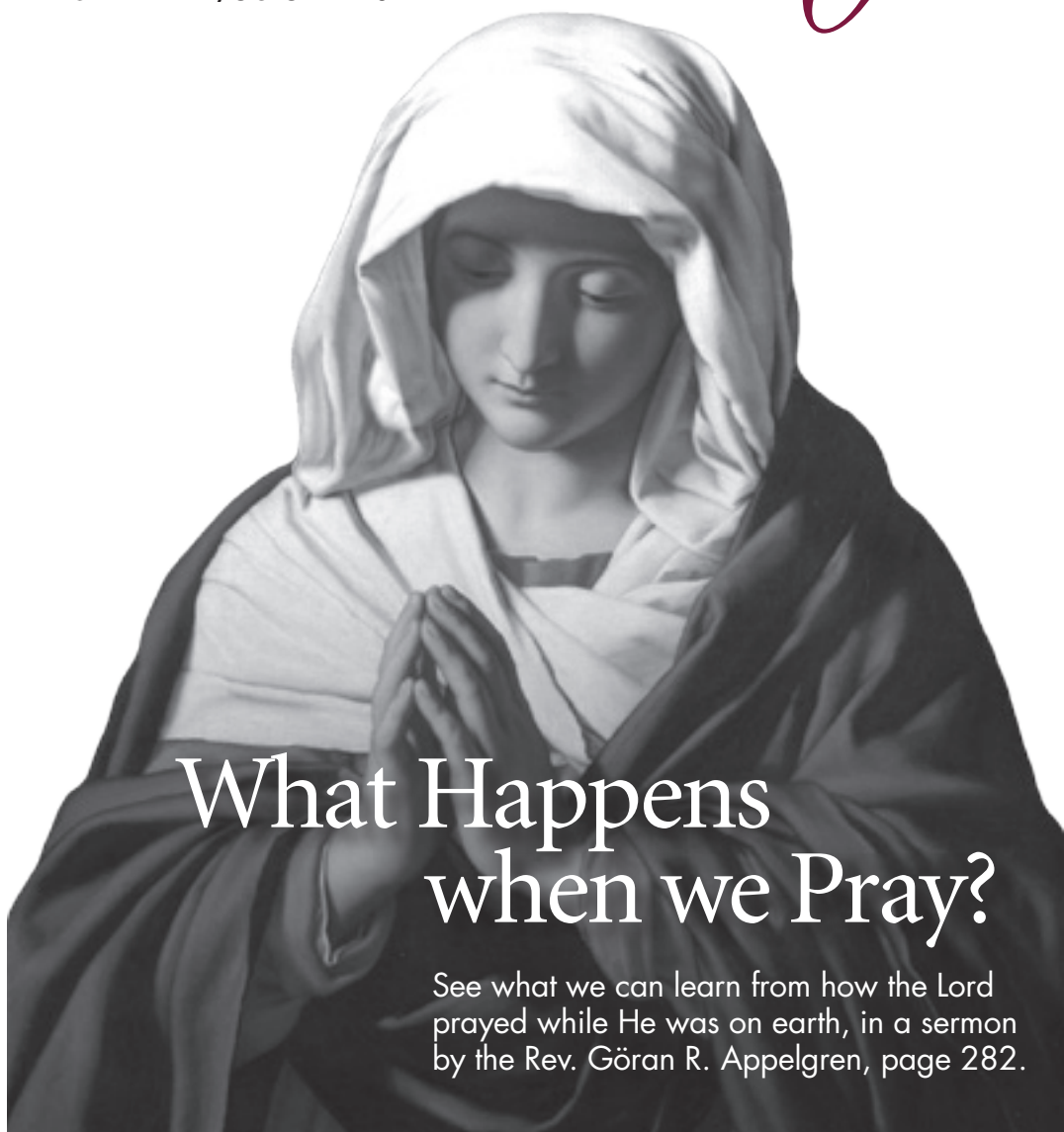


NEW CHURCH *Life*

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

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2011



What Happens when we Pray?

See what we can learn from how the Lord prayed while He was on earth, in a sermon by the Rev. Göran R. Appelgren, page 282.

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New Church Life

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

- 270 Notes on this Issue
- 272 Editorials: *New Church Education: The Hope of the World • What About the 'What Abouts' • The Verdict Is . . . (To Be Continued)*
- 278 Letter to the Editors
- 282 Prayer – *A sermon by the Rev. Göran R. Appelgren*
- 289 Concerns About the Holy Supper – *The Rev. Michael D. Gladish*
- 297 General Church Translation: Why Are We Doing It? – *The Rev. N. Bruce Rogers*
- 305 Introducing Our Ministers: *The Rev. Derrick A. M. Lumsden*
- 308 The Sower: Three Ways Not to Hear The Lord
– *A Sermon by Rev. Derrick A. M. Lumsden*
- 313 A Profound Freedom Supported by New Church Education
– *The Rev. Eric H. Carswell*
- 316 Hard Decisions – *Dr. Gregory L. Baker*
- 320 Thoughts on Giving from a New Church Perspective – *Wayne M. Parker*
- 326 Our Own New Church 800-Pound Gorilla – *James F. Jungé*
- 329 Dreams – *Helen Kennedy*
- 338 General Assembly Workshop Summaries
- 347 New Church Journey Programs – *Burgandy Alden Smith*
- 349 Church News
- 363 Life Lines
- 370 New Initiative Aims to Share the Internal Sense Online – *Brian David*
- 372 Announcements

NOTES ON THIS ISSUE

We all pray, says the Rev. Göran Appelgren in a sermon on prayer, “but with some reflection we may be more inspired and therefore come closer to the Lord and so become more angelic, and better people.” We can learn something about how the Lord Himself prayed while in the world, and begin to feel that something profound is happening when we pray.

- There has been a lot of attention in *New Church Life* this year to the elements used in the Holy Supper and whether or not it is permissible or advisable to offer substitutes for people who can't partake of wine or unleavened bread. The Rev. Michael Gladish offers an in-depth doctrinal study, concluding that the Writings are clear about why wine and bread must be offered but also assuring that this “most holy” sacrament is not required for salvation.
- In an address presented at the New Church Day banquet in Bryn Athyn in June, the Rev. N. Bruce Rogers talks about why it is essential to have General Church translations of the Writings. He has devoted his career to these translations. He talks about some of the challenges and why his guiding principle always has been that in translation “meaning is everything.”
- The Rev. Eric Carswell, Vice Chancellor for the Academy of the New Church and Bishop's Representative for Education, writes about “a profound freedom supported by New Church education.” That is the liberating spiritual principle that we are to act in freedom according to reason. Within this framework “the Lord is working His miracles of change and spiritual progress.”
- In our July-August issue General Church Board member Al Lindsay wrote a challenging letter to fellow Board members about our responsibilities to the Church in these trying economic times. In this issue, fellow Board member Dr. Gregory Baker offers his perspective on *Hard Decisions*; recently retired Development Director Wayne Parker presents *Thoughts for Giving from a New Church Perspective*; and Jim Jungé, a layman long involved in supporting the Church, talks about *Our Own New Church 800-Pound Gorilla*.

- Our series on Introducing Our Ministers continues with the Rev. Derrick Lumsden, whose roots are in the southern United States (Georgia), and who now finds himself happily engaged as Pastor halfway around the world in the New Church Westville in Durban, South Africa. Also included is one of his sermons: *The Sower: Three Ways to Not Hear the Lord*.
- We all dream – and wonder what those often strange subconscious experiences mean. The Bible is filled with dreams – some interpreted, but many not. Helen Kennedy offers a fascinating exploration of *Dreams* – from Freud to Swedenborg – originally presented in New Church Perspective.
- Many different workshops were offered at the General Assembly in Bryn Athyn in June – too many for everyone to attend. All are available on DVD (contact info@ncpulse.com for information). Some do not lend themselves to written summaries but we have invited presenters to provide a synopsis. Several are offered in this issue and we hope to have more for the November-December issue.
- This fall marks the sixth in the highly popular series of Journey Programs, this one called *SHIFT: Small Changes, Big Differences*. Burgandy Alden Smith of the Journey Team has all the information on what this program covers and how to get involved.
- The decision has been made to discontinue publication of *Around the New Church* and incorporate much of its communication and information into Church News in *New Church Life*. We welcome this opportunity to help build community as One Church and you'll see the beginnings of expanded Church News in this issue – including the removal of the old Glenn Hall at the Academy, where a great many Girls School graduates had fond memories, and the opening of a stunning new dormitory. We will welcome contributions to make this a dynamic part of *New Church Life*.
- Brian David, who gave a memorable talk and video presentation at the Assembly, describes a bold new initiative to share the internal sense of the Word online. It is an ambitious concept which could help to spread the truths of the Second Coming throughout the world. And the Rev. Kurt Horigan Asplundh describes a whole new – and easy – way to read *New Church Life* by downloading it onto a Kindle (or Nook). Technology will keep increasing the ways we communicate as a church.

Editorials

New Church Education: The Hope of the World

Another year of New Church education is underway in the Academy and General Church schools in North America, joining our schools in Africa. For some students this is their introduction to an education that will guide their lives – to eternity. For others it is their last year in classrooms before taking that education into a needy world.

The new school year has launched as well throughout the northern hemisphere, from kindergarten through college. Some of that education is excellent, some less so. But none offers what is essential and distinctive in New Church education:

- Teaching the spiritual as well as the natural mind
- Developing a moral and spiritual conscience
- And preparing young people for lives of use – in this world and the world to come.

The ultimate test of education is said to be whether it makes people comfortable and confident in the presence of choices – whether they have the information they need to make good decisions. But moral and spiritual values are essential for making wise decisions. We have to hope people still are getting those values from their homes and churches. Indeed, many good people still bring moral and ethical principles to bear on current issues. But very little is said about such values anymore in our public schools and colleges.

This is what makes New Church education so distinctive and invaluable in a world morally adrift. Education is traditionally focused on life and careers in this world, so to say that we are educating our young people for useful lives in this world and the next is a revolutionary concept. But that is what education should be all about – making our young people comfortable and confident in the presence of choices that have a spiritual basis and eternal consequences.

In his definitive book on New Church education – *Education for Use* – Bishop Willard Pendleton said that modern educational philosophy assumes man is a social being, which is true, “but he is also a moral and spiritual being,

and it is here that societally derived doctrines of the present day leave much to be desired. To neglect these aspects of human existence is to leave a great gap in the educational process.”

New Church education is filling that gap in the “values vacuum” of our modern educational system, where few secular teachers dare talk about morality and ethics, right and wrong, good and evil, and the crowning spiritual dimension of our lives. How sad this is in a desperate world, where well-intentioned practical solutions often fail for lack of spiritual context.

We have accumulated tremendous knowledge and advanced immeasurably as a civilization. The world is alive with progress but confused about where it is going. And for all we have gained, how much have we progressed morally, spiritually and in wisdom?

We live in an increasingly pragmatic world where almost every level of human activity is plagued by moral relativism. Self has been elevated and glorified – self-awareness, self-actualization, self-image, self-interest, self-esteem. The fallout of self-indulgence and wayward values is all around us. People defining for themselves what is good wonder why they aren’t happy. And any child in a New Church school knows the answer – that all good comes from the Lord alone. And that – not a PhD from Harvard – is the beginning of wisdom.

So is understanding that the things of this world should always be seen in the context of eternity. “He who does not perceive what is eternal,” writes Bishop Pendleton, “is not an educated man.” He may be informed and learned, but he is not wise. And this is what New Church education is all about – developing wisdom, not mere intelligence.

A lot of intelligent, caring people are grappling with the issues and challenges of the day, searching for answers, but the dominant philosophy in the world is that religion is irrelevant to what plagues us. However, while our problems may appear purely worldly, at root they are fundamentally spiritual, and cry out for spiritually based solutions. It is the very lack of moral and spiritual values that creates the environment for chaos to flourish.

Wisdom leads to a different perspective. “The ultimate goal of New Church education,” Bishop Pendleton adds, “is the will to do what is good for the sake of use.” Consider the potential power then of New Church education to transform the world with more and more bright young adults guided by moral and spiritual conscience.

A fundamental doctrine of the Church is that “All religion has relation to life, and the life of religion is to do good.” (*Doctrine of Life 1*) It is that simple. And it is that profound. New Church education conveys a clear sense of how religion is, or should be, a part of our lives – every day, in every choice we make. It is not something abstract and irrelevant. And the more we allow our

faith to become a central part of our lives, the more life makes sense. The easier our choices become. And the more useful we can be.

The freedom to get an education and to make free choices is a blessing throughout much of the world. But the guidance to help us make wise moral and spiritual choices is what New Church education is all about – and what sets it apart.

That should not make us feel superior. And it certainly does not make us immune to the allures of the world. It should make us feel prepared, responsible, useful and blessed.

It is easy to be discouraged about how tiny the Church is in the world, how small our schools are in the great sweep of education, how great is the need for what New Church education has to offer, and how slight our influence appears to be. But “be of good cheer,” the Lord tells us, “for I have overcome the world.” It is our calling to have faith and trust in Him – to go forth confidently as His disciples and apostles.

Developing moral and spiritual conscience for our young people to carry into a waiting world “is the work of New Church education,” says Bishop Pendleton. It is “why New Church schools are needed.”

Indeed, New Church education is the hope of the world. So let us support our schools and our students in this unique, essential work. Let us thank our New Church teachers and administrators who carry on this noble and vital work. Let us thank the Lord.

(BMH)

What About the “What Abouts”?

Who was Ralph W. Sockman? Whoever he was, he came up with a great saying: “The larger the island of knowledge, the longer the shoreline of wonder.”

The New Church island of knowledge concerning spiritual things is large indeed. But like every island, it has its limits. And, like shorelines, we find ourselves attracted to them again and again.

We wonder about the Lord’s resurrection body, for instance. We wonder about the “limbus.” We wonder about *The Earths in the Universe* – are there really humans on other planets? We read *Heaven and Hell* and gain much new knowledge about life after death, and yet find we have even more questions about it than we did before.

The more our knowledge of spiritual things expands, the more we find ourselves asking: What about this? What about that? What about....so many things.

In heaven, we'll know much more than we know now: our spiritual island of knowledge will be much larger. But so will the shoreline. And both the island and its shoreline of wonder will keep expanding to all eternity. (Eternity? What about eternity? What does it mean?)

A well-known motto of the New Church is: "Now it is permitted to enter with understanding into the mysteries of faith." (*True Christian Religion* 508) Note that it doesn't say there won't be any more mysteries, just that we can enter into them with understanding. And it doesn't say absolute or complete understanding.

Never to venture in our thought to the edge of the unknown would be a mistake. For one thing, it reminds us that there is much we don't know, and helps keep us humble. And it's at the shoreline that new sand is deposited and the island grows. Doubts arise there, but it is also a place of wonder, excitement and beauty, where we encounter the infinite wisdom of the Divine.

We can even go out a little way onto the sea of mystery in the boat of doctrine, and from there gain a new perspective on the island, and appreciation of it. But let's be careful not to drift too far from land. Let's not get so carried away by speculation on things we don't understand, and which perhaps we are incapable of understanding in our present state, that we lose sight of the solid, good, useful knowledge we *do* understand.

The center of all knowledge is the truth that there is a God and that He is good. If we know that, the 10,000 other things we don't know or understand – the "what abouts?" – will not be much of a problem.

By all means, gaze out at the endless sea, and wonder. But when the shoreline of the mind is shrouded in fog, when waves of doubt beat against the sands of faith, when maddening birds circle over the restless sea screaming: "What about this? What about that?" . . . go back to the center of your island of knowledge.

There, on the high hill at the center, you will find a rock: build your mental house on it. There are 10,000 "what abouts" to distract the mind, but one Truth answers them all: "The Lord only is my rock and my salvation. . . . I shall not be moved." (*Psalms* 62:6)

(WEO)

The Verdict is . . . (To Be Announced)

It might seem that the teachings of the Writings about the spiritual world have little to do with life in the here and now, but nothing could be further from the truth.

Take, for example, the account in *Heaven and Hell* of the second state people go through in the world of spirits on their way to their eternal dwelling place. (*Heaven and Hell* 499-511) In their first state after death they are still “in the state of their exteriors,” as when they were in the natural world. In the second state, though, their Book of Life is opened and their inner character is revealed, to them and to others.

“In this second state spirits become visibly just what they had been in themselves while in the world, what they then did and said secretly being now made manifest.” (*Heaven and Hell* 507) As the Lord says in the Gospel: “There is nothing covered up that shall not be revealed, and hid that shall not be known.” (*Luke 12:2*) No lies, no pretense, no avoidance of reality is possible anymore.

This sounds, shall we say, *awkward*. But that depends, of course, on what our true, inner self has become. In the case of people who faced up to their sins and truly repented, there is no need to revisit those things. But the misdeeds of those who persist in denying their guilt are brought forth from their inner memory and graphically represented or replayed.

Swedenborg witnessed this again and again. “There were some who denied the crimes which they had perpetrated in the world, (but) all their deeds were disclosed and reviewed in order from their memory (so that there was no) possible room for denial.” (*Heaven and Hell* 462b)

The first obvious lesson in this is that it inspires us to pay attention to the work of regeneration: to examine ourselves, identify whatever evils we discover lurking within us, pray to the Lord to help us get rid of them, and then act accordingly.

But another advantage of having this knowledge of how judgment works in the spiritual world came to mind as I listened to a report on the news about the verdict a jury had reached in a murder trial which had gotten a lot of attention. The verdict was “not guilty.” Many people were upset, though, because they believed this was the wrong verdict. (I did not follow this trial and have no opinion on whether the defendant was guilty or not.)

Under the law, a guilty verdict required the jury to be convinced of guilt “beyond a reasonable doubt.” But in the absence of enough hard evidence, jurors are obligated to vote for acquittal even if they suspect the accused is guilty. It is a good system, but frustrating at times when it seems as if a guilty person escaped punishment and justice was not done.

That frustration, though, is mitigated by the knowledge that *no one ever really gets away with anything*. Sooner or later we all must stand before the throne of heaven for our final judgment. That verdict, rendered by infinite Love joined with infinite Wisdom, will be both perfectly just and perfectly merciful.

One of the practical benefits of believing this is that it makes it easier to live with the imperfect justice of this world. It enables us to accept a system that is weighted toward protecting innocent people from being punished for crimes they didn't commit even though this means guilty persons occasionally will escape punishment *in this world*.

In the end justice always prevails.

(WEO)

A New Way to Read New Church Life

The Rev. Kurt Horigan Asplundh happily reports that while browsing the Internet recently he went to www.newchurchlife.org, found the latest issue of *New Church Life*, and easily downloaded it to his Kindle e-reader, easily converting it from a pdf file to a Kindle-friendly format. "All of this, in itself," he says, "is a miracle that I wish more people in the Church knew about."

"Just think," he adds, "on the popular Kindle reader, weighing just 8.5 ounces (probably not much more than the *Life* issue itself) I have the four issues of *New Church Life* published this year, not to mention the entire set of the *Writings* from the Swedenborg Foundation, a printed sermon from my files, a taped sermon by Walter Orthwein (to see if I could do it), the Council of the Clergy papers for the 2011 meetings, a searchable *King James Version Bible*, plus a handful of other books I've downloaded. My total cost for all of this has been 99 cents (for the *Bible* – I'm sure I could find one free)."

The Kindle reader – and no doubt this is true for Nook and similar devices – costs less than \$150 and "it can do wonderful things. It allows you to change the size of the type for easier reading, to bookmark text and highlight it, write notes to yourself – and even to others. If you can't see the text, you can set it to read to you (in a male or female voice). Walter's sermon is in his own voice."

As the technology improves, the price comes down, making this more and more an advantageous option. One current drawback is that the Kindle doesn't import – photographs and some formatting features – except in a pdf format, which is not as easy to read on the Kindle but easily read on your computer. The online version of the *Life* also does not include the Announcements of baptisms, weddings and deaths – for security reasons – so it's still good to have the print version as a backup.

As for older readers adapting to new technology, Kurt says, "I know. I know. People who read the *Life* usually don't like to learn new technology. However, most of them use cars and have central heating." It's that easy.

(BMH)

Letter to the Editors

Remember, "Thou shalt not kill"

To The Editors:

Re the articles by Dr. James deMaine, *Please Let Me Die*, and the response by the Rev. Ethan McCardell, in the May/June issue:

I wonder why these articles have been published in *New Church Life* given that the Writings are quite clear on suicide and taking another's life. Could it be that euthanasia is considered something which should be supported by the General Church? Or perhaps it is because Dr. deMaine is still concerned about his action and has chosen to raise it in *New Church Life* to see what other New Churchmen think about his action. The editor stated that Dr. deMaine welcomes readers' reactions so I reluctantly put forward my views.

The first point is that there is a world of difference (naturally and spiritually) between someone who would have died had he not been kept alive by artificial means while in a coma and deemed to be brain dead, and a person who, although in considerable pain and discomfort, is living with the assistance of artificial aids as was Erik and also is able to think clearly and communicate his thoughts.

In the first case it might be orderly to remove the artificial life support system, thus allowing the person to pass into the spiritual world. However, in the latter case it would be suicide if the person took his own life, or disorderly at best if another person ended his life. Even if a country had legally exempted euthanasia from its definition of murder it seems to me that it would still be contrary to the Lord's commandments. I don't intend to quote from the Writings; there are plenty of references which show that the taking of another life or one's own is against the Lord's will.

The taking of another's life has always been termed murder and we should remember that natural law has actually come to us from spiritual law. Today, however, there are many countries which in legal terms do not see euthanasia as murder. Indeed, there are many in those countries that have not legalised euthanasia who are in agreement with the practice.

However, even though our increasingly secular, materialistic world has moved steadily away from spiritual laws and values, those laws and values remain and no one should knowingly flout them. In the General Church, whether we like it or not, we are influenced by the world's values and sadly, we – being for the most part unregenerate – are always trying to fit worldly arguments to spiritual values despite the strong statements in the Writings that

we cannot see spiritual things from the natural. As with euthanasia, we say it is compassionate to end someone's life, and so convince ourselves that our values are actually spiritual when they clearly are not.

In his article, Dr. deMaine states:

- *That a psychiatrist found Erik not to be depressed and was thinking clearly and*
- *"I asked Erik why he might not want to go on. He said, "First, I am no longer functioning as a man. I have no chance of recovering. I am worsening and am a burden to my wife. I'm serious. I should have the right to decide when enough's enough."*

It is important to note that it was considered that Erik was thinking clearly and was not depressed. So he was rationally considering ending his own life. The Writings clearly state that suicide is wrong. If one believes in the Writings and faces such a situation, surely one should then point out to the person concerned why it is wrong to take one's own life, or worse, ask another to do it for you. If a person ends the life of another is that not a contravention of the Commandments?

Perhaps Erik knew nothing about the Writings. Even so, the whole thrust of his comment is out of step with all that we know from the Writings. It is up to the Lord to determine the time of a person's death. What is it to "function as a man?" What is a "man"? Is a person without arms and legs not a man? A person continues to perform a use even when incapacitated and suffering. How dare we decide for the Lord whether a person is serving any use while in such a state?

Perhaps it was necessary in relation to Erik's own regeneration or to those around him to continue his life in the world. He apparently stated that he was a burden to his wife, but perhaps that is one of the reasons he used to convince himself that it was in order for him to take his own life, whereas his wife might not have felt he was a burden. In fact, according to Dr. deMaine, Gerta loved him and did not wish to see him go.

The arguments Erik put forward are man's reasonings; they are out of step with what we know to be true from the Writings. They are the way the materialistic world argues.

Perhaps Dr. deMaine, in asking whether he did the right thing, knows in his heart, if he is a New Churchman, that he did not. I think he was in a most unenviable position and was moved by great compassion for his patient, but should it not be a case of "Not my will, Lord, but Thine"? I would hate to find myself in that situation for it would tear one apart. However, I think that the Writings are clear about this issue.

I am not sure exactly what Rev. McCardell is saying, although it seems clear that he supports Dr. deMaine's actions. It seems he is saying that because everything comes under the laws of Divine Providence the Lord had foreseen

what was to happen and had provided Dr. deMaine as the means of enabling Erik's transition into the next world.

Rev. McCardell states, "Part of what this passage suggests to me is that although he (Erik) sought to cooperate with God 'as if of himself', *the Lord had already foreseen and provided for the time and the means of Erik's transition. . .*" (my italics) I fail to see how one can assume that Erik sought to cooperate with God in going against the Lord's commandments!

No one can ever know if someone had "sought to cooperate with the Lord" or that the Lord had provided Dr. deMaine as the means to move Erik to the next world. It is totally wrong to make such assumptions. If we are to believe in the Ten Commandments and in the plain teachings of the Writings, suicide – or the taking of another's life – is wrong. Further, we also need to remember that the Two Great Commandments about love do not replace the Ten Commandments but are subject to them.

Of course the Lord foresaw the events, but I find it hard to accept that, in contradiction of what He has taught us in His Word about not taking another's life, He was actually providing for that to happen. I would suggest that Dr. deMaine's action was spiritually wrong and was a permission because as we know, the Lord does not limit another's freedom. In a sense, the Lord did provide for Dr deMaine's intervention because He foresaw it and did not stop it. Nonetheless, in view of the teachings in the Word He would not have willed that intervention but permitted it.

It is of concern to me that Rev. McCardell, a minister in the General Church, condones the actions of Erik and Dr. deMaine. Would he then say of someone who pulls a gun on a bunch of students and kills them that the Lord had foreseen it as the means of their transition and therefore it is all right? After all, the argument Rev. McCardell uses in respect of Erik could also be used for straight-out murder.

I do not think that either of these articles should have been printed in *New Church Life*, the official organ of the New Church. Criticism could well be levelled at the General Church that it supports euthanasia. Euthanasia, while becoming more acceptable in the secular world, is not necessarily spiritually right.

I, too, in Dr. deMaine's position, may well have done exactly the same as he did, out of compassion for the individual, and I doubt very much that the Lord would "hold it against one," but that is not the issue. The issue is whether such an action is against the Lord's will or not.

Response: Dr. deMaine notes that the case he presented was real but that the names were changed. They were not a New Church couple. He says, “I’m not going to address the doctrinal issues of ‘killing’ other than to mention that it seems to be permitted in certain situations such as war. In terms of practical issues and following the writer’s logic, it would seem that all ‘non-brain dead’ patients should have ventilators, CPR, feeding tubes and IVs. Clearly, the modern hospice movement supports people with palliative care at life’s end. Withdrawing life support, such as was done in the article, allows a suffering and dying patient to die.

“I received many positive comments at the Assembly. I hope the discussion continues to enliven *New Church Life* and that others will chime in.”

Editor’s note: The publication in *New Church Life* of various points of view on issues should never be construed as official positions of the Church. They are part of a dialogue within the Church, in which we all search for truth.

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Prayer

A sermon by the Rev. Göran R. Appelgren

We are told to abide in the Lord and that He abides in us. Yes, it is the best place. “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” (*John 15:5*)

We call it heaven, and that is the purpose of human life – to become angels in heaven. In order to get there we do different things in our spiritual life. One thing is to pray. Prayer is not an unknown entity. We all pray, but with

some reflection on the subject we may be more inspired and therefore come closer to the Lord and so become more angelic, and better people.

First of all, remember that something happens when we pray: Regarded in itself prayer is “talking to God and at the same time an inner view of the things that are being prayed for. ... (There is) a certain opening of man’s internals toward God.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 2535)

And therefore Jesus says: “And all things, whatever you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.” (*Matthew 21:22*)

Something does happen when we pray. That

is the first thing to remember. And the other is that the greatest inspiration for prayer comes from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The message today is that something happens when we pray, and that our Lord Jesus Christ is the greatest example for us. The Lord prayed – and since we should follow His example, we should also pray.

We shall now look at four areas of prayer, and we will start with the Lord.

The Lord prayed for help in His own life

The first example of the Lord praying is that He prayed for help in His own life: “He went up on a mountain by Himself to pray.” (*Matthew 14:23; cf. Luke 6:12*) This happened many, many times. According to the Writings it happened more or less constantly, not necessarily on a mountain in a physical sense, but constantly.

Here is another example: “He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed.” (*Luke 5:16*) “Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, ‘Sit here while I go and pray over there.’” (*Matthew 26:36*) The disciples fell asleep. Jesus Christ in His Human was all alone in His battle against the hells out in the spiritual wilderness.

When the Lord prayed something happened. He received from within the guidance He needed. “The Lord’s praying was nothing else than an internal speaking to the Divine ... There was Revelation when He prayed.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 2535) This is clear from what it says about His baptism: “Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. And the Holy Spirit descended.” (*Luke 3:21*) It is a powerful image. He prayed, and the heaven was opened. Something happens during prayer.

Another area of prayer has to do with forgiveness

The Lord almost prayed for forgiveness of sins, but, no, He never sinned. He never sinned. But this is how close He came to praying for forgiveness or maybe we can say for forgiveness for not having had the full conviction or courage of the Divine in His Human: “He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, ‘O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.’” (*Matthew 26:39; cf. Luke 22:42*)

On the same occasion He told the disciples: “Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” (*Matthew 26:41*)

This may well reflect some of His own experience of the battle against the hells within His Human – a Human that was weak but never succumbed to sinning.

He prayed – “Not My will, but Yours be done” – and something happened: “An angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him.” (*Luke 22:43,44*)

Thirdly, He certainly said prayers of thanks

Having performed one of His healing miracles, the one where He raised Lazarus from the dead, He said: “Father, I thank You that You have heard Me.” (*John 11:41*)

And during the Last Supper with His disciples it says that: “He took the cup, and gave thanks ... And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it.” (*Luke 22:17,19*)

And in the Psalms, in a representative sense, we hear the Lord giving thanks after temptations and victory: “O LORD my God, I cried out to You,

And You have healed me. O LORD, You have brought my soul up from the grave; You have kept me alive.” (*Psalm 30:2,3*)

Finally, He also prayed for others

To His disciples He said: “I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever.” (*John 14:16*)

“But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail.” (*Luke 22:32*)

And these are actual words from one of His own prayers to the Father or the Divine within Him. The whole of chapter 17 in John is a prayer. It is a powerful text. This is verse 9:

“I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours.” (*John 17:9*)

Looking at the Lord’s life on earth we can conclude that in His Human He had to pray. That was the way He connected to His Divine Soul within and how He received the Revelation needed in the battle against the hells. “There was revelation when He prayed.” (*Arcana Coelestia 2535*)

We shall pray

The Lord prayed, and we shall pray. “No one can be conjoined with the Lord ... except by becoming like [Him] or making one with Him.” (*Arcana Coelestia 1038:1*)

Praying was a practice in Old Testament times. It is a practice in all religions. (cf. AE 1216:2)

From the Old Testament we can just listen to a couple of quotes:

“Many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD.” (*Zechariah 8:22*)

“My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.” (*Isaiah 56:7*)

In the New Testament the Lord repeats those words from Isaiah: “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you have made it a den of thieves.” (*Matthew 21:13*)

Here Jesus definitely tells us we should practice prayer. In other places He instructs us clearly. In response to the disciples’ request about learning how to pray He said: “In this manner, therefore, pray” (*Matthew 6:9*), and then He gave the prayer of all prayers, “Our Father.”

He encouraged His followers to have a strong belief in the power of prayer: “And all things, whatever you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.” (*Matthew 21:22*)

And He told them that they should never give up: “Then He spoke a

parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart.” (*Luke 18:1*)

We may be tempted to think that we do not have to pray other than in formal settings. The Lord knows everything. He knows who we are, what our spiritual state is, what the future will be.

All of that is true, but it is not an argument for not praying, because by praying we put ourselves in a better position for the Lord to work with us. We open ourselves to Him and to His guidance in a stronger way. “To abide in Him, and He in us.” By praying we make ourselves ready to receive.

This is what it says in the Heavenly Doctrine: “The Lord gives (a man) to ask, and what to ask, and the Lord therefore knows this beforehand, but still the Lord wills that a man should ask first to the end that it may be as from himself, and thus be appropriated to him.” (*Apocalypse Revealed 376*)

This necessary reciprocity is expressed by the Lord in these very inviting and encouraging words from Revelation: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.” (*Revelation 3:20*)

Now, having seen what kind of prayers the Lord used, we can apply those four categories of prayers to our own spiritual needs.

Spiritual life has to do with one thing only – to be reborn, to be born into new life from the Lord.

1. In the process we need help to fight our own selfishness.
2. We need to ask forgiveness for the unrighteous things we have done.
3. Once the battle is over, we wish to express our thanks to the Lord.
4. And the more we abide in the Lord and He in us, the more we wish this transformation to be made possible for other people, and therefore we pray for others.

Those are the four categories – help, forgiveness, thanksgiving and praying for others.

We may be tempted to think we do not have to pray other than in formal settings. The Lord knows everything... but that is not an argument for not praying, because by praying we put ourselves in a better position for the Lord to work with us.

Praying for help:

Let us now reflect on those categories in our own prayer life. In the Lord's Prayer we pray for help: "Do not lead us into temptation, and deliver us from evil." (*Matthew 6:13*) That is what it is all about – to get away from hellish influences. Sometimes it is extremely hard. The hells hold us firmly in their grip. That is why the Lord said:

"This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting." (*Mark 9:29*; cf. *Matthew 17:16-21*) "Fasting" stands for an inner fight against strong wishes to fall into a bad behavior. Praying is a way of letting the Lord come closer in our struggle. "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" (*Mark 9:24*)

Praying for forgiveness:

A human being can never be perfect. We all have to ask the Lord for forgiveness for our sins. And remember that such a prayer is easier than we might think at first. His forgiveness is already at hand: "The Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins." (*Mark 2:10*)

The only – or most important – condition is that we in turn are prepared to forgive:

"And forgive us our debts as we also forgive our debtors" (*Matthew 6:12*), "for if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you." (*Matthew 6:14*)

The beauty of prayer for forgiveness is that it restores a sense of peace and purpose of life. The burden is lifted off, and we can start anew as a better person, a more loving person. Listen to this, where forgiveness and love are linked to one another: . "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little." (*Luke 7:47*)

The beauty of prayer for forgiveness is that it restores a sense of peace and purpose of life. The burden is lifted off, and we can start anew as a better person, a more loving person.

Prayers of thanksgiving:

In the Lord's Prayer there is a form of thanksgiving: "Hallowed be your name." (*Matthew 6:9*)

It is easy to take for granted all the good things we receive from the Lord, especially things having to do with our spiritual recovery. Remember the ten lepers who were healed, of which only one gave thanks: "Now one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned (to Jesus) . . . and fell down on his

face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan. So Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?" (*Luke 17:15-17*)

Praying for others:

Finally, we can pray for others, even for those we do not know personally. The Lord did: "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word." (*John 17:20*) That is talking about people in the future.

We may pray for the growth of the Church, for people we do not yet know by name: "Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." (*Matthew 9:38*)

We may not know exactly what happens and how it happens, but something happens when we pray for others. The Lord did pray for others. We are nothing in and of ourselves, so it is from Him that we pray.

It is from what is from Him in us that we pray for what will be from Him in others. Let us repeat this: *It is from what is from Him in us that we pray for what will be from Him in others.*

Things happen when we pray:

So, things happen when we pray. Again, we can use the example of the Lord Himself. Up on the mountain with Peter, James and John we read this: "And as He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening." (*Luke 9:29*)

"There was revelation when He prayed." (*Arcana Coelestia 2535*)

Prayer is about being in tune with the Divine.

When we are in the Lord, something happens when we pray. From the Lord we pray to the Lord. Then we have the right disposition:

"When a person is engaged in true worship the Lord flows into the forms of good and the truths present with the person, raises them toward Himself, and raises the person with them." (*Arcana Coelestia 10229*)

That is what is meant – among other things – with these words from chapter 15 in John's Gospel:

Prayer is about being in tune with the Divine. When we are in the Lord, something happens when we pray. From the Lord we pray to the Lord. Then we have the right disposition.

“He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. ... If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.” (*John 15:5,7*)

Constant prayer:

When Jesus says that “men ought always to pray and not lose heart” (*Luke 18:1*), He does mean what He says. And, again, it is about disposition. I think you may well recognize this disposition of constant prayer in other people. With some people you just feel that whenever they do or say something they make a quick check with the Lord, quickly their thought goes to these words: “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD.” (*Psalms 19:14*)

The more we practice this, the quicker the check will be, and nobody can notice this spiritual practice, but they will notice a more loving and wise behavior in us.

“If they are wholly celestial and spiritual things about which he prays, something like a Revelation is present within his prayer.” (*Arcana Coelestia 2535*)

I and We:

Finally, a couple of words about the power of being together. The Lord instructs us to pray as a group:

“In this manner, therefore, pray, Our Father in heaven.” (*Matthew 6:9*) He does not instruct them to say “My Father.” Yes, for each one of us He is my heavenly Father, but we must think that we pray this prayer together with all others who love the Lord and wish to come close to Him.

O Lord, we pray each one of us and together, “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.” (*John 15:4*) Amen!

Lessons: *John 15: 1-12, Arcana Coelestia 10299:2*



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Concerns About the Holy Supper

Rev. Michael D. Gladish

When I took my first pastorate in Australia in 1974, traveling to Australian Conference societies it was not long before I was confronted with the old controversy about the use of alcohol in the Holy Supper. I well remember the confidence I felt at that time in the certain knowledge that the doctrine of the General Church was settled on this matter, having been thoroughly debated and resolved many decades earlier. Now I see we are back to the same old arguments, presented just as passionately as ever before and with growing impatience.

My contribution here can only be a tiny sampling of the doctrine as I understand it, but I write to explain in some detail why I continue to believe that wine is the only proper element for the priesthood to offer as a drink in the Holy Supper – despite the problems some people have with it.

My hope is that readers will see this not as a Pharisaic insistence on some merely external matter but as a compassionate, heartfelt desire to help the members of the Church respect the Lord's will even as they confront the limitations of their own conditions. We can't always have what we want; indeed, we can't always receive what the Lord in His wisdom offers us. But the limitations are not in Him, nor in the Church.

While alternatives in many aspects of life can be useful, this seems to be a special case in which we dare not compromise the correspondences in any way. We are, in effect, on holy ground, and in this matter I believe we ought to have a holy fear of doing anything that the Lord Himself does not teach in Scripture or the Heavenly Doctrines.

The Correspondences of Bread and Wine

In the Lord's "Last Supper," on the eve of His crucifixion, He took bread, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples saying, "Take, eat; this do in remembrance of Me." He also took "the cup," which contained wine, and passed it to them all, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the New Covenant..."

Notice that in the passages (*Matthew 26, Mark 14 and Luke 22*) it does *not* say "unleavened wheat bread," just "bread," nor does it say "fermented wine," only "the fruit of the vine." Still, we know historically that the bread

was unleavened in commemoration of the Passover (*True Christian Religion* 704, *Exodus 13*, *Deuteronomy 16*), and that the wine was fermented (Mishna – Jewish tradition). In any case there is no doubt that when the *Writings* refer to this sacrament, and clearly state that wine “was commanded,” they use a word that means fermented wine. (*Arcana Coelestia* 2165:3, 3813:2, 5117:9, *Apocalypse Explained* 1082:2, e.g.)

Yet there are questions today about the proper elements to use in commemoration of this event. And in response I think it’s fair to say that if we were not concerned about the health and welfare of church members who cannot eat bread or drink wine without some real or potential harm coming to them we would answer the questions very simply. We would say that we should use unleavened bread made with wheat as prescribed in the Old Testament, and a very fine, natural, unfortified red wine, also in keeping with the Word of the Old Testament.¹ Why? Because of the correspondences involved, as taught in *True Christian Religion* 700-709, and many other passages.

These correspondences relate directly to the Lord Himself and His state of glorification. (*True Christian Religion* 716-717)

Remember yeast is a fungus, and its usual function in nature is to introduce a process of decay. So symbolically it represents the evil and its accompanying falsity that can corrupt something good. I believe the Lord used unfermented, or unleavened bread to represent His own goodness because that goodness, that love, was absolutely pure from conception: there was nothing selfish in it, nothing false, nothing even in the slightest degree flawed or limited. In fact when we think about the Lord’s love it is almost impossible to appreciate how infinitely generous it is – never angry, never jealous, never puffed up or demanding, always giving.

On the other hand the wine is fermented (the fermentation having been finished) because this corresponds to the purity of the Lord’s wisdom, *wisdom that was purified during His life on earth by means of temptations* (the spiritual meaning of fermentation), since it was *imperfect* in His understanding at the beginning. This, in fact, is why He came into the world: to assume the limitations of a finite human understanding of the Word so that He could confront the hells within himself and subjugate them, thereby restoring order in heaven and spiritual equilibrium on earth. (see *True Christian Religion* 85)

So by eating unleavened bread and by drinking fermented wine we celebrate our ability to receive pure love and *purified* wisdom from the Word, thanks to His redeeming work.

1 In fact the ministers present for the Council of the Clergy meetings in 1999 did say just this. Our only disagreement was about how an individual pastor might accommodate those with special needs.

Personal Concerns

But being the sensitive, caring people that we are, when we see someone struggling with these elements, either in church or in any other aspect of his or her personal life, we feel compassion toward that person and we want to offer some alternative, especially when it comes to the wine. We may ourselves feel the need for an alternative, lest we fall into temptation or physical grief. What are we to do?

For about five years in Toronto I offered pure spring water as an alternative to wine *for those who could not drink alcohol in any form*. My thought was that water, like wine, has an excellent correspondence, and indeed the Lord turned water into wine in His first recorded miracle. Surely, I reasoned, the Lord would accept a substitute with a similar correspondence in cases where wine might be harmful. I was also moved by the argument, presented by a colleague, that the act of drinking may be just as important as the drink itself, for actions have correspondence as surely as things do.

But on further reflection, again with the help of colleagues, I have come to the conclusion that to offer a substitute for bread and wine really is tantamount to offering a substitute for the Lord. This may seem outrageous at first, but I ask your indulgence. Remember, it is known with reasonable certainty that the Lord did not offer anything but bread and wine at the Last Supper, and He said, “*This* do in remembrance of Me.” Now surely we can do any number of other things also in remembrance of Him, but then we are not doing “this,” are we? And as much as the Lord Himself does accommodate by giving us appearances of truth that we can handle (as distinct from pure truths which we could not handle), this does not seem to be the intent of the sacrament. Rather in this unique act the Lord offered Himself, even referring to the elements as His own body and blood: not a substitute, not an alternative, but The Real Thing, the pure, refined, clarified, *glorified* Divine truth.

And it’s true today as it was then: sometimes we simply can’t handle this. Nor is it always our fault if we can’t handle it; we just can’t. It’s the same with alcohol: just because we can’t take it doesn’t mean that we are lesser human beings, we just can’t take it. Does the Lord care about this? Of course He does! Will He accommodate to us by allowing us another way of recognizing and acknowledging Him? Of course He will! But it seems clear that that other way will not be the Holy Supper that He prescribed on this particular occasion.

The Problem with Substitutes

Coming back, then, to the act of drinking, is this actually just as important as the drink itself? No, not really. After all, you can’t drink unless you have

something to drink; it is, therefore, the drink itself that counts. This is borne out by the explanation of the correspondences of various drinks throughout the letter of the Word, from water to broth to milk, wine or wormwood.

If drinking is important but what you drink doesn't matter, why then all you have to do is lift the glass and go through the motions. Indeed, some who are unable to drink wine for health reasons *do* simply lift the chalice of the Holy Supper in a gesture of their *desire* to receive the Lord's truth, which desire itself, we know, is sufficient to attract the Lord's mercy and support.

But what about those for whom even the smell of wine is offensive, and perhaps evokes bitter memories? Surely this will present real difficulties for the communicant, and may even prevent him or her from participating at all. This is enormously sad, and challenging to the Church! But we need to ask, does this give us the right to offer substitutes?

Some say "Yes! Clearly! Obviously!" And in defense of this position they may cite any number of passages in the Writings that speak of the *real* value of the sacrament resting in the *spiritual* things to which the merely natural things *correspond* (see *Arcana Coelestia* 10208, *Apocalypse Revealed* 224, *True Christian Religion* 621 & 727, e.g.), and also of the Lord's desire for *mercy* and *not literalism*.

But let's look at this carefully. Either there is correspondence or there isn't. If there is, and if this is what makes the sacrament particularly effective as "a most holy act of worship" (*Heavenly Doctrine* 210, *True Christian Religion* 709) providing a direct link between the Lord and us, how can we offer substitutes, even if the correspondence may be "similar"?

The Writings plainly say that "without some knowledge of the correspondences of natural with spiritual things it is impossible to know what the uses and benefits of the Holy Supper are" (*True Christian Religion* 698); it follows, therefore – doesn't it? – that these correspondences must be honored in the re-enactment of the sacrament.

Of course, students of the Word may recall quite a few cases in which the Lord did offer substitutes for what He really wanted: the Christmas story gives one example, referring to *Leviticus* 12:8, where the mother of a newborn is supposed to bring a lamb to the tabernacle as a sin offering – in fact a lamb *and* a pigeon or a turtledove. But, we read, if she is not able to bring a lamb she may bring *two* pigeons or *two* turtledoves, which is what Mary did. (*Luke* 2:24)

Other illustrations abound – including many in the Writings in relation to the ideals of marriage. But what of the sacrament? The simple fact is that the bread and wine already *are* substitutes for the flesh and blood of the Jewish sacrifices! Nowhere that I know of does the Lord offer any other options, either in the Old Testament with regard to the Passover, or in the Gospels where He institutes the Holy Supper. Instead, we read, "...as 'bread and wine' have

the same signification as ‘flesh and blood,’ ‘bread,’ meaning the Divine good and ‘wine’ the Divine truth, *therefore these were commanded in place of flesh and blood.*” (*Apocalypse Explained* 1082:2; see also *Arcana Coelestia* 4581:4 & 5117:9) Thus the use of bread and wine in this case appears to be sacrosanct.

Of course *other* rites and ceremonies certainly may be used to provide *other* means of communing with the Lord. This is why some ministers believe that something *like* the Holy Supper may be offered, even though it is *not the same* as the Holy Supper, in order to preserve the sphere and at least a semblance of the order of the supper as long as the person is unable to participate with bread or wine for medical or psychological reasons.

Another possibility is that the wine might be sufficiently diluted as to present no problem for the communicant (again, the Mishna suggests that Passover wine traditionally may have been diluted with water). But as seems orderly in relation to most compromises, we leave this to the consciences of individuals and the care of their local pastors in private venues where the whole matter can be discussed as needed.

Further on Intent

Now again the question is asked: What is really important in the sacrament, the external act or the internal, spiritual state? And the answer *seems* obvious to any thoughtful New Churchman. But IS it obvious?

The Writings have some very reassuring things to say about the priority and superiority of internal over external states. It is not, for example, the deed itself that qualifies a person as loving or wise, it is the intention within or behind the deed. (*Arcana Coelestia* 9210, *Apocalypse Explained* 875:6, and *Heaven and Hell* 472-475, with footnotes) Thus it is not truth alone (faith alone) that saves, but the love of truth, and the Lord tolerates all sorts of mistakes made with a good intention (even though the mistakes may be hurtful). This theme is developed extensively throughout the Writings and is at the heart of our theology.

But there is another equally important set of teachings in the Heavenly Doctrines that explains in some detail the amazing power of correspondences *in physical things*.² Here we read (in the new Rogers translation) that “the last degree embraces and contains the prior degrees” and that “the prior degrees exist in their fullness in the last degree; for they then exist in their effect, and every effect is the full realization of causes.” (*Divine Love and Wisdom* 217)

² See, for example, the whole series in *Divine Love and Wisdom* 209-212 and 217-221 about the fullness and power of all the degrees of height (discrete degrees, which exist by correspondence) in the outmost or ultimate degree.

This is why every created thing has its own unique form, shape and specific quality: it is the material expression of something spiritual from the Lord.

Now we can, of course, create our own forms of our own thoughts and affections, as we do with the letters and words of language, or the many representatives we use in worship, such as the open Word, the candles or lamps, the chancel in the east and so on. They are all just symbols of what we want to communicate as of ourselves. But what the Lord has created from Himself specifically to communicate HIS love and wisdom bears special reverence and respect.

So we read in reference to the literal sense of the Word that it is Divinely ordered and inspired to be “the basis, containant and support” of the spiritual sense (*True Christian Religion* 210-213, *Sacred Scripture* 27-36), and to embody “all the fullness, holiness and power of the spiritual sense.” (*True Christian Religion* 214-216, *Sacred Scripture* 37-42) This is why we take such care of the Word as a book and why we regard its proper translation as so important.

Now if this be so in the case of the Word generally, how much more must it be so in the special case of those things that most fully “embrace and contain” all the holiness and power of the Lord in His Divine Humanity? These things are the two sacraments (*True Christian Religion* 670), and especially the Holy Supper as described above.

And why have they been retained as the teachings indicate? Because of the power of the correspondences; because what we do and how we do it is important.

In this context I am reminded of the story about the Ark of the Covenant in 2 Samuel 6. This may seem a bit of a stretch at first, but think about it. Here we find the ark being carried on an ox cart to Jerusalem, and the oxen stumble. So Uzzah reaches out his hand to steady the ark, to all appearances an admirable and caring thing to do, yet he is promptly struck dead for doing it.

The point is that a hand represents power, but in this case one’s own power in contrast to the power of the Lord. (*Arcana Coelestia* 878:7)³ The connection to the sacrament as I see it is that the elements have such holiness and power in them through correspondences that we dare not “touch” them with accommodations drawn from our own intelligence lest we die (spiritually).

Conclusion

This subject of the elements to be used in the Holy Supper is controversial, I think, because we all recognize the importance of the sacrament and we all want everyone to have the freedom to participate. We ministers, on the other

3 This human power was said to be so profane that the word, hand, was not even written in the Hebrew but only implied lest the angels associated with this story should be offended by the idea.

hand, have a duty (*Arcana Coelestia* 10794) to understand and maintain the real purpose of the ritual and its real integrity based on the correspondences of the elements used. For it is through these correspondences (which *exist by creation* – *True Christian Religion* 238) that the Lord works in this very special case. As we read,

“The correspondences by which the Word as to each and all of its parts has been written possesses such power and strength that it may be called the power and strength of the Divine Omnipotence; for through these correspondences the natural acts conjointly with the spiritual, and the spiritual with the natural; thus all of heaven with all of the world. Thus it is that the two sacraments are correspondences of spiritual with natural things; *thence is their strength and power.*” (*Invitation* 45)

To me this suggests that even a recovering alcoholic may at some point be able to take the wine of the sacrament – because of “the power and strength of the Divine Omnipotence” – but of course that depends entirely on the state of the individual in receiving this power. Meanwhile the particular emphasis on the fullness of the correspondence of bread in one passage suggests that all the essential benefits of the sacrament *may* be received by partaking even without the wine – perhaps by taking an extra portion of the bread. We read,

“As in the supreme sense ‘bread’ signifies the Lord, *it therefore signifies everything holy which is from Him, that is, everything good and true*; and because there is nothing else good, which is good, except that which is of love and charity, ‘bread’ signifies love and charity. Nor did the sacrifices of old signify anything else, for which reason they were called by the one word ‘bread’. (n. 2165) They also ate together of the flesh of the sacrifices, in order that the heavenly feast might be represented, that is, conjunction by the good of love and charity. *This is what is now signified by the Holy Supper*; for this succeeded in the place of sacrifices, and of the feasts from the sanctified things; and the Holy Supper is an external of the church that contains within itself an internal, and by means of this internal it conjoins the man who is in love and charity with heaven, and through heaven with the Lord.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 4211).

Note the emphasis on love and charity. People who cannot take alcohol in any form should be comforted in the knowledge that it is not the bread or wine *themselves* that bring about conjunction with the Lord, but what they stand for, namely, the good of love and the truth of faith (which is the essence of the good of charity). Therefore in the Holy Supper “there is a conjunction of the Lord with man, and of man with the Lord, *not by means of the bread and wine but by means of the love and faith of the person who has done the work of repentance.*” (*Apocalypse Revealed* 224:13)

To me this suggests that we can – and perhaps should – all go to the sacrament and participate to the limit of our ability acknowledging that it is

not the Lord or the Church but our own issues that prevent us from partaking any further. To do so is not a sign of weakness or inferiority, indeed it may be a sign of great strength and resolve, and of the kind of humility we *all* need in order truly to receive the benefits of the Lord's love and wisdom in worship.

Finally, as time goes on and the process of regeneration continues, the Lord may at some point bless even the recovering alcoholic with a new ability to partake more fully. (Note, He may, or He may not! But even if He does not, the special correspondences of the sacrament can bring to mind and confirm the essentials of salvation – which are still available to him no matter what.)

In any case we are clearly taught that although the sacrament is “most holy” and beneficial it is *not required* for salvation. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1175) The three *essentials* of salvation are the acknowledgement of God, faith in Him and the life of genuine charity. (*Heavenly Doctrine* 230, *True Christian Religion* 722, *et al.*) THESE are what we must receive at all cost, and the Holy Supper is a means to that end. Let us therefore pray that we may all approach this “means” with the reverence and respect it requires, and so receive the blessings which the Lord intended in it.



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General Church Translation: Why Are We Doing It?

Rev. N. Bruce Rogers

Editor's note:

This address was presented at the New Church Day Banquet, June 17, 2011 in Bryn Athyn.

Our subject this evening is *General Church translation: Why are we doing it?* Why indeed. We are doing it because this church, the New Christian Church – whose birth we celebrate tonight – is founded on the Heavenly Doctrines, which we refer to informally as the Writings, and these Writings were written in 18th-century Latin, which few people today can read with any comprehension.

So these Writings must be translated into today's languages, in order to make these Writings comprehensible to readers who do not understand them in the original Latin.

Now some people may suppose that once translated, the Writings need not be translated again. But that is not the case. It is not the case because spoken and written languages continue to evolve, and expressions readily intelligible at an earlier time become gradually not so readily intelligible. As time passes, it becomes progressively necessary to update the translations.

But there are other factors involved, and they are primarily the context in which a translation is made and the viewpoint of the translator.

A hundred years ago, many New Churchmen believed that translations ought to be fairly literal. This may have been acceptable when a fair percentage of people were better schooled in the Latin language, but that is not the case today. The context has changed. We now expect texts to be readily accessible; we haven't the time to stop and work out less readily accessible meanings.

The viewpoint of the translator, too, has an effect on his translation. What is his purpose in translating? Is it to speak plainly to members of the church already familiar with the doctrines? Or is it to speak to others outside of the church and ignorant of its doctrines? Is it to provide wording suitable for worship and study, or is it to raise Swedenborg's standing in the pantheon of scholars?

Then there is another consideration. To illustrate it, we may liken translators to art forgers. Both the translator and the art forger endeavor to represent originals, the primary difference being that the translator admits his part in it. But not all art forgers are equally skilled, and not all art forgeries are equally good. Why would we expect them to be? All athletes are not equally skilled. They differ in their prowess. All surgeons are not equally skilled. Some

are better than others. Some are better suited to one kind of surgery, others to other kinds. And so on. So why should we expect all translators to be equally skilled and their translations to be equally suitable for worship and study?

Some people may suppose that these differences do not matter much. But many times they do. It was in the context of these considerations – the age of many of our present translations, the changing context in which they are read, and the differences in translators’ goals and skills – that Bishop Louis King some twenty-four years ago set as a commitment of the General Church to employ the church’s own translators, who share the church’s view of the Writings, to produce over the years a set of the Writings in English that reflect the practices and standards of the General Church.

How have we fared? We have had two published translators so far: the Rev. Dr. John Durban Odhner, and myself. The first of our translations to appear was my translation of *Conjugal Love*, published also as *Married Love*. This has been followed by *Spiritual Experiences* in several volumes, translated by Dr. Odhner; and by my translation of *Three Short Works, Divine Love & Wisdom, Divine Providence*, and more recently, *The Apocalypse Revealed*, in two volumes. In addition to *Spiritual Experiences*, these other works constitute

a little over five of the standard thirty volumes that many of us grew up with, and I am currently at work on the *Four Doctrines*, while the Rev. Kurt Nemitz is completing the last of the English of *Spiritual Experiences* so ably begun by the late Dr. Odhner.

As regards the church’s view of the Writings, the General Church from the outset has regarded these volumes as containing Divine truth, the means by which the Lord has made His second coming, and as such they may justly be called a third

testament, a new Word. Swedenborg himself attests that from the first day of his call, he received nothing pertaining to the doctrines of the New Church from any other source than from the Lord alone (*True Christian Religion* 779). He also intimates that what he wrote is the Word, saying that “without the Lord’s coming again into the world in Divine truth, which is the Word, no one can be saved” (*True Christian Religion* 3, *Brief Exposition* 117).

A General Church translator therefore approaches his task with reverence. This does not prevent him from turning the Latin as much as possible into today’s standard English, for that is his assigned task; but it does mean that he tries as much as possible to be faithful to the original meaning, without adding too much from his own outlook and opinions. He tries to keep his

All athletes are not equally skilled. All surgeons are not equally skilled. So why should we expect all translators to be equally skilled and their translations to be equally suitable for worship and study?

contributions in the background, to allow the text to speak for itself. It also means that he tries to keep modern sensibilities from encroaching on the text. One modern sensibility is to make language gender-neutral. But that does more than translate what Swedenborg wrote; it also editorializes it, and gives it a tone and style foreign to the original.

In one respect we have been able to make the text sound more gender-neutral, and that is in our translating the Latin word *homo* and its plural *homines* as person and people, rather than man and men. But the contrast here is actually with older translations, and not with the Latin text. For the Latin term refers most often to a human being or beings, in contrast to animals, and not to man in contrast to woman. The renderings “person” and “people” are really not innovations, therefore; rather they are better representations of the original intent.

On the other hand, when a person, regardless of gender, is the antecedent of a singular personal pronoun, we preserve, as Swedenborg did, a convention that has stood for over two millennia in dozens of languages, the convention of employing the pronouns “he,” “him” and “his” to refer back to the person, so as not to impose a relatively new modern sensibility on the eighteenth century text. We don’t impose this sensibility on Shakespeare. By what warrant do we impose it on Swedenborg?

As for the church’s practices and standards, the General Church has long preferred the capitalization of the word Divine when referring to the Lord or what emanates from Him. This contrasts with the stance taken by the *Chicago Manual of Style* and other guides, which advise lower-case initial letters. But capitalization of this word and others referring to the Lord and what emanates from Him reflects the reverence the church holds for these volumes. It also reflects Swedenborg’s usual practice. This is but one illustration of one reason that the General Church has chosen to produce its own set of the Writings in English.

Some policy matters have had to be decided on a case-by-case basis. One obvious example is the decision to publish *Conjugial Love* as also *Married Love*, in which the word *conjugial* has been translated rather than simply Anglicized. I was the translator, and I recommended the latter version. I thought I had a strong argument, which I have subsequently included in these volumes in my “Translator’s Remarks.” But I was overruled by other members of the General

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Church Translation Committee, and a compromise, first suggested by the Rev. Lawson Smith, was adopted, namely to publish in two versions.

This demonstrates the oversight the church has over our translations. To take another example of this oversight, in another case a suggestion of mine was accepted by the Committee. If you compare my translation of *The Apocalypse Revealed* with other versions, you will notice that the summaries of the literal sense and the spiritual sense in those other versions are run together in a continuous paragraph, alternating the two senses, as they are in the original Latin, but in my translation they are placed in parallel columns for easier reading. Since our practice is to retain the format of the original, it was necessary and proper for me to obtain approval for the change.

Dr. Odhner, too, consulted the Committee over his titling of what is now called *Spiritual Experiences*. The earlier title, *Spiritual Diary*, was given to the work by Dr. Immanuel Tafel. But Dr. Odhner found convincing evidence that Swedenborg himself referred to the work as *Spiritual Experiences*, which I was able to corroborate with other evidence. Again, it was the Committee that approved the title change.

In addition to this oversight by the Translation Committee, whose chairman – and my boss – is Bishop Brian Keith, we also employ Latin consultants and English readers to thoroughly review our work before publication. The goal is not only to catch inadvertent errors, but also to provide advice and counsel. I have made many, many changes as a result of their comments. My current Latin consultant is Freya Fitzpatrick (Mrs. Daniel Fitzpatrick), and my current English readers are Karen Van Ham (Mrs. Pieter Van Ham) and Kirsten Rogers. I owe it to previous assistants to mention also Chara Daum (Mrs. Scott Daum), my onetime Latin consultant, and Dr. Robert Gladish, one of my English readers until his untimely death while still engaged in critiquing my translation of *The Apocalypse Revealed*.

My uncle, the late Bruce Glenn, used to say that in art, form is everything. I like to say that in translation, meaning is everything. Of course style and tone are important as well, but meaning is paramount. That, too, is why the General Church has set out to produce new translations of the Writings. The fact is that our older translations have introduced into the church a jargon that does not speak clearly to readers of normal English. We may well reflect that we have learned to speak and write in one way in the church, and in another way with people unfamiliar with the church. Some terms, or new uses of terms, are unavoidable – terms such as celestial and spiritual – because there are simply no words in

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English that convey the meaning any better. But other renderings are not only avoidable, they really have to be abandoned in favor of renderings that accord with today's standard English and which are more readily intelligible to today's English reader. In the time left to me, let me offer you just a few examples.

We know what it is to be in love. But when the Writings say that celestial angels are "in love," it is with a different meaning. To say that they are in love is a literal rendering, but it means that they are prompted by love. Do you know what it is to be "in wisdom"? Again it is a literal rendering, but I'm not even sure that one can be "in wisdom" in standard English. Celestial angels are also said to be "in wisdom," but it means that they possess wisdom or are guided by wisdom. So it is with a number of other phrases beginning with the preposition "in." To be in good, to be in truths, to be in a life of goodness and truth, to be in faith, to be in charity – all of these mean to possess them, to be prompted or impelled by them, to be governed by them, to be in a state of them, to be engaged in or caught up in them, and so on.

We may ask why Swedenborg was not more specific. But consider how much he wrote in the years of his call. I myself believe that he could not take the time to be more specific. Yes, it requires, then, the judgment of the translator to discern the meaning so as to be able to express it in standard English. But that really is the translator's job. My father, the Rev. Norbert Rogers, bilingual in English and French, who also read Latin, came home one day and reported that a woman had accosted him to say that translators should translate and not interpret. But to translate is to interpret. The highest paid translators in the world are those employed by the U.N., and they are called interpreters.

Swedenborg himself was the first to employ a translator. Robert Hindmarsh tells us that it was "John Merchant, a literary gentleman of good character, at the express desire of the Author himself, who remunerated him for his trouble." Merchant translated for Swedenborg the second volume of *Arcana Coelestia* into English, which was published along with the original Latin. And to illustrate one of Merchant's interpretations, I can point to something for which I have the late Rev. Don Rose to thank, Merchant's rendering of *Divinum Humanum* (literally, the Divine human) as "the Divine Humanity." For the *Divinum Humanum* does not mean the Lord's physical body, His human; rather it means His human quality or essence, which is more properly rendered in English as His humanity. Swedenborg's Latin is replete with neuter substantives standing in for abstract entities.

Here is another literal statement that needs to be interpreted. The Writings tell us that celestial angels are "loves" and that spiritual angels are "wisdoms" (*Conjugal Love/Married Love* 64:2), also that women and wives are born to be and to become "loves," while men and husbands are born to be and to become "intellects" and "receptions" (*Conjugal Love/Married Love* 55:6, 156:3, 160,

285, 296, 379:1, 393). Now wives may be happy to be thought of as loves, that is, as the objects of deep affection, but that is not the meaning in the Writings; and men may be happy to be thought of as intellects, that is, as people of great intellectual ability, but again, that is not the meaning in the Writings. The meaning is that women and wives are born to be and to become forms of love, or embodiments of love, no matter the character of the love, while men and husbands are born to be and to become forms of the intellect or embodiments of the intellect, no matter their I.Q. or how in error they may be (*cf. Conjugal Love/Married Love 187*). Angels, moreover, are not loves and wisdoms floating about in some ethereal space; they are forms of loves and wisdom, embodiments of love and wisdom, as human as you and I.

The same manner of locution is found in the statement that the Lord is the Word. What does that mean? I know some of you are thinking that the Lord is the Word because He is Divine truth. And that is correct. But Divine truth is actually something that emanates from the Divine, and is an abstraction until it is present in a receiving vessel. Yes, the Lord is Divine truth, in the sense that He embodies Divine truth; and it is in that sense that the Lord is the Word, meaning that He embodies the Word. In Him all the prophecies and inmost story of His advent contained in the Old Testament were fulfilled. The Lord is not a book.

I haven't the time to recount all the terms in our New Church vocabulary that need to be reinterpreted, and your patience would not brook any attempt I might think to do it, but here are just four more to which I would like to call your attention.

The verb "confirm": In the Writings, the verb *confirmare* seldom means to confirm. To confirm means to prove the truth of something. But how does one confirm evils and falsities – the usual context in which we find the word. Rather, to confirm evils is to justify them; to confirm falsities is to affirm them and defend them.

We are told that doctrine is to be drawn from the literal sense of the Word and confirmed by that sense. But what if the doctrine is in error? What if it is not actually true? The history of Christianity abounds in examples of doctrines mistakenly drawn. One would not want to confirm them. No, what the Writings are telling us is that doctrine once drawn must be verified, to test the truth of it, to discover whether it actually accords with the rest of the Word or not, and to be discarded if it does not.

Temptation: The standard definition of "temptation" is the act of tempting or the condition of being tempted. It can also mean something tempting or enticing. And "to tempt" generally means to try to get someone to do wrong, especially by a promise of reward; to entice (*a second helping tempted me*); to provoke or to risk provoking (*don't tempt fate*); or to cause to be strongly

disposed (*he was tempted to walk out*).

None of these definitions is right for *tentatio* as used in the Doctrines, or indeed in most any Jewish or Christian context. The word *tentatio* means “trial” or “time of trial”. Thus the prayer to “lead us not into temptation” means to “lead us not into trial”. Natural temptations are natural trials, when merely natural loves and concepts are affected. Spiritual temptations are spiritual trials, when spiritual loves and concepts are affected.

Here, however, we run into a difficulty. It would be easy enough to translate the word simply as “trial.” But to do so would be to disconnect it from the word “temptation” used in most English translations of the New Testament, which clearly was not Swedenborg’s intent. To preserve the connection and yet clarify the meaning, I have chosen to translate the one word as two, rendering it as “temptation or trial.”

Is that a good idea? Not from a literal standpoint. But as I like to say: “In translation meaning is everything.” If you ask New Church people if they have experienced spiritual temptations, most, if not all, reply that they don’t know, that it is perhaps beyond their knowledge. But if you ask them if they have experienced spiritual trials, they know they have.

The word “use”: This is a term that we use all the time, but almost always in a way foreign to standard English. I do not wish to detain you by listing the various definitions of the term as found outside the New Church, but none of them answers to the meaning invested in the term *usus* in the Writings. In the Writings the term means a *useful purpose, end, aim, or goal; a useful endeavor; a useful application, service, or activity; an employment or function; a useful result, effect, or outcome; a practical end; a useful function; a useful thing; or simply usefulness, or being useful.*

When we prepare our young for a life of use, we mean, or should mean, a life of useful service. When we say that preaching or the like is a use of the priesthood, we mean that it is a function of priests, part of their job. When we say that love and wisdom become actual in use, we mean that they become actual in useful endeavor.

And finally, the word “proprium”: Here is another word frequently heard in the church, and I suppose people have a general idea of the meaning. But it is not a word found in standard English, and yes, it can be translated. One summer years ago I made a detailed study of *proprium* as it is used in the Writings, and sorting through the defining passages I discovered the following five related meanings:

1. Self – one’s own person – a person referred to with respect to complete individuality or identity (e.g., *one’s own self*). **a.** A sense of autonomy, of independence; apparent independence; self-dependence (*the most ancient people eventually desired proprium*, i.e., a sense of independence). **b.** Actual

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autonomy, independence; self-dependence (so we are told that *the Lord alone has proprium*).

2. Self – a person’s nature, character, etc. (either inherent or acquired) (as in *one’s better self*). **a.** One’s inherent nature, instinctive nature, or native character (which in mankind is evil). **b.** An acquired character (which when acquired from the Lord is good).

c. An essential or distinctive nature

of something pertaining to self (a property or trait).

3. Self – personal interest; self-interest (as in *out for self, regard for self*). (*People who study the Word out of proprium do it out of their own self-interest.*)

4. A property, attribute, or characteristic of a thing.

5. Property or possession.

These are but a few of the terms that must be interpreted in order to be understood. And one must be able to rely on the translator to “get it right.” In our case, not only to represent faithfully the meaning of the Latin, but also to reflect the practices and standards of the General Church, as envisioned by Bishop King.

We are met this evening to celebrate the birth of the New Church. This birth was made through the writing and publication of the Heavenly Doctrines, and it is on these doctrines that the General Church is founded. Nothing can be more important to the General Church than the preservation and understanding of these doctrines. It is these doctrines that distinguish the church and give it its *raison d’être*, its reason for being. They are what we have to offer our children and our grandchildren. They are what we have to offer the world.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The Rev. N. Bruce Rogers was ordained in 1969, was an associate professor of Religion and Latin in Bryn Athyn College, and continues to serve part time as a General Church translator. He lives with his wife Kirsten (Rydstrom) in Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania.



Rev. Derrick A.M. Lumsden

From Saving Lives to Saving Souls

The signs were there as a small boy that Derrick Lumsden had the makings of a minister. But it took a co-op with the Michelin Tire Co. as an engineering student in college to set his path.

While growing up in Atlanta, Georgia, he was the kid always answering the minister's questions at church, so people began telling him he would grow up to be a minister.

"So ministry was on the short list," he says, "as I was beginning to make career choices. However, I was also interested in a math and science profession."

He graduated from the Academy of the New Church Boys School in 2001 and in choosing a university, "I decided to try engineering because it would be easier to transfer out of engineering than into it."

After his first year at Georgia Tech, he managed to get that engineering co-op at the Michelin testing facility, and that "proved to be pivotal in my decision process. Through the work experience I came to realize that there were many things I could enjoy about engineering; there is something

Editor's note: This is part of a continuing series introducing ministers of the General Church. Next: The Rev. Mac Frazier, Pastor of the New Way Church in Austin, Texas.

enjoyable about the problem solving that goes with the career. However, I wanted the opportunity to make a bigger difference than I saw the possibilities for in my engineering experience.”

What it came down to was this: “Making a tire safer could save lives, but what good would that do if those people wasted their lives? From the time I came to that realization, I pursued the ministry as a career.”

That meant transferring back to Bryn Athyn College for his bachelor of arts, then entering Theological School. He earned his master of divinity and was ordained in 2006.

The choice was possibly “ordained” for him as he grew up in a strong New Church family in the Morning Star Chapel of the Atlanta Society. He left for school as a teenager with “a lot of respect and love for that congregation.”

He really appreciated growing up with “the best of both worlds” – both a New Church family and attending public school in the Bible Belt, growing up with a lot of people not in the Church. “I see this as a strength for my ministry,” he says, “because I have gained an understanding of where the typical Christian is coming from because of my long exposure and interaction.”

Among the eclectic growing-up experiences that helped prepare him for the many demands of the ministry were soccer referee, carpenter’s assistant, sales associate for Sears and later for Media Play, working in the ANC Dining Hall, garden boy, steak house waiter, painter, product supply manager for a paint company and furniture mover. He doesn’t say how many of those skills have played into his role as pastor, but all helped shape his perspective.

Derrick admits he was not a great student and was “sick of school” by the time he came to the Theological School. His approach to ministry was formed more through self-study than classroom work, and says the best lesson he learned there was “managing my attitude and getting organized.”

After ordination, he was sent with his wife, Eden (King) to be the Assistant to the Pastor at New Church Westville in South Africa under the Rev. Erik Buss. When Erik was called to be the Assistant Pastor in Bryn Athyn, Derrick was called to step into the pastor’s role.

He and Eden have settled into Durban with their two boys – three-year-old John “Jack” Gardner Hugh and nine-month-old Christian Malusi Blake. Derrick loves his role as pastor. “I love the people and the ability to be there for them that the ministry affords and even requires. I get the opportunity to see people at life-changing moments. It is a real honor.”

Another aspect of a pastorate that he enjoys “is the variety of competencies that a pastor has to develop – leadership, interpersonal, theological, marketing, technological and linguistic.”

Someday, he says, he would love to plant a church in the southern United



Eden and Derrick with sons Jack (left) and Christian.

States. “I grew up there and I feel at home there. I feel called to invite people wounded by the dragon to be healed by the teachings of the Second Coming.”

He still has the mix of interests he grew up with, “making me a jack-of-all-trades and master of none. But I love to read, I have dabbled in computers and programming on my gnu-linux Ubuntu laptop, I am enjoying a fitness program called crossfit, and I have had an on-again/off-again relationship with my guitar.”

His reading interests range from leadership and management books to literature and philosophy. A recent favorite is the Aubrey/Maturin series by Patrick O’Brian. Current on his bookshelf are a book on Java programming and *Permission Marketing* by Seth Godin.

His favorite quote not from the Writings is: “With man it is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

His current favorite number from the Writings is TCR 766:

“The Lord is present with every man, urging and pressing to be received; and His first coming, which is called the dawn, is when man receives Him, which he does when he acknowledges Him as his God, Creator, Redeemer, and Savior. From this time man’s understanding begins to be enlightened in spiritual things, and to advance into a more and more interior wisdom; and as he receives this wisdom from the Lord, he advances through morning into day, and this day lasts with him into old age, even to death; and after death he passes into heaven to the Lord Himself; and there, although he died an old man, he is restored to the morning of his life, and the rudiments of the wisdom implanted in him in the natural world grow to eternity.”

The Sower: Three Ways to Not Hear the Lord

A Sermon by the Rev. Derrick A. M. Lumsden

The Lord's Word can be hard to understand. That is the way the Lord intended it. He intends for us to work to understand His Word. The barrier of work provides a protection to the Word. It assures that only those interested enough to do the work get the benefit.

The barrier of work also provides a benefit to us: we own the answer. If it were too easy to see what it was talking about, the Word might feel like unasked, unwelcome advice. Basically, the barriers to understanding the Word make sure we pursue the answer and, therefore, are truly looking for answers.

Today we are going to do some work digging through the Word to get a glimpse of understanding the Lord's Word. We will look at three unreceptive states – three life patterns – that stop us from listening to the Lord. I am going to read the Lord's explanation of the parable of the sower.

The Lord told this parable, but then later explained it to His disciples. Today, we will spend a few minutes about the meaning of the parable, then we will look at how three other parables in the same chapter shed some light on the meaning.

Here is the Lord's explanation of the parable.

Therefore hear the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. (Matthew 13:18-23)

As is obvious from the way the Lord explained the parable, the main focus is about ways we fail to receive His Word. The New Church offers a new understanding of the Bible – the Lord's Word. From this new meaning we

know all the details of the story relate to our lives.

A sower is a farmer who is scattering seed such as wheat or barley. From New Church teachings we know that the meaning of seed in the Bible is truth of faith (*Life* 90). Truths of faith are the good ideas that the Lord teaches us about life in the world and forever. So this story deals primarily with whether we accept or reject these good ideas and what stands in the way of accepting them.

Through the parable, the Lord warns us that we can reject the good ideas He offers us. The first way we might do this is described as the “seed by the wayside.” A wayside is a path. This path could have been at the edge of the field or dividing the field, providing access through it. Either way, the wayside is the paths we walk. This symbolises the life we lead. In this case, the seed falls by the wayside, which symbolises that the good ideas He offers fall next to but are not part of the way we walk. We do things a certain way, and what the Lord is offering us does not fit with our way of doing things.

When what the Lord says is outside the way we already do things, we have a choice to accept what He says or accept what we already know. The ideas we have are symbolised by the birds that come and devour the good seed (*Arcana Coelestia* 745). When the Lord’s truth falls close to our way of life, but doesn’t align with it, we are likely to dismiss it and justify our own position. Those justifications are what devour the seed.

The second way the Lord warns us that we might reject the truth is when the “seed falls on the stony place.” In the Lord’s explanation of the parable, He teaches us that the stony place is also a lack of joy. We get the truth, but it doesn’t take root in our lives. The fault of the stony place is the intellectual acknowledgement without living it. An example of this fault would be someone who reads the Word daily, but what he reads does not change the way he lives.

The third type of rejection that the Lord warns us about is the thorns which choke the seeds. In this fault, the weeds – the unproductive desires and addictions of our lives – leave no room for what the Lord teaches (*Arcana Coelestia* 3310). St. Augustine’s writings and life make a good example of this fault. Before converting to Christianity he was involved in all sorts of prodigal living. One particular problem for him was sexual immorality. After coming to believe that Christianity was true, Augustine had thorns because of his sexual habits. One of his prayers during this time was, “Lord, give me chastity – but not yet.” It is not hard to be caught up and even prefer a life that is not in line with what the Lord teaches.

Now, one problem with these three faults the Lord warns us about is that we are not explicitly taught what to do about them. There is an implied solution to each of these. If the seed falls on the wayside and the birds devour the seed, we need to change our thinking. If the truth falls on the shallow earth, we need

to have not just a commitment to knowing but also to doing. If the truth falls among the thorns, we need to weed out the thorns.

However, the implied solutions are not complete. In the case of the thorns, do we have to be pure before we can understand what the Lord teaches? If we have to be pure first, how do we ever become pure? In the case of the shallow earth, if we delight in what He teaches us, what else do we need to do? Believe harder? And in the case of the wayside, if we need to change the way we think, is there room for any thoughts? Must we give up thinking and become automatons?

These questions are actually addressed in parables the Lord tells in the same chapter. When the disciples asked about the parable of the sower, the Lord explained the meaning of the sower, and then told another parable:

Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?' But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, 'First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.'" (Matthew 13:24-30)

Is there something we can learn from this parable to help us understand the parable of the sower? Well, yes. Tares are a kind of poisonous weed. Weeds relate to the unreceptive state that is described by the thorns. Tares, of course, are different than thorns, but the parable does tell us more about the kinds of weeds that can co-exist with the good seed. Some faults are thorns. We can tell from early on that they are incomparable with what the Lord teaches. However, other faults are much harder to tell apart. Tares are a kind of weed that looks much like wheat, but if you ingest them, they can be poisonous.

For example, doing the right thing so that others will think well of us. Or doing the right thing so that we can deserve heaven. These two attitudes are weeds, and they can poison spiritual life. However, these two motivations are often indistinguishable from those truly useful motivations.

To return to the question above, the Lord uses the parable of the tares to teach us that we do not have to be pure to be receptive of His truth. At first we only need to focus our attention on ridding our lives of the actions that choke out His truth. The thorns are the desires and actions that kill spirituality.

We know from other places that these are the actions that violate the Ten Commandments. We can wait to a later state to rid ourselves of the tares.

Another parable in chapter 13 of *Matthew* gives us more insight into dealing with the seed that is devoured by the birds. The parable the Lord tells after the parable of the wheat and the tares is the parable of the mustard seed:

Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches." (Matthew 13:31-32)

Once again we see the birds of the air – the thoughts and perspectives that flit around our head. When we have a way of doing things that does not receive the Lord, our thoughts devour the truths the Lord sows in our lives. When we receive the Lord's truth – the sower's seed – and let it direct us, the seed takes root. Then there is room for our own thoughts too. But now the birds of the air are the birds of heaven. When we receive the Lord's truth and let it grow in us, we develop a different system of thinking. That thinking has room for our thoughts, and these thoughts live in harmony with the new perspectives that grew out of the Lord's truth.

The last parable we will deal with is the parable the Lord tells about hidden treasure.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it." (Matthew 13:44-46)

To which unreceptive state does this parable relate? It relates to the stony ground which the Lord explained as people who receive His Word with joy. Having a delight or joy in what the Lord teaches is not enough. What if the man who found the hidden treasure rejoiced, but didn't buy the field? What if he was joyful about finding the treasure, but left it at that?

We need to sell all we have. We need to let go of what we have in order to get something better. We have to be willing to sacrifice something to get what we seek from the Lord.

To return to the question above: if we delight in what the Lord teaches, what more do we need to do? The answer is that it is not about belief and joy. These are good initial qualities, but for the Lord's truth to take root we must sacrifice. We must put all our energy into those treasures we find in the Word so that we might own them, not just enjoy discovering them. But once we own

these treasures, once we have made them part of our life, then we can have even greater joy.

Today we have talked about three kinds of unreceptive attitudes that stop the Lord's Word from affecting our lives. I would encourage you to discover which of these three faults you have a tendency toward in different areas of your life. Do the Lord's teachings fail in an area of your life because you already have a thought pattern that doesn't leave room to really hear what the Lord is teaching? If so, recognize that tendency. Choose to let the Lord's Word change the way you think and act. If you do, you will find you have accepted a perspective that will grow to be greater than you expect.

Do the Lord's teachings fail in your life because you only have a shallow delight? A joy in discovery without commitment? If so, recognize this tendency. Choose to let the Lord's Word take root in your life. Be willing to make the sacrifices it takes to be changed by the Lord's Word.

Do the Lord's teachings fail in your life because you have weeds in your life? Do you know you should be doing things differently, but you just like the way you live too much to give it up? If so, recognize that tendency. Choose to set a different standard and weed out the things that contradict the Lord's teachings. This does not mean you have to be pure. If you cannot tell if it is bad, leave it alone until it gets in the way of acting in the ways the Lord teaches.

If we can see the ways we are unreceptive to the Lord's teachings, we can change our ways. We can become good field in which to receive the Lord's teachings. We can then use the Lord's teachings to bear fruit and produce: "some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty." Amen.

A Profound Freedom Supported by New Church Education

Rev. Eric H. Carswell

The first law of Divine Providence asserts that a person act in freedom in accordance with his reason. (*Divine Providence* 71) This promised freedom means that a person's state of mind is not inevitably dictated by his or her environment. Frustrating things can happen and a person does not have to be consumed with frustration. Sad things can happen and a person needn't be consumed with sadness. Things can happen that could easily produce a very angry state of mind and it is possible for this to influence a person no more than a cloud momentarily blocking the sun.

We can recognize something of this freedom by noting that if a cranky toddler acts out and causes us physical pain, most of us would react quite differently than we would if an adult lashed out at us physically, but actually caused less pain. It is not just the magnitude of the pain; our reaction tends to be affected by how responsible we hold the person who causes the pain.

We can also recognize this freedom by noting that one person can face huge physical limitations and sickness and still be a grateful, outward turning person, and someone else can face a relatively minor injury and have it dominate his or her attention and complain to all within hearing.

This freedom also shows itself with some poor people whose attention is dominated by their poverty, while others with the same means live contented lives, are grateful for their lot and share what they have with others. Some people who have substantial wealth are consumed with concerns about what they have and don't have, and others with the same bountiful means live contented lives, are grateful for their lot and share what they have.

Speaking about the spiritual freedom the Lord offers us, the Heavenly Doctrine states:

...the spiritual and natural components in a person have been made distinct, so that a person cannot slip from the one into the other except as the result of a conscious decision. This decision may be likened to a door which must first be unlatched and opened. However, the door stands open, so to speak, in people who think and will rationally in

conformity with the civil laws of the kingdom and the moral laws of society, for they say what they think and do as they will. But the door stands closed, so to speak, in people who think and will in opposition to those laws.

One who pays attention to his wishes and consequent actions will observe that such a conscious decision intervenes, and sometimes more than once in a single conversation or in a single course of action. (Divine Providence 71)

New Church education in its totality has a huge capability of helping young people make those conscious decisions with growing wisdom and insight into how to take care of themselves and the people around them.

It is not hard to grow up in this world with the idea that our external environment determines who we are and inevitably guides our actions. People young and old can find themselves following others to grossly inappropriate and destructive behavior, and in retrospect, shrug and say, "I was caught up in the crowd." The concept of free will runs contrary to all sorts of things we hear about evolutionary processes, how we are programmed to do this or that, and how external forces fundamentally shape who we are.

There are also glimmering recognitions that something else can go on in the human mind than relatively blind responses to external stimuli. A book published in 2009, *In Two Minds: Dual Processes and Beyond*, states:

This book explores the idea that we have two minds. In recent years there has been great interest in so-called dual-process theories of reasoning and rationality. According to dual-process theories, there are two distinct systems underlying human reasoning – an evolutionarily old system that is associative, automatic, unconscious, parallel and fast, and a more recent, distinctively human system that is rule-based, controlled, conscious, serial and slow. Within the former, processes are held to be innate and to use heuristics that evolved to solve specific adaptive problems. In the latter, processes are taken to be learned, flexible, and responsive to rational norms.

New Church education should help to foster the Divinely given capability seemingly referred to in this book as a distinctively human system of mental activity. First at home and then supplemented from the earliest grades, students can be encouraged to be aware of what they are doing and its impact on others. This can be part of the conversation about stories and literature. It can be reflected in the similarities and differences among the people who fill this planet. It can be discussed in terms of historical events.

Parents and teachers can help children and young people recognize that to preserve our freedom the Lord is very careful not to show His hand guiding things. Consequently a scientific study of the natural world mostly shows a mechanical system that is deterministic. And within this appearance the Lord is actually doing so many things at each moment for our eternal welfare that we can understand only “one out of a hundred millions of them.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 3854:2)

The simultaneous gifts recognized freedom and hope based on the Lord’s loving and wise care can help a person in countless settings each day. It can foster the capabilities of healthy mental strength in tough times, the renewed commitment to make good choices and an inner peacefulness even in the busiest and most stressed times that help keep a person focused on what is most important.

These gifts don’t come from a single presentation of ideas. They can be talked about from many perspectives and in many settings. They can be wisely prompted over and over again until they become part of a young person’s regular outlook. Very importantly they can be modeled by many adults and even peers.

Within all of this conscious effort of formal and informal New Church educators, the Lord is working His miracles of change and spiritual progress. And the result can be human beings who are recognized as noticeably strong, healthily independent and useful people.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The Rev. Eric H. Carswell was ordained in 1979 and into the second degree in 1981. Among other assignments he has been pastor of the Glenview and Pittsburgh Societies and head of their schools, Dean of the Academy Theological School and Regional Pastor for the Northeastern United States. He is Vice Chancellor for the Academy and Bishop’s Representative for Education for the Academy and General Church Schools. He and his wife Donna (Zeit) live in Huntingdon Valley.

Supporting the Church: Hard Decisions

Dr. Gregory L. Baker

In our day-to-day living, we make numerous decisions about our financial priorities, usually fairly routine and straightforward. Once in a while, though, we have to make hard choices – cut spending, take on an extra job, or even change jobs. This same pattern could be applied to our Church.

For many years, the Church as an institution has slowly developed, with occasional, relatively minor, reassessments of financial priorities. There have been bumps in the road, but these have been overcome with adjustment and emergency contributions from a few generous donors. But now your Church societies and schools (including the Academy of the New Church and Bryn Athyn College) are at a point where hard choices will have to be made and are being made. These circumstances require actions and choices of a magnitude well beyond anything in our previous experience.

So, what is our financial situation?

Let's start by asking who pays for what in the running of our Church, at least for the United States version.¹ If you are lucky enough to be in a “self-supporting” society – this includes Bryn Athyn, Glenview and Ivyland – you may think all is well. Yet, your pastor was trained by the Theological School under the auspices of Bryn Athyn College, which is part of the Academy of the New Church. If you have a school, many of your teachers were educated at Bryn Athyn College. These institutions are essential to the doctrinal integrity of your society.

In the ongoing operations, the benefits services for your pastors and teachers, such as tuition remission, pension, health care, 403(b) plans, life insurance, payroll, etc., are managed by the General Church of the New Jerusalem (our central church office). The Bishop's Office, Outreach, Office of Education, Journey manuals, publications, translation, and other services are paid for by the General Church. So it seems clear that even a self-supporting society is still somewhat dependent on the central organizations – the General Church and Academy – for these and other services.

¹ The Canadian Church's financial situation is different (and more fortunate) from that of the US Church. Furthermore, the non-North American church is somewhat different again in regard to financial concerns.

The rest of the societies in the United States are not self-supporting. Without substantial financial grants from the General Church, many of our elementary schools might disappear. Education is expensive. World-wide, the grants amount to more than \$1.1 million. The General Church also provides more than \$400,000 for church plants – brand new churches that we all hope will grow to become self-sufficient. And the General Church also helps out with low-interest loans to aid expansion or improvement of societal properties.

The good news is that the General Church provides a lot of services, programs and financial help to local societies. The bad news is that the General Church is running a current deficit of about \$3 million – a completely unsustainable situation. In recent times this deficit was paid for by taking money from the General Church's endowment, which is still the primary generator of its income. As money is taken from endowment, the income yield from endowment decreases, the deficit grows because of decreased income, and the cycle repeats each year. In a very few years, annual income from endowment spirals downward until, without hard decisions and increased annual giving, the General Church becomes unsustainable.

Even Bryn Athyn, our largest society (self-sustaining) with an excellent school, had a budget deficit of about \$500,000 this year. A similarly dismal scenario is possible.

What about the Academy Secondary Schools and Bryn Athyn College? If you (live in or) have visited Bryn Athyn recently you have seen tremendous improvements in the facilities of these institutions. The new physical structures are excellent and will serve these schools well into the future. Yet the improvements, while timely and necessary, were made using a financial model that may not be realistic.

That model assumed a substantial increase in revenues from fees (from large increases in enrollment) and increases in *contributions*. To date, neither of those predictions has happened on the scale envisioned. Yet there are still debts to be paid, and now the Academy of the New Church (which includes Bryn Athyn College) has a deficit of about \$8 million. As with the Bryn Athyn Church's deficit of \$500,000 and the General Church's debt of \$3 million, the Academy's debt will come out of endowment. The dismal scenario described above is also plausible for the Academy.

Here, then, is the first main point of this article: **If such deficits are allowed to continue these institutions will cease to exist in their present forms, probably within a decade.**

How do we begin to solve this problem? One approach is to spend less money. Significant and painful budget cuts are being implemented. This year, more than 50 positions in the Academy and throughout the Church were eliminated or severely curtailed – equivalent to the disappearance of more

than 40 full-time positions. In doing so, significant savings were realized but not nearly enough to make up deficits. Next year there will be more cuts, even more hurtful to important uses and to the dedicated staff who serve those uses.

In a very few years even more difficult decisions will need to be made. Will we close some elementary schools and deprive children of the important sphere needed to nurture their growing trust in the Lord? Will the Academy Secondary Schools become a local bare-bones high school of limited capability and no extra-curricular programs? Will Bryn Athyn College, which has made tremendous strides in its major programs, where the full rationality of the Heavenly Doctrines is evident, revert to its role as a “junior” college, a role that it had successfully escaped decades ago? What of the Theological School? Will it lose its recently gained flexibility in the improved training of priests with various backgrounds?

For more than 100 years we have believed that evangelization of our children through distinctive New Church education has provided and will provide a fruitful field of evangelization. And now, with new facilities, our Academy Secondary Schools and Bryn Athyn College are poised to make great strides on many fronts. Yet ironically, the weight of our terrible financial situation can wipe out major gains and do even further severe damage to their essential uses.

Already we see that cutting budgets only goes so far before real damage results. Cutting alone does not solve the problem. Here is the second main point: **The Church and its institutions need more revenue.**

The days of automatic bailout from major donors or foundations seems past. In fact, one of our traditional benefactor foundations insists on a certain minimum percentage participation of individual donors to an institution before it will even consider an application for help. Foundations and major donors want to see that *everyone* has an interest and that each of us shows that interest by contributing – substantially.

Some Christian denominations have very strong records of contributing, both as a percentage of membership and as a percentage of members’ incomes. What is our record? Here is some current data: For the General Church, 26% of the members give. For the Academy, 23% of alumni give. For the Bryn Athyn Church about 45% of the potential contributing units (such as a household) give. For all United States societies with schools, about 49% of potential contributors give. For non-school societies, 42% give. Clearly our record is lukewarm at best. We need everyone to participate – significantly.

As New Churchmen with a strong belief in spiritual freedom, we sometimes carry that sense of freedom over to our contribution pattern. This attitude is encouraged by the fact that past gifts to endowments from major donors have carried the bulk of the contribution load. Most of the income for

our church organization still derives from income from endowment. Yet this is not fiscally healthy, nor is it spiritually healthy. We have already seen how on the fiscal side we absolutely need significantly stronger annual contributions to preserve our uses.

Some may say that the Church and the Academy do not always spend the money wisely. There are probably as many ideas on this as there are New Church people. And it is appropriate to use human prudence when giving. But objections to specifics are not really the point. If we don't like what the General Church does then we can, for example, give a big gift to our society so that it will not need a grant from the General Church. There are many good specific uses at the Academy that we can gladly support. There are plenty of needs from which to choose.

On the spiritual side, meaningful contributions are hardly a matter of choice. The Lord has given us everything including life itself. He has given us the responsibility of preserving and spreading His New Church on earth. For our own spiritual health, for us to participate effectively in His gift of spiritual growth through regeneration, we need to make a meaningful contributory return to Him and the institutions that support His work.

Here, then, is the final point: **Each of us and All of us must give more.** Each of us should determine what percentage of our income would be a meaningful gift, and conscientiously make that contribution. A regular donation of a percentage of income truly signifies a giving back to the Lord. In doing so, we take ownership and responsibility for our Church. Let us make up our minds to do the right thing. As a spiritual people, this is our obligation and our opportunity.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Gregory L. Baker is professor emeritus at Bryn Athyn College. In retirement, he serves on the General Church Board of Directors. As a director, Greg wishes that every New Church member could have his close-up view of the workings of the dedicated administration of the General Church. As an amateur musician, he is active with

the Bryn Athyn Church Choir and volunteers as an accompanist for the Ivyland New Church. Greg and his wife, Margaret, live in Huntingdon Valley.

Thoughts on Giving from a New Church Perspective

Wayne M. Parker

I have been actively working with many of the clergy to help me find a better voice for understanding giving from a New Church perspective. The broad conversation taking place is energizing. There are some powerful teachings that are not well known and I really think a better understanding of them will help our Church. Pushing people for contributions will never work. How much better if people truly become inspired to give from principle in response to the Lord's request to give of our first fruits?

What I sense we struggle with is the tension between literal interpretation and internal sense. I believe both to be important and purposeful in their role in our doctrinal study and our attempt to live our lives according to these teachings. To zoom in and out or cut and paste the times we use literal or internal sense seems problematic to me, and so I try to look for strong, recurring themes from the body of knowledge of the Word and Writings. There are countless references in the Word about the connections between our heart and our money.

I asked Bishop King, about six months before he passed, if he would give me a succinct statement of his view on tithing. Here is his "elevator speech:"

Always endeavor to tithe, that is, to make a return in fullness according to your specific means at a regular time. Ten represents a fullness of the remains of good and truth, all kinds and degrees, of the benefits the Lord showers upon each of us. Sometimes this translates into a 10% return, sometimes more or less. The point is to reciprocate the Lord's generosity and mercy as a loving act of religion, that His will may be done on earth, as it is in heaven, without missing the least action or use.

What the Lord does, everything good and true, He does through people who direct the first fruits of His gifts to them to the building up of His Kingdom on earth, (the Church), and His Heaven from the Human Race.

So what does a tithe mean in today's terms? I think many are conflicted about what it all really means. What does the Lord say? Here is some of what I

have found. (Bishop Peter Buss helped me with this list.)

- **Tithe:** Giving to the work of the Church was urged in the Old Testament. (*Leviticus 23:37-41; Numbers 15:17-21 and Deuteronomy 16:16,17*)
- The New Testament also seems to say that the law of the tithe should be observed. (*Matthew 23:23: 23 cf. Luke 11:42*)
- Giving to the Lord is an act of freedom. (*Arcana Coelestia 1947; Exodus 35:4,5 and 21,22*)
- It does however seem to be urged. (*Ezekiel 20:40,41: Arcana Coelestia 925*)
- A contribution to the Lord should be the first of our offerings. (*Exodus 22:29-30*)
- The first offering from our produce (salary) should go to the Lord. (*Numbers 15:17-21*)
- Give according to the blessings which the Lord has given you. (*Deuteronomy 16:10, 16-17*)
- Giving to the Church does not help us get to heaven. There is a tendency to hope that it will! (*Charity 185*)
- Contributions are good things to do, but if we don't have internal charity, they are not truly good. (Note that they may accomplish good, but they are not good in themselves.) (*Divine Love and Wisdom XI*)
- The Lord looks at the heart when a person gives. (*Arcana Coelestia 9293*)
- If gifts are given for the right reason, the Lord is in them. (*Apocalypse Explained 933:2 and 934:2: cf. Matthew 19:16-22; Mark 10:17-22; Luke 18:18-23*)

Reflecting upon all this from a New Church perspective, rather than focusing on any one passage, when taken together as a body of knowledge we can see the consistent patterns that emerge and support. Many have expressed frustration that there just isn't a definitive passage that clearly and unequivocally puts down the law. Ironically, I wonder if this is precisely the point; God has asked us to do this, in scores of different ways throughout the Bible, the Word and the Writings. It's a test!

He knows precisely where the tension will be and why. Leaving us wide open to be called, as we see and feel in freedom to respond from reason, is the only way it will really mean something. What disturbs me is how lackadaisical and sometimes disinterested we seem to be about addressing this profound choice/duty.

Here, at least as I see it, are some of the more persistent themes on giving from which to see a pattern developing:

- There's only one reason to give: because the Lord asks us to! For us, not for Him or for the Church or the charity, but for us and our eternal happiness.
- The Lord does not need man's help. We can add nothing to His glory and nothing to His possessions. He asks us to give.
- In the Word, the tithe represents the core acknowledgement that all we have is from the Lord. And so tithe is called the Lord's part. To withhold this is described as taking what is the Lord's for our own purposes.
- The Writings tell us that the spiritual sense of tithe represents giving all. The Lord commands us to love Him with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. This is an either/or choice, for no man can serve two masters. Withholding tithes and offerings has to do with loving self and the world more than worshipping the Lord and serving the neighbor.
- In freedom we choose either to align ourselves with this or not. All offerings are given from what the Lord has given us already! Our gifts are but a return of a small part of the blessings He has given us.
- Our challenge in doing so is to take the first of our earnings and provide for the Lord's part before we use any of the rest for ourselves!
- We are free to determine what we are able to give, how we are to give, and to what uses. But we really do not have freedom in this matter if by freedom is meant the right to give or deny support. Rational freedom is when we accept the Lord's teachings, and by that acknowledgement, act and assume the responsibility of doing our part for the internal and external support of the work of His Church. In doing so, we put the Lord in the first part of

our lives and the magic begins as we properly begin to order things thereafter.

- The teaching of the Word is clear: the Lord requires us to sacrifice, not because He needs the things we bring, but because we need to give of ourselves, to give up what we love, to suffer its loss in order to grow spiritually.
- The children of Israel had to be specifically forbidden from bringing the sick and the deformed of their flock to the sacrifice. They had to give up their flocks at the outer gate of the Tabernacle, a complete and total sacrifice and letting go of any benefit or gain. The modern equivalent is giving money to the Church solely as a way to avoid taxation, and thus provide a net profit for yourself, and without thought of the uses it may serve.
- It is clearly taught in the Word that our offering must be something that we value, or it has no spiritual effect.
- We are very sensitive to any suggestion that we should give it up, and there is always the danger it will appear that we are speaking from selfish motives. But it should be clear that the Lord has taught in His Word that we need to sacrifice to Him for the sake of our own eternal spiritual lives. It would be good for us to give even if everything we gave was simply thrown away! The value is in symbolically and actually giving up what is natural for the sake of what is spiritual.
- Through sacrifice we turn away from the loves of self and the world, and turn toward the Lord and the neighbor, but only when the sacrifice is of sufficient value that it causes us some grief or suffering to give it up.

(Some of these ideas are taken from *The Principle of the Tithe* – the Rev. Harold C. Cranch, and *A Freewill Offering to the Lord* – the Rev. James P. Cooper.)

Regarding the challenge of applying the principle of tithe in a modern economy, I'd argue that viewing the gift of your first fruits as a percentage (tithe) is precisely the way to overcome and equalize the concern that the unemployed pensioner can't give as much as the wealthy CEO of a major corporation. If each commits to giving a fixed percentage from principle of whatever he earns, in freedom and according to reason, they are completely equal in their material support of the Church.

In my work I have been asked by folks who earnestly want to become regular contributors for suggestions on how to make their giving more meaningful and less of a hollow, after-tax equation when they feel financially “safe”. They seek a practical and disciplined approach to giving from principle. I have suggested they consider taking the percentage giving challenge:

- Begin by adding up all the charities you contributed to and declared on your latest tax return.
- Divide this total into your gross income. This is the amount of charitable giving you were comfortable with last year, expressed as a percentage of your income. (Typically this has been 2-4% for most people who have been giving a fixed-dollar amount)
- Begin the sacrifice by bumping this up 20% (2% becomes 2.4%, etc.)
- Decide to take this amount out of your family income off the top of the deck, right up front before any bills are paid or money spent. Now determine the charities you are going to support and the amount you are committing to each. Automatic withdrawals, payroll deductions, credit card payments and pledges all make this step easy and habitual.
- Trust that this gift from your first fruits is going to prosper those efforts the Lord blesses. Remember, you are giving because He asked you to! Let go of outcomes.
- Make a commitment to increase your giving by 20% each year until you are at tithe and beyond.
- Begin to experience the peace, the wonder and the reward of putting the Lord first in everything you do – a full return.

To summarize:

- Tithe: consider giving this back as a percentage of your income/ gifts received
- First fruits of your work
- Free will
- Give freely, from abundance
- Merit –do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing

- Sacrifice
- Give for the right reasons – not for taxes or as a vote
- Let go of outcome – it belongs to Him
- Do not build barns to store up treasure
- Do not bury talents
- Where your treasure is, that's where your heart will be also

It is my hope that this can become a much larger conversation to help us all better understand what is at stake and better address our responsibilities as good stewards of all that the Lord has given us.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Wayne M. Parker retired at the end of June as Development Officer of the General Church and the Academy of the New Church. This is adapted from a workshop talk he gave at the General Assembly. Wayne and his wife, Vina, have returned to their retirement home in northern Ontario, Canada.



Our Own New Church 800-Pound Gorilla

James F. Jungé

Yes, friends, we have an 800-pound gorilla that nobody wants to talk about. His first name is Indifference and his last name is Entitlement. He conspires with the hells to thwart our attempts to grow.

He influences our entire membership. He permeates our church government organizations. He speaks at our Corporation meetings. He sits on our Boards and influences our committees. He intimidates our managements so they are reluctant to call him by his names.

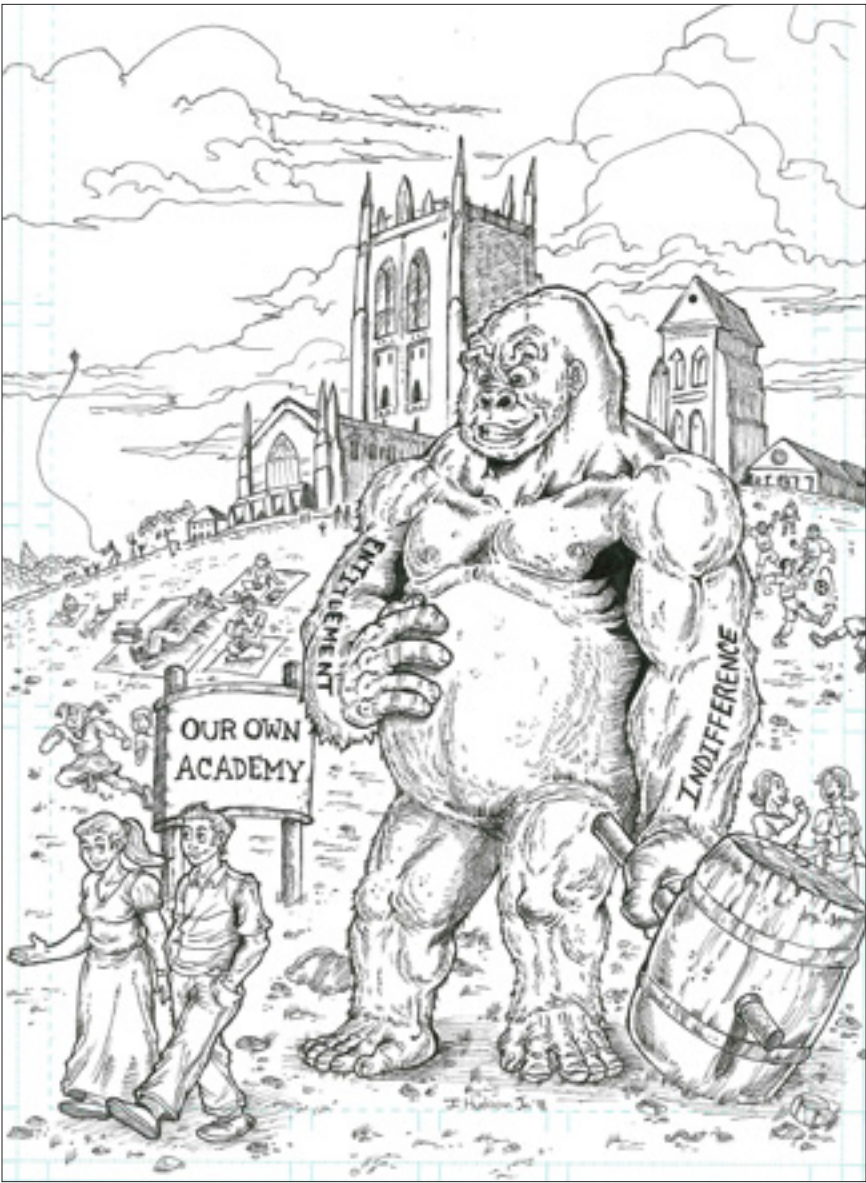
He hobnobs with many in the clergy and convinces them that it is unseemly for a man of God to talk about money. He works very effectively in most of our societies. He frustrates and discourages our teachers and employees.

He is rejoicing that nobody is willing to discuss how he is killing our organizations. But he missed me, or perhaps figured that a 90-year-old was too old to raise a fuss. But when you're 90 what do you have to lose?

If our New Church gorilla – our church-wide indifference and sense of entitlement – can succeed in destroying the Academy, he and the hells will clap for joy. After all, it was the dreams our founders had about creating a college and eventually a New Church University that got this movement started. So I will limit my discussion to the Academy, even though it is equally applicable to the General Church and our societies.

Did you know that when the endowment of the Academy was set up it was to make possible the dream of a New Church College? One hundred percent of these gifts came from John Pitcairn's children and grandchildren and their spouses. Most of these gifts were accompanied by the statement that the gift was given "precatory but not mandatory". At that time the treasurers, the administration and the boards took this to mean, use a minor part of this gift for current operations, but put the major part of it into permanent endowment to provide for future growth.

"But not mandatory" meant we are not binding the future boards or treasurers as to how this endowment can be used. Little did the donors realize that as the endowment grew, many of the Academy's contributors decided that the Academy no longer needed their money and stopped contributing. Our



BY JOHN HUDSON JR.

800-pound gorilla was ecstatic!

Recently our gorilla had a chat with the hells. “We are making great progress,” he said. “Do you realize the alumni and friends of the Academy are one of the best-educated and financially successful small church groups in the world? Yet 77% of those who attended the Academy make no contribution. Alumni and friends give about as much as they would pay for a cup of Starbucks coffee once a day.

“And get this,” our gorilla chuckled, “They all profess to love *Our Own*

Academy.” The hells chimed in, “Friend, you are rightly called Indifference and Entitlement. Keep it up. In another decade this institution will collapse financially and that will make my job of killing off the General Church and its societies much easier.”



Fellow Academy friends, together we can send this gorilla and the hells packing. But we must do it as a group – replacing the indifference with caring, and entitlement with commitment.

Did you know that it’s not uncommon for comparable schools to have more than 50% of their alumni and friends contributing? We have 23%! Assuming a conservative \$60,000 average income for our North American alumni, do you realize that if we all gave 1% of our income to the Academy, annual revenue would be five times current contributions to the annual fund? Imagine what 2 or 3% would accomplish, especially when applied to more realistic income figures.

While I have used the Academy as an example the points are equally applicable to the General Church and its societies. The solution is also equally do-able. If on average we contributed 1% of our income to the General Church and our societies it would immediately solve their financial problems.

But not all will contribute. However, we can make it if most join at this rate. Fortunately we have a few generous contributors who give a 10% tithe or more, consistently, year after year. For many years the Church and schools relied on these contributors to carry the financial load. But this is no longer enough.

Without a significant increase in the number of annual contributors consistently giving a small percentage of income – 1% to the Academy and 1% to the General Church and its societies – we will continue to fall further and further behind, as the gorilla (our own indifference and sense of entitlement) persists.

Do you agree that we value what we have in the General Church and Academy enough to change our culture of personal giving? I think we do! Let’s do it in 2011!

Dreams

Helen Kennedy

Sleep is a wonderful thing. Hamlet says: “...to sleep, perchance to dream” (William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*). Emily Dickinson wrote about sleep and dreaming, too. A verse from a poem of hers says:

“Half glad when it is night and sleep, if, haply, thro’ a dream to peep into parlors shut by day...” (Emily Dickinson, *I Have a King, who does not speak*).

Dreams are full of odd and unusual imagery and there are many books trying to explain the images in dreams. But in sifting through some, I’m convinced it’s still a matter of the person being the only one who can interpret a dream for herself or himself.

When we look at what some people have said about dreams, we see that the pioneer psychologist, Sigmund Freud, had an abiding interest in them, but he maintained that dreams are neurotic symptoms.

In this group he includes hysterical phobias, obsessions and delusions, and says they are bound for practical reasons to be a matter of concern for physicians.

Freud’s idea was that “dreams are a compromise between...wishes that have been repressed and...the restrictions on open expression of these wishes...The repressed wishes are fulfilled in images which ensure that their nature is not revealed”. Freud also believed that, because of our repressed wishes, we dream in order not to wake up.” (Charles Rycroft, *The Innocence of Dreams*)

Jung looked at dreams differently. He “seems, from the very beginning, to have regarded dreams as creations, as messages, though he seems also to have had some difficulty in deciding who or what...was sending them.”

And that they came from “both the...Id or It — and [the] collectively impersonal part of oneself, which one shares with others, or the Collective Unconscious.” Jung seems also to have believed that we continually dream even while awake, “but that consciousness makes such a noise that we do not hear it.” (Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*)

And Jung “rejected Freud’s view that...the purpose of [dreams] is to preserve sleep by granting the dreamer disguised...fulfillment of wishes which would otherwise wake him up.”

Jung says, “There is no reason under the sun why we should assume that

the dream is a crafty device to lead us astray.”

Both Freud and Jung seem to have been partly right, partly wrong. Laboratory research on the physiology of dreaming suggests that we do not dream continually, even during sleep. It suggests rather that one of the reasons why we sleep is in order to dream.

This about Freud and Jung was from *The Innocence of Dreams* by Charles Rycroft.

Let's look at dreams and things of a spiritual nature. To our western, rationalist mind, it is amazing how many books of the Bible include dreams. Some are dreams that need to be interpreted, as in *Genesis 41* where the Pharaoh dreamed of cows that were both fat and skinny. Joseph interpreted the fat cows meaning the present time of plenty, and the skinny ones meaning a famine that was to come. Because of his interpretation, the Pharaoh stored up grain and many people were saved from starvation during the famine that ensued.

The chapters on Daniel have several dreams and visions in them. In one the king Nebuchadnezzar was so frightened of his dream that he actually forgot what it was (*Daniel 2*). Then Daniel had to both tell the king what his dream was *and* interpret it for him. Two chapters later, the king was troubled by another dream and said, “These were the visions of my head while on my bed.” (*Daniel 4:19*) Daniel interpreted it, saying the king would be driven from men, and forced to live as a beast in the field, eating grass. Scary. In the next chapter the king's son, Belshazzar, is frightened so terribly by visions that “the joints of his hips were loosened, and his knees knocked against each other.” (*Daniel 5:6*)

Belshazzar was desperate for someone to interpret the dream, and his wife told him, “Inasmuch as an excellent spirit, knowledge, understanding (of) interpreting dreams, solving riddles and explaining enigmas was found in this Daniel, now let Daniel be called, and he will give the interpretation.” (*Daniel 5:12*)

Not all the dreams in the Bible are portents of terrible things, there are some that have a highly mystical quality, as in *Genesis* where Jacob:

“...dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.” (*Genesis 28*)

Again in *Genesis* where Jacob, as an old man, has learned that his son, Joseph, is still alive; and he undertakes the journey to go down to Egypt and see him. During this time God spoke to him in a dream, calling, “Jacob! Jacob! And Jacob said, ‘Here I am!’ Then God said, ‘...Do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there.’” (*Genesis 46*)

Other dreams from the Bible have conveyed important messages. In

fact, Jesus was protected when He was an infant by the use of dreams. In a dream an angel told Mary's betrothed, Joseph, that God wanted him to take Mary for his wife (*Matthew 1:20*); then again in a dream Joseph was instructed to take the infant, Jesus, and flee to Egypt (*Matthew 2:13*). He had the time to do this because the wrath of Herod was forestalled when an angel told the three wisemen not to return to Herod, but to travel home by a different route (*Matthew 2:12*). Each of the wisemen had the same dream.

There are so many dreams in the Bible that Abraham Lincoln once said, "It seems strange how much there is in the Bible about dreams...some 15 or 16 chapters in the Old Testament and four or five in the New. If we believe the Bible, we must accept the fact that, in the old days, God and His angels came to men in their sleep and made themselves known in dreams." (John A. Sanford, *Dreams & Healing* 6:3)

In fact, Ancient man's belief in dreams gave him a connection to the sources of his spiritual life, but our culture is greatly impoverished in this respect, and a wide gulf has emerged between our conscious life and the life of our souls (for all our material well-being, we are a culturally deprived people). (*Ibid* 7:3) To the best knowledge, there is no ancient culture in which dreams were not exceedingly important. Ancient people believed dreams to be an important way in which the soul received guidance from the spiritual world. (*Ibid* 6:1)

Anthropologist William Merrill writes of the Raramuri of Mexico:

"Dreams are real events. On numerous occasions, people would describe to me quite incredible personal experiences, but fail to mention that the events had taken place in dreams until I asked. This does not mean that they do not distinguish between their waking and dreaming lives, but that they attribute comparable reality to both." (*Healing Dreams* p. 316)

Related to dreams is the cerebellum. I've gone to the library and onto the Internet to learn about the cerebellum. Medical science knows precious little about it and the best use they ascribe to it is having to do with the function of the muscles and with walking.

Philip Whitfield, in the *Human Body Explained*, says:

"Nestled at the lower rear of the brain is the cerebellum. It coordinates

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Swedenborg said the cerebellum is the part of our mind that the spirit flows more directly into and is important to our understanding of dreams because 'at night-time man is in spontaneous things, and the cerebellum is the source of what is spontaneous.'

movements, especially the fine, rapid, accurate movements of skilled actions such as writing or playing a sport. The cerebellum receives motor signals from the motor cortex, as well as sensory signals from the muscles, joints and skin about how a movement is progressing. (p. 50)

In his book *Minds Behind the Brain*, Stanley Finger, says:

"Today we know that the cerebellum plays an important role in allowing us to walk without thinking about how to move one leg in front of the other, and in allowing us to drink from a cup without consciously plotting how far to tip it as it approaches our lips." (p. 96)

These quotes show how the cerebellum controls the unconscious functions and has us bypass our thinking, even in matters pertaining to our body.

Of the cerebellum, theologian and scientist Emanuel Swedenborg, said it is the part of our mind that the spiritual flows more directly into — which would explain why medical science knows so little about it.

Swedenborg said the cerebellum is important to our understanding of dreams because "at night-time man is in spontaneous things, and the cerebellum is the source of what is spontaneous." (*Spiritual Experiences* 4518).

He also says the cerebellum functions during the daytime, too:

"The influx from the cerebellum insinuates itself into the face, as is evident from the fact that the disposition is inscribed on the face, and affections appear in it, for the most part without the man's will, as fear, reverence, shame, etc. These come from the cerebellum by means of its fibers when there is no dissimulation within." (*Arcana Coelestia* 4326:2)

And he says:

"The cerebellum perceives everything the cerebrum does, but does not publish it, or is unable to think or speak in the way that is peculiar to the cerebrum. [It] has an exquisite perception of all thoughts... [notice it knows our thoughts] The cerebrum is comparatively in a turmoil, but the cerebellum is in quiet." (*Arcana Coelestia* 4326:1)

Now we can get some understanding as to why the cerebellum doesn't communicate in words. And it also ties in with what I quoted Jung as saying

that, “Consciousness makes such a noise that we do not hear it.”

When it’s ready for its nightly romp, the cerebellum gears up to communicate with us through dreams. The deeper we are asleep, the more we dream. But dreams are confusing, and most people want to make sense out of what is confusing. But we can allow things to become more confusing until they make sense out of themselves.

What is confusing, at times, is the spirit trying to communicate with us, but the conscious mind doesn’t yet know what it is saying.

Some would think dreams can’t design outer circumstances. But on closer acquaintance one finds that they can. (Wilson Van Dusen, *Swedenborg’s Journal of Dreams* p. 122)

Swedenborg had been lodging with a Moravian man and attending that church every Sunday. But after a series of dreams he didn’t join the Moravian church, though he respected their simple piety, but followed his own individual path. What we see here is the inner world shaping Swedenborg’s religious life. He left behind a very well-documented book called the *Journal of Dreams* which traces his transition from being a well-known scientist to being a visionary and revelator.

However dreams work, for me on a personal level, the key to a dream is the feeling I have when I am waking up. That is what I need to pay attention to. Swedenborg says that, “when a man dreams his natural understanding is laid asleep and his spiritual sight is opened, which draws its all from affection.” (*Apocalypse Explained* 706:3)

In his amazing exploration of the world of spirits, Swedenborg says that at times his dreams coincided with what angels were saying:

I once had quite an ordinary dream, and having woken up I related it all from start to finish. The angels said that it coincided exactly with what they had been discussing; not that the things they were discussing appeared in the dream, but instead things completely different, into which the thoughts in their discussion were transformed, yet in such a way that they were representative and correspondent. Not one detail was missing. (Arcana Coelestia 1981)

This can be understood when we see that, if the angels were talking about truth, Swedenborg’s dream might have had water in it, or stones. He says essentially the same thing in *Arcana Coelestia* 6319:

“As regards what flows into a person from the angels present with him, it is not of the same nature as the objects of his thought but is that which involves correspondences; for the angels think on a spiritual level, but the person perceives their thought on a natural one. Thus spiritual realities come down into images that correspond to them. ...When for example the person speaks about bread, sowing, harvest, fatness and the like, the angels’ thought is about aspects of the good of love and charity, and so on.”

He says that dreams come from varied sources: "...one flows in from spirits, who act (the part of) the persons that are seen in the dreams, and precisely as the dreaming appearance is ...the other kind consists of things... which are usually representations. ...a third kind is from the Lord mediately or immediately through heaven." (*Spiritual Experiences* 3877)

Of the last, Swedenborg says that dreams from angels are beautiful, delightful, instructive and predictive. (*Spiritual Experiences* 8 – index)

"Those in whom ...dreams originate are angelic spirits at the entrance to the paradise gardens... They perform their task with very great delight, so much so that they vie with one another to be there, and they love to fill man with joys and delights such as they see within his affection and disposition. The angelic spirits are drawn from those who during their lifetime took delight in and loved in every way to make other people's lives delightful." (*Arcana Coelestia* 1977:2)

How do these angelic spirits know how to do this? The angelic spirits don't know where this comes from, but then they said:

"...representatives so beautiful and delightful, came to them all in a moment; ...they were told that they came from heaven. They belong to the province of the cerebellum, for the cerebellum, as I have learned, remains awake even during periods when the cerebrum is sleeping." (*Arcana Coelestia* 1977)

Arcana Coelestia 1976 restates what the types of dreams are, slightly differently: "The first type comes from the Lord mediately by way of heaven; such were the prophetic dreams spoken of in the Word. The second type comes by way of angelic spirits, especially those who are situated...over toward the right where the paradise gardens are. This was the source of the dreams that members of the Most Ancient Church had, dreams that were instructive. The third type comes by way of the spirits who are close to a person when he is asleep. These too carry spiritual meanings. Delusory dreams, however, come from a different source."

In these categories I believe Swedenborg is talking about dreams that come from a directly spiritual origin, not the ones that many scientists and other dream researchers think are a rearranging of the events of the day. Those dreams occur earlier in the night, while ones that are very different in content and imagery occur later in the night and toward the end of the dream cycle.

Swedenborg has many interesting things to say about dreams and dreamers. He distinguishes between a prophet and a dreamer like this:

"Prophet: one who teaches truths (they were instructed by a living voice from the Lord). Dreamer: one who stirs up to doing, (or the stirring up from which a thing is done)."

I wish I had written down where this was from, but I didn't. It makes so

much sense to me, and, being a woman, I know about being stirred up by my feelings to do something long before I understand what needs to be done. This is called perception.

This kind of unconscious function is very important, even in literal types of things.

The history of science can produce many examples of dreams reflecting the day's work, with the dream illuminating and directing the scholar's work in progress. (Ernst Benz, *Swedenborg: Visionary Savant in The Age of Reason* p. 153).

Dreams helped Swedenborg in his scientific research and writing of *The Animal Kingdom*. Ernst Benz writes:

"...A dream of 11/12 April (1744) gave him particulars of the thymus gland and its connection to the adrenal glands, which he was discussing in *The Animal Kingdom*. He understood a dream of 8/9 August as an indication that a particular medical discussion in the third part of *The Animal Kingdom* was incomplete, while a dream of 1/2 September confirmed that the conclusion of his first chapter on the sense of taste was "correct and satisfactory." (p. 153)

In more recent times, the leading 20th century scientist Albert Einstein used his imagination in his work. He imagined he was riding on a beam of light from one star to another. That vision was central to developing his Theory of Relativity, and Einstein is known to have said that, "The imagination is more important than knowledge."

Even people who do not have our type of modern science attribute help in developing their specific form of science to dreams. In the book *Healing Dreams* Marc Barasch says that "many a tribal shaman claims to have learned medicinal use of specific plants through dreams." (p. 75)

How do we know what a dream is saying to us, or if it is saying anything at all to us?

In *Healing Dreams*, it says that "the most reasonable-seeming answer is often the wrong one."

Dreams play by rules that confound the waking mind. But at the heart of healing dreams are certain consistent, if challenging attitudes. (*Healing Dreams* p. 28)

Are we too far removed to get anything from our dreams – that is, the ones sent to us by the Lord through the agency of His angels?

"In our society we have not lost our dreams, but our organic connection to them, and thus our ability to act upon them. If we fail to give our dreams a place in our life, our existence may become a wraithlike affair. Healing dreams are not career counselors, telling us how to repackage our assets for success. They speak for the innermost when no one else will. They do not calculate the shortest distance between two points but suggest that we take the long way

home. Though we often content ourselves with having to maintain different faces — one for the job, one with our families; one for society, one for the heart — healing dreams want to make visible the pattern that connects; they tempt us to bring forth what is most passionate and profound within us, for our own sake, and for the world.” (*Healing Dreams* p. 118)

Now I’d like to share two dreams – one I had and another from a book – but they both have to do with interacting with people:

I was in the office of a railroad company executive waiting to be talked to by a woman executive. I had to wait my turn and there was one woman ahead of me. The executive took her and was not hurrying. I was in a rush because I had to go to Italy soon by train. I had one of my granddaughters with me.

As time went on I got more and more rushed. Soon it got to the point where I had to leave and be on the train in two hours. I had to be downtown at the main train station. I had to talk to this woman, get my granddaughter home (she was being good), completely pack, pick up my daughter (who was going with me), drive downtown, and get on the train. All of a sudden it dawned on me I was going to have to park in the lot of the main train station and leave my car for the length of my vacation. I didn’t have anything else to do with the car. It was too late to get someone else to drive us. I was going to have to pay downtown rates for all that time. I tried to think of a few things but nothing worked. I resigned myself to paying the money.

This was a very rushed dream and in the hours after I had it I realized that the high price of downtown parking represented the high cost to my psyche from living crowded with other people and not being authentic.

This is the second dream:

I am stealing a newspaper from a vending machine.

I suddenly wake up to what I am doing and feel guilty.

I had to mull this over for a long time. In the newspaper it seems the articles are just collections of platitudes, opinions, gossip, and scandals raked up to serve as news, etc. I saw that in the dream I was stealing something of very low quality. Finally I made the connection: At the time I was starting in my profession, I was very unsure of myself. I tried to fit into every group, every clique that might give me some feeling of belonging or being ‘someone’. I listened to all the collective opinions and gossip and repeated the trite things whenever I could. A lot of time I repeated it as though it were my information, my points of view.

My dream showed me I was stealing all this collective nonsense because I wasn’t thinking for myself; I was taking it, free of charge, from others. I wasn’t paying the price for having my own ideas and wouldn’t dare to think for myself because I so desperately wanted to belong. (Robert A. Johnson, *Inner Work* p. 74)

There is much that can be said for dreams and being bothered about them. The book, *The Inner Child In Dreams*, says that “a dream unnoticed is like a letter left unopened.”

Where does this letter come from? From what is deep within us. Psychologist and mystic Wilson Van Dusen says, “If one is to know heaven, it has to be through developing the unconscious functions.”

And Swedenborg says, “Angelic thought, or man’s interior thought...may almost be likened to living dreams and the living thought he has in them.” (*Spiritual Diaries 1309*)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Helen Kennedy writes essays, novels and poetry. Her first published story, *Grandmothers and Grandfathers*, was about a new mother who can perceive her baby’s Irish ancestors bringing blessings to the newest member of the family line. Her unique novels are rooted in the human condition while exploring the reality of a world to come. Helen also is an avid genealogist, believing there is much to learn about our minds from the very people with whom we may share facial features, body size, personality traits and other expressions of our humanity. Helen lives in Bryn Athyn.

General Assembly Workshop Summaries

Editor's note: *Following are summaries from some of the Workshops at the General Assembly in Bryn Athyn in June, compiled by the presenters. We hope to have more of these summaries in the November-December issue.*

Going Public | *Led by the Rev. Frank S. Rose*

I was born and raised in Bryn Athyn. In my teens, I came to accept the Writings for myself and soon wondered why the Church is so small when it is so wonderful. I have yet to get a good answer to that question.

The Rev. Karl Alden was the Principal of the Boys School, and, as far as I knew then, was the only minister in the Church who was doing anything about evangelization. Later he gathered some of the College and Theological students into a group that we called the Epsilon Society. We knew that all terms for church growth such as missionary work, evangelization, church growth, end up having a bad name. We wanted to pick a name that did not have any baggage (*epsilon* is the first letter in the Greek word for evangelization, or preaching the good news.)

Among other things we went door-to-door in the area around Bryn Athyn. One of our contacts was at the home of Dr. and Mrs. Ted Lavine, a couple who joined the Church soon after. Mrs. Lavine was to become part of our congregation in Tucson 45 years later.

When I was ordained I was sent to Europe, to grow the Church in Great Britain, Holland, Belgium and France. I was a circuit rider. I made a few feeble attempts at evangelization in the form of public lectures. The chief problem was that if someone attended the lectures and became interested in the Church, we had nothing to invite them to, except meetings in a rental property four times a year.

That all changed when I became Pastor of the Colchester Society. One day, I was traveling on a bus and overheard two women speaking. They looked at the church as we drove by, and one asked the other if she had ever attended a service there. "You can't go to that church, that's private," she said.

I did not answer at the time, but soon after that I began knocking on doors in the vicinity, inviting people to attend the church and assuring them that it was not private. One lady said: "Private church, I didn't think there was such

a thing as a private church.” Maybe not, but I began to look at ways in which we gave that impression. For one thing a tall hedge blocked the view of the church and the sign. A visitor to a service would soon get the feeling of having intruded on a private event.

For a while we tried having a Visitors’ Sunday once a month. There were problems with that approach. The sermons were mostly telling people things they already knew and were aimed at people who were usually not there. They might show up on another Sunday. If so would we have turned them away, inviting them to come back on the Sunday that was directed at them?

From Colchester we moved to Kitchener, Ontario, Canada. This congregation had a private school in a private community. While we were there I made very little effort to grow the Church, but toward the end of the time participated in a church growth workshop at the Schuller Institute in Garden Grove, California. I was immediately struck with the attitude of welcome. It was clear they wanted all participants to be successful when they returned to their congregations.

About six years later, we moved to Tucson, Arizona, and now I had an opportunity to apply the principles of church growth that I had learned at the Schuller Institute. I led the congregation through a series of sessions, including one to consider why growth was important. Eventually we came to the decision to grow. I explained that once we made that decision, all other decisions would refer back to it. Whatever subject came up, we would first consider what effect it would have on growth.

We also brainstormed about barriers to growth and programs to support growth. This led to 20 years of increase in attendance at the church, starting with an average congregation of 18 and ending with an average of about 120.

This meant that the original group of people became a minority in the congregation. The new people brought many talents with them. I think particularly of Boone Jensen, a retired advertising executive. We were discussing whether to put “Visitors Welcome” on the church sign. She pointed out that, in effect, we would be declaring ourselves to be a private church. Supermarkets do not have signs like that because anyone who walks through the door has just as much right to be there as people who have shopped there for years.

Recently I had the pleasure of leading a workshop for growth in Phoenix. We were going through the steps we had followed in Tucson. When we got to the “Decision to grow” something told me that I needed to find a better title for that part of the process. After all, growth is in the Lord’s hands. We can decide that we want to grow, but we cannot control it. And then it came to me that a more appropriate heading would be: “Deciding to go public.” There was an immediate response. We began to look at ways in which the Phoenix congregation could become more of a public church.

Returning to Bryn Athyn for this Assembly, I see many ways in which this kind of change is already taking place in the Church. When I grew up, the Bryn Athyn Cathedral was definitely not a public building, but now it is! The same could be said for Bryn Athyn College.

Change is taking place, and this can be painful. We love a church which is like the bar in the old TV series “Cheers” – “Where everybody knows your name, and they’re awfully glad you came.” It is wonderful worshipping with the same people year after year. There is something comforting about being with a group of people who know your family history. But there are two problems with the private church.

1) It really runs counter to the Lord’s command “to make disciples of all nations.” The Church is not just for us and our loved ones.

2) The other problem is that private churches are doomed to fail. Many of our congregations are seeing a drop in attendance and face the prospect of closing their doors. Most of our congregations are too small to support a full-time pastor. If we do not learn how to go public, we will die as an organization.

I believe that as our congregations look at themselves and see ways of becoming churches for the surrounding community, and not just for ourselves, they will experience growth, and they will find that the joys of a private church are nothing compared to the challenges and satisfaction of a growing church.

As we love the church, acknowledging that it is not ours, we love it to be healthy, and I submit that it is healthy when it is open to the public, and when it is really open to the public, it has a real potential for growth.

The Rev. Garry Walsh talked about how the idea of going public has affected the New Church of Phoenix.

We then formed discussion circles according to the society, circle or group people belonged to (with others welcome to join in). The groups mostly involved 10 or fewer people.

The groups were invited to discuss what going public might mean to their congregation. The items could then be handed to their pastor or another representative of the congregation.

I shared a few closing thoughts and then each individual in the small groups was invited to share a closing thought.

An Open Conversation about the Ordination of Women | *Led by the Rev. Frank S. Rose*

The workshop began with people forming groups of five and selecting a scribe, who collected a pencil, pad and colored index cards.

The first task was to come up with a list of reasons why it was worth discussing this subject. Here is a sample of some of the things mentioned:

- Male and female voices are important; it is against the conjugal principle not to have women ordained
- A lot of women are unhappy; sense of unrest; conflict is becoming great; we don't want to split the Church
- Women are often the ones who get the family to church
- Affects the whole population, at least half the church
- Many women feel a really deep call
- Could it be a couple in ministry?
- Women leaving due to this barrier
- Important issue for growth of church
- Examine: Is this idea old tradition or is it truly taught in the Writings?

Each person was asked to select a colored card according to the position from which he/she wished to speak during the discussion. This was not a lifetime commitment. Red meant speaking from the position of being against the ordination of women, green in support of it, and yellow meant the person did not know or did not choose to say.

We then reorganized the groups to ensure that there would be at least one of each color in each group. We had about 19 groups, with 7 or 8 in each. Out of 137 people reporting, 19 chose red, 62 chose green, and 56 chose yellow.

The groups were then invited to follow this sequence.

1. A person holding a red card would speak to one with a green card explaining the reasons against the ordination of women, the rest of the group listening in.
2. The green card person fed back what he or she had heard.
3. A yellow card person was invited to comment on anything noticed in the exchange.
4. A green card person presented to a red card person the reasons in support of the ordination of women.
5. A red card person repeated back what was heard.
6. A yellow card person fed back what was noticed about the exchange.

After going through these steps, there was time for open discussion, ending with each person having an opportunity to share any closing thoughts and thank the others for sharing.

It seemed to me that the conversations were mostly very positive and respectful. It was satisfying to think that a topic as difficult as this one had been talked about in such a positive way. The people did not all agree with each other, but they seemed to be open to hearing what others said, and respecting them for their opinions.

Resilience Workshop | *Led by Kirsten Cronlund*

Resilience: the ability to bounce back after challenges, and also to reach out to embrace new growth and learning experiences.

Key components of resilience:

- Self-awareness
- Self-regulation
- Flexibility in thinking
- Healthy optimism

Resilience is a set of strategies/skills:

Life throws us curve balls. Our ability to navigate challenges, both large and small, is within our control. While we don't control the situations themselves, *our response is fully within our control*. Resilience is not something people are either born with or not; it is a set of skills or strategies that, with practice, can be adapted more and more fully into our response styles. In other words, the more you practice these skills, the more adept you'll become with them and the more automatic they will become.

The strategies/skills:

Thinking Matters: The same adversity can happen to two different people, and it leaves one person feeling frustrated and angry while the other person walks away shrugging his shoulders. What makes the difference? *What we tell ourselves about the adversity **determines** our reactions and emotions that flow from that adversity.* This is huge! We know from the doctrines of the New Church that we cannot alter our loves or affections, but we can alter our thinking. By honestly and nonjudgmentally examining our thinking about an adversity (big or small), we have a leverage point to choose our reactions. The next time you find yourself upset about something that has just happened (frustrated, angry, guilty, sad), ask yourself what you're telling yourself about

that situation. Then be brutally honest with yourself about whether or not the things are a) helpful and/or b) true. Chances are, there may be an element of truth in what you're telling yourself, but there is probably a lot that you are missing or misinterpreting. By forcing yourself to shift your thinking and try on different possibilities you allow yourself to construct a more productive way of looking at the original adversity. It doesn't make it "good" or pleasant, but it probably takes the edge off of it in such a way that it no longer ties you up in knots.

Focus Matters: We are surrounded by stimuli too plentiful to take in: our physical surroundings, our relationships, media input, etc. We are constantly making choices, without realizing it, about where to place our limited attention. And where we place our attention has everything to do with how we view the world (as hopeful and beautiful or as doomed and ugly), how we view relationships (as loving and fulfilling or as disappointing and depleting), and how we view ourselves in the context of the world (as effective and powerful or as unproductive and powerless). By consciously practicing gratitude and savoring, as well as focusing on areas where we have control, as opposed to areas where we have no control, it's as if we put on a set of glasses through which we begin to see the world as containing more good than bad. This does not mean that we deny the hard parts, or that we attempt to change the unchangeable, but rather we become strategic about where to apply our efforts. We get more bang for our buck – and we have much more fun while doing it! (For an online free survey that will give you a list of your top character strengths, go to www.authentic happiness.org, register, and go to VIA Strengths Survey. It takes about a half hour to complete, but it is informative and worth your time.)

Your Body Matters: The first two strategies are highly cognitive. That is, we change our view of situations and the world by changing how we think about it or what we focus on. With strategy 3, we flip that model around, noticing that our bodies often send us signals about what is going on for us emotionally. For instance, when we are stressed we may tense our shoulders or clench our fists, and our breathing may become more shallow; when we mourn people often talk about their hearts actually hurting; when we are depressed our bodies feel sluggish and slow to respond, and we may sleep more than usual. Knowing this, it's no surprise that one way to impact emotions and mood is to engage in physical activities. An exercise program has been shown to have tremendous benefits, not just to our physical health, but to our ability to regulate emotions and our general energy levels. Controlled breathing exercises increase our parasympathetic nervous system (the calming) response, helping to regulate our sympathetic nervous systems (fight or flight). Many find that changing their diet also has a tremendous impact on their energy levels and even their ability to function cognitively.

Acceptance Matters: At times we go through experiences that are truly overwhelming. No amount of cognitive reframing or exercise or practicing gratitude will get us back to normal. In those times, the best thing to do is to accept that what you're going through is beyond your control, to trust in the Lord's guiding hand and tender touch, and to turn over control to Him through prayer and staying open to whatever He shows you is the next right step.

Strategy is Key:

It takes practice to see the nuances involved in many of the skills above. Trying them all in different situations will help you to see which work best for you in which scenarios. One skill will not work in every situation, and the more adept you become at identifying the most effective skill for any given situation the more resilient you will become. Humility and openness are also important. If you try a skill and it doesn't work, try another. And don't forget to laugh at yourself and to have fun!

Witnessing Your Faith | *Led by C. Augustus Barber*

Witnessing is not a term used very often within General Church culture. However, it is an important part of religious living. An examination of the Old and New Testaments reveals instances of witnessing which can serve as examples or even models for how we witness in our own lives.

There are four types: contractual (witnessing an agreement); judicial (witnessing an event to another person, judge, or jury); testimonial (witnessing one's faith); and martyrdom (witnessing one's faith unto death). Though all of these kinds of witnessing *can* pertain to religious living, the one which drives this study is testimonial.

Testimonial witnessing is more than mere testimony. The Heavenly Doctrines say this about what it is to be a witness: “[Witnesses are] those people who confess and acknowledge from the heart that the Lord is God of heaven and earth, whose humanity is Divine, and *who are conjoined with Him by a life in accordance with the Ten Commandments.*” (*Apocalypse Revealed* 490, emphasis added)

As can be seen, it also takes living the life the Lord set out for us to live. If a person praises the Lord but in reality has no regard for the Commandments, he is not being a witness. From this it is evident that the importance of witnessing rests not only in the words that a person says, but in the life that he leads and the good that he strives to do.

So how can we be a witness? Strive to lead a good life! Consider the story of the Lord healing the man who had been blind from birth (*John 9*). In this story we see what it is to witness: When the blind man is asked what made a change in his life, he reveals without hesitation that the Lord touched him. Just as the man in this story suffered from blindness, there are areas in our lives where we are spiritually blind, and there are also areas where the Lord has healed us through His Word. Therefore we can all be witnesses to our faith.

Witnessing is something that everyone who has been affected by the Lord can do. It does not require memorization of any kind; it only requires your story. It does not require expert knowledge of the Word and Doctrines; it only requires your story. Your story of how the Lord has touched your life can be such a wonderful tool not only for sharing the good news of the Lord, but also for reflection. It creates a space for you to look inside and evaluate how He is operating in your life.

The key to being a witness to your faith is to live your faith, and when anyone asks you what it is that is important to you or what puts the spring in your step, you can tell your story of how you once were blind and now you see.

Nunc Licet: A Play About Emanuel Swedenborg

Led by Arthur Greisiger, Writer/Director

It seemed like an endless journey to get to the point of making a presentation of this play and the script was vastly reduced for the time slot. Even so, the reading went well, albeit a bit long and at times laborious, due to my uncertainty about cutting certain doctrinal points that I couldn't bring myself to cut, but since the reading, I have begun to modify those sections.

The greatest advantage of making this presentation, from the vantage point of the writer, was to be able to gauge the audience reaction and sense the points along the way where the ebb and flow of the piece worked or did not work.

The participants were wonderful and very enthusiastic. Although we did not have time to shape the performances with the characterizations required for a full production, they all stepped up to create characterizations that enhanced the reading immeasurably. Music was included to give a flavor of what is intended in the larger production and the wonderful musicians stepped up to add a number at the last minute which worked extremely well.

We presented the play with stools and music stands in Pendleton Hall. Movement was created by the characters interjecting their lines from their locations and surprisingly it worked very well in lieu of actual blocking and

movement of the characters in the space.

A great deal of material was removed that was designed to give the piece breadth and counteract the propensity for the philosophical subject matter to become burdensome. Since this was a New Church audience, we thought it appropriate to reduce that material. This was unfortunate for the scope of the piece but necessary due to our time limitations. Still, it flowed nicely, except for a few spots that were somewhat didactic and which have been altered.

It is interesting that having removed the more superficial material, the core philosophy has become clearer and therefore easier to reshape to have more drama. That is not a technique I had considered before, but certainly will be using in the future. When we do reach the level of a full production, I can re-insert sub-plot elements as time allows, just so long as the core material continues to take center stage.

All in all everyone I spoke to seemed delighted with what they saw, knowing that it is a work in progress.

Presenting *Nunc Licet* before a world audience of New Church people was the most valuable thing that could have happened for the advancement of the play as an evangelization tool. I hope we can continue to refine the play and present it again.

I came away from this reading realizing that the next important mission is to form a Reader's Edition that works well for a small group to present the play, without the trappings and expense of a theatrical production.

Thank you to all who participated, attended or otherwise offered their support and encouragement. And thank you to the Assembly Committee for the opportunity to advance this stage production after many years of arduous labor and anticipation.

New Church Journey Programs: Old Techniques, New Church Theology, Amazing Results

Burgandy Alden Smith

In 2005 the exciting vision for New Church Journey was conceived: use spiritual growth programs to reach out to newcomers and strengthen churches. For the inaugural year, we supported eight congregations in their implementation of Ray and Star Silverman's program *Rise Above It*.

Each year our approach has evolved and improved, and yet core principles remain the same. Individuals experience sacred text in a very personal way – living the lives God intended for us – in a church environment in which leadership is shared, members are empowered, and new people are welcomed.

Today, six years later, the blessings have continued to unfold. For the upcoming program, we have already enrolled more than 16 congregations from General Church and other denominations from around the world. Our hope and prayer is that we all continue to experience the transforming effects of community-based spiritual growth.

In some ways New Church Journey is nothing new. Many of the outreach principles we draw from have been used successfully for many years by churches around the world. Nonetheless, this particular kind of program has allowed us to move beyond merely telling congregations *to* reach out; we now have tangible tools to show them *how*.

The impact has been remarkable. As one participant said, "New Church Journey Programs have strengthened our church, and put us back in touch with our common purpose of love for one another."

THE NEWEST PROGRAM: SHIFT

Capturing the spirit of change that's possible through spiritual growth, we've named this year's program *SHIFT: Small Changes Big Difference*.

Based on the story of Jacob from the Old Testament, this seven-week program follows the young man's emotional and dramatic life journey. Participants are led through a series of shifts, all leading toward an awareness of the potential blessings hidden within life's struggles. Much of the power of this program comes through personal application of the story's inner meaning, which is deeply and magnificently opened up in Swedenborg's series, *Secrets of Heaven*. Through an appreciation of this story's rich symbolism, we hope that

all – including those new to the New Church – will personally experience the Bible’s great depth and relevance.

HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

If you’re interested in learning more, or in obtaining materials, we welcome you to visit our website, www.newchurchjourney.org. Here you will find access to Journey workbooks, leaders’ guides, video clips, pre-written sermons, children’s materials and much more. If you’re interested in leading a group, you can sign up for weekly emails with reminders, suggestions and inspiration.

Leading a group, sharing the news, inviting friends, participating in the programs and offering donations are all wonderful ways to show your support. Through your involvement, we can continue to spread the wonderful messages of hope and insight that the New Church has to offer.

If you feel inspired to partner with us on a financial level, here is a glimpse of what your support can provide: \$20 covers materials for an individual who could not otherwise participate in a Journey Program; \$100 provides materials to train a congregation; \$500 makes it possible to equip a congregation with all content and promotional materials to fully implement a Journey Program.

We are deeply grateful to all those whose generous contributions of time and resources have made Journey Programs possible, and we look forward to many more years of continued New Church outreach.

We welcome your thoughts, questions and comments: campaignteam@newchurch.org

Church News

UPDATE ON FIVE KEY STRATEGIES

Rt. Rev. Thomas L. Kline

All plans evolve over time. We thought it would be useful to touch base on the five key strategies that were set out for the General Church several years ago. These were:

1. Improve recruiting, training and support of ministers
2. Expand General Church Outreach
3. Develop online church capacity
4. Expand New Church education initiatives
5. Enhance support to create a healthy church

1.) Improving the training and support of Theological School students was a major achievement. The Academy and General Church Boards committed funds to enable second-career men to enter the program and for all students to focus on their studies without having to take additional jobs. Dean Andy Dibb developed additional skill courses and experiences to better prepare students to enter into the leadership and life of our congregations. However, as the College is wrestling with significant operating deficits, reductions had to be made in many areas. This year it was agreed that for financial reasons only two new students could be admitted. Since there were only two successful applicants, this did not have a negative effect. The concern is for the future, especially as we could have more than two capable applicants next year. No decisions have been made, but this is an area we are watching closely.

2.) Outreach has both expanded and contracted. Overall, its budget has been reduced, like most central office functions. This has occurred with the termination of several programs, such as Young Adults and the Joseph Project, and staff position reductions. However, in addition to the much-appreciated Journey Campaigns the use has refocused more to the Internet. Marketing functions are now under Outreach, and several of them involve use of the Internet. To support this, one-half of the Rev. John Odhner's time has been devoted to developing online material and interactions with newcomers.

3.) "Online church capacity," while not specifically mentioning NewChurch LIVE, was generally understood to mean this outreach effort. This

Editor's note: For budgetary and other reasons *Around the New Church* has been discontinued as a separate General Church publication and is being incorporated into *New Church Life*, where we will continue color photographs. We welcome this opportunity to increase our Church News and will be happy to receive submissions from individuals and congregations – including photographs. Please direct any questions, suggestions or material to Bruce.Henderson@anc-gc.org or Walter.Orthwein@verizon.net.

strategy has shifted significantly. Rather than focus on one program, this now includes all our efforts on the Internet to disseminate the Heavenly Doctrines. NewChurch LIVE as an effort to reach out beyond our traditional clientele continues in slightly reduced form. In addition, this strategy now includes the live worship services available from the Bryn Athyn Cathedral and Boulder, and the use of our website to attract newcomers and connect them with our congregations. In fact, there is now substantial overlap between this strategy and the previous one.

4.) Expanding New Church education initiatives has shown itself in several areas. Perhaps most prominently is the Bryn Athyn College effort to reach out to new students. Most of our elementary schools are already doing this. The college's efforts were rewarded this year with an enrollment of more than 230 students – a doubling of enrollment in the last five years. Another less visible shift has occurred with the Bishop's Representative of Education having a role in the Academy and in the Office of Education. And the Office of Education is giving more support than ever to our schools in Africa, with the Rev. Eric Carswell making two trips to South Africa and one to Kenya.

5.) Creating a healthy church has had a mixed result. Through the Capital Campaign it has certainly brought in new money for congregational growth initiatives and increases to endowments. While the campaign was recently terminated without reaching all of its goals many congregations have received support they would not have otherwise.

PROGRESS TOWARD SELF-SUFFICIENCY

As part of a long-term strategy to ensure financial stability in the future, the General Church has encouraged congregations to reduce their dependency on General Church grants and move toward self-sufficiency. There is good progress to report.

Two years ago The Sower's Chapel congregation in Sarver, Pennsylvania, took on the challenge and with a serious fund-raising campaign was able to pay off its manse and close its budget deficit.

David Frazier, General Church Treasurer and Executive Officer, reports that Glenview has reduced its grant to zero this year and that Oak Arbor in Rochester, Michigan, has also committed to a zero grant for this year's budget.

Other congregations also are making progress in coping with difficult financial challenges.

KAINON NEW CHURCH SCHOOL DEDICATION

By Rev. Eric H. Carswell, Bishop's Representative for New Church Education

More than 30 years ago the Kainon New Church School faced a very doubtful future. Enrollment was in the low 20s and they knew that the South African

education ministry would not consider them a viable school if they dropped below 20. One year they had 19 students enrolled the day before a new school year was to start. Focused, direct efforts produced an additional student. They had a thriving separately-operated preschool program on their campus, but back then it was not well connected to the Kainon School.

Since those trying times the school has been working on effectively recruiting students who will be a good fit for New Church education. The Director of Preschool, Daphne Plug, is now a member of the congregation and a strong supporter of having her program serve as a feeder for Kainon School. In recent years Kainon has been the second largest elementary school at a long-established General Church of the New Jerusalem congregation.

Strategic planning led by then Pastor the Rev. Erik Buss started with relatively modest goals and expanded to major renovations and new academic space with a cost of 16 million South African Rand (about \$2.3 million U.S.). With local fund raising and matching funds from the Healthy Church Match this project was undertaken.

On August 26, Bishop Brian Keith and I were present for a dedication of these renovations and new facilities with current Pastor the Rev. Derrick Lumsden as master of ceremonies. The setting was a gathering of both Westville New Church congregation members and Kainon parents in the newly expanded Dan Heinrichs Social Hall.

Following the dedication by Bishop Keith I gave a short presentation on the goals of New Church education and the students offered a program of song, recitation and dance. The evening was capped with a social reception and light supper in the courtyard formed between the refurbished and the new classrooms.

The fruit of years of work, publicity and a growing reputation is shown in the fact that for their new school year that will start in January they already have 20 students signed up for first grade with a waiting list of others. I am inspired by the work and dedication of the teaching staff under the very capable leadership of headmistress Jane Edmunds, a recent graduate of the Master of Arts in Religious Studies program at Bryn Athyn College of the New Church Theological School (formerly known as the Academy of the New Church Theological School).

BRYN ATHYN COLLEGE

Bryn Athyn College welcomed a large and multi-talented group of 108 new students this year, with 90 of them first-year. The total student body is 238. Six of the students are theologs in the Theological School of the College.

The residence halls on main campus are full, primarily with students but also with some community members who are renting space. As we enjoy our

beautiful facilities we remain ever vigilant about reducing costs and exploring revenue.

This year promises to be high energy with a lot of activity around the new psychology major, career skills and mentoring, new courses in the sacred arts, service activities, study and travel abroad, cultural events, student initiatives, and a growing relationship between college and community.

The College is eager to explore how it can come into fruitful partnership with the town and Historic District to further a variety of uses. The Bryn Athyn Bounty farm market has been a great success this summer, and we look forward to further development of our fledgling produce markets on Saturdays.

The College has extraordinary financial challenges ahead, but it is blessed with a devoted and talented faculty, an enthusiastic student body, a newly-energized alumni association, generous donors, and a spiritual purpose and calling.

ANC SECONDARY SCHOOLS

The Academy of the New Church Secondary Schools began the year with 82 students in the Girls School and 127 in the Boys School. Principals Sue Odhner and Jeremy Irwin said the year began with a lot of enthusiasm and excitement. They are confident that enrollment will grow in the future.

The venerable old Glenn Hall was demolished over the summer and was being cleared away as the beautiful new Glenn Hall opened its doors. It can house 48 girls and at this point is home to 22 girls. Sue is sure that as girls experience the new dorm and the word gets out many more girls will want to attend ANC.

With the new dorm came a new Head Housemother, Miriam Synnstedt, former secretary of the Boys School. She agreed to step into this role after the departure and retirement of veteran housemother, Esther Yardumian-Smyth. Sue says, "Miriam brings positivity and warmth to the job. We feel blessed that she is willing to serve, and be a part of our Girls School family."

Among other changes in the Girls School this year, volleyball has moved to the fall, soccer has been eliminated and ice hockey will be a new sport in the winter. "We are excited about these changes," Sue says, "and hope that the girls will be also."

The Boys School welcomed Alex Rohlta as a replacement in the Science Department for Dan Hultgren, who has gone on to graduate school, and Carol Brannon, who has taken over Miriam Synnstedt's role as Administrative Secretary. Other changes include Keith Gruber taking over as Head Housemaster for Stuart Hall and Doug Reuter becoming Assistant Principal. On the football field, this will be Andy Davis' last year as head coach after 24

continued on page 357



Singing at the Concert Celebrating the Dedication



Rev. Eric Carswell, Rev. Derrick Lumsden, Rt. Rev. Brian Keith, Gay Waters and her husband, the Rev. Gerald Waters.



The Rev. Malcolm Smith, Assistant to the Pastor of New Church Westville, with his wife, Abby, daughter, Mara, and Abby's sister, Gayal "Tykah," right.



Gary Waters, Alison Frost Osborn, and George Elphick. These are the architects who worked on the Kainon New Church School renovation project – all members of the Westville congregation.

The growing school has a new media center, renovated classrooms, new classrooms and a pool.



This year's Maple Leaf Academy attendees.



Completed in the summer of 2011, The ANC Girls School dorm—Glenn Hall—is the newest building on the ANC campus.



Ivy and Chara Daum



India Rhodes and Rebekah Clark



Sylvia Odhner

Bryn Athyn Bounty is a collaborative effort among the college, high schools, and historic district to build a sense of community around shared interests in agriculture, horticulture, hands-on learning, and New Church values and heritage. Starting small with a farm market on Saturdays in August, the Bryn Athyn Bounty concept could expand to include sacred arts internships, artisan revival, and living history programs, as well as a café, bed and breakfast, or other entrepreneurial ventures. The intent of Bryn Athyn Bounty is to develop and share community through commitments to use, beauty, sustainability, and collaboration.

continued from page 352

seasons. Jeremy says, “He has served the institution in many capacities over 38 years and we hope he has a fantastic final year in this role.”

Most importantly, say Sue and Jeremy, “We will work hard to help our charges grow. Our goal for these students is that they develop a working relationship with the Lord; that they know that He is there to guide and lead them in all that they do. We want them to spend their time at the Academy gathering the tools they will need to live life in this world as caring, compassionate and confident young men and women. If our boys and girls leave the Academy morally grounded and spiritually motivated, we have done our job.”

BRYN ATHYN CHURCH SCHOOL

The 117th opening of the Bryn Athyn Church School came with the hopeful sign of beautiful sunny skies just two days after Hurricane Irene swept through the area.

In the opening worship the Rev. Phil Schnarr, School Pastor, launched the school theme for the year: “Serve the Lord with all your heart.” To breathe life into the theme students will hear stories throughout the year from people who find extraordinary satisfaction in “ordinary” work.

Newly ordained Rev. Howard Thompson was introduced during worship and will be welcoming families to the school and teaching 4th grade religion. He and his wife Debra joined the school community 13 years ago because they believed a New Church education would be best for their daughter. They were surprised to find that the decision they made for her would have such a profound effect on their own lives.

After school opening, parents and community members joined administrators for coffee. They heard about the new volunteer program – led by Liz Switzer – and were invited to sign up. Jennifer Pronesti delivered a message from the Bryn Athyn Church Board, inviting people to participate in an information-gathering process called Appreciative Inquiry.

Elementary School Director Kirsten Cronlund is leading the next phase of strategic planning by connecting with the many constituents who care deeply about the school. She has already nurtured lively conversations with faculty and soon will be reaching out to the community for input.

A number of teachers worked on curriculum and did professional development over the summer. Judy Soneson worked on a Grand Man Project that will incorporate other New Church communities, including a school in Kenya. Others participated in courses offered by the Bryn Athyn College Masters in Religious Studies, such as *The Human Mind*.

Headmaster Dr. Reid Prichett told parents: “We are excited about what the year ahead will bring for your child. We look forward to a wonderful year ahead.”

PERSPECTIVE FROM THE U.K.

The Rev. Alan Lewin, Pastor of Michael Church in London, wrote the following for the September Newsletter of General Church in Great Britain about the disturbances and riots this summer in London and other British cities:

“We need to be careful that we don’t satisfy ourselves with simple reactions or solutions to these things. There will be complex underlying reasons that encouraged the lawlessness we saw. We might hope that society as a whole will be encouraged to want to do more to create a better society for all of us to live in.

“Sadly, Brixton also saw trouble on its streets for one night. What can we at Michael Church do to help? Our strongest asset as a New Church is our belief that there are spiritual causes behind these troubles and that there are spiritual connections between this world and the spiritual world. I remain convinced that our weekly worship of the Lord Jesus Christ in His Second Advent in the Michael Church brings a positive, strengthening influence into the local area which would be spiritually poorer without it.

“As we prepare for, and then worship, in Church we can bring our awareness of what is happening in the world into the things we care about and thoughtfully reflect on them. We can also bring to mind that the Lord’s Providence works into the least details of everything and that He will bring something good which is of eternal value and use out of the bad things that have happened.

“Let us ask the Lord to lead and strengthen us so that together we can continue to be a good and useful spiritual influence in Brixton.”

ELDERGARTEN

The Eldergarten program has become a hugely successful event in Boynton Beach, Florida, and the move last year to the nearby Duncan Conference Center – which also offers reasonable housing – makes it possible for many more to attend.

This year’s Eldergarten, open to everyone in the Church over the age of 50, is set for January 22-26, 2012. It will include four morning sessions, a special Holy Supper service, a scenic boat ride on the Intercoastal Waterway, and a reception and banquet.

This year’s speakers will be Rt. Rev. Alfred Acton, the Rev. Prescott Rogers and Dr. Sylvia Shaw. Bishop Acton will discuss what the Writings say about

current issues. Rev. Rogers is considering a number of topics, including *Old Testament Themes*, *The Four Gospels* and *Religion's Unanswerable Questions*. Dr. Shaw, who teaches in Bryn Athyn College, will discuss: *Swedenborgian Literary Criticism – Interpreting Literature Through a New Church Lens*.

The registration fee after September 15 is \$200. Room rates in the Duncan Center are \$42 per person per night, double occupancy, including breakfast.

For information contact chairman Bob Brickman at Eldergarten@aol.com.

BUILDING IN KENYA

Duncan Smith of Glenview, who has given untold volunteer hours to spreading the Church – from Russia to Africa – arrived in Kenya in mid-July to offer further help with its emerging Etorima High School. Teachers were just finishing an intense course on New Church education.

He plunged into helping to build three additional classrooms and an office, which were to be completed after he left.

Duncan was sad to realize that a leading student he had met in January was no longer in the school, along with some others, because of an inability to pay. The cost is \$50 per student and \$200 for a dorm student. “What a loss to the spirit of the school,” Duncan said. But a scholarship has been provided so that students can work off their fees by doing campus chores.

MAPLE LEAF ACADEMY

By Gwenda Cowley

For more than 40 years, each summer an enthusiastic group of teens and dedicated staffers meet for a week of instruction, worship and play in the wooded area of southern Ontario, Canada. This year included 33 campers and 11 staff. That's more than some of our congregations count on a given Sunday. These kids are eager to eat, work, play and worship together every day.

Maple Leaf Academy was begun in 1969 by the Rev. Frank Rose, who also helped start the British Summer Academy, Laurel Leaf Academy and others. It has always been held in Canada, in three different locations, and is financially supported by the General Church in Canada. (Some of us dream of someday owning our own camp where we can make better use of the facilities and hire our own cooks, etc.) The Revs. Frank Rose, Mark Carlson, Terry Schnarr and Michael Cowley have all served as Chief Leaf, assisted for many years by Denis Kuhl, and for the past 10 years Directed by Stephanie Kuhl. Over the years about 33 ministers have served on

Smallest attendance: 16
Largest attendance: 100+
Average camp size: 45

In 2007 three generations of Roses attended camp together

staff and around 140 young adults have attended.

If you add up the average hours that a staffer is awake and doing staff duties (planning, supervising, meeting, directing, speaking, setting up and cleaning up), multiply by the average number of staff (10) and then multiply by 40 years – you get a whopping 86,400 hours of volunteer service given freely to serve the teens of the Church. And that doesn't count the hours of prep time, the detail work that happens long before camp begins and the weeks after camp ends when the bills are tallied and paid. No one gets paid for this camp. These young adults take time off from their jobs to come get exhausted and sometimes overworked for free.

Why do they do it? Because something magical happens when you get teens away from the world, away from their everyday high school pressures, and as they settle in to the environment they discover a safe place where they can talk about God. I am amazed every time I witness it. Everyone is kind, everyone listens, you can talk about deep personal beliefs and issues and you are loved.

This year I was the senior staff member and I came away from camp energized and hopeful. It was inspiring to be with the campers and inspirational to be with the rest of the staff. They are always awesome.

Due to several complicated factors, there was only one ordained minister at camp. So rather than overburden him, we had each small group (which we call families) take a turn leading the morning worship. These services were delightful and engaging. Kids had perhaps their first opportunity to experience planning a worship service. Everyone participated. The worships were thoughtfully planned and carried out. I hope this tradition continues!

A second highlight was the final worship service the last night. Everyone walked past every other camper silently, communing with the eyes, and ending up at the beautiful altar, where each person received a hands-on blessing from the robed minister (Rev. Coleman Glenn). This blessing is always powerful and for some was their first experience. It was a reverent and beautiful moment to witness.

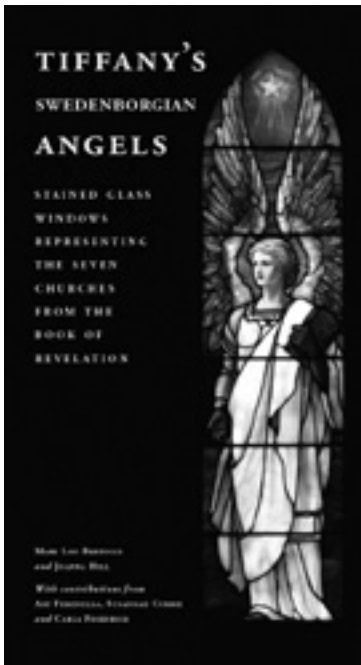
I sincerely hope that this camp – and the many others in the New Church – continue to receive support. They take money and resources and the willing spirit of a lot of people to make them happen. Truly they are serving an important segment of our church population which enriches all of us.

For information contact: Stephanie Kuhl – Maple Leaf Academy
40 Chapel Hill Dr., Kitchener, ON, Canada N2R 1N2

NEW BOOKS FROM THE SWEDENBORG FOUNDATION

The Swedenborg Foundation in West Chester, Pennsylvania, has published two new books: *Tiffany's Swedenborgian Angels: Stained Glass Windows Representing the Seven Churches from the Book of Revelation* by Mary Lou Bertucci and Joanna Hill; and *Stay by Me, Roses: the Life of American Artist Alice Archer Sewall James, 1870-1955* by Alice Blackmer Skinner.

The book on *Tiffany's Swedenborgian Angels* tells of seven stained glass windows created by Louis Comfort Tiffany for a Swedenborgian church in Cincinnati, Ohio, more than 100 years ago.



A press release from the Foundation states: “The book explains that each angel had a lesson to convey to those who understand the symbolism of the text and the imagery within the beautiful Tiffany stained glass. Their value was further enhanced by explanations of historical importance, biblical background and inner spiritual meaning as described by Emanuel Swedenborg.” The book includes 85 color photographs in an oversized paperback with French flaps.

The church in Cincinnati was destroyed in 1964 but the windows were preserved. They are part of a traveling exhibit, *In Company With Angels: Seven Rediscovered Tiffany Windows*, which was on exhibit at the Taft Art Museum in Cincinnati this summer.

Dr. Lynne Ambrosini, Chief Curator of the museum, said: “I am very impressed by the amount of research that

[the book] synthesizes and presents in such digestible form. It’s a beautiful piece of writing that spans scholarship, meditation and spiritual guidance.”

Mary Lou Bertucci is a freelance editor who specializes in scholarly publishing. From 1994 to 2007 she was senior editor at the Swedenborg Foundation. She lives in Elkins park, Pennsylvania. **Joanna Hill** has worked in scholarly and religious publishing for many years and is executive editor of the Foundation. She lives in Bryn Athyn.

The book on Alice James is the first published biography of this internationally known artist who was influenced by Swedenborg.

The Foundation says: “Born in 1870 to a Swedenborgian family in Glendale, Ohio, Alice Archer Sewall James (affectionately known as “Archie”) lived a life that most 19th century women could only dream about. By the time

she was 30, one of her portraits was accepted in Paris by the prestigious Salon de Mai for exhibition at the Musée de Louvre. In 1934 she founded the Urbana Movement, an art school that not only taught students how to draw and paint, but about history, literature and especially spirituality. In addition to her art, she wrote poems and plays.

“The story of Alice Archer Sewall James’ Swedenborgian heritage and her inner creative drive will appeal to anyone who is curious about women who challenged the stereotypes of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It is the only published book on this important historical figure and illuminates important points in Swedenborgian church history.”

Alice Blackmer Skinner, a research psychologist who passed away last year at age 85, had a lifelong interest in women’s studies. She had a PhD in psychology from Harvard. She was the editor of *Rooted in Spirit: A Harvest of Women’s Wisdom* and for 17 years was art director for the Foundation’s *Chrysalis Reader*. She lived in St. George, Maine.



Life Lines

THAT HAPPY DAY

One of the teachings we treasure from *Heaven and Hell* is that good marriages last to eternity in heaven. But many people who have never read the Writings instinctively believe this is true. They share with renowned poet Emily Dickinson – a devoted reader of Swedenborg – the heartfelt conviction that “I shall but love thee better after death.”

One great example of this abiding faith was a man known as one of the greatest college basketball coaches of all time, but who preferred to be known just as a good man who served God and lived his faith.

John Wooden led the UCLA Bruins in the 1950s, '60s and '70s, including 10 national championships and an 88-game winning streak. Throughout it all he was a humble gentleman, who never swore – and prohibited his players from swearing – read the Bible every day, and believed in building upstanding men first, then basketball players.

He was absolutely devoted to his wife, Nell. When she died in 1985 he wrote a love letter to her every month and tied the letters in a ribbon on her pillow, next to his. He once wrote:

“I was never preoccupied with dying. But perhaps like most people, I feared it. Losing Nell has cured me of any fear of death because I believe that when I’m called, when the Good Lord beckons according to His plan, I will go to heaven and be with her. Knowing this gives me peace.

“Mind you, I’m in no hurry to leave, but I have no fear of leaving. When the time comes, it will be a very good day – Nell and I will be together again. In the meantime, each day of the journey is precious, yours and mine – we must strive to make it a masterpiece. Each day, once gone, is gone forever.”

John Wooden passed away last year, just short of his 100th birthday. His family smiled through their tears. They knew that for him it was a very good day.

(BMH)

UNASKED QUESTIONS

It has been said that ministers must “stop answering questions people are not asking.” This criticism certainly has some validity, but less in the New Church than in others, I would think.

The former church taught such “mysteries” as the Trinity, salvation by faith alone, and the resurrection of the body. Those doctrines are false, and

if people are no longer interested in them, that's fine. But the New Church teaches the Word. Its doctrines open the understanding and relate to life. If people aren't asking about its teachings, they should be.

Moreover, New Church clergy must do more than answer questions people are asking, they must introduce questions which people have given up asking because they assume no answers are possible, or which it just wouldn't occur to people to ask, and provide the new answers to those questions which we find in the Writings. Nothing the Lord has revealed is irrelevant.

The questions people are asking may bear little relation to the questions they should be asking. We must do more than appeal to what interests people. We should help them expand their horizons.

(WEO)

HEAVEN IS FOR REAL BUT . . .

A book that created a bit of a sensation as a *New York Times* best-seller last year was *Heaven is for Real* – the story of a four-year-old boy who “died” during an operation and came back with stories about God and heaven.

The book is written by the boy's father, Todd Burpo, pastor of the Crossroads Wesleyan Church in a small town in Nebraska. It is filled with a lot of drama about his son's medical crisis and then the amazing stories that dribbled out of him over months following about his experiences in heaven.

No doubt the account is sincere and has had a positive effect on the many, many people who have read it. But the New Church reader will find it problematic.

Four-year-old Colton tells of meeting the grandfather he had never known, now a young man again, plus a sister he didn't even know about – a baby lost in a miscarriage who was still waiting in heaven for her parents to give her a name. Such tales made believers of his parents, but it's just a little too convenient that so many of Colton's description match his father's own understanding and expectations of scripture.

Colton, for instance, describes meeting Jesus, who is filled with love but still bears “markers” on his hands and feet – from the nails of the crucifixion. He “saw” angels with wings. He “saw” God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit as separate entities, sitting on three thrones. Colton claims to have witnessed Armageddon too – a little much for a four-year-old but something he described as a climactic battle between angels and devils, fought with swords and bows and arrows, and with his father wielding a sword with the angels.

Apparently young Colton learned nothing about the life that leads to heaven, except that you just have to “get right with Jesus.”

Well, *Heaven is for Real* has sold more than two million copies, and we

have to trust that in the Lord's Providence it is opening the eyes and minds of a lot of people that there is something more than this world – and that it is affecting their lives in positive ways.

(BMH)

RATIONAL RELIGION

When we say the New Church is a “rational religion,” what does that mean? It means more than that it is reasonable or “makes sense.” It means that the doctrine of the New Church encompasses both parts of creation, the spiritual and the natural, and shows how they are related. It explains the “ratio” between them, enabling us to bring the light of spiritual truth to bear upon the natural issues of life. The teaching of the New Church appeals to the middle level of the mind, the rational, which was created especially for this purpose of relating the spiritual to the natural.

(WEO)

BEWARE WHAT YOU PICK UP IN THE FOG

The following is from a list of very striking comparisons illustrating the danger of reading the Word “under the auspices of one's own intelligence.” The point is that the Word can only be understood rightly by those who acknowledge and worship the Lord. But those whose thought is not protected and guided by the Lord will latch onto statements in Scripture and misinterpret them to confirm harmful falsities (such as salvation by faith alone).

“They are like a man walking over a wide plain in a thick fog, who seeing a scorpion takes it for a bird, and attempting to seize and pick it up with his hand receives a deadly wound.” (See *True Christian Religion* n. 165 for other, equally graphic, comparisons).

(WEO)

PRAYER AND REMEMBRANCE

When the United States recoiled from the terrorism of September 11, 2001, most people reacted with the instinct of Abraham Lincoln, who said in the depths of the Civil War, “I was driven to my knees because I had nowhere else to go.” Prayer was our first instinct too.

Public prayer services were held in the Bryn Athyn Cathedral then – including a private service for the families of victims in nearby areas – as well as services throughout General Church congregations and in churches, temples and synagogues all over the country and the world.

The American Red Cross requested the service for victims' families in the cathedral, specifically asking that it be led by one of our ministers with our

teachings, because some of the families had found so much comfort in them. The service was led by the Rev. Tom Kline, then pastor of the Bryn Athyn Society, and the group also was addressed by Rabbi Harold Kushner, author of the best-seller, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*.

On the 10-year observance, many solemn prayer services brought people together in churches and congregations, including NewChurch LIVE in Bryn Athyn and Ivyland. At Ivyland, Pastor Tom Rose is a chaplain to fire and emergency workers and had traveled to Ground Zero a month after 9/11 to offer grief counseling. His service this September will be published in the November-December issue of *New Church Life*.

But at this year's commemoration at Ground Zero, where the Twin Towers fell, New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg was criticized for forbidding any prayers or the participation of clergy from any and all faiths. It was the kind of "political correctness" that is "correct" in no one's eyes. Mayor Bloomberg is no Lincoln.

(BMH)

'HERE AM I. SEND ME'

The response to the terrorist attacks of 9/11 brought to mind the familiar verse from *Isaiah* 6:8: "I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us. Then said I, Here am I; send me."

As people ran in terror from the burning Trade Towers, firefighters, police and emergency medical people were running in to save lives – and gave their own. Thousands of men and women in the military deployed overseas and many have sacrificed their lives to protect us from future attacks. They all answered the call: "Send me." They all deserve our gratitude and appreciation – every day.

The response to 9/11 also manifested the core teaching of *Divine Providence* – that the Lord permits evil only that can be turned to good. The devastating attacks were carried out by just a handful of terrorists. But the response of charity, kindness and love overwhelmed the wanton evil unleashed that day. That is what we need to honor, celebrate and remember.

Where the Lord leads is in our own hearts and as we love justice, mercy and freedom – as we love Him – that is the way we all answer the call: "Here am I. Send me."

(BMH)

GEORGE INNESS

The 19th-century Swedenborgian artist George Inness was in the headlines recently during an exhibition at the Philadelphia Museum of Art called “George Inness in Italy.” (It closed May 15th).

The centerpiece of the exhibition was a painting which had been discovered in the basement of the museum in 2005. *Twilight on the Campagna* was painted around 1851 and purchased by the museum in 1945.

Over time its beauty was obscured by a thick layer of discolored varnish which made it unfit to display. But after being found in the basement and restored by conservators it was revealed to be “a masterpiece just waiting to be discovered.”

Inness was very impressed with Swedenborg’s descriptions of the spiritual world and sought to portray it in his landscapes, which are known for their spiritual quality. This newly found painting is said to mark a shift in his work toward this more “poetic” or spiritual style.

Inness lived in Montclair, New Jersey, and the museum there has a good number of his paintings on display, many of which are accompanied by a paragraph explaining the inspiration he found in Swedenborg’s Writings – which might also be described as “a masterpiece just waiting to be discovered.”

(WEO)

AFTER DOOMSDAY

People who do not understand the Last Judgment described in the book of Revelation are prone to doomsday scenarios, such as Christian radio broadcaster Harold Camping who predicted the end of the world last May 21 – when Jesus would return to judge all humankind and gather up the faithful for heaven. When May 22 dawned, the world did not end but Camping’s 15-minutes of media glow did.

Still the Apocalypse is alive as an end-of-days scenario in many churches. People don’t know when or quite what to expect but do see it as a judgment separating good and evil, and promising a transition to a new and better life for the faithful. It is scary but hopeful.

Michael Shermer, publisher of *Skeptic* magazine and a columnist for *Scientific American* wrote in *The Wall Street Journal*: “Apocalyptic visions help us to make sense of an often seemingly senseless world. The literal meaning of apocalypse is an ‘unveiling’ or ‘revelation,’ and this definition of the world holds true whether we consider St. John’s narrative in the book of Revelation or secular chronologies that fit the events of history into a larger cosmic design.

“For human beings, it is much easier to suffer the slings and arrows of

outrageous fortune when we believe that it is part of a deeper, unfolding plan. We may feel like flotsam and jetsam on the vast rivers of history, but when the currents are directed toward a final destination, it gives us purpose and meaning. We want to feel that no matter how chaotic, oppressive or evil the world may be, all will be made right in the end.”

We call it trust in Providence.

(BMH)

THE LORD’S CHALLENGE

A nice postscript to the above came in an e-mail from the Rev. George McCurdy. A non-New Church friend had shared a verse with him and asked him to consider it as a powerful goal for our country. It is from *II Chronicles 7:14*, and George says: “I know it is a non-canonical book of the *Bible* but when I read it I was touched by its theme.

“The setting is this: Solomon finally completed the temple which had been a dream of his father David. In an evening vision Solomon heard the words of the Lord promise to inhabit the temple. The Lord offered this challenge: ‘If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.’

“This seems like a goal – a prayer,” George says “worth taking on as individuals and as a church. Maybe *New Church Life* might find a way to share this verse so that we will focus our efforts on these solid priorities to honor the Lord and His Church.”

(BMH)

HARRY POTTER

Among the many spiritual experiences granted to Swedenborg so that he could understand and explain them was the feeling of how delightful the love of ruling from the love of self is. “It was such as to surpass all the delights that there are in the world. It was also granted me to perceive that from that delight, as from their fountain, gushed forth the delights of all evils...” (*Divine Providence 215.9*)

Power may be gained by means of courageous acts, but one who from principle voluntarily relinquishes power for the sake of a greater good has conquered the strongest enemy of all, the love of ruling from the love of self.

What if you had in your hand a wand that would give you power over everyone on earth? You would be absolutely invincible, and whatever you willed no one could resist. Not only that, you have just proved to yourself and others, by dint of heroic effort and extreme suffering, that you are a good

person and a champion of what is right. Would it be hard to let go of your power?

This is the situation Harry Potter found himself in, and if you've read the book or seen the movie of "*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*," you know what he did.

(WEO)

OTHER EXAMPLES

The ancient Roman hero Cincinnatus (for whom the city of Cincinnati is named) was plowing his fields when word arrived that he had been given dictatorial powers to defend the city. He took command, defeated Rome's enemies, and returned to his farm, refusing all the honors and power that came with his victory.

George Washington was called "the American Cincinnatus" because he repeatedly refused to hold onto power when he easily could have. When King George III of England heard that Washington would resign his commission after the war and turn over the reins to the powerless Continental Congress, the king said: "If he does that he will be the greatest man in the world." Washington did just that, and again, when his term as president was up, he retired and resisted the urging of those who would gladly have made him a king.

(WEO)

THE SUPREME EXAMPLE

The supreme example of relinquishing power was the Lord, who, during His life on earth, submitted His Human nature to the Divine will even to the point of accepting a death He could easily have avoided.

When He was tempted by the devil in the wilderness, the devil took Him up on a high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and told Him: "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me." The Lord replied: "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, you shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve." (*Matthew 4:9*)

(WEO)

New Initiative Aims to Share the Internal Sense Online

Every day, more than 130,000 people use Internet search engines to look for the meaning of the Bible. Every day, more than a million people visit Bible Study websites.

Very few of those seekers find the internal sense as revealed in the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg.

Why? Because, even though the internal sense of the Word is one of the unique “assets” of the New Christian Church, we haven’t yet made a concentrated effort to offer it to people in the place they are looking: online.

The New Christian Bible Study Web aims to change that. Thanks to a grant from the Glencairn Foundation, the project developers are beginning to work on a website which will:

- Offer the text of the Word to readers, linked to...
- Simple, plain-English introductions to the internal sense, linked to...
- The text of the Writings, and to...
- Explanations from more than 50 commentaries by major New Church scholars, and to...
- More than 1,500 sermons tagged by the texts they explain, and to...

Other material – art, music, poetry, children’s materials, craft projects, photography, multi-media presentations and whatever else fits the format.

The site also will offer links to help explain doctrinal terms and ideas. For instance, a reader finding the word “celestial” could follow a link to a simple explanation of its meaning, which would offer further links to the Writings, to sermons and to passages from collateral works expounding on it.

Those central functions will be surrounded by other features typical of Bible Study websites: sermons, articles, other search functions, discussion questions, links to church organizations and congregations, book sellers and more.

Obviously, creating all this will be a monumental task. But the effort being made is substantial as well. The NCBS Project has engaged New Church professionals to design and build the website and to spearhead content development. It is also engaging with the leaders of www.heavenlydoctrines.org, www.kemptonproject.org, www.Newchurch.org and www.Biblemeanings.info, among others, to make use of work that has already been done to share the truths of the Writings online.

Finally, the project also has the enthusiastic support of General Church Outreach Director Rev. David Lindrooth and dozens of other General Church

ministers. The project's leaders have also begun making contacts with other Swedenborgian denominations and independent believers, and are working with them as well.

Despite these resources, however, the project was founded with a conviction that the only path to success lies in creating a broad-based, collaborative effort involving people from throughout the community of believers. The leaders have begun reaching out to ministers and other scholars seeking their contributions, and have also begun reaching out to New Church software developers, seeking their input as well. They are hoping to find other, so-far-unidentified contributors for both content and technical issues as the effort moves forward.

Why should people pitch in? Consider: if one percent of those 130,000 seekers find the New Christian Bible Study website, that would be 1,300 visitors a day. If one out of every 10 visitors became seriously interested, that would be 130 new people thinking and talking about New Christian doctrine – every day! That's more than 47,000 people a year.

The New Christian Bible Study effort is just beginning; the schedule calls for a public launch in about nine months. If you would like to know more, the leaders have established a Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/New-Christian-Bible-Study/211799595499366>. Updates will be posted on the page as well, as work progresses. Project editor Brian David can be reached via email at bridavid@comcast.net; technical lead Steve David can be reached at sdavid@skymark.com.

Preview: The New Christian Bible Study developers created a video, The Story of Fred, which offers a somewhat whimsical view of how the website might affect the world. It can be viewed at www.youtube.com/watch?v=dA9TxdJ6OuQ.



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