

NEW CHURCH *Life*

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

MARCH/APRIL 2012



Consider the Lilies

The beauty of the lilies corresponds to our spiritual growth and awakens a desire for heaven. A sermon by Rev. Walter E. Orthwein, page 122.

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Bruce Henderson, Editor

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New Church Life

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

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NEW CHURCH AUDIO

EASTER RECORDINGS AVAILABLE

Easter from the Lord's Point of View

doctrinal class by Rev. Dr. Erik E. Sandstrom

The Triumphal Entry

sermon by Rev. Dr. Ray Silverman

Easter in our Hearts

sermon by Rev. Ethan D. McCardell

Lifted Up

sermon by Rt. Rev. Louis B. King

The Easter Story in Light of the Writings

doctrinal class by Rev. Kurt Horigan Asplundh

The Mount of Olives

sermon by Rev. Robert S. Jungé

The Risen Lord

sermon by Rev. C. Mark Perry

What Easter Really Means to Us

address by Rt. Rev. George de Charms

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IN THIS ISSUE

Many older members of the Church have fond memories of Bishop George de Charms for his doctrinal scholarship and his personal warmth. We are happy to reprint an address he gave in 1957 on *Divine Providence and Human Prudence in the Establishment of the Church*. And what is our role? Bishop de Charms says, “The Lord gives man a conscious part in the building of the Church. It is a very small part when compared with the infinite operation of the Divine Providence, but still it is indispensable.” (Page 111)

You know all about the 19th of June but do you know the significance of February 6th? That’s the date of the founding of the General Church in 1897. This was a critical time after the split from Bishop Benade and it is an important date to remember. Read about the significance of the new form of government adopted under Bishop W.F. Pendleton and its implications for each of us as church members, in the words of Bishop de Charms and the Rev. W. Cairns Henderson, written on the 60th anniversary. (Page 104)

Another wise and prescient voice from the past is E. Bruce Glenn, fondly revered dean of the Academy College and English professor, with some of his words remembered from 1948 about growing the College. His perspective then relates very much to the current policy of opening the doors to seekers. (Page 119)

Bishop Thomas Kline has been taking *Ezekiel’s Vision of the Dry Bones* throughout the Church as a context for the steps an organization – such as the Church and the Academy – go through in pursuing plans and goals. Read a summary he prepared for the *Academy Journal* as Chancellor of the Academy. (Page 120)

“*Consider the lilies...*” This is the perfect text for a springtime sermon by the Rev. Walter Orthwein – not only because lilies are a favorite symbol of spring and Easter but because they, like all of nature, are an enduring image of the Lord’s love and wisdom, the Divine Providence that leads us at every moment, and the ultimate order that pervades our natural and spiritual lives. (Page 122)

Eldergarten 2012 offered a rich variety of topics: A report – plus questions and answers – from Bishop Kline on *The State of the Church and the Academy*; presentations by the Rt. Rev. Alfred Acton on *The New Church and Current Issues*, the Rev. Prescott Rogers on *The Four Gospels: New Testament Scholarship and the Heavenly Doctrines*, and Dr. Sylvia Shaw on *Swedenborgian Literary Criticism: Interpreting Literature Through a New Church Lens*; and a banquet

address by Bruce Henderson, *Between Dream and Destiny: New Church Exceptionalism and American Exceptionalism*. (Beginning on page 136)

One of the fascinating mysteries for Tom Cooper has been the nature and location of the soul – and maybe it helps to look at the soul the way we view a computer. If we can believe in the ethereal Internet, he wonders, can't we also believe in a human soul living apart from our natural bodies in the spiritual world while we live on earth? (Page 143)

Introducing Our Ministers focuses in this issue on the Rev. Scott Frazier, who for years saw himself becoming a Latin and history teacher – not a minister, especially a pastoral minister – and now finds his greatest delight combining teaching and ministry. (Page 147) We are also pleased to publish Scott's Cathedral address from last Charter Day, *Bring All Your Firepans*, on how to really commit our lives to the Lord. (Page 151)

Would you like to know more about MARS – the Master of Arts in Religious Studies program in Bryn Athyn College? Dr. Jane Williams-Hogan, Director of MARS, describes what it has to offer to lay men and women for personalized doctrinal research and as a platform for church growth. Included are powerful testimonies from former and current students Suzy Laidlaw, Hilary Bryntesson and Gail Cooper. (Page 156)

In *A Taste for Sweetness*, Alanna Rose finds a clue in one man's recovery from cancer about how the Lord leads us from infancy to a loving relationship with Him – from the first flavors of sweetness through all the other aspects of the sense of taste. (Page 164)

Book reviews in this issue include: *Gardens of Heaven and Earth: An essay on Swedenborg and the symbolism of gardens*, by **Dr. Kristin King**, reviewed by Vera Powell Glenn; *Paradise Misplaced: Book One of the Mexican Eden Trilogy*, by **Dr. Sylvia Montgomery Shaw**, reviewed by Naomi Gladish Smith; *Starting Science From God: Rational Scientific Theories From Theism*, by **Dr. Ian Thompson**, reviewed by Dr. Gregory Baker; and *The World Transformed: Swedenborg and the Last Judgment*, **Dan A. Synnestvedt, Editor**, reviewed by Alan Laidlaw. (Beginning on page 173)

Church News includes:

- The delightful story of a MARS graduation recreated in South Africa for a graduate who couldn't make it to Bryn Athyn
- Plans for a European Assembly in England this July – and you're invited
- News from the winter Academy Board meetings, including approval of a new five-year plan for Bryn Athyn College
- A pastor challenged by a "Smart Phone" and led to explore with his congregation how people learn in the new technology environment, and the relationship of video games to innocence
- What Swedenborg might do if he could "Tweet" – with some suggestions from a plugged-in minister (beginning on page 182)

Editorials

EASTER PILGRIMS

As spiritual pilgrims we come to Easter with the hope born of faith and despair born of a wayward world.

April is Easter's metaphor: promise and denial. It struggles between lingering chill and warming sun. Out of that struggle comes the ultimate triumph of nature. Out of Easter comes the rebirth of the spirit. It is no accident they come to us at the same time and that we are desperate for both.

We long for the flowering spirit that lights our landscapes and our hearts. We long for deliverance from the plagues unleashed upon the world. We pray to be led by the Lord: "Thy will be done."

There is always hope – for each of us and for the world. In restive current debates over morality and faith, people of all faiths are challenged to elevate their minds. While too many seem to be worshipping at the altar of technology and worldliness, hope lies in a growing spiritual hunger throughout the world – for something true and good to believe in. The New Church – both Church Specific and Church Universal – is the hope of the world and we are all called to its service.

Today's pilgrims are caught in an age-old quest for faith that offers hope against the banality of the world, and for the meaning and significance of life within a context that is more complex and confusing than ever.

Easter always offers perspective. We are called upon to reflect on its meaning and make it relevant to our lives – by applying its spiritual message to the challenges we confront.

The eternal message of Easter is: "Behold, I make all things new." Springtime is its theater. The soul is its mirror. A new spirit and a brighter future are its promise.

(BMH)

MIRACLES AND THE LAWS OF NATURE

It is often said that miracles are contrary to the laws of nature – but how could they be, since the Author of nature is also the Author of miracles? The order of nature, which the laws of nature describe, is an expression of the same Divine order of life that flows from the Lord and forms the heavens.

Nature was created to receive life from the Divine, and thus corresponds to the spiritual world, but is a less perfect and more resistant receptacle of life

than the spiritual world. Things which are normal occurrences in the spiritual world (that thought brings presence, for instance) would be seen as miracles in this world. And life is a miracle in both worlds, though so common as to be considered natural.

A miracle is simply a temporary intensification on the natural plane of creation of the ordering force of Life Itself, that is, Divine Love, in the immediate presence of the One from whom that force emanates. It is not a violation of any order, but simply a stronger-than-usual and particularly focused application of the spiritual order that always flows into nature generally.

As the human body is an expression of the human soul, formed by the soul as a material covering to contain and serve it in the natural world, so nature as a whole is the outmost expression of the Divine energy radiating from the Lord as the sun of heaven (the difference being that the Lord's Spirit is Life itself, while our souls are derivative forms receptive of life from Him).

The life proceeding from God is accommodated through a series of spiritual atmospheres composed of increasingly compressed and inert substances until it finally comes to rest in the outmost, material substances of nature.

Nature (by its very nature) is therefore resistant to the influx of life from the Divine, but this does not mean the laws of nature are *contrary* to the Divine order of heaven from which they are derived, since nature itself (including its resistance) is part of the Divine plan. The order of nature is a manifestation of Divine and spiritual order on the denser, less perfect and less responsive outmost plane of creation.

Nature's resistance does mean that we humans must make a conscious, deliberate effort to overcome the limitations of nature, especially our own imperfect human nature, in order to realize our spiritual potential and conform ourselves to the order of heaven. Nature is meant to be superseded – in and by us. Or more accurately, by the Lord in us with our cooperation.

We might compare the regeneration of the natural in us to the gradual appearing of an image on photographic paper. Does the superimposing of that image on the paper violate the nature of the paper? No, because the paper was made especially for that purpose. Similarly, the superimposing of the spiritual upon our human nature is a fulfillment of the potential inherent in our human nature from its beginning. We were made “in the image of God” naturally or physically, but with the potential to receive that image in ourselves spiritually.

This order of things – which encompasses the whole of creation, natural and spiritual – is what the Lord made manifest during His life in the world by those acts we call “miracles.” They were demonstrations, not just of His Divine power, but also outward, visible representations of what the exercise of that power accomplishes in our lives – which is to order our lower nature so that it agrees with the spiritual order of life for which we were created.

For instance, He changes the “water” of natural understanding into the “wine” of spiritual understanding – that’s the real miracle; the physical transformation of water into wine was just an outward illustration of it. Again, the healing of blind people was a sign of the far more important healing of the *mind* through the restoration of faith, “the eye of love,” which He accomplishes in everyone who comes to Him and follows Him in the path of life.

In a sense, nature itself violates the so-called “laws of nature” all the time! That is, things which cannot be explained by any natural law occur so regularly in nature that we call them “natural” even though they aren’t. The laws of optics, for instance, explain how a camera works, but cannot account for the human faculty of sight, which involves understanding. No law of nature can explain the difference in the way a dog sees a book and the way a human sees it.

The supreme example is life itself. It appears in nature constantly, but it is not natural and is not subject to the laws of nature. *Life is contrary to “the laws of nature.”* It is natural for bodies to die, but for them to live is natural only in the sense that it happens so regularly. For life to flow into a body is not mandated by any law of nature but by Divine law.

But nature, having been created by the Divine for the purpose of receiving life, is so organized and ruled by the Divine for that purpose, and thus so encompassed by life, that it appears as if the life manifested in it actually belonged to nature itself. The truth, though, is that “In Him we live and move and have our being.” (*Acts 2:28; Divine Love and Wisdom 301*)

Is it natural for wounds to heal? Yes, in the sense that it happens all the time in nature, and the chemistry and natural chain of causes in the process are observable. But obviously there is something essential at work in this process that transcends nature – namely life – since once life has left a body it will no longer heal. So the “natural” process of healing isn’t entirely natural, and thus all healing is at least somewhat “miraculous.”

And what about human speech? We consider it “natural” for humans to speak because they normally do, and the physical apparatus for speaking and the sounds produced belong to the world of nature. But when we look at the phenomenon of human speech in the broader context of the whole animal kingdom, can we not see that there is something transcendent, mysterious – supernatural – at work in human speech?

Birth is another example of something which, although natural, people often call (perhaps more truly than they realize) a “miracle.”

For a body to be conceived and formed and animated by an influx of life into it is something that takes place continually in nature. The miraculous thing about the bodily resurrection of someone who has died, such as Lazarus, is that usually once a body dies it does not come back to life. But what law of nature is violated by such an event? The fact that something rarely happens,

or even happened only once, makes it unusual or unique but not necessarily contrary to a “law.”

To say that miracles can't happen because they are contrary to the laws of nature is to say that God, who is Life itself and who created nature and acts into it, is subservient to that which He created and which receives life and is acted upon by Him. It is not contrary to any order, natural or spiritual, for the subsidiary reality (nature) to serve and be overruled by the primary Reality (God) who created the subsidiary for that very purpose.

Far from being contrary to the laws of nature, a miracle points to and gives a glimpse of the greater Reality behind nature, which is the source and epitome of nature's order, and to which nature in its rough, slow way tends. The reflection in nature of that higher order may be dim and imperfect, but it is not contrary to the higher order. Nor is a momentary special application of the higher order upon the lower a violation of the lower order.

The supreme miracle of all, the Lord's resurrection, violated none of nature's laws, but rather superseded them. For a moment the natural limitations which normally encumber the *conatus* toward life and humanity embedded in nature were set aside, and the promise of glory, the promise of the Divine Humanity contained in nature from the beginning, was realized.

(WEO)

A DAY TO REMEMBER

We joyfully celebrate each year the beginning of the New Church on the 19th of June, 1770. We should remember just as thankfully another significant anniversary recently passed: February 6, 1897 – the founding of the General Church of the New Jerusalem.

It was born in crisis. The Academy had been dissolved as an ecclesiastical body when its members withdrew from Bishop Benade in an ugly but necessary split.

Writing in *New Church Life*, February 1957 – the 60th anniversary of this auspicious day – Bishop George de Charms said this action was taken “with profound regret and deep misgiving.” “Father Benade” was a much-loved figure but had lost the confidence of Academy leaders with his stands.

“The doctrine of the sole Divine authority of the Writings,” Bishop de Charms wrote, “was seen to be the cornerstone of that faith on which the New Church could be permanently established. Yet, with the fall of the Academy, all those who embraced that faith wholeheartedly and with profound conviction were left destitute. They knew not where to turn.”

“To meet this critical situation Bishop W.F. Pendleton took the lead in searching for a way to preserve the precious heritage which was in immediate

danger of being lost.”

So on February 6 he met with five other ministers who had withdrawn from the Academy – C.E. Doering, Carl Theophilus Odhner, N.D. Pendleton, Enoch Price and Homer Synnestvedt – and formed a Council of the Clergy as the nucleus for a new church organization.

The General Church of the New Jerusalem “was providentially chosen” as the name and a General Assembly was called for June, where the Bishop’s organization plan was adopted.

“The essence of the plan,” wrote Bishop de Charms, was “that the Church should be governed by the Lord through the teaching of the Heavenly Doctrine received in heart and conscience. In order to secure this government both priests and layman must be free to think, speak and act in accordance with that conscience. There was to be no man-made constitution, no binding doctrine established by council, and no legislation for the future.”

There was to be a house of the clergy for ecclesiastic affairs and a house of the laity for finance “to be brought into mutual understanding and cooperation by council and assembly.”

This restored “the freedom that was needed and the full confidence in the leadership of the priesthood. Out of it the present government of the General Church has developed. . . . It is a new concept of government, drawn directly from the Writings, and it has stood the test of time through unforeseen trials and conflicts over a period of three generations. It has produced a relationship between the clergy and the laity that is altogether unique, providing for a measure of freedom and unhampered cooperation hitherto unknown.”

Bishop de Charms said it was fitting on that 60th anniversary “to make grateful acknowledgment of the outstanding service rendered by Bishop W. F. Pendleton in formulating this new plan of organization which has brought, and will continue to bring, benefits beyond all price to our beloved Church.”

In a series of four editorials in that same issue, the Rev. W. Cairns Henderson offered penetrating observations, excerpted below, that are still important today – to our perspective and to our future. (We recommend a full reading of Bishop de Charm’s statement and the editorials: *New Church Life*, February 1957.) The headings below are from each of the four editorials.

THE CHURCH: USES AND NEEDS

Two things are necessary for proper ordering of any organization – a true conception of its use and the means to achieve it. “The use that the Lord has established the Church to perform is to teach the interior truths of the Word and lead thereby to the good of life.” To perform this use “the Church has been

founded for one that is even more interior – keeping open an unconscious communication with heaven.”

The life and use of the Church require it to be in a state to receive influx from heaven, within order and freedom. “Upon these two things the Church depends.” These ideals of order and freedom combine to form the government of the Church.

A NEW CONCEPT OF GOVERNMENT

The spiritual concept “first took definite and practical form in the Academy. There it was seen that the Church was to be governed, not by a priestly hierarchy, nor yet by the laity through a congregational form of organization, but by the Lord alone.”

“Under this concept there are no human governors. It is true, of course, that while the Lord governs the Church with the individual immediately, He governs it as an organized body through men as instruments. But these men are administrators of Divine law, not directors of the Church’s affairs; and that there may be order and freedom, their administration may not be by command or by external compulsion. Their function is to mediate influx from the Lord, to present the Lord’s will in such a way that there is a free and willing response formed by the love and life of the truth of the Word.”

A NEW BEGINNING

Bishop Pendleton’s effort to re-form the Church produced a new kind of freedom in church government – not only for the clergy but for the laity. Later he was to “devote himself to finding ways by which the priesthood and the laity might come into free cooperation in the practical administration of the affairs of the Church.” At the Assembly that June, Bishop Pendleton said: “The quality of a church is according to the quality of its government, or according to the idea of government that rules within it. . . . If government is seen under a spiritual idea, this idea reigning in all its parts, then the church will be a spiritual church.”

“This is what was new in the General Church. And the fundamental idea is that membership in the General Church is essentially individual. It is in this that our organization is unique among New Church bodies. Its units are not societies or associations, but individual men and women, each of whom is recognized as a church in least form, while all collectively are recognized as constituting the church in the greatest form.”

“Love to the Lord, charity toward the neighbor, a perceptive insight into the inner meaning of revealed truth, and the spiritual affection of the uses to which that truth leads – these are the things that make a living church. And

the Lord cannot impart these things to a group as such. They can be implanted and developed only in individual human minds.”

“For these reasons we recognize that the Church is essentially individual, and that every member has a responsibility to go to the Lord in the Writings in order that he may come under that direct leading without which the Lord cannot govern the Church as a whole.”

THE PAST AND THE FUTURE

“It would be unrealistic to claim that the efforts during the last 60 years to implement these ideas have been unqualifiedly successful. Yet this is not an admission of failure, but a recognition of fact. It is relatively easy to perceive intellectually that the Lord is to govern the Church through the Writings; but it is much more difficult to see the application of this truth in each and every situation.

“Yet it is our conviction that the General Church’s ideal of government is not an unattainable dream, but a vision that can be ultimated successfully.”

“On this 60th anniversary of the formation of the General Church our duty surely is clear. With heartfelt gratitude for the many blessings the Lord has bestowed upon us in the years of our life as a church, and with quiet confidence for the future, we should resolve to keep intact the faith which is our heritage – the faith that the Lord can and will teach, lead and govern His Church in the measure that we make it possible for Him to do so.”

“This He will do if we seek His help in our hour of need; if, when charity fails, we look in common to the Writings, and, under the shelter of a rock higher than we, seek anew for harmony.”

(BMH)

A GOOD STARTING POINT

Given the confidence of the Lord, and the Church, in investing the Church in the conscience and responsibility of the individual, given our instinct too often to be judgmental and critical, and given the need for charity to guide our ways, the Writings offer the perfect context: “Those who are guided by kindness hardly even notice evil in another but pay attention instead to everything good and true in the person. When they do find anything bad or wrong they put a good interpretation on it.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 1079)

(BMH)

Letters to the Editors

Good News From Ghana

With degree in hand from the ANC Theological School the Rev. William O. Ankra-Badu returned to his native Ghana in 1986 to establish a New Church presence there. I had the privilege of visiting him in the spring of 1988 and attended a service in Accra with about a half dozen others in a small anteroom of his house, featuring an audiotape of a cathedral service and a thoughtful address by Ankra-Badu.

What would you find if you visited Ghana now? There are 10 trained active New Church ministers scattered through the central and southern parts of the country. Ankra-Badu is now in well-deserved retirement and his Accra congregation is under the able direction of the Rev. George Dziekpor.

If you travel a few miles north to Asakraka you will see the Rev. Martin Gyamfi's congregation of about 125 persons and a multi-grade school with a total enrollment of 428 students. Academically the school excels with 100% of students passing standardized government examinations, and the Basic (elementary) School ranked the highest private school out of 79 in the Kwahu South Region.

Gyamfi writes, "New Church Religion is the center of our school's life. Indeed, we are working very hard to teach and live by it in our school, with the hope that one day students and employees may come to know, love and live from the Lord and thus be saved by Him."

The other major school society is in Tema, a coastal port city east of Accra under the leadership of the Rev. Kwasi Darkwah. It also has a congregation of about 125 people housed in a beautiful new church building and a thriving school of more than 200 students. A "Young Disciples of Jesus" group informs teenagers on the ways and beliefs of the Church. Other pastors have their own societies as well as satellite groups that are visited in various locations about the country.

The Ghana New Church groups are making progress toward achieving financial self-sufficiency. Gyamfi reports a new banana plantation on church grounds that will produce bananas for local sale. Tema has a robust alumni association providing support for church and school.

An endowment fund was created for Ghana with private donations at the initiative of the General Church West Africa Committee in 2001 that will be transferred to Ghana for investment there by the end of the second quarter of this year. The money is invested in two T. Rowe Price index mutual funds,

one for equities and one for bonds, with the General Church as custodian. With reinvestment of all dividends and capital gains the balance has reached \$72,000.

This would be an excellent opportunity for individuals who support the growth of the church in Ghana to make an additional contribution to the fund now. It would be great if we could up the balance to \$100,000 before the final transfer date on June 30th. To do so simply send a check to the **Development Office, General Church of the New Jerusalem, PO Box 708, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009-0708** marked “For Ghana Endowment.” Contributions will be tax deductible as far as allowed by the tax code.

As Gyamfi says, “May the Lord support and lead us as we work very hard to ‘make disciples of all nations.’”

Any questions? Email me at wbraddoc@comcast.net

Bill Radcliffe
Mitchellville, Maryland

Suicide and the Writings

To The Editors:

I refer to Donnette Alfelt’s letter in the November-December 2011 *New Church Life* suggesting that I am incorrect in stating that the Writings clearly indicate that suicide is wrong.

All life is from the Lord, thus any attempt by man to end a life, whether murder, in war, euthanasia or suicide has within it the desire to end the life from the Lord. It is against the Lord, thus it is evil, stemming as it does from the love of self. Who is man to determine the death of another?

The Commandment “***Thou shall not kill***” is all-embracing. It covers all killing. Also, there are passages in the Writings indicating that killing is the ending of life, not just the murder of one person by another.

Arcana Coelestia 8902 states that “. . . not only is man not to be killed as to the body, but also as to the soul; thus that he is not only not to be deprived of life in the world, but especially that he is not to be deprived of life in heaven.” (my underlining)

Note that again, this is about any ending of life by another. There are no exceptions.

True Christian Religion 309-311 gives the three meanings of “Thou shalt not kill” – the natural, spiritual and celestial. One cannot make exceptions of the natural without it having repercussions for the other two. Within the

natural meaning of to kill lies hatred of the neighbor and the Lord.

Spiritual Diary 5002 states: “The reason why some die boys, some youths, some adults, some old men, are, 1st, on account of use in the world to men, 2nd, on account of use while he is in the world, to spirits and angels ... 3rd, on account of use to himself in the world, either that he may be regenerated, or that he may be let into his evils lest they lie dormant and later break out, ... 4th, therefore on account of use afterwards in the other life.” It is clear from this that any killing involves man taking it upon himself to determine how best a person may serve these uses.

A reading of *Divine Providence* shows clearly that if we are not to be in a love of self and on the road to hell, we must trust in the Lord’s leading and not subvert such leading by imposing one’s own love of self, which is of course an evil love. Euthanasia and suicide are clearly actions of love of self and a negation of trust in the Lord and His decision-making for us.

To quote from the late Rev. Martin Pryke: “Human life is trust to be employed in God’s service, and to destroy that life willingly is to break the commandment ‘thou shalt not kill.’

“To commit suicide is for a man to take upon himself the function of Divine Providence. It assumes he knows best when he can leave this world and enter the next. It is a presumption which springs from the love of self. It is to enter the other life by means of a crime.”

Mrs. Alfelt appears to draw a distinction between “rational” suicide and madness. But is there, in reality, any distinction other than that of degree? Love of life is a unique feature of human beings. All suicide is irrational, is against Divine Providence and could only be carried out by allowing oneself to descend to the point where one allows evil spirits control of one’s thinking. Madness, surely, would only be a deeper and more frequent or visible control of a person.

Spiritual Experiences 1336 makes the point that to commit suicide is to be under the control of evil spirits, for it states that a certain person had been driven to desperation by melancholia, to which he had been driven by diabolical spirits. The point is though that evil spirits do not control our minds unless we allow them to by turning away from the Lord, by allowing the love of self to rule us.

Name removed at writer's request. The name does appear in the print edition.

Divine Providence and Human Prudence in the Establishment of the Church

Rt. Rev. George de Charms

The establishment of the Church is a work purely Divine. It is done almost entirely without our knowledge, in secret ways beyond our comprehension. Yet there is a vital part of that work which even the Lord cannot do without the willing cooperation of men. This is clearly implied in the oft-quoted passage from *Psalms* 127: “Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.” But if the Lord does build the house men still labor in the building, the only difference being that then their work is productive.

The Lord gives man a conscious part in the building of the Church. It is a very small part when compared with the infinite operation of the Divine Providence, but still it is indispensable. Obviously, if one is to perform any conscious service in connection with the building of the Church he must know what the Church is, and must understand, in some measure, how it is to be established.

This knowledge can be acquired only from the Lord, and only so far as the teaching of the Word is rightly understood. Where the Word is not known, or where, if it is known, its meaning has been perverted by false doctrines, conscious cooperation with the Lord is impossible.

In this lies the difference between “the universal church” (*Apocalypse Explained* 331) and “the specific church” (*Apocalypse Explained* 252). The universal church consists of all in the whole world who sincerely live according to their conscience, whatever their religious faith may be. But the specific church is confined to those who have the Word and who by means of it truly know the Lord and worship Him.

The Lord is equally present with both of these churches, operating secretly to protect and nurture them – and this in thousands of ways of which we can

EDITOR'S NOTE: An address delivered at District Assemblies in Urbana, Ohio, and in Kitchener, Ontario, Canada, in the fall of 1957. Reprinted from *New Church Life*, November 1957.

have no knowledge. But only in the specific church can He operate also openly; that is, with man's conscious cooperation.

The supreme purpose of the Lord's advent is that He may establish His everlasting kingdom on the earth. However, the secret operation of His providence is not sufficient to achieve this end. For this, man's conscious cooperation is necessary. In His operation of the universal church, therefore, the Lord's immediate objective is not the establishment of the Church, but rather the salvation of the individual.

There is here a distinction which it is important for us to realize. With all men the Lord instills celestial remains of innocence. These are the only source from which a religious conscience may arise. The form of this conscience is of course various, being determined by the particular religion with which each one of us is imbued by instruction and training. But whatever the form, it is sincerely believed to be the truth, and if it is obeyed from a genuine desire to do the will of God, it contains the element of innocence, that is, a willingness to be taught and led which opens the way for right instruction and amendment of life in the spiritual world after death.

The Lord protects this conscience with all the power of His providence because man's salvation depends upon it. He does so with the utmost gentleness and with infinite patience. In order to preserve it He permits false religions to be perpetuated from generation to generation, even for thousands of years, because mistaken ideas, forms of worship and modes of religious life instilled during infancy and childhood become so intimately bound up with innocent affections that they cannot, without great difficulty, be separated.

Only in rare instances can this separation be effected during the life of the body; and for this reason, like the tares and the wheat of the Lord's parable, both must be allowed to "grow together until the harvest" – that is, until the final judgment, which can take place only in the spiritual world. (*Matthew 13:30*)

We see many instances of this secret operation of providence. We see, for instance, how, as materialism and irreligion gain the ascendancy among the learned, and their influence threatens to undermine the faith of the simple in heart, the Lord from time to time raises up men who appeal to their religious conscience and restore their confidence in the Bible through some form of religious revival.

We see how, when the bastions of religion are openly and violently attacked, the Lord strengthens the hearts of men and steels their will in defense of whatever they regard as a matter of conscience. This is why it has truly been said that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church," and why in all history it has been shown that persecution is powerless to destroy man's religious faith.

And again we see how, although the generality of men are unwilling to accept the revelation of His second advent, the Lord provides that as the Writings are spread abroad their teachings may subtly influence the minds even of those who know not whence they come. They help in this way to preserve a simple faith in religion with some who could not otherwise resist the assaults of skepticism and unbelief. They also may serve to create a climate of opinion in which such as can be prepared during their lifetime to accept the Heavenly Doctrine may find it easier to do so.

Yet as long as they are regarded merely as human ideas – as the thoughts of a remarkable religious philosopher named Swedenborg, or as the brilliant speculations of some popular speaker of the day, they have no power in them to establish the New Church. They may, and undoubtedly do, contribute to the spiritual welfare of individuals, and thus promote the growth of the Lord's kingdom in the heavens.

They may help prepare the way for the future spread of the New Church throughout the world. But the actual establishment of the Church begins with the vision of the Lord in the Writings, and the acknowledgment that by means of this Divine revelation He has come again to dwell with men, to teach them, and to lead them Himself.

We would not detract in the least from the great importance of the secret work which the Lord is doing for those who belong to the church universal. The "Holy City New Jerusalem" was seen as coming down from heaven and resting upon the earth. It must be built first in the heavens. It is foretold, therefore, that the church on earth at first will be among a few, and one reason given for this is that it can grow here only "according to its increase in the world of spirits."

As we read in *Apocalypse Explained* 732: "Spirits from that world are with men, and they are from such as while they had lived on the earth were in the faith of their church. None of these receive the [Heavenly] Doctrine but those who have been in the spiritual affection of truth. The number of these in the spiritual world now increases daily, and therefore according to their increase does that church which is called the New Jerusalem increase on earth."

It should be explained that by those who are here said to be in the "spiritual affection of truth" are meant all who remain faithful throughout life to whatever they had supposed to be the truth. No one but the Lord knows who these are, but we have every reason to believe that there are millions of such people in the world. They may not belong to any religion. Although they do not know the Lord, and therefore cannot worship Him, they are nevertheless under His immediate auspices every moment of their lives.

Even while they walk blindly in paths of error, the Lord silently guards them from deliberate evil, withholds them from willfully confirming their mistaken beliefs, and so keeps open to them the way that leads to heaven.

But what of those who, in the mercy of the Lord, have been led even here on earth to see in the Heavenly Doctrine the second coming of the Lord? Theirs is a rare privilege that cannot be granted to others – the privilege of cooperating consciously with the Lord in His Divine work of establishing His eternal kingdom among men.

The Writings throughout point to this as the supreme end and purpose of His advent. It must therefore be the end and purpose also of those who are called to be His disciples. To cooperate with Him toward the achievement of this end is their special use, a use that distinguishes them from all others. Indeed, it is only through the performance of this use that the Lord can effect their regeneration.

The Gentiles may be saved through the innocence of ignorance; but one who knows, and in some measure understands the spiritual truth of the Word, cannot be held guiltless if he does not strive sincerely to live according to it. And no one can live according to the Heavenly Doctrine without seeking to promote the end for the sake of which that doctrine has been given: namely, to establish the New Church in the hearts and lives of men still living in the natural world.

Because we know something of what the Lord is doing secretly to save those who belong to the church universal, we can, and must, of course, cooperate with Him in that preparatory work also. This we are called upon to do especially by means of the translation, publication and widespread distribution of the Writings.

We may also do it by publishing missionary literature designed to introduce people to the Writings, and to encourage them to investigate the truth of the Heavenly Doctrine for themselves. We should indeed welcome every opportunity to share with inquiring friends and acquaintances in other faiths the truths we have derived from the Writings. But realizing the great length to which the Lord goes, in providence, to protect the religious conscience of all men, we too must cultivate a spirit of toleration.

We must respect the sincere beliefs of others out of regard for the innocent affections associated with them. We are duty bound, when asked, to present the truth as the Lord gives us to see it in the Writings. But we should do so without exerting any external pressure or persuasion that might interfere with a free and rational acceptance of the doctrine.

We should leave entirely in the Lord's hands the question as to whether the truth is received or rejected. He alone can prepare the mind for its reception. Only by the secret operation of His providence can He produce what appears as a spontaneous sense of need, an affection of truth, which gives rise to a desire to learn.

By a friendly exchange of ideas, in response to questions, or even quite

unconsciously by our efforts to carry out the teachings of the Writings in our own lives, we may be instruments in the hands of the Lord to awaken such a desire. But if this comes to pass it is because secret preparation had already been made, and the conditions necessary to such an awakening were already present although they were unrealized.

In all our relations with those of other faiths our deepest concern must be, not to convert them to the New Church, but instead to cooperate with the Lord in his work with the church universal, which looks primarily to the salvation of the individual rather than to the immediate establishment of the Church on earth.

In all our relations with those of other faiths our deepest concern must be, not to convert them to the New Church but instead to cooperate with the Lord in His work with the church universal, which, as we have noted, looks primarily to the salvation of the individual rather than to the immediate establishment of the Church on earth.

This by no means implies that we should be lacking in missionary zeal, if by that is meant a strong desire that others may join the Church, and an eagerness to help them do so in any way that lies within our power. It means only that we should acknowledge the truth that no one can really come into the Church except freely, under the secret leading of providence; and that “except the Lord build the house” of His indwelling in every human heart, “they labor in vain that build it.”

But let us make it clear that this, our duty toward all who belong to the church universal, is only part of what the Lord requires of us. Important as it is, it is not the most essential part. Our highest responsibility is toward the Lord Himself. It is toward the truth which He has given us in trust. It is to cooperate with the Lord in promoting the supreme end for the sake of which that truth has been revealed.

It is to labor for the establishment and growth of a specific New Church, consisting of all those who acknowledge the Divinity of the Writings, who see in them the second coming of the Lord, and who wish above all things to be taught and led by Him alone. This is the special use to which we have been Divinely called, a use that no others can possibly perform.

Now of course this means, before all else, that we must strive for the establishment of the Church in our own minds and hearts and lives: but in this endeavor no one is self-sufficient. We all need one another’s help, a help that can be given only by those who are striving for the same end.

Why is a church organization so important?

To make such help possible, organization is necessary. In no other way can we hope to create lines of communication and channels of cooperation whereby those who are united in faith may also be united in the performance of uses looking toward the achievement of their common goal. This, indeed, is the function of an ecclesiastical body.

Now why is such a church organization so important? It is because it gives opportunity for unlimited progress in the understanding of revealed truth and in the application of that truth to life, which would otherwise be impossible.

This is to the end that the Lord may direct our steps and mold our lives according to His Divine will, and yet do so while we act in full freedom, on our own initiative, through the exercise of individual judgment and human prudence.

In this lies the secret of all the happiness of heaven. And to impart that happiness in ever-increasing measure to men still living on earth is the final goal of the Lord's providential leading.

In past ages it was inevitable that men should be led by direct command, through the angel of Jehovah, through visions and dreams, or through prophets and seers inspired by the Lord. They were like children who, because of ignorance and lack of judgment, are necessarily subject to parents and masters. But the Heavenly Doctrine has opened the way to a new spiritual freedom.

The Lord established the first beginnings of this freedom when He came into the world. This is why He said to His disciples: "Henceforth I call you not servants: for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth: but I have called you friends: for all things I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you." (*John* 15:15) Yet centuries of preparation were required before this new relationship between the Lord and man could actually be established. Only now is it made possible through the revelation given by the Lord at His second coming.

What this new freedom involves is clearly explained in *Apocalypse Explained* 825: "[Man] is daily taught by the Lord what he must do, and what he must say, also what he must preach or what he must write; for when evils are removed he is continually under the Lord's guidance and enlightenment. Yet he is not led and taught immediately by any dictate, nor by any perceptible inspiration but by an influx into his spiritual delight, from which he has perception according to the truths of which his understanding consists. When he acts from this influx he appears to be acting as if from himself, and yet he acknowledges from the heart that it is from the Lord."

This kind of leading is possible only so far as man's "spiritual delight" is found in being led by the Lord; that is, by the truth of His Word. And it becomes

effective only so far as he knows that truth, understands it, and sincerely desires to live according to it. The desire is what “removes evil” sufficiently from his will so that he may be “continually under the Lord’s guidance and enlightenment.”

Even from most ancient times the Lord has given Divine guidance and enlightenment to all who asked for it sincerely; but this He could do only according to such truths as man was capable of understanding. The rational truth, revealed for the first time in the Heavenly Doctrine, provides for a new kind of enlightenment. It provides for a free cooperation with the Lord as never before possible, and to seek this cooperation is the very life of the New Church.

What do we mean by “free cooperation?” We mean thinking, judging and acting in all things according to the Divine truth revealed. For doing this the organized body of the Church offers many opportunities not otherwise available.

The Lord does not tell us directly how such a specific church is to be established. We are called upon to undertake its establishment on our own initiative. In doing so we must act according to our best judgment, and must exercise human prudence. But everyone who sincerely seeks it will be given Divine guidance.

There are in the Writings plainly stated spiritual laws and governing principles that are applicable to every phase of religious life, and thus to every possible use and function of a church organization. If man, in his efforts to build the Church and promote its uses, searches perpetually for this Divine instruction; if at every stage he forms his judgments according to his best understanding of the spiritual laws revealed; if in every important decision he is called upon to make he sincerely tries to apply the principles he discovers in the Writings; then in spite of that human error to which all men are prone, the Lord will lead him in secret ways to judge and act in accord with the ends of Divine Providence.

Concerning this we read: “If you wish to be led by the Divine Providence, use prudence as a servant and minister who faithfully dispenses the goods of his master. . . . This is the prudence with which Divine Providence acts in unity.” (*Divine Providence* 210)

In the organization of the Church there must be freedom, order, government, worship, instruction and education, social intercourse and appropriate customs connected with society and family life. The Lord has given in the Writings principles of government in all these things, principles that are new and that could not be made known before. They could not be understood without a knowledge of the Lord’s Divine Human, of the spiritual world and its relation to the natural world, and of the laws of Divine Providence, of influx

That which brought the Academy into existence, and later produced the General Church of the New Jerusalem, was the profound conviction that the most compelling duty confronting those who would follow the Lord in His second coming was to labor for the establishment of the specific New Church.

and reception, such as could be revealed only through one who, like Swedenborg, lived in both worlds at the same time, and therefore could compare them and explain their relation to each other.

A church organized according to these principles will be different from any that has been known before. It will open avenues of spiritual and mutual service never before possible. The Church, like heaven, is a kingdom of uses; and it is by means of the performance of uses alone that the Lord can effect man's regeneration. The most powerful means to this end are those uses which the organized Church makes available to us.

That which brought the Academy into existence, and later produced the General Church of the New Jerusalem, was the profound conviction that the most compelling duty confronting those who would follow the Lord in His second coming was to labor for the establishment of the specific New Church.

It was seen that this could be accomplished only through a conscious and unceasing endeavor to cooperate with the Lord in the task by looking to the Writings for authoritative instruction and guidance. His truth must form our judgment and direct our steps in every undertaking; and this, not only in the first establishment of the Church but in its progress and development from generation to generation.

Only as those who are charged with this responsibility faithfully perform that little part which has been assigned to them can the Lord fulfill His promise, in His own time and in His own way, to establish His everlasting kingdom on the earth, that the Holy City New Jerusalem, in very truth, may descend from God out of heaven to impart its incalculable blessings to all the nations and peoples of the world.

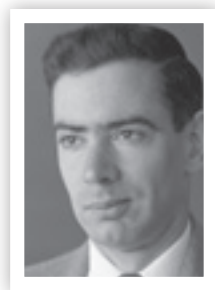


ABOUT THE AUTHOR

George de Charms was inaugurated into the priesthood in 1914 and was the much-loved Bishop of the General Church from 1938 through his retirement in 1962. He was known as a distinguished theologian who wrote prolifically on New Church doctrine and New Church educational philosophy, particularly his books *The Growth of the Mind* and *The Harmony of the Four Gospels*. He passed into the spiritual world in 1988 in his 100th year.

An Enduring Perspective on New Church Education

Excerpt from E. Bruce Glenn



We are grateful to Vera Powell Glenn for passing along some key ideas from the book she edited of her husband Bruce Glenn's addresses and writings, *A Perspective on New Church Education*, published in 1997.

These excerpts are from an address included in the book, *The Functions of New Church Education*, given at the Sons of the Academy banquet in Toronto, Canada, June 26, 1948.

Vera says these concepts "seem pertinent to the current policy to open the doors of the Academy Schools, particularly the Bryn Athyn College of the New Church, to young people who are seeking answers to questions about how to live life in a meaningful and spiritual way that will bring them into a relationship with the Lord God Jesus Christ. These statements, and the whole speech, underpin my endorsement of the open door policy, and my optimism in the need for and ultimate success of this worthy endeavor for all its risks."

Here are the excerpts Vera has collected from the 1948 address:

"We are of the world and in the world; we cannot ignore it. And what is more the world needs us." (p. 25)

"The Lord has promised a new heaven and a new earth. To accept the vision of one while denying the other is to let contemporary events cloud our faith in Divine providence. Our children must enter life with the faith that the Lord can lead people back to Himself." (p. 27)

"If our distinctiveness grows into exclusiveness, then our inheritance must be taken from us; the talent we bury in the earth will be given to those who have learned to use it more wisely." (p. 27)

"This is indeed a thought to humble us. The world of which we are a part is passing through a terrible state of spiritual unrest, reflected on all planes of life and in every human relationship. To look inward at such a time – to expend our spiritual energy upon ourselves alone – this would be to deny the Divine purpose of our work [the work of New Church education]. For it is not an elect group alone, but the whole human race which He came into the world to save. It is not a few closely-knit minds, but the minds and hearts of men and women that sooner or later, must be stirred to rational worship of His visible presence.

"...we are blessed in our work only so far as we serve, with humanity and goodwill, the spiritual welfare of everyone on earth." (p. 28)

Ezekiel's Vision of the Dry Bones

Rt. Rev. Thomas L. Kline

The following was written as the Report of the Chancellor of the Academy of the New Church for the Academy Journal. Bishop Kline has also preached on this subject in several congregations where he has visited.

At the September 2011 Academy Board Meeting I gave an opening worship on the subject of Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones. (*Ezekiel 37:1–14*) Ezekiel witnessed seven steps that took place as the dead bones came alive and became a great army, ready to fight in the name of the Lord. In the worship talk, we looked at these steps as stages of an organization – and specifically our organization, the Academy of the New Church – goes through as it brings ideas and plans into fruition.

The seven steps (from Ezekiel 37):

1. You hear the Word of the Lord
2. You hear a noise and rattling
3. Things begin to come together
4. Flesh and muscles appear
5. Skin covers the flesh and muscles
6. You receive the breath of life from the Lord
7. You stand, part of a great army, ready to fight in the name of the Lord

The image of dry bones becoming an army may seem a bit gruesome, but the underlying meaning demonstrates the Lord's ability to create a living, breathing army out of something seemingly lifeless.

The first step is the most important – to go to the Lord's Word and see a vision that is truly from Him. As an organization, we have gone to the Word and seen the vision of New Church education. We have seen the vision of a New Church College where the newly-forming rational in our students can be ordered in the light of the Heavenly Doctrines. We have seen the vision of New Church Secondary Schools where the spiritual, moral and civil lives of students can be opened by the Lord. We have seen the vision of opening our schools to those who are new to and affirmative of the doctrines.

The second step is a noise and rattling. Whenever a person or an organization goes forth in any new direction there will be a time of anxiety, even upset. Often, members of the organization find that they are not all in

agreement. They meet unexpected obstacles. They find that their original vision is not right on the mark, is not entirely aligned with what the Word teaches.

Our organization has certainly experienced – and is still experiencing – this second step. But noise and rattling is not a sign that we should give up. Often, it is a sign that we are on the path that the Lord describes in Ezekiel's vision. Noise and rattling are part of the process – the struggling, adjusting, clattering, are necessary before we can reach our goal. Noise and rattling indicate progress – like the clanking of materials when erecting a building or the discussion when reaching a mutual decision. We should not give up during the noise and rattling stage.

There are two things we – as individuals and as an institution – are to do during this time of noisy progress. First, we are to return to step one and readjust our vision. Go back and re-examine where we are in the light of the Lord's Word. It is unlikely that anyone will ever get the vision right the first time around. Rather, we need to go forth, examine our efforts, and be willing to re-aim to align them with the Lord's will. It is a continuing process – go forth and “do,” re-examine the results in the light of the Word, and then make the necessary changes.

The second thing we are to do during the time of noise and rattling is to focus on what is described as an “inmost peace” promised by the Lord during times of anxiety and temptation. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 3696) Simply put, this is to trust in the Lord when there is a time of despair and upset.

If we continue to practice these two steps, aligning our vision with the Word and trusting the Lord in times of struggle, we will eventually begin to see step three materialize: things will begin to come together. How do you know you are entering step three? There are many ways, but in an organization, you may actually begin to hear people say, “Things are beginning to come together.”

The Academy has been bold in its new initiatives. Yes, they were founded upon a vision from the Heavenly Doctrines. And yes, we have gone through a period of anxiety and temptation. But we have also had the courage to go back to step one, re-hearing the Word of the Lord, and re-adjusting the vision. We have taken steps one and two, as part of the process the Lord has laid out. And now we are beginning to see things coming together.

The Lord has laid an exciting process before us. We still have many steps ahead of us, and we all look toward that end in view – an army, prepared by the Lord, ready to go forth and serve in His name. There is a way to go yet, but the vision is worth fighting for. It is, in fact, the greatest vision in the history of the human race. And our Academy is part of that great vision.

The Lilies of the Field

A Sermon by the Rev. Walter E. Orthwein

Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. (Matthew 6.28)

We live in a world filled with emblems of Divine love and wisdom, and the Divine Providence which is governing our lives every moment – protecting, nurturing, and leading us to the green pastures and quiet waters the Lord intends for us.

The signs are all around us. From the orderly circuit of the planets around the sun, to the amazing chemistry within a single cell of our own bodies – from the finely tuned ecology of the whole earth, to the mysterious growth of a plant from a seed – nature testifies to the wisdom of the Creator, and the Divine love operating through that wisdom to accomplish its purposes.

How could it be, then, that our lives – the lives of the creatures for whose sake everything else was created – would be any less carefully provided for?

Our most important needs – our distinctly *human* needs – are spiritual: love, understanding, a sense of life's purpose, the satisfaction of being useful, inner peace and joy and hope. Surely the Divine order that governs all creation will provide these things for us just as it provides food for the birds and clothes the lilies of the field with such splendor.

The supreme purpose behind all creation – the reason why the natural universe exists – is that there might be a heaven from the human race. There is a Divine plan, therefore, for each of our lives in this world, which is to prepare us for eternal life. At this very moment we are immersed in the process of becoming angels. And the successful completion of this process, above all else, is what the Lord's providence works constantly to achieve.

At this time of year we see new growth all around us: trees leafing out, flowers blooming, birds building their nests. It is all so wonderfully ordered; there is a rhythm to it – as if all nature was coordinated and moving in harmony with some ethereal music just beyond our hearing. What it is, really, is the order of heaven, where it is always springtime, flowing into the world of nature. Our lives, also, are under the direction of the same Divine Conductor.

“*Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow.*” It was for the sake of our consideration that they were created. The pattern of their growth corresponds to the order of our *spiritual* growth. Their beauty is designed to awaken in us

a desire for heaven, of which earthly beauty is but a reflection.

It is important to observe carefully and think deeply about nature's various forms and patterns and the systems that regulate them, and reflect on their spiritual significance in the light of revelation, in order to discern the Divine message implicit in them, and the love behind that message. "For there is nothing beautiful and delightful in the skies or on the earth which is not in some way representative of the Lord's kingdom." (*Arcana Coelestia* 1807)

The kind of sight we need in order to see the meaning of "the lilies of the field," and of all the other natural evidence of Divine providence, is represented in the story in Genesis where Abram is "led forth abroad" and told to "look toward heaven." As he was brought out of his tent to look at the stars and ponder their meaning, so must we, spiritually, step outside the little tent of naturalistic assumptions which has been our mental house, and look toward heaven in our consideration of nature.

It is only in the light of heaven that we can see the Divine source of nature's order and how it relates to the spiritual order of our lives. But for this to be our minds must be opened to that light. This is accomplished, not just by study and thought – not by any intellectual "toiling and spinning," or theories woven out of human self-intelligence – but by a life according to the Lord's Word.

Consider the saying Swedenborg inscribed on each volume of the *Arcana Coelestia*. That is the most profound and intellectually challenging of works, yet the key to understanding it is so simple: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." (*Matthew* 6:33)

"The kingdom of God," the Lord says, "is within you." (*Luke* 17:21) We are in it (or it is in us) when God is our King; that is, when the Lord is, in fact, *our* Lord – not just in name only, but because we have asked Him to govern our lives, and made an effort to obey His commandments. Trust the Lord. Obey the Lord. Let Him order your thoughts. This is the secret to opening the mind. This is what His providence seeks to bring about – gradually, secretly, without violating our human faculties of free will and reason.

Picture the opening of a flower. The mind before its opening is like a bud, with thoughts all turned in on each other by the love of self, and constrained by a covering of natural appearances. But when that natural wrapping is opened and pushed back, then the mind unfolds and stretches out under the sun of heaven. We see something similar in the animal kingdom when a butterfly emerges from its chrysalis and spreads its wings. Then the truth that before was obscured by ignorance and doubt will be seen, and the beauty of it will

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be apparent. And the sweet sphere of heaven will permeate our mind, like the fragrance from a field of flowers. Then the description of those who “see internal things from external” will apply to us. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1807) And our vision will not be fixed on stars or birds or trees or flowers, but on what they represent in the other life, and in our own spiritual life here and now. Then we will *see* that the same Divine providence that produced the wondrous natural order that inspires all our sciences is operating to bring our lives into a similar state of balance and perfection. Then we will be able truly to “consider the lilies of the field, how they grow.”

Because the natural world corresponds in every detail to the spiritual world, the order of nature, impressed upon us from without through our natural senses, provides a receptive plane in our minds into which the order of heavenly life can flow from above. Considering “the lilies of the field, how they grow” leads us to consider the Divine source of the life that makes them grow and gives them such beauty.

Flowers grow from a seed, which sends forth roots into the earth, and then a stalk that rises from the ground into the air and sunshine, and puts forth branches and leaves, and finally flowers, within which new seeds are formed.

Our spiritual growth follows a similar pattern. In the beginning our thoughts are embedded in nature, like seeds in the earth, in a dark, cool, dense environment, composed of decaying matter; the habitat of worms. This is where we begin and where our mental roots are. Think of pale roots pushing blindly through the soil and you have a picture of the quality of our first, purely natural thought. But the human mind, from the life flowing into it from the Lord through heaven, strives to rise above the natural, like the green shoot of a plant reaching up through the earth toward the sun.

People speak of “seeking God.” But the deeper truth is that it is God who seeks us. A flower turns toward the sun because it is attracted by the sun’s life-giving warmth and light. It is the same regarding our turning toward God – except that we can refuse to respond, if we choose. “He draws all men to Himself,” we are told, “but as angels and men are finite they can follow the current of the attraction only according to their measure, although the force of attraction persists to infinity.” (*True Christian Religion* 350)

The truths of revelation are the seeds of heaven. They are the means by which the Lord’s kingdom is implanted in us. Some may seem dry and lifeless, some even bitter, but when we take those truths to heart, they grow and become in our minds just as much a harbinger of the Lord’s closer presence with us as spring flowers are a sign of summer approaching. (And there are places even in the letter of the Word where the truths of faith have already been brought to flower – such as in the beautiful teachings of the Sermon on the Mount.) “The words that I speak to you,” the Lord said, “are spirit and they are life.”

People speak of 'seeking God.' But the deeper truth is that it is God who seeks us. A flower turns toward the sun because it is attracted by the sun's life-giving warmth and light. It is the same regarding our turning toward God.

Because they have life in them – that is, love – they have power to affect us; to turn us toward heaven, from which they come and to which they lead. Like seeds, they contain within them the means of their own fulfillment. They not only *tell* us to turn away from evil and toward good, but bend us in that direction. They not only *tell* us to put our trust in Divine providence, but grow that trust in us.

The stalk and branches of a plant are like the first principles of truth and their ramifications in our thought. Changing the image slightly, these first principles are the “pillars” that support the temple of wisdom the Lord seeks to build in our mind. They are such truths as we find in the Ten Commandments and the Golden Rule. They are such basic truths as: there is a God; His Word is Divine; there is life after death; the purpose of creation is a heaven from the human race; Divine providence is present in every least particular of our lives; and so on.

It is from such first principles, grounded in Reality itself, that the “leaves” of spiritual intelligence grow. And then flowers, and fruit; and eventually a whole “garden of delight,” with the tree of life in the midst of it.

Because flowers come after the leaves (intelligence) and before the fruit (good), they stand for truths joined with good, or that look toward the fulfillment of some good purpose. Although wildflowers – the “lilies of the field” – are not fruit-producing plants, they still carry the representation of truths leading to good. It's also true of us, isn't it, that not all our good intentions and charitable thoughts bear tangible fruit – but they still look toward good and bring delight to the mind.

Most of the thoughts that occupy our minds, regarding the mundane concerns of this world, are not of much value; they are like leaves growing directly out of the ground; like the grass “which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven.” And yet, here and there in the natural mind, bits of wisdom spring up – spontaneously, without any conscious effort on our part, and transform our whole inner field of view; like wildflowers in a meadow, gracing it with beauty and delight.

And where do these “lilies of the field,” these beautiful thoughts, come from? They are from the Lord, who “clothes the grass” with living gems of truth from heaven. It is the life flowing into our minds from Him that causes them to grow.

People often puzzle over the existence of evil. The Lord explained it in the parable of “the wheat and the tares.” Evil comes from hell. And hell comes from the misuse of our human faculties of liberty and rationality. It is a fact of life: grubby self-interest and twisted reason are an inherent part of our fallen human nature. The existence of thorns and thistles is no surprise. (See *Genesis* 3:17-18)

The real mystery is where the “lilies of the field” come from; where *good* comes from; where human beauty comes from. The answer to this is found in the parable of the Sower.

There must be seeds – seeds of human virtue and wisdom, seeds of genuine humanity – and there must be a Sower. The Lord in His Divine Human is the Sower; the seeds are the truths of His Word that He plants in our mind. They have a beautiful potential in them. (Both parables are in *Matthew* 13.)

The word “provide” means literally “to see beforehand.” Providence seeks to make each one of us into the fully *human* being, the wise and loving angel, which the Lord sees before Him as if the work had already been accomplished – as when a gardener looks at the picture of a beautiful morning glory, for instance, on a packet of seeds, and delights in the flowers they are destined to become.

Yes, we need food and clothing, and a thousand other things, and the natural mind naturally worries about how to obtain these things. And it is not that providence is unconcerned with these natural needs, it is just that the Lord’s chief concern is our spiritual condition. And though the world is always with us, this should be our chief concern as well.

The food and clothing we need most of all are the Bread of Heaven to feed our souls, and white robes of pure truth to clothe our minds. What we need, in fact, is a wedding garment, woven out of love and wisdom descending out of heaven from the Lord, for we have been invited to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. (*Matthew* 22:11, 12; *Revelation* 19:9)

Toil and spin though we might, we cannot procure these most vital necessities of life for ourselves, but “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you.” Amen.

Lessons: *Genesis* 15:1-5 *Matthew* 6:25-33 *Arcana Coelestia* 1807



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The Rev. Walter E. Orthwein was ordained in 1973, recognized as a priest of the General Church in 1976 and ordained into the second degree in 1977. He has served in Detroit and Oak Arbor, Michigan, as a visiting pastor, and taught in Bryn Athyn College and the Theological School. In retirement he is the Spiritual Editor of *New Church Life*. He and his wife Kathy (Williams) live in Bryn Athyn.

Eldergarten 2012:

The State of the Church and the Academy

*A Report from the Bishop and Chancellor
Prepared by Bruce Henderson*

In a special session at Eldergarten in Boynton Beach, Florida, January 23-26, the Rt. Rev. Thomas L. Kline gave a report as Executive Bishop of the General Church and Chancellor of the Academy of the New Church, and answered questions. Here is a summary of that session:

The Academy

Bryn Athyn College of the New Church has been fully re-accredited. Dr. Kristin King is doing a super job as President.

The College has doubled in the last five years, with a current enrollment of 232 students. The expanded student body and new buildings are changing college life in positive ways. We have learned from the kind of new students we are attracting. Now they are generally affirmative to what we are doing as a New Church College.

Bishop Kline referenced the 2011 Charter Day banquet address by the Rev. Dr. Thane Glenn (*New Church Education on the Edge, New Church Life*, January-February 2012, page 35) as an example of how the College is successfully adapting to students new to the New Church while strengthening – not diluting – our distinctive New Church teaching. We are helping students coming into their rationality to figure out what they believe, with the approach, “Come, let us reason together.” They get the context of New Church doctrine but are in freedom to develop their own faith. There are plaques with quotes from the Writings throughout the College.

The primary way that new students find the College is through the Internet and social media, and we are facilitating that networking.

Is the College losing its New Church sphere with these new students? No! And our dedicated faculty is the key. We are still very much a New Church College.

The Secondary Schools are also strong, with good leadership. Like the College, they need stronger financial support.

The General Church

More than 250,000 people visited the www.newchurch.org website this past year. We are able to dissect levels of interest, answer questions and collect testimonials. Also, 32,000 people are subscribing online and reading *New Church Connection*. The magazine also is on Facebook and attracting young readers. We are finding clusters of interest to serve.

Finances: The General Church had a \$3.5 million deficit in a \$9 million budget last year. We have laid off about 60 employees and cut \$1 million. We lost about \$100 million from the endowment in the market crash.

New programs for growth have been part of new spending and some of this has to be cut, especially where results have not been all we hoped for. Even if we cut all these programs, we are still \$1 million short of balancing the budget. But we are down to bare bones on what we can cut. The health care benefits we offer to employees are more generous than most businesses and are increasingly draining the budget.

The General Church Board is committed to balancing the budget in June. We have to plan changes that make sense and this will make us a healthier church. What are we willing to cut? Most uses will still be there. Worship and education remain our top priorities.

One of the most successful things we have done is NewChurch LIVE. It had a budget of \$2 million – half of which was contributed – but projections for growth did not pan out. We were willing to cut it back – an historic step for the General Church – to \$90,000. It is still offering services, but within reasonable limits.

Question and Answer

Q. Are religion classes mandatory for all new students in the College?

A. Yes, they are mandatory for all students, as is chapel. Bishop Kline talked about hosting Ken Turley, President of General Convention in the fall, and giving him a tour of the College. Mr. Turley was most impressed with the people, the facilities and the opportunity our College offers.

Q. Are second-career theologs getting the help they've been promised?

A. We had started a new program of completely subsidizing second-career men but financially just can't do it anymore. We have been able to keep much of the new Theological School program, however, including experiential training. Last year the cost per student was \$150,000 which just is not viable. With the new program it is below \$100,000 and goes down with more students. Theologs are told that they cannot be guaranteed a job in the Church. We have a much better screening and evaluation process to graduate only students who can succeed. The first year of Theological School is filled with a lot of

interaction so that we can evaluate their people skills.

Q. The new Secondary Schools girls dorm has only 20 students. How come?

A. People seem less willing to send children away for high school. We are also getting smaller classes from the Bryn Athyn Elementary School. Enrollment is a challenge that is being addressed. (The new dormitory was funded entirely from special contributions.)

Q. What is happening with smaller congregations?

A. We have to look at new models and there will be changes, such as possibly using part-time ministers. Even if we can afford small congregations having full-time ministers in them might not be the right thing to do. Among the options for these congregations are the live streamed services from the Bryn Athyn Cathedral and other churches.

Q. How much does the Church pay for programs and services?

A. People don't know what it costs for the services we provide. We need to get that information out. With the deficit we may have to ask if people are willing to pay to keep a program. We will be a healthier church when we are stepping up and paying for what we want and what we use.

Daily Inspirations

Sign up to receive by e-mail a Daily Inspiration from the General Church at: **www.newchurch.org**. Some recent postings:

- Life from the Lord flows only into a humble and submissive heart, since it is fitted to receive. (*Arcana Coelestia* 8873)
- Life constitutes the Church, not doctrine; except in the measure that it becomes applicable to life. (*Arcana Coelestia* 8152)
- Prayer comes from the truth inside you, and you are continually at prayer when you live according to that truth. (*Apocalypse Explained* 493)
- The reason why faith which looks away from the Lord toward self is a loser is that then the person does all the fighting alone. (*Arcana Coelestia* 8606)
- God created the universe so that usefulness could exist. (*True Christianity* 67)
- The activity of love and faith is what makes heaven. (*Heaven and Hell* 51)

Presentations at Eldergarten

Prepared by Bruce Henderson

This year's Eldergarten in Boynton Beach, Florida, January 23-26, attracted about 110 seniors. These are the people the Rev. Fred Schnarr liked to call "students" in the age of wisdom when he founded Eldergarten in 1995. Featured in the four-day sessions, with a summary of their presentations below, were:

- **Rt. Rev. Alfred Acton:** *The New Church and Current Issues*
- **Rev. Prescott A. Rogers:** *The Four Gospels: New Testament Scholarship and the Heavenly Doctrines*
- **Dr. Sylvia Montgomery Shaw:** *Swedenborgian Literary Criticism: Interpreting Literature Through a New Church Lens*



We should look at life-and-death issues from the perspective that the Lord's goal of a heaven from the human race demands human freedom, governed by Divine providence.

— *Alfred Acton*

The New Church And Current Issues

Rt. Rev. Alfred Acton

Bishop Acton spoke about a number of current issues in the light of the doctrines as a guide to understanding and dealing with the world we live in. Some of this was admittedly "grisly stuff" – abortion, adultery, suicide – but he said it is good for us to know what the Writings say about such issues so that we can cope and understand them better. The Writings help us see how the teachings apply to our own lives, as well as to specific issues. And it's a good perspective for us: look to the good in others, don't judge them spiritually, and help them to heal.

We should look at life-and-death issues, he said, from the teaching that the Lord's goal of a heaven from the human race demands human freedom, governed by Divine providence. The Lord commanded freedom in Genesis when He said, "Be fruitful and multiply . . . and have dominion over the earth." Dominion implies responsibility. And if we wish to be led by providence, we need to use prudence in striving

to cooperate with the Lord.

There are four faces to Divine providence: The Lord's love or will, His good, His leave and His permission. All relate to the Lord's love. He permits because He cannot preserve our freedom without permission.

Alfred also touched on the four kinds of law – spiritual, moral, civil and natural – and how these inter-relate.

Natural law – such as gravity – cannot be broken. Civil law – the laws we live by in this world – can be broken. Moral laws are made and enforced by society and can change and evolve – not always in good ways. We have seen a lot of change in what is accepted as moral law in recent decades. Spiritual law is made by the Lord and cannot be broken in the spiritual world.

In an ideal world, moral law is derived from spiritual law and civil law is based on moral law. But human freedom determines what we get.

Among the subjects Alfred touched on were: the death of babies; young girls misled into prostitution; depression and suicide; when human life begins; how the soul is formed; marriage, adultery, “trial marriages” and re-marriage – all within the context of what the Writings say about them. Indeed there is a lot in the Heavenly Doctrines to help guide our thinking and our values with many of the troubling issues that confront us.

The Four Gospels: New Testament Scholarship and the Heavenly Doctrines

Rev. Prescott A. Rogers

Rev. Rogers presented a fascinating overview of the four gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John: how distinct they are from each other, but how they also complement one another and produce a wonderful harmony. We need all four of them, he said, to know the Lord completely and to see Him as a visible God.

These gospels were written around 60-100 A.D. because the oral stories were dying out and needed to be preserved. Each offers a different viewpoint. Matthew was a literary genius and used the most poetic language. Mark was a biographer, Luke a historian, and John a theologian/ philosopher.

They were written separately and we don't



The four gospels are distinct from each other but also complement each other and produce a wonderful harmony. We need all four of them to know the Lord as a visible God.

— *Prescott Rogers*

know exactly who the writers were. It is unlikely, for instance, that the Gospel John was also John on the Isle of Patmos who wrote Revelation. Interestingly, Mark was the first of the gospels although he appears second. When the gospels were brought together and canonized for the first Christian Church – leading to the Catholic Church – Matthew was placed first because of the priority of Peter, and so of the Bishop of Rome.

Mark: Compared to the other gospels, Mark has a kind of harshness and not many New Church sermons are based on its teachings. His is the most realistic, least idealized account of the Lord's life on earth. It opens not with the tender Christmas story of Matthew and Luke but with John the Baptist and the call to repentance. But there is a richness in all four gospels and each needs to be seen in its own light. It's also good to remember that "gospel" means "good news" – spreading the Lord's truth. That's what they are doing, each in his own way.

Matthew: Indications are that Matthew wrote about the time (70-80 A.D.) when the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed and the Christians who fled Judea were forming a new organization.

Among the main elements in Matthew identified by Prescott is that he idealizes Jesus, removing most of the merely human traits in Mark and downplaying others, and also idealizes the disciples by downplaying their ignorance. There is a growing awareness in Matthew of who Jesus is: teacher, miracle worker, Messiah or Christ, Son of man and Son of God. Along with the shift in authority from Moses to Jesus Christ, there is an elevation as to what God expects from His people. The church is the new and true Israel.

Luke: The gospel of Luke, who also wrote *Acts*, was a trained historian who had a missionary goal. He was concerned with historical accuracy, and also wanted to persuade the Gentiles to follow Jesus Christ. And more so than any of the other gospels, in Luke women play a major role in the life of Jesus and in the early church.

John: This is very different from the other three gospels in that John uses material not found in the others and asks us to think spiritually. He probably knew of the other gospels but did not want simply to retell their stories.

His prologue, for instance, is a very different telling of the Lord coming on earth: "In the beginning was the Word..." Even on the cross at the end of His life on earth, Jesus acts more divinely than the more human way He is portrayed in the other gospels.

All of this comes together to give us in the unity of the four gospels a personal and personable God – more merciful and healing than what is portrayed in the Old Testament – a God whom we can really know and love.

Swedenborgian Literary Criticism: Interpreting Literature Through a New Church Lens

Dr. Sylvia Montgomery Shaw

Dr. Shaw started by telling how she had come to Bryn Athyn College as a student some 40 years ago – knowing nothing of the Church or Swedenborg. This was to be a trial year, at the urging of her father, a spiritual seeker who had been reading Swedenborg.

Her journey with her father through many faiths made her almost rebellious in encountering Swedenborg. But while wrestling with *Heaven and Hell* one day in the Library, a voice came to her that said, “Just read to understand, not to believe.” With that approach she eventually became an ardent Swedenborgian. But she could not be outspoken about Swedenborg’s influence on writers when teaching at such places as Boston University.

Two years ago she came back to Bryn Athyn College to teach literature and writing as a New Church professor, and says she feels she has “come home.”

Her presentation was divided into three sections: authors influenced by Swedenborg; how her teaching now is “informed by the Writings”; and her passion for writing a trilogy of novels that reflect both her Mexican roots and her Swedenborgian faith.

The Authors: Sylvia concentrated on American writers, but cited Dickens, Balzac and Elizabeth Barrett Browning as clearly influenced by Swedenborg. Browning certainly considered herself a New Church woman but did not want to express it openly in her writing, fearing a negative reaction.

Louis B. Pendleton is probably the best known of New Church novelists – for *Echo of Drums*, *The Wedding Garment* and *The Invisible Police*. Current authors include Naomi Gladish Smith, who was present at Eldergarten, known for many articles and especially her after-life trilogy: *The Arrivals*, *The Wanderers* and *The Searchers*. The Swedenborg Foundation has just published Sylvia’s own novel, *Paradise Misplaced* – the first of a proposed trilogy.



Coming ‘home’ to Bryn Athyn College, she loves being able to teach literature through a New Church lens, focusing on authors who were influenced by Swedenborg.

— *Sylvia Shaw*

Ralph Waldo Emerson not only sparked American letters with transcendentalism but became a respectful reader of Swedenborg. Others in his sphere, such as Thoreau and Louisa May Alcott, also were influenced. Among many others were William Blake, Dostoyevsky, William Butler Yeats, John Muir, Walt Whitman, Howard Pyle and George Inness.

John Bigelow, who founded the New York City Library, had struggled with the violence and apparent injustice in the Old Testament. When he was given a book of the Writings suddenly the meaning of the Bible opened up to him and he wrote, *The Bible That was Lost and is Found*.

Sylvia focused especially on Elizabeth Barrett Browning and William Dean Howells, the dean of American letters.

She loves the image in one of Browning's poems of "art's fiery finger" – what art can do to illuminate the world. Browning was inspired to write *Aurora Leigh* in blank verse, which dared to speak of higher uses for women and of breaking "the serfdom of the world." This is a spiritual journey of the book's heroine, with her elevated sense of use and women – and love as the most important thing in life – all flowing from a spiritual perspective.

She never mentions Swedenborg, and wrestled with whether to do so but feared it might hurt acceptance of the book, which became a best-seller. But in the letters between her and her husband, Robert Browning, there are some 120 references to Swedenborg.

Howells was raised in the Swedenborgian Church and steadfastly believed in living the truth. He was the foremost editor of his time and mentored such authors as Bret Harte, Stephen Crane, Mark Twain and Theodore Dreiser. Twain and Henry James Jr. were among his best friends.

His most important book, *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, is about a wealthy businessman who has to make an ethical decision when he finds his partner has been cheating. He does what is right but the decision kills the business. The book still is used in business schools for its perspective on ethics.

Teaching: Sylvia spent one session talking about how she teaches New Church and non-New Church students at Bryn Athyn College in a manner informed by the Writings that also leaves them in freedom.

In her writing classes she gives students a provocative jumping off place for various styles of writing and encourages them to find passages from Swedenborg that illuminate the texts.

One exercise, for instance, starts with a BBC video on *The Question of God*, focusing on C.S. Lewis (atheist turned believer) and Sigmund Freud (ardent atheist). Both wondered why God would allow evil and injustice in the world. Freud could not be persuaded that a loving God could tolerate evil, but Lewis eventually came to an ardent faith because he realized that God gives man free will and so must be free to choose evil.

Students then are asked to share their own insights into the Lord's love and providence, and Sylvia is delighted with the perspectives they share and connections they make about the many paths to heaven. She quoted an exchange student from France who said he would return home "carrying Swedenborg in my heart."

The Novel: Sylvia took a year off between Boston University and Bryn Athyn College to immerse herself in her trilogy, which draws on her family's roots in Mexico, including the Mexican Revolution (1910-13), and Swedenborgian themes. She says she was most influenced by her reading of *Divine Providence*.

The first book in the series, *Paradise Misplaced*, is available through the Foundation (www.swedenborg.com) and is reviewed on page 174. The second volume – in which the headstrong 15-year-old Isabel is sent to the Academy of the New Church in Bryn Athyn to escape the culture of the Revolution – will be published later this year. The final volume – the counter-revolution – will be out next year.

She says the books are not autobiographical, but are born of her experience, and are something of a journal of self-discovery. They explore why the Lord allows us to make such mistakes in our lives, and the nature and cost of freedom.

Between Dream and Destiny, New Church Exceptionalism and American Exceptionalism

Bruce Henderson

We are all on a journey “Between Dream and Destiny,” within the Church and within our country. We know the dream of the New Church – to spread the truths of the Second Coming throughout the world. We know its destiny is to be “the crown of all churches that have hitherto existed in the world.”

The dream of our country is to be a model for freedom and responsibility, for values founded on faith and charity. Our destiny lies in “we the people” living up to those ideals. The dreams and the destinies of our Church and our country resonate because they flow from the Lord. But remember the woman outside Independence Hall in 1787 who asked Benjamin Franklin after the drafting of our Constitution: “What do we have – a republic or a monarchy?” And he answered: “A republic – if you can keep it.” *If we can keep it.* The destiny of each is up to us.

After the American and French Revolutions, Edmund Burke, a British statesman who supported the cause of freedom, said: “The effect of liberty is that men may do whatever they please. We should wait to see what it pleases them to do before we risk congratulations.”

So, would Edmund Burke – and our Founding Fathers – be congratulating us on what we have made of our nation so far, and the direction we are heading? Would Swedenborg congratulate us on where we are as a Church and how much – or how little – we have grown its acceptance and influence in the world? Clearly we have work to do. But what is our role – as members of the Church and as citizens of this country – in moving us along the journey from dream to destiny?

Now I’ll throw in some provocative concepts: New Church exceptionalism and American exceptionalism – what they mean and don’t mean, and how they relate to each other and to us.

Exceptionalism does not mean that as New Church men and women – and

Editor’s note: Adapted from an address at the Eldergarten banquet, January 25, 2012, in Boynton Beach, Florida.

as Americans – we are better than anyone else. It just means that our Church and our country are exceptions to what had gone before, and that we have been blessed by the Lord with truth and freedom – which bring tremendous opportunities and great responsibility.

The New Church is clearly an exception because it is based on a whole new revelation from the Lord. It helps us to know Him as a visible God and to conjoin with Him through the way we unite His good and truth in lives of charity.

American exceptionalism resonates because it is based on God-given rights and recognizes man as a spiritual being. It allows us and challenges us to be exceptional in protecting religious liberty and individual freedom, in nurturing tolerance, compassion and creativity. It is non-political. And it reminds us when we pledge allegiance that we are “one nation under God.”

Of course, there are untold numbers in the Church Universal who love the Lord and live good lives, and He is revealing Himself and building His Church in them also. There are many noble countries with loyal citizens who are committed to freedom and democracy. What sets the New Church and the United States apart as exceptions is what flows from the Lord. What we celebrate really is the Lord’s exceptionalism – how His love and truth lead us all and free us all.

As Bishop Tom Kline has said many times, “The New Church is the most powerful force for human change that the world has ever known.” And the United States is still the most powerful force in the world for freedom. What the Church and the country stand for are beacons in a floundering world. It is up to us to keep the light burning.

Now let us consider the effects of the Last Judgment and how they may relate to the Church and to our country. We know that the Last Judgment occurred in the spiritual world in 1757 and that the Lord established a New Church in heaven which is descending to earth as “the crown of all churches.” Swedenborg did not know when that Church would be established on earth – only that it would be. Much as we might like to think so, there is no guarantee that the General Church will fulfill the destiny; we only know that the Lord’s Church on earth – in people’s hearts and minds – will endure to eternity. Let us just hope that we are faithfully serving that end.

As for what else is happening in the world we know only that we are in the midst of a process of new light illuminating the darkness. We can only speculate about cause and effect.

The reality is that the Last Judgment produced and ordered not only new heavens but new hells, and that both flow into us. This preserves our freedom and also explains why we have such mixed results and so much work still to do.

In an article on *The Last Judgment* in *New Church Life* in 1957, Dr. Hugo Odhner observed that the telegraph and telephone, movies and television

“contribute to bind the peoples of the earth into a mental community which approximates the conditions of the after-life.” Just imagine how much more so that is now that we so glibly transcend time and space with our iPads and iPhones.

The reality is that the Last Judgment produced and ordered not only new heavens but new hells, and that both flow into us. This preserves our freedom and also explains why we have such mixed results and so much work still to do.

Dr. Odhner also said, “Even the wars and revolutions of modern times take on new proportions and meanings. . . . All over the world, suppressed people are chafing under their social, economic and religious bonds, and are demanding self-determination.” And 55 years later this still is going on. But how might the first after-shocks of the Last Judgment have affected the establishment of a new order of freedom in this country?

Five years ago there was an impressive two-day conference in Bryn Athyn on the 250th anniversary of the Last Judgment. The papers presented have been collected into a wonderful 800-page book, *The World Transformed: Swedenborg and the Last Judgment*, which I highly recommend.

Many Eldergarten attendees remember a summary given here a year later by Brian Henderson of Bryn Athyn College on the way forces suddenly coalesced to end centuries of slavery in the world – with several New Church men in England leading the way. What was it about the second half of the 18th century, Brian asked, that suddenly gave life and triumph to anti-slavery movements? The connection he made to the Last Judgment was compelling.

Dr. Reuben Bell said in a paper on *The New Jerusalem Come Down to Earth*: “From the American and French Revolutions to those that continue to the present, the notion of individual freedom as an ‘unalienable right,’ with which we are ‘endowed by our Creator,’ is a very new idea indeed. In the six thousand years of human and social development leading up to the cultural forms of this day, the radical notion of individual freedom is only a few seconds old. Yet it is embraced as an age-old tenet wherever it falls to earth. It is a spiritual principle, and its source is in the New Jerusalem.”

And Dr. Forrest Dristy, in a talk on *The Liberation of Mathematics*, said: “The 18th and 19th centuries were filled with political and social changes that have extended spiritual, intellectual and personal freedom in such profound ways that it is not difficult to attribute them to the effects stemming from the great spiritual event of 1757.”

Last year was the 400th anniversary of the King James Version of the Bible,

which became a radical text in this country that helped sow the seeds of the American Revolution. British monarchs feared that allowing their subjects to read the Bible in English might instill dangerous ideas about freedom. That surely happened here as pastors stirred imaginations, passions and convictions with fiery sermons on freedom as the new “divine right” of the people.

In *Citizen Tom Paine* historian Howard Fast wrote: “The revolution comes from the people as they reach toward God, and a little of God is in each person, and each will not forget it.” Indeed the real revolution was not the war for independence. It sprang from the minds and hearts of the people, and in that sense the revolution still goes on today.

On its 150th anniversary President Calvin Coolidge called the Declaration of Independence essentially a spiritual document. He was convinced that the future of the country depended on this faith enduring. He also said that: “Governments don’t make ideals, but ideals make governments.” We might add, churches don’t make doctrine, but doctrine makes churches. And “exceptional” doctrine – beyond any that has gone before – makes the New Church.

Think of the most revolutionary words ever written. They did not come from Lenin or Marx or Hitler but from the Founding Fathers: “We the people.” It is that simple, that radical, that profound. This was a turning point in history – a faith that government could be entrusted to the people. And the most revolutionary concept was that “these truths are self-evident” – that we are endowed by our Creator with inalienable rights. It is not that we see God favoring and protecting the United States that makes us exceptional, but that we see our rights as God-given.

French philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville wrote in *Democracy in America* in the early 1800s that our nation’s strength lies in its unique fusion of liberty and religion. One of our greatest challenges now is that we have strayed so far from George Washington’s conviction that it is impossible to govern without God and the Bible. And from Abraham Lincoln’s faith when leaving Illinois to assume the presidency that “With the protection of Divine Providence I cannot fail, and without that protection I cannot succeed.” Imagine a president saying such things today.

Just 60 years ago President Harry Truman lamented: “The fundamental basis of this nation’s law was given to Moses on the Mount. The fundamental basis of our Bill of Rights comes from the teaching we get from Exodus and Matthew, from Isaiah and Paul. I don’t think we emphasize that enough these days. If we don’t have the proper fundamental moral background we will end up a totalitarian government which does not believe in the right of anybody except the state.”

But de Tocqueville also found that the early Americans had “all a lively faith in the perfectability of man,” that they saw their country in a “constant

Our Church and our country have histories of struggle and on-going challenges. We believe that each is in a state of continuing improvement and that the process is up to us – much like our own regeneration.

state of improvement,” and that our future would always be better than our past. On the Fourth of July, we do not celebrate a perfect government but the notion that – as with our faith – the perfection is up to us and it is an ongoing process. And as we look around at what it has “pleased us to do” so far with our liberty, we are far from perfect, with plenty of opportunities and challenge.

We still are witnessing and experiencing the aftermath of the Last Judgment, which may play out for centuries. Where we are right now is not encouraging – from terrorism and unrest all over the world to economic chaos and a culture far adrift from any moral or spiritual compass. It’s enough to make you ask, “Why does God let it happen?” And you don’t have to read the book to know the answer. It is for the sake of our freedom – what it “pleases us to do” with our opportunities. Clearly – both individually and collectively – we need to be making better choices. We can be cheered by the teaching that the Lord does not allow anything to happen that cannot be turned to good. But that does not absolve us from doing our part.

Our Church and our country have histories of struggle and on-going challenges. We believe, like de Tocqueville, that each is in a state of continuing improvement and that the process is up to us – much like our own regeneration. We also recognize that all of our challenges – from how we run our institutions to our values and priorities – are essentially spiritual issues.

When we don’t know where we are going we tend to reach back to the safety of where we have been. That’s why history is filled with so many vexing examples of repeating what doesn’t work and expecting different results. We need vision to light the way forward, to inspire the confidence to get us out of our comfort zones and to move in new directions. Fortunately, the Church and the country never have lacked for vision – the shining city on a hill, the New Jerusalem descending on earth.

Remember that when all the evils were released into the world from Pandora’s Box the only thing left was Hope. Hope is what sustains us when vision fades – especially with people who trust in a loving God in control of His universe.

Still, the world is dogged by apocalyptic fear – from misreading the Book of Revelation to doomsday scenarios, such as Harold Camping’s end-of-the-world predictions last year and what some read into the Mayan calendar for this

October 21st. Just two weeks before Eldergarten scientists advanced the so-called “Doomsday Clock” to five minutes to midnight – ticking down to inevitable catastrophe.

Fortunately, we know better. We know that the Apocalypse *was* the Last Judgment. This brought on the Lord’s Second Coming, when He sent His disciples throughout the heavens and gave a new revelation to the world. But we are still in the lingering darkness of 250 years ago. The Holy City New Jerusalem is descending – gradually but inexorably. We may be worried about the state of the world and impatient for the Church to fulfill its destiny. But we know there will be no Third Coming, no doomsday. This is it. And if the Lord is willing to bring His Church into this uncertain world, shouldn’t we also be confident and optimistic? We should be asking ourselves: What does the Lord want from me? What is our role?

We know that with the Second Coming the Lord continually is bringing new light into the world. *Is bringing*. It is an ongoing process. We still bear sad witness to all that flourishes in the dark, but have the Lord’s assurance: “Do not be dismayed for I have overcome the world.”

When we think about our role, there’s an interesting number (*True Christian Religion* 398) about how we need to know and unite the Lord’s good and truth in us, and that “this is especially important for the people of the church.” We are very good at truth in this Church. The good comes in how we live those truths – as individuals and as a Church – in charity.

So, the Second Coming goes on and the Revolution goes on. Every day we are called upon to build on the dream and to bring the Lord’s Word into a struggling, desperate world by the way we live our lives.

Both the Church and the nation must be constantly renewing themselves to advance toward their destinies. We surely need good, visionary leaders and sound institutions. But we also need committed followers – the quiet, patient, persevering people who are invested and engaged. The masses may determine what we get on TV. The committed determine our values.

Walt Whitman once said with the simple clarity of a poet: “America is nothing but you and me.” In a sense, we can say the same for the Church. Both have their foundation in truths from the Lord, but depend on us to keep the flame alive.

One of the early patriots who gave his life for the American dream at Bunker Hill had told his fellow soldiers: “On you depend the fortunes of America. Be worthy of yourselves.” I am reminded of a story about ice hockey’s

We may be worried about the state of the world and impatient for the Church to fulfill its destiny. But if the Lord is willing to bring His Church into this uncertain world, shouldn’t we also be confident and optimistic?

We stand between what was and what will be, aware that in the Church and in our country we are not yet all that we could be. We have work to do. We should not be discouraged. Neither should we be complacent.

Stanley Cup – “the people’s trophy” – which often goes on public display. One time when fans lined up to touch it and read the names inscribed, a young hockey player just passed his hands reverently around the trophy, not quite touching it. When a guard said, “It’s OK. You can touch it,” he said, “No. No. I am not worthy.” We all need to be humble about our blessings and live to be worthy of them.

We stand now between what was and what will be, aware that in the Church and in our country we are not yet all that we could be. We have work to do. We should not be discouraged. Neither should we be complacent.

What we have been so blessed with needs to be nurtured and valued and carried forward. That is why New Church education is so important to the future of the Church, and why sound teaching is so vital to our country. As Plato once said – and it still is true today: “The only two questions that really matter in all the history of the world are: Who is teaching our children? And, What are they teaching them?”

We need to keep reminding ourselves that the Lord came not to save a favored few but the whole world. He is bringing new light into the world which lights our way – and is a torch in our hands. Think of the Lord’s love in reaching out to save all of us. Think of the courage of our Founding Fathers. Think of what we all need to give back.

And as we stand – between dream and destiny – listen to what the Lord says to us: “You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you.” “You are the light of the world.” And, “Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”

And when the Lord calls on us to be exceptional and asks: “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” I hope we all are ready to say, “Here I am, Lord. Send me.”



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bruce Henderson was a journalist for most of his career, primarily as an editorial page editor and columnist for daily newspapers. In 1999 he came to work in the Development Office of the General Church and the Academy, serving as both Director of Development and Director of Communications, and produced *Around the New Church* and *Lion’s Pride*. Now he is the editor of *New Church Life*. He also has written two books, *Window to Eternity* and *Why Does God Let it Happen?* He and his wife, Carol (Ebert), live in Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania.

The Human Soul and the Computer

Thomas R. Cooper

While reading a novel about a woman who suffered head trauma in an explosion, causing the loss of her memory, I began reflecting on the book's description of the agonizing, slow process of memory recovery. I got to thinking about the process as it related to the medical wonder of the almost total loss of memory details, while at the same time the trauma had hardly affected her functions of feeling, fear, sadness, need, the desire to live, and left most of her motor controls were intact.

With the brain mechanism wounded, the mind seemed to continue working its life force to effect recovery and healing. But where was the lost memory hiding, waiting to be recovered?

It would seem that the soul, the real us, would be the repository of everything that the brain and the mind process, and would therefore hold all of the memory "data" safely outside the injured body. But we have difficulty imagining how the brain/mind in the body and the soul in the spiritual world communicate. More on this in a moment.

Swedenborg believed there were two distinct degrees of the soul: the lower, "animus," is the seat of sensations; the higher, "mens," is the seat of emotion; and memory is developed in the cortex of the brain. If so, then the cortex could be "wounded," affecting memory processing, and the sensations mentioned above could still function.

I have always had an interest in the role of the human soul and where it resides – perhaps stirred by the knowledge that my grandfather, Dr. George M. Cooper, attempted in the early 1900s to identify the soul's location in the body based on his medical training – and whether it can be damaged or is it "immune" from physical harm.

In a paper by Rev. Dr. Reuben Bell, I read that "the soul's substance is not mingled with the body's matter, and is always separate from it as a function of its essential composition."

My mind's eye searched for the place that the soul could work from, where it would be safe from the physical explosion that damaged the brain, where it might hold all of the missing thought, feeling, memories and information while the brain and mind worked together to get the communicating system

I have searched for the place that the soul could work from, where it would be safe from a physical explosion that damages the brain, where it might hold all of the missing thought, feeling, memories and information while the brain and mind worked together to get the communicating system with the soul healed and functioning again.

with the soul healed and functioning again. I am not alone in this search.

The soul is above our consciousness and is called a higher substance as compared to the lower spiritual substance of the mind; and therefore could be and remain in the heavens. If in the heavens, it would seem to be a safe place to keep our souls, indeed.

It is well known that Swedenborg anticipated many scientific discoveries as much as 100 years before “science” accepted them. We also know that all things have relation to God, and most (all?) things are influenced by the spiritual world. Near-death experience patients report seeing an entire separate realm of existence in which all knowledge – past, present and future – seemed to exist. This reflects Swedenborg’s description of the

other world, and may be where all souls congregate from all time.

I want to make a thoughtful comparison between the human internal communication system and the modern computer and the Internet.

A vast amount of medical and technical breakthrough has been achieved in a very small and recent time frame on the large scale of creation. The Lord already knew everything that mankind has learned or discovered, or will discover. He left us in freedom to develop our minds to the level we have come to in the order of His heavenly plan.

The Internet, a relatively recent development, has affected a high percentage of the entire world’s population and is used in almost every facet of the world’s operations and communications. And yet, although only a few people have any idea of how it works, who owns it or where it is located, they accept its existence.

They are incapable of grasping the speed at which information now is found on the Internet, or the speed by which e-mail travels, or how it is that almost anyone with a cell phone can speak in real time to someone else on a cell phone on the other side of the world, casually, right now, while walking down the street – but they accept that it is so.

My idea that began to develop is that the brain, mind and soul have a parallelism to the functioning of computers and the Internet.

The Internet may have been developed through human mental capacity,

If we can believe in the Internet, then why can we not believe in the human soul living apart from our bodies in the spiritual world while we live and function here on earth?

unintentionally, in a way that could explain, or at least help us to understand how our soul can be a part of our human system, yet not in our body, but existing separately in the spiritual world, from which it communicates with our mind and brain continuously, from conception and throughout our eternal life in heaven.

The soul cannot die, does not live of itself, but receives life from the Lord. It is a receptacle of the Lord's life. Swedenborg teaches that each person lives in both the natural and the spiritual realms at the same time, and this would be the case if we are living on earth and our soul resides in the spiritual world.

We (except for a few) do not know where the Internet is, but we acknowledge that it exists and that it is good (small "g"). We (all of us) cannot prove where the soul resides, but we know it is there, somewhere.

Consider that if the souls of the living exist with God in the spiritual world, the mind might communicate with the soul 24/7 using telepathic (digital) thought as described by Swedenborg as the communicating system in the heavens (ideas conveyed by thought).

Similarly, our brain (computer) uses our mind (software), to communicate with our soul (Internet) directly in the heavens (cyber space). The input and output of information to our mind through our senses would be the data-entry system (keyboard) for the brain. The training, skills and knowledge of a particular person would be reflected in the level of software that runs the computer.

The human brain is widely known to function on electrical and chemical pulses and reactions, perhaps the ultimate computer. Human thought process and the ability to change from one thought to another (web pages) is virtually instantaneous and capable of multi-tasking. And now, we have Internet information and voice transmissions that would also seem to be instantaneous.

We see earthly data and communications able to function at unimaginable speed; imagine how fast the mind and the soul could communicate in another dimension.

As my thought about the damaged brain developed, I wondered where the lost information would be "hiding" or stored, waiting to be "remembered" or "restored" by healing if the physical brain were wounded. It's tricky enough to recover deleted information from your computer! (When the paper that you have been working on for hours disappears off the screen of your computer

because you inadvertently hit a wrong key, did you ever wonder where it went?)

We know that everything we ever thought, did, saw, said, felt, learned, etc., is known to the Lord, and is likely to be waiting for us (in His data base) when our thoughts and loves are revealed in the spiritual world after death.

We also know of the influence of angels and the “instantaneous” communications with others in the spiritual world. It seems to become apparent that the soul is always in heaven with the Lord, even from its potential at conception. I am postulating that the soul and the mind communicate so that all things of the mind are stored with the soul in heaven.

If the brain is damaged, the communication system is disabled (crashed), but the soul retains everything – all memory, love, knowledge, etc. – and the soul lives on. As the brain heals (reboots) and becomes able to communicate with the mind again, the mind can begin to retrieve the desired stored memories (RAM/ROM) from the soul and restore (download) them to the healed brain.

When the body dies, the soul, already in heaven, separates from the body, and wakes up in the spiritual world with all of its human experience to form the spiritual person.

One of the most important features of the New Church is the acceptance of the inquiring mind. The above thoughts may have been discussed elsewhere by others, and are not intended to be profound, but perhaps entertaining. If we can believe in the Internet, then why can we not believe in the human soul living apart from our bodies in the spiritual world while we live and function here on earth?

Consider what would happen if the human brain, with its enormous ability to think and solve things, discovered the computer digital system of 1's and 0's bombarding it on the airwaves all around us, and trained itself to interpret it in our minds without a computer. Hmmm.

Author's Footnote: I have read with interest, and made several references about the soul from a paper by Rev. Dr. Reuben P. Bell, *Soul-Body Interaction in Human Conception*. Several quotes are from *The Swedenborg Epic*, and I recommend the Rev. Douglas Taylor's *The Hidden Levels of the Mind*. You may also want to read *Lord-Soul-Body Reflections* by Ed Allen (revised November 2010). These, and many other sermons and papers are available on the subject of the mind.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tom Cooper grew up in Bryn Athyn and is a retired business executive. He and his wife, Charlene, maintain a home in Bryn Athyn but spend most of their time on their boat, based in Florida. They recently donated a new organ to the Bryn Athyn Cathedral.



Nicole and Scott Frazier

Rev. Scott I. Frazier

The Joy of Teaching – As a Minister

We may like to think that the call to the ministry is a lightning-bolt epiphany. Something clicks and “at that moment I just knew...” But for many men it comes of a long struggle, grappling with doubts and inspiration. The process is the preparation.

Such was the journey of Scott Frazier.

He felt the pull – to writing, to teaching, to Latin, to doctrine. But he wasn’t sure about the pastoral side of the ministry and resisted. Then it all came together, but it took time.

Listen to his story.

He grew up in Bryn Athyn as the fourth child of Robert and Bonnie Frazier, going through the elementary school and two years at the Academy. He spent his junior year abroad, mostly in Belgium, where the family had moved for his father’s international consulting work.

He began toying with the idea of the ministry at age 14 in Rev. Christopher Smith’s religion class. “I was captivated by the idea that knowing the truth should change the way you behave, and it should bring happiness.” But he didn’t decide to be a minister until much later.

In Belgium, mornings were spent homeschooling, studying Latin and playing around with physics. When his Dad had a business trip to Barcelona, Milan or London the family joined in. It was an insular life, without many

friends, but he liked it that way. “I was content to be by myself, debating the moral path with a Turkish professor in Istanbul (a business associate of my father), trying to practice archery through the orchard next to our house, and playing endless games of Hearts with my siblings on Italian trains.”

For his senior year he came back to the Academy and Stuart Hall, then on to Bryn Athyn College of the New Church. The only career ambitions he admitted to were being a writer, a professor, or perhaps a Latin translator. Those early thoughts of the ministry were dismissed by the thought of preaching and moving around to different societies.

Bryn Athyn College was an entirely new world. Some faces had changed, some remained, and he found himself surrounded with people who had chosen – or begun to choose – to grapple intellectually with the Heavenly Doctrines.

“Rev. Prescott Rogers’ course on the first half of *Divine Love and Wisdom* (I didn’t read the second half until years later, I’m afraid) was life altering. He showed us how the Doctrines are not just worth thinking about, but thinking from. Studying with other students for the final exam, I considered what it would be like to teach the class. At the time it was an intriguing but unrealistic thought.” (“I taught that very course for the first time in the spring of 2011.”)

In the next year, courses with Rev. Dr. Jonathan Rose and Rev. Bruce Rogers fed his love of Latin. “Jonathan showed me the beauty of *Vera Christiana Religio*: we would sit deep down in the windowless basement of the Swedenborg Library and discuss the role of imagery in the Writings as he would eat his lunch of peanut butter and apple. That distinct smell still reminds me of imputation.

“Bruce walked me through the task of understanding the Writings clearly enough to explain it to others, regaling me with stories of his fights with my great uncle, E. Bruce Glenn. One day I commented that I wanted to maybe be a translator, but I had no interest in being, you know, a priest. As he leaned forward in seriousness, he informed me that the translator ‘*is priest to the priests*’.

“I must have looked dubious, because he went on to describe his role in the Church, including the realization that his translations were being read as ‘the Word’. In the months after the brief conversation, I came to realize not every priest was a pastor, and some priestly uses were not accomplished in the pulpit. I was still not sure I wanted to be a minister, however.”

When he graduated with a bachelor’s degree in Latin and Religion, Scott knew he wanted to teach college, specifically at the Bryn Athyn College of the New Church. He still wasn’t ready to pursue Theological School, and was looking into graduate school. He told his younger brother, Pearse – now also a General Church minister – that he might get a further degree in Latin.

“He (Pearse) disagreed. He did not think I liked Latin. He was pretty

sure of it, and a two-hour debate ensued. Often heated, we went back and forth about my interest in Latin. I argued that I had taken many Latin classes, had liked them, and would enjoy taking more classes and teaching Latin. He argued that my interest was entirely dependent on what I was reading in Latin – the Heavenly Doctrines. Grudgingly, and with less grace than I should have exhibited, I admitted defeat.”

So he pursued a history degree, sure that he liked history. While teaching Latin to high school freshmen at the Academy Boys School, he attended Villanova’s graduate program, focusing on ancient history. “It was rewarding, frustrating and lonely. My paper on Christianity’s spread into China (or the lack thereof) was given an award, but I had been forced to write the paper without any overt perspective from the Heavenly Doctrines.”

He skipped graduation for his wedding a weekend later – May 26, 2001 – to Nicole Hill from Caryndale, Canada, and continued to teach part time at the College, including a course in history.

As a 20-year-old in College, considering Bruce Rogers’ perspective on translation, he had decided he would pursue the ministry – after being a professor at the College. So at age 25 and married he applied to Theological School. “During meetings of the Religion and Sacred Languages Division I had always pointed out that I was not a priest and so was not ‘one of them,’ but they remained oddly quiet. I suspect they were simply waiting for me to admit that I was heading for the ministry.”

When he walked into Dean Brian Keith’s office to apply and told him his plan was to be a priest and translator – and not a pastor – “he informed me that ‘young men often don’t end up doing what they think they are going to do when they are sitting in that chair. Of course, translation is one of those church uses, so maybe you have a good shot.’”

While in Theological School he continued to teach at the College – Latin, Hebrew, History and even Religion (Old Testament). “This meant there were many days when in the morning I would sit at one end of the table as a student in Theological School, and then in the afternoon move to the other end to teach Latin or Hebrew to students – including my classmates. It was under these conditions that I learned how difficult it is to teach your brother – six years your senior – anything, let alone Hebrew stems and parsing.

“Theological thought does not come easily to many people – at least it didn’t for me. For my dissertation, I had the Rev. Prescott Rogers as an advisor, and after turning in my first draft, I went to meet with him and saw, written in ink on it, ‘This sounds like a bunch of marbles dropped on the floor.’ He was right. As I listened to his explanation, I was reminded of the difference between understanding something clearly and expressing something clearly.”

As he finished the program, any concerns he had about being assigned

elsewhere had faded. He would keep his same job after becoming a priest. “I had imagined that not much would change: I would preach every now and then, I would teach religion, but otherwise I would be a professor for most of my professional hours.

“In this, also, I was wrong. The part of my job I was least prepared for – and now find the most rewarding in some ways – is the pastoral role I occupy at the College. Talking to young adults apart from the world of grades, rubrics and syllabi is now a use I take very seriously.”

As for other experiences since becoming a minister, “Weddings remain a special joy. Helping a couple approach the Lord together as they start their married life is a challenge to add to a busy schedule but a joy to add to my professorial life. Oddly enough, of the half-dozen weddings at which I have officiated, two of them have been of men entering the ministry, and both weddings had ministers as father-of-the-bride and father-of-the-groom.”

“My mission at the College, the reason I work there, is to foster an informed laity and clergy for the General Church. Whenever I get the chance to teach the Old Testament, especially the Five Books of Moses, life is especially rich. Whether it is watching Jacob contend with everyone around him, seeing Moses lead a difficult nation, or wading through Levitical laws on sacrifice, I only hope that students enjoy the material half as much as I do.

“I continue to see preaching as a challenge. A classroom is full of people you spend hours with every week, people who respond in the moment and ask questions, and who are paying to be evaluated on their mastery of what you say. None of these things are true when preaching. I find preaching to be such a unique form of communication that there is no substitute for practice in honing this skill. My normal work-week does not include preaching, and I still think I am finding my footing.

“My joy is in teaching young adults the Word in all its forms. I walk into classrooms full of people intending to learn the Lord’s truth, and I help them understand it. I can’t imagine a more rewarding way to spend a day at work.” He’s been teaching at the College now for more than a third of his life.

His free time is spent digesting popular culture, from reading books about it to playing the video games that increasingly influence it, to discussing with any and all what creates the culture we find ourselves in. He also enjoys cooking with his wife: “I find it deeply satisfying to feed people naturally as well as spiritually.”

He admits that according to career guidance tests, he should have become either a lawyer or a forest ranger. “I hope priest is somehow in between those two.”

Scott and Nicole have five children: Trajan, Brian, Padraic, Clio and Colette.

Bring All Your Firepans

Rev. Scott I. Frazier

Charter Day Cathedral Address, October 7, 2011

Take censers for yourselves, Korah and all your company, and put fire in them, and lay incense upon them in the presence of Jehovah tomorrow; and the man whom Jehovah chooses shall be the one who is holy. (Numbers 16:6-7)

Do we value, in ourselves, what really matters? The world around us constantly tells us that nothing is more important than your dreams. The Word tells us that all good and truth are from the Lord, and our ownership of good and truth is at best an appearance. Can they both be right? Can you be good without the Lord? Can you be right without the Lord? We can brush our teeth, we can balance our checkbook, we can stop our car at the stop sign.

It is easy to imagine that we do not need the Lord to pursue our dreams and happiness. We can set our sights on the most noble of dreams, the most altruistic of charitable impulses and never once acknowledge the authority of the Lord and His Word. And yet, if we do, if we pursue these lofty goals without acknowledging the authority of the Lord in His Word, we are doomed to misery as surely as someone who dedicates his life to video games, money, or appetite.

Happiness comes from wanting what the Lord wants. If you don't first admit that there is a Divine Lord who wants something for you, something that really matters, you won't ever get the living water He's offering.

Our story is about discovering what really matters. Picture the teeming Israelites as our everyday concerns, thoughts and actions that we do all the time. Picture the elders and Levites of Israel as our principles and dreams, our important ideas and passions. Aaron and Moses at the top are the Lord's Word and the truth from it, in charge whether we like it or not.

Korah, a Levite, rebels. He thinks that Aaron and Moses have unduly elevated themselves when the Lord has declared all Levites holy and special.

Our dreams and aspirations are important, but Korah's rebellion is a picture of our confusion and unease about how our passions and principles compare to what the Word teaches.

This is not a story about everyday concerns swamping our spiritual life. Korah does not want the regular people to become Levites. Just as the Levites were tasked with managing the religious life of the Israelites, we rightly let our

principles and dreams and goals order our behavior.

So what is Korah's rebellion about? Korah means "baldness," a lack of external things, an absence of hard, observable truth. When Korah rebels, it is the opinion, the suspicion, that we don't need written rules. Korah-as-baldness rebels because he resents the idea that there are rules – written truth – that we have to obey completely.

Korah would rather live life without the rules we didn't write ourselves. Can't we be good without acknowledging the Lord? Can't we be competent and charitable and useful and happy without Moses and Aaron pushing us around all day, "thou shalt not this" and "thou shalt not that?" Korah wants a life where Moses and Aaron are just Levites among Levites. Part of us wants to live a life where the Word and its truth are just more ideas for our own inspiration and journey of self-discovery.

Moses has two responses. First, addressing all the rebels, he sets a challenge: Korah and the elders are to bring incense and fire and censers – a kind of fire-pan for burning incense – to the Tabernacle for a test; the Lord will make clear who He wants as leaders, His authority in the camp. Second, He singles out Korah for his betrayal: *It is against Jehovah that you and all your followers have banded together. Who is Aaron that you should grumble against him? (Numbers 16:8-11)*

He is pointing out that Korah is not attacking the authority of Aaron the High Priest, but the authority of Jehovah Himself. This rebellion is not a simple matter of which a human being should call the shots for God: it is a rebellion against the idea that God calls the shots.

We do not see a criticism of questioning the Word. The Heavenly Doctrines are very clear that we should be constantly questioning what we think the Lord's Word says, always testing and comparing and measuring its ideas and dictates, to make sure we understand and do what it says. This useful skepticism is not Korah.

This is our confusion about what we really care about, what we truly value the most; it is a confusion about the authority of the Lord in our life. What if you care more about your own goals than you do about the living water the Lord is offering? How would you even know if you do? What really, really matters?

Moses, Aaron, Korah and all the elders have gathered to see whom the Lord has chosen. They have gathered to see what really, really matters. Are we going to acknowledge the Lord and value His truth above all else, or are we going to pour our identity, our value, our happiness into something a little less? Are we going to be happy because we are smart, because we are naturally generous, because we are going to change the world, or are we going to be happy because we strive to be an expression of the Lord's will?

To discover what really matters, we need to bring all our firepans to the Lord. Bring them all. Bring your dream to be the best engineer. Bring your satisfaction in being a good listener. Bring your pride in the excellence of your art. Bring them all to the Lord, and Aaron will be standing there with his own firepan. When you do, you bring firepans with incense and fire in them.

The Lord wishes for our eternal happiness. The thing about eternal happiness is that it has to rest on something eternal. Being the best engineer isn't eternal. Pride, in art or anything else, does not yield eternal happiness. Only the Lord and His truth do.

These three – the incense, the fire and the firepan – represent our dreams and aspirations. The incense is all the knowledge and understanding that goes with any dream we pursue. The fire is our passion, our inspiration to become what our dreams depict. The firepans themselves are the value we give them, the authority and even worship we bring to our dreams, placing them above our own convenience and base desires. These firepans matter, we care deeply about them, and will sacrifice for them. Bring them all to the Lord.

And when you do, they are all consumed. They are all consumed by the fire of the Lord. Korah and his elders have been killed and reduced to ash, leaving only their firepans. Is this what happens to our dreams and goals when we bring them to the Lord? Is the Lord a vengeful and jealous God who insists we care about nothing but Him? Does the Lord wish for the destruction of all our dreams and desires?

The Lord wishes for our eternal happiness. The thing about eternal happiness is that it has to rest on something eternal. Being the best engineer isn't eternal. Being a good listener has no eternal value. Pride, in art or anything else, does not yield eternal happiness. Only the Lord and His truth do. This is why Aaron, who stands for the truth we see in the Word, is the only one left standing. The contest reveals what should matter most to us.

Okay, we get it – the truth is the most important. Each of us can resolve, now, to put the Lord's truth first. Then we can all walk out of here into the sunlight and describe our dreams and goals with our colleagues and fellow students. Is that all it takes? A box in our mind we check off? Value the Lord's truth: check.

We do not address Korah's rebellion every waking moment or even on a given Tuesday morning or in the middle of a history test. We will however all face moments of tribulation, moments of crisis, moments where we must confront whether we have placed our identity and happiness in our own dreams or in the Lord's Truth, in What Is Right.

The Lord never wishes for us to suffer, to struggle, to see our dreams fade. Pursue your dreams, live your principles, value the good you can do and the joy you see in everyday life.

But do not worship them.

skills you hone, will help you pursue and ultimately fulfill your aspirations for this life.

But what if your goals, your passions, the life you have struggled to build, are suddenly put into jeopardy? What are your thoughts when the life you imagined yourself to have is suddenly put in peril? What can you lose and still be happy? Can you be happy without your intelligence, your current friends, the life you imagine for yourself, your dreams and aspirations?

Who are you if you don't get the grades you want, if you don't have the friends you want, if the life you are pursuing fades from your horizon? Who are you really, when your world threatens to collapse: when you get that worst of phone calls from your school, from your home, from the hospital downtown? It is one thing to enthusiastically describe your cares, your talents, the life you choose for yourself when the sun is shining and all you see are smiles. It is quite another when you are in the wilderness, facing a life stripped of what you previously held most dear.

Here's the good news: you can decide what matters most before a crisis erupts. At night, when you review your day, focus on and appreciate those moments where you did what was right. In the myriad little decisions filling each day, ask not what is great or exciting, but what is right – and do that. You can decide to make the Lord's truth your source of identity and happiness while you are idling at the stop sign. Next time you are there, resolve to make His truth your only incense and firepan. Even say it out loud: "The Lord's Truth is my incense and my firepan." When a crisis comes, that resolve will serve you well.

Remember, Korah is the miserable belief that we can author our own happiness to eternity. If we believe Korah, if we think that the Word and its truth are just "Levites among Levites," are just more good ideas we can take or leave, then we house our happiness in something not eternal, something that can be taken away from us.

The Lord never wishes for us to suffer, to struggle, to see our dreams fade. Pursue your dreams, live your principles, value the good you can do and the

joy you see in everyday life. But do not worship them. If we worship what does not deserve worship, we risk misery of our own making.

After the contest, when the firepans have been gathered to make a memorial to Korah's folly, there are still people, and there are still Levites and elders. Our lives will still have Monday mornings and career goals, and the Lord still wants us to have our dreams and our passions. Brush your teeth, stop at stop signs, become an engineer, enjoy life. The firepans remain, however, hammered into a covering for the altar.

You are not because you are gifted, competent or even kind. You are because the Lord's Word is forever. In the Words of Jeremiah:

Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches; but let the man who glories, glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am Jehovah. (Jeremiah 9:23-24)



New Church Life Online

Read *New Church Life* online at www.newchurchlife.org. Everything is the same as the printed version except that for security reasons the Announcements (baptisms, marriages and deaths) cannot be posted. You can also sign up on that website for e-mail notification each time a new issue is posted online.

MARS: A Platform for Church Growth

Jane Williams-Hogan, Ph.D., Director

In September of 1996 the Academy of the New Church launched a signature Master of Arts program in Religious Studies for the laity (MARS), which could be viewed as the first step toward a New Church University.

The program, now in its 16th year, grounds students in the teachings of the New Church. They take a minimum of five theology courses and connect what they have learned with their interests in history, education, psychology, philosophy, sociology or science. Courses in these areas have been offered at the graduate level to facilitate students connecting doctrine with these disciplines. The capstone experience is writing a Master's thesis, requiring students to use doctrine to shape their understanding of a research project of their choosing.

To date nearly 100 students have taken courses in MARS, 34 have graduated and eight are seeking degrees. Three plan to graduate this year. Last year 33 students took one or more courses in the program. During our Summer Session 19 students were enrolled. We plan another session this summer, June 11–25, offering three courses: *Systematic Theology*, *The Doctrine of the Word*, and *Swedenborg's Life and Times*. Students rated the summer program 8.3 on a scale of 1 (poor) - 9 (outstanding). The comments were as affirming as the rating. One student wrote: "Connecting with the teachings reshaped my way of thinking and helped me appreciate my life." This student and many others were interested in taking more courses.

When the MARS program was created, it found its home in the Theological School because it also granted MA degrees. Last summer, the administrative structure of the program was shifted to Bryn Athyn College. I remain the Director, but the program now has the support of the College Office and the Academic Dean.

The program is being integrated into the computer-based systems of the College and on its website, which should increase our visibility. The program will still advertise in other venues, but this should make it easier to enroll in the summer session. Last spring tuition support was announced by the New Church Curriculum Development Fund for New Church teachers at any level in the General Church system taking courses in the program. The program is delighted by this on-going support, because such disciplined engagement with

the Writings at the graduate level strengthens New Church education from the primary grades through the Secondary Schools, and including the College.

No other college or university in the world offers such a program. It is unique to Bryn Athyn College. It is a signature program because of its very uniqueness. It identifies what we as a college do: we attempt to understand the world within and through a New Church framework based on the Writings. It is my conviction that the more we advertise the program, the more students will be attracted to the College to take part in it. While I was involved in creating the program, have been Director for the past three years and have taught in it since its beginning, it is the student experiences that are its biggest advertisement.

The Writings of the New Church provide a new understanding of the nature of salvation and the process of human regeneration. In so doing, they also provide profound insights into the nature of human life and human activity. Embedded in the new theology or view of God is a new view of the cosmos and the microcosm – both the natural and human worlds.

The Writings provide new insights into the essence of nature and the parameters of the human condition. They provide a profound understanding of the characteristics of human social-psychology, a theory of education, a philosophy of history, and a spiritual appreciation of the institution of marriage. In fact, they provide insights into almost every human enterprise imaginable. The MARS program allows students to explore this incredible wealth in the Writings and then focus on one topic for their thesis.

Two of the contributors below have made important contributions to scholarship: Suzy Laidlaw in the area of New Church history, and Hilary Bryntesson in the field of human sexuality. Gail Cooper, a current student, is also working on church history with a focus on the judgment of the Ancient Church. Their theses are titled: *A Sociological View of the History of the Growth of the General Church of the New Jerusalem*; *Sexual Intimacy and Conjugal Intimacy in Marriage – Informing and Empowering College Students to Pursue the Ideal*; *From Chaos to Order: The End of the Roman Republic and the Judgment on the Ancient Church*.

MARS Experience: Suzy Laidlaw (2007)

I measure the value of an educational experience by how much it has changed the way I think. My experience at Bryn Athyn College and later in the Masters of Religious Studies program was life changing.

After completing my undergraduate degree at Bryn Athyn College in History and Religion in 1990 I knew that I wanted to continue with classroom learning focused on the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg. At the time I would joke with friends about the possibility of taking some of the classes

in the Theological School that were doctrine-based, knowing there was no mechanism to do that. There was talk even then of developing a Masters of Religious Studies (MARS) for laymen, but it was just a dream at that point.

By 1996 the dream had become a reality and I decided to get into the program. As with my undergraduate degree, I ended up taking a long time to complete the degree, which didn't happen until 2007. By then the program had evolved and there were more courses available.

I was pleased to discover that there were enough offerings for me to continue my focus on the history and sociology of religion. My classes allowed me to choose a topic for my dissertation of particular personal interest: the establishment of Bryn Athyn as a church community and how it affected the growth of the Church in the area and in general. I contrasted Bryn Athyn with other General Church groups who chose to live in a less all-inclusive or "closed" environment.

I was able to focus on the scholarship done by Dr. Rodney Stark, a well-known sociologist of religion. I studied his book, *The Rise of Christianity*, which discusses the early Christian Church and its growth. This became the model for my paper. Stark demonstrates the wildly successful growth of a new and revolutionary religion – Christianity. What light would his model shed on New Church growth since 1772?

My mentor, Dr. Jane Williams-Hogan, is the foremost authority in the world on Swedenborgian culture. She is a regular lecturer at many well-known academic conferences focused on religion, and is a recognized expert on the subject around the world. I can't imagine any other school where I would have had an opportunity to study with, and be mentored by, such a respected academician.

I was also privileged to take a course from Dr. Hogan on the life and times of Emanuel Swedenborg after I received my degree. I believe this would be of interest to everyone even remotely interested in Swedenborgian thought. Our course work demonstrated the remarkable journey that he went on from being a child in Sweden to a divine revelator. I learned that Swedenborg was even more remarkable than I ever thought. This class was life changing for me.

The Masters program is geared to adult post-college students and is a rigorous program for people who are serious about learning the intricacies of our religion as well as the culture and history of the Church. The milieu of the classes fosters candid conversations and all questions and comments are welcome. It is also understood that the ultimate source for all the important answers will be from divine revelation.

The MARS program is still relatively in its infancy and has yet to grow into what I hope it will be. I envision a day when students have the opportunity to study things as diverse as the effects of the Second Coming on art, education

and culture as well as a very broad definition of all things having to do with the life and times of Swedenborg himself. This is the only school in the world where scholarship such as this can be done by laymen. I believe the MARS program will one day be a beacon to the world for scholarship in all things Swedenborgian.

MARS Experience: Hilary Bryntesson (2011)

The MARS program was personally and professionally transformational for me. I was not prepared for how incredibly invigorating and stimulating I would find my studies at Bryn Athyn College. I have always enjoyed talking about religion, but the MARS program ignited a fire within to know more, to understand doctrine at a deeper level, and to make that knowledge accessible and useful for my students, at their level.

The program offers the opportunity to undertake in-depth study of the doctrine and apply it to your field of expertise or occupation. From the outset, it was clear that my teachers would challenge me to think more deeply about New Church teachings than I had ever done before, in spite of a life-long love of discussing religious ideas. It was quite simply wonderful. I felt intellectually *alive*, and spiritually fed. What a combination! My outstanding teachers led me through thorough and careful study of the Writings, challenging me to interrogate the text for my own meaning. I was frankly amazed that the Theological School would allow such openness of inquiry.

In my valedictory speech last May, I mentioned two pivotal epiphanies. First, in Rev. Dr. Ray Silverman's excellent *Heaven and Hell* class, Peter Rhodes taught me that the Writings are revelation, not a rule book. Approaching the Writings as revelation entirely changed how I read them. I no longer searched for someone else's meaning in the text, but saw the books as the Lord's Divine Truth, offered with His open hands, with no agenda attached other than securing heavenly happiness for me.

The Writings were no longer the Word of God unchanging, enduring and fixed through all ages, but a living document, accommodated to me in my spiritual state now, but capable of feeding me and enduring with me through all ages and states. So I read them for *enlightenment*, to see what the Lord was trying to reveal to me, in every nuance of every passage we studied.

The second epiphany was in Rev. Grant Odhner's challenging class, *Doctrine of the Word*, where I learned that there was a hierarchy of truth, and that genuine or essential truths were the "bare face and hands" truths where the internal sense and the sense of the letter of the Word were one.

These are the universal truths accessible to all mankind, and necessary for our salvation. Genuine truths are the lamp which enlightens all other truths. Love to the Lord, and love of the neighbor are two such truths. We read in

Arcana Coelestia, “The understanding ...cannot be enlightened unless people believe that love to the Lord and charity toward the neighbor are the *chief and essential qualities*.” Provided we are governed by these we can go on to see countless truths. So armed with these epiphanies, I sought enlightenment through the lens of love to the Lord and neighbor, in hopeful anticipation of the following:

Everyone is enlightened and instructed from the Word according to his *affection of truth and longing for it*, and according to his capacity of receiving it. They who are in enlightenment are in the light of heaven as to their internal man; for it is the light of heaven which enlightens man in the truths and goods of faith.

As the classes progressed, the extraordinarily *systematic* nature of the Writings fell into place. In Rev. Prescott Rogers’ inspiring *Conjugal Love* class, we took teachings of particular interest and researched them in other works of the Writings which proved invaluable for my future research.

In Rev. Stephen Cole’s fascinating *Arcana Coelestia* class, I appreciated all the more that “The Word of the Lord is like a body that has a living soul within it,” and he taught me what holiness is.

In Rev. Dr. Andy Dibb’s Issues class, we came to grips with a number of controversial topics in a thoroughly stimulating and academically free environment. I understood so much more about the current General Church after Rev. Walter Orthwein’s incredibly entertaining and informative New Church history class. The sense of order which descended from all my classes, and the enriching particulars shaped my teaching, my administrative duties, and my dealings with students.

One of the joys of my job is that students will talk to me about their relationship struggles. As a Physical Education & Health teacher, and in my work in student life at the College, I began to feel a strong calling to address issues of sexual intimacy, because I had heard from so many people, young and old, that contrary to the promise of conjugal bliss, their experiences were fraught with guilt, fear, regret and confusion. And yet, at the same time they spoke with such idealism, and a genuine desire to find a soul mate.

So I wrote my thesis on sexual intimacy in the context of conjugal intimacy, examining secular research in the light of spiritual teachings. The study considers romantic, passionate and companionate love. It examines historical and cultural perspectives on marriage and intimacy. It explores the anatomy and physiology of sexual intimacy, and its management and expression in healthy relationships.

I wanted young people to know that seeking to establish a strong sense of self must precede the pursuit of lasting intimacy. As Erikson points out, “To truly meet others with whom to share a ‘We’, one must have a sense of ‘I.’” Erikson identifies as pre-requisites for a strong identity: a sense of “self-

sameness,” established values and beliefs, and “inner solidarity.”

The study makes the case for intimacy as an evolving spiritual complement of each individual’s genuine and *unique* expression of his or her own femininity or masculinity. The desire to feel womanly or manly may seem to be old-fashioned concepts, because there is a tendency to connect manliness and womanliness to stereotypes. But my study hopes to show that a true sense of femininity or masculinity enables every individual to express, in authentic ways, his or her own spiritual core.

“There is nothing in the soul, mind or body which is not male in the man, and female in the woman.” We need to love and show our partners that we are stirred to our core by a deep appreciation of their manliness/womanliness as they express it.

I found that much of current secular intimacy research echoes the teachings of *Conjugal Love*, and with breathtaking symmetry. It turns out that the vast majority of us yearn for a soul mate, to love one to eternity.

My study asks, “What do the Writings *reveal* to you about the nature of intimacy?” Not what have the ministers taught you, or what have your parents or teachers forbidden you to do, but what is the Lord *revealing* to you through His Word about the ideal of truly intimate love?

At every stage of life, and every day, we need to renew our hope and intent to intimately love the spirit of one soul mate to eternity. And the truths we wield in pursuit of intimacy need to be held up to the enlightening lamp of love, the genuine truths of loving the Lord and loving the neighbor.

I am so grateful to all my teachers for sharing their brilliant minds, extensive expertise and inspiring love of New Church doctrine. I especially want to mention Dr. Jane Williams-Hogan who has been my thesis mentor, my teacher and my friend. Her passion for furthering scholarly study of the Writings and Swedenborg is awe-inspiring, and her output is phenomenal. And yet, in addition to all her excitement and dedication to uncovering the truth, and her prolific scholarship in promoting it, she always makes time to encourage, love and support her students in myriad ways. Thank you, Jane, for your inspiration, and teaching me the meaning of persistence.

MARS Experience: Gail Cooper

When the MARS program was first announced, I was thrilled to think that finally we had a system in place that could address the education of those teaching at the secondary or college level, as well as the general public. The General Church has always had systems and courses in place to train and develop elementary school teachers, but secondary teachers, who are often recruited from non-education majors, had fallen through the cracks. The MARS program was an opportunity to introduce teachers and the general

public into in-depth study of the doctrines.

After finishing my masters in my subject field, the MARS program has been my dessert. I have taken each course as an opportunity to study in depth and then apply a different area of doctrine to my field, and have delved into areas of study of the ancient world that have never been addressed in New Church publications.

This is what every New Church teacher should be doing: applying doctrine to what we teach, how we teach, and to understanding those whom we teach. When taking a course on the Doctrine of the Word, my focus was to understand the teachings about the Ancient Word and look for signs in Roman legend that could be remnants of that Word.

Study of the doctrine of the Lord presented an opportunity to come to a better understanding of the Lord Himself, as well as exploring how the unity, duality and trinity of the Divine has presented itself in pagan cultures.

I have had the pleasure of exploring how the focus of philosophy changed and dovetailed with the Lord's Advent, how animal sacrifice could correspond to the stages of regeneration, and the effect of the pre-Advent world on the ability of the people of that time to regenerate. All this has given me a deeper understanding of the world I present to my students, and it is a vision I could not get in any other institution.

When I finish my work, I hope that I will have added valuable input to New Church thought about the ancient world and that that work will be carried forward by future academics. At the same time, it was invaluable to me as a teacher to learn about the human mind in its operation in both the natural and spiritual worlds. As a result, I have a clearer understanding of what my job as an educator really is.

I was also fortunate enough to be able to take a MARS education class that presented 10 different doctrines and how they can be applied to the field of education. This was truly New Church teacher preparation and development at its best. Any teacher with training can tell you what methods work; a teacher with New Church background can tell you *why* those methods work, and we cannot under-estimate the value of this background. This was the only such education course I encountered in the MARS program, and I am hopeful that it is an area that can be expanded.

Beyond the immeasurable benefit this course of study has provided for me professionally, the personal satisfaction has been deep and enduring. The study of the Lord's truth with others who share the interest and common goals of a class has been pleasure beyond measure. Truly the angels were with us in many discussions as we took what we learned from the doctrines and applied it to ourselves and our world. Every class recharged my spiritual battery, and I can say in all honesty that my increased grasp of the doctrines has changed

my life.

This program is the logical culmination of New Church education for teachers and lay people alike. In my vision of the future of the New Church, the MARS program would be teeming with teachers eager to advance New Church understanding of their subject field, and with New Churchmen inspired to better understand the spiritual basis of the world in which we live.

The work that students of the program do in their studies would be examined, and papers and theses of quality would be made available to the public, both electronically and on the shelves of the Swedenborg Library. The whole church community could benefit from the work that has been done in the past and can be done in the future.

Conclusion

These testimonies indicate the power of the MARS program. It is intellectually stimulating and personally transformative. For these students it has accomplished what all genuine education aspires to do: to so nurture the mind with truth that they see the world anew.

The MARS program allows students to explore doctrine, to make it their own, and to apply it to an area of study dear to their hearts. It gives them the tools to find new answers to old questions. Writing their theses can give them an opportunity to articulate the answers they find and to share them with the broader New Church community.

The theses are not mere intellectual exercises, but often address practical concerns in education, health, church organization and spiritual practice. Our schools and our communities have been enriched by the scholarship and vision of MARS students, and I know that as graduates, they will continue to make valuable contributions as teachers and educators in whatever field they are employed.

I have faith that the MARS program, rooted firmly in the teachings of the New Church, one day will be transformed into a strong and vibrant New Church Graduate School – beckoning to scholars around the world wanting to explore the spiritual truths associated with the remarkable insights found in the articles, papers and books of Bryn Athyn University faculty and students. That day is coming.

A Taste for Sweetness

Alanna Rose

I recently listened to Terry Gross interview the chef Grant Achatz on *Fresh Air*. Years ago, Achatz was diagnosed with tongue cancer, and though his treatments were ultimately successful, during the process he lost his sense of taste. I can only imagine what that would have been like for a man in his position, with his genius, to lose something so central to his purpose in life.

As the interview goes on, we hear how over time his sense of taste was gradually restored, beginning first with sweetness, and then progressively incorporating all of the other tastes — bitterness, sourness, saltiness and umami.

Achatz infers that this incremental incorporation of one taste at a time follows the basic development of the sense of taste in infants, which, by this logic, begins with an appreciation of sweetness.

To be clear, I did not spend time researching the scientific validity of this claim, although his personal experience speaks volumes. But to me this seems to reflect a few things that I think are true about the Lord and His love for us.

I believe that we have been — are being, will be — created by the One God of heaven and earth, the perfect union of Divine love and Divine wisdom, Jesus Christ.¹ I think that the marriage within the Lord, His Being, is the source of all true happiness.

The imprint of this marriage, this preconditioning toward happiness, is evident even on the tips of our tongues. The sweet states of infancy, fastened to the concept that infants register sweetness exclusively for a time, acts as a sign to me that the human race is preordained to participate in a relationship with a loving God.

The Lord's presence involves liberty; the one is the consequence of the other. The more present the Lord is, the freer we are. In other words, the more we love goodness and truth, the more freely we act. That is the nature of the Lord's influence, coming by way of angels.

Hell's influence, on the other hand, coming by way of evil spirits, brings

¹ I am putting a very fine point on it here, and I'm not sure how useful that is to anyone, but I feel compelled to say it this way. I don't feel the reality of this constantly, but I do have moments of recognition that buoy these beliefs. What I don't want is for this statement to exclude anyone from appreciating the goodness around him or her.

with it the forceful effort to dominate. Those spirits connive at nothing else than to put us completely under their yoke so that we become nothing and they become everything. When they are everything, then we are one of them — and hardly even one of them, but like a nobody in their eyes.

So when the Lord delivers us from their control and removes their yoke, a battle begins. And when we have been delivered — reborn — the Lord leads us so gently by means of angels that it is anything but a yoke, anything but domination. Through pleasure and happiness we are led and loved and esteemed. This is what the Lord teaches: “My yoke is mild and my burden is light.” (*Matthew 11:30* and *Secrets of Heaven 905*)

The idea that we all pass through a state in which we only recognize sweetness speaks to me about the Lord’s protection. From a vantage point of contentment, we can know pleasure’s opposite when we encounter it. It is as though we are made to experience happiness initially so that this can function as a compass throughout our lives, guiding us toward reunion with itself, our source.

“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.” (*Revelation 22:13*)

Although we may begin in bliss, life is a growing process. I seem to be continually moving from a state of relative darkness to one that is light by comparison. This is uncomfortable. I am thinking of my nephew’s face when he was given a raspberry for the first time. As adults we’ve learned to appreciate a raspberry for what it is — supple nodes of flesh, a tart explosion, all the subtle fruity flavors — but he didn’t register these aspects of it at all. “No thanks!” It’s too bad for him now, but I anticipate he’ll learn. Where we are being brought may be even better than where we came from, dramatic as that sounds.

As a child, I liked nothing more than sweet things. My mom would guard against my having them, but I would nevertheless find a way. My tastes have changed now.² They have adapted to accept and enjoy hundreds of things I had no taste for previously. In general, this is an obvious improvement, but, nonetheless, I think the primacy of pleasure in our lives is a crucial reflection of the nature of the Lord; our source and our end; what we are working to hold and to share.

² And by changed I mean reversed. To the exclusion of many fine things, and the potential disappointment of warm and friendly hosts, I often lack appreciation for sweet things. I seem to relish sweetness as it exists in nature only. I am not even talking about licking honey off of my fingers here — even that’s too sweet for me. An example of what I am referring to might be the leaves of kale after a frost. In an effort to postpone imminent death, a kale plant will replace the water in its tissues with sugars. This renders the plant even more delightful! I’m disclosing this information merely as a humorous and ironic coincidence that I thought you, as I, might be tickled by knowing as you read what I’ve written here.

“Bless the Lord, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies, Who satisfies your mouth with good things, So that your youth is renewed like the eagle.” (*Psalm 103:1-5*)

All kinds of experiences are useful, but there are many that I do not immediately savor. Witnessing life through a framework in which the Lord’s goodness is a precondition helps me to accept all of the other things that occur in life and treat them as I might an unfamiliar flavor. There is nothing in reality that cannot contribute to the rich feast that is always taking place at the Lord’s table.³

It is my awareness and appreciation of what is, not the object of my attention, that informs the quality of my experience. The Lord is sharpening my palate, and widening my tastes. And there is no doubt in my mind that, in the end, this is sweet.

“O taste and see that the Lord is good.” (*Psalm 34:8*)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alanna Rose is an artist making paintings and meals on a farm in upstate New York. She and her husband Garth Brown are building a house together and co-creating a cheese farm with Edmond Brown and Normandy Alden.

³ White pepper ground over a steaming dish can deliver odors reminiscent of cow manure, but even this has its own charm.

Dr. Gregory and Margaret Baker

Judith A. Lopacki

This begins an occasional series on people who are pillars of our institutions, the General Church, the Academy and local churches *and* who are members of the Johnny Appleseed Society, who participate in the planned giving program. We begin with Gregory and Margaret Baker.

Gregory Langton Baker was born into the New Church on October 11, 1941. His parents, Mary E. and George R. G. Baker, were members of the Olivet New Church in Toronto. Greg attended public elementary school, the Olivet Day School, a private secondary school (UTS), and the Academy College for two years. After graduating from the College with a Junior College Diploma, he transferred to the University of Toronto where he met his wife Margaret, and earned his undergraduate and graduate degrees.

In 1970, with a Ph.D. in physics, he returned to Bryn Athyn as a new college faculty member. He and Marg began to build their lives in the Bryn Athyn community as parents of a growing family, raising two boys, Wilfred and Daryl, and two girls, Natalie and Frances.

In the early '70s, the College consisted of Pendleton Hall, Pitcairn Hall, and the dorms, Childs and Grant Halls, with science labs still occupying the fourth floor of Benade Hall.

Greg says, "Those were interesting years. I had just spent nine years at a large university, with its well-funded research programs and higher-education culture, and was coming to a very small college that was academically and administratively partnered with a secondary school. This seemed strange to me, and I wanted to see the College become an independent institution focused exclusively on higher education."

Along with Bruce Glenn, Robert Gladish, Brian Schnarr, and earlier figures such as Sig Synnesvedt and Lawson Pendleton, Greg was instrumental in defining the proper role of the College as a separate institution from the Secondary Schools, and in bringing the College into the modern era. Administratively, he helped put in place separate secondary and college



Greg and Marg Baker

academic departments, the establishment of regular modest research support, and the resolution of tenure issues.

Greg taught physics and mathematics, carried out research in statistical mechanics and chaotic dynamics, and worked to articulate the appropriate relationship between religion and science. He also had a multi-year, part-time, consultant relationship as an analyst in the field of systems reliability.

Administratively, he worked closely with the College deans over the years, including Bruce Glenn and Robert Gladish. It was during this time in the 1980s that the College faculty became independent of the Academy Secondary Schools faculty. This was important to the professionalization of the College as its own entity. Also, new larger college science space was needed and Greg was a strong force behind the building of the modern air-conditioned science center in honor of his good friend and colleague, Dr. Grant R. Doering.

Into the '90s, Greg took a sabbatical where, in his wish for new challenges, he collaborated with Professor Jerry Gollub at Haverford College and authored a book, *Chaotic Dynamics: an Introduction*, published by Cambridge University Press. This became an important book in the area of non-linear chaotic dynamics. It went on to be translated into Japanese and Polish, eventually selling about 10,000 copies. He also published three other books, *Religion and Science: from Swedenborg to Chaotic Dynamics*; *The Pendulum: A Case Study in Physics* with J.A. Blackburn; and, most recently, *Seven Tales of the Pendulum*, the latter two works with Oxford University Press. Over the years he has authored or co-authored 65 books and articles for scholarly publications.

But Greg isn't all work and no play. He is an accomplished musician (volunteer keyboardist for the Ivyland Church) and singer (second bass). He is a member of the General Church Board, President of the Friends of the

Swedenborg Library, past President of the Bryn Athyn Swim Club and the Swedenborg Scientific Association, and he volunteers at the Upper Moreland Library as an IRS certified tax preparer.

Greg and Marg have raised four children, and have nine grandchildren and one foster grandchild.

Marg has also been busy. She put her accounting skills to good use for many years as Assistant Controller for the General Church. She is treasurer for Cairnwood Village, and volunteer treasurer for the Bryn Athyn Orchestra. She is an adopted grandparent for the Bryn Athyn Church School and, with Greg, a member of the Bryn Athyn Cathedral choir and the Wayne Oratorio Society.

Both Greg and Marg have a deep love and appreciation for the Church and the educational institutions that make up this community. A few years ago they decided they wanted to give back and established a charitable gift annuity to benefit the College. Greg says the College was pivotal to him as a young man “coming into my age of rationality.” It created a framework and incentive for his thinking. “It was a religious institution,” he says, “yet sympathetic to a variety of ways to teach.”

He has fond memories. “It opened my mind and was intellectually nurturing. The College taught a world view that is coherently structured, both spiritually and naturally. And the human developmental process described in the Writings, if followed by all, would be a terrific force for good. I want the College to continue forever.”

Greg and Marg are helping to ensure that happens by supporting the College and the entire community with their time, talent and treasure. They were among the first to participate in the planned giving program. They found that a planned gift can be a very efficient method of giving, both for the institution and for the contributor. And Greg says they are looking to create another gift in the near future.

Greg and Marg are caring, giving people and, like many others, are devoted to supporting the future of education and the teachings of the New Church. They are among the “pillars” of the community. Their willingness to be open about what they are doing is truly courageous and done with the hope of inspiring others to do the same.

For information on the many benefits of planned giving, contact Judy Lopacki, Director of Planned Giving for the General Church and the Academy of the New Church, 267-502-2423, or judy.lopacki@anc-gc.org. There is no obligation, and your questions are welcome.

In Defense of Man

Fran Raymond

Man: noun

1. an adult male person, as distinguished from a boy or a woman
2. a member of the species *Homo Sapiens* or all the members of this species collectively, without regard to sex: *prehistoric man*
3. the human individual as representing the species, without reference to sex; the human race; humankind: *Man hopes for peace, but prepares for war.*
4. a human being; person: *to give a man a chance; When the audience smelled the smoke, it was every man for himself.*
5. a husband

From these definitions, googled from *dictionary.com*, the various meanings of the word “man” can be grouped broadly into two categories: 1) the singular – an adult male person, and 2) the collective – the human race.

For thousands of years this one word has been used with both meanings and the correct understanding has been derived from the context in which the word has been placed. For example, “Man does not live by bread alone” is understood in the universal, collective sense and “The dog bit the man” is understood in the singular, specific sense. The specific meaning, being finite and irreducible, can be understood to be a natural sense of the word and the collective meaning, being general and conceptual can be understood to be a spiritual sense. These two senses, natural and spiritual, ought not to be opposed, but rather, harmonious.

In recent years the use of the word “man” in its universal sense has fallen into disfavor and has been dethroned, as it were, from its place of honor in our vocabulary. Why? Because of the selective application by many today, of the singular meaning of “man” *over and against* its collective meaning.

But why should this be?

For the sake of simplicity, throughout the remainder of this article the word “man,” (all lowercase letters) will refer to “a male of the species” and “Man,” (uppercase M) will refer to “the human race, mankind.”

Ostensibly the good intention behind the selective and preferred use is for the sake of “gender equity” and “inclusiveness.” Yet, does this simple three-lettered word actually exclude? It may appear to do so, but only when looked

at literally and only if the understanding of the reader willfully excludes the collective sense.

The Writings teach about the many falsities that arise when The Word (Sacred Scripture) is understood only according to its literal sense. Here we observe this same phenomenon in our everyday speech. Clearly there is a distinction between the word “man” as meaning one particular male human being and Man in the universal sense. The first meaning is natural, literal and singular. The second meaning is universal, spiritual and general. Each has its use. Both are legitimate.

But if human beings choose to use only the most singular meaning, the general meaning will, over time, inevitably become lost. Nowadays the application of the general sense of the word is becoming scarce due to the disdain that is thrown upon it. Increasingly the use of “Man” in the universal sense has become socially stigmatized with the result that the more socially acceptable, yet awkward alternatives such as “people,” “persons,” “humankind,” “men and women,” or even, “all of us” and “we” are required to be substituted.

In *Matthew 4:4* we read, “*Man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.*” Today this becomes reduced to, “We do not live by bread alone.” This example may seem harmless enough but how far must we go in the substitution of the word?

Quoting from Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* we read, “*What a piece of work is a man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties, in form and moving how express and admirable, in action how like an angel...*” Should we also “improve” Shakespeare’s words to “What a piece of work are people?” Or perhaps the more ego-centric “What a piece of work are we?”

Immediately the beauty of this line is destroyed with the tampering of this noble and poetic word. Herein lies the insidious problem of literalism – the desire to apply and understand only the most basic meaning, to the exclusion of a higher sense.

We often hear about ancient ways and knowledges becoming lost and forgotten. This arises not only from the actual loss of the material forms of the written word (i.e. books, scrolls, parchments) but also by the degradation of the meaning of words through purposeful lack of use.

The history of human civilization is intimately tied up in its language. The layering of the meaning of words gives light and texture, form and substance to human lexis and imbues it with spirit and life and therefore to combat this loss we must strive to honor and preserve the integrity of words.

“Man” in the universal sense is a noble, wise and beautiful word precisely because of its relationship to “man” in the singular sense – the universal encompassing the singular. It is true that “Man” in the universal meaning is more abstract, and to understand the concept of “Man” requires a higher level

of cognitive thinking.

In *Arcana Coelestia* 6653 we read, “*The reason why truths are spoken of abstractedly is that spirits and angels so think and speak, for in this way they comprehend a subject in a universal manner and at the same time singly the particulars belonging to it...*” [emphasis added]

The purpose of this article however, is not only to defend the universal meaning of “Man” and attempt a reconciliation between “man” and “Man,” but also to offer as a parting thought, the idea that there is yet a third meaning – a celestial one – what we in the New Church know as the Grand Man.

It is outside the scope of this article to explore this sense and it is best left to be developed at a future time, however it should be noted that there cannot be entrance into the understanding of any abstract idea without the mind rising up through the universal sense first. In other words, there is no coming to an understanding of the concept of the Grand Man through short-circuiting the concept of Man in the universal sense. There *is* a hierarchy of meaning.

The concept of the Grand Man cannot be understood directly from the concept of man (male of the species). The spiritual, universal sense must be intermediary between the two; therefore if we desire to raise our minds up to heaven to grasp the meaning of the Grand Man, then “Man” in its universal sense must be restored to its original place of honor.

In closing, let us bring our thoughts back down to earth and be reminded that the dignity of “man” in every sense of the word has its origin and culmination in the Lord alone. May we reclaim and uphold the use of this noble, gracious and holy word in all its forms.

And God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.....So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.” (Genesis 2:26-27)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Fran Raymond says she discovered and fell in love with the Writings in 1990. She lives with her husband, Glenn, in Mississauga, Ontario, and attends the Olivet Church in Toronto. Her interests are theology, music and languages. She and her husband have four grown children.

Book Reviews



Gardens of Heaven and Earth

By Dr. Kristin King

The Swedenborg Society, London, United Kingdom, 128 pages

Reviewed by Vera Powell Glenn, Bryn Athyn

Here is a new book to inspire us to look at our spring gardens with a fresh eye and see the heavenly beauty which lies within. This study, says the author Kristin King in her introduction, “is an expression of appreciation for the thoughts and images Swedenborg puts into play through writing about two worlds – a natural world of matter and a spiritual world of substance – and about the meaning of gardens on multiple levels.” For Swedenborg teaches that every plant and tree, and each part of a flower, provides outward form to an inner spiritual idea which gives it its vibrancy and color. The whole garden corresponds, then, to spiritual thoughts and affections.

That this is a serious study is evident from the full Bibliography, thorough Index and copious Endnotes, with references to Swedenborg’s theological writings and to other germane works. But numbers for the notes are unobtrusive and can easily be ignored if the reader prefers not to interrupt the flow of the author’s contemplations. The text moves serenely through space and time as if the author herself were walking in a garden of the mind as she writes. Her reflections draw on her background of literature, as well as her study of religious correspondences and their meaning.

The essay is written in three parts:

Garden Correspondence discusses some of the numerous biblical references to gardens and plants from the Garden of Eden to the Tree of Twelve Fruits in *Revelation*. As explained by Swedenborg this imagery is symbolic of our spiritual life. King concludes that the process of making a lovely garden is like regeneration. In this section are two delightful engravings of gardens used as frontispieces in *Arcana Coelestia* and in one or two other books of the Writings.

Gardens in Heaven recreates several of Swedenborg’s spiritual experiences with gardens in the other world. The Prince’s garden, and two incidents set in rose gardens, are drawn from *Conjugial Love*. The author is disappointed that Swedenborg cannot or will not describe in more specific detail what he is

seeing. Instead he says over and over that earthly language has no words for the beauty of heavenly gardens, which mirror the inner states of the angels. Later, King allows that we may have to wait until we are in heaven to really see and describe the gardens there.

Gardens in History gives a brief overview of 6,000 years of cultivated landscape. King speculates on what those human arrangements of natural space and material might have meant to people through the ages as places of retreat from the world and religious contemplation.

We are invited at the last to visit Swedenborg's own garden in Stockholm. A drawing of it by Donald Moorhead based on descriptions from the time appears in this section, and the appendix at the end of the book has an inventory of the plants and trees in the garden from notes kept by Swedenborg himself. Here in his garden, Swedenborg was literally down-to-earth. He could often be discovered working there by visitors, who found him kindly and approachable. At the end of the garden stood a summer house where he did some of his writing, perhaps using the natural garden he saw through the open door as a window to spiritual gardens.

From her own gardening experience, King finds that gardening is above all a lesson in humility on both the natural and spiritual level. We do not own our gardens, she reminds us, but only cooperate with nature and the Lord in growing delightful and useful things. She writes, "planting any garden [is] an act of faith." The more we become spiritual gardeners, planting true thoughts and good affections in the garden of our minds and hearts the more beautiful grows the garden around our future eternal home.

Gardens of Heaven and Earth is available for \$19.95 from the Cathedral Bookstore in Bryn Athyn, PA, <http://store.newchurch.org>.



Paradise Misplaced: Book One of the Mexican Eden Trilogy

By Dr. Sylvia Montgomery Shaw

Swedenborg Foundation Press, 2012, 304 pages

Reviewed by Naomi Gladish Smith, Glenview/Boynton Beach

Sylvia Montgomery Shaw has written a compelling story set in the midst of the revolution that engulfed Mexico in 1910. This first book in a proposed trilogy introduces us to hot-headed Benjamin, the favored son of an aristocratic family who has left that family and his life of wealth and privilege to elope with an

American girl and fight in the revolution on the side of the rebels.

From the opening pages of a masquerade where murder is committed – or is it murder? – through episodes of hurtling action on to the breathtaking ending, we are swept along on a journey that is spiritual as well as physical. All this despite the fact that much of the novel takes place in the prison where Benjamin, convicted of killing his father, seems destined to live out his youth and middle age.

It is here among criminals and corrupt jailors that the young man has ample time to consider what has led him to his present desperate state. To save his sanity Benjamin begins a journal in which he remembers the bucolic days of his childhood on the family's Eden-like hacienda. It is in the pages of this journal that we encounter the captive quetzal in his mother's aviary, the rare and beautiful bird that serves as a motif throughout the book, the bird's imprisonment mirroring the man's.

But it is Benjamin's spiritual imprisonment that involves the reader as much or more than any of his physical constraints. He has through his rashness and pride thrown aside not only his family and life of pampered indulgence, but the love of his beautiful wife, Isabel, and it is only through his gradual realization of this and his acknowledgement of his guilt that his reformation, or as a Swedenborgian would say, his regeneration, begins.

And here we have the unique aspect of this novel, for Isabel is a Swedenborgian who has gone to high school in Bryn Athyn and espouses the distinctive ideas that typify the New Church. These ideas are presented only vaguely, however, for both they and Isabel's character are seen mainly through Benjamin's eyes and those of his family, most of whom disdain Isabel because of the gutter Spanish she learned from the street children of her Mexican childhood. It is a disdain that turns to contempt when they discover to their dismay and apparently hers, that she has inherited the family fortune.

Shaw assuredly knows her Mexico and the chaotic history of this time. Her story erupts with the volcanic emotions of peasant and aristocrat, passions that inevitably led to revolution. She portrays the classes and culture of that period and the panorama of the revolution with a sure hand and a myriad of well-drawn minor characters.

The novel teems with life, with unexpected twists and turns that keep the reader rapidly turning pages in an attempt to keep up with the breakneck pace. It is rather disconcerting to find that quite a few questions remain unanswered at the end of the book, but then we discover – after the Acknowledgements and "Questions for Discussion" – a brief but tantalizing glimpse of how the story will progress in Book Two.

I, for one, can't wait to follow Sylvia Shaw wherever she may choose to lead us.

Paradise Misplaced is available for \$15.95 from the Swedenborg Foundation, www.swedenborg.com and from the Cathedral Bookstore, <http://store.newchurch.org>.



Starting Science From God: Rational Scientific Theories From Theism

By Ian J. Thompson

Eagle Pearl Press, Pleasanton, CA, 2011, 310 pages

Reviewed by Dr. Gregory L. Baker, Bryn Athyn College

The relationship between science and religion has a long and variable history. Swedenborg speaks of two sources of truth: revelation and nature. Others saw nature and the Bible as the two “books” that revealed God’s creation. Galileo relegated religion to a lower place in the study of nature as suggested by his famous statement that the Bible tells us how to go to heaven and not how the heavens go.

In more recent times, relatively few scientists publicize their belief in Divine creation and/or Divine management of the cosmos. Ian Thompson is an exception to this generalization.

He begins his book with: “I believe in God. I am a nuclear physicist. Those two things do not conflict in my mind, but instead they enhance each other.” (p. ix)

New Church people are aware that, even in his pre-theological work, Swedenborg had a great interest in the relationship of the spiritual to the natural, and attempted to discover this connection using physical science in his *Principia* and again through the biological science in later works such as the *Economy of the Animal Kingdom*.

Nowadays we conclude that he failed in his earlier efforts but that later, in the revelation given in *Divine Love and Wisdom*, and elsewhere, New Church people generally conclude that he succeeded in outlining the main elements of the connection within the confines of three boundaries: 1) 18th century science, 2) the need to preserve future human freedom, and 3) the unimaginable complexity of that connection. Thus the Writings provide an outline, but not the kind of specifics that a 21st century scientist, for example, would consider a precise description.

Nor, as indicated above, would God’s guardianship of human freedom

allow for the kinds of details that scientists seek. For example, the theological writings do not point ahead two centuries to describe quantum mechanics, which is our fundamental and powerful theoretical tool for understanding and harnessing the micro-world to give us such commonplace items as computer chips and lasers. Such prediction in revealed truth would be a major blow to human freedom and the “as of self.”

Dr. Thompson’s book is an important attempt to update our understanding of the spiritual/natural connection, and bring that effort into the context of the 21st century using modern science; particularly, physics and psychology. Yet the language of the work seems to be more philosophical, for the questions addressed are questions of interest to philosophers and theologians, rather than of first importance to present-day working physicists and psychologists.

In Part I Thompson provides a preview of his approach and gives some historical background for the issues.

In Part II, labeled “Ontology,” he discusses the tools for his schema. He talks about “substance,” and “disposition;” the latter we might think of as tendency, probability, or even as that Swedenborgian term, “conatus.”

Thompson goes on to define “multiple generative levels” in which he picks triads of levels of existence, such as “spiritual,” “mental” and “physical” as main categories of existence. But then he correlates each of these with “love,” “thought” and “effects” (uses?) familiar to Swedenborgians.

The triads are then paired. For example, in the spiritual degree there is “spiritual substance forming love.” This, in turn, can be subdivided into three categories as “love of love,” “love of thought” and “love of effects,” all within the spiritual substance realm. The process is carried through in the “mental” and “physical” levels as well.

Even finer subdivisions are postulated although not specified. Later in the book, Thompson will fill in some of the sub-categories from specific concepts of psychology and physics. The multiple generative levels seem to be a kind of generalization and combining of Swedenborgian ideas of discrete degrees, substance and form.

Part III carries the interesting title of “scientific theism,” a way of defining core beliefs about the qualities of God as a set of postulates laid out in an almost mathematical format. This is very helpful for understanding the precise nature of Thompson’s religious views. And these postulates are, in slightly different language, quite familiar to New Church people. By following this methodology, Thompson makes theology (theism¹) look rigorous or “scientific.”

In Part IV Thompson turns the above title around to describe several chapters as “theistic science.” Here, he comes at the science side of reality with

¹ Theism is the belief that God created the universe and is active in “managing” its operation.

a view to showing the importance of the theistic perspective in developing our science. For example, thinking of the mind as only physical may limit us in arriving at a broader truth.

Throughout Part V, Thompson applies his theism to a variety of current issues, some scientific and some religious. Among others, we find evolution, consciousness, spiritual growth, pre-geometry, evil and omnipotence.

Finally, Part VI contains more applications as well as refutations of opposing positions which a theist will encounter in any debate on these subjects.

The book lists many references from theology, philosophy, physics, psychology and other miscellaneous areas. There is an index and a detailed table of contents. It is helpful that the chapters are relatively short and are subdivided into several sections.

At first, I was mystified by the lack of multiple references to Swedenborg, especially in the first half of the book, where most of the postulates are obviously Swedenborgian. (Three Swedenborgian books are listed in the references at the end.) Prof. Thompson probably wanted his reader to think about the ideas without them appearing to be an uncritical sales pitch for Swedenborgian thought. Perhaps this is a good strategy when appealing to a broad academic audience.

Toward the end, Swedenborg becomes a more prominent, but still very controlled, reference. Furthermore, in order to broaden the appeal of the book, Thompson seems to have made a concerted effort to provide a wide variety of sources for his ideas. Finally, the reference list suggests a very broad and deep study of the subject by Prof. Thompson.

A note of caution to the reader: While I think the book is important for Swedenborgian thought, this is not a page turner for the casual reader. It is an academic book. The work is filled with scholarly discussions of philosophic issues, and almost off-hand references to terms from physics, such as "Hamiltonian," "Schrodinger equation" and "wave function," which are not explained. Non-physicist readers will be mystified. Nor is the bulk of the philosophic discussion an easy read. It is a challenging and complex subject and therefore challenging reading. I would say to the readers of *New Church Life*, "You will find many nuggets here, but you will work for them."

In conclusion, let us return to our starting point. We began this piece with the notion of an information gap between religion and science as seen by 21st century scientists. What is the contribution of *Starting Science From God* to this challenge?

Prof. Thompson has, I believe, somewhat closed the gap. I consider his discussion of the multiple generative levels to be important and insightful. Furthermore, his effort to list the postulates of his theology is broadly useful as

a clarifying tool for New Church people, be they general readers or specialist academics.

In these and other areas Prof. Thompson has made valuable contributions and thereby shown that “Starting science from God is [indeed!] a reasonable way to proceed.” (p. x).



The World Transformed

Edited by Dan A. Synnestvedt

Bryn Athyn College Press, 2011, 780 pages (\$25.00)

Reviewed by Alan Laidlaw

Looking for a book with an optimistic view of the future? Interested in how your spiritual life has a tangible impact on your day-to-day existence? This is the book for you! Some background in the teachings of the 18th century polymath, Emanuel Swedenborg, will be helpful, although no extensive experience with his teachings is required if you have an open mind and an acceptance that the apocalypse in the Bible is/was an historical event. This background is assumed by the authors and those without it will not be able to appreciate all that the book has to offer.

One of the reasons I enjoyed this book is the breadth of topics that the authors tackle. They are all experts in their fields but have taken care to make sure their papers are accessible by a broad audience and no specialist knowledge is required to enjoy any and all of the essays. It is a treat to be offered the opportunity to consider the impact of a single event, the Last Judgment, on areas where I am largely ignorant.

I also value the optimistic tone found in all parts of the book. It's not that the authors see everything in the world as perfect, but I think they do see the book's unifying theme of the Last Judgment in 1757 as an inflection point for the better.

All of the essays provide excellent examples of providence leading us individually and as groups of people in a positive direction. I think this is an excellent, hopeful and cheerful thing for the New Church to promote.

We know that in order for us to live in freedom, we can't see providence working in the present but we are given glimpses of social ills in the past that are largely irradiated in today's modern western culture.

This gives us hope for the things we see in our contemporary lives because

we can see how a number of evils have been confronted and removed at the society level in the past. Clearly there are more interior and worse evils still to face in society. But perhaps this means that we are making progress collectively?

Providence may be easy to acknowledge intellectually in the abstract. This book tackles the much more difficult task of finding concrete specific examples in a broad variety of subjects and disciplines. I think it is one of the many compelling aspects of this excellent and ambitious collection of essays. Because the topics are broad, everyone will find something compelling. Read the introduction to set the stage and have at it!

This book is available at the Cathedral Bookstore, <http://store.newchurch.org>

THE WORLD TRANSFORMED

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New Church Family Camp at Jacob's Creek

JULY 26-29, 2012

OUR 20TH ANNIVERSARY!

Whether or not you've come to Jacob's Creek Camp in the past, this is the year to join us. "Jacob's Creek Camp is a wonderful opportunity to build friendships and memories that last a lifetime," says one participant. Camp includes doctrinal talks and discussions, good food and fellowship, worship and singing, free time, and many choices of leisure activities to enjoy.

The theme for camp this year is the Five Churches that have existed on this earth: their history and their impact, and what we can learn from them. What is the unique role of the New Church as it becomes established in the world? What can we do to fulfill our part of the covenant that the Lord makes with us?

The camp is located in the heart of the Laurel Highlands in western Pennsylvania. Accommodations are geared for everyone, with air-conditioned rooms and private baths. Some rooms are handicapped accessible, as are the Dining Hall and the Meetinghouse. Camping sites are available.

Please inquire about our generous scholarships.

We hope to welcome you this summer! Please visit our website at <http://jacobscreekcamp.alotspace.com> or send requests for information to bpmessage@verizon.net or julie.uber@gmail.com. Questions? Call Blake, 610-954-5173

Church News

VIRTUAL GRADUATION FOR AN ONLINE GRADUATE

If the graduate can't come to the commencement ceremony, take the ceremony to the graduate – especially if she's on the other side of the world.

That's what happened when **Jane Edmunds** of South Africa wasn't able to travel to Bryn Athyn last spring to receive her Master's in Religious Studies degree from Bryn Athyn College.

Jane is the much-loved Headmistress of the Kainon School in Westville, South Africa, the second largest of the General Church schools in the world. She was able to complete the MARS program online, including a thesis on the Open Application policy at Kainon. This is a process that allows parents outside of the New Church to apply for admission for their children under clear guidelines. Many happy success stories have come from this practice.

Since **Neil and Carol Buss** of Bryn Athyn were returning to visit their homeland in South Africa last May, they arranged to take Jane's diploma and helped to stage an impressive ceremony in her own congregation, with Carol acting as Master of Ceremonies.

About 150 of Jane's family and friends gathered in the Westville New Church Hall that day, with the **Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss**, also visiting his homeland, and the **Rev. Derrick Lumsden**, Pastor of Westville, leading the procession and presiding.

The elegant procession included a banner donated by Bryn Athyn College, and the flags of the New Church, South Africa and the United States, carried by proud students in uniform, while the school choir sang. The congregation's Board of Governors also was present.

The ceremony was as close as possible to what was occurring in Bryn Athyn for the College and Theological School graduates and included a message from **Dr. Kristin King**, President of the College. The speaker was **Dr. Tanya Mansfield Woker**, professor of law at KwaZulu Natal University, who had spent a year at Bryn Athyn College. The valedictorian – no surprise – was Jane, who spoke about her thesis and the MARS program. Jane also received the Theta Alpha Award. The ceremony ended with the beautiful tri-lingual South African national anthem.

At a reception in the hall after the event, congratulatory messages were read from the Office of Education in Bryn Athyn and its Director, the **Rev. Eric Carswell**, **Rev. Dr. Andrew Dibb**, Dean of the Theological School – another native son – and **Dr. Jane Williams-Hogan**, Director of the MARS program.

This was notable as the first official international graduation for Bryn Athyn College. Surely it will not be the last.



Carol Bongers Buss and Jane Edmonds.



From the left; Professor Dr. Tanya Mansfield Woker, Bishop and Chancellor Emeritus Peter M. Buss, Carol Bongers Buss, Jane Edmonds at lectern.



Students in the Kainon School Choir.



Connor Wentzel, Kane Vass, and Kialan Pillay parade the flags of South Africa, the United States and the New Church.

ELDERGARTEN 2012

A mini-reunion of the Class of '56, left to right, rear: David Stebbing, Roger Echols, Bob Brickman, Bruce Henderson Front: Phyllis Thomas, Corinne Echols, Gale Arnoux, Gail Brickman, Nancy Wyncoll.



Janice Roscoe, also Class of '56.



Eldergarteners enjoy a private cruise on the Inland Waterway.



Eldergarten in session at the Duncan Center.



Rev. Prescott Rogers



During a break at the Duncan Center, with Pearl Richter, left, and Lee Synnestved in the foreground.



The Eldergarten banquet at the Delray Country Club.



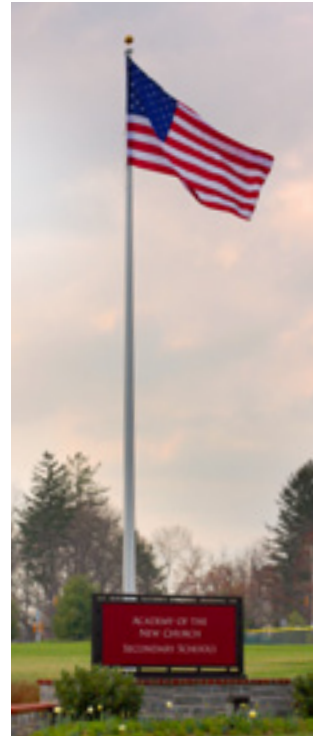
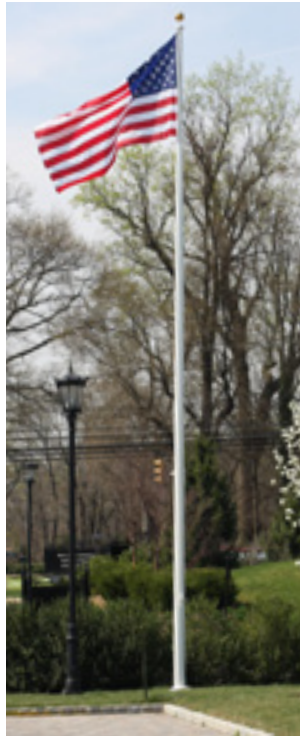
Nine Kline, left, with Corrine Echols on the boat tour



Bea Pitcairn



Trond Larsen interviewed on Fox News. for the discovery of a new species of beetle in 2009 in the lowland rain forests of Peru, which attracted attention of *The New York Times*, *Science Magazine* and BBC.



Lighted flagpoles at the entrances to Bryn Athyn College, left, and the Secondary Schools, have been provided by a special donation.

SOCIETY CELEBRATION



The society in Colchester, England, March 2012, celebrating the 80th birthday of one of its members, Mrs. Ruth (Motum) Greenwold.

JULY 2012 EUROPEAN ASSEMBLY

Rev. Göran Appelgren, Regional Pastor for Europe

A European Assembly will be held in England this summer, Friday-Sunday, July 13-15. It will be held at Purley Chase Centre, known to some of you as the home of the British Academy Summer School. The purpose of the Assembly is to gather people from several countries around Europe in order to strengthen the bonds between dedicated New Church people and inspire us to do the Lord's work each in our own country and culture. (To learn more about the venue, visit www.purleychasecentre.org.uk)

Of course, we will welcome participants from other countries outside of Europe, and in fact we would be delighted by your presence. For a small organization, all contact between members is for good, so do think about coming. England and Europe also have much to offer beyond the Assembly.

A brief summary of the offerings of the three days:

- There will be an opening and closing session and three main sessions.
- Saturday afternoon we will have a three-hour slot for a variety of activities you can choose from. Saturday night we will have a gala dinner with speeches and entertainment.
- Worship services will be moments to gather together to worship and praise our Lord Jesus Christ who is the One who brings us all together, and who sends us out to serve Him in our daily lives.
- Of course, there will be plenty of time to meet up with old and new friends, hopefully from several countries.

We hope you will be able to come. Heaven becomes a more perfect place the more angels there are. A fellowship on earth works the same way. The more we are, the more things we can do, the more joy we will feel.

(For more information about the European Assembly, including costs and registration, visit www.newchurchuk.org)

ACADEMY BOARD APPROVES COLLEGE PLAN

Rev. Eric H. Carswell, Vice Chancellor

The Academy of the New Church Board of Trustees held its winter meetings in early February. The day-and-a-half was spent on a number of substantive reports and discussions.

Bryn Athyn College presented the financial portion of its five-year strategic plan. This plan includes an end to deficit spending by fiscal year 2017. The entire plan was approved unanimously by the Trustees. The Secondary Schools are in the process of compiling the financial background to support

their strategic plan and will present it for approval at the May Board meetings.

Other reports that were considered and adopted included:

- A plan for near-term allocation of the endowment income to the different schools was adopted. This allocation plan will provide the leadership of the Secondary Schools and Bryn Athyn College a clearer sense of the financial resources from this source that will be available for their schools.
- Recommendations for dividing the functions of the finance office following **Dan Allen's** departure at the end of this fiscal year were adopted that will provide more focused financial planning and budget support for both schools. This plan includes the recognition that overall headcount and deficits should not increase as a result of the revised structure of the financial office.

The Trustees had focused discussions on several aspects of the current financial deficits. Reducing expenses, an area in which significant strides have been made, is an important element in solving these deficits. Increased contributions from people who value the New Church education provided by the ANC Secondary Schools and Bryn Athyn College are also vital. Everyone involved in an Academy school recognizes how important these contributions will be to the education they provide and will provide in the future. Your help would be appreciated by many.

(Correction: In the January-February issue under Academy News, the **Rev. James Cooper** was mentioned as a newly appointed General Church representative to the Academy Board, from Mitchellville, Maryland. Jim had served as Pastor in Mitchellville years ago, but is now the Pastor of the Olivet Church in Toronto.)

SMART PHONES, CHALLENGED PEOPLE

A lot of people of a certain age – probably most readers of *New Church Life* – could identify with the **Rev. Michael Gladish**, Pastor of the Washington New Church in Mitchellville, Maryland, who recently decided he couldn't resist the tide of change any longer and got a "smart phone."

Writing in *The Echo*, the society newsletter, he said of his new phone: "It's pretty cool, I have to admit, but it's also way smarter than I am, so it's going to take me a while to learn about it." One of the first issues he had to confront was how to learn. There was no instruction book. Any learning is expected to be intuitive, thorough experimentation. That led Mike to ask a question that is echoing around the Church:

"How do people learn anything these days? How can I as an old guy connect with a new generation of folks who like to learn by experimentation

rather than reading, or who read online rather than in books and other media?”

He also has a lot of questions about video games, which he doesn't have much experience with but which seem to offer a lot of sensual imagery and sensory overload. "Is it just me," he wonders, "or is all this imagery hurtful to a sphere of innocence, patience and self-discipline?"

So he and the **Rev. Ryan Sandstrom**, Assistant to the Pastor and much closer to the plugged-in generation, invited young and old to a special class and discussion on February 17. The idea was to offer relevant teachings from the Word and "share perspectives on the influence of electronic media – especially video games – on the way we learn and interact with our environment in this new world."

No doubt a lot was learned – on both sides of the technology/generation gap. We look forward to a report.

LEVERAGING THE IMPACT

A three-day gathering is planned in the Oak Arbor congregation in Michigan April 19-21 called *Impact 365*: How can we take "church" beyond the limits of Sunday?

Among the topics – which might help those struggling with the kind of questions Mike Gladish is pondering – are Outreach tools, social media skills and networking with New Church leaders around the world.

The event is aimed at "learning strategies for developing a thriving church community in which people are nourished and inspired every day."

For information, go to www.newchurch.org/materials/programs/leaders/Impact365

We expect to have a report for the May-June issue of the *Life*.

WHAT IF SWEDENBORG COULD TWEET?

In the February 9 *Bryn Athyn Post*, the **Rev. Jay Barry**, Assistant to the Pastor in Bryn Athyn, offered the following report: *Nuggets of Gold*.

In 2009 I opened an account on *Twitter*, an online social networking site. It is a unique utility because it restricts the length of each message to a brief 140 characters (including spaces). *Twitter* is a tool to spread information online, and it is popular across a broad spectrum, from hip-hop music in Atlanta to the British Museum (which has 82,000 followers).

I called my account *SwedenborgToday*, and I have continued to add steady little phrases of Divine truth since its inception. If the content of all the other sites on *Twitter* constitute a river of information, then the contributions of *SwedenborgToday* are like dropping golden nuggets of Divine truth into that river. I thought you might enjoy reading some favorite posts:

- The purpose of doctrinal things is not to teach how to think, but how to live. (*Arcana Coelestia* 2982)
- The substances of the earth have nothing of the Divine in themselves, and yet they originate from the Divine in Itself. (*Divine Love and Wisdom* 305)
- Enjoyments of meditation, reflection and thought are the means of purification. (*Divine Providence* 296.10d)
- To become spiritual is the purpose for which we are born. (*True Christian Religion* 481)
- Wherever the Lord is, there is the center. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1582)
- It is true that the Lord was born the son of Mary, but not true that He still is. (*True Christian Religion* 102)
- When man was created, all things were collated in him, hence, heaven is within man. (*Last Judgment* 9)
- Love to the neighbor ascends in a person more and more interiorly as he loves community more than the individual. (*True Christian Religion* 413)
- When truth is only known, it is as if the person is at the gate of spiritual life. (*Arcana Coelestia* 8772.2)

May these little phrases gleam in the river of your memory also, leading you beyond the gate, to all the blessings of spiritual life.

Editor's note: Jay Barry says he has about 230 followers on his Twitter account so far, and the number is growing. You can contact him at jay.barry@bacs-gc.org.

ON NATURE'S FRONTIER

Trond Larsen, a 1994 graduate of the Academy Boys School, continues to make a name for himself internationally in ecology.

A graduate of Duke University with a Ph.D. from Princeton, he discovered a new species of beetle in 2009 in the lowland rain forests of Peru, which attracted attention of *The New York Times*, *Science Magazine* and BBC.

Now if you go to the Academy Secondary Schools website (www.ancss.org) you can watch a video of an interview with Trond on Fox News about discovering several new species in the South American country of Suriname.

Trond, as Director of the International Rapid Assessment Program, led a team that spent three weeks surveying in Suriname. They discovered dozens of new species, including fish, a frog, katydids, damselflies, water beetles and scarab beetles.

In the interview he describes the expedition and such previously unknown

creatures as the aptly named Bullet Ant and his personal favorite – an unusual horned female Dung Beetle.

When he isn't on expeditions in tropical places of the world, Trond lives in Washington, DC, with his wife, Megan. They are expecting their first child this spring.

A SWEDENBORG TREASURE

The Rev. Dr. Erik E. Sandstrom, Swedenborgiana Curator at the Swedenborg Library in Bryn Athyn, has translated the final portion of an amazing collection of original letters and documents personally signed by Swedenborg more than 250 years ago. These documents, some never translated into English, had been hidden away in the Library for years.

Rev. Sandstrom has translated the final eight documents of this collection, with the support of the Carpenter Fund. Written between 1727 and 1756, they include 29 pages of material offering an intriguing view of Swedenborg's activities as a prominent official of Sweden's Board of Mines.

You can find images of these documents, with the new translations, in the Swedenborg Library Digital Collections: www.swedenborglibrary.org/digital (Select: Swedenborgiana> Swedenborg Documents> Swedenborg letters and Documents> Recently Translated Documents)

INDEX FOR 2011

The Index for *New Church Life* for 2011 was not published in the December issue to save on space (nine pages). We had planned to post it online but cannot do so because the names included in the Announcements (baptisms, marriages and deaths) cannot be posted online for security reasons. The Index is on file at the Swedenborg Library.

A copy may be requested from Bruce.Henderson@anc-gc.org.

Life Lines

NOSTALGIA FOR HEAVEN

Several years ago I read a wonderful phrase in a book on *Beauty* by John O'Donohue. The use of beauty, he says, is to awaken in us “nostalgia for heaven.” It’s a puzzling concept. Since heaven is in our future, how can we feel nostalgia for it? But then it hit me: *we’ve been there*.

It is the Lord’s presence that makes heaven, and the Lord is very close to us in our infancy, and even in the womb before we are born.

The Lord conjoins Himself to man in the womb of the mother from his first conception; that is, the Divine that proceeds from the Lord as the sun of heaven, where the angels are. This is life itself, which is present from first conception and is what forms a person.

While man is in the womb he is in a state of innocence; therefore his first state after birth is a state of innocence; and the Lord dwells in man only in his innocence. Man is then in a state of peace. (*Divine Wisdom* 3. This work is found at the end of the last volume of *Apocalypse Explained* in the standard edition).

Nostalgia for heaven is a yearning for a past condition of which we have a kind of subconscious – or rather, supra-conscious – memory. We were not conscious before birth and have no conscious memory of our state then, nor even of our first few years of life in the world, when we were in a state of celestial innocence and peace, enfolded in the Lord’s arms; but somewhere in the sunny highlands of the mind, above conscious thought, we remember that – and feel nostalgia for heaven.

(WEO)

DÉJÀ VU AND REINCARNATION

Something akin to nostalgia is the strange sensation called *déjà vu* – the feeling that we’ve seen a place before even though we haven’t, or that we had previously had a similar experience to the one we’re having now, even though we didn’t.

We find an explanation for *déjà vu* in the Writings (although they don’t use that term), along with the source of the erroneous belief many people have in reincarnation:

An angel or spirit is not permitted to speak with a man from his own memory, but only from the man’s memory; for angels and spirits have a memory as well as man. If a spirit were to speak from his own memory with a man, the man would not know otherwise than that the thoughts then in his mind were his own, although

they were the spirit's thoughts. This would be like the recollection of something which the man had never heard or seen.

This is the source of the belief held by some of the ancients that after some thousands of years they were to return into their former life, and into everything they had done, and in fact, had returned. This they concluded because at times there came to them a sort of recollection of things that they had never seen or heard. This came from an influx from the memory of spirits into their ideas of thought. (*Heaven and Hell* 256)

(WEO)

WHO ARE THE ROLE MODELS?

In almost any nationally televised sporting event these days we are used to seeing athletes point skyward or drop to a knee after a touchdown or homerun to thank God for giving them the talent and the opportunity to succeed. It's not unusual to hear an athlete begin a locker room interview with "First, I want to thank my Lord and Savior..."

Some fans and media critics cringe at such unabashed expressions of faith, as though there is no place for it in the public arena, where we are expected to be tolerant of everything, it seems – except religion.

Others are encouraged that in a culture more and more adrift from moral and spiritual underpinnings that any public figures are willing to profess their faith and gratitude so openly.

Meanwhile, it was interesting that during the Academy Awards presentation of Oscars to stars ready with long lists of people to thank – mothers, directors, hairdressers, fellow actors – no one thought to mention God or thank Him for the gift of their talents and opportunities.

Hollywood is all about self-congratulation and celebrating the "creations" of mere mortals. The sports world often is overwhelmed with ego as well, but it's good to see the credit occasionally going where it belongs.

(BMH)

THE TEBOW PERSPECTIVE

No one has stirred the debate over athletes and faith more than Tim Tebow, a young quarterback recently traded from the Denver Broncos to the New York Jets. Tebow grew up in a missionary family and from a young age was used to taking the Word of God and its message of hope to remote regions of the world and the "hopelessness" of American prisons.

He has been demonstrably open about his faith. That makes many fans and commentators uncomfortable and critical. Others find his devotion to God – and his humility in the national spotlight – downright refreshing. What

really set off the national furor was when Tebow engineered several last-minute comeback victories and fans began speculating whether God was “on his side” and if there may have been some Divine intervention in those “desperation” passes.

But what sets Tebow apart – and above the fray of religion in the public arena – is the way he lives his faith. Rick Reilly, former columnist with *Sports Illustrated* now with *ESPN.com*, wrote earlier this year: “I’ve come to believe in Tim Tebow, but not for what he does on the athletic field. No, I’ve come to believe in Tim Tebow for what he does off a football field, which is represent the best parts of us – the parts I want to be and so rarely am.”

He told how every week during the season – with no publicity or fanfare – Tebow picks out someone who is suffering, dying or injured, flies them and their families to the game, provides a car, hotel, dinner and tickets to the game, visits with them just before kickoff and again for an extended period after the game. Then he sends them home with a basket of gifts – and the hope born of true faith.

After one of his amazing come-from-behind victories – while Twitter was exploding with 9,420 tweets about him *per second* – Tebow spent an hour with 16-year-old Bailey Knaub talking about her 73 surgeries so far and her favorite TV shows.

Bailey’s mother said Tebow had just had the game of his life and the first thing he did after a quick press conference was to find Bailey and see how she was doing. He didn’t say one word about what he had done. He focused just on her.

Bailey, who is operating on one lung, said it took her breath away. “It was the best day of my life. It was a bright star among very gloomy and difficult days. Tim Tebow gave me the greatest gift I could ever imagine. I know that I can face any obstacle placed in front of me. Tim taught me never to give up hope because at the end of the day, today might seem bleak but it can’t rain forever and tomorrow is a new day, with new promises.”

Asked if talking and praying with these hurting people isn’t a distraction to his game preparation, Tebow said: “It’s by far the best thing I can do to get myself ready. Here you are, about to play a game that the world says is the most important thing in the world. Win and they praise you. Lose and they crush you. And here I have a chance to talk to the coolest, most courageous people. It puts it all into perspective. The game doesn’t really matter. I mean, I’ll give 100% of my heart to win it, but in the end, the thing I most want to do is not win a championship or make a lot of money, it’s to invest in people’s lives, to make a difference.”

So with Bailey – as with all the others he invests in – Tebow was not celebrating a “miraculous” 80-yard pass that won a game. He was celebrating

what he is able to give to others from his faith. And he knows who to thank.

(BMH)

‘LIKE RAISING A HEAVY WEIGHT’

Our own will “in no wise acts as one with Divine providence [but] has an inborn enmity against it.” If we felt the leading of providence, we would be “provoked and enraged against God, and would perish.” (*Divine Providence* 211) This is why the working of providence must be hidden.

But how can someone be led in a direction he does not want to go without forcing him (and thus violating his freedom) or deceiving him (and thus violating his rationality)?

This is what Divine providence does, and it is a miraculous accomplishment. Providence leads us toward heaven, even though in our natural state we really aren’t interested in heaven, and if left to ourselves would head in the opposite direction. And yet at the same time it preserves our faculties of free will and reason.

It is not easy. It is something only the Lord, in His infinite wisdom, could do. “To lead man in freedom in opposition to himself is like raising a heavy and resisting weight from the earth by means of jackscrews, through the power of which the weight and resistance are not felt. Or it is like a man in company with an enemy who intends to kill him, which at the time he does not know, and a friend leads him away by unknown paths, and afterwards discloses his enemy’s intention.” (*ibid.*)

(WEO)

THE LORD CASTS NO ONE INTO HELL

Some Christians believe that God condemns sinners to hell. This belief is confirmed by a literal interpretation of certain passages in Scripture. Others believe in a God whose mercy extends to everyone, which is true, but think the existence of hell is contrary to that truth and so do not believe there is a hell. They may or may not believe in heaven. And an increasing number of people don’t believe in God or an afterlife at all.

The New Church view is that there is a hell, but God condemns no one to it. The only reason anyone ends up there is that he or she has chosen the kind of life that constitutes what we call “hell.” Whatever punishments that kind of life entails are not from God, but are a consequence of the evils those in hell embrace.

It is not unusual, though, for someone to say, when told about some New Church teaching, that it is what he or she has “always thought.” The New

Church teaching that there is a hell, but that God doesn't send anyone there, is a case in point. It resonates with their inner perception of what is true.

We might say that these people have one foot in the New Church – but the next step is crucial, and requires serious thought: namely, to recognize the importance of having an explicit and authoritative teaching on the subject which is part of a whole, all-encompassing system of theology, in which each particular truth supports and is supported by all the others.

(WEO)

AN UNCEASING EFFORT

The Lord, from His goodness, love and mercy, is unable to deal in the same way with every person because evils and falsities “quench His Divine influx and even reject it. They are like black clouds which interpose between the sun and the eye.”

And yet the sun of heaven – that is, the Lord – continues to operate behind the clouds, in an “unceasing endeavor” to dissipate them and transmit something of heaven's light to man “by various roundabout ways.”

“From this comparison it can be seen that the Lord is unceasingly present with everyone, but that He is variously received.” (*Heaven and Hell* 549)

(WEO)

THE INFLUENCE OF SWEDENBORG

As part of her presentation at this year's Eldergarten on Swedenborg's influence in the literature of the 19th century (see page 133), Dr. Sylvia Montgomery Shaw noted that his influence declined as the interests of authors and readers turned toward spiritism. The Rev. Prescott Rogers, another presenter at Eldergarten, observed that as writers – and people in general – look for spirituality in their lives rather than spiritism, Swedenborg's influence will return.

(BMH)

LOOKING FOR CLUES

Dr. Stephen Smith, retired surgeon in Quakertown, Pennsylvania, and a man of many interests, recently came across this quotation while researching an article for his local watershed newsletter about oak trees: “Fancy and imagination, grace and beauty, all those qualities which are to the work of art what scent and beauty are to the flower, can only grow toward heaven by taking root in earth.” – Wilkie Collins

Steve wonders “if Collins knew how really profound this beautiful thought is,” and if it is a clue that he read Swedenborg.

Well, he certainly knew of Swedenborg. Wilkie Collins, 1824-1889, was a popular English novelist and playwright in the Victorian era who was a good friend of Charles Dickens, a known reader of Swedenborg. In one of Collins’ novels, *The Two Destinies*, Chapter III is titled *Swedenborg and the Sybil*, and includes this quote:

“Dame Dermond was sitting in the light of the window, as usual, with one of the mystic books of Emanuel Swedenborg open on her lap.”

The word “mystic” seems to betray a false assumption that Swedenborg was all about spiritism, not spirituality.

(BMH)

BUMPER STICKER WISDOM

People often ask if editors are subject to road rage. Well, not of the ordinary kind, of course; just mild pique now and then – usually provoked by bumper stickers with type so small they can’t be read without risking a collision, or which express unsound doctrine.

A case in point (beginning with the preferred wording): “We are spiritual beings having a natural experience.” That’s well stated, and certainly worth contemplating while waiting for the light to change. It clearly and succinctly conveys the truth that we are essentially spirits to which a physical body has been added for use in this natural world.

But I occasionally see another version, adorning slightly less-enlightened vehicles, that reads: “We are spiritual beings having a human experience.” This bothers me because it seems to imply that spiritual beings are something other than human, and vice versa. Also, I can’t edit it at 30 miles an hour, and even if the offending vehicle were parked....well, probably a bad idea.

One might expect such imprecision from a broken-down cement truck, but when you see it on the bumper of a beautifully restored two-tone 1962 Corvette it’s really disappointing.

(WEO)

ANOTHER FAVORITE

A bumper sticker seen and admired on an old wreck of a car some years ago: “Don’t let the car fool you. My treasure’s in heaven.”

(BMH)

SCIENCE STUCK AT THE BEGINNING

Something of a “scientific breakthrough” occurred in January when legendary physicist Stephen Hawking seemed to open the door to the possibility that maybe God had something to do with creation after all.

It happened at an international “state of the universe” conference celebrating Hawking’s 70th birthday where he came close to admitting that science can never explain the beginning of the universe without God.

Hawking, one of the most renowned scientists in the world – all the more remarkable because he is confined to a wheelchair with ALS, unable to move or speak – has said he is convinced that science will win out over religion in the end “because it works.” But, communicating through a computer, he was quoted as saying at this conference: “A point of creation would be a place where science broke down. One would have to appeal to religion and the hand of God.”

Creationists welcomed this opening for God amid scientists’ earth-bound formulas, although MIT cosmologist Alan Guth was not ready to concede. He didn’t feel Hawking or anyone else was giving up on a scientific explanation for the origin of the universe. He did admit that, “We don’t have a solid theory on how the universe originated.” But, he added petulantly, “that doesn’t mean we have to invoke a deity.”

Would that all these learned scientists could lift their minds above their beloved “mysteries of physics,” stop looking through microscopes and telescopes for answers and just read a little Genesis.

(BMH)

WISDOM FROM THE HINTERLANDS

Atheistic author Alain de Botton recently floated a vision in *The Wall Street Journal* for reclaiming our sense of community through a new secular “Religion for Everyone.” His dream includes an Agape Café (“love feast”) and a spiritually aligned travel agency. It attracted an encouraging flurry of letters from across the United States proclaiming that the only way to accomplish his goals and bring people back together is through real religion – turning to God and building a relationship with Him. Here are some excerpts:

“The issue is much bigger than individualism, loneliness and separation from each other. These are actually symptoms of a much deeper issue: our alienation from God.

“When I experience love and forgiveness from God, it’s much easier for me to grant these gifts to my neighbor. When I am at peace with God, I will experience the wholeness in my soul that makes peace with others possible.

From where do these precious gifts come in a secular society full of broken, needy people?

“Secular philosophies have at their heart the implicit belief or understanding that I, the individual, am at the center of the universe. Bringing together folks who believe that for any meaningful purpose sounds like corralling cats to me, no matter how well-intentioned.” (Lake Zurich, Illinois)

“Anything that promises heaven on earth and at the same time denies and rejects the existence of God ultimately results in tyranny and poverty. That I’m sure is the exact opposite of what Mr. de Botton wishes to promote, but ironically it is what his vision would achieve.” (Tucson, Arizona)

“I appreciate Mr. de Botton’s efforts to repair our social connectivity and sense of shared meaning with interesting new constructs. Sadly, I think he misses the bigger, more glaring mark. Alone, we cannot access the Agape, much less feature it on the menu. Though he seeks ‘Religion for Everyone,’ I’m pretty sure that we cannot get it from anyone. That is why we seek God.” (Charleston, South Carolina.)

(BMH)

NO COMMENT

The New Yorker magazine for February 27, 2012 has in its “Shouts and Murmurs” humor section a piece by Calvin Trillin, “*Three Scenes Inspired By The Gingrich Campaign*,” the second of which includes the following:

“I am leaving you, Callista,” Newt said. “I have found another. I am converting to her religion – Swedenborgianism.”

“You’re leaving me for a Swedenborgian because you think I may have dengue fever? You’re leaving a sick wife for the third time? You’re converting for the third time?”

And if you’re up for even more, ah, merriment, the March 5 issue has a review of a new book by Elaine Pagels about the Book of Revelation, which she concludes is an “anti-Christian polemic.”

(WEO)