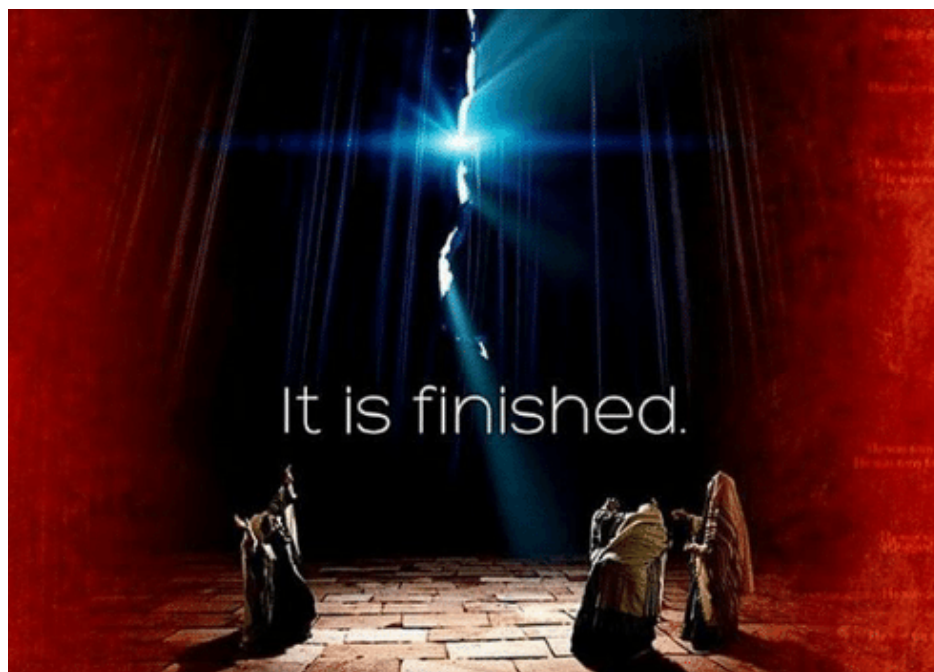


NEW CHURCH *Life*

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

MARCH/APRIL 2021



When the Veil was Torn in Two

When Jesus uttered His last words on the cross – “It is finished!” – the veil in the temple of Jerusalem was torn in two, revealing the most holy inner sanctuary. The Rev. Eric Carswell describes what was also revealed for our own lives. (Page 116)

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New Church Life

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In This Issue

Editorials (page 103) include:

- *The Substance of Belonging* – One thing this past year of the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us is the need for connection among people. The Writings have much to say about this need – “at the very substance of our sense of belonging.” And it goes back to the way that the New Church began.
- *‘Follow Me’* – The Lord came onto earth to overcome the hells and teach us to follow Him into heaven. When He left this world, after the crucifixion, His last words to His disciples were, “Follow Me.” They are words that still should echo through our lives.

In a Palm Sunday sermon, *There Must Be a Place*, the Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr. explains what that day is really all about: “the Lord reestablishing His church and underscoring its use as a place where people could devote their lives to Him.” Our part in the drama of people spreading palms and clothing before Him demonstrates that “there is a human need for the church – the unstoppable desire within us to have a place where we can turn to our God.” (Page 110)

In His last temptation on the cross, Jesus said: “It is finished: and He bowed His head and gave up the spirit.” At that moment the veil of the temple in Jerusalem was dramatically torn in two, revealing the most holy inner sanctuary. The Rev. Eric Carswell explains in a sermon what this means to us: “He is now visible to all who seek Him. The veil of the temple is torn in two. His light can shine out and we can see in to behold our Lord and God, bringing us strength and hope as we face our challenges of today.” (Page 116)

In the second of three sermons on Church Growth, the Rev. Michael Gladish talks about how growth works and how we all have a role in the effort. “We are given the enormous privilege of contributing to this process, helping ourselves as we help others, being blessed as we help bring the Lord’s blessing to them, not by any means in a proud or know-it-all way, but as simple servants sharing what is our duty to share.” (Page 122)

In a message *From The Bishop’s Office*, the Rt. Rev. David Lindrooth finds lessons in an old oak tree on his property about *Learning to be at Peace with*

Change. The tree doesn't look that much different from 20 years ago when he and his family moved in, but it has weathered storms and seasons – just as we all do in being prepared by the Lord for our spiritual lives. (Page 128)

In November of 2019 the Rev. Dr. Andy Dibb traveled in Israel and was particularly moved by a visit to Caesarea Philippi, home of the pagan god Pan, but also the place where Jesus asked His disciple, Simon Peter: “Who do you say that I am?” Dr. Dibb says: “As I stood before that great red cliff with the cave of Pan . . . it suddenly dawned on me why the Lord had chosen this specific spot to elicit the acknowledgment that He is the Christ, Son of the living God. Everything He had come into the world to do stood in stark contrast with the myths of Pan, and His physical presence at Caesarea Philippi reinforced this.” (Page 131)

Dr. Daniel Heilman, with 35 years of experience in Western Pennsylvania in internal and pulmonary medicine, writes in depth about the operation of the heart and lungs and how it all relates to the kingdom of heaven. He also speculates on how Swedenborg would be fascinated with all the advances in medicine and “the wealth of correspondences” involved. (Page 140)

There's *Good News from the New Christian Bible Study Project*, which is steadily growing. Project Manager Steve David says this dynamic website, which is introducing people all over the world to the New Church and the Writings, will surpass five million visits this year. That's a lot of outreach but it's only the beginning. (Page 148)

Church News (page 151) includes:

- The latest in pastoral moves throughout the church
- A report on the December meeting of the Academy Board of Trustees
- Update on the Academy Secondary Schools and the pandemic
- Laws of Life Essay contest

Editorials

THE SUBSTANCE OF BELONGING

It has been more than a year now since the pandemic began, and most of us are aware of the effects it has had on people worldwide. The effects on the church have also been considerable, and we wonder if things will ever be the same again. One thing that the epidemic does highlight, though, is our need for connection. In this editorial we look at what the Writings tell us about this need and at the very substance of our sense of belonging. It goes back to the way that the New Church began.

What does it mean to belong to the church?

It is striking how different the beginning of the New Church was in comparison with that of the Christian Church. After the Lord's resurrection on Easter morning, He commissioned the disciples to baptize "all people" and to "build My church." The church was defined as a specific group of people, who had this identity because they followed the ones appointed by the Lord to lead them and believed in the Gospel that they preached. The church was built on this model, and people came to belong to it who accepted its teachings and practices, and who followed its leadership.

The New Church was not established this way. Swedenborg wrote books, but there were no disciples on whom the Lord conferred legitimacy as church leaders. Swedenborg never gathered any group or did anything to start or recognize any particular body or leadership. There was no group to belong to, and therefore no social or organizational norms other than things specifically written in the Writings. Early readers were not even certain that there ought to be formal New Church organizations.

The difference means that church membership has less importance in the New Church than it has had in Christianity. The only membership that counts is spiritual, for "a person is truly a Christian when they live as a Christian, that is, as the Lord teaches." (*Arcana Coelestia* 1799) Or similarly, "by a person of the church we mean those who have the church in them." (*Divine Love and Wisdom* 118)

At the same time, the Heavenly Doctrine clearly assumes church

organizations that teach the truths of the Word and are composed of the people who make up the church. Without some kind of organization, the sacraments, rites, services of worship, church buildings, education and support of the clergy, and many other things described in the Writings, would not be possible. The Writings support all of these things, so there is no reason to think that church organizations, and belonging to those organizations, are not important.

The way that the New Church was begun by the Lord, and the revelation He gave us, tell us something about the need for a church organization, even though they make it clear that the only church membership that matters is a spiritual one. The question is how the church is important to our sense of belonging.

Our need for belonging

The Heavenly Doctrine describes the value of belonging to a group. In the spiritual world everyone is automatically associated with others like themselves, forming groups like families and communities.

Kindred souls gravitate toward each other spontaneously, as it were, for with each other they feel as though they are with their own family, at home, while with others they feel like foreigners, as though they were abroad. When they are with kindred souls, they enjoy the fullest freedom and find life totally delightful. (*Heaven and Hell* 44)

In the natural world we have the same need to be associated with other people, and we feel the same delight and freedom when we are together with like-minded people. In the natural world, however, it doesn't happen automatically, and it is often challenging to find our place and to know where we belong. People yearn to find this place, and to experience the sense of belonging that goes with it, a search that the Writings call "the inmost object of Divine providence":

It is the continual object of Divine providence that a person become a heaven in form and so an image of the Lord. . . . But its inmost object is that people may be in this or that place in heaven, or in this or that place in the Divine human in heaven, for thus are they in the Lord. (*Divine Providence* 67)

That is, the goal of providence is to lead people to heaven, and the very heart of that goal is to bring them to the exact spiritual place where they belong. Our lives, in a sense, are a search for belonging.

What is the substance of belonging?

A person might say that they feel like they belong when others love, understand and pay attention to them, and when their needs are fulfilled. They might feel that way even more when there is something outside of themselves that they

feel good identifying with, that they are happy about and proud of. And they might especially feel that they belong when they feel a sense of purpose and of participating in something that is worthwhile and useful. For “all the pleasures of heaven are united to forms of service and dwell within them.” (*Heaven and Hell* 402)

Love is the real key to belonging, as anyone would expect, because love is all about affiliation and connection:

Love includes countless elements and welcomes into itself everything that is in harmony with it. (*Heaven and Hell* 18)

This harmony is what makes heaven, and in the spiritual world our loves attract and connect with things that are in harmony with them. This is good when the loves are good, but when the loves are not good there are inevitable disagreements. Self-centered interests sooner or later conflict with the interests of others, resulting in disharmony and isolation.

This is where religion comes into it. In a world guided by spiritual truths people identify with them, practice them, love one another as a result, and feel a sense of belonging. The norms defined by religion guide people’s behavior.

The importance of social norms

Ironically, people often feel that religion has the opposite effect, with its norms serving to judge people, producing isolation instead of belonging. What people don’t realize is that it is not possible to avoid the phenomena of social norms, with their restrictions, taboos, and judgments. These things are inherent in all human interaction, and in the very nature of love itself, which cannot help but reject what it disagrees with:

Our love is like a spongy, porous wood that absorbs whatever liquids prompt its growth, and repels others. It is like animals of various kinds. They recognize their proper foods, seek out the ones that suit their natures, and avoid the ones that disagree. Every love actually wants to be nourished by what is appropriate to it – an evil love by falsities and a good love by truths. (*Heaven and Hell* 479)

Every group of people, therefore, will criticize what its members do not agree with, and in countless ways enforce its social norms on each other – politely and lovingly or not. Disagreement inevitably has an impact, small or great, on a person’s sense of belonging.

The effort to avoid judgment, and find harmony and belonging, by rejecting religion is counterproductive. Instead the effort should be to find a community of people who embrace kindness and reject intrusive and impolite speech to and about others, while obeying the teachings about morality found in the Word, and devoting themselves to service from a real sense of purpose.

A profound teaching of the Writings is the extent to which we think from

the people around us, and not, as it seems to us, from ourselves:

No one, whoever they may be, whether person, spirit, or angel can will and think from themselves, but from others. Nor can these others will and think from themselves, but all again from others, and so on; and thus each one from the First of life, which is the Lord. That which is unconnected has no existence. (*Arcana Coelestia* 2886)

That is, we are affected by the people with whom we interact more than we realize, and our connections to them are more valuable than we might think.

Making the effort to gather with like-minded people on a regular basis is therefore important to our sense of belonging. This is true even if it is something like a church group that meets only occasionally. It is even more true if it is the community that you interact with every day.

This is the theory behind New Church education and New Church communities – that the social norms developed in those settings will be based on the kindness and morality taught in the Writings, producing a sense of purpose and devotion to use, and a deep sense of belonging.

An epidemic of social isolation

In practice it doesn't always work out that way. Human frailty inevitably detracts from the sense of belonging, and when New Church teachings contradict the social norms of the wider community the conflicts are not easily resolved. This is increasingly the case as American cultural norms move away from traditionally held views. This is especially true of traditions around marriage and sexuality, an area that is fundamental to all happiness, according to the Writings. It is no surprise that there are reports of a growing epidemic of social isolation:

Social isolation is a growing epidemic – one that's increasingly recognized as having dire physical, mental and emotional consequences. Since the 1980s, the percentage of American adults who say they're lonely has doubled from 20 percent to 40 percent. (How Social Isolation Is Killing Us, by Dhruv Khullar, *New York Times*, Dec. 22, 2016)

Church membership is not the solution to this epidemic, just as it is not the solution to the coronavirus. But the solution does have to do with having the church in our hearts. We don't just feel like we belong when others love, understand and pay attention to us, or when our needs are fulfilled. We feel more like we belong when there is something outside of ourselves that we feel good identifying with and can act in harmony with. And we especially feel that we belong when we feel a sense of purpose and participation in something that is worthwhile and useful.

During this past year of social isolation, the need for connection has become more and more meaningful to many of us. In this Easter season, and

with the coming of spring, maybe we can come to have a deeper sense of the substance of belonging.

(JFS)

‘FOLLOW ME’

The Lord came into the world to subjugate the hells and to teach us to follow Him – “Follow the Star” – into heaven as a visible, knowable God.

It started with the disciples:

Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. Then He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” (*Matthew* 4:18-20)

This is the call that echoes through the ages and stretches beyond our horizon: Follow Me. It has its roots in the Christmas story and its culmination in the Easter story.

These were also His last words to His disciples – and to us – after His crucifixion, when He had risen but not yet ascended to heaven and the glorification of His Human.

His third and last appearance – in *John* 21 – was to several of His disciples who were fishing but had caught nothing all night. In the morning Jesus stood on the shore, but they did not know it was Him. When they told Him of their bad luck He told them to cast their nets on the right side of the ship. And they could not even draw in their nets for the multitude of fishes.

The other disciples came and recognized Him. And as they were all eating this feast, He asked them a series of questions. Picture Him asking these questions of you. He frustrated Simon Peter by asking him three times: “Do you love Me?”

Each time Simon Peter answered: “You know that I love You.”

And each time, Jesus answered: “Feed My sheep.”

So simple. And so profound. The haunting song from *Jesus Christ Superstar* frames the lament: “I don’t know how to love You.” There is no mystery: “Feed My sheep.” Love your neighbor. Serve others. Be kind and considerate to all. That is how we love the Lord.

Then Jesus said to His disciples:

Verily, verily, I say unto thee: When thou wast young, thou girded thyself and walked whither thou would; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee and carry thee whither thou would not.

This He spake, signifying by what death he should glorify God, And when He had spoken this, He said unto him: Follow Me. (*John* 21:18-19)

It is significant that these were His first and last words to His disciples – at the beginning of His ministry on earth and at the end. They are words that should echo in our own lives, every day: Follow Me.

(BMH)

Letter 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

A Good Question

To The Editors:

It seems to me there are places in the Word that tell us to “fight” for what is good and true. How and to what extent are we obligated to oppose evils that we perceive in the world around us? We are clearly responsible for our *own* choices of a good or an evil life, but what about defending what is good and true in the world, in civil life, in the church?

While we see freedoms being stolen away by hypocritical leaders through false witnesses and misuse of government power, it is not clear to me when, how, where, or even *if*, one should fight against that, or how, or when one should rest complacent because all things are under the hand of the Lord’s providence. Turn the other cheek, or grab an AK-47? If you say, “No” to the AK-47, what do you say about Bunker Hill, Valley Forge, Antietam, Midway Island, and so forth? If you say, “Love never fights,” what do you say about Michael and his angels?

Should I proclaim from the housetops the truths of the New Church, thereby raising a red flag and putting the General Church and my family under the angry eye of an increasingly totalitarian, anti-Christian government? Or, should I quietly stand up for my beliefs when challenged, but otherwise accept whatever providence may bring? Or, “Other? Please explain.”

Sometimes, it seems to me that the will of the Lord is not clear. Good ways or evil are not always as easy to recognize as is the choice between black and white. But surely, making the right choice is why we were born.

Martin E. Klein
Boynton Beach
Florida

“There Must Be A Place”

A Palm Sunday Sermon by the Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr.

Lessons: Luke 19:29-40, Psalm 84:1-4, True Christian Religion 267, Apocalypse Explained 1069

He answered and said to them, “I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out.” (Luke 19:40)

Crying out. So familiar on Palm Sunday is the account of people crying out in praise of the Lord. We spoke the familiar refrain in our recitation, “Hosanna! ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’” (*John 12:12*) We heard a different version in our reading: “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven and glory in the highest.” (*Luke 19:38*) I invite you today not only to consider anew the words themselves but to pay special attention to the emotion behind them and the people expressing that emotion.

All of us have witnessed someone whose joy cannot be contained. Picture the immediate response to the long-awaited news of the engagement of a daughter – the loud exclamations of love and excitement, the laughter, the rising up to share a hug.

We talk of someone who “bursts into tears” – who had been holding something sad inside, until they simply couldn’t any longer, and out it comes. We recall Joseph serving as a ruler in Egypt who “could no longer restrain himself” but had to reveal himself to his brothers. (*Genesis 45:1*) We get it, because we’ve been there ourselves.

So it was with the people at the first experience of Palm Sunday, as they witnessed Jesus riding into Jerusalem. Something inside was unleashed. A celebration of a Miracle Worker and Teacher who had come to set things right; the prospect of a new and better existence. All that pent-up hope came gushing out in the cries and the strewing of palm branches and clothing on the way.

We can therefore understand the Lord’s response to the Pharisees who said to Him, “Teacher, rebuke Your disciples.” (*Luke 19:39*) “I tell you,” He

said, “if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out.” (*Ibid.* 40) There is no way to contain that level of emotion and belief once it is kindled in the human heart. It would be as impossible as telling those parents not to react with joy to their daughter’s engagement news, or telling the person who bursts into tears, “You can’t do that.” It simply wouldn’t work.

Our need to worship. Let’s bring that forward into the context of worship because that’s really what Palm Sunday is about – the Lord reestablishing His church and underscoring its use as a place where people could devote themselves to Him. There is the Lord’s part in that. Right after He rode into Jerusalem He expressed His zeal for the church by casting out the moneychangers, saying: “My house is a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves.” (*Luke* 19:46)

A little later that week He sat down with His disciples at the Passover, saying: “With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you.” (*Luke* 22:15) And in *Isaiah* we read: “For Zion’s sake I will not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burns.” (*Isaiah* 62:1)

But what of our part – our zeal for the church? We hold in mind the people lining the way with their palms, their clothing and their shouts. Demonstrated there is the human need for the church – the unstoppable desire within us to have a place where we can turn to our God.

We read in the Heavenly Doctrines: “A church is a church from this, that the Lord is adored and that the Word is read.” (*Apocalypse Explained* 1069) We have the opportunity in the church to adore the Lord – to acknowledge in our worshipful actions that He is the Savior and we are those seeking salvation; to praise Him for the ways He cares for us and blesses us; to ask for His guidance in our struggles and His mercy on our sins. Seen in this light, we must have a place, an outlet, for those deeply held human needs.

Imagine for a moment if we did not. Sometimes we recognize the value of something when we consider what it would be like if we didn’t have it. Imagine if there was no church for us to go to on Sunday: no beautiful cathedral, or other house of worship that has stood as sacred space for us; no place to seek solace in the presence of the Lord when a loved one has left us for the other world; no aisle to walk down as a bride and groom to be married in the presence of the

[This is] really what Palm Sunday is about – the Lord reestablishing His church and underscoring its use as a place where people could devote themselves to Him.

But what of our part – our zeal for the church? We hold in mind the people lining the way with their palms, their clothing and their shouts. Demonstrated there is the human need for the church – the unstoppable desire within us to have a place where we can turn to our God.

Lord; no congregation with whom we can celebrate the baptism of a beautiful child born to us; no opportunity to be joined to the Lord in the powerful sacrament of the Holy Supper. What if there were no pastors to turn to in times of need, or to answer questions about spiritual life?

It would be untenable to most of us if that was the reality. Fortunately, it is not. But how often do we intentionally value that fact? How can we use the emotion displayed on that first Palm Sunday to inspire our own love for the church? I would like to offer three things we can do to cultivate that love for the church that spring from the Palm Sunday story itself.

“The stones would immediately cry out.” It starts with those stones. “I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry

out.” Stones represent “the Word’s truths.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 1298) In another place they are identified as “truths in their proper order.” (*Ibid.* 9863) Stones *crying out* means that those truths are declared for all to hear – joyfully so. A fundamental use of the church is to see to it that the Word is indeed taught, in all its fullness. Can we celebrate that declaration?

Perhaps this teaching in the Heavenly Doctrines will help: “No connection to heaven is possible unless somewhere on earth there is a church *where the Word* exists and where the Lord is known through that Word.” (*True Christian Religion* 267) It is also the second half of the passage quoted earlier that “the church is a church from this, that the Lord is adored and that *the Word is read.*” (*Apocalypse Explained* 1069)

There must be a place where all of that truth is known, and taught, and declared, and fostered. There has to be somewhere where people can come to know the Lord’s vision for marriage, and that men and women are created for each other in marriage. Do we not want to protect the space and the mandate of the church to teach what works in relation to marriage, despite many opposing messages in the world around us?

Where else will people turn to discover the presence and providence of the Lord when a loved one dies, or as we say it, transitions to the life to come?

Is it not a supreme blessing to hear declared the vision of life after death that the Lord has given us, so that we can be comforted by the continuance of life for those we love?

How else are people to arrive at an abiding trust in the Lord without a proper understanding of His love and wisdom, and how He is at work in even the hardest experiences of our lives? How else can people align themselves with the Lord’s will for their lives without knowing what that will is?

There has to be a place where the Word is declared, where the stones cry out. Can we celebrate the church’s efforts to teach the truths – even the hard ones?

“If you had known . . .” Nowhere is that more true than in terms of hearing from the Lord wherein lies true happiness. As the Lord rode into Jerusalem – in fact immediately after He said those words to the Pharisees about the stones crying out – it says:

Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, “If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.” (*Luke 19:41-42*)

Our souls long for peace. They long for happiness, meaning, belonging, a sense of purpose and self-worth, a way to contribute that brings self-fulfillment. Isn’t it true that the Word has answers to all these things? Speaking again of the church, there must be an opportunity for people to hear from the mouth of the Lord what leads to true and lasting happiness. How else will people know what of our culture is good and reflective of heaven and what is contrary to the order that the Lord can bless?

Consider one contrasting perspective that comes from the Word. We’re all familiar with the saying, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth . . . but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.” (*Matthew 6:19-21*) Of this challenge we read in the Heavenly Doctrines:

While living in the world people call those things a blessing which make them blessed and happy temporally, that is, wealth and important positions. . . . ‘A blessing’ in the spiritual sense, [however,] is those things which constitute eternal life, consequently things which are of charity and faith. (*Arcana Coelestia 8939*)

The church is here to champion the treasures of heaven.

How else are people to arrive at an abiding trust in the Lord without a proper understanding of His love and wisdom, and how He is at work in even the hardest experiences of our lives?

Consider some other examples. The Word says that people find happiness “in use, from use, and in accordance with use.” (*Heaven and Hell* 403) In contrast we know that much in our world sends messages that happiness comes from a life of ease, when we no longer have to apply ourselves in any meaningful direction.

Harder still are the moral standards of the day. Perhaps we’d agree it is much more acceptable today, than in days gone by, to forego marriage, or if not, to forego waiting until marriage to experience intimacy with others. Can we hear the Lord weeping over the hurt that can come to good-hearted people in that context, who believe they are living a life free of unnecessary bonds, but fail to experience the true freedom that comes from living within the bounds of the Lord’s order?

So it is that there must be a church – there must be a place where we can turn to discover and be strengthened in what actually leads to lasting contentment. Can we support the church in its efforts to teach the truth about happiness? We do so when we cultivate an affection for the truth that springs from our version of the affirmation of the Israelites: “All that the Lord has spoken we will do.” (*Exodus* 19:8; *Arcana Coelestia* 4449)

“A house of prayer.” Finally, we come back to the powerful episode of cleansing the Temple. We hear the Lord declaring at the end of His ride into Jerusalem: “My house is a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves.” (*Luke* 19:46) What’s going on there, spiritually speaking?

As with so many other things we have talked about, the Lord drew a stark contrast. The church is not intended to be a place where some capitalize on the vulnerability of others. The church is also not a place to go through the motions – merely showing up and doing the ritual, but not allowing it to go any deeper than that.

It is about prayer. It’s about people’s worship. It is about connecting with the Lord in the worship services we are privileged to experience. It is about fostering praise, humility and reverence by the rituals we go through. It is about absorbing messages from the Word. It is about obeying the Sabbath in its most literal form.

It’s also about “worship in life” that extends beyond Sunday – about the gratitude in our hearts that causes us to thank the Lord for the blessings we have; about carrying a message explored in church into discussion with friends and committing to do something about it; about lifting our perspective up to consider how the Lord would wish us to act in the situations that come before us. To the extent that we can orient ourselves to the many *internal* forms of worship, to the same extent we will find joy in opportunities to participate in *external* forms of worship. (*Apocalypse Explained* 696:11)

Let the stones cry out. When the Pharisees saw the multitudes proclaiming

their Hosannas, they asked Jesus to make them stop. He replied: “I tell you that if these should remain silent, the stones would immediately cry out.”

Shown for us on that day is the power of the Lord to touch the human heart with an ardent desire to worship. We can open ourselves to that touch. We can cultivate a place in our lives that *loves* the opportunity to praise the Lord.

It comes to us when we become convinced that there must be a church – there must be a place where the Word is declared – all of its truths; there must be a place where people can turn in their times of need, and their times of great happiness; there must be a place where we can discover the path to the

lasting happiness that our souls long for; there must be a place where we can go for counsel on the struggles of life, and for a sense of the Lord’s mercy when we have failed.

“A church is a church from this, that the Lord is adored and the Word is read.” (*Apocalypse Explained* 267.) “A church is a church by virtue of its affection for the truth.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 4449) Most of all a church is a church because its people have an unstoppable desire to turn to their God. As we read in the *Psalms*:

My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. . . . Blessed are those who dwell in Your house; they will still be praising You. (*Psalms* 84:2,4)

Amen.



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Shown for us on that day is the power of the Lord to touch the human heart with an ardent desire to worship. We can open ourselves to that touch. We can cultivate a place in our lives that loves the opportunity to praise the Lord.

The Veil Was Torn in Two

An Easter Sermon by the Rev. Eric H. Carswell

Lessons: Matthew 28:1-10, True Christian Religion 787

Jesus, when He had cried out again with a loud voice, yielded up His spirit. And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

(Matthew 27:50-51)

The joy of Easter is the joy of the risen Lord. He conquered death and hell, rising to greet the women who came to the sepulcher, and later the disciples. Their fears and sorrows of the last two days were banished with the joy of His resurrection. We have our own fears and sorrows today. Why is the Lord's life and His resurrection so important to us?

The purpose of Jesus' life in the world is central to the doctrine of the New Church. His unseen battles against the power of evil and His work of uniting His human life with the infinite and invisible God began very early in His childhood and continued to His final temptation on the cross. (*Arcana Coelestia* 2776:2, *Apocalypse Explained* 220:5)

The *Gospel of John* records the Lord's final words as Jesus said: "It is finished: and He bowed His head and gave up the spirit." (*John* 19:30) With the end of this last temptation, the veil of the temple in Jerusalem was torn in two, revealing the most holy inner sanctuary. The simultaneous occurrence of this event with the end of the Lord's final temptation represents the effect of His lifetime of work.

The veil that was torn in two had the same function as the inmost veil in the tabernacle which separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. This inmost veil hid the most holy object in the tabernacle, the golden ark, which contained the Ten Commandments. The Holy of Holies was so sacred that, except under extraordinary circumstances, it was entered only one day a year and then only by the high priest after elaborate preparations of ritual cleansing. (*Leviticus* 16)

The solitary day on which the priest entered the inmost sanctuary was the Day of Atonement. The detailed ritual performed on this day represented

an atonement for all the sins of the Children of Israel. In addition to the entrance of the high priest into the Holy of Holies, the outstanding feature of the ritual included choosing a goat to serve as that year's scapegoat. This goat had the sins of the Israelites symbolically transferred to it, then was led off into the wilderness with the idea that this would carry these sins away from the people.

The ritual of atonement represented both the process of the Lord's spiritual development and the redemption of the human race. (*Arcana Coelestia* 9670:5,6; 9506) It represented the Lord's work of removing evil loves from people who are doing their own work of repentance. The ritual of the scapegoat did not by itself remove any

evil from the Israelites. It was an act of worship that had been understood by an earlier and wiser church. Gradually this understanding was lost and the dominate concerns in people's lives became gradually more worldly and self-centered.

In the Lord's government, the rituals continued to be performed by people who didn't know what their actions were really supposed to mean. The internal or spiritual life of love to the Lord and charity to the neighbor could not exist with many people of the church at the time of the Lord's life in this world. In everything of their worship these internal things had to be closed up or veiled over.

The people of that church did not see the Lord and Divine Truth clearly. Both the true nature of the Lord and the genuine meaning of His words were hidden in darkness from them. The Lord's advent ended this darkness. The ritual forms of worship that were empty of genuine love and understanding were no longer needed.

The Lord's spiritual battles throughout His life in this world gave human beings the possibility of a new revelation of truth. The veil that had hidden the genuine qualities of a true church was torn in two by this revelation. The laws and rituals that had been handed down from ancient times were unfolded to reveal the Lord's Love and Wisdom that had been hidden. Once again, a church could be established which had love and charity as the internal life within the

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external acts of their worship and daily actions.

The revelation of these qualities of a true church was accomplished through the Lord's perfect spiritual development, known in the teachings for the New Church as the "glorification." We might wonder why this revelation couldn't have been accomplished through another prophet. Further written revelation by itself would have been as useless to the human race as a booklet of instructions would be to someone in a pitch-dark room. An inner light was necessary for truth to be seen by each individual human being.

The veil that had hidden the truth from human understanding was torn in two through the Lord's battles with the hells and the way these battles made heaven more perfect. Light could once again shine forth from the Lord to the people of His church. An image of this new presence of the Lord was presented by the veil in front of the Holy of Holies being torn in two at the end of the Lord's final temptation on the cross. (*Arcana Coelestia* 4772)

There is a second meaning to this miraculous event that accompanied the completion of the Lord's work which illustrates why the Lord needed to glorify His Human, or in other words, make this Human perfectly united to the Infinite God. We are told in the opening of the *Gospel of John*: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. . . . That was the true Light, which gives light to everyone who comes into the world." (John 1:1, 9)

"The Word" here means the Divine Truth. (*Arcana Coelestia* 4687:3) The Divine Truth flowing down through heaven was the light that had enlightened all people prior to the advent. Before the coming of the Lord into the world, spiritual light and life flowed from the Infinite God to people and spirits through the angels of the highest heaven. (*Ibid.* 6371:2) But at the time just prior to the advent this spiritual light and life could no longer affect the human race because people had turned so far away from a love of good and a knowledge of truth. Through an accumulation of evil tendencies people had removed themselves from light and cast themselves into darkness. (*Ibid.* 3195)

The influx of Divine light and life flowing through the highest and best angels could no longer reach people to enlighten them and thereby preserve

their spiritual freedom. It could not accomplish this task because it was not purely the Lord's light and life. It was tainted by the impurities of the angels as it descended through heaven. In this sense, the angels were the inner veil of the tabernacle that hid the ark or the Lord Himself. (cf. *Ibid.* 2576:2)

In its most degenerate state, the human race could not receive spiritual light from heaven or be led by it to a sight of the Lord. (cf. *Ibid.* 2814, 1894, 400:14) If this state of spiritual darkness had become complete, not a single human being could have chosen a life that leads to heaven.

To prevent this universal damnation, the Lord was born into this world. "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." (*John* 1:14) The Lord was born, taking on a finite human form from Mary like that of any other human being. (*Arcana Coelestia* 3061) As to His natural body, Jesus was the son of Mary, but His soul was the infinite God who created and guides all things.

As the infant Jesus grew and developed, He had to learn the truths of the Word in the same way we do. In this way He learned the statements of the Word now empty of Divine truth to the people in the world at that time. (cf. *Ibid.* 2813) The Lord then allowed Himself to be tempted that He might remove from Himself all that was limited or merely human, until nothing but the Divine remained. (*Ibid.* 2814, 2816) By means of continual temptations in which His thoughts and loves were attacked by evil spirits and by continual victories in these battles, the Lord simultaneously returned the hells to their proper place and influence, and provided a new order for the angels of heaven to follow. (cf. *Apocalypse Explained* 400:14)

Through conquest in temptation the Lord rose above limitations, revealing the flaws in each false idea or less-than-perfect love as He did so. With each victory His Human drew ever closer to a complete correspondence with the infinite Divine itself. This is what is meant by the glorification.

The Lord by His last temptation, endured in Gethsemane upon the cross,

By reestablishing our spiritual freedom or equilibrium, the Lord redeemed all people from unavoidable damnation. The Lord can now be with each of us and lead us toward heaven even by the natural things of our minds. . . . The veil that would have hidden the light of Divine Truth from us was torn wide open.

He is now visible to all who seek Him. The veil of the temple is torn in two. His light can shine out and we can see in to behold our Lord and God, bringing us strength and hope as we face our challenges of today.

completed the work which He had begun in His childhood. His Human became one with the Divine Itself by dispersing the last of the limitations He had taken on in the world. (*Arcana Coelestia* 2576:5) The completion of this work is also signified by the tearing of the veil of the temple. (cf. *Ibid.* 2576:5, 9670:4; *Apocalypse Explained* 220:5, 400:14)

It is absolutely essential to the purpose of the Lord's glorification or ascension to the Divine Good that He did not temporarily part the veil during His ascent. The veil was torn in two from top to bottom. The Lord by His life of temptation and victory opened

the way to the Divine Itself through His Divine Human. The glorification opened the way for the light of Divine Truth to proceed to the human race and enlighten each of us even when we're in times of deep spiritual darkness. (*Ibid.* 3195)

The Divine truth from the Divine Human can now flow into the mind of every person who has faith arising from a wise kindness. (*Ibid.* 2776:3) By reestablishing our spiritual freedom or equilibrium, the Lord redeemed all people from unavoidable damnation. The Lord can now be with each of us and lead us toward heaven even by the natural things of our minds. By means of the glorification the Lord opened the way for light to flow down to each of us in a manner never possible before that time. The veil that would have hidden the light of Divine Truth from us was torn wide open.

There is a second reason for emphasizing the continuing effect of the Lord's work that is signified by the tearing of the inmost veil. The Lord came into the world and assumed the Human not only to redeem the human race, but also to make Himself visible. (*True Christian Religion* 786) The Lord did not disappear forever from human sight when He cast off the remaining vestiges inherited from Mary. He did not unite His Human to the Divine Itself only to be as remote from us as He had been before these two became one.

On Easter morning the sepulcher was indeed empty. All that had been received from Mary had been put off. (*Arcana Coelestia* 2288) We are not to look to the material body which died on the cross. (cf. *Doctrine of the Lord* 32:8) That was not the Lord Himself. The women who came to the sepulcher early Easter morning were told: "Why do you seek the living among the dead?"

He is not here, but is risen.” (Luke 24:5,6) The Lord had risen. He had become one with the infinite Divine Good. (*Arcana Coelestia* 9199) But the veil that had hidden the true nature of the Lord from human beings was torn in two with His ascent.

Even after His final victory in temptation, the Lord could appear to people in human form as the visible Lord. While it is true that we cannot see the infinite Divine itself, we are to worship a visible God in whom is the Divine Good itself as a soul in a body. (*True Christian Religion* 787) We can see His loving human care in the Gospels’ stories.

For some people God’s work is invisible. They believe God is doing nothing today. In the teachings for the New Church we are invited to learn that His love and wisdom can be clearly visible today. We can recognize His presence as we reflect back on how much He has helped us become better human beings. God is now visible to those who seek Him in His Word and live according to what they learn. With the completion of the Lord’s work in this world, the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom, revealing the inmost sanctuary.

There are many things about the Lord’s work and His life in this world that strain our understanding or surpass it completely. We need not be too concerned over our lack of understanding of some of the particulars of these things, however, for the universals are within everyone’s grasp.

The Lord from eternity, who is Jehovah, came into the world to subjugate the hells and to glorify His Human; and without this no mortal could have been saved. The work that accomplished our redemption took place throughout Jesus’ whole life. The passion of the cross was but the final temptation in a series that had begun early in His childhood. When Jesus conquered in this last temptation, His work was complete. Jesus conquered and rose from the sepulcher as our Savior and Redeemer, the Lord, the one God of heaven and earth.

He is now visible to all who seek Him. The veil of the temple is torn in two. His light can shine out and we can see in to behold our Lord and God, bringing us strength and hope as we face our challenges of today.

Amen.



The Rev. Eric H. Carswell is retiring on June 30 as pastor of Bryn Athyn Church but has agreed to stay on as assistant pastor to aid the new pastor, the Rev. Derek Elphick, for a year or two until a new assistant can be found. Eric and his wife, Donna (Zeit), live in Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania. Contact: *Eric.Carswell@brynathynchurch.org*.

Church Growth: How it Works

Second of Three Sermons by the Rev. Michael D. Gladish

Lessons: Jonah 3; Matthew 10:1-15; Apocalypse Revealed 325:3; Apocalypse Explained 223:20; Arcana Coelestia 9255; Soul and Body 18

Jesus said, "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give."

(Matthew 10:5-8)

In this second of three sermons about church growth we will look at the question of how to share our faith with people outside the New Church, why we should do so, and what sort of people we should try to address.

In reflecting on the verses quoted above, the first thing that might come to mind is that they were addressed to the 12 disciples, not to all of the Lord's followers. So, we might think they only apply to ordained ministers, but even if that were true, it is a fact that ministers serve the Lord through the support of their congregations, so church members are all implicated in one way or another. Besides, it is a general principle that we all have a responsibility to share the blessings we receive from the Lord, and our faith surely is the greatest blessing of all.

It's also important to note that although this first instruction is quite limited in terms of who should be approached, when the Lord appeared to His disciples after His resurrection He was much more inclusive, telling them to "go and make disciples of all the nations (*Matthew 28:19*), and again to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." (*Mark 16:15*)

These two differing instructions are reconciled in the message of *Luke 24:46-47*:

Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

So, the disciples were told to begin with their own people, and then branch out. That is exactly what they did. But the real question is, how does all this relate to us, personally, today? Who are the Gentiles, the Samaritans, the sick, the lepers, the dead and the demon possessed?

As we know, every sentence of the Scriptures involves symbolic meanings, or correspondences, that communicate the Lord's love and wisdom to each one of us in a personal way. So when the Lord spoke to the disciples He is speaking to all of us, and when He talked about Gentiles and Samaritans, the lost sheep of the house of Israel, the sick, the lepers and so on, He talked to us about us, and about the spiritual states of people we know.

Let's begin with "the way of the Gentiles" which we are to avoid. Gentiles in the Word were not part of the Jewish religion, but, as the heart of any religion is the will or devotion, like the references to the "nations" around Israel they represent states of the will. These may be affirmative or negative toward the Jewish or Christian Church, but for us the simple fact is that they don't know the teachings of the Lord in His Second Coming.

So, the "way" of the Gentiles is a confirmed way of living based on whatever other ideas guide them, typically ideas drawn from the world. People like this are not likely to be receptive of New Church teachings, anyway, at least not right away. But the special point for each of us is that we not enter into that worldly way of life ourselves, since it will corrupt our perception of the truth the Lord has given us.

And the Samaritans? Well, they were Gentiles, too, but they specifically represent states of the intellect or understanding – which may be affirmative or negative toward the teachings of the New Church, but either way, they are not of the church. Cities in the Word represent doctrines, that is, general principles that guide one's thinking. So here, "a city of the Samaritans" is a way of thinking based on principles not taught in the Word. Again, people who think that way are not likely to be receptive of New Church teachings, but the special point for us is that we are not to enter into that way of thinking, since it will corrupt our understanding of the Word.

When the Lord spoke to the disciples He is speaking to all of us, and when He talked about Gentiles and Samaritans, the lost sheep of the house of Israel, the sick, the lepers and so on, He's talking to us about us, and about the spiritual states of people we know.

We are not to be “preachy” about telling people what we know, but to be reassuring, sharing our own experience that “the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” And, of course, we can only do this if we really believe it.

Rather we are to go to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Sheep in the Word represent those who are innocent by virtue of their effort to follow the Lord and live right. But their being lost means that they are confused, and so they don’t know how to do this. These are the people and states of mind that are receptive of new ideas. They know they are lost and they want help. The only question is: how do we find these people, and then, how do we approach them helpfully? After all, we may not be doing all that well ourselves.

The answer emerges in what follows. Where the Lord says, “As you go, preach,” the word in Greek means to announce, herald or proclaim, and most interestingly, it begins with a prefix that refers to the heart, meaning, to do so from the heart. This doesn’t mean we don’t need to know what we’re talking about, but it does put a premium on speaking with love and conviction. We are not to be “preachy” about telling people what we know, but to be reassuring, sharing our own experience that “the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” And, of course, we can only do this if we really believe it.

You may recall that these words first occurred in the New Testament when John the Baptist was preparing the way for the Lord, saying: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,” (*Matthew* 3:2) and this was repeated by the Lord Himself when He began His ministry. (*Ibid.* 4:17) So there’s a primary focus on right living, that is, shunning evils as sins against the Lord in order to remove the obstacles to His love and wisdom.

What are those obstacles? The Lord lists them: sickness, leprosy, death and demon possession. But, although the first disciples did so, the Lord does not expect us to solve all these problems literally. In fact, it’s much better to see them for what they are spiritually, like this: when a person is sick, he or she knows that something is wrong; something in the body has been hurt or infected. This represents a spiritual problem, what we sometimes call evil. This does not mean that anybody who is sick is evil; it’s just that sickness in the Word represents evil, so in this passage the Lord is talking to us about evil, that is, helping people heal from things that are evil. And here’s an interesting aside: the word for healing in this verse of *Matthew* is the Greek form of our word, therapy.

How, then, can we offer people healing (or therapy) from evils that may be affecting them? Certainly not by force or coercion, and most certainly not by condemning them or even telling them what to do – as if we could know! Rather, speaking from the heart, from our own vulnerability, we can try to make the kingdom of heaven more real for them by encouraging them, by sharing insights that we have found helpful, and most of all, by communicating the sphere of the Lord’s own love through our words and actions. Is this “preaching”? Maybe not as we normally think of it, but it is a perfectly legitimate interpretation of the idea – declaring helpful truths.

What about cleansing lepers? Lepers in the Word represent people who are in states of profanation, that is, mixing holy things with worldly things in an inappropriate way, such as taking

the Lord’s name in vain, or making fun of stories in the Word. In general, it has to do with almost any type of hypocrisy, representing a deliberate mash-up of truth and evil, or good and falsity. But what are we supposed to do about that?

Again, we are to share that “the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” To cleanse is to clean up, or clarify, and the goal here is to separate the evil from the truth or the falsity from the good. A good start might be to identify something good in the person and affirm it. Then, when he or she sees that we are not antagonistic, we could ask for clarification on what seems to us to be wrong – like, “Why do you say that?” or “What do you mean?” Then, when we understand what’s going on for that person, we may be able to correct a misunderstanding. Ultimately, it’s up to each individual to accept or reject the clarification, the cleansing that is offered. But to honor the Lord’s commandment it would seem that we are obliged to make that offer.

As for raising the dead, what is spiritual death, anyway, but a lack of faith? Our duty toward such people is not to complain about them, criticize or condemn them, but to help them with better ideas and examples of what real faith is, perhaps sharing something from our own inspirational reading, from recent studies in the Word, or from our own experience of the power of faith in

In the end, the Lord’s instruction to go and preach, to heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead and cast out demons, is not in any sense beyond our abilities – if we really believe what we say we believe. But we shouldn’t expect the whole world to be ready and willing to accept what we have to say.

We are given the enormous privilege of contributing to this process, helping ourselves as we help others, being blessed as we help bring the Lord's blessing to them, not by any means in a proud or know-it-all way, but as simple servants sharing what is our duty to share.

spite of our own doubts or difficulties.

Finally, how can we cast out demons, especially when we have our own demons we are dealing with on a daily basis? Well, seeing the suffering of others often is a good way to get in touch with our own suffering, at which point we can empathize. Then what? The teaching comes to mind that if we would only believe – as is the case – that all good and truth come from the Lord and all evil and falsity come from the hells, we would not take ownership of good and account it meritorious, nor would we take ownership of evil and account ourselves responsible. (*Divine Providence* 320)

So, for someone who believes in the spiritual world, this reminder can be a great help and comfort. But for someone who is not a believer we can still speak of influences that affect our

thoughts and feelings, and provide encouragement from our own experience of surrounding ourselves with positive people and doing useful work.

In the end, the Lord's instruction to go and preach, to heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead and cast out demons, is not in any sense beyond our abilities – if we really believe what we say we believe. But we shouldn't expect the whole world to be ready and willing to accept what we have to say. In fact, far from it, as we will see in the final sermon in this series. But we are to "begin in Jerusalem," that is, within the church, among people who have some faith but still need help as represented by the four named afflictions.

The instruction is clear: "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go, rather, to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Do not buy into the ways of the worldly, and do not think the way they think. But go to the people who are spiritually needy and who know it, and just try to be helpful. Then, after getting some practice and gaining some confidence in the process, we can go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, that is to everyone who is willing and able to be created anew (i.e., regenerated) by the Lord.

And what is that gospel, what is the good news of the NEW Christian Church?

- It's all the teaching about the spiritual sense of the Word
- It's the amazing revelation about the life after death
- It's the dynamic explanation of how creation itself and Divine Providence really work
- It's about influx, levels and degrees of life, and the correspondences in all of nature
- But most of all it's about the Lord in His glorified Divine Humanity

All of which is intended for one purpose and one purpose only – to provide for greater human happiness and peace, in this world and in the next, in the short time we have here, and to all eternity when we graduate from this preliminary phase of our lives.

We are given the enormous privilege of contributing to this process, helping ourselves as we help others, being blessed as we help bring the Lord's blessing to them, not by any means in a proud or know-it-all way, but as simple servants sharing what is our duty to share.

Amen.

(This series concludes in the May/June issue with: Expect Persecution)

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FROM THE BISHOP'S OFFICE

Learning to be at Peace with Change



The Rt. Rev. David H. Lindrooth

Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD and whose hope is the LORD.
For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots
by the river, and will not fear when heat comes; but its leaf will be green, and
will not be anxious in the year of drought, nor will cease from yielding fruit.
(*Jeremiah 17:7,8*)

A large old oak tree thrives on the back corner of the property where we live. For more than 100 years its gigantic old branches have stretched out over the lawn with its dancing leaves offering shade for children playing on the grass in the summer. When I think of that tree, I think of it as being static and unchanging. When the storms from hurricane season have lashed its limbs, it has always survived unscathed. It seems immovable.

The tree doesn't look much different than it did when we moved in 20 years ago, but the reality is different. The tree is constantly changing. To use the language of a passage in *Conjugal Love*, "that tree has been developing and growing every little moment, even the very briefest." (*Conjugal Love* 185, see also. *Divine Providence* 332)

The same is true with each one of us. While we are on earth, even in our old age, it is helpful to remember that we are constantly growing, developing and changing "every little moment, even the very briefest!" Each change happens according to providence and gives us the opportunity to grow spiritually. This development is easily observable in infants and young children who grow with astonishing speed. But it is, in fact, also true for us as we advance in age – and even in old age. It is helpful to remember that as long as we are on this planet, the Lord is working with us, constantly, offering us growth.

Using the analogy of a tree, the passage teaches that, like the tree, a person is constantly undergoing changes and each change leads to progressions where,

as it were, one ring of growth encapsulates the last. The new growth progresses out of and is influenced by the growth that has come before. When one stands back and looks at that oak in my back yard, all of its collective experiences have helped shape it into the giant specimen that it has become. And it is the same for each of us.

This concept is reflected in a beautiful passage that invites us to trust that the workings of providence are always working toward the goal of our eternal spiritual well-being. We read: “Peace holds within itself trust in the Lord, the trust that He governs all things and provides all things, and that He leads towards an end that is good. When a person believes these things about Him, he is at peace, since he fears nothing and no anxiety about things to come disturbs him.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 8455)

That passage is famous for its inspirational beauty. And it is easy to feel peaceful as one reflects on the good experiences that are the obvious blessings from the Lord. A married couple, for example, is grateful to enjoy their friendship in marriage and can feel a sense of wonder that the Lord led them together. Those blessings are easy to see as works of providence.

But are we ready to accept that everything that happens to us can actually have the possibility of contributing to “an end that is good”? Can we recognize that trials and difficulties that we experience in our external lives also can create changes that lead to positive growth? Are we able to see that the changes caused by negative events can still bring about progressions that are also shaped by the Lord? Can we remember that the Lord is using EVERYTHING that happens to us “to lead toward an end that is good”?

This does not mean that the Lord causes evil to happen to a person. Because He operates purely from Divine Love, He never causes evil. (*Divine Providence* 327) While the Lord does not wish that a person experience hardship or loss, we are taught that the Lord permits nothing in our lives that cannot (at least eventually) be used for good. (See *Divine Providence* 21-26) Over time, we like the trees are shaped by storms, wind and drought. But continuously, year after year, new growth comes. The growth is influenced and shaped by these experiences, all of which, over time, contribute to a wisdom that is uniquely able to respond to human spiritual needs.

We are forever changed by events that can be indescribably painful. Yet, the Lord is constantly with us, offering His growth and guidance that extends from His eternal love for each of us. He is always there in the background of our lives helping shape us through every change and every modification. While we cannot directly see the spiritual growth that is happening within while we are still living on earth, we can remember the imagery of the tree and think of the Lord using everything we experience in our lives for the growth, wisdom and health of our angelic selves. Then, one day, when we awaken in the spiritual

world, we will see and understand that unique nature of our angelic wisdom and the abilities we have developed through our responses to the events we experienced on earth. And we will see how everything that has happened in our natural lives has helped us become uniquely useful in the Lord's kingdom.

When hard times hit, remember that the Lord is helping us be 'like the tree planted by the waters.' He is constantly deepening our roots by the river. He is helping us develop courage and resilience when times of heat come. He makes our leaves green, and we need not be anxious in the year of drought, for with the Lord's presence in our lives, we will never cease from yielding fruit.

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Who Do People Say that I Am?

The Rev. Dr. Andrew M. T. Dibb

It's amazing how often people overlook details, especially when reading the Word. Sometimes things are mentioned in what seems to be a passing way, as a matter of detail; we read it and move on. In November 2019 I had an experience that launched a long train of thoughts I'd like to share. I was fortunate to visit Israel on a 10-day professional development tour. Among the various places we saw, one particularly fired up my imagination. I'll begin with the story in *Matthew* 16:13-20 where this place is mentioned.

In this episode the Lord asks His disciples who people say that He is. They reply: "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." Then the Lord said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" to which Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

This interchange between the Lord and His disciples is rich with meaning. The answer regarding people in general is informative, hinting at an ancient belief in reincarnation, but it is Simon Peter's answer that really drives home the Lord's message – a reminder mid-Gospel of who the Lord is. He is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

The story continues with the Lord saying that this insight was revealed to Simon Peter from heaven, and then He blessed him, saying: "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

There have been two ways of interpreting this passage down through the centuries. Many believe that Peter is the rock on which the Church will be built. This passage underlies the institution of the papacy in the Roman Catholic Church and the powers to bind or loose have been passed down through popes for centuries. The other interpretation, which the New Church shares, is that the Church will be founded on the acknowledgment of the Lord as the "Christ, the Son of the living God." This is the rock, the essential truth, forming the foundation of the Church.

It is understandable why this passage has been pivotal in the faith and

history of the Christian Church and stands as the unshakable starting point of the New Church, both as an organization and more importantly in every person. For “the gates of Hades” – meaning death and hell – will be powerless over those who acknowledge this attestation to be true.

This was the incident and declaration that I focused on when we came to Caesarea Philippi on my trip. In the story of *Matthew* 16 the physical place is a small detail that is often overlooked when we read this story. The entire incident is introduced with the words: “When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi.” It’s natural to ask, where is Caesarea Philippi? Why did the Lord make this key revelation there? What are we missing when we skim over those words and move on without noticing them?

As we approached Caesarea Philippi, I was looking forward to seeing some ruins in another fascinating archeological site. But I was not prepared for what struck me. Caesarea Philippi is in the north of Israel, on the ancient main road from Palestine to Damascus, well within the area where the Lord travelled, but a long way north of the Sea of Galilee.

As we approached, we were confronted with a high, red stone cliff with assorted ruins at the base. The cliff dominates the scene, but the eye is immediately drawn to the opening of a large cave, which, we were told, contained a lake that was rumored to be bottomless. At one time water flowed from the cave in quantity and eventually became one of the primary sources of the River Jordan.

For hundreds of years this site – particularly this cave – was held to be sacred to the god Pan. People came in droves to offer sacrifices and throw them into the lake to honor him. In fact, before the place was called *Caesarea Philippi* it was called *Paneas* after Pan. Today it is called *Baneas* according to the Arabic pronunciation.

It is the thesis of this essay that the Lord took His disciples to Caesarea Philippi because He wanted this shrine to a Greco-Roman god to be the backdrop to the acknowledgment that He “is the Christ, the Son of the Living God,” upon which He would build His Church. To understand this it is important to consider the god Pan and his symbolism. He is not mentioned by name in the Gospels, but any ancient Jew, on hearing that the Lord went to Caesarea Philippi, would have associated that place with Pan worship.

The natural question is: why did the Lord choose Caesarea Philippi, a center of Pan worship, for this important and central teaching that He is the “Christ, the Son of the Living God”? There is a message here that needs to be examined.

Pan was an ancient and somewhat mysterious god in the Greco-Roman pantheon of gods. His origins are shrouded in mystery. Although the Greek poet Homer identifies Hermes as his father, sometimes his parentage is ascribed



to Zeus, Apollo, Odysseus, or several other gods in the pantheon.¹ However, the strongest tradition is that he was the son of the god Hermes, who was called Mercury by the Romans. Hermes was the patron god of heralds (which may be why some newspapers are called “The Mercury”). He is also the god of travelers, thieves, merchants and orators.

Because he could move easily between the realm of the gods and that of humans, he loved to live among mortals, helping them tend their flocks. One day he saw a beautiful maiden, Dryope, fell in love and married her. She conceived and a child was born. The Greek poet Homer recounts the event:

And in the house she bare Hermes, a dear son who from his birth was marvelous to look upon, with goat's feet and two horns – a noisy, merry-laughing child. But when the nurse saw his uncouth face and full beard, she was afraid and sprang up and fled and left the child.²

His nurse may have fled in horror from the ugly horned-and-bearded baby, but Hermes and the other gods on Olympus were delighted with him, and that is where, according to Homer, he got his name “Pan,” the Greek word for “all,” in this case meaning all the gods.

Pan was one of the oldest gods of Greece and may even have predated the classical Greek culture passed on through their myths. Scholars point out that the name “Pan,” while meaning “all” in Greek, is likely derived from the even earlier Indo-European word “pa-on” meaning a herdsman. Interestingly, the English word “pastor” is similarly related.³ Such scholars claim that Homer’s version of Pan as “all” was a misinterpretation, that Pan was acknowledged as a god long before the Greeks recorded myths about him.

Be that as it may, both interpretations worked out in practice. On the one hand, Pan was universally loved, even though in early years his popularity was confined to a smaller area in the wildernesses of Greece, but in time it

1 Pan (mythology).“ *New World Encyclopedia*, 11 Jan 2019, 19:51 UTC. 28 Mar 2020, 19:30 [www.newworldencyclopedia.org/p/index.php?title=Pan_\(mythology\)&oldid=1017142](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/p/index.php?title=Pan_(mythology)&oldid=1017142)

2 Anonymous. *The Homeric Hymns and Homerica with an English Translation by Hugh G. Evelyn-White*. Homeric Hymns. Cambridge, MA., Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1914. <http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0013.tlg019.perseus-eng1:19>

3 *New World Encyclopedia*.

spread beyond its original borders. The cave of Pan at Caesarea Philippi, a long way from the original place where Pan was worshipped, bears testimony to the spread and popularity of Pan worship.

The other idea – that Pan was a herdsman – also has echoes of truth. He was the god of the wilderness, the god of mountains and valleys, forests and plains. He was concerned with wild creatures, with the flocks and herds of the people, but not in actual farming. He had enormous strength and would range over vast territories without tiring, living in the wild, eschewing towns and cities, sleeping in caves rather than in temples like other gods.

As a god, Pan had some peculiarities apart from his appearance. He was a god of fertility, constantly on the lookout for nymphs to seduce. Some of them, because he was so ugly with a goat's lower regions and horns, were horrified and fled, with Pan in pursuit. He was also musical, inventing the Pan pipes with which he would entice the unsuspecting.

Although he was popular and sought after, he also inspired fear in people and animals. On the one hand he was said to be a merry god, but on the other he could fly into violent rages if he was surprised, and this could cause tremendous fear in people. The word “panic” comes from the human reaction to the presence of Pan when he was angry. This meant that people had to be very careful around him, particularly not to surprise him if they caught him unawares – for example, if he was taking his daily afternoon nap, usually in a cave.

The cave at the foot of the cliff in Caesarea Philippi was said to be one of the places where Pan slept. For hundreds of years people went there to offer sacrifices and implore a blessing of fertility, or perhaps to convince him to inspire panic in their enemies. Since the site was on the main road from Palestine to Damascus, there was a regular flow of travelers, and the town of Paneas grew up.

The combination of the religious significance of the place, plus its accessibility, caught the attention of Herod the Great, who built a temple there to honor Caesar Augustus, hence the Caesar in Caesarea. Herod's son, Philip, who ruled the area during the Lord's lifetime, extended the site, added his own name, and established his capital there. He spent decades embellishing it with temples and baths. And that is how it was when the Lord visited there with His disciples.

My thesis is that the Lord chose this site deliberately because of its connection with Pan. Before exploring this, consider the similarities: both had miraculous conceptions between a deity and a human and therefore had two distinct sides – divine and human. Yet this is a very superficial comparison. It might be better to dig below the surface: Pan was a wild god who rejected civilization. He rejoiced in the untamed wilderness. In this way, he is a metaphor of things in their natural state versus those in a refined state.

Born half goat and half man it is challenging to see Pan embracing the

human side of himself: his manner and morals were more those of a goat than a cultivated man. In addition to this, Pan was mostly amoral and free with his violent temper.

The Lord, on the other hand is much the opposite. Like Pan, He was in two worlds: from Mary He inherited the untamed human inclinations shared with all people. This side of Him is somewhat like the goat's legs and horns on Pan. Yet, unlike Pan, the Lord rejected that side of Himself and embraced instead the cultivated side, the increasingly Divine within.

He spoke out against immorality, teaching marriage as an ideal state, and instead of indulging a human temper, He was the epitome of forgiveness. His reason for His entering the world was to remove the rough humanity He inherited from Mary, and which, with the rest of us, He shared with Pan.

The Lord could presumably have chosen any site to draw out the acknowledgment of Himself as the "Christ, the Son of the Living God," but He chose Caesarea Philippi and all its connections with Pan to make His point. As the conversation with the disciples unfolded, so the distinctions became increasingly clear.

Picture for a moment the Lord at Caesarea Philippi, standing at the foot of that vast red cliff, with the temple to Augustus behind Him, and the opening to the cave, which the Jews called "the gates of Hades" behind it. Imagine Him looking at the throngs of people who have come to consult with, worship and sacrifice to Pan.

He knows what they think of Pan, but what do they think of Him? He asks, "Who do people say that I, the Son of Man, am?" The Pan-worshippers would have thought of Him simply as another man and paid no attention to Him. The Jews, who may have had some knowledge of Him because of His preaching and miracles, related Him to one of the earlier prophets, maybe Elijah or Jeremiah. Essentially no one knew who He was, yet they all knew Pan and gathered to honor him.

His next question to the disciples was, "who do you say that I am?" By this point in the Gospels the disciples had had some experience with the Lord. When He called them to follow Him, they followed, and in the process were present as "Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people."

They watched as "His fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto Him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were epileptics, and those who were paralyzed; and He healed them." (*Matthew* 4:23-24) The disciples were present for the Sermon on the Mount and listened to His parables, which, at times, He explained to them.

By this mid-point in the *Gospel of Matthew*, even though the multitudes at the shrine to Pan did not know who He was, or had a fuzzy idea as some of the Jews did, the disciples were developing a very clear idea, as Simon Peter answered Him: “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.”

This is the first clear distinction between the Lord and Pan. The Lord’s Father is known. He is the living God while Pan’s father may have been Hermes or maybe any of a variety of other gods. In other words, the source of Pan and all his symbolism had no fixed basis, but the source of the Lord is the Living God. This living God gave the Lord the power to heal and the wisdom to preach, neither of which Pan could do. The living God also gave the Lord the love, compassion and willingness to forgive that the disciples were witnessing daily. From his father Pan inherited wildness, a temper, and a streak of immorality that was essentially self-serving.

The Lord’s response to Simon Peter also refers to the relationship between Him and His Father. Peter’s answer, He said, did not come from Himself, but was inspired by the Father: “flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father which is in heaven.” This statement widens the gap between the Lord and Pan, for even if one were to acknowledge Hermes as Pan’s father, what kind of influence would he have had? Although Hermes was the god of heralds, thieves, merchants and travelers, he also had strong connections with the dead and the underworld and frequently acted as a guide to lead people to Hades.

There is a sharp distinction between the Lord, Son of the Living God, who came to give life to the world and lift people up to heaven, and Pan, son of Hermes, one of whose task it is to lead people into Hades. In Greco-Roman mythology, Hades is the shadowy place of the dead. It could simply be where people go after they die, but it could also mean a place of punishment and torment – hell.

The Lord came back to this allusion later in His response to Simon Peter. The distinction then is one between life and death: the Lord came “that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly,” (*John* 10:10), while Pan’s father, Hermes, led to a diminishing of life in Hades.

The Lord then makes a further distinction between Himself and the god Pan. Turning to Simon Peter, He said: “You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Until one is at the actual site of Caesarea Philippi, this statement seems to be a promise that the church would be built on the rock of the statement that He is the “Son of the living God,” as indeed it is. But standing on the spot, a whole new depth emerges.

Picture again the Lord and His disciples standing before that great red cliff, in the jaws, so to speak, of the worship of Pan, a god whose following flocked to the site to worship him. One can imagine the Lord looking at that

cliff, which for many was the beacon to a connection with Pan. Then picture Him again, looking away from that rock to Peter, whose statement is a beacon to the worship of the Lord.

Unlike the worship of Pan, worship of the Lord would be built on a rock of a different kind: on the solid acknowledgement of the Lord. The rock face at Caesarea Philippi is impressive, but it is merely a rock containing a cave used to honor a mythological god. The rock of acknowledging the Lord, known by so few people at Caesarea Philippi, leads to the fullness of life.

The final allusion to Pan that the Lord makes to the disciples is that once the church has been founded on the rock of acknowledgement, “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Remember that the Lord and His disciples would have been standing before the cave in the cliff where people came to honor Pan. Those people believed that this cave was one of the entrances to the subterranean after-life, Hades. While gods lived down there, it was also where the people went after death. Hades was not a pleasant place, it was “a dark and dismal place in the very depths of the earth, the common receptacle of disembodied spirits.”⁴

The concept of Hades stood in stark contrast to the Lord’s message of hope and salvation. In the Gospel of John He promises eternal life:

Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. (*John 14:1-4*)

The Church He will build on the rock of the acknowledgement of Him as the Christ, the Son of the Living God, brings the life of God, lifting up all those

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4 Hades. <http://qbible.com/>

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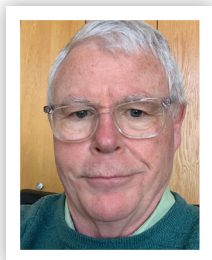
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We often overlook details in the Word, and in the grand scheme of things it may not make too much difference. The importance of this episode in the Gospel is Peter's acknowledgment of the Lord and the Lord's promise to build a church that would withstand the assaults of hell. If Matthew had omitted to mention the place where they were, the overall message would have been the same.

Pan is never mentioned in the Word or in the Heavenly Doctrines, and the correspondence of Caesarea Philippi is never mentioned. But the history is clear and provides us with a speculative reason why the Lord went there, for the distinction between the Lord and Pan is very sharp. And as one contemplates it, we are presented with a choice: we can follow our own false gods who lead to the dismal states of Hades, or we can place our trust in the Lord and acknowledge Him as the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

(See photos on page 156)



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The Human Lungs and Swedenborg

J. Daniel Heilman, MD

Emanuel Swedenborg says in *Heavenly Secrets* 2054: “In the Lord’s Kingdom the Church is like the heart and lungs in man and interior things are joined to the external by means of the heart and lungs.”

Also, “The Church ceases when no true charity, represented by the heart and lungs, exists.” (*Ibid.* 2853) And, “Where the Word does not exist, the Church is like the other internal organs being deprived of the life-giving provisions of the heart and lungs.” (*Ibid.* 4217:3)

Although the heart is described as heavenly (celestial) in its correspondence, and the lungs spiritual, they are usually mentioned together because they function as one. One without the other is interesting anatomically but physiologically useless. From *Animal Kingdom*: “The heart by means of the arteries diffuse the blood, or the corporeal soul, in all directions, while the lungs affuse the spirit of this world, the ultimate and corporeal spirit.”

Swedenborg’s pre-theological study of human anatomy and physiology proved him to be almost visionary, particularly regarding the nervous system. He was aware of the structure of the lungs as an air-pump composed of tubes of diminishing size in contact with the atmosphere where the airways lead to a spongy part that receives blood.

From *Animal Kingdom*: “The substance of the lungs is almost all spongy, being made up of the infinite number of membranous cells, and of different sorts of vessels, spread among the cells in innumerable ramifications.” This is a beautiful description of the “parenchyma” (alveolar mass) of the lungs, where their primary function resides.

Swedenborg’s attraction to anatomy was gargantuan. His work included references to a large array of species (comparative anatomy) and a familiarity with a host of anatomists. I don’t know whether Swedenborg had use of a microscope, but he mentions Malpighi, who did. The Dutch draper/lensmaker Van Leeuwenhoek had studied the microbial world and human micro-anatomy in the late 1600s and Swedenborg spent a lot of time in Holland.

From the minuteness of his descriptions I suspect he did use a microscope. Perhaps a reader more erudite than I might answer that question. Swedenborg was a wee bit imaginative in his physiology, but only from today's perspective.

He was also impressed with the membranous sling which holds the lungs and heart in place (as well as the abdominal viscera). He may or may not have appreciated the few cubic centimeters of fluid between the two layers of the pleura which serve as a lubricant, enabling the lungs to slide within the thorax when they expand on inspiration and spring back to a position of rest at the end of expiration. If the lungs were attached to the chest wall the act and work of breathing would be more arduous.

The lungs come as a pair – the right larger by 55/45%. The heart has two halves. The right heart accepts venous blood from the upper and lower body. The right ventricle pumps blood through the low-pressure system of pulmonary vessels into a fine network of capillaries which interface with the alveolar sacs (en masse, the “spongy tissue”). These sacs represent the terminal membrane of the bronchial tract, after 26 or so branchings from the trachea. This alveolar- capillary interface is the site of the primary function of the lungs, which is gas exchange. If one were able to flatten the approximately 500 million alveoli (in two lungs) into a single layer the cumulative surface would equal an area the size of half a tennis court – well-suited for the diffusion of molecules.

The metabolic fuel oxygen enters the circulation while carbon dioxide, the metabolic exhaust, exits the circulation by way of ventilation. This gas exchange occurs at the alveolar level. Oxygen was first discovered by the theologian/scientist Joseph Priestly in 1774, two years after Swedenborg died. Swedenborg was very colorful in his anticipation of the discovery of carbon dioxide. In *Animal Kingdom* we find: “The lungs eructate and banish the air, the mortal enemy of the blood, in the form of effete and vapid halitus and vapors.” We must remember that dental science was pretty primitive then!

It was the Englishman William Harvey who in the mid-1600s first described the circulation as a closed system with blood flowing in one direction. Rather than simply accept the teachings of Galen (2nd century AD) which had been taught in medical schools for 1400 years, Harvey dissected veins in living animals and showed the presence of valves. Galen had been confined to the observation of fallen gladiators and vivisection of animals, human dissection being taboo at the time. Harvey also accurately described the motions of the heart. He benefited from the elaborate drawings of by the Flemish anatomist Vesalius, who dissected corpses of criminals.

A key ingredient of the circulation was completed by the Italian biologist/physician Malpighi, shortly after Harvey. Malpighi used a microscope to find the capillaries and could be called the first histologist. Capillaries comprise 80% of the 60,000 miles of the total sum of vessels lined up end to end.

Freshly oxygenated blood is carried by the pulmonary veins to the left heart – first the left atrium, then to the left ventricle which operates against a greater pressure than its right-sided counterpart. Possessed of more muscle mass, it powers the circulation of blood against the aortic pressure (“afterload”). The left ventricle supplies the force necessary to perfuse the arteries, capillaries and veins, and resistance dissipates most of this pressure. With the help of valves in leg veins, coupled with the muscle action and residual pressure from the heart, blood returns to the right heart, which is quite a vertical task.

Here we possess a unidirectional and closed system of blood flow as first described by Harvey, whose publishings were familiar to Swedenborg. At rest, about five liters of blood flows around this circulatory system in a minute, or 7,200 liters in a day. (A liter is slightly more than a quart.) We use around 550 liters of oxygen in a day, and exhale around 700 liters of carbon dioxide.

Of course, the circulation serves more than the proper delivery of gases. The functions of the circulation include the distribution and storage of food, transport of hormones, focused immune response, the cleansing of the body by the kidneys, liver and lungs, and other functions that depend upon the body being in contact with itself.

The heart sits at the throne of this complex system. It is composed of an orderly array of muscle, an electrical system with an automatic pacemaker, four valves which ensure unidirectional flow and arteries from the aorta that supply blood to the heart muscle. Today, we can replace or repair every one of these elements – the most dramatic being a cardiac transplant or ventricular assist device. Restoring blood supply by way of vein grafting or stent placement, miraculous as these are, is almost commonplace today, referred to parenthetically as once was an appendectomy.

The modern use of radioactive xenon and a gamma camera is one way to gain a deeper understanding of the lungs’ function. By introducing this trace inert gas both intravenously and by aerosol, one can create a detailed map of both the distribution of ventilation and perfusion in the human lung. This comes to be the essential physiologic concept – the matching of ventilation and perfusion – in order to achieve ideal gas exchange. In other words, the ventilation of an under-perfused or unperfused portion of the lung – for example, due to an embolism – is partially or totally wasted.

Similarly, the perfusion of an under-ventilated or unventilated portion of the lung – for instance, due to blockage of an airway – is partially or totally wasted. In the latter case, venous (only partially oxygenated) blood will arrive in the left-sided circulation as “shunted” blood and the arterial oxygen content will be less as a result. (I think of the matched pairings we read about in the Writings – Faith and Charity, Good and Truth, Conjugal Love – and how each is integral to the other.)

There is no such thing as an ideal lung in which all the V/Q (ventilation/perfusion) units equal one. These units comprise a cluster of alveoli and investing capillary network. Gravity has an effect on blood flow, favoring lower parts of the lung. Gravity also has an effect on air distribution, though less than blood, as air weighs less. This is why when standing erect the alveolar air at the top of the lung contains more oxygen than alveoli at the bottom, where relatively more blood extracts more oxygen. It's also why the aerophilic (oxygen-loving) tubercle bacillus more often involves the upper lung fields. (To be really esoteric, tuberculosis in bats usually occurs in the lung base because they spend most of the time upside down.)

Asthma, for instance, primarily affects airways and when active this treatable and reversible condition leads to inflammation of the bronchial lining, mucous production with plugging and spasm of the muscles that surround these bronchioles, i.e. bronchospasm. Treatment of asthma then is aimed at relief or prevention of these three factors. Emphysema is another obstructive lung problem that is irreversible and leads to alveolar destruction and coalescence. V/Q relationships are disrupted by this alteration of lung architecture. Emphysema is usually preceded by chronic bronchitis, which is most often due to the inhalation of tobacco smoke.

So these gases – oxygen and carbon dioxide – move in opposite directions: the former from the alveolus into the red blood cell and plasma, and the latter from the plasma into the alveolus. Both gases have to move through the alveolar membrane, a capillary membrane (twice); the space in between both membranes known as the interstitial space (of the lung), the red cell membrane and some intracellular fluid.

Not being as soluble as carbon dioxide, oxygen binds to a molecule known as hemoglobin (Hb) in the red blood cell. The hemoglobin molecule contains a complex protein (globin) and a ring with four iron atoms, each of which can accommodate one oxygen molecule. It has been estimated there are around 270 million hemoglobin molecules in every red cell. So when fully saturated a red cell contains roughly a billion O₂ molecules. There are five million red cells in a microliter of blood (a millionth of a liter). Their total number makes up the majority of the 40 trillion or so cells in the human body.

Red blood cells are shaped like biconcave discs that are flexible and can slip, slide, fold and bend within tortuous capillaries. This wear and tear is associated with their lasting about 120 days. Carbon dioxide moves as a dissolved molecule from high (plasma) to low (alveolar) concentration zones. It is vented from the alveoli through the act of breathing.

Hemoglobin is a very clever molecule. Its avidity or attraction for oxygen is greatest during the half-second or so it is exposed to the relatively high oxygen environment of the lung. Because Hb doesn't unload all of its oxygen

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at the tissue level, we can resuscitate people by breathing our exhaled (15% O₂) air into them instead of the 20% oxygen present in air, plus, of course, compressing the chest. Conversely, this avidity decreases when the molecule is circulating in tissue capillaries where the amount of (dissolved) oxygen is lower. In other words, Hb wants to unload oxygen at the tissue level.

This is an intrinsic behavior of the molecule itself. Other factors enhance the unloading of oxygen at the tissue level. These include acidity. As it happens, when the Hb molecule yields its oxygen it becomes a stronger acid than the fully oxygenated form

(oxyhemoglobin). Other acids are also present, including carbonic acid derived from carbon dioxide.

So, the molecular behavior of Hb changes depending on the environment it experiences in its journey through the circulation. If we can have smart phones, we can have smart molecules. Incidentally, the toxicity of carbon monoxide is related to the fact that Hb is 200 times more avid for it than oxygen, hence the displacement of the latter.

From *The Brain* (as translated by Tafel, 1882) we find Swedenborg asserting: “The most general use of the lungs consists in respiration; but we must go further than this and inquire what respiration has to do with life.”

Why, we might ask, is oxygen the key to life? To ask this, we also ask why our cells – aside from red cells – , contain mitochondria. The mitochondrion is the site where oxygen is consumed in the metabolism of glucose. This is the site of a host of enzymes and intermediates known as the Krebs Cycle or citric acid cycle. (It’s worth a semester in college.) This pathway produces CO₂, water, and the high-energy molecule known as ATP – adenosine triphosphate. The addition of this third phosphate group, known as oxidative phosphorylation, is where and when this power molecule is formed.

The chemical energy in this third phosphate group drives many of life’s critical functions. For instance, ATP is used to maintain ion (electrical) gradients across cell membranes so necessary for normal nerve and muscle function; for muscle contraction; for building of polymers such as RNA and DNA; and many other critical processes (or uses). The revelator says in *The Brain*: “For there is a perpetual chain of uses, as of effects and causes, for every

cause and effect involving a use.”

Do we see a symmetry in photosynthesis, where green plants and simple organisms use the energy in sunlight, CO₂ and H₂O, to synthesize food, giving off O₂ in the process?

The term “respiration” at one point was associated with the act of breathing. Then it took on the notion of “gas exchange” and finally we speak of cellular respiration. Even the seemingly simple act of breathing isn’t so simple. The lungs accommodate the motions of the thorax, as mentioned. The act of breathing involves contraction of the diaphragm muscle (and the intercostals) in response to rhythmic discharge from automatic nerve centers in the brain stem (medulla and pons)—the impulse carried by the phrenic nerve.

When the diaphragm contracts the volume of the thorax increases, which according to Boyle’s Law says that the pressure of the gas varies inversely with the volume (temperature constant). So, with the enlargement of the thorax, intrathoracic pressure drops and air at atmospheric pressure flows into the lungs – the “action of the atmosphere.”

Inspiration involves the active expenditure of energy. Since the thorax – and to a less extent, the lungs themselves – are possessed of elastic properties (of which Swedenborg was aware) their expansion, due to kinetic energy, not only draws in air but also stores potential energy while expanded. With relaxation of the diaphragm, exhalation is passive as the thorax springs back to its resting position. This is normal breathing.

With normal “tidal” breathing, we can achieve the required gas exchange with a volume of around 500 cc’s per breath or about eight liters a minute. The amount of air we can forcefully exhale is known as the vital capacity. We can’t completely empty our lungs, because we can’t collapse our thorax. The volume left in our lungs after we forcefully breathe out all we can is known as the residual volume. The vital capacity plus residual volume is the total lung capacity. When our breathing requires a larger portion of the vital capacity to effect normal gas exchange, the work of breathing increases.

Changes in lung compliance or stiffness (interstitial scarring or fibrosis), hyperinflation (emphysema) or airway obstruction (asthma) can alter the work of breathing in addition to the V/Q effects of gas exchange. We then may experience difficulty in breathing (dyspnea) and an increased awareness of this otherwise automatic function.

The revelator says in The Brain: “For there is a perpetual chain of uses, as of effects and causes, for every cause and effect involving a use.”

As elementary as our insight might be, we perceive an intricate and purposeful design, where structure and function conjoin, where the means and the ends are visible.

The respiratory centers in the brain stem are influenced by mechanical stimuli from the lungs, and by chemical stimuli such as pH and CO₂ tension of the cerebrospinal fluid, as well as oxygen tension in the blood. The latter is sensed by special receptors in the carotid arteries. It makes sense to have a built-in monitor to signal to the respiratory centers a measured decrease in oxygen in the blood, perfusing the organ with the highest oxygen consumption.

How do the sensors in the carotid body work? How does the pancreas monitor blood sugar and signal beta cells to release just the right amount of insulin? I have no idea about either. But there are folks who have made a life's work out of trying to understand these and a multitude of bio-feedback mechanisms.

The best way to determine if the lungs are working normally is to sample the two arterial blood gases. This used to involve a needle. Now there are non-invasive ways to do this. Oximetry depends on different light absorbing properties of oxyhemoglobin and deoxyhemoglobin, giving us the percent saturation. Because of the high solubility of CO₂ the exhaled concentration is close to that of arterial blood.

These are two patterns of respiratory failure. The first shows an elevation in CO₂ and a reduction in O₂ – combined ventilatory and oxygenation failure, often due to the obstructive diseases. The second pattern is low oxygen and normal or low CO₂. Here, the person is able to hyperventilate away some CO₂ in response to low oxygen. This occurs in moderate interstitial disease and early respiratory distress syndromes, until the work of breathing starts to compromise ventilation and the first pattern emerges.

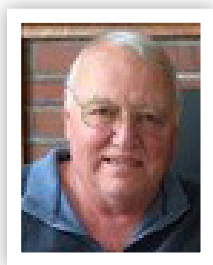
We are benefactors of the ease of normal, automatic, subconscious breathing. I have included a modicum of reference to some of the disease of breathing, for illustrative purposes. Also, I include some astonishing if not incredible numbers involved in this highly integrated system. This overall system seems complicated because it is. One element doesn't work without all. ("All for one, and one for all.") Dumas is less elegant than Swedenborg. One observes a certain beauty in the interactions and inter-relationships along this chain, of which the lungs are a vital part.

We might say that oxygen is the molecule of life, but we can say the same

for ATP and DNA or . . . you name it. As elementary as **our** insight might be, we perceive an intricate and purposeful design, where structure and function conjoin, where the means and the ends are visible. This is just a simple sketch. I'm curious, for instance, why the hormone erythropoietin, which stimulates red cell production in the bone marrow in response to a drop in oxygen, should reside in the kidney. There's an answer and someone knows it. But there are many more answers to questions asked and waiting to be asked.

I believe Swedenborg, eminent scientist that he was, would be enthralled with molecular biology, feedback mechanisms, regulatory interactions and communications, and the wealth of correspondences that spring from such an awe-inspiring subject. What implications for the Grand Man! Surely, his voracious scientific curiosity and study prepared him for his essential calling – the conveyance of our revelatory guide to a productive spiritual life for living, breathing human beings.

I believe Swedenborg, eminent scientist that he was, would be enthralled with molecular biology, feedback mechanisms, regulatory interactions and communications, and the wealth of correspondences that spring from such an awe-inspiring subject. What implications for the Grand Man!



J. Daniel Heilman graduated from the Academy Boys School in 1957, Haverford College and the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine. He was a Diplomat of the American Board of Internal Medicine and the American College of Chest Physicians. He practiced internal and pulmonary medicine for 35 years. He lives in retirement in Sarver, Pennsylvania. Contact: dawndan189@gmail.com (Dan would like to thank Carroll Odhner of the Swedenborg Library in Bryn Athyn for her

assistance in providing articles on Swedenborg's anatomical studies.)

Good News from the New Christian Bible Study Project

Steve David (Project Manager)

It has been 250 years since 1770. A quarter-millennium. How's the Second Coming coming along?

It's hard for us to know, since we each have such a short-term, limited perspective. So, we have to do the best we can with what we know and love right now.

One interesting "right now" thing we're doing is the *New Christian Bible Study* project. Many millions of people are already reading the Word online. They're looking for meaning, for ways to help them live better lives. The Writings show the meaning; they show the way. When we mesh those two things together, it gets the true ideas of the New Church in front of a big, interested audience.

We're coming up to the eighth anniversary of launching the *newchristianbiblestudy.org* site. Traffic is probably going to hit the five million visits/year mark this year. That sounds like a lot, and for Swedenborgian sites, it is! But compared to the big Bible sites, it's still small. But it has been growing fast, and it's getting better all the time.

Here's what we have so far:

- The Word in 85 translations and 43 languages
- The Writings in 20 languages, with 400+ originals and translations online, in Latin, English, French, German, Dutch, Swedish, Czech, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Russian, Serbian, Zulu, Korean, Chinese, Japanese, Malayalam, and more
- 10,000+ explanations of words and phrases, verses, stories, spiritual concepts, and chapters; User Interfaces in 17 languages
- Existing (old-fashioned but helpful) New Church commentary on almost the whole Word, in English, plus a stream of new chapter summaries flowing in

- 1000+ linked videos, hundreds of audio sermons, and illustrations
- A world map with links to more than 400 New Church congregations and organizations
- Easy and Advanced search functions for the Word and the Writings, with explanations, in all the languages
- Searle's Index, Bogg's Glossary, Parallel Passages, and many more research tools

What are we working on now?

The Writings for Everyone

- We're getting close to having all existing digital translations imported and with their cross-references linked
- We're helping to support active translation pipelines in Spanish, Japanese, Chinese, Swedish, Zulu, Malayalam, Filipino, Dutch, English and other languages

The Swedenborg Reader Phone App. We released the latest version of this in October 2020 – check the Google Play Store and the Apple App Store. You can download any/all the Writings translations and read them on your phone. There's search capability and sharing. It's pretty neat!

Interfaces. We just added Filipino/Tagalog and Zulu interfaces for site users. The goal is to have comfortable user experiences for people in many languages, with an interface, the Word, the Writings, commentaries, and people to talk to.

Chapter summaries. Importantly, we're crowd-sourcing concise explanations of every Bible chapter. This is coming along; we're about a third of the way and people really like it. The Rev. Dr. Ray Silverman has written chapter summaries for *Matthew* and *Mark* (*Luke* and *John* are in the works), and we have them all linked in.

We just got this note from a site visitor the other day: “The inner meaning of Matthew is truly excellent; I get so much out of it.”

I agree with her. I've been reading the *Psalms*, side by side with Julian Duckworth's commentaries, and I'm getting so much more from them than ever before. It's good.

Significations. This is a fun part of the project – complicated but useful. We want to make it so that every Bible reader can quickly realize that there IS an internal sense, and what it's like. In English, we've got that working fairly well.

We've been basing this on Nicholson's *Dictionary of Correspondences*,

and we've just about finished parsing Alice Spiers Sechrist's great update, *The Dictionary of Bible Imagery*. It will serve as a good basis for a better, more thorough implementation. Plus, with the broader, more accurate Bible references in Sechrist's work, our routines that find the matching Bible terms in other languages will yield more results. That means, for example, that instead of highlighting 1,000 words in Spanish Bibles, we'll get closer to 3,500. And that means that more people get more access to the Word's inner meaning.

Want to get involved? We have people writing explanations, editing, translating, proofreading, supplying art or photos, choosing music to match Bible readings, programming, and helping with fund raising. We've taken an independent, cross-branch, global approach, which is great for nimbleness and collaboration. If you would like to be involved, get in touch!

Check it out! Web traffic has grown rapidly, to around the 4.8 million visits/year rate now. People come from all over. And this is just scratching the surface!
www.newchristianbiblestudy.org

Contact: sdavid@skymark.com

Church News

Compiled by Bruce Henderson

PASTORAL MOVES

The Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr.

Pastoral selection processes in several congregations have reached a point of clarity such that the Bishop's Office has placed in nomination the following pastors:

- **The Rev. Alan Cowley** has been nominated and affirmed to serve as the pastor of the Oak Arbor Church and School. He will move to Rochester, Michigan, by July 1, with his wife, Susan. Alan has been pastor of the Boynton Beach New Church in Florida.
- **The Rev. Jared Buss** has been nominated and affirmed to serve as pastor of the Pittsburgh New Church and School. He will move to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, by July 1, with his wife, Justine, and three children. Jared has been assistant pastor of the Olivet Church in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.
- **The Rev. Ethan McCardell** has been nominated and affirmed to serve as pastor of the Sunrise Chapel in Tucson, Arizona. He will move to Tucson by July 1, with his wife, Jessica, and their five children. Ethan has been pastor of the Michael Church in London, England.
- **The Rev. Eric Carswell** has graciously agreed to delay his retirement as pastor of the Bryn Athyn Church to take on the role of assistant pastor for up to two years. The intent is to provide strong support for the **Rev. Derek Elphick** as he takes on the leadership role of pastor, beginning July 1.

I wish to offer gratitude to these pastors for their willingness to take on these important assignments within the General Church, to their families for supporting them and adjusting to a new context, to the assistant bishops and regional pastors who helped facilitate these decisions, and to the pastoral advisory committees who worked capably on behalf of their congregations. May the Lord bless these transitions, and cause the Church in these locations

to flourish.

Previously announced:

- **The Rev. Derek Elphick**, pastor in Oak Arbor, has been nominated and affirmed as the next pastor of Bryn Athyn Church. He and his wife, Gay, will move to Bryn Athyn by July 1.
- **The Rev. Erik Buss**, assistant pastor in Bryn Athyn, has accepted the role of providing pastoral leadership in a national pastor capacity throughout the United Kingdom, based in Colchester. Erik will move to England with his wife, Ann, by July 1.
- **The Rev. Grant Odhner**, who has been teaching in the Theological School and serving as a visiting minister, has accepted an assistant pastoral role in the United Kingdom, based in London. He will move there with his wife, Sarah, by July 1.

ACADEMY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Highlights from the meeting on December 16, 2020

Academy Secondary Schools

The Middle States Association visiting team is recommending that the Academy Secondary Schools receive full and unconditional reaccreditation for the next seven years. Formal accreditation is anticipated in the spring. The MSA Accreditation Committee's 94-page report strongly supports the educational system at the Academy.

The schools reopened on January 19 with added COVID-19 restrictions. Proctors are assisting students with learning at an expected cost of \$100,000, which has been covered by a donation.

Bryn Athyn College

The College stayed open for the fall semester, made possible by aggressive preventive measures and the support of students and stakeholders.

The winter term started virtually on January 4, with HyFlex classes starting on January 18. Student life activities and athletics, even with the vaccine, were expected to be curtailed. The vaccination rollout is occurring during the winter and spring semesters.

Treasurer

Wendy Cooper, who had been controller for the General Church, took over as Controller for the Academy on January 1.

The Jungé Pavilion was not opened because of cancellation of the College and Secondary Schools hockey seasons. Farming on the North Campus

property is being considered.

The Board adopted a resolution giving the Treasurer – in consultation with the Real Estate Committee – the authority to enter into leases for non-educational property owned by the Academy.

Glencairn Museum

The museum was open for a brief time, with 500 visitors for the Christmas displays in the Great Hall. A virtual Advent calendar was created with nativity scenes from around the world.

Glencairn has a robust following on social media. The traditional Glencairn Sing was prerecorded, with the number of online viewers exceeding the number who could have attended in person.

ACADEMY SECONDARY SCHOOLS UPDATE

More than a year after the COVID-19 pandemic upset the world, the Academy Secondary Schools still are making adjustments. Among them are the cancellation – again – of the popular ANC Summer Camp and Tools4Life Camp. This was a difficult decision, made in the interest of safety and giving families as much notice as possible. There were still hopes in February – when this was announced – of holding the ANC Performing Arts Day Camp for sixth through eighth graders, with a decision to be made by April.

The Schools planned to reopen dormitories after the spring break, after consulting with health officials, dormitory families and staff. Administrators acknowledged: “As has been the case during this entire pandemic, there are people on all sides of every plan that we have presented and considered. In an effort to be fair for all dorm students and their families, we have made the decision to reopen,” with full mitigation efforts.

The plan also was to resume athletics and dance after the break, but only outdoors. Some extracurricular activities, including the musical, *Little Women*, may be offered virtually.

Check the website, www.ancss.org, and the Facebook link for updated information.

LAWS OF LIFE ESSAY CONTEST

All high school sophomore (or 15-16-year-old) girls world-wide are eligible to enter this contest. This essay is an opportunity to write about what you think is important in life. This is your chance to be heard – to write from the heart about one or more of your personal laws of life.

Essays are to be in English (Google Translate can be used for this purpose). No name or identification can be on the paper itself to allow for impartial

judging, but have your name and address in the envelope or email.

You can see last year's winning essays printed in the *Theta Alpha Journal*. Winners receive a certificate and a check: First Place – \$100; Second Place – \$75; Third Place – \$50. Essays are printed in the Journal with writers' permission and as space permits. The essay guidelines are:

“The Laws of Life” are a set of rules, ideals or principles by which one should live:

- What do you value most in life?
- What is important to you?
- What ideals do you hold deep in your heart?
- Think about the people and experiences that have helped you form these laws.

Pick a topic to write about:

- A personal experience/lesson learned that affects how you live/view your life now
- An aphorism or quote that inspires or guides you
- You can use an analogy, a quotation, a story or parable
- No personal romantic relationships!!

Send submissions to Theta Alpha International, PO Box 154, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009, USA, or email to ANCdaughters@gmail.com. Must be received by March 27, 2021.

NEW CHURCH CHANCELS AT EASTER



Bryn Athyn Cathedral



Floral offerings at the Cathedral



Boynton Beach, Florida



Oak Arbor, Michigan



Boulder, Colorado



Kempton, Pennsylvania

PAN AND THE CAVE OF CAESAREA PHILLIPPI

(See the article by the Rev. Dr. Andrew Dibb on page 131)



Pan at Caesarea Phillippi

Life Lines

DONNETTE ROSE ALFELT

(November 12, 1929 – December 22, 2020)



Lennart and Donnette at their engagement

Donnette Alfelt passed into the spiritual world just a few days before Christmas – a sad shock for her family in the midst of a joyous season but after 91 years of a full and meaningful life.

Donnette was a special person – special to family and friends for her unconditional love and angelic sphere; special to students for the calmness, light and grace she spread among them; special to fellow widows and widowers, for the comfort and wisdom that let them smile again.

Donnette knew the pain of widows and widowers and gave them hope with a soft presence and reassurance rooted in her faith. She lost her beloved husband, Lennart, in 1981; her son, Sten, born with physical disabilities but no limitations on his personality, in his 40s; and a granddaughter, full of life and promise, at age eight. She longed patiently for the reunions she is enjoying now. But she did not just sit around waiting and feeling sorry for herself.

For many years she led a group of widows and widowers, offering wisdom and comfort from the Word and the Writings, and from the perspective of her life and her conviction that we are all put on earth to serve others.

With characteristic humility she produced a number of booklets that remain part of her legacy: *Comfort and Hope for Widows and Widowers*; *When a Spouse Dies*; *Journal for Grief and Healing*; *From the Top of the Yardstick*; and *Nobody Dies*. Each offers lessons and perceptions about life from her experience and her passion for helping others.

In the Introduction to *Nobody Dies* she says: “I have found over the years that sharing other people’s stories made it easier to understand my own.” One of the lessons she shares is that “God’s greatest desire is that we choose to share in the tranquility of heavenly living” – that we will come into heaven by choosing to live it in this life.

She added: “We all know the feeling of joy in making those we love happy or of making a positive difference in the lives of others. Though it can’t be seen or adequately described, altruistic love is the most powerful force on earth and the very substance of heaven and the Creator.”

Donnette is remembered and revered by countless students for her distinctively New Church course for Girls School seniors, *Formative Years*. It helped prepare them for the choices they would make throughout their lives – hopefully leading to heaven.

In one exercise she had the girls pair off and talk about people they admire – and why. They discussed the qualities they had listed, such as: honest, trustworthy, sense of humor, unselfish, thoughtful, sensitive, kind, caring, dependable. Then she asked them to consider words that didn’t make the list: beautiful, handsome, rich, athletic, thin.

Our culture is obsessed with looks and money. This exercise helped girls see that these aren’t the qualities they respect, admire and value in others. And while they may not be rich or beautiful, everyone can develop the qualities they admire in others. They all learned that the choices we make define who we are and where we are going, and that real education is about wisdom, not intelligence. It’s about choosing honor and virtue over rich and beautiful.

Among the many choices that defined Donnette’s life was creating the Delta Mu community service club in the Academy Secondary Schools, in which students take an active role in service beyond the classroom and the campus. She has also played a key role in the Stephen Ministry in Bryn Athyn, where trained individuals aid pastors in providing special support to people in need. Both organizations remain active – a tribute to Donnette’s vision and commitment to serving others.

In the November/December 2019 issue of *New Church Life* we reprinted a talk Donnette gave to the Secondary Schools Honor Society in 1990: *The University of the Natural World*. Here she is again as a master New Church teacher:

“All of us attend the same school. Living in the natural world is nothing but a prep university for eternity. All human beings are accepted at the University of the Natural World, regardless of SAT scores or financial ability. The All-Wise Administrator recognizes the potential of each of us and continually provides us with opportunities to develop to the fullest.”

We don’t just graduate into “real life,” she said. Life is continuing education – with success and failure, exhilaration and boredom, and not always paying attention. But it’s all about those choices we are making – both subconsciously and purposefully, but all determinative. “School,” she said, “is a series of problems to solve and so is life.”

And one last bit of advice: “Our job is to work on our homework every day. Cramming for the final on our death bed isn’t going to work.”

We can be sure that Donnette left her bed on Christmas Eve fully prepared for a spiritual life more joyous and fuller than anything she had known during a rich life on earth. She was a happy graduate.

The Rev. Kurt Hy. Asplundh was asked to do an informal service for the family on Christmas night, a time when we are all lifted to a sense of newness and light. He regretted missed opportunities to visit with Donnette but felt “sustained by the peaceful confidence that she exuded while she was here – that we are all being taken care of, and being taken care of well.” (Kurt also did a live-streamed memorial service for Donnette on January 30.)

Just a little more than a year earlier, Donnette’s family honored her with a 90th birthday party – with strict orders that it be low-key, with no gifts or speeches. I managed to bend the rules with a poem acknowledging the gift that her life had been, which included these lines:

This is your gift, every quality,
That comes from your heart with humility;
Wise and caring, thoughtful and kind –
As angelic a friend as we’ll ever find.
You personify use in all that you do,
Serving the Lord and your neighbor too.
And it all comes wrapped in a gentle smile –
A graciousness that you wear with style.

(BMH)

EDWARD KESSEL ASPLUNDH

(June 16, 1932 – December 31, 2020)



Edward Asplundh passed into the spiritual world on the very last day of 2020, after a lifetime of service to the wider community, our country, his family and our church. He was named after his grandfather Edward Kessel, who was superintendent over much of the work in building the Bryn Athyn Cathedral, and who carved the Hebrew letters on the cornerstone. His other grandfather, Carl Hjalmar Asplundh, was Treasurer and Business Manager of the Academy. Edward was born in 1932, just a few years after the Asplundh Tree Expert Company was founded by his father Carl and uncles Griffith and Lester in 1928. He grew up with the family business, along with his siblings Carl, Christopher and Emily Jane.

After attending the Academy and receiving a degree in Accounting from Penn's Wharton School, he flew C-124 Globemasters in the Air Force, before joining the family business in 1958. In the course of his career he served as head of Asplundh Aviation, Executive Vice-President, President, Chairman of the Asplundh Foundation, and held other positions in the company as well. During that time it thrived and grew steadily, as it continues to do. He married Gwen McQueen in 1955, raised daughters Jacquie, Barbie, Jill, Jennifer and Bethany, and they now have eight grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. Jennifer died when she was only six, and Ed is certainly seeing her again.

Ed and Gwen together have served the community and the church in

numerous ways for more than 50 years. They have focused especially on healthcare, the church, and its schools. Ed has served as Chairman of the Abington Hospital board, spearheading the campaign for the Asplundh Cancer Center among many other things, and also working with other local hospitals. He was on the General Church and Academy boards over many years, taking leadership especially on projects aimed at encouraging their growth and effectiveness.

A natural leader, Edward Asplundh used his intelligence and abilities to serve his country, his church, his family and the wider community throughout his long and good life in this world. We are grateful for all that he has done and will miss him greatly.

(JFS)

E. BOYD ASPLUNDH

(May 4, 1929 – January 14, 2021)



Myra and Boyd

With the recent deaths of Donnette Alfelt, Edward Asplundh and his cousin, Boyd Asplundh, we have been losing a lot of good people from the Church lately. That is the cycle of life – in the church, as well as the world – and part of honoring these great New Church men and women is being grateful to the Lord for their presence and their legacies.

Boyd reminds me of one of my favorite editorials in the collection from my father, the Rev. W. Cairns Henderson's 25-year stint as editor of *New*

Church Life in the '50s into the '70s: *The Quiet New Churchman*. That editorial lauds the kind of men and women who are the bedrock of the church – quiet, unassuming, principled, totally dedicated, whose lives testify to their faith and whose service helps to keep the church true to its calling and its mission.

Boyd epitomized that quiet New Churchman. He was always steady, willing to serve, and guided by what was right and good for the Church and the Academy of the New Church. He served on their boards, on numerous committees, never attracting attention to himself and never compromising his beliefs. He was known for his decency and dignity, his ready smile and his humility. He was someone you could always count on to do the right thing.

That was true in his family as well, where he and Myra were devoted to their children and grandchildren as loving role models – for all of us as well – of what a New Church home and New Church marriage are all about.

An enduring symbol of their lives together was their “Furniture Lady” enterprise, consuming years of labor when most couples are enjoying retirement. This project was devoted to getting decent furniture to people in need, all over the greater Philadelphia area. It was fueled, as the Rev. Derek Elphick said in his Memorial Address, by Myra, “who loved a good bargain, and Boyd, who loved to fix things.” But much more than the furniture it was a meaningful illustration of their commitment to use: loving the Lord and loving the neighbor.

Boyd – and Myra with him – live on as testimonials to what the Lord asks of all of us: “He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?” Those words inspire all of us. Boyd lived them.

(BMH)

WHY EASTER IS BETTER THAN CHRISTMAS

Easter is sometimes a challenge to accept emotionally. Whereas Christmas falls easily into my heart as the sweet miracle of the Savior’s birth, Easter can seem like a complicated, counter-intuitive commemoration. It is not that it is hard to feel the joy of the Resurrection, and its association with the exhilaration of springtime, but why does the death need to take place at all?

The world has been grappling for more than a year now with the most widespread epidemic in history. The death toll is reported daily, and it is depressing to see it grow. Death is a terrible thing.

Yet the truth is that both literal and figurative deaths are among the most enduring and celebrated events in almost any culture. Along with romance, events involving deaths or near-deaths, are the subject of the majority of films, novels and other forms of storytelling. People find these stories entertaining

and uplifting. The Word itself recounts literally thousands of deaths, so there must be a reason. People do object to descriptions of violence and death, but stories about struggles against the threat of extinction, resulting in the elimination of, killing, or liberation from, a threat or oppressor, are popular and satisfying. Life and death issues are important.

A difference between these and the Easter story is that popular stories like these are about the deaths of the enemy, the elimination of the threat, and the survival of the hero. In the Easter story it is the Hero who apparently dies, and yet who somehow continues to live, without anything happening to those who killed Him. It doesn't fit the mold, and it can make people feel uneasy.

The power of death in a narrative is that it represents a final extinction or end point. It usually describes an end to something evil, and when it happens to the good it represents the seeming end of that good thing. The symbolism is powerful because in life this is exactly what death appears to be.

Ironically, the death of the body is really no death at all, with the person entering the spiritual world unscathed, as if nothing had happened. We know that the victims of COVID-19 are in a better place. The symbolism, and how it moves us, has more tangible impact for good or for evil than the event itself.

Worldwide pandemics do have a place in the invisible current that moves humanity towards greater happiness, even if it is hard to see. This struggle will make us better, and lead to world-wide improvements. It might be unifying. And there is no question that we will all be happier when this virus is killed, or brought under control.

Easter has similar elements. The Lord's apparent death is a part of the process of renewal. In the Easter story it is actually the attachment to external and worldly things that dies – or is willingly given up. This is the key to new life. The hatred attached to those external loves, which brought about the Lord's arrest and physical death, is what is defeated. The trick is to understand how that defeat takes place, and how Easter becomes the ultimate victory, a satisfying victory – a victory that becomes more satisfying with every year that goes by. If we can see this then we might also see that Easter is sweeter than Christmas, because it is the next step towards bringing peace to this world.

(JFS)

THE ULTIMATE HUMILITY

Last fall *The Wall Street Journal* published an essay by Jeremy England – *The Creator's Calling Card*. England is Senior Director in Artificial Intelligence at GlaxoKline/Smith and principal research scientist at Georgia Tech. This was adapted from a paper: *Every Life on Fire – Thermodynamics Explains the Origins of Living Things*.

Looking through a microscope rather than to revelation has led many a scientist to deny religion. Not so with Jeremy England:

“Living things are the most intricate and marvelous things in the universe. The simplest organism has such dazzlingly complex architecture that one has never been observed coming into being without help from another life form. This is why life itself is perhaps the best expression of transcendent intention in the arrangement of the world.”

Indeed, “There are a variety of behaviors that life displays . . . that can emerge in initially lifeless and inchoate matter. It’s reasonable to observe this perspective might chip away at my confidence that Scripture has anything accurate, let alone profound, to offer on the origin of life. To my delight and amazement, I have found the opposite to be true.”

One of many readers responding online said: “Reflection and long experience lead me to suspect that there is more going on here than meets the eye. Humans are a species of animal with a ridiculously overly engineered brain for our daily tasks. This alone should at least make you wonder. How did an animal that found evolutionary success wandering the world eating whatever it could catch come to design and build cathedrals?

“As finite beings whose world view is the physical horizon that we are constantly moving toward, we desperately need finite explanations for what is manifestly infinite. This leads to religion and all of its shortcomings, But the internal horizon of our minds is infinite, unknowable and perhaps our proper milieu. We are the animal with a soul (leaving aside dogs) but we mostly flee from the challenge. At the very least, some humility about the questions would be a great relief.”

The humility that both these writers are onto is that we cannot look to science for all the answers about life and creation, which can only come from the Lord through revelation. Such as:

The universe is like a stage on which proofs are constantly being demonstrated that God exists and that there is but one God. (*True Christian Religion* 12)

Every created thing is in itself inanimate and dead, but it is animated and given life by this, that the Divine is in it and that it is in the Divine. (*Divine Love and Wisdom* 53)

(BMH)

THE HOLLYWOOD VIEW OF MARRIAGE

Religious people are not likely to praise the “Hollywood view of marriage” as it is usually understood. But see what you think of this description by an evangelical Christian:

American Christians have largely bought into the secular view of sexuality, kind of the Hollywood view of sexuality, which says that our sexuality is the way in which we become fully human. And so it's in a romantic sexual relationship that we realize our full humanness. You can watch any Hollywood movie to see this being displayed front and center. I think the church has mostly bought into that idea, but has given it a spiritual gloss, which is marriage. ("The Significance of Singleness" by Christina Hitchcock, "Think Biblically" podcast, August 19, 2019)

Does this ring true for you? The "Hollywood view of marriage" she describes places marriage at the center of what it is to be fully human. The lack of morality displayed in the current cinema aside, the comments here are a criticism of the fact that popular culture glorifies intimate relationships, and that American Christians have bought into this. She continues:

1st Corinthians 7 affirms that marriage is not eternal. Singleness is an anticipation, a foretaste of the kingdom. It's ironic to me that in the church we tend to treat marriage as the end.

She is saying that it is singleness, not marriage, that mirrors eternity, because in "the kingdom" we are all single, married only to Christ.

This is a contrast to other Christian statements, such as this one by a Catholic priest, which describes marriage as an "image of God":

Marriage, then, is not a peripheral issue in the Christian life. It finds itself right at the heart of the Christian mystery and, by means of its grand analogy, serves to illuminate it. All analogies are inadequate in their attempts to communicate God's mystery. Yet, speaking of marriage and the family John Paul states: "In this entire world there is not a more perfect, more complete image of God, Unity and Community. There is no other human reality which corresponds more, humanly speaking, to that divine mystery. ("The Basic Theology of Marriage" by Christopher West at www.crossroadsinitiative.com)

Which of these statements is more representative of the Christian point of view on the theology of marriage?

The Heavenly Doctrine teaches that marriage is eternal and, similarly to the statement above, says that within it "we realize our full humanness":

In a marriage of truly conjugal love, each partner becomes more and more deeply human, for that love opens the deeper aspects of their minds, and as these are opened, a person becomes more and more human. (*Conjugal Love* 200)

Along with this, the Heavenly Doctrine places marriage at the center of what happiness is:

Into this love have been gathered all joys and all delights, from the first to the last of them. (*Conjugal Love* 57)

All the delights a person feels, of whatever kind, have to do with their love. Since conjugal love is the fundamental love of all good loves, and because it is engraved on even the smallest aspects of a person, it follows that its delights surpass the delights of all other loves, and also that it gives delight to these other loves according as it is present and at the same time united with them. (*Ibid.* 68)

The reason for this happiness is about uses:

All the pleasures of heaven are united to forms of service and dwell within them. (*Heaven and Hell* 402)

Conjugal love is central to happiness, and to heaven, because its use is central to our existence. (*Conjugal Love* 68) As evolutionary theory puts it, the driving forces of life are survival and reproduction, the survival of the species. So the popular attraction to the “Hollywood view of marriage” is only natural.

The difference between this view and the “Hollywood view of marriage,” though, is that it is **not** that “our sexuality is the way in which we become fully human” but rather that love truly conjugal is the way. The fundamental love leading to all happiness is **not** the desire to reproduce, but conjugal love. The core use is **not** the survival of the human race but the propagation of the heavens. The difference is huge.

Most importantly, perhaps, the basic distinction here is not between being single and being married, as the writer of our opening quote above seems to assume, but between morality and immorality, or between conjugal love and licentious love. To be single isn’t to be less human. The defining issue is our love and respect for marriage, which we can have regardless of whether we are married or single. So we read:

Licentious love makes a person less and less human (hominem) and less and less a man (virum), while conjugal love makes a person more and more human and more and more a man. (*Conjugal Love* 432)

To the degree that a person’s conjugal love wanes and is lost, their character approaches that of an animal. The reason is that the more a person is in a state of conjugal love, the more spiritual they are; and the more spiritual they are, the more human they are. (*Ibid.* 230)

Anyone, married or single, can have this love and respect for marriage, and live by what is taught about it – though differently according to each person’s circumstances. Anyone can have the happiness that accompanies this love. But it is not accessible to anyone except to those “who go to the Lord and love the truths of the church and do the good things it teaches.” (*Ibid.* 70)

The Catholic priest quoted above is right to say, “Marriage, then, is not a peripheral issue in the Christian life. It finds itself right at the heart of the Christian mystery and, by means of its grand analogy, serves to illuminate it.” The New Church, however, takes marriage to be more than an analogy, seeing

it as part of the means of salvation and the creation of heaven on earth. As the “fundamental love of all loves in heaven and the church” (*Conjugal Love* 65) it is an eternal union that is at the heart of what it means to be happy, useful, and fully human.

(JFS)

UNCOMMON WISDOM

As I listen to the clamor still echoing from the chaos and stridency of the past year, I am struck by the lack of spiritual perspective and application – especially among those we look to as leaders.

When we should be looking to the Lord for wisdom and guidance, we’ve been hearing too much judgment, intolerance, condemnation – petty minds offering no uplifting vision. But amid the storms are still, quiet voices urging to be heard.

Among them are two men from the unlikely world of American professional football: Tony Dungy and Benjamin Watson – both respected for their careers and perspective. Together they look for ways to put their faith into life.

Dungy, known for his calm, principled ways and always speaking from a higher perspective, is admired for “uncommon” books that speak to his faith, his values and his character: *The Uncommon Life*; *Uncommon – Finding Your Path to Significance*; *Dare to Be Uncommon – Men’s Bible Study*; *Uncommon Manhood*; *Uncommon Marriage*; and *Quiet Strengths – The Principles, Practices and Priorities of a Winning Life*.

As this year dawned in the wake of the turbulent 2020, with its COVID-19 pandemic and epidemic unrest – and a desperate hope for normalcy – Dungy and Watson issued *A Call for Christian Revival in 2021*. All the challenges of the past year, they said, “drained our collective spirit and left us searching for answers”.

Most people were turning to government for solutions and leadership. Dungy and Watson were looking to churches – and felt let down there too. All churches, of course – including our own – found their voices reduced in the new virtual reality, but the need is there and the hunger is there.

Dungy and Watson are forthright: “God has a plan in all that He does, and it’s a good plan.” Indeed, we have seen the goodness of many people through these challenging times, reaffirming the hope that love and goodness will always prevail. But they challenge Christians to step up and “challenge one another in love, and support each other, when facing strong headwinds.”

Their charge, which we can all embrace, includes: reading the Bible – all of it – in one year; a habit of prayer; and attending and supporting our churches.

This is their call to Christianity, and we can all adapt it in our own lives. “We don’t know what the future holds,” they say, “but God called us to follow Him. It’s long past time for a Christian revival in this country, and following these steps is a call to action that will change this country in unimaginable ways.”

With the Lord’s leading we should be doing all in our New Church power to shine His light for a new way forward – the “uncommon” way.

(BMH)

CHOOSING OUR HABITS, CHOOSING OUR DESTINY

Every story in the Word is there to help us in our daily lives. The context may seem irrelevant but the meaning is there: turn away from evil, follow the Lord, and lovingly serve our neighbors. It is an ongoing process, we do not change our lives all at once. We do it gradually, with daily effort, by building up good habits.

We have to want to change our lives for the better. Reading the Word and the Writings helps, even if forcing ourselves to do so may be a struggle at times. But this is the best way to make a connection with the Lord and His angels – the best help we could ask for.

We need all the help we can get. We are up against daily pressures and distractions in an increasingly demanding and alluring world, so it does take effort and commitment.

New Year’s resolutions are common broad-brush approaches but tend to lose focus. We are told in the Writings that it is better to concentrate on one need at a time, to pray for help, to make the effort and not lose heart when we falter. The best practice – beyond regular reading of the Word, is partaking of the Holy Supper: the process of self-examination, approaching the Lord for help, and receiving hope.

A helpful quote on a practical level has been credited to Mahatma Gandhi, Margaret Thatcher and others:

Take care of your thoughts, because your thoughts become your actions.

Take care of your actions, because your actions become your habits.

Take care of your habits, because your habits become your character.

Take care of your character, because your character becomes your destiny.

That’s a valuable perspective. We are choosing our destiny – ultimately in heaven or hell – every day, through the thousands of choices we make, both consciously and subconsciously, that reflect what we love and will. We are forming our habits every day. We need to be mindful of them.

(BMH)

WHY WE READ THE WORD

One of the charges in Dungey and Watson's Call for *Christian Revival* is to read the Bible all the way through in one year – a commitment of only 15 minutes a day.

We pride ourselves on being “a reading church” – regularly reading the Word and the Writings on our own. We know that this is the way the Lord speaks to us and teaches us. It is how we connect with Him and heaven. And we know that every story in the Word is there to teach us how to live our lives more fully and become better people.

Reading the Word and the Writings can be a struggle because the meanings and relevance are not always clear, but persistence brings clarity. The Writings are filled with numbers reaffirming the purpose and the benefit.

We read in *Arcana Coelestia* 1767:

When the Word of the Lord is being read by someone who loves the Word and leads a charitable life – even by one who, because he is simple-hearted, believes what is written and has not formed opinions that are contrary to the truth of faith that lies within the internal sense – the Lord also sets the Word before the angels. The Lord does so in such beauty and such loveliness, using representatives as well, with indescribable variations, each of which accords with the angels' entire state at the time, that every detail is perceived as if it had life.

This life is that which is present within the Word and from which the Word was given birth when it was sent down from heaven. By reason of this, although in the letter it appears rough and imperfect, the Word of the Lord is such that inwardly there are concealed spiritual and celestial things, which are fully visible to good spirits and to angels while it is being read by man.

On the importance of the Word and the church, from *Apocalypse Explained* 1069:

The church is a church from this that the Lord is adored and that the Word is read. For the Lord reforms His people, and the Word teaches how they must live that they may be reformed by the Lord; therefore, if these two truths are not acknowledged and received the church itself perishes, for upon these two truths the church is founded.

And on our small but vital role, from *True Christian Religion* 267:

No connection to heaven is possible unless somewhere on earth there is a church where the Word exists and where the Lord is known through that Word. This is because the Lord is the God of heaven and earth and without the Lord there is no salvation. It is enough if there is one church where the Word exists. Even if this church consists of comparatively few people, still the Lord is present throughout the world by means of the Word, since heaven is connected to the human race through the Word.

(BMH)

Announcements

BAPTISMS

Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord. (Psalm 127:3)

Clark, Janette Susan – At Westville, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, February 9, 2021, Rev. Malcolm G. Smith officiating.

Cooper, Emelia Grey – At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, October 4, 2020 (born February 4, 2020), daughter of Robin and Cheryl Cooper, Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr. officiating.

Formanski, Elijah David – At Glenview, Illinois, December 27, 2020 (born January 24, 2020), son of Ryan and Rebecca Formanski, Rev. Elmo K. Acton officiating.

Heinzelmann, Michaela Tanya – At Westville, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, August 29, 2020 (born August 29, 2018), daughter of Max and Megan Heinzelmann, Rev. Joel C. Glenn officiating.

King, Cole Petrus – At Kempton, Pennsylvania, January 21, 2021 (born January 5, 2021), son of Cairn and Sibongiseni King, Rev. Lawson M. Smith officiating.

Miller, Mary Anne – At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, December 12, 2020, Rev. Jeffrey O. Smith officiating.

Norfo, Kinsley Noel – At Kempton, Pennsylvania, November 15, 2020 (born July 30, 2020), daughter of Raymond and Eden Norfo, Rev. Brett D. Buick officiating.

Shuff, Tanner Scott – At Glenmoore, Pennsylvania, December 26, 2020 (born July 10, 2020), son of Jonathan and Nicole Shuff, Rev. Charles E. Blair officiating.

CONFIRMATIONS

How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your Word. With my whole heart I have sought You; O, let me not wander from Your commandments. (Psalm 119:9,10)

Buick, Bennett Robert – At Kempton, Pennsylvania, December 6, 2020, Rev. Brett D. Buick officiating.

Heinrichs, Denali – At Kitchener, Ontario, Canada, December 30, 2018, Rev. Bradley D. Heinrichs officiating. Delayed report.

Heinrichs, Reyana – At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, January 10, 2021, Rt. Rev. Bradley D. Heinrichs officiating.

BETROTHALS

I will betroth you to Me forever; yes, I will betroth you to Me in justice and judgment, in loving kindness and mercy: I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, and you shall know the Lord. (Hosea 2:19,20)

King-Heinrichs, Hayden Jesse King and Reyana Heinrichs – At Kempton, Pennsylvania, January 30, 2021, Rt. Rev. Bradley Heinrichs officiating.

King-Heinrichs, Kendal Scott King and Linnea Heinrichs – At Kempton, Pennsylvania, August 8, 2020, Rt. Rev. Bradley D. Heinrichs officiating.

MARRIAGES

Truly conjugal love is not possible except between two; neither is it possible between two except from the Lord alone. Engraved on this love is heaven with all its blessings. (Conjugal Love 332)

Brock-Klippenstein, Gaird Davison Brock and Mikalah Ann Klippenstein – At Rochester, Michigan, December 28, 2020, Rev. Brett D. Buick officiating.

Dziekpor-Kunwar, Denis Yao Dziekpor and Alisha Kunwar – At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, February 5, 2021, Rev. Kurt Hy. Asplundh officiating.

IN MEMORIAM

In order that a person may live to eternity, it is necessary that what is mortal, or the material body, should be taken away from him by death. When this is done, that which is immortal is uncovered, and the person becomes a spirit, still in the human form. (Divine Providence 324)

Anderson, Harriet Esther Christiansen – January 22, 2021, of Weiser, Idaho. 98.

Boyesen, Marcia Lynn Synnvestedt – January 20, 2021, of Kempton, Pennsylvania. 77.

Cronlund, James Loudon – January 16, 2021, of Warminster, Pennsylvania. 81.

Field, Virginia Marie “Polly” – 2020, of Yorba Linda, California. 99.

Goto, Yoshiro – April 15, 2019, of Tokyo, Japan. 55. Delayed report.

Houston, Ian Frank – January 25, 2021, of Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. 76.

Johns, Robert Hughes – January 1, 2021, of Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania. 90.

Johnson, Robert Vernon II – January 17, 2021, of Russell, Pennsylvania. 64.

Leach, Janice Davison – July 3, 2020, of Albuquerque, New Mexico. 96.

Leal, Sybil Anne Hodgson – January 11, 2021, of Hermanus, South Africa. 98.

Petaccio, Steven Edward Jr. – December 20, 2020, of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. 24.

Reichel, Lorraine Theresa Bernadette Cilliers – December 15, 2020, of Westville, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. 77.

Rienstra, William T. – November 28, 2020, of Canon City, Colorado. 84.

Waters, Madeline Grace – January 23, 2021, of Colchester, Essex, United Kingdom. 85.



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"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Matthew 6:21



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