

NEW CHURCH *Life*

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

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2018



Swedenborg and the New Church

The Rev. Jeremy Simons says in a sermon that “Swedenborg’s Story” is an important part of the acceptance of the New Church. How should we think of Swedenborg as we celebrate his birthday on January 29? (Pages 17 and 4)

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NEW CHURCH LIFE (USPS 378-180)

PUBLISHED BIMONTHLY BY

THE GENERAL CHURCH OF THE NEW JERUSALEM

Bruce Henderson, Editor

Rev. Walter Orthwein, Spiritual Editor

SUBSCRIPTION: \$30 TO ANY ADDRESS. To order: 267-502-4990 or susan.wright@anc-gc.org.

Postmaster: Send address changes to: New Church Life, PO Box 708, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009

e-mail: datacenter@anc-gc.org

New Church Life

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

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In This Issue

What does the story in *Joshua* of the tribes of Israel crossing over the flooded Jordan river with the ark of the covenant have to do with our own lives? In a sermon for the new year – and really for any time – the Rev. Kurt Ho. Asplundh says: “Just as surely as the Lord held back the waters of Jordan until all the people of Israel were passed over, so He will perform a similar miracle for us.” (Page 10)

Swedenborg’s “story” is as important to the New Church as is Joseph Smith’s story to the Mormons – and any other “story” underlying the world’s religions. The Rev. Jeremy F. Simons says in a sermon that Swedenborg placed great emphasis on his story of being chosen and prepared to serve the Lord in conveying His new revelation – and that “if we don’t believe the story, we won’t believe the teachings.” (Page 17)

In the first of a three-part series on the trinity, the Rev. Michael D. Gladish focuses on “Our Heavenly Father.” There is a reason why we say, “Our Father in the heavens,” and why we also consider the Church to be feminine. “So when we think of God as our heavenly Father let us think of our Lord, Jesus Christ, as He Himself plainly taught us to do, saying, ‘He who sees Me sees Him who sent Me.’” (Page 23)

The Rev. Mark D. Pendleton wonders in a sermon “What If . . . ?” – what if we shift our whole concept of the Lord – the trinity and how salvation really works to the new model He offers in the Writings? And we don’t have to ask, “What if?” because the Lord has given us the answers. (Page 30)

The Rev. Dr. Erik E. Sandstrom offers a scholarly overview of “The Internal Sense of the Word” – why it is essential for the Church and for our own lives. “The reason the Writings explain how you need enlightenment, the knowledge of correspondences, and the doctrine of genuine truth – or you need to be regenerated in order to discern the spiritual sense of the Old and New Testaments, is that at that time this is exactly what you needed! Plus, you would not believe the doctrines were drawn from the Sacred Scriptures otherwise.” (Page 35)

Tomoya Okubo, a member of the Olivet New Church in Toronto, Canada, writes about concern for the “young people” of the Church – noting that they

really are all of us. He uses the metaphor of Mary and Martha to explain our approaches to church issues. And he says: “A church that is to become new must be one that is bound to face on all fronts, with far more subtlety and severity, the same temptations that have haunted the churches of the past.” (Page 52)

Bronwen Mayer Henry, Small Group Coordinator for the Bryn Athyn Church and Program Manager for General Church Journey Programs, traces the 10-year history of those programs, from how it all began to current challenges and “where we are going.” (Page 59)

Church News (page 65) includes:

- An annual report on “The Church in Asia” from the Rev. John Jin
- The General Church looking for suggestions about what to do with Cairncrest, current home for General Church offices
- An update from General Church Education
- Videos available for last summer’s Swedenborg and the Arts International Conference
- Planning for the 60th anniversary session of the British Academy Summer School
- A new Bachelor of Fine Arts program at Bryn Athyn College on Building Arts

Cover: Portrait of Emanuel Swedenborg from the Glencairn Museum collection. Photo by Ed Gyllenhaal.

OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY

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

MORAL

This is a term which has far wider and deeper extension in the Writings than in common usage, in which it is frequently restricted to sexual behavior. As used by them, it is inclusive of the entire life of man with the neighbor in societies. Thus moral truths relate to the things of every man’s life in regard to companionship and social relations – to what is sincere and right, and to virtues of every kind. Moral good, which is human good itself, is the rational good according to which man lives with other men as a brother and companion. Moral life is to act well, sincerely and justly in all things; and moral wisdom consists in the practice of all the virtues which look to life and enter into it. (See *Apocalypse Explained* 182; *Heaven and Hell* 468; *Charity* 57; *Conjugal Love* 164)

Editorials

“THE REAL JESUS”

The Lord was born on earth in a particular place and moment in history, and we are naturally interested in learning about the geography and culture of the world He lived in. And so the perpetual quest for the “historical Jesus” continues, as we see in the cover story of the December 2017 *National Geographic: The Search for the Real Jesus*.

The gist of the article is that recent archeological discoveries indicate that certain Gospel stories formerly thought to be fiction might actually be true. For example, scholars had long argued that there were no synagogues in Galilee until decades after the death of Jesus, which would contradict the Gospel stories of Jesus teaching in them. In 2009, however, archaeologists “were startled to discover the buried ruins of a synagogue from the time of Jesus – the first such structure unearthed in Galilee.” So now there is “no reason to deny or doubt that Jesus was here.”

This is all well and good, but acknowledging the possibility that Jesus was there 2,000 years ago is a far cry from believing that He is with us today as our God and Savior. Archaeology may find evidence that lends support to the belief that Jesus actually existed, but it cannot answer the essential question, the crucial question, of whether He was Divine. If so, then surely *that* is the “real Jesus.” That truth, however, lies beyond the reach of any human science. Archaeology can no more discover the real Jesus than examining the human body (much less human artifacts) can prove or disprove that human beings have an immortal soul that sets them apart from all other creatures.

Who is anyone, really? It is not the body but the soul that constitutes the real person. It is the same regarding Jesus, except that His Soul was Divine. The Heavenly Doctrine tells us that we can only think truly about the Lord if we think from His Essence to His Person. The only way to gain a true understanding of who He was as a Person is to begin with the truth that His Essence, His Soul, was Divine.

The question of who Jesus was – a mere mortal like everyone else, or the Son of God – is nothing new; it arose during His life in the world. When He taught in the synagogue in Nazareth, the people were astonished and said: “Where did this Man get this wisdom and these mighty works? Is this not the

carpenter's son?" (*Matthew 13:54-56*)

The Lord Himself put the question to His disciples:

"Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven." (*Matthew 16:11-17*)

"*Who do you say that I am?*" The question has been answered in many ways, by theologians, philosophers, psychologists, poets, novelists, historians and archaeologists. But the answer that matters most is the one we find in our own hearts and minds. It is not primarily a matter of knowledge, or doctrine, or professions of faith, but of perception. Perception from love, inspired by the beauty of the Lord's own words.

"I am the Light of the world." "Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Love one another, as I have loved you." "Forgive, and you shall be forgiven." "Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto Me." "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." "My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

The One who said these things is the real Jesus, and this is where we find Him, in His Word.

(WEO)

SWEDENBORG AND THE NEW CHURCH

In a sermon on "Swedenborg's Story," (page 17), the Rev. Jeremy Simons says this "story" is as important to us as the Mormons' story is to them – or the stories behind all religions of the world. Swedenborg's "story" is that he was chosen and prepared by the Lord to convey the revelation of His Second Coming through the Writings for the New Church.

Mr. Simons says: "When we celebrate Swedenborg's birthday on January 29, our message is that stories are important in our lives. It is not simply what we believe about what is right and wrong, or about how the world works, that is important. Our beliefs about where the ideas come from orient us and tell us what we can trust and depend on, and they give us hope for the future." "If we don't believe the story," he adds, "we won't believe the teachings."

The question for many of us is just how much we should venerate Emanuel Swedenborg when we know that the true author of this revelation is the Lord alone.

We all know that Swedenborg was a remarkable man – supremely gifted, intelligent and humble. He was honored as a man of accomplishment in many

fields, but in the greatest calling of his life chose to be known simply as a “servant of the Lord.”

One of the sticking points is how much we identify ourselves – and the Church – with Swedenborg. It is easy to call ourselves Swedenborgians, for instance, rather than try to explain “New Church” or “General Church.” But would Swedenborg approve? How about the Lord?

This question has sparked a bit of a debate in these pages. In the May/June 2016 issue the Rev. Gerald Waters, a retired minister who has served in South Africa, wrote a provocative article, “Surely We are Not Swedenborgians.” Besides sometimes identifying ourselves as Swedenborgians, he said, we can too easily slip into such statements as “according to Swedenborg” and “Swedenborg teaches.” He wrote: “I fear Swedenborg would be distraught to know that the Writings he was enlightened to write down are being referred to as his teachings.”

Putting an emphasis on Swedenborg, he fears, may give the impression we are his followers, which invites labeling us as a cult – when we are anything but. Several letter writers agreed with his concerns.

But in the January/February 2017 issue, the Rev. Derrick Lumsden – who coincidentally also served in South Africa before becoming pastor of the Sower’s Chapel in Sarver, Pennsylvania – countered with an article, “Why I Call Myself a Swedenborgian.”

He agrees with Mr. Waters that we need to protect the works of Swedenborg as Divine revelation. “I call myself a Swedenborgian,” he wrote, “because I believe it is an honest and effective way to communicate with non-Swedenborgians while pointing to Divine revelation itself.” He finds it’s a useful term especially for people unfamiliar with the Church because it opens the way to questions and internet searches – for them to learn more.

But however we may feel about “Swedenborgian,” we should be united in how we feel about Swedenborg the man – and why we honor him. He was one of the greatest intellects of his own – or any – time. He was better known and regarded in his own time and the 19th century than he is now. Henry James Sr. said: “Emanuel Swedenborg had the sanest and most far-reaching intellect this age has ever known.” And Edwin Markham said: “Swedenborg’s writings are today the prime influence beating down the wall of irrationality, making way for a faith that appeals at once to reason and to the heart.”

At the height of his career Swedenborg could have continued with great honor and accomplishment, but when the call came he readily and humbly devoted himself as “servant of the Lord.”

In the Lord’s providence he was born to this calling. He began his preparation with an exhaustive two-year study of the Bible, writing 3,000 pages of personal notes and a complete Bible index, which he used extensively in his theological works. He also perfected his Hebrew and Greek so he could study

the Bible in original texts. Throughout all of this, he never forgot the advice of his father: “I beg you most earnestly that you will fear and love God above all else, for without this fear of God all other training, all study, all learning is of no account.”

We revere Swedenborg for the way he wholly accepted his mission and committed the remaining 27 years of his life to serving the Lord – and to the New Church being formed with the revelation conveyed through him. He may seem a distant soul to us because he revealed so little of himself. His writing style, translated from Latin, can be challenging to read. He may seem, at times, out of step with modern times and modern science.

When he was 80, a friend wrote: “Someone might think that Swedenborg was eccentric and whimsical, but the very reverse was the case. He was very easy and pleasant in company, talked on every subject that came up, accommodating himself to the ideas of the company, and never speaking of his own views unless he was asked about them.”

Throughout these last 27 years of his life he remained humbly committed to his role as “servant of the Lord” in bringing His revelation to the world. He also understood what he was not commissioned to do. He was not commanded to establish a church or to found a religious movement, which sets him apart from mystics and cultists.

While many of Swedenborg’s contemporaries saw and acknowledged the divine truth in what he was writing, others criticized and ridiculed his claims. But when a friend suggested he spare himself the aggravation and return to his honored career in science and public service, he declined, saying he was “compelled by conscience” to carry out his mission.

In the last month of his life several friends urged that he make a final statement about the truth of the work that had consumed his last 27 years. He answered pointedly: “I have written nothing but the truth, as you will have more and more confirmed to you all the days of your life, provided you keep close to the Lord and faithfully serve Him alone by shunning evils of all kinds as sins against Him and diligently searching His Word, which from beginning to end bears incontestable witness to the truth of the doctrines I have delivered to the world.”

Swedenborg might be discouraged that this new revelation still is unknown through most of the world, but he would understand better than we can how the Lord’s providence is watching over His Church. Swedenborg was supremely content in his calling and confident in his trust. We admire, respect and appreciate him as a true, humble servant. And we are grateful to the Lord for calling him to serve us all.

(BMH)

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

Darwinism and Divine Order

To The Editors:

As I read the opening paragraphs of “A Counterattack on Darwinism” by Per Bingen in the September/October issue I was appalled by how it sounded like just another anti-scientific attack on the theory of evolution. However, further along the author says: “At this point I feel the need to state that this essay is not an attack on the theory of evolution, and the scientific theory of evolution, and the scientific approach to what nature consists of, or how it works.”

What is this all about? It seems to be a question of how the term “Darwinism” is used. As noted in the discussion of “Darwinism” in Wikipedia, it notes that the term has been around since 1860 with a variety of meanings, “including the situation today where it ranges from a reference to scientific aspects of the theory of evolution, to a pejorative term used by those who deny evolution on religious grounds.”

I share the author’s concern that those who claim the belief that the scientific validity of the theory of evolution somehow contradicts a belief in God, are wrong. I also agree that such a viewpoint should not be taught in publicly supported schools at any level. However, to create a straw man by claiming that “Darwinism” is somehow “Satan on the loose” is not useful. Let’s recognize that “Darwinism” has multiple meanings.

It seems to me it is very important to recognize that in the Writings of the New Church spiritual truth and the scientific method do not conflict. Science simply seeks to understand natural laws. Those laws are the result of Divine order. If some scientists choose to deny the divine, that is their right, but science itself does not deny the Divine.

Divine order is illustrated by the beauty of the Lord's creation of the natural world through natural laws that can be discovered through science.

Kent Fuller
Glenview, Illinois

Religion and Evolution

To The Editors:

Re the Per Bingen article, "A Counterattack on Darwinism," in the September/October 2017 *New Church Life*:

I have to admit that my initial response to this article was prickly. Darwin has been blamed for many things, but how people take the theory of evolution says more about their own spiritual journey than Darwin's. I was therefore very grateful when Mr. Bingen said he was not against the theory of evolution itself, because I would certainly have taken him to task.

It is very apparent that life evolves over time to meet different circumstances. The atheistic approach says there's no Intelligent Being leading this, but those of us who are religious most certainly see the hand of the Divine in it. So I was very grateful when Mr. Bingen said he was not attacking the theory of evolution itself.

One of the mistakes both scientists and theologians have made is believing science could prove religion or religion prove science. Both of those premises are false. They are on different planes and one should not try to prove the other.

I will take Mr. Bingen to task for saying that most modern-day biologists are not religious. I would argue with that statement. In my 20-30 plus years as a microbiologist/biologist I found most of my colleagues were clearly religious and saw the hand of God in the whole of nature. There are certainly some vocal atheists who love to attack religious people because they believe in a Divine being, but that's their stuff.

I noted with pleasure that he quoted *Arcana Coelestia* 5847, which says: "For there is only one life, namely that of the Lord, which flows into all, but is variously received." This is a non-dualistic statement that Wilson Van Dusen used to show how the Writings are similar in that respect to Hinduism. I am constantly amazed that all faith traditions have plenty of truth in them to enable people to lead good lives.

Rev. Julie Conaron
Willow Grove, Pennsylvania

The Most Important Issue

To The Editors:

Thank you for presenting “A Racist Free World,” by the Rev. Jeremy Simons in the September/October 2017 issue. I found it provoking – a step beyond provocative! In fact, I found the thrust of the article to be racist, condemning Western culture and its values, and elevating globalism in its place.

The article argues that “the Writings portray the fight against racism as perhaps the most important issue facing the world.” The author appears to see the remedy as the world’s population becoming a melting pot, so that all nations and cultures are intermixed. Radical Muslim terrorists, for example, would then no longer have cause to hate the Western culture, as we would all come to respect one another, having one world view.

All my life I’ve heard the General Church priesthood speak of the value of having distinct, diverse nationalities and cultures. They reflect the distinctions we find in the human body or heaven itself. Not exactly melting pots!

As for racism, I don’t consider it the most important issue we face. It is merely a symptom of the unchecked love of self, often related to the rejection of Divine revelation – as in humanism.

I would say the most important issue we face is the need to obey all of the Ten Commandments; or perhaps the erosion of the love that is above all human loves, marriage love, which serves the very highest use – providing inhabitants for heaven.

Yorvar Synnestvedt
Kempton, Pennsylvania

A Safe Crossing

A New Year's Sermon by the Rev. Kurt Ho. Asplundh

Lessons: Joshua 3: 9-4:7; Revelation 12:7:9, 13-17; Apocalypse Explained 700: 12-14.

*Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is crossing
over before you into the Jordan. (Joshua 3:11)*

The wilderness journey was behind them. One thing remained between the tribes of Israel and the Promised Land. The Jordan river. It was the season of floods and the waters rose over the banks. How could the tribes cross the swirling currents to bring women, children, cattle, baggage and the sacred Tabernacle safely to the other side? The river was their entrance to the land. It was also a final, seemingly insurmountable, obstacle.

The book of *Joshua* records the account of a miraculous crossing. The Lord commanded Joshua to send the ark of the covenant into the midst of the river. As soon as the feet of the priests that carried the ark were dipped in the brim of the water the flood shrank back and the waters heaped up as though held behind an invisible dam. The water below receded toward the Dead Sea, leaving behind an ever-widening stretch of dry river bed. Here, the priests bearing the ark stood while all the people of Israel crossed over on dry ground. Not until all the people had crossed and the priests had been called up out of the river bed did the water resume its natural course, filling the river where it had been dry.

This was the first of a series of miracles accomplished with the ark of the covenant. A mighty Divine power emanating from the ark is what held back the flood. Later, this same power brought down the walls of the fortress city of Jericho. The Writings assure us that these miracles, as well as others recorded in the Word, actually took place as described. They are not the imaginings of writers or the embellishments of later historians. They were not made up simply to convey a symbolic sense. They happened as recorded.

Many in our sophisticated age are inclined to scoff at the possibility of miracles. Would a God of order interfere with His own laws? The answer is that the Divine law supersedes our limited knowledge and understanding of natural law.

The Divine wisdom looks to eternal ends and operates consistently to promote those ends even in apparent contradiction to our concept of order. The Lord is omnipotent in heaven and on earth. The account of the crossing of the Jordan river is evidence of the great power the Lord has in events of the natural realm. “By this you shall know that the living God is among you. . . . Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is crossing over before you into the Jordan.” (*Joshua 3: 10, 11*)

The crossing of the Jordan was a crucial event in the history of Israel and it signifies important changes in our lives. For Israel, the crossing was an introduction to the land of promise, a beginning of a new life. Spiritually, this miraculous event pictures our introduction to a new life and to the promise of the Lord’s blessings. “Behold, I make all things new,” the Lord said. (*Revelation 3:5*) These words form a motto for the New Church. The Lord has provided that we may continually see new things in His Word and apply these truths to transform our life.

Like the tribes of Israel at the banks of the Jordan, we stand at the brink of new states of life. The beginning of a new year, with all the potential good we hope for in it, is a powerful reminder of this. A promised land awaits us, a new and better life than anything we have yet experienced. To attain it, however, we must first be introduced into it. This is what is signified by the crossing of the Jordan.

Let us look now at the personal meaning of the key elements of the story. We can begin to build our idea of the spiritual significance of the Jordan river by remembering that it was where John came baptizing. Baptism, the Christian sign, signifies introduction into the church. The waters by which baptism was carried out symbolize spiritual cleansing by truths from the Word of God. Thus are we led to the Lord through a life of repentance and change. The washing of the water of

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baptism does not, in itself, cleanse our spirit but shows how the application of truths can transform it.

The account of Naaman, the leper, being cleansed by washing seven times in the Jordan is another illustration of this same spiritual washing. This again, pictures the power of applying truth in our lives.

Another key to the crossing was the presence of the ark of the covenant. This most holy repository of Divine law, carried by the priests of Israel, led and opened the way for the tribes. It was the source of power in holding back the waters so the tribes might pass safely from one side of the river to the other. This obviously signifies the power of the Word of God in our life. Trusting Divine law strengthens us against the currents of falsity and deception which delude us and threaten to sweep us away.

Recall that the Jordan was in flood when Israel came to cross over it. Ordinarily, its waters were a quiet boundary of Israel. At this season, however, it was in a strong flood stage. Like all correspondential symbols in the Word, the Jordan river bears a double signification. In the good sense, these waters signify the truths that introduce us into the church and heaven. However, these same truths, flooded and defiled with human ambition or pride, become falsified and perverted and signify truth's opposite.

Like many a natural stream which flows pure from its source but becomes increasingly polluted as it flows to the sea, so truths of the Word can become mixed with fallacy, muddied by the erosion of ideals and disturbed by whirlpools of selfishness as they flow into application.

There is a further explanation of why these waters first had a correspondence to falsity instead of truth. The Canaanite was then in the land. Canaanites, Jebusites, Perrizites and other idolatrous nations signify evils and falsities of every kind which had to be removed. For these reasons, the tribes of Israel were to cross on dry ground, protected by the ark from the swollen waters of the Jordan.

And there is another symbolic fact in this account which should be mentioned. Twelve stones were taken up from the river bed, shouldered by a strong man chosen from each tribe, and built into a memorial cairn in Gilgal where they camped after crossing. We are told that these stones again signify truths of the church. The cairn at Gilgal would serve as a memorial of their miraculous crossing, a reminder to Israel when their children asked, "What are these stones?" to say, "Israel crossed over this Jordan on dry land . . . that all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty, that you may fear the Lord your God forever." (*Joshua 4:21,22,24*) This cairn at Gilgal is said to signify "the doctrine of natural truth, which is serviceable for introduction into the church" (*Apocalypse Explained 700:14*) or "the truths of the church through which introduction is effected." (*Ibid. 430:10*)

As we enter into every new state of life we should likewise resolve to

gather up principles of truth from the Word and incorporate them into our life. These knowledges of truth and good which we are responsible for providing, both for ourselves and for our children, are like the twelve stones carried out of the river bed. They become a foundation for our new way of life; a way of life in which heaven can rest. It is the wise man who builds on this sure foundation of rock; for when the storms of life and winds of adversity beat upon the house we have built, it will not fall, being “founded upon a rock.” (*Luke 6:48*)

We have responsibility here not only for ourselves but our children, too. Is there anything more precious to give our children in the church than these doctrines of natural truth from the Word which serve as an introduction to spiritual life? This is the promise we make to the Lord at the baptism of our infants: to teach them the Lord’s Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the truths of Scripture and doctrine. For this reason, too, we have dedicated ourselves to providing New Church education whereby our vow can be more fully carried out.

However, we cannot fulfill our obligation to the Lord in the instruction of our children unless we, as adults, look for continual renewal of our own spiritual life. We all need to seek truths from the Word. We all need to shoulder the responsibility of applying what we learn to every aspect of our life. “It is utterly useless for a man to know many things,” the doctrine of our church teaches, “if he does not live according to what he knows.” (*Arcana Coelestia 1100*) We must form new principles as a foundation for life and action and then carry them out.

It is true that the genuine life of the church is the life of charity and love and being of service to the neighbor from a spiritual motive. This should be our goal. However, we cannot achieve the goal without first being introduced to the church through doctrinal instruction. This is pictured in the *Joshua* text by the simple fact that the tribes could not enter and settle the Promised Land until the Jordan was crossed. We, too, stand at the crossing, seeing the goal ahead, but unable to achieve it without the Lord’s help. Such moments occur throughout our lifetime, time and again.

Having reviewed the signification of the river, the ark and the stones,

However, we cannot fulfill our obligation to the Lord in the instruction of our children unless we, as adults, look for continual renewal of our own spiritual life.

As we reflect on the meaning of the miracle of dividing the waters of the Jordan, we can see a significant application to our educational work in the church.

let us turn now to consideration of the miraculous crossing. Remember that the waters flowing strongly downstream in this season signified the falsities of evil that sometimes carry us away from the good life. It would be foolish of us to challenge these falsities ourselves without the Lord's guidance and protection. Downstream from this place of crossing was the desolate valley of Sodom and Gomorrah, signifying the hells into which we could be swept if we trusted our own intelligence.

The Lord commanded Joshua to send the ark of the Lord into the midst of the river. The ark, with its commandments, signified the strength of Divine truth against falsities of evil. The direct teachings of the Lord have a power no falsity can withstand. No amount of justification or human reasoning can challenge what is true.

The world has lost a basic sense of morality because so many reasons are given that assault the long-accepted codes of moral behavior. Men justify the lie, the theft, the divorce. Moral codes, if regarded as the product of human invention, as merely traditional behavior, are soon eroded by the pressures of self will and worldly love. Anything regarded as a matter of human opinion is certain to be challenged.

What a different spirit there is when we recognize a Divine authority. In spite of all that may be thought and said to weaken the force of what the Lord says, it still stands. You shall not murder. You shall not steal. You shall not commit adultery. The neighbor is to be loved. Evil must be shunned. Happiness comes from the doing of uses without thought of reward. In the face of such clear and authoritative statements of truth, other arguments dry up and shrink away. All of this is signified by the miracle of the Jordan.

The flooding of the Jordan which stood as an impasse for Israel brings to mind other great floods mentioned in the Word: the great flood which covered all the earth; also the flood that spewed from the mouth of the dragon mentioned in the *Apocalypse*. These, too, are symbolic accounts of the flooding of man's life with falsity and evil which often take the form of false reasoning.

But what is our strength? The plain and authoritative teachings of the Word, not only in Scripture but in the Heavenly Doctrine of the New Church as well. These teachings stand as our defense from confusion and uncertainty. In our personal pilgrimage to the Promised Land, we must be brought safely through the swelling currents, to land safe on Canaan's side. Concerning this,

the doctrine teaches that “the Lord alone removes and scatters the falsities of evil that are from hell, and by His Divine truths introduces the faithful into the church and into heaven.” (*Apocalypse Explained* 700:13)

As we reflect on the meaning of the miracle of dividing the waters of the Jordan, we can see a significant application to our educational work in the church. Is it not true that much of what is current in education today is antagonistic to religious faith? Theories and attitudes that are prevalent in many subject fields seem to be the product of a humanism and conceit that obstructs rather than introduces the mind to the life of genuine use. Our effort should be rather to promote an educational experience that confirms and supports the life of faith.

Our primary end is to convey a doctrine of natural truth which is “serviceable” for the introduction of students into the life of the church and heaven. Let us shoulder those stones from the river bed and construct a lasting altar that will be a reminder to all generations that it is the Lord who has brought us safely to heaven’s gate.

Here is another lesson to be drawn from the miracle at the Jordan. It is suggested by the parenthetical statement that the river was in a flooded condition when the tribes came to cross over. The prophet Jeremiah refers also to the “swelling of Jordan.” (*Jeremiah* 12:5) This condition, we are told, pictures a kind of intellectual pride or conceit. The danger to our spiritual life is more often within us than from without.

What we allow to be stirred up in our own heart is what we are accountable for; what brings spiritual harm. This may be said of the falsities of evil signified by the flooded waters of the Jordan. The falsities which especially hinder our introduction to heaven are those we are proud of and conceited about.

The Writings of the Church teach that this “swelling (or flooding) of the Jordan” signifies “the things that belong to the external man, which rise up and desire to dominate over the internal man . . . and the confidence that is from them.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 1585)

The “swelling of the Jordan” is a prophetic expression warning us against overconfidence in our own spiritual intelligence. Israel could not enter Canaan through that flooding current; nor can we enter into the good of life while conceit and pride fill our mind. From these are the falsities of evil which threaten to sweep us to the valley of Sodom and Gomorrah and the Salt Sea; toward the stagnant pools of sensual thought and a life of selfish indulgence.

The Lord alone, by the power of Divine truth in His Word, defends against these inner falsities. Knowledges which do not agree with spiritual truths “will insinuate themselves into the external man,” we are told; also, pleasures and delights that do not agree with celestial goods. These “draw the external man outward and downward . . .” (*Arcana Coelestia* 1563: 2) We should be aware

Just as surely as the Lord held back the waters of the Jordan until all the people of Israel were passed over, so will He perform a similar miracle for us.

of this whenever we are inclined to trust experience and the conclusions of our own reason against revealed truth. We are strongly attracted to these appearances, but they cannot lead us to the Promised Land; only into an imaginary heaven of phantasy and final disillusionment.

Only when we acknowledge the power of Divine truth, looking to what the Lord teaches and learning to subordinate our will to His, can progress be made toward new and better states of life. Just as surely as the

Lord held back the waters of the Jordan until all the people of Israel were passed over, so will He perform a similar miracle for us. “By this you shall know that the living God is among you . . . Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is crossing over before you into the Jordan.” (*Joshua 3:10 ff*)

As we face the flood that stands between us and heavenly life, we should remember the spirit that infills the entire book of *Joshua*, and have confidence in the Lord: For He said: “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” (*Joshua 1:9*)

Amen.



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Swedenborg's Story

A sermon about why Swedenborg's story is an important part of the acceptance of the New Church.

The Rev. Jeremy F. Simons

Lessons: Matthew 10:5-13; Spiritual Experiences 4123, True Christianity 851

And as you go, preach saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. (Matthew 10.7,8)

Anyone familiar with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints – the Mormons – likely will know the story of how Joseph Smith found the golden plates, directed by the angel Moroni, from which he dictated the *Book of Mormon*, using a “seer stone” to translate the story, which was written in “reformed Egyptian.” However much we may like and admire the many good people belonging to the Mormon Church, the story is not credible to most non-Mormons. Yet it is a key part of Mormon evangelization efforts, which are among the most successful of any Christian denomination. Why do they continue to tell it? Wouldn't a more rational strategy be to focus on the reputation for kindness and clean living that most people associate with the Mormon Church – and to distance themselves from something that most people see as unbelievable?

That question, though, reflects our lack of appreciation for the central role that stories play in our thinking.

A few hundred yards from where we sit today [in the Bryn Athyn Cathedral] the Glencairn Museum is full of priceless historical treasures. Yet the value of each one of those objects depends almost completely on its story. The beautiful object sitting in the entry hall is not just a nicely carved bird bath; it is a black granite Egyptian libation bowl from the late 18th or early 19th Dynasty (c. 1400-1200 BC), and we know this because we know its story

and how we acquired it. It is therefore immensely valuable.

This past Friday, [Note: This sermon was delivered January 22, 2017.] we witnessed the inauguration of a new President of the United States. Our appreciation of the significance of this event depends on our understanding of what a president is, and something of our history. We love our country for what we believe to be its goodness and values of liberty, justice and equality – values that are bound up in our understanding of how our country came into being – the story of our country. We pray that our president will lead the country in a way that is consistent with our story, with what America is all about.

But America's history, and the story behind each of the amazing treasures at Glencairn, is discretely different from the story behind a religion. There are ways of examining history, and verifying or revising its assertions. But the supernatural claims behind the origins of almost every world religion lie outside the reach of those methods.

We have no way of knowing whether the angel Moroni appeared to Joseph Smith or not, or whether the golden plates really existed.

The role of miracles in ancient religion

The way around this issue in ancient times was the performance of miracles. The Israelitish Church was established at Mount Sinai by miracles so spectacular that no one witnessing them could doubt the Divine origin of Moses' teaching.

Similarly, our lesson from *Matthew* today showed that not only did the Lord do miracles, but He gave His disciples the power to do them also. This was a means of establishing the Christian Church.

Since those ancient times, however, miracles no longer occur. Or so we believe. What we have instead of miracles are simply the stories themselves. We have the stories of the Old and New Testaments, stories which recount miracles, but which we can choose to believe or not.

New Church teachings explain why miracles are no longer used to establish the Church:

These days people are asking why miracles do not happen anymore the way they used to. There is the belief that if they did happen, we would all acknowledge God from the depths of our hearts. The reason miracles are not happening today the way they used to is that miracles are coercive; they take away our free choice in spiritual matters. They make us more earthly than spiritual. Since the time of the Lord's Coming, everyone in the Christian world has had the capability of becoming spiritual. We become spiritual solely from the Lord through the agency of the Word. If miracles induced us to believe, we would actually lose this capability, because, as I just mentioned, they are coercive and take away our free choice in spiritual matters. And when it comes to spiritual things, everything that is forced on us intrudes into our earthly self and closes the door, so to speak, to the spiritual level in us that is our true inner self. (*True Christianity* 501)

Miracles do not take place today because they are coercive. While the same thing was true in ancient times, the effect was different because of the simplicity of the people and their focus on natural things. They accepted miracles as a matter of course; they did not distinguish as we do between natural and spiritual phenomena. Their ignorance was itself a limiting force on their freedom. So miracles were not harmful to them as they would be today, and they could lead people to the Lord.

Instead of miracles today we have the stories about the miracles, which people are free to believe or not. And people do believe them. About 75% of Americans believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, and about 25% believe that every word was dictated by Him and is literally true. (*Gallup Poll 2014*) About three-quarters of Americans believe that the biblical miracles actually took place. (*Newsweek, April, 2000*) These beliefs, however, are declining.

Instead of miracles today we have the stories about the miracles, which people are free to believe or not. And people do believe them. . . . These beliefs, however, are declining.

Why are origin stories so important?

Our topic today is what these beliefs do in our spiritual lives, and why it matters whether we believe in the reality of such things as the biblical miracles, or the revelations to Joseph Smith, or those of Swedenborg, whose birthday we celebrate on January 29.

Swedenborg was once urged by a friend to stop telling stories about his experiences. The friend, Count Von Hopken, related this conversation:

I asked (Swedenborg) once why he wrote and published those visions and memorable relations, which seemed to throw so much ridicule on his doctrines, otherwise so rational; and whether it would not be best for him to keep them to himself, and not publish them to the world? But he answered, that he had "orders from the Lord to publish them" and that "those who might ridicule him on that account would do him injustice"; for, says he, "why should I, who am a man in years, render myself ridiculous for phantasies and falsehoods." (*Documents Concerning Swedenborg 1 p. 67*)

Count Anders Von Hopken was President of the Royal Majesty's Chancellery, and controlled foreign policy in Sweden in the 1750s and '60s. He was a famous and powerful man, and he knew what all of us know, which is that most people will be skeptical about someone who claims to be a revelator and

[Swedenborg] is saying that it is important to tell the story, and that the story stands in the place of miracles. Without the story people would not believe what the books say about the meaning of the Word.

to have seen into heaven. Swedenborg knew this perfectly well:

I foresee that many people who read the accounts of memorable occurrences that follow the chapters are going to believe that I fabricated them out of my own imagination, but I assert in truth that they were not made up. I truly saw and heard those things. (*True Christianity* 851)

Why was Swedenborg so adamant about publicly asserting this, when he knew that most people would not believe him? Why do Mormon evangelists repeat Joseph Smith's story?

Our lesson from *Spiritual Experiences* explains:

There are spirits who are averse to anything being said concerning the things revealed (to me), but it was replied that they are instead of miracles, and that without them people would not know the character of the book, nor would they buy it, or read it, or understand it, or be affected by it, or believe it. In a word, that they would remain in ignorance (of the whole subject) nor would wish to hear anything respecting the interiors of the Word, which they regard as mere fantasies. (*Spiritual Experiences* 4123)

He is saying that it is important to tell the story, and that the story stands in the place of miracles. Without the story people would not believe what the books say about the meaning of the Word. In short, he is saying the opposite of what we might expect.

We often think that people will be so put off by Swedenborg's claims of speaking with God and seeing into the heavens, that it is better to omit these stories, and instead tell people about the ideas. It would seem to make sense that the rational beauty of the explanations themselves will appeal much more than a recitation of Swedenborg's claim.

Why does Swedenborg seem to say the opposite?

Miracles establish the source of the teaching

It is often claimed that there is actually little that Jesus Christ taught that could not be found in the Old Testament and in Jewish rabbinical texts. The difference is in His story, in the miracles He did, and that He said that the words that He spoke were the words of God Himself.

Similarly, the Heavenly Doctrines tell us that there was little that was new in the Ten Commandments that the Israelites would not have known already:

Anyone can see that those commandments are the kind of laws that are well known everywhere on earth. (*Arcana Coelestia* 8862)

No one thinks the Israelite nation was stupider than other nations and did not know these things were evils. Anyone might be amazed, then, that these laws, universally recognized on earth as they are, were delivered on Mount Sinai in such a miraculous way by Jehovah Himself. I have been told, though, that they were delivered in this miraculous way so that people would know that these laws are not only civil and moral laws but divine laws as well. (*True Christianity* 252)

Why were the laws delivered in so miraculous a way? So that people would know that they were from God – that God was their source.

The critical importance of the story about the origin of the Ten Commandments is the idea that they are true and right because they are from God. The importance of belief in the New Testament story and its claims about the Lord is that it means that the things that it says are from God and are therefore true.

The same is also true about the stories that Swedenborg wrote, and his claim to have received revelations. Accepting the story means that what he wrote is true, that it is from God, and that these doctrines have authority in our life.

Accepting the truth of a particular appealing teaching in the Old Testament or New Testament is not the same thing as accepting their origin from the Lord. Similarly, accepting some particular appealing idea in New Church teachings is not the same thing as accepting its Divine origin. The same is true of every religion, because every religion has teachings that are appealing and true. We can love Mormons or Catholics because of the goodness of their people and the true ideas that they believe, without at the same time accepting Joseph Smith's claims or recognizing the authority of the Pope.

The difference is that whereas we can see good things in every religion, and love every person in the world according to their character, the teachings that have authority in our own lives are those that we believe come directly from the Lord. This is why our belief in the story of their origin is important.

Obviously, no one believes in a religion from the origin story alone. People look at every aspect of a church and its teachings before making up

This is why Swedenborg placed such an emphasis on his story. The same is true of the Joseph Smith story or the story of every religion. If we don't believe the story, we won't believe the teachings.

Our beliefs about where the ideas come from orient us and tell us what we can trust and depend on, and they give us hope for the future.

their mind about it. But in the end acceptance of the story of its origin marks a critical transition in a person's journey, from being attracted by a religion's ideas or the kindness of its members, to accepting the religion as their own.

If we don't believe the story, we won't believe the teachings.

This is why Swedenborg placed such an emphasis on his story. The same is true

of the Joseph Smith story or the story of every religion. If we don't believe the story, we won't believe the teachings.

When we celebrate Swedenborg's birthday on January 29, our message is that stories are important in our lives. It is not simply what we believe about what is right and wrong, or about how the world works, that is important. Our beliefs about where the ideas come from orient us and tell us what we can trust and depend on, and they give us hope for the future.

In ancient times this was the role of miracles. Today the story behind this revelation is in place of miracles, and it plays a critical role in the establishment of the Church, just as miracles did when the Lord sent out the disciples saying:

And as you go, preach saying, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. (*Matthew 10.7,8*)



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Our Heavenly Father

A Sermon by the Rev. Michael D. Gladish

First of a Three-Part Series on the Trinity

Lessons: *Isaiah 43:1-13; Divine Love and Wisdom 13;*
True Christian Religion 4

O Lord, You are our Father; we are the clay, and You our potter; and all we are the work of Your hand. (Isaiah 64:8)

This is the beginning of a three-part series on the Divine Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

As you know, the New Church teachings about this differ from many in the Christian world, and set this our church apart – for a lot of reasons. Yet somehow it seems we don't spend a lot of time on the subject. Perhaps we simply take our teachings about it for granted. But recall our second lesson (*Divine Love and Wisdom 13*) about how important it is to have a right idea of God. And notice the emphasis on this in virtually all the doctrinal works, such as *True Christian Religion*, the *Four Doctrines*, *Apocalypse Revealed*, and so on.

Because we are so accustomed to the idea of God as our Heavenly Father we may not realize just how different our concept is from that in other churches and *why* this difference is so important. So let's begin with the actual Biblical references to God as "our Father." You might think that this title is applied to Him throughout the Word, but the references to God as our Father are almost exclusively in the New Testament. In fact, you will search the Old Testament in vain for more than six or eight verses that directly refer to Him this way. One or two are in *Psalms*, three are in *Isaiah*, and one, very similar to *Isaiah*, is in *Malachi* (2:10).

It seems, for the most part, that the Jews must have considered this term a little too common or familiar for the infinite and awesome God they worshiped. Thus the first really strong reference to Him as a father is in *Isaiah* 9:6, the well-known Advent prophecy that calls Him "Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, *Father of Eternity*, Prince of Peace." Yes, this is often translated "Everlasting Father," but either way the emphasis is on rather distant, abstract qualities – not exactly the kind of father you and I normally think of when we use that title.

Later Isaiah does refer to God as “Father” in more familiar terms, but even then the image is not one of tenderness or affection, but of judgment and power. For the most part the concept of God as a loving, caring, compassionate heavenly Father is distinctly Christian, rooted in the *Prophets* and *Psalms* but only really developed in the *Gospels* and *Epistles*.

Why do you suppose this is so? Isn't it simply because this same God in the New Testament finally *becomes* a Man in visible, tangible Human form? Yes, Jesus speaks of Himself as the Son of God, but then, speaking of God as His Father, He also says, “I and My Father are one” (*John* 10:30), and further, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (*John* 14:9), or even more insistently, “Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me.” (*Ibid.* 11) Thus the awesome, fearsome, distant God of the Old Testament becomes the gentle, merciful, intimately present God of the New. Yet it is the same God, paradoxically as the philosophers would say, both immanent and transcendent. How can this be?

Well, we'll get into what we call “the incarnation,” the embodiment of God “in the flesh” in the second part of this series, but for now let's think about how and why God is called “the Father” at any time.

The best place to start is probably the prophet, Malachi, in chapter 2 where he complains about the corruption of the priesthood especially, and asks: “Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously with one another by profaning the covenant of the fathers?” Here he refers to the patriarchs of Israel, but makes the special point that we all have one Father, who is God, and so should treat one another as brothers.

It's a simple enough concept: God is the origin of everything, and so the term, Father, is used in a symbolic or metaphorical sense. We do the same thing when we refer to “the fathers of our country” or “the mother of invention,” or when we say, “the wish is father to the thought” (Shakespeare), or “the child is father to the man” (Wordsworth). Indeed, we often forget that the whole Bible is written in the language of symbols and metaphors.

But why don't the Jewish Scriptures refer to Him more often as our Father?

Well, for a start, God in all His perfection is of course Infinite! In one sense He can't even be described in personal terms but rather as an awesome, incomprehensible Being, Energy or Force.

In that sense His love is so intense it can be likened to the burning fire of the sun in the solar system, and His wisdom so brilliant that it is like the light that shines from that fire. You can't even look at this directly or you'll go blind, much less get close to it, or you'll be consumed in an instant. Yet both heat and light flow out from Him into every created thing; they are the source and cause of creation in the heavens and on earth. (*Divine Love and Wisdom* 83ff)

Even so, God is Human, but Divinely Human: His essence is the same love and wisdom that constitute any human life. It's just that prior to the incarnation

the only way this essential Humanity could appear to people on earth was in the person of finite humans who represented Him – angels, prophets or other messengers speaking on His behalf.

It was in order to make that Divine Humanity visible to people in all its perfection that He revealed Himself in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. In short, as the Psalmist said, “He bowed the heavens and came down” (*Psalms* 18:9), clothing Himself with the stuff of the material world so that He could be in touch with finite minds, and further so that finite minds could know and understand Him as Human and not just as some impersonal Force.

Even so, this was only the beginning. On a deeper level He came to experience what we experience, to confront and be confronted by every falsity and evil known to man, and so, finally, to overcome all these limitations in the resurrection – by which we can all be lifted up. (*John* 12:32)

So what we have in the Lord of the New Testament actually is the Heavenly Father – the Father of Eternity, the everlasting Father – in defined, specific, limited human form, yet a form that allows His infinite love and wisdom to shine forth – more and more as we appreciate what He was doing and how and why He did it. Remember, our humanity is not defined by our appearance, our arms, legs, fingers, toes or even the full functioning of all our physical senses. It is defined by our emotional and intellectual intelligence, in short, our love and wisdom – all of which comes from the Divine Humanity that is revealed in the Lord.

Remember, too, that Jesus said: “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (*Matthew* 28:18-20) Clearly in this as in the prophecy of Isaiah, the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit is the Lord Jesus Christ (which is why the apostles baptized into that name alone. (See *Acts* 8:16 and 19:5)

But why do we persist in referring to God as masculine and not feminine? Why is God our heavenly Father and not our heavenly Mother? Isn't the image of a mother – conceiving, forming, nurturing and giving birth – just as satisfying, or even more intimately satisfying in regard to creation and our common heritage than the image of a father?

Why do we persist in referring to God as masculine and not feminine? Why is God our heavenly Father and not our heavenly Mother?

The critical use of all revelation is that God communicates His love through His Wisdom in the Word – both the letter of the Word and its living, Human form. Therefore, God cannot appear to us as other than male – “our Father in the heavens.”

As you all no doubt know, many pagan religions honor female deities, and even Christian churches these days are adopting very clever ways of referring to God in gender inclusive language, some even in distinctly female terms. No doubt this helps many women feel more validated and included in the church, and yet the fact remains that the God of our Scriptures is invariably portrayed as male, and we believe that God assumed the masculine form in Jesus Christ, a Man.

As you can imagine, this is something we could discuss for hours. In the first place it is true that God always accommodates His revelations to the states of the people in specific times and cultures. So there is a

temptation to think that He portrayed Himself as male merely because that is what people expected, and the only way they could accept Him as an authority. But actually the Near East in Biblical times was full of female deities, so that’s not the answer.

No, for us the answer comes from the spiritual sense of the Word, and from our understanding of the real significance of the two sexes. Very briefly, this is how we see it: The male form is a form of love veiled over with wisdom. That is to say, the inner core of a man’s mind is love, specifically the love of growing wise, and the outer expression of that core is the wisdom (or what seems to him like wisdom) that he gains and uses to get things done.

The female form is just the opposite: it is wisdom veiled over with love. The inner core of a woman’s mind is a very deep, perceptive wisdom, often hidden, often very hard for her to explain, and the outer expression of that wisdom is the love she uses to connect with others, to build relationships and so also to get things done, though what she does may be very different than the things a man wants to do. (See *Conjugal Love* 32)

Applying this to the nature and appearance of God, we understand that the very essence of God is love – all powerful, all inclusive, merciful, creative and protective love. But what proceeds from and expresses that love is wisdom – profound, comprehensive, discerning, careful, prudent wisdom. And from a very practical point of view the critical use of all revelation is that God communicates His love through His Wisdom in the Word – both the letter of the Word and its living, Human form. Therefore, God cannot appear to us

as other than male – “our *Father* in the heavens.”

On the other hand, the church, which is intended to help us connect lovingly with God and one another, is consistently portrayed in Scripture as feminine, indeed as the mother who is to be honored in the second part of the fourth commandment. In the church we try to teach and share the truths of the Word, but like the inner wisdom of a woman it is all for the sake of the end, which is a good, kind, nurturing and charitable life in a relationship with God.

In some sense everybody knows that God is our Father. The problem we have with the Trinity is that the Lord in His own humanity often speaks as if He and the Father are separate and distinct beings. So the term, persons, is used to describe them even though it is acknowledged that God is and must be ONE.

Perhaps you have seen the classic diagram of an equilateral triangle within a circle, each point of which represents Father, Son or Holy Spirit – each of which is not the other but all of which are somehow God. This is called a mystery of faith and generally speaking people are not encouraged to try to understand it. But if so it might be said that the same person can be a father, a son, and a spirit, or that the word, person, comes from the Greek word for a mask, as in a theatrical mask, and refers to an outward appearance, not the inner reality. But this breaks down when it is said that the Father and Son have different natures, one that demands justice, and the other that is willing to suffer anything to satisfy that demand.

True, Jesus said, “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish” (*John* 3:16), but if this is understood as the work of two distinct persons then what you end up with (ironically!) is a form of what psychologists call “triangulation,” that is, one party placing blame or responsibility on another in an unhealthy or “dysfunctional” way – in this case God requiring that His Son be punished for things He did not do in order to satisfy His own need for justice. It’s just not nice. Nor is it really loving, since the guilty parties, ordinary people like us, never have to take responsibility for our actions, and so never really learn from our mistakes.

Now, of course, the people who believe in this will say that’s just the point. There is so much actual and hereditary evil in the world that no one could possibly atone for it all, and that is why God in His mercy sent His Son to atone for us.

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Note, the whole concept is based on the notion of a substitutionary Human sacrifice to appease the wrath of God. So which is it, wrath or mercy? Can the One infinite God be both wrathful and merciful? True, there is an *appearance* in the Old Testament that God is wrathful, but remember the statement, “No one has seen God at any time.” (*John 1:18*) Until the Advent people could only see the effects of God’s work,¹ which included all the consequences of human evil and falsity, which make God seem wrathful even though in His mercy He is just permitting us to have things our own way.

The New Church teaching about this is that God really is One and that what is called the Son of God is not someone different from Himself but *Himself* appearing for the first time in His own Human form – just as John said in referring to the Word that was in the beginning, that was “with God,” that “was God,” and that “became flesh and dwelt among us” so that we could behold His glory, “full of grace and truth.” (*John 1:1-14*)

In this way of understanding it the Father is like the soul in any man, only Divine, and the Son is like the body – the embodiment of that soul in visible form – and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth proceeding from His mouth. Stretching the analogy a bit we might even say that similarly the Constitution of the United States is the “child” of the founding “fathers.” It gives form to what until then was just an idea. And the spirit of it is its application to government and life. (But more about these things in the second part of this series.)

In conclusion to this installment, the question we all need to ask ourselves is what exactly all this has to do with us. And just so you know, the answer is – everything! First of all, if God sent His Son into the world to suffer and die for the sins of the human race, what difference does it make if we continue to sin? In fact, many Christian preachers will tell you it makes no difference; you are saved by faith. But if He came to subjugate the hells and show us His love and wisdom so that we could cooperate with Him we have a reason to strive – with His help – to improve.

Again, if God divides Himself into two distinct personalities so that He can play “good cop” or “bad cop” depending on the circumstances, and we are created in His image and likeness, isn’t this what we should do, too? If He’s indignant and wrathful shouldn’t we be indignant and wrathful, too? Is forgiveness really something that depends on others, or on some altered state?

No, the truth is God is nothing *but* love and mercy and forgiveness. He is our heavenly Father in the kindest, gentlest, most compassionate sense

¹ This is just as true for Moses on Mt. Sinai as for anyone else in the Old Testament, even though it says the Lord spoke to Moses “face to face.” (*Cf. Exodus 33:11; 20-23*)

we could ever imagine, but He works His compassion through an Infinite wisdom that can only be expressed in the truths that teach us how to cooperate with Him, since if we don't cooperate we can't receive His love and mercy.

That said, we do not pray to God in the name of Jesus as if He were a mediator negotiating on our behalf; we pray in His name in keeping with the qualities of His Divine love and wisdom, which is what His name represents. After all, when we pray we're not going to get whatever we want, we're going to get whatever is consistent with His love and wisdom.

So when we think of God as our heavenly Father let us think of our Lord, Jesus Christ, as He Himself plainly taught us to do saying, "He who sees Me sees Him who sent Me." (*John 12:45*) Let us remember Isaiah's words from our first lesson, representing the awesome God of the Old Testament:

Before Me there was no God formed, nor shall there be after Me. I, even I, am the Lord, and besides Me there is no savior. (*Isaiah 43:10-11*)

Finally, let us pray that as we go about our daily business in this world we may have a living, growing sense of the creative, redemptive, merciful and wise power of our heavenly Father who wishes nothing less for us than that we truly inherit His kingdom in a life of peace, fulfillment, use and blessing – for ourselves and all who constitute the human family.

Amen.

(Part II in the March/April issue: "The Son of God.")



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So when we think of God as our heavenly Father let us think of our Lord, Jesus Christ, as He Himself plainly taught us to do saying, "He who sees Me sees Him who sent Me."

What If...?

A Sermon by the Rev. Mark D. Pendleton

Readings: Genesis 8:15-19, 9:8-17; Luke 13:22-30; Matthew 8:5-13

(Note: This sermon was written at the request of a parishioner who is a long-term member of the Glenview New Church (where Mark is pastor) and a regular attendee at Sunday services. Mark responded to that request, crafting his message from the Scriptures and the theology of the New Church, doing so in a way that he hoped could effectively reach any newcomers who might be present.)

During discussion time following a contemporary worship service, a member of our congregation asked: “Can we hear a sermon sometime on the concept of the Lord’s universal church?”

It’s a good question. How far does the Lord’s Church spread itself? Two related questions are: “Who can be saved?” and, “How does that happen?”

I’d like to respond to the original request, but I’ll do so a little differently than we often do in the New Church.

To begin, I would suggest that the person who made the original request is in good company. When Jesus was alive on earth, someone asked Him: “Lord, are those who are saved few?” It’s a question that any sincere Christian might ask.

As a part of today’s topic, let’s also talk about paradigm shifts.

A “paradigm” is the way in which we understand something. It’s the accepted model we have for how something works. A “paradigm *shift*” refers to the move we make from understanding something in one way to understanding it in another. It’s a shift from one model for how something works to a new one.

One example of a paradigm shift over the centuries would be a shift in belief from “the world is flat” to “the world is round.” Another example would be a shift in a model of our solar system in which the sun moves around the earth, to one in which the earth moves around the sun. A more recent example is a shift in belief that ours is the only planet in the universe that is populated, toward a belief that there is life and even people on other planets in the starry heavens.

When we think of these examples, we can also reflect on the difficulty

with which our paradigms shift. Think of how difficult it may have been, for example, for people to shift from believing that the world is flat, to believing it's round. Think of how difficult it may have been for people to shift from believing that the sun moves around the earth, to believing the other way around.

One particular paradigm that has existed in certain branches of Christianity is the model of salvation – for how salvation happens. That paradigm says there is a Trinity of three individuals – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – who function together in caring for the universe. The paradigm suggests that, for one or another reason, the Son came on earth and died for our sins, and that those people are “saved” and go to heaven who know this, believe that it happened, and accept Jesus as their personal savior while they're alive in this world.

That particular paradigm/model for salvation is solidly based in New Testament Scripture. In *John* 3:16-18 we read:

God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He or she who believes in Him is not condemned; but he or she who does not believe is condemned already, because he or she has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Elsewhere in the New Testament Jesus said: “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” And in a number of Jesus’ healing miracles He said, “Your faith (in Me) has saved you,” and “As you have believed (in Me) so let it be done to you.”

In fact, it's nearly impossible to find anything in the New Testament that doesn't link salvation to faith/belief in Jesus Christ. And anything that seems to say something different or additional can be understood in such a way that it merges with the original model. The point is that the connection of salvation to faith in Jesus Christ is solidly true.

One of the downsides of this model or paradigm is that it has difficulty answering certain pressing questions in a deeply satisfying way. Questions like:

- What about all the people in the world who may grow up never hearing about Jesus Christ?
- What about all the people of other faiths who genuinely love their faith – so much so that they can't imagine switching to Christianity?
- If there are 7.5 billion people in the world, and only 2.2 billion of them are Christian, what happens to the remaining 5.3 billion? Are they all condemned?
- And what about the (potentially) countless number of people on other planets in the universe? What happens to them?

It's a real conundrum. And in a world in which religious freedom, religious tolerance, and human compassion and understanding are on a steep

incline, many people just no longer believe or accept the obvious answer to the question: What happens to the remaining 5.3 billion who aren't Christian?

One popular answer that I've heard to the question is, "I don't know. I don't know what happens to the remaining 5.3 billion. But I'm sure that God has a plan for them." And even though that answer isn't definitive, it can still be comforting to a compassionate, aching soul that caringly wonders about the 5.3 billion. It's certainly far better than the alternative: "They're all condemned."

But what if . . . ? What if the paradigm is . . . mistaken? What if the world *isn't* flat? What if the sun *doesn't* move around the earth? Is it possible that the way we Christians have historically understood the Trinity isn't quite right? Is it possible that the way we've historically understood faith in Jesus and belief in His name aren't quite accurate? Are these things *possible*?

Is there a way of understanding these things that is fully what the Scriptures and Jesus Himself say, different from what we're all used to, and still entirely true – such that the world really *is* round, and the earth really *does* move around the sun, and people of all faiths and cultures can be saved and find a place in heaven under the watchful care of the Lord Jesus Christ? What if . . . ?

For example, what if Father, Son and Holy Spirit aren't three distinct individuals, but rather, three aspects of one and the same God? I remember when I audited a college Comparative Religions course when I was in theological seminary in 1988. We listened to a guest lecturer, a Unitarian Universalist. After his presentation, one of the students asked: "Can you tell me again about the three persons in the Trinity?" "No," he said, "it's not three *persons!* I don't know *what* it is, but it's not three persons!"

Fast forward 20 or 25 years, and on one or two occasions I've heard that this idea of three *aspects* of one God is starting to come into Christian parlance.

What if the Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all wrapped up in Jesus Christ? After all, each one of us as a complete functioning individual has three distinct parts:

1. A soul
2. A body
3. And the work that we accomplish

Each one of us has:

1. Love in our hearts
2. Wise ideas in our minds
3. And useful services that we perform

What if it was the same for Jesus Christ? What if the "Father" that He so often referenced, prayed to, and appealed to is a reference to His own Divine soul? What if it's a reference to His own Divine love, the divinity within Him?

What if the "Son" so often mentioned in Scripture is a reference to His own body – the flesh-and-bones body that He took on through Mary, the glorified

body with which He rose into heaven following His crucifixion? What if the “Son” is also a reference to the “body” of knowledge, truth and wisdom that He brought into the world with Him, and that are manifestations of the Divine love within Him?

And what if the work of the “Holy Spirit” is a reference to His own work of enlightening people’s minds, and also reforming, regenerating and saving them?

What if Jesus Christ was YHWH, Yehowah, Jehovah, God the Father Himself come on earth in a human manifestation? What if God Himself came on earth to take on every temptation that hell could throw at Him, make choices against it, and in that way gain eternal mastery over everything hurtful and bad – so that all of humanity, for the rest of forever, throughout the entire universe, would be able to make those same responsible choices for themselves? Not that He would literally take our sins away from us – like a big magnet, magnetizing them all to Himself, or like a scapegoat taking all the sins of Israel off into the wilderness, or in some other way atoning for them, apart from our responsible choosing – but that He would face off with every possible sin, conquer it by His own power, and in that way maintain our ability to do the same thing, through our own responsible choosing, with help and power from Him? What if . . . ?

What if the “name” of Christ doesn’t mean just the literal name? What if it represents and embodies all of the loving qualities and true ideas that are wrapped up in who He is? Certainly, when we think of another person by name, we don’t just think of his or her name. Instead, the name brings to mind all that he or she is.

What if it’s the same with the name Jesus Christ, such that faith and belief in Him is a faith and belief in the quality of love, and in all the Divine wisdom that He brought with Him to earth? And what if faith or belief in the Lord Jesus Christ is not just an intellectual orientation, but also a living thing, which shows itself in responsible, loving, wise choices in life, informed by the truth of Jesus Christ, or more broadly, informed by the truth that exists throughout the entire Bible?

What if the Lord has seen to it that love, compassion and baseline truths of life –like the Ten Commandments or the Golden Rule – are available in one form or another in all faiths and cultures, to help guide people along heavenly paths? What about a person of any faith, or any culture, who believes in a Divine being or God outside of themselves, and lives a life of love, wisdom and useful service, based on the truth that exists where they’ve grown up? Is it possible that that person could have a silent, *living* acknowledgment (an acknowledgment or belief in heart and life) of who Jesus Christ is, and what He’s all about, though he may not know Him personally? Is it possible?

If these things are possibly true, then what we would have is a major

paradigm shift in who Jesus Christ is, what He's all about, and in the model of salvation:

- What we would have is a clear picture of the Trinity wrapped up in one knowable, visible, humanly accessible God – the Lord Jesus Christ.
- What we would have is a specific, specialized Christian Church on earth where the Lord is clearly known and loved, and also, at the same time, a universal church of the Lord on earth, where He may not be so clearly known, or where He may not be known at all.
- And what we would have is the possibility that all people – of all faiths and cultures – can be lifted up and saved from selfishness and materialism with the help of the one God, according to responsible choices, based in the spiritual truth that they know.
- What we would have are teachings like this one as they exist in the theology of the New Church:

It is mistaken belief that only those are saved who are born within the Church. Those who are born outside the Church are people as well as those born within it, being of the same heavenly origin, and are equally living and immortal souls. They also have a form of religion from which they acknowledge that there is a God, and that they ought to live well; and they who acknowledge God and live well become spiritual in their own degree and are saved. It is urged that these have not been baptized; but baptism does not save anyone except those who are spiritually washed, that is, regenerated, for baptism is a sign and a memorial of this. It is also urged that the Lord is not known to them, and that without the Lord there is no salvation. Salvation, however, does not come to anyone because the Lord is known to him or her, but because they live according to the Lord's commandments; and the Lord is known to everyone who acknowledges God, for the Lord is the God of heaven and earth, as He Himself teaches. (*Matthew 28:18* and elsewhere) What then is more mistaken than to believe that only these latter are saved and the former are condemned, and that a person gains heaven by his or her birth and not by their life? Therefore the Lord says: "I say to you that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven." (*Matthew 8:11-12*) Again, it is written, in *Luke 13:29*: Someone said to Jesus, Lord, are those who are saved few? He said to them, "People will come from the east and from the west, and from the north and from the south, and sit at table in the kingdom of God." (*Divine Providence 330:5-7; Secrets of Heaven 1032*)

Amen.



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The Internal Sense of the Word¹

The Rev. Dr. Erik E. Sandstrom

First, with NewSearch, we can discover that the phrase “internal sense” occurs 1,773 times in all the *published* Writings, i.e. the *Arcana Coelestia*, and the five works extracted from the *Arcana* in 1758,² including the *Apocalypse Explained*, which was prepared for publication by 1759, but never printed by Swedenborg. What is curious is that “internal sense” occurs only eight times in the rest of the published Writings after year 1758. By contrast, the phrase “spiritual sense” occurs 677 times, evenly distributed from the *Arcana* through *True Christian Religion*, 365 times up to 1758, and 312 times after it.³ So the term “internal sense” stops after the Last Judgment of 1757, but the “spiritual sense” keeps going.

Swedenborg was enlightened by the Lord to perceive the internal or spiritual sense of each phrase of Scripture, starting with *Genesis*, composing the Writings only “while I was reading the Word.” (*True Christian Religion* 779) That meant reading his 1646 edition of the Schmidius Bible. Sebastian Schmitt (1617–1696), had translated the Hebrew and Greek Testaments into Latin, and Swedenborg’s own marginal notes in his copy were the first notes as the meaning was revealed.⁴

Going back in history, the first human awareness of “the internal sense” of the Word, were plain Divine truths given by the Lord “face to face” with the Most Ancients (*Arcana Coelestia* 49, *Spiritual Experiences* 2591), also called “direct revelation.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 10632:3)

This face-to-face existed from Day 1 through Day 6 of *Genesis*, the “pre-Adamite” stage. The Lord would have addressed their low mental states,

1 Varies given as classes, most recently Cairnwood Village, April 2012.

2 *Heaven and Hell, Earths in the Universe, New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine, The White Horse and the Last Judgment.*

3 Internal sense is used four times as often as spiritual sense up to 1758. The phrase “internal or spiritual sense” occurs 44 times, 41 up to 1758, and only three times after it. The reverse, “spiritual or internal sense” occurs only 15 times, all up to 1758.

4 A photocopy of Swedenborg’s own Schmidius, including his marginal notes, is now available from Swedenborg Scientific Association. It can also be downloaded at <http://www.baysidechurch.org/bookscans/swedenborg-latin-bible/>

while “not going above their heads, but advancing by degrees to higher ideas as instruction advanced.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 2533:2) It lasted all through the pre-Adamite section of *Genesis* 1, from Day 1 to Day 6, maturing from being “natural and animal-like, they became spiritual.” (*Apocalypse Explained* 294.15, *Arcana Coelestia* 286) Then on Day 7, after the first human beings to reach the Most Ancient Church or Adam, had died, they could finally become celestial angels, or emissaries of the Lord. The Lord’s “face to face” lasted until then. (cf. *Spiritual Experiences* 2591)

Once celestial angels had arrived from humans on this planet, the Lord willed their eternal happiness by handing over to them the use of revealing the same things to successive generations of Adamites. The Lord, of course, did not “need their aid” in doing this work. (*Arcana Coelestia* 8719) “Shall the clay say, what are you making?” (*Isaiah* 45:9) Instead, the Lord wills to give happiness to angels by giving them eternal uses to perform.

Because the Most Ancients regarded the angel of the Lord as the Lord Himself, they knew the internal sense as Divine Truths from the Lord directly: They did not distinguish between the Lord Himself and the Word that He spoke, thus with them “*The Word was not.*” (*Arcana Coelestia* 3432:2 – added emphasis) Only the Lord “was,” i.e. they had no other Word than what *the Lord* gave, day by day. They lived by it the moment they heard it, and thus it was written “on their heart” and the Lord Himself was their “Word.” (*Ibid.*)

From this they were also fluent in the science of correspondences, which was to them the “science of sciences.” (T 210, 846; *Conjugal Love* 532; *Sacred Scripture* 20) While the internal or spiritual sense of the Word at that time constituted the Divine truths themselves, their “literal sense” so to speak, was their own external life in accordance with truth, thus regeneration.; as well as “nature as a theater representative of the Lord’s Kingdom.” (A 4489:3, 2758, 3483)

They knew the *meaning* or spiritual sense of all things of nature, “animals, trees, etc.” (*True Christian Religion* 833:2) They could look at the stars at night, and from that “think of the Lord’s kingdom” (AC 1809). They could look at anything, and know its meaning. “Such was also the Lord’s sight” on earth! Jesus the boy grew up to become “Lord and Master.” No wonder “the child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him. . . . And all who heard him were astonished at His understanding and answers.” (*Luke* 2:40,47)

Later the Lord knew “what was in their hearts,” and “saw Nathaniel under the fig tree” even before they met. (*John* 1:48) So, when the young Jesus read the Torah, the Nebiim or prophets, the Ketubim, or Psalms, He divined their Divine meaning, which contained *His entire glorification* laid out in the internal, celestial and Divine senses in the text. He knew all that was going to happen, down to His “thoughts.”

Thus by reading the story of Abram looking north, south, east and west (*Genesis* 13:14, *Arcana Coelestia* 1605), and Abram counting the stars at night (*Genesis* 15:5; *Arcana Coelestia* 1805), the Lord learned that from the internal sense that the salvation of all on earth – past, present and future – depended on Him. (*Ibid.* 1410, 1414, 1461, 2523) The Lord knew this internal sense, and the life ahead of Him, while yet in His infancy! (*Ibid.* 1616:3)

Now the internal sense is what yields Doctrine: “Doctrine is what the internal sense teaches.” (*Ibid.* 10400:3) “The internal sense is doctrine itself.” (*Ibid.* 9380:2) “The spiritual sense of the Word is the same – identical to the doctrine they have in heaven.” (*Heavenly Doctrine* 7)

So in the *Arcana*, and the *Apocalypse Revealed* and *Explained*, the internal or spiritual sense is drawn out, phrase by phrase, and right after that, from those phrases, Doctrine is constituted: This Doctrine is what John saw “as a city” (*Apocalypse Revealed* 896), and this deeper meaning of the Bible has “now been revealed out of heaven, and is called HEAVENLY DOCTRINE, presented in this book.” (*Heavenly Doctrine* 7)

Since the internal or spiritual sense is “as a soul to the literal sense” or Scripture, (*Sacred Scripture* 2), and since this spiritual sense is by itself “called the Word” (*Arcana Coelestia* 3712:2), therefore we have *The Word of Heavenly Doctrine* which is as soul to the body of the *Word of Sacred Scripture*. The Writings are to the Bible as soul is to body. Both are called the Word. (*Ibid.* 3712) Together they tell of the Lord’s Divine Human, for the Lord is present “in the spiritual sense [Writings] with His Divine, and in the natural sense [Scriptures] with His Human.” (*Invitation* 44)

Recording the Word

The internal sense was the truth the Lord spoke, face to face. The Most Ancient Church lived the internal sense, hearing it daily from angels, seen by them as the Lord Himself. As the Church declined, there came a first time to “record” the Word: those meant by *Cain* started “collecting doctrinal things lest they be lost,” (*Arcana Coelestia* 609) inventing writings for that purpose. (*Earths in the Universe* 115) This record is meant by the “mark of Cain”!

Later, those meant by *Enoch* “collected correspondences and transmitted this knowledge from the mouth of those who knew it,” (*De Verbo* 7 [3.5], 18 [7:3]), producing it in a “manuscript” which was preserved by *Noah* from destruction by the *Nephilim*, the last posterity, who would “offer injury to it.” (*Apocalypse Explained* 728:2) This document was “the internal sense itself . . . the Word.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 3432:2)

Where in the world do we find evidence of this preservation? It is speculation, but the “science of sciences” was preserved from the Most Ancient Church before the flood, to the First Ancient Church after it. Noah and his sons, mean the transition from Most Ancient to Ancient Church, including changes

in speech, breathing and hearing. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1118, 6072) The Word of Enoch is what preserved the science of sciences. From this Word, during the flood, “they knew the meaning of animals.” (*True Christian Religion* 833:2) They knew what all things of nature meant. While preserving a “manuscript” of meanings or the “internal sense, they pictured those meanings.

Now, in France, the world-famous cave art at Lascaux (19,000 B.C.) and more recently Chauvet cave (29,000 B.C.),⁵ and more recently still, in Altamira, Spain (46,000 B.C.). It is exciting to speculate that these are examples of exercises in correspondences. This could place the “flood” at the time of destruction of all Neanderthal peoples anywhere on earth, down to 35,000 B.C. and the simultaneous rise of Cro-Magnon people.

In the Holy Land (Tabun cave, Qafzeh cave, the Skhul cemetery⁶), both kinds of skulls have been found, some even seem mixed. We know that the brain structure was changed during the flood (*Arcana Coelestia* 4326), with the cerebrum becoming more prominent – just as evidenced with Cro-Magnon.⁷ So that would make Noah’s Flood end with the “chalcolithic”: cultures beginning around 18,000 B.C.

My theory therefore is that Enoch’s Word supplying the “texts” or “manuscript” of the internal sense, using caves as hiding places and as exercise books for the knowledge of correspondences, was preserved by “Noah” in the Ark – really Cro-Magnon people who arose at this time, i.e. ca. 35,000 B.C.

They were the “last posterity of the Most Ancient Church” keeping this “Word” – “this was their Word” – away from the Nephilim who would “harm” those texts. (*Apocalypse Explained* 728.2) Where better to exercise your knowledge of correspondences in secret than in caves? The “cave bear” cults of Switzerland, where Cro-Magnon encountered giant bears, would also indicate “the literal sense,” which is what bears represent. (*Apocalypse Revealed* 47) Cave art is full of bear images.



As well, the Aborigines in Australian lived from 60,000 years ago, right through this era, Noah’s contemporaries. They refer to it as “Dreamtime,” i.e. their contact with the spiritual world during the Flood. They are Cro-Magnon survivors, and their “dreamtime” is a living legend of knowing the internal sense of everything. Hence their

5 Images from Chauvet Cave art. http://images.search.yahoo.com/search/images;_ylt=A0PDoX8ABeJPS5DQABY0JzbfP?p=chauvet%20cave&fr=yfp-t-701&ei=utf-8&n=30&x=wrt&fr2=sg-gac&sado=1

6 See *New Philosophy*, “Adam, Noah and Stone Age,” April 1975 p. 215. Albright *From Stone Age to Christianity* 1975 p. 130

7 See *New Church Life*, “An Age-Old Advent,” January 1991 p. 19; part II, p. 75 part III p. 119

mural art, showing the skeletal animal figures. And their Dreamtime legend refers to both a serpent and a rainbow, the “rainbow serpent, called Borlung or Ngyalod.”⁸ They too have their wall-art, the famed “x-ray” animals.⁹

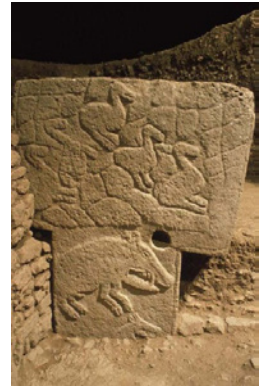
We know by now that there never was a Noah’s Flood of water, as described – although the last Ice Age ending around 12,500 years ago may have led to the imagery of a boat with animals etc. Thus the terminology used what people were used to experiencing. So Noah’s ark may be the Biblical evidence of an ice age ending. And prior to that era, there was cave art, perhaps the *real* Ark.

When agriculture began: “Noah began to be a farmer, and planted a vineyard.” (*Genesis* 9:20) All the animals in the ark stand for qualities of the human mind, so Noah’s ark means the new ordering of the human mind. Enoch “walked with God” was the internal sense of the Word preserved during Flood, “the knowledge transmitted . . . to posterity” (*De Verbo* 7=3.5) for the sake of the “coming churches after the deluge.” (*Apocalypse Explained* 728)

And the “cave bears” of Switzerland, where Cro-Magnon encountered huge grizzly-like bears, would also indicate “the literal sense,” which is what bears represent. They were preserving the “texts” of the internal sense.¹⁰

Ararat

To cap it off, they have recently found Gobekli Tepe¹¹ in Turkey, where Ararat, meaning “light” (*Arcana Coelestia* 850) also is. Gobleki Tepe looks like a much-refined Stonehenge (Britain, ca. 2,000 B.C.), but dating all the way back to 13,000 B.C.! It has animal figures carved into the stones everywhere. This structure just unearthed, I suggest, signals when and where “Noah came out of



8 *New Philosophy* 1988, Borlung and the Rainbow Serpent, p. 665.

9 http://images.search.yahoo.com/search/images?_adv_prop=image&fr=yfp-t-701&va=Australian+ab+original+wall+art

10 For Enoch and **Cave Art**, see *New Philosophy* 1975, “Adam, Noah and the Stone Age,” part I, p. 220; part II 1994, p. 504; *New Philosophy* 1983, “Towards a Universal Chronology,” p. 184, 193. *New Philosophy* 1986, “Science of Sciences,” p. 81.

11 Image: http://images.search.yahoo.com/search/images;_ylt=A0PD0Kr8BOJPwHcAXvuJzbf?_p=g+obekli+tepe&fr=yfp-t-701&ei=utf-8&n=30&x=wrt&y=Search

the ark” – i.e. where the first Ancient Church was established after the Flood. Noah, the farmer, means that the “doctrinal things of faith were preserved among them.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 780) The human mind, now ordered in the modern way we ourselves know, with a conscience to replace perception, culminates in this very ancient Stonehenge structure with animals inscribed all over it!

The Sphinx of Egypt is now thought to be about that ancient, 10,000 years old. At first it was just a lion. Pharaoh Cephes added his own face later. This huge lion, or Leo, was facing the constellation of Leo, with Regulus, in “Leo,” rising at the vernal equinox between 10,000 and 8,000 B.C., the “Age of Leo.” The nutation, or wobble, of this planet shifts every 2,150 years or so.¹²

Now we are coming into “the Age of Aquarius.” So the Sphinx may date long before the Pyramids, also indicated by the severe weathering – rain striation – on the back of the Sphinx, not found on any other Egyptian monuments. The last rainy period of Egypt was around 6,000 B.C. The Sahara was a lush paradise then, with its own wall paintings. Paradise, or the Garden of Eden, was a representative tract of land, usually located from the Nile to Euphrates (*Arcana Coelestia* 3686, 4447, 4516, 4517, 5135, 6516) but could well have included the whole Sahara, “laid waste” with the end of the Most Ancient Church. From cave art, Gobekli Tepe, the Sphinx, hieroglyphics and Ebla tablets, all display evidence of preserving the internal sense of the Word.

When they came out of the Ark, the Word of Enoch, which was “the internal sense of the Word,” started the Ancient Church. But there were problems in understanding this. “They fell into errors” (*Arcana Coelestia* 1072, 1079) meant by Noah’s drunkenness. When they overcame this problem by “interpreting everything for good,” and “excused the problems,” meant by Shem and Japheth covering Noah’s nakedness walking backwards (*Ibid.* 1085), they progressed to see internal things. From being “just a few,” (*Ibid.* 1126) their numbers grew into many nations and of intelligence superior to anything like today. (*Ibid.* 1224, 1253)

Since Enoch’s Word and the Ancient Word are referred to separately, that Enoch’s Word served through the Flood, and the Ancient Word was composed after it.¹³ It had a mastery of much deeper correspondences, thus more complex, than the later Old Testament stories. It was probably composed from “influx,” which did not apply to the Old Testament from *Genesis* 12 onward, which was written solely by “dictation.” (*Heaven and Hell* 254)

So *Genesis* 1 through 11 contain this much “deeper” more complex

12 The north-pole end wobbles, ending up pointing east on the vernal equinox to a different constellation each 2,100 years. The star-positions were part of Ancient church wisdom, as with the Magi. (*Apocalypse Explained* 422.20)

13 *New Philosophy* 1976, “From Enoch’s Codex to the Ancient Word,” p. 386-389.

literal text, and are the main part of the Ancient Word we still have with us today: We have the ancient Word! Read *Genesis* 1 through 11. It contains such a depth of doctrine, so successfully concealed, that even to this day people believe *Genesis* 1 actually describes Creation, that mankind began with just two people, Adam and Eve, living in some mystical Garden of Eden. But nothing of the kind happened.



Genesis 1 is of our human progress, maturation and regeneration; Adam was the human race; Eden human intelligence; Eve a turning; the serpent the origin of evil by man's own turning away, etc. The internal sense of the Ancient Word was most deeply concealed in made-up stories, composed after the flood as personalities linked into a tale. (*Arcana Coelestia* 4442)

So this dates the possible end of the flood, when the internal sense of the Word started civilizations again, in the chalcolithic era of human history: agriculture. That is how far back in post-diluvial times the internal sense of the Word goes!

Ebla

The decline of the Ancient Church came with idolatry and later with animal, or human, sacrifices, meant by Eber – a character found in *Genesis* 10, the Ancient Word. Now Ebla, mentioned above, was a city which flourished around 2,500 B.C. At an archeological site “Tell Mardikh” which Paulo Mattai the Italian archaeologist explored in 1964, in Syria, thousands of clay tablets¹⁴ were found, preserved ironically when the city was destroyed by fire: these tables have been interpreted, and refer *inter alia* to “King Ebrum” –possibly Eber, who began the “Second Ancient Church” in Syria, and from whom Hebrews descended (*Arcana Coelestia* 1137 et al.) – and they mention God named both “El” and “Jah,” (Elohim, and Jehovah of the Old Testament, *Psalms* 68.4, 102.18, 118.5 et.al.) as well as Biblical names like Adam, Saul, Dawud, Esau, Avraham, etc. They also refer to trade with Urusalim, Israel, Megiddo, Joppa and Sodom, Biblical places all. Even Sodom and Gomorrah occur.

Since place names, because of their spiritual meaning, were in Providence preserved from the time of the Most Ancient Church down through the Ancient, in Sacred Scripture (*Arcana Coelestia* 3686, 4447, 4516), consequently the Ebla tablets referring to these Biblical names also preserves something of

14 Image: <http://www.homsonline.com/EN/Citeis/Ebla.htm>

an internal meaning.

When the Hebrews – descended from Eber – were foreseen by the Lord to volunteer to enact the Church, consequently post-diluvial history became selectively meaningful. (*Arcana Coelestia* 2523, 2661) “*In those days, representatives came forth into actual realization.*” (*Ibid.* 1675, added emphasis) Events happened meaningfully, so that the angels could “rest” on this “representative of a Church” set up among the Sons of Israel.

Eventually, selections of this history were patched together, “just using such words as may in the internal sense corresponds to these arcana.” (*Ibid.* 1468e) From the original events being representative, the later record of them became significative – the meaning transferring from events to texts. “Things happened the way they did for the sake of the representation of what is contained in the internal sense.” (*Ibid.* 4756) That was why in Providence “Joseph came to Egypt and first served in the house of Potiphar” so that he “represented how the Lord progressively made the Human in Himself Divine, about which the Word was to be written, that it might contain Divine things in the internal sense.” (*Ibid.* 5307:3) That is why Joseph told his brothers: “God sent me before you.” (*Genesis* 45:7)

Moses started this recording of selective history during the 40 years in the wilderness, inspired by “Hebrew spirits” in the world of spirits, who dictated into his ear the exact words to write. (*Arcana Coelestia* 7055) “It was not influx, but dictation.” (*Heaven and Hell* 254)

One example of this link with heaven is the Tabernacle constructed in the wilderness. It was, in fact, copied by Moses: his eyes were opened to see the original version in the celestial heaven: “According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it.” (*Exodus* 25:9, 25:40; 26:30)

He “saw” the original tabernacle “in the celestial heaven . . . the plan of which was shown to Moses on Mount Sinai.” (*Conjugal Love* 75:8) So, just as all the place names had an ancient meaning, with the heavens resting on the actual geography of the “Holy Land” since the Most Ancient Church, consequently traveling to one or another place brought angelic contact accordingly. (*Arcana Coelestia* 3686, 4447, 4516, 4517, 5135, 6516.) That was why the Tabernacle was moved from place to place, and why the internal sense then reveals such an angelic meaning.

Thus, when Moses started writing – ca. 1,200 B.C. – he was provided with a copy of the Ancient Word to supply the first 11 chapters of *Genesis*. The Ancient Word was for “the Ancient Church” only. (*Arcana Coelestia* 10632) Now, with the Israelitish or “Third Ancient” Church, the Old Testament replaced the “more remote” Ancient Word and is thus called a “New Word” (*Sacred Scripture* 102), even though it is the “Old” testament, and it commenced by this dictation process.

It begins with the stories of Abram changed to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob changed to Israel, and Joseph: these contained “the Lord’s entire life, such as it was to be,” (*Arcana Coelestia* 2523) recorded in a psycho-spiritual drama of historical events, 1000s of years before the Lord was born. If this had not been done, the “angels could not have” waited for the Advent! (*Ibid.*)

The Old Testament continued with successive authors through the centuries, adding books down to 400 years before the Advent, when all prophecies ceased. Everyone wondered when the prophecies would be fulfilled.

When the Lord came, it was not a moment too soon. The link between heaven and the Church was maintained merely through the reading of the Torah, when the Church had become a “significant Church.” “Things *significative* . . . of heaven and the church, were what *at that time conjoined* the Lord with heaven and the world.” (*Apocalypse Explained* 638.16, emphasis added) This tenuous link was broken: “When . . . the connection between the human race and heaven was altogether broken . . . [and it] would have perished . . . the Lord then came into the world, and . . . in Himself, conjoined heaven with earth.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 2243:6, 7)

The Lord, by taking on “just that which was with the . . . angels” (*Ibid.* 6371), was the “Word made flesh” – i.e. “all truth was with the Lord prior to instruction” (*Ibid.* 1469), by His Advent into the world, transferred the last link between heaven and the Church, at that point “altogether broken . . . into Himself.” (*Ibid.* 2243)

He restored the link to the Torah by studying His own Word. (*Ibid.* 1410, 1414) Although He knew everything already, He nonetheless had to acquire the external forms of such knowledge. (*Ibid.* 1482) Thus He instantly could *divine* the meaning of the Torah, really the Tenach – all the Hebrew Scriptures at that time. Thus, from the very first awareness of who He was, He studied the Torah, gaining the outward knowledge to go with His Divine omniscience. (*Ibid.* 1469, 1492, 1495, 1496) He read His own life-story before it happened! (*Ibid.* 1461, 2523).

That was why in the Nazareth Synagogue the Lord began His ministry by fulfilling the very *Isaiah* scripture that prophesied how He would begin His ministry. “The spirit of Jehovah is upon Me, He has anointed Me to preach the gospel . . . preach deliverance . . . and the acceptable year of Jehovah.” (*Luke* 4:18, 19; *Isaiah* 61.1, 2)

He fulfilled this in the very act of reading – for the internal sense means “the Advent of the Lord to save those who are ignorant of truth and desire it,” and to “execute judgment.” (*Prophet and Psalms, of Isaiah* 61.1) And, “The Lord as to the Divine Human is the one whom Jehovah anointed.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 9954:12) That is why He then sat down and said, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” (*Luke* 4:21) No wonder they tried to throw Him “over the cliff”! (*Ibid.* 4:29)

The Lord enacted the internal sense before their very eyes. Now, to preserve an internal sense in all that the Lord said, He “spake not without parables.” (*Matthew* 13:34) The resulting *Gospels*, all His sayings, therefore also have an internal sense.

Did the disciples know it? Yes, at least a lot of it: “When the Lord was alone with them, He expounded all things to them.” (*Mark* 4:34) He told His disciples about the internal sense of everything He had said. This is the “interior truth” the Lord revealed to the Christian Church. (*Apocalypse Explained* 948) But some of that Christian “interior truth” finds its way into the *Epistles*, which were plain language and easier to understand, and could not be profaned, because they have no internal sense. (Letter to Beyer 2; *Apocalypse Explained* 815:2; *Spiritual Experiences* 4824)

The Heavenly Doctrine now present “still more interior truths” for the New Church (*Apocalypse Explained* 948), extending the Lord’s private “expounding” (*Mark* 4:34) to the greatest possible completeness, to last us for the rest of history. But the Apostles had an inkling – 2,000 years ago – of everything we know today.

For example, the *Epistles* have the same doctrinal content as the *Writings* express more fully: “In Christ dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” (*Colossians* II.9) “He is the true God and eternal life.” (*John First Epistle*, 5:20); “The letter kills, the spirit gives life.” (*2 Corinthians* 3:5, 6) The *Writings* say it with more completion, supplying the entire structure to the *Writings*.

The *Gospels* however, back then could be profaned, just as easily as the Old Testament, which would harm their internal sense, so the Lord in Providence permitted the Christian Church to focus on the *Epistles* (*Spiritual Experiences* 4824) They have no internal sense to harm. But if one wants to find the internal sense in the *Gospels*, look for the plain “hand and face” passages. They have no clothing, and are labeled the “doctrine of genuine truth.” (*T* 229, *Sacred Scripture* 55) All of the *Writings* can be extracted “in full” from the *Gospels* and *Revelation*, as well as from the Old Testament.

“The doctrine of genuine truth” or hand-and-face passages abound in both Testaments, meant by Moses’ face shining – the spiritual sense beaming in the scriptural text. (*Exodus* 34:35; *Arcana Coelestia* 10607:2, *T* 209:2e) One main “hand and face” truth is the Golden Rule: “As you would that others do to you, do even so to them.” The internal sense in the open.

An example of a hand-and-face passage in the Old Testament is: “My doctrine shall drop as the rain, My speech distil as the dew.” (*Deuteronomy* 32:2) Water means truth in the Lord’s Word. So also with the Two Great Commandments, on which “hang all the law and the prophets.” Love the Lord and the neighbor mean faith and charity, the essentials of salvation. (*True Christian Religion* 357)

The entire Law and the Prophets, Old Testament, can be interpreted in

terms of love to God or faith in Him, and love of the neighbor. This applies to the New Testament as well: “He who keeps My commandments, he it is who loves Me.” (*John* 14:15,21) Faith and charity are the key to discovering the spiritual sense of the Word.

And in the Parable of the Sower the Lord gives the internal: “The seed is the Word of the Lord.” Here the internal sense as given is called “the doctrine of genuine truth,” i.e. a hand-and-face passage, because it is in the text of Sacred Scripture. It is the spiritual sense appearing within the natural context. Still, the *Gospels* are written in a representative language.

In the Writings, of course, the hand-and-face passages from *Genesis* and *Exodus* expand into a spiritual sense, which then merges into all doctrinal statements. “The case herein is this” occurs hundreds of times. The Writings basically *are* hand-and-face passages, all the way through – except when citing Scriptures. All doctrinal statements are composites of the internal sense given earlier. “Doctrine is what the internal sense teaches.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 10400:3)

All truth that the Church received from the Lord He taught “from His own mouth” (*Ibid.* 9818), but it was as far as we know not recorded by anyone at the time of hearing. Maybe a few folks jotted down notes, but none have been found. Whatever existed was superseded by the written *Gospels*, when they were finally revealed. We surmise, however, that the *Gospels* were spoken, an oral tradition for a couple of decades after the Easter resurrection.

The Lord then brought to “their remembrance” all He had said, just as He had promised the Spirit of truth to them. (*John* 14.26; 16.4) When He again revealed Himself it was the Holy Spirit, using angels again to dictate, since the *Gospels* and *Revelation* contain a spiritual sense: only when angels dictate is there an internal sense. (cf *Heaven and Hell* 254)

The Lord’s revelation and leading, now called Holy Spirit, came to the disciples notably at the time of Pentecost: each apostle spoke on his own accord, but from the influx of the Holy Spirit. (*Apocalypse Explained* 455.22; *True Christian Religion* 154; *Acts* 2:3,4)

The Holy Spirit

Before the Advent, the Lord had flowed in by means of “transflux.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 3061) Whenever angels were used, “The Word of Jehovah came unto me, saying . . .” it was dictation. (*Heaven and Hell* 254) That was before the Holy Spirit came about. Now, after the Advent, it was the Holy Spirit dictating. The Lord commenced this new enlightenment when He breathed on His disciples after the Resurrection and said, “Receive the Holy spirit.” (*John* 20:22, *Lord* 51)

The difference from that time on was that the Lord Himself could inspire all human beings both as to the internal and external man at the same time.

(*True Christian Religion* 109; *Arcana Coelestia* 3145:3, 2776:3, 4180:5) His breathing on His disciples signaled a new manner of composition, so that the *Gospels* and *Revelation* contain a spiritual sense, different from before the Advent.

The first major post-Advent product of the Holy Spirit was to inspire this composition. The New Testament became "the Word written by the Evangelists," (*Arcana Coelestia* 2895) providing a correspondential linkage between heaven and the Church. Only when there is an internal sense in a literal sense does such a conjunction take place.

In order for anyone to receive enlightenment to see this spiritual sense, as Swedenborg was given to see it, a great miracle had to happen. Such intromission into the spiritual world, Swedenborg is inspired to write, "surpasses all revelations and all miracles" ever given. (*Invitation to the New Church* 43, 44, 52, 55) And how was it effected? It was by the "separation of [Swedenborg's] intellectual faculty" (*Coronis Miracles V*), allowing him to be fully intromitted into the spiritual world, while still living in this world. It went on for 29 years!

Such a possibility is a norm for all of us; everyone has an inherent capacity to experience what Swedenborg experienced, since "all of us are spirits within our own bodies." (*Ibid.*) Yet, such a great miracle as Swedenborg walking and talking to all those who live in the spiritual world, is a "miracle surpassing anything granted to anyone since creation." (*Invitation* 52)

The gift of the internal or spiritual sense of Scripture was part of the same event: Swedenborg, after finishing witnessing things in the spiritual world, came back to the normal state of us all, but with him his hearing was opened, (*Apocalypse Revealed* 36) Nothing, however, was ever written, during vision!

"When they were in the spirit or in vision, they were not in the body, but in their spirit, in which state they saw such things as are in heaven; but when the Word came to them, then they were in the body, and heard Jehovah speaking. These two states of the prophets are to be carefully distinguished." (*Apocalypse Revealed* 36)

So the Word was only written, after visions ceased, when they came back "into the body." A second state then began, with inspiration how to write what was just witnessed. "Write the things which you have seen" John was told. (*Revelation* 1:19) Swedenborg avers: "This is true, from the experience of many years." (*Apocalypse Revealed* 36)

Writing anything of revealed truth only happens after the visions, or experiences, are over, and the "writer" is back to his full senses on the earth. Only then is there a second phase, namely of writing. However, in Swedenborg's case, unlike both the Old and New Testament, no angels and or spirits were involved in this second phase: it was "from the Lord alone." (*T* 779) "No angel wished, and no spirit dared to tell him anything of the Word, or doctrine

drawn from the Word. I was taught by the Lord alone who was revealed to me. . . . He has enlightened me.” (*Divine Providence* 135)

So there was a meaningful influx whereby Swedenborg could discern the spiritual sense from the Scripture laid open before his eyes – the Holy Spirit inspired directly. That marks the distinction of how the Writings were composed, unlike the two Testaments: the Old by “dictation” from “transflux,” and the New by the Holy Spirit, “the spirit of truth” by inspiration to assembly memories of what happened. “I will bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.” (*John* 14.26, 16.4) So the New Testament Scripture also was by dictation using angels. There is a spiritual sense.

The earliest version of the “Word of the Evangelists” has this spiritual sense. Scholars suppose that the *Gospels* took a couple of centuries to reach their present format, being *Codex Sinaiticus* found at Saint Catherine Monastery, Sinai (350 A.D.). But this progression of oral into written records was the work of “the Holy Spirit, after the Lord’s resuscitation.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 9818:18) And because the Lord began to open up the internal sense on earth, the *Gospels*, like the *Psalms*, often state the internal sense clearly, as the “doctrine of genuine truth,” thus on the surface. The blessings and the Lord’s Prayer are examples of plainly spoken truths, even though these still contain a deeper doctrinal meaning. The Golden Rule and the Two Great Commandments are other examples of plainly stated Divine truth, as we saw.

The Writings

Since the Writings were not dictated using angels, by this token they do not have an internal sense, but are “doctrinal writings,” just as Swedenborg labeled the *Epistles*. (Letter to Beyer 2) Thus the Writings are the purest product of the Lord’s direct dictation, the closest to “face-to-face” revelation since He proclaimed the first words of “Let there be light” to the Pre-Adamites of *Genesis* 1.

The Lord as Holy Spirit spoke the Writings directly: the Old Testament was dictated by angelic spirits, from transflux – Lord inflowing through heaven; the New Testament was dictated by the Lord’s Spirit of Truth, out of heaven, still using spirits or angels (*Arcana Coelestia* 9818). But the Writings, also “out of heaven,” were composed without angelic dictation. Thus they are the work of the Holy Spirit, purely and simply, and can have no other meaning than what is plainly stated. Nothing spiritual, celestial or Divine can escape being expressed to the “rational comprehension in natural language.” (*De Verbo* 6) The Writings are the only revelation we can take literally, giving us the internal sense of all of Sacred Scripture.

There are, of course, endlessly deeper views of the Writings. Who has not read, and re-read them, for an ever-deepening view! But this comes from an accumulation of memories of other passages! We assemble many passages

in our minds, over time. So a deeper view emerges, but only as the Writings themselves describe this very method: collecting passages on the same subject, while not adding anything of our own conclusion to it.

The Writings put it: “Matters of doctrine concerning good and truth have first to be gathered into unity, since they . . . have mutual connections one with another and relate one to another. Consequently, unless they are first gathered into unity, a defect would exist and things that are missing would have to be supplied from the person’s rational . . . [which is] blind and deluded . . . as spiritual and Divine things are concerned when it relies on itself. . . . To the Church therefore the Word has been given which contains *all* matters of doctrine concerning good and truth.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 3786:2)

We assemble passages by their “mutual aspect and regard.” They are on the same subject. From the Concordance to NewSearch we gather the passages “by their mutual connection and relation one to another.” We bring them into a unity, or oneness, from their “mutual regard” to each other. Thus “*all* doctrinal matters have been given to the Church.” The Word is complete. Would the Lord reveal something incomplete?

The Writings are all such doctrinal things, given to the Church. The Writings have *all* the answers! we say. We research by gathering passages on the same topic, yielding an ever deeper view of the truth. The Writings can thus be seen to be both a topography and a travelogue of the spiritual world.

There is nothing to add, nothing to subtract. To “add something that seems lacking” risks jumping to “deluded” conclusions. This same point is made in *Apocalypse Revealed* 959, the meaning of adding to or taking away from the Revelation – the Apocalyptic warning in *Revelation* 22:18-19: “If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues written in this book; and if anyone takes away from . . . them, God shall take away his part from the book of life, from the Holy City.” This means “that one shall not add nor take away anything from the truths of the doctrine concerning the Lord and concerning faith in Him.” (*Apocalypse Revealed* 959)

We just add to the truths everything we know from elsewhere, to confirm the truths of the Word. “We confirm them by whatever rational ideas, and by whatever factual knowledge, indeed by any philosophical concepts, which [we] are able in any way to make use of.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 2568, cf. 2588)

Why don’t the Writings say everything just once? Why do they repeat so often?

The Writings answer that too: “Things stated elsewhere cannot be closely connected with those written later” and so they have to be “repeated and presented to view together.” (*Divine Providence* 193)

There is too much truth to be said once and for all. So all the Doctrines have been given in a plethora of contexts, so that many passages make any doctrine into a solid object.

Images of the Writings.

The Writings give us this understanding by drawing out the spiritual sense of Sacred Scripture. In an experiment, Swedenborg found that the angelic language, which “coincides entirely with the spiritual sense of the Word” (*Arcana Coelestia* 4387), could not be transferred into natural language: “It was impossible.” (*De Verbo* 4) Nonetheless, “all spiritual, celestial and Divine Truths” can and have been put into “natural language, to our rational comprehension.” (*Ibid.* 6; or 3.4).

The Writings thus liken themselves to the “light of heaven” entering our eyes, variegated by different colored gems, in crystal vessels, contained by a marble vessel. Or they are just as wine in a crystal goblet. (*Apocalypse Explained* 1087:2; *De Verbo* 6, or 3.4) We drink the wine, i.e. the doctrines, but just touch the goblet to our lips and the rational terminology conveys the doctrine to our mind. (*Cf. De Verbo* 6)

So we have to bring like passages together, by their own mutual links of subject matter, for a single view of any chosen topic. That kind of research has established the New Church, specifically the Academy and General Church. “The Church is from the Word” (*Sacred Scripture* 76), or “from its understanding.” (*Ibid*) The Writings supply the only correct, authentic, understanding of the Word [of Sacred Scripture]: “Now it is permitted to understand.” (*True Christian Religion* 508)

Finally, since “The internal sense has been disclosed by the Lord, and the doctrine of genuine truth now revealed” (*Sacred Scripture* 25); and since the “internal sense has now been given to the public in the Doctrine of the New Jerusalem” (*De Verbo* 21), it is self-evident that the Writings as published – ever since *Arcana Coelestia* volume one in 1749 in London, through *True Christian Religion* in 1771 in Amsterdam, on through all the translations printed ever since, that the Writings present this very internal sense and doctrine.

This was known as the “science of sciences” to the Most Ancients and Ancients. They incorporate whatever was found in the Word of Enoch during the Flood, explaining the “meaning of all cave or wall art,” the contents of Ebla tablets, of hieroglyphics. The Writings constitute Heavenly Doctrine, constitute the city seen by John. “To present this Doctrine is the purpose of this book (or work).” (*Heavenly Doctrine* 7) You can buy them. Only how they sound when spoken out loud differs from the language of heaven. “They sound different.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 8862; *True Christian Religion* 280)

And the revelation of the internal or spiritual sense of the Word makes angels and human beings worship the Lord side by side. When John bowed to the angel (*Revelation* 19:10, 22:8) the angel reprimanded John, “See that you don’t do that.” The internal sense means we are “consociated with or adjoined to” angels by the Heavenly Doctrines. (*Apocalypse Revealed* 818, 946)

We may compare the “text” of Sacred Scripture with the “text” of Heavenly Doctrine, or the Writings, when laid side by side, as differing by quasi discrete degrees. This is when two things in consecutive or successive order – the telescope pulled out – are actually on two levels, one above the next below. When these come into simultaneous order – the telescope pushed together – all levels look concentric. The image looks like a target, with a bull’s eye, inner and outer. These are quasi discrete degrees.

Now the text of the Writings in the bull’s eye is still “higher” than the Sacred Scriptures in the “outer” ring. The outer is the “container and foundation” of the inner. (*True Christian Religion* 214) But the bull’s eye – the Writings – are now given to us in their own text, still quasi higher than the Bible. Angels and humans are on the same level – consociates – where the *Heavenly Doctrines* are concerned. Perhaps this helps us see why John was told not to bow to the angel.

Whereas *Sacred Scriptures* by its spiritual sense conjoins heaven and the Church, the Writings being the same except for how they sound, consociate angels and men. *Consociates* trumps conjoins: we are siblings with angels as to Doctrine – the Writings. “From this it is now apparent that the Word’s spiritual meaning was to be revealed for a New Church that will acknowledge and worship the Lord alone, hold His Word sacred, love Divine truths, and reject faith divorced from charity.” (*Divine Providence* 264:5)

The Lord prevents profanation of His Word. Prior to 1757, the entire *Arcana* abounds with phrases such as “more of this of the Lord’s mercy below,” hedging against profanation which would have happened had these truths been presented “before the Last Judgment.” If the internal sense had been presented too plainly, before 1757, “they would have profaned it.” (*Lord* 61)

The Lord prevented it, by performing the Last Judgment, clearing the world of spirits of false heavens led by hypocrites, and also, perhaps, by removing the threat of the Inquisition on earth, where the plot against the internal sense of the Word may have threatened the Second Advent.

Despite obstacles, the revelation of the internal sense of the Word has established the New Church. Thank the Lord.

Swedenborg as Means

The reason the Writings explain how you need enlightenment, the knowledge of correspondences, and the doctrine of genuine truth – those hand-and-face passages – or you need to be regenerated in order to discern the spiritual sense of the Old and New Testaments is that at that time that is exactly what you needed! Plus, we would not believe the doctrines were drawn from the Sacred Scriptures otherwise. The Writings show their hand, saying this is how we did it!

That the Lord granted Swedenborg Divine enlightenment, and gave him

such knowledge in order to carry out the task of drawing out the spiritual sense, yielding the Heavenly Doctrines, thus effecting the Lord's Second Advent, is actually prophesied in Daniel: "And I stood before Him, trembling." (*Daniel* 10:11)

This means: "The sight of man's spirit is opened. For what is in the heavens cannot be seen by the eyes of a man's body, but are seen by the eyes of his spirit; and when it seems good to the Lord these are opened, and man is then withdrawn from the natural light that he is in from the bodily senses and is raised up into spiritual light, which he is in from his spirit. In that light the things in heaven have been seen by me." (*Heaven and Hell* 171)

That is also why we read in *True Christian Religion* 779: "This second coming is taking place by someone whom the Lord has filled with His spirit . . . to present the teachings of the New Church. . . . I testify in truth that the Lord has manifested Himself to me, his servant. . . . What I have received has come from the Lord alone while I was reading the Word."



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OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY

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

MUTUAL LOVE

Here we have a term which is used in various ways. It refers to the love of the neighbor more than oneself which is characteristic of the celestial kingdom. Elsewhere it is taken for charity, or spiritual love; and in other places it is contrasted with friendship in the teaching that mutual love regards the good in man, and being directed to good is given to him who is in good, whereas friendship regards the man for the sake of self. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 2057, 3875; *Apocalypse Revealed* 353)

A related term is the good of mutual love: the good characteristic of the external of the celestial kingdom, the celestial-natural heaven. This is said to be the affection of good for its own sake and the external good of innocence. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 9741, 9912)

The ‘Young People’ of the Church

Tomoya Okubo

As New Church societies, we like talking about young people. We'd like to see them in our church, and we put a lot of effort and resources into making strategies and plans toward that end.

Perhaps we can look at young people differently.

From the perspective of eternity, as the Lord sees us, I wonder how we all look in terms of youth. Some of us may be 30 years old, some 80. Who are the young among us? Is the difference of 50 years on earth significant somehow? I do not think it is. I feel that our youths are not any different among us, in that sense.

Yet, there is indeed such a thing as true youth. It must be of our soul. The 30-year-old may be confident of his apparent youth, sure of his contribution to the society, and even certain of his spiritual salvation in secret. The 80-year-old may be regretful of her apparent old age, unsure of her contribution to the society, and even certain of her spiritual condemnation in secret. Contrary to how they might appear to our eyes, it could well be that the 80-year-old has far more youth in her soul than the 30-year-old does in his.

I believe that the young people we look forward to seeing in our church have never been, and will never be, somewhere out there in the world. They are all already here.

I believe that the young people we look forward to seeing in our church have never been, and will never be, somewhere out there in the world. They are all already here. They are every one of us who is in the church this day. We are the young people with the true youth veiled inside of us, where the newness of a New Church may flow forth.

And our true youth will be solely in this: we are still, and will always be, the poor and needy ourselves, with the heartfelt longing for the Holy and

Sacred. We seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness first, singularly from our confession that we are no more than sinners before the Lord.

With the same passion and devotion that we have shown for so long for the youth outside of us, we can turn around and start reaching into this youth inside of us. I am afraid that we cannot truly look to two destinations at the same time.

Within every one of us, there seem to be two faculties that look to two opposing destinations. One is the Martha, and the other, the Mary. The Martha in us starts her conversations with her “uses.” She drives us to look outward and reach out, speaking in the language of “we should.” The Mary in us, on the other hand, starts her silence with her “yearning.” She is driven to reach in, speaking in the language of “I need.”

Our church seems a house where the Martha in us has been speaking for so long. Martha does not know any better than to compel Mary to get up and walk away from the Lord so that Mary may be put to the “uses” that Martha herself has already defined, dictated, and declared as important – or even essential – for the church. I fear that she has been speaking at the expense of the silence the Mary in us requires. The Mary in us wishes to remain seated quietly at the feet of the Lord from the heartfelt acknowledgement that she does not have the truths nor can do good on her own.

A church that is to become new must be one that is bound to face on all fronts – with far more subtlety and severity – the same temptations that have haunted the churches of the past. The churches that have grown old have all succumbed to the persuasions that are the opposite of that of the Mary in us, namely, that we already have the truths and good in our pockets, and therefore, that we can see our own uses visibly before us.

When truths and good become the property that are readily at our disposal, our confidence in this property always affects the direction we look. In one form or another, we will come to deem ourselves causally responsible for others’ spiritual state and fate, and in so doing, turn away from the Word to the world. We place priorities in reaching out instead of reaching in, in educating instead of seeking, and in leading instead of being led. And if we are in some ways inhibited from offering what we are confident of already possessing in our own pockets, we take thought for the morrow of our church, often with relentless certainty, even in the name of our love for the church and our service to the Lord. What we seem to keep disregarding, however, is the inevitable contradiction that stems from this property of our own.

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A church that is to become new must be one that is bound to face on all fronts, with far more subtlety and severity, the same temptations that have haunted the churches of the past.

On one hand, we advertise to the world that we have the wonderful spiritual truths, the accompanying charity, and the great uses, which are all capable of fulfilling the spiritual needs of those young people out in the world. On the other hand, however, these very things we are sure of having in our pockets have never truly fulfilled our own souls. Standing alone, we are sorrowful and anxious; we do not have that very peace ourselves.

With those who lead, this sorrow may persuade us that the Word cannot be the only source from which truths are to be taught. With those who are led, our anxiety may generate in us the

impression that we have too many truths but not enough charity. The more we remain certain of the truths and goods in our pockets, the more we implant ourselves in our look outward, inadvertently placing ourselves also in the direct line of the state of the world.

The world may be gentle or even helpless in appearance, but it is still fiercely grounded in its own tenet. Prompted by frequent recitations that we are to serve “uses” while unaware of how completely powerless we are in this posture, we face the world only to fall its easy prey. With the property of our own in our pockets, the world never fails to persuade us that we are indeed something of our own.

Like the strike of a serpent, perhaps, the influence of the world is quick and painless but slow-acting. As we subscribe to its tenet unawares, it targets the framework of our very perception, which dictates how we pose a question and what we come to recognize as our needs. We invariably start to lose sight of whom we are to serve first. In this state, the Word begins to appear dim and disappointing in its capacity to satisfy the world with answers to its questions, while we find ourselves swelling up with expectations for our own charity also to be made visible into this world. Driven by our sorrow and anxiety, we now seek our salvation and peace not in the Word but in the world.

The truths and good that have become our own are an irksome yoke and weighty burden. In the process of fitting into our own pockets, they have been reduced and molded into finite forms that are visible to our prudence and measurable to our bodily senses. As a result, in place of the innocence that would direct our sight to the Lord, they generate the gravity that captivates our most immediate regard with respect to ourselves. The cost we pay for this finite

property is insidious to our souls; they keep us ever unaware of the tight grips on the one role that we have been falsely appropriating to ourselves all our life: The role to define, dictate and declare the “uses” that we are performing. The Martha in us has now gone too far.

When the dawn breaks, is not our own shadow bound to appear in the opposite direction, extending far larger than the mere speck of dust that we really are? When truths approach us, we are inevitably tempted by this apparition of our own that incessantly beckons us to turn around and gaze into it. When we start to feel the need for a source of light and heat other than the Sun that has already risen, there must be a reason. Are we not gazing into the shadows of our own?

Without exception, every one of us has unwittingly inherited the lust for the ancient persuasion in the property of our own. As it is rooted deeply and entirely within our will, we are all here to struggle even to the point of despair. This struggle of ours manifests in us from the early age as that drive to ascribe this very life and everything pertaining thereto to none other than ourselves. We so trust that we indeed have the truths, that we can do good, and that we are therefore able to see our uses before our eyes. The New Church, however, must be founded upon the trust in the complete opposite.

In the spirituality of a New Church, we are led to become more and more aware of our falsities and our evil through the temptations that none of us can ever avoid going through. The process is gradual and individually unique, but the results of our temptations are always toward the same acknowledgement that we do not know truths – not even in particular but also in general – nor do good on our own, and thus, that the uses that are visible to our self-reflection are themselves nothing in significance. We are the blind who have come to know that we are indeed blind, incapable of leading ourselves, let alone others, to the heavens. It is in this state, however, that the true uses of a church may finally come to be embodied through us in the manner as follows:

But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly. (*Matthew 5:7*)

We so trust that we indeed have the truths, that we can do good, and that we are therefore able to see our uses before our eyes. The New Church, however, must be founded upon the trust in the complete opposite.

The uses from the church are quite unlike the uses from the world. They are not straight from our abilities that might have appeared obvious to us before, but instead from behind our disabilities that are now obvious to us this very day. The absence of our self-reflection is what is signified by “in secret,” and this is the innocence that is often looked down on in the uses of the world but is always looked up to in the uses of the church. These two distinct uses may manifest through us as follows:

In the world, we live in the future, speaking in the articulate language of “we should,” with an inclination to lead and act to the uses we insist that we already know. We behold these “uses” apart from us with our own eyes, and objectify them as an instrument that would put us in the right place in life as we see it. Our “uses” are no more than the sacrifice from our prudence for the peace that we do not have in secret, with an obscure expectation that we will surely earn it.

In the church, we live this very day, speaking in the silent language of “I need” with an inclination to be led and be acted upon for the uses that we have confessed that we do not know. We are made oblivious to the uses that we are actually performing because we are already one with them as a result of being in the right place in life as the Lord sees it. Our uses are none other than the mercy from His Providence for the peace that we already have in secret, with a heartfelt acknowledgement that we have earned none of it.

There is a very important causality in our spirituality, which we cannot afford not to seek this day. The true uses are never a conscious “cause” for us to be a church; they are to become the subconscious “effect” from our already being a church. It is in this latter that the innocence is made present within us, wherein the Lord is finally restored to the role that belongs only to Him as the true “cause” of our salvation, which is also signified by the following:

The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.
(*John 3:8*)

Because the Lord is the only one who has the perspective from the eternity, He is also the only one who has the true knowledge as to the real uses of what has gone before as well as of what is to come after. The authorship for the vision, mission and strategies for our spirituality does not belong to any one of us but to the Lord only. As these things are works of the Divine, we are not supposed to be able to see them, except the glimpse of the “strategies” that concern us immediately to live this very day. Yet, even these “strategies” that we may be allowed to see for this day are never the artifacts of our own hands; they are fully and solely the very Decalogue and His teachings in the Word, waiting for us to discover and rediscover them to eternity.

When the Lord becomes the only one who envisions our lives in secret

and provides the path thereto through His Word, He also becomes in our hearts the only one who can ever claim merit as to the fruits of our repentance, namely, our true uses. He is indeed the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. All aspects of our salvation are in the Word in its width, depth and extension. The Lord is all in all of His Church.

Only one thing is truly needful on our part. We are to look away from the world, from an assumption that we already have truths, and instead look to the Lord from a realization that we don't have them. There was a time at some point in each one of our lives when we read the Word in our solitude and something in it touched our hearts and brought us down on our knees. That was the salt of the earth we are told never to lose, and the one thing that is truly important that Mary has chosen at the feet of the Lord.

Did we not see then what we did not have, rather than what we already had? Did we not seek then for ourselves, rather than for others? Did we not long then for what is immeasurable in the Word, rather than for what is measurable in the world? The ground where the Mary in us indeed started her silence with her "yearning" is the one only place where we will find the Lord in front of us. He has Himself never moved an inch for thousands of years in the house of Martha, and is ever poised and ready to turn our silence into true uses of His Own, all in secret, behind the veil of our self-reflection.

A New Church, therefore, is like a noble bird with a will of its heavenly own. As long as we keep gazing into effects that we envision on our own, it will fly away before our hands could reach it. But when we cease looking to those effects of ours, perhaps at the end of our despair, the true effects land on our shoulders in forms we cannot see at a time and place we are not aware of.

If we truly desire an effect, such an effect, of course, is the very last place we should be looking to; we are supposed to look to the cause, indeed, with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind. I believe there lies the singular truth that reigns universally to all things in the church; it is the first thing said in the Word – the First Commandment – making up the whole and the entirety of the foundation for a New Church.

If we are told this day that we have only a few days to live in this life on earth, who would spend those remaining days devoted to thinking about our x-year plan for "the growth

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of the church?” And is this not what the Lord tells us that our days are as a shadow that passes away?

When we stop assuming that we have the power and the responsibility to define, dictate and declare our uses, particularly as a church, I believe our worries will recede a little, and we will find a glimpse of this very day to live for ourselves. Then we will find ourselves asking an entirely different set of questions; they are none other than ones to address “the evil sufficient unto this day.”

What would we like the church to be for us, when the future is no longer before us? In what way would we want things to be arranged in the church so that we could find a resting place for our own soul’s labor – not tomorrow, but this very day?

As the Martha in us retreats behind the scene, the Mary in us will surely turn around and sit right back at the feet of the Lord. He speaks new things without limit so long as we remain seated and do not look around. What He speaks about is the innocence that we have lost since the fall of the Most Ancient Church; we are to return to the Lord what we stole from Him then. What we stole is the causality of this life, which begins with the authorship of life for ourselves and ends with the ownership of everything pertaining thereto.

We are never supposed to be service providers of this spirituality with a vision, missions and strategies of our own, nor are we ever to be the customers who would in turn claim the rights and ownerships to the uses from such an envisioning. We are all no more than sinners – the poor and needy – whose pockets have never stored anything of worth to offer as a sacrifice before the Lord.

These very empty pockets of ours, however, are precisely where we receive the true youth in our souls. Our disabilities are our innocence, where the newness of a church may flow forth unobstructed from the Lord. As it is of the Lord, who is the Divine, this newness will never grow old at last, but only newer and newer to eternity even upon this earth. The church will then be His, and no longer ours, so long as we ensure that these pockets of ours remain absolutely empty. We require a place of worship singularly for this purpose.

The young people we have been looking forward to seeing in our church are nowhere out there in the world; every single one of them is already here. Let us pause our restless hands, turn around, and allow our salvation to be here with us.

We can perhaps look at ourselves differently.

Tomoya Okubo started reading the Writings when he was studying religion and philosophy in Tokyo. He grew up in Japan and now lives in Toronto, Canada, with his wife, Kerstin (Sandstrom) and their three children. They attend the Olivet New Church in Toronto.

The Journey Program: A 10-Year Report

By Bronwen Mayer Henry

Four continents. Eighteen countries. Fifty-five churches. Hundreds of small groups. Thousands of people served. Every year since 2006, General Church Journey programs have supported people around the world who are looking to grow spiritually, connect with others, and learn about the New Church.

As one pastor wrote to our team: “The Journey work that Sasha [Silverman] and John [Odhner] have done is one of the greatest ministry gifts I’ve ever had. I know it takes a lot of love, a ton of work and focus, as well as research and reflection, to produce such fine work. I imagine you know this, but, because of the ministry work you all do, many lives in my church are deeply blessed and encouraged from the Lord.”

To mark this 10-year accomplishment we offer a review of the beginnings, challenges and joys, as well as our vision for the future.

How It All Began

In September of 2005, a team from General Church Outreach, plus a few church representatives from around the country, attended a church-growth training conference. Soon after, Outreach received a generous donation to support “whatever was working.” Both the research from the conference as well as our own experiences confirmed for us that the small group model would be an excellent place to put our resources.

In 2006, we trained eight congregations in how to implement Ray and Star Silverman’s *Rise Above It* program. This content had been under development for more than 20 years, and had a moving depth and beauty. Despite being a 10-week-long commitment, the program was a tremendous success. Many congregations had their highest number of small groups ever, with some congregations surpassing their Christmas and Easter attendance during the series. It was phenomenal.

After seeing the success of the *Rise Above It* program, we wanted to continue creating New Church materials that emphasized doctrine, prayer, life-oriented

conversation and service. We envisioned these programs as a way to help congregations welcome and connect newcomers into their communities. After all, the Lord repeatedly tells us to love our neighbor, and we felt confident that small groups would offer a powerful way to help us become better neighbors to one another.

Journey Programs: Phase 1

In 2007, we put together our first “Journey” program called *Realizing Spiritual Freedom*, which drew from the Rt. Rev. Tom Kline’s book, *Journey of Life*. Again, we offered training to help orient leaders to the content. This time, 18 congregations participated, and we sold more than 1,600 Journey books. We were heartened to see that Journey offerings were both wanted and needed.

For the next few years, we continued to create Journey programs from the work of volunteer writers:

- *Building Healthy Relationships* – 2008 by the Rev. Mark Pendleton, Lori Odhner and the Rev. John Odhner
- *Living Courageously* - 2009 by the Rt. Rev. Peter Buss Sr. and Star Silverman
- *Pause* - 2010 by Anna Woofenden and the Rev. Mac Frazier

Although these writers did a tremendous job, we knew we wanted to enhance the sense of cohesion and structure in our offerings.

Journey Programs: Phase 2

It was an exciting turn of events in 2010 when we hired Sasha Silverman to focus exclusively on content development. Sasha enthusiastically took to the task, and the programs since have been consistent in quality, depth and application. As one participant recently wrote: “You and your team are doing a wonderful job of providing the life-changing concepts of the New Church in usable and understandable programs that gently lead folks through some very important issues. And the work just keeps getting better!”

After co-writing the first program, *Shift*, with the Rev. Malcolm Smith in 2011, Sasha has co-written following programs with the Rev. John Odhner:

- *The Path of Integrity*, '12,
- *Seven Practices of Peace*, '13
- *What Would Love Do?* '14
- *Living Gratefully*, '15
- *Mindful Communication Challenge*, '16
- *Practicing Forgiveness*, '17

For the last 10 years, largely due to generous donors, our programs have reached tens of thousands of people. The support we've received financially and personally has been very moving. People's dedication to the beautiful teachings of the New Church and wanting to support systems and structures of implementation are powerful and inspiring to continue this work.

Finding Common Ground with Swedenborgians around the World

Groups around the world are gathering for the current Journey program, *Practicing Forgiveness*. We appreciate how these resources are bringing Swedenborgian groups – including Convention and Conference – together to work on the same spiritual themes.

For example, the Rev. David Lindrooth recently held a conference call with more than 30 church leaders from West Africa (Togo, Benin and Burkina Faso) who wanted to lead *Practicing Forgiveness* in their congregations. Dave said: "It was a pleasure to be able to offer this support to leaders on the other side of the world, and to know we are working together as a New Church family to bring the Lord's Word into our lives."

As another example, in the spring of 2017 we received the following email from England:

Hello. First, I really love the Journey concept and the resources you have put together. I feel the themes are very current and the content engaging and accessible. In January, I started work for Wellspring House – home of the Swedenborg Open Learning Centre in the Northwest of England, UK. We are formerly the New Church College. My role as Centre Leader is to deliver spiritual workshops and programs that will support existing members of the New Church regionally and nationally. I would like to register our organization with you, join your mailing list, act as a point of contact and ask permission to run your programs here at Wellspring House. In particular I would like to run the *Practicing Mindfulness Group Program* starting in September 2017. I already have a small number of people interested in taking part – a mix of New Church members and people from other faith backgrounds. I would like to ask if it is OK to run the Program at Wellspring House?"

This past September in Bryn Athyn, and in many other congregations, small group leaders prepared to lead groups. Many expressed appreciation that other groups are unified in this common theme.

Empowering Individuals to Lead

We knew from the start that an essential part of developing strong small groups involved empowering lay leaders. So, in the early years of Journey, we focused on gathering interested teams from General Church congregations to help them get lay leaders involved, and to spread the word in their communities. For the first few years, we hosted training sessions in Boulder, Colorado;

Glenview, Illinois; Bryn Athyn and Ivyland, Pennsylvania.

This training offered opportunities for leaders from various congregations to learn from each other and from experts in the field. Many attendees expressed appreciation for having the dedicated time and structure to meet with their team, consider goals and map out timelines. Most of all, they appreciated the opportunity to connect, brainstorm and network with other congregations. In many cases this was critical to their success.

However, in recent years, the outreach budget has not allowed for training, and we've seen lower levels of involvement as a result.

Challenges

Although we have experienced many successes throughout the years, we have also faced our share of challenges.

Financial: In many ways Journey programs have been a foundational effort of the General Church, and this has been well supported by donations and the General Church Board. At the same time, we have been affected by some of the financial setbacks and have had to cut back on training, support staff and advertising.

Note: As part of facing what would have been a painful cut to staff, we were able to negotiate a contract with Bryn Athyn Church to use staff time to support their small group efforts. Through this contract, we as a central office support their small group initiatives and create custom content for their uses, that is then shared more broadly with other congregations.

Burnout (leadership and/or participants): An ongoing challenge in all church work is the care and support of volunteers. Implementing Journey programs is not overly complicated but to make the biggest impact a large amount of volunteer effort is needed. While this is possible in a single-year effort, using the same people every year can lead to fatigue, especially in congregations that lack support staff.

Saturation: Journey programs have successfully reached out to all General Church clergy and congregations. At this point, we are looking for ways to reach a broader audience, including other Swedenborgian denominations and beyond. This choice to expand our audience, however, does impact the tone and presentation of the content, which may be difficult for those who are comfortable with the current offerings. Reaching a broader audience also would benefit from more marketing funds and staff time for networking and outreach.

Where We Are Going

Shorter series, more frequently offered

In the past four years, we have begun to shift away from focusing all our

efforts on a *single* Journey series, and are offering various smaller programs in which people can participate throughout the year. Our hope is to have regular opportunities for people to get involved and connected to the church. Our newer series are shorter, mostly 5-6 weeks for each program.

Collaborating with Authors

We are looking to collaborate with people who have inspirations, ideas and plans to implement them. There is room for creativity and diversity. The more content we develop, the more specific and focused the content can be. Our most recent collaborative project is a 365-day reader, *Daily Bread*, written by the Rev. Derek Elphick.

Expanding Our Audience

We started our Journey effort with a broad audience in mind: “People somewhat connected to a General Church congregation who want to grow spiritually.” With time, this has evolved. One recent example of experimenting with different audiences is our *Finding Hope* series and workbook.

This was developed with a specific audience in mind: “People who have been impacted by suicide, addiction, domestic violence, mental illness.” This workbook had a very caring, broad and compassionate tone, and had less emphasis on instruction from New Church doctrine. The series was deeply appreciated by many who have lost loved ones, or been impacted by such painful events.

It has been delightful to have the chance to develop this variety. We hope that as we continue to create more content we can explore opportunities to focus on specific audiences.

Creating Journey Videos

The General Church has been exploring video applications for quite a few years now. Most recently, there has been an eagerness to create video-based content that would make it easy for anyone to lead a group. The idea is to make it “as simple as pressing ‘play.’”

This is certainly an area filled with opportunity. While there are some growing pains with determining how to serve our existing audience, we are willing to work through these as we seek opportunities to serve more people online. Stay tuned as we continue to explore this pathway.

Getting More People Involved

In order to evolve and serve as many people as possible in the most quality ways, we are continually open to ideas for how to update and transform our approach. We are asking all who are interested: What is your vision? What

small group would you like to see? We encourage people to talk to their local pastors, or us at the central office, to get involved.

We emphasize that there are many ways to get involved with small groups, from participating to leading to hosting, to helping promote and to coming up with ideas for new content, and new service opportunities. We hope that all who participate will see the beautiful, sometimes flawed, always inspiring, power of exploring the Lord's teaching in community.

Conclusion

We have a long history in our organization of exploration and love for the Word. This modern iteration – Journey Programs -- has been a noticeable and impactful presence in our congregations. They have enabled us to embody the Lord's call to love our neighbor and to keep the Word in our hearts in a modern and life-giving way.

At Journey, we are committed to continuing to help create space for people to connect, share their lives, learn, heal, feel supported and grow spiritually. We will continue to create content that helps deepen and enliven faith. We will continue to share these resources broadly and welcome all to get involved.



Bronwen Mayer Henry is Small Group Coordinator for the Bryn Athyn Church and Program Manager for Journey Programs in the General Church. She lives with her husband, Jeremy, and children in Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania. Contact: bronwen.henry@newchurch.org.

OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY

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

NATURAL

This particular term refers to the ultimate in every series. Thus it is descriptive of the first or lowest heaven, of the sense of the Word in the letter, and of the ultimate degree of the human mind and of this and other worlds in which creation subsists and terminates. The life of the lowest degree of the mind, which is from the world, is called natural, and the man who lives only on the plane of that life is called a natural man. (See *Heaven and Hell* 31; *Arcana Coelestia* 3293)

Church News

Compiled by Bruce Henderson

THE CHURCH IN ASIA

The following is from a year-end report and fund-raising appeal from the **Rev. John Jin**, pastor of the Philadelphia Korean New Church, head of outreach for Korean-speaking communities in the United States, regional pastor for Asia and Dean of the Korean New Church Theological School.

More than 100 years ago a visionary minister wrote: “So now the New Church will be transferred to the Gentiles.” Then more visionary ministers – such as the **Rev. Bob Jungé**, the **Rev. Douglas Taylor** and others – endlessly spread our New Church teachings to the Gentiles. We believe we can make it. As 2017 comes to a close and a new year begins we would like to share with you all that has been happening with our Asian New Churches.

New Church Theological School

As we told you last year, Rev. Jin started two courses to prepare to open a Chinese Theological School. In June, Rev. Jin finished *The New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* (28 classes). Three people successfully finished. In July, he restarted *True Christian Religion* with three ministers and two missionary course students. This course was open to the public, to anyone who was willing to study New Church teachings. We plan to open a New Church Theological School in July 2018.

Study Group

Among Chinese New Church members there are about 15 who want to study New Church teachings more thoroughly in their own language. **Rev. Tim** leads this group on Saturday evenings.

Worship and a New School

Rev. Tim, the first New Church minister in China, started to hold worship services and opened a new school. We already announced this in 2016,

however that plan failed. Rev. Tim had hired one teacher who recently learned about the New Church, but this teacher suddenly decided to leave his job. Then Rev. Tim taught the students for about three months while looking for a New Church teacher, but he could not find one. After that he sent these students back to local schools.

Despite the unexpected challenges, the Lord still graciously provided for this dream. In October, several New Church members became interested in this dream and discussed it seriously with Rev. Tim at the fall seminar. Finally, three members want to move to JiuJiang City where Tim's school is. Already two people have moved to prepare worship services and open a new school.

Seminar for New Church People in China

We held New Church Seminars in NanChing (spring) and Shanghai (fall). In the spring seminar, the theme was: "What are the basic teachings of the New Church?" During the seminar, we worshipped and also held baptisms for two New Church members. In the fall seminar, the theme was: "How can we build the New Church in China?" We also witnessed the first New Church wedding by Rev. Tim. It was very touching and enlightening, and it gave hope for the future of the New Church in China.

Translation and Publishing

A formal translation group has been formed under **David Zhang**. This year we finished *True Christian Religion* and *The New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine*.

Education Support

Rev. Tim continues to support 80 students in the Guizhou area, including 16 students who are in their senior year of high school. After six years of support, they will prepare for their college examinations. Now that they are over 18 years old, they will each go to a different university. They could go back to their village to teach children who may not have the financial means to do so. Many if not all will pass the test, but they will continue to need some support to get through their college years.

Korea

The Korean New Church continues to grow in various ways, including the translation work as well as the training of ministers through the Theological School. As they move toward a self-support system, they are working on the Korean Project.

We hoped to see a new building to house all of the work in 2017 before

Christmas. However, this project has been delayed three to four months. We expect to have a dedication in April 2018. It is a milestone for growth of the New Church in Asia.

Japan

Members in Japan are working diligently and sincerely to develop the New Church. **Rev. Matsumoto** started two more worship services in Tokyo and Kyoto regions and has spread New Church teachings many different ways. Also, **Mr. Suzuki** and others continue new translation work as volunteers.

In the United States

The Philadelphia New Church continues to worship with Rev. Jin. They support New Church related charity institutions and translation work. The California group (with missionary **Jea Chung** as the lead) keeps growing. They meet twice a week to worship and study the Heavenly Doctrine. They also do a lot of community service.

Treasurer's Message

Without your help this year, our New Church mission in Asia will become very difficult. Please support us in building the Lord's Church in Asia. Contributions may be sent to: Philadelphia Korean New Church, **Hwa Y. Kim**, Treasurer, 537 Anne St., Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania 19006.

WHAT TO DO WITH CAIRNCREST?

The Rt. Rev. Brian W. Keith

The General Church Board of Directors had been exploring the possibility of turning Cairncrest into an elegant inn and constructing a building for our General Church offices elsewhere. At the fall Board meeting it was decided not to pursue this option.

Cairncrest – the former home of Harold and Clara Pitcairn – was an incredible gift to the General Church and has served it well as an office building. But as maintenance expenses have mounted, we are trying to be fiscally responsible in considering other uses for it which are mission driven and fiscally viable.

A new committee has been formed to examine the relative financial merits of Cairncrest remaining as an office building, being used for something else, or perhaps even selling it. If you have suggestions for other possible uses, please contact me as soon as possible.

Rt. Rev. Brian W. Keith

Brian.Keith@newchurch.org

267-502-4944

GENERAL CHURCH EDUCATION

Sarah B. Odhner

General Church Education sent a Christmas mailing containing paper chains with illustrations of the Christmas story to approximately 360 families with preschool children (birth to age 6). We have had wonderful response from recipients!

In preparing for the mailing we reached out to families not yet on our mailing list and added approximately 20 new families. We also updated approximately 10 addresses, and received further information about new babies born to families in our database. We continue to look for new ways to reach out to families who do not yet receive mailings.

In November we produced a new HeartFelt Bible video on the story of Simeon and Anna meeting Baby Jesus. Over the Christmas season the video was viewed more than 8,200 times. Our YouTube channel now has more than 1,450 subscribers and 1,416,000 video views.

Last September we launched a completely new version of our New Church Vineyard website (www.newchurchvineyard.org). The new site offers thousands of materials related to New Church education such as projects, pictures, family talks, spiritual tasks, sermons, Sunday school lessons, videos, etc. These materials are searchable in many different ways and are intended for use by parents, teachers, pastors, Sunday school teachers and adults searching for their own interest and enrichment. Many have been waiting for this online resource library for years and we've had good responses. For an overview of the new site and how to get the most out of it, visit www.newchurchvineyard.org and search for "welcome to new church vineyard."

The Religious Education Program team has started work on a new six-week Youth Journey Program on the book of *Daniel* for ages 3-14. Development is expected to be complete by September 2018.

I will be offering a workshop on practical ways parents can incorporate religion in family life, without adding new activities, at the Bryn Athyn Marriage Conference in February. I will also be reporting on excellent workshops **Rachel Glenn** and I attended at the D6 conference in Texas last October.

ARTS CONFERENCE VIDEOS

Videos and presentations from the Swedenborg and the Arts International Conference, held in Bryn Athyn last June, are available online at the Bryn Athyn College website:

<https://brynathyn.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/ListofSpeakers.pdf>

This was a first-ever international conference devoted to examining the impact of Emanuel Swedenborg’s theology and ideas on the arts. Thirty scholars from 10 countries came to the College to present on a variety of topics related to Swedenborg’s influence on the arts.

The link lists the keynote presentations and sessions, including the chair for each and panel contributors. Included are video and presentation links.

The sessions include:

- Spiritualist Poetics
- Swedenborg in World Literatures
- American Landscape Painting
- Visionary Architecture and Sound
- William Blake and His Circles
- European Romanticism and its Aftereffects
- Jamesian Modernisms
- Swedenborg and the Contemporary

Sponsors of the conference included the Swedenborg Society; the Center for Swedenborgian Studies at the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California; Swedenborg Foundation; Swedenborg Scientific Association; Glencairn Museum; Bryn Athyn College.

BRITISH ACADEMY SUMMER SCHOOL

The British Academy Summer School will mark its 60th anniversary this summer – July 15-28 at the Purley Chase Centre. **The Rev. Howard Thompson**, pastor of the Colchester New Church and headmaster of the Summer School, notes that this is the diamond anniversary. The word “diamond” is derived from the Greek word “*adamas*,” which means unconquerable and enduring. The number 60 also corresponds to the beginning of the age of wisdom.

“How appropriate both of these meanings are,” Howard says, “when you consider the 1,000 or more students who have benefited from participation in Summer School, the many teachers and house parents who have made the experience possible, and the many relationships – friendships and even marriages – that had their origins at BASS!”

Planning is already underway for this year’s school with “a great deal of enthusiasm to make this a special celebration.”

For more information, or to offer suggestions, please contact the Rev. Howard Thompson: *revhathompson@gmail.com*.

NEW BFA AT BAC

Bryn Athyn College is offering the nation's first Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Building Arts. **Stephen Hartley**, assistant professor and head of the Building Arts Program, says: "It is with great pleasure that I am able to announce that (this program) has been approved and will be accepting our first cohort of students for the 2018-2019 academic year. We will initiate this program with concentrations in metal and glass, with the plan to extend to wood and stone concentrations in the very near future."

The metals program will include both historic and modern applications of forged and decorative metal work. Students will focus on tool and hardware production, and traditional, small- and large-scale joinery design and production. They will also learn historical and modern applications in glass, including glass painting, design and production, glass dynamics and stained-glass restoration.

Hartley says: "This is an exciting time for both Bryn Athyn College and the greater world of building arts. We're honored to join the small but influential group of programs that are working diligently to train the next generation of building artisans."

Instructors will include **Kenneth Leap**, known throughout the glass world for modern and traditional work; **Warren Holzman**, owner of Holzman Iron Studio in Philadelphia; and **Mike Rossi**, well-known metal worker.

MASTER OF ARTS IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES (MARS)

Bryn Athyn College's Master of Arts in Religious Studies (MARS) offers an in-depth study of the Heavenly Doctrine. Students can link doctrinal courses with their own areas of interest. Courses are offered at Bryn Athyn College and simultaneously on Skype. Flexible dates and times accommodate a busy workday. Auditors are welcome at a reduced cost.

For further information, please contact **Dr. Jane Williams-Hogan** at janewh@dwave.com.

The courses listed below are planned for the 2017-18 school year:

Winter Term

Beginning week of January 2, 2018

Church History 587. Divine Presence over Five Dispensations

A study of how the Lord addressed the changing spiritual needs of humanity in the five churches described in Heavenly Doctrine. Demonstrates

why the New Church is the “crown” of the churches. Seminar – 5 sessions, 1.5 credits. **The Rev. Stephen Cole**

Beginning week of February 5

Theology 513. Transitions, Perspectives of Death and Resurrection

This course explores the role of society in the death experience, the psychological states leading to and from death, and the New Church teaching on the resuscitation process. Seminar – 3 sessions, 1 credit. **Drs. Jane Williams-Hogan, Erica Hyatt and Andrew Dibb**

Spring Term

Theology 522: The Doctrine of Life – April 2-May 4

The nature and practice of religion, the foundation of the Ten Commandments, and the role of human choice. Five sessions, 1.5 credits. **The Rev. Grant Odhner**

Religious Studies 550: Swedenborg’s Life and Times

The Swedish context for Swedenborg’s intellectual and spiritual development, call, and revelatory works. Examines the geography, history, culture, and society of Sweden in Swedenborg’s time. Seminar, 10 sessions, 3 credits. **Dr. Jane Williams-Hogan**

Theology 501: Heavenly Doctrines as Systematic Theology.

An introduction to important perspectives on general theology and the Heavenly Doctrines by studying the core teachings and the interrelationship of major New Church doctrines. Seminar, 10 sessions, 3 credits. **The Rev. Prescott A. Rogers**

RETIREMENT



The Rev. Michael D. Gladish has informed the congregation of the Washington New Church that he intends to retire at the end of June 2019. This will complete 10 years as pastor of that society and a 46-year career that includes service in Toronto, Canada; Hurstville, New South Wales, Australia; Los Angeles, California; the Calgary New Church in Alberta, Canada; and Dawson Creek, British Columbia, Canada.

Mike and his wife, Ginny, intend to stay in their home – the former manse – and participate as members of the congregation.

He notes that this change will coincide with the installation of a new executive bishop so that there will likely be other pastoral moves throughout the Church.

CORRECTION

The photo at the top of page 547 in the November/December 2017 issue is Dan Uber, not his older brother, David.


ADVANCEMENT

A Planned Gift is a special way to support the uses of the Academy and the General Church.

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



Michael Church Altar



Open door – The Michael Church, London



Open Word at the Michael Church



Michael Church Sanctuary



San Diego Church Buildings



San Diego Chapel



San Diego Chancel



Bishop Keith handing out gifts in Kansas City



A gathering of the Kansas City Group in the home of Brian and Jackie Klippenstein

Life Lines

SWEDENBORG'S 'HABITS' OF LIFE

Posted in many a New Church home and office are Emanuel Swedenborg's familiar *Rules of Life*. But it may come as a surprise that Swedenborg might never have actually written them down. It is good to reflect on these Rules as we observe Swedenborg's birthday on January 29.

In an article in the June 2017 *Messenger*, Dr. Jim Lawrence says, "the only extant claim of seeing them" was in a eulogy delivered at Swedenborg's memorial service by Samuel Sandels, a friend and colleague from the Board of Mines and the Royal Academy of Sciences. (Dr. Lawrence is Dean of the Center for Swedenborgian Studies and Assistant Professor of Spirituality and Historical Studies at the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California.)

Swedenborg had attracted both supporters and critics at the time of his death and Dr. Lawrence suggests Sandels offered the *Rules of Life* as a defense of Swedenborg's character and sanity. He writes: "Sandels claims to have seen scribbled in the margins 'in several places' in Swedenborg's manuscripts these rules that Swedenborg set out for himself, as evidence of his sincerity and honesty."

Whatever their origin, they are compelling rules to live by:

- Diligently to read and meditate on the Word of God.
- To be content under the Dispensation of God's Providence.
- To observe a propriety of behavior, and to keep the conscience pure.
- To obey what is ordered; to attend faithfully to one's office and other duties and in addition to make oneself useful to society in general.

Dr. Lawrence says, "Sandels wanted in his eulogy to present his friend's life in the best possible light." He believes "the most believable hypothesis is that Sandels creatively shaped the *Rules* as a rhetorical device to convey fairly and justly his friend's integrity in the way he lived his life." And he suggests: "Sandels would have been bowled over if he had been informed that in the centuries to come his rhetorical device would adorn plaques hung on countless walls all over the world. But he might have been pleased that he nailed the spirituality of his beloved colleague so truly."

The challenge for all of us, as we glance occasionally at Swedenborg's *Rules*

of Life is whether we really adopt and apply them in our own lives.

Dr. Lawrence's article is headed, "*Building a Daily Spiritual Practice Based on Swedenborg's 'Rules of Life.'*" And he offers a detailed "suggested practice" for turning these rules into daily habits, within this framework:

- *Lectio*: Read and savor a passage from the Word or the Writings.
- *Meditatio*: Meditate on a word or thought in what you read – "what comes to you as a spiritual answer to something going on in your life."
- *Oratio*: Respond to the word that has been spoken to you (i.e. thanks, praise, joy) and seek direction through the insights given.
- *Contemplatio*: Rest in God's presence and peace.

Whether or not Swedenborg actually wrote out those *Rules of Life* he no doubt would approve of taking them off the wall and putting them into life – turning those "rules" into daily habits.

(To read Dr. Lawrence's full article, go to the Convention Church's website, www.swedenborg.org, click on Messenger, then the June 2017 issue.)

(BMH)

EXTENDING THE REACH OF THE BIBLE

Throughout Christianity fewer and fewer people seem to be diligently reading and meditating on the Word of God. Biblical literacy is at an all-time low. That makes it all the more encouraging that a new Museum of the Bible has opened in Washington DC.

Philip Kennicott, art and architecture critic for *The Washington Post*, wrote that this privately funded \$500 million addition to the many tourist attractions along Washington's Mall "will set a new standard for how this country's museums fuse entertainment and education. It is rich in content, stocked with historic treasures and carefully plotted to appeal to audiences of all ages."

The museum's executive director states: "We want it to be as accurate as possible, as fair as possible, and as nonsectarian as possible." The idea is to educate, not convert, but the mission is "to inspire confidence in the absolute authority and reliability of the Bible."

Predictably, there are critics on both sides – that the museum is "not religious enough" or is "too religious." Visitors will be free to draw their own conclusions from carefully and lovingly crafted exhibits. But Mr. Kennicott notes: "Both the traditional and immersive exhibitions start with unstated assumptions: that the Bible is the most important book in the world, that there is concrete archeological evidence to explain its origins, that it has been transmitted through the ages with remarkable accuracy, and that it is fundamentally a blessing to mankind."

What the museum is lacking, of course, is any sense of the internal, spiritual meaning of the Bible which has been revealed through Emanuel Swedenborg but still is unknown throughout most of the world. And that's where there could be a promising link between this new Museum of the Bible and the Glencairn Museum in Bryn Athyn.

Director Brian Henderson said at last year's Boynton Beach Retreat: "Glencairn Museum exists to educate a diverse audience about the history of religion, using art and artifacts from a variety of cultures and time periods. We seek to build understanding between people of all beliefs through an appreciation of common spiritual history and values. The Museum's special focus is to preserve and interpret the art, culture and history of the New Church."

Crispin Paine, a world-renowned expert of religious museums, and a champion of Glencairn and its mission, states: "Too often, museums don't let the religious role and significance of their objects show. They treat them as art, or history, or sometimes science, and their fascinating back-story is suppressed. I'm not suggesting that there's anything wrong with this – simply that it would be valuable to museums also to help visitors understand their religious meaning, as Glencairn Museum does."

Brian says Glencairn already is looking toward a future members' trip to the Museum of the Bible and that he hopes to develop a relationship there. And given the mission and vision of the Washington Museum it's not inconceivable that someday it will be sending its own emissaries to Glencairn to enrich its own understanding of the Bible.

(BMH)

THAT GOLDEN MOMENT

Omniscience is one of those words that stretches beyond our comprehension. It describes the Lord's infinite awareness, endless power and universal knowledge. Knowing all things. Seeing all things. From the beginning of time and extending forever. It is all "too marvelous for our eyes."

We had an amazing example from the world of astronomy this past summer. On August 17 signals were received at space laboratories all over the world from a galaxy unimaginable light years away of two collapsed stars smashing into each other – 130 million years ago! It has taken that long for the evidence to reach us. But scientists knew immediately what had happened so long ago – and what it meant.

That explosion across eons of time sent a burst of gamma rays streaming through space, rippling every fabric of the universe. And that staggering explosion of energy is considered to be just what it took to create all the gold

we have on this planet – as well as silver, platinum and other heavy, precious elements.

Before this event set off alarm bells among astrophysicists – 130 million years later! – they had already speculated that such collisions between neutron stars were the primary source of such precious metals. But no one had even seen one or had such direct evidence – until now.

So, if you are wearing a golden wedding ring, consider this: That gold has its roots in a “kilonova” that happened so long ago and so far away that we can hardly grasp the reality and physics of it all. That gold was created instantaneously 130 million years ago, but only now do we see the evidence. And all the while, the Lord knew a bit of that gold would one day grace your finger, with its promise of eternity.

Now that’s omniscience.

(BMH)

IN HIS GOOD TIME . . .

As mind-boggling as omniscience is the way the Lord’s Providence operates over centuries, free of our worldly limitations – and impatience – with time and space.

Consider the prophecies of the Lord’s coming on earth.

The very first is in *Genesis* 3:15 where the Lord curses the serpent who enticed Eve in the Garden of Eden: “I will put hostility between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed. He will trample you on the head and you will wound him on the heel.”

And later, from *Numbers* 24:17, the prophecy of Balaam: “I shall see Him, but not now: I shall behold Him, but not nigh: there shall come a star out of Jacob, and a Scepter shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth.”

The ancients clearly understood these as prophecies that the Lord would someday come to dwell among the people of the earth. But they waited for thousands of years, across generations and generations, wondering if they would ever live to see the prophecies fulfilled.

When Jesus finally came to teach His disciples and the people He cautioned them: “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth is come, He will guide you into all truth.” (*John* 16:12,13)

He came to subjugate the hells, restore order in heaven, provide for our salvation, and guarantee us the freedom to choose between heaven and hell. But it was 1,757 years before the Last Judgment was accomplished, completing the process.

And it was another 13 years (in 1770) until that Spirit of Truth arrived with the Second Coming and the Lord sent His disciples throughout heaven to

preach that “the Lord God Jesus Christ reigns.” Finally, the internal, spiritual sense of the Word was revealed through Emanuel Swedenborg. But almost 250 years later this new light has yet to penetrate most of the world.

We are promised that the New Church descending from God out of heaven will be “the crown of all churches that have hitherto existed on the earth.” That day is still far beyond any horizon stretching before us.

But when the Lord told the disciples that the Spirit of Truth would come to guide us into all truth, He also said it was necessary for Him to leave them so that the Comforter might come to us all.

“A little while,” He said, “and ye shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see Me, because I go to the Father.” (*John 16:16*)

“A little while,” He said. In His good time . . .

(BMH)

REFLECTIONS ON FAMILIAR NUMBERS FROM THE WRITINGS

Those who have been students of the Writings and engaged in the life of the Church for some time naturally become familiar with pithy statements which are often quoted in sermons, classes and conversations. Even without a conscious effort to memorize paragraph numbers, some stick in your memory just from hearing them so often. Knowing a number is not in itself very important, but it is satisfying and makes it easier to go to the source and read the exact wording of a teaching and see what is said about it.

Here are five teachings from the Writings, with their paragraph numbers, that you may well be familiar with. We’ll continue with a few more in our next issue.

(WEO)

1. DOCTRINE OF LIFE 1: “ALL RELIGION IS OF LIFE, AND THE LIFE OF RELIGION IS TO DO THAT WHICH IS GOOD.”

This familiar saying might be called the motto of the New Church, or one of them anyway. It is a positive statement of the oft-repeated truth that we are not saved by “faith alone,” as traditional Christian doctrine says, but by how we live. This is not to say that faith is not essential, just that it cannot be separated from life. The operative word in the term “faith alone” is “alone.” Rightly understood, faith is not just a profession of belief, but enters into all aspects of life – how we think, speak and act. This New Church view is both Biblical and more in tune with modern sensibilities (which in this case, at least, is a good thing).

Genuine faith in the Lord is grounded in loving Him, and He said: “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” (*John 14:15*) And from the Book of Revelation: “I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and (they)

were judged according to their works.” (*Revelation 9:20*)

The life of religion involves how we relate to God and how we relate to our fellow human beings. The Lord taught this in the Gospel when He said there were *two* great commandments, love of God and love of the neighbor, “on which hang all the law and the prophets.” (*Matthew 22:39-41*) In fact, the doctrines explain that loving the neighbor *is* loving God because it is specifically the good in the neighbor, which is from God, that we are to love.

Doctrine of Life n. 1 also states that how we live means not just what we do, but also how we think. The life of religion includes the life of the mind. “The life of man is his love, and that which he loves he not only likes to be doing, but also likes to be thinking. The reason is that doing what is good acts as a one with thinking what is good, for if these two things do not act as a one in a person, they are not of his life.”

Loving God and loving the neighbor. Living rightly and thinking rightly. Things that man often puts asunder, the Lord, in the Heavenly Doctrine, joins together.

(WEO)

2. DIVINE LOVE AND WISDOM 46: “THOUGHT FROM THE EYE CLOSSES THE UNDERSTANDING, BUT THOUGHT FROM THE UNDERSTANDING OPENS THE EYE.”

To think “from the eye” is to think from appearances. An obvious example is the appearance that the sun rises and sets. Based on that appearance, people thought for thousands of years that the sun revolved around the earth, rather than the earth around the sun.

Optical illusions are often harmless and fun, but they can be deadly. Airplane pilots have to learn to trust their instruments and not be misled by what they think they see (“spatial disorientation”). But illusions are not just optical; the worst ones are caused by the loves of self and the world. Evil causes worse distortions in how we see things than astigmatisms. The spiritual blindness resulting from ignorance and prejudice is more deeply rooted and harder to cure than the natural blindness caused by cataracts.

Spiritual illusions (or delusions) can be very harmful. If our understanding of the letter of the Word is not illuminated by genuine doctrine, we can even get a false view of God from the Bible itself – for example, that God is angry, jealous, condemning, vengeful and so on.

True religion opens the eye of the mind to the Divine love and wisdom of the Lord, the goodness and beauty of the human beings made in His image, and the myriad reflections of the Divine and the Human in the order and forms of nature. It also reveals our own imperfections, the sight of which is necessary

for us to correct them. “Thought from the understanding” makes us humble, and increases our appreciation for the patience and mercy of the Lord.

The need to rise above appearances and think from an enlightened understanding applies to how we relate to other people also. A person who is said to be “understanding” is not just clever or coldly analytical, but sympathetic, agreeable, forgiving, generous and kind. “Thought from the understanding” makes us more understanding of others, and thus more empathetic.

(WEO)

3. DIVINE LOVE AND WISDOM 47: THE DEFINITION OF LOVE

Here, in the very next number of *Divine Love and Wisdom* is another often-quoted saying: “Love consists in this, that its own should be another’s. To feel the joy of another as joy in oneself, that is loving.”

That could almost be a line from a Hallmark card, but it is much more than a mere sentiment. It is a profound truth. It is poetic certainly, all the greatest truths are, but there is a world of meaning in it. Truths are beautiful from the goodness within them that they convey. They are like drops of pure morning dew in which the sun of heaven is reflected.

Divine Love and Wisdom begins with the statement that “Love is the life of man.” Then it explains that although everyone knows there is such a thing as love, we really don’t know what it is. It is life itself! Without it we wouldn’t feel, think, speak or even move. Now, in number 47, we are told that love consists in feeling the joy of another as joy in yourself. If we ever wonder what heaven is like, there is a good answer.

The angels feel the joy of others as joy in themselves because they all derive their “own,” their *proprium*, their sense of self-life, from the same Divine Source, who is Life itself and Being itself. There is really only one “Own,” the Lord’s, in which the angels all participate (as do we, if we only knew it). “In Him we live and move and have our being.” (*Acts 2:17; Divine Love and Wisdom 301e*) “We are because He is.” (*Divine Providence 46e*)

In *John 17* the Lord prayed for all who would be brought to believe in Him through the testimony of His disciples: “That they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one.” (*John 17: 20-23*)

Ideally, the Church, as a spiritual community, consists of people who are one in their devotion to the Lord, belief in His Word, and commitment to living a life of charity. In such a community, the joy of each member adds to

the joy of all the others.

This is all very sublime, but is it realistic? In this fallen world of ours, how much of an experience of feeling the joy of another as joy in ourselves are we likely ever to have? Actually, the possibility is very real – couples bet their lives on it all the time when they get married, in the hope and expectation that the joy they find in each other then will become permanent and eventually unite their two souls into one.

This is the promise of the New Jerusalem, which is “coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” (*Revelation 21:2*)

(WEO)

4. TRUE CHRISTIAN RELIGION 508: “NUNC LICET – IT IS NOW PERMITTED TO ENTER WITH UNDERSTANDING INTO THE MYSTERIES OF FAITH.”

Here is another well-loved saying of the New Church. Swedenborg saw it inscribed over the entrance to a temple in heaven. You almost certainly know it, but did you know where in the Writings that story is found? Have you read *Nunc Licet* in context? *True Christian Religion 508* is a good number to know.

What are “the mysteries of faith?” Name some. And what does it mean to enter into them with understanding? Why is that so important, and how do we go about doing it, as individuals and as a Church?

In the minds of many people, faith and reason are polar opposites. “Faith” is thought to mean belief in things you don’t understand, and which, in fact, cannot be understood. In the New Church, though, faith and reason go together. This does not mean that faith is the *product* of human thought, but that genuine human reason rests upon the truths of faith, and is enlightened and guided by them.

Of all our mental faculties, the most vital and uniquely *human* is faith – which is not just a set of dogmas or ideals or myths, but is “the eye of love.” (*Arcana Coelestia 3863.12*) All levels of thought – spiritual, moral, civil and scientific – begin with faith arising from love: Love of the Lord and His Word. Love of the neighbor. Love of what is good and true. And just plain love of knowledge.

Some of the truths seen by the eye of love are so subtle and profound that they extend into the realm of mystery. This is the case not just regarding religious subjects but of all creation, natural as well as spiritual. It is a truism that each new scientific discovery raises new questions. The invention of the telescope and the microscope, or the discovery of DNA, or the Higgs boson, did not diminish our wonder at the mystery of the universe but increased it. Life itself remains as the ultimate mystery; the more science enters into that

mystery, the greater the mystery becomes.

And so it is regarding the mysteries of faith. The fact that we are now permitted to enter into them with understanding, or with the intellect, does not lessen the sense of mystery, but enhances it. The clearer the sea of knowledge becomes, and the deeper we dive into it, the more beautiful and full of wonders it is seen to be.

The Lord's disciples once asked Him why He spoke to others in parables but to them directly. (*Matthew 10:13-17*) He replied: "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given." The reason was that the others had no interest in spiritual truths and thus no capacity to understand them. "For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed."

And then He added something amazing: "But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it."

Many have desired to see what you see, and did not see it! Surely that statement must have warmed His disciples' hearts, and opened their eyes to the great gift He was bestowing upon them. Those words apply to us today, also, as disciples of the Lord in His second advent. For whatever reason, through no merit of our own, we have been permitted to behold wonderful things, and to enter into "the mysteries of faith."

How full of promise is that inscription Swedenborg saw over the entrance to the temple in heaven: *Nunc Licet*, "now it is permitted."

(WEO)

5. APOCALYPSE EXPLAINED 732: ON THE SLOW GROWTH OF THE NEW CHURCH

It is no accident that the Heavenly Doctrine was revealed right at the dawn of modern science, and through a man who is often cited as an epitome of the Age of Reason. But we should be very cautious about that characterization of Swedenborg. The truths he published were not at all a product of the so-called Enlightenment, but rather served, and continue to serve, as a Divinely provided corrective against the errors that would stem from it; an antidote to its atheistic tendencies, and, ironically, the *irrationality* and insanity that the worship of human reason can lead to, as in the French Revolution's Reign of Terror.

But how effective has this antidote been? In our time we are witnessing a startling decline in religious affiliation, atheism is spreading rapidly, and so is religious fanaticism. And as for the future of our own Church body, we have plenty of reason to be worried about it.

The decline of the former Church should come as no surprise, however; the Lord predicted it in the *Gospels* and in the *Book of Revelation*. And in the Heavenly Doctrine the final judgment of the first Christian Church is described as having taken place in the spiritual world in 1757. But where on earth is the New Church that was to take its place? We expect to see the world transformed. We're impatient! We want to see some results!

But beware of quick fixes. The Lord's ways are not our ways. "When the Pharisees demanded that He tell them when the kingdom of God should come, He answered them and said: The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you." (*Luke 17:20-21*)

The growth of a great tree begins with a tiny seed, out of sight, hidden in the earth, and the first green shoot may not look like much. But its future is foreordained, and each stage of its development is secure in the hand of God and His providence. (*cf. Divine Providence 332*)

Apocalypse Explained 732 gives three reasons why the New Church begins with just a few and can only grow slowly. **The first reason** is that "its doctrine, which is the doctrine of love to the Lord and charity towards the neighbor, cannot be received except by those who are interiorly affected by truths" – that is, people who are able to see truths because they have "cultivated their intellectual faculty, and have not destroyed it in themselves by the loves of self and of the world."

What a challenging statement this is! It shifts the focus of our concern from "the world out there" to the world within us, our own spiritual state, and that of our Church. Are we "interiorly affected by truths?" Have we "cultivated our intellectual faculty?" To what degree have the loves of self and the world warped our thinking?

The second reason for the slow growth of the New Church is that it can only be received by people "who have not confirmed themselves by doctrine and at the same time by life in faith alone." It may seem that this obstacle has been largely removed since the focus of many Christians today has shifted away from doctrine to an emphasis on charity and service toward others. But although the *doctrine* of salvation by faith alone has fallen out of favor with many, the attitude and way of life which that doctrine promoted may remain embedded in the psyche of the Christian world more than we realize. The arrow may have been withdrawn, but the poison it injected into the bloodstream remains.

Apocalypse Explained 732 notes that "confirmation by doctrine alone does not prevent reception, but confirmation by life also does prevent it, for such do not know what love to the Lord is, nor what charity towards the neighbor is, nor are they willing to know."

It would seem that a Christian who professed belief in faith alone, but

nevertheless lived a life of charity – and I think we’ve all known people like that – might actually be more receptive to the New Church than someone who rejected faith alone but whose charitable deeds were tainted by self-merit. Charity begins with repentance, and if the truth that we must repent is cast off along with the falsity of faith alone, what has been gained? The old form of faith alone has then simply been replaced by a new one: faith in one’s own goodness, the worship of a golden calf. We must beware of falling into this trap; the trap of being beguiled by faith in our own enlightenment and goodness.

What the internal, spiritual quality of anyone’s charity is, the Lord alone can judge. What we see in the world around us now – replacing faith-alone theology with an emphasis on a life of charity – is a step in the right direction. But there is more to a truly Christian life than rejecting a spiritual falsity (faith alone) in favor of natural good (service to others mired in self-merit). Genuine charity looks to the Word for guidance and includes repentance and worship of the Lord.

The third reason mentioned is that the growth of the New Church on earth is tied to its growth in the spiritual world. As the population of the New Church in heaven grows, its influence on people in this world will grow also. The sun of heaven will shine more brightly into their hearts and minds, the spiritual climate will change, and as conditions on earth become more favorable toward the life and teachings of the New Church, it will be more widely accepted, grow and bear fruit.

Although it may seem to any one of us that we have accomplished little in terms of growing the New Church on earth, if the seeds of it have been received and taken root in our own mind and life, then in the future, as angels of the New Heaven, we will be able to inspire who knows how many people on earth with a love for the New Church.

There is much in the world around us that looks encouraging for the growth of the New Church, and we should be inspired by that, rejoice in it, and participate in it. At the same time, we must not hide the unique and desperately needed light of the new revelation which has been bequeathed to us under a bushel, but by teaching and example hold it up as a beacon for the world, starting with our own children.

(WEO)

‘THOU ART THE MAN’

It has been a shameful and sordid scandal – a steady stream of prominent men in politics, entertainment and media taking advantage of their power over many years to prey on women. Too often they have been protected by silent complicity – friends and associates who knew what was happening but said

nothing – and by victims afraid to speak out.

Given the erosion of our culture, where too many enablers have given a pass to sexual predators, it is not shocking that it exists – just that it has been tolerated for so long. That it is all being exposed now – and that women are finding the voice and courage to stand up to those who intimidated and victimized them – is welcome at last. What compounds the violation is that so many of the accused mouth scripted apologies – sorry just for being caught it seems – but without apparent humility or shame.

Politicians especially should heed the warning of Teddy Roosevelt: “My power vanishes into thin air the instant that my fellow citizens, who are straight and honest, cease to believe that I represent them and fight for what is straight and honest. That is all the strength I have.”

But most of all, the abusers need to be reminded of David and Nathan. (2 *Samuel 12*) We all know how the revered King David succumbed to temptation once he saw the beautiful Bathsheba, arranged to have her husband killed in battle, then took her for his own wife, and she bore him a son. “But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord.”

The Lord sent Nathan to David, who told him a story about a rich man and a poor man. The rich man had “exceeding many flocks and herds.” The poor man and his family had nothing but a small ewe lamb. When a traveler came to visit, the rich man spared his own flock and took the poor man’s lamb to feed his guest.

David was enraged and said to Nathan: “As the Lord liveth, the man that has done this thing shall surely die.”

Nathan just fixed him with his gaze and said, “Thou art the man.”

David was immediately shamed and confessed: “I have sinned against the Lord.” Nathan told him, “the Lord has put away thy sin,” and that he would live but the child born to him and Bathsheba would die.

There have been calls for many of today’s sinners to be fired or to resign. Some are heeding the call. Some are hiding. But they should not have to be told. Just face up to the truth: “Thou art the man.” And be a man.

(BMH)

SEEK YE FIRST . . .

The science fiction many of us grew up with was end-of-the-world apocalyptic stuff – nasty aliens, futuristic weapons and evil plots.

Today’s literature is more about technology – and it isn’t fiction or even futuristic. It’s here and now – with scary implications.

A column in *The Wall Street Journal* several years ago made the case that we’ve outsourced our brains. We don’t need to know phone numbers, directions or a lot of other information anymore. The numbers are in our phones, along

with a GPS. We don't need to go to malls – just go online. We are masters of our devices – or are we slaves?

In a popular new book, *World Without Mind: The Existential Threat of Big Tech*, Franklin Foer argues that Amazon, Google, Facebook and Apple make our lives easier but less meaningful. We have whole encyclopedias of information at our fingertips. But we don't make the time or effort to think, reflect or communicate as we once did. And where is that taking us?

One reviewer says: “Foer is not a modern-day Cassandra predicting a dystopian future. Rather he is a veteran journalist whose book describes the world we already live in, but whose power dynamics we have almost unanimously failed to grasp. The consequences for continuing to Snap Chat and Facebook IM our lives away in blissful ignorance are likely to be profoundly disturbing, but they are also easy to avert.”

Fortunately, we can save ourselves if we just turn off the screens and indulge ourselves in contemplation and real communication – use our minds again – before it all becomes lost art.

Then there is Dan Brown with another romp through history and into the future. He's perfected the formula in *The Da Vinci Code*, *Angels and Demons*, *Inferno* and *The Lost Symbol*: Harvard symbologist Robert Langdon careening through life-and-death adventures, filled with evil zealots, shadowy organizations out to overthrow the world, history interpreted through puzzles and symbols, and always a super-smart and super-attractive female ally.

Brown's latest book is *Origin*, which is about the threat of science – especially artificial intelligence – controlling the world and overwhelming religion and creationism.

There are enough disturbing signs to hint that he is onto something, but encouraging signs as well that people are starting to be weaned from their devices to ponder what life is really all about.

At some point, let us hope, the masses will tire of the frantic quest for the latest iPhone and “app,” and look instead to a flower, a poem or the Word for substance and inspiration, Perhaps one of the first things Jesus taught in His *Sermon the Mount* will resonate anew: “Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” (*Matthew* 6:33)

And then among the last things He said when Pilate taunted Him about being King of the Jews was this wisdom for all of us about what is really important in life: “My kingdom is not of this world.” (*John* 18:36) And everything that is really important to us – beyond the technical marvels of this world – should be seeking and living for that kingdom.

(BMH)

CHOOSE LOVE

Of all the acts of horror and terror that have haunted the news in recent years none has had the searing impact of the killing of a classroom of 6-year-olds and teachers at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, just before Christmas in 2012. But even here we see signs of the Lord's providence turning evil toward good.

Scarlett Lewis, a single mom who lost her son, Jesse, that day – she has one other older son – gave a powerful presentation at NewChurch LIVE in November about how that darkest day of her life brought her a whole new mission: choose love.

She has written a powerful book, based on the last words her son had left for her: *Nurturing, Healing, Love – A Mother's Journey of Hope and Forgiveness*. She travels the country, crusading for schools to teach children to be compassionate, empathic and loving. And she has created a foundation – www.jesselewischooselove.org – to create awareness in our schools, our children and our communities “that we can choose love over anger, gratitude over entitlement, and forgiveness and compassion over bitterness.”

In retrospect she saw signs that her son sensed something was going to happen. When she finally dared go back into her home to get clothes for his funeral, she saw a message he had scrawled on a kitchen chalkboard: “Nurturing. Healing. Love.” This is not the vocabulary of a 6-year-old, but this is what he left for her – and it changed her life.

In the Introduction to her book she says: “In my darkest hours following the tragedy my son Jesse reached out from heaven to give me signs that he is still with me every minute of every day. And in so doing, he's taught me the everlasting and beautiful truth I first taught him as a child: love never ends.”

She likes to quote Viktor Frankl, holocaust survivor who says in his classic book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, that the last freedom we have – one that can never be taken away from us – is our attitude: how we choose to respond to our circumstances. Scarlett says, “I couldn't choose what happened to me or Jesse, but I could choose the way I reacted.”

What killed Jesse and all those other children and teachers grew out of anger and she was not going to become a victim of anger herself, no matter how strong her feelings.

At Jesse's service she acknowledged that people were asking, “What can I do to help?” And she told them: “If you really want to do something to help, then do something that will help all of us by turning an angry thought into a loving one. This whole tragedy began with an angry thought, and that thought could have been changed to a loving one. If it had been none of us would be here today to bury a child we loved so much.

“Take an angry thought each day and turn it into a loving one – and with one loving thought at a time we will change the world and make it a better place, safer for our children and our children’s children. If you want to help, then please choose love.”

She adds: “If the Sandy Hook tragedy has taught me anything, it’s that we are all united in our grief – and that love and compassion can heal and reshape both our hearts and the world.”

(BMH)

CHOOSE PRAYER

As Scarlett Lewis was speaking that Sunday morning in Bryn Athyn, another unspeakable tragedy was unfolding in tiny Sutherland Springs, Texas, where a gunman walked into the First Baptist Church and massacred 26 worshippers.

Again the country was swept up in grief, horror and prayer. But a strange and disturbing counterpoint emerged as well. Some people began mocking the phrase, “our thoughts and prayers are with you.”

“Your prayers don’t help,” scoffed the cynics and elitists. “This happened in a church! Where was your God?”

Scarlett Lewis says in her book: “Prayer has always comforted me. After the tragedy, when I needed comforting more than ever before, I prayed more than ever before. But it wasn’t something new to me. Prayer has always been a way for me and my boys to look beyond ourselves to express gratitude for our many gifts, and to seek guidance and help, but it was also a way of looking within to create a stillness in our hearts and bring peace and calmness to our hectic lives.”

That is why people who don’t know what else they can do sincerely offer their “thoughts and prayers.” They know it’s not going to change what has happened, but also know that turning to the Lord can bring peace to struggling souls.

Many people of the “church universal” are not schooled in the teachings of *Divine Providence* but still perceive that God permits what He does not will for the sake of our freedom. They know that His love and mercy are constant – for all of us. And they know that His healing love is not in the horrific event but in the loving, reflective and responsive aftermath. That is when the worst of tragedy can be bent toward good.

Ask Scarlett Lewis. She knows something about that – and the power of prayer.

(BMH)



OFFICES Bryn Athyn, PA 19009

PUBLISHED BY General Church of the New Jerusalem

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SUBSCRIPTIONS New Church Life, Box 708, Bryn Athyn, PA
\$30 for any address, \$5.00 a single copy

TELEPHONE 267-502-4990

New Church Life

Published bimonthly by
the General Church of the New Jerusalem
Box 743, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009
U.S.A.

www.newchurch.org
www.newchurchlife.org
January/February 2018

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
LANGHORNE, PA
PERMIT NO. 81