

# NEW CHURCH *Life*

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

**MARCH/APRIL 2018**



## **Easter Symbolism**

The Easter story is filled with symbolism, such as this stained-glass window in the Glencairn Museum. The Rev. Alan Cowley says all that Jesus experienced – especially the suffering and crucifixion at the hands of his accusers – “was a physical representation of how people had come to treat the Word.” (Page 109)

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

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# New Church Life

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

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# In This Issue

Editorials include:

- *The Path* – our pathway of life has roots in both the Christmas and Easter stories
- *'I Thirst'* – what is meant by Jesus saying this on the cross, and how it relates to our lives
- A guest editorial from the Rev. Mac Frazier, *Stand Up to the Darkness*, written the day after the school shootings in Florida on February 14. (Page 97)

The Easter story is filled with powerful symbolism, which has much to teach us. The Rev. Alan Cowley says the physical abuse the Lord suffered demonstrates how the people of that time were treating His Word. But we also have the hopeful vision of how the Lord's work throughout the story effects our salvation. We are burdened by the same hells that led Israel away from the Lord, he says, so we must turn to Him and ask for His light to guide our footsteps. (Page 109)

In the second of a three-part series on the trinity – *The Son of God* – the Rev. Michael Gladish says the distinctions between Father and Son are important. “In the Word the term, Father, refers to the Divine love, the origin, the source, the cause, the very soul of all creation, and the term, Son, refers to what proceeds from that origin and cause, which is the Divine truth or wisdom that makes love visible, at least to the sight of our understanding.” (Page 116)

This year's Boynton Beach Retreat featured three presentations: Chara Daum speaking about her work as a Latinist on the *New Century Edition*, with *offTheLeftEye* videos and the weekly Bible study led by the Rev. Dr. Jonathan Rose; the Rev. Barry Halterman, chaplain and religion teacher in the Academy Secondary Schools, on *One God, Many Religions – Why?*; and the Rt. Rev. Thomas Kline the Nature of Spiritual Substance, church leadership in a congregational setting, and stories from his travels throughout the world as executive bishop. (Page 120) The Rt. Rev. Brian Keith spoke at the Retreat banquet on *The State of the Church*. (Page 152)

As the Swedenborg Foundation is having great success reaching

throughout the world with its *offTheLeftEye* videos, so is the General Church through its website. Web master Rob Andrews describes how they use email programs to engage and involve visitors, utilize social media (Facebook) and offer New Church Audio podcasts. “The invitation to contact us has led to wonderful conversations and opportunities to serve those who are hurting or who are looking for answers.” Many people from all over the world offer heartfelt testimonials about how their lives have been changed. (Page 133)

The occasional series, *Introducing Our Ministers*, focuses on the Rev. Joel C. Glenn, assistant to the pastor of the Westville New Church in South Africa. He decided to take a year off after college, working in retail rather than pursuing a career in the classics. “I have never regretted that choice,” he says, “as it prepared me more for the ministry than years spent studying Greek and Latin would have. (Page 139) See also a sermon by Joel, *Heavenly Union: Marriage on Earth*. (Page 142)

What is it like to be a minister, who does a lot of work with the less fortunate, serving in the midst of a national opioid crisis? The Rev. Chuck Blair, pastor of NewChurch LIVE shares some powerful stories of working with addicts. “I am NEVER more than these people,” he says. “Kinship comes quickly in these moments.” (Page 147)

What are the attributes of a humble person? The Rev. David Lindrooth offers a handy checklist. (Page 150)

Church News (page 152) includes:

- A summary from Bishop Brian Keith on The State of the Church
- The candidates for the next Executive Bishop of the church
- Highlights from Academy Board of Trustees meetings
- A report on the State of the Bryn Athyn College
- A commentary on the Bryn Athyn College production of *Godspell*
- The next Journey Program for the General Church
- Academy and Church summer camps

# Editorials

## THE PATH

Throughout His Word the Lord shows us the path to heaven and assures us it is not hard to get there. But we keep losing our way.

He came to be born on earth because people had turned to spiritual darkness, full of ignorance, false beliefs, evil. He came “a new light” into the world. “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.” But still people turn away and stumble.

The Lord’s life on earth ended with his crucifixion – apparently in failure to His bewildered disciples. But His resurrection was His triumph – and ours. For with it came the restoration of our spiritual freedom and the promise of salvation.

He came on earth to save us from the darkness and fulfilled His purpose with His resurrection. And it all speaks to our own unique journeys along the pathway of life.

In the Christmas story the birth of John the Baptist comes first. His mission was to “prepare the way of the Lord,” preaching the need for baptism and repentance.

Jesus’ life on earth was all about showing us the way. “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” All of His teaching was about the path – the Sermon on the Mount, the Two Great Commandments, all the questions and parables.

The drama of Easter begins with the triumphant procession into Jerusalem – Jesus hailed as a king. But He was not a king they wanted, a ruler to supplant Rome. “My kingdom is not of this world.” Within a week those who sang “Hosanna” were chanting “Crucify Him!”

He was accused of “stirring up the people,” and indeed He was – trying to rouse them from spiritual lethargy, showing them the way. “Jesus wept” – not for Himself but because the people did not understand and accept where He was leading them. All these years later we still need “stirring up” as we choose – each day – which paths we will follow into eternal life.

Even after His resurrection He still had lessons to teach His disciples – and all of us. Two of the disciples set off on a walk to Emmaus. They were distraught by what had happened – not really knowing what they were looking for or what they would find. The Lord, not yet risen to heaven, joined them

but they did not recognize Him. He revealed Himself to them and “expounded to them everything in the Scriptures about Himself.” Again he was teaching them – and all of us – the way.

Suddenly their eyes were opened and they were able to see – as we can too when we read the Word with a humble desire to be led by the Lord, to know the truth, and to take it into our lives.

We all travel the same path – from birth to death to eternity – but it can lead us to heaven or hell, depending on what we choose and what we love. The Lord and His providence are leading us, but all along the way we have experiences and make choices that open new possibilities, unique to each of us.

The Lord said: “Enter through the narrow gate, for broad is the gate and open the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who walk along it; confined is the path and narrow the gate that leads to life, and there are few who find it.” (*Heaven and Hell* 406:3) The way that leads to heaven is narrow, not because it is difficult but because few people find it – because that is not what they are looking for.

We should not be worried that we will stumble over the stone in the pathway and end up on the broad, easy way to hell, if we have just followed the Lord’s leading. After all, His yoke is easy and His burden light.

All along the path we are told that the way to heaven is to live life fully in the world – to be kind and thoughtful, honest and fair – to be angelic. The life of heaven begins with living that life on earth – staying true to the way.

We are told that people questioning heaven “do not realize that the Lord, out of His mercy, leads everyone who accepts Him, and that the people who accept Him are the people who live according to the laws of the Divine design, which are precepts of love and faith. They do not realize they are being led by the Lord from infancy to the end of earthly life and then on to eternity (and that) is what mercy really means. If only they knew that everyone is born for heaven, that people are accepted into heaven who accept heaven in themselves in the world, and that people who do not accept it are shut out!” (*Heaven and Hell* 420)

So we are all on a journey that is common to all of us but leads us to a home – hopefully in heaven – that is unique for each of us. At memorial services we have an opportunity to reflect on the journey of a friend or family member – of all the choices and experiences that went into making that person all that he or she is remembered for – and to reflect on where we are on our own path.

We often sing the familiar hymn, “Thou wilt show me the path of life.” And we do know the path: “No one becomes an angel – comes into heaven – unless he carries with him from the world what is angelic. And in what is angelic



there is present a knowledge of the way from walking in it, and a walking in the way through a knowledge of it." (*Divine Providence* 60)

(BMH)

### “I THIRST”

Dying in agony on the cross, He craved something to drink. “Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, ‘I thirst!’” And what did they give Him? “Sour wine.” (*John* 19:28-30)

His first miracle, at the wedding in Cana, had been turning water into wine, and the master of the feast remarked on how good it was. That’s what He gave. But now, at the end, with His thirst raging within Him, He was given a taste of something very different.

“Sour wine” stands for the quality of truth in the Church, which had profaned, falsified, and rejected it. Truth gone sour. (*Apocalypse Explained* 283.16)

“So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, ‘it is finished!’ And bowing His head, He gave up the Spirit.”

The physical torment the Lord endured was an outward sign of the *spiritual* pain brought upon Him by people’s refusal to accept the saving truth He embodied and had tried to teach them.

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

The terrible physical thirst He felt on the cross corresponded to the spiritual thirst He felt throughout His life. It was the same kind of thirst He spoke of in the Sermon on the Mount when He said: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.” (*Matthew* 5:6) Whenever we hunger for good and thirst for truth it is from the presence of the Lord with us. Our yearning is His yearning to find righteousness in us.

We were not there on Calvary on that darkest day in all history when the Lord went to His death thirsting for truth, thirsting for a truly loving response to the love enfolded in every word He spoke, and was offered only sour wine. But we are here, now, and it is not too late for us to satisfy His thirst. “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” “This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” (*John* 14:15; 15:12)

Then, when we stand before His throne in heaven, we will be among those who are blessed to hear Him say: “I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink. Inasmuch as you did it unto one of the least of these My brethren, you did it unto Me.” (*Matthew* 25:37-40)

(WEO)

**GUEST EDITORIAL: STAND UP TO THE DARKNESS**

(**Note:** The day after the school shooting in Parkland, Florida, on February 14, the Rev. Mac Frazier, Associate Pastor of the Glenview (Illinois) New Church, wrote this commentary for the society newsletter, *Park News*. It was also posted on Facebook. Reprinted with permission.)

This morning was a “late arrival” day for Glenbrook South High School. Gillian already had to be elsewhere, so it fell to me to take a quick break, drive home, pick up our daughter, and drop her off for the 10 a.m. start of school. As we pulled up to the school, I was thinking about yesterday’s news. Today, as I write, it is February 15th. Yesterday a mentally disturbed and angry ex-student of a Florida high school shot more than 30 fellow students, killing more than half of them.

I told my daughter that I loved her, and watched as she and a steady stream of other beautiful, innocent young kids walked from the line of cars to the entrance to their school. I drove back to Glenview New Church, and as I sat in my office here, just moments ago, I watched as our head of school, Phil Parker, set the American flag outside to half-mast. I’m looking at that flag, now. And all this while, I have been thinking about this recent shooting, and the fact that mass killings in schools are becoming frequent enough in our country that we are in danger of becoming numb to their occurrence.

Something is wrong. And it’s not just one thing. Our culture is under multiple influences that all contribute to this problem. I reject the argument that this all could be fixed by a simple policy change overnight. Yes, it is too easy for potential mass murderers to gain access to firearms. Yes, we need to do more to provide for the mental health needs of people before they become killers. And yes, school security procedures are important. But there’s something more going on. Something really dark is happening in the soul of our culture. Our response needs to go further than just addressing one of the causes.

And it’s not just resulting in school shootings. Teenage suicide rates have dramatically risen in recent years. Anxiety disorders and depression among the young are also considerably higher than they once were. When I look at the world my own children are being asked to live in and through, I sometimes am reminded of the beginning of William Butler Yeats’ poem, “*The Second Coming*”:

*Turning and turning in the widening gyre  
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;  
Things fall apart; the center cannot hold . . .*

Friends, the church has a role to play here. This is not inevitable, nor is it unstoppable. But we have to act before it becomes commonplace to just shrug and accept that, “Well, this is the way it is, now.”

So I’m asking you to do something. Stay engaged. Or if you are not engaged in this issue as more than a bystander, consider getting engaged. Look into the causes of these problems, look around at your personal corner of the world, and identify one thing you can do to stand up to the darkness. Pray to the Lord for enlightenment, and for help. Learn about the causes. Pick one of the many potential solutions and advocate for it. But recognize that there are others who are pursuing different solutions to the same larger problem, and that they are not your enemy.

We are meant to be a city on a hill: a community united by common religious doctrine, living out lives of charity in a way that serves the larger world around us. (For more on this, read *Matthew 5:14*, *Apocalypse Revealed* 194, and *Apocalypse Explained* 405.) Teen suicide, school shootings, depression and anxiety among our young – these are manifestations of hell. Please turn to the Lord for strength and wisdom so that we can be a part of His response to this attack on our youth. And join me in prayer to the Lord:

*He who testifies these things says, “Surely I come quickly.” Amen. Come Lord, Jesus. (Rev. 22:20)*

**OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY**

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

**ORDER**

Order itself is the Divine truth that proceeds from the Lord, for it is this that makes order on every plane. Order is defined as the nature of the disposition, determination and activity of the parts, substances or entities which constitute the form of a thing, from whence is its state. Thus when the substances of the mind are so disposed, determined and activated as to receive life from the Lord, the mind is in the order of its life. When this is not the case, we say that the mind is in inverted order. So it is also with other created things as to the order of their life. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 8700; *True Christian Religion* 52)

# Letters to the Editors

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

## *Responses on Racism*

To The Editors:

I appreciate Yorvar Synnestvedt's thoughtful comments (*New Church Life*, January/February 2018, page 9) about my (September/October 2017) article, "A Racist Free World." I apologize if it was provoking, and I think that his points are well taken. I have responses to three of them.

The first is to the view that the thrust of the article is itself racist. I take that to mean that the criticism of people of European ancestry amounts to racial prejudice against that group. My response is that I take my cue from both the explicit teachings of the Writings and the virtually unanimous views of historians. Both New Church teachings and historians point to significant benefits that have resulted from the interactions of Europeans with the global community. But both devote far more space to a long list of injustices, harmful actions and sinful behaviors on our part.

The second is to the suggestion that I envision a future devoid of cultural differences. I did not mean to give that impression and I am grateful that he pointed this out. My thought was that increased familiarity, understanding and integration would make for a more peaceful, interesting and useful world, not a mono-culture. The point of embracing diversity is the appreciation of differences, not their erasure.

The third is to the comment that racism is not as important as I am making it out to be. There is no question that keeping the Ten Commandments and reviving conjugal love are absolutely central. I see the fight against bigotry as part of the same theme. The reason that it has such significance today is that our rapidly shrinking world brings the absence of this particular kind of love of the neighbor to the forefront.

The Rev. Jeremy F. Simons  
Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania

*Race, Racism, and the New Church*

To The Editors:

Thank you, Rev. Jeremy F. Simons, for your thorough and lucid clarification of what the Writings teach about racial and other differences. (“A Racist Free World,” *New Church Life*, September/October 2017) Rev. Simons’ Peace Corps experience in Ghana and study of history provide secular insights that he “marries” with New Church revelation. I strongly recommend this article to anyone who might have missed it. It gave us reason to believe, from the Writings, that in some distant future we may indeed have a world free from racism, however unlikely that may seem from present perspectives.

I was, however, appalled and incredulous that anyone could say “the thrust of the article” was “racist.” (Letter to the Editors, “The Most Important Issue,” January/February 2018) Please, let’s avoid hurling such ugly epithets. The writer also misread the Simons article, saying it advocated globalism, which would result in radical Muslim terrorists no longer having cause to hate Western culture. Not so. See below. Vaguely citing “the General Church priesthood” as valuing “distinct, diverse nationalities and cultures” hardly trumps an accurate description serving as base for projection into the future of current global trends that appear to blend cultures, even as fierce resistance is welling up in some quarters.

Then the writer gets to his main point, challenging this guarded (“good reason;” “perhaps”) statement by Rev. Simons: “There is good reason to say that the Writings portray the fight against racism as perhaps the most important issue facing the world.” The letter writer: “As for racism, I don’t consider it the most important issue we face. It is merely a symptom of the unchecked love of self . . .”

Rev. Simons attempted to summarize key teachings of the Writings, backing it with a string of quotes. A personal opinion trumps that? Hardly. To then assert that obeying the Ten Commandments, or protecting marriage love, is the most important issue is, however much the present writer might agree to their supreme importance, a segue from the whole point of Rev. Simons’ article, and therefore a *non sequitur*. Case lost.

\* \* \*

I was privileged, as a Caucasian, to be forced by circumstances to direct a program in African-American Studies for 16 years. I learned a lot, both by the exposure that position inevitably brought, and by my own field research on attitudes and policies on race in the United States, the West Indies, and South Africa. As Rev. Simons said, there is little doubt Europeans inflicted more pain and suffering on more people than any other group, and that the “justification”

was based on superior race and culture. Nor is there any doubt that the Word was spread in the process.

Let's introduce some definitions, as neither Rev. Simons nor the letter writer did. First, while we might imagine there's consensus on what race is, that's far from the case. Consider this:

Racial formation theory . . . frames race as an unstable, ever-evolving social construct . . . tied to historical and political events. . . . Race has been and continues to be a politically contested social construct, upon which is granted access to rights, resources, and power<sup>1</sup> (emphasis added).

So . . . race is a politically contested *social construct*, the use of which yields gains, including power. We humans make it up (construct it) to suit our purview, and then fight about it. Other scholars say: “The *absence of any biological foundation* makes race often difficult to define and classify, and . . . sociologists view racial categories and the significance of race in society as *unstable, always shifting, and intimately connected to other social forces and structures*”<sup>2</sup> (emphasis added).

Another author agrees the “concept of ‘race’ is itself an illusion – a social invention,” and adds that “*racism and racist thinking* is any action, attitude, language or belief system which assumes people are inferior and therefore rendered justifiably unequal as a consequence of their physical appearance, religion or culture”<sup>3</sup> (italics in original).

I would then define racism as follows: **The belief and intentional acts of prejudice based on that belief that result in discrimination against and social/economic/political loss – or even physical injury – to people deemed inferior.**

Is *that* what the letter writer accuses Rev. Simons of? I hope he simply misunderstood what he was saying, and might be moved to apologize. As I understood Rev. Simons, he was projecting into the future clear global trends of expanding populations and improved communication and travel that will inexorably bring people who previously thought themselves unique closer together.

That frictions arise from this – especially as the gains of globalization are profoundly unequal, favoring giant corporations – is obvious. What is not

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1 Ashley Crossman, “The Sociology of Race and Ethnicity: Studying The Relationship Between Race, Ethnicity and Society,” updated May 11, 2017. <https://www.thoughtco.com/sociology-of-race-and-ethnicity-3026285> 2-11-18.

2 Nicki Lisa Cole, “The Sociological Definition of Race: An Overview of the Concept,” updated May 10, 2017; <https://www.thoughtco.com/race-definition-3026508> 2-11-18.

3 Stephen Whitehead, in “What is the sociological definition of racism? 6 Answers,” <https://www.quora.com/What-is-the-sociological-definition-of-racism>, found 2-11-18.

at all clear is that this means someone *describing* it is condemning Western culture, as the writer asserts. I unapologetically condemn what was done *in the name of Western culture*.

It's clear that we fundamentally flawed Europeans used our might to impose our values on less powerful peoples while presuming to carry "The White Man's Burden" (Rudyard Kipling) of a superior civilization. *That* was racism. Whether that imperialism was permitted in Providence to help spread the Word is another topic of discussion. And whether that kind of racism – contemporary versions of which are all too evident – will fade with time, as Rev. Simons predicts, those of us alive now will regrettably never find out.

Harald M. Sandström  
Bloomfield, Connecticut

[Dr. Sandström is a retired professor at the University of Hartford in Connecticut]

## *No Loopholes on Who is Our Neighbor*

To The Editors:

I am writing in response to Yorvar Synnestvedt's letter to the editor, *The Most Important Issue*, in the January/February 2018 issue of *New Church Life*.

There are two lessons that we are taught in the New Church. To paraphrase, the first is that we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. The second is that our purpose in life is to perform uses/to serve our neighbor.

When we label our neighbors as "Radical Muslim terrorists," decry the melting pot and caution against globalism, we are repeating the polarizing political discourse that has become popular in our country over the last few years. By labeling people as "other" based on race or religion we are effectively picking and choosing who is our neighbor. This proves a point being made by the Rev. Jeremy Simons in his article on *A Racist Free World*.

To pick and choose who is our neighbor is a dehumanizing practice and it goes against the teachings of the New Church. Using current political language about how to treat our neighbor is looking at a spiritual issue through a political lens and should be strongly cautioned against. Everyone, regardless of race, religion or nationality, is our neighbor.

Perhaps it is unfair, but as members of the New Church I believe we should hold ourselves to a higher standard and follow the word of the Lord. We are to

love our neighbor. There is no out clause or loophole to this tenant. Nor should we be looking for one.

Meg Eynon  
Chester Springs, Pennsylvania

### *Forever Timeless*

To The Editors:

The title grabbed me: “Timeless messages in the Word” (by Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr., November/December *New Church Life*). I’m glad I took the time to read it thoroughly and feel very blessed. I have noticed how my affections have changed over the years I’ve been reading the Word and the Writings. In the United Kingdom high school I attended we had Religious Education and my teacher loved the *Psalms*, which must have become implanted in my young soul. As a college student I read the major works of the Writings commuting back and forth on the train to college in London. (All those works that were later donated bear those pencil marks in the margins!)

Imagine my surprise and delight when I returned to read them again later in life, post child rearing. I listened to the Word on tape when traveling back and forth to work and sat down quietly to read them and books of the Writings. Wow! Sometimes, even today, I feel as though I have been hit over the head with an emotional 2x4. Tears streamed down my face reading the *Psalms* I’d heard so many years earlier, and feeling the Psalmist’s deep emotion within them.

When reading the Christmas story to my patients my voice still often catches with emotion. I remember one patient I visited early in my ministry whose eyes glowed when I asked him if he would like to hear the Christmas story (one of many, of course). He said, “the Christmas story,” and was like a man transfixed throughout. He died a few days later.

But I digress. Reading these sacred books is no longer a way for me to collect facts in order to understand the relationship between the spiritual and celestial heavens/kingdoms for example, but a way to follow the Lord the right way, the good way and the way to serve others. I note in Bishop Buss’s comment on page 492: “Even with the revelation of the Heavenly Doctrines, we absorb the amazing statement that no one sees ‘what the Word is like in its spiritual sense (except) the person to whom the Lord reveals it.’” (*Apocalypse Revealed* 824)



Another way is to say those who are leading evil lives won't see the truth, a wonderful permission by the Lord to prevent people from profaning? Or the infinite number of ways the Lord enables us to follow the path to heaven? I value the explanation of how the Word was written for the people of the time and how that influenced the texts. So many blessings from the Lord: how the Lord adapts sacred text to best enable us all to become angels!

I also loved his treatment of the "test cases" in the Heavenly Doctrines. I remember in my MARS class saying to the Rev. Walter Orthwein how much I disliked the passage on women needing to work with their hands (p.495) even as I sat there crocheting in his class! But I came to the conclusion that it was part of my psyche to love making beautiful things for my loved ones, especially to make myself beautiful for my spouse when he was still in this world, which of course was to be spiritual as well as natural. It was not a dictate, but an observation. It didn't mean that was all I could do! I was a scientist for 20-plus years and loved that in a different way to my current work and it's part of who I am today.

As Bishop Buss says: "In all forms of the Word, even the Heavenly Doctrines, it requires some level of interpretation, or a process of discovery, as we seek to absorb the messages the Lord delivers to us." It seems we need to approach both Scripture and the Writings with a humble heart, seeking to learn the truth to serve others better and to become a better human being.

I've found it very worthwhile to read both as if it's addressed to me. When leading services I've often used "we" and "us" when reading from the Writings, though will change to "they" and "them" when it's referring to very evil people. The messages are really for us to judge ourselves, not as a way to condemn others. Having been blessed by having the Rev. Dr. George Dole for two classes in my training I was delighted to receive the insights he had from his 50 years of translating them, and his emphasis on needing to see the whole picture to understand them. It was awe inspiring to hear this humble man say he was just getting to understand them after all those years!

I see I have way too many more remarks to make here, so I'll finish with his remark on page 499, which seems to summarize some of the many ideas he shared on this subject: "The picture that emerges is of a person who takes the time to set aside preconceived ideas, to get the heart and mind in the right place, to see teachings in context, and to check them against the whole of the doctrines. This student of the Word is much more likely to discover the Lord's intended meaning in any part of His revelation."

Rev. Julie Conaron  
Willow Grove, Pennsylvania

## *Beyond Prayer*

To The Editors:

I recently read the Life Line, "Choose Prayer," in the January/February issue of *New Church Life*, and I feel that I need to clarify something.

The writer wrote that "cynics and elitists" scoffed at the idea of prayer as a response to the church shooting in Texas. I believe the main issue that people, myself included, were upset about was the hypocrisy of our leaders. How in the face of the continuing gun violence in this country, they are quick to offer a pat "our thoughts and prayers are with you," and yet sit on their hands and don't take any significant action on gun control.

Though I believe that certain political leaders were somewhat sincere in their statements, I also believe there was an element of making themselves look as compassionate as possible to their constituents. I believe it was people's frustration with this that they were trying to express, not a dismissal of prayer.

We need politicians who are brave enough to do the right things, not just advertise their feigned piety. We're just tired of being taken for a ride. If being a bit skeptical about the whole thing makes me a "cynic and elitist," then that is a label that I would proudly embrace.

Kim Hanna  
Elmira, New York

### **OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY**

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

#### **PERCEPTION**

Perception is said to be a certain internal sensation which is communicated by the Lord alone as a means of knowing whether anything is good and true. It is defined also as an internal dictate, with full conformation by influx from the Lord, as to the intrinsic quality of good and truth, evil and falsity. Thus the perception of the church, like that of the angels, consists in seeing from the Lord what is good and true, not so much in regard to civil society as to love and faith toward the Lord.

Note that perception is not given as a mode of internal or immediate revelation; it is not granted apart from the Word. The Writings speak also of "common perception," so called because it is universal in the spiritual world, though not given on earth, whereby the quality of newcomers is discerned instantly from the sphere they carry about with them, no speech or action being needed. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 104, 1822, 5937, 7680; *Apocalypse Explained* 307)

# Easter Symbolism

*The Rev. Alan M. Cowley*

(Note: This originally appeared in *The New Church Voice of Florida*, April/May 2017)

The Easter story is one that has fascinated people throughout history. Which makes sense; it is perhaps the most dramatic account in the Bible of someone being raised from the dead into life! But it has also confused people and churches for millennia as well. Within that confusion, people and church leaders have struggled to make sense of how and why it all happened the way that it did. And some of these confusions took the Lord's Church down the road of irrational doctrine, even to a place where lay people are being told, "Well . . . that is just a mystery of faith that we will never understand."

Some of the more serious offenses and misunderstandings of this story are what led to doctrine like the "blood atonement," which teaches that God the Father needed someone to suffer and be punished for human evil, and that it was His Son Jesus who took on that suffering, appeasing the Father for all who say that they believe. Not only does this concept not even jibe with a lot of scripture, it also divides the Lord into multiple Gods, and in some cases, denies the Divinity of Jesus Christ, who states, "I and my Father are one." (*John* 10:30) But let's not spend too much time looking at historical errors, as bad as they may be, and instead look at what the Easter story truly means.

To those old, impassable mysteries, we say: "It is now permitted to enter with the understanding into the mysteries of faith." (*True Christian Religion* 508) One of the amazing beauties of the New Church is the internal understanding of Scripture. Every story, every sentence, even every word, contains important and relevant information for us to behold. The Easter story is no different. Not only that, there are also several layers of internal meaning hidden within the literal sense itself.

For this article, let us focus on just two layers:

1. How the Easter story demonstrates the reality of how people were treating the Word of God.
2. How the Lord's work throughout the story effects the salvation of

The things that Jesus experienced, especially the suffering at the hands of his accusers, was a physical representation of how people had come to treat the Word.

human beings. Just these two items could fill books, but let's scratch the surface anyway.

It can be horribly painful to think about our Lord being betrayed, beaten, scourged, spat on, stripped and crucified. How could anyone do these horrible things? To the Lord no less! Well, one role that the Lord chose to play while he was in the world was that of a prophet. In fact, He was THE Prophet. We see clues of this role in the many times we read about how something was said or done so that it might be completed, as was spoken by

the prophet. There are numerous references to this in the book of *Matthew*.

Prophets in the Word served two main roles; one was to relay God's message, and the second was to be a living example of how the people were treating the Lord and His Word. You might think of how Isaiah was told to strip naked for three years as a "sign and a wonder against Egypt and Ethiopia." (*Isaiah* 20:3) This was a symbol of how people had lost respect for the true internal meaning of Scripture and made all of life and worship simply about external ritual. (cf. *Apocalypse Explained* 532)

The things that Jesus experienced, especially the suffering at the hands of his accusers, was a physical representation of how people had come to treat the Word.

His betrayal by Judas meant that He was betrayed by the Jewish nation, which possessed the Word, since Judas represented that nation. His arrest and conviction by the chief priests and elders meant that the whole of that church so behaved. His being beaten, being spat upon in the face, being flogged and having His head struck with a reed meant their similar treatment of the Word as regards the Divine truths it contains. The crowning with thorns meant that they falsified and adulterated these truths. The dividing of His garments and throwing lots for His tunic meant that they threw to the winds all the truths of the Word, but not its spiritual sense, which is what the tunic meant. The crucifixion meant that they destroyed and profaned the whole Word. Their giving Him vinegar to drink meant that they offered only falsified truths, which is why He did not drink it. The piercing of His side meant that they utterly extinguished all the truth and all the good of the Word. (*True Christian Religion* 130)

What this internal meaning painted for humanity at that time was a very grim future. Well, no future at all had the Lord not come to rectify the situation.

The Lord's burial and resurrection point to a new beginning. "Truly, truly,

I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” (*John 12:24*) The old church had fallen and a new one had to rise in its place. The Lord had to be the center of that church: His love, His wisdom, His ways. Understanding of the Word must come through Him, and not through the perverse teachings of a dead church.

The Angels at the tomb spoke to the women who came to anoint the Lord: “Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen!” (*Luke 24:5-6*) The Lord was no longer to be found in ritual alone, or in the literal sense of Scripture alone. “The kingdom of God does not come

with observation; nor will they say, ‘See here!’ or ‘See there!’ For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.” (*Luke 17:20-21*)

As we move our discussion of Easter to the next level, dealing with how the Lord’s work in the world effects our salvation, we should begin by recognizing that many of the symbolic meanings are similar. For instance, the way that the Lord was treated and how that represented the way people were treating the Word, represents in us a tendency from hell to treat the Lord and the Word in the same way.

All evil and falsity are, in one way or another, an offense against the Lord and the Word. For instance, when a person who knows better decides to steal something, seemingly gets away with it, and is proud of himself for his cunning theft and perhaps justifies it, he is, at the same time, betraying the Lord, falsifying truths, and throwing them to the winds. Though the person himself may not think he did anything more than steal, the evil spirits, who inspired his actions, are overjoyed by every detail of how that person has damaged his relationship with the Lord and His Word.

What this brings us to is the reality that human beings are inherently inclined toward evils of every kind. One way that we can look at the general picture which the Old Testament paints is that we are shown an image of what people are created to be, people who follow the Lord’s order and command with love and faith.

These things are seen in the creation story, the commandments, the Lord’s

The Angels at the tomb spoke to the women who came to anoint the Lord: “Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen!” (*Luke 24:5-6*) The Lord was no longer to be found in ritual alone, or in the literal sense of Scripture alone.

We, too, yes all of us, are burdened by the same hells which led Israel away from the Lord.

abandoned or twisted the only good thing which they had, the Lord's Word. Doom was on the doorstep. But there was a Promised One, a Messiah!

We, too, yes all of us, are burdened by the same hells which led Israel away from the Lord. We, too, though the Lord kindly keeps us from seeing the full extent of our evil heredity, are in the position of condemnation. But there is a Promised One, a Messiah!

The significance of what the Lord did while he was in the world, especially through His crucifixion and resurrection, is that He established an order and a governance over hell which gives Him complete, instantaneous, and perfect control over every evil and falsity that we face. The Lord accomplished this by inviting the hells into himself, lower case 'h', the human which He took on from Mary. He invited them in so that He could fight against them from Divine Love and Truth, conquer them, and make them subject to His command.

One way we might think of this is that evil spirits work under the cover of darkness. When we are engaged in perverse thinking or harmful actions

our spirit is in darkness; we cannot see the evils and falsities for what they are. But the Lord, through His combats and victories in temptation, installed a light in every room in hell.

We must turn to the Lord and ask for His light to guide our footsteps. This will not take away the spiritual battle that we must participate in, but it will enable us to fight from the Lord and to be victorious.

The Lord is present and even governing hell from His Divine Truth. The light is in every room, and there is a light switch there as well, so that now when our spirit is in a dark place all we must do is flip the switch. That is, we must turn to the Lord and ask for His light to guide our footsteps. This will not take away the spiritual battle that we must participate in, but it will enable us to fight from the Lord and to be victorious.

In the Word, this metaphorical light switch was first turned on the very first Easter morning. Think about when the women came down to anoint the Lord's body. Symbolically, in our lives, this shows an unwavering affection for Divine Truth. Though the women must have been confused by the outcome (they were no longer sure how the Lord Jesus was the Messiah after he had been crucified), their love remained loyal and humble. And when they approached the tomb and found that the stone had been rolled away, a new hope was born through the words of an angel who said, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, for He has risen as He said." (*Matthew 28:6*)

**'The morning' means the rise of a new Church**, for that Church is the Lord's kingdom on earth. That kingdom is meant both in a general and in a particular sense, and indeed in a specific sense. The general being when any Church on earth is established anew; the particular, when a person is being regenerated and becoming a new person, for the Lord's kingdom is in that case being established in him and he is becoming the Church; and the specific, **as often as good flowing from love and faith is at work with him, for this is what constitutes the Lord's coming**. Consequently, the Lord's resurrection on the third morning embodies in the particular and the specific senses the truth that **He rises daily, indeed every single moment, in the minds of regenerate persons**. (*Arcana Coelestia 2405*  
\*Emphasis added)



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# The Son of God

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

## **Second of a Three-Part Series on the Trinity**

*Lessons: Isaiah 40:3-5, 10-11 and 61:1-3; John 1:1-14 and 3:14-17 and True Christian Religion 84*

“...God,” we read, “so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.” (*John 3:16-17*).

**T**his is the second sermon in our series on the Divine Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The appearance, especially in the *Gospel of John*, that God has a son who is somehow separate from Himself, whom He sent to suffer and die for the sins of the human race, is, in one light, fairly compelling. The fact that this Son said, “I and My father are one” (*John 10:30*), and that “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (*Ibid.* 14:9) is often explained as meaning that they are one in their plan or purpose, though still separate entities. It gets a little more complicated, however, when the Lord says, “I am *in* the Father and the Father *in* Me.” (*Ibid.* 14:11).

What are we to make of these teachings, among the many others that also seem to suggest a Divine Being somehow divided into separate personal forms?

Of course, in the New Church we have a simple explanation, which is that the Father is to the Son as the soul of anyone is to his or her body. In other words, the Lord, Jesus, is the embodiment of the Infinite love and wisdom in a human form that we can comprehend, believe and follow. Remember the beginning of John’s Gospel: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us.”

These verses make it clear that Jesus is not separate or a different “person,” but the same person taking on a physical mind and body in order to function



in the natural world in a way that allows conscious human interaction with Him. This is why we call it the *incarnation* of God. In fact, the appearance of the Infinite in a finite human form really makes God a “person” for the first time. Until then His Divine Humanity could only be represented by flawed human agents – men or angels – in the natural or spiritual world.

So the real question is why this relationship of His soul and body is described as if they were a Father and Son. After all, in our world fathers and sons *are* distinct persons.

To answer the question we really need to ask another question: if He was not the Son of God, whose Son was He? Everybody has a father, right? In fact there are times in the Gospels when the Lord does call Himself the *Son of Man*, in a sense highlighting His dual nature, since He was born of a finite human mother. But even this term needs some explanation because it doesn't really refer to the mother, Mary. It refers to the Word of the Old Testament, that is, the Word as it was clothed in appearances of truth accommodated to natural, worldly human minds.

OK, that was a mouthful, so let's take it slowly. There are, for sure, many examples in the Word where ordinary people are called sons of man because they are, well, human. But when you finally come to *Ezekiel* you see the term used more than 90 times to refer specifically to the prophet as a prophet, thus as a representative of God giving instruction to the people of Israel. In that sense he is the Word made flesh before the coming of the Lord in His *own* body of flesh. And Jesus then calls Himself the Son of Man specifically referring to this teaching because He is the ultimate Prophet who fulfilled all the teachings of the Word in His own life.

But consider this statement in the *Gospel of Matthew*:

Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come. (12:32)

Since the Lord is called the Son of God (in the *Gospel of Luke* 1:35) specifically because of the Holy Spirit “overshadowing” Mary and causing her to conceive, this passage contrasting an offense against the Son of Man with an offense against the Holy Spirit highlights the difference between the Son of Man and the Son of God. One is the WORD with all its puzzling, often troubling stories which we can certainly be forgiven for questioning or misunderstanding, and the other is the Divine Itself, the very Spirit of truth, clothed at last in His own body.

So we return to the distinction between God, our heavenly Father, and the Son of God. This is the thing that confuses people. Given that Isaiah plainly said that the Son who would be born to redeem and save Israel would be called “Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (*Isaiah* 9:6), given that God said “He is the only Savior, and besides Him there is

In the Word the term, Father, refers to the Divine love, the origin, the source, the cause, the very soul of all creation, and the term, Son, refers to what proceeds from that origin and cause, which is the Divine truth or wisdom that makes love visible, at least to the sight of our understanding.

no Savior” (*Ibid.* 43:3,10,11), and given that His name was called “Immanuel, which is translated, ‘God with us’” (*Matthew* 1:23), *what exactly is this distinction*, and why is it important?

To understand it, like a thousand other teachings in the Word, it is absolutely critical that we recognize the symbolic language used throughout the Scriptures. In that language the word, father, does not just mean a person any more than the names of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Gideon, Samson, Saul, David or Solomon just refer to people in an ancient story. In fact each one of these names, like the names of all the sons of Israel, is a composite of certain Hebrew words that describe the circumstances of their stories.

Isaac, for example, means “to laugh,” David means “beloved,” Reuben, Simeon and Levi are names

that mean “to see, to hear, and to be conjoined” respectively. Thus every one of these people represents some essential quality or characteristic that is part of our spiritual development, from which we learn about ourselves and the Lord.

So in the Word the term, Father, refers to the Divine love, the origin, the source, the cause, the very soul of all creation, and the term, Son, refers to what proceeds from that origin and cause, which is the Divine truth or wisdom that makes love visible, at least to the sight of our understanding. The symbolism works because we often see the characteristics of a father in his sons, and we know that it is the seed of the father that fertilizes and causes the mother’s egg to grow, giving form to what otherwise is an invisible string of DNA.

Again, as we noted in the first sermon of this series, the Father in this case is Infinite and so can’t be visualized in any form except representatively, or in a body shaped by the Divine as its soul. But, even now we do not see the Son of God as a physical Human Being; we don’t even have any authentic images of His face or any other physical features; what we have is the written record of His words and actions, which constitute the truths of the New Testament. So the Son of God that we worship is the love of God made visible in the truths that He taught, that we can “see” and understand, respect and obey.

Such is the New Church concept. And it beautifully affirms what is said in *John* many times in many different ways, namely, that God the Father is IN the

Son, that he who sees the Son sees Him who sent Him, that He and the Father are ONE, that the reason He came into the world was “to bear witness to the truth” (*John* 18:37), and that he who loves the truth loves what is good.

In contrast to this, many churches teach that God from eternity had a Son who was separate and distinct from Himself, and that He sent this Son into the world to atone for the accumulated sins of the human race by offering Himself as a sacrificial “scapegoat” to appease His own Divine wrath, that is, His own eternal requirement of justice. Because it is a substitutionary sacrifice in which the real guilty parties are relieved of any consequences for their sin, and a perfectly innocent but loving martyr takes all the blame, this is called a “vicarious” atonement – vicarious meaning done or experienced by someone other than the person who gets the credit for it.

To be fair, there are some teachings that support this idea. One is that we can’t do any good of or from ourselves; only the Lord can do what is genuinely good in us and for us. It seems logical to say, therefore, that all we can do to obtain salvation is to accept and believe that He does it all. The trouble is that logically even this acknowledgment ultimately would come from Him, and so in the end what we’re left with is predestination, because we really have no choice in the matter. God elects whom He elects, and everyone else goes to hell.

The New Church response to this is also Scriptural in that the Lord clearly commanded us to love Him, and to do so implies that it is possible. But a careful reading of the Gospel shows that we love Him by doing what He taught. When we do it – by our free choice as if of ourselves – we provide a foundation on which He can build, an orderly life that can receive His love and blessing. Yes, He does the real work, but we have to co-operate in order to get the benefit of it.

Another set of teachings that seems to support the vicarious atonement doctrine is represented by the saying, “Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.” (*John* 1:29) This harks back to *Isaiah* 53, made famous in the libretto of Handel’s *Messiah*:

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

These passages seem to suggest that He suffered so that we don’t have to. But, in fact, this is not what they really say. First of all, the Lamb of God does not “take away” the sin of the world; the Greek word here means that He *bears* or *carries* that sin, which is to say that He suffered because people made Him suffer. (*Doctrine of the Lord* 15) They made poor choices; they threatened,

In fact the Lord allowed Himself to be crucified not to appease the wrath of an angry, jealous Father, but to allow the evils and falsities of human arrogance to be exposed and to overcome those evils and falsities in the resurrection so that once and for all we could fully appreciate His Divine love, mercy, patience, forgiveness and wisdom.

accused and condemned Him; they even made Him carry His own cross. So He bore, He carried all the grief and sorrow that *only* He in His Divine love could feel for the human race as they betrayed Him and rejected His pure love and wisdom and blessing.

And yet, we read, “by His stripes (that is, by His torture) we are healed.” What does that mean? Well, sadly, it is an undeniable truth that unless evils and falsities are allowed to break out and be seen for what they are, we can never understand them or address them, we can never appreciate the harm they cause, and we can never be saved from them. They will fester under the surface of our conscious life like gangrene or cancer until it is too late.

In fact the Lord allowed Himself to be crucified *not* to appease the wrath of an angry, jealous Father, but to allow the evils and falsities of human arrogance to be exposed and to overcome those

evils and falsities in the resurrection so that once and for all we could fully appreciate His Divine love, mercy, patience, forgiveness and wisdom.

Remember His words to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus: “Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?” (*Luke* 24:26) So He also said, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission (i.e., forgiveness) of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (*Ibid.* 46-47)

Just think of it! At the crucifixion all the disciples – not just Judas, nor Peter who denied Him three times, but **all** the disciples had forsaken Him and fled. (*Matthew* 26:56, *Mark* 14:50). Yet here He was, in all His glory, forgiving them, teaching them, breaking bread with them, reassuring them, serving them breakfast by the sea. How could they not be filled with gratitude and awe, and with fervent zeal to share this incredible gift with others?

How would you feel if you had betrayed your best friend, a completely innocent friend, who then suffered incredible torment because of you, and yet when it was all over he simply blessed you, and comforted you, and explained

why he had allowed these things to happen, and then, even more incredibly, entrusted you to share His message of love and forgiveness to all who would listen? Once you got over your embarrassment and shame wouldn't you be moved to tears with relief and with renewed commitment to this man?

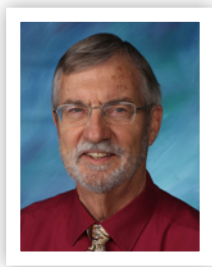
So the Lord in His wisdom and mercy allowed all this evil to attack Him, in fact He subjected Himself to the very same violence that the people had inflicted on the Word by abusing and contradicting it, so that He could do what no other man could do, that is, correct the falsity and overcome the abuse so that all on earth and in the heavens and hell might know the truth, and that the truth, if we live according to it, might make us free. So He redeemed us, indeed He paid a heavy price, giving His life in this world, as He said, "a ransom for many." (*Matthew 20:28*)

But note, He didn't give His death as a ransom, He gave His life, that we might be led and taught by the judgments of His mouth, the mercy of His grieving love and the power of His work. So He said, "I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you." (*John 13:15*) And again: "If you love Me, Keep My commandments, and I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you, and will be in you." (*John 14:15-17*)

Who is this Helper? Still another person in a trinity of persons? No! It is the Lord Himself coming to us again and again in the spirit of His truth, the understanding of His Word. Remember, He said, "I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you." (*Ibid.* 18)

Amen.

(Part III in the May/June issue: "The Holy Spirit")



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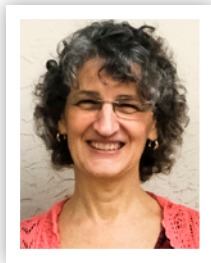
# Boynton Beach Retreat 2018

*Bruce Henderson*

Another successful Retreat in Boynton Beach, Florida, January 28 through February 1, attracted New Church people from eight states and Canada for four-day presentations by:

- **Chara C. Daum**, a Latin scholar, speaking about her work with the *New Century Edition* of the Writings; the *Spirit and Life Bible Study* led by the Rev. Dr. Jonathan Rose; and the *offTheLeftEye* video team featuring Curtis Childs.
- **The Rev. Barry C. Halterman**, religion teacher and chaplain for the Academy of the New Church Secondary Schools, who has made a study of world religions. He spoke on: *One God, Many Religions – Why?*
- **The Rt. Rev. Thomas L. Kline** on *The Nature of Spiritual Substance*; church leadership in a congregational setting; and stories from his travels throughout the world as Executive Bishop.

**The Rt. Rev. Brian W. Keith** also gave a presentation at the Retreat banquet on the state of the Church. (See page 152)



## TRANSLATION AND OUTREACH

*Chara C. Daum*

Chara is thrilled that her work as a Latinist stretches from the very beginnings of the Church, with the first editions of the Writings in Latin, to the very latest efforts to disseminate the Lord's teachings through modern technology. That ranges from the fresh translations of the *New Century Edition* to the cutting-edge YouTube *offTheLeftEye* videos attracting thousands of viewers around the world.

That puts her where she is happy to be – on the front line with newcomers all over the world – bridging the “dead language” of Latin with the mind-boggling new world of the internet and live streaming.

Chara admits she had no career goals growing up but fell into her role “with the Lord leading me.”

She loved Latin as a student – and generally loved language and the use of words. Her first mentor, the Rev. Bruce Rogers, encouraged her. As a religion major in Bryn Athyn College she immersed herself in the sacred languages and got summer work in the field.

She graduated without a plan – “but fortunately the Lord had a plan.” Miss Margaret Wilde, legendary Latin teacher at the Academy, became ill and Chara stepped in for three years. That was also when she married Scott Daum, and soon afterward got her first job helping Bruce Rogers with translations.

In 1998 the *New Century Edition* was launched at the Swedenborg Foundation and she was asked to be a Latin consultant by Series Editor, the Rev. Dr. Jonathan Rose. She has worked with almost all of the Writings, carefully checking to make sure that all of the Latin is represented in the new translations. When the volumes are getting ready to go to press, the process involves a lot of proofing, double-checking – a lot of paper. As she puts it: “Kill the trees, save the people.”

She is also excited to be part of the weekly offTheLeftEye video team – with 56,000 subscribers all over the world – and interacting with viewers on live panels during broadcasts. And she is a logistics manager and reader for Jonathan’s live-streamed weekly Bible study, which is reaching 38,500 viewers – many of them new to Swedenborg and the New Church.

Swedenborg had a unique experience and mission. What was it like for such a successful man to work humbly as a “servant of the Lord”? What was it like for such a brilliant mind to struggle to express what is ineffable? That is a challenge for translators as well. She quotes an Italian saying: “A translator is a traitor.” It is inevitable that something will be lost in translation no matter how conscientious the translator. But she is content that the translators she works with are good people, doing the best they can.

Swedenborg wrote in a simple, straightforward style but Latin vocabulary and sentence structure can translate into convoluted English. The Latin, she says, is bristling with meaning waiting to be discovered. Meanwhile, our own language is constantly changing. Hence the *New Century Edition* as a way to evolve from the old green volumes for a modern audience.

The outdated style of the old translations has become a barrier to new readers. The attempt now is to bridge the gap of “members only” Swedenborgianese – words like *proprium*, *arcana*, *esse*, *existere*, *conjugal*. The new edition reaches out with explanatory notes, decorative ornaments and historical context. The style is simple and straightforward. It’s an attempt to restore the beauty of the Writings – making them more pleasant on the eyes and more readable.

The introduction and notes – often written by non-New Church scholars – give her a new appreciation for what a treasure we have in the Writings.

(Chara) sees tremendous power in what we are doing on the internet – from Jonathan Rose’s Bible study to the offTheLeftEye videos by Curtis Childs to other efforts across the church – for changing people’s lives by blessing them with truer ideas.

One of the controversies in the new translations is the use of lower case for Divine pronouns. That’s consistent with the Foundation’s guide – *The Chicago Manual of Style* – but not with New Church tradition. Chara emphasizes that this doesn’t change words or meaning, that reverence and respect for the Lord are in the heart of the reader. She also pointed out that we all grew up with the King James Version of the Word/Bible, which does not use the upper case for divine pronouns. She said Swedenborg used capitals freely – often where we would not. There were many compassionate discussions at the Foundation about this sensitive issue and they know this is still a loss to some readers.

The Lord, she feels, is much bigger than word choices and capital letters, and every member of the team cares deeply about these issues – and how they are reaching new readers. She has a deep reverence for the message, and great empathy for the reader. The challenges, she says, are human, not technical.

Among the NCE team she honors are Jonathan Rose, Stuart Shotwell, Lisa Hyatt Cooper, the Rev. Dr. George Dole (“a beloved pastor and teacher”), the Rev. Lee Woofenden, Alicia Dole, Sarah Dole, Erik Odhner and Skye Kerr – “wonderful people with good hearts.” And because it is a human process, each translator has a unique style. She is also grateful for the many dedicated translators of the past.

With the *New Century Edition*, she says, we are trying something new. That can be scary, but there is inspiration in the Lord’s words: “Behold, I make all things new.”

Shifting to Jonathan’s weekly *Spirit and Life Bible Study*, she appreciates the effort to reach out to the Christian world and meet them where they primarily live, in the Acts and Epistles. The approach is to find common ground in the whole of the Bible to make a case for the New Church – looking at the Bible through a Swedenborgian lens.

The class was aimed originally at Swedenborgians but quickly attracted others and now has 38,500 followers. One of the revelations for her is that the Acts and Epistles contain much “New Church truth,” so we have more



in common with traditional Christians than she was aware of. She offered several moving testimonials of how this Bible study is changing people's lives.

(The archive for all past programs is [www.spiritandlifebiblestudy.com](http://www.spiritandlifebiblestudy.com). The web address for live streaming Wednesday nights at 7:30 is [www.ustream.tv/channel/nunclicetbiblestudy](http://www.ustream.tv/channel/nunclicetbiblestudy). You can also access the Facebook page – [www.facebook.com/SpiritAndLifeBibleStudy](http://www.facebook.com/SpiritAndLifeBibleStudy) -- for announcement of the topic for the week and links to upstream videos.)

In her wrap-up session Chara said her work with the *New Century Edition* has shaken her loose from her historical faith and given her a new sense of freedom in how she holds her faith. She sees tremendous power in what we are doing on the internet – from Jonathan's Bible study to the *offTheLeftEye* videos by Curtis Childs to other efforts across the church – for changing people's lives by blessing them with truer ideas.

People watching the *offTheLeftEye* videos – [www.youtube.com/offTheLeftEye](http://www.youtube.com/offTheLeftEye) -- can click on their screens and download or buy a book of the Writings. Every show attracts a long list of comments and questions, each of which is answered by a response team. In the past year the videos have been watched for 32.9 million minutes – 84.5 million since the show was launched.

Chara showed a moving video of a woman in Norway who had come across the videos and said they have changed her life. This theme comes up constantly in testimonials. Three women who did not know each other, for instance, showed up at last June's *Swedenborg and the Arts Conference* in Bryn Athyn because they were so excited about what they had seen and just wanted to be with "real Swedenborgians."

She cited many testimonials that exposure to the teachings of the Writings has been life changing, that "I have found peace in the Writings," they "took me to the Lord" and "became part of my life forever."

The Swedenborg Foundation is having similar experiences with people traveling to its annual meeting just to be with Swedenborgians. They all have powerful, heartfelt messages about how their lives have been changed; how they appreciate "the absence of guile and superiority" in presenting ideas; and

She cited many testimonials that exposure to the teachings of the Writings has been life changing, that "I have found peace in the Writings," they "took me to the Lord" and "became part of my life forever."

how these teachings “make more sense than anything I’ve heard.” (See Life Lines, page 165, for more of these testimonials.)

And all of this testifies why Chara feels her own life has been changed and forever blessed by the path the Lord has placed before her.



**ONE GOD, MANY RELIGIONS: WHY?**

*The Rev. Barry C. Halterman*

Barry has long been a student of World Religions, earning a Masters Degree in Comparative Religions and teaching Comparative World Religions at the Academy Secondary Schools for 14 years. He uses that perspective in teaching religion to today’s increasingly diverse student body in the Academy Secondary Schools. His topic revolved around that question he asks them – and asked those attending the Retreat: *One God, Many Religions – Why?*

The New Church, he says, can contribute to a new way of looking at religion. It has the potential to enliven and infill other religions because of the way our doctrines bring everything together. His teaching is fully New Church, connecting with a spirit of goodness and common core teachings. It is aimed more at sharing and connecting than trying to convert.

Twenty years ago Barry represented the Church at a Buddhist/Christian Conference at DePaul University in Chicago where he was part of a panel presentation with two non-Swedenborgian professors on “The Dharma of Emanuel Swedenborg.” He sees a continuous thread from the beginning of religion until now and it was a powerful experience to show how Buddhism and Christianity relate – and how Swedenborg can be a bridge between them.

He used the familiar metaphor of six blind men describing an elephant based on the part they were touching (tail, trunk, leg, etc.) and said we have a similar “blindness” in describing religions. New Church philosophy offers the best perspective.

A New Church view of world religions begins with the question: Why does the Lord create? He creates because His love wants to conjoin all people to Himself – and we each have our own unique relationship with Him.

So how many churches are there? Each of us is a church – formed by our individual and unique relationships with the Lord. Together we all make up the one true church. He quoted *New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* 244: “The Lord’s Church exists throughout the whole world, although it is especially located where the Lord is acknowledged and the Word is known.” We are also taught in *Divine Providence* 326 that heaven is composed of people of many

religions, not a single religion.

There is also the key teaching in *Divine Providence* 256 that “a religion that is not adapted is not accepted.” We see countless examples of how the Lord adapts His teachings to individuals’ understanding. So the Lord’s Church is everywhere, according to how He is known.

A whole new era for religion began with the Last Judgment in 1757 and the new revelation given for the New Church in 1770. *Arcana Coelestia* 10318 teaches how essential this is – that without revelation we can’t know anything about eternal life, the Lord, love to Him and faith in Him. The very first revelation was creation itself. The Lord is always revealing Himself to us in His creation. It is up to us to discover Him there.

Barry noted that the desire to investigate the mysteries of faith by means of the sense and memory – the human mind rather than Divine revelation – was not only the cause of the fall of the Most Ancient Church but is also the cause of the fall of every church. (*Arcana Coelestia* 127) People who think they can figure it all out for themselves, and turn away from the Lord, “are eating from the wrong tree.”

Modern religions have progressed from animism, native worship, idolatry, ritualism and sacred spaces to written collections of teachings, ethical codes and the development of philosophy. The corrupting influences are the rise of individualism, a universal approach that is not bound by culture, and a dynamic that is always changing and growing. The Christian Church fell because of a false trinity, faith alone and naturalism.

The current religious environment, Barry said, is chaotic – which may not be a bad thing. Chaos is necessary for shedding false ideas and making new revelation possible. What we have now in the world is religious pluralism, a lack of boundaries, and attitudes that are non-judgmental, loving everybody, not distinguishing between right and wrong, being spiritual but not religious

The New Church can contribute to a new way of looking at religion. It has the potential to enliven and infill other religions because of the way our doctrines bring everything together. (Barry’s) teaching is fully New Church, connecting with a spirit of goodness and common core teachings. It is aimed more at sharing and connecting than trying to convert.

and anti-organization.

Barry cited *Apocalypse Explained* 1177-1180 for insights into the universal means of salvation. We learn how much we can say about other religions and what the Lord teaches. He always teaches through religious principles – and always adapted for people of all faiths.

When teaching comparative religions he focuses on:

- Experiences – love and connection with the spiritual dimension
- Myths – the way we tell stories to express truth
- Doctrine – tenets and teachings
- Ethics – how we treat the neighbor, etc.
- Social dynamics
- Materials and sacred items and symbols

And there are always five big questions in evaluating religions:

- Who or what is the source (God)?
- How do we know what is true?
- What is the human condition?
- What happens after death?
- What is the path of life? What do we have to do to improve?

The New Church answers to these questions are:

- The Lord is the source, with His infinite love and wisdom
- We know what is true through the Word and influx from the Lord
- We are all works in progress – sinners but potential angels
- The afterlife has already begun as “the Kingdom of God is within you” and we enter heaven or hell depending on what we have loved more in this life
- Love the Lord and the neighbor, regenerate, live a useful life

Barry discussed some of the defining aspects of Hinduism, Buddhism, Chinese Philosophy (Confucius and Taoism) and Western religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) for a range of perspective: a cycle of life and rebirth through reincarnation under Hinduism; growth through suffering (Buddhism); leadership by example (Confucius); balance and harmony in the universe (Taoism); one God and following His commandments (Western).

Barry noted that since the Last Judgment we are living in a post-Christian world and this is what he is dealing with in teaching today’s Academy students – some with a traditional New Church background, some not. Ours is a culture of religious pluralism – a buffet style of picking and choosing among beliefs. It is highly individual and relative. There is a dissolution of traditional institutions,

a rise of scientific materialism, and an overall spiritual malaise.

Somewhat surprisingly he finds that students raised in the New Church tend to be the most skeptical, while those from other backgrounds are more likely to step up and lead a prayer.

So how does he deal with this? By constantly adapting our teachings, without compromise – and by saying the same thing five different ways. The chaos that exists may be good or bad but it's real: let's deal with it. The Last Judgment brought a new state of religious freedom and we have more spiritual freedom than ever. We need to make the most of that.

The role of the New Church, he feels, is to share what we have with others – not to hold back but to live confidently in the world as it is. Freely we receive and freely we give through New Church education. We should be ready to give to all who are willing to receive.

He does this by focusing on the essence of religion – what is ultimately true and authentic. We are not bound by culture. The teachings of the Writings are eternal and fit anywhere. He promotes the oneness of all life while also promoting individual expression. We can't be all things to all people – but we can be more things to more people. We can seek balance.

Religion needs to come across as holistic, and the New Church is all about this – appealing to emotion, intellect and a desire to transform the world in positive ways. We tend to come across as an intellectual church, above common people's heads. We need to put real value on understanding. And we need to talk more about “heart stuff” not just “head stuff” such as being loving and compassionate.

It is important not just what we believe as a church but what we do as a church. The community service of Delta Mu in the schools is very popular. The students want to be out there being useful – as the church needs to be also.

Among the many things the New Church has to offer are:

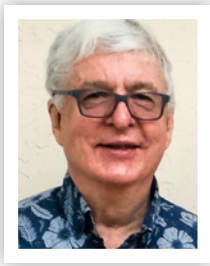
- The revealed deeper meanings of sacred texts
- Explaining the spirit in nature – God's first and continuing revelation

The role of the New Church is to share what we have with others – not to hold back but to live confidently in the world as it is. Freely we receive and freely we give through New Church education. We should be ready to give to all who are willing to receive.

- Explaining the afterlife – with teachings no one else has
- Explaining true masculinity and femininity; we have a lot to offer but are not winning on this issue right now
- Reuniting science, philosophy and religion as complementary, not competing
- Fully explain the Lord – His love, His wisdom and what He is doing for all of us

We always need to keep the newcomer in mind – including those raised in the New Church. All of our students are newcomers to the New Church. This means avoiding any us-vs.-them comparisons. Always considering our language and insider customs. We have a long way to go here but are getting better.

This is what we are meant to be doing, Barry asserts – introducing the New Church, explaining, listening, adapting. We are always open to new ideas because ideas can be transformative. He loves that we are a faith-based school that is open to all ideas – fully New Church and openly universal.



### **A BISHOP'S PERSPECTIVE**

*The Rt. Rev. Thomas L. Kline*

#### **The Nature of Spiritual Substance**

Bishop Kline devoted one of his sessions to *The Nature of Spiritual Substance* and something of a spiritual controversy developing from the publication of two books: *The Nature of the Spiritual World* by Bishop Alfred Acton (1914), and *The Spiritual World* by the Rev. Dr. Hugo Lj. Odhner (1968). This created something of an Acton-Odhner split in the church.

The Odhner book, he said, focuses on spiritual appearances. The Acton book looks more at what's behind the appearances – how it all happens. When we believe in appearances we get into trouble. The earth appears to be flat, for instance, but now we know better. When we are sitting in a room we seem to be at rest but everything is really in high-speed motion around the sun. So these Acton-Odhner views of the spiritual world can be seen as complementary, not competing.

Spiritual forms in heaven, Bishop Kline said, are always changing according to individual states. What we see in this world is real and unchanging, but is entirely subjective in the spiritual world.

There is actually just one world though – the spiritual and natural together. They operate independently but are linked together. We are the meeting place

where they come together, and nothing really exists until both are brought together.

There are no spiritual ultimates in spiritual forms. The spiritual world is all activity, springing from our loves. If we are loving innocence, for instance, we may see a lamb. But not everyone will see what we see if their states are different.

Whether in this life or the next what we see is the spiritual and natural coming together. What we are conscious of in this world is objective – a real lamb. In the spiritual world what flows in is completely subjective.

Bishop Kline left a handout with several relevant numbers, including:

First, that it is of Divine providence that a person by death puts off natural and temporal things and puts on spiritual and eternal ones: Natural and temporal things are the outmost and lowest ones into which a person first comes, as he does when he is born, in order to make it possible for him to be afterward introduced into interior and higher ones. For outmost and lowest things are contained in vessels, and these exist in the natural world.

So it is that no angel or spirit was created directly, but they were all born people first and in this way introduced into interior and higher things. This provides them with the outmost and lowest constituents which in themselves are fixed and set, within which and by which their inner constituents can be held in connection. (*Divine Providence* 220)

In this natural world we are all gathering images that will be of use to us to eternity. These images are also of use to people in the spiritual world. An elderly person, for instance, may no longer feel useful. But Bishop Kline said just enjoying a sunset on this earth may be serving millions of angels. A whole lifetime of experiences can give angels a resting place in familiar images. And when we read the Word we can't believe how this affects the angels. We are serving God and His angels in ways we can't imagine. So we should listen to good music, be kind to others, enjoy positive experiences because we are building a foundation for the spiritual world.

Knowing this we might see new meaning in our lives in this world. And old age might be the most useful times of our lives, given the depth of experience that can enrich the lives if angels.

It all starts on this earth and another number he left was:

Spiritual forms in heaven are always changing according to individual states. What we see in this world is real and unchanging, but is entirely subjective in the spiritual world.

He learned that if the pastor/leader is stressed his congregation will be also. You have to be able to relax, spend time with your family, find a balance.

The natural substances of that mind – which, as we said, are by death left behind – form an epidermal envelope encompassing the spiritual body that spirits and angels have. It is in consequence of such an envelope, taken from the natural world, that their spiritual bodies have permanent existence, for the natural element is the outmost containing vessel. That is why there is no spirit or angel who was not first born a person in the world. (*Divine Love and Wisdom* 257)

### **Leadership in the Church**

Bishop Kline spent 14 years as assistant pastor in Bryn Athyn and thought it was the best job in the church – because

he didn't have to make any hard decisions. But during this period he took classes on leadership with Ed Friedman, the author of the book *Generation to Generation*.

He learned that if the pastor/leader is stressed his congregation will be also. You have to be able to relax, spend time with your family, find a balance.

Friedman taught Family System Theory – beginning with treating a congregation as family. New directions alter the family system, which resists change. When you decide on a new direction, there is often upset. But any organization must be able to grow and change. The litmus test comes in the closeness of the family relationship, including such factors as how isolated or insular it is, and how steeped the traditions.

Daring to make a decision is the hardest thing to do. We are a rational religion but our system is emotional. We may think we can talk people into change but they will resist, almost automatically. So a leader must be ready to bend and adjust.

An example was moving the General Church Book Room from Cairncrest to the Cathedral. But once the change was made it was quickly accepted.

Other changes he instituted as pastor included:

- Serving refreshments after church in the cathedral.
- Moving the still-life Christmas Tableaux from the Assembly Hall to the Cathedral, with scenes in motion.
- Informal services in Pendleton Hall – resisted at first but soon embraced by many.
- And perhaps the biggest change – introducing a Good Touch/Bad Touch program in the elementary school.

Bishop Kline discussed many leadership styles which may come into play with pastors:



**The French General:** This is a leader who waits to see which way the wind is blowing then jumps to the front, which is really not leadership at all.

**The Peace Monger:** He wants peace at all costs, and obviously this doesn't work. The leader gets trapped when there is no peace. The Writings say that the only way to regenerate is through temptation, so conflict can often be a key to growth.

**The Messiah Complex:** Jesus is the only priest not to fall into this trap. The Messiah Complex can tear you apart, trying to be all things to all people and responsible for everything. There were a lot of unmet needs when the Lord was on earth, but He knew His core purpose.

**The Technical Fanatic:** If you don't have the aptitude for leadership, technology is not going to do it for you.

**The Figurehead:** He has the title but doesn't do anything with it.

**The Squeaky Wheel:** It sends a bad message to the congregation if you just respond to whoever shouts the loudest.

Bishop Kline's To Do List for a successful pastor:

- Dare to make decisions
- Be responsible for your own emotions
- Increase your threshold for pain
- Be a non-anxious presence in all situations
- Do the most caring thing, which can sometimes feel like tough love
- Work on family-of-origin issues
- Don't take yourself too seriously

### Travels of a Bishop

Bishop Kline recounted several amusing, poignant and humbling stories of his travels and experiences as executive bishop, including:

**Ghana:** He met in the "Chief's Palace." There was an elaborate ceremony and service, which included students brought in to dance, and gifts presented to the chief.

**Togo:** The church service was in a rented building – in French, with translations. When the lights went out Bishop Kline was able to read from the Bible on his phone. The people were amazed that his face glowed when he read the Bible.

**Rio:** Bishop Kline and the Rev. Andy Heilman – who is fluent in Portuguese – combined in giving a service. But there was confusion over the English-Portuguese translations when they had to share and tear apart the one copy available on the chancel. This involved many quick conferences which

the congregation assumed were sacred prayer.

**South Africa:** Bishop Kline presided over the dedication of a new church in Alexandria and was surprised to find – as the offertory was brought forward – that he was expected to lead the congregation in dancing. He did.

**Bryn Athyn:** On a day off, he was in old work clothes putting together a bicycle for a granddaughter. He took it on a test ride up the hill from his home to the cathedral. There he found two forlorn nuns sitting on a wall outside who had arrived too late for a tour. The cathedral was closed.

Tom told them they were in luck. He was the bishop of the church and had a key to a door in the back, behind some shrubbery. They followed him a bit apprehensively, and when his key didn't work he started wondering out loud why they had changed the lock on him. By now the nuns were getting concerned that this somewhat disheveled and agitated “bishop” was a poor homeless soul. They quickly assured him they could find him a place to stay that night and get him a meal.

**OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY**

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

**PASSIVE**

This term is applied in the Writings to things which are dead, that is, things which cannot act of themselves but can be activated by the influx of life from the Lord. Passives are therefore both recipients and reagents. Both of these ideas are necessary, and the relation of passives to actives is indicated in the teaching that the eyes and the ears are passive while the ether and the air are active.

Thus “passive” does not mean inert; that which is inert is called the merely passive and is said to dissipate influx. By derivation the word means to suffer. It is also connected with the word patients; and reflection on what that involves can throw further light on the meaning of this term. (See *Divine Love and Wisdom* 178; *True Christian Religion* 110, 607; *Apocalypse Explained* 616)

# Outreach Through the Internet

*Rob Andrews*

*Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. (Luke 9:1-2)*

Jesus gave this imperative to His disciples: preach the kingdom of God and heal the sick. These are important things for any church to do. They are key elements of evangelization, and integral to the mission of General Church Outreach. The New Church has so many answers, and so much to give to the rest of the world.

The internet provides a powerful tool, and we are using our website, *www.newchurch.org*, as a vehicle to accomplish our goals. While maintaining a commitment for supporting members, in recent years we've had an increased focus on outreach purposes:

1. Evangelization to seekers
2. Serve those in need of the Lord's love
3. Help more people draw closer to the Lord

To achieve these goals through our website, we provide features to attract newcomers, addressing relevant topics and accessible language, as well as providing fresh content both for members and newcomers. There are typically two or more new features on the homepage every week, including video messages, sermons and articles.

Our collection of *New Church Connection* magazine articles offers relevant content to readers, and often leads them to explore our theological pages. These articles have offered comfort to many in spiritual need. We also feature numerous email programs for both members and newcomers, including spiritual growth Journey Programs, and Daily Inspiration emails.

The email programs engage and involve visitors, and we feature "mini-contact" forms on many of our website pages inviting relevant discussion from our readers. We also utilize social media (Facebook), and offer New Church Audio podcasts. In 2017 more than 300,000 people visited our website, most of whom were obviously newcomers to the church.

The invitation to contact us has led to wonderful conversations and

In 2017 more than 300,000 people visited our website, most of whom were obviously newcomers to the church.

opportunities to serve those who are hurting, or who are looking for answers. We offer a listening ear, attempting to help their pain. We offer advice when asked, as well as prayer. Since people in pain are more open to new things and since New Church theology provides so many answers, these conversations also open the door to introduce them to

these teachings.

Since we've been tracking these conversations in 2010, we've had about 5,000 conversations with newcomers. A few examples of initial questions from readers can provide a glimpse of the opportunities:

"I recently experienced my niece passing. She was only 8 years old and was a twin. How can I explain to him that his sister is not returning? Everyone grieves differently. So how can I explain it in a biblical aspect?" (Kimberly)

"I've been struggling with my spiritual life for many, many years. I've always known God was there but I had a difficult time connecting with Him. A few weeks ago I did a wiki search on Christianity and came across Emanuel Swedenborg. From there I watched a few videos and purchased *Swedenborg's Garden of Theology* by Jonathan Rose. For the first time in my spiritual journey I actually felt the truth about God deeply in my soul. This time it was very different. I've attended Bible study before at different churches throughout my area. Although I was inspired and moved intellectually I was never moved spiritually. One book and a few short videos based on Swedenborg's theology changed all that. Also, this Sunday I'm planning on attending my first New Church service at Light for Life New Church in Seattle."

"I am a Hindu by birth and I have never read anything other than the Baghvat Geeta. I just do not know what made me sign up for this seven-week program. Maybe it is a miracle. Day after day I was simply looking forward to the lessons. I reflect a lot every day and I see profound meanings connected to everyday life." (Venkatraman, a Living Courageously Journey Program Subscriber)

"I've been sexually, mentally and physically abused my whole life. I started wondering why God is making this happen to me. I found this link at the bottom of my page and I didn't even think about clicking it. But seriously, I was going to write someone back on *myspace*, and it just showed up. I've been reading everything . . . I understand why stuff is happening now. This website saved my life from hell. Thank you so much!" (A reader of our *God doesn't make bad things happen* article)

(More examples can be read at the end of this article.)

We have more than 8,500 subscribers to our email programs, most of whom are newcomers. The Daily Inspiration list is the largest (and oldest), reaching more than 2,300 subscribers. This list provides an email every day

featuring quotes from the Heavenly Doctrines.

The Christmas Readings list has reached 2,294 readers over the years, with 1,538 active subscribers. This program has been very popular, adding 150-200 newcomers each year. Every Christmas since 2008, this list offers a daily email for the first 26 days of December. It features a scriptural passage from the Christmas story followed by readings from the Writings given for the New Church. At the end of the readings for each day is a set of reflections, together with some questions for consideration to connect the readings to daily life.

Journey spiritual growth email programs are another popular draw for newcomers. We offer 10 different Journey programs via email, with a

new one added every year. These email programs feature the content of the Journey programs which have been created by General Church Outreach, and which are familiar to many in the New Church.

Each Journey program is a relevant, step-by-step, Bible-based program designed to assist in growing spiritually and applying God's teachings to one's everyday life. They include scriptural passages, quotes from New Church theology, reflections and tasks.

Subscribers to a Journey Program receive daily emails over several weeks. A newcomer can sign up at any time and will begin receiving the emails the next day. We've had more than 4,000 subscribers to these and continue to draw about two newcomer subscriptions every day.

For those who have been touched in some way by the content on the website, we provide another email program for them to learn more about the New Church. It's called Foundations, a seven-week introduction to New Church theology, based on the book by the Rev. Frank Rose.

Much as the printing press provided a way to dramatically reach more people than previously possible, the internet is doing the same thing today, to an even greater extent. Our website, [www.newchurch.org](http://www.newchurch.org), has proven to be an effective mechanism for reaching and helping newcomers. It is very gratifying to me personally to connect with them and see how people have been touched.

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More samples of emails from readers:

“I think you are a blessing to God Himself. Surely, He is proud to have you on His team.”

(From a minister, originally challenging our doctrine, after an email exchange)

First Contact:

“I think you are lost. If one is not saved by grace alone through faith alone, through Christ’s death and resurrection, then the Gospel is not good news . . . You’ve denied the Gospel and sadly you are outside the faith. Repent and look to Christ and His atoning work alone for your salvation. I will pray that God would lead you out of

this doctrinal stupor you have fallen into. I would have much more sympathy for you if you simply claimed to be unbelievers. Sorry.”

Later (12 emails):

“There has been a bond formed between us that I will not soon forget . . . We can agree to disagree and still be kind-hearted toward the other. Thank you for the dialog . . . If you’re ever up in Traverse City I’d be honored if you stopped by.”  
(From Dan, a Protestant Minister)

“I have finished the book [*Heaven and Hell*, sent by newchurch.org] and I must say it sure makes you stop and think . . . Some days I wonder if it’s worth getting up but then I think of what I read in the book and I know it isn’t my choice. I am so lonely and scared because I am now on my own and for 34 years I had someone to share everything with. Please keep in touch and pray for me. Thanks again for not giving up on me and for being a friend. I really need that.”

(One of 33 emails with a reader of *God Doesn’t Make Bad Things Happen*)

“Thank you so much. I just received your email and wanted to thank you for the many words of encouragement. It’s good to know that there are people out there who still care. I am so happy that I stumbled across the website. It was truly an act of God. I guess all there is left to do is just continue to have faith, believe, and trust in God, even if I still suffer physically. Just like you said, the answer to my healing from God might not be now but later on. Until then I will thank Him in advance and continue to be grateful that I’ve lived to see another sunrise and sunset. Thank you again for taking the time out to respond. You didn’t have to do it but I’m glad you did. I was always told that there are angels among us. Bless you.”

(June, a reader of *God Doesn’t Make Bad Things Happen*)

“Thank you for responding, and for doing so in love . . . I’ve been told that I can be too zealous, and sometimes I agree . . . I should also say that I am always eager to learn and don’t want to get puffed up by knowledge or assume that I am completely right . . . I also think that, when I am able and God willing, I should read what Swedenborg wrote in his own words.”

(From Jon, another doctrinal challenger)

“You are my angel from a distance.”

“I am a Chaplain for Placer County, CA, Jail & Juvenile Detention Facility and would love to use your [Living Courageously Journey program] materials to serve these individuals that have taken the wrong path.”

“I am really excited to find out that there is a Church such as this one!”

“From what I have read on your site, your beliefs are close to the ones my wife and I hold. We have practiced our relation to God by ourselves, and now seek kinship with like-minded good people.”

(This contact led to baptism and regular church attendance.)

“Gripping, I passed this on to a comrade of mine, and he actually bought me lunch because I found this for him, so let me rephrase: Thanks for lunch.”

(From a reader of our article on *Fear & Worry*)

“I accept now what God is giving me. And I open my eyes now. . . . Thanks for this program, I found the bread of life in your nice message. Thanks again and more power.”

(Living Courageously Journey subscriber)

“Viewing the broadcast about Alcatraz has directed me with the substantial first steps that I needed to get out of my comfort zone and let go of my bars.”

(Viewer of a NewChurchLIVE video sermon)

“First, thank you. My name is Janeen and I’m 22. My own mind is my personal prison and I’m too afraid to admit that to myself, another person, as well as God. My heart is yearning to be freed from this mental torment. My thoughts are not harmful, just a mass of confusion and uncertainty. I don’t think that God hears the cries of my heart all of the time. I do believe, however. I am ready to start my journey of life and to understand my personal calling. Thank you, again.”

(Another viewer of the NewChurch LIVE video sermon, *Escape from Alcatraz*)

“We learn what is the real freedom in Jesus Christ, Salvation, Repentance, Born Again, Baptism, Worship, building relations, New Church, and the ministry statement of faith, belief and much more. I was from a trinitarian background; now we unlearn the false understandings and realized the truth.”

(Clery, a subscriber to the Living Courageously Journey Program. Subsequently, Clery found and met with Rev. Peter Devassy, and reported:

“We decided to be baptized on Sunday 1-1-2012 at Cochin where we start a new life and do the given mission. After this, opening a gathering (worship, Word study) every Sunday at My home.”

“I feel God presented a video to me about angels and I opened link and saw about the New Church and watched the awesome pastor speak. I loved it. You have a church in Arizona. I have family who live there. And I have felt a calling and a pull to move there. But finances have made me remain in Iowa City. I will continue to view services online until God directs me to a way to make it possible to move.”

I am so happy that I stumbled across the website. It was truly an act of God.

“I really need to join with a solid foundation and that is why I believe God has guided me to you. And as much as I am reading all the materials in your website, I am getting to more depth of truth. I believe this guidance is from God Himself. Swedenborg’s Writings are really uplifting in Christian knowledge.”  
(Patrick in Bangladesh)

“I am fascinated with this New Church. Catholic by education and training. Now broadly ecumenical. I am a Chaplain with Pointman Ministries International and for the Marine Corps League in Apple Valley, CA. I think I will hang out with you folks!”  
(Michael)

“I like to know how you work and your mission. Are you Christian? I have got a group of people and we would like to be together with you. *Proverbs 11.14*” And later: “I beg you to tell me many things about New Church”  
(Richard in Democratic Republic of Congo)

*We get many emails from pastors just looking to connect with an organization for support. But Richard has communicated with us over 186 emails, never asking for money or material support. He now self-identifies as New Church and asks for doctrinal support and how to conduct himself as a New Church pastor to lead his congregation.*

“Sir, thank you for the answers to my questions and I will read it in the church meetings. There are so many areas we would like you people to help us, we need explanatory books on our major doctrines if possible and also tracts that we can re-distribute to people to enable us reach out to people for learning.”

*After more than 100 emails, this minister and his brother (another minister) have since met with our Director of Outreach, and desire affiliation with the New Church. He and his brother are now acting as New Church lay leaders in Nigeria. He is a candidate for ordination through the Theological School.*



**Rob Andrews** retired from a career with Burroughs and Unisys Corporation, serving as Vice-President there. He currently works part-time for the General Church with responsibility for their websites, including newchurch.org. He lives in Bryn Athyn with his wife Susie, 2 daughters and their husbands, and his grandchildren. Contact: [Rob.Andrews@newchurch.org](mailto:Rob.Andrews@newchurch.org)





## The Rev. Joel Christian Glenn

### *The Joy of Sharing the Lord's Word*

Joel Glenn was born in Abington, Pennsylvania, in 1989 – son of Michael and Hilary Glenn, the fifth of seven siblings. He was a long way – literally and figuratively – from Westville, South Africa, where he is now the assistant pastor and chaplain of the Kainon School.

“As a child I mostly enjoyed keeping to myself and doing my own thing.” He attended schools in Bryn Athyn for his whole academic career. By the time he left Theological School he had spent 20 years in its educational system.

He graduated from Bryn Athyn College of the New Church in 2011 with a BA in History/Religion. He considered pursuing a degree in the classics but opted instead to work retail for a year and take a break from academia. “I have never regretted that choice as it prepared me more for ministry than years spent studying Greek and Latin would have.” In the fall of 2013 he entered Theological School.

He had first begun thinking of becoming a minister sometime in high school. “I had always enjoyed theology and questioning the meaning of life. But at the time I did not take the idea of becoming a minister seriously. My focus was more on theory and I did not think teaching or pastoring would be

what I wanted to do with my life.”

He credits his family upbringing as preparing him well for being a minister. “My parents made sure to instill New Church principles in us from a young age.”

It was in Bryn Athyn College that he really felt the push to become a minister. “The religion professors there opened my eyes to how much impact a minister could have on the lives of others. Prior to that my interaction with ministers had been distant, but at Bryn Athyn I had first-hand experience of being supported and seeing others supported by ministers in a very personal way. That experience, both in and out of the classroom, did a great deal to shape me as a minister.”

He finally committed to becoming a minister “probably around sophomore year. It was a gradual decision-making process, but one key moment came when I was contemplating whether or not I would enjoy life as a minister. The person I was talking with challenged me instead to think whether I would be able to serve a use as a minister. As soon as I realized the answer was yes, it came to me that I would also enjoy it.”

He found Theological School was invaluable in preparing him for the ministry. “The discussions, debates, and arguments with my classmates and teachers sharpened my doctrinal understanding in a way that nothing else has. From the outside looking in it may have looked very intellectual but for us it had deep meaning for how we would serve our future congregants and the Lord. I continue to draw on those experiences as a pastor.”

After ordination in the summer of 2015 he moved to Rochester, Michigan, to serve the Oak Arbor Society as assistant pastor. “I enjoyed serving in one of the most beautiful church buildings I have been to, not to mention the warm and welcoming people. I left Oak Arbor sooner than expected to become the assistant pastor in Westville, South Africa, in March of 2017, which is where I am now.

“I enjoy serving as the school chaplain and working on how best to serve the children’s spiritual lives. The congregation is wonderful and vibrant.”

Joel says, “I have loved being a pastor even more than I thought I would. The highlight for me has been preaching. There is no feeling like standing in front of a congregation, sharing the Lord’s Word with them, and knowing that it will make a difference for their lives. When I come away from a good sermon I feel drained in the most rewarding way, as if all my energy has been spent and used in pursuit of a good thing, and I can rest content that I have done my job.”

Looking to the future he hopes to be able to bring the New Church to a wider audience. “I look forward to the challenge of teaching people who have no background in the Church. Anyone and everyone can understand what the Lord teaches when they are shown how it speaks directly to their life.”

As a hobby he invests much of his free time in cycling. “I love listening to podcasts such as Jonathan Rose’s *Spirit and Life Bible Study* as I cycle through the Lord’s creation. I’m even coming to love the hills of Westville, quite a change from flat Michigan.” He also enjoys reading and playing video games.

He says people might be surprised to find that when he was younger he despised any form of public speaking. “While I still dislike acting,” he says, “I now love to speak in front of a crowd. It is an exhilarating and humbling feeling to have the opportunity to influence how people think and live.”

He is hard pressed to pick one favorite passage from the Writings but one he enjoys is *Arcana Coelestia* 2023:

Love to the Lord cannot possibly be separated from love toward the neighbor, for the Lord’s love is directed toward the whole human race whom He wishes to save eternally and to join so completely to Himself that not a single one of them perishes. Anyone therefore who has love to the Lord possesses the Lord’s love and so cannot help loving the neighbor.

To contact Joel Glenn: [joelcglenn@gmail.com](mailto:joelcglenn@gmail.com) or [joel@newchurch.co.za](mailto:joel@newchurch.co.za)

#### OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY

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

#### PERMISSION

This is one of four related terms which makes vital contributions to our theology and involve important distinctions. All the power of acting is from the Lord; but what is done by angels, spirits and men is nearer to or more remote from the Lord in the degree that they intend to conform with His will or purpose to act contrary to it. Thus there are four distinct qualities of action.

What is done from love to the Lord and toward the neighbor is from will. All that is done from the same love, but qualified as yet by still active states of the proprium, is from good pleasure. That which is done by those who are interiorly evil, but from an end of natural good, is from leave. But what is done by the evil from a deliberate purpose of evil is done from permission.

Note, however, that a permission always involves two things. The Lord permits only the evil which He can bend to an end of good that could not be achieved in any other way; and He neither wills nor concurs in the evil. This is peculiar to the Lord. He alone can permit and not will in the least degree, or even acquiesce in, the evil permitted. (See *Heavenly Doctrine* 272; *Divine Providence* 296)

# Heavenly Union: Marriage on Earth

*A Sermon by the Rev. Joel C. Glenn*

Without truth, nothing good could exist. Without goodness, there would be nothing true. That statement is a surprising one. What does goodness have to do with making something true? And isn't it obvious that we can be loving regardless of how correct we are? Yet the teachings of the New Church make it clear that goodness and truth, or love and wisdom only exist when they are partnered together in a kind of marriage. (*Married Love* 83)

So why do these two things *need* to be married? How is it that something is not good if not true, nor true if not good? The teachings of the New Church explain it this way:

Good does not exist by itself, nor truth by itself, but they are everywhere united. Anyone with any sense who tries to form for himself an idea of goodness, finds he cannot do it without adding something that expresses it and presents it to view. Unless something is added, good is a nameless entity. That which expresses it and presents it to view has to do with truth. Try saying just "good" without at the same time mentioning some particular or other with which it is associated, or define it abstractly, that is, without attaching any additional idea, and you will see that it has no reality, but that it has reality when something is added . . . It is the same with truth if it is referred to without a subject. (*Married Love* 87)

Without truth there is no way of defining or expressing goodness. In other words, we can't just talk about "good." We can only talk about "good" in the context of things that *are* good. It might be as simple as a smile (he has a good smile) or as complex as a person (he is a good man), but without it "good" doesn't convey much. All those images and ideas that allow us to express what goodness is are truth.

Think of it this way: something is true when it points to what is real. Fundamentally, good is the most real thing in the world. Evil is an illusion, it's empty, without substance. But goodness is real and lasting. So anything that lets us understand or experience goodness speaks to what is really real, or in other words, the truth.

We can see this easily in the case of someone who thinks he has goodness,

but thinks that the best way to express it is by sacrificing animals on an altar. His actions are not true because they don't really testify to his goodness, nor is his goodness real because it doesn't translate into anything that is actually good. Likewise, consider someone who has his facts right but is not good. Aren't his facts still true? In a sense, perhaps, but not spiritually.

Take someone who firmly believes in one God. It is true that there is only one God. But let's say this person then takes that to mean that he can belittle other faiths and condemn those who don't worship his God. His belief is no longer really true because by the statement "there is only one God" he means something false: "I can belittle people of other faiths." Whereas when the statement "there is only one God" is paired with goodness, that is, it is taken to mean, "all people of all faiths have some connection to the same God," then it is true. Without goodness, the evil implications make a statement false: no matter how factual the statement is, if the implications are evil, and so false, it is not true, because what you *mean* by it is not true.

The need that truth and goodness have to be married to each other plays out within each one of us as the love and wisdom that make up who we are. This marriage is not static but exists in a continuous cycle: love motivates us to seek wisdom, wisdom teaches us to express love, and that love in turn motivates us to seek even more wisdom.

There's a catch, however: if that cycle were to run in a single person it would soon fall out of balance, for a very particular reason. At first, a person would love the idea of growing wise, and put in the effort to do so. But when he had achieved that wisdom, a problem would arise: his love of growing wise would transform into a love for his own wisdom, and so for himself. He would become conceited and prideful, and the cycle would be cut off: his newfound wisdom would only be used to elevate himself over others, and not to promote love in the world.

For this reason the Lord provides that the cycle exists most fully only when it exists in two people, specifically a husband and wife. (*Married Love* 88-89) This is the origin and foundation of marriage. In short, marriage is the interplay and cycle of love and wisdom not just within one person but across two people.

This reality is told in the symbolism of the story of the creation of Adam and Eve. Adam at first represents all of humanity: Adam is simply a Hebrew word that means "person" or "mankind." But when Eve is taken from him he, as the male, then only represents one part of a person, the first half of the cycle of love and wisdom; Eve, the woman, represents the second half. We will go into more detail on that further on, but for now here is the story of Adam and Eve.

And Jehovah God said, "It is not good that Man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him." Out of the ground Jehovah God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Man to see what he would call them. And whatever Man called each living creature, that was its name. So Man gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Man there was not found a helper comparable to him. (*Genesis 2: 18-20*)

The situation is that God realizes that Man on his own is not sufficient, something needs to be done. God brings all the animals to him, but not one of them is a suitable partner for man. They are all beneath him. God decides to remove a part of Man, to create a new person, so that there can be a suitable partnership and balance:

And Jehovah God caused a deep sleep to fall on Man, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which Jehovah God had taken from Man He made into a female, and He brought her to Man.

And Man said: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called a female, because she was taken out of a male."

Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. (*Genesis 2: 21-24*)

Adam, or the male, stands for the first half of the equation: the love of growing wise that produces wisdom. Eve, or the female, stands for the second half of the equation: loving that wisdom that has been produced and so putting it into practice. This separation protects human beings from conceit. Rather than loving himself for how wise he has become, a man can love that wisdom as it is loved by women. And women in turn can love that wisdom deeply without conceit or pride.

This isn't to say that men are just wise and women are just loving. Love and wisdom exist in both men and women; but men are specialists in the pursuit of wisdom, and women are specialists in loving wisdom. Another way of putting that is that men are more focused on things that make them wise: integrity, fairness, truth, standing up for what is right, and coming to conclusions by analysis. Women are more focused on the love that comes from that wisdom: caring for people, being sensitive to needs, softening truth with mercy, using an organic approach to solve problems, prioritizing people over rules, remaining focused on the application or use of ideas, working together rather than in isolation and building communities.

How these qualities play out in the lives of individual men and women could fill books, but the fundamental quality remains the same even when infinitely varied.

But what do we do with this information? How does it change who we are and how we live? For one thing it highlights how much we need each other and

how much we need to work together as one. As a man I am missing something, and no matter how closely I unite love and wisdom together in my life I will always have an imbalance toward the wisdom side. Likewise a woman, no matter how closely she unites love and wisdom together in her life, will always have an imbalance toward the love side. Not to mention the fact that when the marriage between love and wisdom is only happening within, we tend to overestimate how good of a job we're doing with it.

The messiness of bringing another human being into the picture does a good job of shaking us out of that illusion and bringing real balance. This is especially true in a marriage, when two people are forced into each other's personal space and can't help but intrude into each other's inner lives.

Take a husband who is proud of how strict he is being with the kids: he knows that in the long run it will lead to their benefit and when they are older they'll thank him. So he feels some pride in how well he has married wisdom (knowing how best to enforce the rules in this case) and love (looking out for his kids' well-being).

But then his wife comes in and gently informs him that in this case, actually, he has gone too far. She can see that this situation requires a softer touch. She is bringing in a wisdom that is more closely married to love. That will probably deflate his pride a little (or a lot), but it will actually create more balance between love and wisdom in their family.

On the other hand the wife might at times be too lenient, thinking that in doing so she is wisely letting love rule the day. But at times her husband sees that what's needed is a firmer hand, and has to lay down the law. She in retrospect may even see that in dealing with the kids firmly, they have created an even more loving home, not a less loving one. So at times his firm wisdom will create a better balance of love and wisdom in the family.

This is only one example among the millions we could look at. As we've said, there is infinite variety in how these dynamics show up. You may even find that at times a woman's focus on love leads her to be too strict and a man's focus on wisdom leads him to be too lenient.

That brings us to an interesting question: should men and women *intentionally* create imbalance? Should men err on the side of wisdom to the detriment of love, and vice versa for women? Well, not necessarily. A more positive way to put it would be to say that as men and women we should be as balanced as possible, but we will also inevitably need to play to our strengths. This is especially useful to remember for those who are not married: you can, and in fact must, still work on balancing the love and wisdom in your life.

Even if as men and women we specialize in one or the other, we all have both love and wisdom. What a married partner provides is a balance, in part, to the love and wisdom that we already have. In other words, if you don't

balance love and wisdom in your life as an individual, there is no way that you will be able to do so when you find yourself in a marriage relationship. (Cf. *Married Love* 65: “True married love is nothing but a union of love and wisdom. Two married partners who have this love between them and in them at the same time are a reflection and image of it.”)

That leads us to the biggest takeaway that all of us can have from this look at marriage, whether you are single or married, widowed or divorced, in a happy relationship or a destructive one, whatever your marital status is: the marriage that the Lord will eventually provide for you will only be as good as the two of you are.

How well your future marriage will work, whether it is the one you are working on five minutes from now in the social hall or 500 years from now in heaven, is entirely dependent on the choices you make in the here and now to balance love and wisdom. Without those two together a marriage cannot work.

That is why Jesus said those famous words, “So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.” (*Matthew* 19:6). Yes, this is referring to husbands and wives, but more than that it is referring to love and wisdom. God fully intends for these to be no longer two but one flesh within us, such that we never do or say anything true that is not also loving, nor ever do or say anything loving that is not also wise. What God has joined together as one, we are forbidden to separate in our own lives. *Amen.*



# Serving in the Midst of the Opioid Crisis

*The Rev. Chuck Blair*

**W**e live in the midst of an opioid crisis. The number of deaths in the United States in 2017 topped 64,000<sup>1</sup>. Just within our small congregation here at NewChurch LIVE, five families have tragically lost loved ones to the disease over our short eight years of existence.

So how do we, as congregations, best serve there?

It begins with this core commitment, I believe, the “why” before the “how,” and the “why” is that we must serve. The core commitment grows directly out of the simple and profound narrative of *Matthew 25*:

Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you? (*Matthew 25:37-38*)

The Lord’s answer is straightforward and prescriptive:

Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me. (*Matthew 25:40*)

Enough said then about the “why.” Onto the “how.”

The “how” means we cannot overly spiritualize this challenge. There are times, of course, to see the spiritual aspects of “hunger” and “thirst.” And there are times to simply see it naturally, that people actually are hungry and thirsty. I fear that if we over-spiritualize our theology, seeing “hunger” and “thirst” only as a metaphor for spiritual needs, we miss the incarnational aspect of the Lord’s message which very much addressed physical needs, i.e. physical hunger and thirst, as well as the call to address those needs.

As a result of over-spiritualizing, we can arguably become all too ready to pronounce spiritual judgment on addiction without ever actually drawing near enough to addicts to know the fullness of the challenge in its very physical

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1 <https://www.drugabuse.gov/related-topics/trends-statistics/overdose-death-rates>

Emanuel Swedenborg  
again and again  
repeats a simple train  
of logic. We are here  
to serve. We are here  
to serve the neighbor.  
Who is the neighbor  
I am to serve? It is the  
good in the neighbor  
that I am to serve.

nature. The distorting image of a doctor writing prescriptions without meeting the patient comes to mind.

New Church theology offers a very different approach, one that thankfully starts to erase the arbitrary line between “care giver” and “care receiver.” Emanuel Swedenborg again and again repeats a simple train of logic. We are here to serve. We are here to serve the neighbor. Who is the neighbor I am to serve? It is the good in the neighbor that I am to serve. And that generous cycle spirals out, ripples out in circles that come to move from our churches, to our communities, to our country, to our world, and eventually to God Himself.

That core theological paradigm means this: everyone, every breathing human being, has something good within, a Divine spark, an inmost. I believe we are called – with great humility and an open heart – to draw near enough to our brothers and sisters to both know that good within them and to find ways to serve it both spiritually and physically. In doing so, expect to be changed.

That does not mean there is no accountability or a sloppy inability to speak the truth. It does mean, however, that we best serve when we look deeply, when we humbly draw alongside the other, when we practice however imperfectly table fellowship vs. boundary monitoring, when we seek kinship first.

A story. Every few weeks we head down to Philadelphia with a very small group of people to offer “blessing bags” to the homeless and addicted of Kensington, an idea gleaned from a non-profit, “Angels in Motion.”

It is a simple process. Holding zip-lock bags with food, socks, a few toiletries, etc., we walk the streets, offering the bags, conversation, and sometimes a prayerful interaction.

There is always that one interaction, that “thin space” as it were, that speaks to why, in God’s providence, we are there. And it is never about us changing someone else’s life but instead, it is always about the exact opposite, how we change one another’s. How in kinship we are returned to ourselves.

A few weeks back it was Val, an addict living beneath a bridge. On passing her small living space, my friend noticed a Bible prominently displayed, opened to the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, sitting on a linen-covered cardboard box. Through tears she talked of her journey. Through tears we joined hands and prayed.

And we prayed the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm.

I am NEVER more than these people. Kinship comes quickly in those moments. As Father Gregory Boyle notes, over time we stop standing in critical judgment of how others carry their burdens, but stand in awe that they carry it.

In the years now of doing this, I frequently ask those we serve what I can pray for. One hundred percent of the time their prayers are for their families and for relief from addiction.

Let that be our prayer also.



**The Rev. Charles E. (Chuck) Blair** is pastor of NewChurch LIVE in Bryn Athyn. He has taught in the Academy Secondary Schools and was head housemaster in Stuart Hall for many years before entering the ministry. He lives with his wife, Keene (Smith), and their family in Bryn Athyn. Contact: [chuck.blair@newchurchlive.tv](mailto:chuck.blair@newchurchlive.tv).

# Attributes of a Humble Person

*The Rev. David H. Lindrooth*

Over the last several years I have compiled various statements in the Heavenly Doctrines that describe the different behaviors of a person who is truly humble. I don't know if it is complete or not, but it seems to cover most of the statements the Writings make.

Over time, it has become a list that I often turn to when I am looking for inspiration in my personal life. It is something I have shared with my family, and it has been a great basis for those deeper conversations one likes to have with family members and close friends. It is the kind of list I like to have taped on my refrigerator to remind me what life is really about. So now I share it with you in the hopes that you can enjoy it as well!

A humble person:

- Recognizes that everything truly alive comes from God. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1153)
- Sees that all evil comes from self. (*Arcana Coelestia* 3880)
- Sees “self” as “dust” and “ashes” and “nothing but evil.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 2265, 7550)
- Repents. (*Arcana Coelestia* 4779)
- Obeys the Lord's commands. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1937)
- Does not let self-interest obstruct one's efforts to serve. (*Arcana Coelestia* 8873)
- Is aware that what one knows is hardly anything in comparison with what one doesn't know. (*Apocalypse Explained* 828)
- Does what is good. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1937)
- Speaks the truth. (*Ibid.*)
- Views one's external circumstances as the means to serve others. (*Arcana Coelestia* 5913)
- Prays, worships, kneels and prostrates oneself. (*Apocalypse Revealed* 293, *Arcana Coelestia* 4215, 8271, 1999)
- Asks for mercy and grace. (*Arcana Coelestia* 598, 5929)

ATTRIBUTES OF A HUMBLE PERSON

- Abandons the notion that the power to think or act comes from self, completely turning instead to the Lord. (*Arcana Coelestia* 6866)
- Never holds others in contempt. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1594)
- Is connected with heaven. (*Arcana Coelestia* 8678)
- Recognizes that all goodness comes from the Lord. (*Arcana Coelestia* 3880)
- Receives the Divine. (*Arcana Coelestia* 8678, 2715)
- Is truly happy. (*Arcana Coelestia* 8271)



**The Rev. David H. Lindrooth** is director of General Church Outreach. He lives in Bryn Athyn with his wife, Aven (Pendleton). Contact: [David.Lindrooth@newchurch.org](mailto:David.Lindrooth@newchurch.org)

# Church News

*Compiled by Bruce Henderson*

## STATE OF THE CHURCH

**The Rt. Rev. Brian W. Keith** presented highlights of “The State of the Church” at the Boynton Beach Retreat banquet on January 31.

The Bryn Athyn Church is pleased to be hosting a General Assembly in 2020 – the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the Church when the Lord sent His disciples throughout the spiritual world on June 19, 1770, proclaiming that “the Lord God Jesus Christ reigns.” The Assembly will held over June 19, 2020.

Bishop Keith has announced his retirement in June 2019. A process is underway for the next Executive Bishop of the Church. (See the following item for the names of the candidates.) The Council of the Clergy, after taking extensive counsel, will determine a nominee during the clergy meetings in June.

The General Church achieved a balanced budget last year, for the first time in several years. Many of our societies are now self-sufficient. Increased communication is being produced by the Office of Advancement.

The lack of involvement among young adults is a continuing concern – and is common to most churches. **The Rev. Coleman Glenn** is focusing a quarter of his time on young adults. This year graduates of the Academy Secondary Schools and Bryn Athyn College were given a gift from the Church of a book of the Writings. Many congregations face challenges with schools and attendance, but there are a lot of positives as well.

The International Church continues to see growth. We are working with the churches toward financial self-sufficiency, limiting the percentage of General Church budget that we can allocate there. Good things are also happening in Brazil, Europe and Asia.

Bishop Keith and his wife, **Gretchen**, attended a very successful summer camp in Australia last year, put on jointly with the New Church in Australasia. **The Rev. Howard Thompson** will be taking a leave of absence from the General Church to serve that Australasia congregation, beginning this summer.

The church in the Philippines is being supported through San Diego. With growing interest in Cuba, the **Rev. Brad Heinrichs** is traveling there several times a year from Canada.

Reporting as Chancellor for the Academy of the New Church, the Glencairn Museum is a huge success with growing impact in the field of religious museums. The Secondary Schools had a very successful year – with half the endowment they had 10 years ago. Bryn Athyn College has more than 300 students and is generating income through tuition to achieve a balanced budget. Applications for next year are already off the charts, with potentially 400 enrolled students. (See the report below from **President Brian Blair** on the State of the College.)

### CANDIDATES FOR BISHOP

The names of six nominees for the next Executive Bishop of the General Church have been sent to the clergy and the General Church Board of Directors. Here are the names in alphabetical order, with their ages and current roles:

- **Erik Buss** (52), Assistant Pastor of the Bryn Athyn Church
- **Peter Buss Jr.** (50) Assistant to the Bishop
- **Glenn “Mac” Frazier** (47), Associate Pastor of Glenview (Illinois) New Church
- **Bradley Heinrichs** (50), Head Pastor of the Carmel New Church and School, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada, and Executive Vice President of the General Church in Canada
- **David Lindrooth** (55), Director of General Church Outreach
- **Derrick Lumsden** (35), Pastor of Sower’s Chapel in Sarver, Pennsylvania

The Board has received the resumés, nomination statements and answers from the nominees to a series of questions it had posed. The Board will give input to the Council of the Clergy, which will nominate the next Executive Bishop at its meetings in June.

### ACADEMY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Highlights from recent Academy Board of Trustees meetings:

#### January 17

Enrollment at Bryn Athyn College is expanding rapidly, with expectations of perhaps reaching 400+ in the next year. Since the capacity for the present infrastructure and faculty is about 500 students, this is a time to pause, take stock, and plan for the future, including:

- Achieving a balanced operational budget, as expected with enrollment of 400+
- Identifying additional infrastructure needs and sources of funding
- How to provide New Church faculty
- Ensuring New Church moral culture in student life

Recognizing that growing enrollment will require more faculty with doctoral degrees, a generous gift has been received to provide financial support for New Church graduate students to obtain such degrees and then teach at the College.

A formal code of conduct has been adopted for the Board, which will be part of the orientation for new Board members.

### February 9-10

After taking counsel with the Board, **Chancellor Brian Keith** nominated **Brian Blair** for another three-year term as President of Bryn Athyn College. This was unanimously approved by the Board, with appreciation for the job Mr. Blair has been doing. The Board also accepted a resolution not to cap College enrollment at any specific number, provided that stakeholders believe the College is delivering New Church education.

The operating budget for the College is projected to be balanced by 2021, with an enrollment close to 500. There are now nine majors in the College, plus two graduate programs in Religious Studies and Special Education. A program for developing New Church teaching skills with new faculty was presented to the Board.

Student life issues were discussed, including spiritual development, chapel, health services, dining, disability and Title IX programs. There are 150 students participating in 14 athletic programs. A 2.0 grade point average is required for athletic participation; these students are averaging 3.02 GPA.

A Swedenborg Learning Institute has been proposed, which would include:

- Hosting academic conferences
- Visiting scholars doing research and making presentations
- The Master of Arts in Religious Studies (MARS) Program
- Non-graduation programs

Managing Director **Jim Adams** reported that the Academy Secondary Schools expect enrollment to decline before recovering because of a very small graduating class in the Bryn Athyn Church School this year. **Kaylene Glenn** has been hired as a part-time Alumni Relations Manager. One of her



first projects is to develop a voucher program for children of New Church parents to encourage connection and future attendance. Additional recruiting of New Church students is also planned. The dual enrollment program with the College is a success and an excellent recruiting tool for both schools.

Director of Finance **Duane Hyatt** reported that six-month operating results are as expected; there has been a significant increase in contributions to the schools; and the Fieldcrest property on Byberry Road is close to final sale. David Tolson, chair of the Facilities and Grounds Committee, said an idea has been presented for a commercial and apartment complex on Academy land at Buck and Byberry Roads.

**Leonard Gyllenhaal**, chair of the Investment Committee, reported a 16% return on investments last year. The budget for the Glencairn Museum is on target, with a surplus. The budget for Cairnwood is also on target, with hopes for it being balanced with additional revenue from a newly acquired liquor license for its events.

**Isaac Smith** reported that the Nominating Committee is seeking candidates for two Board vacancies, looking especially for backgrounds in law, finance and higher education.

**Susan Asplundh**, chair of the Advancement Committee, led a discussion of the new fund for doctoral degrees for New Church educators, noting that it can be used by current Bryn Athyn College professors and potential New Church hires who fit with the College's needs. She also highlighted \$500,000 endowment gift to the Mitchell Performing Arts Center for staffing, to alleviate the work load of the manager.

The Academy is moving forward with hiring a Director of Public Safety to develop the Security Department as the student body increases in numbers and complexity.

## STATE OF BRYN ATHYN COLLEGE

(Note: This is a summary of a "State of the College" presentation given February 7, featuring President **Brian Blair**, Chief Academic Officer the **Rev. Dr. Thane Glenn**, and Dean of Students **Dr. Suzanne Nelson**.)

### Sustainability and Growth

The particular qualities and resources of Bryn Athyn College make it an intellectual center for all who desire to engage in higher education enriched, guided and structured by the study of the Old Testament, New Testament and theological writings of Emanuel Swedenborg.

As the College's student body expands, the intention is for traditional students in undergraduate and graduate programs to be joined by increasing

numbers of life-long learners. Some of the special resources at the College include associations with organizations and events that attract more students and individuals interested in the study of Swedenborg and the Heavenly Doctrines.

Last June 2017, the College held a well-attended academic conference on Swedenborg's Influence on the Arts. Participants included members from seven different Swedenborgian organizations. The College intends to build on these relationships to encourage more study in Swedenborgian thought and spiritual insight.

As interest in the College increases through connections like these and through admissions department efforts, record numbers of applications are supporting robust enrollment forecasts. At this time, submitted applications are up 40% over last year, with higher average academic profiles in all measured areas.

The yield from submitted applications to deposited students depends on many factors, but there are certain indicators that remain consistent through the years. Those who have physically come to campus are much more likely to enroll, and a big part of that is the beauty of the grounds and the value of the facilities.

Families are also looking for quality education that does not create crushing financial debt, and so a strong scholarship fund is important. Additionally, the caliber of faculty and academic programs plays a huge part in a student's decision to attend. These areas are all affected by Advancement efforts, and happily, the College has experienced a record level of total giving over the past three years.

Annual giving at the College has shown an increase in the number of donors, and there have been a number of large donors and foundations that wish to support capital projects and programs. These gifts have allowed the College to improve facilities and support academic development while also working with a healthier revenue model to eliminate the waning deficit by 2021.

One exciting project on the horizon is the construction of a student union and conference center in the area between Pendleton Hall and the residence halls. The need for a central student gathering place has been evident for some time, and its creation will support enrollment, retention and revenue by way of attracting new students, keeping current ones, and generating income from rentals. The first floor will house a café and meeting spaces, including an area for presentations and performances. The lower floor will be devoted to a fitness center and locker rooms.

Several additional campus projects are forthcoming. One is the development of a building arts studio village, which will grow around the

current metal forge space near the ice skating rink. More on that will be shared as plans are solidified.

An interactive welcome board in the Brickman Center is also being considered. The purpose would be to offer information about the New Church to visitors in a prominent and central location on campus. There are also plans to reconfigure certain classrooms to accommodate distance learning.

The Bryn Athyn College garden will be moving to a new location. This will accommodate future building and parking needs, and also allow for an expanded “farm to table” program with Sage Dining Services, plus further development of the Education Department’s garden-based curriculum, and continued partnerships with Friends of the Farm and others.

### **Academics and Student Experience**

One highlight of the academic program report was the student survey statistics on religion courses at the College. The results show the overall satisfaction with religion courses at 89%. While that is a very high rating, an even better one comes from overall satisfaction with Religion 101, specifically, which is 95%. As an institution whose mission is spiritually based, this data is an important indicator of success.

Another measurement of success is in how well prepared for the workforce our students feel in comparison to their peers at other colleges and universities. In an effort to improve this index, departmental curricula are adjusting to include increased focus in skills that are identified as being particularly useful in future job acquisition. For example, the English major has expanded its official title to English and Communications, and includes coursework aimed at showing marketable, currently desirable skills to potential employers. The business major has also worked to add increased training in financing skills to better prepare graduates for the current business-focused workforce.

The student experience at Bryn Athyn College is one of the spirit and the mind, but also a journey affected and shaped by social activities, physical environment and opportunities for networking and community building.

Due to the small size and expanding demographic of the College student body, it becomes more and more critical to create opportunities that support a healthy and thriving student life experience.

The building of the new student union and conference center will be an impactful development for student life programming. It is expected to improve the general satisfaction of both resident and commuter students. With a dedicated space for socializing, and expanded availability of exercise facilities and food options, this space will bolster the student life experience in ways that could produce exciting results for enrollment and retention rates.

## GODSPELL

(Note: **Lori S. Odhner (Mrs. John)** sends out a thoughtful and creative “Marriage Moats” email each day to subscribers. The one below commented on the Bryn Athyn College production of *Godspell* early in the year and is reprinted with her kind permission. See photos from the production on pages 162 and 163.)

*Godspell* first came out when I was in high school. My sister and I turned up the volume while cranking out the family Christmas card that December. We marbled bluey purplish skies with a single golden star. Because the paint was oil based the project was sequestered in the garage, which made for great acoustics as we sang along.

(Bryn Athyn College) is offering the musical with a cast of 12 vibrant souls, and while I have five tickets for Saturday I slipped in to a performance last weekend. I had an inkling that once would not be enough.

There were probably 20 stories from the Bible woven into the script, on top of the songs: the prodigal son, the sower, the unforgiving servant, Noah, the Last Supper, the woman caught in adultery, Judas’ betrayal, the cleansing of the temple. Those tales reach deeply into my history, and seeing them portrayed playfully yet respectfully added one more share to my understanding.

Then there were the voices. Ah, the golden voices. “Prepare ye the way of the Lord.”

At one point the man portraying Jesus hugged everyone on stage. It moved me to see their hesitation, and sense of unworthiness melt as he reached out to them, and wrapped his mocha arms around them. For me, the image of human contact with the Divine is what keeps me from drifting out to sea.

*“Linking with an invisible God is like linking the sight of the eye with the expanse of the universe, the bounds of which are not to be seen. Or it is like looking out in the middle of an ocean, when the gaze falls on the air and the sea and is frustrated. But linking with a visible God is like seeing a man in the air or the sea opening his arms and inviting you into his embrace.” (True Christianity 787)*

## LOVE OVER EGO

*Sasha Silverman*

### **An Invitation to the 2018 Journey Program:**

Last week, my counseling class role-played a situation where a family had come to a clinic for therapy.

With astounding acting ability, our gentle, soft-spoken professor transitioned into his role as the domineering father. He took off his tie and sat down with a thud. He sneered, hunched forward, avoided eye contact,

and asked the female counselors, “What are you girls’ names? Are there any male counselors here?” He introduced his discontent by throwing jabs at the student playing the “rebel” child, saying he needed to be “fixed.”

Playing the role of his wife, I felt his disdain as well as he consistently cut me off mid-sentence. To say the least, it was an intensive exercise dealing with that level of ego. The counselors felt stumped; it was too hard to find this character’s compassion and humanity. As Swedenborg writes, when viewed from heaven, our proprium looks “just like something bony, lifeless, and utterly misshapen, and so in itself something dead.” He adds, however, that “once it has received life from the Lord it appears as something having flesh.”

While reflecting on this experience, I could see that Dr. Tucker’s character exists in all of us – and, of course, in me. There are times when I find myself completely hardened to the needs and thoughts of others, safe within the walls of my judgments. Even if I don’t overtly chastise someone the way he did, the ego barriers create distance, and hurt. When I consciously choose to respond from love, my tone and words change. The person I’m talking with will often relax and open up in response.

This fall’s Journey program, *Love Over Ego*, offers a curriculum for getting a better understanding of how our egos work. We have based it on the Biblical story of Daniel from his early days as a kidnapped child, to his rise as one of the most respected and influential leaders in Babylon. The story underscores the way authentic love for God and others can put ego in its rightful place. By connecting with our higher selves – the parts of us that are full of love, and have nothing to justify or blame – we embody “love over ego.”

The program contains instructions for a leader, as well as questions for reflection, quotes, daily readings, meditations, video testimonials and sermons. If you’re interested in joining a group, or for more information, please visit [www.newchurchjourney.org](http://www.newchurchjourney.org).

## **SUMMER CAMPS**

For more information about Academy of the New Church camps go to [www.ancss.org](http://www.ancss.org).

### **ANC Summer Camp**

The popular ANC Summer Camp, for current 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> graders, will be held on the Academy campus July 8-14. This residential camp is designed to familiarize campers with the Academy, including religious instruction, classes, activities and social events.

Photos are posted throughout the week on the ANC Summer Camp Facebook page. “Liking” the page now will provide updates and photos – up to and during the week of camp.

### **Performing Arts Camp**

This year's camp – June 20-30 – for 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders, will culminate with a production of Disney's *Aladdin Jr.* Contact **Sarah Waelchli**, [sarah.waelchli@ancss.org](mailto:sarah.waelchli@ancss.org), 267-502-2678.

### **Medieval Camp**

This camp for 9- and 10-year-olds, takes place at Glencairn Museum in Bryn Athyn.

Session One: June 18-22, 8:45-12:45 daily

Session Two: June 25-29, 8:45-12:45 daily

Contact: [christine.mcdonald@glencairnmuseum.org](mailto:christine.mcdonald@glencairnmuseum.org), 267-502-2995

## **CHURCH CAMPS**

### **Jacob's Creek Family Retreat**

This religious camp for families and all ages is set in the mountains of Western Pennsylvania. It is scheduled for July 22-25. This year's theme is: *Let Your Light Shine – Sharing the Good News.*

**The Rev. Matthew Genzlinger** returns as Family Retreat Pastor, assisted by the **Rev. Calvin Odhner** and the **Rev. Brad Heinrichs**. Camp Directors again are **Blake and Paul Messman, Jamie and Julie Uber**.

For more information and to register go to [www.jacobscreekfamilypastor.org](http://www.jacobscreekfamilypastor.org) or email [jacobscreekfamilypastor@gmail.com](mailto:jacobscreekfamilypastor@gmail.com). You can also "friend" the camp on Facebook at [facebook.com/JacobsCreekFamilyCamp](https://www.facebook.com/JacobsCreekFamilyCamp). And you can call 412-782-2710 for a paper copy of the registration form.

### **Maple Leaf Academy**

This New Church camp for teens will be held July 1-7 at the Ecology Retreat Centre, Mono, Ontario. It is open to teenagers who have completed 8<sup>th</sup> grade and those in high school. It is sponsored by the General Church in Canada and has been serving the youth of the Church since 1969.

For a registration form, financial assistance and other information please contact **Stephanie Kuhl**, Camp Director: [stephkuhl@live.ca](mailto:stephkuhl@live.ca) or call 519-895-1891, Please also check the camp's Facebook page.

EPISCOPAL VISIT TO SOUTH AFRICA  
(Photos courtesy of Gretchen U. Keith)



Mandla and Mandisa Stole following his ordination into the ministry at the New Church Buccleuch



Kainon School Courtyard



New Church Westville's Church and Social Hall



Kwa Mashu New Church



Kwa Mashu Chancel



Diepkloof New Church Sanctuary



Speakers at a Banquet at the Diepkloof New Church



Jonathan Carr portrayed Jesus



Jonathan Carr



Maia Synnestevedt



Left to right: Teryn Rose, Justin Rallo, Brandy Rose, Ashley Walsh, and Phoenix Fritch



BRYN ATHYN COLLEGE MUSICAL GODSPELL  
(Photos courtesy of Holly Feerrar)



Kayla Bundy



Marissa Miller



Left to right: Brittany Gunther, Brielle Williams and Maia Synnestvedt



The cast of *Godspell* performs a musical number

BOYNTON BEACH RETREAT  
(Photos courtesy of Gretchen U. Keith)



Dorothy and Bill Radcliffe, Naomi and Bob Smith



The Boynton Beach New Church



The Rev. Dan Heinrichs



Tim Bilger, Swedenborg Foundation, and Mark Wyncoll, General Church Advancement



The presenters, Bishop Tom Kline, Chara Daum and the Rev. Barry Halterman



The Retreat team, left to right: Scott Daum, Gail and Bob Brickman, Rachel Ebert Boyce, Sylvia Kloc, Bob and Naomi Smith, the Rev. Alan Cowley

# Life Lines

## CHAMPIONS OF NEW CHURCH EDUCATION

We lost two giants of New Church education within days of each other in February:

- **Beth Synnestvedt Johns**, who forever influenced thousands of students and educators through teaching art, developing the art curriculum for New Church schools, and awakening an appreciation for art in countless students.
- **Jane Williams-Hogan**, a renowned Swedenborgian scholar who put Bryn Athyn College on the global educational map with her expertise on Swedenborg and promoted international academic conferences focused on Swedenborg's intellect and influence.



### **Beth Johns:**

Beth and her husband, Hyland, have devoted their lives to the Church, the Academy and New Church education. That was always the focus of their community social life and their enduring passion. With Beth it was all ultimated in art, both as artist and educator.

In his memorial address, the Rev. Jeremy Simons said: “Beth’s greatest contribution, other than her five children, was to art in New Church education. From teaching dance to 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders in the Bryn Athyn Church school in her first year of college, to helping develop the first religion lessons produced by Theta Alpha in the 1940s, education and art were a huge passion from early on.”

In 1959 she outlined her guiding philosophy in an article, *A Plea for the Artistic Approach*, in the *Theta Alpha Journal*. Teaching at all levels, from elementary school to college, “She put love and attention not just into teaching art but also developing an art curriculum closely connected with New Church education – a curriculum still followed today.” Her book, *Art in Education*, is being revised and should be out shortly.

Jeremy noted: “She had an enormous effect on her students, with many of them saying today that she opened their eyes to the world of art and

expression.” Many will also admit they had resisted, claiming no talent for art and little interest, but with her gentle prodding they discovered latent abilities and lifelong appreciation.

In 1990 Beth wrote probably her crowning work – *Heads, Hearts and Hands: Nurturing Creativity*. In a review in *New Church Life*, Bruce Glenn wrote: “This book is not just about children’s art; it’s a discussion of the vital role of human creativity throughout all of life. Nurturing creativity is not a compartmentalized activity, saved only for parents and teachers of young children, but is a rich orientation for anyone who wants to be as fully alive as our Creator intended.”

Beth herself notes in this book: “It can be said that we are created to create, that we need to create in order to fulfill the Lord’s plan in creating us. . . . Our ability to take part in His creation is a magnificent gift.”

Dr. Martha Gyllenhaal, Head of the Art Department at Bryn Athyn College, paid heartfelt tribute to her dear friend and mentor at a reception following the service. Her early years of teaching in the Bryn Athyn Church School art room were under Beth’s guidance – who inspired and empowered would-be teachers for decades in the College’s Education Department. *Heads, Hearts and Hands*, plus a book she co-wrote on *Art in Education*, still are used as textbooks in the teaching of art.

Martha said: “To walk down the halls of New Church elementary schools and peek into the classrooms is to see Beth’s legacy: classroom teachers who are confident and enthusiastic about having their students do all kinds of projects for all kinds of subjects – math, religion, history, writing, the full curriculum. Beth writes: ‘If art materials are well organized and available in the classroom, a teacher can turn to them and help teach all subjects. Art can be an integral part of every learning experience instead of an interruption.’”

Beth was a graduate of the Tyler School of Art and “a wonderful artist in her own right.” Many friends and relatives treasure her art work and the family’s classic Christmas cards.

Martha noted that Beth studied and carefully observed how children develop and “loved awakening a sense of wonder [in them] by bringing their attention to various aspects of their environment which she then reinforced through a hands-on project.”

Examples were reflected in a continuous slide show at the reception and Martha added: “Children reflecting back on how it feels to walk in a blizzard, or carry flowers up the stone aisle of the Cathedral between rows of pews on Easter. She knew that awareness brings the need for response. And she stressed that the process itself is always more important than the product, though you can see in the hundred of photos she took of her students’ work, there are charming results when adults encourage children to ultimate their experiences.”

Beth's teaching and appreciation for art always was guided by her study of the Word and the Writings. She wrote: "As New Church teachers, we are looking for the beauty the Lord has built into each child. We're trying to open children to the knowledges that will make them able to flower into the form of use each was created to be."

Jeremy said in his memorial address: "The Lord is the inspiration and power behind everything good, everything we do, every beautiful thing that exists. Those angelic spirits were unknowingly linked to angels, and these in turn to higher angels, through whom the Lord's inspiration and power flowed.

"Like all of us, Beth Johns was surrounded by these spiritual influences. . . . Now she has gone from being a recipient of these influences to being one of those who helped carry them to others. . . . But now she is doing it in a new way – a way that is far more effective, and will give her far more joy, than what can be done in this world."

Just imagine her own sense of wonder now – and her joy.



### **Jane Williams-Hogan**

Jane was so driven as a leading international scholar on Emanuel Swedenborg and his wide-ranging influence that some may have wondered if her husband and family of six – plus grandchildren – got the attention they deserved. But it was really the career that came second. As the Rev. David Lindrooth said in his memorial address: "Jane was a deep, brilliant, non-stop intellectual, who, while leaving her mark on her academic community, grounded everything of her academic career in the context of her family and her church."

Dave noted that as she was working on her all-consuming doctoral dissertation in 1985 – *A New Church in a Disenchanted World* – it was her husband, Michael, and her family who saw her through. In the dedication to this 738-page dissertation, she paid loving tribute to her family for giving her life meaning.

"To her," Dave noted, "a rich, warm, honest, free-wheeling family life was the embodiment of her intellectual pursuits. The richer and more full-bodied her family life was, the more completely it served as a base and catalyst for her academic thinking."

About that seminal doctoral tome he said: "The book itself captures the passion of weaving together her personal faith with such weighty themes as the Enlightenment and the emerging European Culture of our time. It also looks at how the theology of the New Church, which is both deeply inspiring and systemic, provided the essential motivation for starting a new faith without the

usual presence of charismatic figures like Martin Luther, John Calvin, Joseph Smith or other high-powered leaders.

“I would characterize her lifelong passion as weaving or combining of what she found to be internal and sacred with the sociological forces at play in world cultures so that one could learn from their inter-relationships and see how the one influenced the other.”

The familiar description from *True Christianity* 508 of the *Nunc Licet* temple – “now it is permitted to enter intellectually into the mysteries of faith” – “was a concept Jane took to heart. In fact, she felt that intellectual pursuit of faith was not just permitted but a required basis for any faith that is real. All human beings then, without exception, have such a mandate to investigate, think about, use their God-given gifts of rationality to seek to understand spirituality and faith independently, in ways that make clear, rational sense for the purpose of living well. This is an essential quality of healthy modern human spirituality.”

All of this was the foundation for her 43-year career of teaching, pioneering research and scholarship, books and articles and a soaring vision – from the Master of Arts in Religious Studies (MARS) graduate program she helped to lead for many years to her hopes for an International Academic Center for Swedenborgian Studies at Bryn Athyn College. Many a student and colleague has been forever inspired by her passion. And College President Brian Blair promised at the reception that her dream of a Center for Swedenborgian Studies will be realized.

Her research into the life and impact of Swedenborg – not just as a theologian but in the worlds of art and literature – made Sweden almost a second home to her. And with her scholarship and leadership she helped to elevate her beloved Bryn Athyn College in worldwide academic circles.

In 1988 she organized a landmark Swedenborg Bicentenary Conference at the College – the first major international symposium focused on Swedenborg’s influence on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century thought. She played a huge role in a 2007 conference – *The World Transformed: Swedenborg and the Last Judgment* – chaired by her husband, Michael. (Her own contribution was a fascinating paper: *A New Refrain: The Child and ‘Songs of Innocence.’*)

She helped to establish and chaired the Swedenborg Seminar at the American Academy of Religion from 1993 to 1997 and was in demand as a presenter at academic conferences all over the globe. Last June, just months after being diagnosed with cancer, she chaired the *Swedenborg and the Arts* conference that brought scholars from all over the world to the Bryn Athyn College campus – and left them thirsting for more.

Jane gave the Church and the College a place at the table of international scholarship. The Center for the Study of New Religious Movements is honoring

her contributions this year by dedicating a future lectureship in her name. The first will be delivered in Taiwan this June by a dear friend and colleague from Bordeaux, France.

Jane also served on the Board of Directors of the Swedenborg Foundation for 12 years, where she oversaw publication of scholarly books on Swedenborg. She is fondly remembered there for her “rare blend of insight and integrity” and “deep, inexhaustible passion for Swedenborg’s life and works.”

She left unfinished a new, comprehensive biography of Swedenborg – years in the making – and a collection of essays on Swedenborg and five artists. And just as her work in this world was not finished, we can be sure her passions are driving her still.

Dave Lindrooth mentioned that Jane was known for long, deep conversations with friends and colleagues. Perhaps it is just as well there is no time in heaven because we can be sure that by now she has tracked down Swedenborg himself – and that there have been many very long conversations.

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Martha Gyllenhaal included Jane Hogan in her tribute to Beth Johns – “the second great New Church scholar we have lost this month.” She added: “These two women studied the Writings from very different perspectives but both saw how this new revelation could change people’s lives for the better and both women had the zeal to inspire people to share a deeper and broader awareness of what it is to be fully human.”

Jane’s scholarship will live on in the College – and academic circles – particularly with the new Institute of Swedenborgian Studies. And Beth’s commitment will carry on through the art curriculum and the General Church Arts Fund which she and Hyland founded years ago and have generously supported.

We are all blessed that their legacies live on – that God’s gifts just keep on giving.

(BMH)

## **WE ARE ALL SOWERS**

We know one of the reasons the Lord was born on earth is that here the Word could be preserved and read. The invention of the Gutenberg printing press in 1454 was revolutionary. Ever since then publication of the Bible has been prolific and it remains the best seller every year throughout the world. Now the Internet is launching unimagined opportunities to spread the Word in new ways.

We are just beginning to scratch the global potential. In his article, *Outreach Through the Internet* (page 133), General Church webmaster Rob

Andrews describes the impact – unknown to many of us – that the website *www.newchurch.org* is having all over the world.

Seekers from the United States to Bangladesh and the Congo are finding us and asking questions. Every question gets an answer -- primarily from Rob and the Rev. John Odhner. Some conversations and strong interests develop – even some baptisms. Read some of the inspiring testimonials in Rob’s article.

We are hearing more and more as well about the incredible growth and reach of the *offTheLeftEye* YouTube videos produced for the Swedenborg Foundation by Curtis Childs and the Rev. Dr. Jonathan Rose and their team. They have thousands of subscribers from all over the world tuning in every Monday evening – and their numbers grow each week. Questions are answered in real time by a team of responders. Read some of their moving testimonials below.

So what are we to make of all this? We aren’t seeing significant growth in the Church just yet. Many people say their lives are being changed but for the most part they aren’t clamoring to join a church. But does that matter? An impressively increasing number of people are having their hearts, minds and lives touched and influenced. Surely the Lord’s Church on earth is growing and that’s a good thing.

Perhaps our mission is not so much to convert as to connect, and then trust in the Lord’s leading. We can’t know where all this will lead but have to be encouraged. And it is not just Rob and John, Curtis and Jonathan, and others behind the scenes who are making connections. All of us have opportunities – just in the way we live our lives, or in things we write or say – to plant seeds that open the way for the Lord to work in people’s lives.

Like the Parable of the Sower, we can’t always know if the seeds are falling on rocky ground, among thorns, or in good soil. But we can spread seeds and let the Lord work the miracles. We are all sowers.

(BMH)

### ‘YOU ARE CHANGING MY LIFE’

As we fret at times about the slow growth of the Church – in a world desperately in need of enlightenment – it is encouraging to see these meaningful connections being established on the Internet. People not only are having their interests piqued but many feel their lives have been forever blessed and changed.

Among the many testimonies quoted by Rob Andrews in his article is one from a Hindu who said: “I’ve been struggling with my spiritual life for many, many years. I’ve always known God was there but I had a difficult time connecting with Him.” He came across Swedenborg on the Internet, watched some videos and bought a book. And, “For the first time in my spiritual



journey I actually felt the truth about God deeply in my soul.”

As part of Chara Daum’s presentation at the Boynton Beach Retreat on her work with *offTheLeftEye* videos and Jonathan Rose’s weekly Bible study (page 120) she included similar heartfelt testimonials. Among them:

- I like coming to this (YouTube) channel. Many channels out there are polarizing and mean spirited. It’s great to have a channel where people are genuinely kind, humble and seeking the truth as best they can, both within themselves and in the outer world.
- I found that ever since I came across this channel, everything started to make a lot more sense to me. Not only did it throw out the confused mess that is the traditional mess of Christianity out the window, but life itself and most religions began to make a lot more sense. You can really apply Swedenborg’s teachings to your life and it is very practical.
- Just want to thank you and tell you how many times a day I find myself thinking about something I learned from Swedenborg through your show and how it helps me to see beauty in everything good from God, but also gives me the paths my mind can follow to understand so many things I was confused about and brings me such joy all through my day.
- You and Swedenborg have saved my life and my soul. I now want to know everything about God and heaven. Please keep up the great work you are doing.

These are powerful, meaningful, life-changing connections. As with the printing press the Internet is indiscriminate, offering a lot that is good and a lot that is not. We may feel a bit like Jacob awakening in the wilderness to realize: “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not.” (*Genesis 28:16*)

(BMH)

### BEYOND ‘THE RATIONAL BIBLE’

Dennis Prager is a nationally syndicated radio talk show host with clear political views, but he is also a Jewish scholar with profound respect for Christianity and the Bible. His latest book – *The Rational Bible* – is his attempt to revive the Bible and its historic role in American/Western culture.

“I have believed all my life,” he says, “that the primary crisis in America and the West is the abandonment of Judeo-Christian values, or, one might say, the dismissal of the Bible.”

That’s an echo of famous Russian writer and intellect Alexander Solzhenitsyn who said years ago that a lifetime study of his country’s failings led him to one unmistakable conclusion: “We have forgotten God.”

Indeed, the Word is filled with admonitions for the Children of Israel – and all of us – about the consequences of forgetting God.

Prager says: “From the time long before the United States became a country until well into the 1950s, the Bible was not only the most widely read book in America; it was the primary vehicle by which each generation passed on morality and wisdom to the next generation. Since that time, we have gone from a Bible-based society to a Bible-ignorant one; from the Bible being the Greatest Book to the Bible being an irrelevant book.”

He laments that Biblical literacy is rapidly declining, that most of today’s young people cannot identify even basic Biblical stories and characters. But even worse that ignorance of the Bible, he says, is contempt for it. “Just about anyone who quotes the Bible, let alone says it is the source of his or her values, is essentially regarded as a simpleton who is anti-science, anti-intellectual and sexist.”

He quotes Abraham Lincoln, who affiliated with no church but read the Bible daily – as well as the Writings! – as saying: “I believe the Bible is the best gift God has given to man.” He feels Lincoln would be shocked by many things today but nothing “as much as the widespread ignorance of and contempt for the Bible.”

Many people trace the decline to the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in the 1960s removing the Bible from public schools and the fervor since to keep religion in any form out of public life, and that has surely been a factor. But the Bible’s place – beyond the churches – is first in the home, and that is where it is increasingly displaced by social media and benign neglect.

But all is not lost. Many Christian churches have active Bible study groups. The Bible is still the number one best seller each year. Prager himself has been teaching the Bible – especially the first five books of the *Torah* – to people of all faiths, and no faith, for 40 years.

He says his book is an attempt to get beyond people simply believing in the Bible from faith to understanding that it is still and always relevant to their lives. He wants the approach to be rational – for the Bible not to be somehow above our understanding but to simply make sense. “My ultimate aim,” he says, “is to help make the Bible America’s book once again.”

His attempt to revive the Bible by reason is admirably sincere but obviously limited. The Bible – the Word – cannot be fully explained and “make sense” without the internal, spiritual meaning revealed to us by the Lord through Swedenborg. All of the Internet connections cited above are helping us to do that. And we do it all the time in our churches and other means.

My own contribution is a book for the Swedenborg Foundation – an attempt to convey this spiritual sense in layman’s language. The working title is: *A New Key to the Bible – Unlocking Its Mysteries and Hidden Meanings*. It should be published late this summer or early fall. I plan to send a copy to Dennis Prager – inviting him to take a step beyond “*The Rational Bible*.”

(BMH)

**FURTHER REFLECTIONS ON NUMBERS FROM THE WRITINGS**

In our last issue we wrote about five often-quoted numbers from the Writings. We continue now with another five. There are certainly more that could be mentioned, but we'll stop with 10, a nice round number that signifies "all" in the spiritual sense – which is why there are 10 Commandments; they contain all the truths of the Word in condensed form. (*Arcana Coelestia* 10,688)

**6. ARCANA COELESTIA 14: WHY WE REFER TO 'THE LORD'**

All Christians use the term "Lord" to some extent, but they generally speak of "God" and "Jesus." The Heavenly Doctrines also refer to "God" and "Jesus" in certain contexts, but generally they speak of "the Lord." This has been our practice in the Church also. In this, we are following the lead (or command) given to us by the Lord Himself in the revelation upon which the New Church is founded. We find it right at the beginning of the first book of the Writings:

In the following work, by the name LORD is meant the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ, and Him only; and He is called "the Lord" without adding any of the rest of His names. Throughout heaven He is acknowledged and worshiped as Lord because He has all power in the heavens and on earth. He also commanded His disciples so to call Him, saying, "You call Me Lord, and you say well, for so I am." (*John 13:13*) And this is what His disciples called Him after His resurrection: "the Lord." (*Arcana Coelestia* 14)

The habit of referring to our Creator as God and to our Savior as Jesus – and especially praying to God "in the name of" Jesus – reinforces the Trinitarian error of separating the Divine and the Human into separate Persons. Referring and praying simply to "the Lord" is in accord with the truth that in Him the Divine and the Human are one. This truth, which prevailed in the first innocent state of the Christian Church, was eventually rejected, but has been raised up again as the cornerstone of the New Church. (*see Psalm 118:22, Matthew 21:42; Arcana Coelestia* 9256)

"God" is an infinite, invisible Divine Being; or even just a philosophical concept. In Jesus Christ, God becomes visible and approachable. Nevertheless, Jesus may easily be reduced in people's thought to merely an historical figure – unusually wise and good, perhaps, but still a man like any other. Continually referring to Him by the name "Jesus" or "Christ" may reinforce that misapprehension. Calling Him "Lord," though, is a reminder of His Divinity, and also expresses our relationship to Him as our God. (I do not mean we should never use the name Jesus; it is a holy name! Just always remember that the Lord Jesus Christ is the *One God* of heaven and earth).

It is important to use the proper term, the one He Himself taught us, when referring to the Lord. But even more important is to actually *live* by the truth it represents. Then we won't have to hear Him say: "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?" (*Luke 6:46*)

(WEO)

## 7. ARCANA COELESTIA 10,325: THE BOOKS OF THE WORD LISTED

Here we find a list of the books of the Bible which the New Church recognizes as containing the actual Word of God, and the reason for their inclusion, which is that they are the ones that have an internal sense. It is the internal sense that makes the "Holy Bible" holy.

The books of the Word in the Old Testament are the five books of Moses, the book of Joshua, the book of Judges, the two books of Samuel, the two books of Kings, the Psalms of David, the Prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. And in the New Testament: the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and Revelation.

The other books in the Bible – the Acts and the Epistles, for example – are "good books for the church" but are not part of the Lord's Word. (Swedenborg said that in a letter to Dr. Beyer).

The use of the term "the Word" rather than "the Bible" is part of the distinctive vocabulary of the New Church. We occasionally refer to "the Bible," but our general practice is to speak of "the Word" because the Bible contains some books that do not have the internal sense.

Other churches also have their own canon of the Word. The Roman Catholic Bible includes books (the Apocrypha) that the Protestant Bible does not. The New Church leaves out the Apocryphal books and also a number of books in the Old and New Testaments that the Catholic and Protestant Bibles include.

Since so many sermons in other churches are on texts from the *Book of Acts* or the *Epistles of Paul* in the New Testament, the different New Church canon has a significant practical effect on our worship services. Our sermon texts are almost always drawn from a book of the Word and are explained according to the internal sense.

I think it is obvious that the list in *Arcana Coelestia* 10,325 is identifying those books *in the Bible* which are books of the Word. The fact that the books of Heavenly Doctrine revealed to Swedenborg are not mentioned does not imply that they are *not* books of the Word. No mention is made of books of the Ancient Word either, and yet they were books of the Word.

Nor does saying the Writings are the Word go against the warning at the end of the New Testament against adding or taking away “from the words of the book of this prophecy.” (*Revelation 22:18-19*) A similar warning is given in the Old Testament (*Deuteronomy 4:2* and *12:32*), and yet the rest of the Old Testament and, in the Christian Church, the whole New Testament was added. The warning is against adding to, or taking away from, the *meaning* of holy writ by false interpretations to make them fit with our own wishes – as when the Lord told the Pharisees that “you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition.” (*Matthew 15:6*)

The Lord can certainly add to His previous revelations, and He promised to do just that both in Old Testament times, and again when He was on earth in Person. “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear *them* now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.” (*John 16:12-13*) These words, we believe, have now been fulfilled in the Writings of the New Church (WEO)

## 8. HEAVEN AND HELL 302: NEITHER GOOD NOR EVIL IS FROM US

The teaching here is very liberating, leading us to focus not on ourselves so much, but on the influences that affect our spiritual condition.

If only we believed, as is really true, that all good is from the Lord and all evil from hell, we would not take credit for the good within us or attribute the evil to ourselves. Rather, we would look to the Lord in all that is good in what we think and do, and any evil that flowed in would be cast down to the hell from which it came.

But because people do not believe that anything flows into them either from heaven or from hell, and therefore suppose that everything they think and will originates in themselves, they make the evil their own and defile the good by feeling that they deserve praise for it. (*Heaven and Hell 302*)

What we *are* depends upon what we *receive*, from heaven or from hell, and how we respond. We are only responsible for the evil we welcome into our lives and make our own.

When we do something good we are tempted to think how good we are, and that spoils the good feeling that comes with doing what is right because we know, at some level, that we really aren't all that virtuous. Then again, when we do something wrong, we are tempted to think, well, that's just the way I am. I can't help it and there's no point trying.

And so we vacillate between narcissism and guilt. It's almost comical. “I'm humble, that's good; but now I'm proud of being humble, and that's bad. But

then, doesn't the very fact that I recognize this flaw in myself indicate that I'm really good?"

How to get off this merry-go-round is the question. It's not that we shouldn't reflect upon our spiritual condition. Periodic self-examination is a key element in our regeneration. But a general obsession with self, whether it revolves around self-congratulation or self-condemnation, is not healthy.

Eastern religions, such as Buddhism, teach self-forgetfulness as the key to happiness; and their practice of meditation is useful in overcoming our attachment to self and the world. What is still needed, however, is a clear understanding of what the self (or *proprium* in the Latin of the Writings) actually *is* and can *become*. Enlightenment comes, not just by meditation, but by revelation. And the goal is not nirvana, but heaven; not the annihilation of the self, but its transformation into a new self more reflective of the Lord's Divine Humanity. The goal is not silence, but to turn down the noise of hell and discover the harmonies of heaven.

(WEO)

## 9. ARCANA COELESTIA 8478: THE STREAM OF PROVIDENCE

If you have been in the Church for some years, you are probably quite familiar with this teaching, which shows how vital it is. And who can forget the phrase, "unruffled is their spirit."

To be in the stream of providence is to be in a state of peace, something we all desire. We desire it because we were created for heaven. But relying upon our own wisdom and strength to get us there is like paddling upstream in a mighty river when the place you actually want to go is downstream.

The key is to "trust in the Divine," but this does not come easily; we have to overcome the inherent skepticism of the natural mind before the spiritual mind is opened and enlightens it.

Those who ascribe all things to nature, chance or their own wisdom look down upon those who trust in providence as "simple." Perhaps, but the Word of the Lord "makes wise the simple." (*Psalms 19:7*)

Those who trust in the Divine, although they have care for the morrow, still have it not, because they do not think of the morrow with solicitude, still less with anxiety. Unruffled is their spirit whether they obtain the objects of their desire, or not; and they do not grieve over the loss of them, being content with their lot. . . . They know that for those who trust in the Divine all things advance toward a happy state to eternity, whatever befalls them in time.

The Divine providence is universal, that is, in every least thing. Those who are in the stream of providence are all the time carried along toward everything that is happy, whatever may be the appearance of the means. And those are in it who put their trust in the Divine and attribute all things to Him. Moreover, insofar as anyone is in

the stream of providence, so far he is in a state of peace.

Those who trust in themselves alone and attribute all things to themselves are not in the stream of providence. They are in the opposite, for they take away providence from the Divine, and claim it for themselves. They are scarcely willing to hear providence mentioned, for they ascribe everything to their own sagacity; and what they do not ascribe to this they ascribe to fortune or chance, and by some to blind fate. They call those simple who do not attribute all things to themselves or to nature. (*Arcana Coelestia* 8478.3-6, *slightly edited*)

(WEO)

### 10. CONJUGIAL LOVE 81: THIS LOVE WILL BE RAISED UP ANEW

Outwardly, marriage is a matter of social custom and civil law, but inwardly it is a spiritual reality that originates in heaven. The quality of marriage in this world depends upon how truly it represents marriage in heaven.

Nothing in this world is entirely pure because we are not angels, but as human beings we have the capability of becoming angels, and entering into the love that above all others is the source of heaven's happiness, conjugal love. Marriage on earth is not only a result of that love, but is also the main means for helping us come into it.

In our time, though, the institution of marriage is declining dramatically, along with religious affiliation. This is not just a coincidence; religion and marriage are aspects of the same thing, the joining together of love and wisdom. The simultaneous decline in these institutions is not because they are no longer essential, but because there has been an increasing lack of connection with their essential nature. It is the institution of marriage, the way it is regarded and practiced, that is a problem, not marriage itself; and it's the same regarding religion.

In both cases, the institution has become unmoored from its Divine source, and the sphere of heaven that gives them life is not as fully present as it once was. But it will be again, for this is the promise which the Lord has given: "After His advent, conjugal love will be raised up anew by the Lord, such as it was with the ancients; for this love is from the Lord alone and is with those who are made spiritual by Him through the Word." (*Conjugal Love 81e*)

And there we have it: the promise, and the means for its fulfillment. As apostles of the New Church which the Lord has established in His second advent, we have a responsibility to do all we can to meet the condition for the renewal of marriage, namely, to be "made spiritual by Him through the Word." In doing so, we will benefit, not just ourselves, but also, by example, promote the extension of this blessing from heaven to the whole world.

We envision, not just a New Church, but a whole new civilization, with the Church at its center as a city set on a hill, a beacon of truth bringing light to the

world – “the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”

(WEO)





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