

# New Church c·o·n·n·e·c·t·i·o·n

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# New Church Teachings



- There is one loving, personal God, and He is the Lord Jesus Christ.
- The life of religion is to follow the Ten Commandments and to act honestly and faithfully in our daily occupations.
- The New Church is based on the Word of God, as revealed in the Old and New Testaments and the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg.
- The Word of God (the Bible) has a deeper level of meaning, teaching about the Lord's essential nature and a person's spiritual development.
- Each of us continues life as a complete person immediately after the death of the body.
- God does not judge us, but we judge ourselves by what we love and how we live.
- People of every faith are saved if they live sincerely according to their religion.

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## New Church Connection

Exists to inspire, inform, and connect people who are interested in the New Church. Every issue will have background information on New Church teachings; inspirational content from personal testimonies and quotations from the Word; and information about the organized New Church (the General Church of the New Jerusalem), and how to get connected. Each issue will have a theme that helps enrich your spiritual journey.

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Emanuel Swedenborg's work *Divine Love and Wisdom* presents a vision of order and beauty in our universe. This book outlines God's purpose in creating the natural universe. It shows how God is love and life itself, giving life and love to all creatures.

Available online today at [store.newchurch.org](http://store.newchurch.org) or call 267-502-4980

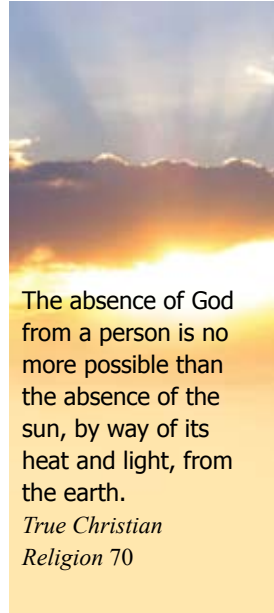
If you are exploring the New Church for the first time, you might be awed by the beautiful teachings on marriage, or perhaps comforted by the hopeful images of life after death. You might be engaged by the unlocking of so many biblical stories, or perhaps you find new joy in the connections evident between the natural world and spirituality. Our focus in this issue is on the insights that New Church teachings offer in regard to religion and science.

We will explore how religion and science can not only co-exist, but build upon and compliment each other. The New Church offers a perspective where greater knowledge of religion enhances one's experience of science and where scientific discoveries affirm the existence of an all-loving and brilliant God.

Many spiritual lessons are found in nature. I am reminded (if I pause to reflect on it!) that just as it is an appearance that the sun sets, when actually the earth is rotating, it is the same in my relationship with God. It may appear that He is moving away from me, but in reality it is I who am doing the retreating. His strong presence in my life, like the sun's light and warmth, is constantly available to me when I turn to Him.

In this issue we explore the connection between religion and science. How can the Bible be reconciled with the facts of evolution? (p.6). Do our prayers impact the natural world? (p.12). How do the ideas Swedenborg presents connect with modern medicine? (p.16). Among these topics we also include ideas to bring your spirituality into life (p.9-10), and share with you how others have done the same (p. 8 and p.20). We invite you to explore further the harmony between science and religion.

Bronwen Henry  
General Church Outreach



The absence of God from a person is no more possible than the absence of the sun, by way of its heat and light, from the earth.  
*True Christian Religion 70*

There is an order to the creation of everything in the world.  
*True Christian Religion 75*

A person ought to be instilled with sciences and knowledges, since by these one learns to think, then to understand what is true and good, and finally to be wise, that is to live according to them.  
*New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrines 51*

For with God nothing will be impossible.  
Luke 1:37

Any people who want to can decide in favor of Divinity on the basis of what they can see in nature, and people so decide who base their thinking about God on life. *Divine Love and Wisdom 353*

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.  
Genesis 1:1

Who said it?

Emanuel Swedenborg was an 18th century scientist and philosopher who continually studied the Word, later devoting his life to the revelation of the New Church. In the New Church we believe his later works are a divinely inspired revelation for the modern age, touching on all the different aspects of religion with a very rational and common-sense approach. See [www.newchurch.org/about/swedenborg](http://www.newchurch.org/about/swedenborg) for more information.

# Seeking Answers

## Questions about Science and Religion

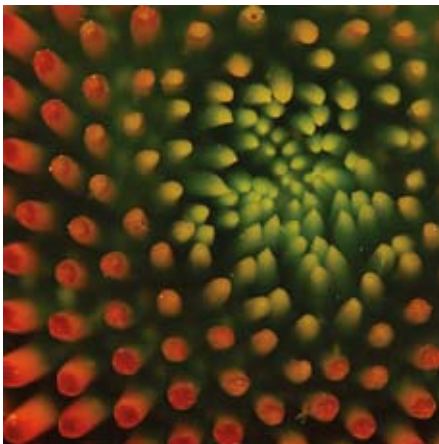
**Q. Why do the Writings and the Bible contain statements about the natural world that today appear outdated?**

**A.** Sacred scripture contains information about the natural world, but this information is present for the purpose of illustrating an idea or setting a context; the information is not in itself revelatory. When Jesus speaks of a grain of wheat becoming many seeds (John 12:24), He is using a well known phenomenon to illustrate that life is amplified when we do not cling to our natural existence. Sometimes the scientific information present in revelation is not in agreement with contemporary understanding. These inconsistencies are opportunities for us to explore metaphors based on current scientific understanding to illustrate religious ideas. The inconsistencies also serve as pointers toward the central value of written revelation, which is not to inform us about the physical realities of the natural world but to help us live our lives in cooperation with our Creator.

**Q. Is the theory of evolution compatible with New Church belief?**

**A.** New Church scientists believe that evolution and New Church doctrine are

wonderfully integrated. Scientific evidence shows that all of us—from bacteria to humans—are of common physical organic descent. This evidence shows that all life on earth has one “origin.” New Church doctrine teaches that natural laws were created by God. Our existence on this earth follows natural laws. We are part of the evolutionary process. This does not preclude our spiritual



Our knowledge of the world can serve to help us better understand our Creator.

nature. Through evolution God has created an organic vessel (the human) that has the ability to transcend the natural. Humans are able, by divine design, to

rise above the natural plane, receive spiritual influx from the Lord, and become spiritual beings.

**Q. Does New Church spirituality connect with the ideas of Intelligent Design?**

**A.** No it doesn't. The 'intelligent design' movement denies that we are biologically connected to all other living organisms. This movement claims that humans were created from dust as explained in Genesis in the Bible. The New Church sees the explanation of creation in Genesis as metaphorical for the creation of our spiritual being, not the natural world. The New Church does teach that the Lord designed the universe and human kind in His infinite love and wisdom.

*Thanks to Dr. Allen Bedford and Dr. Sherri Cooper, professors at Bryn Athyn College of the New Church, for these insights. Learn more at [www.brynthyn.edu](http://www.brynthyn.edu).*

## Questions Wanted

We want to answer questions that are relevant and compelling to you. Send your questions to [outreach@newchurch.org](mailto:outreach@newchurch.org).

## Lessons from Nature

In the Bible, natural images symbolize spiritual principles. For example:

**Moon**—A reflection of our *faith*—shining even in the darkest moments.

**Trees**—Trees are useful, producing fruit or wood. They remind us to live *useful lives*.

**Water**—Just as water cleanses our bodies, so the Lord's *truth* cleanses us of evil and falsity.

**Mountains**—We climb mountains as if to touch the sky. Mountains reflect a *closeness to the Lord*.

**Birds**—The sight of birds flying high into the sky is a representation of a person's *thoughts*.

# Changing Lives

Every faith journey is unique and purposeful in the Lord's plan. **Marie Donnelly** shares a glimpse of her spiritual quest culminating in God 'finding her' through the New Church.

**I** still remember the thrill of my very first lesson about God. As a first grader in a Catholic school it began with the Baltimore Catechism.

Who made you? God made me.  
Who is God? God is the Creator of heaven and earth.  
Why did God make you? God made me to know, love and serve Him and to have everlasting life.

My seven year old mind and heart were stirred. What joy...to ask a question and be given an answer...to be asked a question and have an answer! Excitedly, I enlisted both my father and mother in my evening catechism recitations. They would read me the question and I would give them the answer! I was proud...I was smart...I understood...the meaning of life...at age 7! I was a good Catholic throughout my elementary and High School years. I understood the doctrine, I followed the rules, I confessed and did penances.

My college years were full of surprises. I found out that everything was relative and that life was absurd. What a revelation...I no longer had to follow the rules...there was no authority...life was meaningless! With existential abandon, I savored a life of drugs, sex and rock and roll. I became a radical feminist, did not marry or bear any children. I was jaded...at the age of 21. Then I stumbled upon the following quip:

“God is dead.” Nietzsche

“Nietzsche is dead.” God

How absurd...I laughed, then cried, then “with fear and trembling” began a ten year trek through the labyrinthian ways of eastern mysticism. I did yoga with a swami,

# Life Faith Action

Quotations from the teachings of the New Church and thoughts on how to bring these ideas into life.

“[There is] an image of the infinite and eternal in the creation and multiplication of all things.”

*Divine Providence 56:3*

The hand of the Lord can be seen in nature and in our lives. Take time to acknowledge and honor the beauty and abundance of the Lord's creation.

“Bless the Lord, O my soul,  
And forget not all His benefits:  
Who forgives all your iniquities,  
Who heals all your diseases.”

*Psalms 103:2-3*

The Lord gives life. See how He blesses you with His gifts and heals you. Take time to thank Him in prayer for these blessings.

“Whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.” Matthew 21:22

“Those who are in faith from the Lord ask for nothing but what conduces to the Lord’s kingdom and their own salvation.”

*Apocalypse Explained* 815:10

Pray to the Lord. Ask that His will might be done. Trust that the Lord knows and will provide what you need.

“The natural person regards and loves himself and the world; but the spiritual person does not regard himself and the world, except insofar as is conducive to the promotion of uses in the spiritual world; and thus regards its service and loves it from the use and end.” *Secrets of Heaven* 3913

Lift the focus of your attention from selfish and materialistic things, and focus on being of service to your fellow human beings. Don’t let your thoughts be earth-bound; strive to lift them to be heaven-bound.

“The life that leads to heaven is not a life withdrawn from the world, but a life in the world.”

*Heaven and Hell* 535

A spiritual path is a life of service. Get to know your neighbors. Practice kindness. Be an active member of your community.

Continued from page 8

studied with a guru and meditated until I saw white light. I read and read about the Tao, Zen and motorcycle maintenance, the “Bhagavad Gita,” The Egyptian “Book of the Dead,” “Siddhartha” and T.S. Suzuki. I played with the I-Ching and Tarot cards. I was getting enlightened!

In my mid 30s I read the Bible cover to cover twice. ... I didn’t understand it but I was enthused! At 33 I was baptized by full immersion. I was born again and joined a Church. At about this time I also began a twenty year trek through psycho-therapy.

By the age of about 45 I was as mad as a hatter. I was a repressed, depressed, liberated, enlightened, radical feminist, conservative Christian and professional clerical worker. At 51, I married my soul mate and became a wife.

I continued with bible studies and became interested in the Old Testament in particular. I read Judaic writings and began to consider another conversion... this time... to Judaism! However, my psychiatrist gently suggested that instead of a “mikvah,” I try a 12 step program. I did and it worked! The 12 steps are a spiritual blueprint of how “it” works. I was fascinated by the spiritual dynamics of the program and decided to investigate its origins. I read up on

the history of A.A. and discovered that one of the Founders was married to a Swedenborgian. What a coincidence... for two years I had been walking my dog on the grounds of Bryn Athyn... a *Swedenborgian Church!* This must be a leading! To learn more I checked out the bookstore and purchased a copy of *Heaven and Hell*, Swedenborg’s best seller. Therein I discovered what made sense of “it” all, including the Bible which I’m still reading.

...And that’s how I found Swedenborg and the New Church.

I’m now 60 years old and have been an official New Church member since my third baptism, a year ago, on April 3, 2007 (this is also my birthday). So far, what you have read is a bare bones story of how I came to the New Church. The problem with revealing a more comprehensive story to you is one of perspective. I know now that this is really His story of finding me rather than her story of what “I” did to find The Lord Jesus Christ. ■

*Heaven and Hell*  
by Emanuel Swedenborg  
is available from the New  
Church bookstore at  
[bookstore@newchurch.org](mailto:bookstore@newchurch.org) or  
257-502-4980.

# Does Prayer Impact Healing?



*“I’m going in for an operation; pray for me.” “My mother is sick, and they are not sure if she’s going to pull through. Would you please pray for her?”*

What could be more natural than to ask for help from a loving God when we or someone we care for is in need, and especially when we’d like to have some reassurance that we are not alone? It is frightening to face a threat to our health, and perhaps even more so to watch someone we love slide slowly downhill. So people reach out to the Lord, the one who can make a difference when no one else can. And we ask others to do so as well.

But does it do any good? It may make us feel better, but is it really a pain killer that simply numbs reality? Surely the

Lord is doing all that can possibly be done for that person. How would the prayers of one human being sway the God of the universe to give someone more healing power, or more courage to pull through a hard healing process?

I’m going to assume that you believe that praying for others is a good idea. After all, in the Lord’s prayer (Matthew 6:20) we ask to receive blessings—“give us this day our daily bread...lead us not into temptation.” And the Lord tells us to pray for those who spitefully use us and persecute us (Matthew 5:44).

In New Church teachings, prayer means that we should “intercede” for others in trouble, meaning that we should seek to stand between them and the harm that is coming to them (*Apocalypse Explained*

644:23). Imagine a parent willing to stand in harm’s way to protect a child when you are picturing what interceding means. There is a clear message to pray for others, especially in their times of need.

But what can we pray for? We know we can pray for spiritual well-being, and that it should be the focus of our prayers. The Lord is interested in things that last. Can we also pray for a new car? For a solution to a health crisis?

I would say that a prayer is as good as the intention of the person asking it. If you have a sincere desire for something good, your spirit will be open to the Lord’s purposes.

One way to ensure that we are open to the Lord’s way of doing things is to do what He did while on earth. When He was in the Garden of Gethsemane He prayed, “Father if it is possible let this

cup pass from Me. Nevertheless, not as I will but as You will” (Matthew 26:39). This, for me, is the best answer. Pray for almost anything, but when you are done turn it over to the Lord, telling Him that you trust His leading and providence.



**If you think of someone with love, your spirit is touching that person’s. If you pray, your spirit is open to the Lord’s presence in a heightened way. If you pray for someone else, you share a bit of that connection with the Lord with that other person.**

Here’s a good reason to pray for people when they are in need: it works. Consider this famous study about prayer for others done by Randy Byrd: In 1988, as a cardiologist at the UCSF Medical Center, his double-blind study

of 393 cardiac patients showed that those prayed for by Christian prayer groups used in the study were five times less likely to require antibiotics, three times less likely to develop pulmonary edema, and, compared with the control group, fewer prayed-for patients died.

The Christians in this study were

simply given the first name and initial of the last name. They did not know the people, nor did any of the hospital workers know that the study was occurring. A similar study was carried out by Zvi Bentwich at Kaplan Hospital in Rehovot, Israel. In this study patients were not prayed for, but were given “healing intention” (meaning well-wishes) by volunteers.

One interesting aspect of the research done on the effectiveness of prayer is that non-directed prayer—prayer that is simply opening ourselves up to the Lord without any goal in mind—seems to be somewhat more effective than directed prayer. That is one of the reasons why it is so important to end our prayers, as the Lord did, with “nevertheless, not as I will but as You will.”

People in the medical profession sometimes say, “God heals; the doctor sends the bill.” Think about it this way: if you think of someone with love, your spirit

is touching that person’s. If you pray, your spirit is open to the Lord’s presence in a heightened way. If you pray



for someone else, you share a bit of that connection with the Lord with that other person. If in some small way that presence of the Lord could help, it would be worth doing.

Prayer, in the end, is speaking with God. Its real aim is to change ourselves. It is turning to the source of life and hope. Whenever something that we value is threatened, we will benefit from turning to Him. His purposes are higher than ours, and He will not always answer us in ways that we might like, but He will answer us. Our job is to turn to Him daily and especially when we are in need. And if we cultivate patterns of asking for His help we open ourselves up to the best chance of receiving the blessings He has to offer. ■

Prayer,  
in the end,  
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with God.

If you are interested in the Bible, and long for a way to understand it on a deeper level, the teachings of the New Church may resonate with you. The first in a series exploring the deeper meaning of the Old Testament, *Secrets of Heaven* by Emanuel Swedenborg, opens a new level of understanding to the the Old Testament.

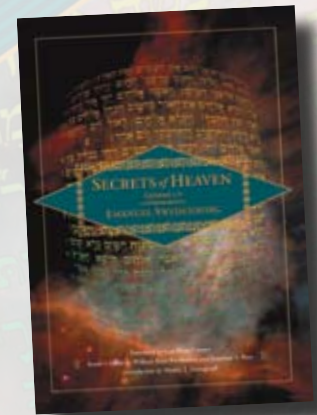
Below, you will find excerpts from this groundbreaking work, recently retranslated and published in the New Century Edition from the Swedenborg Foundation.

### The Bible’s Deeper Meaning

The Word in the Old Testament contains secrets of heaven, and every single aspect of it has to do with the Lord, his heaven, the church, faith, and all the tenets of faith; but not a single person sees this in the letter. In the letter, or literal meaning, people see only that it deals for the most part with the external facts of the Jewish religion. The truth, however, is that every part of the Old Testament holds an inner message. (*Secrets of Heaven* 1)

### Living Faith

A life of faith without love is like sunlight without warmth—the type of light that occurs in winter, when nothing grows and everything droops and dies. Faith rising out of love, on the contrary, is like light from the sun in spring, when everything grows and flourishes. Warmth from the sun is the fertile agent. The same is true in spiritual and heavenly affairs, which are typically represented in the Word by objects found in nature and human culture. (*Secrets of Heaven* 34)



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# Mehmet Oz Finds His Teacher

This bestselling author and renowned heart surgeon found inspiration for his family life and medical practice in the ideas of the Swedish scientist, philosopher, theologian, and Christian mystic Emanuel Swedenborg.

By Mehmet Oz, M.D., with Rev. Jonathan S. Rose, Ph.D., and Lisa Oz  
Photography by James Salzano

Our religion was never a subject of great interest to me. I was raised a secular Moslem. My father was a surgeon. For me, science had always been the source of ultimate truth. I didn't even begin to struggle with the deeper questions of life until midway through my first year in medical school. But the disconnects accumulated briskly. The cadaver that each of us received had many subtle anatomical structures in the heart, but no "soul" was ever delineated. Brilliant teachers showed me the inner workings of the brain, so I understood how we could remember and desire and move, but I could not find the location of love. I was introduced to patients who seemed to be more than the sum total of our textbooks, and witnessed suffering on a level that I could not understand any beneficent creator permitting. I had entered medical school to better understand the world inside us, but paradoxically, I seemed to be moving in the opposite direction as I wrestled to find the soul in medicine.

I hungered for a scientific rationale to help me reconcile my newly found insights into our bodies and the deeper spiritual longings that we all possess. Help came in the form of an eighteenth-century Swedish philosopher. As with many of the transformational ideas that would be slipped into my life subsequently, the teacher was my future wife.



Soon after I met Lisa, she introduced me to insights into heaven and hell (and marriage, of course, which should not

necessarily be confused with them) that challenged my status quo. She asked what Jung, Blake, Goethe, Emerson, Dostoyevsky, Balzac, and even Helen Keller had in common. I responded that they had all died, which did not impress her. It turns out that they were profoundly influenced by the Swedish mystic Emanuel Swedenborg. Lisa argued that the recommendation of these luminaries should be enough to stimulate my interest in a figure who, though rarely discussed in modern theology, might provide a spiritual light to those still searching in an often ill-lit terrain. I agreed and selfishly asked Lisa for another date.

## WHO WAS SWEDENBORG?

Swedenborg, I later learned, was a scientist and theologian whose great and defining quest was to find the nature of the relationship between the body and the spirit. In his mid-fifties he came into an altered state of awareness in which he experienced a simultaneous dual consciousness of this life and the afterlife. This sounded spooky to me at first, but as I came into contact with his many writings, I began to understand his profound insights and how they applied directly to my life.

On first glance, many of Swedenborg's teachings seem familiar: the idea of one God, infinite and absolute; the belief in an afterlife; the reliance on the Bible

as a source of divine revelation. These are tenets familiar to most Western faiths. His emphasis on overcoming the delusion of the self and on the profound interdependence of all things in both the spiritual and natural worlds aligns so closely with Buddhist thought that the Zen master D. T. Suzuki referred to him as "the Buddha of the North." Yet when one examines the particulars of Swedenborg's works, one finds a distinctive vision.

For example, when Lisa and I got married, there was no "til death do us part" in the ceremony. Swedenborg taught that true marriage lasts for eternity. (Although many of us feel this to be the case anyway, it is not generally part of other traditional doctrines.) According to Swedenborg, men and women are each a partial reflection of the Divine, and it is through their union that they most perfectly approach the image of God. Heavenly marriages are deep soul-bonds formed between two individuals—eternal relationships endlessly growing and being renewed. They include a level of peace, innocence, friendship, playfulness, and, yes, sexual ecstasy that is difficult for those of us here on earth to even imagine.

## HEAVEN AND HELL

According to Swedenborg, heaven and hell are not merely places but spiritual states. We do not "go there" when we

die. We are already there. By choosing a life of good will and devotion, we build heaven in our hearts. This place within us then becomes our eternal home. After death, the veil that separates the spiritual from the material world is lifted, and we continue as our true selves—either angels or evil spirits, depending on whether we have internally made a heaven or a hell for ourselves while living here.

Heaven, like the human body, is an emanation and expression of the divine form. Societies are organized according to mutual loves. Each collective group has a specific function, contributing to the whole, much like organs in the body. Every person has a special use, just as individual cells in our body are responsible for specific tasks to which they are perfectly suited, such as collecting oxygen or resolving infection. The idea that we each have a purpose associated with our unique talents and desires and the concept of a “Divine Human” were particularly compelling to me.

I have always had trouble with the idea of selective redemption. How could a compassionate God condemn his children for nothing more than being born into the “wrong faith”? How could an all-loving God choose to extend that love to only a select few? Swedenborg taught that God loves us all, and the various religions allow us

to approach him in the way best suited to our needs. He argued that we are all born for heaven, and that it is what we love that determines our fate, not what we profess to believe. God is infinite. We are not. Not even the most brilliant or enlightened among us can fully comprehend the Divine, so our view of God is determined by who and where we are spiritually. Each religion provides something unique and wonderful for its followers and, when focused on loving God and our neighbor, can lead to heaven.

Further, Swedenborg claimed that God never judges us. Through his boundless mercy, God allows us to choose where we will be happiest based on our ruling loves. If we love God and our fellow human beings, then heaven is a place of immeasurable joy for us. If, on the other hand, we love only ourselves and desire merely the pleasures of the world, then hell is where we are most comfortable. It is “hellish” there primarily because we are prevented from fulfilling our evil desires to harm others.

Angels as described by Swedenborg aren’t a separate species but people who are regenerate—literally, reborn humans. This is achieved through putting aside the selfish desires of the ego and attempting to align ourselves with divine providence.

## THE BIBLE AND SUFFERING

Swedenborg saw the Bible as more than a history of the Jewish nation or a collection of morality tales and ancient laws; he saw it as a detailed metaphor for the human condition. Each story—in fact, each word—represents something in our spiritual life. This is its divine essence. For example, the Children of Israel’s wandering through the desert for 40 years echoes our own periods of crisis when we feel lost and hopeless. Their enslavement in Egypt parallels our own addiction to worldly knowledge and delights. These deeper revelations are especially enlightening when the stories seem morally ambiguous or even self-contradictory.

While this gave me a welcome new perspective on Scripture, it was Swedenborg’s explanation of suffering that I found most useful. According to Swedenborg, God permits evil only to preserve our spiritual freedom, since good which is not freely chosen is not good at all. He never wills the resulting suffering, but constantly turns it into opportunities for growth and transcen-

dence. (I have seen patients transform their lives after a serious illness.) God, while thoughtful of our natural health and happiness, has our spiritual well-being as an even higher priority. Our struggles and afflictions in the material world are ways of reminding us of our true nature, which is pure spirit.

## BRINGING SWEDENBORG INTO SURGERY

In my practice I have struggled to provide holistic healing. For example, helping a transplant recipient deal with the emotional crisis of a rejecting heart is often more of a challenge than the surgery itself. Nothing in science can address the hopelessness we feel when our hearts fail us completely, or give us comfort when we face the possibility of our own death or the loss of a loved one. As a physician, I seek to connect with my patients on both the physical and spiritual levels, since true healing is never about curing just the body. Although I rarely mention him by name, Swedenborg has made this easier for me.

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Mehmet Oz, M.D., is professor and vice chair of surgery at Columbia University. Lisa Oz is a producer, book author, and screenwriter. Rev. Jonathan S. Rose, Ph.D., is a Swedenborgian minister and author of works about and translator of works by Swedenborg.

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# Many Religions Provided



Photo by Heather Allais

What is a New Church teaching that influenced your life? **Becca Smith**, a reader from Maryland, describes her experience.

**O**ne of the most influential *New Church teachings in my life is that the Lord provided for multiple religions so that everyone could learn something about Him and have guidelines for how to become a better person. My husband and I recently attended a Ramadan feast with some devout Muslim friends. We benefit so much from exchanging ideas on a wide range of topics with these friends. Like us, they believe there is one God. We respect each other because we see each other seeking to practice our faith, understand the world, and care for other people.*

Here are some quotations from the teachings of the New Church that are core to the ideas Becca describes:

## The Lord Provides a Religion for Everyone

“The general opinion is that people who have been born outside the church, the people called “the nations” or “non-Christians,” cannot be saved because they do not have the Word and therefore do not know the Lord; and without the Lord there is no salvation. They could know, however, that these people too are saved simply from the fact that the Lord’s mercy is universal, that is, it is extended to all individuals. Non-Christians are born just as human as people within the church, who are in fact few by comparison. It is not their fault that they do not know the Lord. So anyone who thinks from any enlightened reason at all can see that no one is born for hell. The Lord is actually love itself, and his love is an intent to save everyone. So he provides that everyone shall have some religion, an acknowledgment of the Divine Being through that religion, and an inner life. That is, living according to one’s religious principles is an inner life, for then we focus on the Divine; and to the extent that we do focus on the Divine, we do not focus on the world but move away from the world and therefore from a worldly life, which is an outward life.”

*Heaven and Hell 318*

## Our Faith Does Not Define Our Eternity

“In the spiritual world, into which every person comes after death, the question that is asked is not, What was your faith, or what was your doctrine? but, What was the nature of your life?”

*Divine Providence 101*

## Religion Is More Than Membership

“All religion is of the life, and the life of religion is to do that which is good. Every person who has religion knows and acknowledges that he who leads a good life is saved, and that he who leads an evil life is damned; for he knows and acknowledges that the person who lives aright thinks aright, not only about God but also about his neighbor; but not so the person whose life is evil. The life of a person is his love, and that which he loves he not only likes to be doing, but also likes to be thinking. The reason therefore why we say that the life is to do that which is good is that doing what is good acts as a one with thinking what is good, for if in a person these two things do not act as a one, they are not of his life.”

*Doctrine of Life 1*



The New Church (General Church of the New Jerusalem) has congregations on every continent around the world. When you travel to different congregations you will notice that they may emphasize different worship styles. One congregation might have recorded music, another might have drums and guitars, and yet another an organ or choirs. As various as the music and styles of worship may be, you will find people in each congregation inspired and dedicated to the powerful teachings of the New Church. All people are welcome to join in worship and participate in the life and community of the church.

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## Did you know?

**Emanuel Swedenborg studied physics, mechanics, philosophy, geometry, chemistry, anatomy and physiology. One of his aspirations was for scientific excellence. For many, this is evidence of his preparation for connecting the natural and spiritual worlds.**

- **God is Love** and nothing but what is good can come from God, because His very nature is love. God came to this world in the form of Jesus Christ, who is the one and only God.
- **The Old and New Testaments** have a deeper meaning, revealed in the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, which help people learn how to live happy and useful lives to eternity.
- **All religions have goodness** in them. There are many paths and gates into the heavenly city, New Jerusalem.
- **Heaven is for everyone** who wants to live a heavenly life. Heaven is where people (angels) love God and others and want to be useful. While people are free to choose to live in hell, God wants everyone to live with Him in heaven to eternity.
- **The Last Judgment predicted** in the Bible is not about the physical world; nor does God impose His will on us. He affirms the judgments we make upon ourselves according to the way we live. People who love God and try to live a good life according to what they believe are saved.
- **Marriage can last forever** for God blesses people with a special love in marriage that goes on after death, even to eternity.
- **God's providence is powerful** and unending. God guides each person's spiritual path, from the smallest things up to the biggest things, and His angels are with us every moment.

**It is a law of the divine providence that you should not be compelled by external means to think and will, and thus to believe and love, the things of religion, but should persuade and at times compel yourself to do so.**

*Divine Providence 129.*

**For everything that  
has been created is in itself  
inanimate and lifeless,  
but is animated and given life  
by its having the Divine in it  
and its being in the Divine.**

*Divine Love and Wisdom 53*

[www.newchurch.org](http://www.newchurch.org)

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**New Church Connection**

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