

NEW CHURCH *Life*

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

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2021



With This Ring . . .

Conjugal Love is a central doctrine of the church and the model for a world adrift. This issue has several articles on the importance of the marriage ideal, especially amid the struggle with issues of sexuality and gender, and the very sanctity of marriage. (Page 365)

NEW CHURCH LIFE (USPS 378-180)

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New Church Life

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

- 350 In This Issue
- 352 Editorials: *Our Guiding Vision • The Last Judgment and the Sexual Revolution*
- 360 Letters to the Editors
- 365 Conjugal Love: A Most Precious Gem of the New Church
A Sermon by the Rt. Rev. David H. Lindrooth
- 372 What the Heavenly Doctrines Say About Sex and Gender
The Rev. Christopher A. Barber
- 384 From the Bishop's Office: Marriage, Doctrine and Dialogue
The Rt. Rev. David H. Lindrooth
- 387 Four Steps to Healing – *A Sermon by the Rev. Dr. Andrew M. T. Dibb*
- 394 A Call to Neighbors – *The Rev. Thomas H. Rose*
- 400 Young Adults: What's the Real Problem? – *The Rev. Jeffrey O. Smith*
- 404 Finding the New Jerusalem: The Story of John Clowes
Howard Roth (Edited by Marvin Clymer)
- 414 Declaration of Faith and Statement of Purpose
The Rev. Justin E. Schorran
- 415 Church News
- 425 Life Lines
- 436 Announcements - *not included in digital version*

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In This Issue

Editorials (page 352) include:

- *Our Guiding Vision*: The vision of the Holy City New Jerusalem, “coming down from heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” is the hope of the world and the image of heaven. However we navigate the roiling waters of sexuality and gender, conjugal love must be our prism for viewing and understanding the challenges we face.
- *The Last Judgment and the Sexual Revolution*: The Last Judgment occurred in the spiritual world in 1757 and we are still dealing with the fallout, including the sexual revolution that launched in the 1960s – and we are still dealing with that fallout as well. But there is reason for hope in the wake of the Last Judgment: the promise of conjugal love.

A sermon by the Rt. Rev. David Lindrooth – *Conjugal Love: A Most Precious Gem of the New Church* – explains why “the New Church vision of marriage offers something completely different than our world culture’s external view of marriage.” Conjugal love is not only the hope for marriage on earth but the hope for a whole new relationship with the Lord. (Page 365)

The Rev. Christopher Barber, religion teacher in the Academy Secondary Schools, was invited to lead a professional development session for faculty and administration in the spring on *What the Heavenly Doctrines Say About Sex and Gender*. He offers a summary of that presentation – an overview of teachings that can help to guide all of us in a new age where subjects once taboo now are at the forefront of discussion. (Page 372)

The Rt. Rev. David Lindrooth offers a perspective From the Bishop’s Office on these sex and gender issues with *Marriage, Doctrine and Dialogue*. He points out that the goal of our New Church marriage theology is not to legislate morality but to lead to happiness. The church invites a dialogue on these sensitive subjects that is compassionate, charitable and doctrinal. (Page 384)

One day in the Lord’s life on earth, as told in the Gospel of *Matthew*, describes a progression of four healing miracles which, the Rev. Dr. Andrew

Dibb says in a sermon, shows how the Lord is always willing to heal us, no matter where we are in our lives. (Page 387)

At the Independence Day celebration in Bryn Athyn, the Rev. Thomas Rose said that in these troubling times we need to remember to live together as neighbors, with love and respect. “Let’s continue to support and look to the good in (our) neighbor, our country. And in our communities. And in the microcosm let’s support each other – each neighbor – and look to the good in each other. This way, we acknowledge and protect each other’s freedom.” (Page 394)

Continuing a series on Young Adults, the Rev. Jeffrey Smith asks: “What’s the real problem” with the lack of growth in the church? We need to focus on questions like these: “What is our driving purpose as a church; and from that purpose, what do we offer society? Is our product a physical church service, a specific understanding of three dozen books, or a sense of community?” (Page 400)

Continuing another series – *Finding the New Jerusalem* – Marvin Clymer retells the story of John Clowes, a man who played a pivotal role in the history of the New Church in 18th century England. As an early reader of the Writings, he recognized the Lord’s New Church “as a great spiritual movement, affecting all men, and bringing the blessings of truth, faith and peaceful love into the world. To him this was the true Christian religion.” (Page 404)

Church News (page 415) includes:

- Highlights of the June meeting of the General Church Board of Directors
- An update of the Grand Human Project, building small groups of people attracted to the church
- A new Director of Communications for the General Church
- New staffing and programs at Bryn Athyn College, plus an uptick in enrollment
- The new school year for the Academy Secondary Schools, coming out from under the COVID cloud
- Plans for a back-to-normal but scaled down Charter Day celebration
- Council of the Clergy meetings adjusted to COVID restrictions

Editorials

Bruce M. Henderson and the Rev. Jeremy F. Simons

OUR GUIDING VISION

The transcendent vision for the New Church is “the Holy City, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”

The conjugal love of one man and one woman is the very image of heaven – the conjunction of the Lord’s good and truth in its every aspect. That is why conjugal love is one of the most distinctive and essential doctrines of the church. And as the church descends – as that bride adorned for her husband – the concept of true married love is elevated throughout the world. We need that.

Much of this issue of *New Church Life* is devoted to the teachings of conjugal love, emerging issues around sexuality, and threats to marriage arising in the world. As you read the relevant articles think about what we can and should be doing – as a church and as New Church men and women – to reflect the Lord’s love and mercy while also protecting and promoting the ideal. To help frame the issue we offer:

- A sermon by the Rt. Rev. David Lindrooth: *Conjugal Love – A Most Precious Gem of the New Church*. “It is essential for the spiritual health of the human race,” he says, “that our church clearly teach what conjugal love is and how people can approach the Lord to find it.”
- A report from the Rev. Christopher Barber on a professional development session he led for Academy Secondary Schools administration and faculty this spring on *What the Heavenly Doctrines Say About Sex and Gender*. “This presentation,” he says, “is meant to be the beginning of reflection and conversation, not the final word. It is the Lord who has the final say, and we are all His servants, doing our best to hear and do His Word, because it is in the doing of these things that blessing is found.”
- A perspective From the Bishop’s Office on *Marriage, Doctrine and*

Dialogue on how the church is responding to these issues, which also invites a dialogue that is compassionate, charitable and doctrinal.

Responding to these issues is a responsibility for all of us – for the church we love and support, and for the church within all of us. It is a call for sensitivity and mercy, honesty and charity, tolerance and respect. It is a challenge for accommodation without compromise, and for clarity and integrity of doctrine.

Part of the challenge is bridging a generational divide. Young people today seem more tuned in to increasingly insistent issues of sexuality and gender. They are generally more tolerant, accepting, nonjudgmental, open minded. The older generation tends to be more traditional, primed to put doctrine first, and less accepting of new realities.

We all have something to teach each other and need to come to the discussion with mutual respect, compassion and humility. We don't have all the answers and look for guidance. We are blessed with teachings from the Lord as touchstones to guide our thinking.

Our schools – especially the Academy Secondary Schools and Bryn Athyn College – are on the front lines. How do they cope with sexuality and gender issues among their students, which are more and more a presence and a topic of discussion? How do the schools remain true to their mission, while accommodating to real needs without compromising New Church ideals?

Key to the challenge is restoring the luster to the ideal. As Bishop Lindrooth says in his sermon: “We live in a climate where there is almost total ignorance about the sacredness, beauty, innocence, peace and depth that characterizes true marriage as defined in the Heavenly Doctrines.” Just look at the way marriage and sexuality are portrayed in today's culture of movies, television, books, magazines and social media, where what was once abnormal is increasingly portrayed as the new normal. Relationships even in traditional weddings are viewed as natural, not spiritual – just “until death do you part.”

We need to re-examine the teachings of *Conjugal Love* in light of the pervasive culture. How do we make that ideal more relevant and compelling, especially for young people more inclined to be influenced by what the world thinks and feels? The ideal may seem dated, old-fashioned and irrelevant in this modern age; the Ten Commandments are “dated” too – but given for all time.

We believe that marriage is not just a festive occasion and “a piece of paper,” but an act of worship. And it is an act of worship not only for the bridal couple and their families but for the attendant congregation. It is important to have that sense of community affirmation – supporting the wedding as a holy covenant. And it is essential to preserve the guiding concept that as a couple looks to the Lord in their marriage they will be blessed with conjugal love – to all eternity.

What we seek to preserve, amid modern attitudes and practices, is that

marriage is – at its core – a Divine institution, holy because of the Lord’s presence in it. And the enduring vision of the church descending – as a bride adorned for her husband – is that conjugal love with all its promise is being restored on the earth.

And however we navigate the roiling waters of sexuality and gender, conjugal love must be the prism for viewing and understanding all of the emergent issues of the day. It is this guiding vision that remains forever the hope of the world – that bride, that husband, with the Lord at the center, and a congregation of family and friends beaming with affirmation.

(BMH)

THE LAST JUDGMENT AND THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION

Americans often idealize the 1950s as a time of good moral values and religious participation. Despite the obvious issues with seeing pre-Civil Rights America that way, this is true in the New Church as well. It is easy for us to forget that, according to the Heavenly Doctrine, the Last Judgment on the Christian Church happened in 1757. This means that although older Americans like to complain about the nation’s moral decline, the New Church actually locates the decline much further in the past.

The 1950s were, in fact, a high-water mark for religious participation in America. On a typical Sunday morning in the period from 1955-58, almost half of all Americans were attending church – the highest percentage in U.S. history. During the 1950s, nationwide church membership grew at a faster rate than the population, from 57 percent of the U.S. population in 1950 to 63.3 percent in 1960.¹ By contrast in 2020, 47% of Americans said they belonged to a church, synagogue or mosque,² and only 22% of Americans reported attending church services regularly.³

The optimism of the 1950s, riding the prosperity, unity and national pride of the post-World War II era, gradually gave way to the challenges of the 1960s. While some have suggested that Christianity has experienced a revival and rebirth since the Last Judgment, with the advent of the New Church, this has not been the way that it is usually understood in the General Church. Instead,

1 “The 1950s – Powerful Years for Religion”, Carol Tucker, June, 1997 <https://news.usc.edu/25835/The-1950s-Powerful-Years-for-Religion/>

2 U.S. Church Membership Falls Below Majority for First Time, by Jeffrey M. Jones, March 29, 2021 <https://news.gallup.com/poll/341963/church-membership-falls-below-majority-first-time.aspx>

3 Church Attendance - Wikipedia

the post-Christian era among the peoples of European origin is more typically described by quotes such as these:

That the Christian church of today is severely devastated and is at its end is not at all apparent to those on earth who have become adamantly devoted to the church's false teachings. (*True Christianity* 758)

Falsities and evils continually grow in the church that has once been perverted and extinguished. (*Arcana Coelestia* 4503)

Knowing this, a common New Church response to the idea of moral decline since the 1950s is that the only thing that has changed is that what was once hidden is now on display. This can even be described as a positive development, since evils cannot be shunned unless they appear. (*Divine Providence* 278)

The Sexual Revolution

Probably the most common examples of these changes are those associated with what is called “the sexual revolution.” Here is a current description from Wikipedia:

The sexual revolution, also known as a time of sexual liberation, was a social movement that challenged traditional codes of behavior related to sexuality and interpersonal relationships throughout the United States from the 1960s to the 1980s. Sexual liberation included increased acceptance of sex outside of traditional heterosexual, monogamous relationships (primarily marriage). The normalization of contraception and the pill, public nudity, pornography, premarital sex, homosexuality, masturbation, alternative forms of sexuality, and the legalization of abortion all followed. (*Sexual Revolution, Wikipedia, 6/26/2021*)

To those who have lived through it, this sexual revolution has seemed to be a major moral decline. Yet the Writings describe the 18th-century Christian world in surprisingly similar terms:

Adulteries are less abhorrent with Christians than with the Gentiles, and even with some barbarous nations, for the reason that at present in the Christian world there is no marriage of good and truth, but a marriage of evil and falsity. . . . From this origin, a desire and favor for adultery from hell flow in; and this is why adulteries are believed in the Christian world to be allowable, and are practiced without shame. (*Apocalypse Explained* 1008.2)

Hells made up of people like this are growing immensely larger at

the present day; and what is astounding, such people come mainly from among those within the Church on account of all the guile, trickery, hatred, revenge and adultery that flourish there more than anywhere else. For in the Church of today guile is reckoned to be cleverness, and adultery to be honorable behavior; and those who think anything different are laughed at. Since this is the situation at the present day within the Church, it is a sign that its last days are at hand. (*Arcana Coelestia* 6666)

The last statement here emphasizes sexual immorality as a sign of the end of the church and a cause of the Last Judgment. This follows from the teachings that conjugal love is “the fundamental love of all celestial and spiritual loves, and consequently of natural loves” (*Conjugal Love* 57), and that “all the delights of heaven flow from the delights of conjugal love, like sweet waters from a gushing spring.” (*Ibid.* 229). By contrast: “Hatreds of every kind gush forth from the love of adultery (or licentiousness), both against God and against the neighbor, and in general against every good and truth of heaven and the church.” (*Apocalypse Explained* 993)

From this perspective, the social changes that seem to have come with the sexual revolution are less surprising. Interestingly, accounts of the sexual revolution point out that it has had multiple stages reaching well back into our history. It is often traced back especially to the Enlightenment, which, not coincidentally, was the time of the Last Judgment:

History professor Faramerz Dabhoiwala cites the Age of Enlightenment – approximately the 18th century – as a major period of transition in the United Kingdom. During this time, the philosophy of liberalism developed and was popularized, and migration to cities increased opportunities for sex and made enforcement of rules more difficult than in small villages. . . . Overall, toleration increased for heterosexual sex outside marriage, including prostitution, mistresses and pre-marital sex. Though these acts were still condemned by many as libertine, infidelity became more often a civil matter than a criminal offense receiving capital punishment. The rate of out-of-wedlock births went from about 1% in 1650 to about 25% in 1800, with about 40% of brides being pregnant. (*Sexual Revolution*, *Wikipedia*, 6/26/2021)

It is hard to know the truth about historical trends like these. Social scientists find evidence for them in old documents and look for their origins in social and economic causes. The Writings, on the other hand, point to the state of the church, with these trends, especially as seen by Swedenborg in the spiritual world, being evidence that “its last days are at hand.” (*Arcana*

Coelestia 6666)

The Impact of the Birth Control Pill

Regardless of how we understand the changes in American religion and morality up to that point, the immediate causes of the sexual revolution beginning in the 1960s are fairly clear-cut and widely agreed upon. Simply put, the invention of the birth control pill in 1960 changed everything.

Entire books have been written about the economic and social changes springing from that one invention – from the limitation of family size, to women’s increased involvement in the workplace, to the sexual revolution itself. It only takes a little thought to see how phenomena such as the proliferation of fast-food restaurants, extended shopping hours, organized efforts to improve gender equity, and the increase in the number of people who delay marriage and children, or who never marry, are all related to this invention.

Prior to effective and easily available means of birth control, and also safe methods of abortion and cures for sexually transmitted diseases, the likely consequences of pre-marital and extra-marital sex were substantial. In a span of just a few years the risks changed dramatically.

Exactly how much this new freedom changed behavior is a matter of debate. But there is no question that attitudes have changed. *Arcana Coelestia* 6203 discusses how powerful the forces are that motivate us to justify our behaviors. The passage describes what happens when a person begins to engage in something that has been considered wrong:

When this happens he looks around for ideas such as will support the notion that the thing is not an evil, until he becomes thoroughly convinced it is not. At this point he strives so far as he can to get rid of external restraints and to make it allowable and smart, and at length even attractive and honorable.

Since the 1960s there have been continuous open challenges to traditional ideas of morality, both outside of the church and within it. Arguments about these challenges have become tiresome refrains familiar to everyone, and opinions quickly became so entrenched that the term “culture wars” was invented specifically to describe the struggle.

The Impact of the Sexual Revolution on Churches

The sexual revolution has been a remarkably powerful tool for prying people away from religions of every kind. Popular attitudes toward sexuality now contradict religion throughout western society, and these shifting attitudes have strongly impacted church involvement. Interestingly, this is true regardless of denominational stances, with liberal denominations suffering

even greater declines than conservative ones.

Passing a religion on to the next generation requires young people who have a degree of innocence, and who are reasonably sober, moral and accepting of the truths of the Word. These are not uncommon traits in young people, but issues stemming from the sexual revolution continually make that number smaller. Debates over these issues consistently paint traditional morality as harsh and puritanical, and as contradicting love and kindness.

Within the General Church a key effort to support the ideals of conjugal love has been the work of New Church education. Its major goal has been to create an environment within which the Heavenly Doctrine will be accepted and followed, making it possible for the New Church to be passed on to the next generation. The creation and maintenance of that environment is no small task, and many of the factors crucial to success are not under the control of educators. Still, New Church schools have been a great help to parents' efforts to pass on the beliefs and practices of the church – something that often means so much to parents that they are willing to go to great lengths to get it.

A New Church teacher explaining the value of New Church education to new parents described how one responded when he spoke about the emphasis on chastity at the school:

Last week I was giving a tour to a family (and spoke about how we approach chastity). What was unique was having a mother start openly crying as I went over it.

Why was she crying? Chastity is not as common as it might be, and it is a rare thing to find a school that emphasizes resistance to the challenges faced by young people in that arena today. The word “chastity” in the Writings is about thinking spiritually about marriage and about abstaining from its physical expression until after marriage.

Conjugal love is a bedrock teaching of the New Church. It is said to be the “essential atmosphere itself of heaven” (*Conjugal Love* 54) without which a person’s “character approaches that of an animal.” (*Ibid.* 230) The distinction, as described in the Writings, is not between heterosexuality and its alternatives, but between chastity and its alternatives. The ideals of this love, which are “celestial, spiritual, holy, pure, and clean beyond every other love” (*Ibid.* 64), are within reach of everyone, whether single or married, and are the very core of the happiness of heaven. Anyone can believe in and aspire to this love. “For the conjugal union of one man with one wife is the precious jewel of human life and the repository of Christian religion.” (*Ibid.* 457)

The Last Judgment and the Sexual Revolution

The Last Judgment of 1757 signaled the end of the church in the Christian world,

with the promise of a New Church, beginning at the same time and announced on June 19, 1770, to come to prominence somewhere on earth outside of the Christian world. The sexual revolution since the 1960s does not mark any new spiritual decline. There have in fact been many positive social developments during that time, from the struggle for racial equality, to marked decreases in crime, poverty and hunger not only in this country but worldwide, to the proliferation of freedom of speech and democratic governments throughout the world. In the realm of sexuality the new emphasis on the importance of consent, the attention given to the prevention of abuse and harassment, as well as the larger efforts toward gender equity, are all good signs.

Still, fallout from the sexual revolution continues to pose issues for organized religion in the United States and elsewhere, and for the organized New Church in those places. Its continuing narrative requires challenging the status quo, overcoming barriers, and confronting taboos in a never-ending quest to discover and uproot society's problems. Meanwhile the true solution is ignored by most of us, and apparently will continue to be ignored until the time is right:

“Surely everyone knows,” the angels said, “that the delights involved in marriage love are greater than the delights of any other type of love . . .”

“People do not in fact know this,” I said, “and the reason is that they have not turned to the Lord. They have not abstained from the lusts of the flesh . . .”

“I have my doubts,” I added, “that people in the world today are willing to believe that this love is intrinsically spiritual and is a result of their religious practice. They are likely to be resistant to this idea because they think of marriage love as something that relates to the body alone. Because the quality of this love depends on our religious practice, it is spiritual among spiritual people, earthly among earthly people, and merely carnal among adulterous people.” (*True Christianity* 847)

Happily, according to the Heavenly Doctrine, this resistance will not last forever:

Following His Advent the Lord will revive conjugal love, such as it was among ancient peoples. For conjugal love comes only from the Lord, and it is found in people who are made spiritual by Him through His Word. (*Conjugal Love* 81)

(JFS)

Letters to the Editors

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

Church Growth: It's Up to Us

To The Editors:

The three articles by the Rev. Michael Gladish on "Church Growth" touched on a very important aspect of the church. These articles are well thought out, thorough and well written, which reflects knowledge and thinking. Thank you, Michael. Others have written and have done a lot for the growth of the church; they all have/had the interest of the church at heart, and thank you.

Growth is obviously important on many fronts; for a start the opposite of growth is regression or decline. We have seen many of these and would like to avoid any more of them like the plague. At best the absence of growth is the status quo, which is not enviable. So growth is of prime importance.

Many thriving societies have disappeared. For example, the Church in Kensington (Conference), in the middle of the great City of London, was closed. How unfortunate, how sad. (I should say, what a disaster!) This is the city in which Swedenborg wrote the Writings, which were published by such people as Robert Hindmarsh and most likely a group was formed. Why did the church close and why was it sold? Because there were few people coming to church, the original congregation passed away, and most of all there was no growth. It withered away and died. What a shame.

Continuing in a very practical vein, being small makes an organization vulnerable, as it does not have staying power to survive a blow – whatever that blow may be. A large organization has a better chance to reorganize, carry on, and survive.

The other point I would like to make is about preparedness. Usually, or in certain cases, small organizations are asked to have a disaster recovery plan. Unfortunately many small organizations do not have such a plan. The other

aspect of a disaster plan is preparedness for a sudden and extreme overnight growth. I am thinking of a very influential celebrity who would recommend reading a book of the Writings, and all of a sudden there is an avalanche of demands for information and books. Will a small church be able to deal with this? It is not a far-fetched event, not in the era of instant communication to a large group of people.

Growth of the church is not easy; if it was, it would have been done by now. Everyone has an idea of how this growth should be done. Some have used their ideas and acted on them very successfully, others not so much. As one of the ministers said in a sermon, if I recall, Swedenborg did not personally start a congregation, this was left to those who believed.

There have been many congregations who have come and gone since then. It is now left to us, the present congregation, to act.

One thing I am convinced of – that the Writings should be made available, relatively easy to find, easy to reach for. That’s the key. With the Lord’s help, His Divine Providence, this can be done, but the effort has to come from all of us, as Mr. Gladish rightfully discussed.

Denis de Chazal
Montreal, Quebec,
Canada

The Gift of Innocence

To The Editors:

The article by the Rev. Daniel W. Goodenough in *New Church Life*, May/June, 2021, *Evil From Birth?* was a careful answer to this question proposed to him:

Given this quote: “From birth, each of us is like a little hell in constant conflict with heaven” (*Divine Providence* 351), how can God, who is nothing but love, create babies who are little hells?”

His answers were wide-ranging and instructive. I found two additional numbers, in *Arcana Coelestia*, that also seem to cut to the chase:

Every man is born, of his parents, into the evils of the love of self and of the world. Every evil which by habit has as it were contracted a nature, is derived into the offspring; thus successively from parents, from grandfathers, and from great-grandfathers in a long series backward. Hence the derivation of evil has at length become so great that all man’s own life is nothing else but evil. This continued

derived [evil] is not broken and altered except by a life of faith and charity from the Lord. (#8550)

That the states of innocence, charity, and mercy which man has in infancy and the years of childhood, enable him to become man, is evident from the consideration that, unlike the brutes, he is not born into any exercise of life, but has everything to learn; and what he learns becomes by use habitual, and thus as it were natural to him. He cannot even walk or speak without being taught; and so with all the other actions which habit renders as it were natural to him. So it is also with the states of innocence, charity and mercy, with which likewise he becomes imbued in infancy, and unless they were present with him he would be much viler than a brute. But these are states which a man does not learn, but receives as a gift from the Lord, and which the Lord preserves in him; and these together with the truths of faith are what are called remains and are of the Lord alone. In proportion as in adult age a man extinguishes these states he becomes dead, and when he is regenerated these are the beginnings of regeneration. In these he is led; for the Lord, as was said, operates by means of remains. (#1050)

So it seems that although we are evil by heredity, our innocence at birth and early childhood is a gift from the Lord which creates a background in us that is necessary for the Lord to use in our regeneration. His wisdom and love in our care is beyond imagination!

Martin E. Klein
Boynton Beach
Florida

The Brain is Heaven

To The Editors:

In his article *Sent Out and Sent Out Again* on page 185 for *New Church Life*, May/June 2021, Bishop Peter Buss, Jr. quotes *True Christian Religion* 791: "The next day He (the Lord) sent all of them out to the entire spiritual world to preach that the Lord Jesus Christ reigns and that His kingdom will last for ages of ages."

In *Arcana Coelestia* 4049, in one of his interchapter Memorable Relations, Swedenborg wrote that "there were certain spirits overhead and slightly to the front who spoke to me. They spoke to me in a manner that was pleasant and

flowed in quite gently. They were different from others in that an unceasing longing and desire existed with them to enter heaven. I was told that these spirits are such as correlate with the ventricles or cava majora of the brain and that belong to that province. The reason was also added that the nature of the better kind of lymphatic secretion within that province is such that it flows back into the brain to which it therefore possesses the endeavour to go. The brain is heaven, and this endeavour is that longing and desire. Such is the nature of these correspondences.”

There is a good deal more information about the correspondence between the brain and heaven in 4041 and 4042. It puts the quote from *True Christian Religion* 791 into context.

Arcana Coelestia 4049 says clearly the “brain is heaven,” so when Swedenborg describes the Lord sending out His disciples he is talking about the correspondence between those disciples and the spirits of the brain, particularly the cava majora. Swedenborg describes them as corresponding to the better sort as opposed to other more “excrementitious lymphs” who twist conjugal love into adulterous love.

Following this No. 4050 describes, in an amazingly medically up-to-date detail, one of Swedenborg’s visionary experiences. He describes that he was shown an indentation in the floor of the third ventricle, one of the cava majora that he has just mentioned in No. 4049. In the No. 4050 vision he is told to describe this indentation as the infundibulum. This had been described about 200 years earlier in 1543 by Vesalius in his book *De Humani Corporis Fabrica Libri Septem* (On the Fabric of the Human Body). The infundibulum is a Latin word meaning a well, say of water, but in this instance, it contains a fluid which correlates with the spirits of the ventricles or cava majora.

In No. 4050 Swedenborg describes a sort of cloud or vapor springing up and out of the infundibulum, like a fountain. “I was shown that there are two kinds of this lymph which is pumped out of the infundibulum which belongs to the useful lymphs, and that which is mingled with serous substances, which belongs among the useful lymphs, and that which is mingled with serous substances which belongs among the excrementitious lymphs.”

We now know that the infundibulum is the site of the hypothalamus and the pituitary gland. Apart from many other hormones or biochemical messengers, two of them are known to as oxytocin and vasopressin. Oxytocin is the messenger of love and floods the brain of men and women when they fall in love, and of women when they bear children and love them in a way which only those who have had this experience know. Perhaps oxytocin corresponds to the Lord’s love and that love His disciples have for the people to whom they are sent.

Vasopressin produces the feelings of rivalry and enmity when, say, another

man approaches a man's girl friend or wife with unwelcome intentions. It is also involved as is oxytocin with adulterous love, as a kind of excrementitious lymph. Oxytocin and vasopressin correspond to the spirit of the message of the disciples as they are sent out.

I imagine one of these disciples visiting me and I offer him a cup of tea. Being English I naturally like tea, but I love it in a special way when I know the messenger is one of the Lord's disciples or the woman I love. This enhances the value of His message. There is a correspondence between the disciples and oxytocin and vasopressin, and between the brain and the messengers as they represent heaven.

That message that the Lord's disciples represent in the Palestine of the Lord's earthly life and in Swedenborg's brain or spiritual world of the 1700s is that God loves us like a man loves his girlfriend, as in the *Song of Songs*, or a woman her baby. If you reject that love you are in effect rejecting an aspect of the Lord's love and the message of his sent-out disciples. Vasopressin gives you free will to reject the message if you will.

Men and women would have a very vague idea of the Lord's love if it was not for the action of the angelic messengers we know as oxytocin and vasopressin. I suggest that falling in love is the equivalent – or is in fact – the Lord's second coming. It is a sad omission that we do not usually make the connection.

For Swedenborg the start of the Lord's second coming was for him, when in a visionary dream, he found himself sitting on the Lord's lap in a bedroom in Delft during the night of Easter Monday 1744, as he describes in his Dream Diary, section 54. The Lord asked Swedenborg if he had a health certificate, referring to the time when Swedenborg as a much younger man broke quarantine regulations on arriving in London in 1710. (*Swedenborg's Secret* by Lars Bergqvist, p. 33). Swedenborg replies: "Lord, Thou knowest better than I." The Lord then says, "Well then, do!" That is as I (Swedenborg) inwardly grasped this, "Do love Me or do as promised".

This shows the depths of love that Swedenborg had for the Lord as a result of this and other subsequent experiences. But for us it is the conjugal relationship and all its concomitants which illustrate the Lord's love and the motivation for His sending out of His disciples throughout the spiritual world or brain. Divine love endures; His disciples are sent out again and again, in *secula seculorum*.

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Conjugal Love: A Most Precious Gem of the New Church

A Sermon by the Rt. Rev. David H. Lindrooth

Lessons: Genesis 2: 15-25; Matthew 19: 1-6; Conjugal Love 115 (portions)

“And the two shall become one flesh”

The narrative account that we read in our lesson from *Conjugal Love* paints a bleak picture of the state of marriage in our world today. Clear in its implication, the paper in the hand of the angel with its words “the marriage between good and truth” successively decomposes as the angel descends from heaven and approaches earth.

It is a heavenly analogy, but it rings true today. We live in a climate where there is almost total ignorance about the sacredness, beauty, innocence, peace and depth that characterize true marriage as defined in the Heavenly Doctrines.

It is helpful to recognize how completely broken today’s culture is in respect to its perceptions about marriage. It is also useful to realize that the heavenly relationship described in the doctrines is significantly different from how people talk about marriage today. While people look for partnership in this world, the cultural definition for what that partnership looks like, its basis for operating and its attributes are weak, temporary and often unappealing when compared with what the Word for the New Church teaches about conjugal love.

Think about how the dominant world religions commonly speak about marriage. Christianity generally teaches that marriage lasts only during life on earth. This theology suggests that a person becomes sexless after death

and there is no concept of “spiritual marriage” or any notion that men and women can live together as one to eternity. How can people find guidance and spiritual growth in that?

Some Christian faiths take this even further by expressing the view that celibacy is the ideal. Marriage, then, is only said to exist for the purposes of bearing children, and for limiting desire in those who cannot maintain a life of abstinence while on earth. The dysfunction promoted by these beliefs is stunning. One wonders

how such false notions contribute toward helping people live lives as human beings instead of animals. Of themselves, these beliefs do little to promote happy life-long relationships between husband and wife.

These definitions fall short because they define marriage as a purely natural relationship rather than a spiritual one and with that they miss the essence of what makes a true marriage between husband and wife. Promoting these false beliefs has caused profound ignorance, and it can be no wonder that our culture is left to flounder.

Without any spiritual guideposts, our culture is influenced by tentative opinions and trends about marriage and sexuality that are inherently external and only physical in nature. And since there is nothing to anchor these in any sort of eternal truth, social mores about relationships are unmoored and shift from one year to the next based on what theories rule the day about “healthy relationships.”

It is truly heartbreaking not only to observe the ignorance but to see the waves of damage done as people blindly fall into behaviors that seemingly damage their ability to have the spiritual relationships defined by our church that promise deep, eternal fulfillment.

The Heavenly Doctrines characterize the essential problem this way: People are born natural and with their inherently natural minds they think natural and physical thoughts. That natural thinking, locked in the dimension of time and space of this material world, is incapable on its own of grasping the inner spiritual reality that lies within all human life. Only the Lord can raise people’s awareness and introduce them into this spiritual reality. It is in this spiritual world that conjugal love and its life exists. It descends into natural life as far as we are open to conforming our relationships in appropriate ways to receive it. We read:

Without any spiritual guideposts, our culture is influenced by tentative opinions and trends about marriage and sexuality that are inherently external and only physical in nature.

Embedded in this hope is the point that the New Church definition of marriage offers something completely different than our world culture's external view of a marriage.

The Lord alone opens the internal elements of human minds and makes them spiritual, and implants them then in the natural elements so that they too take on a spiritual essence. This is what happens if people go to the Lord and live according to His commandments. His commandments in sum are to believe in Him and refrain from evils because they are of the devil and from the devil; and to do good things because they are of the Lord and from the Lord;

and to do both the one and the other as though one's own and at the same time believe they are done through oneself by the Lord. (*Conjugal Love* 340)

The Heavenly Doctrines express tremendous hope that this true spiritually grounded marriage, that draws from conjugal love, will be fully restored among people living in our world today. We read that when Swedenborg was allowed to experience what conjugal love was like with people living in “the Golden Age” (among ancient peoples living long before written history), his angel guide said to him: “I am sustained by the hope that the God of heaven, who is the Lord, will revive this love, because it is possible for it to be revived.” (*Conjugal Love* 79 e)

Later, Swedenborg himself echoes this hope. After his interaction with angels celebrating the future of marriage, he declares: “My heart leapt, and I went home filled with joy. And there, returning from the state of my spirit into a bodily state, I wrote down what I had seen and heard. To which I will now add this: that following His Advent, the Lord will revive married love, such as it was among ancient peoples. For married love comes only from the Lord, and is found in people who are made spiritual by Him through His Word.” (*Ibid.* 81)

Our hearts can “leap” too, because the Lord is reviving this love with the New Church, and He offers it to anyone who turns to Him recognizing Him as their God, the God of heaven and earth, and who lives according to His precepts.

Embedded in this hope is the point that the New Church definition of marriage offers something completely different than our world culture's external view of a marriage. When speaking of the ideal marriage, the

Heavenly Doctrines are speaking about a relationship that is as different from the modern definition of marriage as heaven is different from earth. While the one is timebound, material in nature, and focused on satisfying each other's present needs in the moment, conjugal love is a relationship based on its depth, on its spiritual purposes that are reflective of the Lord's eternal purposes for the angelic heavens and by extension the human race. It is defined by the Lord in His Word.

And so we need to allow that those definitions are going to be different than how the world might choose to define marriage. That doesn't mean that there isn't helpful advice that can be used to improve communication, relationships, easing tensions and relieving the day-to-day problems people experience in marriage. But there is very little outside of the church that truly defines the internal soul and source of conjugal love and shows its orderly descent into the externals of worldly life.

By definition, conjugal love is a life force that comes from the Lord alone. As such it is "celestial, spiritual, holy, pure and clean, more so than any other love which exists from the Lord in angels of heaven or people of the church." (*Ibid.* 57) It is said to be the highest form of love that one can experience, either as an angel in heaven or as a person living on earth.

Conjugal love is an expression of the Lord's love which He in turn shares with couples. It is a gift that comes solely from Him. And so, when one deeply reflects on this, one can see that couples receive conjugal love from the Lord alone, in the measure or degree that they are connected with Him. The closer a couple is conjoined with the Lord, the more open they are to receiving this most precious love and to enjoying its delights in their relationship.

One cannot separate God out of this, for the life of a true and eternal marriage comes solely from Him. The rationale for this is that conjugal love, as a spiritual love, is dependent on the interiors of a person's mind being open if it is to be received and experienced by human beings. Since people are born naturally, this opening of the interiors doesn't happen by itself. It requires our cooperation with the Lord and His precepts found in the Word.

The interiors of the mind are opened by the Lord when people acknowledge Him as the God of heaven and earth and go to Him, and this in those who live according to His commandments. The actual reason is that otherwise there is no conjunction, and without conjunction, there is no reception. (*Ibid.* 341[2])

From this we can see why the New Church is a marriage church and is inseparably connected to its need to teach truths about conjugal love. To put it simply, it is essential for the spiritual health of the human race that our church clearly teach what conjugal love is and how people can approach the Lord

It is essential for the spiritual health of the human race that our church clearly teach what conjugal love is and how people can approach the Lord to find it.

to find it. If our church fails in this regard, where on earth could people find the path to this love that is such an important part of human spiritual life? The Heavenly Doctrine puts it this way:

The human inclination toward marriage goes hand in hand with religion at every step. Every little step and every stride away from religion or toward religion is also a step or stride away from or toward the conjugal inclination that is peculiar and proper to a

Christian person. At my (Swedenborg's) asking what that conjugal inclination was, (the angel) said, "It is a wish to live with only one wife, and a Christian person has this wish to the extent that he has religion." (*Ibid.* 80[2])

It is important to contextualize these teachings with the understanding that no person receives any love from the Lord perfectly. Every human being on earth is riddled with flaws and imperfections. Everyone is negatively influenced by inherited natural longings for evil. No one lives in an environment that is isolated from the flaws of others. And, sadly, people can be deeply impacted by actual harm done by the destructive, corrosive forces of evil – either in oneself or in others. It is simply an unavoidable product of the culture we live in. But that said, everyone can make progress toward heaven, and, we can progress toward opening ourselves to conjugal love despite our flaws, imperfections and sins of old.

No love can ever become pure in human beings, nor in angels. So neither can this love. But because the Lord primarily regards the intention that is in the will, therefore to the extent that a person has the intention and perseveres in it, to that extent he is introduced into the purity and holiness of this love, and gradually makes progress in it. (*Ibid.*71)

The Lord knows us. He knows our downfalls. As the Human God, he understands our weaknesses and our flaws better than we do ourselves. And yet He still loves us and desires that we are blessed in full measure by all of His loves. "His mercy is everlasting." (*Psalms* 100:5) He is constantly leading us toward heaven.

The doctrines teach clearly the power of the Lord, who with all His

omnipotence is working to lead us toward heaven and help us experience conjugal love in a marriage we will have with an angel partner that will last to eternity. His careful, quiet leadership is manifestly clear in descriptions of the intimate role that providence has in how people are prepared for marriage, with each being led from infancy to eventually recognize the one that they were intended by the Lord to marry.

Through life in the New Church, the Lord is inviting humanity to enjoy the revival, growth and development of love truly conjugal in our marriages today.

The Lord's providence is most specific and therefore most universal in connection with marriages and its operation in marriages in heaven, because all blessings in heaven flow from the delights of married love like sweet waters from a sweetly gushing spring. It is therefore provided by the Lord that marital partners be born, that they are raised and continually prepared for their marriages, neither are the boy and the girl aware of the fact. (*Ibid.* 316)

The same force is at work in our lives. The Lord is constantly with us, preparing us, giving us strength, courage and a desire to respond to Him in ways that help us to open spiritually so that we can receive the Lord's life. This is especially true when it comes to receiving conjugal love. Because this love is the highest, most precious form of life that can be experienced by human beings, the Lord works more powerfully with this love so that it can be shared with us. So it is no different with us than it is with the young boy and girl who are continually being prepared and will one day meet and recognize that they are destined for one another. The Lord is working just as strongly in our hearts so that we can receive this love, and receive it to the fullest extent in the measure that we are willing to respond to the Lord and His life.

But the Lord does require cooperation. He asks us to turn to Him as the God of heaven and earth, and to do so through a life according to the Commandments where we shun licentiousness and seek to do what He says is good.

This cooperation is the beginning and basis of a spiritual marriage that is different in essence than any kind of relationship that is promoted by our materialistic and time-bound culture. And it is immeasurably better, sweeter, more innocent and more delightful because it is reflective of the eternal presence of the Lord in heaven itself.

Through life in the New Church, the Lord is inviting humanity to enjoy the revival, growth and development of love truly conjugal in our marriages today. By turning to the Lord and responding to Him with a life according to His teachings, we can enjoy the growth of this priceless gem, with its spiritual life and happiness to eternity in heaven.

Amen.



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What the Heavenly Doctrines Say About Sex and Gender

An Academy of the New Church Professional Development Experience

The Rev. Christopher A. Barber

We all have seen quite a bit of change to our lives since 2020, and the Academy of the New Church Secondary Schools are no exception. From having to grapple with hard conversations on race and diversity while also managing classrooms from dining tables and guest-rooms-become-home-offices during the global pandemic, it has been a wild ride.

Another area of challenge and change at the Academy has been around more modern conversations on sex, gender and sexuality. These topics, once more taboo, are increasingly discussed by our student body, who take their intellectual and personal curiosities seriously and are less abashed about such things than even I and my contemporaries were a generation ago in their shoes.

The fact that students are willing to ask questions of this nature of our teachers and administration is a good sign that they feel safe to learn of *all* aspects of human life at the Academy. This safety is an important part of our mission to help them build principled and useful lives in both the natural and spiritual worlds. One of the strengths of the Academy Secondary Schools is their consistent commitment to teaching, governing and caring for their constituents in the light of the Word of the Old and New Testaments and the Heavenly Doctrine.

So it was not surprising to me when Principals Jeremy Irwin and Kira Schadegg asked me to lead a professional development training seminar on what the doctrines for the New Church have to say about these matters. On April 23, 2021, it was my delight and privilege to present to the faculty, staff and administration an overview of the core teachings of the New Church on sex, gender and sexual orientation so that everyone could feel more confident in working with students on these subjects with the guidance of the Lord and

Discussing human sexuality is a fraught undertaking, not unlike standing in the middle of an intersection – not of cars, but of interests, challenges, biases, experiences, commitments, beliefs and fears.

with His best wishes for us in mind.

A few colleagues suggested that the entire church could also benefit from a similar treatment of these important key teachings, so I have gladly reworked the content from a 90-minute presentation to these pages. I hope this presentation of our heavenly teachings aids all of us in moving forward with confidence and compassion in the Lord's vision for His creation.

Discussing human sexuality is a fraught undertaking, not unlike standing in the middle of an intersection – not of cars, but of interests, challenges, biases, experiences, commitments, beliefs and fears. When I first began studying and writing about human

sexuality, I was reminded of a vignette recalled by renowned world traveler Rick Steves about driving around the French monument *Arc de Triomphe*. His Parisian taxi driver told him:

If there is an accident here, each driver is considered equally at fault. This is the only place in Paris where accidents are not judged. No matter what the circumstances, insurance companies split the costs 50-50. In Paris, a good driver gets only scratches, not dents.

Because there are so many different feelings, beliefs, experiences and even traumas for people relating to human sexuality, participating in a discourse can be a little nerve-racking. I know that in my experience engaging in this work I have been enriched, but also feel a little bruised as my recognition of the complexities of the conversation have caused me to ask hard questions and have left some people feeling a little wary of my motives.

But anyone who has had this experience knows we're in good company, as Swedenborg himself got caught up in the defense of his book *Conjugal Love* within his home country.¹ He referred to the heresy trial that ensued as being “the most important and the most solemn that has been before any council

1 Known commonly today as the “Trial at Gothenburg,” this event represented an assault by the Swedish Lutheran establishment on the validity of the entire Heavenly Doctrine and the witness of Swedenborg himself. (*The Swedenborg Epic*, Cyriel Sigstedt, 1952)

during the last 1700 years.” (*Documents Concerning Swedenborg*, Volume. II, page 382)

And so it can be with us as well. These conversations can feel deeply moving, sometimes troubling and earth-shaking, and hopefully through it all can also bring a sense of clarity and trust in the Lord and His design. The fact is, the doctrines for the New Church contain robust teaching on the sexes, their interactions, and the Divine plan behind it all. Human happiness is secured most fully when these matters unfold according to the Lord’s order.

The following points are drawn primarily from the clearly presented concepts in the Word of the Old and New Testament and the Heavenly

Doctrine. They are not to be considered the *only* word on the topic of human sexuality and relationships, but rather a starting point for your consideration.

Just as the main points presented here are not the only word on the topics at hand, the passages provided with each point are not exhaustive, but rather are a representative sample of what the fullness of the Word has to offer.

Lastly, a quick survey of the points reveals that many subjects that pose challenges in our world today are left unaddressed. This assessment is accurate. Rather than being a weakness of this presentation, I see this as being a strength – providing readers with foundational teachings on which understanding of and approach to all other issues can be built and from which all courses can be charted. It is my hope that all who would like to know what the New Church has to offer on these matters will bear in mind these doctrinal touchstones when considering all other matters of this nature.

I wish you all the best as you consider human sexuality, relationships, and how it all fits with the Lord’s best wishes for you.

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. (*Jeremiah 29:11*)

The fact is, the doctrines for the New Church contain robust teaching on the sexes, their interactions, and the Divine plan behind it all. Human happiness is secured most fully when these matters unfold according to the Lord’s order.

Main Points of Doctrine:

From the vast body of New Church doctrine, I present the following as

important points on the subject of Human Sexuality and Relationships:

- Sex is primarily a spiritual quality.
- Sex is determined from conception (creation).
- Sex is ideally experienced as a distinct binary (either male or female) and all aspects of a person are impacted by this.
- Each sex is designed to be inclined to the other.
- The sexes are designed to conjoin physically and spiritually.
- One sex cannot by any means be spiritually converted into being the other.
- All of this is in order to provide for procreations, which ensures more people can be born for the purpose of fulfilling the Lord's mission of building a heaven from the human race.
- Physical disorders of a sexual nature are possible in the natural world, but these do not extend beyond the physical, and can potentially be repaired when the life of the body ends.

Below, direct quotes from doctrine are applied, identifying the ground from which these main points spring. Note: Some passages and quotes appear multiple times under different headings. This is not in error, and marks of emphasis have been incorporated to direct the eye and mind to some key ideas in the quotes.

Sex is Primarily a Spiritual Quality

After death a male is still male, and a female is still female. (*Conjugal Love* 33)

A mutual and reciprocal love for the opposite sex remains in people after death. (*Ibid.* 37)

Now because an inclination to conjunction has been engraved on each and every element in the male and female, it follows that this inclination cannot be wiped out or die with the body. (*Ibid.* 46)

They who in the life of the body have had happiness in marriages from genuine conjugal love, have happiness also in the other life; so that with them the happiness of the one life is continued into that of the other, and becomes there a union of minds, in which is heaven. (*Arcana Coelestia* 2734)

Male and female were created to be the very image of the marriage between good and truth. This is because the male was created to be an expression of the understanding of truth, thus a picture of truth,

and the female was created to be an expression of the will of good, thus a picture of good, and implanted in both from their inmost beings is an inclination to conjunction into one. Thus the two together form a single image, which imitates the conjugal model of good and truth. We say that it imitates this model, because it is not identical to it but similar. (*Conjugal Love* 100)

Truly conjugal love is nothing but a union of love and wisdom. Two married partners who have this love between them and in them at the same time are a reflection and image of it. In the heavens, too, where the looks of their faces are genuine representations of the affections of their love, they are all likenesses of it, for it is in them in general and in every part. (*Ibid.* 65)

Good and truth form a marriage with each other (n. 1904, 2173); nay, incredible as it may appear to most, it is from this marriage as from its genuine origin that there comes the sanctity of marriages on earth. (*Arcana Coelestia* 2466)

Regarded in its essence, conjugal love is the fundamental love of all loves in heaven and the church, because it originates from the marriage between good and truth, and from this marriage spring all the loves which form heaven and the church in a person. The good in this marriage produces love, and the truth in it produces wisdom. And when love is added to wisdom or united with it, then love becomes loving. And when wisdom conversely is added to love and united with it, then wisdom becomes wise. (*Conjugal Love* 65)

Sex is Determined from Conception (or Creation)

So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. (*Genesis* 1:27)

In the day that God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female, and blessed them and called them Mankind in the day they were created. (*Ibid.* 5:1-2)

But from the beginning of the creation, God "made them male and female." (*Mark* 10:6)

And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female?" (*Matthew* 19:4)

As regards sexual love, this is a universal feature shared by all. For it was implanted from creation in a person's soul, which is the source of the whole person's essence, as something necessary for the continuance of the human race. (*Conjugal Love* 46)

Sex is Ideally Experienced as a Distinct Binary (i.e., Either Male or Female) and All Aspects of a Person are Impacted by This

Indeed, masculinity in the male is masculine in every part, even in the least part of his body, and also in every idea of his thought, and in every bit of his affection. So, too, with femininity in the female. (*Conjugal Love* 33)

There is nothing in the soul, mind or body which is not male in the man and female in the woman. (*Ibid.* 46)

Each Sex is Designed to be Inclined to the Other

The two sexes also differ in behavior and manners. In short, nothing in the two sexes is the same, although there is nevertheless a capacity for conjunction in every detail. (*Ibid.* 33)

The impulse to be joined is present in every detail down to the smallest. Since that impulse to be joined was implanted from creation and is therefore continually present, it follows that the one desires the other and longs to be joined to the other . . . For the male and the female of the human species are so created as to be able to become like a single individual, that is, one flesh; and when united, then they are, taken together, the full expression of humanity. (*Ibid.* 37)

As regards love for the sex, this is universal in all people, for it is implanted from the moment of creation in a person's very soul, from which comes the essential nature of the whole person, and it is implanted for the sake of propagating the human race. . . . the two sexes have been so created as to strive for conjunction, indeed, for conjunction in order that they may become one. (*Ibid.* 46)

The Sexes are Designed to Conjoin Physically and Spiritually

Marriages in heaven differ from marriages on the earth in that the procreation of offspring is another purpose of marriages on the earth, but not of marriages in heaven, since in heaven the procreation

of good and truth takes the place of procreation of offspring. The former takes the place of the latter because marriage in heaven is a marriage of good and truth (as has been shown above); and as in that marriage good and truth and their conjunction are loved above all things so these are what are propagated by marriages in heaven. (*Heaven and Hell* 382)

A couple's minds or spirits should be united to each other and as though married first, before they are united also in respect to the body; namely, that the marriage may be a marriage of the spirit when it becomes one of the body; consequently, that the partners may love each other because of the spirit and in body as a result of that. (*Conjugal Love* 310)

The genital organs in both sexes mean things associated with the joining together of good and truth. They not only mean them but also in actual fact correspond to them. . . . These correspond to the marriage of good and truth, from which marriage conjugal love also comes down. (*Arcana Coelestia* 4462)

This makes evident why the pleasure of producing offspring, which surpasses every other pleasure, is so great. It surpasses every other because its use, which is the procreation of the human race, and thus of heaven, surpasses all other uses. (*Apocalypse Explained* 991)

One Sex Cannot By Any Means be Spiritually Converted into Being the Other

People are male and female, and since it is one thing to be masculine and another to be feminine, with the two qualities being so different one cannot be converted into the other. (*Conjugal Love* 32)

It is contrary to order for the posterior to flow into the prior, or the grosser into the purer; thus for the body to inflow into the soul. (*Arcana Coelestia* 3219)

It is contrary to order for what is lower to flow into what is higher. (cf. *Divine Love and Wisdom* 12; *Spiritual Experiences* 2554, 4606; *True Christian Religion* 672; *Intercourse of Soul and Body* 4; *Conjugal Love* 408; *Divine Love and Wisdom* 166; *Heaven and Hell* 209; *Last Judgment* 24; *Apocalypse Explained* 1215; *Arcana Coelestia* 3721, 5119, 5259, 6322; 8237, 8516, 9110)

What person of sound reason cannot see that the washing of the face, hands and feet, or of all the limbs, and even the whole body in

a bath, does nothing more than wash away the dirt, that people may appear clean in the human form before [others]? And who cannot understand that no washing enters into a person's spirit and renders that equally clean? For any thief, plunderer or robber may wash themselves until they shine; but is the disposition to steal, plunder, and rob thereby washed away? (*True Christian Religion* 672)

All of this is in order to provide for procreations, which ensures more people can be born for the purpose of fulfilling the Lord's mission of building a heaven from the human race.

The Lord's Divine Providence has as its end a heaven from the human race. Heaven does not consist of any angels created such from the beginning, and hell does not originate from some devil who was created an angel of light and cast down from heaven. Rather, both heaven and hell arise from the human race. (*Divine Providence* 27)

Nor can it be otherwise, because from creation people have in them His image and likeness – His image in them being wisdom, and His likeness in them being love. And the Lord in them is love united to wisdom and wisdom united to love, or to say the same thing, it is goodness united to truth and truth united to goodness. (*Ibid*)

This vast system called the universe is a work connected as one thing from beginning to end because God had a single purpose in creating it: an angelic heaven populated by the human race. All the things that make up the world are means of fulfilling that purpose, because someone who intends an end result also intends the means to achieve it. (*True Christian Religion* 13)

The delight of marriage, which is a purer and more exquisite delight of touch, transcends all the rest because of its use, which is the procreation of the human race and thereby of angels of heaven. (*Heaven and Hell* 402)

The procreations of the human on the earths will never cease. (*Last Judgment* 6)

That the procreations of the human race will endure to eternity:

- I. The human race is the basis on which heaven is founded.
- II. The human race is the seminary of heaven.
- III. The extension of heaven, which is for angels, is so immense that it cannot be filled to eternity.

IV. They are but few respectively, of whom heaven at present is formed.

V. The perfection of heaven increases according to its numbers.

VI. And every Divine work has respect to infinity and eternity. (*Ibid.* 7)

Therefore the seed-ground of heaven is in the outmost. (*Heaven and Hell* 315)

Physical disorders of a sexual nature are possible in the natural world, but these do not extend beyond the physical, and can potentially be repaired when the life of the body ends.²

There are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. (*Matthew* 19:12)

Chastity cannot be ascribed to people who are born eunuchs or who have been made eunuchs. By people who are born eunuchs we mean chiefly people in whom the outmost impulse of love is missing from birth. And because the highest and intermediate impulses then lack a foundation on which to rest, neither do these impulses develop. . . . The diversities among people like this, however, are many. (*Conjugal Love* 151)

There is no point recounting the harmful effects which an excessive restraint of love for the sex can cause and inflict in men who struggle with sexual heat owing to an inordinate sexual abundance. In their case it gives rise to the origins of certain physical maladies and mental illnesses, not to mention little-known evils which are too unspeakable to be named. It is different with those whose love for the sex is moderate enough that they can resist the urges of its lust. (*Ibid.* 450)

When the spirit of a person first enters the world of spirits . . . their face and their tone of voice resemble those they had in the world, because they are then in the state of their exteriors, and their interiors

2 Additionally, we know that Swedenborg was aware of disorders of a sexual nature from a medical and biological perspective as well, as recorded in his personal notes on the reproductive system, found in *Generation*, passages 34, 59, 143, 200, *et al*

are not as yet uncovered. This is a person's first state after death. But subsequently their face is changed, and becomes entirely different, resembling their ruling affection or ruling love . . . For the face of a person's spirit differs greatly from the face of their body. (*Heaven and Hell* 457)

Those who are in heaven are continually advancing toward the spring of life, with a greater advance toward a more joyful and happy spring the more thousands of years they live; and this to eternity, with increase according to the growth and degree of their love, charity and faith. . . . In a word, to grow old in heaven is to grow young. (*Ibid.* 414)

Discussion

Note, the following discussion, though it happened throughout the Professional Development lecture, is included below for the purposes of readability. Also, most of the following is drawn from my hitherto unpublished work from 2016 on sex, gender and the Heavenly Doctrines, which was the foundation of this Professional Development presentation.

Male and Female: The Heavenly Doctrines offer that the Lord's plan all along was to bring male and female humans into existence. This was primarily for the purpose of fulfilling His ultimate goal: the formation of a heaven from the human race. Note that the creation of males and females is not the end goal in itself—it is a means to an end. The means (male and female) took the form that it did because of the marriage of goodness and truth. This is explored further in the section *Metaphysical Underpinnings* below.

Created for Heaven: These passages point to the Lord's taking a longer view when regarding His creation. The goal of the creation of a heaven from the human race is paramount, and in that heaven husbands and wives dwell together to eternity. The life of this union is found in the metaphysical underpinnings of the conjunction of goodness and truth, of which human marriage is an emulation.

Created Different: Taking these passages at face value makes it very clear from a Biblical and doctrinal perspective that male and female are created to be distinct, and that one cannot be converted into the other. With this being the philosophical starting point, it makes sense that we find laws, which enforce gender roles and govern sexual expression in ancient Israel.

Created for Each Other: This is true naturally, but only because it is first true spiritually. We encounter a number of teachings in the Heavenly Doctrines

that clearly show that the inclination of a man to join to a woman and vice versa has been granted by the Lord and is protected by the Lord from a person's earliest existence. This inclination is often called "the love of the opposite sex" or simply, "the love of the sex" (from the Latin *amor sexus*).

It has been set by Divine order that all people are designed to be sexually oriented toward the opposite sex. And not only is this "love of the opposite sex" engraved on the inmosts of a person, it manifests in all areas of that person's being and for that reason, does not end with the death of the body, but continues after death, as it is not proper to the body but is proper to the spirit.

There is such compatibility between males and females on the physical level as well as the spiritual level. It is the metaphysical underpinnings of the sexes that provide for this compatibility.

Metaphysical Underpinnings: Males and females were created by the Lord to join together physically and spiritually. It is important to remember, however, that sexual dimorphism is not an end goal in itself; the male human form and the female human form are at the end of a long line of relevant metaphysical pairings. This is articulated in *Conjugal Love*.

There is order in the universe, from the Maker of Heaven and Earth who is Love and Wisdom and Goodness and Truth at His core, all the way to the elementals of our natural world. Biology, being somewhere in between, does not exist apart from this order, but fits in it perfectly. The creation that is the universe is truly in the image and likeness of the One who created it.

Can Sex Change? In the Heavenly Doctrines, much time is spent describing the dynamics existing between the spiritual and the natural. In short, everything flows from the Divine, through the spiritual, and lands in the natural. Nothing whatsoever flows from the natural into the spiritual and back to the Divine. In fact, this very dynamic, flowing from natural to spiritual, is described many times as being "contrary to order."

The human body is the soul's domain, the place where the soul and spirit of a person rest and act. It is a vehicle and a vessel. It is important, but only because of what dwells within it. Much like changing a vessel does not change its contents, or altering a vehicle does not alter its driver, or changing an outfit does not change a demeanor, no amount of altering to the human form can change what dwells within that human form. It is contrary to order for what is lower to flow into what is higher.

Can things go wrong? With all of this being said, this would not be a complete examination of this subject without noting the times that the Doctrines state explicitly what things can go wrong. It is true that there is a Divine plan. This plan works in perfect order in the spiritual plane of existence. The natural

This presentation is meant to be the beginning of reflection and conversation, not the final word. It is the Lord who has the final say, and we all are His servants, doing our best to hear and do His Word, because it is in the doing of these that blessing is found.

plane, however, is not in perfect order, and so it is also true that the natural world is not always aligned with the Divine plan.

Biblical accounts such as Adam and Eve being tempted and subsequently kicked out of the Garden of Eden, Noah and his Ark, the Captivity of Israel, the Crucifixion of Jesus, Jesus' reference to eunuchs, and so many more demonstrate natural world disorder and disagreement with the Divine plan. Natural disorder is also evident from studying current and historical events: wars, tragedies, popular vices, and more.

Conclusion

There's no better way to engage with the Lord than to approach Him directly through His Word. In the light of that, I acknowledge that this presentation is

deficient. Other relevant passages might have eluded my detection or might be applicable but were ultimately left out. Still others that were included might not meet your understanding in the same way as they did mine. This is all very fine. This presentation is meant to be the beginning of reflection and conversation, not the final word. It is the Lord who has the final say, and we all are His servants, doing our best to hear and do His Word, because it is in the doing of these that blessing is found.

And remember, this study isn't easy, and these conversations can be hard. Please feel encouraged to search the Word for understanding on the challenging and personal matters that relate to these main points and passages presented above. And may the Lord bless you, keep you, make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you as you take on the joys and the challenges of corporeal life in this natural world.



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FROM THE BISHOP'S OFFICE

Marriage, Doctrine and Dialogue



The Rt. Rev. David L. Lindrooth

Beginning a Sacred Dialogue about Marriage by focusing on the Lord's leading toward eternal happiness and by emphasizing our interaction with these teachings from compassion.

The General Church values marriage as an essential component of our culture and teachings because of how the subject is treated in the Heavenly Doctrine. Our theology describing the marriage human beings experience is built on the internal concept of the marriage relationship of goodness and truth that runs from the inmost aspects of everything the Lord creates through to the most external parts of human life. (*Conjugal Love* 101) All of this is grounded in the imagery of the marriage between one man and one woman. All of it promotes the growth and perfection of the angelic heaven.

The purpose of New Church marriage theology isn't to legislate morality, rather it is to promote happiness. The teachings help human beings configure their lives to receive the Lord's eternal life and its resulting deep satisfaction, not just during our days on earth, but to eternity as angels in heaven (where life really gets exciting!).

True marriage provides the kind of spiritual happiness that lasts forever. It is worth noting that the goal of this theology is *eternal* happiness. (*Ibid.* 57) The Lord is using the truths presented in *Conjugal Love* (and elsewhere) to prepare us for eternal life. These teachings are designed to help us prepare to be angels – angel husbands and angel wives who together are supremely useful in ways we would have difficulty understanding from an earthly perspective.

The Heavenly Doctrine teaches a heavenly view of marriage that is substantively different from definitions of marriage commonly held in the culture of our day because their purpose is a relationship that is not of this

The purpose of New Church marriage theology isn't to legislate morality, rather it is to promote happiness.

world. You could say that the Writings provide “inside information” on how the heavenly relationship we call “marriage” is powered by “conjugal love” – a love that comes only from the Lord. Because the love comes from heaven, we need that inside, spiritual information to know what that heavenly relationship is and to experience it.

Conjugal Love teaches that this love is exceedingly rare today and that few people experience it because people do not think of it as a spiritual love that comes from the Lord alone or as a fundamental love of heaven. (*Ibid.* 69) While that ignorance was described roughly 250 years ago when *Conjugal Love* was published, it is clear that lack of understanding still exists today.

It is common today that people try to define various relationships, calling them “marriages” when they do not fit into the model that the Lord offers for the world. People say “love is love”; there is little understanding about gender; people don’t think about the spiritual dynamics offered in relationships. All of this leads to tremendous confusion about the Lord’s view of marriage that He wishes for all humanity.

We have teachings stating that our faith, and the truths extending from it, must be aligned with love, compassion and charity. (*Arcana Coelestia* 379, 393, 904 etc.) This is especially true for teachings about marriage. Since there is broad misunderstanding about marriage today, and there are many who for a variety of reasons have struggled with all kinds of aspects of marriage, it is essential that the church proceed with the utmost care to hold a dialogue about marriage that treats others with utmost compassion. The purpose of the church’s beautiful teachings on marriage is to promote eternal happiness, not pain and misery – to enhance people’s spiritual lives and not make them more difficult!

This issue of *New Church Life* contains several pieces on marriage. It represents the early stages of an effort led by the episcopal team (Bishops Peter Buss Jr., Bradley Heinrichs and me) to bring a full dialogue about marriage, what it is in the Lord’s Word, what the Lord offers through the marriage relationship that He talks about, and about how we respond in states when aspects of relationships do not match up with what the Lord seems to be teaching. We think this is an important dialogue where we can all learn and grow, and that can help us all to come closer to the Lord.

When we talk about marriage, we are talking about a subject that touches many affections. As such, it can cause strong reactions. Our promise to you

is to do two things. First, we will hold that dialogue in such a way that people can see what the Heavenly Doctrines teach about marriage and gender issues. At the same time, we commit to strongly promoting a compassionate approach to the subject and its interchange. We want the church to be a safe place to talk about difficult, sensitive issues. Compassion toward others is the seedbed for the truths and wisdom about marriage. When this is the case, the Lord is present, allowing His growth and healing to occur.

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Four Steps to Healing

A Sermon by the Rev. Dr. Andrew M. T. Dibb

Lessons: Matthew 8; Apocalypse Revealed 376; Arcana Coelestia 6988(3), 10645

Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed;
save me, and I shall be saved: for Thou art my praise.
-*Jeremiah 17:14*

It is inspiring to read the Gospels, to see the Lord as He walked among the people, to hear His preaching and wonder at His miracles. In the New Testament one sees the Lord as a man, as those who had known Him from childhood knew Him. As He preached, He gave words of wisdom that have stood for the 2,000 years since He spoke them. Famous as He was, the Lord was approachable, a man of the people. Crowds gathered around Him; people reached out to touch Him and He never turned them away. We will consider a single day in the Lord's life, as related in the *Gospel of Matthew*.

After His baptism in the River Jordan, and His return from 40 days of temptation in the wilderness, the Lord went through Galilee, preaching in the synagogues and healing those who came to Him. His fame spread and crowds of people came to see Him, even from as far away as Jerusalem. They came to hear Him speak, and perhaps to be healed by Him. The events of this day happened in, or near, the town of Capernaum on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee.

On that day, when the Lord became aware of how large the crowd following Him was, He withdrew to a hill outside the town and the multitude followed Him, settling down on the grass to hear Him speak. His sermon, which we know as The Sermon on the Mount, has inspired people throughout Christian history. Then, when He finished preaching, He walked down the hill on His way back to Capernaum.

This is the part of the day we will concentrate on, the time between the end of the Sermon on the Mount and the evening. During this time three

miracles happened, and a final one followed in the evening. Reading the letter of the Word, these miracles seem to be four unrelated accounts of the Lord healing the sick and the demon possessed. The sicknesses of those who asked for healing do not seem to bear any relationship to each other, and the people who are healed appear to be random.

The first healing happened when a leper approached the Lord as He came down the hill after giving the Sermon on the Mount. As he approached the Lord, he worshipped Him and said, “Lord if you are willing you can make me clean.” A little later, as the Lord entered Capernaum, a Roman centurion came to the Lord. His servant was paralyzed and suffering greatly. The centurion asked the Lord to heal him. The third healing took place in Capernaum when the Lord entered the home of Simon Peter and found his mother sick with a fever. In the evening of that day, a great multitude again came to the Lord and He cast out demons and healed the sick.

After preaching the Sermon on the Mount the Lord healed leprosy, paralysis, fever and finally demons. Taken literally these four afflictions seem unrelated. The connection between them only becomes clear when one turns to the Heavenly Doctrine and there finds the meaning of these diseases. Seen in a spiritual light, these four incidents are not a random pattern, nor are they unrelated to each other. As one discovers the spiritual meaning of each disease, it becomes clearer first why these miracles took place after the Sermon on the Mount, and why they happened in the order they did. This set of four healing miracles describes a progression that if left uncured would lead a person further and further away from the Lord.

Leprosy refers to the profanation of truth. This happens when someone believes and accepts the truth, but then turns away from it. There are various degrees of profanation, some of them more serious, some less so. All can be cured by repentance, but if any are left uncorrected, they disfigure a person’s spirit in much the same way as leprosy disfigures their body.

An example given in *Divine Providence* is about someone who believes in the holiness of the Word but makes jokes about it. This person mixes holiness with a habit of making fun of the Word. It is not possible to take the Word seriously and lightly at the same time. When these two attitudes exist together the person has profaned the Word by mixing things that should not be mixed. There are greater and lesser degrees of profanation following that same pattern

This set of four healing miracles describes a progression that if left uncured would lead a person further and further away from the Lord.

of believing the teachings of the Word, and at the same time willingly living contrary to them. Some of them can be healed by repentance, but if left alone the bond between sacred and profane will become so strong that they cannot be separated. This is spiritual leprosy.

Leprosy in the natural world does not lead to paralysis, but in the spiritual world it does. The profanation of truth leads to a spiritual paralysis. A spiritual leper is one who believes two mutually incompatible things at the same time, but no one can act in two opposite ways at once. The result is that belief in the truth is compartmentalized in a person's understanding, while the actual behavior of the person is governed by a false belief. We can see this in the example of someone who makes jokes about the Word: that a person believes in the holiness of the Word, but this is hidden in one part of the mind, while the justifications for joking are in another. At this point the person believes two incompatible things.

A person who believes it is permissible to make jests from the Word strips it of its power, even as he believes it to be true. When the Word is blocked in this way, no matter what the person believes about the Word, it does not affect his actions. Spiritual paralysis, seen from this perspective, is the consequence of spiritual leprosy – the state in which a person separates faith from actions, so that the faith, or belief from the Word, has no bearing on what the person does. There is no outlet for the truth, no practice to express the truth in the person's life. This is described as spiritual paralysis.

The third disease the Lord healed that day was fever. Again, there is no obvious connection in the literal sense between leprosy, paralysis and fever. But once again the Heavenly Doctrine shows the progression. A fever in the spiritual world, as in this world, is an effect of a disease. In spiritual terms, it is the spiritual evils people fall into when their faith is muzzled, and action flows from a different source.

By ignoring what they believe the Word to be teaching them, people open themselves to their own inclinations toward evil. The object of truth is to do good, but if one limits the influence of truth, then there are no barriers to the evils existing within, burning to get out. Those evils of life are the spiritual fever that follows the spiritual versions of leprosy and paralysis.

The final miracle in this sequence was the Lord casting out demons. Demons describe the last state of this progression. They signify the love of evil and the many falsities we tell ourselves to make it possible for us to commit them, even though we believe from the Word that we should not. The primary evil love afflicting people is selfishness and every other evil in our life stems from it. When the truth has been limited and separated from our actions, selfishness has nothing to keep it in order. Like a contagion it affects other areas of life until everything a person does is selfish. It is said that the Lord

cast out demons, in the plural, because left to itself, selfishness multiplies and saturates the spirit.

Taken together, these four miracles describe people who know truth but allow it to be overridden by other contradictory thoughts, which they also believe to be true, mixing them in their mind. By overriding truth, a person separates the truths from the Word from ideas they believe to be true but are not. This appearance of truth is

the source of the actions of life, so one says one thing but does another. This paralyzes the truth by preventing it from being expressed. The result is a life in which a person feels no restriction to selfishness and accompanying evils. Finally, the love of self takes control of the person's mind and truth is forgotten.

Keeping these thoughts in mind, we go back to the overall day: the Lord had just finished preaching the Sermon on the Mount and was on His way to Capernaum. The sermon is full of the Lord's wisdom. Summing it up, the Heavenly Doctrine says: "In the fifth, sixth and seventh chapters of Matthew from their beginning to their end the Lord teaches good works, and what they must be, and that thence is heavenly happiness." (*Apocalypse Explained* 785:4)

The diseases that follow show the consequences of believing those words, but simultaneously believing false things that can lead to spiritual trouble. This section of the Lord's day was not given just to highlight the causes and effects of natural and spiritual diseases, but to show the Lord's mercy toward us when we are ready to break this cycle. He healed every one of these people, indicating that He can and will heal all our states if we are willing.

The sufferers in this sequence of miracles all wanted to be healed. They took the initiative to come to the Lord and ask. The leper came and worshipped the Lord and asked for healing. The centurion accosted the Lord as He entered Capernaum and asked Him to help his servant. Peter's mother is different. In this case, the Lord went to her and seems to heal her without her asking. Then at the end of the day, the multitude came to the Lord for healing.

The leper's words begin the process of healing: "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." We are told that when we pray to the Lord, He knows what we need before we ask for it; nevertheless, we still need to ask. The same is true with this leper. He needed to ask because in asking one humbles oneself to the Lord. This leper knew about his leprosy, what it had done to his body and how it had made his life miserable, and he wanted to be healed. So, with us, when we hear the Lord's words, remember this took place right after the Lord

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The Word teaches which evils to shun so that selfishness is restrained, and we begin to do good because the Word teaches us to do it, because it is good. The result is that the evils that cause our spiritual fever are removed.

preached the Sermon on the Mount. His words bring to mind how we should live our lives, and we become aware of the discrepancy between what we believe and what we believe we may do.

The centurion's approach to the Lord takes us to the next step along the path. He asked the Lord to heal his servant who was paralyzed and dreadfully tormented. When the Lord offered to go to his house, the centurion replied: "Lord, I am not worthy for you to come under my roof but speak the word and my servant shall be healed."

The centurion had every reason to think of himself with pride: he was a

commander of men; his orders are obeyed. Yet when he approached the Lord and asked for help, he did so in humility. He recognized the Lord's power to heal, and whatever he could do as a centurion was nothing in comparison. This humble recognition is his acknowledgement of the Lord's power, a power far greater than his own. So, the second step reveals itself: we need to ask the Lord for help and healing, and we need to do so with humility about our own condition and acknowledge the Lord as the only one who can help us.

The story of Peter's mother is different. She is home sick with a fever. She does not approach the Lord and ask to be healed. He comes to her in her house, takes her by the hand and heals her. Why is this different? Remember that Peter's mother represents the evils of life that spring from the progression of leprosy and paralysis. Profanation of truth leads to the separation of faith and charity, so that our lives are not governed by what we believe the Word says, but what we believe we can do. Without the Word to guide us, we sink into the evils generated by selfishness. Left to themselves those evils will infest our minds as the demons infested those whom the Lord cured in the evening.

By healing these people, the Lord showed how He heals us when we are in those states. When a person turns to the Lord in humility and acknowledges His power, what happens is that the falsities we had believed are rejected, faith in the truth becomes central, and the leprosy is cured. Without the opposition of falsity, a person can seek ways to apply the truth to life and use it. Acting according to truth is charity, so that in this state the person's paralysis is healed and the truth becomes active within. By being cured of spiritual leprosy, we are cured of spiritual paralysis. The Word teaches which evils to shun so that

selfishness is restrained, and we begin to do good because the Word teaches us to do it, and because it is good.

The result is that the evils that cause our spiritual fever are removed. This is why the Lord took Peter's mother's hand and healed her: His hand represents His power, and when we accept the power of truth, He heals us of evil.

Finally, in the evening the crowds returned, and the Lord cast out demons and healed them. We do not have only one evil in our lives, and once we have removed it, we are done. We incline toward evils of every kind, so this healing process will take place over and over as we become aware of something that we think is twisting and profaning the things we believe are true from the Word. We need to approach the Lord with humility, to acknowledge His power to help us, and be willing to let go of our evils, relying on the Lord's power to sustain us.

The wonderful observation about this story is that the Lord healed all these people, the leper, the paralyzed man, Peter's mother and all those obsessed by demons. No one was beyond His power to heal. This tells us something about the Lord: He is always willing to heal us, no matter where we are in our lives.

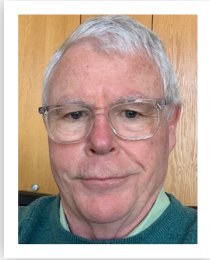
When the leper approached him, saying: "Lord if you are willing you can make me clean," the Lord responded by reaching out, touching the leper, and saying, "I am willing, be cleansed." When the centurion asked him to heal his servant, the Lord responded, "I will come and heal him." And when the centurion said he was not worthy for the Lord to enter his house; He healed the man from a distance. He entered Peter's house, and even though his mother was not evil, her fever represented evil, which the Lord cured by taking her hand in His.

Throughout this day in the life of the Lord we see Him moving amongst people, preaching to them and then healing them. Like those ancient people, we are invited to settle down on a grassy hillside and listen to His words as He teaches "good works, and what they must be, and that thence is heavenly happiness." (*Apocalypse Explained* 785:4)

As we reflect on the truths in the Sermon on the Mount, we will find discrepancies between what the Lord teaches and who we are, yet the Lord does not turn away. We are invited to approach Him in humility and with acknowledgment of His power to heal us. And if we do that, we can trust that He will work each of those miracles in us. The Lord reaches out and touches us and makes us clean. For He says to us as He said to the leper:

This tells us something about the Lord: He is always willing to heal us, no matter where we are in our lives.

I am willing to be cleansed.
And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.



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A Call to Neighbors

The Rev. Thomas H. Rose

Editors' note: This talk was delivered at the Independence Day celebration in Bryn Athyn on July 3, 2021. Its message about loving the neighbor is especially important in these times, for all people.

Here we are, gathered together to celebrate America, a nation of neighbors. Today, I want to talk with you neighbor to neighbor, because we are each other's neighbor, and this town is our neighbor and so is this country. Bryn Athyn is a beautiful little place on the map within these United States. This town is not a church; it is a home rule municipality, a community with a civil government. But more to what I want to talk about, it is the sum total of its people and its closest friends – all neighbors.

Gathered today we are residents, friends and visitors – all neighbors in closer and broader community. Neighbors are everywhere around us, and are of every age, every skin color, every walk of life. I want to say hello to you, my neighbors. I am a son of and a mishmash product of this town.

I went through all of the schools here, raised a family here, served on the fire company and ambulance, and pastored in the church. I think I put a fire out at your house (pointing around), took you to the hospital, taught your kid, did your baptism, your wedding, and did your funeral. Wait, *are you still with us?*

And I'm privileged to be talking with you today, neighbor to neighbor. And yes, of course there's a religious component to this town that helped shape me. It taught me about loving the neighbor. I learned here that we're supposed to strive to look to the good in our neighbor. We're told that's what angels do.

We can *all do that*.

There is a passage in the work *Secrets of Heaven, or Arcana Coelestia*, which says:

The person who intends good to his neighbor, thinks nothing but good regarding him, and when possible actually does it, is among angelic spirits, and becomes an angel in the next life. (No. 1680)

Let's continue to support and look to the good in (our) neighbor, our country. And in our communities. And in the microcosm, let's support each other – each neighbor – and look to the good in each other. This way, we acknowledge and protect each other's freedom.

In fact, further teachings say that it's the good in each one of us that is the neighbor who is to be loved. If you don't know how to love the good in your neighbor, just flip it around and think about what you hope your neighbor sees and loves in you yourself. Because . . .

You're not perfect.

And I'm not perfect.

And we are neighbors who can love each other.

[A wooden American Flag is placed on a stool.]

I invited this particular neighbor to come sit next to me here today. He's my Uncle. Boy, has he been through a lot in life. He's rather weathered and hardened. And I've heard things about his birth that you wouldn't believe. The labor and its pains lasted a very long

time, and when he was finally born, there was very little chance of survival. There was a lot of unrest, and a war going on, and even a smallpox epidemic that threatened everything.

[See an article: *How Crude Smallpox Inoculations Helped George Washington Win the War*, by Dave Roos, May 18, 2020]

Sam did make it through all that and grew up to be my uncle you see here, with his good looks, good accomplishments and with all his dings and dents – all his faults. Like anyone, Sam isn't perfect. I'm not perfect, and yet I hope that my neighbors can see the good in me, forgive the faults and hurts, and trust that I'm trying hard, and that I have a conscience as well as a heart. I look at Sam here and I know some things about his past. I trust that he has a conscience about his behaviors toward indigenous people, or slaves, or other situations involving people that could be cited over the years.

I'm saying that so that I can always remind myself to acknowledge what needs to be acknowledged, and still strive to look to the good. Look to the good in all of my neighbors, including Sam here. In many ways I know that I wouldn't be here if it weren't for him.

In 1962, Martin Luther King Jr. said this in his Emancipation Proclamation Centennial Address, September 12, 1962:

The Declaration of Independence proclaimed . . . that the dignity of human personality was inherent in man as a living being. The Emancipation Proclamation was the offspring of the Declaration of Independence. It was a constructive use of the force of law to uproot a social order which sought to separate liberty from a segment of humanity.

Let's continue to support and look to the good in this neighbor here, our country. And in our communities. And in the microcosm, let's support each other – each neighbor – and look to the good in each other. This way, we acknowledge and protect each other's freedom.

Freedom. Independence. There's something *vital* about it. There's a *need* behind it.

The independence gained by the founders of this nation came at great risk and at a great cost. It was won, not because the colonies had a standing army more powerful than the British Empire. They had next to nothing in comparison. It was won in large part by a force of will. Individual will, and a collective will to resist oppression and coercion.

Arcana Coelestia 1947 says this:

The human conscience does not allow itself to be coerced.

The Lord never compels anyone.

Everyone who is not free desires to become so, for this is a person's life.

Elsewhere in the *Arcana*, it is made clear that only in self-compulsion, however difficult, is freedom realized. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 1937)

In *New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine* 141 we read:

All freedom is of love, [and] all freedom is of the will . . . and because love and the will make one's life, so also does freedom.

So . . . self-compulsion is of freedom, and *freedom is life*.

The American Revolution: self-compelled, self-started, vital efforts among colonists toward liberty -- that's what it was about.

In 1774, Esther de Berdt Reed of Philadelphia wrote to her brother Dennis in England:

The people of New England . . . are prepared for the worst event, and they have such ideas of their injured liberty, and so much enthusiasm in the cause, that I do not think that any power on earth could take it from them but with their lives.

Let's listen to some more quotes about liberty, about diligence, about

conflict of conscience, just to get some flavor from some notable figures of the time of the revolution.

John Adams:

Liberty must at all hazards be supported. We have a right to it, derived from our Maker. (A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law, 1765)

Abigail Adams:

Learning is not attained by chance, it must be sought for with ardor and diligence. (In a letter to John Quincy Adams, March 29, 1780)

Patrick Henry:

I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty or give me death! (Speech at the Virginia Convention)

In 1783, George Washington said:

The establishment of Civil and Religious Liberty was the Motive which induced me to the Field – the object is attained – and it now remains to be my earnest wish and prayer, that the Citizens of the United States could make a wise and virtuous use of the blessings placed before them. (To the Reformed German Congregation of New York City, November 27, 1783)

Benjamin Franklin:

God grant that not only the Love of Liberty, but a thorough Knowledge of the Rights of Man, may pervade all the Nations of the Earth, so that a Philosopher may set his Foot anywhere on its Surface, and say, "This is my Country." (Letter to David Hartley, December 4, 1789)

Alexander Hamilton:

Natural liberty is a gift of the beneficent Creator, to the whole human race; . . . and cannot be wrested from any people, without the most manifest violation of justice. (The Farmer Refuted, 1775)

Abigail Adams:

It is not in the still calm of life that great characters are formed. The habits of a vigorous mind are formed in contending with difficulties. Great necessities call out great virtues. (To John Quincy Adams, January 19, 1780)

We can see that it took – and it takes – a mighty force of will to achieve liberty and to preserve each other’s right to humanity and happiness. And it takes a force of commitment to defend it.

And, finally, from Sam Adams:

The liberties of our country, the freedom of our civil constitution, are worth defending at all hazards; and it is our duty to defend them against all attacks. (Article in the *Boston Gazette*, October 14, 1771)

At this point I want to recognize and thank all active members of the United States Armed Forces, all veterans of all branches, and all who gave their lives in defense of the liberties our country stands for. Blessings and thanks to their families.

We’ve talked about freedom. We’ve talked about looking to the good in the neighbor on the scale of every individual and on the scale of our country as our neighbor. We defend the freedom of our neighbors.

Let’s look at my friend and neighbor here next to me again, not as I did before. Let’s look at her as *America*.

We have a song: *God Bless America*.

In a 1940 interview, composer Irving Berlin said:

It’s not a patriotic song, but an expression of gratitude for what this country has done for its citizens, of what home really means.

And so I say, God bless *you*, America. And God bless all of you, America, here together today. You – family, friends and neighbors – are my home.

I’ll leave you to your friendly interactions and celebrations. We’ve been through a lot together over the past year! Like the smallpox epidemic that hit the colonies and caused General Washington pains to make difficult decisions about it, a disease has come our way, and we’re working our way through its

We’ve been through a lot together over the past year. We don’t all react the same exact way but there’s one thing we can do. We can each put a positive spin on the opinions and decisions of our neighbors. And I’m not just talking about a pandemic.

effects. We don't all react the same exact way, we don't all do the same things to deal with it, but there's one thing we can do. We can each put a positive spin on the opinions and decisions of our neighbors. And I'm not just talking about a pandemic.

Love the neighbor. It's about goodness and love.

Every age, every skin color, every walk of life. Equals. Neighbors. We can look to the good in our neighbors . . . and we can love them.

One last beautiful note from *Arcana Coelestia* 4837:

If heaven were distinguished according to truths. . . and not according to good, there would be no heaven, for there would be no unanimity. This is possible only in good, that is, in love to the Lord, and in love toward the neighbor. For love conjoins all.

As for our neighbor, here [on the stool]:

God bless America, land that I love.
Stand beside her.
And guide her
through the night
. . . with the light from above.



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Young Adults: What's the Real Problem?

The Rev. Jeffrey O. Smith

At the end of the *Young Adults* article in the previous issue, I told you I would be inserting some feedback from young adults in this present one, but that was before I wrote it. I hope you won't be disappointed that I took a different angle for now. Although I draw little to no attention to young adults in this article, the title maintains the reference to that age group because we are still dealing with a problem that is classically blamed on them: the church's struggle to survive. It is the cause of this struggle that we will deal with now.

I offered some thoughts in my last article on current ecclesiastical statistics – trends that, should they continue, do not bode well for the future of the General Church. Please note that I do not believe that the Lord's Church is in any danger. I believe the Lord will continue to grow His New Church in the hearts and minds of people in this world, and that it is indeed and without question the crown of all churches.

The question is whether the General Church will continue to be a thriving organization that supports the growth of the Lord's Church. I believe our participation in His Church will in part depend on us being prudent as serpents and pure as doves.

Some decades ago, the General Church was experiencing healthy growth. Services were well-attended, families sent their children through the church school system, and societies were social and vibrant. But ever since those decades ago, services, schools and societies have been waning. But why? Why has the life of the church in which so many participated in the mid-20th century turned into what it is today? Church attendance is low; our schools are struggling to survive. Were we offering something back then that we no longer offer today? Have our sermons or services lost a quality that used to be there? Did we start doing something wrong?

Aside from the General Church and the broader Christian Church, there

I believe the Lord will continue to grow His New Church in the hearts and minds of people in this world, and that it is indeed and without question the crown of all churches. The question is whether the General Church will continue to be a thriving organization that supports the growth of the Lord's Church.

are other institutions and organizations that once thrived but no longer do. Take for example the video store, the shopping mall, and the bookstore. Each of these venues once thrived. If you wanted to rent a video, the video store was there for you. Shopping malls used to be veritable mad houses at Christmastime and popular hangouts for teens on weekends. Bookstores used to be alive with customers, with the bigger, fancier ones offering a café where the customers could peruse their prospective purchases with cups of over-priced coffee. So, what happened to these institutions? Did they start doing something wrong? Did their product go bad?

Let's consider the movie store. Why have they gone the way of the dinosaur? The issue is not that people have stopped watching movies. In fact, people probably spend more time watching movies now than ever before.

The difference is that the medium through which movies are watched has changed. People no longer need to drive to the video store to pick out a movie because most movies these days are streamed online. Movies aren't outdated, but the way we watch them has changed.

And the shopping mall? When malls came into being, they revolutionized shopping. Instead of having to go all over town, people were able to park in one parking lot and get all of their shopping done at once. This made malls especially advantageous at Christmastime. And beyond the shopping, it was a perfect spot for teens: out of the seasonal heat or cold, with snacks, boutiques and a gameplex. What happened to the indestructible behemoth called the mall? Well, people found a shopping mall online with all they needed and didn't even have to leave their homes. The social patterns of teens and other age groups were no longer enough to support their existence. Shopping isn't outdated, but the way people do it has changed.

What might be the implications for the General Church in this online era that, it seems, isn't going away any time soon? Are there any implications? Will we, like the video store, mall and bookstore be forced to shut our physical

doors and adapt to the new online reality that exists in our world today? Are churches subject to the consumer climate change that has affected almost every other industry in the world? Maybe church is only subject to these changes to the extent that it is consumed instead of shared.

Let's get back to our main question: what's the real problem? In the case of video stores, they died out because their purpose was short-sighted and narrow: people wanted more movies and wanted them more efficiently, but the store was only focused on the physical tapes. Yes, they were able to accommodate the arrival of the DVD, but they were not at all prepared for the streaming revolution.

I do believe we need to start by asking the right questions. What is our driving purpose as a church; and from that purpose, what do we offer society? Is our product a physical church service, a specific understanding of three dozen books, or a sense of community? Whatever it is that we are offering people, do they still want it? Or maybe they want the essence of what we offer but not the package it comes in. Is our product more than a proverbial VHS or DVD?

I am not advocating for church to go fully virtual, much less be fully cancelled. I am simply positing that if we are offering a product to be consumed, that we offer it in a way that people want to consume it. This reminds me of a saying that I have modified for this topic: "If sheep don't eat it, it ain't sheep food."

As an organization, what can our church offer that is in line with our purpose and also appeals to the people of the culture in which we live? Can we stay true to our ideals as we ask: What changes can we make to serve people better?

What do I want you to take away from this article?

1. I hope you will really consider if we as a church should be expecting people of our culture to return to us as *we are*, or if should we be accommodating within the boundaries of our ideals to meet them where *they are*.
2. If we ought to be accommodating, the next consideration is whether we are doing enough. Is tweaking our service of worship, updating our

What is our driving purpose as a church; and from that purpose, what do we offer society? Is our product a physical church service, a specific understanding of three dozen books, or a sense of community?

songbook, and even streaming our services sufficient, or do we need to think bigger?

In the next article, I again hope to include some feedback from young adults whom I am blessed to serve, and with that feedback, some ideas that will not ask us to abandon the people we are currently serving, but that will also ask us to think outside of our current box. I welcome your thoughts and feedback. Please email me: Jeffrey.Smith@newchurch.org



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Finding the New Jerusalem: The Story of John Clowes

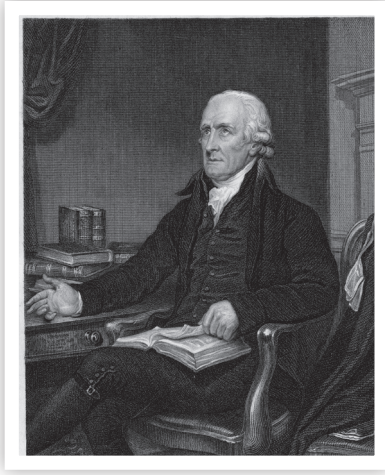
Howard Roth
(Edited by Marvin B. Clymer)

Continuing the series begun in the May/June issue of *New Church Life*, we turn our attention to the Rev. John Clowes, a well-known Church of England preacher who found the New Church in a miraculous fashion through a friend of the Rev. Thomas Hartley, the primary subject of the last article. The long, distinguished career of Rev. Clowes earned him a prominent position in the early history of the church and produced countless articles in New Church journals, plus several books, including his own memoir. So, the biggest challenge was to narrow the subject down to a manageable size for this journal.

The best option in my mind is to reprint *The Story of John Clowes* by Howard Roth from the November 1995 issue of *New Church Life* and add some excerpts from *John Clowes* by the Rev. Dennis Duckworth, printed in the October 1981 issue (sections marked with italics).

This paper is about the life of John Clowes (pronounced Clooz), born in Manchester, England, October 31, 1743¹, a man who, in my humble estimation, played a pivotal role in the history of the New Church. As an instrument in the Lord's hands, he helped create and establish a solid base of devoted believers in the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg. His life's endeavors in bringing the Writings to the English-speaking world are a story that bears retelling to every new generation of New Churchmen! My personal affections have been strongly moved by the exquisite and animated presentation skills he possessed.

1 The year when Swedenborg received his Divine commission.



He made the Writings easily understood, comprehensible and loved. He was truly a great teacher!

John Clowes was the second son of Joseph Clowes, a provincial barrister. John's mother was the daughter of the Rector of "Llanbedar" in North Wales; his surname was "Edwards." He was a pious and learned man, transmitting these virtues to his daughter, John's mother. She, in turn, was assiduous in the upbringing of her children. They practiced the habit of private devotion, and regularly attended public worship. Sadly, she died when John was seven

years old.

John's father was a religious man. He attended church regularly with his family. He would assemble them every Sunday evening to hear a sermon and join in private devotions. Joseph Clowes was firm and a man of methodical habits, requiring steadfast obedience from his sons.

Another important influence on Clowes was his schooling. John attended Salford Grammar School, gaining a competent knowledge of the classical languages Latin and Greek. He was then sent to Cambridge and later was admitted as a pensioner of Trinity College. John Law (who would later become Bishop of Elphen) and Allott, Dean of Raphoe, were among his friends at college. These prominent men would later play important roles in Clowes' life.

Noted for his mathematical achievements, Clowes earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in January 1766, and earned a subsequent election to a fellowship of Trinity College in recognition of his classical scholarship.

In 1769 Clowes was ordained into the ministry of the Anglican Church by Dr. Terrick, Bishop of London. A church building and parish of St. John's (Manchester) were offered to Clowes by its founder, Edward Byrom, an old and dear friend of John's father. It was here that he began his ministry in which he would remain for nearly 62 years, practicing habits of temperance and punctuality he obtained from his mother. (They would be essential to his advancement in the world.)

Clowes became noted among his clerical brethren for his sentiments on the subject of the trinity. He renewed his intercourse with John Law, then Bishop of London and a suspected skeptic of the trinity. Law would write to him: "Clowes, I would give all I possess to believe in the Divinity of Christ, as you do."

In later years Clowes would recall events at Cambridge – as the time he

was "made sensible that the love of science prevailed in his mind over the love of fame," and that the "delights of friendship were far sweeter than the credit of great connections." He would later tell of one particular day when he was powerfully struck with the sentiment that these two gifts – the love of science and the delights of friendship – were imparted from above, and he was compelled to fall down on his knees before the Lord "in the devout adoration of his Divine bounty." Clowes later wrote how he communicated his love of knowledge to children by opening to their view the "new world of wonder which knowledge discovers."

Clowes wrote of an impression he would never forget – the occasion when an internal dictate said to him: "Thou dost well to wonder and adore;

but wait patiently and thou shalt see greater things than these." What the greater things were was not made known to him until he began, several years afterward, to apply his mind more earnestly to the "contemplation and pursuit of religious knowledge."

His theological research and religious views were very limited, by his own estimation. He read the "Thirty-nine Articles" which form the code of the doctrine particular to the Church of England, but "this was all." He wrote that he had no clear nor distinct views of eternal truth (which he would later write of) in his own mind, and that his ideas on the subject were those of others rather than his own.

In the spring of 1773, in an event that would forever change his life, Clowes was introduced to a Mr. Houghton, an ardent reader of Swedenborg's Writings [and a friend of the Rev. Thomas Hartley – subject of the previous article]². Houghton was a close friend of John Wesley, who shortly after Swedenborg's death declared in a most solemn manner: "We might burn all the old books of theology, for God has sent a teacher from heaven," and "in the Writings of

John Wesley, shortly after Swedenborg's death, declared in a most solemn manner: "We might burn all the old books of theology, for God has sent a teacher from heaven," and "in the Writings of Swedenborg we might learn all that is necessary for us to know!"

Swedenborg we might learn all that is necessary for us to know!"

Impressed by these comments, Clowes agreed to Houghton's recommendation to read Swedenborg's *Vera Christiana Religio* (*True Christian Religion*). The book was ordered from London and arrived 10 days later. By that time, Clowes later admitted in recounting the story, his inclination to read it was gone! In fact, the book was left on a shelf all summer, neglected and almost forgotten.

In October of that same year, Clowes made his customary annual trip to County York to visit a former college pupil, the Honorable John Smyth of Heath. The evening before he set out on his visit, he took the then dusty book off his shelf, not with the intent to read it, but merely to get a better idea of its contents. As he turned over the book's pages, the term "Divine Human" caught his eye. This term was unfamiliar to Clowes' scholarly eye. Still, it did not affect his mind in a manner to produce any lasting impression. On closing the book, it seemed to be forgotten and gone.

Awakening early one morning a few days following his arrival at Smyth's home, Clowes found his mind being powerfully drawn into a state of "inward recollection accompanied with a state of inexpressible calm and composure never before experienced." Suddenly it was made manifest to him what he could call by no other name but that the "peaceful state was in close connection with the 'Divine Humanity,' a strong persuasion that this was no other than the Divine Humanity of Jesus Christ!" Recollections of this experience would follow him throughout the day, whether alone or with company. The next morning the same experience occurred, but, according to Clowes' reports, "with increased splendor!"

Clowes soon felt an irresistible desire to return home – immediately – to reexamine the neglected volume he had left behind. So powerful was this desire that he terminated his visit a week early and hastened back to Manchester.

Upon alighting at his father's house, Clowes sought the much-desired volume. Pressing it to his chest with an ardor of piety, he dedicated every morning thereafter, until completion, to the attentive study of *Vera Christiana Religio*! He wrote that there were "no words to express the effect wrought in the mind by its perusal."

Clowes' mind was truly changed. He was then convinced, beyond all doubt, that what was happening to him was of the "Divine Presence and operation of the Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ in His Divine Humanity . . . inclining and preparing me to receive and bear testimony to the second glorious advent of God." He soon devoured other books of the Writings: *Heaven and Hell*, *Arcana Coelestia*, *Apocalypse Revealed*, *The Divine Love and Wisdom*, *Divine Providence* and *Conjugal Love*.

It's important to consider that the Writings at this time were in their

original language – Latin – and that no society of people or church professing these doctrines existed anywhere in the world.

That such a church would eventually be manifested, Clowes was "most entirely convinced."

John Clowes was not a man to confine any good to himself. Soon he was expounding the teachings of the Writings from the pulpit of the Church of England, and rapidly drawing increased attention to his ministry. To relieve his conscience from the uneasy feelings he was experiencing by appearing in ministerial robes and preaching this profound doctrine without acknowledging his source, Clowes boldly declared Swedenborg as his author. This courageous and, for the times, indiscreet behavior raised the anger of the neighboring clergy and then their jealousy, as the simple-hearted poor began to flock in crowds to his ministry.

Private applications were made to Clowes for further information respecting the New Jerusalem, which he satisfied by opening the doors of his own home two evenings a week, giving extemporaneous lectures on various theological subjects. At the same time, societies were being formed in neighboring towns and villages for the "mutual edification of the Heavenly Doctrines," and Clowes was asked to attend their meetings. What was first perceived as a duty soon became a delight. Clowes later recounted that some of the happiest hours of his life were passed on these occasions.

The pulpit, however, was not sufficient to satisfy his ardent desire to make known the Heavenly Intelligence he felt called to communicate. Clowes believed that many minds were fainting for want of more substantial nourishment than the popular theologies of the time were able to furnish. The sheer number of these people was beyond the reach of his voice. To reach them, the Latin Writings of Swedenborg had to be translated into English.

At this point, Clowes began a communication with the Rev. Thomas Hartley (whom he met through Houghton), proposing that they jointly translate *Vera Christiana Religio* (*True Christian Religion*).

It was soon determined that this would be a disjointed affair. It was

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Clowes' zeal for the propagation of what he held to be the truth, and the growing crowds of inquirers from neighboring parishes, soon brought upon him serious opposition, a cross he would have to bear.

finally arranged that Clowes should undertake the whole work, which in spite of all his other clerical duties he completed in two years.

Clowes saw Hartley but once in London and proposed to his more experienced friend this puzzling dilemma: how far could he, Clowes, conscientiously remain a beneficed clergyman of an establishment whose avowed tenets were apparently at variance with the New Doctrines. Hartley urged Clowes to remain in the duty of the occupation Providence had marked for him as a priest in the Church of England, enduring the cross that would be put upon him over promoting the New Doctrines.

Hartley believed this path would better serve Clowes' purification and usefulness as a pastor than resigning from the church and seeking change from outside the organization. He recommended that Clowes eschew the excitement of self-sought martyrdom and its "insidious sense of merit." Clowes acted on his colleague's temperate advice and stayed with the Church of England. He would remain a non-separatist his entire life.

Clowes' zeal for the propagation of what he held to be the truth, and the growing crowds of inquirers from neighboring parishes, soon brought upon him serious opposition, a cross he would have to bear. Three clergymen in particular took on Clowes. Initially, they held weekly meetings for the purpose of crushing "the growing heresy" in its infancy. Pamphlets were issued with false charges against him. These were at once replied to and rendered harmless.

The opposition then took on a more serious form of persecution in a direct appeal to the Bishop of the Diocese (later of London), the celebrated Dr. Porteus. The complaint to the Bishop was accompanied by a hint that Porteus had neglected his duty in having passed no censure on Clowes at the preceding visitation.

The Bishop wrote to Clowes at once, requesting an interview. Clowes immediately responded and repaired to the palace at Chester.

Four distinct charges were brought against Clowes:

1. That Clowes denied the Trinity
2. That Clowes denied the Atonement

3. That Clowes went about the country endeavoring to propagate the New Doctrines
4. That Clowes held private meetings in his own house for the same purpose

The Bishop, in receiving Clowes, invited him to defend against the charges with a full explanation. Hours later, Clowes emerged from the meeting. The Bishop had responded to each answer, saying: "I have no differences with your opinions since they mirror my own. You are vindicated." He dismissed Clowes but cautioned him to be prudent and circumspect in his conduct. It was plain that Clowes had enemies on the watch, looking to find any cause of complaint.

Their accusations dismissed, Clowes' accusers never gave him further trouble. A few months later the three clergymen who had taken a leading part in the persecution were gone; two had died and the third left the neighborhood. Clowes wrote in his autobiography that during the persecution he was made sensible of Divine protection. The tranquility and composure in which he believed his mind was preserved was proof to Clowes that he had experienced a degree of the blessing announced in these words of the eternal truth: "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake."

When he was church rector, one of Clowes' bitterest persecutors was his own curate. His bitterness was probably increased by a debt of 100 pounds, which Clowes, among other kindnesses, had lent him on his note of hand. The story goes that soon after the curate failed in his attempt to bring his rector, Clowes, under ecclesiastical censure, Clowes sent for him. Producing the note of hand in his possession, Clowes informed the curate he was determined the affair should be settled that day, at which time he tore the note into pieces.

"Now," said Clowes, "our affairs are settled!" The curate continued in his post and continued with his open resentments against Clowes and the New Doctrines. Shortly thereafter, the curate was taken ill and died a few days later! (It is not the intent or purpose of this paper to sensationalize these amazing events, but rather to record them for your edification.)

In addition to his many pastoral duties and services of worship, Clowes conducted services of worship in his home two evenings each week. He made periodic visits to the country societies around Manchester as well. He would ride in the early morning to some manufacturing village where a society had been formed and where most of the members worked.

Upon his arrival at a factory, a bell would ring and the members could leave work and assemble in a large room allowed by the proprietors for the purpose of gathering, the proprietors being happy to welcome a minister whose adherents were the most orderly of those in their employ. There men and women, with features hardened by difficult work and living conditions, would listen intently. Their faces would soften, with tears of tenderness and joy

Men and women, with features hardened by difficult work and living conditions, would listen intently. Their faces would soften, with tears of tenderness and joy running down their cheeks.

running down their cheeks. They were eager to know the measure of their duty and how to practice it. It was reported that "Mr. Clowes would hold forth in such animated strains that his own fine countenance seemed at last radiant, even to glistening with the light of heaven beaming from it."

Clowes' missionary visits were not confined to the neighborhood of Manchester. Societies for reading the New Theology were formed in London, Bath, Bristol, Stroud, Birmingham, Liverpool, Hull and elsewhere. But Clowes was a man of intense energy and productivity. In addition to

time-consuming activities of extensive travel, he continued the immense concentration and labor involved in translating and managed to render all but two volumes of the Writings from Latin to English.

He was a prodigious writer, producing 29 books in addition to the countless number of sermons he composed.

So vast were the undertakings which occupied his time that Clowes feared he might resign his care for souls. All this labor, he feared, was more than he could bear. While pondering the subject one morning, he sensed the presence of an angelic society from which seemed to come an internal communication: "Do not do it; we will help you!" From that time on, he declared, his sermons gave him no trouble.

Hawkstone-under-Redcastle, Shropshire, [in England] was the seat and estate of the ancient royalist family of Rowland Hill. (Hawkstone Park and the village of Weston lie on the A-49 between Shrewsbury and Whitchurch.) The Hawkstone Meetings (1806-1824 and 1832-1865) formed a kind of sabbatical and conference for the New Church non-separatists. John Clowes was the great inspirer of these midsummer meetings lasting two or three weeks, an inspiration which continued long after his death in 1831.

The old English parkland was glorious, the Hawkstone Inn was celebrated for its hospitality, the assembled company of ladies and gentlemen was most congenial, and the chosen themes for contemplation and discussion (such as, redemption, Sacred Scripture, the Divine trinity, atonement, charity, faith and good works) were vital and rewarding. The Hawkstone Reports are preserved entire and are a witness to the value and graciousness of these annual assemblies.

The sheer excellence of Hawkstone attracted many visitors to the meetings

– even eminent separatists such as Joseph Proud and Samuel Noble; apparently without any loss of cordiality and friendly regard on either side. Here then was a pre-Victorian and early-Victorian event with a modern ring about it – a summer school, retreat, or seminar, not dissimilar in aim and character from the equivalents of our own times. So moved by the whole experience was Joseph Whittingham Salmon that in 1817 he composed and published a long lyrical poem in the manner of Wordsworth: "On the Beauties of Hawkstone Park. A poem in celebration of the annual New Church meetings held in this place."³

The Rev. John Clowes served the Lord in 58 years of concentrated and dedicated service. He never married. He was the ultimate missionary and preacher, and his unwavering zeal in spreading the Heavenly Doctrines has filled me with awe when I consider all that he was able to accomplish. [He was 88 years old when he died on May 28, 1831.]

Clowes remained a "non-separatist" to the end. He affected the lives of countless people. From his hard work and devotion arose the beginnings of the New Church organization as we know it. At an April 19, 1787, meeting, a group of New Churchmen proposed to establish a distinct place of worship with forms of prayers and preaching more in harmony with the New Doctrines than those in the established church and the various "dissenting chapels." Among the first group were two famous names, Noble and Hindmarsh, both early parishioners of Rev. John Clowes.

John Clowes was offered a bishopric⁴ by William Pitt, but declined to accept it, preferring simply to keep his Manchester pastorate. His influence in that city and throughout the whole of the North of England increased as the years passed by, and he was loved and revered as a holy man of God. He never married. He loved music, and he loved little children. He was fond of a game of chess. His health – always indifferent – deteriorated as he grew older. He had a droll humor and was a very pleasant and entertaining companion.

He saw the Lord's New Church as a great spiritual movement, affecting all men, and bringing the blessings of truth, faith and peaceful love into the world. To him this was the true Christian religion – and who would dare to say that he was mistaken? He died on May 28, 1831, and his body was laid in the churchyard at St. John's.

A memorial tablet placed in the church contains a fine eulogy, from which the following words are taken: "As a learned scholar, a finished gentleman, a luminous writer, an impressive preacher, a vigilant pastor, a spiritual moralist, and a practical Christian Divine, he gave real evidence that 'Godliness hath the

(Clowes) saw the Lord's New Church as a great spiritual movement, affecting all men, and bringing the blessings of truth, faith and peaceful love into the world. To him this was the true Christian religion.

promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."⁵

Notes

The portrait of Rev. Clowes was printed in *A Memoir of the Late Rev. John Clowes*. London. 1849.

For more stories about early champions of the New Church, explore the New Church Digital Collections at www.swedenborglibrary.org/digital and select: *Archives*> *New Church History*> *Early New Church People*> *In America or In England*.

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3. *The Life and Correspondence of Rev. John Clowes, M.A.* Theodore Compton. London. 1874.
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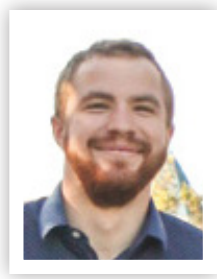
Marvin B. Clymer is the Digital Collections Supervisor the Swedenborg Library at Bryn Athyn College. He and his wife, Wendy (Twining) live in Willow Grove, Pennsylvania. Contact: Marvin.Clymer@brynathyn.edu.

5 *John Clowes* by Rev. Dennis Duckworth in the October 1981 issue of *New Church Life*, page 536.

Statement of Faith and Declaration of Purpose

The Rev. Justin E. Schorran

I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and that He is the God of heaven and earth. I believe that His will is for us to be in heaven with Him to eternity. I believe that the Lord has revealed Himself in the Old Testament, the New Testament, and in the Heavenly Doctrine of the New Jerusalem.



I believe that a person ought to believe in the Lord, which is done by believing and living by what the threefold Word teaches.

I believe that all religion has to do with the way we live and conduct ourselves and that the life of religion is to do good. I believe that shunning evils is the Christian religion itself. I believe that by living the life of religion, we are both loving the Lord and our fellow neighbor.

I believe that the function of the priesthood is to teach all people the way to heaven and to help lead them there.

I believe in Conjugal Love, and I believe that the conjugal union of one man with one wife is the precious jewel of human life and the repository of the Christian religion.

In presenting myself as a priest, my prayer and hope is that the Lord gives me the strength and courage to perform the duties of the priesthood, which is to teach the truths that lead to the good of life. This is important work, and I hope to be held accountable for this by the priesthood and the laity if I ever happen to lose sight of this.

Church News

Compiled by Bruce Henderson

GENERAL CHURCH NEWS

The Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr.

(Compiled from an email sent From the Bishop's Office on August 4, 2021, to General Church members. Publishing this information preserves it in the historical record.)

General Church Retreat

The General Church Retreat planned for 2020 had to be canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We have been working ever since toward a rescheduled session and I am committed to a Retreat and look forward to the time when it can happen. Our current trajectory is toward June of 2023.

A number of factors went into the decision not to plan a Retreat for June 2022. One is the availability of venues, noting that Glencairn Museum and the Mitchell Performing Arts Center would not be available. We also had a wrinkle in the children's program, with some of the partners who had offered to help in 2020 not able to do so in 2022. There are also lingering concerns about international travel, vaccine availability, and a world not quite back to normal. The prudent decision is to give ourselves more time. We will continue our planning and look forward to announcing a rescheduled Retreat.

New Priestly Leadership Positions

The Rev. Martin Gyamfi has the honor of being our first full-time Regional Pastor within the General Church. He has served as pastor in Asakraka, Ghana, and has tried with limited time to coordinate with pastors throughout the West Africa subregion. He has handed off his pastoral role to allow for most of his time to go toward supervising and supporting other pastors.

The Rev. Erik Buss has assumed the role of National Pastor for the United Kingdom. He, with the **Rev. Grant Odhner**, are trying a new country-wide approach. They will work with the membership in the UK to coordinate

national plans for worship and engagement.

The Rev. Jean Atta has assumed the role of Secretary for the Council of the Clergy. This position is nominated by the Bishop's Office and affirmed by the Council. He will help to coordinate clergy meetings and act as a voice of the Council of the Clergy as specified in our governing documents.

New Positions Within the General Church Central Offices

We have welcomed several new people to our staff – some are new and some in expanded positions. Each is related to our core strategies of communicating a shared vision and improving our organizational strategies.

Freya S. Williams has assumed dual part-time roles of Engagement Coordinator, working on membership processes for the General Church, and Assistant Program Manager in Outreach.

Janet C. Lockard has accepted an expanded portfolio to include Donor Relations management in addition to her work with General Church Education. She replaces **Tara Fehon** who retired from her position in Advancement as of June 30.

Marijke Bau-Madsen has been hired as our new Communications Director. This is a major step forward in our strategy of sharing a vision with the Church from the Bishop's Office, and more effectively coordinating our many communications.

Liliya Titus has joined the General Church Administration as Assistant Controller, replacing **Barbara Bevan**, who recently retired. Liliya has worked in various financial capacities with the General Church and the Academy of the New Church.

Sarah Grubb has expanded her role within the Human Resources Department. As a full-time HR assistant, she will help with payroll and benefits as needed, as well as providing IT support to the department.

The Rev. Pearse Frazier has relocated to Bryn Athyn as full-time Assistant Outreach Director. His function is to coordinate the Grand Human Project and oversee content development.

The Rev. Nathan Gladish, who recently retired as pastor in Tucson, Arizona, has a new part-time role with the Office of Outreach to help expand the value of the Grand Human Project by recruiting small group leaders, training, mentoring and supporting them so that they can launch their own small groups in person, online or hybrid. These small groups can significantly support building a sense of community among people with a common interest in Swedenborg and the New Church. He is also the acting pastor of the New Church of Boston, Massachusetts.

GENERAL CHURCH BOARD OF DIRECTORS

(Highlights from June 25-26 meetings)

President's Report: Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr.

Bishop Buss is working with the new Bishop's Council on how best to receive ongoing input and feedback from the laity of the church.

He presented Organizational Objectives for the new fiscal year aimed to align with our vision of engaging and serving more people through:

- inspiring and accessible worship activities
 - opportunities for learning and exploring together
 - activities that express the New Church faith in actions that serve
-
- Strategic Objectives
 - Vision Casting
 - Organizational Improvements
 - Employee Development
 - Mission Offerings
 - Theological Resources – focused on providing for the worship of the Lord
 - Non-worship services and products including our core programs.
 - New Church Education
 - Outreach
 - Healthy Congregations
 - Governance

The board voted to affirm the Organizational Objectives.

General Church Education

Board member **Charlotte Gyllenhaal** and **Bishop Bradley Heinrichs** gave an update, including:

- Succession planning within GCED
- New educational materials being made available via the internet
- Support of New Church schools

Outreach

The Rev. Pearse Frazier provided an update about Outreach's two-step process of scattering seeds: sharing the Lord's Church with new people; and gathering the harvest or inviting people into spiritual communities. Efforts include:

- Online marketing efforts on newchurch.org, videos on YouTube, and social media
- Grand Human Project (GHP) building new programs and emphasizing existing programs that may be of special interest to newcomers

Theological School

Dean Andrew Dibb reported that one student graduated and was ordained. Seven students are expected for the 2021-22 school year, three of whom are scheduled to graduate next spring.

An accredited Certificate Program is under review, aimed at distant learning.

Assistant Bishops Update

David Lindrooth and Bradley Heinrichs

Bishop Heinrichs reported on the visiting minister program which is resuming in-person visits. Atlanta and Boston will receive services from pastors living remotely and traveling to their congregations.

Bishop Lindrooth reported that he is working on strengthening the regional pastor system and is aiming to support congregational strategic plans in coordination with General Church plans.

Executive Director

David Frazier

Actual financial results for the nine-month period ended March 31 showed revenue at \$4.4 million, and expenses at \$3.6 million, with an operating surplus of about \$651,000.

He reported on a draft document aimed at strengthening the relationship of the General Church and the local church groups (Statement of Relationship).

The aim is to bring definition and certainty to the relationship – a formal understanding for what has been an informal means of operating until now. It is anticipated this process will take time to listen and strengthen the relationship, with both parties consenting in freedom.

Human Resources

Jamie Uber reported that the Retirement Plans Administrative Committee recommended approval of an amendment to the frozen pension plan allowing employees to draw pension at age 64 and continue full-time work with the General Church and the Academy of the New Church.

Investment

Jesse Cole reported that the General Church is fortunate to have a healthy endowment and has benefitted from continued strong market and portfolio performance.

Advancement

Amy Buick and **Mark Wyncoll** reported that fiscal year-to-date giving numbers were up 67 compared to the prior year for number of donors, number of gifts up 55, and the Annual Fund up \$326,000.

Membership Committee

Ian Carswell reported that a Women's Focus subgroup of the Membership Committee is improving online engagement through the Grand Human Project.

OUTREACH: GRAND HUMAN PROJECT

(Highlights from a June 25 committee meeting)

The Rt. Rev. David Lindrooth noted that since we receive spiritual teachings by transmission, and through one another, we have a duty to share the church's teachings to the world. We must resist the tendency to focus inward. We become healthier as a church and community by looking outward, connecting with those around us and sharing truths.

The Rev. Pearse Frazier is now in Bryn Athyn, working with **Bergen Jungé** to head the Grand Human Project (GHP). **Charles Ebert**, head of the Outreach Committee, has been working with the board to shape the charge of the committee, emphasizing that its primary work is to support the work of Outreach.

Pearse reported that the GHP is building databases of potential group leaders to be drawn from those already affirmative to the New Church, and that we can ask new people to invite friends and to take leadership roles. Bergen said the focus on recruiting leaders is based on a well-researched growth model of members going on to launch their own groups.

The Rev. Chuck Blair suggested we're in the middle of a sea change and that the future of church is moving toward engagement over information. NewChurch LIVE is now 90% online. We need a wider embrace and to let go of "border-control Christianity." New groups are a funnel for engagement and growth.

Pearse reported that the response to "Big Spiritual Questions" has been tremendous, which together with newchurch.org, has been good for initial contact with new people. We are looking at ways to bring people into deeper engagement with the life of the church. A large part of GHP involves connecting

with local congregations. We've been building a platform for people to connect with others from various regions. Experience with the pandemic has shown that online groups are viable; we want to continue with these as well as in-person groups. We need to train, encourage and empower leaders to build these groups.

The Rev. Mac Frazier supports this approach and said it will take self-control and courage to “push leadership out to the periphery.” He emphasized that we are not trying to “be the New Church” so much as trying to “mid-wife” its growth.

Pearse said certain rites and sacraments will remain but that our goal is to get the doctrines out there and inspire people to take ownership of the teachings from the Word. He asked members of the committee to be ambassadors for the vision.

Chuck Blair observed that people will benefit if we build on core messages, such as eternal marriage and a loving God.

Children in Crisis

Kay Alden reported that since many teens at the orphanage in Kenya were confined to a small space during the pandemic, some asked if they could stay with relatives. Sadly, some of them were used and abused, treated like slaves or even kidnapped, but the kidnapped child was rescued. Ongoing measures are needed to care for children who have endured trauma.

David Frazier observed that with all that is going on it is providential that we have so many great outcomes at HCIC, with many children now in stable environments. He said the Grand Human Project is a positive effort. We haven't got it all figured out yet “but let's continue to focus on positive outcomes, do the best we can, and trust that the Lord's Divine Providence is leading us toward a better future.”

COMMUNICATION

Marijke Bau-Madsen has been named the new Communications Director for the General Church. She comes to the position from Mighty Writers, a children's literacy nonprofit organization. She began her work with the church on August 9.

Marijke is a 2011 honors graduate of the Academy Girls School and was a Theta Alpha Award winner. She also received a Bachelor of Arts degree *cum laude* from Bryn Athyn College in 2015 and a Master of Liberal Arts from the University of Pennsylvania with a focus on social science and philosophy.

Marijke will work with all departments in the General Church Central Offices to improve and structure all communication efforts and strategy – both incoming and outgoing.

She lives in Philadelphia.

BRYN ATHYN COLLEGE 2021-22

Staffing

Dr. Ryan Pine is a new English and Communications teacher. **Melissa Gamba** is the new Director of Human Resources. **Dr. Wendy Closterman** stepped down as Dean of Academics (2018-2021) and Dean of Faculty (2014-2021) to focus on teaching. **Dr. Jonathan Kline** is the new Dean of Academics and **Dr. Marcy Latta** is Dean of Faculty. **The Rev. Coleman Glenn** steps into the role of Head Chaplain, succeeding the **Rev. Grant Schnarr**, who is now Assistant Chaplain and Chair Elect of the Faculty Council.

Programs

There are three new Graduate Certificates available through the MARS program (brynathyn.edu/mars). Bryn Athyn College has a new Educational Partnership Agreement with Duquesne University.

There is more information about this partnership and other news from the College in the news section of the website: (<https://brynathyn.edu/news/educational-partnership-agreement-between-bryn-athyn-college-and-duquesne-university.html>).

Enrollment

William Larrousse, Vice President of Enrollment, said the College was optimistic about fall enrollment. As of late summer, when numbers were still being finalized, the entering class was expected to be about 40% higher than last year – “a nice recovery from an enrollment greatly affected by the height of the pandemic.”

ACADEMY SECONDARY SCHOOLS 2021-22

James M. Adams - Managing Director
Kira R. Schadegg - Girls School Principal
Jeremy T. Irwin - Boys School Principal

Enrollment Projections for the 2021-2022 School Year:

<u>Girls School</u>		<u>Boys School</u>	
Seniors	16	Seniors	27
Juniors	26	Juniors	46
Sophomores	23	Sophomores	37
Freshmen	20	Freshmen	23
Total	85	Total	133
Dorm	11	Dorm	33
Day	74	Day	100
Total projected enrollment: 218			

New Changes for the Coming School Year:

- Regarding COVID-19, we expect all programs to resume operating as they were pre-pandemic. Masking indoors will be likely.
- Latin remains one of the three language options at ANC but is no longer required of freshmen. Starting in their freshman year, all students are able to take Latin, Spanish or French.
- We extended our orientation process at the beginning of the year to help students more effectively acclimate and adjust to ANC so they can maximize opportunities to be successful.
- Video production has been added as a junior elective.

Faculty/Staff changes in the Girls School:

While the Girls School is not welcoming any new teachers, several teachers are moving to new disciplines this coming year. **Martha Odhner** has moved from Honors Chemistry to take on PreCalculus. **Michaela Boyesen** takes on Honors Statistics and Assistant Housemother for Glenn Hall. **Cheryl Cooper** has taken on a newly created role as assistant Delta Mu Advisor. **Mary Williams** takes on the Theta Alpha liaison role vacated by Cheryl Cooper. **Nicole Smith** is the head girls tennis coach. We are still looking for an assistant tennis coach to replace **Bonnie Hodgell** who has stepped down after countless years in that role.

Faculty Changes in the Boys School:

We wish **Jeremy Fehon** (IPS, Mathematics) well as he has moved on to pursue other opportunities. We welcomed **Edwin Glenn** (IPS, Honors Chemistry). Notable changes in roles: **Erik Odhner** has taken on Latin 3-4. **Cory Boyce** is reducing time, limiting his role to teaching Senior Project. **Ben Cole** has taken on a section of Spanish. **Dylan Glenn** moved from Precalculus to take on Honors Calculus and Algebra 2.

Changes in Admissions

We wish **Denise DiFiglia** well as she moves on to pursue other opportunities. We are happy to announce that **Jennifer Allen** has accepted the newly formed position of Director of Enrollment. She will work with administration to reorganize, update and streamline the Admissions Office.

We anticipate hiring several part-time Admissions Associates to ensure the efficiency and efficacy of attracting, enrolling and retaining “good fit” students for ANC.

Summer Renovations

Thanks to generous donations from the Glencairn Foundation and private donors we are in the process of designing and obtaining permits to construct a recording studio on the first floor of Benade Hall. This studio will be used to record our new online religion classes and other classes that we will be working on developing in the future. It will be used by faculty, staff and students for various recording projects and for our video production class.

Also thanks to generous donations we are upgrading our security cameras campus wide.

ANC Summer Programs

Due to the pandemic we had to cancel our two overnight camps – ANC Summer Camp and Tools4Life. We were able to hold our Performing Arts Camp. (See below)

We are looking forward to offering all of our camps next summer.

CHARTER DAY

Charter Day was all but wiped out by the COVID-19 pandemic last year, save for the Cathedral service, the golf outing fund raiser and some athletic contests. This year's schedule is a little more back to normal, although there will be no banquet or mix-and-mingle event.

The Charter Day weekend begins Thursday, October 7. The golf outing will be one week later, Monday, October 18, at Huntingdon Valley Country Club.

The procession and Cathedral service will take place on Friday, October 8, led by the **Rt. Rev. David H. Lindrooth**.

Since there were no class reunions last year, alumni of class years ending in 0 or 1 will be having reunions.

Watch for a report in the November/December issue of *New Church Life*.

CLERGY MEETINGS

COVID restrictions have affected the usual churchwide clergy meetings in Bryn Athyn. Two sets of meetings for North America were scheduled – one August 17-19 and September 21-23.

Bishops Peter M. Buss Jr. and **Bradley D. Heinrichs** are scheduled to meet with European clergy in Stockholm, Sweden, October 25-28. Meetings in Africa and Asia are in planning stages.

JACOB'S CREEK FAMILY RETREAT

The Jacob's Creek Family Retreat took place July 25-28 in the mountains of western Pennsylvania near Mt. Pleasant. There were 88 people attending (51 adults and 37 children), ranging in age from nine months to 92 years. The theme of the camp was the Ten Blessings from the Sermon on the Mount. Attendees felt particularly blessed to be able to gather in person after being canceled last year by the pandemic.

Next year's retreat will be July 24-27, 2022, and will be limited to 175-180 people. Look for an email next February to sign up early.

Each morning began with worship after breakfast, then a class by one of the staff ministers – the **Rev. Matthew Genzlinger** (head pastor), the **Rev. Brett Buick** (Kempton pastor), and the **Rev. Glenn (Mac) Frazier** (Washington pastor). The children attended morning classes run by volunteers. Children then enjoyed another activity led by volunteers while the morning lecture was repeated for the adults who taught the children's classes. After lunch there was free time, including a new swimming pool, tennis, shuffleboard and mini golf.

On Monday afternoon, the **Rev. Stephen Cole** gave an elective presentation on Uses, and on Tuesday afternoon theological student **Calvin Heinrichs** offered an elective on Charity. Following dinner and worship each evening there was a camp-wide activity, including a welcome event, scavenger hunt and talent show. As part of evening worship, one of the young adults attending this year had her confirmation. We also celebrated the Holy Supper.

The retreat began on Sunday with dinner and an evening worship service on Sunset Hill and concluded on Wednesday with a closing worship on the ballfield before everyone headed home after lunch.

Life Lines

Bruce M. Henderson and the Rev. Jeremy F. Simons

THE MARRIAGE CHURCH

Part of the dream and vision of many New Church men, women and clergy is that we should be known as The Marriage Church. It is a noble calling. Our teachings about marriage and conjugal love are among our most unique, distinctive, inviting and essential. They are never more needed than in this wayward culture, although it is heartening to see that the sanctity of marriage remains the ideal with many couples and still is upheld in wedding ceremonies throughout the world.

As New Church men and women we not only are called to teach and support the ideal but to model it. Fortunately, many people still identify with the aspiration of Elizabeth Barrett Browning: “I shall but love thee better after death.” When half of a loving couple dies there is often an instinctive belief that they will be together again in heaven – no matter what their faith teaches.

But there is also a growing, insidious doubt that traditional marriage is old-fashioned, replaced by “anything goes.” Pressure is mounting all around us against the ideal. But this isn’t new. Back in 1954, my father, the Rev. W. Cairns Henderson, wrote a series of editorials in *New Church Life on Crossroads of Faith*, including one on the importance of traditional marriage as the backbone of society and the very model of heaven. That editorial follows:

“It might not seem that marriage must inevitably represent a crucial situation in the life of faith. Yet reflection should show that it cannot be otherwise. Because the conjugal sphere is the very sphere itself of the Lord’s kingdom, the most deadly and persistent attacks of the hells upon the church are directed against it. When conjugal love is given in a marriage, it is as the successive rewards of victories in temptation combats against the evils which are opposed to it. There are undoubtedly marriages in which that love is not realized, although it will be by one or both of the partners after death. Many are still preparing for marriage. And for some the only marriages they would consider seem, in the Lord’s providence, to be denied on earth, or to be well nigh unattainable.

“Thus for every man and woman in the church a decision is inescapable. It is more likely to be made gradually, through a series of reactions and choices, than by facing one personal crisis; but it cannot be avoided, and once finally made its consequences are eternal. And it should be emphasized that the decision which has to be made is not about any particular marriage, but about marriage itself! In the case of the unmarried this is obvious. In other instances the Writings teach clearly that no inferences may be drawn for externals, since there are marriages in which conjugal love does not appear and yet is, and others in which it seems to be and yet is not. (See *Conjugal Love* 531)

“The decision, then, is as to marriage itself, and this apart from one’s state in or status as to marriage, though once made it will have a profound effect upon both. Essentially it is a decision with reference to the conjugal ideal presented in the Writings – a decision as to truth and as to values. Do we believe that men and women were created by the Lord to achieve their only true destiny in chaste, monogamous, eternal marriage? And if we can see this intellectually, do we or can we value it so highly that we are prepared to resist everything that is opposed to it? Do we want to appropriate that ideal and make it our own, or do we prefer to reject it in favor of something else?

“That is the decision that must be made: a decision of faith, if necessary quite apart from the experience of life; but a faith that is of the life and not merely intellectual. In making it both the men and women of the church indeed stand at the crossroads. And there are powerful influences ready to draw them into the wrong way!

“Although voices are raised in protest, the internal sphere of the world exerts tremendous pressure against the conjugal through a crazed eroticism that is everywhere only too apparent. But if men and women will use their freedom and rationality to withstand those pressures they will put themselves on the side of a greater power – the power of the angelic heavens, and the omnipotence of the Lord, whose Divine love is most fully satisfied in bestowing the gift of love truly conjugal.”

That is why we must be The Marriage Church.

(BMH)

O PRECIOUS SIGN

That vision of devoted couples loving each other even “better after death” cheers us all. We all know couples whom we love to picture reunited in heaven, after separation by death, with an eternity of love stretching before them. For people in Bryn Athyn – and many others who knew them – such a couple were Mace and Peb Adams.

That’s why tears were shed and angels rejoiced when Peb left this world



Mace and Peb Adams on their wedding day. Peb passed away one day after their 64th anniversary.

on July 13 at age 88 – seven years after Mace – to be with him again. You couldn’t think of one without the other.

An amazing part of their story is that neither was born, raised and educated in Bryn Athyn, but they became much-loved and devoted pillars of the church, the schools and the community.

Mace grew up in neighboring Lower Moreland and came to Bryn Athyn as a policeman after serving in the military police of the U. S. Air Force. One day he pulled over a young lady who caught his eye – not to give her a ticket but to ask her out on a date. That was Peb, of course. They were engaged five weeks later and shared almost 60 years devoted to their marriage, their

family and their adopted community.

They were embraced by that community – and no wonder. As the eventual chief of police Mace was a law-and-order man – but also the funniest man in town. He took his work seriously, keeping the community safe and young people – especially – out of trouble. Everyone loved him.

And everyone loved Peb. She was the long-time secretary of the Bryn Athyn pastor and editor of the weekly *Bryn Athyn Post* newsletter. She knew everything that was going on – and it all went on smoothly because of her caring attention to detail.

Separately and together they had a sense of purpose and service that guided their lives. They made a difference with a loving character that set the example for all of us – with laughter to lighten our load.

Mace and Peb – like so many other great couples we have known – together again. We can see the smiles, hear the laughter, see the glint in their eyes – loving each other even better after death, “not for time alone but to eternity.”

(BMH)

LOVE AND MERCY

In an article on page 372 – *What the Heavenly Doctrines Say About Sex and Gender* – the Rev. Christopher Barber reports on a professional development session he led last spring for the administration and faculty of the Academy Secondary Schools in Bryn Athyn. Surely we all need guidance from the Word and the Writings on these challenging topics, once virtually taboo but now

very much with us – including our students.

Administrators and teachers need to be prepared, informed and sensitive in dealing with these issues, guided first by teachings from the Lord. So do we all.

With increasing public acceptance of sexual identities lumped under LGBTQ+ a lot of difficult issues arise. Among the headings in Chris Barber's study, for instance, are: "One sex cannot by any measure be spiritually converted into being the other"; and "Physical disorders of a sexual nature are possible in the natural world, but these do not extend beyond the physical, and can be potentially repaired when the life of the body ends."

These teachings seem to fit with my simple layman's take – that the Lord loves everyone and is striving to raise all of us into heaven. That's our choice and opportunity. So it would seem that homosexuals, for instance, can get into heaven if they have led good lives. But since the model of heaven is the marriage of one man with one woman, it's hard to imagine there ever could be homosexuality in heaven. How that all works out I do not know. I'm just confident in the Lord's love and mercy.

Here is a relevant story from a General Church minister that may shed some light – and hope – on this issue:

"This goes back 30 years – back when gays stayed in the closet – and everyone involved is in the spiritual world now. A woman I knew had a gay, adult son who lived the lifestyle, got AIDS, and died. She was distraught and very embarrassed that he was gay – and even more so that it was AIDS that killed him. But she said that sometime after he had passed, her son came to her in a dream and told her that he was fine but that he wasn't going to be able to see her for a while because he had to work some things out.

"She knew that it was his sexuality and accompanying lifestyle that he was having to work out, and it wasn't a surprise that it was going to take what sounded to her like a great deal of time to get things straightened out. There was definitely work to be done. However, it gave her great peace that her son was able to see clearly now, and make the changes needed so he would make it to heaven. For me, it fit with what I knew of the doctrine: good people go to heaven. Despite the issues he must have had a good ruling love that was finally brought forth after death."

To some, this is probably reassuring. To others, maybe not so much. But however it works out in the spiritual world, the Lord is always working with what we love from His own love and mercy. We cannot ask for more – for ourselves and everyone else.

(BMH)

FOOLED BY SPECTRUM

Fooled by Spectrum is the title of a talk aired in May 2019 by Seth Godin on his “Akimbo” podcast. Godin says that in 1950 9% of American households had a TV, but by 1961 90% of them did. According to Godin, this changed the world. Conversely, a similar change that has been happening since the year 2000 is poised to change it back again.

The reference to “spectrum” is to the narrow range of the TV and radio dial that many of us grew up with. There were only a few channels on TV in the decades following its invention, and not that many more on the radio. The resulting scarcity of access to these attractive forms of communication meant that only the best and the brightest, and those with the broadest appeal, would be heard and seen. National brands, and national sources of top-quality news and entertainment, became more powerful than ever. Local brands, and items of interest to few, lost out – replaced by the national powers.

The lesson for religion, philosophy and social commentary was that the message and the appeal had to be tailored to the broadest market possible in order to compete. If it did not have mass appeal it would never be heard. The stiff competition for the scarce resources of spectrum, the narrow spectrum of broadcast channels, not to mention print publications, would choke out the message.

In the digital age, however, everything is changing. There is no longer a narrow spectrum. It has been replaced by almost unlimited access and opportunity. According to Godin this is having the effect of changing things back to being more like they used to be, before the dominance of the mass market.

Now, instead of needing a message with universal appeal, there is much more ability to target specific audiences. Those who want opera can find opera, those who want religion can find religion. The watchword now is less about mass marketing and more about finding what is called “the smallest viable audience.” That is, those people who are looking for precisely what you have to offer, yet numerous enough to be “viable” or able to sustain the programming.

Despite the existence of this new situation, according to Godin, we continue to be “fooled by spectrum” – thinking that we need to appeal to a mass undifferentiated audience through offerings that are universally pleasing. But the new reality is that if the message is authentic and well-presented it will attract whoever is looking for exactly that message. They will be able to find it. We aren’t living in the 1960s anymore.

This is the strategy, for example, of *offTheLeftEye*, the video programming from the Swedenborg Foundation featuring Curtis Childs. These programs state exactly what the Writings teach and make the source explicitly clear. They are not trying to appeal to anyone except those who might be interested in

what Swedenborg has to say. They are finding an audience, with more than 120,000 subscribers and several shows with more than a million views.

The new key, according to Godin, is a distinct and differentiated message, not mass appeal. The key is not to tailor the lecture to what the average American thinks, or to current trends, or to the expected views of the majority. Instead, the greatest chance of success is linked to whether a viable audience exists for exactly what the organization is able to provide.

The Writings repeatedly stress that the average person in the Christian world will not be interested in their message. They emphasize that in its beginning the New Church will appeal to very few people. For example:

I received a letter saying that not more than four copies (of the *Arcana Coelestia* volume 1, published in 1749) had been sold within two months, and when this was made known to the angels, they were indeed surprised, but they said that it must be left to the Providence of the Lord, and that it is such that it compels no one – which could have been done, but that it is not fitting that any others should read it first than those who have faith. . . . But still those were found who received, being those who had faith, to whom the apostles were also sent. (*Spiritual Experiences* 4422)

We sometimes think that if sales of books are poor, or if few attend services and classes, that this means that soon literally no one will read the books or attend events, and that the movement will not survive. But few is not the same as none, and what matters is not large numbers but “the smallest viable audience.” It may be hard for us to know what a “viable” or “sustainable” audience actually is. Passages like this one appear to assure us that it exists. While this does not mean that any specific congregation or church organization will survive, it does mean that the movement will not only continue to exist but will thrive and grow.

An important point suggested by Seth Godin here, though, is that we need to avoid being “fooled by spectrum.” Rather than attempting to appeal to the average person, or being intimidated by apparent disconnects between New Church teachings and current trends, the goal needs to be to find the audience that wants what the Heavenly Doctrine has to offer. The Writings speak about the peace and freedom that results when kindred spirits find each other:

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)

People recognize kindred spirits and love nothing more than to connect with them. This is most likely to happen when both the message and the life are authentic. There is nothing exclusive about a gravitation to the message of the Heavenly Doctrine, because its authentic meaning involves love and kindness towards everyone. Still, not everyone is going to be attracted to these doctrines and the lifestyle that they teach.

The online world facilitates this kind of connection in a way that has never existed before except in the spiritual world. Translating these connections from cyberspace to the three-dimensional world is more complicated, but it is immensely satisfying. Combining the blessings of the days when everything was local and community-based with those of today, when we have much more ability to find matches for our specific needs, interests, and beliefs, is an exciting challenge that we all face. If we can avoid being “fooled by spectrum” we can increase the chances that those who love what the New Church has to offer will be able to find it.

(JFS)

WON'T YOU BE MY NEIGHBOR?

The Independence Day address given in Bryn Athyn for the Fourth of July by the Rev. Thomas Rose, *A Call to Neighbors* (page 394), celebrated America as “a nation of neighbors.” That is how we all should feel, in whatever country we call home. As Tom said: “We are all each other’s neighbor, and this town is our neighbor, and so is this country.”

This was a timely message, not just for Bryn Athyn and Independence Day but for everyone, at all times. We have all been emerging from our COVID cocoons, with all their anxiety and isolation. In many of the large cities of America – and in some abroad – there has been violence and chaos in the streets. Our politics are a cauldron of ill will. There is another pandemic among us: a fractious society, fiercely divided, viewing “neighbors” with suspicion, mistrust, accusation. We have lost much of that sense of all being neighbors.

What has happened to the presumption of good will we used to count on – that guiding principle of always looking for the good in others, instead of looking first at what divides and turns us against each other?

As Tom put it: “I learned here (in Bryn Athyn) that we’re supposed to strive to look to the good in our neighbor. That’s what angels do. We can all do that.”

He quoted *Arcana Coelestia* 1680: “The person who intends good to his neighbor thinks nothing but good regarding him, and when possible actually does it, is among angelic spirits, and becomes an angel in the next life.”

This is the answer to our daily prayer: “As in heaven so upon the earth.”

And it starts with each of us – neighbor to neighbor. It is that simple – and that challenging.

The Second Great Commandment says: “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” This is not an option from a social worker’s clipboard. It is a commandment from the Lord.

We know we are not perfect. Our country is not perfect. We are not expected to be perfect. We are expected to be striving always to be better people – better to each other. That is why we are neighbors. We should not be looking for the faults in others, judging them and dividing ourselves, but looking for what brings us together. We are here to love and support one another, to build better communities, a better country, a better world. That is what the freedom we celebrate is all about – our choices and their consequences.

Television’s legendary Mr. Rogers was famous for asking children – and really all of us: “Won’t you be my neighbor?” Can’t we love each other and live together in harmony – really live the commandment to “love one another”?

The great American poet Walt Whitman once said, with profound simplicity: “America is nothing but you and me.” That’s what it comes down to: how we treat each other. How well we do that creates our freedom and defines our culture. If we cannot do that we get anything but heaven. Together, the good and the bad, makes us – and our country – who we are and shows us where we still have work to do.

We all want to live lives of purpose and meaning. We have that, in bumper-sticker simplicity, in *True Christian Religion* 406: “We are not born for the sake of ourselves, but for the sake of others.” That means living the commandment, just being a good neighbor – every day.

(BMH)

MIRACLE MILE ONE

The Rev. Dr. George F. Dole, who passed into the spiritual world on June 29 at age 89, was a legendary minister in the Convention Church, a good friend of the General Church, and a Swedenborgian Renaissance Man. He was known and loved for his doctrinal scholarship, his wisdom and his kindly presence. He was a prolific author and translator, and leaves a rich legacy.

He was an esteemed graduate of Yale, Oxford and Harvard, with a lifelong delight in learning, teaching – and running. He taught ancient languages and theology, and was a pastor for many years in his beloved Bath, Maine. He wrote several books, including *Freedom and Evil* and *Sorting Things Out*, won awards for film scripts for the Swedenborg Foundation – *Images of Knowing* and *The Other Side of Life* – was a director of the Foundation for 42 years and president for three. With the Rev. Dr. Jonathan Rose he has been at the forefront of the

New Century Edition of the Writings, as an editor and translator.

He read broadly, thought deeply and shared generously. He was a lead tenor in many local chorus groups, was a member with his wife, Lois, of a Gilbert and Sullivan society, played classical guitar and a harpsicord he built from a kit. He made maple syrup, apple cider and crabapple jelly as gifts for friends.

But another lifelong passion was running, which he continued into his 80s, and this led to a memorable brush with fame. While studying at Oxford he won the famous Oxford-Cambridge Mile. That earned him a place as one of six runners in the world-famous race in 1954 in which Roger Bannister broke the four-minute-mile.

Following are excerpts from an article by Jonathan Crowe in the May 2014 *Messenger* of the Convention Church on the 60th anniversary of the race:

The weather in Oxford, England, was less than ideal for a record-breaking attempt. Fifteen-mile-per-hour winds, with gusts up to 20 miles per hour, had 22-year-old George Dole wondering if the race at the Iffley Road Track would be canceled. But the man who was to create history on May 6 had been training in high winds, and he was determined.

Ten minutes before the gun went off, the flag on top of St. George's tower fell limp. George took the pole position at 6 p.m. and exactly three minutes and 59.4 seconds later Roger Bannister accomplished his goal of becoming the first person to break the four-minute mile, a record that had previously seemed unattainable. This incredible event is still celebrated 60 years later.

While he did not win that day, the Rev. Dr. George F. Dole has led a life of useful service as a pastor, author, and Director of the Swedenborg Foundation. He continues to win the hearts of his students, parishioners, colleagues, countless friends and community members. George returns to Fryeburg (Maine) every August to lecture at the Fryeburg New Church Assembly on the banks of the Saco River. At 82 years old he continues to run on Haleytown Road, and more recently on the new Rail Trail.

Friends at the Fryeburg New Church Assembly celebrated his achievement that summer with a special three-mile race, for runners and walkers of all ages. The night before, George Dole told the story of the race with Roger Bannister, with characteristic good humor and humility. It's all just a footnote now – but still worth honoring – in a memorable career of devoted service to the church and to people everywhere on the journey of their lives.

(BMH)

MIRACLE MILE TWO

Brian Henderson, Director of Glencairn Museum and a former, very popular dean and history professor at Bryn Athyn College, gave a powerful talk at NewChurch LIVE in July about his recovery from a strange disease that left him temporarily paralyzed three years ago.

Brian woke up one morning with a high fever and thought he had the flu. Within days he lost the use of his legs and eventually was paralyzed from the chest down. It took a while for doctors to diagnose this as an extreme reaction to West Nile Virus from a mosquito bite that attacked his immune system.

Brian's story is one of heroic recovery, but not without setbacks, a lot of doubt and discouragement, and a doctor telling him to prepare for life in a wheelchair.

He was in a dark place. But he did not give up. With help of his faith, his wife, his family and friends, his doctors, and an inspiring team of occupational and physical therapists, he regained the ability to walk with a cane and to resume a useful life.

The therapists are his heroes. They told him to live simply, never give up hope, to remain humble and grateful, and to live always with love and kindness. He trusted in the Lord and His providence. He persevered. And now he is an even more dynamic teacher than ever before, with a heartfelt and inspiring message. (You can listen to his talk at <https://livestream.com/newchurchlive/events9747138>)

He came to realize – with the help of his devoted therapists – that he needed to heal his spirit, not just his body: to find peace and hope in the present. He says that he would never have chosen this experience but is so grateful because of what it did for his perspective on what is important in life: kindness, simplicity, humility, love, hope.

One of the highlights of his recovery was a one-mile walk arranged by his therapists that he managed with all his supportive friends. It was a route familiar to locals – from the Asplundh Field House on the Academy campus to Pine Run Park, just north of Bryn Athyn. It was an amazing outpouring of support – a celebration of hope. It took Brian more than two gritty hours to walk that mile – a journey not unlike his whole persistent and hopeful recovery. It was every bit the triumph of Roger Bannister – and George Dole.

(BMH)

PLANTING SEEDS 101

Like many people attending the Bryn Athyn College commencement in June, I was surprised to see the first name on the list of graduates: Roy Aharonovich,

from Risehon Le Zion, Israel. This was a first: a Jewish graduate, all the way from Israel. There had to be a story behind this. And there is.

Roy was a member of the Israeli national hockey team – as oxymoronic as the Olympic Jamaican bobsled team of 1988. He came to Bryn Athyn as a hockey player – certainly not the first to do so, but unique. He quickly came to love the College so much – especially the religion courses – that he gave up hockey.

He wanted his family to see this College he loved so much that he delayed his graduation so his parents and brother could fly from Israel for the ceremony. He's in a graduate program in Philadelphia now and Bryn Athyn College President Brian Blair says "he's going places." But Roy says the College will always be a part of him and that he will be forever connected. (You can read more about him and his plans in the Spring/Summer issue of the *Bryn Athyn Alumni Magazine*.)

There has been concern among alumni and friends in recent years that the College was losing its way – and its mission – in recruiting students for athletics. The College is recognizing this and making changes. But we never know quite how the Lord's providence is working as the College sows seeds in young, inquisitive minds. Roy may never become a member of the church, but he would be the first to say that his life has been transformed and that he will be forever influenced by what he learned about the church – and life – at Bryn Athyn College.

(BMH)



ADVANCEMENT



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