

NEW CHURCH *Life*

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

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2020

Declarations and Revolutions



Through the lens of Independence Day in the United States, the Rev. Christopher Barber looks at the impact of Declarations and Revolutions – in our nations, in our church, and in our lives. What is the Lord asking of us? (Page 369)

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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

We welcome the Rev. Jeremy F. Simons as Spiritual Editor of *New Church Life*, following in the trail blazed by the Rev. Walter Orthwein. (Page 349)

Editorials (page 352) include::

- *How Long, Lord?* It's been 250 years since the birth of the New Church in heaven, followed by its slow growth on earth. And it's been almost 250 years since America gained its independence and offered the dream of "liberty and justice for all." We all have a role in these destinies.
- *Racism and the 250th Anniversary of the Church:* There has been renewed focus on the scourge of racism in recent months. "The recognition of our fallen nature, the awareness of our own faults and prejudices, and the understanding that without the Lord's help there is no church in us at all, is key to the healing that the New Church brings."

In a sermon, *Trust in the Lord and Do Good*, the Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr. offers this hope in these trying times: "There is great wisdom in trusting in the Lord: in turning to Him in all things of life; believing that He can enlighten us; in deeply perceiving that He is the only One who can get us through all that life throws our way." (Page 363)

In a powerful sermon delivered the day after the Fourth of July in Bryn Athyn, the Rev. Christopher Barber spoke about *Declarations and Revolutions*. He drew parallels between the 250th anniversary of the birth of the New Church and birth of America – almost 250 years ago – and the challenges within each to build on the dreams. "What is it that we celebrate on the Fourth of July?" he asked. "When we get right down to it, it's not much different from what we celebrate on the 19th of June: the declaration of a new standard representing a revolution in thought and allegiance." (Page 369)

Two of our ministers also offer thoughts on racism through the lens of doctrine. In a sermon, *The Roots of Racism*, the Rev. Mark Pendleton says the

Writings suggest that “the insubordinate love of oneself is the root of racism, and the only thing that can cut that root out of the ground is personal, systemic active repentance, and a return to loving the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves.” (Page 378) And in an article, *Racism: What Can I Do?*, the Rev. Howard Thompson says “that racism is evil and that each of us is inclined to evil from birth. If we cannot shine a light on the evil within ourselves what chance do we have of weeding out evil in the world?” (Page 386)

The Rev. Jay Barry, a chaplain in one of Philadelphia’s largest hospitals, offers a touching tribute to the nurses in this age of the COVID-19 pandemic who must take on his role in comforting and praying with dying patients. In doing so they humbly demonstrate true worship. (Page 391)

In a timely paper written before much of the current election bitterness flared up in the United States, the Rev. Michael D. Gladish invites us to consider *The Character and Quality of Governors*. This is offered in the spirit of a general guide for citizens and in the long-held tradition of *New Church Life* is meant to be completely nonpartisan and non-political. Added on to this article is an excerpt from an Academy publication 132 years ago which illustrates how little has changed in all this time regarding the Church and politics. (Page 394)

In a message From the Bishop’s Office, the Rt. Rev. David Lindrooth asks these provocative questions: “Who does the Lord invite to participate in the New Church? And why does He invite them?” The answer is found in the letters to the seven churches of Asia. (Page 409)

Church News (page 414) includes:

- Pastoral moves
- Highlights from recent General Church and Academy Board meetings
- Plans for Bryn Athyn College, the Academy Secondary Schools and General Church Schools in this uncertain time of the COVID-19 pandemic
- How Glencairn Museum is remaining relevant and connected in the pandemic lockdown
- This year’s Laurel Camp was cancelled – along with many others – but still held a virtual service while planning for its 50th anniversary next year

The Rev. Jeremy Simons:



The New Spiritual Editor for *New Church Life*

The Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr.

It is with pleasure that I welcome the Rev. Jeremy Simons as Spiritual Editor for *New Church Life*. Jeremy succeeds the Rev. Walter Orthwein, who retired from this position this past January. He joined the editorial team anchored by Bruce Henderson effective July 1, 2020.

His primary responsibility is to ensure, together with Bruce, that excellent New Church content fills the pages of this official publication of the General Church.

Jeremy brings to the position a lengthy career in pastoral work and doctrinal study, a passion for research and writing, and a long-held goal of serving on the editorial team of this publication.

I look forward to reading content specifically from Jeremy, and am grateful for the additional careful perspective that he will bring to *New Church Life*. Welcome, Jeremy.

A Welcome Opportunity

The Rev. Jeremy Simons

It is my great pleasure to follow the Rev. Walter Orthwein as this publication's Spiritual Editor. I am also happy for the chance to work with now longtime Editor Bruce Henderson. I will do my best to follow in Walter's doctrinally insightful footsteps.

I grew up in Bryn Athyn and am a fourth-generation General Church minister, following my father David Simons, grandfather Frederick Gyllenhaal, and great-grandfather William Hyde Alden. Editors also seem to run in the family, with great-grandfather Leonard Anders Gyllenhaal editing Chicago's Swedish newspaper, and various other Gyllenhaals continuing that line of work in different ways. I edited the *Academian* in high school, the College Publication at the Academy College, and was on the staff of the *Daily Pennsylvanian* at the University of Pennsylvania, where I received a degree in Economics and Sociology in 1975.

In 1974, when I heard about the miraculous interest in the Writings in Ghana, I joined the Peace Corps and was posted in neighboring Togo, to see what was going on. The Swedenborg Foundation sent approximately 150,000 books there between 1965 and 1980, and as a result there are now numerous New Church congregations in West Africa. This experience spurred my interest in the ministry, and for years I asked to be posted to West Africa, which never happened, although I have visited numerous times.

My only other ambition as a minister was to be editor of *New Church Life*, so I am a happy man. Along the way I was pastor in Kempton, Pennsylvania, Assistant Pastor in Glenview, Illinois, and Assistant Pastor and then Pastor in Bryn Athyn. I also collected a Master's Degree in Education, and Principal's Certification, at Lehigh University.

My plans as Spiritual Editor include an interest in promoting General Church scholarship in our approach to current issues, along the lines of my article in the May/June issue: *20/20 Vision – Our Search for Truth*. I am also interested in re-looking at the original views and strategies of the General Church founders. But mainly I feel privileged to serve and hope that *New Church Life* can continue to be a valuable part of people's connection to the

General Church.

Jeremy lives in Bryn Athyn with his wife, Allyn (Edmonds). Contact: Jeremy.Simons@brynathynchurch.org

A Warm Heart and Inquiring Mind

Bruce Henderson, Editor

When the Rev. Walter Orthwein retired as Spiritual Editor of *New Church Life* early in the year I bestowed on him a quote from William Shakespeare: “Welcome ever smiles, and farewell goes out sighing.”

The sighs are for Walter, who is missed. The smiles are for the Rev. Jeremy Simons, his successor, who brings an exuberant spirit – for the church, for the doctrines, and for life in general.

My wife and I have been part of a Journey Group led by Jeremy for several years now, and we love the camaraderie, the learning, and the laughter led by Allyn and Jeremy so much that we look for excuses to get together even when there isn’t a Journey Campaign. That’s the kind of spirit, curiosity and doctrinal leadership he will bring to these pages.

Readers of *New Church Life* are already familiar with his writing and thinking. He has been contributing sermons and articles throughout the 10 years of my tenure – always thoughtful, sometimes provocative, and always anchored in doctrine. Typical was his most recent offering in the May/June issue: *20/20 Vision: Our Search for Truth*. He has an inquiring mind and loves to research – in the Writings and relevant literature – on everything from church history and modern trends to a recent discussion of slavery and the New Church.

As did Walter in this position, he will offer editorials and Life Lines with each issue, articles on anything else that catches his interest, and occasional sermons. And we will all be richer for it. (See his initial editorial on *Racism*, page 355.)

Jeremy is often seen walking around Bryn Athyn, with his wife, Allyn, his dog – or both – counting his steps on a FitBit toward a daily goal. I have no doubt his mind is taking “steps” as well – thinking about issues we all face and how the doctrines apply to help us all. We look forward to the results. “Welcome ever smiles . . . “

Editorials

HOW LONG, LORD?

This past 19th of June we celebrated the 250th anniversary of the birth of the New Church, descending to earth out of heaven. Because of the coronavirus pandemic we could not celebrate – together, as that precious church – at the General Church Retreat. But we could reflect on the vision and the promise. And as we wait and wait for the New Church to come into the fulfilment of its destiny – “the crown of all the churches that have hitherto existed in the earth” – and as the ravages of the Last Judgment still roil the world around us, we are one with the plaintive psalmist: “How long, Lord? How long?”

On the Fourth of July Americans also celebrated another dream of great promise and challenge – the independence wrung from revolution. That, too, was almost 250 years ago. That, too, held out ideals – that “all men are created equal,” with rights “endowed by their Creator.” And still the dream falls short of the destiny. How much longer, Lord?

The Rev. Christopher Barber preached a sermon in the Bryn Athyn Cathedral the day after the Fourth of July, *Declarations and Revolutions*. (See page 369) He focuses on the link between the celebrations: “The *declaration* of a new standard representing a *revolution* in thought and allegiance.” The message is relevant to New Church men and women in any free, democratic country that derives its values from the yearnings of its citizenry.

But how much time must elapse in this troubling needy world until the revolutions fulfill their promise? Where are we on the spectrum after a long and trying 250 years?

That bright vision of the Declaration of Independence proclaimed: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” But as Mr. Barber points out, this was not true then for Black slaves, for women, for many not in the class of the wealthy elite. We have made progress. We still have more to do.

What we need to recognize is that the “rights” of the Declaration, and the Pledge of Allegiance to “one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and

justice for all,” are aspirational. It is like the prayer we recite every day: “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, as in heaven, so upon the earth.” These are goals we pledge ourselves to achieving and we are not there yet – indeed may never get there completely. But we all have hope. We all have roles and responsibilities.

When Benjamin Franklin came out of Independence Hall in Philadelphia on the last day of the Constitutional Convention in 1787, a lady passing by asked: “Well, Doctor, what do we have – a Republic or a Monarchy?” Franklin famously answered: “A Republic – if you can keep it.” He did not say, “if we can keep it,” or “if *the government* can keep it,” but “*if you* can keep it.” It is clearly the opportunity and responsibility of “We the People.” So it is with establishing the New Church on earth.

French aristocrat, diplomat and philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville, an astute observer of the early American character, wrote about his travels in *Democracy in America* in 1835 that “Americans have all a lively faith in the perfectibility of man. They all consider society as a body in a state of improvement.”

That is the impulse of people everywhere – especially where they have the opportunity to perfect what their nation stands for. It is like the process we are all called upon as we evolve – as individuals, nations and churches: regeneration.

Rev. Barber focused on proprium – that “selfhood that is initially rooted in the love of self and the world.” This is the challenge of our lifetimes – to rise above those baser loves and learn to love first the Lord and our neighbor. That is also the challenging process of achieving “liberty and justice for all” – and the painfully slow process of establishing the Lord’s Church on earth.

We know that the battles of personal regeneration, of building “a more perfect union,” of establishing that “crown of all churches,” are fraught with demons and dragons.

The Book of Revelation is our own Declaration of Independence, filled with symbolism of the struggle and the ultimate promise of the New Church and a new world.

It begins with the Woman clothed with the Sun, about to “bring forth a male child, who is to rule all the nations.” That newborn is “snatched away and taken to God and to His throne,” while the woman is driven into the wilderness to escape the dragon in a place prepared by the Lord. She is a symbol of spiritual truth giving birth to the Heavenly Doctrines establishing that New Church in heaven and on the earth.

This becomes possible as the falsities of the previous church are exposed. The newborn represents the new doctrine revealed to us by the Lord. The

dragon forever stalks this new understanding of truth. Michael and his angels, fighting for the one God of heaven and for a life of faith, slay that dragon of faith alone.

Attacks on our faith are part of temptation and regeneration. Even when the dragon is cast out of heaven it still persecutes the woman. But she is given the wings of an eagle to fly into the wilderness to be nourished and protected “for a time, and times, and half a time.” That curious phrase means “the end of the former church and the beginning of the new.” (*Apocalypse Revealed* 547) The dragon still spews a flood of water out of its mouth, threatening to drown people in their own selfishness. But the earth swallows up the flood: truth will always absorb and overcome falsity.

Like the woman, we are never completely safe in this world, because of everyone’s freedom to choose between good and evil. That freedom is both curse and blessing – depending on how we choose to use it. All of our successes and failures are rooted in these choices. So is our potential – and our hope.

There will always be dragons, bent on turning us toward darkness and hopelessness. But in our own “declarations” and “revolutions” we strive for the ideals we yearn for – in our lives, in our nation, in our church.

In the lessons before his sermon Mr. Barber read the parable in *Matthew* 25 about feeding the hungry, taking in the stranger, clothing the naked as “doing unto Me.”

“We must see ourselves in this parable,” he said, “as individuals, as a church, and as a country. There have been times when we have been righteous. There have been times when we have been accursed. There have been times when we have been loving and there have been times when we have left the sick uncared for and the imprisoned unvisited.”

And what does this mean for what is still left undone?

“Whether we are speaking of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes, or the Doctrines for the New Church, these are all tall orders. But they are all tall orders for our souls and our spirits. They are tall order for salvation of all people and the creation of a heaven from the human race. They are tall orders for our hearts, and if we are to fulfill them, we must ever strive to do better.”

But how long, Lord? How long until we are worthy of heaven? How long until “the better angels of our nature” deliver on our nation’s promise? How long until His Church truly crowns the earth? This sermon was followed by the soulful hymn, *Lord, make me a dwelling place for You*. That is where our hope begins and where it rests.

(BMH)

RACISM AND THE 250TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE NEW CHURCH

Several articles in this issue address the problem of racism and the urgent need for some kind of revolution.

Last June we had a somewhat muted celebration of the 250th anniversary of the beginning of the New Church, remembering that sweetest of all days in June 1770. It was muted because of Covid-19. Even though this event was almost completely unrecognized in this world, its magnitude and importance can't be overstated. It is literally the solution to every problem that the world faces. It is the revolution that we need.

One of the ironies of this situation is that even though the Writings assert that the New Church really is the solution, it is seen by some as part of the problem, as is also the case with most churches. It is sometimes said that organized religion is the cause of all world strife. Surprisingly, this is an accusation that has merit, according to the Writings.

When there are serious issues in our world, such as our recurring, long-standing and seemingly hopeless struggle with racism and bigotry, we often forget or discount the teaching of the Writings that these things have a religious cause. The spiritual state of the people of our culture, our own spiritual state, is the source of these conflicts. The Writings tell us that Christianity has come to an end, and that the result of this fallen state is widespread, long term, pain and suffering. The "souls under the altar" in *Revelation 6* are the victims of the bigotry and abuse that is prevalent in the culture of the fallen church.

The Writings even identify this tendency as a genetic condition:

The nature of a church is that it tends to dwindle and deteriorate and its initial integrity dissolves. The main reason is that hereditary evil increases, since all parents add new evil to what they inherited. (*Secrets of Heaven* 494)

It is often said that the denial of racism is one of the strongest identifying markers of a racist. This is because when we are blind to our own prejudices and tendencies, we are all the more likely to perpetuate them. Our blindness to our cultural weaknesses prevents us from recognizing and dealing with their causes. We are all part of a fallen Christian culture and belonging to an organization that believes in something new and better, as is described in the Writings, does not change that.

The New Church is a new spiritual era that has come to this world, and which is beginning to spread. The beliefs, attitudes and behaviors, or the norms and mindsets, of this era will erase every one of humanity's dilemmas one by one. While these healing norms, mindsets and practices may or may not truly characterize our organization, they are nevertheless what we aspire to, and why we love to think of ourselves as part of the New Church.

The recognition of our fallen nature, the awareness of our own faults and

prejudices, and the understanding that without the Lord's help there is no church in us at all, is key to the healing that the New Church brings. We may not think that after 250 years the world has progressed very far towards the state described in the Heavenly Doctrine called "The New Church." But the Lord is in charge of the world, not us, and we are not the judges of how things ought to be. The descriptions are there to give us hope, to help us to understand and contextualize what we see happening around us, and to encourage us to make the New Church a reality in our own spiritual lives. It is a revolution that is happening one person at a time, and no power on earth can stop it.

(JFS)

Letters to the Editors

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

A Longer View

To The Editors:

Recently, the Rev. Solomon Keal preached on Jonah and the whale. We enjoyed his sermon virtually because, at that moment, Margaret and I were pretty much locked down in our retirement community in order to prevent exposure of our aged population to COVID-19. Even now, we seem to be in the “belly of the whale” and, like Jonah, our ordinary lives are still on hold, as we wait for deliverance in the form of a cure and/or a vaccine. Life has slowed considerably.

This is an opportunity to do a little inward examination of ourselves and outward examination of our world. In the latter case, I have noticed that the air is cleaner. In fact, photographic comparisons of some large cities before and after the lockdown have shown significant reductions in pollution due to the various restrictions on vehicle and industrial usage. Carbon emissions are reduced – at least for now.

As Barrie Ridgway noted in his letter – *A Broader View* (*New Church Life* (March/April 2020) – the human race is the seminary, basis and support of the heavens. (*Last Judgment* 10 and *Doctrine of the Holy Scripture* 34) At the moment, the human race lives on this earth, but one wonders how long this earth will support the human race. How long will we live our very comfortable lives, or indeed any life at all?

Many decades ago, I learned in an astronomy course that the sun will run out of fuel and blow out as a red giant in a few billion years. At that point, the earth will be completely incinerated. But, does the earthbound human race actually have even that much time?

On shorter time scales, the future of the earth is a very complex scientific subject. Factors include the natural cycles of the earth’s orbital and spin

parameters which create cycles of ice ages, the natural gradual increase in solar radiation, the melting of polar ice to increase sea levels, the melting of permafrost to release carbon dioxide, and the man-made enhancement of the naturally-occurring greenhouse effect through our energy usage carbon emissions.

During the last ice age – about 21,000 years ago – ice covered the northern hemisphere down to present day New York City, and Norfolk in the United Kingdom. In the southern hemisphere it covered Patagonia, South Africa, and Australia. (*Physics Today*, May 2020, p.50) Our next ice coverage will happen in another 20,000 years unless man-made global warming pushes it further away.

At first, it seems that man-made global warming may sound like good news, but such warming will make our planet very uncomfortable as average temperatures rise significantly. Changes to more extreme climate behavior will accelerate dramatically and in a few hundred years, much of the land mass of the earth will be inhospitable to mammalian life.

On the other hand, if we humans *significantly* reduce our carbon output, we can survive by moving around the planet, at least until the next ice age. And perhaps beyond. Surviving cyclical ice ages, we might even live here another few hundreds of thousands of years. (See e.g. *NASA.gov*) The future of Homo Sapiens might then be as long as its past.

This is a very big discussion. But I am suggesting that during this global pandemic, we might take this opportunity, this slow-down, to ponder global issues. Could we not ask what sort of world we wish to pass on to future generations? Would not a consideration of this question be a wise use of our time “in the belly of the whale”?

Gregory L. Baker
Hatboro, Pennsylvania

Imaginary and Real Heavens

To The Editors:

Have you ever wondered why the memorable relations about the imaginary heavens are at the beginning of *Conjugal Love* instead of the beginning of *Heaven and Hell*? This bothered me for years. Then it struck me that many people view marriage sort of as an imaginary heaven that will make them live “happily ever after,” with no thought of use and focused on themselves.

You can put this together with the teaching that to love is to feel another's joy as joy in oneself and not the other way around. All those imaginary heavens are really focused on feeling joy oneself, not on making someone else happy. They are all the recreations of heaven but not the essence of heaven, just like feeling happy in marriage is the recreation and the result but not the cause.

It is being useful, both in heaven and in marriage, that makes it heavenly, that gives real delight, and that brings us closer to each other and closer to God.

In our world today, with so much focus on the sensual and material, people use this as a guide to love and marriage so they, in essence, choose an imaginary heaven and only discover afterwards that it doesn't last because the foundation is not there to support it. It is like the difference between love and emotion that Dr. James Dobson describes so well.

Love is a straight line of quiet, steady commitment and caring about another's well-being but sometimes it is not obvious in our surface feelings. Emotion comes and goes, up and down, but we always are aware of it when it is there.

Consider the air that is always there but that we only notice when the wind blows or when it is very hot or very cold. The air is like the love and the wind and temperature are like the emotion. We need to choose love, not emotion, and air, not wind, as the foundations we build on.

I thought it might be fun to share things in the Three-fold Word that have puzzled us, whether we have come to some kind of peace about them or not. I always think of these as the growing edge of my spirit.

Kathleen Simons
Lutherville, Maryland

The Substances Matter in the Holy Supper

To The Editors:

What is a priest, one who has accepted the responsibility of representing the Lord in worship, to do when asked to offer the Holy Supper to a person who has been advised to stop consuming one of the elements offered, i.e., the bread or the wine? Should he accommodate and offer something else, say, plain bread and grape juice? **Do the substances really matter?**

Yes, according to the Lord's teachings they significantly do. Our Lord has made this clearly known to every priest – and layman – of the New Church

in a specific chapter on the Holy Supper in the crowning work of His new revelation, *True Christian Religion* (or, as it has now been also titled, *True Christianity*). There we are told, “Without knowing about the correspondences of physical things with spiritual things, no one can know the functions and benefits of the Holy Supper.” (# 698) The spiritual correspondence of bread and wine are then explained in detail.

Recently, however, the opinion has been expressed that “the one condition that brings about correspondence is that there is love among the people who partake.”

Now, eating a meal together certainly does bring people together; and if they have a love for the Lord – for His Divine Humanity – such a meal brings them closer to Him. But can any kind of meal fulfill the primary purpose He intends with His Supper? After all, it was the Lord who purposefully instituted the Holy Supper. It is the Almighty God who wants to join us with Him, not we who by our own efforts make this happen; we are but receivers of His goodness and truth. Thus it was Jesus who, repeating the commands of Jehovah, told His disciples specifically what was to be served at the table in the upper room.

What did our Lord have in mind for us when He asked us to “do this in remembrance of Me” – to celebrate again His last supper with His disciples with bread and wine? Let us closely consider the following principle He inspired Swedenborg to unfold in his journal, *Spiritual Experiences*. It explains how our Creator flows into us with His life. There Swedenborg wrote under the heading:

The apparent inflow from a person on earth to the Lord

It appears as if human thoughts, from a person on earth or from a spirit, move the Lord, when yet all things to the very least flow in from the Lord, thus into the person, not from the person. For I am taught that the fact is, when the life of the Lord flows into a subject fit to receive, heaven is moved, because the order is complete, and the receiving vessel, so to speak, is fit to receive. It is different when it is not fit, for then the qualities flowing in cannot operate. (*Spiritual Experiences* 2960)

This principle is further specified in the reference Swedenborg made in his *Index* to his *Spiritual Experiences*, where it is said that the vessel must be “fit and corresponding” (emphasis added):

That a person on earth does not flow in through his or her thoughts into heaven and to the Lord, but that the life of the Lord flows in, and where there is a fit receiving and corresponding vessel, heaven is affected. *It is otherwise when the vessel is not fit.* (*Spiritual Experiences* 2960; *Index*, Vol. 2, p. 291, *Vessel (Vas)*, I:804–emphasis added)

Doubtless the necessity of there being a corresponding vessel for the Lord to flow into is why the chapter on the Holy Supper in *True Christianity* begins with the statement: “Without knowing about the correspondences of physical

things with spiritual things, no one can know the functions and benefits of the Holy Supper.” (# 688) The correspondences of unleavened bread and wine are then explained. But why go into all this unless there is something special about unleavened bread and fermented wine?

From the explanation then given it clearly follows that the unleavened bread and fermented wine of the Holy Supper are the earthly, physical components making up the Divinely prescribed “fit and corresponding vessels” – the vital spiritual ones being, of course, faith in the Lord and charity toward the neighbor.

It seems self-evident that a miserably poor translation or paraphrase of the Bible does not form an adequate vessel in the minds of children into which angelic thought can flow, so that angels can then be with them. It cannot but be that there is a similar communication failure in the case of adults when other than unleavened bread and fermented wine are used as we eat together at the Holy Supper.

Plain grape juice and leavened bread, or whatever else, just cannot bring the right mental imagery into our minds so that the angels can be present with us. Such elements simply do not correspond to our Lord’s love and wisdom. The Lord did not make them that way, and so they cannot affect our actual physical selves in the same way as bread and wine; consequently, the Lord cannot make His intended full connection with us through them at this sacred earthly meal. For, as we saw in the words above from *Spiritual Experiences* 2690: “The fact is, when the life of the Lord flows into a subject fit to receive, heaven is moved, because the order is complete, and the receiving vessel, so to speak, is fit to receive.” It is ever so, for according to the Divine order governing all creation: “Whatever flows into any vessel is received by it according to its form.” (*Conjugal Love* 86)

From all that we are told about the Holy Supper in our Lord’s new revelation, it seems clear to me that *unleavened* bread and *fermented* wine are alone the elements that correspond to His body and blood, to His Divine goodness and truth, and are therefore alone what can potentially bring about full conjunction with Him.

So at a Holy Supper service an effort, however sincere, to accommodate to the mortal defects of worshipers by using any other elements than unleavened bread and fermented wine is to attempt to move heaven by *unfit* vessels. Substitutes cannot help them in the way their Lord intended with bread and wine. Consequently, considered in the light of the Divine doctrine, making any substitution seems a well-intended but nonetheless impossible attempt to override the very Divine order of creation, does it not?

For a minister to offer substitute substances in the Holy Supper would seem to do as little to strengthen the spiritual life of a worshiper as would

giving a low-calorie drink and meal to someone weak and underfed. Just because something tastes satisfying does not mean it can really strengthen the body. What is needed in worship is food that truly corresponds to what can spiritually nourish us.

Admittedly, this may be a “hard saying” for those who cannot partake of the Divinely intended elements of the Holy Supper. For it means they are cut off from one way to communicate with their Creator. But their case is in a way not unlike those who are totally deaf. They are unfortunately cut off from an essential part of what makes life human, namely feelings: the warmth of sincerity in a word of thanks, the urgency in a cry for help or the joy in a child’s laugh, and especially the authority in the Word of the Lord preached – to give just a few examples. The hearing organs of the deaf cannot form the vessels that can properly receive the vibrations corresponding to these feelings.

Then is life over for the deaf? Of course not. They have other senses through which to have contact with others and experience life. It is similar with those who cannot take either the unleavened bread or the wine of the Holy Supper. They have other senses to be used to have a relationship with God, particularly sight and hearing – to read and receive instruction from His Word; and voice – to pray to Him. Through these many vessels their minds can be formed, into which our merciful Creator’s love and wisdom can inflow.

Salvation and eternal life are not dependent upon receiving the Holy Supper, just as is not necessary for one to be married on earth to be prepared for life in heaven. The Holy Supper is not a guarantee; it is only an important aid to salvation, given to those who can receive it.

The Rev. Kurt P. Nemitz
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Trust in the Lord and Do Good

A Sermon by the Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr.

Readings: *Psalm 37:3-9; Matthew 6:25-33; Arcana Coelestia 4353:3.*

Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness. Delight yourself also in the LORD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart. (Psalm 37:3-4)

Simplicity. “Trust in the Lord and do good.” Who among us doesn’t resonate with the simplicity of that statement? It’s not hard to understand. It could easily be a mantra for life, and as a window into a whole code of conduct that we aspire to. “Trust in the Lord and do good.” Simple, straightforward and powerful.

But does trust in the Lord always feel simple? We know from experience that it does not. What about when we’re in the throes of temptation and are feeling forlorn – by guilt and a sense of our own failings? What about when life feels completely overwhelming, or we’re experiencing something that just feels unfair? The Psalmist puts words to how we sometimes feel: “O Lord, how long . . . ? I am weary with my groaning. . . . I drench my couch with my tears. My eye wastes away because of grief.” (*Psalm 6:4,6*) Sometimes it’s hard to simply “trust in the Lord.”

What about “doing good”? How many of us have struggled with the most helpful course of action in the complexities of life? Do we step in or stand back? Is this a time to stand firm on principle with the likelihood of distancing ourselves from people we love, or is this a time to listen more intently to where they are coming from and be patient? Should I go to my superiors with this issue or try to handle it myself? Will this money actually help, or will it deepen a kind of dependency?

Sometimes we are like Solomon when he said: “I am a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in.” (*1 Kings 3:7*) Making good decisions, even when intending to do so, is not always easy.

Despite all that, there is a formula here that is indeed simple and is incredibly

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powerful. There is great wisdom in trusting in the Lord: in turning to Him in all things of life; believing that He can enlighten us; in deeply perceiving that He is the only One who can get us through all that life throws our way. And there is blessedness in consistently striving to do what is good. Even asking ourselves that question: What is the right thing to do in this situation? What will help? So often that leads to actions the Lord can bless. At the end of the day, the Lord is always the answer, and from Him we will be led to do what is good.

So, let's spend some time with this Psalm in which we receive this message.

As we may expect, the verses that follow lay out a pathway for us of how to increase our trust in the Lord and come to a better understanding of the good things that He calls us to do.

Try it and you'll see. The very next phrase provides us with one of those keys. "Dwell in the land and feed on His faithfulness." (*Psalms* 37:3) In this our minds can be drawn to the Children of Israel in the Land of Canaan. This is a *Psalms* of David, during a time in Israel's history where they had largely conquered the land, but still had the pivotal challenge of obeying their part of the covenant in it.

What I hear in the phrase, "Dwell in the land and feed on His faithfulness," is the message: try it and you'll see. Land means heaven in the Word. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 9305, 2658:7, *Apocalypse Explained* 304:77) Dwelling in the land means to live a good life. (*Apocalypse Revealed* 883) For the Israelites there was a specific message: obey the covenant in the land that the Lord had provided. The covenant, as any student of the Old Testament knows, was the determinant of the Israelites' experience in the land. If they obeyed, good things happened. If they disobeyed, bad things happened.

The message for us, then, is to feed on His faithfulness, to obey the covenant. Be faithful to the covenant. Obey the Lord's commandments. Live according to the principles given to us in the Word.

The command to "dwell in the land" is the "try it and you will see" part of it. It's not obedience for its own sake. Rather there is an invitation to see that goodness results. For the Israelites, they knew viscerally – their crops grew, they were safe from their enemies, they had healthy and growing families. If they obeyed. When they did "feed on His faithfulness," life worked. And if they disobeyed, it didn't – again in palpable ways.

What we come to realize is that the same thing is true for us – even though it’s not always so obvious. We’re invited to project a bit into the life of heaven – to try it out and see that a heavenly way of acting is pleasant, joyful and safe. When we obey the Lord’s teachings our relationships work, we experience less guilt, our business dealings prosper, and we feel the inherent satisfaction of being useful. But every time we disobey, the opposite happens. Maybe not always, or right away, but if we’re paying attention, anxiety increases, we’re shorter on patience and more self-centered. As a result, things don’t go well between us and others.

There’s a principle given to us in the Heavenly Doctrines that applies. “Action comes first, then the desire for it in the person’s will follows.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 4353:3) The specific reference is to the two Great Commandments: to love the Lord and to serve the neighbor. But the point is underscored that these two are really a summary of all the truths of the Word – all the many teachings which explain and give breadth to what it means to serve the Lord and the neighbor.

So we’re invited to pick one and try it. We start by compelling ourselves to do the truth, whether or not we love it or buy into it. The *Psalms* provides us with an example: “Cease from anger and forsake wrath.” (*Psalms* 37: 8) Well, that’s a hard one for many of us. Obedience might very well need to be the initial motivator. The Lord says it, so I will do it. I’m going to dwell in the land – to project myself into a place where my anger is under control. I won’t say the grumpy thing. I won’t criticize or rebuke. I won’t let them have it when they don’t do exactly what I wanted. I won’t hold grudges. I won’t be passive aggressive.

As we make such efforts, it’s not hard to imagine some positive feedback. If loved ones see that we’re trying, they’ll appreciate it. Even one effort to bite our tongue makes a difference. And so it goes if we persistently strive to make this change in our lives. As the passage we read said, it gets easier. We remember more often. So much so that eventually it becomes “habitual.” But even more importantly we’re living a new reality. We’re dwelling in the land of no anger. We’re feeding on His faithfulness and coming to see that He’s right. Cease from anger and forsake wrath – it only causes harm. Yes, that’s true. This way is so much better. And we come to love this new way of interacting.

When we obey the Lord’s teachings our relationships work, we experience less guilt, our business dealings prosper, and we feel the inherent satisfaction of being useful.

The same is true of kindnesses. There's a passage that says everyone in heaven loves and serves others in the first place, rather than pushing persistently for their own needs. (*Arcana Coelestia* 549) This, too, is something we can try. We can project into a heavenly way of living by consciously seeking to make the day better for the ones we love. It may feel clumsy and forced at first, but we're almost certain to receive positive feedback from our efforts. And as we persist, we come to realize that heaven on earth is indeed created by everyone paying attention to the needs of others, with an effort to meet them.

The same is true with admitting our wrongs. Could we see ourselves committing to that? "Yes, I am guilty of that." "Yes, that's what I was thinking." "You caught me." Instead of "I would never . . ." "Come on, me? No way." As we try it, we begin to see that it actually works. The person to whom we are admitting doesn't think less of us but more.

We begin to see the seedlings of greater trust. We experience the positive feedback of a willingness to change our patterns, the gratitude of investing in our relationship in a new way. "Action comes first, then the desire for it in the person's will follows." This is "dwelling in the land and feeding on His faithfulness." This is experiencing a slice of heaven on earth, because we are willing to trust in the Lord's plan – because we are willing to conform our actions to what He says. We feed on His faithfulness and find it to be delightful.

Delight in the Lord. It should be no surprise, then, to discover that the very next word in the Psalm is "delight." "Delight yourself also in the Lord and He shall give you the desires of your heart." (*Psalm* 37:4) Now I love "the desires of the heart" part, but at this point I want to focus on the part about the Lord.

Delight yourself also *in the Lord*. The Psalm actually has several callings to us relating to the Lord. We've already talked about "Trust *in the Lord* and do good." But then there's "Commit your way *to the Lord*" (vs. 5). "Rest *in the Lord*." "Wait patiently *for Him*" (vs. 7).

In general, we're talking about the Source. Yes, there are the principles of truth that we are to live by – and to see that they work. But how fundamental and powerful it is to recognize that it is the Lord who is asking. It is He who is offering heaven. It is He who is showing us the way and coaching us consistently to walk in it.

There is a powerful teaching along these lines in the *Heavenly Doctrines*:

Acknowledging one's God is the starting point of religion, and among Christians acknowledging the Lord is the starting point of the Church; for without acknowledgement of Him there can be no transmission of anything from Him, nor consequently any faith, nor thus any love. (*Arcana Coelestia* 10,112)

Similarly, we read in the *Psalms*: "The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom." (*Psalm* 111:10)

So, we are called to "Delight [ourselves] in the Lord." Not only is there

an invitation to find true delight in the Lord's path, but to discover the contentedness from knowing deeply in our spirits that He is the source of all our true happiness. We can capture this when we develop a habit of thanking the Lord for all that's good in our lives. For when we notice our blessings, and attribute them to Him, we come to understand that He is indeed a God of love.

Commit your way to the Lord. So too with committing. We have been talking about it – committing to the Lord's pathways, or His teachings. But the focus can also be on committing *to the Lord*. Is there not a leap of faith involved at least on some level? We have to say at some point, "Okay, Lord, I'm in." "I'm going with Your plan." "I dedicate my life to You." Isn't it amazing, and sad, how many people can't seem to get there?

Rest in the Lord. So next comes the invitation to "*rest in the Lord*." There appears to be an invitation to live with the reality that He is always with us – to try to live with that awareness. The most famous of the *Psalms* says, "The Lord is my Shepherd." And then backs that up with a powerful list of acknowledgments: "He makes me to lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in the paths of righteousness. [He is with me, even in] the valley of the shadow of death." (*Psalms* 23:2-4)

As we reflect on all that we go through, can we acknowledge these things about Him? When we can capture that sense, our souls can be at rest, knowing and believing in a deep way that we are never alone.

Wait patiently. And if we get to phases of life where we do feel alone, or in one of those valleys of the shadow of death where we can't easily experience the Lord's presence, can we wait patiently for Him to lead us to a better state? Isn't it true that when we look back, He has led us through? He has provided comfort. He has brought us to brighter days when happiness returned – when the trauma is over, when the overwhelming feeling has passed, when the problem is either resolved or in the process of being resolved.

Conclusion. We live in a world where a vast number of people, some very well known to us, have a growing hesitancy to place their faith in the Word, or

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Today we have been reminded that we do not actually need to wait. It's not all a future promise. It can be ours right now in powerful and real ways, if we will only "dwell in the land and feed on His faithfulness."

to believe in the Lord. In our skeptical world where people can't seem to commit or don't have that simple faith, the Lord places this simple formula before them: "Trust in the Lord and do good."

I'm well aware that I'm preaching to the choir for the most part. I can easily imagine that you've seen the Lord's principles at work in your life -- you've dwelt in the land and know the experience of heaven that can come. You're also likely to resonate with the sense of the Lord's presence -- to nod your head with your own version of the ways in which the Lord has carried you

through.

So today maybe there's an extended invitation to share this simple formula with someone who might need it -- with someone who is skeptical; with some who haven't yet found it in themselves to commit. Can you share with them that it's all about trusting in the Lord and doing good? It's all about trying it and seeing that it works. It's all about placing your delights and true happiness -- the desires of your heart -- on the things the Lord wants to give you anyway.

At the end of the day, we are all on a journey to the land flowing with milk and honey. We all need to hear the Lord say to us: "In My father's house are many mansions; I go to prepare a place for you." (*John* 14:2) We know that a full and rich experience of heaven awaits us to the extent that we persevere in our part of the covenant.

Today we have been reminded that we do not actually need to wait. It's not all a future promise. It can be ours right now in powerful and real ways, if we will only "dwell in the land and feed on His faithfulness." If we can "commit our ways to the Lord;" if are willing to "rest in Him" and "wait patiently for Him." If we "trust in the Lord and do good."

Amen.



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Declarations and Revolutions

A Sermon by The Rev. Christopher A. Barber

Bryn Athyn Cathedral – July 5, 2020

Lessons: Psalm 30; Matthew 25:31-46; Arcana Coelestia 149

Yesterday, July 4, our nation celebrated the traditional date of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. This day in 1776 for America, much like our Church's *19th of June* 1770, is usually commemorated with great crowds and fanfare as a birthday of something important.

Declaration and (premature) celebration of an ideal

What is it that we celebrate on the Fourth of July? When we get down to it, it's not much different from what we celebrate on the 19th of June: The *declaration* of a new standard representing a *revolution* in thought and allegiance.

In both instances, however, we celebrate something that does not exist, but instead is an ideal that is ever coming into being. The Declaration of Independence includes these words embedded in our national consciousness: “*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.*”

These truths, however, were not made evident to the millions of Black people held in the bondage of slavery. These rights were tucked away from the nation's women who had limited access to property, education, independence and their franchise. This consent was made foreign to those indigenous peoples who became alienated from the very land that once was theirs.

These values captured in our Declaration of Independence were held as the new standard of this new nation. People have striven to secure them more

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perfectly ever since.

The United States has been filled with unrest, awakenings and conversations on inequalities experienced throughout the land. Cities have turned into demonstration platforms while governments have been in the precarious position of having to balance the protection of rights of peaceful protest and the protection of property. Curfews have been instituted to help bring calm to the streets and to separate principled protesters from those who are merely mischief-makers and far worse.

There have been varied responses to their efforts and it is clear that protesters and activists will not be silenced. They are emboldened even

now by the values of the Declaration and they are protected by the Constitution of our nation.

The proprium as a good thing

This great and extended unrest might seem to some like a failing of the democratic principles of our nation. However, the Doctrines for the New Church tell us that a collective group, such as a nation, is a macrocosm of an individual. (cf. *New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* 91; *Divine Love and Wisdom* 319; *True Christian Religion* 775)

Each of us has something within that the Doctrines call a proprium. This is the source of our experience of selfhood, which is initially rooted in the love of self and of the world. (*Brief Exposition* 110) It is what gives us a sense that I have an ending of who I am and you have a beginning of who you are (*Divine Providence* 78) -- that there is such a thing as mine and the eventual recognition that there can and ought to be such a thing as yours. This is what makes it possible for us to have individual as well as communal identities and plans, hopes and dreams.

For those who know about this proprium, or this perception of selfhood, it often has a bad connotation. The Doctrines frequently present it as pure love of self and pure love of the world and the source of all evil. (cf. *New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* 82) So there are warnings against leaving our propriums

untrained and immature.

However, the Doctrines also tell us that if we refuse to engage in the love of self and the world, if we try to live only in the spirit and neglect what is natural about our lives and our world, then we become like a house that has lost its foundation, one that would crack and crumble. (*Heaven and Hell* 528)

And this proprium, this self, is what allows us to detect when we are being harmed, being limited, being taken advantage of, being controlled, and being oppressed. (cf. *Arcana Coelestia* 847) It is the part of us that makes us respond with upset and indignation, sometimes with anger and rage or protest when we or “our people” are threatened. (*Conjugal Love* 392) It is what enables us to keep our balance as individuals in a society of many – eventually conserve harmony between the push and pull of life, and keep track of our rights and responsibilities (cf. *Arcana Coelestia* 1594)

When people are together as a collective unit – whether it is in the collective identity as a married couple, as a family, as a city, as a nation, or as a church – the proprium is the source of our ability to have pride, and our ability to be a community and to take care of our own. It is the source of a community’s ability to inventory needs and respond to trials and hurts, as when the people of a town join together to stop the advance of a highway that will divide their community, or how citizens of a nation can rise up in time of war and support each other in the effort.

The proprium as a bad thing

And yet this same proprium that makes for such ordinary and extraordinary demonstrations of sacrifice and camaraderie for oneself and one’s people has another side. It can make us indifferent to the suffering of those who are not “our own.” It makes it possible for us to put our interests, both individually and collectively, above the needs or even the rights of others.

It is what can lead to communities looking down their collective nose at others. It can make nations take advantage of other weaker sovereignties. It can lead churches and faith groups to believe that they are exclusively the people

Much like freedom is a double-edged sword, the proprium, that sense of self, can be the same. That mechanism which can bring us together as we focus on our collective needs and protection can also drive us apart.

of God and let everyone else quite literally be damned. It can make individuals and collectives believe that their way of life is the best way, or their culture the best culture, or their perspective the best perspective, or their political party the best party, or their heritage the best heritage, or even their race the best race. (cf. *New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* 75; *Arcana Coelestia* 3993.9; *Jonah* 4; *Prophets and Psalms* 211, 214)

Much as freedom is a double-edged sword, the proprium, that sense of self, can be the same. That mechanism which can bring us together as we focus on our collective needs and protection can also drive us apart. What determines whether community or ostracism will occur is what is most important to us – in other words, what rules us. (*Arcana Coelestia* 8794; *Divine Providence* 113)

Rebellion in America

And speaking of rulers . . . The great irony of Independence Day is that we celebrate the deliberate dissolution of our ties with one ruling government in favor of the ultimate establishment of a new one. Our independence was accomplished by significant acts of lawlessness and rebellion.

From the perspective of today, most Americans would agree that this was right. However, the internal deliberation and strife within the Second Continental Congress, as well as within regular everyday colonials, leading up to the Revolution, was very real. The tension is captured in the newspapers and journals of the day. It is captured in memories of family division – fathers against sons and in-laws against their children’s chosen spouses. The tension in the colonies was real, the hurt harbored in that reality was real.

From this, a flashpoint in history – the Boston Massacre – exploded out of the hidden energy of that tension. Despite its name, only five men were killed – the first to fall being a dock worker, Crispus Attucks, a man of Native American and African descent. Word of the event was spread around the colonies and stirred people, eventually leading future President John Adams, who had been in Boston during the event, to reflect that on that day the “foundation of American Independence was laid.”

Many events and offenses led to the Declaration of Independence which we celebrated yesterday, of which the Boston Massacre is just one example. Small skirmishes here and there became all-out war – complete and total revolution. The British Colonies of North America, no longer wishing to be subservient to England, outlined their grievances and made polite and dignified supplication to their king to honor their wish to separate and exist alongside it, “to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them.”

With this document, the Second Continental Congress channeled the

American ideal. And when King George refused to acknowledge their sovereignty, the nation stood firm in its demand for autonomy, respect and equal footing on the world stage, threw its reliance on, as they put it, “the protection of divine Providence,” and risked their “lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor” and officially were in open revolution.

The American revolutionaries demanded a change. And they demanded a change because above all they had something that we all are called to have – something that serves as an extension of the proprium: self-respect. And what is self-respect but a willingness to believe in our own potential – that we are born for good things. (*Heaven and Hell* 329)

What is self-respect but our willingness to love who we are and to believe that we are worthy? The Lord calls us each to have this. He calls out to us in His Word, begging us to hear that He loves us. He calls out to us in His Word asking us to take care of ourselves, body, mind and soul. (*Divine Love and Wisdom* 331)

Rebellion in ourselves

And, much as the proprium has two sides, self-respect can go too far. When it tips the balance and becomes a disrespect of others, it goes too far. When it causes us to dismiss others, it goes too far. When it turns into a contempt and disgust of others who are different, it goes too far. (cf. *Arcana Coelestia* 2910)

And when things go too far, we require a revolution.

The Doctrines for the New Church tell us that our sense of self must in time be put away in favor of something better. Our selfhood is limited, our proprium natural, and without change we will always treat ourselves as being the gold standard of humanity. But if you’re like me, you know that you’re not perfect. But there is One who is perfect. We must take on the Lord’s standard and learn to see the world through His eyes and from His sense of self. He calls us to take on His ways which are higher than ours. He asks us to have a revolution of our own hearts and minds – each of us individually and

We must take on the Lord’s standard and learn to see the world through His eyes and from His sense of self. He calls us to take on His ways which are higher than ours. He asks us to have a revolution of our own hearts and minds – each of us individually and collectively.

These documents of church and country have much in common. They both tell a story of high expectations for future independence.

collectively.

The Doctrines for the New Church, penned not long before the Declaration we celebrated yesterday, spell out terms of their own which are radical and revolutionary in and of themselves. They tell of a sundering and a separation – the end of an old Christian Church, one corrupted and overbearing, one disconnected from the values and understanding of the Divine. One that had shattered God

into three and made charity of no importance.

The Doctrines of the New Church tell a story of a new and independent spirit – one, not of a New Nation, but of a New Christianity. Their spirit, rebellious and radical, tells of a new way of being people. They tell of a new heart that we each can have, one where our selfishness and worldliness take a back seat to our care for our neighbors and our love to the Lord.

These documents of church and country have much in common. They both tell a story of high expectations for future independence. For separation from what has become harmful and a hindrance. For dreams of freedom – true freedom and responsibility. And neither of them is a guarantee.

In a way, the Doctrines of the New Church spreading throughout the world are not much different from a copy of the Declaration of Independence packed away on a ship bound for London. They are both imbued with bold, audacious – and at the time of their advent – radically revolutionary dreams, and neither of them secures for anyone their vision.

Must we have the full roadmap established to be confident in a vision? From declaration to realization? From Doctrine to New Jerusalem Descended? No. How can we? But we must set our course by some guiding light. The North Star of our values and hopes. The rising sun of our better tomorrow.

And we must do this despite being inclined to evils of every kind. As our Executive Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Peter Buss Jr. reminded in his letter to the Church in response to the racial unrest following the murder of George Floyd:

We . . . have available to us vital perspectives from the Heavenly Doctrines – that variety is a part of perfection, and that each soul is an angel in the making loved by the Lord. A particular teaching has demanded attention in my mind at this time. It states that “evils cannot be removed unless they appear.” (*Divine Providence* 278) The thing that led me to this passage is the rejecting part – the Lord doesn’t cause evil to happen but can work with us to abhor it when we see its destructive nature. We are seeing that rejection [in our nation today], and that is as it should be.

Part of the work of setting our sights on a better future is contending with the obstacles, challenges, threats and enemies that stand between us and that better future. This is true for our great nation when we set our sights on the lofty promises and goals of the Declaration of Independence. When we enact the rights and privileges and responsibilities set forth for us – and by us – in our Constitution, the very document which gives us the right to assemble, to worship, and to believe as we would today.

If God – the one with every reason to condemn – could find it in His heart to forgive, who are we to hate our sisters and brothers in this national body?

Comparing and Contrasting America and ourselves

In the United States we value the consent of the governed. These days we hear the voices of our friends and neighbors, the voices of hundreds, the voices of thousands, the voices of tens and hundreds of thousands – the voices of generations crying out in the streets! We hear them calling for Justice! They state that they do not consent to being treated as second- or third-class citizens but rather to be equal members of the body of this nation. They demand that their brothers and sisters be treated the same. They declare their independence from old harmful systems, and work to incite revolution of hearts, minds and ways.

In a community, just as in a body, if one part suffers, every part suffers with it. (*I Corinthians 12:26*) We are called in this church to be mindful of the whole body of our church. We are charged by our Constitution and the very spirit of it to be mindful of the whole body of our nation. We are charged with the selfless love of the Father in Heaven who calls us to love one another as He has loved us. (*John 13:34*)

And if Jesus – God Himself on the cross – could call for forgiveness of those who rejected Him. Of those who persecuted Him. Of he who betrayed Him. Of those who arrested Him, mocked and scourged Him, humiliated and tortured Him. Of those who set themselves as His enemies. Of those who crucified Him. If God – the one with every reason to condemn – could find it in His heart to forgive, who are we to hate our sisters and brothers in this national body?

His declarations were *radical*. Jesus called for a revolution of heart.

I think of His parable which I read this morning of the *Son of Man Judging*

It is not enough to make a Declaration.
 It is not enough to craft a Constitution.
 It is not enough to know a doctrine. It is not enough to hold a Bible. These are simply the beginning.

the Nations:

We must see ourselves in this parable, as individuals, as a church, and as a country. There have been times when we have been righteous. There have been times when we have been accursed. There have been times when we have been loving and there have been times when we have left the sick uncared for and the imprisoned unvisited.

But inasmuch as we have done it to the least – we have done it to the highest. So what does that mean when we've left it undone?

Whether we are speaking of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the Ten Commandments, The Beatitudes, or the Doctrines for the New Church, these are all tall orders. But they are all tall orders for our souls and our spirits. They are tall orders for salvation of all people and the creation of a heaven from the human race. They are tall orders for our hearts, and if we are to fulfill them, we must ever strive to do better.

It is not enough to make a Declaration. It is not enough to craft a Constitution. It is not enough to know a doctrine. It is not enough to hold a Bible. These are simply the beginning.

The proprium as a tool in the revolution

Our proprium is in us as a tool to aid us in our journey through this life. We must have access to love of the self and love of the world – the pride and the self-confidence and the self-love and the self-worth and self-respect to look at our past and see how far we've come. To be proud of our accomplishments. To be proud of our growth. But at the same time, we must have the humility to look forward and see how far we have to go. To see how we all fall short of the Glory of God (*Romans* 3:23), and even so we are called into all greatness in Him who made us and governs us and guides us and seeks our acceptance of His will and His way.

He tells us that things will be hard when we pursue what is right. (*Matthew* 5:11, 10:22) That families will turn on each other on account of commitments to what is right. (*Luke* 12: 49-53) He tells us that sufficient for EACH AND EVERY DAY is the evil thereof. (*Matthew* 6:34) He tells us that there are many

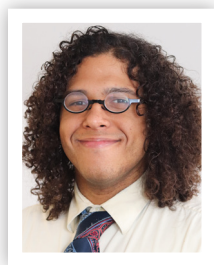
opportunities for destruction as we go. (*Matthew 7: 13-14*) And He tells us to set our sights on the sunrise of a better tomorrow. (*Heaven and Hell 141-142*)

Our nation has been in a state of unrest and weeping. But there is joy promised in the morning. (*Psalms 30:5*) We must each in our own way find it in ourselves to feel the grief of our brothers and sisters – the heartache of a nation – not hold them in murderous contempt. Social media is almost like a training ground for this work. It has given us an unprecedented opportunity to hear from each other and to see both great displays of dismissiveness, contempt and hatred, at the same time as it exhibits compassion, growth, knowledge and love. Protests and counter protests and demonstrations and letters and videos and books and articles and conversations and sermons happen. There is conflict in these to be sure, but as the proverb says, “iron sharpens iron.” (*Proverbs 27:17*)

We find ourselves right now fighting in the battleground of ideas and values. But at some point, we must beat these iron swords of revolution into ploughshares for farming and turn from deconstruction of old harmful systems to the development and growth of new and better ones. (*Isaiah 2:4*) And we can do this in the spirit of the Lord if we are willing to find unity in the human points of contact in our topics of passion.

We must – as a nation, as a church, and as individuals – make our declarations, and see to our revolutions.

Amen.



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The Roots of Racism

A Sermon by The Rev. Mark D. Pendleton

*Readings: Genesis 6:1-9; 1 Samuel 16: 1, 4, 5, 6-7; Mark 12:28-34;
Matthew 7:12; Secrets of Heaven 570, 580, 584, 593, 597, 594*

I want to talk with you about racism.

This is something I've cared about since I was 15 years old or younger. At the same time, I acknowledge that I am by no means an expert on the topic. I don't have all the answers. I am learning and growing along these lines like the rest of you. And, even with all the learning I've done over the years, and the counsel I've taken from a number of wise people in preparation for this sermon, I can't imagine I won't hit a pothole or step on a landmine and say something in such a way as to offend one or more of you. But I think this is something we need to talk about.

I also realize that what I share with you is just one small slice of a very big pie. It's one small facet of a very big, important and even beautiful gem – a true and deep understanding of racism. So, if I hit a pothole, or step on a landmine, I simply ask for your mercy, understanding and compassion as I continue to learn and grow together with you.

It's no secret that we have a problem with racism in our country. It's a problem that stretches back to 1503 when the first Africans were kidnapped by the Portuguese, shipped against their will across the Atlantic, and sold as slaves in the newly forming colonies.

Racism is defined as "prejudice, discrimination or antagonism directed against someone of a different race based on the belief that one's own race is superior." It's also defined as "the belief that all members of each race possess characteristics specific to that race, especially so as to distinguish it as inferior to another race."

The other day my wife Ellen and I were watching a documentary on racism in our country – how blacks have been treated over the centuries, and how racist ways of thinking, racist assumptions, and racist ways of behaving have become ingrained in our culture and also in our governmental and

organizational systems – to the point that even good-hearted and well-meaning people may not be aware of them.

As I watched, I felt more and more implicated in, incriminated by, and guilty of these crimes against humanity. It was as though I was the one who did these things to and against black people over the centuries, as though it was **my** fault! I felt so guilty that I wanted to turn away from what I was watching, turn off the television and retreat into a place of oblivious denial.

But I didn't stop watching. Neither did Ellen.

I want to begin and end on a positive note. I want to applaud all of you who have cared about this topic, beginning in your formative years, or at any other time in your life. I'll bet that any number of you grew up like I did – in an all-white community, attending an all-white school – so that your first encounter with a person of color was curiosity: “Hey, there's something different about this person. The cover of their book is different than mine.”

At the same time, you may have been taught by a wise and loving parent or mentor, or you may have sensed deep within your own heart: “I can't judge this book by its cover; it would be wrong to do so.” And so, each one of you may have worked conscientiously over the years to open other people's “books,” including people of color other than white, and read the contents, getting to know and understand them more deeply, caring about things that they care about, and loving and supporting them in their hopes, dreams and aspirations. I applaud these things in you.

But if we look at *Genesis* chapter 6, I believe the Lord tells us that we need to be on our guard, because we all have racist tendencies within us. All of us have it in us to be racist. The teachings of the New Church elucidate this by saying that since the time of the great flood, everyone of us experiences “inherited tendencies” to all kinds of attitudes and behaviors that are hurtful, destructive and “evil,” including racism. With some of us, racism is a greater challenge to overcome, and with some of us it's a lesser challenge. It's just the way spiritual inheritance works.

So, let's look at the story in *Genesis* 6 and see how racism may have gotten its start in our world, and how it can get its start in each one of us if we're not careful. Let's do this so we can know what to watch out for, what

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to guard against, and what to change about ourselves, so that racism will be fully eradicated from our own hearts, from our country, from our systems and organizations, and from our world.

Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they *were* beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose.
(Genesis 6:1,2)

This scripture isn't talking about people taking others as slaves; it's talking about the sons of God seeing the daughters of men, that they were beautiful, and taking for themselves as wives all whom they chose. But if you simply remove some words and insert some ellipses, I believe the problem of racism and enslavement shows itself in that text. Here's what you get: "Now it came to pass, when people began to multiply on the face of the earth . . . that the sons of God . . . took for themselves all whom they chose" – people taking whomever they wanted and enslaving them. Maybe it's a stretch, but isn't it interesting to see the possibility?

How did it come to be this way in our world? To answer this question, I think we need to take a walk back in time and history.

The systematic theology given to the world through Emanuel Swedenborg suggests that prior to the great flood – from the time of Adam and Eve – humankind fell away from loving God and the neighbor into loving themselves *more* than God and the neighbor, and also into loving material things, possessions, worldly success, the survival of plantations, etc., *more* than loving God and the neighbor.

We might think of this form of love for oneself and the world as "self-centered," or a "unhealthy" love of oneself in the world, or an "insubordinate" love of oneself and the world – insubordinate to loving the Lord above all, and our neighbor as ourselves.

Swedenborg shows how this insubordinate love of oneself and the world is reflected in the last two of the Ten Commandments: "You shall not covet your neighbor's house" (a house is a worldly thing) and "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbors." The word "covet" means "craving," and the "wife," "manservant," "maidservant," etc. refer to the different parts of an individual human being, such that the last of the Ten Commandments make it spiritually unlawful to own, possess, control or dominate another human being.

Swedenborg also describes the quality of this "unhealthy" love of self, in that it looks down on other people, and despises them in comparison with themselves, especially people who do not agree with them, or who won't do their bidding. In one reference, he asserts that this form of love "wills and

eagerly desires to subject other people (and therefore races) to its own authority and bidding.” (*Apocalypse Explained* 1022:2) This “unhealthy” love of self deeply also believes that it is superior to other people and races.

Swedenborg suggests that this insubordinate love of self and the world is the root of racism, and the only thing that can cut that root out of the ground is personal, systemic, active repentance, and a return to loving the Lord above all and our neighbor as ourselves.

The story in *Genesis* 6 continues: “There were giants on the earth in those days, and afterward. . . . They were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.” There it is in Scripture: the human tendency to see oneself and one’s

own race as giants in the land, superior to other people and races, and then to assume the right to own, possess, control, dominate, suppress and repress them at will.

This one single route of racism has four branches – four things we need to watch out for. The first branch has to do with human desire and will. The second has to do with justifications. The third is the assumptions we make. And the fourth is ignorance, meaning lack of awareness, or simply not knowing.

The first branch has to do with human desire and will. The insubordinate love of self and the world wants to dominate and control people and races, and it wills this to be so. This brand of love for oneself doesn’t have a good reason why it is this way. It just wants what it wants and wills it to be so.

The second branch of this racist root is the justification that the selfish love of oneself and the world comes up with in support of what it wants and wills. Our theology suggests that as human beings we are motivated and driven by our desires, wants and will, and what we want and will we naturally seek to justify with our intellect, even using the Word of God to do so.

As part of my research, I went online to learn about the slave trade. One of the main reasons it got its start was that people in the newly forming colonies didn’t have enough labor to run their plantations. So they went overseas and, as it says in *Genesis* 6, “took for themselves all whom they chose.” I also wanted to discover arguments and justifications for slavery that existed back in the day. I found 27 justifications, some of which still exist today as legitimate reasons for

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looking down on people of color and treating them as less than whites. Four of them were scriptural.

The theology of the New Church suggests that justifications for what we want and will are “conceived” in our will and thinking and that over time they take away the human capacity to think clearly. The result is that what is genuinely true and good gets smothered and extinguished, until we no longer see or perceive what is genuinely true or good. (See *Secrets of Heaven* 589 and 584)

The third branch of the self-centered love of oneself and the world is the assumptions we make. These are false assumptions that go on in our hearts and minds that we may or may not be aware of. Some of the baseline assumption of the selfish love of oneself and the world include: *I am better than you. I deserve better than you. I’m smarter, more creative, and more critically thinking than you.*

In addition to assuming superiority and supremacy over others, this selfish form of love of self also assumes inferiority of other people and races. It thinks: *You are less than I am. You don’t deserve as much as I do. You aren’t as smart, creative, or critically thinking as I am.*

Two things that are challenging about the underlying assumptions we make, or that have been impressed on us, are that we may not be aware that we’re making them, and once we’ve adopted them, they can be hard to change. This means that as part of the ongoing battle against racism, we need to fearlessly, selflessly look at our own assumptions and test them, so we can spot those that are false and correct them.

The fourth and final branch of the racist root is ignorance, meaning lack of awareness or simply not knowing. How many of you, on your own journey, have experienced learning something new about racism – maybe in the last few weeks – that made you aware of a racist tendency in yourself, or racist assumptions you’ve made or had impressed on you over the years, or a racist way of thinking, speaking or acting, that you hadn’t been aware of before? And when you’ve come to that new awareness about yourself, haven’t you felt badly about it in conscience and started to work to correct it? The theology of the New Church talks about this reality:

The subject in *Genesis* 6:1-7 is people who immersed doctrinal matters concerning faith in their own evil desires. Those, however, who had no doctrine of faith were unable to act in this fashion. For people outside of the Church have no knowledge of truth and good, *and those who do not have that knowledge can have a type of innocence even when they say or do something that is contrary to the truths and goods of faith.* For they can be inspired with zeal for the system of worship which they have been brought up in since early childhood, and which they therefore suppose to be true and good. (*Secrets of Heaven* 593, emphasis added)

The point is that there may be assumptions we make, or that have been impressed on us from an early age, that go against what is true and good – and we don't even know it. As our culture and world grow and improve, our sight of the issue of racism, and what's involved in it, and what we need to do about it, will grow as well. Each one of us will come “out of the darkness” and “into the light” over and over again. We need fearlessly and willingly to do that.

So, we're talking today about the root of racism – the human will to own, dominate and control other people and races, and a companion belief in our own superiority. And what does all of this look like to the Lord? What has it all been like from His perspective?

Genesis 6 answers the question briefly: “The Lord was grieved in His heart.” The Lord has never once not grieved, and He has never stopped grieving for any crime that has ever been committed against people of color. He grieves deeply for what they have gone through at the hands of white supremacy and domination. Not only that, our theology suggests that He grieves for all of us, because these traits and characteristics are part of human nature that all of us have to contend with and that we need to own up to, face up to, and come to grips with – and it's not easy to do.

But there is light at the end of the tunnel. The story in *Genesis 6* ends with these words: “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Noah walked with God.”

Noah was a good man. He and his wife and family were good people. They were a remnant that survived the great flood. Swedenborg suggests that Noah is a symbol for something in each one of us, and that is our conscience – a conscience of what is true and good that is built up in each one of us over time: from things we learn from wise people around us, from good books that we read, and especially from the Lord's Word. Conscience is often experienced as a quiet, inner voice or knowing that helps us guard against hurtful, violent and destructive tendencies within ourselves.

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Swedenborg suggests that conscience is the God-given saving grace that allows us – and the whole world – to be lifted up and “saved” from the evil love of dominating other people and races, and its companion belief in its own superiority and supremacy.

God-given saving grace that allows us – and the whole world – to be lifted up and “saved” from the evil love of dominating other people and races, and its companion belief in its own superiority and supremacy. Listen to what Swedenborg says about Noah:

The mercy of the Lord entails and looks to the salvation of the whole human race; and so does His grace. Consequently, the salvation of the human race is meant by the words, “But Noah found grace in Jehovah’s eyes.” “Noah” in this scripture symbolizes a new Church, one that had a conscience of what is good and true. “Noah” not only means this new Church but also the faith of that Church, which was a faith that was rooted in goodwill. The Lord accordingly foresaw that it would be possible for the human race to be saved by means of conscience, that is, by means of faith that was rooted in goodwill. (*Secrets of Heaven* 597, 598)

So, Noah is a symbol for our conscience. That conscience is what gives us the willingness to detect willful tendencies in ourselves to control and dominate other people and races, along with its companion belief in our own superiority and supremacy. Conscience gives us the willingness to spot justifications for these things. It gives us the willingness to scope out and test our underlying assumptions. It gives us the willingness to become aware of our blind spots. And finally, a conscience of what is true and good gives us the willingness to battle against all of these things for the sake of a good cause.

But I said I wanted to begin and end this message on a positive note. The positive note is that I believe racism will not survive in our country or in our world. I believe it will burn itself out. *Genesis* 6 says: “And the Lord was sorry that He had made humankind on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So the Lord said: ‘I will destroy humankind whom I have created from the face of the earth, for I am sorry that I have made them.’”

A related Scriptural reference includes: “A sword against the mighty ones.” “A sword against the liars” (that is, against the justifiers). “They will be thrown into confusion.” “They will go mad.” (*Jeremiah* 50:36) And when the Lord said, “I will destroy humankind,” I don’t think it means that the Lord Himself would destroy people whom He had created. A truly loving God isn’t capable of that. I think it means that things like selfishness, superiority, supremacy and racism would bring about their own end.

So, I believe the “giants” in the earth will not survive. Superiority and racism will not win in the end. Evil is **not** stronger than good. False justifications and assumptions are **not** stronger than the truth. The Lord is stronger than all of it, and there are too many “Noahs” in our world today – and the number of them is increasing every day – to allow it to be otherwise.

So, we’ve talked about one main root of racism. We’ve suggested that it is the “insubordinate” love of oneself and the companion belief in its own superiority and supremacy, together with false justifications, false assumptions

and ignorance that lend strength to that insubordinate love.

I'm not an expert on racism, and what I've shared is one small piece of a very big pie. It's one small facet of a very big, important and even beautiful gem – a true understanding of racism. In the end, I hope that each one of us will know and care a little bit more about this topic than we did before. Not all of us will march in protests or make big statements against racism. But I hope each one of us will care a little bit more today than we did yesterday, and a little bit more tomorrow than we do today. I also hope that each one of us will continue to work conscientiously – each in our own way – in support of this cause.

And what is that cause? It is the cause of wanting what the Lord wants – equality for all people and races in our world, and for all time. The Lord needs all of us – *all* people, like individual muscle fibers in a muscle – to pull in the same direction: the direction of loving the Lord our God above all and our neighbor as ourselves.

Amen.

The cause (is) wanting
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Racism: What Can I Do?

The Rev. Howard A. Thompson

Like most of you, I have spent the last several weeks reflecting on the subject of racism. This has come to the fore for most of us because of the news of the killing of an unarmed, handcuffed and otherwise restrained black man at the hands of a white police officer in the United States. All caught on camera, this was a horrible thing to see and it seems to have been a real catalyst for change both in the United States and abroad. But I am also well aware of the fact that racism, where it exists, is both deeply ingrained and generations in the making.

As an American, I can tell you that I also feel we have been here before. We have seen incidents of the killing of black Americans by the police in similar situations many times in the last several decades. This reality leaves me feeling nearly powerless on the subject. I suspect that for someone holding blatantly racist views, my opinion on the matter will make no difference. But for those with “ears to hear” I hope my words will give you some encouragement that progress can be made against racism. So, what can I do? What can we all do to weed out the evil of racism?

First – and I don’t really think I need to say this – racism is an evil. While the teachings for the New Church never mention the word “racism,” this certainly does not mean that it does not recognize racism as an evil. It does not take much to recognize that racism is, at its core, a manifestation of the love of self. Compare the following dictionary definition of racism and the description of the mindset of a person immersed in self-love:

Racism: prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against a person or people on the basis of their membership of a particular racial or ethnic group, typically one that is a minority or marginalized.

And consider this from *Arcana Coelestia* 7370:

The person immersed in self-love is one who despises his neighbor in comparison with himself, and who regards his neighbor as an enemy if he is not favorably disposed toward him and does not defer to him. Immersed more deeply in self-love is one who therefore hates and persecutes his neighbor; and immersed even more deeply than that is one who is therefore consumed with vengeance against him and

longs to ruin him. People like this at length love to vent their rage on their neighbor; and if these people are also adulterers they become cruel.

In the New Church it is generally accepted that although we are not evil we are inclined to evils of all kinds from birth. In other words, without the Lord's leading and left to our own desires we would sink headlong into the worst and most vile of evils.

One place this is noted is in *Divine Providence* 281.4 where the Lord says: "We are all immersed in many kinds of evil from birth. They are in our volition, and we love whatever is in our volition. That is, we love all the intentions that come from within; and we intend whatever we love. This love of our volition flows into our discernment and makes itself felt there as pleasure. It moves from there into our thoughts and into our conscious intentions."

That "we love whatever is in our volition" is why racism itself can flourish. In a study published in 2019 the Pew Research Center reported that 74% of Americans surveyed felt that racism was a "very big" or "moderately big" problem facing the nation. In fact, only 4% of those polled felt racism was not a problem. Now Pew did not ask those it polled: are you a racist? But I feel confident that had they done so, the vast majority of participants would have responded "absolutely not." And that is how racism, like any evil, can flourish.

It is easy to see it in others but very hard to find it within ourselves. But if racism is evil and I am inclined to evils of every kind from birth, then racism probably exists within me and the Lord calls me to root it out. But how?

The key to banishing racism or any sin within ourselves rests in that quote from *Divine Providence*: the love of our volition makes its way into "our thoughts and into our conscious intentions." It is those thoughts in our conscious intentions that then allow us to fight against the evil of racism. I can better explain this with an example from my own life.

I was raised in a family very proud of its German heritage – not anti-Semites, mind you, but very proud of their heritage. I did, however, feel the pull and power that the imagery of the 1930-40's era in Germany could have on a young and impressionable mind. I recall regularly perusing the books on World War II in our family library and can even recall a certain appeal I felt toward the cultivated image of strength and ferocity of the German soldier.

Of course, I understood the history of World War II – Nazis, Fascists and

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One thing I have realized is that I may not be able to affect the existence of racism in the world or in others but I should be able to see the racism in myself. In fact, I think the Lord is calling us all to look within ourselves.

the Holocaust – but still some part deep inside of me felt a strange appeal. Or, as *Divine Providence* 281 notes, at some level I felt these thoughts “as pleasure.”

Following high school I attended Muhlenberg College (a Lutheran college in Pennsylvania) and decided to satisfy my religion course requirement by taking a series of courses on “The Holocaust and its Impact” taught by the Rev. Dr. Darrell Jodock. This, along with my childhood experience of feeling a certain draw toward the imagery of 1930-40’s Germany, caused more than a little bit of a spiritual crisis,

similar in form to that described in *Arcana Coelestia* 5036:

In temptation a person is brought into a state in which the evil that possesses the person, that is, possesses their essential self, is dominant. Once the person enters this state evil and hellish spirits surround them, and when the spirits realize that inwardly the person is protected by angels, those evil spirits reactivate the false ideas the person has previously contemplated and the evil deeds they have committed. But the angels defend the person from within. This conflict is what the person experiences as temptation, yet the experience is so vague that the person is aware of it as scarcely anything more than a feeling of anxiety.

The end result of this “anxiety” was a personal realization and acknowledgement that at 16, 17, 18 and even 19 years old, had I been living in Germany in the 1930s and ‘40s, I feel I would have happily just gone along. Part of me even feels shame sharing this with whoever may read this piece.

Traveling in Europe the summer after graduation from Muhlenberg, I felt the need to visit Dachau, the concentration camp just outside of Munich. At 22 years old I stood on those grounds and wept. Nearly 30 years later I returned with my family to Dachau. Our daughter had just graduated from Muhlenberg and our boys were 14 and 10 and I wanted them to stand on those grounds as well. I wanted them to stand in the gas chambers and see the ovens. Again, I wept.

Racism, anti-Semitism, the Holocaust, slavery, Jim Crow and lynchings are all too big for me to fight against. All too big for me to change. But these are all evils within us, so there must be something I can do.

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In fact, I think the Lord is calling us all to look within ourselves.

First, we must acknowledge that we are, of ourselves, capable of nothing but evil. I saw this in myself and felt compelled to acknowledge it during my time at Muhlenberg. Second, we must actively repent. The evil of racism is ingrained in our DNA. None of us may espouse beliefs of racial superiority or use hate-filled racist language but most of us (and I include myself in this) are susceptible to the evil of racism. The person who claims not to be, likely, has not really engaged in self-reflection.

The teachings for the New Church explain that: “Active repentance is examining ourselves, recognizing and admitting our sins, praying to the Lord, and beginning a new life.” It is the process of “examining ourselves” that holds the key to what each of us can do to end racism. I mentioned the difficulty I would have in changing another’s racist views. It is interesting that the teachings for the New Church point out that it is also easier to point out evil in others than it is to recognize evil in ourselves:

It is easy for any of us to rebuke someone else who is intending to do something evil and say, "Don't do that - that's a sin!" And yet it is difficult for us to say the same thing to ourselves. The reason is that saying it to ourselves requires a movement of the will, but saying it to someone else requires only a low level of thought based on things we have heard. (*True Christianity* 535)

On the subject of active repentance, *True Christianity* 561 notes that “active repentance is easy for people who have done it a few times; those who have not done it, however, experience tremendous inner resistance to it.”

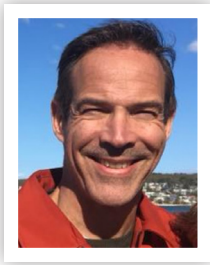
This passage seems very applicable to racism. None of us wants to admit that we are inclined to a racist will. None of us wants to acknowledge this because we all believe that we are good people and that racism is evil. I write this piece to say to you, the reader, that racism is evil and that each of us is inclined to evil from birth. If we cannot shine a light on the evil within ourselves what chance do we have of weeding out evil in the world?

Divine Providence 281.4 (quoted above) opens by noting that “the permission of evil is for the purpose of salvation.” If we fail to see any evil in ourselves then we fail to cooperate with the Lord in His efforts toward our salvation.

I write this to say that racism is evil and that each of us is inclined to evil from birth. If we cannot shine a light on the evil within ourselves what chance do we have of weeding out evil in the world?

*“Nothing that we despise in other men is inherently absent from ourselves.”
(Dietrich Bonhoeffer)*

Post-script: My choice to answer what I feel is a call to serve the Lord has led me and my family to live on three continents. Since ordination in 2011 we have served in the United States, the United Kingdom and now Australia. I wrote this piece from this perspective. I looked both at current events in the United States and at my own experience being raised and raising my own family there. But I have also witnessed blatant acts of racism in the United Kingdom, in other parts of Europe, and in Australia. We humans, inclined to evils of all kinds from birth, seem to have no lack of reasons to hate another human being.



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Nurses, Sacraments and True Worship in the ICU

The Rev. Jay Barry

In the barren, impersonal setting of a hospital Intensive Care Unit (ICU), the presence of the Lord has been real and tangible during COVID-19. Nurses have brought love, humility and sacraments to their Christian patients at a time when family, clergy and hospital chaplains were not allowed to enter their rooms. With patients alone and dying in front of their eyes – some expressing a desire for prayer and religious rituals – many nurses have become agents of the Lord’s loving kindness as they attend to their patients’ spiritual needs.

I work every day as a hospital chaplain in a densely populated urban area. Imbedded in the Department of Nursing, my fellow chaplains and I work side-by-side with nurses in every clinical area. During the spring of 2020 our hospital census was more than half-full of patients with the COVID-19 virus. Due to strict isolation protocols access to these patients was strictly reserved for physicians and nurses only. We saw a terrible gap in patient support, especially for those at the end of their lives.

Ordinarily the family is present at the bedside, but during the crisis they were not allowed in the hospital for fear of community transmission of the virus. Several nurses told me they did not feel worthy to fulfill the role of spiritual caregiver. The reality was this: there was no one left to do the Lord’s work except them.

There were many ways in which the nursing staff became emissaries of love and good will. They held the hands of the distressed, used soothing words, and played the patients’ favorite music as they lay dying. They also prayed with them. As I reflected upon their love and dedication I wondered if their actions could be embodiments of what the *Heavenly Doctrines* call *true worship*:

Adoration of the Lord consists of being humble, and being humble consists in the self-acknowledgment that with oneself there is nothing living and nothing good. Being humble also consists in the acknowledgement that everything living and good comes from the Lord. The more a person acknowledges these things not only with the lips but in his heart, the more humility he has, and consequently more adoration – which is true worship – and the more love and charity, and more happiness.
(*Arcana Coelestia* 1153.2)

As I reflected upon (the nurses') love and dedication I wondered if their actions could be embodiments of what the *Heavenly Doctrines* call true worship.

True worship is a powerful ideal from the Word, shining even more nobly in a setting of anxiety and fear. Though nurses are dedicated to helping others, they were also very aware of their risks of exposure to the COVID-19 virus. Nurses who are mothers of young children were especially worried, even terrified of bringing the danger home. Yet, I witnessed how love, humility and teamwork prevailed in their care of others.

In one illustration, a young nurse asked me to come up to her dying patient's room. This was a man in his 60s, intubated, and visible behind the glass doors of his room in the ICU. He was not able to speak. The nurse asked me: "Will you give the patient Last Rites?"

Instead of answering her question, I asked: Did the patient ask for the ritual? She responded: "No." Did the patient's family request the ritual? She looked at me solemnly. "This patient has no family." There was a long pause as the realization dawned. Professional chaplains are not allowed to provide a religious ritual unless requested to do so by the patient or the family. Also, only a Roman Catholic priest can administer the Ritual of Anointing the Sick, also known as Last Rites.

I asked her: Do you mean that you, his nurse, are requesting a blessing for him? She looked down, and her shoulders fell. "Yes. He has nothing. He is homeless. I'm all he has now. I want him to have something."

I gave her the prayer book and showed her where to read. I asked her to lay her hand on the man's forehead as she recited the Lord's Prayer. I watched her dutifully administer the sacrament through the glass door.

When she came out of the room her face was glowing with innocence and happiness. In the following hours, the Lord called the gentleman home.

Worship, not coerced, when genuine, is spiritual worship, alive, lucid and joyful. It is spiritual because it has in it a spirit from the Lord; alive because it has in it life from the Lord, and lucid because it has wisdom from the Lord, and joyful because it has in it heaven from the Lord. (*Divine Providence* 137)

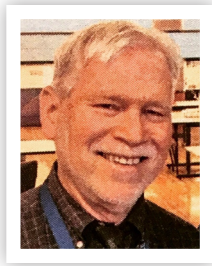
On another occasion the daughter of a patient called the hospital and asked that we pray with her father. Two nurses told me they did not feel worthy to pray with him, and yet they performed the same ritual. One nurse read the Lord's Prayer while the other placed her hand gently on the patient's forehead. The patient was much calmed and pacified. Not the nurses, however. Visibly

shaken, the nurses left the patient's room in tears. In addition to their ordinary duties they were shouldering this emotional burden also. Before long, however, they were back to the tasks at hand.

The *Heavenly Doctrines* make it very clear that only the Lord knows whether or not a person has a sincere heart behind his or her actions. He alone knows our true motivations. Yet, in the sterile setting of an ICU, nurses have shown, "it is in charity or love toward the neighbor the Lord is present." (*Arcana Coelestia* 1150)

If you know any nurses, thank them. Whether it be during this crisis, or in any time, they may be practitioners of *true worship* as well as medicine.

In the sterile setting
of an ICU, nurses have
shown, "it is in charity or
love toward the neighbor
the Lord is present."



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The Character and Quality of Governors

A Study by The Rev. Michael D. Gladish

Editor's note: *New Church Life* has always been steadfastly nonpartisan and non-political and remains so. This article is offered in that spirit, without any political bias – real or imagined – simply as a guide to our thinking as we approach a national election in the United States. It was written in June, before much of the election partisanship flared up.

Much has been written in the history of the New Church about government, particularly the government of the church itself. Some studies, such as Bishop George de Charms' 1943 work on *Principles of Government*, have also addressed civil government. But it seems very little has been written about the character and quality of governors themselves, except perhaps in affirmation of the principle that a bad man can perform good uses for others in the natural world, even though these actions are not useful to him in his own spiritual life.

This teaching is often cited in relation to Divine Providence and permission:

The impious or wicked can perform uses equally with the pious or the good; and, indeed, with greater zeal, for they have regard to themselves in the uses, and they regard the honors as uses. Therefore, whatever the height to which the love of self mounts up, there burns within it the consuming desire of performing uses for the sake of its own glory. With the pious or good there is no such fire unless it is kindled from below by some feeling of honor. Therefore, the Lord governs the wicked at heart who are in positions of dignity by the reputation of their name, and moves them to perform uses to the community or country, society or city in which they dwell, and also to the fellow-citizen or neighbor with whom they associate. This is the Lord's government, which is called the Divine Providence, with such; for the Lord's kingdom is a kingdom of uses; and where there are but few who perform uses for the sake of uses He causes worshippers of self to be raised to the higher offices, in which everyone is moved to do good by means of his own love (*Divine Providence* 250:3)

After reading about love toward the neighbor being expressed in a fuller degree when practiced by governors or kings, we read in *True Christian Religion* 412:3:

Rulers of today, however, can perform uses and consult the good of society, and yet not love the neighbor. This is the case with those who discharge their public functions from worldly and selfish motives, for the sake of appearances, or that they may merit promotion to higher dignities. The real character of such persons does not appear in the world, but in heaven it is made manifest . . . (and) those who have performed uses from the love of the world and the love of self are cast out.

So, although “a king, prince, general, praetor, consul, magistrate, or judge, of whatever rank, is loved only for the wisdom of his respective actions and speech,” still:

It is remarkable that not only does the upright man love what is good and just in another, but so also does the unprincipled man; for in his dealings with a good and just person he is in no fear of losing his reputation, his honor or his wealth. With an unprincipled man, however, the love of good is not the love of the neighbor, for he does not love another interiorly, but only so far as he can make use of him. (*Ibid.* 418)

This principle is important because we are all prone to evils of every kind, we all have various deficits in charity and wisdom, and no one is without fault, so unless these teachings were true we would have no governors at all and chaos would reign.

There is, however, another important set of teachings that bring an important perspective to this issue, and that concerns the basic integrity required for the just performance of the governing function. So, let's begin with what it means to govern.

The Meaning of the Word, Governor, or Government

Several words in the Latin of the Writings are translated as forms of government, or governance. Most often it is the word, *praefectus*, from *praeficio*, meaning one set over or appointed, as a superintendent or overseer. It can refer to a military officer, thus a commander, but (and this may be a stretch) it also appears to be related to *praefero*, which has to do with bearing in front, showing, or bringing to light, thus a kind of leadership.

The other word generally translated “governor” is from the Latin, *gubernator*, which really means a helmsman, steersman or pilot, thus a leader who gives direction. Finally, another closely related word comes from *moderare*, which means to moderate or direct. This is the term used in *True Christian Religion* 412, quoted above, where the translation has “rulers.”

In that context we are reminded of the teaching in *Matthew* 25:21, 23 where the Lord says: “I will make you ruler (set you, or appoint you over) many things,” meaning an overseer. That is reminiscent of the Lord’s teaching: “If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.” (*Mark* 9:35) Or, “the last will be first, and the first last.” (*Matthew* 20:16)

Regardless of which passage one reads, this makes clear that all those who administer any sort of order on the Lord's behalf represent Him and are all servants in relation to Him, "no matter what rank of society they belong to."

Regarding qualifications for governors, as well as distinctions in various kinds of governors, the root passage in *Arcana Coelestia* 10792 is carried over into the *New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* as follows:

Persons in authority (*praefecti*), therefore, are necessary for keeping the assemblage of men in order; which persons ought to be skilled in the laws, wise and God-fearing. Order also should be among those in authority; lest anyone, from caprice or ignorance (*ex lubitu aut inscitia*), should permit evils which are in opposition to order, and should thereby destroy order; which is guarded against when those in authority are higher and lower, and when there is subordination among them. (No. 313)

But in the *Doctrine of Charity* it is cast slightly differently:

By governors (*magistratus*) are meant those holding the highest positions in kingdoms, commonwealths, provinces, cities, societies, over which they have jurisdiction in civil affairs. Each one of them in his own position, if he looks to the Lord and shuns evils as sins, and if he honestly, justly, and faithfully carries out the work of his exalted function, is continually doing a good of use to the community and to the individuals in it, and becomes a charity in form. And this takes place when the good of the subjects or citizens affects him; and when this affects him, it moves him to enact, together with those who are wise and God-fearing, laws of use, to see that they are kept, and to be first in living subject to them; also, to appoint over the groups of people under him officials, who are intelligent and at the same time of good will, through whom, under his supervision, judgment and justice may prevail, and the general good always be promoted. He will regard himself as the highest in rank of those serving others, and not as the head, for the head directs all things of its body from love and wisdom in itself; and Love and Wisdom in itself is the Lord alone, by whom he, too, as a servant, will be directed. (*Charity* 161; see also *New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* 323)

Regardless of which passage one reads, this makes clear that all those who administer any sort of order on the Lord's behalf represent Him and are all servants in relation to Him, "no matter what rank of society they belong to." (*Arcana Coelestia* 5164:2)

Of course many of the teachings about rulers or governors in the Writings (as in *True Christian Religion* and the *New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine*) are based on the term, *rex*, or *regnum*, which refers to a king, the King of kings, and the only TRUE governor of all being the Lord. All others are at best

representatives of the Lord in HIS governing function, and as such their sacred duty is to administer the laws of His Divine love and wisdom as well as they possibly can. So we read:

The very regal office is not in the person but is adjoined to the person. A king who believes that the regal office is in his own person, and a person in authority (*praefecti*) who supposes that the dignity of his office is in his own person, are not wise. (*New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* 321)

The regal office consists in administering according to the laws of the realm, and in judging according to these laws, from a principle of justice. A king who regards the laws as above himself, is wise; but he who considers himself as being above the law, is not wise. A king who looks upon the laws as above himself, places the regal office in the law, and the law rules over him; for he knows that the law means justice, and all justice, which is justice, is Divine. But he who looks upon himself as being above the laws, places the regal office in himself, and either believes himself to be the law, or that the law which is justice, is derived from himself; hence he arrogates to himself that which is Divine; when yet he ought to be under it. (*Ibid.* 322)

Therefore, we also read:

Charity itself is to act justly and faithfully in the office, business and employment in which one is engaged, for then everything that a man does is of use to society, and use is good; and good in the abstract, considered apart from persons, is the neighbor. . . . A king, for instance, who sets his subjects an example in well-doing, who desires that they should live according to the laws of justice, rewards those who so live, regards each according to his merit, defends them against injury and invasion, acts as the father of his kingdom, and consults the general prosperity of his people, is at heart an embodiment of charity, and his deeds are good works. (*True Christian Religion* 422)

It follows that if leaders, governors, prefects or any other appointed overseers are to do their job properly they have an obligation to represent in their words and actions the love and wisdom that are the only real source of order (and freedom!), even if they don't know where it comes from.

Good is the neighbor because good is of the will, and the will is the being of a man's life. Truth in the understanding is also the neighbor, but only so far as it proceeds from good in the will; since the good of the will takes form in the understanding, and there renders itself visible in the light of reason. Common experience shows that good is the neighbor; for a person is loved according to the quality of his will and understanding, that is, according to what is good and upright in him. A king, prince, general, praetor, consul, magistrate, or judge, of whatever rank, is loved only for the wisdom of his respective actions and speech; a prelate, minister, or canon of the Church for his learning, for the integrity of his life, and his zeal for the salvation of souls; the general of an army, or any officer under him, for his courage and skill; a merchant for his honesty; a workman, or a servant for his fidelity; nay, a tree for its fruit, soil for its fertility, a stone for its precious character, and so on. (*Ibid.* 418)

So, what do we know about representation when it comes to leadership of

any kind?

Representation in Positions of Leadership

Despite the teaching that representatives in worship (except for baptism and the holy supper) were abrogated by the Lord when He came into the world (*Arcana Coelestia* 2180:2, 4489:3, 4904:3, etc.) it is clear from the teachings about honors being associated with the work of any office, and not with the person, that any person doing such work represents the work itself.

[This] may be seen from the representatives which also exist at the present day. For all kings, no matter who they are or what they are like, represent the Lord through the kingly office itself residing with them; and in like manner all priests, no matter who they are or what they are like, do so through their priestly office. The kingly office itself and the priestly office itself are sacred, no matter who serves in them. Consequently, the Word taught by someone evil is no less sacred; nor is the Sacrament of Baptism, or the Holy Supper, or similar ministrations any less so. From this it may also be seen that no king can possibly claim as his own the sacredness that goes with his kingly office, nor any priest the sacredness that goes with his priestly office. Insofar as he does claim it or attribute it to himself he brands himself with the sign of a spiritual thief, or the mark of spiritual theft. And insofar as he commits what is evil, that is, acts contrary to what is right and fair, and contrary to what is good and true, a king puts off his representation of the sacred kingly office, and a priest his representation of the sacred priestly office, and then represents the opposite. (*Ibid.* 3670:2)

On one hand this passage seems to indicate that it doesn't matter to the use whether a governor is inwardly good or evil, but on closer examination what it actually says is that the TRUTH is the same whether taught by a good or evil man, but that if a king acts contrary to that truth he "puts off his representation" and in fact "represents the opposite," the clear implication being that he should be removed from his office. This is consistent with the principle of *True Christian Religion* 418, quoted above, and with *New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* 324, which plainly say that the king becomes a tyrant and no longer a king when he behaves badly.

Again, there is an appearance in many passages of the Writings that the internal state of a person need have nothing to do with what he represents, but a closer examination of this teaching reveals that it is given primarily in the exposition of the literal sense of the Word, and of the Jewish "representative of a church" whereas today, and generally throughout the world, all externals are representative of internals, and vice versa.

The learned know that subsistence is a perpetual coming forth. . . . Inasmuch, therefore, as each and all things subsist, that is, continually come forth, from the Divine, and as each and all things thence derived must needs be representative of those things whereby they came into existence, it follows that the visible universe

is nothing else than a theater
representative of the Lord's kingdom;
and that this kingdom is a theater
representative of the Lord Himself.
(*Arcana Coelestia* 3483, 4939, etc.)

How much more must this be the case in leadership roles, where anyone appointed to such a duty is responsible primarily for the wise applications of the principles of charity and faith?

This even applies in the case of the wars “with kings and rulers” in Scripture, which “represent in heaven states of the church and are correspondences,” but it’s important to remember the whole context of the teaching, namely: “Such also are all the wars at this day . . . wherever they occur; for all things that take place in the natural world correspond to spiritual things in the spiritual world.” (*Divine Providence* 251:3-4)

True, the passage goes on to say that we can’t know in this world which kingdoms represent which specific combatants in the Word, but it does NOT say that we can’t figure out what’s good or evil in moral and civil life, or where in the spiritual world it might be coming from. Indeed, other passages are explicit about how important it is to do just this.

But to bring the issue into sharper focus there is one passage that must be quoted at length. It is discussing the dynamics of representation in the Jewish representative of a church, and first makes the point that although there could be communication with heaven on account of a purely external state of holiness among them, still, “good spirits and angels were not within them but outside of them. . . . For this reason there was no communication with any person himself, only with the holiness which existed with them when they observed the ordinances and commandments.” Then, skipping ahead:

It is similar with priests and ministers who preach about holy things and yet live wickedly and believe in what is wicked. With them no good spirits are present, only evil ones, even when they officiate at external acts of worship in a manner which is outwardly holy. For it is self-love and love of the world – that is, love directed toward the attainment of prominent positions and love directed toward the acquisition of gain and so of reputation – which fires them and is the reason for their display of holiness.

Sometimes such ambitions are so great that those priests and ministers do not see any false presence in themselves, nor at the same time do they believe that such

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presence can even exist. Yet in fact they are in the midst of evil spirits whose state is at that time the same as theirs and who serve as their aspiration and inspiration. The presence of evil spirits in that kind of state – when priests or ministers officiate at external acts of worship and when a brake is put on their self-love and love of the world – I have been allowed to know from a considerable amount of experience. . . .

Those priests and ministers do not themselves have any communication with heaven, but those who hear and receive the words coming from their lips do so if internal reverence and holiness exist with them. For it does not matter at all who declares what is good and true, provided their lives are not openly wicked, because that would give offence. (Potts: Cause a Scandal, L. scandalizat); (*Arcana Coelestia* 4311:3)

Applying this to the realm of civil affairs, it's clear that the same conditions would prevail. The just and wise performance of the governing use depends entirely on the proper administration of the law, and on the states of those being governed. The influence of the evil spirits with an evil leader must be held constantly in check, typically by fear of the loss of reputation, honor and gain, or serious abuses will surely follow. This is one of the reasons given in the Writings for order among the governors, including subordinate ranks of governors (*praefecti*) who themselves ought to be wise, skilled in the law and God-fearing.

So How Can We Discern Good or Evil in a Leader?

Following all this a vital question to explore is what real charity looks like in regard to a leader – or to anyone, for that matter. The doctrine is clear that, contrary to public opinion, “Christian prudence demands that a person's life should be carefully checked and charity exercised accordingly. A person who belongs internally to the church does so in a discerning way, and so intelligently.” (*New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* 85 - Chadwick).

Indeed, “Charity consists in acting prudently, and with the intention that good may come of it. If anyone gives help to a poor or needy wrongdoer, he does harm to the neighbor through him. For the help he gives strengthens him in evil and supplies him with the resources to do harm to others.” (*Ibid.* 100, also *Arcana Coelestia* 3820, 6703, 8120) Clearly this applies especially in the case of people in positions of leadership.

But how can we know about them? How can we judge? What are the signs that indicate the presence or absence of charity, wisdom, skill in the law or the fear of God?

The basic teaching is in *Charity* 174, which plainly says that “the signs of charity are all the things that are of worship,” including a specific list of five external, church-related behaviors that are not hard to recognize. Although these are not necessarily indications of a truly charitable inner life, the point is

that if the inner life is one of charity, these things will be done.

But regarding charity in general, the story of Ham's response to the drunken state of his father, Noah, describes the situation very well in contrasting images:

Here Ham's noticing his father's nakedness, that is, his errors and perversities, describes people with whom faith is separated from charity. Such people see nothing else but errors and perversities residing with a person. But those who have faith that inheres in charity are different. They notice the goods, and if they do see evils and falsities they excuse them, and if possible endeavor with that person to correct them, as is said here of Shem and Japheth.

Where charity does not exist self-love is present and consequently hatred toward all who do not show favor to self. As a result, they see in the neighbor nothing except his evil. Or if they do see anything good they either perceive it as nothing or else place a bad interpretation on it. It is altogether otherwise with those with whom charity is present. And from such presence or absence of charity these two kinds of people are distinguished from each other. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1079:2-3) As the Lord said, "You will know them by their fruits. . . . A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit." (*Matthew* 7:15, 17)

In heaven all who perform uses from an affection for use draw from the life which they share in common, a state of wisdom and happiness exceeding that of others. And there, with them, performing uses means acting sincerely, uprightly, justly, and faithfully, in the work of their employment. This they call charity, and acts of worship they call signs of charity, and other things they call duties and privileges; declaring that when anyone does the work of his employment sincerely, uprightly, justly and faithfully, the community abides and continues steadfast in its state of good, and that this is to "be in the Lord," since everything that flows in from the Lord is a use, and flows in from the parts into the community, and from the community to the parts. (*Divine Love and Wisdom* 431)

The presence or absence of charity in a leader – as in anyone – can be seen in the following passage, where Swedenborg actually comments on how incredible this reality may seem:

The person whose rational is such as consists in truth alone, even though this is the truth of faith, and does not at the same time consist in the good of charity, is altogether such [as the description of Ishmael]. He is quick to find fault, makes no allowances, is against all, regards everyone as being in error, is instantly prepared to rebuke, to chasten, and to punish, shows no pity, does not apply himself and makes no effort to redirect people's thinking; for he views everything from the standpoint of truth, and nothing from the standpoint of good. In short, he is a hard man. The one thing to soften his hardness is the good of charity, for good is the soul of truth, and when good draws near and implants itself in truth the latter becomes so different that it can hardly be recognized. Isaac represents the Lord's Rational Man which sprang from good, not from truth separated from good. So it

was that Ishmael was cast out and after that dwelt in the desert, and that his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt, (*Genesis* 21:9-21), all of which events are representative of a person who is endowed with a rational such as that. (*Arcana Coelestia* 1949)

Of course, everybody makes mistakes, but an obvious quality of good leadership is to be able to admit mistakes and work to correct them, a concept we call repentance. In that context we know that the Lord is all-forgiving – all the time, no exceptions – but that people can only be forgiven if they repent, otherwise the evils they think, will and do “cling to them” and prevent them from receiving the Lord’s forgiveness. (*New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* 165)

That said, the signs that sins have been forgiven are all essentially internal, and so can’t be known with confidence by any but one’s self. (*Ibid.* 167) That does not mean we can’t judge behaviors. “Who,” after all, “does not see that were it not lawful for a person to judge as to the moral life of his fellow inhabitants in the world, society would fall!” (*Conjugal Love* 523)

Referenced below is the state of humility needed in the people being governed. Here it must be said that humility, as the opposite of self-love (which is the source of all evils including hatred, revenge, cruelty and adultery), is not hard to see, at least in its outward form. A humble person will admit his errors of judgment or action and will not constantly call attention to himself. He will not constantly praise himself or compare himself to others with contempt. In American history perhaps the leadership of Abraham Lincoln embodies the best of these qualities, as well as those good qualities outlined in *Arcana Coelestia* 1079.

In confirmation, consider *Arcana Coelestia* 1505:

I have also been informed about the way in which [people’s] spheres, which in the next life become so perceptible to the senses, are acquired. So that this information can be stated and understood, let a person be taken as an example who has adopted a high opinion of himself and of his superiority over others. Eventually he is permeated by a disposition and so to speak natural condition which are such that wherever he goes and there sees others and talks to them he is regardful of himself. At first the disposition exists manifestly, but after that does not, so that he is not aware of it; but it still reigns, not only in every detail of his affection and thought, but also in every detail of his bodily gestures and every detail of his utterances. People can see this in others.

Wisdom and the fear of God may be more difficult to assess in a leader but will be reflected also in their dispositions and actions toward others, and in whatever can be known about his or her faith. Lies, slanders, conflicts of interest, unwarranted aggression, adultery, self-justification and many other evils are not hard to recognize – and call out. And here is the crux of the matter as the heavenly doctrine explains it:

He who from purpose or confirmation acts against one commandment acts against the rest; for to act thus from purpose or confirmation is wholly to deny that the action is a sin, and he who denies sin makes nothing of acting against the other commandments. Who does not know that one who is an adulterer is not therefore a murderer, a thief, and a false witness, and does not wish to be? But one who is an adulterer from purpose and confirmation makes all things of religion to be of no account, and so makes nothing of murder, theft, and false witness, and abstains from them, not because they are sins but because he fears the law and the loss of his reputation. (*Conjugial Love* 528)

The plain truth stated here is that a person – especially a governor – who willfully disrespects any of the commandments simply can't be trusted – no matter how much he seems to promote good policies. Adolf Hitler, for example, strongly affirmed the rights and freedoms of the German people and the importance of the Christian faith, but it was all a deception to get the support of every available means of control. To use the analogy of the priesthood, anyone who governs this way is a bad shepherd of the flock. (*New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* 315)

What is Our Responsibility in Application of These Teachings?

Continuing with the analogy of the priesthood to civil government, we read: “Just as priests are in charge of affairs concerning Divine law and worship, so kings and magistrates are in charge of affairs concerning civil law and justice.” (*Ibid.* 319) The difference is that priests cannot compel the ways people think or will, because that would interfere with their internal freedom, but civil governors can compel behaviors because their responsibility is to external order, and in that sphere compulsion does no harm; rather, it is necessary.

So in the well-known passage about separation the very same principle applies to civil governors – and perhaps even more so – as it does to the priesthood:

Priests ought to teach the people, and through truths ought to lead them to the good of life; but still they ought not to compel any one; since no one can be compelled to believe what is opposed to that which in his heart he has thought to be true. He who believes differently from the priest, and does not make any disturbances, ought to be left in peace: but he who makes disturbances, ought to be separated; for this also belongs to the order for the sake of which the priesthood is. (*Ibid.* 318)

Note the caveat in the teaching about freedom, *Ibid.* 143:

A person has the freedom of thinking evil and falsity, and also of doing them, so far as he is not restrained by the laws, and indeed for this reason, that he may have the capacity of being reformed; for goods and truths have to be implanted in his love and in his will, in order that they may become a part of his life; and this cannot be brought about unless he has the freedom of thinking evil and falsity, as well as

Thus a fundamental responsibility of the people under any form of government is to become well-informed, if possible from a variety of sources. This requires not only diligence but patience, and a great deal of humility as we read about, listen to, and reflect on the issues in the light of the Word.

good and truth. This freedom is granted to everyone by the Lord.

It's no stretch to see this in the light of what the priest or the governor represents, namely the love and wisdom that provide for order and for the uses of the realm. As long as there is no disturbance of this order the priest himself or the governor can be left in peace, and even rewarded according to the order that he administers. But if he disturbs this order or misrepresents it, he ought to be separated, as indeed he separates himself from the office that he represents. (See *True Christian Religion* 418)

In civil government there are three or four ways for people to do this: by public pressure (petitions, peaceful protests, responsible journalism, and so on), by legal proceedings, by vote, or by armed insurrection. All of these

means, however, can be effective only when they are practiced according to the very principles of good government outlined above. They must be done in charity, with wisdom, skill in the law, and the fear of God. Otherwise one form of tyranny will simply be replaced with another, and nothing will be gained. Character assassination will not do. Rioting and looting will not do. The passage of unjust or oppressive laws will not do.

Obviously, there are progressive levels and degrees of action that may be necessary. But everything depends on the citizens knowing the truth, that is, having accurate information about the whole situation so that they can act with good judgment in the interest of true freedom. (See *New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* 141-142 ff) This is no easy task, especially when there are partisans with various conflicts of interest, skilled in reasoning and persuasion that favor their own will or convictions.

Thus a fundamental responsibility of the people under any form of government is to become well-informed, if possible from a variety of sources. This requires not only diligence but patience, and a great deal of humility as we read about, listen to, and reflect on the issues in the light of the Word. One useful technique for getting at the underlying factors in any difficulty or disorder is to ask the question: why? And then when an answer is forthcoming,

ask again: why? This can go on for a long time until a really deep-seated problem comes to light, which, when properly addressed, may well resolve the matter.

Another possible way of discovering the truth is, as they say, to follow the money. Who stands to benefit from a particular point of view? Who stands to be hurt by it, and how? Reputation, honor and gain are certainly major motivators for a lot of people in public service, as the Writings imply, and so attention to these factors can reveal important facts about what is being represented in “the news.”

But we don't have to fall for the “Saul Syndrome.” We can choose or reject our leaders on the basis of a conscience drawn from the Word – enlightened, of course, by doctrine.

Tough Choices: The Greater Good or the Lesser of Two Evils?

To conclude this study, it may be objected – or fairly said – that no one is perfect, and so the choice of a leader, magistrate, or governor may be one of “the lesser of two evils.” If so, what further principles can we draw from the doctrine that might help us pick the best of what may be a poor selection of available candidates?

As we know, in the Word Saul was chosen to be king of Israel because he was outwardly attractive – handsome and a head taller than most of the people, but that didn't work out very well. Indeed, the whole process of his appointment was fraught, since their real reason for wanting a king was to be like the nations around them, amounting to a rejection of the Lord's own leadership through Samuel. So here we see the principle at work that people tend to get the kind of government they deserve, depending on their own states.

But we don't have to fall for the “Saul Syndrome.” We can choose or reject our leaders on the basis of a conscience drawn from the Word – enlightened, of course, by doctrine. In that case we will need to explore not only a candidate's character and resumé, but also the teachings about what constitutes good government. Still, this study is not so much about the platform of the candidates as about their personal qualities, because even good policies inspired or enacted through bad influences will lead inevitably to bad outcomes, since everything in the natural world arises from spiritual causes, which to a large extent are embodied in the leadership.

We have a responsibility, according to the doctrines, to look for the best qualities we can get, not only in policies or policy statements, which ought to be developed by consensus, but in the personal integrity of the ones we appoint to represent the Lord's love and wisdom in carrying out that consensus.

Truly, because we are all flawed, we have to find a balance between any leader's strengths and weaknesses, the positive and negative qualities and characteristics that he brings to the job. We have a responsibility, according to the doctrines, to look for the best qualities we can get, not only in policies or policy statements, which ought to be developed by consensus, but in the personal integrity of the ones we appoint to represent the Lord's love and wisdom in carrying out that consensus.

So, despite the teachings in the Word about not harming the Lord's anointed, and in the doctrine about not harming any king or governor (*New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* 325); despite the teachings that even a bad man can be useful to society, and because of the teachings

that we are obliged to make moral judgments of people for the preservation of order in society, the *Heavenly Doctrine* is clear that a prefect's or a governor's moral life is not something we can discount or brush aside. It influences every decision he makes, everyone he appoints, indeed everything he says and does, and it sets the tone for those among the people who are inclined to follow his example.

Post Script: In confirmation of this conclusion it is interesting that almost all the criticisms of the Catholic and Protestant Churches in the Writings are actually directed at the leadership of those churches, not the average members, many of whom are exonerated and even praised for their common sense in living what the Word teaches. See especially *Apocalypse Explained* 764:2 (765 in some editions), where the church in faith alone is discussed, and where we read:

In that church there are dragons who separate faith from good works, not only in doctrine, but also in life; [but] the rest in the same church, who live the life of faith, which is charity, are not dragons, although among them, for they do not know but that it is agreeable to doctrine that faith produces the fruits, which are good works, and that the faith that justifies and saves is to believe those things that are in the

Word, and to do them. . . . But what and how crafty and even pernicious are the reasonings of those meant by the dragon about the separation of faith from good works, and their conjunction - the Lord being willing - will be revealed elsewhere, also that those reasonings exist only with the learned leaders of the church, and are unknown to the people of the church because they are not understood by them.



The Rev. Michael D. Gladish retired last year as pastor of the Washington New Church in Mitchellville, Maryland, where he and his wife, Virginia (de Maine), continue to live. He has also been a pastor on Hurstville, Australia, Los Angeles, and Toronto, Calgary and Dawson Creek in Canada. Contact: mdgladish@gmail.com

Election Déjà vu

Marvin Clymer, Digital Collections Supervisor for the Swedenborg Library in Bryn Athyn, came across a bit of church history that illustrates how little has changed in 128 years when it comes to elections. These are excerpts from an 1892 article in *The Bulletin*, published bi-weekly by students of the Academy of the New Church, then on Wallace Street in Philadelphia. (You can search *The Bulletin* in the digital collections: www.swedenborglibrary.org/digital: select New Church Literature> New Church Journals> Bulletin)

The article was non-partisan and addressed to New Church men only. Women could not vote until 1920 – 100 years ago. (The election was a rematch of 1888. This time former President Grover Cleveland defeated the incumbent, Benjamin Harrison.)

The regular presidential election is fast approaching and even those who rarely follow the ordinary course of political events are compelled to have their attention directed to this important step in our national life.

In politics not only the selfishness of man and his greed for gain find ultimatum but also the love of dominion and power for the mere sake of self. Therefore, as in many things of the world, the New Churchman in looking over the field encounters a rather dreary waste of land with only a few fertile spots to gladden his eye. These are represented by those men who appear to be actuated by a real love of their use and of their country.

Even in men of presumably high moral character we frequently see the expression of favoritism and the accommodation which worldly prudence places in the way of fearless recognition and bringing into act of what is right.

In regard to political parties it is obvious that a New Churchman . . . has to choose the lesser of two evils. Rare indeed is the case when the principles of a party would receive his entire sanction. The matter then is one of selecting which would do the least harm.

The great danger is that of falling into a blind allegiance to a party and following it through all the devious ways and paths where it may lead. This feeling of partisanship is unfortunately very prevalent in this country.

It is singular how far the affection for a party will influence rational judgment. Men who will calmly and dispassionately discuss any other question of the day will grow unreasonably heated in a political discussion.

By the nature of circumstances our governors are elected by the popular voice of the land. . . . It can be seen that it fixes the responsibility on every individual who votes. How necessary then that all, even those who are not voters as yet, should give the study of government of their country earnest and intelligent attention.

FROM THE BISHOP'S OFFICE

Who Does the Lord Invite to Participate in the New Church? And Why Does He Invite Them?

The Rt. Rev. David H. Lindrooth

The goods of life open the inner recesses of the mind, and when these have been opened, truths appear in their own light, causing them to be not only understood but also loved. (*Apocalypse Revealed* 82)



The Lord intended that a broad variety of very different people with differing interests and cultural backgrounds, and with different approaches to the way they see and understand things, be led into the New Church. I believe this is as true for the spiritual entity as a whole as it is for our unique General Church congregations around the globe.

There are many teachings in the Word that substantiate this. This body of teaching has encouraged the General Church to make the effort to support establishing congregations among different populations around the globe where pockets of people have heard the Lord's voice calling them into the Church.

It is also a body of teaching that strongly encourages individual congregations to open their doors to those who feel the Lord leading them into the active New Church community, even though they may come from different backgrounds than the existing membership.

One set of key teachings in this vein comes from the *Book of Revelation* and its explanation in the book *Apocalypse Revealed*. In chapters three and four, John is commanded to write to each of the seven churches that are in Asia. We are directly taught that “the seven churches [here] describe the

The Lord intended that a broad variety of very different people with differing interests and cultural backgrounds, and with different approaches to the way they see and understand things, be led into the New Church.

entire New Church in its varieties.” (No. 73) This passage also explains that “these variations may be compared to the various members and organs in an intact body, **which nevertheless form a single unit**; indeed that may be compared to the various jewels in a royal crown.” (Emphasis added)

This is a strong statement where the Lord is asserting the value of allowing different constituents, who have differing ways of approaching their faith, to join and form the community that is central to the life of our New Church congregations.

It is striking to read the varying characteristics of the people represented by each of these seven

churches. After teaching how this breadth is an important feature in the Lord’s New Church, the narrative in the *Apocalypse Revealed* continues by listing significant flaws in each type of approach.

The Ephesians represent people who love doctrine but fall to the temptation to make it more important than charity. (No. 82) The Smyrnans are people who do good works but are easily caught up in falsities. The Pergamossians represent people who place everything having to do with the church in good works, and nothing in the doctrinal truths which are supposed to stand as the framework and support for a good life. (No. 107)

The Thyatirans represent those who have a faith divorced from charity, so they allow themselves to engage in evil actions thinking they will not be held accountable. (No. 124) The Sardinians are people who are engaged “in lifeless worship,” or, “worship that lacks the goods expressive of charity or the truths connected with faith.” (No. 154) The Philadelphians, who sound like the best of the lot, are people who are governed by truths springing from goodness derived from the Lord.” (No. 172) These people sound like ideal candidates for the church, but they are weak and fall easily from their faith.

The seventh group of people invited by the Lord into the New Church are the Laodiceans, who base their beliefs sometimes on their own thinking and sometimes on the Word, and as a result they profane the holy things of the church. (No. 198) This flip-flopping leaves them without direction or principles from which they make decisions about how to live.

Taken collectively, this seems like an unruly, diverse group of people with a lot of serious spiritual problems. It might seem strange that the Lord invites all of them into the New Church. No doubt, the differences and their resulting tensions are the origins of some of the struggles we experience in the General Church today. Those tensions are real, and they are often difficult. But I suspect that the Lord had higher purposes in mind when He issued this Divine invitation.

Apocalypse Revealed 73 offers clues as to what those purposes are. It suggests that these differing perspectives are as important to the organization as the different organs are to a person's physical body. No one would be so foolish as to think that a body can be healthy if it is entirely composed of lung tissue. And a body that is missing its bones is going to be seriously lacking in structure.

The story does not suggest an organization that is devoid of common principles, or that those principles ought not to be founded in the Word, or even that there should not be leadership and decision-making authority invested in various parts of the organization. (Certainly in a body the brain, with its nervous system, has command over the body while other organs are subordinate.)

I believe the Lord intentionally set up the foundations of the New Church with this variety because of the health it offers to the people of His Church. The insights shared from differing approaches to living the truths of the Word in our extraordinarily complex world provide a knowledge base and collective wisdom that help people find spiritually sound solutions in an environment where no one approach could work, especially with the hells attacking us in so many different ways.

It helps to remember that the purpose of the Church is spiritual transformation – or to use the term the *Heavenly Doctrines* use, “Regeneration.” It is only through transformation that the Lord shapes our souls into angelic forms and leads us to be truly useful. And so, implicit in the story of the letters to the seven churches, is the message where the Lord encourages us to rise above the fray of the different weaknesses conveyed by each church because of the value of having everyone in the same community.

Why? Because transformation happens better when the dialogue around

I believe the Lord intentionally set up the foundations of the New Church with this variety because of the health it offers to the people of His Church.

transformation includes various approaches and their insights. We are invited to value each approach as different “jewels in the Lord’s crown,” shining with wisdom and insight that we could never glean on our own.

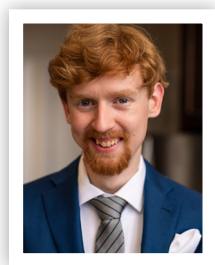
With that in mind, those variations of wisdom are a precious treasure in a community created by the Lord – variations of insight that will help us on our paths to our eternal homes.

Contact: David.Lindrooth@newchurch.org

Statement of Faith and Declaration of Purpose

The Rev. Richard M. Glenn

June 28, 2020



I believe that the Lord God Jesus Christ reigns. I believe that He makes Himself known to us through the three-fold Word, and through His providence, which guides our hearts and minds. I believe in a life after death. I believe that the promise of heaven is offered to every person and each person has the choice in their spiritual freedom to make their home in hell or in heaven. I believe that the life of heaven is a life of usefulness, peace and married love continuing to

eternity.

I believe that, beginning with the Lord's second coming, a new age of Christianity has been given to humanity. It is my hope and intention to be one vessel of the Lord by which the light of His New Church may shine more brightly into the hearts and minds of people, giving this world an abundance of innocence and peace.

I pray to the one God of heaven and earth for a wise and humble heart with which I can more clearly see His truth and feel His love in order to share the blessings of His Church with as many people as my words and actions can reach.

“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.” (*Psalms* 51:10)

Church News

Compiled by Bruce Henderson

PASTORAL MOVES

*The Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr.
Executive Bishop*

Pastoral moves typically happen at the start of the church year: July 1. As is often the case, there are several such moves to report.

- **The Rev. Garry Walsh** resumed full-time General Church pastoral work on April 1, 2020, after a nearly two-year leave of absence. We are grateful to have him back. He is serving primarily as pastor of the Sower's Chapel in Sarver, Pennsylvania. He is also providing some interim pastoral help to the Pittsburgh New Church with 25% of his time.
- **The Rev. Calvin Odhner** resigned as pastor of the Pittsburgh New Church in February 2020. We wish him well as he pursues other career pathways.
- **The Rev. Glenn Alden** has accepted a two-year Interim Pastor assignment for New Church Buccleuch in South Africa. He and his wife, Mary, will travel to Johannesburg as soon as such travel is possible. In the interim they are working remotely with congregants.
- **The Rev. Ablam Amouzouvi** has accepted a position as pastor of a new congregation in Lomé, Togo. This is one of two West African pilot congregation efforts launched in coordination with local leadership and the General Church Central Offices. **The Rev. Moise Bab** has accepted a position as pastor of the second new congregation under this pilot program, in the Ivorian city of Yamoussoukro.
- **The Rev. Richard Glenn** has been appointed Assistant to the Pastor of the Oak Arbor Church in Rochester, Michigan. He and his wife, Sonja, planned an August move, contingent on safety protocols. He began his work with that congregation remotely.
- The Pittsburgh New Church will receive the pastoral attention of several

people for the year between July 2020 and June 2021. In addition to help from Garry Walsh, the following pastors have agreed to travel to Pittsburgh for periods of time. They are: **Rt. Rev. Brian Keith, Rev. Mike Gladish, Rev. Jeffrey Smith, and Rev. Dr. Mark Alden**. I am grateful for their help, and particularly pleased that **Mark Alden** is willing and able to return to part-time pastoral work in this way. The rest of the yearly preaching schedule will be filled out with visiting clergy via the General Church Visiting Minister Program.

- **The Rev. Judah Synnestvedt** has resigned from his high-school-related pastoral position in the Washington New Church School and has returned to Kempton, Pennsylvania, with his family to pursue independent podcast work.
- **The Rev. Louis Synnestvedt** has agreed to extend his interim pastoral service to the Colchester Society in the United Kingdom into a third year.

GENERAL CHURCH BOARD

(Highlights of the June 26-27 meetings of the General Church Board of Directors)

Joint Meeting

These sessions included a joint meeting with the Academy Board of Trustees, something that had not happened in many years. **Peter Buss** gave a report as both Executive Bishop of the General Church and Chancellor of the Academy, including a history of the Academy Movement and “why we are here today.”

The mission and the message that the Word is the only source of truth in both organizations dovetails with the bylaws and the responsibility of the priesthood. The boards serve each other in common uses: providing worship for living a New Church life, training of ministers, and providing New Church education.

President

Bishop Buss gave a summary of his first year as Executive Bishop and highlighted areas of focus for the coming fiscal year, including:

- Vision casting around the globe
- Communications (later in the meeting the Board directed the administration to develop a plan to staff Outreach and Communications missions with full-time personnel, for consideration at the September meeting of the Board)
- Instituting and working with a Bishop’s Council
- Planning the General Church Retreat 2021 (building on plans for the

2020 Retreat, which was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic)

- Finalizing and beginning implementation of the Strategic Plan

Assistant Bishops

The Rt. Rev. Bradley Heinrichs reported that during the pandemic visiting ministers have provided services to isolated groups by video, online sermons and phone calls to congregants. Funds from the Glencairn Foundation for translation of the Writings will be used to increase books in the Korean and Zulu languages.

The Rt. Rev. David Lindrooth reported that he is working on restructuring the regions of employees he supervises by redefining job descriptions for pastors and regional pastors; strengthening the regional pastor system to align better with church growth; and developing systems for delivering worship in those regions.

International Committee

Bishop Lindrooth introduced the **Rev. Jeff Smith**, project manager for the Research and Development Project in Africa.

Jeff is developing systems for congregations to grow by creating a master plan, developing criteria for essentials in worship, goals and metrics for measurement of success or failure, reporting requirements plus expectations and job descriptions for pastors. He reported on two pilot research projects in Western Africa: Yamoussoukro, Ivory Coast, and Lomé, Togo.

In both locations construction of places of worship has been delayed slightly by COVID-19 restrictions, but both congregations hope to begin worshipping soon in their new buildings.

Executive Director

David Frazier reported on Fiscal Year 20 actual financial results, forecast through the June 30 year end, with revenue of \$5.4 million and expenses of \$5.2 million, with a projected operating surplus of about \$250,000.

Crisis planning has been developed under four scenarios in the event of further economic downturn, focused particularly on market performance of investments and giving levels. Modeling will be done at quarterly checkpoints to review performance.

General Church Education

Rachel Glenn spoke about the shift to providing educational resources online, at no cost to users. Demand grew to more than 400 downloads since the pandemic quarantine began. Two mailings were sent to children, up to age 10, in celebration of Easter and New Church Day.

Rebekah Russell and **Scott Daum** reported that they have shifted their work on professional development online rather than in-person visits. They continue to work on the Teacher Competencies Program, including short videos on *Core Beliefs of the New Church* and *Introduction to New Church Education*.

Outreach

Focus has shifted to accelerate production of the Grand Human Project online and small group worship opportunities during the pandemic. These include:

- Spreading teachings with newcomers
- Helping people congregate and directing them to existing congregations
- Encouraging service to others

A new website has been launched for the Olivet New Church in Toronto, Canada.

Advertising is being developed aimed at increasing traffic with ad-specific targets, including videos for Google and YouTube.

Young Adult Outreach

The Rev. Jeff Smith reported on formation of the New Church Career Network, connecting job seekers with opportunities through a network of New Church contacts. Pilot programs are underway in Bryn Athyn and Oak Arbor, Michigan.

Video outreach through the Grand Human Project was expected to connect young adults online in the following week.

General Church Membership

Ian Carswell reported on development of a membership metrics report to be distributed regularly to General Church leadership. He also gave updates on five areas of subcommittee work: Women Focused; Membership Services; Membership Application; Young Adults; and Membership Communications.

Advancement

Amy Buick reported that year-to-date results as of May, compared to the same period last year with the General Church, are on track to reach the goal of \$976,000 by June 30.

Contribution revenue was off 60%, due to a one-time large estate gift last year. Without that gift we are ahead of last year. The number of gifts is up 6% to 1,949 and the number of donors is up 14% to 825. There has been strong annual support during the pandemic.

The General Church processed almost \$800,000 in transitory gifts to societies.

Human Resources

The team has been extremely busy responding to employment issues relating to the pandemic. A pay freeze for all U.S.-based employees, effective July 1, will be reviewed throughout the year.

Theological School

Five students are enrolled in the Theological School, with two more admitted for the coming school year.

This year's graduate, the **Rev. Richard Glenn**, reported on his Theological School experience. He has been posted to the Oak Arbor Society in Michigan, assisting **Pastor Derek Elphick**.

ACADEMY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

(Highlights of a June 27 meeting conducted by telephone and video conference.)

The Board adopted by resolution 21 goals for the current fiscal year.

Graduation

A violent storm tore through the Bryn Athyn community and the Academy campus three days before the planned "virtual graduation" for the Secondary Schools. There was widespread damage on the campus, including many trees, the new turf field, lights and buildings. Tree removal cost \$40,000. But an extremely meaningful and memorable graduation program – including a parade of cars through town – was conducted on schedule.

Finance

Budgets for the Secondary Schools, Glencairn, Cairnwood, Theological School and Central Office, plus capital budgets, were approved, with a combined total deficit of \$3.2 million – a slight improvement over the previous year. The Bryn Athyn College budget was approved in January and targets are being monitored. Once final enrollment information is available for the 2020-21 school year, budgets will be reconsidered for salary increases.

The endowment is down 5.5% and continued short-term volatility is expected.

Reopening

The College and Secondary Schools face many challenges with reopening in the fall. (See separate reports below.) These include:

- New practices to monitor the coronavirus, including changes to curriculum, food services, classroom sizes, ingress/egress and flow in stairs and hallways, signage, athletics and classroom cameras

- Conducting classes using new teaching practices and techniques with online features
- Required preparations for reopening
- Alterations in school year calendars
- Decreased athletic competitions
- Delayed filling of open positions

The Board adopted the Secondary Schools' newly developed Athletics Health & Safety Plan.

In response to recent events, the College, Secondary Schools and Glencairn have formed committees to study racial diversity, inequality, access and racial injustice.

Bryn Athyn College

The College is having a robust year in admissions applications and better-than-expected student retention. Participation in summer “pop-up” online courses has been exciting and encouraging.

Secondary Schools

The Academy Secondary Schools received a generous \$3.5 million grant from the Asplundh Foundation for current year operations and adding to the Asplundh Founders Fund.

Cairnwood

Cairnwood continues to adhere to pandemic precautions. Most events under contract have been moved to new dates. During events guests are required to wear masks and to exercise social distancing and other safety measures.

Brent Pendleton, Thayer Pendleton and Jennifer Pronesti were elected to three-year terms on the Board of Governors, and **Shaun Buss** was elected as Academy Board representative.

Contributions

Board participation in annual giving to the Academy is 100% and Corporation members are at 77%. The Mitchell Performing Arts Center received an estate bequest of \$100,000. Bryn Athyn College received \$50,000 for its terminal degree program. Pitcairn Hall accessibility renovations and the turf field for the Girls School are fully funded.

Orientation

The Board adopted a three-phase orientation for new Board and Corporation members.

NEW CHURCH EDUCATION IN THE AGE OF COVID-19

Below are reports from Bryn Athyn College, the Academy of the New Church Secondary Schools, the Bryn Athyn Church School, and several General Church Schools responding to requests for information. Administrators and teachers spent a lot of time over the summer studying changing scenarios and reviewing options, resulting in plans that best fit their circumstances. All of these, of course, are subject to further change in this volatile climate.

Bryn Athyn College

*An August 12 letter from Bryn Athyn College President **Brian Blair**:*

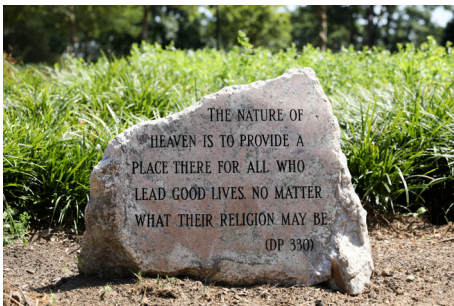
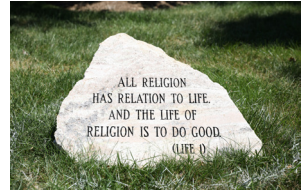
I am writing to confirm that Bryn Athyn College will re-open for the Fall 2020 term on September 8, with classes beginning on September 10. Most of our classes will be made available in a hyflex format where students can attend in-person or virtually. The Bryn Athyn College website has a COVID-19 section where regular updates and postings can be found on a variety of relevant subjects. There are specific bulletins covering academics, health services, residence life, student activities and associated practices dealing with COVID-19. We encourage all our campus community to review the posted information <https://brynathyn.edu/covid-19-update/>.

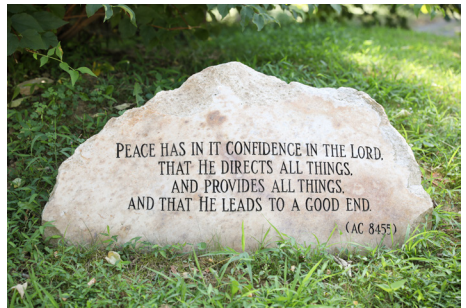
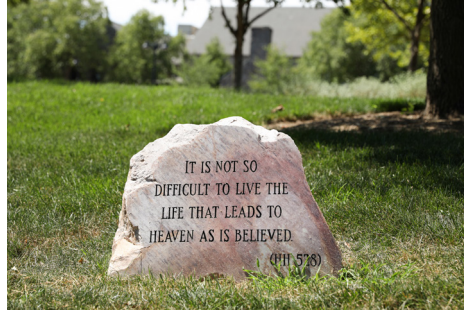
This summer has experienced on-going developments associated with COVID-19. Various parts of the United States have seen infection rates dramatically increase while other sections have remained relatively steady. Bryn Athyn College is located in Montgomery County, where the infection rate has been relatively stable. Our leadership team has established sound working relationships with our county health officials, our medical advisors at Abington/Jefferson Health System and an association of other colleges/universities in the county. We have collaborated with these organizations and have incorporated the best available knowledge into our planning and preparation to re-open in September. Our plans include the understanding that students, faculty and staff members may have safety concerns that would require them to attend/teach/work remotely due to health risks associated with the individual or their immediate family. We will work with every individual to determine what are the best options for them to attend or work remotely. Our students have indicated a very strong preference to attend class in-person as well as participate in other aspects of student life. We will do our best to provide an environment that keeps our campus as safe as possible from COVID-19. There are, of course, no guarantees. The best prevention approach is for all students and employees to strictly follow the personal protection guidelines posted on our website. Our commitment is to offer a quality education and a meaningful

TWELVE STONES PROJECT

(Photos by Holly Adams)

Twelve stones with engravings from the Word and the Writings have been placed around the Academy Secondary Schools campus. The engraving and placement were done by Rich Show and his crew. The quotes were selected by the primary donor, Chaplain Barry Halterman, the Rev. Christopher Barber, and Principals Jeremy Irwin and Kira Schadegg.





THE NEW TERRY AND EILEEN GLENN GIRLS ATHLETIC FIELD

(Photo by Holly Adams)



college experience, while taking necessary precautions to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 on campus. We all look forward to seeing our students, whether returning to campus or attending virtually, and thank you all for your support.

Academy Secondary Schools

Academy Managing Director **Jim Adams**, Girls School Principal **Kira Schadegg** and Boys School Principal **Jeremy Irwin** sent out a letter on June 30 outlining a tentative plan for the school year, projecting a modified opening and as-close-to-normal operations as possible. However, this was followed by letters on August 7 and 10. Excerpts follow:

August 7: The data and guidance regarding school reopening has continued to change during recent weeks and as a result we have had to make a very difficult decision. We had hoped to start the year in a hybrid model that reduced transmission vectors and left individual families to decide whether to utilize in-person options or choose an entirely virtual option. Given current circumstances, that approach is no longer possible.

We must start the 2020-21 academic year in a virtual environment, with education provided remotely. The safety and well-being of students, staff and everyone's families was an important factor in this decision.

For many, this decision is very difficult to hear and we are sorry for any negative impact that it may have on our community. The Pandemic Administrative Team has taken a great deal of counsel from a host of sources and has deliberated at length. Ultimately, however, the decision was made unanimously. The reality of the situation is undeniable. At this time we cannot provide the necessary levels of safety, staffing or sustainability in a hybrid or mixed environment.

This was followed by a detailed letter on August 10 which is available on the website, www.ancss.org, under COVID-19 Updates Page. This answers many questions and provides information about what the academic experience – including performing arts and athletics – will look like.

GENERAL CHURCH SCHOOLS

Schools throughout the General Church system worked through the summer to develop plans for reopening this fall – aware that any plans may be subject to change in the new pandemic reality. Here is a glimpse of what some of these schools are doing.

Bryn Athyn Church School

(Adapted from an August 17 letter to parents from Greg Henderson, Principal, Kirsten Huff, Vice-Principal, and the Rev. Solomon Keal, School Pastor)

Earlier this summer we communicated our plans to hold school onsite when it was safe to do so. Since then many schools in our area have changed their plans and will begin the year remotely. At the same time new data about the pediatric rate of COVID-19 has been released and the State of Pennsylvania has released guidance for instructional models to be safely implemented in the various counties. Based on the number of new cases in Montgomery County the guidelines state that BACS should be limited to a hybrid or a remote model.

Because of our staffing structure, we have not seen a hybrid model as a feasible long-term option. Our teachers could not teach in person full time while simultaneously running an online program for other students. We will therefore be starting the 2020-21 school year in a remote platform, with the exception of a first week in-person orientation.

While this is a disappointing decision to make, we feel it is the responsible direction we need to take. In addition to the state guidance on how best to protect the safety of our students, their families and our staff, other factors were involved in this decision. Current regulations on exclusion for students and staff when they test positive for COVID-9, are exposed to a positive case, or exhibit symptoms mean that an onsite model would almost certainly include extended periods of exclusion. This might mean that the school is closed for weeks at a time, different grade levels are excluded for two weeks, or certain students or staff members are excluded.

Medical professionals have been increasingly describing a fall season in which students are in and out of school and taught by substitute teachers. The decision of other schools in our area to switch to remote models also impacts us as we are unclear how many of our families would lose the ability to bus their children to school.

We recognize it is likely a portion of the school year would have to be delivered remotely, so even while we optimistically planned for in-person protocols we were also discussing changes we would make to the design of last spring's remote program.

One area we think will be an improvement is the increase in synchronous lessons (a teacher and a class of students connecting by computer at the same time). Teachers and parents both saw the importance of live in-person connections and we plan to increase these opportunities beyond what was offered last spring.

Another difference this fall will be opportunities for materials to be dropped off and picked up throughout remote learning. Because we are not under a shelter-in-place order we have the ability to have materials, supplies and/or texts handed back and forth between home and school in a way that wasn't possible in the spring. So, we will not be as reliant on digital content.

Our teachers are also learning new ways to make digital content more

effective and engaging. The fact that they can be in their classrooms will have positive effects in several ways. Another difference with this year's remote program is that specialist subjects such as art, music and PE will be part of the curriculum rather than an option. Classes like science and religion will continue to be part of the curriculum and chapel services will be shared with students. While a remote BACS by necessity is different from onsite, we continue to strive to instill those aspects of New Church education that we believe make our school special.

Beginning the year through a remote platform does not allow for teachers and students to form the same kind of relationship that beginning in person would. We are working on plans to redefine our first week as in-person orientation. Half of the class will meet with their teacher on each of these days and the other half will meet for a different time that day. This will follow increased safety guidelines but also allow teachers to introduce their systems, train their students on remote platforms, and hand out materials for the first units of the year.

We are prepared to loan devices to families in need. These orientation days will provide a setting for students and teachers to get to know each other before remote learning begins.

Our goal remains to have school in person when it is deemed safe to do so. We will reassess the environment at the fall midterm in October and throughout the year as we gather new information. The guidance from the state for in-person education is based on the number of new cases being fewer than 10 per 100,000 residents and the percent of positivity of diagnostic testing being fewer than 5%. These metrics and further recommendations from the state and the Montgomery County Health Department will be a primary guide in our future decision to return to school.

Kainon Church School, Westville, Natal, Republic of South Africa

Jane Edmonds, Principal

Wow! It has been such a crazy year. We are in our third term and things are going well.

On March 25 we were locked down and schools closed suddenly just before the end of Term 2 and Easter break.

During that two-week break the teachers brainstormed to place our whole curriculum on two online platforms, uploading worksheets and recordings of themselves. It was very challenging at first as parents and teachers tried to adjust to this new way of supporting the children.

We continued online through April and May and teachers connected with their classes on Zoom. The ministers recorded their worship and I recorded

story time for Juniors and Assembly time.

We were granted permission by the government to start onsite schooling with many protocols in place. We employed one of our parents, who is a Nursing Sister, to come each day to assist with COVID-19 protocols and related administration. We had 50% of our children coming back from Grade R to 7. This worked well with the new social distancing rules.

All children come to school in cloth masks. Parents are not allowed to leave their vehicles and also must wear masks.

A Health Momentum App has to be completed each morning on the parent's cell phone which provides them with a code that is scanned by the school nurse. Each child then hand sanitizes and walks through a booth that has a non-toxic vapor to assist with sanitization.

Teachers and all cleaning staff follow the same procedures. No parents are allowed on campus and all meetings are on Zoom or by phone call. Classrooms windows and doors are open for air flow and no air conditioners are used.

The school day is shortened and only core subjects are taught online. All children who want to be onsite are, which is about 60% of the school, including Pre-Primary. The rest of the school is online.

We are offering this hybrid schooling for the remainder of this year and into 2021, and for as long as is necessary.

The children always sit in the same place in and out the classrooms for tracking and tracing purposes. Classes do not mix so we know who has been exposed and we can isolate classes separately if necessary without closing down the whole school.

Every hour on the hour, teachers and children sanitize the surface where they are working. Hand sanitization happens every time a child/ teacher walks in or out of a room.

The school day ends at noon and the children continue online at home. We have Zoom sport skills and PE lessons. To date we have not missed an academic day and we are fortunately up to speed with our curriculum.

We have had two teacher cases of COVID-19 in the Pre-Primary. They were exposed off campus and became infected. We had to close the Pre-Primary for two weeks for deep cleaning. We had one student case of COVID-19 in Grade 1 and all teachers who had been in that classroom had to self-isolate and the class went back online for two weeks.

Our parents are encouraged to be vigilant and to communicate any symptoms early, or to let us know if there is a family member who has been exposed or has symptoms or has been tested positive.

Kempton New Church School, Kempton, Pennsylvania

The Rev. Brett D. Buick, Principal

Dale R. Smith, Assistant Principal

In these uncertain times, we at the Kempton New Church School at least know that the Lord is certainty itself. With belief in Him – and with a long-considered school re-entry plan in place – we intend to start the 2020-2021 school year on September 1 with in-person classes.

We have every hope that June will see another year of New Church education under our belts, with our teachers and 63 students having safely shared actual space together!

The future is not ours to see, of course, which is in Providence. It may be that we'll have to undertake virtual classes at some point. But currently we are not offering them, so several of our families have chosen to undertake home schooling this year, which we totally support. These decisions have been challenging for everyone.

We are sad to be eliminating some of the loveliest things for the time being, such as our beloved plays and singing – even during worship. But for whatever time we are given to be together, we will still find ways to turn our attention heavenward.

One of the church's most beautiful hymns comes to mind:

Lord, let my prayer be set before Thee as incense rising unto Thee, and let the lifting up of my hands be as an evening sacrifice. Set Thou a watch before my mouth and keep, O Lord, the doors of my lips! My eyes, O God, are unto Thee; in Thee, O Lord, do I put my trust. (From *Psalms* 141)

We send our warm good wishes to the rest of the New Church schools in the world. Peace be yours.

Oak Arbor School, Rochester, Michigan

Nathaniel Brock, Head Teacher

As of July 31, we are in Phase 4 of the Michigan Safe Start plan, and in-school instruction is possible with extra hygiene and spacing measures in place. We are working with the State of Michigan guidelines, Rochester Community Schools, as well as the General Church of the New Jerusalem to develop a safe back-to-school plan.

This plan will take into consideration the current research regarding building sanitization, mask wearing, student groupings as well as Oak Arbor's unique lower enrollment. We are awaiting directives for nonpublic schools from the Michigan Department of Education, hoping they will allow us a little

more flexibility than the stringent guidance for large public schools.

We are excited to be welcoming a number of new families to our Oak Arbor Church Montessori School community, both due to our Montessori transition as well as the COVID-19 situation that has had families looking for smaller school options for their children.

Washington New Church School, Mitchellville, Maryland

The Rev. Brian Smith, Principal

(Excerpts from a July 31 letter to parents)

I am very sorry to inform you that we have had to withdraw our offer of an in-classroom program for the first semester of the school year. I heard the relief and excitement from several of you when we previously announced this offer and I'm sure that removing this option puts significant logistical challenges back on your plate. It is an unhappy decision and one that was difficult for us to reach.

We are worried about the real possibility of being forced to close our classrooms at unplanned times. Ultimately, the high infection rates locally left us too concerned about the risk to our school community to be willing to start the school year with open classrooms.

This will leave us focused on delivering the best distance-learning program possible. Our plan is to improve on the program we provided last spring and to find creative ways to deliver education that is both rigorous and also personal. Depending on guidance from Maryland and the local infection rates, we may be able to open the classrooms later in the year.

Other General Church Schools

We understand from the General Church Office of Education that the schools in Glenview, Illinois, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Caryndale and Toronto, in Ontario, Canada, all are planning to reopen with in-school classes.

GLENCAIRN MUSEUM

As with other museums and historic sites around the world, Glencairn Museum faced the challenge of remaining relevant and connected with its audience.

The result: Glencairn launched a partnership with Google Arts & Culture, whose mission is “to preserve and bring the world’s art and culture online so it’s accessible to anyone, anywhere.”

Glencairn has also expanded its media presence to help meet the cultural, intellectual and emotional needs of followers. It has developed new web-based resources for parents and children. And it is supporting its community by

reaching out to hospitals, teachers and retirement facilities.

Glencairn believes it will emerge from the COVID-19 challenge with an even stronger connection with its virtual and local audiences.

LAUREL CAMP JUBILEE

The COVID-19 pandemic not only cancelled the General Church Retreat and its celebration of the 250th anniversary of the birth of the New Church, but also many beloved Church and Academy camps – including the Laurel Camp in western Pennsylvania that will celebrate its 50th anniversary next year.

The Rev. Solomon Keal noted in the *Bryn Athyn Post* that even though there would be no Laurel this year, “We were able to create a little bit of the Laurel Camp feeling by producing a Laurel Sunday video” for a regular informal service in Bryn Athyn in July.

“*Dr. Graham Bier* [Director of Music at the Bryn Athyn Cathedral], recruited 37 musicians from around the world (Pennsylvania, Maine, Colorado, Arizona, California and South Africa) to participate in virtual bands, playing and singing Laurel Camp favorites.” The service was filmed in the Hemlock Grove of The Lord’s New Church, including the candelabra, banner and Word used at the camp, “which helped give it that Laurel Camp feeling of being out in the woods.” (The video can be viewed at www.brynathynchurch.org.)

The theme for this year’s camp was the familiar quote from *Micah* 6:8, to “do justly, love mercy, walk humbly with your God.” Mr. Keal said: “Expressing love isn’t just about warm fuzzy feelings. It means living a life in which we practice justice, mercy and humility. Laurel has long been a place where people have found inspiration to live that kind of life. It was a pioneer of the small-group movement, which has since then come down ‘out of the hills’ to become part of General Church culture as a whole.”

Some of the founders in the early 1970s were Jack, Donald and Frank Rose, “and people have continued to gather together in the woods of Laurel Hill State Park to worship together and find spiritual community for the last 50 years!”

“The Word says: ‘And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a Jubilee for you!’ (*Leviticus* 25:10)

“Since we couldn’t go out to Laurel Hill State Park this summer, we are counting this year as our ‘year of rest.’ And next year at Laurel Camp we will be celebrating the Jubilee, honoring 50 years of Laurel Camp history and community.” (For more about the camp see www.LaurelCamp.org.)

NEW CHRISTIAN BIBLE STUDY

Steve David

Here's a quick news roundup from the New Christian Bible Study project, on behalf of the staff and volunteers. It's been a busy summer. Here are some highlights:

Traffic keeps growing: We're up to 340,000 visits/month now!

We've been busy adding more Bible chapter summaries with explanations:

- New commentary on the *Book of Judges*: Exploring the Meaning of *Judges* 1.
- Plus some new commentary flowing in for *1 Samuel*: Exploring the Meaning of *1 Samuel* 1.
- And we've started posting chapter-level commentaries on the inner meaning for *Psalms* 1-8, and 26-29 so far.

We've surpassed the 400-translation milestone for Swedenborg's works, adding these ones:

- *The Inner Meaning of the Prophets and Psalms* - Latin text
- *Doctrine about Life* - Swedish text
- *Arcana Coelestia*, or *The Inner Meaning of Genesis and Exodus* - in German
- *Enthüllte Offenbarung*, or *Apocalypse Revealed* - in German
- *Doctrine about Faith*, or 第四部信仰についての新エルサレムの教義 - in Japanese.
- *Doctrina de la Nueva Jerusalén sobre las Sagradas Escrituras* - in Spanish.
- *Arcana Coelestia*, or *Hemelse Verborgenheden in Genesis en Exodus* - in Dutch, Exodus 1-20.
- *Apocalypse Explained*, in English.
- *Manželská láska*, or *Marriage Love*, in Czech.

Plus, we've made nice changes to the user interface, added new search capabilities, and linked to a bunch of new videos. Come check it all out! www.newchristianbiblestudy.org.

Life Lines

HYLAND JOHNS: A LIFE OF SERVICE



Hyland Johns

Hyland Johns came into the Church with his family when he was a teenager. The Church came into his life as though it was already in his soul. When he passed on to a whole new world of spiritual uses in August at age 95, he was still keenly engaged. He was always asking – of friends, of church leaders, of groups of doers and thinkers he was always putting together: What can we do to help the Church and Academy meet their challenges? How can we make them even better?

He not only asked questions. He got involved. That started when he was a teenager – new to the Church, new to the Academy, new to the Bryn Athyn community, all of which defined his long and useful life. He joined the Bryn Athyn Fire Company and never stopped volunteering and serving for another 80 productive years.

His energy and devotion were as breathtaking as they were inspiring. The list is exhausting: the General Church, Academy and Bryn Athyn Church

boards, plus numerous committees; Pennypack Ecological Restoration Trust; Holy Redeemer Health System (he virtually ran the hospital for a time); several forestry associations in connection with his career as senior vice president with the Asplundh Company. He was mayor of Bryn Athyn for decades. He chaired numerous General Church Assemblies and Church/Academy building committees. Everyone knew: if you wanted something done – and done right – put Hyland in charge.

He put in a lot of time to become a successful investor so he developed a way to share his knowledge. He led a mutual fund group in Bryn Athyn for many years, bringing in speakers, sharing information and helping many people develop financial security. He was never interested in personal credit; he just wanted to help.

When I worked in the Development Office for the Church and the Academy, Hyland was always the first to volunteer to call contributors – especially Board and Corporation members. He believed that serving any organization carried responsibilities. He never missed a Charter Day or graduation procession because that was “part of the job.” He took his obligations seriously.

He was always that way. I remember hearing family stories at a milestone birthday party of Hyland as a college student with all his term papers finished early, lined up in the order they were due, with color-coded binders. Everyone chuckled knowingly. That’s Hyland!

Words always come to mind that encapsulate a person’s life and meaning. For Hyland it’s a long list: dignity, integrity, smart, generous, wise, caring, respected, persevering, organized, dedicated – and with that shock of white hair to the end, youthful.

It’s almost a cliché at New Church memorial services to say of such stalwart givers and ambassadors: “Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of the Lord.” Hyland Johns was the epitome of that lifelong servant. He has earned the joy.

(BMH)

FACING DEATH

Jim de Maine was a classmate of mine at the Academy College (now Bryn Athyn College) in the late 1950s, before earning his medical degree at the University of Pennsylvania and launching a 32-year career as a thoroughly New Church and highly respected physician.

Jim was a specialist in pulmonary and critical care who witnessed a lot of changes – in medical treatment, technology and ethics. He says the questions didn’t change during that span, especially over challenging end-of-life issues, but the answers have kept evolving – for doctors, health-care professionals,

patients and families.

He kept up a blog during his career, chronicling stories and ethical issues, viewed through the lens of his New Church faith. Now he has produced a book – *Facing Death: Finding Dignity, Hope and Healing at the End* – which is the gift of his thoughtful approach to the critical issues of life and death. (The book will be available in the fall. You can reserve a copy through the publisher: <https://clydehillpublishing.com/product/facing-death/>)

In 2014 Jim gave a memorable presentation at the Boynton Beach Retreat on *End-of-Life Issues and Medical Ethics*. (See *New Church Life*, March/April 2014, p. 141) He emphasized how critical it is for patients and families to discuss end-of-life issues – among themselves and with their doctors – before they are dealing with a crisis and a lot of tough, emotional choices.

Planning ahead – to make it easier on everyone – should include basic rights and responsibilities, decisions and preferences about life-sustaining treatment, informing doctors about your preferences, and then making sure they are honored.

“Who do we want to speak for us,” Jim asked, “when we can no longer speak for ourselves?”

Clyde Hill Publishing says of Jim’s book:

“Many books look at end of life and how to die with dignity. In this beautifully written memoir, physician Jim de Maine presents stories – lessons learned from patients and caregivers who taught him about dying.

“His medical career began in the era when little could be done for what remain our two biggest killers – heart disease and cancer. There were iron lungs but no ventilators. ICUs and CCUs (intensive care and critical care units) had not yet evolved. Possibly the most distressing was seeing his patients die without the benefit of hospice care. With amazing rapidity, medical science brought us life-saving advances such as hemodialysis and organ transplants.

“The progress of medical science is both marvelous and problematic. The advances continue to outpace our ability to thoughtfully and ethically bring new technologies to the bedside. When should they be used? How do we decide how to allocate these advances when resources are scarce or prohibitively expensive?

“Dr. de Maine’s stories are about hopes and fears, about the ethical dilemmas he encountered, about advanced-care planning, about physician aid in dying, about medical mistakes, and about modern hospice and palliative care. He shares stories that taught him hard, humbling lessons. He shares thoughts about the future and leaving a legacy to our loved ones.”

Death is inevitable but dealing with it – on whatever level – is often painful and trying. Jim’s thoughtful, caring approach makes it easier for all of us. It is the last gift we can give each other.

Jim and his wife, Lourdes, live in retirement in Seattle, Washington.
Contact: jimdemaine@comcast.net.

(BMH)

THE HUMBLE HEROS

Beyond doctors like Jim de Maine, no one knows more about “Facing Death” than the nurses who deal with it every day. Since early in the year they have been on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic, heroically risking their own lives for the sake of their patients.

They will never have the acclaim of Florence Nightingale or Mother Teresa, although in some cities they – along with all hospital workers – are serenaded and cheered every day by grateful neighbors as shifts change. They put in long hours, giving whatever aid and comfort they can to patients who cannot even see their own families. Then they go home, weary beyond words, put their clothes in the wash, and rest for another day.

They offer not just bandages and medication but caring and love. Especially in this crisis they are the epitome of selflessness – in every hospital, hospice and nursing home. And they are called on to do much more than they ever trained for.

The Rev. James Barry, a chaplain in one of Philadelphia’s major hospitals, offers a moving tribute: *Nurses, Sacraments and True Worship in the ICU* (page 391). He tells of nurses who now must do what he did before even chaplains and close family were forbidden from visiting patients. It is hard on these nurses. It is emotional. But one nurse, Jay says, forced to be the one to say the prayers and provide that last measure of comfort for a dying patient, came out of the room, her face “glowing with innocence and happiness.”

This is what Jay describes as “true worship” – a spiritual experience of connecting a lonely, dying patient with the Lord. With it comes the blessing of inner bliss.

This is an illustration that “Worship does not consist in prayers and external devotion but in a life of charity.” (*Apocalypse Explained* 325)

This is the truest expression of use – our influence for good with others. “A person who loves the neighbor as himself never experiences the delight of charity except in the exercise of it, or in use. Consequently, the life of charity is a life of uses.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 997)

These heroic nurses and all their compatriots, these humble heroes, are useful beyond measure. They deserve our quiet thanks and praise.

(BMH)

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

Continuing the theme from my editorial, *Racism and the 250th Anniversary of the New Church* (page 355), Columbus Day is October 12. Over the summer statues of Columbus have been removed all over the United States. Trenton and Pennsauken in New Jersey were among many communities nationwide that removed their statues in July. As of this writing the removal of the Columbus statue in Marconi Plaza in South Philadelphia was the subject of continuing debate. In Washington, D.C., the debate focuses not only on the statue but on the name of the District itself.

Trenton's Mayor W. Reed Gusciora said:

The current national debate on racial justice has led to a long-overdue examination of how we honor our past, including our statues, monuments, and the names of our parks and schools. Our communities rightfully expect that the individuals we celebrate actually represent the principles of freedom and equality that we all hold dear.

When it comes to the monuments to Confederate Civil War heroes, most Americans see them as an attempt on the part of white Southerners to protest their defeat and romanticize their "lost cause," without a shred of repentance for the evil that slavery inflicted on black Americans. To many it is surprising that the statues were ever allowed to go up in the first place.

Columbus, however, is a different sort of figure. Does the New Church have anything to say here?

Samuel Morison's 1942 book, *Admiral of the Ocean Sea*, dated but still regarded as the authoritative account of his life, describes both the idealism and the rampant wickedness of 15th Century Christianity.

Columbus and the Spanish sovereigns described themselves as genuinely interested in the spread of Christianity and the welfare of the peoples they encountered. But the casual brutality of their society, and its continual economic and political precariousness, meant that these stated goals were always subordinate to the demands of financial and political survival. Even though the explorers were delighted by the often unbelievably innocent and generous people in the New World, they wasted no time in taking their goods and women, pressing them into a search for gold, and carrying them back to Spain as slaves.

Columbus seems to have attempted to limit and prevent much of this, but it was implicit in the setup, and the results speak for themselves. Columbus has traditionally been seen as a hero, but he can just as easily be seen as representing the massive injustices that have been visited on the peoples of the Americas over the past 500 years.

The Writings are in wholehearted agreement with this assessment of the immorality and cruelty of the Europeans. A recognition of this behavior is

key to the New Church concept of the fall of Christianity. At the same time the Writings explain that the providential reason for this exploration and commerce was so that the Word would be spread. (See *Sacred Scripture* 108) Sure enough, despite the behavior of Europeans all over the world, the Word has been spread. Christianity is larger than any other religion, continues to grow rapidly, and the vast majority of believers are non-Europeans, setting the stage for the new spiritual era that is the New Church.

New Church teachings can support either side of the question of the Columbus statues. But they are unambiguous in supporting racial equality and in denouncing the long history of injustice toward people of color, not only in this country but all over the world.

(JFS)

WITNESS TO THE LIGHT

The opening words of the *Gospel of John* are among the most familiar and sublime in the Word: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shined in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.”

And then, “There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. (He) came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.”

John had no illusions about his calling – to prepare the way of the Lord and sinners for repentance so they could be with the Lord in heaven. “He who is coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe’s latchet I am not worthy to unloose.” He knew that “He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.”

This was an enormous opportunity and responsibility. It is really a calling to all of us from the Lord: “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become the children of God.”

And so we become one with John: “The voice of one, crying in the wilderness: make straight the way of the Lord.”

In His Sermon on the Mount the Lord says to us: “You are the light of the world. . . . Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”

It is humbling and inspiring that we each have the opportunity – and the calling – to witness the Light, to reflect it in our lives, and help lead the way to the true Light.

(BMH)

WITNESS TO THE DARKNESS

Throughout the summer major American cities have been roiled by unrest. By day the streets are calm but littered with debris. By night peaceful protests are overtaken by violence and chaos. The targets are predictable: buildings, businesses, statues, vehicles, police. Less predictable but all the more disturbing is the desecration of churches and religious symbols.

It is no coincidence that the violence erupts in darkness.

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil.

For everyone that does evil hates the light, neither comes to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.

But he that truly comes to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God. (*John 3:19-21*)

We are witness to the battle between light and darkness. We put our faith and trust in the Light.

“Jesus said, I am the light of the world; he that follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life.” (*John 8:12*)

(BMH)

HEREDITARY EVIL

New Church members may not appreciate how unique and wonderful the doctrine of hereditary evil is. The idea that character traits, both positive and negative, run in families is obvious to everyone. It is surprising that no Christian doctrine accounts for it – except in the New Church. The Christian concept of original sin is somewhat different, being the tendency to sin innate in all human beings, held to be inherited from Adam in consequence of the Fall. It is also humanity’s collective guilt because of Adam’s sin, erased only by Christ’s sacrifice.

The New Church idea is different from this. Hereditary evils are inclinations to negative behaviors which are present with all people, and yet differently with each person. These inclinations are passed down from one generation to the next and are modified from generation to generation by their actual behaviors. Every family and every individual have their own set, and they take their place among the many character traits that distinguish one family and individual from another. Some of the differences from the traditional Christian idea are:

- Hereditary evil is different with every person, so everyone has different inclinations.
- This heredity changes from one generation to the next, improving or getting worse.

- No one is held guilty for these inclinations, which are present in everyone, but only for what they freely choose to adopt, justify and act on.
- Our choices in life are not determined by this heredity. We are held in freedom by the Lord and are therefore accountable for what we actually do.

This means that according to New Church teachings there is a biological basis for all of our traits, preferences and inclinations. Studies have shown genetic links to behaviors of many different kinds, from altruism and religious faith, to alcoholism, infidelity and criminal behavior. The New Church concept of hereditary evil solves the problem of how we are accountable for our behavior if it is seemingly genetically determined.

The answer is that genetics don't determine our behaviors, even if they account for many of our inclinations. Everyone has his or her own unique heredity, and we deal with it as best we can in the freedom that the Lord gives us.

“We, the human race, have been born into evils of every kind. From birth onward we have tendencies toward things that come from hell. Unless we are born again or regenerated, we cannot come into heaven.” (*True Christianity* 329; *Divine Providence* 83, *New Jerusalem* 83)

“In addition to all this, young children vary in their nature and disposition. They do so because of their heredity derived from parents and by succession from grandparents and great grandparents; for any action which has been confirmed in parents through habitual practice acquires a natural disposition to it and is implanted through heredity in young children. And this is how they come to possess varying inclinations.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 2300)

(JFS)

SWEDENBORG: SAVED FROM THE NOOSE!

Some of the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic may seem draconian. The Rev. Todd Beiswenger in Australia, for instance, notes in his church newsletter that it seems “pretty harsh” that police have been given the authority to issue on-the-spot fines of \$1,000 to people breaking quarantine rules.

But “my good friend, the Rev. Julian Duckworth (of the Australia Conference) reminded me that modern penalties are much less severe than penalties from a few hundred years ago.” Then he quoted from a story Swedenborg related about his own experience with breaking a quarantine in London in 1710 – and nearly being hanged for it!

“I traveled to Gothenburg and thence by ship to London. On the way to London I was four times in danger of my life:

1. From a sandbank on the English coast in a dense fog, when all considered themselves lost, the keel of the vessel being within a quarter of a fathom of the bank.
2. From a crew of a privateer, who came on board, declaring themselves to be French, while we thought they were Danes.
3. From an English guard ship on the following evening which on the strength of a report mistook us in the darkness for the privateer; wherefore it fired a whole broadside into us but without doing any serious damage.
4. In London I was soon exposed to a still greater danger, for some Swedes, who had approached our ship in a yacht persuaded me to sail with them to town, when all on board had been commanded to remain there for six weeks, the news having already spread that the plague had broken out in Sweden. As I did not observe the quarantine, an inquiry was made; yet I was saved from the noose with the declaration, however, that no one who ventured to do this in the future would escape his doom. In London and Oxford I spent upwards of a year.”

Swedenborg wrote this account in his *Journals of Travel*, written in Swedish but never published. After his death the journal was found and is now part of *Tafel's Documents Concerning Swedenborg* – Volume 2, Document 204.

Todd adds: “I thought (this) an interesting little story that reminds us that policies and procedures we’re enduring today aren’t really anything new and that we can be grateful that our government isn’t threatening death as punishment for breaking quarantine!”

(BMH)

THE LIFE TEAM

Every issue of New Church Life is the product of a team effort. The team deserves to be recognized.

In addition to welcoming the **Rev. Jeremy Simons** as Spiritual Editor (see page 349), we are also happy to add **Donald Fitzpatrick** to our team of proofreaders. As a well-respected former administrator and English teacher in both Bryn Athyn College and the Secondary Schools – a man well-versed in careful language – Don fits right in with our veteran pros: **Noelene Rose, Elaine York and Katie Goerwitz**. They pore over every word in the *Life*, diligent volunteers all, and deserve to be recognized and thanked.

Noelene also prepares the Announcements (Baptisms, Marriages and Deaths), with the help of **Anita Halterman**, who also puts together the General Church Secretary Annual Report. Cairncrest Executive Assistant **Kelly Treacy** chips in every year to produce the exhaustive Directory of the General Church

Clergy.

Finally, **Michelle Chapin** is the technology wizard who puts each issue into its final attractive format, including the photo pages. **Sue Wright** quietly and professionally handles subscriptions and **Rob Andrews** takes care of getting issues posted online.

It's a great team to work with. And they post a win every time out!

(BMH)

Announcements

ORDINATION, First Degree

The priesthood, in the highest sense, is every function which the Lord performs as Savior, and whatever He performs as Savior is from His Divine love. Because of this, the priesthood was representative of the Lord as to all the work of salvation from Divine love. Therefore, all worship was of the office of the priest. (Arcana Coelestia 9809:2)

Glenn, Richard M. – At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, June 28, 2020, Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr. officiating.

BAPTISMS

Baptism was instituted for a sign that a person is of the Church, and for a memorial that he is to be regenerated; for the washing of baptism is a spiritual washing, which is regeneration. (New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine 202)

Allen, Darrell Edward – At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, June 27, 2020, Rev. Kurt Hy. Asplundh officiating.

Cole, Thorin Arnheim Azar – At Kitchener, Ontario, Canada, June 19, 2020 (born June 9, 2020), son of Nathan and Vera Cole, Rev. Mark B. Allais officiating.

Henriques, Kevin Anthony – At Kempton, Pennsylvania, June 25, 2020, Rev. Brett D. Buick officiating.

Lompo, Josias Bepampo – At Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, July 17, 2020 (born July 14, 2020), son of Stephanie Ahou Nadege N’Goran and Samuel Oumpouguila Lompo, Rev. Samuel Oumpouguila Lompo officiating.

Ngcobo, Nomthandazo Nquobile – At Buccleuch, South Africa, November 24, 2019 (born April 22, 2019), daughter of Bongani and Petunia Ngcobo, Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss, Sr. officiating.

Steen, Caspian Erik – At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, July 5, 2020 (born June 23, 2020), son of David and Rachel Steen, Rev. Erik J. Buss officiating.

Tormey, Decklan John – At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, June 14, 2020 (born September 6, 2019), son of Travis and Caitlin Tormey, Rev. Eric H. Carswell officiating.

Tough, Bethany – At Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, February 13, 2020, Rev. Calvin A. Odhner officiating.

MARRIAGES

The delights of conjugal love surpass the delights of all other loves, and conjugal love also gives delight to these other loves according as it is present and at the same time united with them. (Conjugal Love 68)

Blau-Hartfield, David Blau and Kelli Hartfield – At Glenview, Illinois, June 27, 2020, Rev. Mark D. Pendleton officiating.

Lee-Heinrichs, Parker Alan Lee and Elizabeth Ryan Heinrichs – At Silverthorne, Colorado, May 11, 2019, Rev. Willard L. D. Heinrichs officiating. Delayed report.

Rohtla-Sellecchia, Eric Alexander Rohtla Jr. and Monica Sellecchia – At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, July 18, 2020, Rev. Barry C. Halterman officiating.

Straeffer-Vencill, Mitch Straeffer and Sara Vencill – At Glenview, Illinois, June 26, 2020, Rev. Mark D. Pendleton officiating.

DEATHS

And behold, I am coming quickly and My reward is with Me, to give to everyone according to his work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last. Blessed are those who do His commandments that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. (Revelation 22:12-14)

Fehon, William Charles – August 18, 2020, of Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania. 66.

Funk, Cora Price – August 27, 2020, of Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania. 81.

Gillespie, Eulalie Beatrice – June 10, 2020, of Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. 75.

Jarvie, Helen – August 2, 2020, of Minneapolis, Minnesota. 89.

Johns, Hyland Righter – August 11, 2020, of Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania. 95.

Lockhart, Peter Reynolds – August 17, 2020, of Norristown, Pennsylvania. 82.



ADVANCEMENT

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"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Matthew 6:21



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