

NEW CHURCH *Life*

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

MARCH/APRIL 2017

Finding Humanity in Judas Iscariot

The Rev. Christopher Barber writes extensively about Judas, seeking to understand him as a three-dimensional human being rather than an icon of villainy, which offers a new lens on our own redemption. (Page 103) (This is the Judas window in the Bryn Athyn Cathedral.)



Seeking Virtue in Medieval Glencairn

One of the young Lords and Ladies dedicating herself to Virtue during the Medieval Camp at Glencairn Museum. Brian Henderson describes the many special programs and collections at the museum during the Boynton Beach Retreat. (Page 136.)

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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Palm Sunday - Between the Celebrations ~ Sermon

What Easter Really Means to Us ~ Address

The Easter Story ~ Class

The Stones Would Immediately Cry Out ~ Sermon

Responding to the Risen Lord ~ Sermon

~

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In This Issue

Sadly, suicide, mental illness, grief and tragedy are insistent issues – throughout our society and in the Church. Within these pages are an editorial, two sermons, an article and several Life Line items dealing with these topics. We encourage a useful and doctrinally based discussion among the clergy and the laity.

In a Palm Sunday sermon – “The Stones Would Immediately Cry Out” – the Rev. Eric H. Carswell says: “Palm Sunday represents a quality that the Lord wants in our lives in all we care about, think, speak or do. It represents our conscious choice to make a path for the Lord to come not just into our own hearts and minds but that His presence and His blessings may be ever more present through our choices.” (Page 85)

In a doctrinal presentation the Rev. Michael D. Gladish looks at “What the Lord Actually Accomplished by His Incarnation” – for us and for Himself. “When the Lord took on His own natural human body and mind among the Jews,” he writes, “He Himself was able to bridge the gap between God and the world. He Himself was able to restore the circuit that was almost broken for all life on earth.” And He still does this for us: “He subjugates or controls the hells for us. We don’t. We can’t. But He did and He can – every day.” (Page 91)

How well do we really know Judas Iscariot, the disciple who betrayed Jesus? The Rev. Christopher A. Barber, in a comprehensive study, says that seeing Judas as a three-dimensional character offers us a new lens on redemption – his own and ours. He cites *The Word Explained* 3158 as a reason for us “to reconsider everything we know about Judas. If there is hope for Judas, then there is hope for us.” (Page 103)

The Rev. David C. Roth offers a sermon “In Support of Mental and Spiritual Health,” which came in response to a recent suicide in the Church. He was greatly saddened by this and “left with the realization that we need to turn up the light [on mental health issues]. To turn it up very brightly. To turn it up so brightly that hell has nowhere to hide.” (Page 118)

Mr. Roth also wrote a six-step message on “Coping With Grief” for his society newsletter in the Boulder (Colorado) New Church which offers helpful strategies in dealing with grief for anyone who has lost a loved one. (Page 129)

Also relating to mental health, the Rev. Geoffrey H. Howard offers a sermon on “The Non-Appropriation of Evil.” It begins with the admonition from Jesus that “not what goes into the mouth defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a person.” Our thoughts come from the spiritual world but we are only responsible for those we take into our lives. (Page 130)

Another successful Boynton Beach Retreat (page 136) featured presentations by:

- Brian Henderson, Director of the Glencairn Museum, on its activities and outreach as a unique religious museum
- Dr. Soni Werner, recently retired professor of psychology at Bryn Athyn College, on “Dark and Light: Psychological and Swedenborgian Perspectives on Human Behavior”
- The Rev. Glenn (Mac) Frazier on lessons learned from the attempt to plant a church in Austin, Texas – what works and doesn’t about church growth

The banquet address was presented by The Rev. Alan M. Cowley, new pastor in Boynton Beach, on “The Great Minister-Congregation Compromise.”

Naomi Scott Reid loves the familiar hymn, “Lead us and guide us, Lord, in paths of peace.” She writes a loving tribute to her late father for teaching his family to trust in the Lord and pray to Him that He might truly lead and guide us into peace. (Page 152)

Church News (page 155) includes:

- Announcement of the Rt. Rev. Brian W. Keith’s planned retirement as Executive Bishop in 2019 and the process for naming a replacement
- A State of the College report from Bryn Athyn College President Brian Blair and others
- How Swedenborg is becoming known and valued on another college campus
- Appointment of the Rev. Dr. Thane P. Glenn as the new Chief Academic Officer and Academic Dean at Bryn Athyn College
- Questions and answers about the state of the Church by the Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr. at the Boynton Beach Retreat
- A report on another fun and successful summer camp in Australia – with photos
- General Church Outreach producing videos for a “Faithful Friday” segment on the Dr. Oz TV show
- A report on a General Church Education summit
- Summer camps in the Academy

Editorials

THE ROOTS OF EASTER

The oft-repeated observation that Easter and Christmas have roots in ancient pagan traditions may be true enough, as far as it goes. But that partial truth, or conjecture, can easily be turned into a falsity if it is misconstrued as evidence that the miracles memorialized in these Christian holidays are only reformulated “myths.”

And the natural desire to appear knowledgeable and sophisticated increases the possibility of such a misinterpretation.

To say the story of Easter has its roots in pagan myth is like saying the New Testament has its roots in the Old Testament. Well, yes, but the far more important point is that the truth of the Gospels is a new, fuller revelation of the same *eternal* truth contained in the Old Testament (in a more heavily veiled form).

Every church has roots in the previous one, but all of them have their *taproot* in heaven.

The story of the Lord’s life in the Gospels, including His resurrection, is the “original,” and the myths that preceded it – even though they came beforehand in time – are the imitations. They are allegorical, prophetic *previews* of the Divine Truth personified by the Lord Jesus Christ, “the Word made flesh.” Whatever the order of their appearance in human history, all events in this world of time are but shadows of realities in the eternal world of heaven.

Imagine that as you are walking along you see the shadow of a tree on the ground ahead of you even though the tree itself is out of sight around the side of a hill or the edge of a building. Then when you get to where you can see around the corner you see the tree. You saw the shadow first, but the tree was prior to it; without the tree there would have been no shadow.

In a similar way, the Lord’s life on earth was *foreshadowed* by the gods and heroes of mythology, as well as Old Testament figures such as Joseph, who was drawn out of a pit, and Jonah, who spent three days and nights in the fish’s belly. (See *Matthew 12:40*) As the Lord said: “Before Abraham was, I AM.” (*John 8:58*)

Nature itself is a theater in which spiritual realities are represented. Long before the Lord was born, caterpillars were emerging as butterflies from the

cocoons in which they were “entombed,” but their resurrection was in imitation of His, not the other way around. The Lord is the Archetype of all archetypes, and His Resurrection is re-enacted in all resurrections.

The Christian celebration of the Lord’s Resurrection was prefigured in pagan rites celebrating the spring equinox because the order of nature itself, which inspired the pagans, represents the spiritual order of human life established by nature’s Divinely Human Creator. Resurrection is an integral part of that order.

Our Easter story, therefore, is not just an embellishment or overlay tacked onto myths, but completes those ancient stories, which are variations on themes impressed upon the human mind by revelation, by its echoes in myth and fable, and also by the forms and patterns of the natural world because it comes from and corresponds to the spiritual world.

The theme of death and resurrection pervades the cosmos. It is repeated in the death and birth of stars, the phases of the moon, the ebb and flow of the tide, the wearing down and building up of land.

The leafing out of the trees in the springtime is an emblem of resurrection, as is every green shoot that arises from a seed. The Lord, in preparing His disciples for His death, said: “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.” (*John 12:23-25*)

Resurrection is a recurring motif in human history also. When a civilization declines and falls, the spiritual ideals and principles that gave it life may be revived in a new civilization.

The creation story in *Genesis* – a Divine allegory of a person’s spiritual creation or regeneration – progresses through alternating states of “evening” and “morning.” As each day wears on we labor to bring whatever love and enlightenment we have gained into the uses of life, spiritual and natural.

In the process we undergo temptation and lapse into an evening state again, but each step in overcoming evil and falsity is followed by a new day, a new stage in the renewal of spiritual life with us; a step closer to the Lord, “the Dayspring from on high.”

Regeneration takes us through a lifelong series of mini-deaths and mini-resurrections (as we might call them). And so, little by little, the old, natural *proprium* dies and is put off, and a new, heavenly *proprium* is raised up. “Whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.” (*Matthew 16:25*)

As we look back over the course of our lives, all the states that we’ve been through, good and bad, happy and sad, can we not see that the Lord has been with us continually, little by little raising us up into new life? “He rises daily, indeed every single moment, in the minds of regenerate persons.” (*Arcana Coelestia 2405.8*)

The miracle of Easter, then, is not just the story of something that

happened a long time ago in a distant place, but an eternal reality that we are participating in. Each resurrection of spiritual life we experience is really the Lord's resurrection in us. For as He said: "I am the resurrection and the life." "Because I live, you will live also." (*John 11:25; 14:19*)

The roots of Easter are in heaven – and heaven is "within you." (*Luke 17:21*)

(WEO)

THE CRY OF SUICIDE

Suicide is always tragic, on so many levels, and no one is immune. The General Church has been devastated with several people taking their lives in recent years, leaving family and friends, communities and congregations reeling with searing pain, crushing grief and haunting questions. No matter how much time passes, the pain, the grief and the questions don't go away. They are forever acute and insistent.

There is something in suicide that calls out to us in anguish. We wish we could have done something to prevent it. We want to respond to the cry so that we might be able to help prevent another.

We need to learn all that we can – from the clergy and doctrinal insights, from mental health professionals, and from each other.

We recommend that anyone eager to heed the call read – or re-read – the article, "Reflections on Suicide" by the Rev. John L. Odhner in the July/August 2015 issue of *New Church Life*. This is a comprehensive and compassionate study, brimming with the Lord's mercy and the comfort of His teachings.

"Suicide," he says, "can leave us feeling that life is extremely confusing, complex and painful. It will often seem to make absolutely no sense at all. The teachings [in the Writings] will not take away all the pain, but they may bring a little clarity and comfort to people who have been faced with suicide."

Mr. Odhner says clearly that "the act of suicide is always wrong and painful," but cautions that we should never judge those who have taken their own lives. We just cannot know what pushes someone over the edge. But he offers a calming perspective from the Writings, under such headings as:

- What should we think about suicide?
- Suicide does not end our problem
- Are people punished after death for suicide?
- Suicide permitted to protect a person's soul

(You can find Mr. Odhner's article online at www.newchurchlife.org; click on "Read Recent Issues," and look for July/August 2015. There have been many others articles and commentaries on suicide in the pages of *New Church Life* over the years, which may be searched through www.heavenlydoctrines.org.

In this issue we also offer sermons by the Rev. David C. Roth (*In Support of Mental and Spiritual Health*) and the Rev. Geoffrey H. Howard (*The Non-Appropriation of Evil*), plus several Life Line items. We hope all of these will contribute to increased personal education and sensitivity, as well as to a larger discussion in these pages, and we invite response.)

The great tragedy of suicide is that the pain and the lingering questions never go away. But neither do the Lord's love and mercy.

As Mr. Odhner concluded his reflections: "The Lord is infinitely loving and merciful, both to those who feel that love and to those who feel isolated from it. All the evil that the Lord permits, and all the blessings He provides, come from that infinite mercy which is constantly seeking to lead each one of us to heaven as far as we are willing to go, each on the unique path that is best for us."

(BMH)

HISTORY AND DIVINE PROVIDENCE

We know that the Lord's providence operates in every aspect of our lives, with ripples extending to eternity. We know that the operation of providence should never be evident to us but that we should always know that it is there, working in everyone's lives and bending them toward good. And just as this is true for the "least particulars" of our lives it is also true for the grand events that shape history.

Here, too, we cannot see the operation of Divine providence in the day-to-day affairs of nations, but in retrospect – through the lens of history – we may see indications of how the Lord is working through often cataclysmic events and bending outcomes toward good as He looks to what is infinite and eternal in this world.

One of the great tests of faith was the Holocaust in World War II, which left believers and non-believers alike to wonder: how could a loving God allow such horror for six million innocent souls? But we know that the Lord permits what is against His will – even such unspeakable evil – for the sake of human freedom. And we know that His love and providence are not in events themselves but in the aftermath, where evil can be bent toward good. Viktor Frankl, a Holocaust survivor, tells in his classic book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, how he witnessed God's love and leading – His providence – even amid the horror of Auschwitz.

Among some of the more dramatic events in history that seem to indicate the workings of providence was a devastating earthquake in Lisbon on November 1, 1755. It is considered one of the most powerful earthquakes of all time, claiming the lives of more than 60,000 people – in Lisbon from the

earthquake itself and as far away as the coast of North Africa from a resulting giant tsunami wave. The tremors set church bells tolling all over Europe.

Lisbon then was the center of the Catholic Church – not Rome – and the earthquake struck on All Saints Day when churches were filled. Many worshippers died in their pews, setting off speculation that this was God’s judgment on the Catholic Church. Others were convinced that God simply was not present. French philosopher Voltaire wrote his withering satirical novel *Candide*, mocking optimists who still found comfort in God.

But an unmistakable chain of events began leading to good outcomes – seen by many as the hand of providence. Strict orthodoxy began giving way to open minds and freedom of speech. New ideas were no longer scorned but welcomed. There was an evangelic revival in England and missionary efforts spread throughout the world. The arc of history – and religion – was “bent” in a positive direction.

There was also an event in 1688 – coincidentally the year of Swedenborg’s birth – when the Spanish Armada was kept from invading and overrunning England by what was called a “Protestant Wind.” It, too, was seen as a sign of divine intervention – or providence. Indeed, a commemorative medal was struck in England with the inscription: “He blew His winds, and they were scattered.”

Much of the history of the United States is often framed in the context of providence. The term “American exceptionalism” is often misused and misunderstood. It does not imply that America is exceptional in the sense of “better than.” Indeed, every nation and every person is loved and led by the Lord. But “American exceptionalism” is rooted in the declaration that people’s rights flow from God, not government – and that government of “we the people” is the exception to all that has gone before.

Today’s leaders are careful not to sound “too religious,” but the Founding Fathers were outspoken in their faith in God and providence. Michael Medved, a nationally syndicated talk show host, has a new book out called unabashedly: *The American Miracle – Divine Providence in the Rise of the Republic*.

Bill Bennett, former U.S. Secretary of Education and author of such books as *America: The Last Best Hope* offers this conviction: “Michael Medved chronicles in intriguing detail how America’s unlikely founding and enduring success can’t be explained by luck or coincidence but only one thing: divine providence. After reading this book, even the toughest skeptics will be hard pressed not to believe that God had a role in America’s fortune.”

Benjamin Franklin, one of the more eminent of the Founding Fathers, famously said to the Constitutional Convention in 1787 in Philadelphia: “I have lived, Sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth – that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow

cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid? We have been assured, Sir, in the sacred writings, that ‘except the Lord build the House they labor in vain that build it.’ I firmly believe this; and I also believe that without His concurring aid we shall succeed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel.”

In the 230 years since – and throughout all of history – the Lord’s providence has watched over “the affairs of men” in all nations. We have witnessed much horror and evil in those times – and much recovery and hope. America and the world still are anxious places but the Lord and His providence always offer the calming antidote: “Peace has within it confidence in the Lord, that He directs all things, and provides all things, and leads to an end that is good.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 8455)

(BMH)

RELIGIOUS FEELINGS: HOLY FEAR AND UNWORTHINESS

We began this series in the January/February issue on the feelings of awe and mystery that a sense of the Lord’s presence brings. This was expressed by Jacob when he awoke from his dream, saying: “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not! And he was afraid and said: How fearful is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!” (*Genesis* 28:16,17)

Jacob had stolen his brother Esau’s birthright, and was afraid that God was now going to punish him. But the better part of his nature caused him also to feel “holy fear” – which is a fear, not just of being punished for our sins, but of sinning itself.

Holy fear is joined to “the kind of love young children feel towards parents, that parents feel towards young children, that married couples have for each other.” It causes them to “fear doing whatever is displeasing, thus whatever injures love in any way.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 8925)

When we realize and are moved by how greatly the Lord has loved us, and thus love Him in return, then we fear doing anything that would offend Him or damage our relationship with Him; anything contrary to His Word. This is holy fear. We feel it because we are aware of how unworthy we are of the patience, loving-kindness and tender mercies He has shown toward us.

A feeling of unworthiness is a recurring theme in Scripture. Jacob expressed it later in the story of his life when he said: “I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which You have shown unto Your servant.” (*Genesis* 32:10)

Moses felt it when he encountered Jehovah at the burning bush and exclaimed: “Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?” (*Exodus* 3:11; see also 6:12)

When Isaiah was called by the Lord to be His prophet he also lamented his unworthiness, crying: “Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.” (*Isaiah 6:5*)

John the Baptist is quoted in all four Gospels as confessing his unworthiness even to bend down and loosen the Lord’s sandal strap. (*John 1:27*)

In the *Book of Revelation*, when the Lord appeared to the Apostle John in the midst of the seven golden lampstands, John was overcome by holy fear and a sense of his own unworthiness. He perceived that nothing within him – nothing living and good – was his own, but that his very life was from the Lord alone, and “fell at His feet as if dead.” (*Revelation 1:17*)

Swedenborg, also, when he was called to serve the Lord as the instrument of the new revelation, had an acute sense of his unworthiness, and cried for the Lord’s mercy. “I acknowledged that I was impure from head to foot! . . . I found myself unworthy of all the grace which God deigned to show me, because with me the love of self and the pride were so deeply rooted.” He also noted that “it is not enough to call oneself unworthy, for this may be done while yet the heart is far from it, and it may be pretense, but to perceive that one is such, this is of the grace of the Spirit.” (*Journal of Dreams n. 85, 272, 74*)

To *perceive* that we are unworthy is more than an intellectual acknowledgment, sincere as it may be, but implies a deep *feeling* of our unworthiness. It is not a happy feeling, but it is a hopeful sign because it prepares the way for genuine, whole-hearted worship of the Lord -- and that is the most exalted and joyful of feelings. (See *Apocalypse Revealed 275*)

How can we see and be affected by the beauty and perfection of the Lord, without at the same time seeing and feeling what flawed and wretched creatures we are? “Unprofitable servants.” The same light of truth that reveals how small and shabby we are, also opens our eyes to the infinite goodness and beauty of the Lord, and how gracious and merciful He has been toward us – and that is a joyful thing to contemplate.

(WEO)

Letters To The Editors

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

Bridging the Gaps

To the Editors:

This is in response to the letter from Barrie Ridgway in the November/December 2016 issue. His letter was in three parts and I have some comments on the first two.

In his first part he takes exception to a letter from Martin Klein, and I think he may misunderstand Mr. Klein's point. His letter was about the controversy concerning women being ordained as priests in the General church, which extended from September 2013 to June 2015. Mr. Klein praised the Council of the Clergy for its decision at its meeting of February 2016, when it strongly agreed that the policy for a male priesthood should remain.

Mr. Ridgway felt that we should not put our trust in the councils of men, but should rely on the counsel of the teachings of the Word. The problem in this case, as he says, is that there is no specific, clear-cut teaching that says no, though there are teachings about the correspondences of what is male and what is female that suggest it.

I think that Mr. Klein's praise of the Council was for pondering this question seriously and giving individual arguments for their positions and then making the decision, when they knew very well that no matter what the decision was it would alienate some people in the Church, and I agree with him that it required courage to make a decision. In such a case and with such a controversy, I see no other way to close the issue for our Church, at least for now.

I find it interesting to see that Mr. Klein and Mr. Ridgway end up saying almost the same thing in their respective letters, though not respecting the same subject. Mr. Klein's letter says near the end: "Isn't 'accommodating' our

approach counter-productive to the Lord's message? Surely our reason for existence is to firmly share all the truths now revealed by the Lord . . . I believe that when we try to 'fit in' we actually deny the Lord before the crowing of the cock. Are we just being prudent as we seek to swell our membership through temporal appeals, or are we fearful of rejection or even of persecution? "

And Mr. Ridgway says in the middle part of his letter: "I have been most concerned over many years at the way in which the General Church has been moving away from that very principle of faith that gives it the very reason for its existence. . . . It seems to me that our increasing failure to strongly acknowledge the Divinity of the new Word is either from a lack of understanding of what the so-called Writings of Swedenborg really are and a lack of appreciation of our prime belief, or that it is thought that by hiding our light we will blend in with others and so attract more membership." Don't these two quotes sound pretty much alike?

In his second part Mr. Ridgway and I agree about one point, about calling ourselves Swedenborgians, but then, I'm sorry to say, we drift apart. My concept of the term "Heavenly Doctrines" must be quite different from his. We are told several times in the Writings that when a person reads the Old or New Testament parts of the Word, that the angels who are with that person do not hear the words of the literal sense. They do not hear about Abraham and Isaac, or about Jeremiah's woes; they hear only the internal sense, about the Lord and His rational, or about the state of the Church.

This hearing of doctrine through the correspondences of the Word are, I think, what is meant by "the heavenly doctrines" – what the inhabitants of heaven hear when we read the Word. I see it as distinguishing between the literal sense we read and the internal sense they hear, and that it is not at all something that is tampered with by people. (See *New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* 7 and 252, and *Heaven and Hell* 516.)

And if one looks at all the ways the term "Word" or "the Word" are used in the Writings, one finds that two definitions become evident. The most common one is that the Word is the Old and New Testaments, but this definition is stretchable. It can mean as little as the Ten Commandments, then all the laws given to the children of Israel at Mt. Sinai, or the whole of the five books of Moses. Further, it can also include the historical books and the prophets, so we sometimes find it written as "the Law and the Prophets" or "Moses and the Prophets." And further yet it will include the *Gospels* and *Revelation*.

All of these descriptions are used, and keeping in mind that the non-canonical parts should always be excluded, it means the Word as we know it from childhood, or the Bible. Twice at least Swedenborg uses the term, "our Word." (*Apocalypse Explained* 797:7, and *Sacred Scripture* 71) The other definition that becomes evident, or maybe I should say the most stretched

definition, is that in the largest sense “The Word” is everything that the Lord has created or done, all of the proceeding of the Divine truth.

In that sense we can call the universe, and heaven and all nature the Word. (See *John 1*, *Divine Love and Wisdom* 52, 55, and *New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* 11.) However, when it is said that the Word was written wholly by means of correspondences I believe that it is our written Word – the Old and New Testaments – that is meant. “By Word here, Divine truth is meant, because the Word which is in the Church is Divine truth itself, for it was dictated by Jehovah Himself, and what is dictated by Jehovah is nothing but Divine truth and can be nothing else.” (*True Christian Religion* 85) And who but the Lord could create such a set of stories and prophecies that could contain in their spiritual and celestial inner senses such a wealth of truths as to keep the angelic heavens busy forever? (See also *Last Judgment* 1, *Sacred Scripture* 113, 117.)

We know that cities in the Word represent doctrine, and the holy city, the New Jerusalem, is sent “down from God out of Heaven.” What else can this be but what Swedenborg was commissioned to write? And because it came down from heaven, Swedenborg is well justified in calling it the heavenly doctrine and thus distinguishing it from the corresponding literal doctrine of what we commonly call the Word.

Are the Writings then the Word? Yes, of course, they are: 1) they come from the Lord as Swedenborg tells us several times, and 2) they are the interior of the Old and New Testaments that we have always called the Word.

Are the Writings a separate work that we are adding to the Word – a “New Word” as Mr. Ridgway calls it in the quote shown above? I don’t think so. They are what the angels understand of the Word, and those spiritual knowledges have always been inside the Word ever since the literal sense started to be written down.

They may be new to our world but in heaven they go back, I think, to the Garden of Eden, and certainly to the Ancient Word. So they don’t exactly add to the Word something new; they rather open up the Word so that we can understand it better, see what has always been there, inside, as the angels do.

How do we regard the Writings, as open, or as shrouded by clouds? Well, the Lord told us in *John 16:25* that when the spirit of truth came he would tell us plainly of the Father. In *2 Samuel 23:4* we can read of King David’s last song: “And He shall be as the light of the morning when the sun rises, even a morning without clouds . . .”

And let’s look at the “Holy city, whose street was pure gold, as it were transparent glass” and “the city had no need of the sun to shine in her . . . for the glory of God enlightened her,” and from the throne of God in that city a river flowed, “a pure river of water of life, bright as crystal.”

This descriptive collection doesn't sound like something shrouded in clouds of correspondence. When Swedenborg sees the temple in heaven, the cherub of correspondences is there, but the curtain has been raised so that we can see beyond him. (See *Apocalypse Revealed* 668, 897)

Joseph S. David
Indianapolis, Indiana

Our Planets Are Not Inhabited

To The Editors:

We often hear about church membership not growing. One reason has got to be *Earths in the Universe*. A new reader may think, "This makes sense," but then reads about spirits from Saturn, which must be an immediate turnoff.

I don't think I've seen an official explanation of spirits being said to come from planets in our solar system. Shouldn't we, finally, address this head on?

The basis for an explanation might well be *Earths in the Universe* 134: [That those not in faith] may be led along to something of acknowledgment it has been conceded to relate such things as delight to attract the man who is desirous of knowing . . . " (This is the Swedenborg Foundation translation. The Swedenborg Society has "granted" for "conceded.")

In Swedenborg's time almost everyone thought the other planets were inhabited (Benjamin Franklin, etc.). Some even thought the sun was inhabited (William Herschel, etc.).

Perhaps to take advantage of this thinking Swedenborg assigned certain spirits to our planets, these planets being "closer to home," hoping to arouse interest in the Writings. This could well be what was "conceded/granted."

In a 1771 letter Swedenborg says: "The Lord our Savior leaves things which concern temporal matters to my intelligence and judgment." Whether or not certain planets are inhabited is a temporal matter.

Let's get something out there soon, if only on our websites!

William L. Weaver
Largo, Florida

A Beautiful Story

To The Editors:

I just finished reading from the September-October 2016 issue the sermon by the Rev. Chris Barber on the story of Balaam. What a wonderful review of the story. Chris is to be commended.

There is strength, beauty and affection in this story as told. I always loved the story. Now I like it more than ever. Kudos to Chris Barber.

Kenneth Blair
Sarver, Pennsylvania

OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY

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

INSPIRATION

By this term, we are told, is not meant dictation but inspiration from the Divine. The distinction is that whatever inflows from the Divine is Divine in itself, but passes through heaven, in which it becomes celestial and spiritual, and then enters the world, where it becomes worldly, but with the Divine and what is heavenly within it.

This definition shows what is the nature of the inspiration of the Word and enables us to distinguish between it and what is commonly called the inspiration of secular writers. Inspiration is also defined as insertion into angelic societies, which has the same general implication, namely, insertion into the spheres through which the Divine proceeds. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 9094; *True Christian Religion* 140.)

The Stones Would Immediately Cry Out

A Palm Sunday Sermon by the Rev. Eric H. Carswell

Lessons: Psalm 148, Luke 19:28-40, Arcana Coelestia 5323:3

Jesus answered and said to the Pharisees, "I tell you that if the disciples should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out." (Luke 19:39-40)

Picture what was happening as Jesus rode into Jerusalem. He was riding on a donkey and a multitude of His disciples, followers and many others were rejoicing and praising with loud voices His arrival as king. They spread their outer garments and palm branches on the road before the donkey carrying Jesus.

The noise and celebration could have been almost overwhelming. The celebration was so great that people were offended. Some of the Pharisees called to Jesus to rebuke His disciples for the noise, and He replied, "If [these] should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out."

What did Jesus mean by invoking the voice of the stones? Literally it implies a miraculous praise coming from non-living objects. For those who have the eyes and ears to see and hear, all of creation can praise the Lord. We are taught:

Nothing ever exists in the created world that does not have a correspondence with things in the spiritual world, and so that does not represent in its own way something in the Lord's kingdom. It is from there that all things come into being and are kept in being. If people knew that this is how these things stand they would never attribute everything to natural forces as they are accustomed to do. Consequently each and all things in the universe represent the Lord's kingdom, so much so that the universe with all its constellations, its various atmospheres, and its three kingdoms is nothing else than a kind of stage on which the Lord's glory as it exists in heaven is represented. (*Arcana Coelestia* 2999-3000)

Many places in the *Psalms* also convey something of this idea. *Psalm* 69 includes the words, "Let heaven and earth praise [the Lord], the seas and everything that moves in them." And *Psalm* 145 says, "All Your works shall

Palm Sunday represents a quality that the Lord wants in our lives in all we care about, think, speak or do. It represents our conscious choice to make a path for the Lord to come not just into our own hearts and minds but that His presence and His blessings may be ever more present through our choices.

praise You, O LORD.” *Psalm 148*, read as the first lesson, states:

Praise the LORD from the earth,
 You great sea creatures and all the depths;
 Fire and hail, snow and clouds;
 Stormy wind, fulfilling His word;
 Mountains and all hills;
 Fruitful trees and all cedars;
 Beasts and all cattle;
 Creeping things and flying fowl;
 Kings of the earth and all peoples;
 Princes and all judges of the earth;
 Both young men and maidens;
 Old men and children.
 Let them praise the name of the LORD

Palm Sunday represents a quality that the Lord wants in our lives in all we care about, think, speak or do. It represents our conscious choice to make a path for the Lord to come not just into our own hearts and minds but that His presence and His blessings may be ever more present through our choices.

What kind of a king do we celebrate on Palm Sunday? For a king to exist there usually is a kingdom. Many times in the four *Gospels* there is reference to the “kingdom of heaven” and the “kingdom of God.” It is important to know what kind of kingdom this is. There have been some who, from religious belief, wanted a king who will exalt them above all throughout the whole world, not one whose kingdom is in heaven and who looks from there to the salvation also of all on earth. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 10570:3)

Listen to the following words from the teachings for the New Church:

I have spoken several times to spirits recently arrived from the world about the state of eternal life, and have said that it was important for them to know who the Lord of that kingdom is, what is the system of government, and what form that government takes. It is the same in the world when people go to another kingdom; they wish to know beforehand who the king is and what he is like, what is the system of government, and many other facts concerning that kingdom. How much more does this apply in that kingdom where they are going to live forever.

I have told them that the Lord alone rules not only heaven but also the whole universe, for He who rules the one must rule the other, and also that the kingdom which they are now in is the Lord’s kingdom, and that the laws of this kingdom are eternal truths, every one of which is based on the incomparable law that they are to love the Lord supremely and the neighbor as themselves. Indeed, if they wished to be as the angels,

they must now go beyond that and love the neighbor more than themselves.

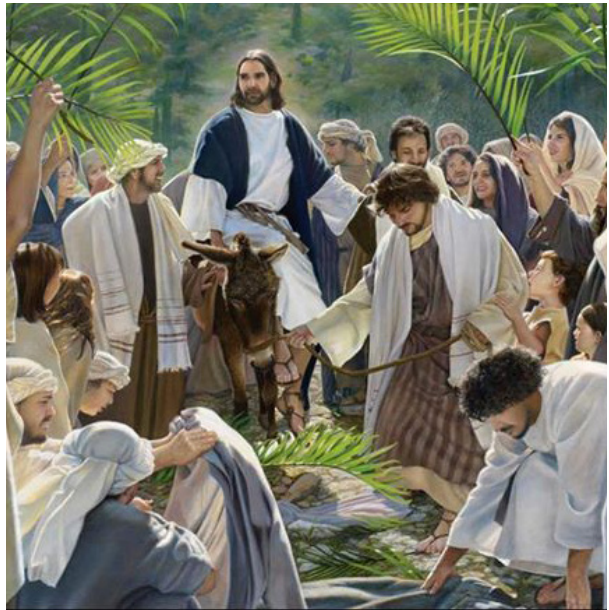
On hearing these things they have been speechless, for during their life-time they had heard something of the sort but had not believed it. Even though they had heard that they were to love the neighbor as themselves, they have been amazed that such love exists in heaven, and that it is possible for anyone to love the neighbor more than himself. They have been informed however that in the next life all goods increase without limit, whereas life in the body is such that they cannot progress beyond the point of loving their neighbor as themselves, because they are engrossed in bodily interests. Once the latter have been removed however, love becomes purer, and at length angelic. And this is loving the neighbor more than themselves. (*Arcana Coelestia* 548:1-2)

If the Lord is our king we need to ask for and seek His help in developing a love for Him supremely and our neighbor as ourselves.

The presence of the Lord as king comes to us by means of the spiritual quality meant by a donkey. We need to turn to Divine revelation, read it, hear it taught, and reflect on it to see its meaning for our lives.

We welcome that the Lord is king by means of the spiritual quality of loudly spoken praise, by creating a pathway for this king by laying down what is meant spiritually by our outer garments and palm branches. The shouted praise is an acknowledgment in heart, mind and life that the Lord is our king and God. The clothes and branches mean the wise kindness that guides each of our thoughts, words and actions.

This wise kindness is a gift of the Lord. It is what He means by true charity toward the neighbor. It isn't just an external pleasantness and helpfulness. It is a deep and thoughtful concern for the welfare of the individuals around us, the community in which we live, the country that provides so much for all the people who live in it and are served by it, and still more broadly the cause of the spiritual welfare of all human beings in this world – which is the Lord's kingdom in this world in its widest sense. This is how we welcome the Lord as king within



our own lives in daily life.

In the teachings for the New Church the Lord has told us that we all have a king. Our king is what we make most important in our lives.

There are many kinds of loves, but two of them are like lords or kings, namely, heavenly love and hellish love. Heavenly love is love toward the Lord and love for the neighbor, while hellish love is love of self and love of the world. These two kinds of loves are as opposed to each other as heaven and hell; for one who is impelled by a love of self and the world does not wish anyone well but himself, whereas one who is impelled by love toward the Lord and love for the neighbor wishes all well. These two loves constitute people's life's loves, but with much variety. Heavenly love is the life's love of those who are led by the Lord, while hellish love is the life's love of those who are led by the devil. . . .

Love dwells in its affections like a lord in his manor or like a king in his kingdom. Their dominion or reign is over the constituents of the mind, that is, over the constituents of a person's will and intellect, and so over the constituents of the body. Through its affections and consequent perceptions, and through its delights and consequent thoughts, a person's life's love governs the entire person – the internal level of his mind by its affections and consequent perceptions, and the external level of his mind by the delights of its affections and consequent thoughts. (*Divine Providence* 106)

Our daily decisions shout praise to whatever rules in us. Our daily decisions are values and ideas expressed in word and deed that are like clothes and palms laid as a pathway for whatever rules us to advance more fully into our lives. Unless we seek the Lord's help it will be impossible for us to recognize

the true nature of the king in our lives. Hear the following from the teachings of the New Church:

A person is incapable of perceiving the lusts of his own evil. He perceives, indeed, their delights, but he also little reflects on them, for the delights beguile his thoughts and divert his reflections. Consequently, if he did not know from some other source that they are evil, he would call them good and, in freedom in accordance with reason of his thinking, would commit them. And when he does this, he makes them his.

To the extent that he makes these allowable, he enlarges the court of his reigning love, which is his life's love. His lusts form its court, for they are, so to speak, its ministers and attendants, by which it governs the outer elements which constitute its kingdom.

Our daily decisions shout praise to whatever rules in us. Our daily decisions are values and ideas expressed in word and deed that are like clothes and palms laid as a pathway for whatever rules us to advance more fully into our lives.

But as the character of the king is, such is the character of the ministers and attendants, and such is the character of the kingdom. If the devil is king, his ministers and attendants are irrational thoughts and ideas, and the populace of his kingdom are false ideas of every kind, false ideas which, by reasonings based on fallacies and by delusions, the ministers – whom they call wise, even though they are insane – make to appear as true and to be acknowledged as true.

Can the state of a person like this be changed in any other way than by putting away the evils in his external self? By this the lusts connected with the evils are also put away. Otherwise the lusts have no exit open to them, for they are shut in, like a city besieged, or like an ulcer covered over. (*Divine Providence* 113)

The Lord wants us to welcome Him as king as He truly is. He wants us to have love to Him and our neighbor rule in our lives. He works with infinite love, wisdom and power to help us receive Him as king.

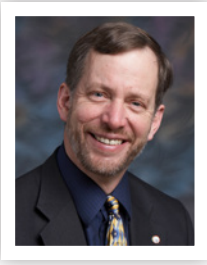
The Lord wants us to welcome Him as king as He truly is. He wants us to have love to Him and our neighbor rule in our lives. He works with infinite love, wisdom and power to help us receive Him as king.

We know that the first Palm Sunday had people loudly rejoicing, laying down outer garments and palm branches. But we also know that five days later there were loud voices calling for the crucifixion of Jesus, perhaps even some of the people who welcomed Him the previous Sunday. They were looking for a very different kind of king. One who would make them powerful and rich. They were looking for a king whose greatest concern was for their own country alone. May we be very different. May we seek a king who loves others as much as He loves us and calls us to follow His example.

While the first Palm Sunday can be tinged with sadness because of what was shortly going to happen, consider that the final book of the teachings for the New Church ends with a very different image of a king being recognized.

After the completion of this book, the Lord called together His twelve disciples, who had followed Him in the world; and a day later He sent them all forth throughout the spiritual world to preach the Gospel, that the Lord God Jesus Christ is king, and His kingdom shall be for ever and ever. (*True Christian Religion* 791)

May we do our part to become subjects of that everlasting kingdom. May we make the conscious decisions to have the Lord God Jesus Christ be our king.



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OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY

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THE INTELLECTUAL

The intellectual is the truth of faith. In general it is the sight of the internal man, which sees from the light of heaven that is from the Lord. What it sees is heavenly. The term is used also of the understanding. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 863, 5114, 8458.)

What the Lord Actually Accomplished by His Incarnation

The Rev. Michael D. Gladish

(Note: This was originally presented as a doctrinal class in Mitchellville, Maryland, shortly before Christmas. It has been modified by the author for the Easter season.)

Celebration of the Lord's resurrection presents an excellent opportunity to reflect on the whole purpose of the incarnation, and what the Lord actually accomplished – for us and for Himself – in that process. And there's hardly a better place to begin than with *Arcana Coelestia* 2034, where we read:

After everything celestial with man perished, that is, all love to God, so that as a result the will for what is good existed no longer, the human race was separated from the Divine. For nothing other than love effects conjunction, and when love has been reduced to nothing, disjunction has taken place. And when the latter has taken place destruction and annihilation follow. At that point therefore a promise was given concerning the Lord's Coming into the world, who was to unite the Human to the Divine, and by means of this union was to join [to the Divine] the human race that was abiding in Himself through faith grounded in love and charity.

From the time of that first promise given in *Genesis* 3:15, this kind of faith in the Lord who was to come was conjunctive. But once faith springing from love did not remain any more in the world the Lord came and united the Human Essence to the Divine Essence so that these were completely one, as He Himself states explicitly. At the same time He taught the way of truth to the effect that everyone who believed in Him, that is, who would love Him and what was His, and who would abide in His love, which is a love directed toward the entire human race and so toward the neighbor, would be conjoined and thus saved.

Once the Human had been made Divine, and the Divine made Human in the Lord, an influx of the Infinite, or the Supreme Divine, took place with man which could not possibly have manifested itself in any other way. Also by means of that influx the dreadful false persuasions and the dreadful desires for evil were dispersed with which the world of spirits had been filled and was constantly being filled by souls streaming into it from the world; and those who were actuated by such persuasions

and evil desires were cast into hell and so separated. Unless this had been done the human race would have perished, for it is by means of spirits that the Lord rules the human race. They could not have been dispersed in any other way because there was no activity of the Divine by way of man's rational concepts into his inner sensory awareness, for these are far below the Supreme Divine when not so united.

The point is that the whole world is connected to the Divine by means of human minds completing a circle of creation that flows from God down into physical matter and then back up to Him as He is acknowledged, loved and obeyed. When this circle is broken the world cannot continue to exist since, speaking metaphorically, the energy has nowhere to go – just the same as when a short circuit cuts off the flow of power in your house.

The thing is, for the connection to be effective there has to be a certain level of understanding and respect for God in the world, and the problem at the time of the Lord's birth was that this level had reached such a low point that the influx of life was just about to be lost. The Word of the Old Testament was of course well known by the Jews, but nobody really understood what it meant spiritually, and in the case of other religions, most were either polytheistic or animistic, or were based on a totally abstract idea of God, so no truly human connection could be made through them. These were the last remnants of the Ancient Church.

But when the Lord took on His own natural human body and mind among the Jews, as He learned the teachings of the Word He was able to see and understand their spiritual meaning instantly, and because His inmost love was Divine He was able to apply the teachings perfectly throughout His life. So He Himself was able to bridge the gap between God and the world. He Himself

was able to restore the circuit that was almost broken for all life on earth.

So we read in *Isaiah*, "His own arm brought salvation for Him; and His own justice, it sustained Him." (*Isaiah* 59:16) And again: "I looked, but there was no one to help, and I wondered, that there was no one to uphold; therefore My own arm brought salvation for Me; and My own fury, it sustained Me . . ." (*Ibid.*, 63:5) The "arm" of Jehovah is of course His Human life in the world, and the "fury" mentioned is really a kind of indignation that we can think of as intense zeal for the truth.

When the Lord took on His own natural human body and mind among the Jews . . . He Himself was able to bridge the gap between God and the world. He Himself was able to restore the circuit that was almost broken for all life on earth.

Remember the Lord also said, “No one comes to the Father except through Me . . .” (*John* 14:6), meaning we can’t see or connect with God at all except through His Human form and appearance. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 5110, etc.)

But getting to the specific issue in this article, we read in *True Christian Religion* 86 (and other passages) that God accomplished three specific things by His actions in the world: He subjugated the hells, restored order to the heavens, and established the Christian Church. These are the three aspects of what is called redemption and we’ll discuss each of them in order, but first, and importantly, it is in this context that the Writings address the particular qualities of the good and the truth in His Humanity. *True Christian Religion* 85 states that, “Jehovah God descended as the Divine Truth which is the Word, and yet He did not separate the Divine Good.” What does this mean?

To descend is to come down, and to come down as the truth is to embody that truth in words and actions on the lowest plane of life – not just the natural but the physical (corporeal) plane. But in order to do this God had to impose limitations on Himself! After all, the Infinite has no limits and so cannot be confined in any way by words or physical appearances. So He did this, not unlike the way He created matter itself, which is complicated (though the process is explained in some detail in the philosophical works that Swedenborg wrote before the *Arcana*). The big difference in this case is that “He did not separate the Divine Good,” that is, He retained all the “motive” force of His Divinely Human love within this physical creation so that it took form as a human infant in the womb of a particular Jewish mother.

But here’s the critical point: with the natural human heredity that He adopted in the process He not only acquired a visible body but as well the limitations of thought that He needed to confront the evils and falsities of the day – not only in the world outside of Him but most importantly within Himself. For as we read in *True Christian Religion* 84:

God is in the inmost and purest realms. There was no other way He could cross over to the lowest levels where the hells exist and where people were at that time, just as a soul cannot do anything without a body. By analogy, there is no way to overpower enemies who are not in sight and whom we cannot approach with weapons such as spears, shields or guns.

This raises an interesting question. Can we really ascribe all the hereditary evils of the Lord’s life to the virgin, Mary? Could all those limitations be her fault? No, not at all! She was surely no worse than any other man or woman in Palestine at the time, and may have been better than most. It’s just that the heredity the Lord received from her was weak and prone to evils of every kind *simply because it was finite* and therefore subject to all the temptations of the finite world. In fact that was the whole point of His being born of such a virgin – so that He could be subject to those same temptations and confront them and overcome them all.

This naturally leads to another question: given His Divine soul and Infinite love from conception, was there ever really any doubt that the Lord would overcome the temptations of the world? I don't think there was – although in His natural mind it certainly did seem to Him at times as if there was. Rather I think the Lord's greatest temptation – still within His natural consciousness – was to think that all His work might have been for nothing if the people He came to redeem and save were to reject Him. But this is another article for another day.

The idea that the Lord “descended as the Divine Truth which is the Word” is what we need to understand – because it's not intuitive. Yes, John's gospel tells us that “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us,” but I think we need to see this as a gradual process, not an event of birth. After all, we know that the limitations He took on made it impossible for Him fully to comprehend the depths of Divine Wisdom in the beginning.

In other words, He was “an infant like any other infant, a boy like any other boy, and so on; but with this sole difference, that He passed through those progressive states sooner, more fully and more perfectly than others.” (*True Christian Religion* 89) Yet during that process, as He learned the truths of the Word which was and is Divine, one by one, “line upon line, precept upon precept,” He understood immediately how they applied to Himself, and His mind was formed by them and His speech and actions expressed them.

That is how He came to embody the Divine Truth – without separating it from the Divine Good. And that is why it is said in *John* that “we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” (*John 1:14*)

There is no way the shepherds or the wise men saw that glory in the physical features of a baby – except as the hope and promise of fulfillment of messianic prophecy “as it was told to them.” Remember *Isaiah* 53 where we read: “Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of Jehovah been revealed? For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground; He has no form nor comeliness; and when we see Him there is no beauty that we should desire Him.”

Rather it was “the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Jehovah” (*Ibid.* 11:2) that made His glory visible as He taught and was glorified.

The whole process, of course, was not finished until His resurrection when at last the disciples did see Him in glory such that “their hearts burned within them while He talked with them on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to them.” (*Luke 24:32*)

Again, a tangent, but it may be useful to note that the bread of the holy supper is unleavened because it corresponds to the Lord's Divine love, which was never “leavened” by any corruption (represented by yeast), but the wine is

leavened, that is, fermented, because it represents the result of a long process of temptation through which the truth was “refined” and perfected in Him.

Redemption, Part 1

But let’s get back to the topic of redemption and what this really means. The word itself in modern usage carries implications of cashing something in, almost as you would do with coupons, or with scrap metal. In Christian circles the word is often tied to the concept of ransom, as in the Gospels where we read that “the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” (*Matthew 20:28, Mark 10:45*). We’ll come back to this.

Meanwhile a better understanding of the term, redemption, may come to mind if you think of redeeming a bad situation: how do you take a tragedy and get some “redeeming value” out of it? Or how do you “redeem yourself” when you make a serious mistake? You don’t exactly trade yourself in, right? But you do try to do better, and to cover your mistake with appropriate words or actions.

That word, cover, also comes up in relation to the Lord’s life, at least in vicarious atonement circles, because there is an idea that Jesus “covered” our sins by offering Himself as a sacrifice in our place. This might be inferred from *Psalms 85* where it is said of the Lord: “You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people; You have covered all their sin.” But, in fact, that covering is better explained by Shem and Japheth’s actions in covering their father Noah’s drunkenness in *Genesis 9*, and in the *Epistle of James 5:20* where we read that “he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins,” or *1 Peter 4:8*, where we read that “love will cover a multitude of sins.” The point is that the “covering” effect of redemption is not a matter of disregarding evil but of amending it and making things better.

By the way, another term that is often used in Christian circles to describe the Lord’s work is “atonement.” This is interesting because there isn’t a single reference to that word in the New Testament

All this of course is what the Lord continues to do for us every day since then if, as and when we believe in Him, appeal to Him, and do as He teaches: He subjugates or controls the hells for us. We don’t. We can’t. But He did and He can – every day.

– *Gospels* or *Epistles*!¹ Rather it comes from the Old Testament where it is a Hebrew word that means “a covering,” and that refers to the use of sacrifices to cover for the sins of the people.

In those cases there definitely was a vicarious element to the matter: animals – most notably the so-called scapegoat of *Leviticus* 16 – were cursed or beaten or burned on altars to appease the anger of God and “take away” the consequences of the people’s wrong-doing. But as we know now, this was all simply representative, and the representative use of sacrifices was abrogated (done away with) when the Lord Himself came to do His redeeming work.²

So again, the first thing the Lord accomplished in His life in this world was that He amended the evil and made things better. How? By learning the truths of the Word and using them to subjugate the hells, that is, to get the hells that were corrupting life in this world under control. But again, how? Of course He confronted the evils and falsities of the people in Israel who were corrupt, but more importantly through His own inner combats against the evils and falsities of His own hereditary nature He acquired the power to control the hells themselves by taking away their ability to distort the truth which they were using to justify their own depravity.

A simple example is in *Matthew* 4 where we read that the devil tempted Him by abusing ideas and quotations from the Word – to which the Lord responded with other Scriptures that completely disarmed him. But many other examples occur throughout the Gospels as the Lord throughout His life cast out demons, corrected misrepresentations of the Word, explained and illustrated the true meaning of its contents, and clearly demonstrated the healing power of His Divine love.

All this, of course, is what the Lord continues to do for us every day since then if, as and when we believe in Him, appeal to Him, and do as He teaches: He subjugates or controls the hells for us. We don’t. We can’t. But He did and He can – every day. So first of all He redeemed the world from destruction by repairing the connection between heaven and earth within Himself, and then He extended that redemption to all who would come after Him by making the power of His love and wisdom fully accessible in the Word.

But now, how can we understand this concept of ransom? It’s not just an

1 The one New Testament reference, *Romans* 5:11, that uses the word, atonement, in the *King James Version* actually means reconciliation, and so refers to a truly just and human way of covering for our sins.

2 The English word, atonement, is actually pretty clever in that we can see it as “at-one-ment,” suggesting the very process of reconciliation, which the Lord accomplished through the glorification of His Humanity, bringing worldly things into harmony with spiritual things by subjugating the former to the latter in Himself.

“old church” concept: the Gospel clearly says that Jesus came “to give His life a ransom for many.” But people put this together with the prophecy in *Isaiah* 53 and draw all sorts of unwarranted – although very tempting – conclusions.

“Surely,” we read, “He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” (*Isaiah* 53:4-6)

The idea is that He suffered so that we don’t have to – that His suffering appeased the wrath of God, the Father, so that we would not have to bear the consequences of our sin (just like the Old Testament scapegoat), thus that He suffered *for* us, on our behalf. But that simply isn’t what the passage means.

What it means is that Jesus bore the brunt of human evil in His life, carrying it as a burden of graft and persecution against Him, graft and persecution that He only suffered so that He could answer it with truth and compassion. And we are healed by His stripes, that is, by the brutal treatment given to Him, if we see the horror of it all, observe His response to it, and determine not to do in our lives what the people did to Him. (See *Divine Providence* 275)

Of course we read in the *Gospel of John* that John the Baptist said, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” (1:29) But the Writings (in *Doctrine of the Lord* 15) are very clear that this is a mistranslation, and that what it really says is as just mentioned, and further, that He bore, or carried the abuse heaped on Him as a clear manifestation of the abuse that had been heaped on the Word, which He then embodied.

The application to our lives now is frightening if we take it seriously, and at any rate constitutes a graphic warning about how we treat the Word. It’s not that we might really hurt the Lord, who we know will continue to love and care for us just as He did the disciples after His resurrection, but when we abuse the goods and truths of the Word we put our own salvation – our own spiritual health – at risk.

It’s in this context that the concept of a ransom comes up. Normally we think of a ransom as the price that one person pays to free another from captivity. Did the Lord pay this price? Well, yes, yes He did. He suffered – He endured and overcame temptations of all kinds – in order to free *us* from captivity – from our own sins as well as the influence of the hells. But it’s not a ransom without responsibility. It’s a price the Lord paid to rectify the whole order of things so that we could take the responsibility that was being withheld by the corrupting influences of this world and the next.

Going back to our first reference from *Arcana Coelestia* 2034 it was about freeing us from the compelling power of the Word misapplied – in

fact the very thing we're talking about right now in the awful doctrine of the vicarious atonement and salvation by faith alone in a merciful, loving God who supposedly appeased the wrath of another, angry and judgmental God!

All this should remind us of the prophecy in *Isaiah* 61, which the Lord openly applied to Himself as He taught in the synagogue at Nazareth (*Luke* 4:18-19), saying:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

Redemption, Part 2

Now when the Lord subjugated the hells, or perhaps as He was doing this, He also restored order to the heavens – by which apparently the whole of the spiritual world is meant (see below). This is the second aspect of redemption, that is, what the Lord actually accomplished by coming into the world as a Man. We read:

Prior to [His] Coming into the world there was among men and among spirits an influx of life from Jehovah or the Lord which came by way of the celestial kingdom, that is, through the angels who were in that kingdom. This was the source of their power at that time. But when the Lord came into the world, and by so doing made the Human within Himself Divine, He took to Himself what had rested with angels of the celestial kingdom, namely that power and control. For what flowed from God and passed through that heaven had until then been the Divine human. That influx was also the Divine Person who presented Himself, when Jehovah revealed Himself in this way. But this Divine human came to an end when the Lord made the Human within Himself Divine. (*Arcana Coelestia* 6371)

Continuing:

For when the Divine presented Himself by means of that kingdom there was no tranquility, since things in heaven and those in hell could not be brought by means of that kingdom into a state of order. This was because the Divine, as it passed through that kingdom, could not remain pure since heaven is not pure; so neither was that kingdom strong enough to serve as the means by which all things could be preserved in a state of order. And what is more, as a consequence hellish and devilish spirits were at that time breaking out of hell and having dominion over souls who were coming from the world, as a result of which a situation was coming about in which none but the celestial ones could be saved. At length scarcely these could have been saved if the Lord had not taken on the Human and made that Human within Himself Divine. By doing this the Lord brought all things into a state of order, first those in heaven, then those in hell; and this gave rise to peaceful tranquility. (*Ibid.* 6373)

Evidently, the problems in the spiritual world were not unlike the problems in this world at the time of the Advent, especially since the other world was being populated by those whose mixed motives and confused ideas continued to characterize their lives after death. You might think that all this confusion

would be instantly cleared up in the spiritual world, but after all, that world is really just the world of our own spirits, our own minds, and we don't change much after death, least of all as to our ruling loves. But mixed motives and confused ideas do not provide for a heavenly life, which is why the Writings speak of false or imaginary heavens, realms inhabited by spirits who were either simple enough to be misled or deceptive enough to be able to mislead others by their misinterpretation of the Word.

People therefore who had read the Word and tried to live a good life were in a sense "bound" or imprisoned by improper thinking about God, and so had not been able to enter fully "into the joy of their Lord." In effect, they were like the people described in *Revelation* as "the souls under the altar" who cried out, "How long, O Lord, How long?" until they could fully understand and be released from these false ideas.

However when the Lord Himself came into the world and corrected all these misguided concepts, the men and women in the spiritual world who needed His help to sort things out received that help because the spiritual light that radiated from His life and teaching filled that world even more than it filled this natural world, which is of course limited by time and space. There is a dramatic and very interesting teaching about this in *Divine Love and Wisdom* 233, where we read:

It has been told me from heaven that in the Lord from eternity, who is Jehovah, before the assumption of the Human in the world, the two prior degrees existed actually, and the third degree in potency, as they do also with angels, but that after the assumption of a Human in the world, He put on also the third degree, which is called the natural, thereby becoming Man, like a man in the world, the only difference being that in the Lord, this degree as were the prior ones, is infinite and uncreate, while in angel and in man these degrees are finite and created.

For the Divine which, apart from space, had filled all space (n. 69-72), penetrated even to the ultimates (the lowest levels) of nature. But before the assumption of the Human, there was a Divine influx into the natural degree mediate through the angelic heavens, but after the assumption, immediate from Himself. This is the reason that all Churches in the world before His advent were representative of spiritual and celestial things, but after His advent they became spiritual-natural and celestial-natural, and representative worship was abolished.

This was also the reason that the Sun of the angelic heaven which, as was said above, is the first proceeding of His Divine Love and Wisdom, after the assumption of the Human, shone forth with greater radiance and splendor than before the assumption. This also is what is understood by these words in *Isaiah*:

In that day the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold as the light of seven days. (30:26)

This is said of the state of heaven and of the Church after the Lord's coming into the world. Again, in the Apocalypse:

The countenance of the Son of Man was as the sun shines in its strength. *Revelation* 1:16, and elsewhere as in *Isaiah* 60:20; *2 Samuel* 23:3, 4; *Matthew* 17:1, 2.

Here we see that the influence of the Lord's life on earth spread throughout the spiritual world – there being no limitations of time or space in that world to prevent it – and that the effects were so profound that good spirits everywhere were able to breathe a sigh of relief and say, “Ahhh, Now I see! Now I understand,” while the deceivers who had justified their personal ambitions with quotations from the Word and so remained untouchable, were finally removed from their positions of authority and cast down into hell.

Note, by the way, that “the natural” referred to in this and other passages of the Writings does not refer to the physical substance of the earth but to the lowest levels of the mind, where we receive and interpret the things drawn in through the senses. (*New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* 46) This “natural” continues to be the basis of our spiritual lives after the death of the physical body and consists for the most part of thoughts and affections based on our memories.

No doubt one reason why the Lord's teaching could enlighten those who had no previous memories of His natural life is that they did know the prophecies which were in the literal sense of the Word and which He fulfilled and explained during His life – as in *Luke* 24 on the walk to Emmaus.

Redemption, Part 3

The third main thing the Lord accomplished through His life in the world was the establishment of the church, meaning the Christian Church. This is interesting because it is very clear from the Gospel stories and the *Acts and Epistles* that this church was established primarily through the use of miracles, and yet the Writings are clear that miracles never really convince people of anything spiritually, since they take away the focus on rational thought and understanding, interfering therefore with truly human freedom.

What we have to keep in mind is that the people who became the Lord's disciples, and then His apostles, were for the most part very simple, naturally-minded men and women. In fact, the whole “business” of the Advent was to reach down to the lowest natural level of the mind and provide a sensory experience of the Humanity of God – because that was all people could really appreciate at that time.

So the Lord provided that the church at first be based on natural evidence, the evidence of the natural senses that demonstrated the Lord's power through physical healing, physical release from prisons, physical feeding and other dramatic events. In fact, the Lord didn't expect them to understand very much,

and said so in the well-known lines of *John* 16:12-13 where we read: “I have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of Truth has come, He will guide you into all truth.”

Until then it was necessary to establish a cult – and I use that word in its most positive sense – of worship that would hold the attention of worldly minded people and introduce thousands across Europe and eventually the whole world to the knowledge of the Lord. Then, when as a friend of mine used to say, the human race grew up and was ready to think more deeply, He was able to build on that knowledge with new understanding and so invite a deeper level of commitment.

In a way it's not surprising – and it certainly was foreseen by the Lord – that the pure and innocent external devotion of the church to the Lord in its early years should be politicized, corrupted and falsified within 300 years of His resurrection, since the faith of those early followers lacked intellectual depth and so was subject to manipulation by the educated classes, especially the clever, power-hungry people of the world.

Just imagine, for example, the incredible pressure those 318 bishops gathered together by the emperor, Constantine, at Nicea must have felt to compromise on their beliefs about the Lord for the sake of unity and state endorsement of the church. Remember, too, the fearful power Catholic priests wielded in the Middle Ages, selling indulgences, excommunicating people (from heaven!), or even torturing those who disagreed with their interpretation of almost anything. For the most part the only reason they could get away with this was that the common people didn't understand the Gospels clearly enough to know better.

Still, they knew about the Lord and so the foundation was laid in simple faith for the revelation that would follow – in the 18th century. Now, we read, for the first time true Christianity has begun to dawn:

This New Church is the crown of all the Churches which have hitherto existed on the earth, because it will worship one visible God, in whom is the invisible God, as the soul is in the body. Only thus can there be conjunction of God with man, because man is natural, and consequently thinks naturally; while conjunction must be in thought and so in affection, and this takes place when a man thinks of God as a Man (that is, as Human). (*True Christian Religion* 787)

This is my final point: the Lord's Humanity is not seen in His physical body. (I'm sure that's why there are no authentic paintings of His actual appearance; it may even be one reason why He came to do His work on earth before photography was invented.) Rather His Humanity is seen in the record of His words and actions, the revelation of His love and wisdom so that we can reflect on it deeply and in true freedom, not fearing for our salvation but acknowledging that the Lord provides for us as we co-operate inwardly with Him.

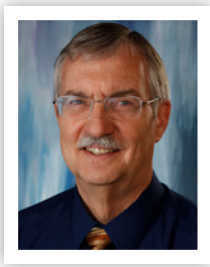
The Lord did not come to provide a sacrificial atonement to an angry God for the sins of the human race; He came to teach, and to facilitate a truly free and rational, internal, human relationship with Himself as our God so that we can understand Him and be inspired by Him and co-operate with Him no matter what the physical conditions of our lives may be.

In summary, then, as the Lord said after He healed the blind man, “For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind” (*John* 9:39), or again, “I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness” (*Ibid.* 12:46); or yet again, as He told Pilate before His crucifixion, “For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth.” (*Ibid.* 18:37)

The Lord did not come to provide a sacrificial atonement to an angry God for the sins of the human race; He came to teach, and to facilitate a truly free and rational, internal, human relationship with Himself as our God so that we can understand Him and be inspired by Him and co-operate with Him no matter what the physical conditions

of our lives may be.

In short He came to prepare us for heaven – not with a ticket to get in but with the love and wisdom we need to live in peace and harmony within the laws of His heavenly order.



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Finding the Humanity in Judas Iscariot

Seeing Judas as a Three-Dimensional Character
Offers Us a New Lens on Redemption

The Rev. Christopher A. Barber¹

To the modern mind, the name Judas is synonymous with traitor, and this traces right back to the disciple who betrayed God: Judas Iscariot. Who was this man and how did he fall so far from grace? How did he go from walking, teaching and healing with Jesus, to being loathed by Christians from the earliest church until today? How did he go from living with the source of life to taking his own life?

Was he a fraud, targeting Jesus as an easy source of cash? Was he a man beset by disillusionment, driven to the brink by his disappointment in the mission and ministry of Jesus? Was he a sleeper cell who somehow insinuated himself into Jesus' inner circle, who bided his time until he had Him where he wanted Him? Was he the devil? Or was he merely a pawn in a game too big for him to understand?

Seeking to understand Judas Iscariot leads us to regard him as a three-dimensional human being rather than a flat icon of villainy, and this in turn offers us an unexpected new lens on our own redemption.

Judas in One Dimension

Judas doesn't get as much attention as other lesser disciples. There is neither clear background of where he is from nor is there a telling of his call to discipleship. The four evangelists unanimously paint Judas as a one-dimensional character. Reading his story, he seems to be included for one purpose only: to betray Jesus.

¹ With thanks to Dr. Annika Barber for reviewing and offering suggestions on syntax and flow.

Some disciples have their former professions and hometowns listed. Others are depicted with a range of emotions and challenging dispositions. Thomas has strong thoughts, doubts and regrets. Simon Peter is regularly up and down in the rankings. John is the beloved disciple. Zacchaeus is short and climbs trees. Judas, however, is bland and is of one mind: contradict, bamboozle and betray Jesus. But didn't Judas have thoughts and feelings and quirks? If even Jesus vacillated between confidence and anxiety, between joy and sadness, between feasting and fasting, could Judas have been so decidedly uncomplicated?

On the surface, Judas does not seem like he has much to offer. He is a theory. Judas is a pawn. He is not a person. But was Judas like this in actual history? Or has he perhaps been stripped of his humanity? Was Judas once a vibrant person who worked with Jesus with enthusiasm and vigor? Did he laugh with his companions? Did he enjoy the wine at the wedding at Cana? Did he himself teach and work miracles with his brethren? Did he pray and weep and smile and faint and wonder and fear and dream and tremble and hope? Who shaved him down to a plot point? Who turned him into a symbol of hatred, wickedness, selfishness, greed and betrayal? Did Judas really *live*? And if he lived, who stripped him of that life in the Gospel accounts?

Lord, is it I?

When evening had come, He sat down with the twelve. Now as they were eating, He said, "Assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me."

And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and each of them began to say to Him, "Lord, is it I?" (*Matthew 26:20-22*)

In that moment they all felt convicted – all twelve disciples: Andrew, Bartholomew, James the Elder, James the younger, John, Judas, Jude, Matthew, Peter, Philip, Simon and Thomas. None pointed fingers. None cast aspersions. None defensively called Jesus a liar, delusional, paranoid or mistaken. All took His words at face value. All assumed the worst of themselves. They each worried that they might turn on their Lord and their God.

But as Jesus said, only one of His most trusted disciples would turn on Him. Only one would reveal His location to those who sought to take His life. Only one would betray the confidence of the Son of Man. Only one would seal His fate with a kiss. And yet, when Jesus revealed this harsh truth to His twelve closest students and friends, there came twelve desperate pleas asking, "Lord, is it I?"

As we know, it was Judas Iscariot. But who was Judas really?

Chosen: Judas the Disciple

“He [Judas] was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry.” (Acts 1:17)

Life as a disciple was not an easy undertaking. A person required more than mere desire to be a member of Jesus’ inner circle. In order to be a disciple of Jesus, one had to be accepted. For many, their introduction into discipleship was the Jesus’ simple call to “Follow me.” (*Mark 2:14; Matthew 4:19, et al.*) It is a very powerful experience to read the Gospel accounts of Jesus building His inner circle.

Judas’ individual invitation to discipleship is missing from the Gospels. Did Judas come to Jesus, hoping to be accepted? Or did Jesus surprise Judas with an invitation? This remains a mystery. While some do come to Jesus and ask to be part of His work, it is a two-way agreement. Consider Jesus speaking of His intentional relationship with His disciples:

You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. These things I command you, that you love one another. (*John 15:14-17*)

Those who know the *Gospel of John* have probably already noted that Judas was not actually present when Jesus spoke the words above (he was busy preparing for Jesus’ capture), so it seems that Judas Iscariot is not one of Jesus’ chosen. However, reading this account from *Luke* clearly shows that Jesus intentionally chose Judas Iscariot.

Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles: Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; James and John; Philip and Bartholomew; Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called the Zealot; Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot [editorializing omitted]. (*Luke 6:12-16*)

But as Jesus said, only one of His most trusted disciples would turn on Him. Only one would betray the confidence of the Son of Man. And yet, when Jesus revealed this harsh truth to His twelve closest students and friends, there came twelve desperate pleas asking “Lord, is it I?”

It's hard to deny that, at least at first, Judas must have been committed to discipleship. Being with Jesus was not the easiest thing to do. It takes commitment to stick with Jesus. No one follows Him casually.

Whatever Judas turned out to be, he started as one of Jesus' chosen disciples. Since he was a disciple, we can safely assume that Judas left everything behind. As a nomad, he did not have many possessions that he could bring with him. We know for sure that he held the money box, but otherwise we cannot say what he had or what he left behind.

We can say with certainty that Judas walked with Jesus. They all spent considerable time traveling together. What drove Judas to remain with Jesus? Could this have been done lightly?

It's hard to deny that, at least at first, Judas must have been committed

to discipleship. Being with Jesus was not the easiest thing to do. Jesus was constantly moving around, ruffling feathers, and eventually had a warrant out for His arrest. It takes commitment to stick with Jesus. No one follows Him casually.

We have evidence from the text that Judas was believed by his companions to be a trustworthy person. This proof comes from a vignette in the *John* account. When Jesus said someone would betray Him, no one suspected Judas.

When Jesus had said these things, He was troubled in spirit, and testified and said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me." Then the disciples looked at one another, perplexed about whom He spoke.

Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask who it was of whom He spoke.

Then, leaning back on Jesus' breast, he said to Him, "Lord, who is it?"

Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread when I have dipped it." And having dipped the bread, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. Now after the piece of bread, Satan entered him. Then Jesus said to him, "What you do, do quickly." But no one at the table knew for what reason He said this to him. For some thought, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus had said to him, "Buy those things we need for the feast," or that he should give something to the poor. (*John* 13:21-29)

As we see, even when everyone heard that one of them would betray Jesus, and Judas hurried out immediately after that, the disciples just assumed that he was going to buy something or give money to the poor. Clearly they were

aware that he was their treasurer, but why would they jump to this conclusion if Judas had no history of this kind of activity? Did the task of acquiring their food usually fall to Judas? Was he usually in charge of ministering to the poor (after all, this is the second reference to Judas worrying about the poor, *cf. John 12:5*)? Not a single one of the disciples assumed it was Judas who would betray.

All-in-all, on the surface, Judas looked very much like any other disciple. And yet he is treated very differently from other characters in the Gospels. *Is this because he turned out to be a bad guy?*

Pilate and Herod: Complex New Testament Villains

I don't think it's enough to chalk up the discrepancy between the presentation of Judas and the presentation of other characters to simple villainy. Just because a character is a villain does not mean that his character is uninteresting or uncomplicated. For the sake of comparison, let's briefly consider Pontius Pilate, one of the main "villains" in the Gospels, and see what kind of treatment he gets. (With the exception of dating, all information below is gleaned from the Gospel accounts of the Jesus story.)

Pontius Pilate has the dubious honor of being remembered for conducting the trial of Jesus of Nazareth and ultimately sentencing Him to death by crucifixion. We learn from Luke's Gospel that Pontius Pilate served as the Governor of Judea, serving "in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar" (*Luke 3:1*) (about 30AD²). At this time, others are serving in the region, including his enemy Herod who is "tetrarch of Galilee." (*Ibid.* 3:1, 23:11-12).

Pontius Pilate was a no-nonsense kind of governor. He was not afraid to squash rebellion or unruliness, and the public was all too aware of his forceful nature. His bloody interventions stuck in their collective memory and were a source of uneasiness for the Jewish people. (*Luke 13:1*) In addition to keeping the peace and maintaining order, Pilate heard cases as they were brought to him. He was a thorough examiner and valued facts and accuracy. It is this aspect of his job that is featured most prominently in the Gospels. (*Matthew 27*; *Mark 15*; *Luke 23*; *John 18-19*)

When Jesus was brought before Pilate, the governor began collecting facts. When he got no direct clear crime from the accusers, Pilate went straight to Jesus, demanding answers. Private conversations between Jesus and Pilate are reported in each of the Gospels. (*Matthew 27:11-14*; *Mark 15:2-5*; *Luke 23:3*; *John 18:33-38, 19:9-11*)

In what is reported, we see that Pilate gave Jesus every opportunity to

2 "Tiberius". Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. Encyclopædia Britannica Inc., 2016. Web. 14 Aug. 2016
<<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Tiberius>>.

defend himself of the charges against Him. Jesus did not give him much to work with and neither did the priests and Pharisees, but Pilate could tell that something was amiss. He was certain that Jesus was innocent of the mess of charges brought against Him, and he asserted this conviction, even shouting over the angry mob at his door to make his ruling known. (*Matthew* 18:23, 24; *Mark* 15:10, 14; *Luke* 23:14-16, 20, 22; *John* 18:38, 19:4, 6, 12)

This trial set Pilate's teeth on edge. This was not an ordinary sedition case, it was something more. Not only was it unsettling to Pilate, it disturbed his wife as well. She sent an urgent message to Pilate telling him to be careful because she had unsettling dreams about Jesus, whom she believed was innocent. (*Matthew* 27:19) Something was different. Pilate was accustomed to being in control, but his authority seemed to mean nothing to Jesus. (*John* 19:10-11) His authority, in fact, was challenged at every turn. Pilate was positive that Jesus was innocent, and he did all in his power to stick to this ruling. However, he had a weak spot: Pilate cared about his reputation.

This case left Pilate feeling uneasy. He regularly feels shocked, anxious, afraid, even exasperated by the events that are unfolding. (*Matthew* 27:14, 23-24; *Mark* 15:4-5, 14, 44; *Luke* 24:20-24; *John* 18:35, 38, 19:6, 8-10) Again and again, Pilate sputters, trying to hold his ground that Jesus is innocent, but in that moment his authority meant nothing to the crowd.

There was only one ruling that would satisfy the mob: crucifixion. Pilate was loath to make that call, but when the crowd pressured him by calling into question his loyalty to Caesar, he broke. Pilate, despite his better judgment, gave in to the pressure of their demands and sentenced Jesus to death by crucifixion. (*Mark* 15:15; *Luke* 23:24; *John* 19:12-16)

The Biblical Pontius Pilate is a very compelling character. When we take all of his details into account, we are left with a sense of a real flesh-and-blood human being. The Biblical Pilate is a person with convictions and relationships. He is a person with strong character traits. He is willing to stand up for what he believes, but he has his limits, and when he gets pushed too far, he breaks. He seems committed to justice, but is also wary

Echoes and shadows of Judas' humanity remain preserved between the lines and verses of the Gospels. By taking a close look at his own words as recorded by the Evangelists, we can hear him calling to us, begging us to understand his life and struggles.

of the realities of politics and governance.

While there are some differences between the historical record of Pontius Pilate and the Gospel record, what we do have from the Gospels paints a very vivid picture of someone who is a villain. His humanity is preserved by the evangelists despite the shameful role he played in the death of Jesus of Nazareth.

Pilate is not the only villain to be presented with such humanity. (In *Luke* 23:8 Herod is actually reported as being extremely excited to meet Jesus “because he had heard many things about Him, and he hoped to see some miracle done by Him.”) It is clear that it was possible for the Gospel writers to present a character in such a dynamic way, but Judas Iscariot was denied this same kind of treatment, and as a result, his humanity has faded away. How can Judas reclaim his humanity so that he can speak to us today?

Echoes and shadows of Judas’ humanity remain preserved between the lines and verses of the Gospels. By taking a close look at his own words as recorded by the Evangelists, we can hear him calling to us, begging us to understand his life and struggles. These words, along with a critical analysis of his recorded deeds, will leave us with a fuller picture of a disciple in conflict with himself, and one who felt hopeless, helpless and forever condemned.

Judas Speaks

When it comes down to it, even though we have access to quotes that are attributed to Judas biblically, it is very possible that all we have to go by when it comes to the historical Judas is a name and a legacy.

Below are the collected direct quotations from the four Gospels attributed to Judas. These words may or may not have been uttered by Judas. They could well have been written by an evangelist who hated Judas on account of what he did to Jesus. This might seem farfetched, but it is odd that in each of the Gospels Judas is introduced as the betrayer well before any subversive or traitorous deeds take place. (Spoiler alert!)

And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: . . . and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him. (*Matthew* 10:1-4; cf. *Mark* 3:14-19, *Luke* 6:12-16; also *John* 6:70-71)

Despite these disclaimers and concerns, Judas’ quotes throughout the Gospels are our best chance for hearing the voice of Judas. (The quotations below are organized in the chronological order of the story of Jesus.)

Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor? (*John* 12:5)

What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you? (*Matthew 26:15*)

Then Judas, who was betraying Him, answered and said, “Rabbi, is it I?” He said to him, “You have said it.” (*Matthew 26:25*)

“Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him.” Immediately he went up to Jesus and said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” and kissed Him. (*Matthew 26:48*)

“Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him and lead Him away safely.” As soon as he had come, immediately he went up to Him and said to Him, “Rabbi, Rabbi!” and kissed Him. (*Mark 14:44-45*)

“I have sinned by betraying innocent blood” . . . Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself. (*Matthew 27:4-5*)

Between the Lines: The Real Judas?

There is very little that we can say about the “real” Judas Iscariot, the Judas who had a life and profession before he became immortalized in the Jesus story. There are a few clues embedded in his name that have been the source of much speculation – where he is from, who his family was, what his political and religious beliefs were – but when all is said and done, we know next-to-nothing about the real Judas.

From a few interactions, we detect some strong indications of how Judas’ time before his involvement in ministry might have been spent. This brief survey will revolve around one key feature of Judas which is touched on time and time again across the Gospels: Judas’ relationship with money.

Jesus’ disciples made real sacrifices to follow Him: they left their jobs, their families, their homes, and their possessions behind. Even so, they all still had physical needs. Their ministry was not powered solely by miracles, but was supported by the kindness of friends (like Mary and Martha of Bethany) and good old-fashioned coin.

Jesus’ ministry functioned, not as 13 independent contractors each managing his own affairs, but rather as one corporation. As such, all of their money was managed by a single treasurer who counted, carried and dispensed all of their money as each occasion demanded. That treasurer was none other than Judas Iscariot.

[...Judas] had the money box. [editorializing omitted]” (John 12:6; 13:29)

A few hints are available regarding Judas’ service as treasurer, but first consider how one might get to become a treasurer of a corporation. A person who serves as treasurer ought to be trustworthy and competent with money – that is, able to tally, budget, even project how much will be needed in the future. It is hard to believe that anyone would leave their money in the hands of one whom they did not trust or believe to be competent. So it is a safe

assumption that the disciples trusted Judas' abilities and character.

In a very famous scene, a woman pours out a container of Spikenard (a very costly oil from the Himalayas) on Jesus as an offering. In the *Matthew* account of this, all of the disciples rage at the sight of such waste, demanding why it hadn't been sold and the money given to the poor. However, in the *John* account, this disapproval is presented as being expressed exclusively and more explicitly by Judas!

Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor? (*John* 12:5)

Judas really demonstrates his familiarity with money here. Not only does he recognize that the oil is valuable, but he, in the midst of his emotion, conducts an appraisal of the amount used. If Judas' estimate is correct then this is an impressive feat, especially given that lower class workers (such as made up Jesus' disciples) would not have had much occasion to become familiar with such luxuries. How did Judas know the cost of the oil? Had he overheard the woman speaking of its value? Or had he worked with luxuries in the past? Was he a trader? A merchant? Did he work in imports and exports?

Whatever his life before becoming a disciple, these few clues serve to connect the reader to a broader view of Judas. With this broader view, we can see that Judas was essential to the mission of Jesus and was trusted by everyone who worked with him.

The Betrayal

Whatever has been lost concerning the Judas of history, the man who had a life before he ever met Jesus, what remains of Judas biblically is damning. Whether or not he was a man of good humor, was adept with his numbers and finances, and even though he was an integral part of Jesus' ministry for three years – these questions and considerations tend to fall away when we remember the fact that Judas Iscariot committed the most heinous act of betrayal in human history.

What could have driven Judas to such an act? The Gospels offer three

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possibilities. They imply that it was greed that drove his actions. (*Matthew 26:14-16; John 12:6*) They also include an even more troubling possibility – demonic possession. (*Luke 22:3; John 13:27*) But also, Jesus opens the door to something more puzzling – a kind of predestination in the form of fulfillment of prophesy. (*John 13:17-18*) Jesus’ pronouncement of prophesy is punctuated by His foreknowledge that Judas would eventually betray Him. (*Matthew 26:24-25; Mark 14:18-21; Luke 22:21-23; John 13:21-30*) All of these options, biblically founded and confirmed, create a four-way tension between Judas’ personal failing, the overpowering nature of hell, ancient narrative, and divine permission.

Regardless of his motivation, Judas did do something terrible, and he lived to regret it. From Matthew’s account:

Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the 30 pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.”

And they said, “What is that to us? You see to it!”

Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself. (*Matthew 27:4-5*)

This is arguably the most human account of Judas Iscariot in the entire Gospel anthology. Whereas Judas had been so single-minded before – intent on thieving and betraying, he is here depicted as a man full of regret, as one so moved with guilt and remorse that he cast to the ground the very 30 coins that are purported to have sealed his betrayal in the first place. But even this gesture was not enough to assuage Judas’ guilt. Hastening from the presence of the chief priests and elders, Judas gave over the last thing that he had to his name – his own life.

The Conscience of Judas

Without Matthew’s tragic account of the torment and end of Judas’ life, posterity would be left with the image of Judas as a two-timing, unrepentant, good-for-nothing devil of a man. But this last scene of Judas reveals that he had one thing that people do not often afford the man: a conscience. Think of Judas Iscariot when you read the following selections on conscience from *New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine*:

A person’s spiritual life really consists in having a true conscience, for there his faith is combined with charity. Acting in accordance with one’s conscience is therefore for such people the same as acting in accordance with the prompting of one’s own spiritual life; and acting against one’s conscience is for them acting against their own spiritual life. Consequently they enjoy the tranquility of peace and inner blessedness, when they act in accordance with their conscience; but they experience disturbance and pain when they act against it. **This pain is what is called remorse.**

Some examples will illustrate the nature of conscience. If someone has in his possession someone else's goods, without the owner's knowledge, so that he can enjoy them without fear of legal action or losing his honors or reputation, but still gives them back to the other person, because they are not his, **such a person has a conscience.** (#133, 136, emphasis mine)

Could it be that Judas was not so single-minded in his betrayal of Jesus as the Gospels paint him to be? While it is undeniable that he did a terrible thing, perhaps he could still be redeemed from his sin. Based on the above passages, that Judas felt anguish on account of the evil that he did, this is a strong indicator that he did indeed have a conscience. A person's conscience is formed:

... by the truths of faith he learns from the Word, or by teaching from the Word, depending upon how he receives them in his heart. For when someone knows the truths of faith and grasps them in his own manner, and so comes to will and do them, then he develops a conscience. Receiving them in the heart means in the will, for a person's will is what is called the heart. (*New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* 131)

Judas Iscariot walked and talked and learned from the Word made flesh. That Judas wrestled within himself, and experienced great anguish on account of what he had done – this shows us that Judas was no devil, but rather was human.

Judas Redeemed?

Judas did not live to see the fullness of the injustice that Jesus endured. He did not stand in the wings, watching the public trial before Pilate. He did not walk in the press to Golgotha to witness the crucifixion. He did not see the pain on the faces of Jesus' family as the soldiers and priests mocked Him. He did not see the sacrifices made and the risks taken by those who buried Him.

Judas did not tremble in fear with his brothers, the disciples who stayed hidden, lest they be arrested and executed for being part of Jesus' mission. And he was not present when Jesus made His return and marked His triumph over death. How might things have played out if Judas had found the strength to carry on in the face of what he had done? Could Judas have been redeemed?

Judas Iscariot walked and talked and learned from the Word made flesh. That Judas wrestled within himself, and experienced great anguish on account of what he had done – this shows us that Judas was no devil, but rather was human.

On the cross, surrounded by criminals, hecklers and cruel soldiers, Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.” (*Luke 23:34*) How far did that forgiveness extend? Was Jesus asking forgiveness for the criminals who were crucified alongside Him? Was Jesus asking forgiveness for those soldiers who divided His clothes between them and mocked Him as He hung dying before them? Was Jesus asking forgiveness for Pontius Pilate who buckled under pressure and ordered the crucifixion? Was Jesus asking forgiveness for the crowd who turned on Him? Was Jesus asking forgiveness for the priests and leaders who put a price on His head in the first place? Was Jesus asking forgiveness for Judas Iscariot who betrayed Him into the hands of those who sought to kill Him?

Jesus said, “Forgive them, for they do not know what they do,” but did anyone involved in this really know what they were doing? If anyone had been aware that Jesus was the Word made flesh, would they have put Him to death? If anyone had truly grasped the magnitude of the events that had been unfolding over Jesus’ three-year ministry, could anyone have stood against it? Would Judas have done his vile deed if he had known that he sealed the fate of God on earth?

Judas was not the only disciple to go against Jesus in those last days. Simon Peter denied Jesus three times (*Matthew 26:69-75; Mark 14:66-72; Luke 22:55-63; John 18:16, 25-27*) and Thomas was of little faith that Jesus had returned. (*John 20:24-25*) Both of these disciples received personal attention by Jesus following His return. (*John 21:15-19, 20:26-29*)

He did not reject them, but received them lovingly and gave them what they needed to be comforted. While Judas’ actions led to a worse outcome for Jesus than those of either Simon Peter or Thomas, I cannot help but wonder how Jesus’ reunion with Judas would have taken place following His resurrection if Judas had not taken his own life.

Judas Put to Rest

In *The Acts of the Apostles* (commonly called the *Book of Acts*) – a book of the Bible which tells the history of the disciples after Jesus’ ascension – we get a glimpse of how the remaining disciples processed Judas’ betrayal of their friend and teacher.

Immediately following Jesus’ parting words to the disciples (called *apostles* in *Acts*), He ascended back to heaven, and the 11 who remained reconvened in Jerusalem along with about a hundred other unnamed followers of Jesus. It was there that Simon Peter rose and spoke:

Men and brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus; for he was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry.

(Now this man [Judas] purchased a field with the wages of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out. And it became known to all those dwelling in Jerusalem; so that field is called in their own language, Akel Dama, that is, Field of Blood.)

For it is written in the *Book of Psalms*:

“Let his dwelling place be desolate,
And let no one live in it.” And, “Let another take his office.”

Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.

And they proposed two: Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed and said, “You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.” And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles. (*Acts* 1:16-26)

Simon Peter grasped that all events had to unfold in a certain way in order to fulfill the Scriptures. He understood that Judas was a small part of a much bigger narrative that had been set in motion from the very beginning of humanity.

The *Acts of the Apostles* presents the 11 remaining disciples as taking Judas’ betrayal in stride. By this time they have been comforted and reassured that Jesus, their friend and teacher, is safe and better off now than He had been when He was alive. They had been instructed as to how the events that unfolded were preordained and prophesied. (*Luke* 24:13-32) And so all that remained to do was to clear up the empty space left by Judas Iscariot. They replaced him with a man named Matthias. And that was that.

Following this, Judas is put to rest and gets no further mention in the Bible.

His final reference in the Bible is rather graphic and unsettling, but it is presented in the context of full awareness that Judas played an important and inevitable part of the Jesus story, and that Jesus could not complete His mission without him. In the *Acts of the Apostles* there is a kind of tacit acceptance of Judas’ sad role that is strikingly absent from the four Gospels.

There is Hope for Judas

Though Judas’ story trails off in the *Acts of the Apostles*, a small clue as to his eternal situation is provided in a brief spiritual experience recorded by Swedenborg in *The Word Explained* (which is an early attempt at deep Biblical exposition and reads like the *Arcana Coelestia*).

What we find in *The Word Explained* 3158 forces us to reconsider everything we know about Judas. If there is hope for Judas, then there is also hope for us.

In passage 3158 of *The Word Explained*, Swedenborg writes concerning admission into heaven, and how none is admitted without first being prepared spiritually. The passage speaks frankly of temptations and how “God Messiah” (the Lord) permits people to struggle, as it is in these times that He can work most closely with people and bring about the greatest changes. Swedenborg concludes the passage with a note on extraordinary cases of reformation and preparation for heaven:

To this it must be added that some are indeed reformed more quickly, and even at the moment of death; but then they are of such a nature that they had been prepared previously in a marvelous manner of which they themselves are ignorant; otherwise, if saved by the mere mercy of God Messiah, they would undergo infernal torments, **as was told me concerning Judas the betrayer, of whom however, there is said to be hope** because he was one of the elect who were given to God Messiah by Jehovah the Father, as declared by God Messiah himself. [John 17:6] (*The Word Explained* 3158, emphasis mine)

With this brief note, we find hope for Judas. There is an assurance that even though he was not present for the resurrection, the Lord did not forget him. We see that perhaps Judas was being prepared for heaven “in a marvelous manner of which [he himself] was ignorant.” And most significantly, that Judas would not suffer in eternal damnation for being chosen to play the villain in a narrative so huge that he could not understand his place in it.

What we find in *The Word Explained* 3158 forces us to reconsider everything we know about Judas. This is only a brief selection in a posthumously published “pre-theological” work, but what it has to offer the legacy of Judas cannot be overstated, especially because of what it has to offer us.

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Conclusion

Many disciples have small details stated explicitly regarding their families, occupations, even their thoughts and feelings. Judas, however, does not get similar treatment, despite being one of the most significant disciples on account of his role in the ultimate prophesy-fulfilling “lifting up” of Jesus.

Because of their age and brevity, it might be tempting to believe that the Gospels are closer to mere registers of events with no frills than they are to

character-driven epics. But a closer reading reveals that they are not utilitarian presentations of the life of Jesus. They are narratives, full of rich details and intrigue and riddle and mystery and personality. The Gospels have shown that they care about the characters that move the story forward – even villains. But Judas Iscariot received such a notably different treatment.

Did the evangelists downplay Judas' love for Jesus and emphasize his human failings? Did they deny him a true place in posterity by ignoring his service and simplifying him to evil incarnate? Did the evangelists fear that their readers would sympathize with Judas?

That this man is still known to humanity and that he can still impact people in such a way as to cause wonder and woe is in itself a testimony to his importance. It is evidence of his immortality, and is a sign that the spirit of Judas lives on in people today, just as his spirit was present in some shape or form in each of Jesus' disciples during that solemn last supper, when each of them asked, "Lord, is it I?"

Seeing Judas as a real person – not just an icon of betrayal – allows us to ask both, "Is it I?" and to know that no matter how far we feel we have turned away, with remorse and repentance, the Lord's redemption surely awaits.

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In Support of Mental and Spiritual Health

A Sermon by the Rev. David C. Roth

The New Church at Boulder, Colorado – January 8, 2017

Lessons: Luke 15:3-7; Matthew 2:13-18; Secrets of Heaven 2077, 905

To begin I want to draw our attention back to the Christmas story for a moment. It is a wonderful story of both hope and promise – the promise of bringing light into a dark world, restoring a state of freedom and bringing love to people again. We see Goodness setting the stage to overcome those dark forces. And then right on the heels of that beautiful story of innocence, peace and light is this story of evil, pain and horror: the story of Herod, in his jealous rage, killing all the male children two years old and below in Bethlehem and the surrounding areas.

I bring up this contrast to remind us that hell is real and that there are forces at work against us whose influences are powerful, insidious and cruel.

But they are not more powerful than the forces of love, light and kindness. Sometimes we forget that. We don't feel that.

The reading that we shared today from the Heavenly Doctrines says that the Lord's love is *unbelievable in the extreme*. I don't know how He could have said it more strongly than that. It's unbelievable in the extreme. We can't truly imagine how much the Lord loves us. And angels think nothing of giving their own lives to save us and they would suffer hell in our place if they could. That's how much they love

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us. And their love is something they receive from the Lord.

The point is there is this duality that exists and we are sandwiched between the forces of good and the forces for evil, and their influences affect all of us. We are vessels that receive life. And life is flowing into us all the time. We are supposed to be in a state of equilibrium. We are supposed to be able to freely recognize those things and freely choose what influences we will listen to – to accept the true and good things and to reject the selfish and hellish things. But that's not always the case.

Earlier this week we received news from my hometown of a beloved teacher, coach, mentor, mother and wife who took her own life. The community was shocked and rocked by that. She seemed so together, so happy and so inspiring to so many people. She was such an influence for good. And you ask yourself the question: "How could that possibly happen?" The answer: She was a victim of mental illness and a terrible assault from the hells. That act is not who she was.

I was in disbelief myself and saddened and left with the realization that we need to turn up the light. To turn it up very brightly. To turn it up so brightly that hell has nowhere to hide. So I am talking about this today. If this makes you uncomfortable, I am sorry about that but we need to bring it into the light and to talk about mental health and mental illness. I hope you will take time to share your thoughts at the end of the service too.

You have probably seen this said somewhere or heard it perhaps: "Everyone is fighting a battle that you are not aware of." Have you heard that? Everyone is fighting a battle that we just don't know about. Some of them are what the Writings call trials. We experience these trials for the things that have to do with this natural world, like maybe trying to diet or the struggle that we experience when we are trying not to eat ice cream. That kind of trial.

It's a pain but it's not that bad, if you think about it. Sure it's a struggle, like wanting to lose weight. It's a struggle like when we need to work out but we don't really want to. It's that trial that we experience – that struggle.

And then there are spiritual temptations that the Writings talk about where we're actually trying to change our character and are trying to grow spiritually. We are trying to leave behind a bad habit. They concern things that we want

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to get rid of and as we try to do that we enter into a state of temptation. There is a struggle because we're trying to do what is good and hell wants to keep us in that negative state. So we experience a struggle.

Our experience of it may come in the form of depression, anxiety, fear or all kinds of negative emotions. We don't even know why, necessarily, but we experience those types of anguish. But what's happening is that we are being removed from hell and being brought closer to the state of heaven. And that is a good thing. Temptations are a good thing. And often, we are

told, they go to the point of despair, where we just feel like we can't go or hold on any further, and then – it stops. It's lifted. But there's a difference with some people. What they experience is that it is not lifted. It doesn't stop. It doesn't seem to end. And they don't seem to be able to do anything about it.

In *Secrets of Heaven* we read: "From all this one may see what natural trial is and what spiritual temptation is." Then it talks about this third kind: "A third kind of temptation or trial also exists which is anxiety and depression caused for the most part by physical or mental infirmity. Such anxiety may involve some degree of spiritual temptation or it may not involve any at all."

With those who experience this third kind of temptation they are experiencing this horrible state and it's not because of spiritual growth. It's just that they are being attacked and they can't stop it. Part of the truth of that passage I want to highlight is that there are many people who suffer that way. It's beyond temptation. It is not a usual spiritual battle they are suffering from. It is the result of what we would categorize as a type of mental illness.

You may be close to someone who suffers from a form of mental illness. Look around you. Yes, most people have someone in their life who is dealing with that. We're told about 25% of the population suffers from some kind of mental illness.

So I think we need more dialogue about this. And today is just a beginning. I'm not going to say everything that you hoped I would say today and I'm not going to solve it.

But we need openness around these issues. It's often taboo to talk about it. People are hush-hush. If someone was sick or had cancer or a broken arm we would talk about it and we would invite people to support them. And if it was

us who was suffering we would get help. Yet often those who are suffering with mental illness and those who are around them suffer in silence. So I hope we can help to bring this issue into the open and help with the healing process.

Think about the 12-step program. Alcoholism in this country was a hugely taboo subject many years ago. Not that long ago, really. But now it's something we recognize. We don't shame people about it. We don't blame them about it. It's been brought into the light. We can talk about it. "Oh, you go to a 12-step group? So do I." "I go for drug addiction." Or, "I go for sex addiction" or "for drinking" or whatever it is.

We recognize that people suffer from addictions and that's something we accept. In any case people need our support and understanding and our compassion and our encouragement – the encouragement to seek help. For the battle they are fighting is very real. It is overwhelming. And hell is real and wants to destroy us. They are not nice. They won't stop. I could bring all kinds of passages to bear about that but let me just say they want to destroy us and if they can find a way to do it they will.

Let's bring this topic into the light and remove it from the place of shame and blame, and recognize that people from all walks of life suffer from various forms of mental illness. And let's recognize that we can do much more than we are doing to support one another.

One of the things I want to do today is just give voice to some of the types of mental illness that are talked about. Because there are many different conditions that are recognized as mental illness and some of the more common types are these:

- Anxiety disorders: These include generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder, social anxiety disorder, and specific phobias.
- Mood disorders: The most common mood disorders are depression, bipolar disorder and cyclothymic disorder. Psychotic disorders: Schizophrenia is an example of a psychotic disorder.
- Eating disorders: Anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa and binge-eating disorder are the most common forms.
- Impulse control and addiction disorders: Pyromania (starting fires), kleptomania (stealing), and compulsive gambling are examples of impulse control disorders. Alcohol and drugs are often the common objects of addictions.
- Personality disorders: Examples include antisocial personality disorder, obsessive-compulsive personality disorder, and paranoid personality disorder.
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD): An example is a person with an unreasonable fear of germs who constantly washes his or her hands.

If you are a parent of a teenager who you believe is affected by mental illness the most important thing you can do is to encourage your child to talk to you about the problem.

estimated that 20% of teens and adolescents meet the diagnostic criteria for mental health disorder.

So teens are struggling with this. Those with symptoms of mental illness are often afraid to speak out about it for fear of being judged by their peers or by their parents. If you are a parent of a teenager who you believe is affected by mental illness the most important thing you can do is to encourage your child to talk to you about the problem. Many teens attempt suicide as a means of escaping those symptoms that they don't know how to deal with. Suicide is the third leading cause of death for adolescents in the United States.

No matter who you are everyone needs to feel there is someone they can talk to. If we keep the issues bottled up inside it will only make the symptoms of the mental illness worse. I think about this from a spiritual perspective. Hell thrives under a cloak of darkness. When we are unwilling to bring what we are struggling with into the light, that's a victory for them.

You don't want to talk about it? That's a victory for them. We are too embarrassed to talk about it? That's a victory for them. Can you imagine someone in such a state of pain and despair that this – suicide – seems like the solution? Seems like that's a better choice – a better choice than even trying to get help for it. It feels worse for them to actually talk to somebody because it's too embarrassing. So ending their life seems like a better solution than sharing what they are

- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD): This is a condition that can develop following a traumatic and/or terrifying event.

There are other diseases or conditions, including various sleep-related problems and many forms of dementia, including Alzheimer's disease. Alzheimer's and certain forms of dementia are sometimes classified as mental illnesses, because they involve the brain.

At the Centers for Disease Control they say about 25% of Americans have some form of mental illness. Also it is

struggling with.

I want to say it's not okay if that's the culture they have to exist within. If we knew that about them we would certainly try with all of our might to help them. And the hard thing is we don't always know. But we need to shine a light. We need to help to make it okay that if you're struggling there is help. There is hope. There is someone you can talk to.

We can't always prevent it. If someone is determined, they might just do it. They will find a way. I think what we can do is to create community and connection and reach out to people and try to normalize this the best that we can. Because most often people who are struggling feel isolated.

Think of the story of the little lost lamb from *Luke 15*. I usually think about that story from the perspective of the man who had lost his sheep instead of thinking from the perspective of the lamb who is lost. Being that little lost lamb must be really hard. You're lost, you're scared, you're worried.

What can we do if that is a picture of how we feel? We can cry out. Can I say something? Can I speak out? It is hard to do that. I think we live in a culture where we're supposed to feel tough enough. That we can handle it. That we should be able to suck it up, right? This is not a healthy culture for us to live in. We need to check in with each other and have the courage to show up for one another. I think a lot of us don't do that because we are afraid we don't have the right thing to say.

There isn't a right thing to say. Just say, "I'm thinking about you." Or, "Hi." Or, "I'm here for you." It doesn't matter what you say; just let them know you're there and are thinking about them.

So why does this happen? Why is there mental illness? I don't know how to answer that question but I do know that there are spiritual influences. And with some people, whether it's chemical or physiological, there seems to be a problem with the filter – with the ability to get rid of what's flowing into them from hell. They can't stop it, or they can't see it. They can't recognize where the influences are coming from and be able to say, "Oh that, that's not me. That's hell flowing in." And they can't differentiate between what's coming in and who they are.

So it seems like there's a crack in that wall where under normal circumstances we can say, "Oh, that's hell flowing in and I don't want that." Then it can go away. But for them it just keeps coming. There is a crack there.

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It doesn't stop. In some cases I believe that medications can help seal that crack for them. This can create a level playing field for that person so they can then engage in what we might call *normal battles* against the hells, as opposed to ones that are completely overwhelming all the time.

We are a church that feels good about the truth we have. There are some very wonderful truths about the Lord's power. The one I have been referencing – that all evil is flowing in from evil spirits from hell and that all good is flowing in from heaven from the Lord. That it's not us. That's such an important teaching. If we can recognize that those voices – those negative impulses and thoughts – are not me. That I didn't create them. That they are flowing into me. Or that we can reflect, "Oh, I can say no thank you to that."

And that we can choose – but not always. Or the comforting teaching about the power of the angels to help remove evil from our minds. It teaches that an angel armed with the truth can disperse thousands of evil spirits with just a look and an effort of the will.

But I offer these beautiful truths with a caution. When I first moved here to Colorado I went to Colorado State University to take some graduate courses. I thought I was going to study Marriage and Family therapy. I found that trying to pastor a new society of the church and go to graduate school at the same time was too much. But I did take one course on Grief and Loss and started one on Adolescence.

In the course on Grief and Loss they were talking about suicide. They said that in Larimer County (where CSU was) they had the highest suicide rate in the nation. They were puzzled by that. "Why is that happening here in Larimer County?" After much thought, research and reflection they came up with the thought that there is such external beauty in Larimer County and it's sunny almost all the time. If on the inside you are struggling to feel sunny and beautiful and happy, and the world around you is sunny and beautiful and happy, the disconnect, dissonance or tension can feel overwhelming. "Why don't I feel the way it looks all around me all the time?" That was their best guess at why that happened.

I wonder if it's possible that with our teachings on the beauty of heaven and the ideals of marriage – so beautiful and so amazing – in contrast to how a person might be feeling within can be overwhelming. If someone is feeling sad, depressed and unworthy, feeling like a failure because they can't live up to the high ideals, that the tension is too great, then suicide might seem like a better choice.

So we share these truths, recognizing that we all struggle – that we're dealing with struggles and need to admit that. We are not our thoughts. We are not our bodies. We are not our diseases. We are not our illnesses. They do not define us. And no one here is perfect or without issues. Look around you. It is a room filled with imperfect people. Welcome!

That's the power of the Men's Retreat. Be part of that. It is a great place to share your struggles with other men who support you and who struggle too. There is such a power in the truth. Equip yourself with the truth. Defend yourself the best you can with that.

The Heavenly Doctrines say that the Church that has Divine truths from the Lord has power over the hells. Power over the hells. I encourage people to read the Word every day. I think that's a powerful thing you can do to be in the Lord's presence because it's not just a book with words on it. It's the Lord Himself. He's there with you as you read it. It's connecting with His power, even if you don't understand what's being said or get the point. To connect with that. I think of it as suiting yourself up with armor so you can go out and live your life. Life is hard.

The Writings teach: "Nothing is of greater importance to us than knowing what the truth is. When we know what the truth is, and know it so well that it cannot be perverted, it cannot then be steeped in evil desires and have a deadly effect." (*Arcana Coelestia* 794)

So that's important. And reach out. The task I want to give each of us this week is to reach out to five different people. It could be through Facebook or on the phone or in person. Whatever you do reach out to someone and just say, "Hey, how are you? I was thinking about you." Whatever it is, reach out to somebody.

Research confirms that people with support from family and friends is a key part of helping them with their mental illness. It provides a supportive network that supports them and gives them emotional help. It can feel very hard to reach out. And it can feel very hard to ask for help.

I want to read an excerpt from an article someone shared with me. The author wrote about how hard it was to call the Suicide Prevention Hotline. I want to read part of it. I think it highlights what we struggle with. It says:

"A few days ago I found myself on the phone with the suicide prevention lifeline . . . embarrassing to admit. I felt guilty and ashamed, and I didn't have the strength to call anybody in my regular support network of friends and loved ones. My mind was fearful I would be a burden on them. It's this shame and guilt that makes this such a deadly issue. Our minds tell us to hide, to pretend it isn't there, and not to 'bother' the people we would effect if we were no longer living – *and who would do anything to help us.*"

The Lord is calling on each one of us to be the people who reach out. He can't directly benefit us that way. He needs us to do that. You hear that? He needs us to do that.

A little tension there. There are people who love us and would do anything to help us but we feel too embarrassed to reach out to them.

Here is what the Lord says:

“God loves every one of us but cannot directly benefit us; He can benefit us only indirectly through each other. For this reason He inspires us with His love, just as He inspires parents with love for their children.” (*True Christian Religion*)

The Lord is calling on each one of us to be the people who reach out. He can't directly benefit us that way. He needs us to do that. You hear that? He needs us to do that.

So what I want to say loud and clearly to you is that you are not alone. We see you. And we love you. We accept you and we want you here. You're not less than. You are not unworthy. You're more than good enough. You are loved and you are valued.

We read in *Jeremiah 29:11* “For I know the plans I have for you,” says the LORD. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.”

In *Isaiah 49:14-16*, Jerusalem says, “The LORD HAS DESERTED US; the Lord has forgotten us.” “Never! Can a mother forget her nursing child? Can she feel no love for the child she has borne? But even if that were possible, I would not forget you! See, I have written your name on the palms of my hands.”

We read in *True Christian Religion 56*: “These few considerations can reveal the madness of those who think, even more believe, more still teach, that God can damn anyone, curse them, cast them into hell, predestine their soul to eternal death, avenge injuries, be angry or punish anyone. He is not even able to turn His face away from us and frown upon us.”

And in *Secrets of Heaven 223*: “Since the Lord's face is mercy, peace, and all good, it is clear that He always looks with mercy on anybody, and never turns His face away from anybody.”

And finally in *Deuteronomy 31*: “Be strong and courageous. Don't tremble! Don't be afraid of them! The LORD your God is the one who is going with you. He won't abandon you or leave you.”

Amen.



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Coping With Grief

The Rev. David C. Roth

(Note: This was written by the pastor for the newsletter of the Boulder, Colorado, New Church.)

In the New Church we have an abundance of beautiful and comforting teachings on life after death. This can be such a blessing to people. It is a blessing to know what happens to us when we die; it can remove many of the fears we may have. It is also a blessing to know what happens to our loved ones when they die. It is comforting to be able to place them when we can no longer be with them physically. In a small way, it may be analogous to seeing a friend's or sibling's apartment after they have moved across the country. We still miss them, but now we can picture their surroundings and it brings a sense of relief.

On the other side of the coin, we can also be quite naive about death and what someone may be going through. We like to say things like, "Everything will be okay. He's in a better place." Or, "Don't cry, she is in heaven now." Or "I know how you must feel." (No we don't, unless we have been there.)

We can have the opinion that if someone believed in what the Writings teach about heaven that they would have no sorrow over the passing of a loved one. This is not the case – except maybe in cases of acute denial, but even then the sorrow will manifest itself in some other way in the future.

The fact is that when someone loses a friend, spouse, child, parent, grandparent, brother, sister or whomever, their whole world can become quite insane. They may be wondering whether they have gone crazy because they cannot seem to think of anything else and can't stop crying about it. Or they may wonder if they need to go to the hospital because they are feeling physically very sick. Everyone's experience is different, and yet everyone's experience is similar in that they feel a great deal of pain over an undetermined period of time.

Many people believe or were told that they will "get over it" in a year or in so many months. But what researchers and experience have shown recently is that people don't get over it; it is always a part of their life and experience.

They will eventually start to resume the activities of their “normal” life, like shopping, cleaning, going to work and socializing – but that doesn’t mean that their grief has been resolved or that they are over it.

So what are some of the things that we can do to help somebody after the death of a loved one?

One of the first things we can do is not assume we know how they feel or try to discount the grief they are experiencing.

Here are six helping strategies that I learned in a class on *Grief and Loss* that we can use to help those who have lost a loved one.

1. Give permission to grieve

Tell the person that you are sorry about their loss. Or let them know that they have a right to be in pain. It may be of a comfort to know that they are not insane but that what they are experiencing is quite normal. I was struck by a story of a minister who came to someone’s house after they lost a loved one and instead of saying the normal, “He’s in a better place and in better hands,” he said, “It hurts like hell, doesn’t it?” This was exactly what the man was thinking and feeling. He wasn’t feeling that it was for the best that he had lost his son or that everything was fine. It wasn’t.

2. Avoid the Conspiracy of Silence

We have a tendency not to want to bring up discussion about the deceased because it may cause pain. But we need to know that the person who has lost a loved one most likely wants to talk about it with someone – maybe even needs to talk about it. We go to the person’s house and neither of us brings it up because we don’t know if the other person can handle it so it becomes this huge barrier. You may just say, “I am sorry about your husband. Do you want to talk about this?” It is important to invite them to talk about it, never force them.

With children we need to remember that they grieve also. Just because they may not manifest it the same way that we do doesn’t mean that they aren’t sad. Talk with them about it. They may need to ask a lot of questions over a long period of time because they can only understand so much at one time about such an event. And don’t tell them something that isn’t true, such as, “Mommy went on a long trip,” or “Grandma is sleeping for a long time.” These two things are both reversible and so they may expect them to return. Or they may be afraid to go to sleep for fear they will sleep so long or be taken away.

3. Recognize Anniversary Dates

On occasions like the anniversary of someone’s death or around festive times like Christmas try to be especially supportive. At these times especially strong emotions may bubble back to the surface. Organizing a get-together of friends can be useful. Inactivity is not useful to someone who is grieving. Try to phone, send a card, or visit someone at these times, or make sure they have people around.

4. Encourage Externalization of Grief

Let someone know that it is okay to cry. (Actually, big boys do cry.) But also realize that crying is not the only way that people grieve. The individual may not be a crier. Maybe they need to have a punching bag installed in their basement because some people need a physical energy release of some other kind. Try to encourage that, if it is their way. People may need to write down their ideas, just talk with you, or do a ritual of some sort that has special meaning to them.

5. Be Available - Listen

It is helpful to be there to listen – not just being a warm body, but being there emotionally for the person. If you also are sad over the loss of this person cry with them. Don't assume that someone wants you to hold them if they are crying. They may not want to be touched. It is best if we can ask something like, "How can I be supportive? Would you like me to hold you?"

6. Assist in Practical and Concrete Ways - Be Specific in Offers to Help

We are all probably most familiar with the Mourner's Buffet. That is, when someone dies many people will bring over a dish of food for the family. We may scoff at this but actually it is one of the most important things we can do to help. People who are grieving will often not have the energy to cook, clean, shop, or even eat. Grieving is a very draining process and people need to keep up their strength. So helping in very tangible ways like this is extremely useful. We may not really know what to say at these times, but helping this way says a lot.

Someone who is grieving may not know what they need so when asking if you can help try to be specific. For example, "Can I take care of the children for the afternoon for you?" "Could I make dinner for you tonight?" "Can I go shopping for you?" "Can I clean up the kitchen and bathrooms for you or do the laundry?" These are extremely helpful things that we may not always think of, but they will not go unappreciated.

The death of a loved one is a very difficult time. We have the opportunity to be of use in very tangible ways at a time like this. Just because someone doesn't ask for help doesn't mean they don't need it.

As a church we have beautiful teachings to support people at this difficult time. But we also have wonderful people who can support one another in meaningful and helpful ways. The most important thing is to be available to each other at these times emotionally, physically and practically.

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The Non-Appropriation of Evil

A Sermon by the Rev. Geoffrey H. Howard

Lessons: Psalm 141:1-4; Matthew 15:10-20; Arcana Coelestia 6206

When [Jesus] had called the multitude to Himself, He said to them, "Hear and understand: Not what goes into the mouth defiles a person; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a person." (Matthew 15: 10,11)

The Lord, in His parables and teachings, frequently used images familiar to people living in this natural world to illustrate truths of a higher degree. He used the symbolic language of correspondences to raise our minds and help us think on a higher plane; to uplift us into the realm of spiritual thought. Our text is a case in point. There He speaks of the mouth, comparing what goes into it, and what proceeds out of it.

The Writings tell us that "the mouth corresponds to the thought, as do all things that belong to the mouth, the lips, the tongue and the throat." (Arcana Coelestia 8910) All of these component organs are necessary in making human speech possible. But what does our speech convey? Through our speech we convey thoughts that flow into the mind and bring them to the ears of our listeners.

Many thoughts come into our minds daily. But have we ever questioned where those thoughts come from? In order to answer that question we first need to begin from a fundamental revealed in the Word. That premise is the truth that we have all been created by the Lord. We live from Him. He is the giver and the sustainer of all life. Without the influx of His Divine life flowing into our soul, into our mind, and into our body we could not live. Everything of life flows in from Him.

But this creative and sustaining life from the Lord flows into us through two distinct channels. One is directly into the soul and then into the cerebellum of the brain. This, the Writings call "immediate influx." It directs all the involuntary functions that take place in the human body – the beating of the heart, the respiration of the lungs. It vivifies every living cell in the human body. None of these life-sustaining functions is dependent upon human thought or control.

The other aspect of the Lord's inflowing life enters into the mind through the medium of the spiritual world, that is, through heaven, the world of spirits, and hell. This is called "mediate influx" because it flows through the medium of angels and spirits in the spiritual world. It enters the other hemisphere of the brain, called the cerebrum. This is what gives us the ability to enjoy conscious thoughts and affections.

So we ask again, where do our thoughts come from? They come to us from the spiritual world, and although we are unaware of it we are always in communion with either angels or spirits of some other quality.

All of our thoughts have a basis in this world of time and space. We see trees, lakes, flowers, buildings, people, and all the physical objects around us. But the ability to interpret these images into meaningful concepts of thought comes by virtue of this mediate influx of the Lord's life flowing into our minds through the spiritual world.

The senses of the body simply serve to bring images into the mind from the world around us, but it is the influx of life from the Lord passing through the spiritual world into the cerebrum that provides for our ability to formulate thoughts and perceive their quality.

So we can rightly say that the human mind is actually in communion with two worlds. The human mind is the meeting ground where influences from the spiritual world and the natural world meet and come together, giving rise to our thoughts and affections. But we are not consciously aware of the spiritual association that is taking place as we experience the thoughts that come into our mind.

As we all know from experience, however, the thoughts we entertain can be either good or evil. The Lord has created us to be free beings, and the only freedom we truly have lies in the choice we make between good or evil. The Word of the Lord provides a clear distinction between the two. It provides us with the knowledge of truth which, if we choose to follow it, will lead to a good and truly fulfilling experience of life. By following the leading of truth advocated in the Word our thoughts are brought into consociation with the angels of heaven. But if we choose the contrary course we fall into communion with the evil spirits of hell.

Where do our thoughts come from? They come to us from the spiritual world, and although we are unaware of it we are always in communion with either angels or spirits of some other quality.

The Word reveals much about this spiritual consociation that results in the thoughts that come into our mind. From our mental observation we are completely unaware of the fact that we are actually in association with angels and spirits every moment of every day.

Perhaps the dramas we experience in our dreams, when our rational mind is inactive and quiescent, offer the clearest testimony of this fact. Spirits are then at liberty to reach into our memory and impose their fantasies upon us, causing us to feel their influence as our own.

When we awaken, our rational mind becomes reactive again and dismisses the experience as a fantasy not of our own making. Dreams are examples of the influence that spirits have upon our mind.

Angels and spirits are also with us during our wakeful hours, but again we are completely unaware of their presence. If our thoughts are in harmony with the Lord's order, we are then in association with the angels of heaven, and they cast their love and happiness upon us. But if our thoughts are turned away from the Lord in favor of selfish or merely worldly ends we fall under the influence of the hells. They are the source of all the evil lusts that the Lord referred to in our lesson: "murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." (Matthew 15: 19)

So what do we do with evil thoughts that periodically invade our mind?

If our thoughts are in harmony with the Lord's order, we are then in association with the angels of heaven, and they cast their love and happiness upon us. But if our thoughts are turned away from the Lord in favor of selfish or merely worldly ends we fall under the influence of the hells.

When we experience wicked or unkind thoughts it is easy to mistake the enticement we feel as though it were our own, causing us to feel unworthy and guilty. This is where the words of the Lord can bring us comfort and relief, for He says that it is "not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person."

Remember that the mouth corresponds to thought. The thoughts that come into our mind are not in themselves attributable to us. They come upon us from the spiritual world. Evil thoughts are breathed into our minds from hell. Good and pleasant thoughts come through associate angels in heaven when we think in accord with the teachings of the Word.

So we read in the work on Divine Providence that: "If a person were to

believe, as is the truth, that all goodness and truth originate from the Lord, and all evil and falsity from hell, he would not assign goodness to himself and make it deserving of merit, nor would he assign evil to himself and make himself guilty of it.” (Divine Providence 320) What a telling statement that is! The evil thoughts that come into our mind are not of our choosing. They are enticements from hell, and we should not feel guilt because of them.

But if, in a sane state of mind, we freely and rationally choose to act on an evil thought, then that evil does become our own. Strenuous repentance is then necessary for the Lord to render that evil quiescent, and to make us worthy to receive the grace of His forgiveness. Evils committed

from purpose, from deliberate will and action, are what are meant by the Lord’s words, “what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a person.”

But here we should add a note of caution. There are occasions when, under certain abnormal conditions, evil spirits can invade and overrun the bounds of normal human sanity. They can enter into a disturbed mind with such persuasive power that the protective faculties of freedom and rationality are temporarily overridden, leaving the victim in a state of utter despondency and unbearable depression.

This can occur from a variety of causes, concerning which we can only speculate at best. There may be vitiated conditions in the body and brain, which can distort normal rational thinking. These and other causes can open the way for evil spirits to inflict upon their victim their persuasive and destructive powers. Their influence has the effect of interposing the normal influx of life flowing from the Lord through heaven.

Actions taken under these adverse circumstances may not be of the person’s choosing, and therefore may not be imputed to them. The person may well have been held temporarily captive under the spell of this unwanted persuasion.

However, our best protection lies in turning to the Word for guidance. As we come to learn from the Word what constitutes good and what constitutes evil, that knowledge provides us with a shield of defense. For when evil

Actions taken under these adverse circumstances may not be of the person’s choosing, and therefore may not be imputed to them. The person may well have been held temporarily captive under the spell of this unwanted persuasion.

thoughts come into our mind we can both know and reflect upon their source and origin. At such a moment, we need to pause and reflect upon their source and origin. That moment of reflection is of vital importance, for in it we can evaluate the consequences to our spiritual welfare if we allow it to have mastery over us.

And the Writings reveal another remarkable fact, namely, that during such moments of reflection when evil thoughts are identified as to their origin, angels will come to our rescue and turn the evil away. "For the influx of the angels is into what a person knows and believes, but not into what a person does not know and believe." (Arcana Coelestia 6206)

From these teachings perhaps we can come to appreciate the importance of turning to the Word as a source of inspiration and instruction. Reading the Word, or hearing its sacred message being read, invites angels to be with us. It also helps greatly to strengthen our resolve to reject evil thoughts that come upon us. When we are in a quandary as to the appropriate action we should take, turning to the Lord in His Word, with a sincere prayer for guidance, can yield the enlightenment needed to go forward.

We do not live from ourselves but from the Lord alone. Yet to provide for our freedom He has given us a wonderful gift, the gift of allowing us to feel His inflowing life as our own. Yet we need to guard against the false persuasive notion of thinking that the good we may do and the truth we may speak are our own, for they are not. We cannot claim merit for the good things we may do, nor should we bask in the pride of our own intelligence for the truth we may speak. These are gifts bestowed upon us by the Lord, a truth that should be interiorly acknowledged.

But if our life, and our ability to act in it, is given us by the Lord we may wonder if there is anything that we can truly call our own? And the answer is that the only thing that is truly our own is the choice we make during times of temptation. That is the moment when we are called upon to exercise our own free will.

While the empowerment to make the choice between good or evil is from the Lord, the choice that we make is of our own choosing. That is the only area in which we are truly free. The multiple choices that we make over a lifetime form what is called our ruling love, which becomes the essence of our character that will suit us for eternal life either in heaven or in hell.

The Lord works in secret ways, and in every way possible He tries to steer our errant nature toward heaven. If we choose evil He causes us to feel troubled in conscience, and we have to hide our wrongful deed in shame. He provides that evil shall never rest comfortably, unless we in freedom determine our will to act in its favor. If we turn from our wickedness He sends His angels to inspire repentance and the promise of forgiveness. He makes it hard for us

to choose the downward path.

So truly, we may say with the Psalmist: “The Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works.” (Psalm 145: 9) Amen.

The Rev. Geoffrey H. Howard lives in retirement in Summerville, South Carolina, where he is co-pastor with the Rt. Rev. Alfred Acton II of the newly designated Charleston Group. In his active ministry, between 1961 and 1999, he served in Glenview, Illinois; Tucson, Arizona; Los Angeles, California; the Durban Society in South Africa; Bryn Athyn and Boston, Massachusetts. Contact: geoffreyhoward@earthlink.net

OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY

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

INTELLECTUAL OF THE CHURCH

The intellectual of the church, we are taught, is that when a man reads the Word, and carefully compares one passage with another, he perceives thence what is to be believed and done. It exists with those only who are enlightened, that is, who desire to know truths only for the sake of life and use. Thus the term should not be confused with what is usually called intellectualism; the emphasis here is on the search for truth as the means to the good of life. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 6222.)

Boynton Beach Retreat 2017

Compiled by Bruce Henderson

Another successful Retreat in Boynton Beach, Florida, January 29 through February 2, drew New Church members from 10 states and Canada, and featured four-day presentations by:

- **Brian Henderson**, Director of the Glencairn Museum in Bryn Athyn, speaking about this unique religious museum and what it is doing for the Church, the Academy and thousands of visitors
- **Dr. Soni Werner**, associate professor emerita of Bryn Athyn College, on *Dark and Light: Psychological and Swedenborgian Perspectives*
- **The Rev. Mac Frazier**, assistant pastor of the Glenview (Illinois) New Church, on lessons learned trying to plant a New Church in Austin, Texas, and about what works and doesn't work for church growth

The Rev. Alan M. Cowley, the new pastor in Boynton Beach, presented the banquet address on the theme: "The Great Minister-Congregation Compromise." The premise, on one hand, he said, "was to look at the apparent mismatch of a young upstart, long-haired minister, with an 'older' congregation. On the other hand, it was to look at tradition and ritual as similar to my long hair." And so he had a list of traditions on the board with the deal that if someone was willing to change a tradition, and was able to convince a majority of the people in the room to change it as well, then they would be allowed to cut off a lock of his hair.

Meanwhile, he told about some experiences in London, England, where he had previously been pastor, "which to me demonstrated well the essential internals of worship, though they were not in a church context, where our traditions were not present, and yet the internals (prayer, instruction, praise and humility) were all very present."

He ended the talk with a charge "that as we work to keep the Lord's Church going from generation to generation, that we focus more on what is essential, while finding new externals which might be better or more effective vessels for the internals. Not that we ought to throw out anything that we have

necessarily, but that we ought to be more flexible regarding the external forms and traditions in our church.”

Following are summaries of the three presentations:



Glencairn Museum

Brian D. Henderson

When John Pitcairn and the Rev. William H. Benade set off for Europe, Egypt and the Holy Land in 1877 these were not two dilettantes indulging a whim by embarking on a “Grand Tour.” They were on a mission

to spread news about the Academy of the New Church across Europe, and to see for themselves the land of the Bible. By the time they returned to Philadelphia they had purchased more than 1,000 artifacts from the ancient world, an impressive beginning for the Academy’s museum.

This was part of the story Director Brian Henderson told of how that dream has transformed this museum through the years from an almost forgotten presence on the fourth floor of the Old Library on the Academy campus to world-class status in Glencairn Museum.

Brian divided his presentation into four topics:

1. **History and Context:** Why museums matter; why the Academy established a museum; and why Glencairn Museum is relevant in the world
2. **Educational Programs:** How Glencairn Museum enriches student learning
3. **Public Programs:** How the

Glencairn Museum exists to educate a diverse audience about the history of religion, using art and artifacts from a variety of cultures and time periods. We seek to build understanding between people of all beliefs through an appreciation of common spiritual history and values. The Museum’s special focus is to preserve and interpret the art, culture and history of the New Church.

museum is sharing its mission with the broader community

4. Preserving the Past and Looking to the Future: How the museum is preserving its collections and the building; next steps for Glencairn and the Historic District

Brian noted that museums in the United States are a \$698 billion industry; they spend more than \$2 billion a year on educational activities; preserve and protect more than 1 billion objects; and are visited by 850 million people a year – more than all major league sporting events and theme parks combined.

He asked Retreat attendees how many had visited a museum in the past year and to reflect on: What experience had the most impact? How were you enriched by your visit? And are museums still important and relevant in our culture today?

A primary use, of course, is education: bringing to life what is taught in the classroom and developing appreciation and empathy for other people and cultures. Research has shown that children who visit a museum during kindergarten have higher achievement scores in reading, mathematics and science in third grade than children who did not.

What museums do is tell stories. They use artifacts to tell about people and history, about their lives and values, and promote better understanding of our collective heritage.

Brian offered several testimonials from experts in the field:

- “Access to museums . . . allows everybody to enter another world, think of another world, see the world from somewhere else, reimagine their own world, reimagine themselves. . . . The point of the museum is to allow the citizen to be a better citizen.” Neil MacGregory, Director of the British Museum
- “In every museum there is a little bit of you, whether it’s a recognition that history does mean something to you – and that maybe you should have listened harder at school – or finding that one object that makes your heart sing.” Tamsin Loveless, National Maritime Museum, Cornwall
- “Museums are magical places. They are treasure troves of interesting stuff that make us think and see the world and our place in it differently. They have the power to make us stop and wonder and be curious, to challenge our views, and ask new questions.” Miriam Bader, New York Tenement Museum

“These are just a few of the reasons why museum professionals and researchers believe that museums are important today,” Brian said, “but why

from the Academy's earliest establishment did its founders believe that a museum was a vital part of the Academy?"

After the legal charter was granted on November 3, 1877, a Theological School was established in Philadelphia, then a college the next year. But within two years of its founding – even before the Boys School (1181) and Girls School (1883) – the Academy had a museum.

But when the Academy officially opened in 1877, William Henry Benade and John Pitcairn – two men who had played such a significant role in its founding – were not there to witness it. They had already left on their grand tour, anxious to spread the word about the New Church and the Academy and to see for themselves the land of the Bible.

They returned home with more than 1,000 artifacts from the ancient world. Benade said he hoped “all our friends will bear in mind that we shall need a Museum, and will collect whatever they can find that may be of use for such a purpose.”

Of their trip along the Nile, Benade wrote glowingly about the pictures on the walls of some of the temples, “with profound reverence for the Divine Being, coupled with a deep, confiding love.”

Most Christians then focused on the differences between ancient religion and Christianity as the one true faith. They would have found it odd that a 19th century minister would express such interest in and admiration for the religion of ancient Egypt.

But Benade was speaking from a knowledge of the Five Churches. The Writings teach that the Ancient Church was located in Egypt and extended throughout the ancient world. So

The museum seeks to encourage reflection and a sense of wonder about religious traditions around the world, past and present, through an exploration of the cultural expressions of faith. We hope to engage visitors in the ongoing dialogue about the contemporary relevance of spiritual belief and practice, leading to understanding, empathy and, ultimately, compassion and tolerance for one another in our common human endeavor to find meaning and purpose in our lives.

Benade saw these tombs and temples not as an odd polytheistic religion but as illustrations of a falling Ancient Church attempting to connect with the Lord. He believed a museum could teach Academy students about ancient cultures from a New Church perspective.

A shipment of antiquities and photographs purchased in Egypt arrived in Philadelphia in the fall of 1878 and the Academy's museum was housed in Benade's home. Over the next several decades, the school – and the museum – moved from place to place in Philadelphia.

After the move to Bryn Athyn, the museum was housed first in Benade Hall, then on the top floor of the new library in 1912. It was largely neglected but revived in the early 1970s by a group of enthusiastic faculty led by Aubrey Cole Odhner.

The size, scope and quality of the museum was dramatically altered when Glencairn and its world-class collections were gifted to the Academy in 1980. When Glencairn Museum opened in 1982, the Academy's museum had grown from a collection of 1,000 objects to 10,000.

So why did Raymond Pitcairn go on to amass his own collections? He took over supervising the building the Bryn Athyn Cathedral in 1916. The stained glass windows were to be based on New Church teachings, and he was determined to duplicate the textures and pure colors of the medieval glass he had admired in European churches.

He knew he would need craftsmen with hands-on access to medieval windows and began buying medieval glass panels at auctions and from dealers in Europe and America. This collection grew to include more than 260 panels and he became an art collector of international importance.

His interests broadened and in addition to Christian art, he acquired art from ancient Egypt, the Near East, Greece and Rome, plus Asian and Islamic cultures.

A portion of the collection was on display in Cairnwood long before ground was ever broken for Glencairn, but the difficulties of exhibiting it in Cairnwood greatly influenced his desire to build a new structure – Glencairn, completed in 1939.

With the generous gift of Glencairn and its contents – after the passing of Raymond and Mildred Pitcairn – the Academy's Museum was transformed almost overnight from a “cabinet of curiosities” to a museum of international importance.

Its mission has remained essentially unchanged since Benade and Pitcairn founded the Academy's original museum. It remains a museum of religion, art and history, dedicated to using art and artifacts – as inspirational expressions of human faith – to help students and visitors better understand the history of religion.

Brian noted, “The museum seeks to encourage reflection and a sense of wonder about religious traditions around the world, past and present, through an exploration of the cultural expressions of faith. We hope to engage visitors in the ongoing dialogue about the contemporary relevance of spiritual belief and practice, leading to understanding, empathy and, ultimately, compassion and tolerance for one another in our common human endeavor to find meaning and purpose in our lives.

“As a museum of religious art, we use the art and artifacts in our collections as clues to understanding the total religious experience of the people who used them. We are interested in what each object can tell us about the beliefs of its creators, and about the ways in which they expressed those beliefs in their practices. Each object is a gateway to the history of religion as it has been experienced by religious adherents in their daily lives.”

Crispin Paine, a world renowned expert who has visited Glencairn Museum, said: “In the past, museums often changed the meaning of icons or statues of deities from sacred to aesthetic, or used them to declare the superiority of Western society, or simply as cultural and historical evidence. The last generation has seen . . . curators recognizing that objects can only be understood within their original religious context. In recent years there has been an explosion of interest in the role religion plays in museums, with major exhibitions highlighting the religious as well as the historical nature of objects.

“Objects have a unique power to speak to people, and do so on a quite different level to words, or even to images. That is why religious objects in museums must have an exceptional role and responsibility in the great cause of helping humankind to understand human motives.

"Too often, museums don't let the religious role and significance of their objects show. They treat them as art, or history, or sometimes science, and their fascinating back-story is suppressed. . . . I'm not suggesting that there's anything wrong with this – simply that it would be valuable for museums also to help visitors understand their religious meanings – as Glencairn Museum does." (Crispin Paine, world-renowned expert)

“Too often, though, museums don’t let the religious role and significance of their objects show. They treat them as *art*, or *history*, or sometimes *science*, and their fascinating back-story is suppressed. . . . I’m not suggesting that there’s anything wrong with this – simply that it would be valuable for museums *also* to help visitors understand their *religious* meanings – as Glencairn Museum does.”

Diane Apostolos-Cappadona, noted scholar of religious art at Georgetown University, wrote that Glencairn Museum “is unique in its dedication to collecting and displaying the art of world religions in the United States. The only other such museums of which I am aware are St. Mungo’s Museum of Art and Religion in Glasgow and the Museum of World Religions in Taipei. While there are museums that specialize in modern religious art, such as the Museum of Contemporary Religious Art in St. Louis and the Gallery of Modern Religious Art in Vatican City, their focus is narrower than the wide lens of Glencairn Museum.”

Brian adds: “While it may be a new trend in museums to give religious meaning back to religious objects, the Academy’s museum, from its

establishment, has interpreted the objects in its collections as expressions of faith, used for the very purpose of understanding their religious meaning in their religious context.

“The goal has always been to use objects to better understand the religious beliefs of other cultures throughout history, and to see how these cultures have received and responded to the Lord’s influx.

“For while we are taught that the Lord’s church exists specifically where the Word is, where the Lord is known, and where Divine Truths are revealed, we are also taught that there is a union of heaven through the Word with people who are outside the Church, where the Word is not found. For the Lord’s Church, whether specific or universal, is everywhere and exists with everyone who acknowledges a divine and lives a good life.”

Education is key to the museum’s

Glencairn Museum “is unique in its dedication to collecting and displaying the art of world religions in the United States. While there are museums that specialize in modern religious art, their focus is narrower than the wide lens of Glencairn Museum.”
(Diane Apostolos-Cappadona, noted scholar of religious art)

mission, which includes courses and programs for the Bryn Athyn Church School, Academy of the New Church Secondary Schools, Bryn Athyn College and many other schools and colleges throughout the greater Philadelphia area.

Part of this includes transporting them out of their time and place and asking: What was it like to live in a different time? In a different culture with different beliefs and practices? What do you see? And reinforcing what they have learned in the classroom.

The stained glass program includes capturing the invisible, with the light of God shining, and learning to “read” the messages in stained glass.

School programs include such topics as: Christmas art and workshops; Greece and Rome; mosaics and manuscripts; Islamic vs. Christian art; Egypt and Mesopotamia; China and Eastern religions; and a tie-in with local history.

Among the primary goals of all the education programs are getting students to think about and develop empathy for other cultures. They find out, for instance, what it is like to use a quill pen and to pull an old printing press.

Among testimonials from Academy and College teachers:

“Glencairn brings history to life. It helps answer the question ‘so what?’ that students may have after studying facts and dates in the classroom. It helps to humanize history, making characters relatable and events understandable. When the students interact with actual objects (holding a weapon, writing with a quill, etc.) or find themselves in a different set of circumstances (postulates in an Abbey) they see history in a personal way rather than as some remote and theoretical subject that has no relevance to their current lives.”

“Visiting the galleries in history classes is a wonderful complement to what we do in the classroom. One of my overarching goals in any history class I teach is to see the people in historical eras as fully human. Seeing actual objects, the ‘real deal,’ helps to do just this by making history, especially religious history, come alive. For me, it is hard to over-emphasize the importance of humanizing history.”

“When students participate in the Medieval Festival, they have the opportunity to engage in public history at a premiere venue. I stress to students what an exceptional opportunity this is for them to engage in living history, and their test results show they retain this information best.”

“Having a world-class collection at our fingertips makes this course a joy to teach. Close inspection of paint on stained glass, the details of manuscripts, the texture on sculpture does not come across in photos in our textbook.”

The Medieval Camp last summer included 81 students from 13 states, and 15 student teachers. Activities included worship, a pilgrimage, cooking, a Maypole, sword play, virtues, a naming ceremony and a final “battle.”

Among the many public exhibitions at Glencairn Museum are:

“From Gutenberg to Kindle: The Art of Bible Making.” This marked the

400th anniversary of the first printing of the King James Version of the Bible, which celebrated the art and history of Bible making and included a working replica of a Gutenberg-era printing press.

“Sacred Stories: Scripture, Myth and Ritual.” This is the story of how religious people communicate stories sacred to them through oral tradition, scripture and myth, with objects ranging in date from circa 1450 BC to 1960 AD.

“Eden to Eternity,” featuring hand-stitched panels from the San Blas Islands near Panama, illustrating stories from the Bible.

“Windows into Heaven” using icons in an unbroken tradition developed during the earliest centuries of Christianity.

“The Apocalypse of John: 25 Paintings by G. Roland Smith,” illustrating the meaning of imagery in the *Book of Revelation*.

“Way of the Cross: Sculptures by Thorsten Sigstedt.” In the early 1950s Sigstedt, a woodcarver with a home and studio in Bryn Athyn, carved the Stations of the Cross for St. Timothy’s Episcopal Church in Philadelphia.

“Behind the Lens: Raymond Pitcairn and Photography.”

‘A Hill of Unity: The Founding of Bryn Athyn Borough.’

Public tours in Glencairn include an orientation video, the Great Hall, the tower, the chapel and the master bedroom. A “Time Travelers Family Backpack Tour” uses the museum like a time machine, where the present meets the past.

Popular festivals include medieval demonstrations, the Sacred Arts Festival, workshops and Christmas at Glencairn, where the annual display of World Nativities drew more than 5,000 visitors this year. Regular concerts also bring in scores of people from Bryn Athyn and surrounding communities.

A large part of Glencairn’s history is preserved in extensive archives, which are used for several College courses and have been accessed by scholars around the world.

With Glencairn almost 80 years old a lot of planning and work goes into regular maintenance and improvements. The well-remembered front terrace fountain will reopen this spring for the first time in 40 years.

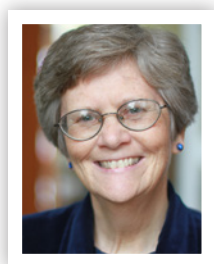
Glencairn Museum has close working and loan arrangements with many leading museums around the world, including the Louvre in Paris. Brian emphasized how lucky the museum is that John Pitcairn and Bishop Benade were so dedicated to amassing their collection when they did because most countries regret letting these treasures leave and now have restrictions.

Just one of many stories Brian recounted: In 2014 the Gettysburg National Military Park Museum and Visitor Center spent \$70,000 to restore the Nativity scenes made in Bryn Athyn for the Eisenhower White House. In 1954 Raymond and Mildred Pitcairn commissioned Winfred S. Hyatt to make a single Nativity scene for President and Mrs. Eisenhower, which was displayed

in the East Room of the White House that year, next to the Christmas tree. Two more scenes were added in 1957.

You can follow Glencairn Museum on social media, which already has more than 7,000 followers and tries to post new material twice a day, and through the *Glencairn Museum News*, which has more than 5,000 subscribers. To subscribe visit glencairnmuseum.org.

See photos of illustrations from Brian's talk on pages xxx and xxx.)



Dark and Light: Psychological and Swedenborgian Perspectives on Human Behavior

Dr. Soni S. Werner

Dr. Soni Werner has explored both the “darkness and light” of human behavior, working in prisons and teaching in Bryn Athyn College, including a new course on altruism. All of it is filtered through the Lord’s teachings in the Writings.

What we know about the brain, she said, is changing all the time, which affects her work in the extremes of human behavior.

She focused for the first two days on the dark side – informed both by her studies and her volunteer service in prisons. Right now that involves working with women coming out of prison, helping them to re-establish with family and community and get a job.

Her focus is particularly on forensic psychology, which looks at how to prevent people from turning to crime, how to intervene when appropriate, and how to rehabilitate those involved in crime. The guiding philosophy is that it is never too late to try to save someone.

Soni worked in a maximum security prison for five years. In addition to mentoring women now she is also an advocate for foster children and a mediator with people needing help. To do this effectively, she studies what is known about the minds of criminals and how the Writings shed light on relevant issues – such as regeneration and conscience.

For her teaching she wrote an e-book, *Conscience: Forensic Psychology*, which can be accessed at www.smashwords.com/books/view/590834.

Dealing with criminals takes judgment and mercy. We need both but it’s a delicate balancing act.

The brain can be impacted by many external factors, including concussions,

Soni worked in a maximum security prison for five years. In addition to mentoring women now she is also an advocate for foster children and a mediator with people needing help. To do this effectively, she studies what is known about the minds of criminals and how the Writings shed light on relevant issues – such as regeneration and conscience.

drugs and malnourishment, which can factor into personal responsibility. Cultural influences (such as violent video games) and parenting can also influence conscience – in negative or positive ways.

Such questions come into play in determining whether a person charged with a crime is mentally competent. Soni cited the recent case of Dylan Roof, accused of killing several people at a Bible study class in Charlestown, South Carolina, who expressed no regrets or remorse, and was found guilty and sentenced to death.

Soni offered the hopeful perspective that there is a tiny place in each of us that we can't ruin, and this is where God works. We may give up on some people, but God does not.

She infills her teaching about the dark side with New Church teachings: that there is a God, an afterlife and providence; spirits in the other world go through a process of self-examination before finding their place in heaven or hell; we all have freedom

according to reason; the rational mind can be temporarily turned off; and we are to judge others civilly and morally but never spiritually.

Parents and caregivers have a tremendous responsibility to love, protect and guide children – and keep them from turning to crime. She emphasized the importance of face-to-face communication with children when correcting them – looking them in the eye and speaking calmly and clearly about your expectations. This develops a high degree of self-regulation, with children knowing the rules and that they are loved. They also develop an ability to read the moods of others and develop empathy, whereas bullies don't decode their victims' feelings.

The use of gentle, loving discipline helps to develop empathy and conscience – and to keep young people from becoming calloused adults.

Once unhealthy behavior starts the issue becomes how to intervene effectively. The Ten Commandments are a good place to start. And watch for

the justifications that come so easily: everyone's doing it; it's not a big deal; I'm not hurting anyone; I was drunk or high; and I'm just keeping it real. Get them to consider the long-term consequences of their behavior on others.

From a psychological perspective, Soni said, we need to:

- train parents to reduce callousness
- identify children at risk
- teach alternatives to physical violence
- practice problem-solving skills
- mediate conflict calmly and respectfully
- provide therapy for social anxiety
- show empathy for all human beings

Rehabilitation of criminals is most effective, she said, when it is faith based. Get them to confess and pray, to become involved with a church or synagogue, and do a pilgrimage or 12-step program, if appropriate.

What we are taught through Swedenborg emphasizes the importance of developing a new will, shunning evil as part of regeneration, the belief that there is no hypocrisy after death – that we cannot hide our true feelings – and that we must be useful.

For the final two days of her presentation Soni focused on: The Lighter Side of Humanity – Altruism and Kindness. She has written a textbook on altruism for her class. There was also an article written by her students for the November/December 2014 issue of *New Church Life: Helping Hands – Bryn Athyn College's Altruism Class Shares Their Experiences of Serving*.

From 1900 through 1990 psychology focused on what's wrong with us, but in the '90s Dr. Marty Seligman in Philadelphia started focusing on positive psychology and what we can do to help people flourish. He started a course at the University of

From 1900 through 1990 psychology focused on what's wrong with us, but in the '90s Dr. Marty Seligman in Philadelphia started focusing on positive psychology and what we can do to help people flourish. He started a course at the University of Pennsylvania on how to develop resiliency and find hope.

Pennsylvania on how to develop resiliency and find hope.

Pitirim Sorokin was sent to a political prison in Russia during the 1917 revolution, through no fault of his own, where he was terrorized and never knew if he would be shot. But he managed to escape, flee and get an education, and ended up as a professor at Harvard, establishing the first Department of Altruism there.

Barbara Fredrickson also has broadened the study of altruism and how an attitude of helping others helps to develop our own compassion, empathy and living a positive life.

Soni uses *Arcana Coelestia* 3688 to teach the four basic levels of charity, from lowest to highest:

- giving to others but with a hope of reward
- helping anyone who needs it without thought of reward
- helping only people deemed to be upright
- looking for the Lord's goodness in people and supporting that

She also teaches the six ways to serve the neighbor in the well-known parable from *Matthew* of serving the hungry, thirsty, stranger, naked, sick and in prison. We can be altruistic at the literal level or on a deeper spiritual level, which we get from the Writings. We do this by offering love and kindness, truth and protection. And by serving these needs we serve the Lord as well as the neighbor.

(You can read more about Soni Werner and her teaching in an article in the latest Bryn Athyn College Alumni Magazine: *Find One Good Thing*.)

(To contact Soni: soniasw@ptd.net)



Lessons Learned

The Rev. Mac Frazier

The Rev. Glenn (Mac) Frazier is a second-career minister who followed a dream by planting a new church in Austin, Texas – only to see it fail after six years of devoted effort. At the Retreat he shared the lessons he learned from the effort: what works and doesn't work – both in launching a new church and trying to grow the established church.

Mac had worked for several years as a founding partner of a successful technology firm but says he always knew that he would end up in the ministry.

He loved connecting with people new to the Church and the Writings

but was haunted by the question: if all of this is so great and life changing, why is the Church so small? He began studying church growth in various denominations. He found that most people come into a church through people already connected. But nothing lasts forever – including churches – and unless we keep planting new congregations the Church will never grow.

Austin was targeted as ripe for a church plant because the city itself was growing. It was a progressive area with religious diversity. He took the plunge – with help from the General Church and a small staff, and the New Way Church was born.

He found it is possible to open a new church and people will show up – but growing and sustaining a church is a real challenge.

With the truths of the Church we have a lot to offer. The New Church message is decidedly different and does resonate with some people. If it is seen as “cool and different” they will tell friends – but only if the pastor is saying the right thing and the message is working.

Newcomers are evaluating you: Does this feel like a place where people are living their religion? If they see this happening they may get excited.

But Mac found they were attracting people mostly from poor communities who had no experience with what he was preaching. Many had been homeless, in prison, on drugs. Most were single young adults and there were few children. They brought a sense of being judged. So the way they were welcomed was really important. They have to see and believe that you love them.

With all of this to work with, Mac decided to give them full-on New Church doctrine. They were wary, but they listened. But he quickly realized that a pastor-centered model is fragile. We are in a Noah state as a church, he feels, with the priesthood at the top, and this may not be the best for growth.

When he was preaching he was always open to interruption, such as, “Did I hear that right?” He found he could get from A to B in his sermons,

He had launched the plant knowing the failure rate was high but with a lot of people telling him it would be great. He knew they would make mistakes and might fail, but had to try. The Lord, he said, loves when we trip and fall, and learn from the experience. And, “We as a church need to get better at this” – making the effort and learning how to do it better.

The key to outreach, he feels, is love – and one way to show love is to listen. We may overwhelm newcomers with effusive greetings. The way new spirits are welcomed in the spiritual world should guide us. Their first contact is with angels who offer pure love.

with many detours. But this, he reflected, is the way the Lord often talked to people on earth – asking questions and getting them to think. The people came to feel that their questions and opinions mattered.

He had launched the plant knowing the failure rate was high but with a lot of people telling him it would be great. He knew they would make mistakes and might fail, but had to try. The Lord, he said, loves when we trip and fall, and learn from the experience. And, “We as a church need to get better at this” – making the effort and learning how to do it better.

This is similar to the process of regeneration – learning how to respond to our failures. Our culture says failure is bad but it’s really good for us. You try something and if it doesn’t work you

try something else.

The problem for the New Way Church is that it couldn’t get to the point of financial viability. There was a lot sadness and grieving when the decision was made to close down the church, but valuable lessons were learned. And for six years attendees were exposed to New Church doctrine and are forever changed by that.

As a pastor, he said, you don’t always know what effect you are having and it’s easy to get down, but you are dealing with people who want to make the world and their lives better and that makes a difference.

For many of the people he was serving their lives were a mess. So how do we establish church for those who can’t afford it? Many people today generally distrust religion. They are looking for healing. He learned that it is important not to judge people and that we need to get better at disagreeing but still finding common ground. So we need to be thinking about the future of the Church – not just right now but 20 years from now.

The key to outreach, he feels, is love – and one way to show love is to listen. We may overwhelm newcomers with effusive greetings. The way new spirits are welcomed in the spiritual world should guide us. Their first contact is with angels who offer pure love.

It is scary and uncomfortable to go into a new church, not knowing what to expect. So we need to allay that fear with love from the Lord.

The next angels with new spirits then instruct them – much as the Lord taught on earth, by asking people a lot of questions. So it is important to show a real interest and be a good listener. It's also a good exercise in humility.

With young adults today most are not joiners but doers. We need to find ways to involve them in the life of the church. Being useful is an important part of building community.

What we offer in the New Church can be life changing but Mac found it was very important to solicit feedback. What is working? What isn't? Their opinions matter.

Effective outreach is more than just offering truth. We need to involve people in good works also, such as service projects. We should be inviting people not just to worship with us but to serve with us.

Out of this experience Mac is developing theories which he is presenting to the clergy. As an evangelist he identifies particularly with the statement in the Sermon on the Mount: "Let your light so shine that men may see your good works and glorify God in heaven." We can all let our light shine.

We also have The Great Commission at the end of *Matthew* to "go forth and baptize all nations." Growing the Church really starts with the individual and we all have a role.

The primary use of the priesthood, as described in the Writings, is to instruct in the truths of faith and lead to the good of life. The old idea of evangelism was simply sharing truth. But we can't just feed truth to people without showing how it applies to life. We should be inviting people in to the good of life and to be changed by it.

We know that unless we add good to truth we don't really have a church. Our approach should be: here's what is true now let's go out and practice it. The number one criticism of organized religion is that it doesn't practice what it preaches. To reach new people – especially young people – we should not be standing in front of them preaching but inviting them to stand next to us.

We need to be involved in our communities by planting seeds. Church growth should not be the specific goal but simply increasing the way that people are connected to the Church and the Lord. If we practice love to the neighbor the Lord will bless our efforts.

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Effective outreach is more than just offering truth. We need to involve people in good works also, such as service projects. We should be inviting people not just to worship with us but to serve with us.

‘Lead Us and Guide Us, Lord’

Naomi (Scott) Reid

“Lead us and guide us, Lord, in paths of peace. Put forth Thy mighty hand for our release. Turning our hearts to Thee, drawn by Thy love, seeking from sin to flee, true may we prove. Meekly to bear Thy cross, though the world frown; winning through pain and loss, heaven’s shining crown.”

This beautiful hymn is one of my favorites that we sing in the New Church. I love the music which was written by Beethoven and the words which were written by Evelyn E. Plummer, which complement the melody beautifully.

We sing the hymn regularly in the New Church congregation where I attend. We sing it, but do we actually believe the words in this hymn? Do we actually believe that the Lord can lead and guide the individual paths of our life? Do we believe that the Lord can actually put forth His hand to release us from the evil desires and false ideas that evil spirits relentlessly put in our way? Do we honestly and sincerely turn our hearts and minds to the Lord instead of just reciting the Lord’s Prayer as our only connection to the Lord? We need a personal relationship with the Lord to keep the hells from entering our lives.

My father died almost 20 years ago, but I will always think of him as a spiritually and naturally wise man. The reason I believe my father was wise is that he enjoyed reading and learning about both natural and spiritual ideas. He enjoyed learning about history, philosophy, current events and other topics, but his favorite books to read and learn from were the Writings for the New Church given through Swedenborg. He tried to apply what he had learned to his life and he would share what he had learned with his family. As a child and young person I could ask him about many different topics, including religion, and we often had an in-depth discussion about it.

Once my mother asked him, “When do you pray to the Lord?” He answered, “all of the time.” He explained that he had a running dialogue with the Lord. Although he led our family in reverently saying the Lord’s Prayer before bed, he believed and taught us that it was not enough just to say the Lord’s Prayer, and told us a story that happened early in his life.

He lost an important farming tool for constructing fences. He spent the

next three days wandering around his farm looking for it. Finally, he asked the Lord to help him find it, and he walked directly to the tool which was hidden in tall grass. He knew that he never would have found it on his own before driving over it and wrecking his tractor or mower.

Every fall when it was time to sell cattle at the local auction mart so he could earn an income for the family, he would ask the Lord to help him get a fair price so he could pay off his debt to the bank and not lose the farm, leaving his family homeless. He told us that many times he watched the cattle price spike when he sold his cattle, and he would make enough to pay his loan to the bank with a little bit extra to spare. I remember being with my Dad as a teen during a cattle auction when this happened and the auctioneer asked him publicly what he was feeding his cattle to make the prices go up.

Perhaps it was from situations like these that my father learned not to waste time trying to do things without the Lord's help. He and my mother taught us to ask the Lord directly for help whenever we needed it. They also stressed the idea that we needed to obey everything that the Lord asks of us, so that the Lord could work in our lives.

Living with this attitude of trusting the Lord was normal for me because I grew up with this idea. Did my Dad learn this idea from the New Church? It would be nice if I could say yes, but he didn't grow up in the New Church. His family was not particularly religious, but he did have one aunt who was religious and she made sure she taught him to pray to the Lord directly with any and all of his concerns.

What if my Dad chose not to listen to his aunt who consistently taught him to pray directly to the Lord for help? What if he did not teach this idea to family? What if we had lived our lives without the knowledge that we can pray to the Lord and He can help us in times of distress? What if any of us had faced difficulties that felt bigger than we can handle? What tools would we have to face these troubles?

If we chose to rule out asking the Lord to help us with the specific problems in our lives and we had not met others who knew enough to remind us to do this, then we could easily become overwhelmed with the problems that we face and have nothing to help us face them. We could easily feel unstable, empty, hopeless and full of despair. But if we have the tools to deal with life's problems, then we can feel stable, peaceful, grateful and hopeful, even if we don't have everything we want.

So how can we go from feeling overwhelmed and that we do not have what it takes to deal with a big problem to feeling like we can handle it? I think the solution comes down to acknowledging that the Lord already knows the solution to the problem and if we ask for His help through prayer He can help us discover a solution, even if the problem feels huge and unsolvable. The Lord

knows what tools we need to cope with our life and can help us if we ask Him. The Lord will show us the solution, or perhaps send someone to help us. But we need to develop a relationship with the Lord, and pray for guidance.

How do we know that the Lord can help us with whatever we are facing? Because Divine providence governs all things, both the greatest and the least. It is “in the minutest particulars of nature and of human prudence.” And “the operation of the Divine Providence for the salvation of man begins at his birth and continues until the end of his life, and afterwards to eternity.” (*Divine Providence* 174, 201, 332)

So the Lord not only leads and guides the big picture, but He is very aware of even the smallest details in our lives. After all, we acknowledge in the New Church that the Lord is infinite (is everywhere), omnipotent (all powerful) and omniscient (all knowing). But do we really believe it?

If we know that we can pray to Him for help with all of the struggles in our lives, we won't be left feeling that any problem is too big or formidable for the Lord to help us with. We will truly believe that He will give us the help that we need to face the challenges that our lives present us with. After all, isn't it true that “even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.” (*Luke 12:7*)



Naomi (Scott) Reid lives with her husband, John Reid, and their three children (Jordan, 21, Caelan, 19 and Alisha, 16) in Toronto, where they are members of the Olivet New Church congregation. She attended the Academy Girls School for senior year and Bryn Athyn College, where she earned a Bachelor's degree. She says; "I really enjoyed my years in Bryn Athyn as a student. Many years later I earned a Master's in Psychology. I counselled teens for 26 years and now enjoy working at a number of jobs for the Olivet Church and School – including

high school weekends, youth and young adults social events, an after-school program and Sunday school). I especially enjoy learning to make a variety of crafts and teaching them."

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Church News

Compiled by Bruce Henderson

BISHOP KEITH RETIREMENT

The Rt. Rev. Brian W. Keith

I have decided to step down from the office of the Executive Bishop in June of 2019. At that time I will have served in this office for six years. Added to my eight years as Assistant Bishop, that will be 14 years in the episcopal office. Also, at that time I will be 68 years old – past the retirement age of any Executive Bishop in more than 50 years!

At the 2017 June meetings the Council of the Clergy will re-examine the selection process it used last time and will have the opportunity to take formal counsel with the General Church Board of Directors. During the next year the clergy will take counsel throughout the Church and come to the 2018 June meetings with candidates to consider so that they can make a nomination to the Church.

From June 2018 through June 2019 the church-wide confirmation process will take place. The nominee will also consider who should serve as his assistant. I will also work with him to prepare him for the office of Executive Bishop.

It is an honor and privilege to serve the Lord's New Church and the General Church in the episcopal office, and I look forward to the two-plus years remaining in my tenure as Executive Bishop.

MINISTER MOVE

The Rev. Calvin Odhner, pastor of the Morning Star Chapel in Atlanta, Georgia, will become the pastor in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, as of July 1. The Rev. Pearse Frazier, pastor in Pittsburgh, has been called to be the pastor in Atlanta beginning July 1.

GENERAL CHURCH UPDATE

At the Boynton Beach Retreat in Florida in late January the **Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr.** offered an open session with an opportunity for people to ask questions about the Church. Among the highlights:

We are experiencing an increasing variety in worship styles throughout the Church, experimenting with what works best for various groups. We also have a growing clergy in West Africa and Asia and are looking at the best way to support them. Five new ministers were ordained this spring in West Africa.

Some General Church schools are struggling with declining enrollment and it is a challenge to keep a critical mass of New Church students. Beyond Bryn Athyn the schools in Kempton, Pennsylvania, and Westville, South Africa, are particularly strong. Bishop Buss spoke about a General Church Education retreat February 9 and 10 in Bryn Athyn, with a focus on expectations and what people are looking for today in New Church education.

There is also an issue of declining numbers of young people getting involved in the Church. This is not just an issue for the Church. The next generation just are not joiners the way previous generations were. A General Church task force is looking into this.

There is also a Women’s Participation Task Force addressing women’s roles in the Church. Bishop Buss is leading this study, assisted by **Dr. Jane Williams-Hogan** as co-chair.

Ordination of women is not on the table but the task force is studying doctrine and looking at other possibilities. The dialogue so far has been very healthy. The group hopes to present recommendations in June.

The Theological School has been fluctuating over the years and is currently lean, with a real need for new students. One theolog will graduate this year and another the next, then three.

The nationally syndicated Dr. Oz television show has launched a “Faith on Friday” segment and invited General Church Outreach to produce videos. **Curtis Childs**, who presents the *offTheLeftEye* videos for the Swedenborg Foundation, is helping with this project. Those videos, plus live streaming and other digital efforts are contributing to church growth. (See a separate report from the **Rev. David Lindrooth** on this initiative.)

The Rev. Bradley Heinrichs is visiting in Cuba three times a year, helping to grow church interest there and help with translation efforts.



STATE OF BRYN ATHYN COLLEGE ADDRESS: A SUMMARY

In **President Brian Blair’s** 2016-2017 State of the School Address on January 9, 2017, he updated alumni, friends, faculty, staff, students, families and Board members on what has happened so far in this academic year and what is on the horizon for Bryn Athyn College. The hour-long town hall format included presentations from Academic Dean **Allen Bedford**, Ph.D., and Dean of Students **Kiri Rogers**. Questions from the audience and online attendees were taken at the end, with Athletic Director

Matt Kennedy, Chief Financial Officer **Dan Allen**, and Director of Admissions **Roberta Nolan**, Ed. D., joining the conversation.

In President Blair's opening comments he noted that the strategy for the operations, growth and development of the College is guided by a commitment to value-based education and a devotion to New Church teachings. He acknowledged the 2016-17 fall term as record breaking, with 303 students enrolled at the College and an eye on growing enrollment to 500 in the next few years.

He expressed a desire for an expanded reach to all learners, both traditional and non-traditional. He also outlined a sequence of points working toward this goal over the next three to five years, starting with expanding academic programs, including additional supportive facilities, and incorporating life-long learning access into the College's offerings. These initiatives are poised to support continued mission growth.

Dean Bedford detailed some of the plans for expanding academic offerings at the College. He listed a number of new programs in the works including a BFA (Bachelor of Fine Arts) in the building arts, a dance minor, a data sciences minor, a communications minor, and a graduate level education program focused on literacy and advanced special education.

The College is actively seeking grant funding for these projects, and Dean Bedford pointed out that these new offerings stem logically from existing resources in the College. He described the adjacent Historic District as an extraordinary boon to a potential BFA program that potentially will distinguish the College among peer institutions, not only regionally but nationwide.

A campus map was projected for the audience to see the recently completed **Dr. Sherri Cooper** and **Rev. Dan Goodenough** residence halls, and **General Ronald K. Nelson** athletic field. Also on the map were suggested locations for possible future projects undergoing feasibility studies – a School of Education and a new student center.

The School of Education would provide additional classroom space for all disciplines and would formally house a graduate School of Education. The student center would serve as a hub for campus life, providing much needed space for student activities, gatherings and presentations.

Dean Rogers reported that a cross section of faculty and staff has formed a committee ensuring that various constituents on campus are represented in early planning phases for such an important structure.

She also reviewed some of the programming that the student life department oversees, and provided an impressive list of positive updates. The news ranged from spiritual life programming to community service opportunities, and from multicultural awareness events to athletic department updates.

She reported another strong academic term for student athletes, with a cumulative GPA over 3.0 this fall. The College will complete the provisional

process and become a full member of the NCAA division III in June 2017. Dean Rogers described this as a good fit for the College, saying: “The Division III playing season and eligibility standards minimize conflicts between athletics and academics, allowing student athletes to focus on their academic programs and the achievement of their degree.”

Questions were posed to the panel of administrators after the prepared remarks and answers were readily given to queries about target percentages for commuting students vs. resident students (about 35-40% commuter vs. 60-65% resident), and whether athletic scholarships are given to students (they are not).

To view the full address, go to live.brynathyn.edu and select the State of the College Address 2017.



NEW DEAN AT BRYN ATHYN

Brian Blair, President

Bryn Athyn College is proud to announce that the **Rev. Thane Glenn**, Ph.D., has been selected to take over as Chief Academic Officer (CAO) and Academic Dean, beginning July 1, 2017. As a tenured professor who has also served as the College Chaplain since 2011, Thane has built a record of academic and spiritual leadership that makes him uniquely qualified to step into this role.

Over the past 19 years at Bryn Athyn College he has chaired and served on numerous committees that inform areas such as strategic planning, curriculum, spiritual life, admissions and academic assessment, among others.

Allen Bedford, Ph.D., is stepping down from the CAO role to take a sabbatical year. He has been accepted to the Executive Leadership Academy, which is sponsored in part by the Council of Independent Colleges. Allen is in his 22nd year of service to Bryn Athyn College, the last seven of which have been as CAO and Academic Dean. His well-deserved sabbatical will further broaden his professional development and result in additional valuable contributions to the College upon his return.

SWEDENBORG IN ANOTHER COLLEGE

The Swedenborg Foundation reports that its weekly webcast *Swedenborg and Life* on its *offTheLeftEye* YouTube channel has inspired students in a new course at Adelphi University in Garden City, New York.

The course was “Spirituality Through the Lens of Historical Narratives,” which included works of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Helen Keller and Emanuel Swedenborg. Instructor Dr. Cristina Zaccarini said the students loved the materials on the Foundation’s website “and were captivated by the *offTheLeftEye* series, as I have been as well. They like **Curtis Childs** because he is such an

enthusiastic, knowledgeable and engaging speaker who can really relate to young students.”

The course went so well that she plans to offer it again with even more Swedenborgian content. “I knew these videos would be very helpful,” she said, “but I had no idea that they would be life-transforming. One of my students was a peer advisor to my students in the Spirituality class and he said the material was ‘extraordinary’ in its impact on them.”

NEW COLLEGE PRESIDENT

Dr. Charles (Chuck) Lindsay, former Dean of Bryn Athyn College, has been unanimously elected as the new president of Elmira College in Elmira, New York, beginning July 1.



Chuck, who was an economics professor as well as Dean of Bryn Athyn College, continues to serve on the Academy Board of Trustees – which includes the College, Theological School and Secondary Schools – where he chairs the Finance Committee.

He attended Bryn Athyn College before graduating from Lafayette College and Lehigh University. He earned his PhD from the University of Pennsylvania, where he also did post-graduate work in Finance and Accounting at the Wharton School.

Elmira notes that “his background in assessment and accreditation, including as a Middle States evaluator, along with his strategic planning experience will serve the institution well in the coming years.”

Chuck is the 15th President in Elmira’s 162-year history and after just five years there as a faculty member and most recently as Provost, he was unanimously recommended to the Board of Trustees by the faculty leadership.

The Chairman of Elmira’s Board said that Chuck and the outgoing interim President have overseen more improvements in the past year than the five or six years previously and they were gratified this could continue with Chuck’s leadership.

A spokesman for the Faculty Executive Committee said that since joining Elmira in 2012, “Dr. Lindsay has been an enthusiastic and collaborative leader, earning the respect and trust of the faculty.”

Chuck said: “I’m honored to have been selected and excited about the College’s future. Our recent elevation to top tier status, along with the College’s long-standing position as a Phi Beta Kappa institution, well positions Elmira to high plateaus and I will very much enjoy helping to make that happen in the coming years.”

He and his wife Janna (Gunther) will be moving into the President’s residence on campus.

STANWELL TOPS CAMP, AUSTRALIA*Rev. Todd J. Beiswenger*

I'm finding that the annual family camp has really become one of the highlights of the year for me. I enjoy the feeling of community, mixing around with different people at meals, along with the teaching and adventure activities that enrich the experience as well. Here are some of the highlights:

On Monday **David Moffat** led us in a "Pokemon Go!" inspired session, "Family Camp Go!" The idea was to figure out various puzzles that used correspondences in the answers that led to the next puzzle. Knowing Bible verses was helpful, but Google was always available to help out. It kept the kids active, moving and engaged.

That afternoon we had the opportunity to tackle the "high ropes" challenge. It was mostly a test of courage as you were harnessed into a safety wire, but you still had to navigate around an obstacle course that was five meters off the ground. While it is a bit of a challenge for the adults, it is a much greater challenge for the kids as their legs aren't long enough to reach past certain obstacles. Nevertheless, two of our smallest campers faced their fears, overcame their short legs, and managed to defeat the course.

Later that evening we played a new game, "Taylor Swift: Lyric or Lamentations?" On the screen was a phrase, and each team had to guess whether it was a Taylor Swift lyric or a quote from *Lamentations*. Our group of teenage boys took home the victory. I suppose they all must have been studying the book of *Lamentations* in their spare time; either that or they know the music of a good looking blonde woman really well.

The next day **Julian Duckworth** led a theme of "On Your Knees." He demonstrated the usefulness of knees, noting how much we need that bend in our legs to do so many things. The Word teaches us about the need to kneel, and how kneeling before the Lord is for our humility. Yet he also took the opportunity to teach about humiliation. He asked me to "volunteer" for a demonstration. However, it was no simple doctrinal point that was made! Rather I was ordered to kneel before Julian to show what submission and humiliation look like. I'm sure there are of number of pictures of me kneeling before him that will haunt me for years to come.

Next was the outing day that divided us into various groups. A quarter of the camp drove to Jamberoo, a waterslide/adventure park. Others went to a local wildlife park, some to the beach at Wollongong, and others had an easy day of working on puzzles. After dinner Holy Supper was offered by the **Rev. David Moffat** and **Bishop Brian Keith**.

Part of Bishop Keith's job is to go around the world visiting and assisting New Church congregations. His wife, **Gretchen**, loves to take pictures so his travels are well documented. On Thursday morning he took us on a virtual

tour of Africa, showing pictures and sharing stories of traveling around the continent. It was hard not to feel that we really have a lot of blessings in our life in Australia, yet the smiles and joy on the faces in these poverty-stricken places were quite real and authentic. It is a true testimony to the spirit of these people that they can achieve so much with so little.

Our trivia night was very Bible oriented, so the organizers made sure to prevent an all-powerful team of ministers and disbursed them each to different tables. The teams were competitive until Julian's team came from behind to steal the win.

David Millar wowed us the next morning with a demonstration of a rod turning to a serpent and making water turn to blood. Much in the same way that Moses took these real demonstrations to Pharaoh, we were reminded that we have to confront the Pharaoh in our own life, who wants to enslave us, and will not let us go until we put in the effort to see what spiritual work needs to be done.

On the final day I ran the family session, "That's Not Fair!" It's a phrase we've all said at one time or another. The point was that the Lord doesn't give to us equally, and that we have to raise our thinking up higher than a basic, animalistic type of fairness. To do that, some part of us must die.

We'll do it all again next year in Queensland. Please consider joining us for fun, learning and friendship.

(See photos of the camp on page 170)

FAITHFUL FRIDAYS IN THE LAND OF OZ

The Rev. David Lindrooth

Director, General Church Outreach

The team at General Church Outreach has never been busier as it charts its way in communicating the truths of the New Church to a wider audience than ever before. As always, our goal has been to communicate the value of these truths, emphasizing the help they offer to a person's daily life – the starting point for faith.

Outreach also strives to provide content that can feed the growing interest sparked by our initial contact, so that a person can be led gradually to fully embrace the faith of the New Church, ultimately leading to membership and participation in one of our congregations.

Front and center in our efforts is what we call *Journey Video*. Online video is the fastest growing segment of internet use today, with many people preferring to view short films on their smart phones or tablets instead of traditional written content. Because of this trend YouTube has grown to more than 1 billion users in the last year.

Journey Video has been producing content to showcase the New Church

to those users, inviting them into a relationship with the Church. Soon all our Journey Campaign material will offer online videos as a component of our efforts.

In addition, we were approached early in the new year by *The Dr. Oz Show*, a morning television program with 3.5 million daily viewers. They asked us to provide short video content in support of a new segment of the show called *Faithful Fridays*, which began airing in February. This content is being used by the show in their online outlets to prepare for the Friday morning airing of the TV program with Dr. Oz.

We are clear that successful content production for this new use requires close collaboration with NewChurch LIVE and the Swedenborg Foundation's *offTheLeftEye*. We regard this collaboration as essential and we feel that together we will be able to establish the New Church at the forefront of the online video market for religion and spirituality.

These efforts are funded by generous donations. We need help with production costs, equipment needs and online advertising. We are also looking for funding so that we can support other pastors and congregations in learning how to use video in their ministry. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me with any questions. (David.Lindrooth@newchurch.org or 267-502-4910)

Our work in online video is paralleled by the increase in our available small group content. As we begin our winter season of Journey groups featuring *Mindful Communication Challenge* we are positioned to follow up with a series supporting creativity, and later a series we call *Finding Hope*, which will serve people dealing with grief and loss.

SUMMER CAMPS

Note: Additional information about Academy of the New Church camps is available at www.ancss.org, including necessary forms and contact information.

ANC Summer Camp

This popular camp for current 8th and 9th graders will take place July 9-15 on the Academy campus. Campers will learn about New Church teachings, attend academic and recreational classes, play sports and enjoy social events, while getting to know more than 100 peers from around the Church.

Photos will be posted throughout the week on the ANC Summer Camp Facebook page. Parents and others interested can "Like" the page now and get notifications throughout the week as updates and photos are added.

Tools 4 Life

This camp is open to incoming high school juniors and seniors and will run July 16-22 on the Academy campus. This is a career and life skills camp designed to help teenagers gain the tools and confidence for the next steps after high school. It includes activities and workshops in a rich, caring environment of mentoring, personal growth and networking.

Campers will visit area colleges and experience a career day, community

service, a dinner/date night and a recreational outing.

Performing Arts Camp

This camp will be held in the Mitchell Performing Arts Center on the Academy campus June 20-10 for 6th, 7th and 8th graders. It will culminate with a performance of Disney's *The Lion King Jr.* at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. on June 30.

Classes include blocking, vocal production, choreography and character development. The focus is on engaging the imagination and developing creativity and performance skills.

For further information contact *sarah.waelchli@ancss.org*; 267-502-2678.

Environmental Science Camp

This camp for 7th, 8th and 9th graders will take place August 7-11, with ANC science teachers helping campers explore water quality, identify trees, birds and wildlife, and offering survival and first aid skills. Contact jeremy.fehon@ancss.org or call Admissions at 267-502-2539.

Glencairn Museum Mythology Summer Camp

For children ages 9 and 10. Two weeks to choose from:

Session One: June 19-23

Session Two: June 26-30

Daily hours are 8:30 am to 12:30 pm. The cost is \$125 per student. Registration brochures were mailed on Monday, March 13.

Each day of summer camp will start with a short worship service including a Bible story. Students will explore the mythologies of the ancient Egyptians, Native Americans, Greek and Romans, Mesopotamians and Celts. Daily activities include cooking, storytelling, crafts and archery.

The overall theme of the summer camp is to show how the moral lessons taught in Bible stories are reflected in the myths of ancient peoples.

For more information contact **Christine McDonald**, Education Coordinator for Glencairn Museum, at 267-502-2995 or *christine.mcdonald@glencairnmuseum.org*.

EUROPEAN ASSEMBLY: AUGUST 4-7, 2017

There is a registration form on the website: <http://europeanassembly.eu/registration-form>

The booking deadline is Easter 2017 (April 16). Do consider joining us!

DISTANT VOICES

The Swedenborg Society in England has just published *Distant Voices: Sketches of a Swedenborgian World View* by **John S Haller Jr.**, with a Foreword by **Devin Zuber**.

The Society notes: "The legacy of the Enlightenment philosopher, scientist and mystic Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) permeated widely throughout 19th century literature, art and social reform movements. In *Distant Voices*,

John S Haller Jr. takes us from the mid-19th century worlds of Henry James Sr., Ralph Waldo Emerson and Charles Fourier through to the 1960s era of counterculture that D. T. Suzuki helped shape and in which he saw out his life.

“Each chapter can be read as a self-contained essay: biographical and critical appraisals (and reappraisals) in which the subjects are linked together by their use of Swedenborg, their interest in Oriental beliefs and their desire for the betterment of society.”

Essays include: Henry James Sr., Ralph Waldo Emerson, Charles Fourier, Albert Brisbane, Thomas Lake Harris, J.J.G. Wilkinson, James Tyler Kent, Charles Bonney, the World’s Parliament of Religions, Paul Carus, Herman Vetterling, Ralph Waldo Trine and D.T. Suzuki.

John Haller is emeritus professor of History and Medical Humanities at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. He has written on subjects ranging from the history of race and sexuality to medicine, pharmacy and spirituality. His most recent books include: *The History of American Homeopathy*; *Swedenborg, Mesmer and the Mind-Body Complex*; and *Shadow Medicine*.

Devin Zuber says of the book: “Distant in time as these voices from the 19th and early 20th century might be . . . their words captured by Haller continue to reverberate very much with our present.”

CONVENTION FOR CONVENTION

It's been 200 years since a number of members of the New Church from different parts of the United States met together in the New Jerusalem Temple in the City of Philadelphia. This was the first convention of the receivers of the doctrines of the New Jerusalem Church, when we were all one.

Now there is the opportunity to celebrate the bicentennial of this momentous occasion. The General Convention is gathering at West Chester University, just outside Philadelphia, July 8-12, 2017 for their annual convention. Please join us!

A special day is planned for Sunday, July 9, at the Asplundh Theater with worship, nationally known speaker Diana Butler Bass, and an evening barbecue. On July 8 there will be visits to the Bryn Athyn Cathedral, Glencairn Museum and the Lord’s New Church.

For more information check the site at <http://tinyurl.com/Swedenborg2017> where you can find links for registration, check out the Facebook page, or call 617-969-4240.

GENERAL CHURCH EDUCATION ADMINISTRATORS RETREAT

Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr.
Assistant to the Bishop

General Church Education hosted a successful Education Leadership

Team Retreat on February 9-10. The team consists primarily of administrators of General Church and Academy schools. We had 18 administrators in attendance, representing eight General Church schools (Glenview, Oak Arbor, Pittsburgh, Bryn Athyn, Kempton, Caryndale, Toronto, and Washington), the Academy Girls and Boys Schools, and the Education Department at Bryn Athyn College. Rounding out the attendance were four from our GCED staff, for a total of 22.

As fate would have it, a winter storm arrived in the Bryn Athyn area the night before the retreat. Several worked through cancelled flights and other headaches to be there. Only one person had to attend remotely because of the weather.

It is a tremendous privilege to gather with all these administrators. They are incredibly capable people, some with years of administrative experience, and others just getting started in their leadership capacities.

We had four reasons for gathering:

First we aimed to explore the subject of “Increasing Demand for New Church Education.” All those who work within our schools know the goodness that happens. It is very useful from time to time to consider how best to articulate that goodness to today’s prospective parents. We had two sessions on this subject, one on “The Essence of our Offering,” which I led, the second led by **Dr. Roberta Nolan**, Director of Admissions for Bryn Athyn College.

Roberta was kind enough to share with us some of the professional approach to admissions that she is deploying at Bryn Athyn College. Also shared with the administrators was information from **Denise DeFiglia** and **Jennifer Allen** regarding the Academy Secondary Schools admissions processes. Conversation and debate about admissions was robust.

A second goal of our meetings was to focus on teacher professional development. **Scott Daum** led this section, drawing attention to our protocols around documenting professional development credits for teachers, and then inviting feedback on the training modules developed by GCED in the past year.

A third goal was to consider our curriculum development processes. **Rebekah Russell** drew attention to the ways in which we are, or could, collectively implement the various strands of curriculum that reach completion. She also invited input on our current online platform for sharing and updating our New Church curricula.

A final goal was to further relationships and mutual support among administrators. As can be imagined, spending time in each other’s presence, recognizing the similarities of our work despite different contexts, and feeling the support of a system of education all happens in a retreat like this.

A strategic goal for the General Church is to gather people together in the name of New Church education. This retreat was a successful example.

Swedenborg and the Arts International Conference

June 6-9, 2017

Bryn Athyn College is hosting the first-ever international conference dedicated to examining the impact of Emanuel Swedenborg's theology and ideas on the arts. Thirty scholars from 10 different countries will be coming to the College to present on a variety of topics related to Swedenborg's influence on the arts.

The conference offers a unique opportunity to learn about 200 years' worth of painters, poets, architects and novelists who all used Swedenborgian concepts in their art. Can you paint love? Is it possible to design a city with heaven (or the Grand Human) in mind? Daniel Burnham, a Swedenborgian, did so in Chicago and in many other places as well. When we read Swedenborg, why did Ralph Waldo Emerson write that "we come into a world which is a living poem"?

Artists inspired by ideas revealed by Swedenborg are still painting, still writing, and still designing today. Some of them will be at the conference to discuss what they are working on and what they hope to do in the future.

Please keep the dates available and when registration is open, sign up and join us for this exciting event at Bryn Athyn College.

Suzy Laidlaw, Event Coordinator
suzy@dwave.com

EASTER CHANCELS AROUND THE CHURCH



Boynton Beach, Florida, Easter Sunrise Service



Bucleuch, Johannesburg, South Africa



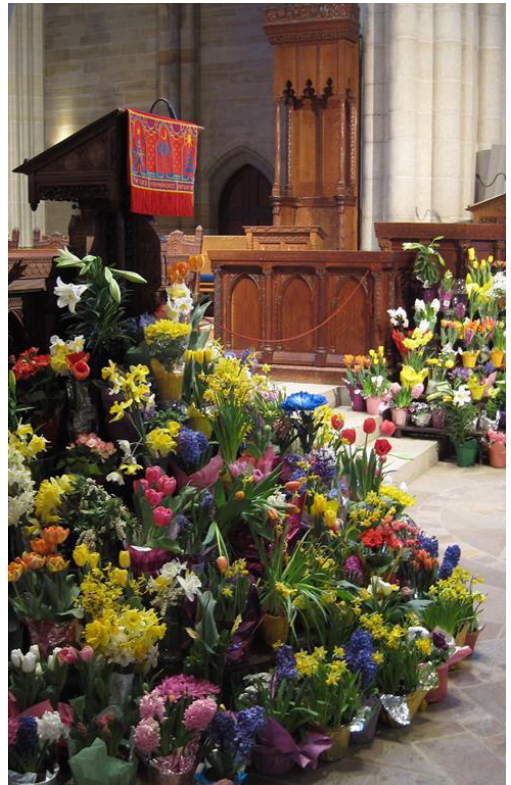
Hurstville, Australia: The Angel and the Empty Tomb



Boulder Valley, Colorado



Oak Arbor, Rochester, Michigan



Bryn Athyn Cathedral

WHAT MAKES THE GLENCAIRN MUSEUM UNIQUE IN THE WORLD



Medieval Camp friends (left to right) Zoe, Anna, Ayla



Enthusiastic stone carvers



Studying Islamic geometric designs



Checking old manuscripts with a quill pen



Chapel ceiling: The Backpack Tour



Losong, a popular annual Buddhist visitor, creating a sand mandala for an appreciative audience



The Maypole Dance



Eden Halterman trains a would-be archer



Michael slaying the dragon before a rapt audience



Glass painting



Rona participates in the moving Virtues ceremony



Learning about mosaics



Intricate detail on an old choir stall



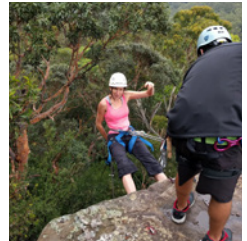
Happy Campers in Australia.



A brave Zach Beiswenger starts his way down the rappelling challenge



Todd Beiswenger flying free



Jenn Beiswenger takes a turn



David Millar engaging with some youngsters



Left to right: The Rev. David Moffat, the Rt. Rev. Brian and Gretchen Keith, the Rev. Todd and Jenn Beiswenger, the Rev. Julian and Ruth Duckworth, the Rev. David Millar.



Instructors helping the brave with the rappelling challenge

Life Lines

COMFORT ON SUICIDE

The editorial, “The Cry of Suicide” on page 75, refers to a wonderfully compassionate study by the Rev. John L. Odhner, “Reflections on Suicide,” in the July/August 2015 issue of *New Church Life*. Suicide is a tragic scourge of our intense age and the Church has not been immune. We need all the comfort and guidance we can get – about suicide itself, mental health issues, and what we can do to help those at risk – and more material has been included in this issue.

Some of the points Mr. Odhner included in his Summary deserve to be repeated here:

- A person may take his or her own life for good reasons, bad reasons, or a mixture of both. We cannot judge the inner motivations involved in suicide, only the outward appearances.
- The act of suicide is always wrong and painful. It is an evil which comes from hell, just like war and disease. But this does not mean that a person who commits suicide is evil. That person may be a victim of forces entirely beyond his or her control.
- Suicide is caused by the influence of evil spirits who love to harm people. These people can cause suicidal compulsions and temporary insanity. The individuals involved may or may not be at fault in opening themselves up to evil spirits.
- Suicide is permitted for the sake of eternal good that can come to those affected by it. Committing suicide does not prevent a person from entering heaven, and may in fact help keep a person out of hell. Good can also come of it to loved ones left behind.
- The quality of our life after death is based more on how we live our life in this world than on how we die. A moment of death-bed repentance will not make an angel of someone who has enjoyed a life of evil. And one act of evil at the end of a person’s life, even committed deliberately, will not destroy all a person’s good loves and intentions.

As mentioned in the editorial, this article can be found online at www.newchurchlife.org, click on “Read Recent Issues” and look for the July/August 2015 issue. It is well worth careful consideration.

(BMH)

WHAT GOD SEES

In the wake of personal tragedy – or just what we might call misfortune or bad luck – the question of God’s will and presence can be relevant and intense.

Thornton Wilder famously probed the question in his classic book, *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, in which five people plunge to their deaths when a rope bridge collapses in 18th century Peru.

Wilder asks how we are to make sense of such seemingly random victims. Is it just bad luck? Or somehow God’s will? Is God sometimes powerless in such situations? Are we all predestined to our fate? Is there a Divine plan for each of our lives, or is it all just random events and consequences?

Wilder never really answered the questions satisfactorily in this story but did a better job in a book he wrote 40 years later, *The Eighth Day*. This is about another innocent victim, a good and decent man whose life is ruined by bad luck. Here Wilder helps us understand with the image of a tapestry that shows a tangle of threads and knots on one side, but a work of art on the other.

The art, he suggests, is what God sees – and helps to explain why good people may suffer in this life. Some lives may appear twisted, knotted, cut short. From our limited vantage point this is what we see – just the random tangle of knots and threads. But God sees the spiritual continuum of our lives – the other side of the tapestry where all those knots and threads can help to produce a work of art in heaven.

We all have that tapestry within us. So do all the people we see as victims of tragedy or “bad luck.” It’s all in the hand that is guiding the needle.

(BMH)

THE CALL TO ANGELS

One of our comforting teachings about death – whether sudden and unexpected, the result of disease or suicide, or the natural result of old age – is that the person awakening in the spiritual world is immediately cared for by angels. He or she still must deal with issues unresolved in this world, but within the embrace of those loving angels. We may wonder though: where are the angels for those who have been left behind and are hurting? And where is God – especially in the midst of tragedy?

But God is there in all the love and kindness shown – by family, by friends, by community, even by strangers.

We saw it after the 9/11 tragedy, when the spontaneous eruption of love all over the world quickly overwhelmed the evil of the terrorism. We see it in response to any tragedy, whether it affects great numbers or just one family. We see it in the cakes and casseroles that suddenly appear, in all the smiles and hugs and tears, in all the sincere hands trying to lift the grieving – just like the angels do.

We are all called upon to be the angels for those left behind, who desperately need God's love too. And we need not wonder in the midst of tragedy: where is God? He is with us through His angels – the angels among us. Always.

(BMH)

A CHRISTMAS MIRACLE

A story in the *San Diego Tribune* just before Christmas told of a “miracle” involving the parents of a victim of terrorism in Nice, France, last July, and “a measure of comfort in a sea of nearly unrelenting grief” that came from a knowledge of Swedenborg. The news story was reprinted by the Swedenborg Foundation.

Nicolas Leslie, a 20-year-old student at the University of California Berkeley who was studying abroad, was one of 84 people killed when a terrorist drove a truck at high speed through a crowd celebrating Bastille Day in that French city. His parents, Conrad and Paola Leslie, had been tormented by images of their son's body alone and abandoned amid the chaos. But they got a Facebook message just two days before Christmas telling them that two French women – unknown to Nicolas – had come across his body and stayed with him throughout the night.

Something compelled them to sit with this unknown man. They went home and got candles and prayed all night by his side. It was the mother of a neighbor of these Good Samaritans who finally got the message to the parents on Facebook.

Conrad said he had been trying to find faith and meaning in his son's death. The story does not explain his familiarity with the Writings, but he says he was comforted by Swedenborg's image of two angels attending a dying person. This convinced him that his son was not left abandoned and alone the night he died. The image of these two strangers sitting in an all-night vigil with his son “was the proof I needed that these two people were the embodiment of the angels I saw in [Swedenborg's] illustration. It brought us so much peace and faith in humanity.”

The Leslies plan to meet the woman who relayed the message this summer in Nice, as well as the two women who sat with their son's body. The whole experience, Conrad says, illustrates how such terrorist attacks impact lives far beyond the immediate victims. And it's not just the horrible event, he says. “It ripples, and it ripples, and it destroys lives. But there are also ripples of goodness.”

And that is where God is – in the ripples of goodness that never end.

(BMH)

A CALL TO THE CLERGY

Sometimes in the wake of a tragedy – whether someone taken “before his time” by accident or illness, or taking his own life – we have that comfort of knowing such people are received and tended to by heaven’s loving angels. But wouldn’t these people be feeling anguish too – just like those left behind?

After some of the recent tragedies in the Church, a young man noted: “In the New Church we always hear about the deceased waking in the spiritual world and gradually acclimating to their new life, gently guided by angels. It all sounds wonderful and can be comforting, especially if the person was in pain or had other difficulties in this world that they’ve left behind. We often hear talk about the deceased being ‘in a better place,’ with the logical assumption that they must be happier there.

“But what about their concerns for the people they’ve left behind on earth? I know there’s no time in heaven, so we are told they don’t have a sense of waiting years for their family and friends to pass on and join them. But they have to know their loved ones are grieving and suffering because of their loss.”

People who have left behind a spouse and young children especially must have some feeling for their grief and suffering – and wouldn’t they be feeling this as well? So how do we reconcile all of this with the peace the angels bring?

We ask anyone in the clergy with insight into this question to share thoughts with our readers. And we ask readers who ponder their own questions of life and doctrine to pose them so that we might appeal to the clergy for answers. Thank you.

(BMH)

‘THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO’

While He was dying on the cross the Lord said: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” (*Luke 23:34*) This shows how essential knowledge of the truth is. And how deadly lack of knowledge can be.

Questions of truth and falsity may seem abstract, academic, theoretical – not crucial or of practical importance. But what we believe and think determines how we act, for good or ill. The fact that an evil deed was done unknowingly does not lessen the harm it causes, which can be excruciating.

“Ignorance, indeed, excuses, but it does not take away falsity that has been confirmed; for such falsity is bound together with evil, thus with hell.” (*Divine Love and Wisdom 350*)

The Lord is never angry, never condemns anyone, is always merciful. But His mercy operates by means of truth, and without the light of truth, we are more likely to be drawn into one of hell’s devious plots.

“Nothing therefore is of more importance than to know what is true.” (*Arcana Coelestia 794*)

(WEO)

THE KEY TO GROWTH

We have seen the rise and fall of mega-churches and charismatic ministers that try to be all things to all people and eventually fail because they don't stand for anything lasting.

Mainline Protestant churches in the United States are learning the lesson all over again. A recent report by the Pew Research Center says they are shrinking by about a million members a year, which has ominous implications for the future. It also has a lesson for us about the right and the wrong ways to grow the Church.

Twenty years ago John Shelby Spong, a bishop in the U.S. Episcopal Church, published a provocative book, *Why Christianity Must Change or Die*. Mainline churches were already experiencing decline and this was to be the antidote. The theologically liberal Spong was confident that congregations would grow if they just abandoned their literal interpretations of the Bible and accommodated them to "changing times."

This has become a popular approach in many churches, also endorsed by academia. A leader of the Harvard Divinity School said the book "should be required reading for everyone concerned with facing head-on the intellectual and spiritual challenges of late 20th century religious life." But the embrace of liberal theology has not stopped the decline in their churches.

A study of 22 mainline congregations in the Canadian province of Ontario over the past five years found that churches sticking to more conservative literal views of the Bible were growing while more liberal churches were in decline. This tracks with the general trend that churches which are firm and clear in their religious convictions are the ones that are growing.

That should not really come as a surprise – and it's a factor to consider as we look to ways to increase our own church growth. Whether services are informal or traditional it shouldn't make a difference – and should support growth – as long as we are clear, consistent and uncompromising in what we stand for and maintain doctrinal integrity, not water down doctrine to fit "changing times."

Spong may be right that Christianity must change or die. But it all depends on what you change – and what you don't.

(BMH)

GOOD QUESTIONS IN A PAINTING

"Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?" is a large painting (more than 12 feet long) of a mystical Tahitian scene, like a vision or a dream. Gauguin regarded it as his masterpiece. I've seen it twice: many years ago in its home at the Boston Museum of Art, and more recently when it

traveled to an exhibit at the Philadelphia Museum.

Gauguin had come to Tahiti expecting a tropical paradise, but he had brought his demons with him. His dissolute lifestyle had taken a terrible toll on him. He was ill and deeply in debt, and he was planning to kill himself after the painting was completed. He did try, but the attempt was unsuccessful, and it may have been during his recovery that he painted the title of the picture (in French) on a yellow patch in the upper left corner.

It's an intriguing title, very philosophical, and in fact theological. The three questions are from a Catholic catechism Gauguin had learned as a schoolboy in France. He rejected the faith as an adult, but he remembered the questions and was pondering the deep subject of what it means to be human when he painted "Where Do We Come From? . . ."

This reminds me of the New Church doctrine of "remains," and the importance of "memory-knowledge" as the basis for thought. Rote learning by itself is not enough, obviously, but *knowing* is a prerequisite for understanding. And I wonder if some form of catechism would not be useful in the New Church. I saw one once, years ago in an old pamphlet, but I don't know how much it was ever used.

Falsities based upon natural appearances and worldly reasoning continually challenge the truths of faith in a young person's mind. The teachings of the New Church provide a strong defense – but only if they are *known*. Then, even if people had little understanding of the New Church answer to one of life's important questions, at least they would know there *is* an answer. That would be a good start. It would give them something to think about, and learn more about if they wanted to. Once knowledge is implanted in the mind, greater understanding and belief can follow, even years later.

(WEO)

A NEW CHURCH CATECHISM

The gist of each doctrine of the New Church could be learned through a series of short questions and answers. Lodged in the memory, these answers would be helpful in knowing how to respond to various important questions when they arise. They would provide an immediate, simple response, which would lend strength to someone facing a temptation. Further study and thought could follow. Think of the five smooth stones with which David armed himself when he went out to meet Goliath.

As an example of what a New Church Catechism might look like, consider how we might respond to the questions in Gauguin's painting (along with some related questions).

Q: Where do we come from? **A:** We come from God, who created us in

His image.

Q: What are we? **A:** We are recipients of life from God, who is life itself.

Q: Where are we going? **A:** The purpose of creation is a heaven from the human race. Each of us was created to become an angel and live to eternity in heaven.

Q: What makes us human? **A:** The two distinctively human faculties are rationality and liberty, or free will and reason.

Q: What is life? **A:** Love is the life of man. Without it we would not think or move.

Q: How do we prepare for eternal life? **A:** We must be regenerated – that is, born again, spiritually.

Q: How can we be regenerated? **A:** By shunning evils as sins against God, and living according to the teachings of the Word.

Q: Does regeneration happen all at once? **A:** No, it is a gradual process that lasts throughout our life, as we are little by little drawn out of evil and into good.

Q: What are the steps of regeneration? **A:** The three general stages of regeneration are repentance, reformation and regeneration.

Q: How do we shun evils? **A:** Examine ourselves; identify the bad feelings and thoughts we have; pray to the Lord for help in getting rid of them; and stop acting on them.

Q: Why does the Lord permit evil things to happen? **A:** Evil must be seen in order to be rejected. (And there are other reasons – so there could be several questions on this aspect of providence)

Q: Does that mean we need to do what is wrong so evil can be seen? **A:** Absolutely not. If we examine ourselves, we can see evils in ourselves *before* they come into act. “Offenses must come, but woe to those by whom they come.”

(WEO)

THE BIBLE GETS ITS PLACE

Amid all of the growing pressure to keep religion out of the public square there is hope. The American Bible Society in Philadelphia is planning a \$60 million Faith & Liberty Discovery Center – devoted to the importance and the influence of the Bible in American life – just across from Independence Mall, the birthplace of American freedom. The center, scheduled to open in the fall of 2018, is expected to attract 250,000 visitors a year.

Roy Peterson, president of the American Bible Society, said it belongs as part of Independence Mall because the founders relied so heavily on the Bible in crafting the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. “The

framers were inspired by words of Scripture,” he said, and to understand the DNA of America “you need to know something about the Bible.”

Indeed, George Washington forthrightly stated that “it is impossible to govern without the Bible.” He also felt that morality was essential to the viability of democratic government – and that morality cannot exist without religion.

Daniel Dreisbach, a professor and constitutional scholar at American University, contends that “the Bible provided the basic building blocks of American civic life.” He sees a Bible museum in Independence Hall as no threat to the abiding American principle of separation of church and state because it is all about education, not proselytizing.

Hopefully part of that education will be reminding us all that, “Happy are the people whose God is the Lord,” (*Psalms* 144:15) and, “Except the Lord builds the house they labor in vain who build it.” (*Psalms* 127:1)

(BMH)

SOUTHWEST TO TRUE NORTH

“Big business” is a pejorative term these days. It’s all about greed and the ethic of the bottom line. But many a business executive – and the companies they head – are led by Christian values. One is Southwest Airlines which projects its whole business model from the Golden Rule.

On a recent Southwest flight I saw an article in its inflight magazine by chairman and CEO Gary Kelly: “Embracing Civility and the Golden Rule.” He said one of the things that attracted him to Southwest three decades ago – and compelled him to stay – was its guiding principle: “Treat others the way you wish to be treated.”

This applies to employees and customers – and has always been good for business. Through all of the ups and downs, bankruptcies and mergers in the industry, Southwest has been a model of growth and stability.

“Southwest is world famous and often admired,” Kelly says, “for our people-centric culture, and it all starts with how we treat each other.”

What a model, not only for a business, but any organization, family, community – and church.

Kelly also voiced concern for the decline of civility, especially in social media and forums. More civility in the way we communicate with each other, he says, “could bring us all closer together, help us understand each other and make us stronger.”

He has found that “interpersonal conflict often results from lack of understanding. The more we listen to each other, the more likely we are to engage in civil discourse and achieve understanding. In these meaningful

interactions, we find good in one another.”

Opening our minds and hearts to our neighbors “has to start with a desire to listen, to understand and to be tolerant of different points of view, and a desire to be reasonable, patient and respectful.”

Sounds like the recent Journey campaign on Mindful Communication (Is it true? Is it kind? Is it useful?) It sounds just like the Golden Rule – not framed on a wall but brought down into life. It is that simple. And it is that profound.
(BMH)

DISTINCTIVENESS REDUX

One of the main purposes in the founding of the Academy and General Church was to create a New Church culture distinct from that of the world around it. The goal was not to be *exclusive*, but for the life of the Church community – in marriages, families, education and social life – to be as clearly distinct from the existing culture as New Church doctrines are from traditional Christian teaching.

If elements of aloofness or elitism crept in, that was not the intent; although, given our fallen human heredity, some degree of distortion of the ideal was perhaps inevitable. But a misapplication of something that serves a good purpose does not mean that it is not useful when properly observed. Distinctiveness that comes from within, from a devotion to what is good and true, and not from a foolish sense of self-merit and a wish to look down on others, is good.

In any case, because of the way the world around us is changing, the General Church is destined to become even more distinctive in the days ahead – unless, of course, it goes the way of the world.

In the early days of the New Church the difference between it and the world around it, which still mostly identified itself as Christian, was mainly a matter of doctrine and not so outwardly apparent. In fact, the question of whether there even needed to be a separate organization was a matter of considerable debate.

Now, though, the spiritual divide between the teachings and culture of the New Church and the ideas and culture around it is becoming ever deeper and wider. The outstanding example is the difference between the New Church view of marriage and that which has taken hold in the world and even many other churches.

And yet, at the same time the world, in many ways, is growing further apart from the New Church, we also see spiritual progress in the widespread and growing interest in being kind and useful to others – the poor and needy and those who have been ignored and mistreated. Young people today are

especially influenced by this new spirit of charity. So there is hope.

In recent years, there has been a growing desire in our Church also to reach out and connect with the world in order to be of use to others. This is good, but along with it we need to be careful not to neglect or change the things that make the New Church special. How to be “in” the world but not “of” the world is a constant challenge.

Distinctiveness and welcoming newcomers are not mutually exclusive interests, but actually go together – for what does the New Church have to offer people except those things that set it apart from others and make it distinctly *new*?

(WEO)

THE MINISTRY OF GLENCAIRN

After four days of riveting presentation on the Glencairn Museum at the Boynton Beach Retreat by Director Brian Henderson (see page 180), the Rev. George McCurdy – a regular participant at the Retreat – commented that the work of the museum is “a kind of ministry” which deserves our support.

Indeed, considering the scope of activities at Glencairn – for the College, the Academy and Bryn Athyn Church School, the community, and the larger community beyond – and the thousands of visitors inspired by its programs and collections each year, this is very much a ministry with extraordinary impact in its outreach. This is true not only for the Glencairn Museum but the contiguous Historic District, including Cairnwood Estate and the Cathedral.

My daily commute to Cairncrest passes through the District and I am impressed almost every day to see school buses and tour buses in the parking lots, and processions of students from various schools, eager to learn what these buildings have to offer.

When John Pitcairn and Bishop Benade traveled to Egypt and the Holy Land more than 100 years ago, their incredible collections seeded the Museum that started modestly in Philadelphia, then moved to the fourth floor of the Old Library on the Academy campus before moving to Glencairn in 1980. A museum devoted to religious artifacts was central to their vision for the Academy.

When Raymond and Mildred Pitcairn built Glencairn in the 1930s it was not only a family home but already a home for religious art and treasures. So it became a natural repository for the Academy Museum, which has transformed Glencairn into one of the finest religious museums in the world, with unlimited horizons.

The outreach going on in the museum – for the Church and the Academy – is beyond measure. We can never know the impact of all the seeds being

nurtured – just know that thousands of children and adults every year are having their lives and minds touched in profound ways. And somewhere we can be sure that John Pitcairn and Bishop Benade, and Raymond and Mildred Pitcairn, are smiling.

(BMH)

A New ‘Belief’

Rev. Dr. George F. Dole

Chapter 2 of Judges tells of the idolaters who were left in the land after the initial conquest, explaining in verse 22 that this was in order to "test" Israel. At #3/4681 in *The Word Explained*, Swedenborg comments in terms that bring immediately to mind Divine Providence 278a, "Evils cannot be set aside unless they come to light." He first emphasizes the need for combat and then notes the need of an "arouser." He continues:

The evil is aroused and opened up like a wound, and so the man grows better and is reformed. . . . Otherwise the evil in man stagnates, as it were, whence come putrefactions, and the man would breathe his last. Evil, moreover, cleaves with good and without such an arousing, there is no separating it.

He then adds an indented paragraph 4682, as follows:

These are the things which, by the divine mercy of God Messiah, it has been granted me to learn within a period now of sixteen months. Otherwise they would have been mysteries to me, nor could I readily have believed them. ¹

I have been discovering that *The Word Explained*, which Swedenborg started to write immediately after his call vision, records the encounter between his childhood faith and his highly disciplined adult intellect. This is the most vivid example I have come across of a new and important "belief" being granted him through his engagement with the Word.

¹ The translation is taken from Alfred Acton's *The Word Explained*, Volume VI, pp. 78f., where the section numbers are 6009 and 6010.



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