

NEW CHURCH *Life*

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

MAY/JUNE 2018



The Descent of the Holy City

This is a powerful image for the Church. The Rev. Eric Carswell says in a sermon that on the 19th of June we celebrate not only what the Lord has provided in bringing the holy city, New Jerusalem, down from heaven to dwell among us, but also what we are called to do to make a dwelling place for the Lord in our lives. (Page 192)

Note: There is no extra cost for the use of color on the front page.

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New Church Life

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

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In This Issue

Editorials (page 183) include:

- “*As in heaven . . .*” This is part of our daily prayer to bring the peace and love of heaven into our world, but also conveys our own commitment to help make it happen.
- *Liberty* – Written for Independence Day in the United States, but with a common theme about our natural and spiritual freedom and our role in preserving both.

In a 19th of June sermon, *The Descent of the Holy City*, the Rev. Eric H. Carswell talks about all of the stories in the *Book of Revelation* leading up to John’s vision of the holy city New Jerusalem descending out of heaven. But, he asks, “What do these stories teach us about the Lord?” And, “What do they teach us about the role of a congregation in building up the New Church?” (Page 192)

In the conclusion of his three-part series on the Trinity – *The Holy Spirit* – the Rev. Michael D. Gladish asks “what are we who see the Spirit of truth in this new revelation to do with it? How are we to use it so that we can get the full benefit out of it?” The answer is that “all of the functions of the Holy Spirit have to do with clarifying and improving the quality of our inner lives and perspectives, giving us spiritual health and well-being, peace, comfort and stability . . . a real taste of salvation, however fleeting it may be in this life.” (Page 198)

In a sermon, *Four Sacrifices, Four Prayers*, the Rev. Scott I. Frazier says that by looking at four basic kinds of sacrifice in the religious life of the Israelites we may be able to find “insights and directions to aid us in our religious lives as we pray daily to the Lord.” These sacrifices, he says, were the central connection between Israelites and the Lord, and “prayer should be a central connection for us as well.” (Page 205)

Major General Frederick A. Fiedler was a consummate New Churchman, devoted to serving the Church, his country and his family. In a memorial address, the Rev. Daniel W. Goodenough notes his many contributions over a very productive life, and concludes: “Perhaps most valuable for New Church groups has been his conviction what when we co-operate, even in hard times, we find good answers and can do more than we imagined.” (Page 211) See also

several tributes to Fred in Life Lines, beginning on page 253.

The Rev. Dr. Andrew M. T. Dibb, Dean of the Bryn Athyn College Theological School, describes how the General Church is addressing the challenge of educating men for the ministry all around the world, without having to bring them to Bryn Athyn for training. “The General Church is truly an international church,” he writes, “with much of its growth happening in far-flung parts of the world. Figuring out ways of educating a ministry is challenging and exciting.” (Page 219)

With the way technology is taking over so many aspects of our lives, the Rev. Todd J. Beiswenger wonders what’s next: robot priests? He isn’t really worried about that because the one thing robots lack – no matter how advanced their artificial intelligence – is just the quality of being human. “The Lord isn’t telling us that if we just program a will and understanding into a robot that we’ll have a human. He’s telling us that all these things have to be in place and connected back to Him in order to receive life.” (Page 227)

The Rev. Dr. James F. Lawrence, Dean of the Center for Swedenborgian Studies in Berkeley, California, offers a review of the book by Rachel Odhner Longstaff: *In the Shadow of the Dragon’s Back: A Young American Girl in South Africa During the Early years of Apartheid*. He says she “ably assists readers to enter the complexity of contradictions – beauty and humiliation, privilege and disenfranchisement, black and white. The space created is ever timely, fruitful for contemplating an outsized scale of life on history’s backdrop. The metaphor supplied by the flat serrated mountain range that looks like a dragon’s back is quite apt, as is the shadow it casts.” (Page 231)

Laurel O. Powell is moved to imaginative free verse to respond to a recent article and letters in *New Church Life* on the topic we sometimes shrink from addressing – *The Earths in the Universe*. (Page 233)

At his inauguration into the priesthood in New Church Buccleuch in South Africa in March, the Rev. Mandla Stole offers a moving and comprehensive Confession of Faith and Declaration of Purpose. (Page 239)

- Church News (page 242) includes:
 - A report on General Church Board of Directors meetings
 - The next step in the Bishop Selection process
 - General Church Corporation election
 - The 25th anniversary of the Ivyland, Pennsylvania, congregation
 - A Glencairn Museum exhibit: *A Window to the Soul – Nishan Yardumian’s Biblical Art*
 - Publication of *Other Planets (Earths in the Universe)*, edited by the Rev. Dr. George F. Dole and the Rev. Dr. Jonathan S. Rose

Editorials

‘AS IN HEAVEN . . .’

When we pray, “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done; as in heaven, so upon the earth,” it is not meant to be rote recitation, without intent or reflection. Neither is it meant to be an impossible dream. It should represent a personal commitment, recognizing that we – as a church and as individuals – have a role in bringing the sphere of heaven more and more into the world.

We have the beautiful image in the Word of “a new heaven and a new earth . . . the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven.” (*Revelation* 21:2) This is what we celebrate on the 19th of June – both the vision and the promise of the establishment of the New Church, in heaven and on earth, and what it means in our lives.

But this is not something just to witness and appreciate from the sidelines. We all have a part in making the prayer come true – as individuals and as New Church congregations.

It is not easy to have an impact in a world and a culture awash in evil. But for all we battle these influences – both subtle and flagrant – we know it is not hopeless if we have the power of the Lord’s love with us. We know there will always be evil in this world because of the essential equilibrium between heaven and hell, which preserves our freedom. We know there is none of this evil in heaven, because there the love of the Lord and the neighbor rules. And we are called upon to bring that healing, loving sphere into the world as much as we can to try to make a difference.

The Rev. Eric Carswell, in his 19th of June sermon, *The Descent of the Holy City*, (page 192), lays out all of the gifts and opportunities we have been given by the Lord and asks what we, “as a congregation or group of people who are trying to help the establishment of the New Church” are supposed to do?

We can do a lot. “We as a church congregation can help the Lord bring the light of heaven to people’s spiritual sight. We can try to foster a living understanding of what it means to live a good life.” And, “If we do our work with a desire to serve and support what is good in others, we can help the Lord bring the light of heaven to them.”

A year ago in the newsletter of the Washington New Church the Rev. Michael Gladish also made the case for our personal responsibility. He noted

that on June 19, 1770, the disciples were sent throughout the heavens to proclaim that “the Lord God Jesus Christ Reigns.” This was not entirely new, however, “for we know that when He glorified His Humanity in the first century He restored order in the heavens, subjugated all the hells and established the Christian Church on earth.”

What is different now, he said – what is new about the *New Christian Church* – is that in the years leading up to 1770 the Lord gave new revelation to correct misunderstandings and provide the means “to convince even those of our skeptical culture that He does indeed reign supreme.”

This gets back to our responsibility: “Thus the New Church represents a new understanding of the reality that has indeed existed since the Lord rose from the tomb in Gethsemane. It represents a new appreciation of our responsibilities to the Lord and to our neighbors, not just in faith . . . but in an active life of commitment to Him through the spiritual sense of His Word.

“This, therefore, is what is expected of the New Church, that its members will be interested in this new understanding, committed to learning and practicing it in daily life, and dedicated to serving our neighbors by sharing it freely.”

All of our forms of worship and fellowship are important, “but the bottom line is our personal and group commitment to the Lord as He is presented to us in the love and wisdom of the Heavenly Doctrines.”

Many of us may be feeling: “Well, that sounds nice but what can I do as just one individual in the Church?” But it is not a matter of doing great, transformative things. As Helen Keller humbly put it: “I long to accomplish a great and noble task, but it is my chief duty to accomplish small tasks as if they were great and noble.”

Think of the familiar verse in *Micah* 6:8: “He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.” It is that simple and it is that profound. Bring the life of heaven into the world simply by living it and that will make a difference.

Although Helen Keller was blind, she saw clearly the role and the mission of the New Church – and of New Church men and women. At a national conference of Swedenborgians in Washington, DC, in 1928 she said: “It seems to me the New Church has a great mission in the world. The people are in need of just the message that Swedenborg gave for mankind. Instead of merely listening to that message, we should go out and teach it. I want to see the New Church put on its beautiful garments and shake itself from the dust of aloofness.”

The world – and the Church – still need that message, just as was true on the 19th of June, 1770, when that holy city began descending, just as it was in

Helen Keller's vision 90 years ago, and just as it was when Jesus Christ gave the Great Commission to His disciples – and to all of us – to go out and “teach all nations.”

The calling – to the Church, to our congregations, and to each of us – is not really daunting. It does not ask too much of us – just to love the Lord and bring the promise and beauty of heaven into the world by modeling it in our lives. That is how we help the Lord bring the light of heaven into the lives of others. And the Lord actually tells us that He needs our help:

"God loves each and every human being, and because He cannot do good to them directly but only indirectly by means of other people, He therefore breathes into people His love." (*True Christian Religion* 457)

That is how we really make a difference in the world – simply by helping the Lord .

And that is how we live the prayer: “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, as in heaven, so upon the earth.”

(BMH)

LIBERTY

Liberty is essential to human life. The spiritual faculties of liberty and rationality we have from our Creator distinguish us from all other creatures and make us human. From the free spirit within us we have an innate desire to express our inner, spiritual freedom on the natural plane of life.

Spiritual liberty needs civil liberty as a soul needs a body through which to express itself and accomplish its ends. Free will and free thought demand the right to act and speak freely. Lack of political freedom is frustrating and intolerable not only naturally but spiritually.

A free society is the most vital and happy earthly condition for people to live in because it corresponds to the spiritual freedom of the heaven they were born for. But like heaven itself, freedom does not come to us naturally or easily in our fallen human condition. It is hard-won and ever-fragile in this world.

The natural part of our being, although created from the spiritual and for the purpose of serving it, resists being ordered by the spiritual. “The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” (*Matthew 26:41*) The birth of political freedom on earth, therefore, was the culmination of a long and laborious process, and preserving it has been a constant struggle. No matter how firmly it might seem to be established for a time, our grip on it is tenuous.

The very rights inspired by heavenly truths can easily be subverted and put to the service of hell. And rights which are abused are destined to be lost. For instance, the right of free speech, having been perverted to justify

obscenity and blasphemy, is now on college campuses being turned on its head and made into a license to shout down speakers who dare question the prevailing orthodoxy of political correctness.

The saying from *Matthew* quoted above is from words the Lord spoke to His disciples in Gethsemane on the night before He died, when He found them sleeping: “What! Could you not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

Watch and pray! Preserving liberty depends on it, as do all the blessings of heaven.

(WEO)

OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY

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

PROFANATION

To profane is to deny the Lord, the Word and eternal life after they have once been interiorly acknowledged, or to believe in them and still live contrary to them. The essential condition of profanation is that it causes good and evil, truth and falsity, to become so inextricably intermingled in the interiors of the mind that they cannot be separated, with the result that the man can go neither to heaven nor to hell.

The regenerating man has both good and evil, truth and falsity, in his mind; but they are separated, the good being in the internal mind and the evil and falsity in the external. It is those only who know the truth who can profane it, and among them those only do so who first acknowledge and then deny. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 10287, 9818)

Letters to the Editors

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

An Internal Sense in the Writings

To The Editors:

The Rev. Erik Sandstrom's comprehensive article on "The Internal Sense" (January/February 2018 *New Church Life*) shows excellent research on the historical and correspondential things of the Old and New Testaments. However, I am disappointed with his conclusion, that the Writings do not have an internal sense and that there are just "plain teachings" in the Writings. Although he concludes that if we read and re-read them and compare sentences, we will then get an ever-deepening view. I want to express some thoughts about the idea that there is no internal sense to the Writings.

What I find missing in this extremely well-researched article is a sight of the Divine Human of the Lord, who is now present in our midst. "The Second Coming of the Lord is not in person, but in the Word, which is from Him and is Himself." (*True Christian Religion* 776) The Writings themselves clearly teach that they are the Word of the Second Coming.

The Writings also teach that God cannot reveal Divine Truths without parable and that there are always cherubim to guard the way to the internal sense. These teachings are directly opposite to believing that in the letter are all plain teachings.

What I am asking is this: If a person thinks the Writings are just the internal sense of the Old and New Testaments and that a person is in this "internal sense" just by reading the letter, then how can the Lord open a person's mind to see the internal things there when he or she doesn't believe there is an internal sense the Lord can bring him or her into?

If a person believes that the Writings are a New Word and a Third Testament and that they are the Lord Himself, they are read with a Holy sphere and with delight that what is written is "by the Lord alone." Then, I believe,

they are led to see truths within that are eternal and endless. And these inner truths constitute the Lord's Divine Human. "The Divine that has revealed Itself is the Divine Human." (*Apocalypse Explained* 45)

Rev. Sandstrom questions, "Could the Lord reveal something that is incomplete?" My answer is no, and that of course the Writings are "complete," just as the Old and New Testaments were complete for each age when they were revealed – and yet they contained internal spiritual and celestial things which were not seen in the letter when they were revealed. Similarly, the Writings contain eternal truths within the letter that can open to eternity. "In every Divine Word there is a first, middle and a last." (*Sacred Scripture* 27)

There is a state at the very beginning of everybody's reformation that is imaged as the "light of the first day." In the *Arcana* we are taught that this "light of the first day" – the first day of our spiritual creation (i.e. regeneration) – comes to exist with us and in us when we see that "the Good and True is something higher." (*Arcana Coelestia* 20)

This is seeing for the first time how our own thinking has to be opened and uplifted by the Lord and that whenever we study the Writings we are to look to the Lord to lead us up out of our proprial thinking to a sight of the Good and True that is higher and from Him. "No one can see the spiritual sense except from the Lord alone." (*Sacred Scripture* 26)

"The spiritual sense does not appear in the letter, but is within it as the soul is in the body." The Lord longs for a Celestial Church and is always calling us to repentance and to follow the spiritual path that He has revealed in His New Revelation.

Isn't it obvious because the whole of the *Arcana* is about how to open our spiritual minds, that it has to have an internal sense to be led into? It also teaches how to remove the things that block the Lord's presence with us.

A spiritual rebirth and a sight of the internal sense will only happen when we turn to Him in this New Word, bring His truths to life, and are led to see His Divine Human in His New Word.

Dawn Barnitz Potts
Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania

Spiritual Truth is 'Self-Evident'

To The Editors:

Thanks to Mrs. Dawn Potts for her thoughtful response, that an internal sense of the Writings can be seen from enlightenment.

We should, of course, remember that the glorified Lord “imparted the ability to see Divine truth” (*Arcana Coelestia* 9818.15) to everyone, 2000 years ago, when He breathed on the apostles the Holy Spirit. Enlightenment started back then. Spiritual truth became “self-evident . . . the moment you heard it.” (*Canons prologue, Faith* 3) But because Christianity was beset by heresies from “its very cradle,” (*True Christian Religion* 378) the spiritual sun “set” after 325 A.D. erasing spiritual temptations as possible, (*Ibid.* 597, 638) and it took until the Last Judgment of 1757 to restore that light.

But since “total damnation stood threatening at the door” at that time (BE 117) the Second Coming had to rescue the human race. The Lord therefore granted Divine enlightenment – that same one He gave 2000 years previously, ahead of time to Swedenborg – after most rigorous preparations. All humans would have profaned the Divine truth had it been granted prior to 1757. (Cf. *Doctrine of the Lord* 61, *Apocalypse Revealed* 464) So Swedenborg’s preparations were vital, or it would have proven lethal to him.

The Lord’s own hand has revealed the Heavenly Doctrines, so the Writings are the glove, so to speak, whereby He granted exactly the same doctrines angels have, but now in our own languages. The “firsts” Mrs. Potts mentioned have already been put into their own “lasts” – namely their own terminology. The enlightenment to understand them comes with the works themselves. Reading became seeing the instantly self-evident truth again. And that 2000-year-old enlightenment is now seven-fold!

All the doctrines angels love to discuss were experimentally transferred from “heaven to earth” by means of “rationally comprehensible natural language.” (*De Verbo* 6)

The *ineffable* language of heaven is bypassed by having the contents, the doctrines themselves – which by the way “entirely coincides with angelic spiritual speech” (*Arcana Coelestia* 4387) – transferred into human language. *Fait accompli*.

We drink the same “wine” angels drink, but our understanding needs the “crystal goblet” of rational terminology (*De Verbo* 6) – providentially handed to us by Neo-Latin, courtesy of the Age of Reason. Now the Writings exist in 34 languages, and counting. Thus these “heavenly things” have been put into “print by me,” admits Swedenborg, (*True Christian Religion* 779) the “Lord’s humble servant.” (*Ibid.*, title) We’d better believe it.

The “higher truths” Mrs. Potts mentioned were actually “remnants” (*Arcana Coelestia* 19, 20), those remains granted to the first “animal-like” human beings on this planet and still granted after birth onward to every human being, rendering us all human. (*Arcana Coelestia* 286, *Apocalypse Explained* 294.15, 739:6) Those higher truths are now an open secret.

The Writings cannot have an internal sense the same way the Old and New Testaments do, in any case, because of their own statements. The spiritual sense of the Word of Sacred Scripture has “been printed” in the works of Swedenborg, and this internal sense “teaches Doctrine.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 9380:2) “Doctrine is what the internal or spiritual sense teaches.” (*Ibid.* 10400.3) This spiritual sense is the same as “the doctrine they have in heaven.” It is all now presented “in this book.” (*Heavenly Doctrine* 7)

The reason there is the belief that the Writings, as the Word of Heavenly Doctrine also beg for an enlightened or inner view, is probably because the Writings reveal the many layers or degrees of truth in the heavens. There are six degrees described in *Arcana Coelestia* 8443: the first two above the heavens are matched by the “two radiant belts” or solar halos described in *Arcana Coelestia* 7270. These two are below the spiritual sun in which is the Lord Himself.

Next below these two come the celestial, spiritual and natural -- now New -- heavens. The last spiritual degree called the fifth of 8443, may “somewhat” be seen by people enlightened by regeneration -- or by those just counting the Word to be holy -- here on earth.

Also in *Apocalypse Revealed* 959, the Word is described coming through the “celestial heaven where the meaning is celestial, to the spiritual heaven where it is spiritual, to the natural where it is natural, down to the man who wrote it.”

It is tempting to think the celestial sense of the Word can be found within its spiritual sense: but the celestial sense is reached by going more deeply into the text from which the spiritual sense was first drawn. You have to go deeper to go higher. The Writings occasionally do this, revealing the celestial sense of the Ten Commandments, and portions of Jacob’s story.

But since John’s eyes were opened to “the celestial heaven” and there he saw the “New Church as to doctrine” coming down as a city, (*Apocalypse Revealed* 896) it is clear that the Writings incorporate *all these degrees of truth*. Without the Writings, anyone may only come into the fifth degree “for a little bit.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 8443)

The Writings have blasted that fifth-degree barrier for good. All levels of truth are open, with doctrinal passages decorating these degrees as musical notes on heaven’s staves. That is why we feel there are deeper things to be found. So read on, and find them.

The doctrines are accumulative, “by their mutual respect and regard.” We just can’t add our own rational conclusions to them. (*Arcana Coelestia* 3786) That would be to “add or take away from the truths of doctrine which are in its spiritual sense.” (*Apocalypse Revealed* 959)

Since those doctrines concern “the Lord and faith in Him,” adding to or taking away terms not used in the Writings themselves results in “not acknowledging the Lord as God, no wisdom, not being received into the New Jerusalem.” (*Apocalypse Revealed* 958) So we’d better stick to that God-given enlightenment, the Holy Spirit-sown light beaming together with the actual wording in the pages of the Heavenly Doctrine, the City New Jerusalem, now come down from God out of heaven, to earth.

And, get on with our regeneration.

The Rev. Dr. Erik E. Sandstrom
Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania

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PROPRIUM

Like conjugal, this term is best left untranslated. It has been rendered as “own” and “ownhood,” “self” and “selfhood”; but it has no true equivalent in English, and these attempts to find one are not only clumsy but also inaccurate, since man has nothing of his own. Perhaps the simplest way to define it is to say that man’s proprium is the life that seems to be his and no other’s – the life that distinguishes him from every other man and makes him a unique individual.

If this life inflows from hell, it makes an infernal proprium; if it comes from the Lord by influx through heaven, it makes a heavenly proprium. In each instance the life inflows, but the fact that it is sensed as if self-derived makes it a proprium. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 3812; *Conjugal Love* 194; *Sacred Scripture* 60; *Apocalypse Revealed* 558)

The Descent of the Holy City

A Sermon by the Rev. Eric H. Carswell

Lessons: Revelation 21:1-5, 9-11, 22-27; 22:1-5; True Christianity 187

Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. (*Revelation 21:2*)

Almost 275 years ago the book commonly known by the English title *Apocalypse Revealed* was published anonymously in Amsterdam by Emanuel Swedenborg. This 629-page book explains how the last book of the New Testament, *Revelation*, can be seen as a prophecy about the future of the church Jesus Christ founded with His first coming.

It describes how the choices of human beings resulted in the clear message of the Gospels being twisted and destroyed. It describes how human organizations created alternative sets of ideas that not only didn't lead people to the Lord and living a good and useful life according to what He teaches. It actually led them away from worshiping the Lord Jesus Christ and focused their minds on ideas about salvation that didn't require living a good and useful life.

But this volume also shows that the Lord was completely aware of this future. He foretold what was going to happen centuries before it occurred. He also foretold how He would, with patience and mercy, wait until the right time to end the darkness of the church. He would bring about a judgment on False-Christians in the World of Spirits, intermediate between heaven and hell, and remove their power and the corrupting influence they were having on so many. The images of destruction in the *Book of Revelation* are in reality the Lord shining the light of heaven on fantasies, revealing them as they really are.

The second lesson from the *True Christian Religion* illustrates how the light of heaven transformed a magnificent shrine with a statue of a woman dressed in scarlet into a falling-apart house with a dragon-headed dummy hanging in it. That reality had always been there but had been hidden by a twisted view of reality from false explanations of the Word.

The Lord alone can bring the light we need to recognize what is true and genuinely useful. It was His prophecy that was written in the *Book of*

Revelation and many of us accept that it was He who has told us what that book means as described in *Apocalypse Revealed*. The dramatic conclusion of that prophecy is, “the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” (*Revelation* 21:2) This is a prophecy of a re-established church in heaven and earth. All of the *Book of Revelation* leads to the Lord’s establishment of the New Church.

This congregation has the *Apocalypse Revealed* and many other volumes of the Heavenly Doctrine available to it. With the Lord’s help we have the opportunity to see in light so many things that have been hidden in the clouds of misunderstanding. We have the opportunity to better understand the God who created the world and us and guides us with perfect love and wisdom each moment.

We have the opportunity to better understand the Old and New Testaments and in so many places recognize how they can be seen as parables of spiritual rebirth. We have the opportunity to better understand why we are born in this natural world, live for a time and then will spend eternity in heaven or hell and why we will have chosen that eternal home by our choices. We have the opportunity to understand how our minds work. Why we are neither inherently evil or good but are in freedom to choose if we seek the Lord’s help and do our part.

We have the opportunity to understand why we were created male or female and why the Lord loves the marriage that can exist between husband and wife. If based on turning to the Lord and trying to live a good and useful life this marriage can last to eternity in heaven.

What wonderful gifts we can recognize in all that we have available to us from the Lord.

In response, what are we, as a group of people who are trying to help the establishment of the New Church congregation supposed to do? If we were to reflect on the life and values of this congregation over the period of more than a hundred years, in the Lord’s eyes, what are the essential qualities of its role? Thinking of the imagery of the *Book of Revelation*, we could ask: “When is the group of people who make up that congregation helping to fulfill the promised descent of the holy city, New Jerusalem?”

The church is not the church

An important part of the Lord’s life in the world was to reveal to us a way of life that we could not otherwise have known.

He said, “For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.”

merely because it has the Word. We know that the church exists where it is received in the hearts, minds and lives of individual people. Who are the people who best come to mind as characterizing what we would most like to emulate? An important part of the Lord's life in the world was to reveal to us a way of life that we could not otherwise have known. He said, "For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you." (*John* 13:15)

When we want to define the New Church, one likely source would be to draw from the words of *Revelation*. Many of the powerful images it presents have been enacted in dozens of pageants over the years at this church. What do those images teach us about the essential quality of the church? We are taught in the Writings that "every single truth of wisdom is as it were a mirror in which the Lord is seen." (*True Christian Religion* 767) How can we see the Lord's life in the *Book of Revelation*?

One way of reading this book could result in us emphasizing judgment and the conflict of good and evil. The stories of the opening of the seven seals, the sounding of the seven trumpets, the pouring out of the bowls of the seven plagues, all seem to speak of a powerful destruction of evil. There is also the war between the dragon and Michael, the judgment on the city Babylon and the war between the Lord and the beast. All of these lead up to John's vision of the holy city New Jerusalem descending out of heaven.

What do these stories teach us about the Lord? How do they mirror Him and how do they help us see what a church on earth is to be like? What do they teach us about the role of a congregation in building up the New Church?

We would not be seeing the Lord mirrored if we focus on the evil revealed in these stories as the essential message. One of the characteristics of evil and not good is a strong desire to judge and condemn others. A knowledge of truth or merely intellectual faith carries with it the danger that this truth will be used wrongly. It is used wrongly when it used to be destructively critical and condemning. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 1079)

What are we to learn from the images of evil and destruction that so fill the *Book of Revelation*? Perhaps we can recognize their true import if we try to look at them through the Lord's eyes.

One of the great innovative truths of the New Church is that the Lord does not Himself judge people either to heaven or hell. Judgment is a natural process that occurs – providing the light of heaven exists. Without the light of heaven, no one can see clearly to know good from evil. No one can in freedom choose the results they hope to achieve.

Consider the insanity of doing exactly the same thing over and over again, but each time hoping for a different result. If one was groping around in the darkness, such repetitive action might be understandable. But does it make sense in the light of heaven? Sadly, the light of heaven is missing from our sight all too often.

We want to have good friendships, strong marriages, happy children. We want to succeed in work and in the other important jobs in our lives, but at times we go about achieving these goals by means that guarantee failure. Whenever we try to go about things in a manner that is contrary to the Lord's order, lasting success is impossible. Choices that are flawed by the darkness of evil and false ideas just don't work.

The Lord looks at us when we are making choices that will hurt ourselves and others and grieves. He has no desire whatsoever to judge or condemn us for the evils and false ideas that we give life to by our choices. Contrary to the appearance the apparent destruction wrought on the evil in the *Book of Revelation* is not from the Lord.

Each and every step spoken of in this book represents another aspect of the Lord showing reality in the light of heaven. Whenever destruction is spoken of, it is never something real and useful being destroyed. It is always a fantasy that has been shown for what it really is. As in the example read as a lesson, the magnificent shrine with the statue of a woman wearing a scarlet dress was imaginary. In the light of heaven, the reality present was a ruinous building holding a hideous beast.

The opening of the seven seals, the sounding of the seven trumpets and the pouring out of the seven last plagues all represent the Lord revealing afresh what was true and good. The growing light of truth showed the imaginary cities, trees and other landscape for the blacked and deadly evil they really were. Just as the shrine and statue of a woman were fantasies so many things in front of our eyes can appear falsely.

Revealing the light of truth re-established the freedom of people to choose what they wanted. Those who, at the core of their life, loved good and useful things could be gradually led to heaven. Those who, at the core of their life, love evil and destructive things fled from the light to the darkness of hell. The consequence was a separation of the good from the evil. A separation that the Lord wanted not to punish the evil, but rather to protect the good but relatively ignorant people from being led astray and being hurt.

The *Book of Revelation* has been a powerful guide to us. It presents an image

The Book of Revelation has been a powerful guide to us. It presents an image of the birth of the New Church and its descent to this earth. Having read its pages and considered its meaning, what are we to do as individuals and as a congregation?

If we do our work with a desire to serve and support what is good in others, we can help the Lord bring the light of heaven to them.

human mental life, the purpose of this world and its relation to the life after death, and many other significant ideas such as the importance and sanctity of marriage.

We as a church congregation can help the Lord bring the light of heaven to people's spiritual sight. We can as a group of people try to foster a living understanding of what it means to live a good life. As a human organization, we can provide the means whereby a life according the truths of the Word can be lived. We can provide the means that help support the worship of the Lord – both worship in a formal sense and also the worship that takes place constantly within a life of use.

Words on a page or spoken with the mouth in church or at a class can be an important part of helping people recognize the Lord's order and purpose.

Through this effort we have cooperated with the Lord in helping Him to bring the holy city, New Jerusalem, down from heaven to dwell among us. And by this effort we have done our part to make a dwelling place for the Lord.

of the birth of the New Church and its descent to this earth. Having read its pages and considered its meaning, what are we to do as individuals and as a congregation?

This book is a powerful image of the Lord's love and His desire to bring freedom and with it usefulness and happiness to all who can receive it. Freedom does not occur with ignorance of the fundamental truths about the nature and development of

But one of the powerful ways that a church congregation can serve as a whole to teach people is by the lives its members lead. Through what we say and do we can, as individuals, help the Lord present a living picture of what is true for others to see.

If we do our work with a desire to serve and support what is good in others, we can help the Lord bring the light of heaven to them. They then in freedom can respond from within either by accepting and drawing closer to the truth or rejecting it and turning away. Except in many cases it won't be us who is judging and separating them from us.

We as a church congregation can encourage individual reading and prayer. We can foster an organization that is strongly dedicated to presenting the living reality of truth in sermons and classes. We can help each other to see ourselves more clearly, to see the consequences of our choices, individually and as a group in the light of heaven.

We, as individuals, have contact with thousands of people each week. Many, many of these people have little source of genuine truth in their lives. Can we help them? Can we with appropriate strength or gentleness, depending on the situation, try to present some of the ideas of the New Church for others in language they can understand and be easily recognized by a wise common sense?

We as a congregation have spent more than 100 years here, working to bring the New Church into the reality of daily life. Many, many people have done their part so that this church may exist and that through its existence the Lord's Church can be built in the lives of so many. Through this effort we have cooperated with the Lord in helping Him to bring the holy city, New Jerusalem, down from heaven to dwell among us. And by this effort we have done our part to make a dwelling place for the Lord.

Amen.



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The Holy Spirit

A Sermon by the Rev. Michael D. Gladish

Third of a Three-Part Series on the Trinity

Lessons: John 16:1-15; True Christian Religion 139:1 and 138:2-6

Jesus said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever – the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.” (*John 14:15-18*)

This is the third sermon in our series on the Divine Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It has been inspired, at least to some extent, by the realization that although we have a strong and clear set of teachings about the Holy Spirit in this church we don’t actually talk very much about it, and when we do it is almost always in rather abstract, impersonal terms. Yet the Gospels refer to the Holy Spirit as the *Helper* or the *Comforter* and not just some abstract Spirit of truth that nobody can see or feel.

Indeed, people in most Christian churches think of this Spirit as a Person – the third Person in the Trinity – for several reasons that we’ll consider momentarily. And yet it is *not* a person separate or different from the Lord Himself, as He made perfectly clear, saying that He, as that Spirit, would dwell with His disciples *and be in them* – indeed that *He* would not leave them orphans, but that *He* would come to them.

So what are we to believe about this very powerful presence that the Lord promised at the end of His natural life in this world? And how can we learn to appreciate its influence in our lives?

As usual, it’s important first to get the meaning of certain key words in the Gospels. For example, the word translated Helper, and sometimes Comforter, is from the Greek, *Paraclete*, from a verb that means *to call alongside*. Curiously, it is the very same word used in *Luke* (3:18) to describe the preaching of John the Baptist (and several other places), where it is translated “exhortation.”

So it suggests a kind of urging or encouragement, as of one walking with you, appealing to you. It is also translated “consolation,” when for example it refers to Simeon, who at the Lord’s birth was found “waiting for the *Consolation*

of Israel.” (Luke 2:25) Finally, John in his first Epistle, also used the word, which is then translated “advocate” in the saying, “If anyone sins, we have an *Advocate* with the Father, (namely,) Jesus Christ the righteous.” (*Ibid.* 2:1)

Since all these names suggest a Personal presence, and since the Lord sometimes speaks as if the Comforter were a Person separate from Himself, it is understandable that many have come to this conclusion about the Holy Spirit. But wait. Speaking of Jesus in His earthly life, John said: “*He* will baptize you *with* the Holy Spirit and with fire.” (Luke 3:16) What does *that* mean?

Again, speaking of the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father would send, Jesus said it was He Himself who would come to them. (*John* 14:28) Not only that, but translation issues further complicate the matter, as the personal pronoun, *he*, is often assigned to the Holy Spirit when in fact the impersonal, *it*, is just as valid, if not more so. We’ll see why this is important shortly.

First, let’s be aware that the term, spirit, like the term, father, and son, is not always used to refer to a person. “The wish is father to the thought,” we say, and we often speak of having a “brain child.” The point is that these terms represent the principles of cause and effect. In the same vein the word, spirit, can refer to an attitude, a disposition or an understanding, as in the expression, “not just the letter but *the spirit of the law*.”

In fact the word in the original languages in the vast majority of cases in the New Testament actually means *breath* or *wind*, as in “the wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” (*John* 3:8) Wind and Spirit in this verse are the same Greek word.

Remember in the book of *Acts*, chapter 2, where the people in Jerusalem “were all filled with the Holy Spirit” on the Day of Pentecost? What this means, of course, is that they were inspired. And yes, they were inspired by the Lord, but the inspiration was a function of their thought and perception so that even though they came from many different countries they understood one another as if they were all speaking the same language. The Lord was therefore working *in* them through the Spirit of truth, not outside of them as if by means of another separate person.

Turning back to John’s Gospel, then, especially chapter 16, where the

So what are we to believe about this very powerful presence that the Lord promised at the end of His natural life in this world? And how can we learn to appreciate its influence in our lives?

Holy Spirit is mentioned more than any other place in the Word, we find the statement: "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth." (*Ibid.* 12-13)

In the Greek language of the Gospels this word, *He*, is *not* necessarily masculine. It could just as easily be the neuter, *It*. So, "When *this*, the Spirit of truth, has come, *IT* will guide you into all truth." The main reason it has been translated as masculine is that in the Elizabethan English of 1611, like modern French, all nouns were considered either masculine or feminine, so "It" was not an option. But today *It* is what we mean, and *It* is only personified in a symbolic or representative sense. Just think of how we use expressions like "the spirit of adventure," "the spirit of generosity," or "a kindly spirit." Sure, these are attributes a person may have, but they are not the person.

Of course, the translation goes on to say, "... for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come." But note here, the word, *authority*, is not in the original text. And really, what the verse means is simply that the Spirit of truth does not proceed from itself but from the love that inspires it.

So, further, we have the teaching: "It (the Spirit of truth) will glorify Me, for it will take of what is Mine and declare it to you." (*Ibid.* 14) "What is Mine" here, of course, refers to the Lord's love and wisdom, and this surely is glorified when it is informed by the Spirit, that is, the true understanding and appreciation of it.

Note, all this is written in the context of these earlier verses:

"Because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you." (*John* 16:6-7)

Again, we sincerely believe the *He* and *Him* in these verses should be *It*, for the Helper Jesus refers to here is not another person but the Help itself, the Comfort, the Consolation, and yes, even the Advocacy that comes with a knowledge and understanding of His Word.

The whole idea here has to be seen in the light of what the Lord was actually doing in the world, and what changes were taking place in His own life as He fought against the corruption of the hells. The process is what we call glorification and it is similar to our own regeneration, that is, being born again from natural life into spiritual life.

Simply put, the Lord when He came into the world adopted a natural human heredity so that He could confront the hells *in Himself* rather than imposing on the freedom of others. Then, during His life, He addressed all the evils, all the selfishness, all the loves of dominating over others, and all

the falsities that confirm these attitudes by rejecting them, correcting them, and demonstrating the power of what we now call Christian love and wisdom. In this way, as we say, He *subjugated* the hells, restored order in the whole spiritual world, and established a new church on the earth.

But it was a church built among very simple, innocent people and so its members at first had very little depth of understanding. They heard the teachings and they saw the miracles, but they didn't really see the implications except in outward life. And this is why the Lord so plainly said: "I still have many things to say to you, however you cannot bear them now." This is why Christians even today continue to struggle to understand the Bible, especially Bible prophecy, and almost everything to do with the Trinity, the atonement and salvation.

But, He said, "When the Spirit of truth has come, it will guide you into all truth," and specifically, "It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I do not go away, help will not come to you, but if I depart, I will send it to you."

The point is that the Lord had to complete the work He was doing to, as He said, "overcome the world" (*John* 16:33) and fully glorify His Humanity. This He accomplished through the death of His material body and the resurrection of His spiritual body so that He could, in fact, be present in His love and wisdom *everywhere and for all time*, not just among the people of one small nation in one tiny part of the world, for one generation of followers.

So the spirit and power of His teaching, the Spirit of truth that did in fact bring great spiritual help and comfort was effective for thousands of people all around the Mediterranean right from that first Day of Pentecost. But still, the Lord had many things to say, many things to explain especially as people began to grow in knowledge and understanding of the world around them, and began to question the teachings of the Word that seemed to contradict the evidence of their senses.

You all know the story, but you may not appreciate the ramifications it had for the church in the 18th and 19th centuries. The intellectual and industrial revolution of those years so challenged the simple faith of "Bible believers" that they found themselves virtually backed into a corner: the new scientific knowledge was contradicting what they thought the Bible teaches, so in order to bolster their faith they retreated more and more into the literal sense and took their stand in opposition to science. Unfortunately, this alienated many who were not prepared to deny the evidence of their senses, and so a sort of culture war began to develop over religion.

It was in this context that Emanuel Swedenborg was born, educated and began to write. And what he wrote, from around 1749 until 1770, literally codified a whole new approach to the understanding of the Scriptures **and** science. In fact we now say that his many volumes are the embodiment of the

But now, what are we who see the Spirit of truth in this new revelation actually to do with it? How are we to use it so that we can get the full benefit of it?

Spirit of truth that the Lord Himself promised, and that they reveal the deeper meaning and implications of all that He taught in a way that actually constitutes His Second Coming – not indeed in a body of flesh (since what He did once most perfectly He did not need to do again), but in a body of teaching that provides all the new help, comfort and consolation that the world needs to see how natural life can serve the spiritual and minister to it.

Volume after volume was written, 25 big books in Latin (35 now in English), providentially just as the printing press was taking off, making publication relatively cheap and accessible around the world. And all sorts of very profound concepts were explained so that even today many of our modern branches of psychology are grafted on the roots of what was revealed through this man.

Here we have a detailed exposition of the true nature of God, the symbolism of the whole Bible, the cause and means of creation, the laws of providence, the interaction of the soul and body, the real nature of heaven and hell, the spiritual principles and eternal purpose of marriage and much more all plainly set forth in a rigorously logical manner for all to see – if only we have eyes to see.

So in *Revelation* (1:7) we read: “Behold He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, and they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him.” The clouds here represent the truths of the literal sense of the Word within which, and through which the deeper truths of the spiritual sense shine forth like beautiful rays of glorious sunshine despite the dark, foreboding character of so much that is written in the Word.

“Every eye [that] will see Him” is the understanding of everyone who looks and reads, or otherwise appreciates the truth of what has been written. “They who pierced Him” are those who reject Him, but still they can see, and they will reject what they see if they don’t like it. And finally, “the tribes of the earth that will mourn,” are the members of the Christian Church generally who have so embraced the fallacies of a literal or dysfunctional interpretation of the Word that they honestly feel sorry for us and grieve that we can be so misled by these new teachings.

But now, what are we who see the Spirit of truth in this new revelation actually to do with it? How are we to use it so that we can get the full benefit of it?

Well, here's the thing. Just having the books doesn't do us any good. Neither does just reading or discussing them. The Spirit of truth is not a set of books, but a spirit of true understanding, something we can only get from the Lord Himself in a state of enlightenment, which in turn is only possible when we put what He teaches us to work *internally*. It's not enough to use it as a guide for outward activity, to inform our civic and social lives, or even to evaluate what we see around us, though all those are useful things to do.

Our third lesson today outlined two general functions of the Holy Spirit in our lives, *reformation and regeneration*, followed by seven specific functions, including renewal, vivification, sanctification, justification, purification from evils, forgiveness of sins and at last salvation. Many of these are big, fancy words, but what they mean is pretty straightforward.

Vivification, for example, simply means giving life: the Lord through the Spirit of His truth gives us a spiritual quality of life that we couldn't have without it.

Sanctification means to make holy, not that anyone is ever really holy, but holiness can be attributed to us as if it were our own to the extent that we receive Divine truth in faith and life.

And justification is not at all what it sounds like (least of all by a vicarious atonement); what it really means is the process of making just, which in everyday terms could be said to mean fair and good. And the thing is, we can't be genuinely fair or good unless we understand the truth. So the Lord through His Holy Spirit inspires true justice in us by informing us and directing our thoughts as we reflect on His Word.

In short, all the functions of the Holy Spirit have to do with clarifying and improving the quality of our inner lives and perspectives, giving us spiritual health and well-being, peace, comfort and stability, in other words, a real taste of salvation, however fleeting it may be in this life. And we should know that

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the operation of the Holy Spirit upon us is constant, never wavering in its strength or purpose; it is only up to us to receive it and act upon it.

Finally, we feel the influence of the Holy Spirit when we are fully committed to the Word, when we see it coming to life through a working knowledge of its contents and the revelation of its spiritual sense, and when we let its powerful truths affect the way we think and talk and act, whether on our own or with others. So the Lord's prophecy of His own indwelling Spirit will be realized, and His final message in the *Gospel of Matthew* will be fulfilled where He said:

“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (17-20)

Amen.



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Four Sacrifices, Four Prayers

A Sermon by the Rev. Scott I. Frazier

Lessons: Leviticus 1-6 (portions); True Christian Religion 670

“It is a burnt offering, a food offering, an aroma pleasing to the LORD.”

We are encouraged to pray to the Lord and communicate with Him. We know that He neither needs our prayers nor is ignorant of our lives, but we pray to Him as one of our efforts to conjoin to Him.

While we now have only two sacraments – holy supper and baptism – the Israelites had many different complicated rituals of sacrifice with which to communicate with the Lord. These rituals were central to their religious identity and the Old Testament is full of warnings and encouragements to attend to the sacrifices in the correct ways.

We are not supposed to follow these practices literally, but the instructions for the sacrifices have a Divine internal sense, even if we now find the details of their practices disturbing or confusing. By looking at the four basic kinds of sacrifice that formed the core of the Israelites’ religious life, perhaps we can find insights and directions to aid us in our religious lives as we pray daily to the Lord, as well as approach the sacraments.

We find odd, specific instructions for sacrifice: particular animals were prescribed for particular situations; the Israelites were never to eat the fat or blood of the sacrifices; they were not to add yeast or honey to some sacrifices, but salt was to be added to every sacrifice; they were to lay their hands on the sacrificial animal and then burn the animal, sometimes entirely, sometimes only particular parts of the animals; the priest would sometimes get a portion of the animal in payment, but only according to specific practices. Keeping track just of the physical details can be overwhelming, and studying the internal sense of these rituals is the work of a lifetime.

We can still learn a great deal about talking to the Lord from sacrifice. Just as we have different spiritual states that prompt us to bring different thoughts before the Lord, the Israelites were given different rituals of sacrifice for different situations. The beginning chapters of *Leviticus* describe four main rituals of sacrifice around which all other rituals were formed. We can call these: whole burnt offering, sin offering, guilt offering, and freewill offering.

By looking at the four basic kinds of sacrifice that formed the core of the Israelites' religious life, perhaps we can find insights and directions to aid us in our religious lives as we pray daily to the Lord, as well as approach the sacraments.

We will examine them to explore four different kinds of prayer the Lord might be asking us to make to Him.

Whole Burnt Offering and Habit Prayers

The first sacrifice is called the "whole burnt offering" because the entire animal was consumed in the fire of sacrifice. The Israelites were commanded to perform this sacrifice every day, at the beginning and the end of the day. Someone would bring an animal, an expensive animal for important people but a cheaper animal or bird for a poorer person, and they would then kill the animal and burn it entirely on the altar of burnt offering.

The altar was thus used every day and the fire for the altar would never go out. No particular event would prompt this besides the turning of the day; the Israelites would do this from habit without any change in their circumstances. To them, the whole burnt offering was a daily acknowledgment of how the universe works: Jehovah was at the center, He was the source of all that is good and real, and He had told their ancestors that He was pleased when people recognized this fact by sending him valuable animals by means of sacrifice. The Israelites might even have seen the whole burnt offering as a matter of spiritual maintenance, done without much thought.

Everyone here is familiar with this kind of prayer. The Lord asks us to pray to him every day, even if we haven't done proper reflection on our lives. We may feel a pang of guilt when we find we have said the Lord's Prayer in the morning or evening without a lot of thought, but there is real use and power in this practice. Just like the whole burnt offering, the habit of daily prayer is about the basic acknowledgment that the Lord is in charge. That the sacrificial animal is completely consumed by the fire is a reminder to us that all the value and joy in our lives comes from and ultimately belongs to the Lord. If you take what is the Lord's away, nothing is left but ashes.

As profound as this thought can be, the brief, daily attention to it is important to our spiritual lives. In the Lord's Prayer itself, we ask to the Lord to give us our daily bread. Simply by praying to the Lord at all, you spend a moment thinking rightly that you depend upon Him. This is our daily spiritual maintenance. There is no point in feeling bad if we don't always give much

attention to our habitual prayers – the habit is in some way the point.

In the whole burnt offering, everything was burnt, but there were no sacrifices which allowed the Israelites to eat the fat or the blood; this symbolizes our recognition that we ourselves never have pure, Divine truth or the good that goes with it.

The whole burnt offering tells us to offer “habit prayers”; we should make a habit of prayer which reminds us that everything good and true comes from the Lord, not from ourselves. Saying the Lord’s Prayer every morning or evening can be how we do this.

In the Lord’s Prayer, we ask to the Lord to give us our daily bread. Simply by praying to the Lord at all, you spend a moment thinking rightly that you depend upon Him. This is our daily spiritual maintenance.

Sin Offering and Refocus Prayers

However, offering only this kind of prayer would be a shallow spiritual life. This is only the first of four kinds of sacrifice. The second kind of sacrifice we call the “sin offering.” This second sacrifice was offered when someone realized they had committed an unintentional error in their lives. *Leviticus* describes the things prompting a sin offering as mostly unintentional. We might think “sin” means something evil and serious, but here the word is closer to “mistake” or “stumble.” The Israelites lived in a world where they could “sin” by not breaking a clay pot at the correct time or touching a dead animal on the wrong day or not speaking up when they knew the truth.

If they realized later that they had made a religious mistake, they brought an animal for the sin offering. Again, the more important the person, the more valuable the animal would be. The priest would take the animal, butcher it, and place most of the animal on the altar of burnt offering. The blood and fat, of course, went only to the Lord. The priest was allowed to take a portion of the sacrifice as payment and to complete the ritual; this was one way priests fed their families.

The cost of making a sin offering could be steep. Imagine realizing you had made a mistake and now had to pay a hefty fine. Nobody demanded you pay it – it was your responsibility. The way *Leviticus* describes it, the very poor could bring a small handful of flour as their sacrifice, but the wealthy brought an entire bull.

This would ritualistically cleanse the person from the ritualistic trouble caused by their mistake and bring them back into the proper relationship with

If you are feeling lost and unhappy, prayers of refocus are what *Leviticus* may be calling for. Just as they would bring an animal to the Tabernacle, we can pick a person or a truth we love, and ask the Lord to keep it in our mind for the day.

the Lord.

The Lord demands no such physical payment from us, but He does want us to come back into a proper relationship with Him. The Heavenly Doctrines tell us that offering an animal symbolizes that evil is driven away by the good of innocence. This is why sheep and lambs – symbols of innocence – are so important in these rituals. In other words, when we have made a mistake, the prayer we should make is one of innocence. We reflect on our lives, find the affections and motivations we want to be important in our lives, and see that they come from and belong to the Lord. Those good affections are the animal we bring.

What kind of prayers mirror the sin offering? Perhaps these are prayers of refocusing on principles, recommitting to a meaningful life. When we want to put our lives in greater order according to the Lord's Word, that is the innocence of our internal self-exercising increased control of our external self. We all have moments or days when our lives are distracted, when we have become lost in the noise and urgency of external life. Have you ever spent too much time being upset about school lunches or budget reports? Have you ever let your day be ruined by a stain on your shirt or a comment from a colleague? Have you ever spent too much effort on social media or decorating your home at the expense of rejoicing in the neighbor and the Lord's creation?

We should offer prayers of refocus that mirror the sin offering. We reflect, find higher, internal things we really do care about, and pray to the Lord to help us recommit to our ideals and better selves. We should certainly still care about our clothes, our jobs, our reputations and our money, but sometimes we should offer prayers to help us put these things in their proper place. We know that happiness comes from obeying the Lord, loving the neighbor, and living a life of useful service, and yet we spend a lot of time not necessarily living this way.

If you are feeling lost and unhappy, prayers of refocus are what *Leviticus* may be calling for. Just as they would bring an animal to the Tabernacle, we can pick a person or a truth we love, and ask the Lord to keep it in our mind for the day. You don't need special words; just ask: "Lord, I bring this truth, from You, that I have; help me make it my focus for today." You have just made

a sin offering. The Lord will help you keep your external life aligned with your internal life.

Guilt Offering and Confession Prayers

Sometimes our unhappiness doesn't come from a lack of focus. Sometimes, we know we have invited evil into our lives and must repent and return to the Lord. This is when the guilt offering shows us we should make prayers of confession. In *Leviticus*, an Israelite would bring a guilt offering when he had done something intentional and wrong: broken a civil law; demonstrated a lack of respect for someone; even stolen property. Just like in the sin offering, the guilt offering was usually a valuable animal that would be butchered and burned with some parts reserved for the priest doing the sacrificing. Of course, the fat and blood went only to the Lord.

Often bread and wine would also be offered along with the animal, but neither yeast (or "leaven") nor honey could be added to the bread.

The Heavenly Doctrines tell us that yeast in sacrifice symbolizes human reason mixing of truth and falsity which destroys truth, and honey is the same mixing of heavenly and worldly delight that destroys good. Yeast in sacrificial bread is us reasoning about how life should be and honey in that bread is us taking delight in how life is.

Prayers of confession should be made when we have knowingly broken the Commandments and are seeking a path back to the Lord. Prayers of confession – just like prayers of refocus – are about finding a truth you love (the animal of sacrifice), believing it is from the Lord, not yourself (offering the animal), and praying for the Lord to help you love it today. You know it isn't fun (no honey), you know it isn't about what you think (no yeast) – it is about finding your innocence and bringing that innocence into your daily life.

If you are actively struggling with an evil, a prayer of confession may be what *Leviticus* calls for: "Lord, I have broken your commandment. I ask you for the strength to follow your Word in humility and contrition."

The guilt offering was offered when someone had done wrong, but also periodically at national holidays. The same holds for us; if the New Year is a time when you make resolutions, adding prayers of confession mirrors the schedule *Leviticus* sets for guilt offerings.

Freewill Offering and Gratitude Prayers

These are the first three sacrifices: whole burnt, sin, and guilt. The fourth sacrifice, the freewill offering, is about joy and conjunction. *Leviticus* encourages Israelites to bring a sacrifice to the Lord when things are going well. They might consecrate a vow, give formal thanks for blessings in their life, or just want to give an offering. Once the priest had butchered the animal and taken a portion for himself, he would return the remaining meat to the

The sacrifices described in *Leviticus* were the central connection between Israelites and the Lord, and prayer should be a central connection for us as well.

Israelite. Again, the fat and blood went only to the Lord.

These offerings could include bread with yeast or even honey; human reason and delight are welcome here. Once parts for the Lord were consumed on the altar, the Israelite took the meat home and presumably had a feast.

These are prayers of gratitude. We offer these prayers when we want to. Have you accomplished something you value? Have you had a good day or week? Do you have three minutes to yourself in your office or kitchen? You can offer a prayer of gratitude: “Lord,

things are great right now – thanks for life.” This is the freewill offering.

Just as the Israelites themselves benefited from the freewill offering, gratitude also feeds us when we offer it to the Lord in prayer. Prayers of gratitude are about the joy of doing so. If we offer prayers of gratitude, over time we receive more joy than we offer.

Please also notice that prayers of gratitude and joy seem to be as important as prayers of refocus and confession. When you speak to the Lord, speak with joy as well as with remorse or resolve.

The sacrifices described in *Leviticus* were the central connection between Israelites and the Lord, and prayer should be a central connection for us as well. We have looked at four models of prayer given to us by the Lord in *Leviticus*: the prayers of habit, refocus, confession and gratitude. Offer prayers of habit every day; offer prayers of refocus when we have become distracted; offer prayers of confession when we have done evil; and offer prayers of gratitude when we want to. They all have their place, and all of them serve to conjoin us to the Lord and bring His heavenly happiness into our lives.

“O Lord, open my lips; and my mouth shall show forth your praise.” (Psalm 51:15)

Amen



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MEMORIAL ADDRESS

**Major General Frederick A.
Fiedler (USAF-Ret.)**



The Rev. Daniel W. Goodenough

(New Church of Phoenix, Arizona – March 20, 2018)

*Readings: Psalm 23; John 11:25,26; 12:23,24; 14:1-3
Divine Providence 27.2; Heaven and Hell 445
Arcana Coelestia 10595-6; Divine Providence 324.4
Married Love 321*

Many of us who were little during World War II picked up an assumption as we grew up – that a cause bigger than we were was a whole lot more important than we ourselves. We got this less from speeches than from the realities we lived in, from Victory gardens and blackout window shades, to songs and heroes in uniform who put the cause above their personal glory.

Taking in this lesson by osmosis didn't mean we learned it, or liked it, but there was no mistaking the reality that when the cause comes first, despite human foibles, it leads to cooperation and amazing levels of human

accomplishment. No one wants war, yet the experiences of working with many others for that cause showed a great deal about human cooperation, remembered by those who gave of themselves then.

We all have come to love and respect Fred Fiedler. A little boy after Pearl Harbor, when Americans were putting the cause first, Fred grew up also with spiritual concepts that explained **why** and **how** to value some causes as higher than oneself.

Why? Because we and our world were created by a loving God whose goal is to bring cooperative usefulness and happiness throughout creation, to everyone here in this space-time world, and in the next life forever.

How can a loving God's purposes be carried out? Here especially the spiritual concepts in the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg helped Fred see God's creation as inherently systemic, with rational order and comprehensible laws introduced by God into all creation, natural and spiritual. The universe makes sense if seen from science and corresponding spiritual causes. Growing up on a wheat farm in northeast Colorado, Fred had a full love of nature, including its inherent created order, and a love for exploring nature in new ways through sophisticated machinery.

Two distant high school years at the Academy of the New Church in Pennsylvania, and a third at the small New Church College [in Bryn Athyn], taught Fred much about the principles of God's spiritual order and about their corresponding components of order throughout nature. He was valedictorian for his high school class. A Congressional appointment brought him to the new Air Force Academy near Colorado Springs. After four hard-working years he graduated in 1962 with a Bachelor of Science in Engineering Science – his first of quite a few academic degrees, later in specialties such as aerospace management and different military sciences.

Fred's studies fit well with his understanding of the created world as ordered by God. Order in life and society enables human good will and mutual support to flourish. Order is for the sake of uses, getting things done. A working national defense makes possible a human society that is free, open, productive, and able to benefit all. Fred knew national defense cannot be taken for granted, but needs to be planned and provided as a country's first need.

Fred's choice in serving the cause of national defense was flying, and fly he did, a lot – especially in the earlier years of his 30-year Air Force career. He flew as command pilot for 6,000 flying hours, in more than 50 different types of aircraft. This included 480 flying hours over southeast Asia, as well as 400 hours as a B-1 test pilot.

Promoted to Wing Commander in 1984, and later to Air Division Commander, he was in command of several different Air Force bases, and later director for command and control for operations, Strategic Air Command

(SAC) headquarters, and other high-level Air Force responsibilities.

He served at more than a dozen Air Force bases around the country and in eastern Asia – stationed often at Edwards and elsewhere in California, then south to Alabama and later Louisiana, as far east as New Hampshire, before Minot in North Dakota. In 1989 he was promoted to Major General. His military awards and decorations are numerous, and express important accomplishments and broad recognition of his leadership of others.

Flying and serving his country's national defense brought fulfillment to Fred's love of order, and of exploring limits of our universe and known technology. He loved serving his country. He also knew that truth and order are not inherently the highest goals. Order and truth provide the means and environment for human cooperation and goodness to grow. Authentic truth is the form of love, and God created order for the sake of goodness and human love, because love is what lasts to eternity.

God's love for created humans begins with the gift of freedom – not total freedom to do anything, but an inner freedom to think within ourselves as we each choose, and also to will and to love (or not love) as we ourselves choose.

In Swedenborgian terms truth and love are the two universal principles of creation, reflected almost everywhere we look, especially in male and female throughout the universe. Fred, male and active seeker of truth, understanding and wisdom, was well aware of how truth – and he Fred – needed goodness, love, warmth, caring attachment.

He and Barbara Allen were high school friends, but it was later that their romance developed, more toward the end of his Air Force Academy days, a lot of it by telephone. Yes, in those days we wrote long letters, by hand, sent with stamps, and spent a lot of time waiting to phone, or to hear a ring. After graduating from the Air Force Academy Fred proposed to Barbara in October, 1962 – *on the telephone*.

They were married the next February, and delighted in a new cause, bigger than themselves, given by God as a wonderful way they both could serve others, together. Marion arrived, bringing with her a whole new realm of usefulness and human care. Soon Erin, then Dale, and a bit later Daniel, came

Flying and serving his country's national defense brought fulfillment to Fred's love of order, and of exploring limits of our universe and known technology. He loved serving his country.

Not surprisingly, the children grew up with respect for the truths, love, mutual cooperation and other values they saw and felt at home. . . . They also gained much from their parents' respect for freedom and their own opportunities to mature as of themselves, and to learn from their own decisions, successes and mistakes.

into the family. They moved often from air base to air base. They weathered some lengthy military separations, one for a year when Fred was stationed in Korea, and mom back in Washington, DC, with three children under 10. She was truly a hero. Only those who've experienced this can appreciate what long-separated parents, especially moms, are giving for the cause they believe in.

Not surprisingly, the children grew up with respect for the truths, love, mutual cooperation and other values they saw and felt at home – not to mention a lot of fun in many contexts. (Ask them sometime to show you their reunion socks.) They also gained much from their parents' respect for freedom and their own opportunities to mature as of themselves, and to learn from their own decisions, successes and mistakes.

As God grants free will and thinking to all, parenthood means learning how to balance, even marry, disciplinary instruction with a daughter's or son's freedom to choose. The four children grew independently, each with their own distinctive characters, interests, and opinions, and they love to be together as a family.

Marion married Mike Harris, Erin married Bob Clendenin, and Dan married Kaitlin Phelps, and today six grandchildren range in age from 8 months to 24 years. Fred has had much fun with them too, including rides in the open El Camino. He really loves children, and befriends them easily, with a way of making them feel safe and secure. As his grandkids grow up he's been interested in their education and career plans, just as he was for his own children. It's not surprising that his descendants, encouraged to develop freely, grow up as independent individuals.

Hear this: Fred said, looking at everything he's done, what he's most proud of are his four children. The happiness of married life in the family has strong roots in Fred's and Barbara's married love, which goes back to the ideal of "conjugal" or married love, as a spiritual union of wife and husband, who are

complementary forms of love and wisdom. The fruit of family grows from this inner source of love and truth, joined and working together.

To this organized family that carefully planned ahead, something utterly unexpected happened. In March 1991, 16 months before Fred's retirement from the Air Force, a whole new phase of life opened. I think the Lord wanted their special help in preparing a future angel. A really terrible car accident in Missouri took Barbara's mother from this life, injured Barbara and Daniel, and left 22-year-old Dale very near death, in a coma that lasted three months. Thanks to truly excellent medical treatment by many doctors and close personal care, Dale survived, with special needs – especially the need for caring love and devoted time.

The family moved to their 24th house, in Phoenix, carefully chosen to serve the family's new needs. New responsibilities taught new kinds of skills, and deepened the meaning of love. My strongest memories of Fred will remain seeing his diligent and sometimes difficult personal care, often quite muscular, carried out with fun and jokes to match Dale's cheerful – well, Dale's usually cheerful responses. A truly wonderful spirit grew in the home, with Fred, Barbara and Dale all giving to it.

Many of you have shared in the gift of this spirit. I can't describe it – you have to feel it for yourself. Fred and Barbara became expert in bringing Dale with them to church and to many other occasions, big and little, important and petty, for fun and for interest, and giving many people opportunities to share Dale's friendly personality, and helping Dale stay abreast of other people's lives and thoughts. One highlight was a cross-country driving trip for Dale to see many old friends – a typical Fiedler activity: ambitious, difficult, successful, tiring, widely enjoyable.

Back in 1991, of course, this new cause looked less like an opening than a closing. But the Lord's Divine providence brings goodness and help out of the evils that He allows or permits, but does not want. The Fiedler home became a living example that brought true benefits to a great many – including medical practitioners of many kinds, and especially nurses, therapists and other caregivers who've worked in their house.

Fred and Barbara have been a real moral and spiritual help to this New Church minister and my wife, as we sought to be for them; the 1991 accident that struck Dale was a year and a half after our son, Danny, who played lacrosse with Dale, left this life. The two sets of parents, not especially close previously, found we had a great deal to say to each other. And we discovered a number of common views and interests.

Retired from the Air Force, Fred continued to look for worthwhile causes. For a few years he was vice-president at American West Airlines, overseeing flight operations, and also a consultant for the airline industry.

As Academy President
... I found Fred was soon widely respected for his balanced and clearly thought-out perspectives. He was one of those people who when he starts to speak, you stop and listen.

The spiritual perspective guiding his life led him back to the Academy of the New Church, and he served on its governing Board of Trustees for a decade. As Academy President for the first four of those years, I found Fred was soon widely respected for his balanced and clearly thought-out perspectives. He was one of those people who when he starts to speak, you stop and listen. He asked the right tough questions and insisted we think through specific goals for *growth* and *fairness*.

In those days we at the Academy were slow in providing for disabilities of all kinds. As chair of our Accessibility

Committee, Fred was the key leader in bringing needed changes to all our high school and college buildings. More important, I personally feel, was his leadership in shifting our levels of sensitivity, to consider and focus on ability needs of all students. We needed to shift, and without forcing or pressure Fred brought an important change in our perspective, as well as in buildings.

True love of the neighbor grows from God's love for all human beings, and through his public life, and in private conversations too, Fred consistently treated all people as God's creations, "with liberty and justice for all."

Our church and country need leadership in becoming open to the needs of challenged people, and Fred found time to serve also on the board of New Church Challenge, a growing organization that supports families with challenged children. Fred was appointed by the Governor of Arizona to the state's Council for Brain and Spinal Injuries. He served two terms and provided strong positive leadership that was needed to move forward. In many contexts Fred will be truly missed, but he's given us a large legacy of accomplishments and personal example.

Recently Fred served two terms on the Board of the General Church of the New Jerusalem, his worldwide church based on the Bible and the Writings of Swedenborg. Fred's special outreach and growth came from his perspective of living among many different human and geographic viewpoints. Outreach for the New Church was a strong interest too in his service to the New Church of Phoenix, where he, Barbara and Dale have centered their spiritual activities.

An excellent church treasurer for many years, Fred served often on committees and groups, and loved to add skillful hands to work parties of every

kind. He especially helped to improve the planning, and levels of organized administration in this church. Many visitors to the New Church of Phoenix stayed at the delightful Fiedler guest house that he somehow found time to construct. Perhaps most valuable for New Church groups has been his conviction that when we co-operate, even in hard times, we find good answers and can do more than we imagined.

A familiar theme at the end of someone's life is that now he can relax and enjoy the reward he's earned – or perhaps that he may rest in peace. If this is what Fred gets, great will be his disappointment! Having awakened on the third day after his material body died, Fred enjoys life in a healthy spiritual body that corresponds to his vigorous mind and spirit. He continues as the same Fred we know, and I can easily imagine him chopping wood, as at that old cabin in California. If not already, soon he'll look for useful activity (a cause to serve?).

Fred will enjoy meeting many loved ones who left their earthly bodies earlier. And he'll want to explore how moving through the *spiritual* world differs from flying through *natural* space. He will miss many people here, especially Dale, and of course Barbara above all, until she joins him. He'll be excited by all there is to learn, and will grow ready to face deeper spiritual states to arise in his consciousness. While we love to remember much good in his life, every person's lasting future state, based on the inner being we become through how we live, is known only to God.

Swedenborg's Writings mention that *good men* who live at sea are more devout in their prayers than landsmen, "because they trust more to the Divine providence." (*Charity* 170) I wonder if something similar might be said of air pilots, who like seamen experience weather, wind and spatial vastness in dramatic ways, with much opportunity to reflect on expanses of creation, and their meaning, and our place in the universe. Sailing on the open sea, or flying high, long, fast and often – do these offer a heightened sense of closeness to the Almighty, and to the Divine providing for His creation?

At the time of death the reality of Divine providence may be even a stronger rock for faith than the clear and detailed teachings about life after death. About Divine providence let us remember what Jesus said: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your

Perhaps most valuable
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heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” (*John 14.27*)

Amen.



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OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY

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

PROVIDENCE

The term, the Divine Providence, is inclusive of all that is done by the Lord, which is infinite and eternal. The Divine Providence is therefore the government of the Divine love and wisdom in the spiritual world and on earth, and it consists in the preservation of creation for the sake of uses to man in every Divine work which has to do with human salvation.

It is predicated of the provision of good, and is a leading to good and guarding from evil; but as good operates through truth, it is also the Divine wisdom. In proceeding, it is the Lord's influx, both through heaven and immediately from Himself, effecting the production of uses through the spheres of procreating and of protecting what is procreated.

In reception, it is the Divine operation in the man who has removed the love of self. In general, Providence conserves what is in order and strives to restore to order that which is not. (See *Heavenly Doctrines* 267; *Arcana Coelestia* 5195; *Apocalypse Explained* 25)

Laborers in the Vineyard

Educating General Church Ministers Outside of Bryn Athyn

The Rev. Dr. Andrew M. T. Dibb

Dean of the Bryn Athyn College Theological School

On May 31, 1915, a Johannesburg-bound train puffed out of Durban Station. On board was a youthful Rev. Frederick Gyllenhaal, who had arrived in South Africa a few months before. He was the first General Church pastor to the Durban Society and was traveling at the invitation of two men from Lesotho, or Basutoland. They had travelled to Durban to make contact with other New Church people. The leader of these two men was Samuel Mofokeng, who had been introduced to the Heavenly Doctrines and wanted to establish the New Church among his people.

On his arrival in Basutoland, Gyllenhaal was thrust into an entirely new life, travelling on horseback or by cart, he went with Mofokeng from one group to the next, preaching at different societies, sometimes to a hundred or more people. He rapidly grew convinced that the New Church had a prosperous future amongst these people. During that visit he began educating four men who would eventually become the first African ministers of the General Church. They were ordained in 1919 by Bishop N.D. Pendleton, and the General Church Mission in South Africa was formed at the same time.

This kind of event has been repeated many times in other parts of the world since then. There is a long history of people finding the Heavenly Doctrines and realizing the importance of being educated in them to become ministers. By training the four men in Basutoland between 1915 and 1919, Fred Gyllenhaal established an educational heritage that the General Church continues to build on.

Today the General Church operates in many countries; it is truly an international church without borders. Anyone, from any country, culture or language group, who believes in the Heavenly Doctrines and is willing to be baptized is free to join, so groups have formed in places where they never

Today the General Church operates in many countries; it is truly an international church without borders. . . . The General Church tries to assist these groups as much as they can within the limits of its natural resources.

existed before, and new groups regularly come into existence. The General Church tries to assist these groups as much as they can within the limits of its natural resources.

The Heavenly Doctrines are clear that a church requires a ministry which is educated and trained to teach and lead people in their spiritual journeys. As the Church has spread, however, the question of how to provide an educated clergy has presented the General Church with a challenge.

At one point it was assumed that all General Church ministers would attend Theological School in Bryn Athyn, and except for those educated

in South Africa, that was the way it worked. The Bryn Athyn Theological School is well equipped in terms of teachers and resources, but cannot provide education to every aspirant minister. There is a growing number of men in other countries, speaking languages other than English, who wish to become ministers, yet cannot attend school in Bryn Athyn for valid reasons: they may not speak any English, or their education background may not meet American graduate level standards.

Many men wishing to enter the ministry are married with children, and leaving them for years to attend Theological School would be an impossible burden on such families, and breaking up families is very unappealing. Bringing an entire family to Bryn Athyn is extremely difficult, and, of course, the cost is prohibitive. Added to this is that foreign students are not always permitted to enter the United States. As has happened before, the United States government may simply decide not to grant a visa.

The only solution to these problems is to educate ministers in their own countries. The Rev. Fred Gyllenhaal laid a foundation for this in 1915. From that time on, many South Africans were trained for the ministry, serving their congregations in Zulu or Sesotho, and in time the same process developed in other countries as well. Currently there are five primary training programs around the world, each tailored to suit the needs of the area, each maintaining strict doctrinal integrity.

The New Church in Brazil

In 1981 the Rev. Andrew Heilman moved to Rio de Janeiro as the pastor of the New Church Society there. Recognizing the need for Brazilian ministers, he began training Cristovao Nobre, who was ordained in 1984. Others were subsequently educated and have joined the teaching staff that includes other graduates of the program.

The language of instruction in Brazil is Portuguese. The program consists of 12 courses, which are similar to those offered by the Theological School for distant learners. Fortunately, almost all the Heavenly Doctrine has been translated into Portuguese so most of the courses are based on the theological works themselves, such as *Divine Providence*, *Heaven and Hell* and *Conjugal Love*. Other courses include the *Doctrine of the Lord*, *the Word*, *Life* and the *Ten Commandments*, the Church and Church History (Pre-Advent and Post-Advent).

The Study of the Letter of the Word is interspersed with the other courses, such as the Historical Old Testament with the Pre-Advent Churches, the Prophets and Psalms with study of the Word and its internal sense, the Four Gospels with the *Doctrine of the Lord*, and the book of *Revelation*, with both the Post Advent Churches and the study of the Spiritual World based mostly on *Heaven and Hell*.

There are, of course, the more practical aspects of priestly training such as sermon writing, pastoral visiting, children's talks and Sunday School, etc. This is done in conjunction with other courses, together with a unit on the principles of exposition. The program takes between three and four years to complete.

Since beginning in 1981, five men have graduated from this school and been ordained in Brazil, and the current enrollment is five students, spread out across Brazil: two in Rio, two in Curitiba, and one in Maraba', Para', in northern Brazil. Because of the distances involved, all these students are part-time and most of the courses are done via e-mail. The students answer questions or write essays, classes or sermons and send them back to the teacher for comments.

When Rev. Heilman visits from the United States, especially during the annual minister/ student meetings, faculty and students can meet face to face, adding community to the study program. Because there are so few ministers

Currently there are five primary training programs around the world, each tailored to suit the needs of the area, each maintaining strict doctrinal integrity.

in Brazil, in some cases part of the practical education may consist of students serving a congregation as the leader until they are ordained. This provides valuable experience.

The New Church in South Korea

A similar situation exists in South Korea. There has been New Church activity in South Korea since the beginning of the 20th century when a Japanese Convention minister began preaching there. The first General Church minister was the Rev. Dzin Kwak, who graduated from the Theological School in 1988 and took up residence in Seoul.

In the next few years, several Koreans attended the Theological School in Bryn Athyn and were ordained: Yong (John) J. Jin 1994, Jong-Ui Lee 1998, and Sung-Won Paek in 2001. There were, however, more potential students in Korea whose English abilities prevented them from attending the Theological School in Bryn Athyn.

To remedy this, the Asia Region Theological School came into being, under the overall supervision of the Rev. Yong Jin. In 2008 the Rev. Dzin Kwak retired from the pastorate, and his place was taken by the Rev. Kyu Yang, who was added to the teaching staff.

The Korean program is divided into two streams: those who are training for the ordained ministry, and a second consisting of those who are preparing to be missionaries and who will not be ordained. From the outset it was noted that none of these students, whether ordained or not, could expect employment as ministers, as the only pastoral posts in Korea were already filled. Instead they were encouraged to start their own church congregations.

There have been three graduating classes since the school's inception in 2004: the first class of five ministers and one missionary graduated in 2010. Of the five ministers, one left the Church, one is serving the Seoul society (Mr. Yang retired in 2016). The other three ministers have either started or are starting new congregations in South Korea.

A second class graduated in 2014. One of the students in this class serves in Japan, another is a translator, and the third began a congregation in 2014. This second class also educated two missionaries, both of whom are serving the Korean Congregation in Orange County, California. A third class is in process with two students, one of whom will serve in Japan. At the time of writing this article, a fourth class is preparing to get underway, with four students expected to join.

In 2017 the Rev. Yong Jin began exploring ways to extend operations of the Asia Region Theological School into China. Aware that there are severe restrictions on this kind of activity, it is not quite clear what form this will take,

but it is anticipated to be a shared venture between Asia Region Theological School and the General Church Theological School operating out of Bryn Athyn (more about this later.)

The curriculum used in Asia is very similar to that used in other places in the Church where education takes place: 13 courses covering the essential major doctrines of the Church. Many of the books of the Heavenly Doctrine have been translated into Korean, making it possible for students to access them directly.

Ghana

Ghana burst into the American New Church consciousness in the late 1970s when people became aware of Pastor Garna distributing books of the Heavenly Doctrines and preaching to crowds of eager listeners. His vision for the New Church included developing a Theological School serving West Africa, where men could be trained for the ministry and lead to the growth and development of the Church in that part of the world.

Before such a school could be started, it was necessary to have Ghanaian ministers to run it. As an English-speaking country, it was less challenging for Ghanaians to attend Theological School in Bryn Athyn. The first was the Rev. Ankra-Badu graduating 1985. He was followed by several other students, who provided a strong core of Bryn Athyn educated clergy in Ghana.

However, as in other countries, not all Ghanaians were able to attend Theological School in Bryn Athyn, so under Ankra-Badu's leadership a Ghanaian Theological School began operations in 1999 with 12 students. Classes were held twice a week and followed the same curriculum taught in Bryn Athyn.

In 2016 the Ghanaian Theological School was restarted under the leadership of the Rev. Jacob Borketey-Kwaku, who has three students studying in Accra, and the Rev. Martin Gyamfi, who teaches a student in Asakraka-Kwahu. The program notes are provided by the Theological School, following the same core curriculum as other theological schools around the world. This cohort is still in its early stages of training, but will be a welcome addition to the Church.

Côte d'Ivoire

In 2004 the Rev. Sylvain Agnes was ordained after completing Theological School education in Bryn Athyn. Côte d'Ivoire is a French-speaking country. While he was in Theological School Rev. Agnes began to prepare to establish a French theological school serving all the Francophone countries of West Africa. By the time he returned home, he was well equipped with notes for a number of courses in French, and opened the doors of Institut Théologique la

Nouvelle Jérusalem, serving students in Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, Benin, Burkina Faso and Liberia.

Initially the teaching staff of this school was primarily the Rev. Agnes and the Rev. Alain Nicolier, but in time, as the first cohort graduated, the staff expanded to include many of them as well. In addition to the ministerial staff, Rev. Agnes also hires adjunct teachers to teach church history, counselling and other practical matters, providing a well-rounded education.

The Institut Théologique is the only Theological School other than in Bryn Athyn where students attend full time, which allows for a much fuller program than is possible for those studying part time. Even so, it takes students between three and four years to complete, and once graduated and ordained, these new ministers are expected to plant their own congregations.

The result has been several congregations, some with their own buildings, developing in West Africa. At the time of this writing, there have been three graduating classes: 2010 graduating five students, 2013 with nine students, and 2017 with four, a total of 18 students in seven years. School enrollment at the moment is 12 students, six of whom are candidates and the other six split between the first and second years. Between the ministerial education in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, West Africa is well served with ministers, with more to come.

Other Parts of the World

Minister training in Brazil, Korea and West Africa enables many ministers for the General Church, but what happens to those who are not in those areas and can no more attend one of those schools than they can attend in Bryn Athyn? Fortunately, modern communications have made distance training possible.

Students in Japan and China are able to study online using a course delivery process called "Moodle" – a program used by Bryn Athyn College. This course of study is overseen by the Dean of the Theological School, and courses are taught by Theological School teachers. The courses are uploaded to a Moodle site, students download them, complete the assignments and return them to the teacher.

Using this system two ministers in Japan and one in China are prepared for the ministry. Fortunately, most of the Heavenly Doctrines exist in Japanese, so students are able to do their assignments in their own language, and submit returns in English. This is supplemented by periodic visits from Bryn Athyn, mostly for enrichment.

However, the Moodle system of delivery is unsatisfactory as a sole method of teaching as it does not provide much opportunity for face-to-face instruction or make community building possible. In 2012 an opportunity

arose to change the format. At that point there were two students in South Africa, one in Nigeria and one in Norway, all of whom are in similar time zones. Using Skype as a medium of instruction, it became possible for all the students to meet online with a teacher based in Bryn Athyn, with students and teachers able to see and hear each other. This creates a virtual classroom.

Using this method, the regular program of 12 courses can be delivered in a far more satisfactory manner. Classes are held at a regular time each week; early afternoon in Bryn Athyn equates to early evening in Africa and Europe, a time when students are home from work, have had their supper and are ready to attend class.

The program is much the same as it is in other distance schools: regular Theological School classes adapted for the circumstances. However, it is only possible to offer one course at a time because students can only attend part time, so the overall program takes between three and four years to complete.

Under this system of training, two men, one in Norway and one in South Africa, have completed and been ordained. A third is a candidate nearing the end of his education, while the others are at different points. In addition to General Church students, there is also a student studying for the ministry of the Lord's New Church who lives in the Netherlands.

Finally, there have been situations, which may arise again, of people who do not fit any of these programs. For several years ministers travelled to Kenya to give classes as there was no one there who could do this. Over a four-year period, three men were prepared, ordained and now serve congregations in Kenya.

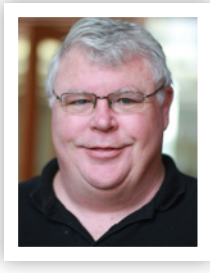
The General Church is truly an international church, with much of its growth happening in far-flung parts of the world. Figuring out ways of educating a ministry is challenging and exciting. The established schools teaching in their local languages means that we do not have to rely on someone's ability to speak English in order to serve. Technology makes it possible to pull together people who are continents apart, and provide the opportunity to read, study and discuss together as if they were in the same room.

Even so, new challenges arise from time to time. There have been students in time zones or with limited internet accessibility where the only way to

The General Church is truly an international church, with much of its growth happening in far-flung parts of the world. Figuring out ways of educating a ministry is challenging and exciting.

communicate is by email. In these circumstances the process is not perfect and it may take a lot longer, but we make the best of it. In the meantime, the New Church continues to grow and spread, requiring a continually developing clergy. Fortunately, technology grows at the same time, so there is always the hope that we will find new and better ways to train ministers.

(See related photos on page 249.)



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OUR NEW CHURCH VOCABULARY

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

RATIONAL

The essential idea in this term is that of an intermediate between the spiritual and the natural – a mental plane on which light from heaven illuminates what is in the light of the world. Thus rational truth is the spiritual truth about natural things, and rational thought is thought from understanding of the spiritual uses of things.

The rational is the highest plane of the natural degree, intermediate between the soul and the natural mind; and rationality is the faculty of receiving light from the Lord, and of thus perceiving the relations of things to one another and to the Lord. The terms “natural rational” and “spiritual rational” refer to the rational before and after regeneration. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 3314, 5150, 1944; *Apocalypse Explained* 569; *Heaven and Hell* 468)

Coming Soon to a Church Near You: Robot Priests?

The Rev. Todd J. Beiswenger

(Reprinted from March 2018 The New Church Newsletter of Australia)

For at least 10 years now, the General Church has been concerned about a lack of priests. This led to an initiative to recruit men who were interested in changing careers and joining the ministry. I came through that program, but this new initiative is much bolder in an attempt to bolster our ranks. Yes, get ready for the robot priest. I'm sure many of you will be surprised by this, but the Bishop lays out a pretty reasonable case for it. In a statement to the clergy he wrote:

“Innovation is the key to church growth. In a world where we are more and more connected through electronic means, having digital, robotic priests will only help enhance our ability to connect with younger generations and ensure that the message of the New Church continues to spread around the world.”

He goes on to talk about reaching out into areas where Christianity is growing, but we have little to no presence. With robo-priest there are no immigration issues. Importing a robot is as simple as shipping a computer or a piece of luggage. No lawyers involved, so you can put a robot just about anywhere in the world in a matter of days. There are plenty of other practical advantages too. Training doesn't take three or four years. Need it to speak a language other than English? No problem. Need it to be part of the musical offering? Easy. Whatever the problem is, just import some files, make some customizations, the new robo-priest is ready to go in days, sometimes hours.

At first, though, these robots will only be used to assist human priests. Because they're able to comb through all the texts so quickly, they will be able to answer any theological question almost instantly. No longer will a priest or layperson have to waste time searching for that elusive passage. But as we get more acclimated to the robo-priest it is expected that they'll take on a larger role, including offering blessings, officiating at weddings and even pastoral

visits. You'll be amazed at the quality of conversation they can have!

Okay, so I made all of that up. The crazy thing is that while I'm hearing of all sorts of ways robots are going to be integrated into our lives, until recently I hadn't heard about robots doing religious work. Believe it or not, what I've found is that my fictitious opening isn't as far from reality as I thought.

It turns out that in 2016 a Buddhist temple on the edge of Beijing developed a robot monk who can chant mantras and explain basic tenets of faith. It's about the same height as Yoda – standing two feet tall. While Yoda is green, Xian'er is encased in saffron-yellow robes and has a shaved head. Despite spending much of his time closeted in the spiritual calm of Longquan Temple, he wears an expression of permanent surprise.

His purpose is to reach out to people who are more connected to their smartphones than their inner being. Xian'er can answer 20 simple questions, displayed on the touch-screen on his chest, about Buddhism and daily life at the 500-year-old temple. Master Xianfian, a (human) monk at Longquan and Xian'er's creator, said artificial intelligence could be harnessed to spread Buddhist wisdom in China. The robot made appearances at a number of tech shows, generated a lot of publicity, but apparently now spends most of its life on an office shelf in deep meditation.

The Germans weren't to be outdone in the endeavor to robotize religion. Their robot, called BlessU-2, is intended to trigger debate about the future of the church and the potential of artificial intelligence. "We wanted people to consider if it is possible to be blessed by a machine, or if a human being is needed," said Stephan Krebs of the Protestant Church in Hesse and Nassau, which is behind the initiative.

BlessU-2 is 5.5 feet tall and looks like an arcade machine with a head and arms attached. It has offered blessings in a choice of German, English, French, Spanish or Polish. Worshipers can choose between a male or female voice. The robot raises its arms, flashes lights, recites a biblical verse and says: "God bless and protect you." If requested, it will provide a printout of its words. A backup robot is available in case of breakdown.

"The idea is to provoke debate," said Krebs. "People from the street are curious, amused and interested. They are really taken with it, and are very positive. But inside the church some people think we want to replace human pastors with machines. Those who are church-oriented are more critical."

Despite a European-wide shortage of priests, the Protestant Church of Europe has no intention of using robots to fill the gap. But my fictitious opening to this article is actually based in reality. That's because Japan has gotten into the robo-priest game and created its robot named "Pepper."

This humanoid robot has put itself up for hire as a Buddhist priest for funerals. They've taken the German blessing bot idea and taken it to a whole

new level. Pepper's new code will let it chant sutras in a computerized voice while tapping a drum, providing a cheaper alternative to a human priest to see your loved ones off into the eternal sleep. The cost of hiring Pepper is about 80% less than the cost of hiring a human priest to run the funeral.

With Japan's population aging and shrinking, many Buddhist priests receive less financial support from their communities, prompting some to find part-time work outside their temple duties, said Michio Inamura, Nissei's executive adviser, who suggested Pepper could step in when a human wasn't available. Would-be funeral arrangers have the option to deck Pepper out in the robe of a

Buddhist monk and can even live-stream the ceremony to those who can't attend in person.

Pepper has yet to be hired to conduct a funeral, but with robots slowly creeping into most facets of life it seems inevitable they will be involved in religion and the church sooner or later. For me, all of this brings up the question of what it is to be human. Academics, philosophers and the like have put forward all sorts of ideas, including having "heart," "empathy," or "spirit." The Writings give us a different answer as to what it is to be human: "For a person is human because of intelligence and wisdom – essentially truth and good respectively – which people have solely from the Lord." (*Arcana Coelestia* 2305)

In other places we are taught that our freedom and rationality are big parts of being human, as is having a will and understanding. But there's more to it. There's a connection between higher and lower planes that is essential to our humanity. This quote from *True Christianity* illustrates how our humanity is integrated into the various aspects of our life.

"...if we had no free choice in spiritual matters, we would have no free choice in civic, moral, and earthly matters either, this stands to reason from the fact that the spiritual things that are called theological dwell in the highest region of the human mind, just as the soul dwells in the body. That is where such things live, because the door through which the Lord "comes in to us" [*Revelation* 3:20] is on that level.

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The Lord isn't telling us that if we just program a will and understanding into a robot that we'll have a human. He's telling us that all of these things have to be in place and connected back to Him in order to receive life.

Beneath them are civic, moral, and earthly concerns, which in human beings receive all their life from the spiritual qualities that reside above. Because the life from the Lord flows in at the highest level and because our life consists of the power to freely think and will, and therefore speak and act, it follows that our free choice in politics and earthly matters comes exclusively from our spiritual freedom. Our sense of what is good and true and what is just and upright in civic matters comes from that spiritual freedom; and this sense is the very essence of true intellect." (*True Christianity* 482)

The Lord isn't telling us that if we just program a will and understanding into a robot that we'll have a human.

He's telling us that all of these things have to be in place and connected back to Him in order to receive life. We need that "door" for the Lord to enter into our soul and mind. Silicon chips just don't receive the Lord's life the way a human does.

People were created in God's image and likeness, not an assembly of plastic, silicon and electronic gadgetry. As a result, I just don't see how robots can pass on God's blessing, His Word, or His Love in the same way that a person can. These things are to flow through us to others. A robot just can't do that.

The robots are coming, there's no doubt. They'll be driving us around, diagnosing our illnesses, and flipping our burgers, but I'm quite happy to see that the world hasn't gone so mad as to hire Pepper to perform funerals.



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BOOK REVIEW

*In the Shadow of the Dragon's
Back: A Young American Girl
in South Africa During the
Early Years of Apartheid*

By Rachel Odhner Longstaff

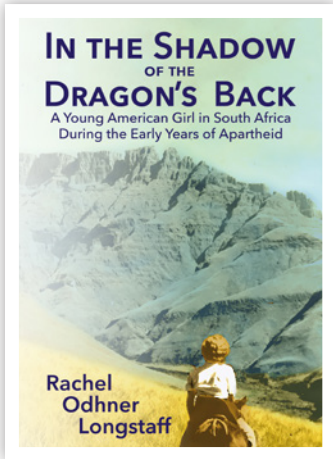
Reviewed by the Rev. Dr. James F. Lawrence

Rachel Odhner Longstaff's mesmerizing reflection upon her youth sprouting up as a white Swedenborgian minister's daughter in South Africa weaves interconnected journeys of a girl, a family, a church, and a nation during the now infamous social context known as apartheid. Her father's new pastoral assignment in Durban commenced in 1948, the same year that apartheid (Afrikaans for apart-hood) was inaugurated with all its increasingly harsh laws. The family adventured from a staid and stately Philadelphia suburban world to one both newly exotic and troubled.

Contemplating anew from four decades' distance the social and spiritual spaces she inhabited there, *In the Shadow of the Dragon's Back* refers to a prominent topographical feature of the author's childhood now transformed as metaphorical muse for those complexly resonant times.

A discovery late in life of photograph negatives taken by her deceased older brother of those years helped to stimulate the birth of this volume so lushly illustrated with Pehr Odhner's crisp black-and-white photographs. An avid amateur photographer, Pehr's bountiful illustrations open windows with the text revealing ambience and mood both innocent and ominous, and they evoke a depth in the stories whose brevity belies the profundity of the volume.

The 22 chapters unfold their interwoven stories chronologically, with the



first 20 covering the family's arrival with the author as a preschool child and continuing through the first dozen years of apartheid until 1960 when all the Odhner children returned to the United States. The final two chapters follow the author's life through her university years at Northwestern where she continued to immerse herself in African history and culture studies and her later career as a librarian.

The conclusion reflects upon a return visit to South Africa in 1991 that coincided with the final dismantling of apartheid. Bryn Athyn College Theological School Dean, the Rev. Dr. Andrew Dibb, who served in South Africa for 14 years,

contributes a warm preface.

Especially effective is the unceasing crossing between the often creative and happy family and church life and the looming social tensions that grew year upon year with apartheid's litany of controlling laws. The family's empathy and friendships with native Africans vie with anxiety and alarm over the ever-present police state scrutiny of the church's activities.

Every chapter registers both worlds as Christmas cookies are baked amid the promulgations of the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, mountain hikes are undertaken while teachers are silenced and university employees arrested, delightful music and singing lessons are sounded as the Natives Laws Amendment Act that severely prohibited public movements by native Africans became law.

Longstaff ably assists readers to enter the complexity of contradictions – beauty and humiliation, privilege and disenfranchisement, black and white. The space created is ever timely, fruitful for contemplating an outsized scale of life on history's backdrop. The metaphor supplied by the flat serrated mountain range that looks like a dragon's back is quite apt, as is the shadow it casts.

(Published by Culicidae Press, 2017. <https://www.culicidaepress.com/category/books/>
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The Planets Play Their Parts

Laurel O. Powell

(Note: This was written in response to an article, “The Earths in the Universe: Teachings, Reflections and Speculations,” by the Rev. Willard Heinrichs in the September/October 2017 issue of *New Church Life*, plus two responses in the November/December issue.)

Outside the poet’s window, in the sky,
The swirl of stars and planets dances by.
Open window brings in the Spirit’s wind,
and all these planets’ peoples, kind by kind.
Upon my desk the stranger’s letter lies:
“There cannot be life in this system’s skies.
Please make this awkward doctrine go away.”
I rant reply, I fill page after page
with zeal, belief and sorrow, research, rage,
and theories. But I forget to pray . . .

Lord, why did You come walking on this Earth?
So that you writers could announce My birth!
Why is our Earth in this sun’s system here?
Start writing, child, and why may all come clear.

Mercury: We travel from the planet near the sun.
We heard you thinking about other earths.
What interactions are you pondering?

Abstract your thoughts for us from space and time.

Poet: I’m studying the planets ‘round our sun.

Mercury: We do not want to know about the planets.
We want to hear your interior thoughts.

Poet: I’m thinking God is infinite; and that
Infinite life flows forth into expression
in infinitely varying human forms.

Mercury: We like that. We agree. We have observed many different humans in our travels.

Poet: Oh, tell me all about your observations!

Mercury: We'll twist your ears if you ask us to tell you.

It is your job to tell us what you know.

Our job is to remember, not to tell.

What else do you think?

Poet: Right now I'm thinking

each planet has a job.

Mercury: That fits the truth.

Poet: And this whole system's work is for the Word, and spreading it throughout the universe.

Mercury: You're speculating. You must learn what's real before we can make judgment about that.

Poet: Oh, crystal-minded gatherers of thoughts, you will not tell me anything you know, but you will spur me to study the Word so you can read more knowledge from my mind. I'll study till I can refute this letter.

(Venus appears in two companies, those toward Mercury in accord with interior things, those toward Earth fierce giants. When not specified, they speak together.)

Venus: What's happened? Show the letter. Tell the story!

Poet: I read about your worlds in Swedenborg.

I love you all. I love this starlit dancing through space with every solar planet's children.

Letters like this strike fear into my heart that Earth will come destroy you all, not seeing that you are there, or even what life is.

Venus toward Earth: We see you're angry. That is good. Let's plunder! Plunder them, use their own weapons against them, eat them up! their lusts, their sensual knowledge.

Poet: That would be science. Science says that you cannot live in a world of liquid brimstone, a world that floods with lava and erases craters and memories of a million years.

Venus toward Earth: Why not? Why not? Lava and molten brimstone express the yearnings of our nomad life. We hoard emotions, cattle, tales, sensations, until another tribe takes all we have,

eats us up, and we have to start all over.
 The hot earth rolls beneath our giant footsteps;
 we roar with joy and anger when we meet.
 You hoard that letter, and your gut reactions.
 We'll help you plunder all their arguments.
Venus toward Mercury: No, giants, don't urge this poet to plunder.
 Remember, God is One, and walks here, too.
 Remember, our walk is our path to heaven.
 And adversaries are children of God.
Mercury: (*to Poet*) Keep yourself over on our side of Venus.
 We do not want to hear you talk to giants.
Poet: I have to talk to all of you, I'm sorry,
 even if some disturb your abstract thought.
Venus-toward-Earth: We'll hoard your anger!
Mercury: Then we shall withdraw.

Moon: (*Thundering*) Order! No harm! No fighting over poets!
 Hold together. Help her do her work.
 (*Normal voice*) Dear friend, our faithfulness closely surrounds you.
 You go and do the things you need to do:
 pray, research, meditate, write, and imagine –
 we'll thunder at those who get in your way.
 We'll hold the tides of memory and emotion
 in order. When you're ready, we will be here
 to bind together structure for your thought.
Poet: My dear and kind and silver-shining neighbors,
 I look up to you every night for faith.
 You carry one another on your shoulders,
 and carry me toward charity in act.
 I'll write for you, and for our neighbor planets.
 I'll trust your orbit to keep me in order,
 reminding me to sit, and pray, and write.

Mars: From deep inside your brain we come breathe on you.
Poet: Your speech, so soft, I do not understand.
Mars: That is because you're used to separating
 words from their meanings when you speak and write.
 We join your cerebellum and cerebrum.
 We come to warn you not to disconnect
 thought from affection. Those who do are cast out
 to lifeless life, among the outer rocks.

Take heavenly fire of love in hand and write this;
don't let the bird of thought grow stony cold.
Without love you may still think you are writing
out of the Word, but that will not be true;
your words, just like the surface of our planet,
will then appear as lifeless as the stones.

Poet: I have no power to do such honest writing.
I'm just an Earthling, born to evil loves.

Mars: Then let them sleep, and let angels speak through you,
and of what comes, speak only what is true.

Poet: Oh, Lord of heaven, how can I be worthy
even to look at You or at Your Word?

Mars: We'll pour out fires to give you light to work by,
when your prayer's done and our Lord lifts you up.

Jupiter: Come dance with us!

Poet: I'm older now, my joints stiff.

Jupiter: Oh, child, that doesn't matter in the least!
The sphere of your imagination dances,
more even than when you were still a child.

On your Earth, where corporeal spheres repel us,
we found an open door into your mind.

Poet: You care for children, and you love to teach them.
Earth's grown-ups used to comment, wide-eyed, frowning,
"What an imagination that child has!"

I didn't know imagining was *you*, then –
they'd taught me you were too heavy to stand,
walking on knuckles like some wild gorillas,
on a great rock with gravity too strong.
I was so glad to learn your world is liquid
and swirling air, and then to read the words,
"progress with hands, almost like swimmers, turning,"
to know that you are free and joyful dancers.
I'm glad they sent a ship to Jupiter.

Jupiter: The angels told us to respect your science.
We see it's opened up your intellect.

Poet: The more astronomers find, the more it confirms
the way the Word says each world's people live.
And yet they try to make it mean there's no life
on any world around our sun but earth.

Jupiter: Do they think having life means having bodies

like you have, all closed up against the spirit?

Poet: I don't know what they think. I cannot judge them.
I know I love to dance with Jupiter.

Jupiter: Come dance, then, through our airy, liquid swirlings,
and rest and talk on leaves of seaweed fig trees,
imagining the myriad ways life could be,
and raise your face always to see the stars.

Saturn: Look to the stars for light, but do not worship
the stars, or that great arc that lights our nights.
Our job's to draw your thoughts away from senses,
upward and in, toward the love of reason.

Poet: What's reason? Here on Earth if we are clever,
and use enough big words, we're "reasoning;"
if we let them make facts learned through our senses
take precedence over the truths of faith,
we're being "reasonable;" if we confess
we talk with spirits, we have "lost our reason."
But you of Saturn, who embody reason,
you hardly speak: your face just shows your will.
And if someone from this Earth tries to lead you
away from worshipping the Only God,
you hold a dagger to your breast, and cry out,
you'd rather die than turn away from Him.

Saturn: What's reason? Knowing what is real, and turning
toward the truth with every breath that's in you.
Not to acknowledge truth is what's insane.

Poet: And what is real?

Saturn: What's real is,
that life is love, and love's the Only God,
every moment, everywhere inflowing.
We're just dead empty vessels who receive Him,
and turn to thank Him for His life in us.

Poet: Thank you for your simple, clear perception.
I'll try to put your wisdom in my words.
And thank you all! I need help from each one
to write or speak truly about the Lord.
Each has a part in this work we've been given:
remember, write, care, think, imagine, know.
Each planet's use will help to spread the Gospel
throughout creation. Still, I don't know how.

Mercury: (*returning*) Whatever you conclude, we want to know.

Poet: Come with me, if you want – to Earth I go,

hoping somebody there will want to hear

how real I think you all are, and how near.

This flight of the imagination's mine;

they can say I just made it up, that's fine.

But open on my desk here lies the Word

that says, "*Where there's a planet, men are there.*"

I cannot not believe our infinite Lord

creates His Human likeness everywhere.

Laurel O. Powell lives in Lenhartsville, Pennsylvania.

Confession of Faith and Declaration of Purpose



The Rev. Mandla Stole

New Church Buccleuch, March 4, 2018

For centuries it has been known that Scripture has a hidden or inner meaning – but it has not been known or understood what exactly it is. The hidden or inner meaning is confirmed by the Lord Himself in Scripture.

In *John* 16: 12-13 He says: “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears he will speak; and He will tell you things to come.”

Matthew 24:30 – “And they will see the clouds of Heaven with power and great glory.”

It is written in many places in Scripture that the Lord in His Second Coming will return in the clouds of heaven. It is therefore commonly believed that the Lord will appear in clouds in Person.

It is not known that “the clouds of heaven, the power and the glory” have an inner meaning. “The clouds of heaven” represent Scripture. The “glory

and power” in which He is to come also have an inner meaning. The “glory” represents the spiritual sense of Scripture and “power” represents the Lord’s power through Scripture.

Firstly, the Second Coming of the Lord is NOT in Person.

Secondly, unknown to many, the Lord has already returned. He came as the “Spirit of Truth,” revealing the hidden or inner meanings of the Holy Scripture through the teachings for the New Church, called the Heavenly Doctrines or the Writings, which are from the Lord.

In His Second Coming he has revealed the hidden meaning behind *Matthew 24:29*: “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.”

He has revealed that: the “sun” means love to the Lord and charity toward the neighbor; the “moon” means faith; the “stars” mean knowledges of faith; all of which, at the end of life, will be thus darkened, will not give light, that is, will vanish away from the Church or the person. And further on, by “nation against nation, and kingdom against kingdom,” nothing else is meant than evils against evils, and falsities against falsities, and so on.

It is through the Lord’s Second Coming:

- That **I believe** there is One and only God, Jesus Christ the Lord; in Him is the Soul (which is God), the Body (which is Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit (which is good uses); and from Himself exists the entire blessed spiritual world and the physical universe, while at the same time He is present with all of mankind in their hearts and minds; as well as that in His mercy, in both the spiritual world and on earth, He accommodates the hells that arise (not from Him) but from human evils and falsities created by human “love of self” and “love of worldly pleasures.”
- That **I believe** He is Divine Love and Divine Wisdom itself, eternally merciful to all His creation and strives to lead all humanity to a good eternity.
- That **I believe** He created marriage of good and truth, represented in heaven and on earth by marriage arising from conjugal love between one man and one woman, leading to eternal happiness. It leads to eternal happiness because the marriage the Lord created is not the one of “till death do you part” but the one that starts on earth and continues in the spiritual world to eternity.
- That **I believe** in His Divine Mercy. He created in Heaven and on the earth the New Church spoken about in *Revelation 21: 1-2*, which is signified by the Holy City, New Jerusalem, descending from God out of heaven, teaching that all those who lead their lives according to its

teachings and laws of the Divine Providence will start to live an angelic life while still here on earth. And He also provided the priesthood, whose duty is to maintain and administer what is Divine, providing them with a periodic reminder, the Sabbath Day, for them to continually remind the people to lead a useful life according to the Holy Scripture and the heavenly teachings of the New Church.

- That **I believe** for a human being to be conjoined with the Lord, the person must first shun evils as sins, go through temptations for the purpose of salvation and start a process of repentance, leading to reformation and regeneration. *Divine Providence* 60 teaches that no one becomes an angel or gets to heaven unless he or she arrives bringing along some angelic quality from the world.

It is my desire to help people to start living a heavenly life while still on earth, by being a light that leads them to truth.

Luke 11:23: “No one, when he has lit a lamp, puts it in a secret place or under a basket, but on a lampstand, that those who come in may see the light.”

May the Lord help me to let the light He has given me shine to all humanity.

It is my desire to assist people to start living a heavenly life while still here on earth, by teaching them to love the Lord and love the neighbor.

Matthew 13: 31-32: 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 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.”

May the Lord help me to be like a mustard seed – whereupon a great many heavenly things will grow.

In **Matthew 28:19** the Lord says: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.” I, therefore, with humility declare, before the Lord God, before angels and the people of the church, that with the Lord’s help I will shun evils as sins, be faithful and truthful in teaching the Lord’s Word and His heavenly Teachings to all His children, in this life and the next.

Church News

Compiled by Bruce Henderson

GENERAL CHURCH BOARD (MARCH 16-17 MEETINGS)

To facilitate the Board's role in seconding the nomination for the Executive Bishop, basic informational materials on the six candidates have been shared with them. As part of the Bishop selection process Board members will share their questions of the candidates with the entire clergy as a form of counsel.

International Church: The Board developed a four-year timeline to measure support for a global church. This will include selection of two to five pilot congregations for investment to generate increased growth and professional development for all those involved.

Vice President: The Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr. reported two experiments in General Church schools. The Pittsburgh New Church School will add special education in dyslexia to its offerings. And the Washington New Church School is researching distance learning for its secondary school level. Visiting minister offerings will expand to 22 locations in the United States in the next fiscal year.

Contributions: The Office of Advancement reported that in the past year the number of donors is up 5%; total contributions are up 150%, thanks to unusually strong donations in December; and total gifts are up 1%. Many planned (estate) gifts are donated to local churches and schools, and so do not show up at the General Church level.

Finance: Executive Director **David Frazier** reported operating results for the six-month period ending December 31, 2017, vs. the prior year:

- Revenue of \$2.6 million, up 3% (\$55,000 favorable to the budget)
- Expenses of \$2.3 million, down 2% (\$257,000 favorable to the budget)
- Net surplus of \$279,000, which is expected to even out by the end of the year

Fiscal year 2019 operating, capital and non-operating budgets were approved, with the overall operating budget projecting a surplus of about \$5,000. Revenue is \$5.1 million, up approximately \$100,000 from the previous fiscal year. Expenses are about \$5.1 million, up roughly \$100,000 due to inflation and higher costs for personnel.

Cairncrest: The request for alternate use suggestions for Cairncrest brought in more than 20 ideas, which are being evaluated in committee.

BISHOP SELECTION

The six nominees for the next Executive Bishop of the General Church are:

- **The Rev. Erik J. Buss**, Assistant Pastor of the Bryn Athyn Church
- **The Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr.**, Assistant to the Bishop
- **The Rev. Glenn “Mac” Frazier**, Associate Pastor of the Glenview New Church
- **The Rev. Bradley D. Heinrichs**, Head Pastor of the Carmel New Church and School, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada, and Executive Vice President of the General Church in Canada
- **The Rev. David H. Lindrooth**, Director of General Church Outreach
- **The Rev. Derrick A. M. Lumsden**, Pastor of Sower’s Chapel in Sarver, Pennsylvania

In a letter to the General Church Corporation the **Rt. Rev. Brian W. Keith** noted that the career histories of the nominees and the blended statements of those who nominated them are available on the General Church website, www.newchurch.org.

Bishop Keith also reported: “At the June Council of the Clergy meetings one of these ministers will be nominated for the Episcopal Office. He will then meet with the General Church Board who will give a response to the clergy. Presuming it is affirmative, the nominee’s name will be placed before the entire church membership for a vote of affirmation.

“Along with the affirmation ballot, we will send additional information on the nominee. Again, presuming a positive response from the Church, he will take office on July 1, 2019, when I will be retiring. While the nominee will be retaining his current position in the next fiscal year, we will work with him to prepare him to assume the office.”

NEW MINISTER FOR COLCHESTER

The Rt. Rev. Brian W. Keith

I’m pleased to announce that with the affirmation of the Colchester Pastoral Advisory Committee, the **Rev. Lou Synnestvedt** has agreed to serve as interim pastor there for the next two years. Congratulations to both Lou and Colchester.

GENERAL CHURCH CORPORATION

The annual meeting of the General Church Corporation is scheduled for Saturday, June 30, at 3:00 p.m. in the Academy of the New Church Secondary Schools Dining Hall.

This will include Board nominations and election.
Incumbents eligible and willing to be re-elected are:

Bengt Boyesen, Kempton, Pennsylvania

Amy Buick, Jenkintown, Pennsylvania

Wade Buick, Kempton, Pennsylvania

Stephanie Klippenstein, Maysville, Missouri

Jennifer Pronesti, Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania

Ned Uber, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

New nominates for three-year terms are:

Cheryl Cooper, Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania

Rene Johnson, Russell, Pennsylvania

Wayne Wadsworth, Marietta, Georgia

Retiring from the Board, with appreciation for their service, are:

Gregory Baker, Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania

Dawn Wadsworth, Marietta, Georgia

Thayer York, Lake Forest Park, Washington

The Nominating Committee consists of: **David Norman**, chair;

Ian Carswell, Vice Chair; **Jim Adams**, **Jill Brickman** and **Kurt Wille**.

BRYN ATHYN COLLEGE

Dr. Wendy Closterman has been appointed Chief Academics Officer and Dean of Academics of Bryn Athyn College, starting July 1.

Wendy has served as Dean of Faculty since 2014 and was appointed to the rank of full professor last January, specializing in Greek history. She has chaired the History and Social Sciences Department twice (2002-2008 and 2010-2014), chaired the Tenure and Promotions Committees (2010-2014), and has chaired the Research Committee since 2014.

She earned her Bachelor of Arts in History and Sacred Languages from Bryn Athyn College and her PhD in Classics from Johns Hopkins University.

The Rev. Coleman S. Glenn has been hired as an Assistant Professor of Religion starting in the fall term of 2018. He has been a Visiting Assistant Professor of Religion this year. Coleman received his B.A. in Religion from Bryn Athyn College in 2006 and his M.Div. in 2009. He has served in pastoral roles for the General Church in Toronto, Ontario; Dawson Creek, British Columbia; and Westville, South Africa.

He has been serving as the Assistant Chaplain at Bryn Athyn College this year and will continue in this role.

The Rev. Matthew L. Genzlinger also has been added to the Religion Department as an Assistant Professor of Religion. He has most recently been pastor of the Concord, Massachusetts, congregation.

Michael Austin has been appointed Director of Residence Life, overseeing the residence hall managers and “the overall success and engagement of the residents of the College.”

He previously served in various housing positions at Stony Brook University, most notably as student life specialist at Brookhaven Residential Village. He earned his Bachelor of Arts in English and Sociology and Master of Arts in Higher Education Administration from Stony Brook.

IVYLAND NEW CHURCH 25TH ANNIVERSARY

Alaine York



(The Ivyland congregation celebrates the 25th anniversary and The Rev. Ryan Sandstrom, current pastor in Ivyland)

On Sunday, April 29, the Ivyland New Church congregation hosted a special church service, program and lunch to celebrate 25 years in our church building in Ivyland, Pennsylvania. The church building, converted from a pole barn in the early 1990s, was actually dedicated in December 1992, but we opted to wait for warmer (?) weather for the celebration.



The day began with a family worship service led by our pastor, the **Rev. Ryan Sandstrom**, with the theme “Who Are We? Don’t Underestimate the Importance of Your Existence.” His talk focused on building things, how various parts are essential, support one another and fit together to create a strong whole, and how it is of Divine Providence that life should work this way.

Following the church service, we enjoyed a program opened by **Bishop Brian W. Keith**, which included messages from our former pastors. The **Rev. Robert S. Jungé**, our founding pastor, sent a message read by the **Rev. Andrew**

Heilman, who assisted Bob in the early days of the Hatboro/Horsham Group – later to become Ivyland New Church. We also heard a message from the **Rev. David Lindroth**, our pastor from 1996 – 2004 (who unfortunately could not be with us due to other church duties); from the **Rev. Tom Rose**, pastor from 2004 – 2012; and from the **Rev. Todd Beiswenger**, who acted as assistant to Tom for a time. Then our current pastor, the Rev. Ryan Sandstrom, spoke briefly of his journey to Ivyland. As you can tell from this list of names, Ivyland has been blessed from the beginning with gifted, loving pastors, and we have loved them all.

We were delighted to have old friends join us for this celebration, along with newer members. A signature focus of Ivyland New Church is FOOD and FELLOWSHIP. We have had many delightful potluck meals (Feasts of Charity) after church services over the years, and this occasion was no exception. We seated more than 120 people in the tent set up for the occasion, with barbecue and many other delicious treats.

Ivyland New Church was founded as a form of outreach to bring our faith to the community outside of the established church center. We have benefited over the years from the support of friends in the Bryn Athyn Church and the Academy of the New Church, from New Church friends located farther out in Bucks and Montgomery Counties, and from friends new to our faith.

We broadcast our church services over our Ivyland New Church Facebook Page and invite you to view them. Please feel free to enjoy this anniversary program as we did. We pride ourselves on being a welcoming, family oriented group, and we hope you will visit us sometime soon!

A WINDOW TO THE SOUL: NISHAN YARDUMIAN'S BIBLICAL ART

Glencairn Museum is hosting an exhibit through November 4: *A Window to the Soul: Nishan Yardumian's Biblical Art*. (See photos on page 252.)

Nishan Yardumian was a gifted and much-loved artist and teacher who died much too young at age 39. He profoundly influenced a great many students in the Academy Secondary Schools and Bryn Athyn College – with his artistic talent, his insights and his rich sense of humor. He had a special interest in religious art and this exhibit is devoted to his exploration of the Divine within biblical stories and how they illuminate our human experiences as spiritual beings.

The exhibit was introduced at an opening reception by Glencairn Director **Brian Henderson**, who spoke of Nishan's passion as an artist and the inspiration he drew from the Word.

He said: "We hope this exhibit invites you – as Nishan intended through his art so clearly influenced by the teachings for the New Church – to ask what it is in us to which each painting makes its appeal. To reflect on the meaning that each of these stories from the Lord's Word has in our lives. To allow

something spiritual in us to be called forth.”

He quoted one of Nishan’s favorite sayings: “Paintings don’t re-direct the wind; they realign the heart.”

Brian thanked especially Nishan’s wife, **Siri Yardumian Hurst**: “This exhibition is her vision and inspiration. She has been an essential member of the exhibition team – proposing the theme, helping to select and gather the included works, and offering input on design.”

He concluded with the words of Nishan’s teacher, Dr. Furman Finck: “On second or third look, Nishan’s work contains amid the colors and technical strokes, the quiet of the walk or communing with nature, being one with yourself.”

Brian introduced two speakers – longtime friends of Nishan’s – who reflected briefly on his lasting influence in their lives and in the art community he illuminated: **Dr. Martha Gyllenhaal**, associate professor emeritus of art and art history at Bryn Athyn College and head of the Fine Arts Department at Bryn Athyn College; and former student, the **Rev. Thomas Rose**.

Among several quotes from the artist available with the biblical context for his paintings:

Ideally, paintings add to a room something spiritual, that is, something genuinely human. One may hang a painting on a wall and have thereafter on his wall a window to the soul.

- Painting aims at the universal with the hope that each individual can find his identification with it. Teaching aims at the individual with the hope of developing the universal.
- To me, the very strength of painting is that it is static – monumental. It doesn’t change, we do.
- While analyzing the appeal a picture has for us, we must ask: to what in us is the picture making its appeal? The answer to this will determine the type of friendship we are, therefore, to have with it.
- The Appearance of the Angel to the Shepherds would represent an idea born; the angel is an idea of “appearing,” the shepherds are the trauma of change an idea might occasion in one’s life. The sheep are a reflection on the phenomenon.
- The discipline the artist must develop with constancy is that of discerning the angelic from the worldly in his environment.

GENERAL CHURCH EDUCATION

General Church Education has completely remodeled the New Church Vineyard website. By popular request, the site now provides one central location for New Church educational resources, offering more than 4,500 activities, projects, readings and videos for all ages. We are continually adding

materials and have created a “subscribe” feature to let you know about some of our resources a few times a month.

We invite you to sign up at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/subscribe/>.

OTHER PLANETS

The New Century Edition translation of *Other Planets* – also known as *Earths in the Universe* – has been published by the Swedenborg Foundation, translated by the **Rev. Dr. George F. Dole** and the **Rev. Dr. Jonathan S. Rose**.

The spring issue of News from the Swedenborg Foundation reported: “This short work takes the form of an extended description of Swedenborg’s experiences in the afterlife – specifically, visiting the spirits that originate on other planets. He gives accounts of meeting spirits from the planets in our solar system that were known at the time (Mercury through Jupiter, and also Earth’s moon), as well as some extrasolar planets.

“The work has often posed difficulty for people who read it literally, given that advances in astronomy have shown that there is no intelligent life on many of the bodies he names, and has been the subject of a great deal of speculation.”

The Foundation also recommends: “For an overview of the theories about this work, see the Deluxe volume, *The Shorter Works of 1758*, where the introduction by Richard Smoley contains a special section on this very topic.”

The Foundation adds: “Regardless of how the reader understands Swedenborg’s experiences, the work presents a fascinating spiritual message: that all humans, whether we encounter them today here on Earth or tomorrow in the far reaches of the universe, have their share in spiritual life. The beings Swedenborg encounters offer a variety of different perspectives on how to live spiritually, often highlighting ways in which we here on Earth get it wrong. Along the way, Swedenborg offers some of the most concise explanations of key theological principles to be found anywhere in his books.”

This book is available through the Foundation: www.swedenborg.com

JACOB’S CREEK

Jacob’s Creek Family Retreat will be held July 22-25 at the Laurelville Mennonite Church Center in Mt. Pleasant, Pennsylvania. This year’s theme is: *Let Your Light Shine: Sharing The Good News*.

Registration forms are online at: <https://www.jacobscreekfamilyretreat.org/>

Friend us on Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/>

[JacobsCreekFamilyRetreat/](https://www.facebook.com/JacobsCreekFamilyRetreat/)

Or you can contact **Julie Uber** at 412-782-2710 (h) or jacobscreekfamilyretreat@gmail.com to receive forms by mail.



Front row center: The Rev. Göran Appelgren and the Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr.



The Rev. Sylvain Agnes teaching a class in Côte d'Ivoire



The Rev. Martin Kofi Gyamfi, instructor in Ghana, with student Bernard Obeng Wiredu



In Ghana, left to right: The Revs. Robert Kwesi Hagan, Benjamin Ebo Hayford, Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr., Sylvanus Karikari and Jacob Borketey-Kwaku, instructor



The Rev. Andrew Heilman, second row left, with students in Brazil



Front row, left to right: The Revs. Sylvain Agnes, David Lindrooth, Rt. Rev. Brian Keith and Roger Koudou with theologs in Côte d'Ivoire



Shrek and Friends



James Gay as Pinocchio



Donkey, Shrek and Fiona



Camryn Buss as Fiona



Zach Lambertus as
Lord Farquaad



Bradley Robinson as
the Talking Donkey



Shrek towers over Lord Farquaad



Tim Radcliffe as Shrek



Fiona and the Dancing Rats



Shrek amuses Fiona



The whole happy crew

A WINDOW TO THE SOUL: NISHAN YARDUMIAN'S BIBLICAL ART
(Glencairn Museum – Images courtesy of Ed Gyllenhaal)



Noah Entering the Ark



Bethlehem



Three Angels Appearing to Abraham



Annunciation to the Shepherds



Baptism of Christ



Joseph Revealing His True Identity to His Brothers



Annunciation to Mary

Life Lines

“ALL THINGS NEW”

It is more than the birth of a new, truly spiritual form of Christianity that we celebrate on New Church Day, it is a renewal of everything; a celebration of the Lord’s proclamation: “Behold, I make all things new.”

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away. . . . And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. . . . And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, “Behold, the Tabernacle of God is with men. . . .” And he that sat upon the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” (*Revelation 21:1-5*)

The universe is “made new” when we come to understand it in a radically new way. Then it is born anew to us, in our mind, and we see beyond the natural covering of it into the Divine Soul that created it, sustains it, inhabits it, and shines through it.

The natural objects we see in this world are “effects” produced by the influx of life that flows into the natural world from the spiritual world. The order and beauty we see in nature are a reflection of the order and beauty of heaven. When our mind’s eye is opened to see this, then the “Tabernacle of God” encompasses the whole universe.

For this to be, our mind must be reordered and opened to the light of heaven. This is done by learning and reflecting upon the truths of the Word, and especially living by them. The more we do this, the more translucent nature will become, and the more we will see heaven reflected in it. We will gain a fresh view of human nature, also. The more we are able to see the goodness in people, the more heavenly life in this world will appear, and *be*.

Then the promise of the Lord’s second coming will be fulfilled for us: “Behold, I make all things new.”

(WEO)

FRED FIEDLER: NEW CHURCH CHAMPION

Major General Frederick A. Fiedler, who passed into the spiritual world in March after a valiant battle with cancer, was the consummate New Churchman. He loved serving his country, his church, his family, his community. He

committed his life to use and charity. An engaging smile and willing spirit were his signature and he was a pillar of integrity in everything he did.

My first memories of Fred go back to the Academy Boys School, where he earned everyone's respect. He liked to remind me that we played in the first basketball game in the new Asplundh Field House in the late '50s. Many years later I had the privilege of serving with him on the Academy Board of Trustees, where his impact was profound. It was so true to his nature when he led the effort to make the Academy campus accessible to all – a tribute to his disabled son and a fitting monument to his caring nature and natural leadership.

He followed that with more cross-country travel and equally committed service on the General Church Board. Literally to his last days he was taking care of business as treasurer for the Phoenix, Arizona, society. And wherever his military career took him, he was absolutely devoted to his wife and family. He was a good man.

He came to the Academy from a farm life in Colorado, steeped in its heartland values, and thoroughly embraced New Church education. He even took a year at the then Academy College before entering a four-year program at the new Air Force Academy, where he was a member of its first graduating class. Throughout a distinguished career – from test pilot to senior leader with the Strategic Air Command – he and his wife Barbara (Allen) made homes for their family all over the world, and the church was always at the center.

In his moving memorial address (page 211) the Rev. Dan Goodenough talks about the touching bond he shared with Fred because of serious accidents that struck down their sons, at a similar age. But that was just one essential part of what defined Fred Fiedler.

It was natural that he was attracted to the military because order and service were touchstones in his life. "Order in life and society enables human good will and mutual support to flourish," Dan writes. "Order is for the sake of uses, getting things done." The military is all about order and getting things done.

"Fred loved serving his country. He also knew that truth and order are not inherently the highest goals (but) provide the means and environment for human cooperation and goodness to grow. Authentic truth is the form of love, and God created order for the sake of goodness and human love, because love is what lasts to eternity."

Serving a cause higher than himself was his calling. And he must have been smiling somewhere when Dan singled out Barbara as a true hero – part of the special breed of loyal military wives, often doing it all on their own in distant corners of the world, also "giving for the cause they believe in."

With Fred's passing, the Rev. Willard Heinrichs wrote to their classmates: "While we grieve, especially for Barbara and their children, and we mourn

the loss from our conscious presence of this man of unusual devotion and dedicated service to his church, country and family, I suspect there will be many in the spiritual world who will be welcoming with joy a new champion for the Lord's kingdom.

"We also know that as the New Church grows in the spiritual world, so it may grow from that in the natural world. I think we can be pretty confident that Fred's service to his church, his country, and his family in this world will not cease just because he has now passed from this natural realm into conscious awareness in the spiritual realm. Indeed his influence and service, though more subtle, may now become more powerful with us here on earth."

Fred was a special man and a humble man who would point to use and shrink from praise. We are left to echo what Hamlet said of his father: "He was a man, take him for all in all. We shall not look upon his like again."

(BMH)

THE ULTIMATE ROLE MODEL

As Fred Fiedler rose through the ranks of the U.S. Air Force to become a major general – loved and respected by everyone he served with – he never forgot where he came from: growing up on a wheat farm in Colorado, and attending the Boys School of the Academy of the New Church.

Last Charter Day Fred was honored as a Distinguished Alumnus of the Academy. He was not able to attend his 60th class reunion because of his illness, nor to address the senior boys as is the tradition with this honor. But he sent a powerful message, which was read to the seniors by Principal Jeremy Irwin. His theme was "What Are Your Values?"

Looking back on a life of significant accomplishment – serving his country, the Church and the Academy – he said the foundation for all of it was laid in the Boys School, because that is what "shaped my moral values."

He talked about the importance of personal responsibility – not only in academics, student government, athletics and other endeavors but in their personal attitudes. "When you make the doctrine of charity an application to life – a personal value – you will be taking personal responsibility. This will be important to any success you achieve."

He also emphasized honesty and personal integrity as "the most important value – one that defines even your spiritual life." Living with integrity "allows you to live at peace with yourself. Your personal integrity is not worth any price. Live it, don't sell it or give it away."

He encouraged the seniors to aim high but not to be satisfied with just external accomplishments and accolades. "Live a meaningful life of use and charity, more than an academic life trying to decipher good and truth, love and

wisdom, will and understanding. The knowledge will only become meaningful when you can apply it to life. You decide what that meaningful life is for you.” Then he wished them all “a life of charity and use, and the respect, love and joy that will bring.”

And he left them with the perfect role model.

(BMH)

A TOUCH OF CLASS

Each year for Veterans Day (November 11) fifth-graders at the Bryn Athyn Church School write letters to armed forces veterans in the church, thanking them for their service to their country. This year our grandson, Cade, was fortunate to draw the name of Fred Fiedler.

Cade was fortunate, not only because his veteran was the only one to reply with a beautiful, hand-written thank-you note, which was read aloud to the class, but because of the loving, thoughtful message he received.

Here was Fred, fighting his brave battle with cancer, taking the time to write to a boy he did not know just because that’s the way he lived his life: always do the right thing.

He wrote in part: “Thank you for taking the time to consider and remember all the veterans. One thing I am thankful for is having the opportunity to serve our great nation as an Air Force officer and assume some of the responsibilities that go with military service. Perhaps one day you might consider military service as well.”

He added: “I, too, am thankful for our church and the schools it supports to give students like you and Chyler [his sister] the opportunity to learn in the light of the Lord’s Word.”

He also quoted briefly from the 23rd *Psalms*, saying, “It’s comforting for me to remember that when my day may not be going so well.”

At this point many of his days were not going so well. But it didn’t stop him from reaching out to a young boy with a simple message that defined his own life – and now will stay with another whose life he forever touched.

(BMH)

GATEWAYS FOR CONNECTIONS

After the memorial service for Fred Fiedler, the son of one of his classmates at the Air Force Academy told the Rev. Dan Goodenough that he loved what he had heard – the whole feel and tone of the service – and wanted to read more of Swedenborg’s Writings. Dan gave him some suggestions and promised to stay in touch.

So often we hear responses like this from visitors new to our teachings,

especially at memorial services and weddings – which attract the most visitors. Our confident faith in life after death and the blessing of eternal marriage resonate with the deepest hopes and spiritual aspirations of many people.

This is something to keep in mind with all of our services. Is there something in the message – whether a wedding, a memorial or regular Sunday service – assuring all listeners that a loving God wants what is best for all of us, and leaving them with an uplifting sense of hope and promise? We only get one opportunity to make a first impression – to connect with visitors like the young man at Fred’s service, who love the tone and feel of what they hear, hunger for more, and want to come back.

(BMH)

“THINK FOR YOURSELF. LIVE FOR OTHERS.”

This is the motto of Bryn Athyn College, and a good motto it is. We live in a time when groupthink is prevalent, and the first part of the motto, “think for yourself,” indicates our desire to resist it.

The second part – that we are born, not for ourselves alone, but for the sake of others – is explicitly stated in the Writings of the New Church and is a continual theme throughout them. (*True Christian Religion* 406) The doctrine of Use, Grand Man, and all the doctrines teach it. And a corollary is that how well we are able to serve others depends upon our ability to think clearly.

The goal of teaching students to think for themselves is one all colleges would affirm, but in reality the heavy hand of political correctness makes independent thought rare on many campuses. Bryn Athyn College, however, is especially prepared to foster independent thought because of the light shed by the Writings upon the nature and use of the human mind.

Truly free thought is thought enlightened and guided by revealed truth. “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (*John 8:31*)

The psychology we find in the Writings is unique in its depth and its breadth. They explain the degrees of mental activity from the highest to the lowest: from the sensitivity and profound insights inspired by love flowing into the highest level of the mind from the Lord; to the rational faculty in the middle; to the storehouse of knowledge we call memory; and at the lowest level, the impressions made upon the mind by external objects detected by our bodily senses.

There is no shortage of theories about the mind. Brain studies are advancing, and the promise of dramatic benefits is exciting. But the complexity of even the mind’s physical outer covering, the brain, remains daunting, and the mind is an even greater mystery, which no merely natural theory can ever solve.

From a New Church perspective, it is axiomatic that only the Creator of the human mind can provide a comprehensive explanation of it. We further believe that this revelation of the mind's origin, structure and purpose has been given to us in the Heavenly Doctrines. These spiritual teachings about the mind have been deeply studied and written about for many years in numerous papers and books by New Church scholars such as the Rev. Dr. Hugo Odhner (author of *The Human Mind*), the Rt. Rev. George de Charms (*The Growth of the Mind*), the Rev. Douglas Taylor (*Hidden Levels of the Mind*), and many others.

All the students at Bryn Athyn College need to become familiar with the teachings of the New Church regarding the human mind. This is vital to the College's mission of enabling students to think for themselves.

(WEO)

BUT NO THOUGHT IS WHOLLY INDEPENDENT

We can think *for* ourselves in the sense of not having our thoughts dominated by others, but not *from* ourselves. Our power of thinking is from the Lord, and our ideas are influenced by other people.

Nearly everyone believes that man thinks and wills, and consequently speaks and acts, from himself, since the appearance that this is the case is so strong. And yet this is not possible. . . . No one thinks from himself but from others; and these others do not think from themselves, but all from the Lord, the wicked as well as the good. (*Divine Providence* 308)

We need others' ideas and perspectives to stimulate and enrich our own. Imagine how constricted our thought would be even about the objects we see around us in nature if we were unaware of anyone else's thoughts about them? And nature isn't the main thing that occupies our minds; we mostly think about other people and their ideas. Scientists, historians, educators, even artists striving for originality – people in every field – do not pursue their subjects in isolation but study what others have thought about them.

Our ideas about everything are conditioned by what we have learned from others. Contemplating the stars and the immensity of the universe gives rise to all kinds of thoughts, but without knowledge gained from astronomers who have studied and thought about the universe over the centuries, how would we even know how vast it is? Not to mention the reflections of poets and philosophers on the beauty, mystery and meaning of creation.

Imagine if you had been left as an infant all alone on a desert island, and somehow managed to survive to adulthood without ever having met or even learned of the existence of any other human being. "Thinking for yourself" would be the only thought possible, and your thought would be very constrained, to say the least. But even in that extreme situation your thoughts

would be influenced by the spirits who are with you. And without contact from any other people in this world, you would especially need the influence of your guardian angels to counteract false thoughts that might be insinuated by evil spirits.

(WEO)

ALONE TIME

Important as communication with others is, we do need to have quiet times alone to think. Self-examination, a critical part of our regeneration, is a solitary exercise, not a group project. When we are alone – not interacting with or trying to impress other people, or “plugged in” to some device – then we “think in accord with the interior love of our spirit.” (*Divine Love and Wisdom* 418)

This might be a good thing, or not! Whether our solitary thoughts are wise or insane depends upon whether we are inwardly good or bad. There is a great use and protection in having our thoughts “bounced off” others. But alone time, when we can more easily discern what we truly think and feel, is also important for our spiritual development.

(WEO)

THINKING FROM APPEARANCES

Imagine someone using a hose to water the garden in the backyard. The hose is connected to the house, so as far as the person can see the water is coming out of the house. It appears that the house must be full of water! But of course that’s not the case at all. The water enters the house through a pipe which is invisible because it is underground. It then travels through the house in another pipe that leads to the faucet that the hose is connected to.

So now we see how the mind works, how water gets into a hose, and how the garden grows. And also free will, since the gardener can point the hose in any direction he wants.

But just to make all this perfectly clear: the “house” is your mind; the “water” flowing into it is the influx of life into your mind from the Lord; the water flowing out of it through the hose is your stream of consciousness. The fact that as far as you can see the water originates in the house illustrates the appearance that thinking originates in a person’s mind (and many would even say the brain).

Consider also that the quality of the water that exits the house depends upon the quality of the water that enters it. As every New Church person knows, “efflux is according to influx.”

And while we’re at it, we might note that there is *some* water in the house, in the water heater, which we’ll compare to the memory, in which knowledge

is stored in the mind – until you get old and your memory springs a leak, but let's not belabor the point. Or is it already too late for that?

(WEO)

HAPPILY EVER AFTER?

When Stephen Hawking, the most renowned and celebrated scientist of our time died in March, his greatest discoveries lay before him – if he had eyes to see.

Hawking was enormously popular and respected. He projected a brave, indomitable spirit, triumphing over the Lou Gehrig's Disease (ALS) that crippled his body but not his spirit. When he was diagnosed at age 21 he was given only a few years to live, but stoically persevered to age 76. Though tethered to a computerized wheelchair, he appeared on prime-time TV shows, was the subject of a popular movie, authored such best-sellers as *A Brief History of Time*, and was as hailed and recognized throughout his life as Albert Einstein.

There was much to admire about him but he was ultimately a flawed hero as well because he believed only in science, completely rejecting God and religion. He said he was not afraid of death but didn't believe in an afterlife. "I regard the brain as a computer which will stop working when its components fail," he said. "There is no heaven or afterlife for broken-down computers; that is a fairy story for people afraid of the dark."

Despite his frail, dysfunctional body he inspired many people with his spirit. Talking about the meaning of life, he said: "Remember to look up at the stars and not down at your feet. Try to make sense of what you see and wonder about what makes the universe exist. Be curious. And however difficult it may seem, there is always something you can do and succeed at. Where there's life there's hope."

He struggled with the image of God as Creator of the universe. "God is the name people give to the reason we are here. But I think that reason is the laws of physics rather than someone with whom we can have a personal relationship. An impersonal God."

In another interview he said: "Before we understand science, it is natural to believe that God created the universe. But now science offers a more convincing explanation. What I meant by 'we would know the mind of God' is, we would know everything that God would know, if there were a God, which there isn't. I'm an atheist."

He expanded on that by saying: "Religion believes in miracles, but these are not compatible with science."

He added: "There is a fundamental difference between religion, which is based on authority, and science, which is based on observation and reason."

Science will win because it works.”

Still he struggled with his theory. After writing *The Universe in a Nutshell* – the sequel to *A Brief History of Time* – he confessed: “One can’t help asking the question: Why does the universe exist? I don’t know an operational way to give the question or the answer, if there is one, a meaning. But it bothers me.”

For all his intellect and insight, Stephen Hawking – like so many scientists – believed only in what he could see. Now that his spiritual eyes are open, is he believing what he’s seeing?

(BMH)

FORGOTTEN ANGELS

Ruth Marcus, deputy editorial page editor of *The Washington Post*, recently inflamed the abortion debate with a column: “I would’ve aborted a fetus with Down syndrome. Women need that right.”

She noted: “There is a new push in antiabortion circles to pass state laws aimed at barring women from terminating their pregnancies after the fetus has been determined to have Down syndrome.”

And she acknowledged: “This is a difficult subject to discuss because there are so many parents who have – and cherish – a child with Down syndrome. Many people with Down syndrome live happy and fulfilled lives.”

But she said of her own two pregnancies: “I can say without hesitation that, tragic as it would have felt and ghastly as a second-trimester abortion would have been, I would have terminated those pregnancies had the testing come back positive. I would have grieved the loss and moved on.”

She consoled herself that she is not alone – that more than two-thirds of American women choose abortion in such circumstances. She respects and admires families who welcome a Down syndrome baby into their lives but was absolutely blunt: “This was not the child I wanted. You can call me selfish, or worse, but I am in good company. The evidence is clear that most women confronted with the same unhappy alternative would make the same decision.”

Indeed, women are actually being forced to make that decision in Iceland which has embarked on a national policy to eliminate Down syndrome in that country.

George Will, a colleague of Ruth Marcus, countered with a column: “The real Down syndrome problem: Accepting genocide.” (Will and his wife are the parents of a much-loved Down syndrome son, although he did not mention this in his column.)

He calls Iceland’s official policy genocide because it is “the deliberate, systematic attempt to erase a category of people.”

Prenatal screening tests have become highly accurate. In Iceland 85 percent

of pregnant women opt for the testing “which has produced a Down syndrome elimination rate approaching 100 percent.” So, Will says, an expectant couple can decide to extinguish a flawed fetus and “try again for a normal child who might be less trouble, at least until he or she is an adolescent with hormonal turbulence and a driver’s license.”

He quotes an Iceland geneticist who says “we have basically eradicated” Down syndrome, while lamenting “heavy-handed genetic counseling” that is influencing women’s decisions.” He quotes an Icelandic counselor advising a woman: “This is your life. You have the right to choose how your life will look. We don’t look at abortion as murder. We look at it as a thing that we ended.”

Iceland is not alone. In Denmark the “elimination rate” for Down syndrome is 98 percent, and in the United Kingdom it is 90 percent. The United States “is playing catch-up,” Will says, with a rate of 67 percent of those who make Ruth Marcus feels she is not alone.

Two years ago a French court ruled that it would be inappropriate for French television to air a brief video for World Down Syndrome Day assuring women that Down syndrome children can lead happy, fulfilling lives. The court feared that the video was “likely to disturb the conscience of women” who choose Down syndrome abortion. Such moral confusion, Will concluded, is the real “Down syndrome problem.”

Many of us know families with a Down syndrome child, who feel blessed by the sweet and innocent presence brought into their home. Those lives on earth may be limited but like all of us they are children with eternal potential. Isn’t that what is being forgotten? Indeed, these children are often described by loving parents as “angelic.” Like everyone else they are born to become real angels in heaven. And sadly, that is “the *thing*” being ended.

(BMH)

WHY DO DOGS WALK IN CIRCLES?

A curious behavior of dogs is the way they walk around in a circle several times before lying down. It is thought that this behavior evolved because the wild ancestors of today’s domesticated dogs needed to flatten the grass before lying on it. It occurs to me, though, that this ritual may be more than just a vestige of a prior stage in their evolution.

Dogs, like all things in nature, represent aspects of *human* nature. So I wonder what distinctively human trait this walking in circles to flatten the grass might relate to. The three basic human postures are standing, sitting and lying down, which correspond to increasingly fixed mental states. A “bed” in the Word represents the doctrine upon which our thought rests. When we say “you’ve made your bed, now lie in it,” we usually aren’t referring to a bed but to a decision.

Conclusion: It is proper for us, as rational creatures, to “walk in circles” mentally – that is, to examine a belief from all sides – before we “settle” upon it and adopt it as a fixed belief.

(WEO)

WHY DO HUMANS STAND UPRIGHT?

According to evolutionary theory some of the predecessors of our species living on the savannahs of Africa obtained, through random mutation, the ability to raise themselves up on their hind legs. This enabled them to look over the grass for enemies, which gave them a survival advantage. So more of their genes were passed on to future generations and the upright stance became the norm for humans.

This left our hominid ancestors’ front paws with nothing much to do, so now they could carry sticks and throw stones, and so the use of tools evolved along with hands to manipulate them. (What good is a smart phone if you don’t have opposable thumbs?) But now evolution had a new problem to solve, for what good are hands capable of using tools without a brain to direct them? And so the brain got bigger, and that’s how we got to be so smart. (Now we’ve even evolved OSHA to regulate our tool using and keep us from hurting ourselves).

This all seems a little, oh, *deflating* somehow. Human intelligence evolved because some ancient creatures were born with limbs deformed in such a way that they could stand up and peep over the grass? It may be true enough as far as it goes, but surely *something* else must have been involved.

Perhaps the physical elevation that enabled early man to see above the tall grass was congruent with, and representative of, the spiritual evolution that enabled him to raise his thought above the merely natural so he could spot the approach of the spiritual predators (evils and falsities) that stalk the human soul.

And whether or not the natural story of evolution is true, it may be a projection of an unconscious awareness embedded in the human mind that there are hidden dangers lurking in our natural heredity and that to see them we need to raise our vision above the merely natural appearances that would keep us from seeing them.

(WEO)

THE ENDURING CHALLENGE

While writing the editorial, “As in Heaven,” (page 183) about our daily prayer for bringing the sphere of heaven into a world in tumult, the 50th anniversary of the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. brought to mind an example of how this can work. That shocking event rocked a nation already

simmering with racial tension. Into this tinder box stepped Robert Kennedy, then a candidate for president of the United States.

Kennedy learned of the assassination on his way to address a black audience in Indianapolis, Indiana, already stoked with anger. He was advised to skip the event because of the threat of riots and fear for his safety, but knew he had to do what he could to calm a volatile nation. On a brief plane ride he wrote what has been hailed as one of the great speeches in American history. It was brief, soaring, powerful – likened to the *Gettysburg Address* that Abraham Lincoln outlined on the back of an envelope while riding a train to the battlefield.

Kennedy acknowledged the seething frustration of the crowd but appealed to “the better angels” of their nature. He reminded them of King’s own commitment to “replace that violence, that stain of bloodshed that has spread across our land, with an effort to understand with compassion and love.” Quoting the ancient Greek playwright Aeschylus, he said: “Even in our sleep, pain which cannot forget falls drop by drop upon the heart until, in our own despair, against our will, comes wisdom through the awful grace of God.”

What was needed in our country then – and always – he said, “is not hatred. What we need in the United States is not violence or lawlessness, but love and wisdom, and compassion toward one another, and a feeling of justice toward those who still suffer within our country.”

He pleaded for unity, not division, and encouraged the whole country “to dedicate ourselves to what the Greeks wrote so many years ago: ‘to tame the savageness of man and to make gentle the life of this world.’”

There were riots throughout much of the country in the days that followed, but not in Indianapolis, where the crowd dispersed calmly in response to Kennedy’s plea. The following day he gave a more formal speech to the whole nation “On the Mindless Menace of Violence.” Sadly Robert Kennedy became a victim himself when he was assassinated two months later in Los Angeles.

In the almost 2,500 years since Aeschylus’ plea “to tame the savageness of man and to make gentle the life of the world,” the call has only become more insistent.

Aeschylus was right and Kennedy was right, and we all have a role in this enduring challenge. As we read in *Arcana Coelestia* 8893: “As soon as the good of love has been implanted, conflict comes to an end and rest takes over; for now the person is brought into heaven and is led by the Lord.”

(BMH)

“EVERY RIGHT HAS ITS LIMITS”

This was the message on a sign carried by one of the protesters in the wake of the school shooting by a deranged man in Florida. The sign’s specific reference was to gun rights, but it proclaimed a general principle that applies to *all*

rights – a truth worth reflecting on by people fortunate enough to live in a free society.

Rights have responsibilities that go along with them and make the rights possible. Civil liberty can only exist in a society in which the citizens act rationally and place self-imposed limits upon the exercise of their rights. The continuance of the social structure that protects our rights depends upon a general acknowledgment and respect for their limits.

(WEO)

BRAVE NEW CHURCH WORLD

Early in April the Chinese government extended its longstanding effort to limit the influence of Christianity by banning online retailers from selling the Bible. China is tolerant to Buddhism, Taoism and Islam but is hostile to Christianity, despite surging interest.

The Bible is printed in China but is legally available only at church bookstores. Online sales threatened that control; hence the ban. There are estimates of some 38 million Protestants in China and 6 million Catholics, but the number may be higher because of many underground churches. One of them is the New Church of China.

We have a very brave and dedicated minister there, identified only as Rev. Tim – the first New Church minister in China. We withhold his last name for his protection. But that does not make him timid.

In the January/February 2017 issue of *New Church Life*, the Rev. Yong Jin, regional pastor for Asia, reported that Rev. Tim conducts worship every Sunday for students, teachers and others.

He has also opened a New Church high school, and because it is an alternative school he is allowed to teach from New Church doctrine. There were wonderful testimonials from students whose lives are being changed. But they are challenged to find enough teachers.

They have conducted seminars for New Church people in China, including many baptisms. Among the themes have been: “What are the basic teachings of the New Church?” And, “How can we build the New Church in China?” There are plans for a theological school, translation and publication.

The Chinese government can build its Great Wall against the Bible and Christianity, but Rev. Tim and his followers are not deterred. The Rev. Jin says simply: “These people are trying to spread our church one member at a time and believe that this New Church will continue to grow.”

(BMH)



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Matthew 6



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