrines regarding the gender of the priesthood. Indeed, I think if those leaders could see into the world – Carl Theophilus Odhner, William F. Pendleton and Charles E. Doering – they would be surprised, if not shocked, to have their statements so applied. Nor did she cite any of the more recent articles demonstrating the doctrinal basis for a priesthood consisting of educated men.

For Mrs. Odhner's edification, and the edification of others still not acquainted with the doctrinal basis, I present here a summary of the argument I presented in *New Church Life* in 2012 in an article, *Gender and the Priesthood of the New Church in the 21st Century*:

1. The Church is a unique organization, originating from Divine revelation, and being, therefore, a creation, not of men, but of God.
2. The Heavenly Doctrines are not subject to revision, but are immutable.
3. The Church is a church according to its understanding of the Word (*Sacred Scripture* 51, 52) and of doctrine drawn from the Word (*Ibid.* 53, 77), which, in the New Church, includes the Heavenly Doctrines.
4. The Church is formed in wives by the union of their affections and loves with their husbands' insights and judgments, or in the words of the doctrine, by a union of her will with her husband's understanding

(*Married Love* 63, 125), which includes her husband's understanding of the Word and doctrine.

5. Women in general are meant to be lovers of the wisdom and understanding of men. (*Ibid.* 32, 56:3, 75:7, 91, 159, 180, 187)

If the Church is to remain true to the Doctrines regarding the sexes in relation to the Church, then the inevitable conclusion must be that women ought not to be admitted into the priesthood of the New Church.

One may argue that admission of women into the priesthood is not a central issue in the Doctrines, and may therefore be an acceptable accommodation to those who wish it. After all, the fundamental teachings of the Church are to acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ as the one God of heaven and earth, and to keep His commandments as found in His Word.

But in addition to these fundamental teachings, we find a host of others in the Heavenly Doctrines. Which ones shall we hold to, and which ones shall we adapt and reinterpret to suit present circumstance?

As I said in my 2012 article, to the degree that the Church adopts the ideas and mores of the popular culture in opposition to its doctrines, it gradually ceases to be a church in fact and becomes just another secular institution. Even a small change in one generation becomes license for still another change in a later generation. And little by little, through the generations, the Church becomes no longer what it once was, but something manufactured out of the minds of men. This is how every former church has foundered and failed: because, like the scribes and Pharisees of the Jewish Church, their leaders have begun teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. (*Matthew* 15:9)

And to this I now add: That is why the *True Christian Religion* admonishes us: "Do not place your trust in any Council, but in the Word of the Lord, which is superior to Councils." (# 489)

The Rev. N. Bruce Rogers
Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania

Response: Keep Freedom First

To The Editors:

In my paper I do not review in detail the doctrinal arguments opposed to and in favor of women serving as priests. I intentionally limit the scope of my paper to the doctrinal emphases the Rev. Pendleton makes in his "Notes on Government" about what we are to hold as central guiding principles in the organization of our church as it continues to develop spiritually under the

Lord's leading.

It may be helpful to underscore that the central argument on which my paper hinges is that since careful study of the Doctrines of our church have led some to see reasons for a male-only priesthood and others to envision a priesthood that makes use of the strengths of both genders, limiting our church to only one of these interpretations, in the Rev. Pendleton's language, places an "external bond" on the conscience of some of our members.

Is it right to have one interpretation hold sway over another when both arise from reverence to the Word and humility to the Lord? In this situation, is it not better to embrace the doctrinal principle of freedom? Furthermore, if we are to make application of teachings on marriage to the issue of gender in the ministry, passages that emphasize the essential place of freedom in marriage (i.e., *Heaven and Hell* 380 and *Conjugal Love* 248) imply to my mind that the dominion of one gender over another with regard to the spiritual leadership of our church interferes with the Lord's ability to lead our organization.

Chelsea Rose Odhner
Willow Grove, Pennsylvania

A New Look at Governance Issues in the General Church

The Rt. Rev. Brian W. Keith

Executive Bishop, General Church of the New Jerusalem

At the March General Church Board of Directors meetings there were extended discussions on governance and my affirmation of our longstanding policy to inaugurate only men into the priesthood. The three motions arose from these discussions.

The first motion, to establish a joint lay-clergy communications committee, is an effort to provide for greater interaction and communication between the Board and the clergy. This is a governance use that has languished in recent times. Some brief background here might be useful.

When the General Church of the New Jerusalem was founded in 1897, it wrestled with what form of governance it should have. A significant factor was that Bishop Benade, who had effected a welcomed separation from the General Convention, had become progressively more dictatorial. The sense of the loss of freedom by both laity and clergy led them to separate from him and found a new organization. Initially there were voices calling for extensive checks and balances and even for a congregational form of government. There were also strong voices opposed to returning to the governance structure of Convention, which they thought inhibited the freedom to be led by the Word.

In this setting Bishop William F. Pendleton delivered his historic paper: “Notes on the Government of the Church.” (*New Church Life* 1897:106-109) It was embraced and became the structural foundation for our governance. He envisioned a configuration of the Lord leading His Church through His Word and providing for the free response of both laity and clergy. Woven into it was the mandate on governance from the Word that, “Governors over those things with people which relate to heaven, or over ecclesiastical affairs, are

called priests, and their office is called the priesthood.” (*New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* 314)

As a natural structure to support church uses he proposed a council of the clergy and a council of the laity. Both would have freedom in their own realms, or over the areas appropriate to each. Thus the clergy would lead in governance, worship and instruction; and the laity would lead in supportive or civil uses, such as financial and legal. Also proposed was a Joint Council that would provide for discussion by both councils together.

The uses of clergy and laity continue as the Council of the Clergy and the General Church Board of Directors. However, the Joint Council, while undoubtedly useful for nearly a century, fell into disuse in the 1990s. Two factors were probably major contributors to this:

1. The size of the body, being comprised of 30 members of the Board and nearly 100 clergy at that time, precluded any meaningful exchange of ideas.
2. The annual agendas did not promote discussion, and primarily consisted of hearing reports.

Thus the concept of a smaller joint lay-clergy group to discuss the uses of the Church and to refer to either the clergy or Board for any possible action, seems a way to provide for this function.

At present a small joint lay-clergy committee is working on a “charge” for this Communication Committee, considering its role, membership and other initial organizational issues. A draft of this will be presented to the clergy and the Board for consideration at their June meetings.

The second motion attempts to address two issues:

1. How we can have greater clarity about decision-making streams within the Church?
2. How much latitude should individuals or groups have in providing for local accommodations and differences?

While most of the key decisions regarding governance in the Church are clearly set out in various documents, others are less explicitly stated and happen by custom. And given our efforts at council and assembly, many decisions involve extended interactions before anything finally results. This can lead to uncertainty and confusion about who actually gets to make decisions in various areas – especially where there is a contentious issue.

From the discussions at the Board meeting it does not appear there is a request for a precise decision-making grid that answers all questions. But Board members would like discussions about this topic and greater clarity. When I suggested that it appears this motion would be appropriate for consideration by the proposed Communication Committee they did not seem opposed to

that. This topic will receive further consideration as we move ahead on the first motion.

The final motion, about considering removing the gender restriction to the M.Div. program, was an outgrowth of the discussion regarding gender and inauguration into the priesthood.

The letter published last fall affirming our policy of inaugurating only men into the priesthood drew a strong reaction in many quarters. Apparently a number of people expected a change in policy and were surprised and deeply disappointed that we had not done that. In response, there was a letter-writing initiative to the Board to give voice to people's concerns and sadness about the policy.

This motion was explained in terms of the opportunity for women to enter into related fields other than the General Church priesthood. Many women have a strong love of serving the Lord and we need to look at additional practical ways for feminine abilities to bring life to human uses. The MA degree, which was designed to provide graduate level instruction in theology and has been very useful for teachers at the Academy and in our elementary schools and others, is not a recognized degree for entrance into various uses, such as becoming a chaplain in a hospital.

An important point here is that a number of Board members strongly affirmed that the decision to inaugurate into the priesthood rests with the Executive Bishop (with appropriate counsel, of course). This motion was not an attempt to overturn our governance or in any way challenge the *New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine* series on governance.

In initial discussions some serious concerns have been voiced about how this could be provided for without adversely affecting the current M.Div. program. It is a professionally oriented degree program specifically designed to prepare men to serve as priests in the General Church. All the instruction, assignments and interactions in the classroom are focused on this and lead to inauguration to the priesthood. So to introduce students who are not in that vein could significantly diminish the primary use of the Theological School.

However, even with that and other concerns, I want to honor the Board's request by exploring this further. Perhaps there are ways to provide for additional uses without adversely affecting the central use. I will be engaging with the Theological School faculty and the normal college administrative decision-making process to look thoroughly at all aspects of this.

The New Jerusalem

A Sermon by the Rev. Malcolm G. Smith

Why Jerusalem? Have you ever wondered about that? Why not Bethel or Bethlehem?

We're talking about the establishment of the New Church today. Often around June 19th we talk about stories from the book of *Revelation* because some of the elements are symbolic of the New Church. And at the end of the book – chapters 21 and 22, the last two chapters of the Bible – there's this vision of a huge, golden, holy city, coming down from heaven.

Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. (*Revelation 21:1-2*)

Lots of different aspects of this city are described. The detail that caught my attention this time was Jerusalem. It's called "the holy city, New Jerusalem."

Why not the city of Bethel, which means "house of God," or Bethlehem, where the Lord was born? Or why not just call it the holy city and have no name attached? It's a bit of an intellectual starting point but as I researched it I realized that the holy city being called the New Jerusalem has something important to teach us about what it means to be part of the New Church – or any church for that matter.

Let's explore this with some fun facts in the Bible. The word Jerusalem occurs 806 times in the Bible – 660 times in the Old Testament and 146 times in the New Testament. In a list of the most frequent words in the King James Version of the Bible it's number 123 – that's in a list including words like a, and, the, and God.

If you take a list of the most frequent nouns, it's in the top 20. There are no other cities in the top 100. The only location that's more frequent is Israel and I would guess the only reason it is more frequent is because that word can also be used as a person's name and as a way of referring to the people, as in "the children of Israel."

Jerusalem is the most frequently mentioned location in the Bible, especially if we include other words referring to it, such as "the city" and "Zion." This

It is a holy city – not holy because it has a temple in it where ritual sacrifices are performed in the right way, but holy because God is truly present there, protecting and comforting His people, and illuminating the whole city.

doesn't really answer the question but it does make sense that if there was going to be a vision at the end of the Bible of some location, it would be the one mentioned most often in the rest of the Bible.

But what will really help us to understand why Jerusalem is used at the end of the Bible is to get a sense of the different ways it comes into the story.

The name Jerusalem means foundation, or city of peace – the *salem* part is like the word *shalom* for peace – so Jerusalem is dwelling place of peace. Jerusalem is first mentioned, however, as the city of an enemy people. (*Joshua*

10) The people who lived in Jerusalem were the Jebusites. They were tenacious enough that the people under Joshua weren't able to drive them out of the land, so they stayed there. (*Joshua* 15:63; *Judges* 1:21)

They were able to do this partly because of where Jerusalem was. It was located in the southern part of the land of Canaan but fairly centrally overall. It was built on two mountains and was a difficult city to attack. And it had a spring that supplied it with water, which meant that it could last longer under siege than other cities. When David became king he conquered it and made it his capital city, (*2 Samuel* 5) and it became the largest city in the land of Canaan.

Then David brought the ark of the covenant into it, making Jerusalem the place where all the people would come to worship. (*2 Samuel* 6). David's son Solomon built the temple there, fully establishing that Jerusalem, with the temple in it, was God's dwelling place with the children of Israel. (*1 Kings* 6-7) Then, when the kingdom split into the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah, it was the capital city of Judah.

It had good times and bad, largely dependent on the character of the king at the time and whether he was following the Lord or following other gods. Jerusalem and the temple in it were eventually destroyed by Babylon and the people taken into captivity. (*2 Kings* 24-25) Eventually they returned and rebuilt the temple and Jerusalem.

During that period many psalmists and prophets of the Lord spoke about Jerusalem: its holiness and its special place in God's care; its corruption and its profaneness; its restoration and its beautiful future.

As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds His people, from this time forth and forever. (*Psalms* 125:2)

Look upon Zion, the city of our appointed feasts; your eyes will see Jerusalem, a quiet home, a tabernacle that will not be taken down; not one of its stakes will ever be removed, nor will any of its cords be broken. (*Isaiah* 33:20)

Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins. (*Isaiah* 40:2)

O Jerusalem, wash your heart from wickedness, that you may be saved. How long shall your evil thoughts lodge within you? (*Jeremiah* 4:14)

Thus says the Lord: 'In this manner I will ruin the pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusalem. I have seen your adulteries and your lustful neighings, the lewdness of your harlotry, your abominations on the hills in the fields. Woe to you, O Jerusalem! Will you still not be made clean?' (*Jeremiah* 13:9,27)

Hear the word of the Lord, O kings of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem. Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: "Behold, I will bring such a catastrophe on this place, that whoever hears of it, his ears will tingle." (*Jeremiah* 19:3)

All who pass by clap their hands at you; they hiss and shake their heads at the daughter of Jerusalem: "Is this the city that is called "The perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth"?" (*Lamentations* 2:15)

And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, as the Lord has said, among the remnant whom the Lord calls. (*Joel* 2:32)

Many nations shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. (*Micah* 4:2; cf. *Isaiah* 2:3)

Thus says the Lord: "I will return to Zion, and dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be called the City of Truth, the Mountain of the Lord of Hosts, the Holy Mountain." Thus says the Lord of Hosts: "Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each one with his staff in his hand because of great age. The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets."

"Yes, many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of Hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord." Thus says the Lord of Hosts: "In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.'" (*Zechariah* 8:3-5, 22-23)

For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity,

but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city. (*Zechariah 14:2*)

Back and forth – such beautiful and terrifying imagery, such promise and destruction.

Then we come to the New Testament. On the one hand Jerusalem is the place where Jesus was presented as an infant in the temple and where, as a 12-year-old, He impressed the scholars with His knowledge and questions. (*Luke 2*) But mostly Jerusalem was the stronghold of the enemies of Jesus.

He rode into Jerusalem as a king on Palm Sunday. He went to the temple and drove out the people who were buying and selling there. (*Mark 11:15*) He preached there. He healed there. He was put on trial there and crucified just outside of Jerusalem. One of the most poignant moments was when Jesus wept over Jerusalem:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! (*Matthew 23:37*)

And another poignant moment:

If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation. (*Luke 19:42-44*)

The Greek word and the Latin word (for church) is *ecclesia*. It doesn't have anything to do with a building or really even a formal organization. It means an assembly of people, a gathered group – literally those called out. So the church means the group of people called out by the Lord to follow Him.

Just like the prophets, He prophesied another destruction of Jerusalem. After He was crucified and rose on the third day He told His disciples “that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” (*Ibid. 24:47*) And He told them to wait in the city of Jerusalem until they were given power from on high. (*Ibid. 24:49*) And then Jerusalem is mentioned a number of times in the *Acts and Epistles of the Apostles*, as a location where they were working.

Finally we come to the vision of the New Jerusalem:

Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new."

.... The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light. And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. (*Revelation 1:2-5, 21-27*)

With this history of Jerusalem in mind we can see the contrast between the old Jerusalem and the new. Jerusalem was always meant to be the dwelling place of peace – where God could be with His people. This new Jerusalem is the fulfillment of that. This is a pure Jerusalem – one that cannot be corrupted or defiled. It is open to people of all nations and yet safe from all enemies.

This is a Jerusalem that will never be destroyed. It is a holy city – not holy because it has a temple in it where ritual sacrifices are performed in the right way, but holy because God is truly present there, protecting and comforting His people, and illuminating the whole city. It is a beautiful vision.

The teachings of the New Church say that Jerusalem in the Bible means "the church" and the new Jerusalem means the New Church. (*True Christianity* 107, 782; *Apocalypse Revealed* 880) If we aren't careful we can think: "The New Jerusalem is the New Church. We are the New Church. The New Jerusalem is perfect and the best. Therefore we are perfect and the best. Rah, rah New Church Day!"

But let's slow down and think it through carefully. What is a church? When are we part of the New Church?

The Greek word and the Latin word is *ecclesia*. It doesn't have anything to do with a building or really even a formal organization. It means an assembly of people, a gathered group – literally those called out. So the church means the group of people called out by the Lord to follow Him.

When we look at the history of Jerusalem we are looking at the history of those who have been called out by the Lord to follow Him. The New Church is the new group of people who are called out by the Lord to follow Him.

Here's an explanation from the teachings of the New Church about what it means to be part of the Church:

There are some people who believe that they belong to the Church because they have the Word, read it or hear it read by a preacher and know something of the sense of the Letter, although they do not know how certain passages in it are to be understood. . . . The Word is the Word according to the understanding of it with a person, that is, as it is understood. If it is not understood, the Word is indeed called the Word, but with the person it does not exist. The Word is truth according to the understanding of it; for the Word may not be truth, as it can be falsified. . . . Through the understanding of the Word and according to it, the Church is a Church – a noble Church if it is in genuine truths, an ignoble Church if it is not in genuine truths, and a Church destroyed if it is in falsified truths. . . . The Lord. . . is present with a person through the reading of the Word; but He is conjoined with him through his understanding of truth from the Word and according to it; and in the degree that the Lord is conjoined with a person, the Church is in him. The Church is within a person. The Church that is outside of him is the Church among the many people within whom the Church exists. (*Doctrine of the Sacred Scripture* 76-78)

People in the Church are those who have the Church in them. People in the New Church are people who have the New Church in them – in their minds, in their hearts, in their lives.

So, are you part of the New Church? Is the New Church in your mind and in your heart? If you were going to picture your relationship with the Lord as a city, what sort of Jerusalem do you have within you? Is it the Jerusalem of Solomon's time – a city following the Lord but mostly focused on just the external actions of going to church and doing the religious rituals? Is it a corrupt Jerusalem where the temple is run down and unused, and the king and people are worshiping the gods of self-gratification? Or is it the Holy City New Jerusalem descending from God out of heaven where the Lord Himself is the temple and the light of your mind?

Now, I am not trying to talk everyone out of thinking that he or she is part of the New Church. When we really understand what it means to be part of the New Church it feels arrogant and presumptuous to say that we know we are part of it. We're running into the challenge of ideals vs. reality. We want to hold onto and believe in ideals for ourselves and other people and we also want to be realistic and understanding about the fallibility of ordinary human beings.

We run into difficulties when we look at our man-made natural world organizations and compare them with the ideal of what the New Church is meant to be. Or when we look at the actions of other people who "call themselves New Church" but don't measure up, in our minds, to that glittering ideal. Or we look at ourselves and think the same thing. "Who am I to call myself New Church when my marriage is like this or when my children are doing that?"

Part of the benefit I see in understanding the whole history of Jerusalem is

seeing that the Lord gets it. He created us. He understand us.

And when we're not measuring up to the ideal, that's nothing He hasn't seen before. That has been the history for literally thousands of years. It's unlikely that we can mess things up worse than other people already have. You name it, people have done it – greed, promiscuity, deceit, human sacrifice.

But still God wanted to be with His people. Still He was reaching out to them – calling them to turn back to Him, promising restoration and comfort and rebuilding. No matter what you've done or where you are in your life, the Lord wants you to be part of His New Church.

The Church has always been for real people. The New Church is for real people. It's not something out there. Yes, the Word and the teachings of the New Church are perfect and beautiful and Divine. But if nobody reads them and thinks about them and tries to live them then they're just a pile of dead trees and ink. Or like the most beautiful church ever built with nobody inside it. The Church does not exist apart from people. (*Secrets of Heaven* 1068, 4292:1)

As soon as we try to read and think about and live the teachings of the Church we run into difficulties. We battle to understand things. We battle even more to apply even basic things we understand. We get conceited and self-righteous about the little we do know. And so we have to get over ourselves and get back on our feet and keep going back to the Lord to try again.

In no other way does the New Church become something real in us and real in the world in general. This is what it means to be part of the Lord's Church – to be part of the people called out by the Lord to follow Him – to be part of the New Jerusalem.

In the final vision at the end of the Bible, the Lord could have just called it "The Holy City" with no name attached or with some new name that we'd never heard before. Instead He chose to name it Jerusalem – a city with all its history, good and bad.

But it was the *new* Jerusalem. "He who sat on the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new.'" (*Revelation* 21:5) It is a city and a church for God's imperfect people that He will make new if they will let Him. Jerusalem's past was corrupt but He made it new. Our own pasts have not been perfect but we

People in the Church are those who have the Church in them. People in the New Church are people who have the New Church in them – in their minds, in their hearts, in their lives.

can be made new. And the Lord is working for this with incredible energy if we will only let Him. As He promises:

For Zion's sake I will not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burns. (*Isaiah 62:1*)

Amen.



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What is New About the New Church?

The Rev. Daniel W. Goodenough

What's in a name? The New Church, for example. Why do we call it *new*? Partly, we call it new because the disciple John saw the *New Jerusalem* descending from God out of heaven. This new city represents or stands for a *New Church* which the Lord promised to build after the end of the First Christian Church – a New Church to take the place of the First Christian Church which lost sight of the paths to the Lord. But that still doesn't explain *how* it is new.

What really is new about the New Church? The true answer is – everything. Everything is new about the New Church because now we can clearly understand the Lord and His ways and what He wants for us and from us. It is not that New Church people act completely differently from everyone else. In fact, we worship in more or less similar ways as other people – though many people love the quiet, joyful peace of New Church worship, especially at weddings and memorial services.

We go to work and school; we enjoy sports; we vote and take part in the life of community, society and church. We should live useful and productive lives, in outward ways not too different from the lives of many other people.

The New Church is not new because its members' lives are outwardly very different from the lives of various good people we run in to. What is new is how our lives can become inwardly new – new in the way we think and feel, new in the way we do things, new in what and how we love. For love is our very life. We are not what we do; we are what we love and take delight in. This is what the Writings tell us.

The newness of the New Church is not from ourselves, but from the Lord, because He has now revealed things that people have not known before. *The Heavenly Doctrines*, given by the Lord through Emanuel Swedenborg, teach us plainly and directly many things that for hundreds, even thousands of years, people have wondered about but have not understood.

Who really is God and what is He like? Is He human? What does He

The newness of the New Church is not from ourselves, but from the Lord, because He has now revealed things that people have not known before.

want from us, and what kinds of things should we do to serve Him? Will He raise us up when we die? How? When? How can people live after death? What does being saved really mean? And how can all this have any connection with our daily lives?

Does God care about the little things we do from day to day? Does He even care about the big things we do? How can our own individual lives have any meaning to God?

Countless numbers of people wondered about God and His ways for a very long time, and many people are wondering the same things today. Many have wondered for so long that they have even given up hope of finding satisfactory answers.

But these answers are just what the *Heavenly Doctrines* give us, in a beautifully full outpouring of love and wisdom from the Lord through heaven. He teaches us plainly and directly about Himself, explaining clearly who He is, so that we may know Him. And He tells us about His ways – not only why He wants us to be happy but also what we can do so that He can make us happy.

He tells us about the life after death, in great detail, and He explains precisely how the spirit – the real person – is drawn out of the body, not after waiting for many years in a rotting grave but immediately after we die. He tells us what life in heaven is like, so that we can use our lives on earth to get ready for true happiness – not worshipping, or praying, or singing all the time, but by loving our neighbors in all the ways we can find to do good to them.

One of the most wonderful things of all: He tells us how we can work for conjugal love (true married love), not just the temporary romantic love described in movies and books, but the permanent conjugal love between two people who will grow to love each other more and more in marriage forever. And who does not want that?

These and many more are the answers that the Lord gives us. That is the reason the New Church puts so much emphasis on reading the Lord's Word – the Old and New Testaments and the *Heavenly Doctrines*. It is easy to forget the Lord's wisdom unless we continue to read His Word and learn to find enjoyment from gradually learning more and more about Him and His ways.

It is not that the Word tells us outright every little thing we should do. That would not leave us free and we wouldn't like it at all. He wants us to follow Him by using our heads to decide what we should do. So we should study the Word, not because it will tell us exactly what we should do tomorrow, but because

it will give us an overall picture of the Lord and His kingdom.

When we have questions about how to act, we will find that if we look to the Lord the answers will become clear to us. They may not come immediately, but the answers will soon be there and, if we are honest with ourselves, we will know what the Lord wants us to do.

The New Church is new because the *Heavenly Doctrines* show us not how to make our body happy but how to make our spirit happy – and the spirit is the real person, the real us. We *have* bodies but we *are* spirits: we are feelings and thoughts; loves, ideas and delights.

The *Heavenly Doctrines* show very clearly that it is not just *what* we do that counts (although that is important); why we do things is what really matters. The *Heavenly Doctrines* open up a new way to understand the real us; they explain how we can be brought to God and be made happy forever. Deep down, doesn't everyone want that?

So read the Word, learn these doctrines, try to begin to live them, and then you will see what is truly new.

The New Church is new because the Heavenly Doctrines show us not how to make our body happy but how to make our spirit happy – and the spirit is the real person, the real us.



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The Rim of Gold

A Sermon for Memorial Day

The Rev. James H. (Jay) Barry

Lessons: Psalm 27; John 5:13; True Christian Religion 414

The Lord is the One who goes ahead of you and He will be with you – do not fear or be dismayed. (Deuteronomy 31:8)

On Memorial Day the United States pauses to remember the men and women who gave their lives in defense of their country. This is a day in which we pause to thank soldiers who have died, giving their lives to the cause of freedom.

There are many good things in our country, in our communities and in our families – too many to mention in one brief phrase. The freedom to express oneself, the availability of higher education for all, and the economic freedom to improve one's condition through innovation and hard work are among them. The virtue of the soldier is the desire to protect these things and to preserve what is good from people who would seek to do us harm.

In the *Heavenly Doctrines* the desire to protect what is good is symbolically represented as a *rim of gold* that not only surrounds heaven, but also that

which is heavenly in ourselves and in others. That is how the internal sense of the book of *Exodus* expresses it where the Sanctuary and the Ark of the Covenant are described:

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: "Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring Me an offering. From everyone who gives it willingly... And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. And they shall make an ark of acacia wood...and you shall overlay it with pure gold and shall



make on it a *rim of gold*.” (*Exodus* 25:1-2, 8, 10,11)

The *rim of gold* means a border of good, which the *Heavenly Doctrines* explain as the Lord’s effort “to defend [us] from the approach of evils and the harm these can do.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 9492)

Our military services in the United States can be thought of in the same way; they form a *rim of gold*, a border of good around this nation. In their service to this cause, many soldiers of the U.S. Army, the Marines, sailors in the Navy, and flight crews of the Air Force do their duty knowing that they may be called on any given day to give their lives to protect us.

The defense of our country began before we were a country, on April 19, 1775. On that day, the first battle of the Revolutionary War began. We did not have an army, but a loosely organized militia who were defending the common good of the Colonial settlements. With the first shots being fired at dawn in Lexington, Massachusetts, three companies of British regular troops later advanced to Concord and there they met 500 militiamen at the Old North Bridge.

Ralph Waldo Emerson later lived within eyesight of the event in the first generation of our country, and captured the moment in his famous poem, *Concord Hymn*:

*By the rude bridge that arched the flood,
Their flag to April’s breeze unfurled,
Here once the embattled farmers stood,
And fired the shot heard round the world.*

The intention of the Colonials was to protect, preserve and defend the rights of liberty and to oppose brutality. They started a resistance to tyranny, preserving personal freedoms which we enjoy every day in our country. On that first day of the conflict, 49 men gave their lives for this cause. They bravely stood on the *rim of gold*, and gave their lives to preserve it.

In the New Church, a very important part of our values is our love of country. In every war since World War I, New Church men have given their lives protecting what is just and right, good and merciful, in every community across this great nation. Our devotion to serve and die for our country is expressed in many teachings, including:

One’s country is more a neighbor than a single community, because it consists of many communities, and consequently love toward the country is a broader and higher love. Moreover, loving one’s country is loving the public welfare. One’s country is the neighbor, because it is like a parent; for one is born in it, and it has nourished him and continues to nourish him, and has protected and continues to protect him from injury.

The rim of gold means a border of good. Our military services can be thought of in the same way; they form a rim of gold, a border around this nation.

Men and women ought to do good to their country from a love for it, according to its needs, some of which are natural and some spiritual. Natural needs relate to civil life and order, and spiritual needs to spiritual life and order. That one's country should be loved, not as one loves himself, but more than himself, is a law inscribed on the human heart; from which has come the well-known principle, which every true man endorses, that if the country is threatened with ruin from an enemy or any other source, it is noble to die for it.

This is said because so great should be one's love for it. It should be known that those who love their country and render good service to it from good will, after death love the Lord's kingdom, for then that is their country; and those who love the Lord's kingdom love the Lord Himself, because the Lord is the all in all things of His kingdom. (*True Christian Religion* 414)

The positive attitude to help our nation, the willingness to do our civic duty and serve our communities with honesty and integrity, and our desire to protect all people from harm, constitutes the best attitude for loving our country. This spiritual attitude forms, as it were, a *rim of gold* around our whole life.

In June of last year we marked the 70th anniversary of the invasion of Normandy, France, in World War II. Many soldiers have given their lives since that day to preserve our freedom at home. On Memorial Day we take a moment to honor, remember and thank them.

They gave their lives in places far away from our congregations, but to name a few: Normandy, El Alamein, Monte Cassino and Okinawa, Dak To in Vietnam and Chosin Reservoir in Korea. More recently, our men and women have given their lives in Iraq and Afghanistan. Just in these areas of conflict alone, more than 250,000 men and women became casualties of war.

Many from the New Church served our country in battle, giving the best of themselves to protect us here at home. Allow me to read from the diary of one soldier, who was in the U.S. Marines in the Pacific theater. His family has preserved 126 letters written by him from May 8, 1943, until October 11, 1945. He saw action in combat in the important military campaigns in Guam and Okinawa. He was 20 years old. Reading from his diary:

Tuesday, June 20, 1943,
Okinawa:

It has been a pretty long time since I wrote, but not too much has happened. The only thing you would be interested in is the fact that after I was discharged from that Navy Hospital, I returned to my company. Four days later, still on the front lines {the enemy} opened up on us as we were digging foxholes later in the afternoon with a 20 mm anti-aircraft gun. That shows how desperate they are.

Now I am [back] in an Army Hospital and tomorrow I will be back with my company on the front lines. A guy's luck can run out, even mine, and I can't last forever. Barsness and I thought we were immune to such stuff, but Barsness is gone and I am left by myself now. He was the best buddy I ever had, he was so close if not closer to me than [my brother].

I am not ashamed to say I cried many nights after it happened. I wish I could get a case of amnesia or something for a guy's memory can just about drive him nuts at times.

I hope everybody is all right at home. Give them my love. No telling when I will get another chance to write so... All my love, your youngest son. ¹

In the New Church, a very important part of our values is our love of country. In every war since World War I, New Church men have given their lives protecting what is just and right, good and merciful, in every community across this great nation.

Though the writer of the diary felt he was left alone, the Lord was by his side, protecting and preserving him for a greater usefulness in the years ahead. Though he was spared, and though his best friend gave his life, both were willing to give the *last full measure of devotion* ² to preserve the good in this

¹ *The War Diary of John Barry*

² "The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us – that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last

country.

The Lord said: "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (*John 15:12,13*)

Every military man and woman in this country signs, as it were, a blank check to the United States of America. The agreement states that in their defense of the Constitution, they may be required to give their own life in order to preserve it.

Though any person would fear this prospect, the highest motivation of the true soldier is pure, from the desire to protect all that is good in this country. (See *Doctrine of Life 39*)

They stand at the *rim of gold*, the boundary of all that is good in us, and at the border of heaven. Many have been called to cross over it. It is these especially, whom we remember with prayers and gratitude on Memorial Day.

My goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield, and He in whom I trust; who subdues my enemy under me. (*Psalms 144:2*)



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full measure of devotion – that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain – that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom – and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth." Abraham Lincoln, *Gettysburg Address*.

Freedom to be New Church

A Sermon by the Rev. Howard A. Thompson

Lessons: Psalm 33:10-22, John 8:31-36, True Christian Religion 497

The [human] spirit is midway between heaven and hell, and therefore midway between good and evil. As a result we are in equilibrium.

This is what gives us free choice in spiritual matters. (*True Christianity* 497)

Each July, all across America, people celebrate their nation's Independence Day. I invite you to take a moment to reflect on the meaning of this day for you. Maybe close your eyes, hear your favorite patriotic song, smell the grass of your back yard or wherever your picnics are held. Visualize your family and friends enjoying the day, either at a parade, a beach, a pool or simply a garden. Can you see it? Can you imagine it? Can you smell it? Do you feel blessed?

Along those lines do you feel blessed when you reflect on your faith? Can you feel a similar peace when you reflect on the strongly held beliefs that have carried you thus far in your life and which have made you feel closer to the Lord?

Reflecting on how to begin a sermon, a theological talk, in advance of the celebration of Independence Day, I could not help but consider the fictional story of Rip Van Winkle. Written by American author Washington Irving this short story tells of a man who lives in colonial America, near New York's Catskill Mountains, in the years before the American Revolution.

Out wandering in the wilderness with his dog one winter day, Rip Van Winkle happens upon a group of oddly dressed men celebrating something with a keg of moonshine. Rip joins in and drinks from the keg and falls asleep. When he awakes he notices a number of oddities. His rifle is covered with rust, his dog is nowhere to be found, and his beard is very long. Returning to his village he finds few people he recognizes. He learns that his wife has died and that many of his male friends have fallen in the Revolutionary War. And, most symbolically of all, he finds that King George III's portrait over the Inn has been replaced by that of George Washington.

Rarely do major changes occur in any society without struggle and conflict. The truth is that there is a battle being waged in America today. There is always a battle being waged in America, because there is always a battle being waged within each of us.

Rip Van Winkle learns that he has been asleep for more than 20 years and thanks to the advancing of time and the American War for Independence he has awakened in a world nearly unrecognizable to him.

Fast forward and consider several modern-day fixtures: smart phones, tablets, terrorism and the breakup of the Soviet Union. For those of you over 40 the world today in some respects is unrecognizable from 20-30 years ago. Now consider legalized marijuana and same-sex-marriage, two issues or debates that are raging in the country today. The legalization of either of these issues would have been unthinkable just 20 years ago.

Doesn't this provide an interesting conflict? On the one hand we can look at all of our blessings and find peace in the good that surrounds us, and on the other hand we can somewhat easily allow ourselves to get caught up in the battles that rage around the hot issues of the day.

The New Church is founded on the belief that the Second Coming has occurred and that it was not a literal fire-and-brimstone, war-and-pestilence, death-and-destruction to come at some point in the future. We believe that the prophecy of the Second Coming describes a spiritual battle, a spiritual event that will not necessarily be seen directly and immediately in the world. In fact we believe it has already occurred!

And yet, I can hear from many people that this world is in worse shape than ever before, that this country, this society, is headed in the wrong direction.

It would certainly appear that some people look at all the evil in the world and pine for the days of a simpler, better time. Others look at all the good in the world and wonder, with joyful anticipation: What's next? But the reality is that each of us does a little of both.

Before I switch to my rose-colored glasses let me acknowledge that rarely do major changes occur in any society without struggle and conflict. The truth is that there is a battle being waged in America today. There is always a battle being waged in America, because there is always a battle being waged within each of us. The Lord, in fact, calls us to do battle – with injustice in the world and with evil in ourselves.

Through external battles with injustice we fight internal battles. While you are fighting one battle against drugs on the street, the drug addict is fighting a battle against drug addiction. As you are fighting one battle against same-sex-marriage, proponents of same-sex-marriage are fighting a battle against injustice, bigotry and hatred. We all fight a myriad of battles, sometimes apparently conflicting battles. And at one level we are all right and all wrong. “No one is good but One, that is, God.” (*Mark 10:18*)

And why do these battles continually rage? They rage because through the conflict or observing the conflict we are able to find a clearer understanding of how doctrine – the Lord’s Word – is to be applied in a person’s life. Understanding better how to apply the Lord’s Word to our lives brings greater order to our outward or external lives and when we do this the Lord is able to bring order to our inward or internal lives. (*Divine Providence 174*) Quite frankly I would even suggest that the work the Lord is able to do has less to do with how right we are and more to do with the simple act of engaging in the battle.

Each of us arrived here today with a set of beliefs and concepts that help us to understand the nature of the Lord, the nature of the world and our role in it. Each of us got here, to that place of understanding, because of one word: Freedom – the freedom the Lord guarantees each of us. It is the freedom to make decisions, to believe or not believe, and to act or not act as we understand and as our will moves us to act and believe. We have also, each of us, gotten here thanks to a lesser extent to the freedom to think and act provided by the parents, teachers and friends who have nurtured us.

There was a time before the Lord’s coming, when humans and even angels lacked the freedom to resist evil. Evil had so infected the world that it even reached up to heaven. But the Lord has changed that. He has levelled the playing field. Today, each of us is held in a perfect balance of freedom when it comes to spiritual matters, matters of thought and matters of action.

On a daily basis each of us may have a sense of this freedom. Consider any thought that is in your mind and it is usually rather easy to find a contrary or at least diversionary thought: “Oh, I would really like to have a donut now. . . I shouldn’t eat a donut – that would not work well with my diet . . . well, I did run an extra mile this morning . . . Oh, look, isn’t the stained glass beautiful this morning.” Each of us is under constant assault by the thoughts in our head and these are only the thoughts and motivations that we are aware of.

But in all of this the Lord guarantees that each of us is held in freedom. Like a perfectly balanced scale, try to put a little more weight on one side of the scale and the Lord balances the other side from this moment to the next. In *True Christianity* the Lord paints a picture of a person being pulled from all sides by spirits he is unaware of because of the equal and opposite forces being applied by other spirits.

Wouldn't it be nice if we spent the weeks between June 19th, the day we celebrate the Second Coming occurring in 1770, and July 4th, Independence Day, reflecting on the freedom required to be New Church?

Why does the Lord hold us in this equilibrium, in this freedom? He does this so that in this freedom He can, without our awareness, bend our desires toward good. He can, without our awareness, move us closer to Him. And by doing this, without our awareness, each of us continues to act and believe that we are free.

But there is an enemy of freedom. That enemy exists both within us and outside of us but it is known by different names. The internal enemy is our own selfishness and inclination to follow our more base instincts and desires. Externally, the enemy of freedom is compulsion. Everyone who is to be

reformed by the Lord, who is to set aside his or her will for His will, is to do so within a freedom guaranteed by the Lord. When a person is compelled it is human nature to draw back from the compulsion:

No one who is compelled to think that which is true and to do that which is good is reformed, but instead thinks all the more what is false and wills all the more what is evil. This is so with all compulsion, as may also become clear from all the experience and lessons of life, which when learned prove two things – first, that human consciences will not allow themselves to be coerced, and second, that we strive after the forbidden. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1947)

A favorite patriotic hymn of many Americans is the *Battle Hymn of The Republic*. The original version includes this verse: “As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free.” This verse has been removed from many modern arrangements. This is unfortunate as, from a New Church perspective, the verse contains an important message. The Lord teaches that, “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.” (*John* 15:13)

From a New Church understanding, to lay down one’s life is to set aside your desires in favor of another’s. In the context of this hymn I can see this meaning that when we lay down our desires – set aside our beliefs of what is better for another person – we leave that person in the state of freedom. This is what the Lord uses to best move him or her, imperceptibly, toward a state of greater order, both internally and externally.

In the years ahead wouldn't it be nice if we spent the weeks between June 19th, the day we celebrate the Second Coming occurring in 1770, and July 4th, Independence Day, reflecting on the freedom required to be New Church – the freedom to be New Church.



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OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY

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

CONSCIENCE

Here is another instance of a term being used with a meaning strikingly different from that given to it in ordinary speech. Conscience is generally thought of as an inner voice which warns us when we are about to do wrong, or reproaches when we have already done so, and which is originally possessed by everyone – although it may be stifled. In the Writings, however, this term means, in its highest sense, the new will received by regeneration.

This is conscience in its essence, which is to do evil to none and good to all. As thus defined, conscience is possessed only by the good; the evil have none, and the idea that the torments of hell are the stings of conscience is merely a pious fancy. As a perception of what is and what is not to be done, conscience can be possessed by all; but as it is formed with a man from the particular religion in which he is, and only according to internal reception thereof, it is not uniform and is not true of necessity. Thus there is a spurious conscience in those Gentiles who are in simple good, and what is called a false conscience with those in natural good, the latter being so called because natural good is inwardly selfish, worldly and evil.

It is this that has often been mistaken for conscience itself, and its existence that has led men to postulate a norm of conscience. But conscience is a relative thing, the bad conscience of a good man being the good conscience of a bad one; and the true idea of spiritual conscience is to be found in the teaching that it is to act according to religion and faith.

(See Arcana Coelestia 1033, 1076, 1077, 2144, 2831; True Christian Religion 666.)

A Wake-Up Call: Will the General Church Survive and Thrive?

Peter H. Boericke

Like many others, I have read and reread Bishop Keith's *Statement about Gender and the Clergy in the General Church*, published in the November/December 2014 issue of *New Church Life* until my copy has become worn and dog-eared. I have attended almost every event in Bryn Athyn over the last 25 years where the women-in-the-priesthood issue was discussed, questions raised, and insightful presentations offered by the clergy and laity alike.

I have read a number of the scholarly papers and theses carefully researched and written on this subject. I have listened. I have learned. And I have become greatly concerned! This is just one issue, and a pivotal one, that should signal a wake-up call if the General Church is to survive and thrive.

Women in the priesthood may indeed be the most passionate and central issue of our time, but it is not, by far, the only one. Today, the organization and its clergy are being challenged by tough questions which I believe must be asked, answered, and acted upon if the General Church is to become healthy and thrive.

These questions are not new, but they are on the lips of many. I ask them openly, not out of criticism, but out of a deep and abiding affection for the faith of the New Church and for that human organization known as the General Church that is charged with the responsibility to carry out its core purpose:

- **Is there a vision for the future of the General Church?** Our core purpose is clearly stated: *"To help people throughout the world grow closer to the Lord God Jesus Christ in His Second Coming, thereby finding happiness, peace and meaning in their lives."* Is there a vision and a plan from the current leadership to help make this happen?

- **Why aren't young adults joining the General Church?** Fifty years ago, well over 80 percent of Academy and College graduates joined the General Church. Today, less than 10 percent become members and even this percentage continues to decline. Our most fertile ground for membership evangelization – our students – appears to have been left fallow, untilled and unfulfilled. It is one thing to teach for the good of life, both natural and spiritual, and another to reap the rewards of such teaching. In today's fast-paced, changing world, is what we teach relevant to those whom we teach? Do we have a program in place that both leads and invites every young adult to make an informed decision in freedom to join the General Church? Is our faith simply no longer relevant in the lives of our savvy young students who carry with them, at the touch of a pad, the keys to a secular world of knowledge and influence, both good and ill? Is our Church accommodating to meet the needs of our young people; to meet them where they are and provide real answers to their individual concerns and personal struggles? It is very important to remember that any organization is only as strong as its next generation!
- **Is General Church membership really growing?** It is true that we have experienced membership growth every year since the beginning of the General Church. We also know clearly from the Word: "Except the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain that build it." (*Psalms 127:1*) While it is the Lord who builds the Church and that membership is simply one measure of growth, it is our duty and responsibility to cooperate fully in the building of His Church. Fifty years ago, there were 3,088 members in the General Church. At the end of fiscal year 2013-2014, there were 5,429 members for an average growth rate of 47 members per year. Is this a successful measure of healthy membership growth?
- **Is the General Church addressing the relevant issues of today?** We live in a world where being "politically correct" appears to be more important than speaking out and upholding the truths. Is the General Church providing needed guidance and leadership for the relevant issues of our day – issues such as birth control, abortion on demand, cloning, lifestyle choices, sex before marriage, divorce and remarriage, and a myriad of other concerns that confront us all? Are these issues being addressed and communicated openly by the leadership and clergy?

- Are the General Church and New Church education financially sustainable for the future?** From the very beginning, our institutions have been blessed by benefactors with sizable endowments and large contributions from which most of us have benefited. Today, however, because of a robust building campaign and a commitment to growth in the Academy and College – both impacted by a sustained recession, coupled with a less-than-successful capital campaign – as of the end of fiscal year 2013-2014 the Academy and College are still left with a long-term debt of more than \$49.9 million and continued deficit spending. Although expenses continue to be reduced through hard and painful choices (notably in the General Church with a balanced budget recently approved for fiscal year 2015-2016), deficit spending still continues in both the Academy and College. Other New Church schools are also struggling to keep their doors open. Despite progress, contributions are not keeping pace with needs. With the knowledge that solicitations are made only in North America (the United States and Canada), in fiscal year 2013-2014 only 27% of General Church members (963 out of 3,565) contributed to the organization. When friends and those baptized (but not members) were included, the rate was about 36%. The average age of the General Church contributor is about 60. And, only 19.4% of Academy and College alumni (931 out of 4,793) contributed to these two educational institutions. Much greater participation is needed! If these trends continue, is the long-term future of these institutions sustainable?
- What's happened to communications?** While there are online publications, websites, livestreaming, and the goods and ills of social media, what has happened to the printed communications of the past? Gone are the *Sons Bulletin* (along with the Sons), the *Theta Alpha Journal* (although it is being resurrected), *The Academy Journal* (missing in action), alumni publications (online only), and such other publications as *Lion's Pride* and *Around the New Church*. To my knowledge, the only official publication still in print presenting editorials, opinions, points of view, the news of the General Church, the Academy and the College is the one you are reading – *New Church Life*. For much of the time, with the exception of contribution requests, our members and alumni do not hear or see much – less so in the past several years – unless they take the initiative and go online. How many really do? And those who do not have email or access to a computer – and there are still some – truly are left in the dark, but for *New Church Life*. While the internet and social media are the digital tools of the new age, is it not still important to publish the written word so that an open

forum for information and dialogue remains alive, active, and preserved for future generations?

Finally, with these questions and concerns in mind, I return to the central issue noted at the beginning of this article: **Women in the Priesthood.**

After patiently reading, listening, researching and praying about this issue, I have come to believe that those women who feel a true calling from the Lord to become priests in the General Church should be given an opportunity to apply to Theological School on the same basis as do male applicants through an intensive application process.

It is interesting to note that the Master of Arts in Religious Studies (MARS) program, available since 1996 to both men and women with accredited undergraduate degrees, has been awarded to 37 students to date with two more graduates probable in May. Should this occur, twice the number of women (26) than men (13) will have received this degree. This has become a very important and successful program, but it does not take the place of Theological School, nor was that the intent.

Fifty years ago, young ladies did not engage in competitive sports at the Academy. It was not thought to be ladylike. Forty years ago, women were not permitted to become members of the Boards of the General Church or Academy, let alone serve on committees of real importance, such as a pastor's council. And less than 30 years ago, but for the necessary Girls School Principal and Dean of Women for the College, women did not serve in executive leadership roles.

Today, with enlightenment, that has changed for the better. It's still far from perfect, but is definitively better. And the women who now serve on boards, on important committees, and in executive leadership roles, have brought with them the professional skills, credentials and perceptive insights that have complemented and enhanced the life of the Church and its schools. They have clearly added a new vitality and freshness, and a new complementary viewpoint so necessary to the important work at hand.

Since Bishop Keith's policy statement last September, 16 people so far have resigned from the General Church. Many were highly talented, long-time volunteers, leaders and supporters of the Church. This is both sad and disturbing indeed! To date, nine women have gone elsewhere to become credentialed chaplains or priests in other ministries, or to preach by invitation at one of the independent New Church congregations springing up in rented buildings and homes (those not officially recognized by the General Church). I am told by those who know that at least 10 more women feel the Lord's calling and would willingly begin the work to become priests in the General Church if given the opportunity to do so.

While I appreciate the sincerity, integrity and duty of the clergy to seek

enlightenment from the Word and Heavenly Doctrines on this issue, I have become personally clear that there is no clarity on this issue. Perhaps the Lord, in His Divine Providence, intends that it should be so. I am also clear that every woman who aspires to the priesthood feels called by the Lord alone and desires to become ordained so that she might minister to people with her own special gifts as a woman would, not as a man would.

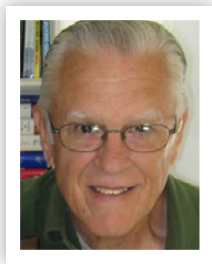
Just imagine what new and wonderful insights women could bring to this use for the spiritual welfare of all. Each would bring her own unique gifts of love, perception and wisdom to complement the men currently serving in this use. Together, they could minister to everyone with the skill and compassion so needed in today's world: accommodating and meeting each person's needs where he or she is; helping to provide the answers so necessary for healing life's – natural and spiritual – struggles and pain.

As a faith that believes deeply in the Lord's gift of individual freedom, are we perhaps more influenced, as Bishop Emeritus Louis B. King noted in *Questions Regarding the Uses of Women in the General Church* (November 6, 2000), by “. . . remains, tradition and important cultural considerations that have grown up around the service of worship [he loved].” He believed then, and I believe now, that women will be given the opportunity to become ordained priests in the General Church. It's only a matter of time, but with some of the questions and concerns raised in this article, time may be running out.

Those who lead the General Church are good and caring priests who are genuinely seeking what is good from the Lord's Word. With this knowledge in mind, it is my most sincere hope that those members – men and women – who are most impassioned about this issue will work within the General Church to make it possible. Please do not resign out of anguish or heartache, but rather become strong and persistent voices for change from within. We need that courage if the General Church is to survive and thrive!

We must always remember that the General Church is a human organization. It was, and is, man-made to publish, to teach, and to spread the good news throughout the world of the Lord in His Second Coming. It must change – and change quickly – to truly meet the needs of those it serves. And we must not lose hope that the General Church can still be that mechanism for the New Church spoken of as “. . . the Crown of all Churches that have hitherto existed on earth.” (*True Christian Religion* 786)

(Note: All statistics and references noted in this article have been obtained through searching the archives of heavenlydoctrines.org, from the 2014 ANC/College Treasurer's Report online, and from answers received to specific questions from the General Church Data Center, courtesy of Administrator Susan Wright. MARS statistics were provided by Dr. Jane Williams-Hogan.)



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OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY

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

CONSUMMATION

This term refers generally to the state that exists when evil reaches its height; specifically to the end of a religious dispensation, which comes when there is no longer any charity or faith because the church has turned away from the Lord entirely. Note that this end is spiritual, that the church itself is unaware of it, and that it may continue as an organized body although it has come to an end as far as performing the use of a church is concerned. (*Arcana Coelestia* 2243, 2905)

Reflections on a Gift of ‘95 Theses’

The Rev. Dr. Ray Silverman

Early in January I received a request from Irv Kaage to review a 208-page manuscript he calls, “95 Theses.”

My immediate thought was that this was a brilliant idea. I was aware that Martin Luther had nailed the original “95 Theses” to the door of the All Saints Church in Wittenberg, Germany, in 1517. It was a protest against the abuses of the clergy, and the advent of what became known as Protestantism.

Some 250 years later, Emanuel Swedenborg was to launch a new protest – one which we recognize as the Second Coming of the Lord. It was a protest not just against the abuses of the clergy, but also against the idea of “faith alone,” which Luther had championed so vigorously. Luther was making a case for an individual’s direct relationship with God, without need for an intermediary priesthood. All a person needed (to come into a direct relationship with God) was faith – faith alone, not the priesthood, not the church, not penances and indulgences. Just faith.

While Swedenborg agreed with Luther that the clergy, with its corrupt system of indulgences, should not be an intermediary between God and humanity, he also believed that Luther had taken the idea of “faith alone” much too far. In fact, the very idea that “faith alone” was the only thing necessary for salvation was Swedenborg’s arch enemy.

Throughout his voluminous Writings, he points to the theological fact that faith without charity is dead. Over and over again, quoting abundantly from the Word, the Writings consistently teach that we demonstrate our love for the Lord through keeping His commandments – not just through having faith. As Jesus says, “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” (*John* 14:15) We are not just told to believe in them, or have faith in them. We are urged to *keep* them – that is, to *do* them.

So I was impressed with Mr. Kaage’s choice of title. Perhaps he could have called it “A New 95 Theses.”

I was aware, though, that my teaching and administrative responsibilities

at Bryn Athyn College would prevent me from providing extensive editorial assistance. So I wrote back, saying that I would be happy to read the manuscript and provide general comments, but would not be able to give him a detailed review or provide extensive editorial assistance. In his reply, which included a full copy of the manuscript, he said he would be pleased with any comments I could provide.

And so I began to read . . . and read . . . and read. It took me about two weeks, reading every morning and evening. As I read, I became more and more captivated by his style and approach. His own thinking is so seamlessly interwoven with direct quotations from the Writings that sometimes it is hard to discern whether one is reading the Writings or reading Mr. Kaage's reflections.

While my editor's instinct picked up many "no-no's" – such as the misuse of ellipses, overuse of exclamation points, capitalization errors, and a disruptive shift from "he" to "she" to "we" to be gender inclusive – my theological mind began to look beyond the grammatical problems to the beauty of this man's doctrinal insights.

Here are a few I gleaned from the manuscript, followed by my comments:

Thesis 17: There are infinite things in the Divine which nevertheless make one.

Kaage: "It is not possible for the Lord's pure mercy – and this alone – to bring anyone out from a hellish state to a heavenly state of salvation, for this requires consent and agreement on the part of each person." (p.27)

Silverman: While this is a well-known doctrine, I found Mr. Kaage's inclusion of the phrase "consent and agreement" arresting. It reminded me of the teaching in *Conjugal Love 21* that "consent is the essential element in marriage."

Thesis 27: Life, Happiness, Heaven and Salvation are terms expressive of an identical concept.

Kaage: "These terms are all descriptive of a continuously expanding degree of Divine presence. This Divine Life is entering us each moment from within. Thus it is that the greatest gift we could ever hope to receive is truly something we already possess." (p. 43)

Silverman: Despite Jesus' teaching that the kingdom of God is within us, and the teaching from the Writings that the heavenly kingdom is not "on high" but in those things that are internal (*Arcana Coelestia* 2148), the human mind has a tendency to think that heavenly qualities are somewhere "outside" of us. Mr. Kaage reminds us, in simple language, that everything we seek is already present, and that all we need to do is "receive" what is already there. Later, he will say more about how we receive.

Thesis 54: The Lord is this Divine Truth become Human . . . the Word become flesh.

Kaage: “It is Christ who has revealed the Father in a way that anyone can understand in thought, and in a way that anyone can be united with in love. This impact upon a person’s ability to understand the Divine nature is the very purpose of the Lord’s Human. This is how Christ can be understood to be the ‘covenant’ itself – the conjunctive means between the Father and the human race.” (p. 91)

Silverman: I thought this was beautifully and simply written. “Oh,” I thought, “this is another way of describing the necessity of the Lord’s coming. We cannot worship an invisible God, so in Jesus Christ God is made visible.” I also like the way Mr. Kaage shows how we come to the Father *through* Christ. This is what is meant by Jesus saying, “No one comes to the Father except *through* Me.”

Thesis 57: There are three fundamental qualities of the One Supreme Being.

Kaage: “The Holy Spirit is mentioned that we may know that these forces of Divine Love and Truth pervade the universe and are alive within all things, acting upon them internally. We receive His Holy Spirit within ourselves when we have ordered our mind to receive life from Divine Love and Truth. In the Word this is also referred to as the ‘breath of life.’” (p.100)

Silverman: I find Mr. Kaage’s wording quite refreshing. We are accustomed to speak of the Holy Spirit as the “Divine Proceeding,” but Mr. Kaage helps us think of it not only as “proceeding” from the Lord, but also “pervading” everything in creation. Interestingly, although the Writings frequently speak of Divine Love and Divine Wisdom *pervading* all of creation (*True Christian Religion* 44), as well as a conjugal atmosphere *pervading* the universe (*Conjugal Love* 92), the terms “pervade,” “pervades” and “pervading” are not associated with the Holy Spirit. Mr. Kaage, by simply using this term in relation to the Holy Spirit, has enhanced my understanding of this important quality of God. The Holy Spirit is indeed not just “proceeding” from the Lord but “pervading” the entire universe.

Thesis 61: By enduring temptations, the Lord glorified His human and conquered hell.

Kaage: “In order that hell would no longer be able to dominate the human race, the Lord fought against it; thus he fought against what hell essentially is: love of self, love of the world, and the many ways that these loves manifest: pride, hatred, greed, ambition, domination, adultery, indolence and deception.” (p. 112)

Silverman: This is one of the more difficult doctrines of the Church, but Kaage handles it with ease, pointing out rather quickly that when we are referring to “the hells” or saying that the Lord “conquered hell,” we are not just talking about a war against evil spirits. More deeply, we are talking about a war against every selfish love that would destroy humanity. The evil spirits indeed wage the combat, but the real enemies of humanity are the malevolent motives that these spirits incarnate – the very thoughts and emotions that would destroy each of us if we were not protected by the Lord.

Thesis 68: As the Savior of the world, the Lord continually redeems all people and bears the full burden of our sins.

Kaage: “It is said that the Lord ‘bears our iniquity.’ This does not mean that the Lord absolves us of responsibility for the quality of our spirit, but rather that He provides Divine assistance during our combats of temptation – assistance which leads to eventual victory in our personal struggles. The Lord ‘bears iniquities’ when He fights within our soul against the hell to which we are inured. No one can possibly fight against this without Divine assistance. Because the Lord conquered hell, He alone is capable of victory He, therefore, who alone fights for the human race against evils and falsities is said ‘to bear sins,’ for He alone supports this burden and continually removes us from hell.” (p.137)

Silverman: Those who have come to embrace the doctrine of the New Church as “genuine Christianity,” understand that “bearing sins” has nothing to do with the idea that the Lord protects us from “God’s wrath” by taking the punishment we deserve. The truth is, we cannot be absolved from our sins by merely believing that someone “paid the price” for us (took the punishment we deserved).

Mr. Kaage deals with this misconception beautifully by saying that the Lord does not “absolve us of responsibility for the quality of our spirit.” Instead, He “bears our iniquities” by fighting within our soul against hellish influences. In other words, the Lord is continually bearing the full burden of our sins. And we, on our part, experience the ongoing benefits of His redemptive love through striving to fight against all that is ignoble within us, as if from ourselves.

Thesis 70: By the Passion of the Cross the Lord did not take away sins, but bore them.

Kaage: “There are many within the church who believe that by the passion of the cross the Lord took away sins and made satisfaction to the Father, supposing that He transferred to Himself the sins of those who have faith

in Him. However, to transfer the sins of others, and to take them away by punishments admitted into Himself is contrary to the nature of the annulling of sins. Sins can be annulled only by repentance of life by him who has sinned.” (p. 141)

Silverman: This is one of the most interesting, curious and captivating aspects of Mr. Kaage’s style. The selection just quoted is a combination of exact quotations from the *Doctrine of the Lord* 15, and *Apocalypse Explained* 805. And yet, they are brought together so seamlessly that they mutually reinforce each other.

Thesis 75: One does not enter heaven by Divine permission.

Kaage: “Many Christian sects confidently profess a doctrine rejecting good works, supposing perhaps that no one can do them without feeling a sense of self-merit. What these philosophies have failed to realize is that those who are led by the Lord desire nothing more than to do good works, and that they also think of no merit by them. This is the new life and new intention that enters a person following a grueling process of temptations. This new intention is given by the Lord to those who are being regenerated, and this intention to do good is actually the Divine within us. . . . Love is a Divine active force so overwhelming that it must escape into action. It cannot be present within us without immediately seeking expression.” (p. 150)

Silverman: Mr. Kaage is taking on the fallacious teaching that all our efforts to do good amount to nothing more than “rags of righteousness.” Not only does he succinctly refute this destructive and debilitating doctrine, but he adds that the sincere desire to do good, without any sense of self-merit, is “the Divine within us.”

He goes on to describe this “Divine within us” as a force so great “that it must escape into action.” What a beautiful way of describing the spontaneous love that a mother feels for a child, a true teacher for students, a benevolent doctor for patients! These God-given moments of genuine love are truly “the Divine within us.”

Thesis 81: We too must undergo temptations as He did, for the rebirth of each person is patterned after the Lord’s glorification.

Kaage: “When we turn away from the life of evil, and are raised up into the life of heaven by the Lord, we are no longer in what is our own. We are then in the Lord, and we think and intend goods He has inspired within us. Thus, we must take great care to avoid evil, but we need not be anxious about what specific good to do. When evil is avoided, then good immediately enters in from the Lord and directs us toward what we can and should do.” (p. 159)

Silverman: A very familiar teaching of the Writings is *Apocalypse Explained*

979:2: "Cease therefore to inquire in thyself, 'What are the good works that I shall do, or what good shall I do that I may receive life eternal?' Only abstain from evils as sins, and look to the Lord, and the Lord will teach and lead thee."

Mr. Kaage puts this teaching in his own words admirably. He also situates it in a "thesis" about the necessity of undergoing temptations in order to experience spiritual rebirth. In this process we have two freedoms: the freedom to think well of others, and the freedom to shun evils as sins against the Lord. When we exercise these freedoms, he says, "we are raised up into the life of heaven by the Lord."

Thesis 83: Salvation, or heavenly life, is purely a gift; it can never be earned or merited by anyone.

Kaage: "When self-infatuation and the delusion of self-reliance are removed, the Divine enters in with heavenly good. Therefore, happiness is purely a gift. It can never be earned or merited by any amount of effort. It is totally free, and there is nothing we can possibly ever do to attain eternal happiness by our own effort. Happiness can be received when we simply open ourselves to the life of love and humility flowing through us constantly. The great peculiarity of life is that we can never earn the right to heaven, happiness and salvation. . . . and yet, at the same time, if we do not put forth our very best effort, we cannot receive them." (p. 162)

Silverman: At first glance, this thesis sounds a lot like the Old Church idea that there is nothing you can do to earn salvation. But Mr. Kaage adds the all-important idea that we can open ourselves to receive the free gift of salvation, a gift that is already there within us. It is "the life of love and humility flowing through us constantly."

Whenever we feel ourselves removed from this constant flow of love and humility, it's good to know that it is "self-infatuation" and "the delusion of self-reliance" that keep us separated from that ever-present flow.

What this means, then, is that we must put forth our very best effort to overcome the delusions of self-infatuation and self-reliance, while acknowledging that the Lord alone is the power within every effort. We are accustomed to calling this the "as-of-self" principle. We must make efforts to shun evil, as if from ourselves, while acknowledging that the Lord alone provides the love, wisdom and power to do so.

Thesis 87: Heaven cannot be imposed upon us.

Kaage: "Our unity with the Divine requires the right tone. We cannot form a bonding relationship with God if we are simultaneously afraid of Him and concerned about how He might treat us. If we fear being judged harshly for who we are or what we do, this may well cause us to change our behavior, but

we will not change! The only lasting change we might then experience is that of becoming more bitter. Developing a fear of God is not a spiritual path. In the end, we will always rebel against fear. It is true that in the short term fear does serve us; it causes us to create new questions and make careful considerations. But in the end a sustained fear – especially a fear of damnation – can only cripple us.” (p. 169)

Silverman: The fear of eternal damnation, as Mr. Kaage puts it, might get us to change our behavior, but not necessarily our essential selves. In the end, he says, “sustained fear – especially a fear of damnation – can only cripple us.” His explanation reminds us that a loving relationship with the Lord – one that is not based on fear or compulsion – is the foundation of all other healthy relationships.

For example, when there is fear in a marriage relationship, or in a parent-child relationship (whether it be the fear of criticism, abuse or abandonment), there is little hope for establishing healthy connections. This kind of fear, of course, is different from what the Writings call “holy fear” – the fear that we might inadvertently hurt what is good and true in others.

Holy fear does not arise from the threat of punishment, the possibility of rejection, or any kind of compulsion. On the contrary, it may arise from the healthy fear that we are possibly too controlling, too demanding, and too eager to impose our will on others. In brief, as Mr. Kaage puts it, “heaven [*and this includes our idea of heaven*] cannot be imposed on others.” (For a discussion of “holy fear” see *Arcana Coelestia* 3718.)

Thesis 88: As we grow closer to the Divine, we begin to feel more free.

Kaage: “The new self is defined by the extent of removal of the old self. This state is authentic freedom. We can never come into a state of real freedom until we are regenerated and led by the Lord through love for what is good and true. When in this state, then for the first time we can perceive what freedom really is. . . . The goal of Divine Providence is not to make us self-sufficient (as He is), but to bind us together through variety, compatibility, dependence and reliance upon one another. To be in heaven is to pursue greater and greater levels of freedom and contribution to eternity.” (p. 170)

Silverman: One of the central tenets of Hinduism, Buddhism and other eastern religions is that we have “a divine identity” or a “Buddha nature” which is indistinguishable from God. From this it follows that as people attain enlightenment they become totally satisfied within themselves, needing nothing and no one for happiness. This is because their core nature *is* happiness. They are complete, reliant on no one, and free from all attachments.

This “self-realization,” the realization of one’s inner divinity, is called “*moksha*” – ultimate freedom. Mr. Kaage, however, helps us understand

freedom differently. As he puts it, we experience greater and greater freedom as we grow closer to the Divine. This involves putting off more and more of the old self so that we can experience the freedom of our true self – the regenerated person God designed us to be. As we come into this freedom, it is felt as a greater and greater love for what is good and true, and a concomitant desire to contribute to others, in our unique way.

This is not a state of “self-sufficiency,” or completion, because the process is never complete. Rather, we feel increasing joy in being intimately connected with the world around us, responsible to others and dependent on them. Most deeply, we feel totally dependent on God, and in this we experience our greatest freedom.

Thesis 90: A life of mutual love is inherently more pleasurable than one of self-love.

Kaage: “The inherent misery within selfishness is God’s primary agent for reforming us. Our source of pleasure is the only cause of our misery; to forsake evil, what we must do is create an association to selfish desires as ultimately being a negative influence – one leading to pain. Our life begins anew in proportion as we develop the power to override our habitual associations and equate evil with unhappiness in this way. What is contrary to human happiness and to heaven is permitted by the Divine due to our stubbornness, and only for the sake of preserving our freedom. Evil loves are their own punishment and lead to unhappiness.” (p. 174)

Silverman: In my margin notes, next to the statement, “The inherent misery within selfishness is God’s primary agent for reforming us,” I wrote the word, “Zinger.” It really was. This is a new way of expressing the idea that people often need to “hit rock bottom” before being motivated to amend their lives.

We tend to think of “rock bottom” as a drunkard in the gutter, with no money and no friends. He has hit the bottom, hard. But people who are immersed in selfishness may seem to be at the top – both financially and socially. Yet, spiritually, they are in the depths of hell, suffering the inherent miseries of selfishness.

With God’s gentle leading, their only hope is to gradually come into the light, realizing, as Mr. Kaage puts it, that “a life of mutual love is inherently more pleasurable than one of self-love.”

I could go on. Reading Mr. Kaage’s manuscript has been a deeply inspiring experience for me.

I would invite readers of *New Church Life*, if they feel so moved, to contact Mr. Kaage for themselves. I know very little about him except for the fact that he began reading the *Arcana Coelestia* on his own when he was a teenager, and

that he attended Bryn Athyn College about 15 years ago. He also admits that he is a trained architect with little knowledge of how to put a book together. Perhaps there are readers of this magazine who feel called to assist him in getting his manuscript edited and published.

You can contact him at 312-340-7000 or ikaage@gmail.com.



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Irv Kaage is a residential architect in Wilmette, Illinois, focusing on historic districts, both designing new custom homes and renovating homes dating back to 1872. In 2009, following a 10-year career as project manager for an architectural firm, he paused his career, moving to Glenview, Illinois, where his wife, Claire, resumed her career while he became a stay-at-home Dad for their four children. He initiated a three-year process of "meditative research on Swedenborg's exegesis of the Torah and Gospel." Uninspired by his Lutheran upbringing he became a religious seeker as a teenager. He discovered the Writings and began studying Philosophy/Religion at Bryn Athyn College the following year. His guiding passion is "finding ways for repaying that first gift of spiritual light." His life's purpose "is to develop a writing approach of unique appeal to seekers, and to favorably share his excitement for the Word's life-changing, life-giving power." Contact: ikaage@gmail.com



The Rev. C. Mark Perry

A Ministry Born of Loving People

Many people who hear Mark Perry preach in San Diego, California, feel that he was born to be a minister and a teacher, but it took him a while to catch on. Now he is the pastor of the San Diego New Church, since 2002, and visiting pastor to the Palo Alto New Church. He lives in San Diego with his wife, Anna (Hyatt), and their four children: Sean, 13, Ella, 11, and twins Darren and Janine, 9.

He was born in Pretoria, South Africa, and says: “I moved a lot as a kid. We lived in Durban, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and Irene. I attended the New Church Kainon School in Durban, South Africa, for Grade 1. My parents were a big part of the early New Church in Irene, near Pretoria. This small group would later become the New Church of Buccleuch in Midrand.

“At that time, I cared a lot about the scattered New Church folk who attended the church services in Irene, but the truth is, I cared little for the doctrines. It was my parents’ church. My friends were either Catholic or Protestant.

“The arrival of the Riley family would have a profound impact on me as a teen growing up. The Rev. Norman Riley became our first full-time pastor, and the Perry and Riley families spent a lot of time together. Thirty-five years later I still love this family! Chats with Norman would eventually lead me to confirmation and consideration of attending Bryn Athyn College.

“I left sunny, warm South Africa in mid-summer at 19 with my sister, Leann (18), two days after matriculating from high school. Two days later we were sitting in classrooms in freezing mid-winter in Bryn Athyn, having missed the first two weeks of winter term 1984.

“I gave no thought to becoming a minister while in South Africa. After my first year in Bryn Athyn, on the invitation by the Dyck family, I went up to the northwestern part of Alberta, Canada, for the summer. We were invited there to attend the Convention Church Camp at Paul Haven, where I was asked to lead a group of young people – about my own age. I had no experience with teaching and felt way out of my depth.”

But the pastor, the Rev. Dave Sonmore, told him: “You’ve had two terms in Bryn Athyn. You know more than they do!” And that was the beginning.

Mark adds: “I found through that experience that I truly enjoyed teaching.” After that summer in Alberta, he returned to Bryn Athyn and switched his major from math/science to the humanities and philosophy. Through his philosophy courses he met Mr. Charlie Cole, a professor of chemistry and philosophy and Dean of the College.

“This sage and gentle man would have a profound influence on my decision to become a minister,” he says, but it was not a “burning-bush” decision. “There was no immediate and overwhelming experience. It was more of a very slow and gradual coming to see that this is what I wanted to do with my life.”

Mr. Cole’s philosophy classes “were a big part of an early path to ministry. Bigness and smallness were in harmony. The atom and the universe looked so alike, with stuff spinning around other stuff, and I began to see the Great Connection between all things – everything in harmony and in perfect order. Contemplation of the operation of a Divine Hand began to pervade my thinking.”

By the end of his third year in Bryn Athyn, “I was pretty sure I wanted to become a minister but still had some doubts. I was never a good student academically and struggled throughout my high school and college years. With mild dyslexia (b, p and d’s would flip, and I often transposed numbers – in fact, I still do), I wondered if I was cut out for the academics of Theological School.

“Long chats with Charlie Cole and the Rev. Willard Heinrichs convinced me there was more to ministry than the rigors of academic learning. I resolved to try to help people the best I could, and ministry seemed like the best way I could do that. So in my fourth year I applied for Theological School and held my breath.”

He was accepted and among key experiences there that affect how he approaches the ministry, he lists:

1. Hanging out in early Theological School days with the Rev. Grant Schnarr. He had an infectious enthusiasm and affected and inspired me with

his Latin mantra: *Non Solus Sum* – I am not alone.

2. Listening to the Rev. Tom Kline giving sermons in the Cathedral. What a treat! His simple expositions of Bible stories I had known and loved was always uplifting and their effect profound. I liked going to church to hear a good, clear message that spoke of the Love the Lord had for His Creation, His people. I wanted to preach like that!

3. The Rev. Don Rose. There is not enough time for me to share all my early interactions with this dear, sweet man. He was my mentor and teacher. I once asked Don: “If you had one thing to say to a new minister, what would that be?” He replied: “Love people!” For years after I graduated from Theological School Don would write me periodic letters, sharing words of encouragement, enthusiasm for something he was doing, or how the Truths of the New Church were impacting something in the world. After more than two decades of service in ministry I have come to see the wisdom of Don’s simple message to me all those years ago. For people will seldom remember what you said to them or what you taught them. They will remember how you made them feel!

After ordination Mark found himself divorced and says: “This would have a profound impact on me and in some ways, still does. I was assigned to be the assistant to the Rev. Kurt Horigan Asplundh, Pastor of the Bryn Athyn Church. I had the privilege of teaching the children in the Bryn Athyn Church Elementary School. I believe those ‘kids’ saved my life. They filled me with joy.

“I rebelled a bit, got a black leather jacket and a motorbike. I spent many wonderful weekends helping the Rev. Bob Jungé build the Ivyland New Church. In fact, if you walk into the Ivyland Church and look up at the main beam above the door – and look carefully – you will notice one bolt missing. That was my doing. At the end of a long day, having to drill from both ends to line up for the bolt to pass through, I just could not line up the holes, so that last bolt never found its home. And that small imperfection still makes me grin when I look up.”

In 1993 Mark became the pastor in Atlanta, Georgia. There, he says, “I found some of the most kind, loving and incredible people in this bustling Southern metropolis. While there we sold the Church in Chamblee, purchased land in Alpharetta, and built a brand new facility. The Morning Star Chapel was the culmination of hard work and dedication by a congregation motivated with a great passion for the Church. I am looking forward to returning to Atlanta this summer, over July 4th weekend, to preach in my first pastoral home!”

In 2002 he moved to San Diego to become the pastor and has been there ever since. “I am truly ‘at home’ in Southern California,” he says. “It reminds me in so many ways of the Africa of my youth. Even many of the species of flowers and succulents here are South African. Looking up at Balboa Park

from San Diego Bay is almost the same view as standing at Durban harbor and looking back toward the Berea. I cannot see myself making another pastoral move – although the Lord may have other plans for me. I fully intend to fill my remaining years as a minister serving the New Church in Southern California.”

Among the highlights of his career he says: “Certainly the construction of Morning Star Chapel while I was pastor in Atlanta is something I am both proud and grateful to have been a part of. Working with the likes of Jack Martin, Roger Echols, Tom Leeper and Henry Dunlap was interesting to say the least. However, at the end of the day, we got past our many differences and we (the entire congregation) achieved something huge for a small congregation.”

He notes that volunteering for the 1996 Olympics and spending nearly six weeks in the Olympic Village in downtown Atlanta “was an experience I will treasure for the rest of my life. If any one of you reading this has a chance to volunteer for the Olympic Games, do it!”

At the end of the Games, he was offered a paid staff position for the Sydney Games. “It was a tipping point for me – become part of a future Olympics, or remain a pastor in the New Church? I would like to say that it was the doctrines of the New Church that kept me in ministry, but that would not be true. It was my planned engagement to Anna Hyatt that prevented me taking off for Sydney and a completely different life.” Their eldest son, Sean, was born on September 20, 2001 – just nine days after 9/11.

Mark says his hopes and goals today are pretty much what they have always been: TO LOVE PEOPLE.

As for hobbies and interests, he confesses: “I have always been into sports. I have a huge ego and a minor aggressive streak (admittedly not pastoral qualities). When I arrived in Bryn Athyn from South Africa I could not skate. But watching just a few minutes of ice hockey, I knew that sport was for me. That first winter I taught myself to skate with some help from the kids, and the following winter I was playing hockey for my college. Since we needed a goalie – and I knew I was the worst skater on the team – I volunteered for the position. Fun times.

“I scuba dive and have dived with sharks off the African coast. I have always loved snakes and had a huge python in Atlanta. I have been bitten by a rattlesnake!

“I got into running after volunteering for the Olympics. In 1997 I finished my first full marathon under the Olympic Rings in Atlanta in under 3.5 hours. I would run many more marathons, but never again in less than three-and-a-half hours.”

Among his favorite books “would have to be the Wilbur Smith novels. I think I have read them all. The gripping tales of people interwoven with the history of Africa and Europe had me turning pages. Non-fiction works

important to me are writings of William Bruce, particularly his exposition of the *Gospel of John*. Ernest Kurtz' *The Spirituality of Imperfection*, and *I Heard the Owl Call My Name* by Margaret Craven should be required reading for all theologs (in my opinion). I value the information and insights contained in the work *Alcoholics Anonymous* by Bill Wilson.

"If stuck on a desert island with only one book available to me, I would take the Bible. Given two books I am in a serious quandary as to what the second would be – a coin toss between *Divine Love and Wisdom*, *True Christianity* or the Second Volume of the *Arcana Coelestia (Heavenly Secrets)*."

What else might you be surprised to learn about Mark Perry?

"If you follow me on FaceBook, (I am the only C. Mark Perry on FB), I would not be much of a surprise to you. I am a passionate deep sea fisherman and spend a lot of time on the water. In a different life, I would have made a fine longshoreman. We go 'catching,' not fishing. My favorite passage of Scripture is *John 21:3* where Peter says: 'I am going fishing!'

"In 2004 I broke 80 at Torrey Pines North course – shot a 79, finishing in the dark. Today I am happy breaking 100. Every round of golf I have one prayerful golf shot; I still can carry 180 yards off my knees.

"I also love really old books. I have volumes from the late 1700s.

"On any given day I work with more people outside the New Church and have a greater sphere of influence with these folk than I do with people associated with the New Church."

As for favorite passages from the Writings, he lists two:

"Very different is the case with those who trust in the Divine. These, notwithstanding they have care for the morrow, still have it not, because they do not think of the morrow with solicitude, still less with anxiety. Unruffled is their spirit whether they obtain the objects of their desire, or not. And they do not grieve over the loss of them, being content with their lot. If they become rich, they do not set their hearts on riches; if they are raised to honors, they do not regard themselves as more worthy than others; if they become poor, they are not made sad; if their circumstances are mean, they are not dejected. They know that for those who trust in the Divine all things advance toward a happy state to eternity, and that whatever befalls them in time is still conducive thereto." (*Heavenly Secrets* 8472)

"What is doctrine but that which teaches how a man must live? In the Christian world it is doctrinal matters that distinguish churches; and from them men call themselves Roman Catholics, Lutherans, and Calvinists, or the Reformed and the Evangelical, and by other names. It is from what is doctrinal alone that they are so called; which would never be if they would make love to the Lord and charity toward the neighbor the principal of faith. Doctrinal matters would then be only varieties of opinion concerning the

mysteries of faith, which truly Christian men would leave to everyone to hold in accordance with his conscience, and would say in their hearts that a man is truly a Christian when he lives as a Christian, that is, as the Lord teaches. Thus from all the differing churches there would be made one church; and all the dissensions that come forth from doctrine alone would vanish; yea, all hatreds of one against another would be dissipated in a moment, and the Lord's kingdom would come upon the earth." (*Ibid.* 1799)

OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY

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CORPOREAL

This term does not refer to the body itself but to the ultimate plane of the mind. Thus it is not applied to the bodily senses, but to that ultimate plane of mental life which operates through them, and also to the cupidities, pleasures and appetites of the body. A man who lives only on the plane of these ultimate things, immersing the mind in the body, is called a corporeal man. (*Arcana Coelestia* 911, 4038; *Apocalypse Explained* 496)

Plane Kindness

The Rev. Coleman S. Glenn

(This article originally appeared in the *Peace River New Church Current* in Dawson Creek, British Columbia, Canada, and also appeared on *NewChurchPerspective.com*. It is reprinted with permission.)

Since becoming a pastor, I've spent a good deal of time in airplanes and airports. You might expect that spending all that time with tired, overcrowded, hurried individuals, I'd have seen a lot of the worst in people. But I've found the opposite to be true. Sure, I've run into some grumpy folks in my travels; but I've also seen travel bring out the best in people.

On one flight there was a passenger who didn't have the right credit card to pay for her meal, and the airline didn't take cash. Seeing her trouble, the man next to her (a complete stranger as far as I could tell) handed the flight attendant his credit card instead, and when the woman took out cash to offer the man, he turned it down.

Another time, when I was flying with my then-fiancée, Anne, we both had middle seats in different parts of the plane. When the man next to me found out we were engaged and not able to sit together, he gave up his aisle seat for Anne's middle seat.

What is inspiring these people to give up their seats and their money? There was an article a few years ago in Air Canada's *EnRoute* magazine explaining the scientific, brain-chemistry reasons why doing acts of kindness for others – even small ones in places like airplanes and airports – makes us feel good and increases our happiness. (<http://enroute.aircanada.com/en/articles/airport-altruism>) There's something about doing something nice for someone else that just feels good.

This article pointed out the difference between being in a plane and being in a car. In a car, we can't see the other people; it is all mechanical interactions. But in a plane, we see people as people. And, for little cost, we can do something personal that will affect another person's life. It's a wonderful feeling to know that you've brightened a stranger's day.

That ability to see others as *people* is vital in learning to love the neighbor

as ourselves. The root of all evil is the love of ruling over others from a love of self. We read about spirits who are in this love: “These spirits are all sensually natural, and some are of such a character as to believe that they alone are alive, regarding others as phantoms.” (*Divine Love and Wisdom* 144)

The love of self causes us to view ourselves as more alive and more human than others; but love to the Lord and love to the neighbor sees everyone as a recipient of life from the Lord, made in the image and likeness of God, and therefore truly human.

Those moments where we see other people treating strangers kindly can help remind us of this. In those moments, we see the Lord acting in the world. Now, maybe the person who gave up his seat to me is mean in his everyday life; maybe that man who paid for the woman’s meal was only doing it so he could feel pride in his own generosity. Those small acts are *not* charity itself, which consists in acting from love every day. But even so, the Lord uses those moments to bend a person’s life toward heaven.

The angelic view is to look for the good in people – to assume a good motivation, to put the best interpretation on everything. So I hope and choose to assume that those people who acted kindly in the airplane were acting from genuine love that has been implanted in them by the Lord.

That *EnRoute* magazine article suggests that we should do such small acts of kindness in places like airplanes and airports *because* it will make us happier, causing our brain to release pleasurable chemicals into our body. That’s an OK place to start. But the Lord challenges us to go even further – to do those good deeds not for ourselves, and not even for the pleasure we get from helping others, but truly for the sake of others. The paradox is that if we focus on the pleasure we get from doing the good, we actually get less pleasure; if we focus on the good itself, we get more pleasure. *Arcana Coelestia* puts it this way:

When an angel does good to somebody else he also communicates to that person the goodness, blessedness and bliss he himself has received; and he does this in a spirit of wishing to give the other everything and hold nothing back. When that spirit of communication is present in him, he receives far more goodness flowing in with blessedness and bliss than he imparts; and this goes on unceasingly with increasing returns. But as soon as any thought enters in of wishing to communicate what he has with the purpose of gaining that influx of blessedness and bliss into himself, the influx is nullified, especially if some thought occurs to him of repayment from the one to whom he communicates the goodness he himself has received. (*Arcana Coelestia* 6478)

The Lord’s goal for each one of us is that we reach the point where we act spontaneously to give to others simply from the love of doing good to others. But we need the in-between stage, where we are partly doing it for the sake of

others, and partly for the good feeling we get from knowing that we've been kind. The Lord uses both those motivations to lift us step-by-step toward a true heavenly love. And giving up a seat on a plane -- or a bus, or a train -- isn't a bad place to start.



The Rev. Coleman S. Glenn is Associate Pastor of New Church Westville, South Africa, and chaplain of the Kainon School there. He is also visiting pastor to Cape Town. He was previously Pastor in Dawson Creek, British Columbia, Canada. He lives in Westville, with his wife, Anne (Hurd), and children, Samuel and Eleanor. He maintains an occasional blog at: www.patheos.com/blogs/goodandtruth. Contact: coleman.glenn@gmail.com.

BOOK REVIEW

V as in Victor

By Naomi Gladish Smith

Reviewed by Vera Powell Glenn

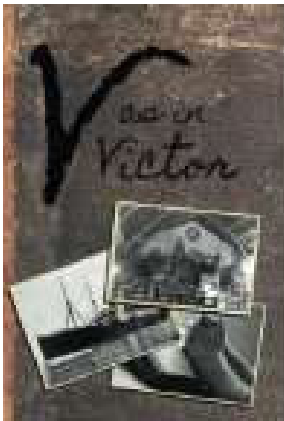
It took courage to write this book, but it is a book that needed to be written. It will resonate with those people whose families lived through many of the same experiences as Victor Gladish and his family. It should arouse the sympathy of those who didn't know what distress some of our ministers had to face in the first half of the 20th century. For others this candid glimpse of New Church history may be more dismaying than they wish to see.

At the time the General Church had been hit hard economically by the Great Depression, and battered and bruised by the recent heartrending schism between the General Church of the New Jerusalem and Der Hemelche Leer position. War was a threat and soon to be a reality. George de Charms, named Executive Bishop after the death of Bishop N. D. Pendleton in 1937, was trying to cope with these and many other pressing church-wide problems.

An Introduction – just a paragraph or two at the beginning – would have helped readers understand this situation better and made clear the writer's intention with her book. It would have introduced us to the Rev. Victor Jeremiah Gladish, a man many of us knew personally. A photograph would have shown us what he looked like.

As it is, Chapter One opens without preamble with an ominous knock on the door of the New Church manse in Colchester, England, in June 1940. England is at war. The American minister and his family, as aliens, are ordered to evacuate their home within 72 hours and quit England as soon as they can find passage to the United States.

Leaving the supportive parishioners of his pastorate, the Rev. Victor Gladish, his wife,



Lucy, and their five young children, take ship by night from Ireland under threat of attack by German submarines. A week later the Gladishes arrive safely on American shores, but with nothing except what is packed in their few suitcases. They have no home, no money, no assets, and Victor has no job. It is a desperate situation.

The fourth daughter, Naomi, not quite five at the time of the family's arrival in the U.S., writes that she didn't realize what was really happening then, or even in later years. It was not until she discovered two boxes of letters in clearing out her parents' things that she came to realize the extent of poverty, illness and struggle that beset her family.

For 20 crucial years Victor kept copies of letters that he wrote, and letters that he received from others. In reading all these letters Naomi for the first time came to understand her father as a man. They inspired her to tell his often painful yet very human story.

Naomi expresses a loving daughter's natural concern for her father and what happened to him, but she doesn't minimize his shortcomings. Throughout most of the book she takes a fair-minded approach, trying to understand both sides of each situation against its historical background. She uses a conversational style, asking questions and speculating on people's motivations and actions, seeking answers rather than making definitive statements. However, there is a place where this seems to break down.

As might be expected, on arriving in America destitute, Rev. Gladish turned to the General Church for help. He begged for a pastorate somewhere or any kind of church work, but the Church had little to offer him. It wasn't until mid-December that Bishop de Charms wrote to Victor that there was a possible opening in a small group situated near Cincinnati, Ohio. The job would also include traveling to visit isolated New Church members in the South. The position included no housing and hardly paid enough to keep his family, but Victor optimistically accepted.

In another letter, the Bishop suggested he might supplement his low income with additional secular work. For a man not yet over the effects of a severe motorcycle accident in England several years before, it was to prove a stressful situation.

After less than a year eking out a meager living, doing a lot of tiring traveling, and struggling to satisfy the Wyoming Group with little success, Victor was called by the Bishop in the autumn of 1941 to meet with him at a District Assembly in Glenview, Illinois. Not knowing what to expect, but hoping he might be offered a less-difficult post, Victor was stunned when the Bishop asked him to give up the love of his life and resign from the ministry. He was so devastated that for several weeks he could not even tell his wife, pregnant with their sixth child.

In the letters that followed Victor's dismissal from the ministry, from which the author quotes, Bishop de Charms comes across as unsympathetic and even harsh. No doubt he did not mean to be so wounding, but the words were heart wrenching to Victor's daughter. In writing about the incident she is perhaps more judgmental than she should have been, but the facts are there. The words and tone are de Charms' own, and Naomi certainly experienced first-hand the traumatic effect it had on her father and the family.

Forced to find secular work to house and feed his family, Victor took a job at a munitions factory – dangerous work, long hours and low pay. Later, his wife Lucy, not in good health herself, took part-time jobs to supplement the family income, leaving the oldest daughter at home to keep an eye on the other children after school, and to mind the baby.

Despite all the physical hardship, the marriage remained firm. Family ties were loving and strong. The children were not raised with bitterness, as the parents did not discuss the bleak situation with them. Naomi tells of happy summers spent in Linden Hills (Michigan) with her Gladish grandparents. She recalls funny incidents with a light touch. Books and education took precedence in the home. By scrimping and saving every child had the opportunity to attend the Academy of the New Church in Bryn Athyn.

Some people may have seen Victor as a failure. At times he may have seen himself that way, but there are qualities of more lasting value than worldly success. His life story is a testimony to that. His dream of being a minister did not crumble to dust. In his heart he remained a loyal New Church minister, never giving up, always seeking opportunities to preach and study doctrine to the end of his days.

This written tribute from his daughter, Naomi Gladish Smith, is summed up in the title she chose for the book: *V as in Victor*.

(*V as in Victor* is published by eLectio Publishing, Little Elm, Texas. It is available from the New Church Bookstore, www.newchurchbooks.com.)

Church News

Compiled by Bruce Henderson

GENERAL CHURCH BOARD

The Nominating Committee of the General Church Board of Directors has nominated five incumbents for re-election, as well as four new nominees, all for three-year terms. The election will take place at the annual meeting of the General Church Corporation, June 27, in Bryn Athyn.

The incumbents eligible and willing to be re-elected are:

Gregory Baker, Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania

Amy C. Buick, Jenkintown, Pennsylvania

Jennifer B. Pronesti, Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania

Dawn R. Wadsworth, Atlanta, Georgia

Thayer York, Seattle, Washington

The four new nominees are:

Bengt Boyesen, Kempton, Pennsylvania

Wade Buick, Lehigh Valley, Pennsylvania

Stephanie A. Klippenstein, Maysville, Missouri

Ned Uber, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Leaving the Board, with thanks for their service, are:

Justin Allen, Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania

Jeffrey Jackson, Austin, Texas

The Nominating Committee was chaired by **Charles Ebert**, assisted by **Mary Jane Junge** as vice chair, and included **Kaye Lermitte**, **David Radcliffe** and **Willard Smith**.

The Board also approved operating, non-operating and capital budgets for fiscal year 2015-16, with a balanced operating budget projected.

Progress on the strategic planning process was reviewed, including articulation of several draft strategies to fulfill major goals. More will be reported once action is anticipated.

The Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr. reported that General Church Education is moving ahead on two strategies: an overhaul of professional development for teachers, and a mailing project aimed at younger families.

The Rt. Rev. Brian W. Keith reports separately (page 238) on three different motions considered by the Board, having to do with: improved interaction and communication between the Board and the clergy; how to have greater clarity around decision-making in the Church; and – in response to many communications – further consideration about the gender restriction to the M.Div. program in the Theological School. Bishop Keith said he would be thoroughly looking at all aspects of this issue, and will report on any recommendations.

NEW CHURCH EDUCATION BEYOND THE SCHOOLS

Rachel Glenn



On January 16 and 17, a group of 24 parents, Sunday school teachers, General Church Board members and staff members from General Church Education, gathered to consider the use of New Church education outside of formal schooling. We met at Cairncrest in Bryn Athyn, with attendees from a variety of geographic areas, including Missouri, Massachusetts, Ohio and Michigan.

Our goals were to create a sense of community around the use of New Church education, which **Bishop Peter Buss Jr.** refers to as “rallying around what is precious,” share information about the resources we have to offer, and hear from people working in the field about their needs, hopes and dreams.

Over two days we had six sessions. The first three focused on the big picture of the use of New Church education, available resources, and people’s experiences in using them. In the remaining sessions, we brainstormed potential directions to focus our work in the next few years. We asked: What is working and what isn’t? What delivery methods seem to work best? What needs are not being met? What new avenues might open up? What communication strategies can we use to reach people effectively – to let them know about what we have to offer?

One of the messages that came through clearly is that people are thirsty for resources on New Church education, and hungry for a communication network that will allow them to support each other in this use. The vital role of homes in New Church education was reaffirmed, and parents need easy-to-access ideas and projects to support family worship and religious activities. A redesigned, more user-friendly website, providing “one-stop shopping,” would be a big step. A number of other needs and possible solutions were discussed. Input will become part of the General Church’s planning process.

Getting together with a roomful of people who all care passionately about educating children in the light of the threefold Word was exhilarating. The meetings were a great experience for the staff and I believe for those who attended as well. We hope to continue working with this group and with others in the field to let the light of the Lord's Word shine.

Reaching Out to Families

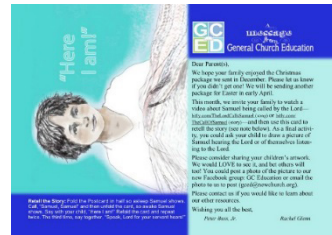
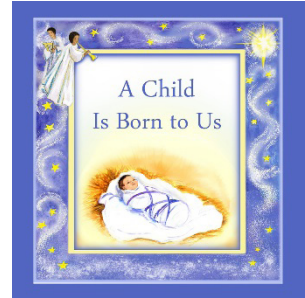
Thanks to a generous donation, General Church Education has begun to reach out to families with children from infants to six in a new way with direct physical mailings. At Christmas time we sent out about 480 copies of a newly revised book, *A Child Is Born to Us*, and a nativity sticker project. A letter to parents gave Christmas greetings from General Church Education, directed people to a few online resources, and requested them to look for further mailings from us. We have had very positive feedback on the Christmas gifts, with people expressing how lovely it was to receive something from the Church.

Another, simpler mailing went out at the end of February in the form of a postcard inviting people to watch two videos about the Call of Samuel (www.bitly.com/TheLordCallsSamuel; www.bitly.com/TheCallOfSamuel).

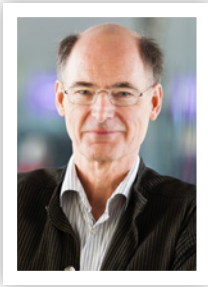
A second gift – a CD of songs – was sent for Easter. One thing we are hoping to do is highlight some of the different kinds of materials we have available. Also included in the Easter package were brief worship suggestions for Palm Sunday, Good Friday and Easter from Bishop Buss, links to GCED videos (www.bitly.com/GCEDEasterStory) and several pictures to color.

We will be sending out one more gift mailing for New Church Day. After that we plan to ask people for feedback and to invite them to opt in to receive email communication from us as well as occasional mailings. The central message we are hoping to convey is that the Church cares about families and has resources to help them teach their children about the Lord and His Word.

These gifts are being sent throughout North America to all the families for whom we had information and to selected international locations (English speaking and with reliable mail delivery). We would love to add people to our mailing list. If you were missed, please let us know by phone (267-502-4959) or email (gced@newchurch.org).



REGIONAL CLERGY MEETINGS



Europe, March 2015

The Regional Pastor for Europe and India

Rev. Göran R. Appelgren

The clergy in Europe met in the south of France, March 16-19. **The Rev. Alain Nicolier** and his wife, **Jeanne**, moved there not long ago. Nearby their new house there is a simple retreat center located in a Regional Park in the Pyrenees. (See photos on page 295.)

Those who gathered with Alain and Jeanne were Michael Church Pastor **Alan Cowley** with his wife, **Susan**, Colchester Pastor **Howard Thompson**, and candidate **Thomas Floyd** from Norway. Along with myself, the group also included the **Rev. David Lindrooth**, who has strong ties to Europe and Scandinavia besides being the Director of Outreach, which benefited us.

We have these meetings now and then, maybe every other year. We all found them to be very useful, and we now have a strong team in Europe. It is interesting that both pastors in England are Americans. They both love their work and it gives some important and useful benefits to the work in Europe. We are one church but we work in different cultures and traditions. The cross pollination is of vital importance.

In Scandinavia we will soon have a second minister, Thomas Floyd, who will be ordained in May. Alain continues his own work spreading the good news of the Second Coming through his counselling practice and lecturing.

Even within Europe we struggle with different cultures and traditions. A key element is the sense of freedom in religious matters and a deep scepticism toward organized religion, at least when there is a perception of being subjected to a human-built power structure.

Much of our discussions centered around how we can keep a conversation going both within our own ranks and with people seeking answers to their questions about life and the other world. The idea of accommodation was presented and discussed, as well as ways of adapting the way we teach or what we teach depending on the culture and the people we meet. Alain put it this way: "In Europe it seems imperative to adapt our approach to the growing secularity and gentilism if we want to reach out to people where they're at and talk their language."

The question of the role of women in the Church came up, of course. Our task was not to find an answer but we all felt it was useful to reflect, listen and let influx from the Lord guide us. I think I might sum it by saying we all felt the

Church needs to find a way forward, so that when we come out on the other side, we can go back to doing what a church is supposed to do – help people find the Lord and find inspiration to grow as a person and reach out with whatever talents we have, as individuals and as a church.

But more than turning doctrines in and out we were able to build a stronger sense of friendship and collegiality. We all went away strengthened and inspired, and I mean all, Jeanne and Susan included.

There is not enough space to give justice to all the contributions, so I will conclude by quoting Howard Thompson, who summarized his presentation in this beautiful way:

“Struck by the appearance of the river in both the garden in *Genesis* and the Holy City in *Revelation* we looked at the natural interplay of a river on the land it flows over as a metaphor for how we, our spiritual selves, are shaped by the truth we learn from the Word. Simply put, a river both accommodates itself to the land it flows over and shapes the land as it flows. We looked at the effects of a variety of flowing waters and the effect each has on a variety of land features. Another way to look at it is that each of us when we are born is the garden and the Lord is working to shape us into the Holy City.”



Canada, February 2015

Rev. James P. Cooper
Regional Pastor for Canada

As the number of ministers at the full Council of the Clergy meetings has continued to grow we have found they have a very formal feel. Regional clergy meetings, on the other hand, are much more relaxed and conducive to participation, discussion and friendly conversations with colleagues.

Another difference is that only a small percentage of ministers can present papers or topics at the full meetings, while everyone invited to a regional meeting is expected to present a study or lead a workshop. It's a great way to try out ideas that are perhaps a little outside of the mainstream. An idea may still get shot down, but it will be done in a friendly way with helpful suggestions.

There is also an opportunity for frank talk about how to handle some of the pastoral issues we face in our congregations. Finally, when the Bishop is present it's a great way for him to get counsel on a number of issues from people who are on the front lines of the Church.

So, there are lots of good reasons to have regional meetings, even in years when there are full meetings, because the regional meetings serve a very different use. With all those advantages in mind, the Executive Bishop

and pastors and assistants from the Glenview, Oak Arbor, Pittsburgh, Sarver and Caryndale societies were invited to Toronto for three days of meetings at the end of February. **Bishop Keith, Jay Barry, Pearse Frazier and Derrick Lumsden** joined the Canadian ministers, **Brad Heinrichs, Nathan Cole, Brian Smith, Ron Schnarr and Jim Cooper.**

Starting Wednesday morning, each minister had an hour to present a topic of personal interest and lead the resulting discussion. Topics included: the Doctrine of Perception; the Doctrine of Divine Providence as it relates to Permission; How to Teach Appropriate Social Life and Courtship; A Conversation with the Lord about Pastoring; A New Church Perspective on Conscience; using the Twelve Tribes Model to Survey a Congregation About the Direction of the Ministry; and Freedom and Learning (a new way to organize schools).

The Bishop led two sessions of questions and answers which covered a variety of topics, some doctrinal, some pastoral, and some relating to administrative policies.

We also had time for fun and fellowship. On Wednesday night there was an informal dinner at the manse so that the Caryndale contingent could wait until the rush hour traffic on 401 (the busiest highway in North America) improved. On Thursday night the ministers and wives met for dinner at a steak house conveniently located halfway between Toronto and Kitchener. We closed after lunch on Friday so that everyone could get back home in time to be ready to preach on Sunday.

It's always difficult to arrange to leave your congregation for a few days, but we all felt the change of scenery and the opportunity to talk to some of the only people who really understand the daily challenge of our job was refreshing and encouraging and definitely worth the effort. And the papers were interesting too!

HAPPY 25TH ANNIVERSARY

The Boynton Beach (Florida) New Church celebrated its 25th anniversary on April 19. This congregation had its roots in Miami, then began worshipping in the manse on El Clair Ranch Road in Boynton Beach in 1988.

The church building was completed in 1990 and dedicated on June 24 by the **Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Sr.**, with 123 adults and 21 children present.

The 25th anniversary celebration included a worship service on *The House of the Lord*, a catered luncheon, reminiscences, a slide show, photo album and memorabilia.



The house of Alain and Jeanne



The house of Alain and Jeanne with
Alan, Susan and David



Left to right: Jeanne Nicolier, Alain Nicolier, David Lindrooth, Alan Cowley,
Susan Cowley, Göran Appelgren, Thomas Floyd, Howard Thompson



The nearest larger town, Foix



Alan Cowley presenting



Alain Nicolier presenting with
Thomas Floyd listening



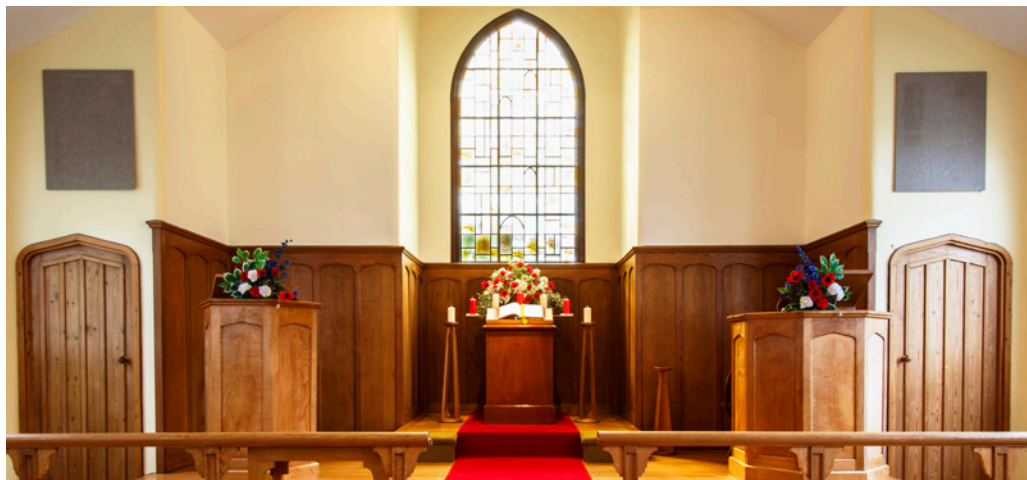
The old fortified city of Carcassonne,
a World Heritage site



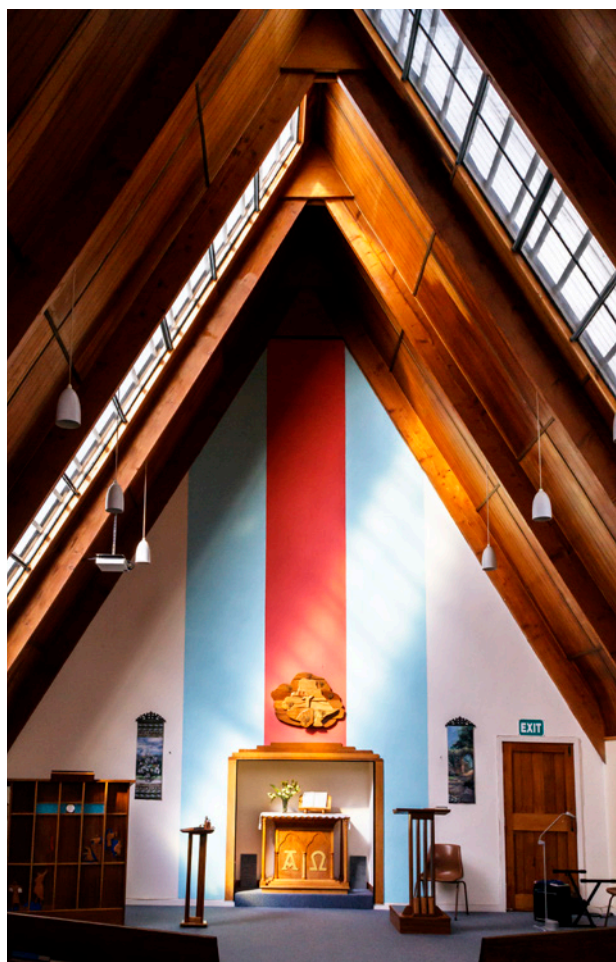
A dinner out with fantastic
food in Saint Giron



The Le Mas d'Azil cave in Ariège
not far from where we stayed



The chancel at the Colchester New Church in United Kingdom



Auckland Society of the New Church, New Zealand



Wood carving, by Thorsten Sigstedt, above the altar at Dawson Creek New Church in Canada



The sanctuary at Dawson Creek New Church in Canada



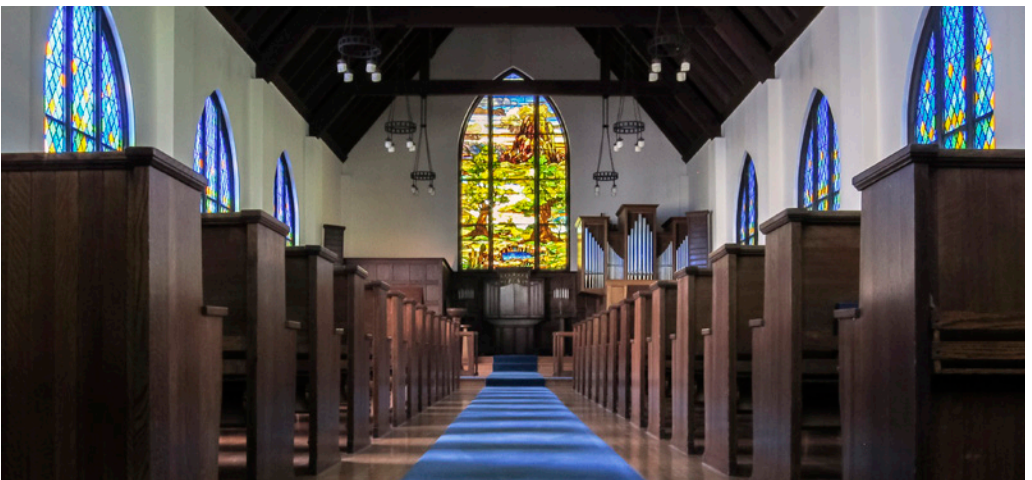
The chancel in Stockholm, Sweden



The chancel in Westville, South Africa



Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, New Church



Glenview, Illinois, New Church



Peter Pan (Decland Durand) and the Lost Boys



Captain Hook (Ashley Smith) and his pirate crew



Tiger Lily (Brianna Salvatori) and the Indian Tribe



Left to right: John (Galen Stevens-King), Michael (Liam Taylor) and Wendy (Hannah Dewees) soar to Neverland.



Nana, played by Weston Wadsworth.



Wendy and the Lost Boys in Neverland



Freshman Declan Durand stars as Peter Pan

THE ACADEMY MODEL*Kira Schadegg and Denise DiFiglia*

Boys and girls really are different! Their brains are different. Their hormonal influences are different. These physiological differences cause boys and girls to learn differently. In the New Church we know from doctrine that men and women are different down to their innermost being. The exciting thing is that the rest of the world is catching up!

Now we are having secular corroboration of these teachings from the world of science. Why is scientific proof important? It provides natural evidence for a spiritual reality. Much of our scientific evidence is gathered by the Gurian Institute, based in Colorado Springs, Colorado. The Academy of the New Church is a Gurian Model School. But we believe we have as much to offer the Gurian Institute in regards to the nature of the genders as it has to offer us in scientific research.

On March 26, **Denise DiFiglia**, **Kyle Genzlinger** and **Kira Schadegg** gave a presentation at the Small Boarding Schools Conference at the Vanguard School in Lake Wales, Florida. This was an opportunity to highlight what being a Gurian Model School is all about. It was also an opportunity to showcase our unique method for single-gender education coupled with co-ed education. We have the best of both worlds and had many of the attendees agreeing with us by the end of our workshop. (There were 200 attendees, including heads of schools, admissions directors and educational consultants.)

Denise began the workshop with an introduction highlighting our school make-up and mission. Kira and Kyle discussed some current research about differences between male and female brains and hormones, with a view to how those differences impact what takes place in the classroom.

Infused into the talks were examples of things our colleagues are doing in their all-boys, all-girls and co-ed classes. We ended the workshop with a question-and-answer period that was illustrative and engaging for the participants and the three of us.

NEW CHURCH MUSIC SCHOLARSHIP

The New Church Scholarship Fund promotes the highest quality growth of music and music education in New Church schools and societies. The fund provides financial assistance to individuals enrolled in undergraduate degrees in music.

Eligible applicants must be participating members of a New Church community and have demonstrated an active involvement in music in the community. Applicants also must show proof of their involvement in New

Church education, which may include at least one year in an Academy School.

Applicants must also have been accepted into an undergraduate music program, on course to receive a Bachelor of Music degree.

Scholarship applications are available online at: www.newchurch.org/about/news/music-scholarship-fund-2015.

Contributions toward the scholarship fund are tax deductible, made out to:

The New Church Music Scholarship Fund

The Academy of the New Church

P.O. Box 708

Bryn Athyn, PA 19009

For further information please contact:

Nancy Metroka, Chairperson

nancy.metroka@ancss.org

Bonny Lundin-Scheer

bonnys@glenviewnewchurch.org

JACOB'S CREEK FAMILY CAMP

The annual New Church Family Camp at Jacob's Creek will be held July 26-29 at the Laurelville Mennonite Center in western Pennsylvania.

The Rev. Matthew Genzlinger, camp pastor, notes: "Every year at Jacob's Creek we have a theme that helps us focus our attention on a specific collection of teachings from the Lord's Word. Our goal is to come together with open hearts and minds, to learn about and discuss these wonderful teachings, and to reflect on how we can make them a part of our lives."

This year's theme is *Freedom and Rationality*. The children's program will revolve around the Children of Israel's escape from Egypt.

In the advance notice for the camp, Matthew says: "Freedom and rationality are what make us human. They are gifts that the Lord gives to every one of us. This year we will be exploring what it is that makes these gifts so important. How does the Lord protect our freedom and rationality? How do we use these gifts correctly and how do we at times abuse them? Does providing us with freedom and rationality mean that we can do anything we want?"

"Several passages in the Word point out that people can think and will whatever they please, but that people are NOT at liberty to do and speak whatever they please. How does this relate to our concept of freedom of speech? As you can see, there is a lot of wonderful material to explore."

Matthew's staff will include: the **Rev. Brad Heinrichs**, pastor of the Carmel New Church in Caryndale, Ontario, Canada; **Brett Buick**, currently completing his final year of Theological School; and the **Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr.** Camp directors will be **Blake and Paul Messman**, and **Jamie and Julie Uber**.

Registration forms are available online at: www.jacobscreekcamp.alotspace.com. You can "friend" the camp on Facebook: www.facebook.com/JacobsCreekFamilyCamp.

A deposit of \$50 is due by May 31, along with registration forms, with the balance due by June 30. For further information contact: julie.uber@gmail.com.

LIVING WATERS FAMILY CAMP

The third annual Living Waters Family Camp in Canada will be held July 9-12 with the theme, *Discriminate Charity*.

The Rev. Brad Heinrichs, camp pastor, says: “Every good church camp has the Lord at the center of it, and the opportunity to learn about Him from His Word and to worship Him with thankful praise.

“The other thing that makes a great church camp is the campers themselves. So come with a great attitude, look for opportunities to be charitable to one another, make new friends, and deepen old friendships.”

Focusing on the theme he said, “We will discuss many interesting facets of this concept and ask some key questions. For instance, ‘judge not’ – what does this really mean? Who are my neighbors and what is my responsibility toward them? What roles do mercy and forgiveness play?”

For information contact: pastor@carmelnewchurch.org.

LAUREL CAMP

Laurel Family Camp is celebrating its 47th year as a family-friendly spiritual retreat. Activities for all ages make it ideal for young families, teens and adults alike. Please join us for a week of fellowship, worship and song in the lovely Appalachian Mountains.

Registration is open for the week of July 19 – 25. We expect a full camp, and so advise you to register early. This year’s theme will be about Balance.

Register at www.laurelcamp.org, or email the registrar, Cyd Knoble, at Cyd@nobledolls.com. Questions? Call her at 267-718-5465.

Life Lines

LOVE WINS

Within one dark week at the end of March the Bryn Athyn community was rocked by two sudden, shocking tragedies that took the lives of a young father with three small children, and a young couple, also leaving three children. Just days before, a fire in town destroyed an apartment added onto a home, disrupting another family's life.

In all three cases the response within the community and the Bryn Athyn Church School was instantaneous and overwhelming love and support.

Fortunately, as we deal with tragedy and evil in our world and our communities, this instinct to respond with love is pervasive. We saw it nationwide and worldwide in the wake of the 9/11 terrorism. For every catastrophe that strikes nations, communities and individual families, the instant outpouring of love offers the calm assurance of the Lord's presence, saying especially in the darkest times: "I am with you always." His love and providence already are bending what was against His will toward good. Love will triumph.

Many people in the Bryn Athyn congregation, like so many others in the Church, had just participated in the Journey Campaign: *What Would Love Do?* This is what love does.

The Two Great Commandments tell us simply to love God and love our neighbor. This is the essence of living our faith. Don't just mouth words in prayer but put love into action. That is what lifted and united the Bryn Athyn community in its time of need: love in action.

Helen Keller once said: "No matter from what angle Jesus started, He came back to this fact, that He entrusted the reconstruction of the world, not to wealth or caste or power or learning, but to the better instincts of the human race – to the nobler ideas and sentiments of people – to love, which is the mover of the will and the dynamic force of action. He turned His words every conceivable way and did every possible work to convince doubters that love – good or evil – is the life of their life, the fuel of their thoughts, the breath of their nostrils, their heaven or their destruction. There was no exception or modification whatever in His holy, awesome, supreme Gospel of Love."

Tragedy, evil and misfortune can erupt anywhere, any time, but the Lord's

promise is constant: “I will be with you always.” He never stops loving us and leading us. And as a lot of hurting people in Bryn Athyn discovered through their tears, as they hugged and helped each other in the face of darkness, love always wins. Always.

(BMH)

THE NAME OF GOD

I read an online news report about an unusually awful crime recently which included comments from readers, one of whom wrote: “What in the name of God is wrong with the world?” It is a cry from the heart that many thousands of people must feel every day as they see a world spinning out of control.

The “name of God” stands for the various qualities by which the Lord is known, qualities whose nature is described by truths. The name of God is Truth.

The truths which the Lord has revealed in His Word tell us what God is: Love itself, Life itself, Humanity itself, Order itself, Innocence itself, Peace itself . . . and so on. All these truths in the complex constitute His Word, in which He is present with us. They are His name, by which He is known to us.

The truths of the Word also tell us how we should *respond* to His name; how we should live in order to receive love, life and humanity from Him. “I am the way, the truth and the life,” He said. (*John 14:6*)

What’s wrong with the world is that it has rejected the name of God. It has rejected the Word. It has turned away from the Truth, and the path of life it reveals, and has chosen spiritual darkness over the light.

If the world is ever to come into the light and peace of heaven, it must stop mocking and profaning holy things, and thus opening the door to the sphere of hell which inspires evil madness and violence. It must stop taking the Lord’s name in vain and instead hallow it. Then His kingdom will come, on earth as it is in heaven. (See *Arcana Coelestia 2009.2*)

(WEO)

THE INEFFABLE VERSUS THE UNSPEAKABLE

Our world is a middle-ground between heaven above and hell below. The things in heaven above (many of them at least) are so pure and beautiful they can hardly be put into words. This was the challenge Swedenborg had to deal with, how to describe the indescribably sublime. Even though He had Divine help, sometimes there simply were no words. All he could say regarding some of the wonders he saw was that they were “ineffable” – beyond words. (The word “ineffable” appears more than 100 times in the Writings.)

As for the things in hell, it was necessary for him to describe them, as

a warning to us, and so we could identify their presence in ourselves, and because the goodness and sanity of heaven is made especially apparent by contrast with its opposites.

But in themselves these hellish things are nothing. They are simply the opposite of heavenly qualities, and can be generally understood that way. Cold is the absence of heat, darkness is the absence of light, death is the absence of life. A shadow has no existence apart from light.

Love and wisdom are real; hatred and insanity result from a willful turning away and denial of what is real, and the delusions this produces. Heaven is something, hell exists only as a rejection and perversion of heaven.

But just as we are affected by cold and dark and death, the *effects* of hell's influence on our lives are real enough. It is better not to dwell on them, though, or even mention them any more than necessary. Let them remain unspeakable. It is better to concentrate our thoughts on the things of heaven, some of which are too beautiful for words.

“Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.” (*Philippians* 4:8)

(WEO)

LEST WE FORGET

Philip Yancey, prolific Christian writer of such popular books as *What's So Amazing About Grace?*, *Where is God When It Hurts?*, and *Discovering God*, also wrote, *Soul Survivor – How Thirteen Unlikely Mentors Helped My Faith Survive the Church*. Too bad Swedenborg wasn't one of Yancey's mentors; he may not have needed the others.

One of those mentors was a favorite author of mine, Annie Dillard, whose transcendent and beautifully written *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* won the Pulitzer Prize in 1974. (I had written to her then because so many of her themes seemed congruent with Swedenborg. She wrote a kind note back saying that she had been a religion major at the University of Pittsburgh and was well acquainted with Swedenborg.)

She told Yancey in an interview: “I have no problem with miracles. I'm a long way from agnosticism, and no longer even remember how a lot of things that used to be problems for me were. But that isn't the question I struggle with. To me, the real question is: How in the world can we *remember* God? I like that part of the Bible that lists kings as good or bad. Suddenly there comes this one, King Josiah, who orders the temple to be cleaned up and inadvertently discovers the law. This happens after generations of rulers and

after the Israelites followed God through the Exodus.

“Somehow they had forgotten the whole thing, every piece of it. A whole nation simply forgot God. That famous prayer, ‘I will in the course of this day forget thee; forget thou not Me,’ is sometimes thought of as a warm Christian joke. I don’t think it is so warm. I think that is a lot to ask.”

Yancey adds: “As a member of post-modern academia, she realizes that, with a worldview light-years away from (King Josiah), a whole civilization is in danger of forgetting God.”

Before Josiah we have countless examples of the Children of Israel being warned to “remember the law,” then constantly backsliding – doubting Moses and God, even imploring Aaron to build them a golden calf to worship while Moses was receiving the Ten Commandments for them. We may wonder: what was the matter with them? – until we remember that all of the Word is about our own lives and is speaking to us.

The world is filled with warnings enough about forgetting God – from wanton terrorism to our increasingly decadent culture. It is worth recalling the words of Russian literary giant Alexander Solzhenitsyn when he was awarded the Templeton Prize in Philadelphia in 1983:

“Over half a century ago, while I was still a child, I recall hearing a number of older people offer the following explanation for the great disasters that had befallen Russia: ‘Men have forgotten God; that’s why all this has happened.’

“Since then I have spent well-nigh 50 years working on the history of our revolution; in the process I have read hundreds of books, collected hundreds of personal testimonies, and have already contributed eight volumes of my own toward the effort of clearing away the rubble left by the upheaval.

“But if I were asked today to formulate as concisely as possible the main cause of the ruinous revolution that swallowed up some 60 million of our people, I could not put it more accurately than to repeat: ‘Men have forgotten God; that is why all this has happened.’”

(BMH)

WHAT ARE THE STAKES?

So how do we reach out to those in danger of “forgetting God”? How do we get – and hold – their attention?

The example of the Lord when He was on earth is compelling. He was drawn to the sick and the sinners, because they needed Him the most and that is where His love could heal. When the scribes and Pharisees challenged His disciples because He ate with publicans and sinners, Jesus said to them: “They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they who are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” (*Mark 2:17*)

In a chapter about another of his mentors – renowned preacher and writer Frederick Buechner – Philip Yancey says: “People of faith stumble across God everywhere: in nature, in the Bible, in daily acts of Providence. God seems amply evident. But the secular mind sees no such evidence, and wonders how it is even possible to find God in the maze of competing claims. Unless we truly understand that viewpoint, *and speak in terms a faithless person can understand*, our words will have the quaint and useless ring of a foreign language.”

It is always easy – perhaps too easy – to preach to the choir. The challenge is to “speak in terms a faithless person can understand,” and to stir a longing within them.

Yancey frames the challenge in this quote from one of Buechner’s books:

“In the front pews the old ladies turn up their hearing aids, and a young lady slips her six-year-old a Lifesaver and a Magic Marker. A college sophomore home for vacation, who is there because he was dragged there, slumps forward with his chin in his hand. The vice president of a bank who twice that week had seriously contemplated suicide places his hymnal in the rack. The pregnant girl feels the life stir inside her. A high school math teacher, who for 20 years has managed to keep his homosexuality a secret for the most part even from himself, creases his order of service down the center with his thumbnail and tucks it under his knee. The preacher pulls the little cord that turns on the lectern light and deals out his note cards like a riverboat gambler. The stakes have never been higher.”

(BMH)

MARRIAGE IN A COSMIC CONTEXT

The wonderful thing about the view of marriage we have in the Heavenly Doctrine is how all-inclusive it is. It extends from its purest Divine and heavenly origins to its representations throughout the world of nature, and even its infernal distortions. “There is a universal sphere of marriage which proceeds from the Lord, pervading the universe from first to last, and so from angels all the way down to worms.” (*Conjugal Love* 92; 222)

Needless to say (or is it, in this age in which humans are assumed by many to be just a species of animal?), the form in which this universal sphere of marriage is embodied in angels and worms is not the same, not equal, but of a very different quality. The inclination to marriage affects everyone and everything, but it takes on many different forms.

The conjugal atmosphere that flows into the universe is, in its origin, Divine. As it descends, it becomes, with angels in heaven, celestial and spiritual; with people, natural; with beasts and birds, animal; with worms, merely carnal; and in the case of plant forms, mechanical. In addition, in individual recipients it is also modified according to their particular forms. (*Conjugal Love* 225)

The different ways in which males and females receive the good and truth emanating from the Lord is the source of the attraction between the sexes. In animals the attraction is only natural; in humans it is both natural and spiritual.

And because of the angelic potential that humans possess, we are also capable of behavior which is worse than animals are capable of, because they act according to instinct alone, not being endowed with free will and reason.

Animals are amoral; we are either moral or immoral. They mate, but are not capable of marrying in the way humans are. Their instinct to mate comes from the Divine, but a pair of animals do not know of God's presence with them as the deepest source of the bond between them, as a human husband and wife can. Humans can know it, reflect on it, and cultivate it.

The spiritual love of marriage is said to lie within the general physical attraction between the sexes "like a gem in its matrix." (*Conjugal Love* 97) Our goal, as individual human beings and as a society, should be to find that hidden treasure of spiritual love, cherish it, hold it close and protect it. "For the conjugal union of one man with one wife is the precious jewel of human life and the repository of Christian religion." (*Ibid.* 457)

(WEO)

WHICH COMES FIRST?

Which of those things (referred to in *Conjugal Love* 457) – the conjugal union of one man with one wife, or the Christian religion – is primary? It's like asking which came first, the chicken or the egg? They are inseparable. Neither can exist, truly, in a society in which the other is absent.

For the human inclination towards marriage goes hand in hand with religion at every step. Every little step and every stride away from religion or towards religion is also a step or stride away from or towards the conjugal inclination that is peculiar and proper to a Christian person. (*Ibid.*)

(WEO)

'BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY'

The number I quoted above about the sphere of conjugal love that pervades all creation goes on to say, "it is also the sphere of reproduction and fruitfulness, and this is the same as the Divine Providence for the preservation of the universe by successive generations." (*Conjugal Love* 92)

For various reasons it isn't always possible, but as a general rule the bearing of children is the Divinely intended natural result of marriage. Here is the reason why, in the form of a series of questions and answers:

Why did the Lord create the human race in the first place? (So there could be a heaven from the human race.)

Why does He want there to be a heaven? (Because God is love, and love desires to make others happy.)

And why did He make them male and female? (For the express purpose of marriage, because it is in marriage that people can experience heaven's highest love and joy, conjugal love.)

And what did He tell the first couple? ("Be fruitful and multiply.")

Why did He tell them that? (Because marriage originates in the Divine marriage of Love and Wisdom that makes heaven and fills it with such happiness; and that marriage of love and wisdom seeks to bring forth the third element of Divine life: use. The natural use, or "fruit," of marriage in this world is the birth of children.)

This is why marriage was ordained by God, and is holy, and why its joys surpass all others – because its use is the highest of all uses, the propagation of the human race, which adds to the population of heaven.

(WEO)

V AS IN VALOR

In her review of Naomi Gladish Smith's ode to her father, *V as in Victor*, (page 286), Vera Glenn says this book "will resonate with those people whose families lived through many of the same experiences as Victor Gladish and his family." Well, it resonates with me.

Naomi tells the story of her father, a minister in Colchester, England, who in 1940 is forced by the looming threat of World War II to flee to America with his wife and five children. It is a sad story of a man unable to pursue his dream as a New Church minister, but who emerged a "victor" anyway.

Mr. Gladish succeeded my father, the Rev. W. Cairns Henderson, who spent one year in England after his ordination in the mid-'30s, before he and my mother were called to Australia.

Part of my Dad's job in England was serving an "open road" ministry on a motorcycle – and we siblings have always had a hard time imagining our father on a motorcycle! How did he keep his pipe lit? Tragically, it was a bad fall from that motorcycle that may have limited Victor's usefulness as a pastor.

But what really resonates for me from this tale is the way Victor and his wife persevered in the face of hardship and disappointment, without infecting their children with bitterness, sorrow or complaint.

My parents were in Australia for 11 years and never left until the war was over. They lived with the tension and hardship of war and rationing, on a meager salary with few resources. They were a world away from family – my father's in Scotland, my mother's in Sweden. If Dad needed to write to Bishop de Charms in Bryn Athyn, it was six weeks before he could expect an answer.

Letters to Europe took much longer. Imagine that in this age of instant e-mail.

No doubt we were poor but we never felt deprived or “underprivileged.” My memory is of a wonderful, happy childhood. I don’t know how our parents did it. But they did not act like victims or feel sorry for themselves, so we didn’t either.

Vas in Victor makes me grateful all over again for the Victor and Lucy Gladishes, the Cairns and Eva Hendersons, of the world. They, too, were the Greatest Generation.

(BMH)

DOCTRINE IS OUR POLICY

It has been suggested to the Board of Directors of the General Church that ordination is a matter of policy, not doctrine. But the General Church was founded upon the principle that all its policies, as far as possible, should be determined by doctrine. This is what has distinguished the General Church from the beginning, and has made it the most vital of New Church organizations on earth.

It is true that the doctrines don’t spell out every little detail of our organization, such as whether ministers should wear robes (although even these relatively unessential practices reflect an effort to incorporate principles derived from doctrine). But the question at hand is ordination – not a minor issue to be lumped in with other smaller matters. And on this the doctrines give us an abundance of guidance: namely, the teachings regarding the use of the priesthood, and those that explain the difference between men and women and their uses.

In the General Church, policy and doctrine are not competing interests, but make a one. To abandon the main principle upon which the General Church was founded and structured would mark the end of this church as a spiritual entity, and we would be left with just a soulless, hollow shell of the church it once was.

(WEO)

ALLEGIANCE TO DOCTRINE

The Church’s allegiance to doctrine is more than just *one* of its strong points, it is the Church’s very reason for being. This is because the doctrine is from the Lord and is the Lord with us in His Second Coming. Furthermore, the doctrine of the New Church is a doctrine of life, and all the special uses of the Church stem from its doctrine.

The Heavenly Doctrine was revealed by the Lord as the foundation upon which the New Church on earth would be built. Saying it is anything less than

that is like saying America's allegiance to the ideal of freedom is "one of its strong points," when in fact it is the very soul of the nation.

The ideal the General Church was established to represent, and has always striven toward, is to be governed by the Lord, which means being governed by the truths which He has revealed. That ideal is not just *a* strong point, but its strongest point. If it falls, the whole structure will fall with it.

(WEO)

SHOULD WE EVEN HAVE AN ORGANIZED CHURCH?

The fact is, we do have one. If we accept the premise that the organization itself is not sanctioned by the Writings, then of course what the Writings have to say about any organizational issues that arise is irrelevant. I assume, however, from the fact that the Writings have so much to say about how churches are formed, and how vital the church is to life on earth, and what their use is, and what the use of the priesthood is, and so on . . . that an organized New Church body (or bodies) is implied. And that the Writings are meant to be our guide in organizing it.

Every revelation of the Word has been for the sake of forming a church based on that revelation. If not to form a church – in individuals and as an association of people united in a common purpose – what *is* the Heavenly Doctrine for?

(WEO)

A VOICE FROM THE PAST – FOR THE FUTURE

One of the treasures of the annals of the Church and the Academy is a book, *A Perspective on New Church Education*, by the late E. Bruce Glenn, lovingly edited by his wife, Vera. This is a collection of papers and addresses given over a brilliant, dedicated 46-year career at the Academy of the New Church Secondary Schools and College. Topics range from the distinctiveness of New Church education to the future of the Academy College – now Bryn Athyn College of the New Church.

Many of these noble essays were presented to joint faculty sessions and it is a shame that this practice has largely been lost. Bruce Glenn, and other educational giants of his time, were passionate about framing issues that encouraged teachers and supporters to think about the what and why of New Church education, to appreciate its vital role in the world, and to dare to envision together the hopes and challenges of the future.

He was Dean of the College at an exciting time when it moved to its own campus in Pendleton Hall in 1968 and began to deal with questions of growth and focus that still are at the heart of an expanding vision. In one particularly

prescient address to the Glenview Chapter of Theta Alpha in 1968 – which was published in the Literary Number of the 1969 *Academy Journal* (another lost treasure) and included in this book of his essays – he spoke about *The Academy College: The Choices Ahead*.

In sharing “some thoughts and hopes and concerns that I have as Dean of the College of the Academy for its future,” he said: “I think everyone in the General Church needs to be concerned about the College because of what it means to the General Church.” This was almost 50 years ago but his words still speak to both our hopes and concerns for the College. Consider just this excerpt:

“I do not believe that the Academy College is the best college in this country, but I do believe it is the most important. As the most important, it behooves us to make it the best that we can. It is very easy to see why it is not the best. We have limitations of size, of viewpoints, we have problems of many kinds; and yet I also believe truly that it is the most important – not just for the Church – it’s obviously the most important for the Church because it’s the only one. But I believe that it is the most important college in the country for the world. If Harvard, or the University of Chicago, or any other college in this country failed, there would be others to take its place. But if the Academy College were to fail, there would be nothing in the foreseeable future to replace it.”

(BMH)

LET’S GET REAL

The supreme, and really *only*, Reality is the Divine Human of the Lord. It encompasses all that is, all that has any actual existence, spiritual and natural. Everything in creation is more or less real and substantial depending upon the degree to which it participates in Reality Itself.

Our own finite humanity is received from the Lord’s infinite Divine Human. Our humanity at birth consists in the fact that we have a potential which no other animal has for becoming more human throughout our lives. And our lives extend to eternity; the process of becoming fully human is not cut short in the case of those who die as infants, but continues in heaven.

The more we learn about the Lord from His Word, and are conjoined with the Lord by a life according to His Word, the more truly human we can become; and the more real we can become. This is what life is all about.

“We are because God *is*.” (*Divine Providence* 46)

(WEO)

WITHOUT A PRAYER?

A poll conducted since 1972 in the United States shows the number of Americans attending church regularly, affiliating with a particular faith, or even describing themselves as religious has fallen to all-time lows. This trend is even more accelerated throughout Europe and much of the developed world.

The General Church seems to be holding its own, but just barely. Growth is incremental among young people, and the “graying” of congregations casts a pall over the future of the Church.

The brighter side of the general decline is that the same poll finds increasing numbers call themselves spiritual and pray regularly, even if they are not attending or affiliating with a church. No doubt some of our own young people would identify with this, and they may seek more involvement as they begin to raise their own families.

But it is obvious that the survival of any church is only as strong as the next generation. The growth of the New Church is specifically to be in the minds and hearts of people, but we still need an organized church to serve people’s needs – and especially to provide for New Church education.

So, are we up to the challenge of assuring the sustainability of the Church by making it relevant, accessible and meaningful in the lives of our young people? Let us pray.

(BMH)



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