

# NEW CHURCH *Life*

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

**JULY/AUGUST 2023**



*We see Him in the magnitude of the universe and the infinitesimal building block of the atom. Can science actually help those who doubt His existence? (Page 273) A sermon on "Comprehending the Infinite" helps show the way. (Page 284)*

COME AND LET US GO UP TO THE MOUNTAIN OF THE LORD



GENERAL  
CHURCH  
ASSEMBLY

JUNE 27 TO 30, 2024  
BRYN ATHYN, PA



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Isaiah 2:3

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# New Church Life

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

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# In This Issue

Editorials (page 257) include:

- *Change and the Church*: The church is challenged in these precipitous times with what it needs to change to survive and grow – and what it must not change. But as we focus on the church and its challenges, we need to look within ourselves as well because the church thrives only as it grows within each of us.
- *Free Speech and the First Amendment*: Free speech is such an important aspect of freedom that it is included in the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, but what leads all of us to true freedom “is to willingly do and think things that are consistent with reality, consistent with the truth, and consistent with the Lord’s will.”

The Rev. Robert Jungé was a legend among General Church ministers – for his vision and his leadership – but before he passed into the spiritual world on June 3 he had asked that his memorial not be a eulogy “but a service of gratitude to the Lord for eternal life.” The Rev. Lawson Smith provided just such a service for his father-in-law. (Page 266) But proper tribute is also paid to this remarkable man in Life Lines. (Page 328)

In a probing and fascinating essay, Don Ridgway asks: “Can science help those who doubt the existence of God?” There may be more atheists than believers among prominent scientists, who believe only what they see. Don says of himself that he “left the church for a long period and wandered in a wilderness of spiritual doubt; but I finally realized that I could no longer do without the sublime logic of the Heavenly Doctrine and its magnificent revelation of the internal sense of the Word.” (Page 273)

The Rev. Michael Gladish helps to answer questions about “comprehending the Infinite” in a sermon on *Our Relationship with God*. “Maybe you recall a starry night at the beach or in the mountains when you gazed in awe at the wonder of it all.” We’ve all had those moments of pondering the Lord’s

presence in all of His creation – from the magnitude of the universe to the unseen intricacies of the atom. We see Him in all of this. But we see and know Him best in His own Word. (Page 284)

In a sermon – *When the Righteous Cry Out* – the Rev. Christopher Barber examines the hope and the challenge within Psalm 34. “When we cry out in hard times,” he says, “we have the Lord beside us.” But, “When we are distant from the Lord, we run the risk of becoming agents of harm in other people’s lives.” To counter this, “We are called to try to make this place a little bit more like heaven by inviting the Lord into our lives.” (Page 290)

In a message From the Bishop’s Office, the Rt. Rev. Peter Buss Jr. focuses on *Messages from the Lord that Shift Our Perspective*. One of the examples he cites is Jacob’s dream when he is fleeing his brother in fear, sleeps in the wilderness, and dreams of a ladder with angels ascending and descending. He awakens to the realization – a shift in perspective we all may experience – that “surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it.” (Page 296)

In her address for the Bryn Athyn College Commencement, Susan de Maine talks about *The Power of Story*. We are all writing stories with our lives – “stories that build our sense of self-worth and stories that fill us with self-doubt. We have stories that we tell others and stories we tell only ourselves.” But we get to edit. We get to re-write. “My hope for all of you,” she said, “is that today, although a very important day, is simply the end of an early chapter in a lifelong story of learning and growth.” (Page 300)

John Thygeson and his wife found the Academy Secondary Schools 10 years ago as the right school for their four boys – the youngest of whom graduated this day. Little did John know that he would not only cheer on his boys at the Academy but would come to teach there himself. He offered the graduates two critical lessons: the importance of resilience in handling adversity and the importance of learning from failure – of “failing forward.” These are qualities that allow us to see challenges as opportunities for growth. (Page 304)

The Rev. Todd Beiswenger asks: *Is there a New Church Answer for Euthanasia?* The temptation surely is there for those facing prolonged suffering – especially in old age. He acknowledges that “we do not want to prolong the process of dying more than necessary; we want to preserve life, but not prolong death.” But, “Part of the purpose for illness and disease is to get us to rethink our priorities.” And, “The overriding lesson is that God is in control, has our long-term best interests in mind, and therefore euthanasia and assisted suicide are not good ideas.” (Page 307)

Church News (page 320) includes:

- A report on regional clergy meetings for Asia and Australia
- Bryn Athyn College graduates and awards
- Academy Secondary Schools graduates and awards
- A new plan for partial opening of the Academy dormitories
- A very successful youth weekend in Canada
- More progress at New Christian Bible Study
- Gathering Leaves scheduled for late August

## Editorials

*Bruce M. Henderson and the Rev. Jeremy F. Simons*

### CHANGE AND THE CHURCH

We are blessed with the vision in *True Christian Religion* that the New Church is to be “the crown of all churches that have ever existed on the earth.” The Lord is leading His Church and we ultimately trust in Him. Still, we may wonder how the New Church will ever achieve that standing, given: that it has not grown significantly since angels were sent throughout the heavens 250 years ago to proclaim its mission; that some of our societies and schools are struggling to survive; that the hells are attacking religion more fervently than ever; and that faith is in decline all over the world.

Much of that world is in spiritual darkness, desperate for the Lord’s light. We do not doubt His power, His leading, and His promise. But what do we need to do, as caring and concerned supporters, to grow and strengthen His church? How do we adapt to changing needs and a challenging culture without compromising foundational doctrines? What do we need to change in the church? And what must never change?

We are not immune to the challenges confronting churches all over the world. And while we generally do not look outside the church for what we should or should not do, we can learn from others about survival and growth.

Still relevant, for instance, is a best-seller from 30 years ago: *The Purpose-Driven Church – Growth Without Compromising Your Message and Mission*. It was written by Rick Warren, pastor of the Saddleback mega-church in California, who is retiring after 40 years of leadership.

Twenty years ago some 20 New Church ministers and church leaders



visited his church and spent a week learning about his methods. There was initial enthusiasm although little actually came of it. However, the popular General Church Journey Programs were inspired by his “40 Days of Purpose” program.

Some of Warren’s observations still resonate:

- Church leaders should stop praying, “Lord, bless what I am doing,” and start praying, “Lord, help me to do what You are blessing.”
- The problem with many churches is that they begin with the wrong question. They ask: “What will make our church grow?” The question we need to ask is: “What is keeping our church from growing?”
- “A healthy church cannot help but grow. An unhealthy church will never grow.”

So, how healthy are we? The health of any church begins with its spiritual grounding – its doctrinal integrity. Churches that are growing are those that do not compromise basic beliefs. People know what they stand for and what will not change. That commitment resonates with people of faith. Churches that catch waves of popular culture and try to be all things to all people do not last.

The General Church has been challenged in recent years – particularly on women in the ministry, and sexuality/gender issues – with strong opinions on both sides, including ministry and laity. The church is holding true to a consensus of doctrinal understanding on these issues, while also striving to be less harsh in its positions and more compassionate and charitable in dealing with sincere opposition.

It is said that our church – any church really – is only as strong as the next generation. No doubt every generation nurses concerns about the next: whether they will be as dedicated and committed. Generally, they rise to hopes and expectations. But young people throughout the world – including many of our own – are less religious and involved than they used to be. And given our changing culture, they may not best be reached in pews but through technology or other means. But they need our attention.

Concerns for the future of the church generally revolve around three issues: attendance and engagement; financial and emotional support; and commitment to New Church education.

- **Attendance:** The online services born of the covid epidemic make attendance harder to track, but congregations are dwindling, with more

gray hair than young heads at services. Many Christian churches have active youth ministries and find new ways to reach this next generation with special programs. Our own efforts to engage young people seem to struggle. But it is encouraging to see the report in Church News (page 317) about a very successful young people's weekend in Caryndale, Canada, in April that attracted 58 teens from seven societies. That's something to build on.

- **Support:** We are both blessed and cursed with a generous endowment: blessed because it provides the means and security to exist, even without growth; cursed because it may actually discourage contributions: a "they don't need my money" syndrome. Support within societies is generally strong, but hovers around 25-30% for central General Church uses, and that is not healthy. It takes clear vision and leadership, plus constant effort and open communication, to maintain and renew goodwill and support.

- **New Church education:** This is our primary growth engine: educate our young people in the church. Our General Church primary schools are strong. But more and more graduates of the Academy Secondary Schools and Bryn Athyn College seem to be drifting away from the church. Recruiting non-traditional students has increased enrollment on both campuses but is there a cost? The schools are committed to their New Church mission and religion teachers have risen to the challenge of reaching new students. Still, they are dogged with concerns about watering down our teachings, whether we are on the slippery slope to secularization, and if New Church education is becoming less distinctive. The College and Secondary Schools also face severe financial challenges and need all the goodwill and support they can muster. But there is hope. Anyone who attended recent Bryn Athyn College, Academy Secondary Schools and General Church Schools graduations has to feel encouraged about all the good young people moving forward with New Church teachings in their core.

There are other insistent issues given the realities we face. Beyond lagging growth, the General Church faces foundational challenges. It has 521 employees worldwide, including 79 ministers, 241 teachers and 80 administrators. Over the next 10 years 66 of those ministers and teachers will reach retirement age, but we are graduating on average just one minister and one teacher per year. Given this daunting scenario, the General Church has launched new programs to recruit and develop New Church teachers and ministers. That is encouraging – and will be challenging – but it is a start.

We have to expect that our ministers and teachers will always be dedicated to teaching and leading from the Lord's Word, but they will also be challenged

to find new ways to connect with students and adults.

They will doubtless know how to use technology with today's students and may need to adapt it to church services as well. We will always need church – people coming together to be taught from the threefold Word, praying and singing together, forming community. General Church Education and Outreach are developing videos to bring people in touch with the New Church. Some ministers are experimenting with social media to extend their reach. The Rev. Todd Beiswenger in Australia, for instance, is using short videos across the social media platforms of YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and Tiktok, with promising results. He reports that a recent video he posted on Instagram had 8,000 views, plus another 2,000 on Facebook. "All for free," he says. "Sure beats standing on a soap box on the streets!"

The General Church website connects with people all over the world. The Swedenborg Foundation's *offTheLeftEye* videos reach millions of people who love what they are seeing and learning. They may not be joining the General Church yet but the reach of the New Church certainly is expanding. The new Outreach program of videos and contacts aimed at building groups, circles and eventually societies, may be one way that the church will grow. That is the hope. But what's next? Who knows what Artificial Intelligence will bring. Some ministers are experimenting with how AI handles doctrinal inquiries, with amazing responses that include Swedenborgian teachings. Pretty remarkable but perhaps also scary. We need to look at what is potentially useful, and what may be threatening. Like so many other organizations, we need to be ready for possibilities we haven't even thought of yet.

We know that the New Church must remain small in the wake of the Last Judgment – until false doctrines have been removed from traditional Christianity and people are ready for spiritual truth. But we need to be actively working for progress – especially with our own people and families.

As a "purpose-driven" church our purpose is clear, unchanging and compelling. Nothing could be healthier than the internal spirit of the Lord's New Church – a new revelation "descending from God out of heaven." Through these perilous times we know that the Lord is leading His Church, and that the assurance He gives to each of us He also gives to His Church: "*For I know the thoughts I have for you . . . thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and hope.*" (Jeremiah 29:11)

But as we look ahead with hope to be led within the church into a more robust future, we need to look within ourselves as well – and to look back to our roots.

When we talk about "the church," we need always to remember that the church is not just a building or an organization but that each one of us is the church. We still need the structure of a physical church and the community of

a congregation, but the church thrives as it grows within us. And that is up to each of us.

Looking back, the church has been blessed with great minds and great leaders. Among them was the wise, clear-thinking and much-loved Bishop George de Charms. Within his great legacy is his doctrinally insightful *Principles of Government*, written in 1960. Consider this wise perspective and challenge for our hope and our future in his conclusion:

“The government of our church can do no more than provide the necessary conditions and the opportunity to approach more nearly [an ideal] from generation to generation. Every generation must enter the ranks and assume the burden of conflict for itself. Each one must acquire its own knowledge and understanding of the Writings, from which to make its own decisions; and each one must face anew, and overcome, the temptation, prompted by human prudence, to introduce external bonds into the church in the vain hope of protecting it from without.”

(BMH)

## FREE SPEECH AND THE FIRST AMENDMENT

The First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States reads:

*Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.*

Notice that the freedom of speech does not have its own amendment, but is grouped with the freedom of religion, the freedom of assembly, and the freedom to petition the government. The Heavenly Doctrine does not mention the freedom of speech and the freedom of religion together and does not seem to connect the two. In fact, the Writings do not explicitly address the question of the freedom of religion at all in civil life, though it is implied in many passages, especially that people must not be compelled to worship. (*Divine Providence* 136) Regardless, all four of these freedoms have an obvious logical connection.

Freedom is not an absolute capacity, since all freedom is limited in one way or another. Even though the Writings praise the freedom of speech in the highest terms, they also praise the existence of laws that many would consider to be unacceptable limits to freedom. For example, we read:

*When it comes to the spiritual or theological teachings of the church, the nations that have freedom are like eagles that can soar aloft to any height; the nations that have no freedom are like swans swimming on the surface of a river. Nations that have freedom are*

*like majestic deer with great racks of antlers, running wherever they wish through fields, woods, and forests; nations that have no freedom are like deer kept in a game preserve for the royal family's amusement.*

*(True Christianity 815)*

This praise of freedom is speaking specifically about the British, who are said to “*have a profound intellectual light. . . . They owe this light to their freedom of speech and freedom of the press, and their consequent freedom of thought.*” (*True Christianity 807*)

Despite this praise of freedom, the following passages praise the existence of laws that many would consider to be unacceptable limits to freedom.

*In countries where justice and judgment are preserved, moreover, everyone is compelled not to speak in opposition to religion or to behave in opposition to it, but still no one can be compelled to think and will in favor of it. (Divine Providence 129)*

*A monarch is to be obeyed as the laws of the realm prescribe and is not to be harmed in any way by deed or word. The security of the nation depends on this. (New Jerusalem 325)*

These statements also appear to be about Britain, although many countries have similar laws. Britain’s “*Seditious Libel Law*” makes it a crime to publish anything disrespectful of the “*King, State, Church or their Officers.*” While freedom of speech seems to have a long traditional basis in England, it did not become a fact of British law until the so-called “*Licensing Laws*” were repealed in 1694, which previously had required everything printed to be licensed.

It is curious that the Writings speak so forcefully about the spiritual benefits of free speech in England, when this freedom seems to have been less than 100 years old when he wrote about it. The American constitutional guarantees of freedom are based more or less on these British laws and traditional understandings, even though Britain did not have any codified constitution or bill of rights that included these things.

## **Nunc Licet**

The freedom of speech, and its limits based on civil law mentioned above, have an interesting parallel in the “*Nunc Licet*” statement in *True Christianity 508*. Swedenborg was shown a temple in the spiritual world that represented the New Church. He writes:

| *As I came closer to the building, I saw an inscription above the*

*door: Now It Is Allowed (Nunc Licet), which means that we are now allowed to use our intellect to explore the mysteries of faith.*

This statement is about the importance of basing belief on a rational understanding of what is true. The passage explains:

*In this church (meant by this temple), we are allowed to use our intellect to explore and penetrate all the church's mysteries and also to use the Word to support what we find. The reason this is allowed is that the teachings of the new church are continuous truths revealed by the Lord through the Word. Rational arguments that support these truths cause the intellect to open up more and more at its highest level and to be elevated into the light that the angels in heaven enjoy. That light is essentially truth. In that light, acknowledgment of the Lord as the God of heaven and earth shines in its glory. This is the meaning of the inscription.*

Yet, just as the freedom of speech has limitations, this same passage goes on to warn about the dangers of rationalizing about religion:

*Seeing this inscription brought to my mind how extremely dangerous it is to use our intellect to explore any dogma of faith that was constructed by a self-serving mindset and therefore consists of falsities. It is even worse to use statements from the Word to support such dogmas. Doing so shuts down our intellect at its highest level, and gradually shuts it down at lower levels as well, to the point where theological teachings become disgusting to us and are finally obliterated, the way writing on paper is eaten away by worms or wool clothing is consumed by moths. Then the only way in which our intellect still functions is in dealing with political issues that affect our life in the region where we live, with civic issues that affect our jobs, and with domestic issues that relate to our homes. In these arenas we continually embrace the material world and love it for the alluring pleasures it offers, the way idolaters carry their golden effigy close to their heart. (True Christianity 508)*

It is a mistake to think that this “*Nunc Licet*” statement gives us permission to use our imagination to construct arguments about what is right and wrong and why. What is “now permitted” is to understand the truth by basing our thought on the rational teachings that are now revealed. This is the freedom that leads to true freedom – which is to willingly do and think things that are consistent with reality, consistent with the truth, and consistent with the Lord’s will.

(JFS)

# Letter to the Editors

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

## *Promises to Keep*

To The Editors:

Robert Frost (1874-1963) composed the poem, *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*, at his home in Shaftsbury, Vermont in June, 1922. The last stanza of this famous poem is:

*The woods are lovely, dark and deep,  
But I have promises to keep,  
And miles to go before I sleep,  
And miles to go before I sleep.*

So, he cannot rest for long and he and his little horse pause only briefly in the woods before resuming their journey.

I am sure that masses of humanity can easily understand the meaning of these words from personal experience. Human life on earth can be full of obligations to be kept even to the point of emotional and physical exhaustion that only sleep will relieve. There under the curative ministrations of angels, weary minds are revived with new life. And Frost himself wrote from personal experience in this state of life.

We read on the Internet about him: “For 10 long, lean and hungry years, Robert Frost worked his small farm and taught English at Pinkerton Academy [in New Hampshire], all the while gleaning from his poverty, hardship and heartbreak, the essence of his genius.”

Surely most farmers work from dawn to dusk, especially in Frost’s time. And when I think about sleep, I cannot help but think about the state of rest. It can be at the end of a good struggle, and be a mental state of the Sabbath, which is a day set aside for rest and worship. Consider this quote from *Arcana Coelestia* 4063.3: “*When therefore a man, from being the old man is made a new one (that is, when he is being regenerated), it is not done in a moment, as some believe, but through a course of years; nay, during the man’s whole life, even to its end.*”

During these years we should hold fast to our duties such as our marital obligations. For example, I recall my own marriage to Dorothy Louise, conducted by the Rev. Donald L. Rose in my home here in Pine Run Park on

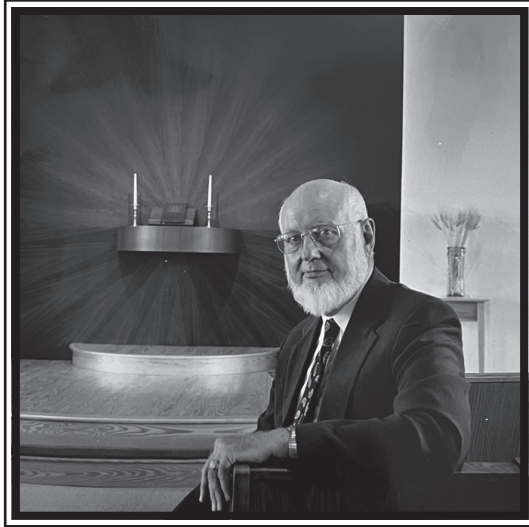
April 24, 1999. And I have not wavered from the vows I took at that time.

Now some readers might think that I am pushing a religious, indeed a Swedenborgian/New Church interpretation onto Frost's poem. Well, read what Frost wrote about himself: "I was brought up a Swedenborgian. I am not a Swedenborgian. But there is a good deal of it that is left in me. I'm a mystic. I believe in symbols."

I also believe in symbols such as the concept of having promises to keep and the vision of having miles to go before we sleep, as possibly meaning to continue our personal journeys of regeneration.

Richard Linquist  
Huntingdon Valley  
Pennsylvania





# A Resurrection Worship Service at the Passing of the Rev. Robert Schill Jungé

*By the Rev. Lawson M. Smith*

June 3, 2023, at the Kempton New Church

(Photo: The Rev. Robert Jungé at the Ivyland New Church)

Lessons:

*But Thou, O Jehovah, [art] a shield for me, my glory, and He that exalts  
my head.*

*I call to Jehovah with my voice, and He answers me from the mountain of His  
holiness. Selah.*

*I lie down and sleep; I awake; for Jehovah supports me.*

*Salvation [belongs] to Jehovah! Thy blessing [is] upon Thy people.*

*(Psalm 3:3-5, 8)*

**E**veryone's life is foreseen by the Lord – how long he will live and what his life will be like. Therefore, that person is guided from earliest infancy with eternal life in view. So, the Lord's Providence begins with earliest infancy.

*(Diary of Spiritual Experiences 5002)*

And Jehovah God said, “[It is] not good [that] man should be alone; I will make for him a helper as with him.” And Jehovah God formed out of the ground every animal of the field and every fowl of the skies, and brought [them] to man to see what he would call them. And whatever man called a living soul, that was its name. And man gave names to every beast, to the fowl of the skies, and to the wild animal of the field. But for man there was not found a helper as with him. And Jehovah God caused a deep sleep to fall on man, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead of it. And the rib which Jehovah God had taken from man He built into a woman, and He brought her to man. And man said, “This [one, this] time [is] bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh; for this she shall be called a wife, for she was taken out of a man.” Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. *(Genesis 2:18-24)*

[W]hen partners [on earth] tenderly love each other, they think of their covenant as being eternal and have no thought whatever concerning its end by death; and if they do think of this, they grieve; yet, at the thought of its continuance after death, they are revived by hope. *(Conjugal Love 216e)*

[An angel] then said: “In the world, these wives whom you now see as girls were old women; and their husbands, now seen as young men, were infirm and old. They have all been restored by the Lord to this flower of age because they mutually loved each other and from religion shunned adulteries as enormous sins.” He said further: “No one knows the blessed delights of conjugal love except he who rejects the horrid delights of adultery; and no one can reject these except he who is wise from the Lord; and no one is wise from the Lord unless he performs uses from the love of uses.” *(Conjugal Love 137:7)*

I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest who shall do according to what is in My heart and in My mind. I will build him a sure house, and he shall walk before My anointed forever. *(I Samuel 2:35)*

*Charity in the Priest.* If he looks to the Lord and shuns evils as sins, and sincerely, justly, and faithfully performs the work of the ministry enjoined upon him, he does the good of use continually, and becomes charity in form. And he does the good of use or the work of the ministry sincerely, justly, and faithfully, when he is affected with a desire for the salvation of souls. And in proportion as he is so affected, he is affected by truths, because by means of them he leads souls to heaven; and he leads souls to heaven by means of truths

when he leads them to the Lord. It is, then, his love diligently to teach truths from the Word; because when he teaches them from the Word, he teaches them from the Lord. For the Lord not only is “the Word” (*John 1:1, 2, 14*), but is also “the Way, the Truth, and the Life” (*John 14:6*), and He is the “Door.” He therefore who enters in by the Lord as the door into the sheepfold is a good shepherd. (*Charity 160*)

Angelic life consists in use, and in good deeds of charity. For angels never feel happier than when they are informing and teaching spirits that stream in from the world, or when they are ministering to men and are preventing the evil spirits with them from overstepping the mark, and inspiring men with what is good; also when they are arousing the dead into the life of eternity, and after that introducing such souls into heaven if they are capable of it. The happiness they find in all this is more than can possibly be described. (*Arcana Coelestia 454*)

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand. I and My Father are one. (*John 10:27-30*)

\* \* \* \* \*

Jesus said: “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all to Myself.” (*John 12:32*)

At the time of someone’s passing, we are led to reflect on the reason why the Lord creates us. Why are we here? What is our destiny? What is our purpose? In His Word, the Lord teaches us that the reason He creates us is that He is Love itself, and He wants to draw all of us to Him, as many as are willing. We in turn are free to choose to let Him lift us up from the earth as He was lifted up. We can let Him lead us out of being focused only on ourselves and earthly things and lift us up to be with Him.

The Lord creates us in His image and likeness and teaches us how to be truly human beings. He says: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (*John 13:34-35*) This is a new commandment to us in our earthly state – the idea that we can love one another, not just ourselves. *True Christian Religion 406* says: “Man is born not for himself but for others.” Loving others as well as ourselves

is how we let the Lord lift us up and draw us to Himself. We join His team, we “help” Him, as if from ourselves, with His projects of caring for others.

In the Heavenly Doctrine, ways of caring for others are called “uses.” The Lord calls us to live a useful life, learning not to harm but to help, for His sake and for our neighbors.’ A passage says: “SO FAR AS MAN IS IN THE LOVE OF USE, SO FAR HE IS IN THE LORD, SO FAR HE LOVES THE LORD AND LOVES THE NEIGHBOR, AND SO FAR HE IS A HUMAN BEING. . . . To be a human being means to perform uses to the neighbor, from the Lord, for the Lord’s sake.” (*Divine Love 13:1*)

As we reflect on the many uses of a person’s life, we can rejoice to know that performing uses is how we love the Lord. We read: “To love the Lord means to do uses from Him and for His sake, for the reason that all the good uses that a person does are from the Lord. . . . And it is well known that good [things] are from the Lord. Loving them is doing them, for what a person loves he does. . . . No one can love the Lord in any other way; for uses, which are good [things], are from the Lord, and consequently they are Divine; indeed, they are the Lord Himself with man.” (*Divine Love 13:1-2*)

Jesus illustrated in this parable that doing uses for others is also loving Him: “And He shall stand the sheep indeed on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King shall say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the founding of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me to drink; I was a sojourner, and you gathered Me [in]; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.’ Then the just shall answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see Thee hungry, and fed [Thee], or thirsty, and gave [Thee] to drink? And when did we see Thee a sojourner, and gathered [Thee in], or naked, and clothed [Thee]? And when did we see Thee sick, or in prison, and came to Thee?’ And the King answering shall say to them, ‘Amen [truly] I say to you, As much as you have done [it] to one of the least of these My brothers, you have done [it] to Me.’” (*Matthew 25:33-40*)

Performing uses is how we love the Lord above all and our neighbors as ourselves. These twin loves make heaven with us and eternal happiness. We read: “[T]hose who are in genuine mutual love are in their delight and bliss when they are benefiting the neighbor, for they desire nothing more . . . for the delight and bliss [of doing useful things] is itself the reward; and in the other life this becomes the joy and happiness that are in heaven, thus it becomes heaven to them. For when those who are in this love perform uses and do good to others, they are in such joy and happiness that then for the first time they seem to themselves to be in heaven. This [joy] is given to them by the Lord, to everyone according to the uses he performs.” (*Arcana Coelestia 6388*)

The Lord calls each of us to our own special use, which He gives us to do, and enables us to grow into that use. Bob's primary use has been to serve as a priest. About the priesthood we read: "As regards priests, they must teach people the way to heaven, and must also lead them. They must teach them according to the doctrine of their church from the Word, and they must lead them to live according to it. Priests who teach truths and by means of them lead to the good of life, and thus to the Lord, are good shepherds of the sheep." (*Arcana Coelestia* 10794)

As a priest, Bob loved to share the Word with people. An example of this love is an article he just wrote for *New Church Life*, to be published in the September/October issue, reflecting on a passage titled: "The reasons why some die [as] children, some youths, some adults, some old people." (*Diary of Spiritual Experiences* 5003)

Bob has especially gathered teachings from the Word about raising and teaching children. He collected a book of passages titled, *Human Prudence and the Love of Offspring*, and another titled, *A Heritage from the Lord*, to help couples be led by the Lord in receiving children into their lives. Just in the last 10 years, he wrote a little book: *Feeding His Flock: Parenting Preschoolers*.

Bob loved visiting with people. He loved, as he said, to drag the Writings into the conversation any chance he got! Because the Word was given by the Lord to save us!

In addition to the New Church, Bob also loved his country and the principles on which it was founded. He put together a study titled, "*We Hold These Truths*": *Our Country's Religious Roots*. He reflects on the words of the Declaration of Independence, the Preamble to the Constitution, and the sayings of a number of our founding fathers, showing how religion is at the heart of our country's founding concepts.

Concerning love for one's country we read: "Our country is more the neighbor than a society, because it is like a parent; for there the person has been born; it nourishes him, and protects him from harm. . . . He who loves his country, and from good will benefits it, in the other life loves the Lord's kingdom; for there the Lord's kingdom is his country. And he who loves the Lord's kingdom, loves the Lord, because the Lord is the all in all of His kingdom." (*Arcana Coelestia* 6821)

We are all created to become the Lord's messengers, bringing His gospel, His good news of repentance and eternal life, to each other. The word "angel" means "messenger." The Lord creates us to become His angels. The good and true things we bring are not from ourselves but from the Lord – we are His messengers. We are made to be vessels filled with the Lord's blessings, the good loves, and the true ideas that we receive from Him, and to share them with each other in a useful life.

The Lord provides that we can be affected by the kindness, wisdom, practical help and the example of the lives of those around us. In our lives, our parents are the first messengers to us; they represent the Lord to us. All through our lives the people we meet, work with, and associate with can also be messengers from the Lord to us and we to them. All the good influences that the Lord brings to us through others and through us to others are “uses.” We can even say that angels in heaven are uses, not from themselves, but from the Lord. This is what we are all created for. We can take inspiration through others to become the Lord’s angels or messengers ourselves.

Another way the Lord leads us to be a truly human being is this: God created mankind male and female, and said: “On this account a man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. So, they are no longer two, but one flesh. What, therefore, God has joined together, let not man put asunder.” (*Matthew 19:4-6, Genesis 2:24*) Bob and Vera took this teaching to heart and applied it to their life together.

The teaching of the Heavenly Doctrine that Bob possibly referred to more than any other is this: “Those who have lived in love truly conjugal . . . have been united as to souls and thence as to minds; and this union, being spiritual, is an actual joining of the soul and the mind of the one to the soul and mind of the other, which can never be dissolved. . . . [A] sphere of love flows forth continually from the wife, and a sphere of understanding from the man, and this perfects the conjunctions. . . . This sphere with its pleasant outpouring surrounds them and unites them.... Partners thus united in marriage think and breathe what is eternal, and upon this idea is founded their eternal happiness. . . . [B]y reason of these causes, they are no more two but one human being, that is, one flesh. . . . Such a one cannot be torn apart by the death of either partner. . . . These two are not separated by the death of one, since the spirit of the deceased partner dwells continually with the spirit of the one not yet deceased, and this until the death of the latter, when they meet again and reunite and love each other more tenderly than before because in the spiritual world.” (*Conjugal Love 321*)

Bob felt strongly that Vera was with him in all his work, perhaps above all as he continued to raise their younger children after Vera passed into the spiritual world. Anyone who spoke with Bob for any length of time would have heard him talk about how he is counting on being with his wife Vera again. Lately, he spoke of their possibly helping to raise children who die and grow up in heaven, especially teenagers. For many years, he and Vera loved having crews of teens at their farm for the summer. Bob’s devotion to the promise of eternal marriage, and of his steadfast faithfulness to Vera for over 40 years, is an inspiration.

We are taught that in heaven, “True conjugal love remains forever, the wife becoming more and more a wife, and the husband becoming more and more a husband. . . . The reason is that in a marriage of love truly conjugal, each [partner] becomes an ever more interiorly human being; for [conjugal] love opens the interiors of their minds, and as these are opened, one becomes more and more a human being. To become more a human, on the part of the wife, is to become more a wife, and on the part of the husband, to become more a husband.” (*Conjugal Love 200*)

The Lord makes each of us more and more truly human as we are ready to receive and act upon the blessings He gives us, especially the blessing of conjugal love. We read: “[A] person is in this world to be initiated by his activities there into the things which are of heaven, and his life in this world is hardly a moment in comparison with his life after death, for this is eternal. . . . [T]his I can declare with certainty: that a person immediately after death is in the other life, and that his life in this world is wholly continued there, and is of the same quality as it had been in this world.” (*Arcana Coelestia 5006:4*)

“The Lord regenerates a person from Divine Mercy. This is done from his infancy down to the last of his life in the world, and afterward to eternity. Thus it is from Divine Mercy that the Lord withdraws a person from evils and falsities, and leads him to the truths of faith and the goods of love, and afterward keeps him in these. And after this, in Divine Mercy He raises him to Himself in heaven, and makes him happy.” (*Arcana Coelestia 9452*) “Then the King shall say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the founding of the world.’” (*Matthew 25:34*)  
*Amen.*

(See related Life Lines on page 328.)



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# Can Science Help Those Who Doubt the Existence of God?

*Don Ridgway*

**W**e are born into a universe of material and non-material phenomena that should, if we have the intelligence and inclination, spur us to investigate its magnificent complexity. As we mature, we may eventually ask questions about our purpose on earth, our existence, our freedom and our reason.

Most of us will accept only what science or our senses tell us but the reality we see and believe to be concrete can be deceptive. Einstein tells us that time is relative, not in a subjective but in a physical sense. For example, we grow older very slightly more quickly on a mountain than at the seaside. The unpleasant dream I had last night is not a concrete reality, but it was an actual dream, so much so, that I struggle to dismiss its effect on my mood in the morning. Are our thoughts and feelings, our inner world, the reality of our existence?

In *Flight to Arras*, Saint-Exupery, the author of *The Little Prince*, puts this dramatically:

*Your son is in a burning house. Nobody can hold you back. You may burn up; but do you think of that? You are ready to bequeath the rags of your body to any man who will take them. You discover that what you set so much store by is trash. It is in your act that you exist; not in your body. Your act is yourself and there is no other you. Your body belongs to you; it is not you. Your true significance becomes dazzlingly evident. Your true name is duty, love, child. . . . There is no other you than this.*

We dismiss our non-material self with such ease. C.S. Lewis says: “You do not have a soul. You are a soul. You have a body.”



There is a unique thing that happens when you grow older. You never feel the age you see in the mirror. You may be 75 but you actually feel 40 or 50. Is not this the real me? We all eventually feel this bifurcation.

Yeats expresses it like this, in these two quotes:

*An aged man is but a paltry thing,  
A tattered coat upon a stick, unless  
Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing  
For every tatter in its mortal dress.*

*Plato thought nature but a spume that plays  
Upon a ghostly paradigm of things.*

At the sub-atomic level Plato was right; the further we research the less real nature becomes. Look at your body – this extraordinary thing we have the use of for the course of our life on this planet. We are made of water, blood, carbon, etc. Matter! But what is matter? The simple scientific definition is that matter is “made of what atoms and molecules are made of,” meaning anything made of positively charged protons, neutral neutrons and negatively charged electrons. This becomes stranger when we realize that protons are not considered to be matter, as they have neither rest mass nor volume. Then there are quarks and leptons and gluon fields. Bosons seem to come from nowhere and disappear nowhere.

How did Shakespeare know that: “We are such stuff as dreams are made on”? Most of us would dearly love to have the insight into human nature that he had.

We are part of a miraculous universe which, to all intents and purposes, is pure energy and we are tuned into this miracle so precisely that we appear to have solid (or almost) solid sensating bodies, but what we are really is pure energy. This body can express the incorporeal thoughts and emotions that make us real. As C. S. Lewis says, our physicality is unreal and the reality is our consciousness. Swedenborg says: “Humankind is will and intellect.”

If we consider the universality of human knowledge, not just that of the physical universe but consider great literature, the arts, the philosophies and religions of our civilizations, we may begin to see beyond what is said to be random, purposeless natural selection and recognize it as something else.

Today, most of us can be accused of intellectual and moral laziness in that we adopt the popular scientific view of things, without giving the achievements of the past a second thought. We come out of university knowing everything! We haven't read much beyond course work, certainly nothing as cretinous as the Bible, but our superlatively knowledgeable professors have told us that the

only study worth anything is the natural sciences and that the only intelligent stance must be that of atheism.

This seems to give our new graduates the intellectual high ground and our greatest intellects and creators – Socrates, Plato, Dante, Shakespeare, Bach, Beethoven, Michelangelo, da Vinci, Aquinas, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Swedenborg and Einstein – are forgotten. Those dismissed poets, writers, musicians, philosophers, scientists and theologians, who represent the supreme aspirational achievements of the human spirit, would disagree with the graduates' cavalier approach.

“Art is miraculously communicative in its own domain of fused spirit and sensation.” *The House of the Intellect*, by Jacques Barzun.

Have we really all lost our sense of awe in the remarkable processes of our brains, our wonderful bodies, our glorious world and inexpressibly complex universe?

“I maintain that the human mystery is incredibly demeaned by scientific reductionism, with its claim in promissory materialism to account eventually for all of the spiritual world in patterns of neuronal activity. This belief must be classed as superstition. We have to recognize we are spiritual beings with souls existing in a spiritual world as well as material beings with bodies and brains existing in a material world.” *Sir John Eccles (Nobel Prize – Physiology)*

Science has no right, by definition, to make moral, philosophical and metaphysical judgments as it bases its hypotheses on the “*a posteriori*,” that is, it uses inductive reasoning from observable facts. Its hypotheses change from time to time, as they should, in accordance with the latest data. In supine laziness we disregard this fact; it's simpler to accept the current (philosophical?) vision of popular scientists like Richard Dawkins or Brian Cox (a TV scientist in Britain and one-time pop star). For theistic academics who don't abide by the accepted faith it can mean loss of their position; so much for the objectivity of science.

The evidence from science (contrary to most people's superficial view) is overwhelmingly in favor of a First Cause. From apparent nothingness something happened that was miraculous, an explosion of such gigantic



(now in his 90s and venerated in America as one of its greatest scientists) went further: “The more I examine the universe and the details of its architecture, the more evidence I find that the universe in some sense must have known we were coming.”

Everything was in place for the universe and ultimately for ourselves to exist in the first nano-second of the big bang. Something happened of such ineffable intelligence and terrifying power that it seems unimaginable that we don't consider the INTELLIGENCE behind it. The statistical possibility that we came about by chance, contrary to Stephen Hawking's deflation, “enormous,” is a point with possibly an infinite number of zeros behind it.

All this should give any sensible, rational person pause and cause for thought. Philosophically, the atheist now has to make a gigantic leap of faith. He can't admit a first cause and must now “believe” the big bang or the first moment of creation was the one and only EFFECT without a CAUSE in the life of the universe. A startling assumption! Brian Cox talks of a cosmic soup prior to the big bang (weird and absolutely unscientific). British scientist Peter Atkins talks of dust created by time and space (simply mad). In any case these assumptions just push the argument back a notch.

But all is not lost; the atheist can fall back on any number of philosophers (they suddenly need them) who now bring in the “infinite regression” argument. In other words, the “so-called” first cause is actually an effect that had a cause, and so on ad infinitum, and therefore the “first cause” argument is invalid. This sophomoric proposition is a logical and semantic one and does not solve the problem of the one effect without a cause. After all it did happen. So, it is an argument and not reality, which leads to an infinite regression. We are replacing Aristotle's “Unmoved Mover” with “A Singularity.”

“The existence of a singularity – in this case the given, unique state from which the universe emerged – is anathema to science, because it is beyond explanation. There can be no answer to why such a state existed. Is this, then, where scientific explanation breaks down and God takes over, the artificer of that singularity, the initial simplicity? Astrophysicist Robert Jastrow, in his book, *God and the Astronomers*, describes this as the scientist's nightmare: “He has scaled the mountains of ignorance, he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries.” (*Wrinkles in Time* – George Smoot)

If we accept that the macrocosm is this finely tuned then let us briefly look at the microcosm:

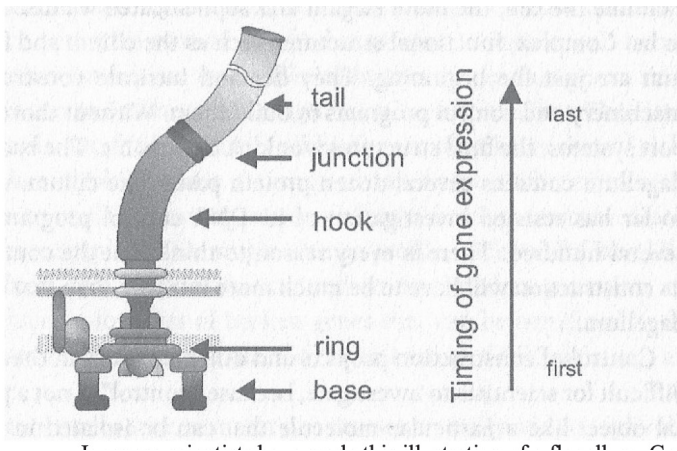
| *Well, as common sense would suggest, the Darwinian theory is*

*correct in the small, but not in the large. Rabbits come from other slightly different rabbits, not from (primeval soup or potatoes). Where they come from in the first place is a problem yet to be solved, like much else on a cosmic scale. (Sir Fred Hoyle)*

*Science simply can't tell us how inorganic matter became organic matter.*

*Even the tiniest bacterial cell, weighing less than a trillionth of a gram, is a veritable microminiaturized factory containing thousands of exquisitely designed pieces of intricate molecular machinery made up altogether of 100 thousand atoms, far more complicated than any machine built by man. (Geneticist, Michael Denton)*

The existence of these intricately constituted molecular machines is powerful evidence for some scientists of a designing intelligence. Biochemist Michael Behe gives the example of the tiny acid-driven motor (discovered in 1973) that powers the bacterial flagellum – a propeller-like device that allows bacteria to swim – and he shows that this motor, so small that 35,000 laid end to end would take up only 1 mm. – consists of some 40 protein parts, including a rotor, a stator, bushings and a drive shaft.



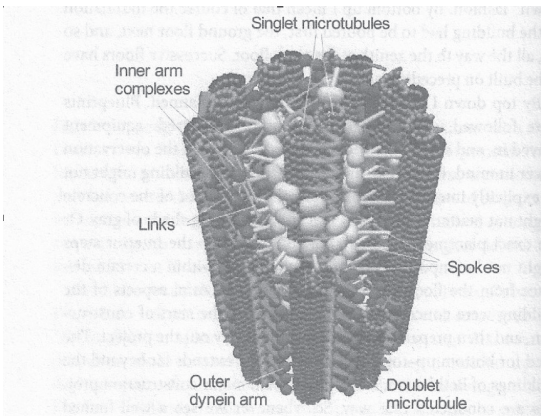
Japanese scientists have made this illustration of a flagellum. Genes for its construction are activated in a precisely timed sequence; those for the construction of the bottom of the molecular machine are switched on first, followed in order by those for the more distant parts. Behe argues that the loss of any one of these protein parts would result in complete loss of motor

function. This means the motor is “irreducibly complex.” It could never have come from modifications of a precursor system – it couldn’t have evolved through time. In other words, “it comes full blown from the head of Zeus.”

Recently Israeli scientists have analyzed in even finer detail the control exerted by DNA which switch on the necessary genes at precisely the right moment. Timing is everything! These systems are now referred to as “developmental gene regulatory networks” or dgrn’s.

I must add this computer-generated image of a section of a cilium, cut away to reveal its component parts. (Like the flagellum it enables liquid to move around and there are millions of these in our body, like minute eyelashes.) Each small sphere is a protein of roughly the complexity of hemoglobin. (It has been admitted by arch-atheist Richard Dawkins that by natural selection alone mathematics shows that it would take longer than the existence of the universe to produce hemoglobin.)

The cilium is comprised of about 200 proteins.



In a recent article in Nature titled “What is a gene?” the author marvels that control systems that effect when, where and how much of a particular protein is made, are so complex that it is simply mind-boggling. (I wonder why he did not have his name printed? Perhaps he needs his job.)

Darwin said that if any such system were found to exist his system would absolutely break down. Behe argues that many irreducibly complex molecular machines exist. His ideas, as you can imagine, have provoked a storm of controversy, some vitriolic, not logical or scientific.

Life (the origin of life on our planet) requires hundreds of thousands of proteins and it has been calculated that the odds against producing these proteins by chance are more than 10 to the 40,000th to 1. Sir Fred Hoyle famously compared these odds against the spontaneous formation of life with

the chance of a tornado sweeping through a junkyard and producing a Boeing 747 jet aircraft.

*What lies at the heart of every living thing . . . is information, words, instructions. Think of a billion discrete digital characters. . . . If you want to understand life, think about digital technology. (Richard Dawkins. Biologist, author, Nobel Prize-winner and prominent atheist)*

No biologist has explored the regulatory logic of animal development more than Eric Davidson at the California Institute of Technology. He talks of “developmental gene regulatory networks” of stunning complexity and their similarity to computer circuitry. To put it simply, it is like the production of a motor car that has to start with a “plan,” which controls the actions and preparations of the stations downstream.

He elaborates: “Neo-Darwinian evolution . . . assumes all processes work the same way, so that the evolution of enzymes or flower colors can be used as current proxies to study the evolution of the body-plan. It erroneously assumes that change in protein-coding sequence is the basic cause of change in the developmental program; and it erroneously assumes that evolutionary change in body-plan morphology occurs by a continuous process. All of these assumptions are basically counter-factual.”

It now appears true that new species come about through top-down evolution, in other words, the form of a creature exists before it is assembled. It is a discovery of immense importance and Stephen Meyer explains it at length in *Darwin's Doubt*. (There is an excellent interview with him and his colleagues Berlinsky and Gellanter on Peter Robinson's *Uncommon Knowledge* TV channel.)

Meyer has recently published, *The Return of the God Hypothesis*, and there is another interview on *Uncommon Knowledge*. As Darwinism would have it, the painfully slow accretion and ordering of parts to form a complex animal by bottom-up evolution just does not work.

When scientists actively refuse to seek the TRUTH and are locked into a *priori* materialism, it often leaves them up the creek without a paddle.

*To take the side of science in spite of the patent absurdity of some of its constructs, in spite of its failure to fulfil many of its extravagant promises of health and life, in spite of the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated just-so stories, because we have an a priori commitment, a commitment to materialism. It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our a priori adherence to material*

*There is one absolute certainty: materially, logically, philosophically and theologically, there has to be a **cause for an effect**. We happen to call that first cause **God**.*

*causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counter intuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, the materialism is absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door. (Harvard geneticist Richard Lewontin).*

At least well-known English philosopher Anthony Flew was not subject to such materialistic stricture when, after 50 years of aggressive atheism, he gave the reason for his conversion to theism as biologists' investigation of DNA. It has shown, by the almost unbelievable complexity of the arrangements which are needed for life, that intelligence must have been involved. As he said, he simply used the Socratic method of following the evidence where it leads.

There is one absolute certainty: materially, logically, philosophically and theologically, there has to be a cause for an effect. We happen to call that first cause God.

All our scientific knowledge is delightful but are there rules infinitely more important than the rules that govern matter?

*"The circle of a person's life is to know, to understand, to will and to do." Emanuel Swedenborg*

If we in wisdom use our intelligence rationally to confirm things learned from the sciences – for instance, that creation is not an accident and will venture to read the Word – we will be given the enlightenment to see that spiritual and celestial things cannot be seen by the eyes for, "the true order is to be wise from the Lord, that is, from his Word, then all things follow. And we are also enlightened in matters of reason and science." (Swedenborg)

If we do establish eventually – as philosopher Anthony Flew did – that there is a First Cause, should we not consider the rules our Judeo-Christian culture espouses?

C. B. De Mille said something extraordinary while producing his film, *The Ten Commandments*: "We cannot break the LAW; we can only break ourselves against IT." By opposing these laws, we are putting our eternal selves at risk.

The Ten Commandments were summarized while the Lord was on this



earth as love for the Divine (the Lord) and for the neighbor.

*There are those who hate the idea of worshipping . . . and may suppose that the Lord loves to be worshipped and desires glory from a man. Divine Love consists in desiring worship and glory not for the sake of Itself, but for the sake of us and our salvation. For those who worship the Lord and give glory to the Lord, are in a state of humiliation, and when we are in this state our proprium (ego/id) recedes and in the same proportion the Divine is received; it is our proprium that alone opposes the Divine, for it is evil and false. This is the glory of the Lord and the worship of Him is for the sake of this end. (Arcana Coelestia 10,646)*

*He that hath My precepts and doeth them, he it is that loveth Me.” (John 14:21)*

*To perform uses is to love the Lord. That is to do our work diligently and honestly. “There is no other way in which the Lord can be loved, for uses, which are goods, are from the Lord and are therefore Divine, or rather, they are the Lord with us. In the degree that we are in the love of use, we are in the Lord and in that degree we love Him and the neighbor, and in that degree we are human.” (Divine Love and Divine Wisdom 13)*

This is so practical and down to earth and, obviously, applies to all our human relationships.

Swedenborg also says: “The Christian world is as yet profoundly ignorant of the fact that all things in the Word . . . enfold within it spiritual and heavenly things . . . and unless it did so it could not be called the Lord’s Word, nor could it be said to have any life in it.”

If we go searching for the Lord where we can really find Him in the Bible, we will find the miracle of a Divine Life whose coming is predicted from the third chapter of *Genesis*, “He shall trample on thy head and thou shalt bruise His heel,” and more strongly and obviously throughout the Old Testament. *Psalms* 22 graphically depicts and predicts His terrible death in Jerusalem as He comes to represent the state of a people who no longer accept God and His Commandments.

What I have written is an attempt to ask those who doubt their spirituality to find time in their lives to consider the Lord’s teachings. In the Word’s internal sense there are such miracles to be found, perhaps more extraordinary than all the wonders of science. Every young person hopes rightly for temporal success and happiness but there is an eternal life out there and not all the success

and wealth will compensate for losing eternal happiness. The great Catholic theologian and philosopher Thomas Aquinas states my concern perfectly: “Eternity is the possession of oneself as in a single moment.”

**Donald Ridgway** was born in Durban, South Africa, in 1940. He says: “During my first six years I hardly saw my father as he was off soldiering. My beloved mother brought up four highly active children in typically straitened wartime circumstances.

My siblings and I were all brought up in the church; in fact my great grandfather had brought the writings to South Africa. Every Sunday the lovely Miss Champion would drive out to Pinetown, some 12 miles outside Durban, to give the small children Sunday school. There were three Ridgway families in close proximity, and some Sundays the minister would hold a church service.

In my last year in high school I was written off as a hopeless case, as my only interests were in the arts. However, I persisted and at 21 I went to London for three years to work in the theatre. On my return to South Africa I joined the SA Broadcasting Corporation as an announcer and spent 35 wonderful years as an announcer, actor and drama director on stage, radio and TV.

In 2002 I returned to England permanently and four of my children now live here, while two still live in South Africa and one has moved to New Zealand.

During my years in South Africa, I left the church for a long period and wandered in a wilderness of spiritual doubt; but I finally realized that I could no longer do without the sublime logic of the Heavenly Doctrine and its magnificent revelation of the internal sense of the Word.

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# Our Relationship With God or How to Comprehend the Infinite

*A Sermon by the Rev. Michael D. Gladish*

*Lessons: Isaiah 61:1-3, 10-11; John 1:1/4, 14 and 14:5-9; True Christian  
Religion 787*

*Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also, and from now on you know Him and have seen Him. . . . He who has seen Me has seen the Father." (John 14:6,7,9)*

**T**hink for a moment about any occasion when you have been struck by the magnitude and at the same time the fantastic detail and order of the universe. Maybe you recall a starry night at the beach or in the mountains when you gazed in awe at the wonder of it all, or maybe you have been struck by such simple things as how the grass grows, how birds fly, or how a baby develops in a mother's womb. Maybe you are into science and are fascinated by the makeup and potential of atomic or sub-atomic physics. For some of us, the complexity of all these things can be simply mind-boggling.

If we think about how God controls all these vast and intricately balanced systems, or what God was doing before creation, we can be so overwhelmed that we simply can't begin to contemplate any of it. In fact, in many ways, it may seem simpler and easier to imagine that it all works automatically, each thing coming into existence and taking form spontaneously according to the conditions that allow for it, than to try to think of an intelligent Being consciously creating, let alone managing it all.

In that case, no doubt we could still be thankful for what exists. But if we are at all concerned about *purpose* and *meaning* in the universe, we might be inclined just to shrug and try not to think about it. But then where are we? The real, ultimate purpose of our lives is that we should have a relationship with

our Maker so that we can be connected with Him in a joyfully conscious way, not just for life in this world but for eternal life. (See *John 15:11* and *16:24*, and *True Christian Religion 43*)

Our third lesson about the importance of our New Church theology summarizes the problem. The point is, we all think in natural terms, and we all need sensory images to get clear ideas about anything. So, the passage contrasts a view of the vast expanse of the universe with the idea of Man “in the air,” or a view of the sea “mid-ocean” with the vision of Man “on the sea.” Even so, we need to be wary of a merely physical idea of the Lord. He is human, just as we are human, not because of the shape of our bodies, but because of the love and wisdom that may be expressed *through* the body.

In *Matthew 14*, the disciples saw the Lord in the midst of the Sea of Galilee but still didn’t know who He was until He spoke to them and performed an amazing miracle for them. And even then they didn’t see the Infinite God; they saw a natural embodiment of Him.

### **Why this is important**

In philosophical circles there is a tension between what is called “the immanent” and “the transcendent,” or between what is close, personal or in some way accessible to the finite mind, and what is far off, cosmic or in some way beyond our finite comprehension. We are confronted with both realities every day of our lives, and it can be difficult to reconcile them in our minds.

It’s the same sort of problem we face in the church when we try to comprehend God, the infinite Creator of all things, the timeless, formless energy or force behind the whole universe, now revealed through the James Webb Space Telescope in even more spectacular detail than anyone had ever imagined. This includes galaxies that are – or were – thousands of light years away, so that when we see them we actually are looking into the far distant past. Never mind what is being created anew every split second.

The problem is featured in various passages of the Writings (e.g. *Heaven and Hell 162 and 191*, and *True Christian Religion 31*) that discuss the difficulty of thinking about anything spiritual from a perspective of time and space. For sure, there are progressions of state in the spiritual world – which can give an appearance of time and space – but the truth is that any thought rooted in time and space prevents us from truly understanding anything spiritual, especially the essence or nature of God.

After all, the Infinite, by definition, is all-encompassing, without any limits or boundaries that would allow us to form an idea of it. In the *Star Wars* movies, for example, God is a complete abstraction, called simply, “The Force.” But God is more than a Force. God is love, and from that love comes wisdom,

just as light comes from the sun. And from the love and wisdom together we get power. The question is, how to get a rational idea – how to form a mental picture of all that purposeful energy – so that we can appreciate it as a source of instruction, guidance and inspiration.

The answer is to think of it in human terms – not in ordinary human terms, but in “super-Human” terms.

### **The Divine Humanity**

Our concept of this begins for all of us in a very simple and natural way, when we are little children, with an appreciation of the love, wisdom and power – such as they are – of our parents. For the disciples in the New Testament, it began in a special way with the miraculous birth of an extraordinary, and clearly precocious child, whom they were able to observe growing in wisdom and power year by year (*Luke 2:42-47, True Christian Religion 89*) culminating in His resurrection from a brutal execution, followed by miracle after miracle in Jerusalem and on the shores of Galilee.

The point is, we learn what “super-Human” is first of all by learning what it is to be human at all. Then, as we grow – if we really think about it – we begin to understand that our humanity comes from the Divine Humanity of God. After all, it has to come from somewhere! Our consciousness isn’t just a function of neurons in the brain somehow leaping to conclusions from a set of interactions in the material world. Chemistry has no power of perception; it has no ability to lift itself above the level of action and reaction, any more than a pair of pliers has the power to become the mind that controls it, or a two-dimensional picture has the power to project itself into the third dimension; it just does what it does.

But what animates the chemistry, directs it, and provides for its purposeful function is spiritual, and more profoundly Human than anyone in this world ever can be. That said, we are created in the image and likeness of God (*Genesis 1:26*), and all the stuff in this world – including our physical bodies – exists to manifest and support that otherwise invisible reality.

This is one of the reasons why love to the Lord is always tied together with love for the neighbor. (*Arcana Coelestia 6025*) This will sound outrageous at first, but some people are obviously more human than others, that is, more loving and wise, but always looking for what is human in one another. And yet, how can we know what is truly human without learning from our Creator what that looks like?

So, our Creator took on a natural human form, at first through visions of angels, priests, or prophets, and then in fact by showing up in His own body of flesh and bones. But even then, it’s not the flesh and bones themselves that

reveal the Infinite; it is the love, the purpose, the wisdom, the judgment and the emotional impact of the Man that reveal it. It's not the physical features of Jesus – or anyone else for that matter – that reveal His thought, affection and power; it is His words and actions.

So, as noted earlier, even the disciples who saw the Lord with their own eyes didn't really recognize who He was just by looking. And most certainly neither did the Scribes, the Pharisees, or the Romans who crucified Him. So, neither will we recognize Him just by reading the story of His natural life, His moral or ethical teaching, or even His miracles. In this age of science and psychology we can find all sorts of ways to explain this remarkable Man's power and influence without attributing Divine authority to Him – which is why we now have a whole new revelation in the Writings for the New Church, to give us the deeper, spiritual meaning of this amazing life. These teachings, in addition to the record of the Lord's natural life in the gospels, are really critical for strengthening, not just our faith, but our emotional relationship with God.

### **But Why Does God Appear as a Man, and not a Woman?**

You'll note that these doctrines consistently refer to God as a Man – that is, a masculine person. Of course, many references use the term Man, meaning "Human," without any specific gender or sexual implications. But many others do identify the personification of God as male. Why is that, and why is it important? This is a good example of the deep significance of the new revelation for understanding our relationship with God.

In this revelation the classic definition of the masculine mind is that it is "intellect-oriented," whereas the feminine mind is "will-oriented." (*Conjugal Love* 33) Of course, both the masculine and the feminine are composed of *both* will and understanding. The difference is that the masculine mind consists of "love veiled over with wisdom," whereas the feminine mind is the opposite – "wisdom veiled over with love." (*Ibid.* 32, 88-91) This doesn't mean that men are more rational than women, or that women are more emotional than men. It just means that the outwardly visible characteristics are driven by invisible ones that inspire or motivate us.

That said, why did God assume a natural human form? He answered that question Himself, saying: "*For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth.*" (*John* 18:37) And now we can understand this more perfectly to mean that He came to present Himself as the very form of that truth, expressing His inner love such that He could restore order to the world through His own work without compromising anyone else's freedom. He was, in fact, the very epitome of "love veiled over with wisdom," the Word made flesh.

Our teachings about the masculine mind bring this into a clear light. It was infinite love that brought God into this world, and infinite love that directed everything He did. But He did His work by clearly demonstrating the real wisdom of the Word, and then by absolutely joining that learned, finite wisdom together with His infinite love for our eternal happiness, making them ONE. We call this the process of glorification, and the end result was that no physical body of either sex could contain it. Now it is the body of teaching that describes His life and work, still finite, still written in masculine terms, that fully reveals this Humanity.

### **The Lord as the Bridegroom and Husband of the Church**

Naturally, we connect with this teaching not only through our understanding, but also through our will and emotions when we live according to it. So, in many passages of the Word, the Lord is referred to as a Bridegroom or Husband, and the Church, consisting of both men and women, as His bride or wife. (See *Isaiah 62:5, Matthew 9:15, Revelation 21:2*)

What this means is that when we learn what we need to know, and practice it, that wisdom becomes a new inner core of our being, and then, whether we are male or female, the Lord gives us a new will through which we can express it, outwardly loving others as ourselves, living in genuine charity because of the inner core of our faith.

And that is how, as John wrote, we can see the Infinite in the finite, and cultivate a real relationship with Him. Remember, Jesus said:

*He is the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father, except through Him. If we know Him, we will know His Father also, and from now on if we really reflect on His life, we will know Him and we will see Him. (John 14:6-7, adapted)*

So, as John also wrote, and as our New Church doctrine confirms, the Word has become flesh for us, first in the form of a natural Man, but now, forever, not just in a body of flesh, but in a body of teaching, given with intellectual force from the full weight and power of infinite love, so that we can indeed be conjoined with Him – not It, but Him – and enjoy a life of inmost blessing and peace among others who will also strive for connection and conjunction with Him as our infinite, otherwise incomprehensible heavenly Father.

Remember, we don't worship order, light or energy; we don't worship some vague Force, or Providence – as in "Providence did this," or "Providence did that." We worship the Lord Jesus Christ, the God of all the universe revealing Himself in a natural Human form, ideal and perfect for that purpose.

Amen.



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### **A Prayer used with this service:**

*Lord, God of all the universe, we bow before You today in the humble acknowledgement of how challenging it really is to know You and think about Your infinite love and wisdom. Help us today, we pray, to see the Humanity in Your Divinity, and the Divinity in Your Humanity, that we may worship You and be conjoined with You in real faith and charity, returning what is Yours to You in gratitude and the determined effort to grow as human beings into Your own image and likeness.*



# When the Righteous Cry Out: The Hope and Challenge of Psalm 34

*A Sermon by the Rev. Christopher A. Barber*

*Lessons: Psalm 34; Matthew 6:25-34; True Christian Religion 68*

*The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears,  
And delivers them out of all their troubles.  
(Psalm 34:17)*

What do you do when you feel like there's unfairness in your life? How do you handle that nagging suspicion that justice is not being served? Is the first thing you do is ask: "Could I be wrong?" "Could I be interpreting this situation incorrectly?" "Am I part of the problem?" If not, it might be worth considering – even just to rule it out.

I offer this because people tend to move through this life with one standard in mind, at least at first. And that is *our* standard, calibrated according to our own wants and needs. The standards by which we evaluate the events in our lives tend to be based on how they impact us, rather than whether they are truly fair or warranted. If we never evaluate these benchmarks of right and wrong, fair and unfair, we risk moving through life making unsound appraisals.

Our psalm this morning says that the "righteous" cry out and the Lord hears. But what about in our moments of self-righteousness? Those times when believe that we *alone* are right and that our indignation parallels objective reality. How can we safeguard against this?

Growing in true righteousness requires humility. As we read in *Arcana Coelestia* 6866:

*When real humility is present in a person they surrender all power to think or do anything by themselves and abandon themselves completely to the Divine, and in this condition draw near to the Divine.*

We are called repeatedly throughout the Word of the Old and New Testaments and the Heavenly Doctrine to humble ourselves before the knowledge that of ourselves we can do nothing. This includes appraising what is right and wrong, just and fair.

*But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. (Matthew 6:33)*

What are “all these things?” – various elements of natural, moral, emotional and spiritual sustainment. It is God’s kingdom that we are called to seek, not one of our establishment alone. It is God’s righteousness that we are called to seek, not some metric of our own invention. As the psalm promises: “No one who trusts in Him shall be condemned.”

Righteousness is an ongoing endeavor. From *Apocalypse Revealed* 815:

*Someone who believes that they are righteous and so are living a good life without living in accordance with truths is much deceived. For a person cannot be reformed and regenerated and so become good, except by means of truths and by a life in accordance with those truths.*

You might like to know that the word translated here as “righteous” is other times translated as “just” or “fair.” Maybe that language makes it a little easier for us to grasp what’s being elevated in these teachings. We ought to seek justice. As we read in *Micah* 6:8:

*He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?*

Being someone who seeks justice means more than merely demanding it for oneself. It means being just in how we live and bringing justice in how we work with others. If we look again, we’ll see that justice is our focus in the psalm. Unlike some other psalms we could examine, this one does not detail injustice, but instead provides a shorthand for how a person can be righteous:

- Praise the Lord (verse 1)
- Trust the Lord (verse 8)
- Seek the Lord (verse 10)
- Teach and learn of the Lord (verse 11)
- Speak only what is true (verse 13)
- Be a peacemaker (verse 14)
- Call on the Lord (verse 17)

The psalm reminds us, though, that we'll have our share of troubles along the way. Recall it is the righteous who are doing the crying out.

I think sometimes we get it into our heads that if we do everything right, if we follow the invitation of *Psalm 34*, then we'll merit serenity. That if we ourselves seek to be fair in how we handle the people around us, we, too, will be handled fairly. Maybe it sounds naïve, however I think we need look no further than the feelings of indignation that often arise whenever we feel slighted.

This is why the Lord reminds us of such unfortunate realities about our natural life:

| *Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof...* (Matthew 6:34)

And

| *In this world you will have trouble...* (John 16:33)

We know these things and yet if we truly believe them why are we taken by surprise when they come true? Why does it catch us off guard when things go wrong and we say: "I did everything I was supposed to." Do you ever gripe like this? We almost feel betrayed! But in the *Gospel of Mark*, when the Lord offered the signs that would follow His believers, He said:

| *In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.* (Mark 16:17-18)

Even having their faith there are still dangerous situations to contend with. The promise of faith is not one of a peaceful retreat, but that if we stay committed, the Lord will keep our spirit safe, even when we are unable to see the progress that is being made.

But the Lord knows that we can lose confidence in His providence when we stare injustice in the face. From *ww* *People who think about Divine providence in worldly terms come to the conclusion that it applies only on the largest scale, but that the details are left to us. But people who think this way do not know the mysteries of heaven. They draw their conclusions solely on the basis of self-love, love for the world, and the things that give pleasure to these loves. So, when they see evil people raised to high rank, making more money than good people, and skillfully and successfully accomplishing evil things, they say in their hearts that none of this would be happening if Divine providence were operative in all the details. They fail to take into account, though, that the goal of Divine providence does not concern what is momentary and transient, what comes to an end when our lives in this world cease. Rather, its goal concerns*

*what lasts to eternity, what therefore does not have an end.*

When we do deeds that we know to be good because we have read about them in the truths of our church; when we make those truths the guiding principles of our existence; when we use those teachings as our standard, we are inviting the Lord down into our lives. But not as a talisman we can cling to, or a merit badge we can wear and make ours and say: “I was righteous once,” or “I was just once,” or “I was fair once.” “Therefore, I’m always righteous, just, or fair.”

No. It can’t be attached to us, but it can be present with us. It feels like a tall order at first, but every interaction we have, no matter how inconsequential it seems, can be a moment where we make space for the Lord and His righteousness. *True Christianity* 96 teaches:

*The truth is that the Lord’s righteousness, being such in its nature and origin, and being in itself purely Divine, cannot be conjoined to any person, and thus cannot effect salvation any otherwise than as the Divine life can, which is Divine love and Divine wisdom. With these the Lord enters into every person; but unless a person is living in accordance with order, that life, although it is in them, contributes nothing whatever to their salvation; it imparts merely an ability to understand truth and do good. To live according to order is to live according to God’s commandments; and when a person so lives and so does, they acquire for themselves righteousness – not the righteousness of the Lord’s redemption, but the Lord Himself as righteousness.*

When we cry out in hard times, when we feel afflicted, or that things are unfair, we have the Lord beside us. He provides what we need to sustain us. He inspires what we need to slow and eventually stop any patterns of harm that might be present in our own lives and families and communities. Righteousness can be with us even when – and maybe even *especially* when – we feel like we need to cry out.

When we are distant from the Lord, we run the risk of becoming the agents of harm in other people’s lives. When we act in ways that leave other people feeling low, or when we do things that impede justice and fairness for others, we push back on the Lord’s presence and set ourselves against righteousness. In those times, because of our choices, He is closer to those who are on the receiving end of our aggression, or our wrath, or our carelessness. We set ourselves against not only another person, but against righteousness and justice itself – that is, the Lord.

But this is all appearance. The Lord doesn’t move. He neither changes His tune nor His position. His truth is firm and His love is constant. The question is

not “Where is God?” but rather “Where are we?”

Whether the Lord is close to us depends not on His willingness but ours. Which is the same as saying our relationship with the Lord depends on willingness to be loving, kind, principled, and to embody the truths we know in the good actions of life. This is what it means to say that “the life of religion is to do good.” (*Life 1*)

I invite you to ask yourself this question: “When am I the closest to the Lord?” This might be a hard question to answer because being close to the Lord doesn’t mean everything will go our way. Simply having the one who IS, WAS, and IS TO COME by our side does not guarantee an easy life. But what it does guarantee is we have the strength to move through hard times without losing our commitments to our principles.

We are called to try to make this place a little bit more like heaven by inviting the Lord into our lives. *True Christianity 422* reminds us that:

*Charity itself is acting justly and faithfully in the office, business, and employment in which a person is engaged, and those with whom the person has any dealings.*

We have the freedom to choose. Do we connect ourselves with heaven through embodying those principles and our actions that really speak of heaven? Do we connect ourselves with the Lord by trying to be righteous and invite righteousness into our lives, or do we push those away and take on the opposite? The choice is very much ours. And the Lord is always on our side, either strengthening us as we do good or calling us to do better.

How do we move forward together? Can we, as *Psalms 34* directs, magnify the Lord together? Can we exalt His name together? *True Christian Religion 100* teaches us about this partnership:

*A real partnership is not possible unless it happens mutually and reciprocally. Therefore the Lord’s partnership with us is mutual and reciprocal, This partnership comes about as we move closer to the Lord and the Lord moves closer to us; for it is a fixed and unchangeable law that the closer we move toward the Lord, the closer the Lord moves toward us.*

*Whether the Lord is close to us depends not on His willingness but **ours**.*

*I invite you to ask yourself this question: “**When am I the closest to the Lord?**”*

It is in this closeness we find that we enable the Lord – as *Psalm 34* puts it – to deliver us from our fears, save us from our troubles, surround us with His angels, and deliver us.

If we ever find ourselves calling out to the Lord in our righteousness, wondering why we still have trouble despite doing our best, the simple answer is: troubles come because not everybody is committing to the Lord. Not everyone is participating. Can we remember in these times that the Lord's Providence is working all things to a good end? That even if we can't see it, He is working in this world?

This is why we pray:

“*Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, as in heaven so upon the earth.*”

What is so inspiring about our teachings about heaven is that they paint a picture of a world where all have committed themselves to be of service to their neighbor and their God, and therefore troubles don't arise because there aren't people making trouble. In our weaker moments on this earth, the vision can feel more like a fantasy. But in our stronger, more righteous moments, we see the reality of the Lord's promise. We ally with Him and bring healing and stability.

This is why the *Psalm*, in its eternal optimism, sings:

*I will bless the Lord at all times;  
His praise shall continually be in my mouth.  
My soul shall make its boast in the Lord;  
The humble shall hear of it and be glad.  
Oh, magnify the Lord with me,  
And let us exalt His name together.  
– Psalm 34:1-3*

Amen.

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FROM THE BISHOP'S OFFICE

## Messages from the Lord that Shift our Perspective

*The Rt. Rev. Peter Buss Jr.*

One of the many blessings of the Word is that it allows us to witness the ways the Lord works with people. So often we see an engagement that shifts their perspective. They become aware in ways they weren't before, and more open to the things of spiritual life. Collectively they call us to wiser ways of thinking and living that allow us to cooperate more fully with the Lord.

There are so many shift-in-perspective stories in the Word, almost begging us to see that a central goal of the Word is to consistently lead us to new levels of wisdom. Here I wish to focus on three stories that hold a collective message for our personal lives and for our church about why we are here and what our focus should be.

### **Awakening us to the Lord's plans for our lives.**

The first story reminds us of the spiritual dimension of life. Our attention is drawn to Jacob, whom we find fleeing from his brother's wrath, having tricked him out of his inheritance. No longer was he safe at home with his family. His whole pattern of life was disrupted, and he found himself on an uncertain journey.

Enter the Lord with a key message for Jacob. While he slept the Lord gave him an amazing dream of a ladder with angels ascending and descending on it.

The Lord Himself stood at the top offering a covenant to Jacob: *“I am the Lord God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants.”* (Genesis 28:12) In that moment Jacob learned of the Lord’s plans for him, and of the Lord’s providential care. In his amazement he said those famous words: *“Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it.”* (vs. 16)

It matters that Jacob saw angels and the Lord Himself. All of us can hear the call to our version of the covenant and our way of being led by the Lord to something grander than this world can offer. Constantly and consistently the Lord finds a way to say to us: *“I am with you and will keep you wherever you go.”* (Genesis 28:15) I am your provider, and I will take care of you no matter what sad or hard or stressful things are going on in your life.

How many of us have those moments where we discover a touch of heaven, or a window into what is truly important in life – people caring for each other, or a special worship service that fills our souls, or a realization of the Lord’s blessings in the context of those we love –and we say to ourselves: *“Surely the Lord is in this place and I did not know it? This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven?”* (Genesis 28:16-17)

We read in the Writings: *“True wisdom is to see what is conducive to anyone’s life to eternity, and to determine oneself according to that, which is done when a person not only knows these things and perceives them with their understanding, but also wills and does them.”* (Apocalypse Explained 338) The Lord has ways of shifting our perspective to the things of spiritual life, to His providence and plans for our life, and the church is here to help with that process.

### **Spiritual mandates that we are wise to embrace.**

The next story takes us beyond the mere acknowledgment of spiritual life. Once the Lord has our attention, He has subsequent messages for how we choose to act. It’s not merely a set of commands for the sake of submission and obedience, although He will use that if nothing deeper is firing for us in the moment. Rather it is His way of helping us to see that His ways lead to the kind of happiness and fulfillment we long for.

I love the way the Lord worked with Naaman, the commander of the army of Syria. This mighty man came down with the debilitating disease of leprosy. Leprosy appears to be a curable disease today, but back then it put a major roadblock into the normal functioning of life. Believed to be highly infectious and unclean, people were largely separated from society, unable to do their jobs or to live with their families. For these reasons, leprosy represents profanation or a mixing of good and evil that destroys what is beautiful and



wholesome and distances us from others. (*Arcana Coelestia* 6963; *Apocalypse Explained* 475:18)

It is important in this context to note the person needing curing. He is a leader who by all appearances is a proud man, caught up in his worldly success and stature. As such Naaman had more options than most and perhaps believed he deserved more than most to be cured. This eventually brought him to Elisha the prophet. He came with gifts and grandeur, expecting some dramatic miracle. Instead, he was simply told through a messenger: “Go and wash in the Jordan seven times.” (*2 Kings* 5:10)

Many of us know the story of Naaman’s disgust and anger, leading to initial unwillingness to do this simple ritual of cleansing. His servants were the ones to convince him, saying: “My father, if the prophet had told you to do something great, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, ‘Wash, and be clean?’” (*2 Kings* 5:13) Being so convinced, he did what was asked and was healed.

What can we learn from this shift-in-perspective story? There are messages about our own self-importance for sure, but the main message is about our willingness to follow the simple messages of the Lord’s Word, symbolized by the waters of the Jordan. (*Apocalypse Explained* 475:18) Isn’t it true that the Word tells us many things we are, or are not to do, in order to be healed of various spiritual afflictions – pride, selfishness, permissions we give ourselves based on a sense of deservedness, an over focus of the things of this world and worldly success at the expense of spiritual devotion, and so on?

How willing are we to follow the commands we learn in the Word relative to these things, so that we, too, can be healed? “Wash and be clean.” Repentance, obedience, trust that the Lord’s ways work and our ways do not – these are the things that come to us when we are willing to have our perspective shifted by the Lord. And our lives will be so much better for it, as was Naaman’s.

### **The call to service.**

A final story we focus on, although there are many more that deserve our attention, comes from the Lord’s own mouth while on earth. In fact, it draws our attention to the Lord Himself and His example of how we should live. It comes in the context of the last supper before His crucifixion, during which “a dispute [arose] among [the disciples] as to which of them should be considered the greatest.” (*Luke* 22:24)

The Lord rebuked them saying “. . . it shall not be so among you.” He continued with the famous words: “For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves.” (*Luke* 22:26,27)

The Lord's consistent message is that we are here to use our gifts and energies to be a force for good in the lives of others. His kingdom is "*a kingdom of useful services.*" (Conjugal Love 7:3) "*The sole purpose for which people are born is that they perform a use.*" (Arcana Coelestia 1103) "*Heavenly blessedness does not consist in wishing to have dominion and to be served by others but in wishing to serve others and to be the least.*" (Arcana Coelestia 6393:2) It's not about taking from others but about giving, for in this way heaven itself is created.

### **A focus for our church.**

People ask me quite often for perspective on where our church is and where it is headed. While there are countless ways to answer that query, the one I place before you today is about shifting our perspective.

The church is here to awaken us to the realities of spiritual life – to give us eyes to see the hand of the Lord leading all of us forward in His providence. "*Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it.*" (Genesis 28:16)

The church is here to remind us of the things that need to change in our lives for us to experience the happiness and fulfillment we long for. "*Wash, and be clean.*" (2 Kings 5:13) Follow the spiritual mandates of the Word and we will be healed.

At the end of the day, the church is here to encourage us to serve – to use our time and energy to be a source of blessing to others. All our worship services and learning from the Word, all our repentance, and all the wisdom we derive from the Lord leads in this direction. "*I am among you as one who serves.*" (Luke 22:27)

*At the end of the day, the church is here to encourage us to **serve** – to use our time and energy to be a source of blessing to others.*

The more we focus on these things, the wiser and happier we will be, and the healthier our church will become.

If you'd like to hear more shift-in-perspective stories, one place I can direct you to is [www.newchurchaudio.org](http://www.newchurchaudio.org), to a Palm Sunday sermon by this title: "*Wise Shifts in Perspective*" preached on April 2, 2023.

# The Power of Story

*Susan David de Maine*

**T**hank you for inviting me to be here this morning, to share in this special day that bears witness to your hard work and accomplishments. Congratulations to all of you.

As President Carswell mentioned, I serve on the Board of Trustees for Bryn Athyn College. Not long ago, in one of our meetings, I had the pleasure of voting “aye” to the granting of a degree to each of you. Even sitting in my office 700 miles away, connected only by my webcam, I knew, that having met the expectations set by this remarkable faculty, you have learned not just new concepts and skills but also how to keep developing both your mind and your heart and to grow in wisdom.

One of the things I think Bryn Athyn College is particularly good at, because of the Swedenborgian ideas at its core, is teaching with and about the power of story. Stories are an essential part of being human, and they play a huge role in our moral and spiritual growth. As writer Lisa Cron has said: “Opposable thumbs let us hang on; story told us what to hang on to.”

Because stories are such powerful tools for helping us make sense of the world, I’d like you to take a moment to reflect on the stories you hold. We all have stories. We have stories that build our sense of self-worth and stories that fill us with self-doubt. We have stories that we tell others and stories we only tell ourselves. What if we don’t like some of our stories? What if they are harming us? Can we edit these stories to change our outlook or hold new values?

Several months ago, I had lunch with a friend I hadn’t seen or even been

***Stories are an essential part of being human, and they play a huge role in our moral and spiritual growth.***

in touch with for 25 years. We went to law school together, but after graduation, we went our separate ways. As we caught up, I learned that he spends some of his time consulting: identifying the strengths of individuals, usually in an employment context, and helping them make choices about their work that align with their strengths.

He loves doing this work; it makes him feel very useful. He told me that he has had people tear up with joy as they finally realize why they are unhappy in their jobs and what they might be able to do about it. But this work is only a side gig. My friend spends most of his work time scouting for and worrying about business deals.

Yes, he wants these deals to have a positive impact on the community, but the stories of success he is telling himself focus not on that impact but on more money, a private jet (he was very specific about this), a beautiful beach house, and always, always the next deal. This is making him and his family deeply unhappy. He said it feels like he can't breathe because of the weight sitting on his chest.

As we sat there, finishing our coffee, I thought to myself: "What would happen if he could rewrite his success stories to focus on the positive impact he has on people instead of more financial gain? Could he measure himself according to a different story?"

Then there are the stories in our heads about our own abilities. Many of us, really probably all of us, have at one time or another felt like an imposter. In this story, we're not good enough for the job or assignment that has been entrusted to us. We don't know what we're doing, and our fraud will be discovered when we inevitably fail in some spectacular and horribly embarrassing way.

I felt this way every single time I took law school exams. In law school, it is not unusual for your grade to be composed of a single exam given at the end of the semester. Everything depends on that exam, and only a few people will be given A's. During the Christmas holiday of my first year, when I learned the grades for our Torts exam were posted on the bulletin board in the school, my sense of being an imposter became so overwhelming that I couldn't bear to look at my grade. I couldn't stomach even approaching the building.

I had to have my husband go check for me. So, he walked the 15 minutes to campus, with my exam number in hand (everything was anonymized using numbers instead of names), to look at the bulletin board. When he reported back with the news that I'd gotten an A, I simply didn't believe him. I accused him of trying to make me feel better because I knew I'd actually failed.

I'm thankful that, at least to some extent, the stories in my head have changed, but I wouldn't go back and undo that story about my exam grades, or any of my other travails – even the nervousness and sense of unworthiness I have experienced in preparing to give this speech this morning. Why? Because

the gaps between the stories we tell ourselves and reality are catalysts for growth.

In his book entitled *The Last Lecture*, Professor Randy Pausch coined the aphorism: “Experience is what you get when you [don’t] get what you want[.]” I think perhaps Professor Pausch doesn’t go far enough. Sure, we get experience when we don’t get what we want, but what we gain from that experience depends on the stories we author. We can spin stories of resentment and bitterness, or we can weave stories of resilience and deepening self-awareness. We can carry our experiences with grace and embrace even the difficult ones as a means of developing wisdom.

Harkening back to opposable thumbs and what to hold on to, it’s important to note that our stories don’t just affect us. They also teach others what to hold onto. To illustrate, I’ll tell you one more story before I go.

It was late summer of 2011, I was going back to work after spending several years out of the work force raising my children. I had had a really rough year. First my mother died, and then four months later, my mother-in-law. I had been very close to both of them. Four months after that, my marriage of 18 years fell apart quite suddenly, and then my daughter was diagnosed with severe scoliosis.

I desperately needed this job. I was going to be a research librarian in the law library at Indiana University’s Indianapolis campus, a job that happened to hit right in the bullseye of my long-delayed career goals. It was the Saturday before classes started, and my first day in the library wouldn’t be until the coming week.

I spent the day as usual, doing errands and laundry, taking care of the kids. At 4:30 that afternoon, the phone rang. “Hi. I’m calling from the Ruth Lilly Law Library. I think you were supposed to be here today. The schedule says you’re covering the reference desk from 9 to 5.”

What? I was supposed to be at work? How did this happen?? How did I miss the entire first day at my new job?!?! I absolutely panicked. I screamed like I have never screamed at any other time in my life, and I kept on screaming. I wailed. I sobbed. I was utterly mortified, and I didn’t know what to do. My kids, who were right there with me, were terrified by my outburst, so in the end I had little choice. I had to pull myself together, and I had to try to salvage my employment. I couldn’t let myself continue to be overwhelmed by a story of failure, shame and financial disaster.

Eventually, I was able to calm down enough to write honest and very apologetic emails. Then, I showed up in person on Monday – yes, Sunday was a long, hard day – to apologize again and see if there was any way I could still have the job. Fortunately (which doesn’t seem like a strong enough word), my two supervisors were kind and forgiving. I was able to keep the job.

Today, I am the Director of the Jerome Hall Law Library at Indiana University's flagship campus in Bloomington, Indiana – a position I could not imagine holding when I missed that first day of work 12 years ago. My children, now mostly grown up, remember that terrible August day. We have told the story of that day over and over, hanging on to the idea that, even when things go wrong, you must go on. After a little time for panic and falling apart, you get back up and figure out how to fix it. And even when things seem terribly dark, the future might hold surprising light.

My hope for you is that today, although a very important day, is simply the end of an early chapter in a lifelong story of learning and growth. Embrace all that life throws at you, the good and the bad, knowing that losses, hardships and disappointments are gateways to wisdom and compassion. Live fully and tell great stories.

**Susan David de Maine** graduated from the Academy Girls School in 1988 and attended Bryn Athyn College for two years. She earned a bachelor's degree in art history at Penn State, having been inspired by classes with Professor Martha Gyllenhaal and a part-time job at Glencairn Museum. In 1995 she returned to school for a master's degree in library science at the University of Kentucky, then a law degree. After graduating from law school, she worked for the Honorable David A. Nelson, a judge on the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit Court in Cincinnati, Ohio.



After moving with her family to Indianapolis, Susan spent several years away from professional life to be with her young children full time. In 2011 she took up her career again, starting as a professor of legal research, then joining the law library faculty at Indiana University's McKinney School of Law in Indianapolis. After nine years there she was selected to be the Director of the Jerome Hall Law Library and a Senior Lecturer at Indiana University's School of Law.

Susan is very active in the profession of law librarianship. She has published several articles and book chapters, presents frequently, and is a member of the American Association of Law Libraries. She serves on the Board of Trustees of the Academy of the New Church and particularly enjoys serving the Board's College Committee.

# Resilience and ‘Failing Forward’

*John Thygeson*

Thank you for the honor of speaking to you today. My wife, Maggie and I, have had a son at the Academy since the fall of 2013. Our oldest son, Jake, came here as a sophomore and graduated in 2016, Matt was in the class of 2019, and Owen in the class of 2020. Today, our youngest son, Chase, graduates. So today is an emotional day for us. We found ANC because we wanted a school with smaller classes and a place where our kids wouldn't be just a number. We found that and more. What we didn't count on finding was that I would be working here 10 years later.

Typically, the person speaking in this spot offers some words of wisdom to the graduating class as they move on from the Academy, be it to a college or university, into the workplace, trade school, or the military. I want to speak to you about two qualities that complement each other and should serve you in whatever adventure you are beginning. These are qualities that I have had the good fortune to see in the student body over the past year. I have heard about this quality from some of you from our interactions in the halls. I heard of additional experiences from other faculty and staff, and I was able to witness, first-hand, those qualities in a few of the students whom I had the pleasure to teach in my class.

The first is a quality that is very important in our lives: resilience. Resilience is the ability to withstand and overcome adversity, to bounce back from

*Resilience is the ability to withstand and overcome adversity, to bounce back from failure, and to keep moving forward in the face of challenges.*

failure, and to keep moving forward in the face of challenges. Basically, it's how well you respond when bad things happen. It is a characteristic that is found in the hearts of successful people in all industries and the minds of great leaders. Resilience is not just about surviving; it's about thriving and achieving success.

ANC's class of 2023, each of you, has had to be resilient to get where you are now. Your freshman year was cut short by covid, and your sophomore year wasn't exactly normal either. Do you all remember remote classes on Zoom? And when you came back to campus you wore masks, there were temperature checks every morning, and desks had to be at least six feet apart. That was a major interruption to the academic world you had been used to. But you, with a lot of help from the people who are here today, overcame that adversity and moved forward.

While that stretch was probably the most memorable example, it wasn't the only time that you had to be resilient. You have all faced challenges in your time here – adversity in a performing arts performance, athletics, or with your studies. And yet, here you sit, ready to graduate and move on to the next chapter in your life. All of you have accomplished a great deal to get where you are today.

The next quality I want to mention is the ability to learn from failure, or as I like to call it, “failing forward.” Failure, when done right, is not a sign of weakness or incompetence but rather is a strong motivator. It is through failure that we gain invaluable lessons and opportunities for personal and professional development.

Throughout history people have faced many failures but ultimately triumphed. Thomas Edison is a perfect example. When he was trying to perfect the light bulb, he failed over and over and over again. He never gave up though. He said: “I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work.” If everything worked perfectly the first time, WD-40 would just be called WD.

If you think about it, it's completely natural to learn from failure, and you've been doing it your whole life. When you first started to walk, you didn't just stand up and stride across the room in your diaper and your onesie. No, you fell, then you got up and fell again. When you spoke your first words when you were a year old you didn't say to your mom, “Mother, I've grown weary of the pureed peas and would like to try the pureed squash this evening.” You started off by babbling some stuff that your parents claimed were words. But you eventually learned to walk and talk. When

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that we gain  
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and professional  
development.*



you embrace moments of failure as a learning experience, you can feel more comfortable experimenting and exploring in whatever you are doing.

As I wrap up my remarks, keep in mind that the path to success doesn't look the same for everyone. It's not a simple, straight line from beginning to end. It is a journey with plenty of unexpected events and twists and turns. Resilience and failing forward are qualities that allow us to view the unexpected events and challenges we face as opportunities for growth, rather than as an impenetrable wall.

Remember to fail forward, learn from your mistakes, and be resilient so that any barriers you come across can be looked at as steppingstones in your life experience. Thank you.



**John Thygeson** and his wife, Maggie, are the parents of four boys, all of whom attended ANC. John has spent the last 20 years volunteering in leadership positions and as a coach for the various sports his sons played. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Management from Cabrini College, a Master's in Higher Education from Drexel University, and a Master's in Instructional Technology from Lehigh University. He has more than 25 years of experience in the information technology field at Thomas Jefferson University, NextGen Healthcare and Drexel University. This year he brought that technology experience to the Academy, teaching a new class called Educational Technology Applications. Contact: [john.thygeson@ancss.org](mailto:john.thygeson@ancss.org).

# Euthanasia: Is There a New Church Answer?

*The Rev. Todd J. Beiswenger*

**I**t is a fairly normal experience, I think, at some point to wish that our life would come to an end. Elijah wishes for it. Jonah and Job do as well. And while God grants none of these requests, with the ever-advancing medical technology of our modern world that can extend our life perhaps longer than was originally planned, we also gain more of an ability to grant the wish for ourselves by refusing further medical intervention, or by actively using modern medicine to finish the Grim Reaper's job for him.

I can understand the desire to leave this life behind, even without being burdened with a terminal illness or condition. After all, heaven sounds like a great place, certainly better than here. Eat all the donuts you want, and never get fat! But there are some things you do get to experience here that you'll never experience there. For example, those achy knees you've got – well, you won't have those in heaven. Grey hair? No hair? Wrinkles? None of these will you have in heaven.

I know that sounds like a good thing but stay with me: maybe part of the gift of life here is getting to experience those things. I know it may sound crazy, but frailty is one of the unique aspects of physical existence. You only get to live in this body for a short time, then forever in the prime of your youth. So maybe in the next life you'll get a chance to sit around with your friends and compare your stories of bodily aches, pains and disease like military veterans swapping war stories. The basic idea here is to explore the pain with curiosity, knowing that after you leave this rock you won't ever experience it again.

What's that you're thinking? Not convinced of this plan? Well, let's further explore the question of euthanasia from a more doctrinal point of view. Religious people in particular find the dilemma around euthanasia, or "voluntary assisted dying," rather perplexing. On one hand, we do not want

to take a person's life into our own hands and end it prematurely. On the other hand, we do not want to prolong the process of dying more than necessary; we want to preserve life, but not prolong death. At what point do we simply allow a person to die and take no further action to extend his or her life?

What does the Lord teach us about this? The short answer is "nothing." While we do get the general command not to kill or murder, when Moses was up on Mount Sinai nothing was given to him instructing us on how to decide whether to keep a person with a painful, terminal, illness alive. The fact is that the answer wasn't given to us via Jesus or Swedenborg either, meaning that whatever I write here is really just my best understanding.

The attempt here is to look at the principles taught by the Lord and come to a reasonable conclusion, but "reasonable" by the teachings and priorities of the Lord, not necessarily "reasonable" by humanity's or the medical establishment's standards. Let's get started.

We do get one clear example where the Bible does not condone taking someone's life even when the person is facing an imminent and unavoidable death. When King Saul was mortally wounded in battle, he asked his attendant to help end his life. (*1 Samuel 31:3, 4*) Saul's attendant refused. However, another man later falsely claimed to have fulfilled Saul's wish. This man, an Amalekite, came to David saying that he had killed Saul, hoping to be rewarded for vanquishing David's presumed enemy. Instead, David says: "How was it you were not afraid to put forth your hand to destroy the Lord's anointed?" I think this is a question we have to ask ourselves when it comes to euthanasia: who are we to decide our time of death?

It is a humbling perspective for sure. When Job complains to God about the job He's doing, God gives Job a similar message: who are you to question My judgment? If you get right down to it, when we question God's plan, we are in effect saying that we are smarter than God, or at the very least that we know something that God doesn't. Which clearly isn't the case. When it comes to our time of death, believe it or not, the Lord does have a whole set of factors that He weighs out. You can find a listing of them in Swedenborg's *Diary*, also known as *Spiritual Experiences*. Here's the whole quote:

**5002. CONCERNING THE DURATIONS OF THE LIFE OF MEN: WHY SOME LIVE LONG, AND SOME NOT LONG.**

*We do not want to prolong the process of dying more than necessary; we want to preserve life, but not prolong death.*

The life of every man is foreseen by the Lord, as to how long he will live, and in what manner; wherefore he is directed from earliest infancy with a regard to a life to eternity. The Providence of the Lord, therefore, commences from earliest infancy.

5003. The reasons why some die boys, some youths, some adults, some old men, are:

1. On account of use in the world to men;
2. On account of use, while he is in the world, to spirits and angels; for man, as to his interiors, is with spirits; and he is there as long as he is in the world, in which all things in the spiritual world terminate;
3. On account of use to himself in the world, either that he may be regenerated, or that he may be let into his evils lest they lie dormant and afterward break out, which would result in his eternal ruin;
4. Therefore, on account of use afterward in the other life, after death, to eternity; for everyone who will be in heaven has his place in the Grand Man, or, on the other hand, he has his place in hell: wherever forces fail they are balanced, and, of the Providence of the Lord, men are brought thither. Thus also, the kingdom of the Lord is cared for, the welfare of which is universal Providence.

I can see a few lessons from these passages that are relevant to the euthanasia question. I think the first one is pretty simple: the Lord really does have all of this well-organized. If we're here suffering in our physical body, it isn't because we've slipped off His radar. The euthanized person doesn't arrive in the next world with the Lord saying: "Oh, so sorry about that suffering! I had forgotten all about you!" The fact is our situation isn't a surprise to Him, and in fact He's left us here for a reason, and these passages give us a few for us to mull over.

What I often encounter with people who are wrestling with the euthanasia question is that they are not feeling useful. Instead, they feel like a burden to their family, friends, and perhaps even to the whole health care system. What these passages show is that we may not be here to be useful to those around us, but our use may actually be to our own selves.

If we look at *Arcana Coelestia* we're given some teachings that say bodily suffering can be a pathway to remove our minds from worldly concerns, and raising them to something higher. Specifically, it says that we undergo

| *other experiences, such as misfortune, grief, and anxiety which*

*arise from natural or from bodily causes. There are also bodily illnesses and diseases, which to some extent weaken and break down the life of his pleasures and desires, and fix his thoughts on and raise them to higher and nobler things. (Arcana Coelestia 762)*

In a similar vein we are taught that

*old age is the final stage of life, when bodily things start to be cast aside together with the loves which belong to the preceding stage, and so when interior things start to be enlightened; for once bodily things have been removed interior things are enlightened. (Ibid. 3492)*

I think the message is clear: part of the purpose for illness and disease is to get us to rethink our priorities. We sometimes need physical suffering in this world to serve the long-term good of our spirit. The problem is that the hells will take full advantage of it and try to burden us with guilt by putting thoughts in our head like: “The reason I’m suffering and sick is because I’m a terrible person!”

Therefore, we have to use these teachings responsibly, using them to do honest self-examination, but at the same time not letting them crush our spirit to the point where no reformation can take place. The Lord’s goal is our amendment, not our punishment, so if you look at your life and see areas where you could improve, forgive yourself, move on and give the self-immolation a miss.

To my mind I think the single most important thing that can come out of physical illness and frailty is the destruction of the ego. It can be very humbling and embarrassing to need somebody else’s help to do basic things like change our clothes, wash ourselves, or go to the toilet. I get it; nobody wants that! But at the same time, nothing will quite send the ego into a crushing retreat like asking somebody to do these things for you.

Suddenly you see that you’re not all that great and powerful, and perhaps not as smart as you once thought you were. It also leads back to one of the other reasons for our continued life on this earth listed in *Spiritual Experiences*, which is that we may very well be providing an opportunity for others to be useful by allowing them to attend to us.

The overriding lesson in all of this is

*I think the single most important thing that can come out of physical illness and frailty is the **destruction of the ego.***

that God is in control, has our long-term best interests in mind, and therefore euthanasia and assisted suicide are not good ideas. That's not to say that we are obligated to extend our life here as long as possible. I do not see any evidence that we must pursue every medical intervention available. In fact, if we would like to exit this life, it seems that the best way to do it is to just let nature take its course.

When disease hits, maybe you don't go to the doctor and have it checked out, or at the very least once you realize that a disease or condition you have is terminal, take the hospice option instead of the treatment option. There's nothing wrong with that.

I will also admit that there may in fact be nothing all that bad with euthanasia either, at least in the long term. After Judas betrays Jesus, he realizes the error of his ways and commits suicide. I make the comparison because isn't euthanasia really just suicide? Most Christians seem to assume Judas went to hell, but the Writings make us think otherwise. True Christian Religion 791 states that after "this work was finished the Lord called together His twelve disciples who followed Him in the world; and the next day He sent them all forth throughout the whole spiritual world to preach."

Well, Judas was one of the twelve who followed Jesus while He was in the world, so maybe despite the betrayal and suicide Judas ended up in the good place after all. Even though things seemed to have worked out for Judas, actively working against God's plans is generally not a direction that I would recommend. In fact, the whole Old Testament is really just a set of stories that teach us that very explicitly.

*The overriding lesson in all of this is that God is in control, has our long-term best interests in mind, and therefore euthanasia and assisted suicide are not good ideas.*

If you step outside the New Church canon, you can find plenty of stories of people who committed suicide, had a near-death experience (NDE), and came back to life with a story that is closer to that of a horror movie than a fairy tale. It seems to come out good for them in the end, but in general what I have read is that the process isn't a fun or pleasant one, and while the person may have only been physically dead for a matter of minutes, sometimes their experience is that they were in a hellish environment for what felt like thousands of years.

I think that is what happens when we step outside of God's plan for us. So perhaps when we are euthanized we are

skipping out on physical pain, but then have to deal with some spiritual pain on the other side. Hard to say for sure as it isn't directly taught in any real revelation from the Lord, but I think it falls into the category of a "reasonable" conclusion. Maybe you don't, and that's okay too.

I think the big takeaway is that euthanasia isn't a good idea even though I can understand why somebody would want to leave this world behind. If you or somebody you love goes down this path, things may very well turn out fine for them in the end. However, my perspective and bias are to err on the side of safety and attempt to limit the amount of pain, suffering and trauma, which includes limiting post-death pain, suffering and trauma.

God does have a plan for us. If we're here, we are likely more useful than we realize. Maybe our use is not to other Earthlings, but to ourselves, and perhaps even to angels and spirits who are connected to us. Ultimately, I think we should adopt the attitude of the Psalmist: *"Into your hands I commit my spirit; deliver me, Lord, my faithful God."* (Psalm 31:5)



The **Rev. Todd J. Beiswenger** is pastor of the Hurstville Society (outside Sydney) and the Brisbane New Church in Australia. He and his wife, Jenn (Jorgenson), live with their son in Penshurst, New South Wales. Contact: [todd@hurstvillenewchurch.com](mailto:todd@hurstvillenewchurch.com)





## BRYN ATHYN COLLEGE COMMENCEMENT 2023

*Photos by Serena Sutton & Michelle Chapin*



The Setting



The Faculty



Procession



Greg and Colleen Blair, with a message from their father, outgoing President Brian Blair



## BRYN ATHYN COLLEGE COMMENCEMENT 2023



Commencement speaker  
Susan de Maine



Chaplain Coleman Glenn

Dr. Jonathan Kline



Carling Brock and family



Carling Brock, valedictorian



A graduation hug



The cap toss

## ANC SECONDARY SCHOOLS COMMENCEMENT 2023

*Photos by Holly Adams  
& Bruce Cronlund*



Graduation Selfie



Lucas Flynn,  
Boys School  
valedictorian

The Senior Song



Senior Class Presidents  
Ajibade Al-Amin and Chloe  
Swierczynski with their  
class banner



Meg Matsukawa, Girls School  
Valedictorian



Senior Class

## ANC SECONDARY SCHOOLS COMMENCEMENT 2023 Honorary Diplomas



Hiroko Matsukawa and  
Daniel Matsukawa with  
Jeremy Irwin



Jennings Durand



Chris Groh



John Thygeson



Priscilla Gyimah



Chase and John Thygeson



# Declaration of Faith and Purpose

*The Rev. Justin Schorran*

**May 7, 2023**

## **1. The Lord**

I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; that He is the One God of heaven and earth. I believe that “The Lord from eternity, who is Jehovah, came into the world to subjugate the hells and to glorify His Human; and without this no mortal could have been saved; and those are saved who believe in Him.” I believe that all life is from the Lord alone. On account of this, I believe it is the first principle of the church to acknowledge the Lord in His Divine and His Human; to believe in Him and to love Him; and that without this acknowledgement, belief and love there is no conjunction with Him. (*True Christian Religion 2; cf. New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine 281-283*)

## **2. The Word**

I believe that the Lord Jesus Christ reveals Himself to us in His threefold Word. He reveals Himself in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. And now He has revealed Himself again in the form of the Heavenly Doctrine for the New Church. I believe that the Heavenly Doctrine for the New Church is the Second Coming of the Lord that was predicted in the *Gospel of Matthew 24*. Through this revelation, the Lord does not speak to us in parables, but teaches us openly, plainly, and clearly in the Spirit of Truth. Since the Heavenly Doctrine is a revelation from the Lord, it is a timeless revelation, and is not bound or limited to the confines of the culture and times in which it was written.

I believe that if we approach the Lord God the Savior, and read His threefold Word under His guidance and care, He will enlighten our hearts and minds, and show us the truths that should constitute our faith and life. (*cf. Matthew 24:30; John 16:13, 25; True Christian Religion 779, 165; Apocalypse Revealed 224:3*)

### **3. The Church**

I believe that the previous churches on earth have fallen and in their stead the Lord is raising up a New Christian Church. I believe that this New Church is the Holy City New Jerusalem depicted in the book of *Revelation*; this New Church is the Crown of all churches that have hitherto existed on the earth, because it is to worship one visible God. I believe the church exists specifically where the Word is, and where the Lord is thereby known, and thus where Divine truths are revealed. I believe the church is established by means of the soundness and purity of its doctrine from the Word; thus the church is established by its understanding of the Word. But what makes the church to be a church is not only its understanding, but a faith and life according to that doctrine. This is what establishes and makes the church in the individual. (cf. *Revelation 21*; *True Christian Religion* 757, 787, 245; *New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* 246)

### **4. Regeneration**

I believe that all human beings incline to evils of every kind and that of ourselves we are nothing but evil. Despite this, I believe that the Lord is merciful and loving, and that regardless of our fallen state, He still desires that each one of us come into heaven to live with Him there to eternity. To this end, the Lord provides a way forward for each and every human being to come into heaven through the practice of repentance. I believe the Lord shows us in His Word the evils that must not be done and that we must shun them from thought, will and life because they are of the devil and from the devil. To the extent we shun any evil as a sin against the Lord, to the same extent does He save us and implant within us a love of the opposite good. (cf. *Divine Providence* 27; *Arcana Coelestia* 1799; *Heaven and Hell* 522; *True Christian Religion* 3; *Doctrine of Life*)

### **5. Marriage**

I believe in Conjugal Love and that the conjugal union of one man and one wife is the precious jewel of human life and the repository of the Christian religion. I believe that from creation the Lord made them male and female and for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife. He created male and female to be distinct, but He also created them to be conjoined in each and every detail. Throughout history and even today, conjugal love has been challenged; but I believe that the Lord, through His Second Coming, is working to revive this love once again as it was among the ancients. I believe that the New Church, with its possession of the Heavenly Doctrine, has a unique privilege and part to play in the renewal of this precious love. (cf. *Conjugal Love* 457, 37; 80, 81e; *Mark* 10:6-7)

## 6. Priesthood

I believe that the work of the priesthood is to teach the truth and lead thereby to the good of life. Priests who teach according to the doctrine of their church from the Word and lead people to heaven are good shepherds. Those who teach but do not lead are evil shepherds. I believe that if a priest shuns evils as sins, and does his work honestly, justly and faithfully, he comes into the love of his use, which is to care for the salvation of souls. Insofar as he is in this love, so far will he be affected by the truths of the Lord's Word, because by means of them, he helps lead people to heaven. (*cf. New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine 315; Charity 160; Doctrine of Life 39*)

## 7. Purpose

In presenting myself as a pastor and priest for the General Church, my prayer is that the Lord will give me an understanding heart and the wisdom of King Solomon to learn how to judge between what is good and evil. May the Lord grant me this wisdom so I may be led to perform the uses of a pastor. I will strive to listen to the Lord in His Word and follow Him where He leads me. I will do my best to help lead the people He has entrusted in my care to live a life of love and faith to the end that they may become angels in His heavenly kingdom to eternity. (*1 Kings 3:9; Revelation 14:4*)



# Church News

*Compiled by Bruce Henderson*

## REGIONAL CLERGY MEETINGS

The General Church is sponsoring Regional Clergy Meetings in seven locations this year on the theme: “*Show me Your ways, O Lord.*” *Psalm 25.4* Date and locations:

- South Africa: March 6-7 – Westville, South Africa
- Asia/Australia: April 22-25 – Seoul, South Korea
- Europe/Scandinavia: June 5-8 – Stockholm, Sweden
- Bryn Athyn: June 28-30
- West Africa: August 15-18 – Accra, Ghana
- Western United States: September 12-14 – near Boulder, Colorado
- Great Lakes (U.S. and Canada): September 19-21 – Glenview, Illinois

In connection with the Asia/Australia meetings, the **Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr.** offered congratulations and gratitude to the **Rev. Yang, Gyu Dae** of South Korea on his retirement from active ministry after 40 years of faithful service, celebrated for him and his wife, **Mrs. Eun, Suk Hee**. Rev. Yang served most recently as pastor of the Seoul New Church and as National Pastor for South Korea.

Congratulations also to **Jeong, Jin Oh** and **Cho, Soon Won** on their baptism into the faith of the New Church, which took place in the Seoul New Church on April 18, 2023.

The **Rev. Todd Beiswenger**, pastor in Hurstville, New South Wales, Australia, offered a brief report on these Asia/Australia meetings in his society newsletter:

“I flew to Seoul for four days of regional meetings with pastors from Korea, Japan and Australia. You might be thinking, “One of those places is not like the others.” Which is true. You would think Australia would be the odd one out; however, what we saw is that all three places have the same problems. There’s declining church attendance around the world, and Korea and Japan are no exceptions.

The Korean Church will probably have an easier time than Japan, as I



learned that about 35-40% of Koreans identify as Christian of one denomination or another, versus only about 1.5% of Japanese are Christian. This, of course, leads to different strategies for moving forward.

The Korean Church has plans to create new web-based materials – everything from new websites, new book translations, video creation and the like to reach more people. They are early on with these plans, which was one reason it was useful for me to be there and share with them my experience with YouTube and social media.

Japan has a different project underway – creating comic books. The **Rev. Jon Jin** put together an article about this that I will hopefully be able to run in our next newsletter. It's an interesting approach, and not without precedent of working in Japan. However, since it is run by volunteers, progress is slow.

Of perhaps the greatest interest to us was the presentation given by the **Rt. Rev. David Lindrooth** about a General Church Outreach program designed to attract newcomers to the church. I'll forgive you if you're thinking, "I've heard that before," and I think even he has guarded optimism about the initiative.

However, I will watch with great interest because if it does work, this program is certainly something we could duplicate in Sydney. Essentially it is an advertising program and the idea is to guide people through steps of contact that lead to actual in-person participation.

He gave us the big picture, including costs and projections, and suggested that I need to have a conference call with him and some of the others in Bryn Athyn working on the project to get a better idea of the details. I hope to do that in the not-too-distant future.



Rt. Rev. Peter Buss, the  
Rev. Gyu Dae Yang,  
the Rev. John Jin

Peter and  
Teresa Buss,  
Mrs. Soon  
Won Cho, the  
Rev. Jin Oh  
Jeong



Teresa and Peter  
Buss, the Rev. Gyu  
Dae Yang and  
his wife, Mrs. Suk  
Hee Eun

## **BRYN ATHYN COLLEGE COMMENCEMENT AND AWARDS**

At the 146th Commencement of Bryn Athyn College of the New Church, 58 students were awarded degrees: 46 Bachelor of Arts (10 cum laude), and 12 Bachelor of Science (six cum laude). All of the graduates were from the United States, except one from South Africa, and represented eight states: Delaware, Florida, Maryland, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Oregon and Pennsylvania.

**The Rev. Eric Carswell** presided as the newly installed president. Outgoing president **Brian Blair** was briefly hospitalized and unable to attend. His son, Greg, and daughter, Colleen, read a message of appreciation and congratulations from him. Chancellor Peter M. Buss Jr. offered a moving tribute to President Blair, thanking him for eight years of dedicated leadership during challenging times, including the covid crisis.

**Susan David de Maine** gave the Commencement Address: *The Power of Story*. Susan graduated from the Academy Girls School in 1988 and attended Bryn Athyn College for two years. She eventually earned master's and law degrees and is Director of the Law Library at Indiana University's School of Law. You can read her address on page 300.

See photos from the commencement on page 313.

### **Here is a listing of the graduates and awards: Bachelor of Arts (\* indicates cum laude)**

<b>Cheyenne Andrews</b> , Troutdale, OR	<b>Elena Clavijo</b> , South River, NJ
<b>Michael Antonyuk</b> , Philadelphia, PA	<b>Isaiah Cureton</b> , Princeton, NJ
<b>Aida Barry</b> , Bronx, NY	<b>Ava Elder*</b> , Rochester, MI
<b>Michael Bastida Flores</b> , Norristown, PA	<b>Andre Fisher Jr.</b> , Townsend, DE
<b>Raymond Bochneak</b> , Huntingdon Valley, PA	<b>Ursula Friesen</b> , Huntingdon Valley, PA
<b>Jency Brock*</b> , Rochester Hills, MI	<b>John Grumbach*</b> , Glenside, PA
<b>Anthony Burr</b> , Cream Ridge, NJ	<b>Rebecca Homber*</b> , Johannesburg, S. Africa
<b>Janiyah Carter*</b> , Sharon Hill, NJ	<b>Meerab Ishrat</b> , Philadelphia, PA
<b>Shaina Childs*</b> , Rochester, MI	<b>Juleton Jean-Louis Jr.</b> , Philadelphia, PA
<b>Aaron Clark</b> , Philadelphia, PA	

CHURCH NEWS

<b>Hannah King</b> , Huntingdon Valley, PA	<b>Owen Ovecka</b> , Philadelphia, PA
<b>Heater Kirlin</b> , Doylestown, PA	<b>Ryan Ovecka</b> , Philadelphia, PA
<b>Thomas Kozlowski</b> , Olney, MD	<b>Alisha Parnell</b> , Upper Darby, PA
<b>Alan Kuruvilla</b> , Philadelphia, PA	<b>Kaitlyn Pierce</b> , Philadelphia, PA
<b>Jaryn McCann</b> , Auburndale, FL	<b>Leonardo Pineda</b> , Fairless Hills, PA
<b>Alisha Mcknight</b> , Reading, PA	<b>Brandon Rios</b> , Hasbrouck, NJ
<b>Lauryl Mergen</b> , Corbett, OR	<b>Monica Rose*</b> , Bryn Athyn, PA
<b>Alexander Moffa</b> , Berlin, NJ	<b>Lauren Schmittinger*</b> , Souderton, PA
<b>Allakemenin Mulbah</b> , Burlington, NJ	<b>Christian Smith</b> , Franklinville, NJ
<b>Joseph Nugent</b> , Philadelphia, PA	<b>Cevin, Spencer</b> , Philadelphia, PA
<b>Colin O’Hara*</b> , Huntingdon Valley, PA	<b>William Timberlake III</b> , Reading, PA
<b>Chinecherem Onwuka</b> , Sharon Hill, PA	<b>Kevin Wisinski Jr.</b> , Philadelphia, PA

**Bachelor of Science** (\* indicates *cum laude*)

<b>Leah Antwi*</b> , North Brunswick, NJ	<b>Katherine Halle</b> , Hillsborough, NJ
<b>Carling Brock*</b> , Huntingdon Valley, PA	<b>Gabrielle Lang</b> , Clifton Heights, PA
<b>Felicia Cohen*</b> , Philadelphia, PA	<b>Brandi Riffel*</b> , Huntingdon Valley, PA
<b>Brandon Cruz</b> , Holland, PA	<b>Kalie Soulsby*</b> , Yardley, PA
<b>Liam Elphick*</b> , Huntingdon Valley, PA	<b>Jada Waugh</b> , Bristol, PA
<b>Payton Gormley</b> , Huntingdon Valley, PA	
<b>Priscilla Gyimah</b> , Corona NY	

The valedictorian was **Carling Brock**

**Scholarships and Awards  
for Academic Performance**

Spirit of Service Award  
**Kalie Soulsby**

Theta Alpha  
International Scholarships  
**Evelyn de Chazal, Leilah Glenn,  
Katelyn Osterhoudt, Mary Jane Hill,  
Jennica Nobre**

Erland Brock Memorial  
Science Scholarships  
**Joseline Tiapaya, Alexis Ewer**

Gregory and Margaret  
Baker Scholarship  
**Trenton Hiatt**

Dristy Farrell Scholarships  
**Evelyn de Chazal, Laban Genzlinger**

Spillman Farmer  
Architects Scholarship  
**Teagan Dewees**

Gerald Hurst Outstanding  
Business Graduate Award  
**Jency Brock**

Psychology Major Graduate Award  
**Shaina Childs**

History and Social Sciences  
Department Award  
**John Grumbach**

Language and Literature  
Department Award  
**Alex Moffa**

Biology Award  
**Carling Brock**

**ACADEMY SECONDARY SCHOOLS GRADUATION AND AWARDS**

At the 146th commencement for the Academy Secondary Schools on June 10, 2023, 65 seniors graduated: 29 girls (15 with honors) and 36 boys (17 with honors). In addition to the United States, they hailed from Australia and Nigeria, plus five states: Arizona, Maryland, New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania.

The commencement speaker was John Thygeson who, with his wife, Maggie, have sent four sons to the Academy – the last graduating with this class. The Academy – and the Church – were a whole new experience for them, and they have felt blessed by their experience. John even taught a class in the schools this year. His talk stressed the importance of resilience and “failing forward.” (See page 304.)

See graduation photos on page 315.

**Here is a listing of the graduates and awards:**  
**Graduates of the Girls School** (\* indicates *With Honors*)

**Analiese Baker**, Abington, PA

**Abigail Bodnar**,  
Huntingdon Valley, PA

**Mayzie Braun\***, Hatboro, PA  
**Natasha Carvalho**, Willow Grove, PA

**Cece Colon**, Philadelphia, PA

**Anya Durand\***,  
Huntingdon Valley, PA

**Serena Elphick\***,  
Huntingdon Valley, PA

**Aria Genzlinger**, Bryn Athyn, PA

**Chyler Henderson**,  
Huntingdon Valley, PA

**Sarah Hughes\***, Bryn Athyn, PA

**Sophia Irwin\***, Willow Grove, PA

**Alessandra Kuzowsky**,  
Philadelphia, PA

**Janina Lee**, Tucson, AZ

**Makenna Lindsay\***, Sarver, PA

**Meg Matsukawa\***, Wyndmoor, PA

**Ainsley Odhner\***, Bryn Athyn, PA

**Oniya Osbourne**, Bristol, PA

**Tara Pitcairn\***, Bryn Athyn, PA

**Caeden Reuter**, Bryn Athyn, PA

**Trinity Robinson**, Philadelphia, PA

**Audrey Smith\***, Bryn Athyn, PA

**Sohaila Smith\***, Bowie, MD

**Avery Stein\***, Pittsburgh, PA

**Katherine Stein\***,  
Huntingdon Valley, PA

**Maggie Stine**, Bryn Athyn, PA

**Chloe Swierczynski\***,  
Hunt. Valley, PA

**Paige Swierczynski\***, Hunt. Valley, PA

**Tess Wyandt**, Bryn Athyn, PA

The valedictorian was **Meg Matsukawa**

**Graduates of the Boys School** (\* indicates *With Honors*)

**Ajibade Al-Amin**,  
Shaki, Oy State, Nigeria

**Colby Barnave**, Queens, NY

**Nathan Bradley\***, Woolwich, NJ

**Gresham Brown**, Bryn Athyn, PA

**Evan Buss\***, Bryn Athyn, PA

**Owen Carr\***, Huntingdon Valley, PA

**London Cataldi**, Southampton, PA

**Benjamin Evans\***, Bryn Athyn, PA

**Terrance Farrell**, Bellmawr, NJ

**Lucas Flynn\***, Cherry Hill, NJ

**Brian Frazier**, Bryn Athyn, PA

**Callum Glenn\***,  
Gold Coast, Australia

**Grayson Henderson\***,  
Bryn Athyn, PA

**Tyler Hodowanec**, Reading, PA

**Adam Holt\***, Ivyland, PA

**James Hungaski\***, Kempton, PA

**Luke Hyland**, Swedesboro, NJ

**Matt Hyler**, Huntingdon Valley, PA

**Chris Keel**, Philadelphia, PA

**Jarell Keel**, Philadelphia, PA

**Ian Kistner\***, Huntingdon Valley, PA

**Leopold Kline**, Bryn Athyn, PA

**Leam Knipprath**, Bryn Athyn, PA

**Karsen Kronen**, Sarver, PA

**Jason Lambertus\***, Bryn Athyn, PA

**Trent Layton\***, Clarksboro, NJ

**Trey Medley**, West Philly, PA

**Liam Mohan**, Bryn Athyn, PA

**Linus Orthwein\***, Bryn Athyn, PA

**Brandon Riggione\***, Doylestown, PA

**Wyatt Smith\***, Bryn Athyn, PA

**Lucas Synnestvedt\***, Kempton, PA

**Deywilk Tavaréz**, Pennsauken, NJ

**Zahir Thomas**, Philadelphia, PA

**Chase Thygeson**, Abington, PA

**Isaac van Zyverden\***,  
Huntingdon Valley, PA

The valedictorian was **Lucas Flynn**

### **Academic and Athletic Awards**

Honorary Girls School Diplomas

**Priscilla Gyimah**

**Hiroko Matsukawa**

Honorary Boys School Diplomas

**Jennings Durand**

**Chris Groh**

**Daniel Matsukawa**

**John Thygeson**

Theta Alpha Awards

*Gold*

**Sarah Hughes**

**Meg Matsukawa**

**Tara Pitcairn**

**Katherine Stein**

*Silver*

**Sohaila Smith**

Boys School Faculty Awards

*Gold*

**Evan Buss**

*Silver*

**Al-Amin Ajibade**

**Lucas Flynn**

Major Athletic Awards

*Girls School*

Elaine S. Asplundh Award

**Xola Wade**

Marah P. Boyesen Award

**Katherine Stein**

*Boys School*

Stanley F. Ebert Award

**Luke Hyland**

Payson Lyman Award

**Nathan Bradley**

**Trent Layton**

Academic Excellence Award

**Jaden Keal**

Senior Science Award

**Sohaila Smith**

**Faculty Commendations**

*Girls School*

**Mayzie Braun, Sarah Hughes, Meg**

**Matsukawa, Ainsley Odhner, Tara**

**Pitcairn, Audrey Smith, Sohaila**

**Smith, Katherine Stein**

*Boys School*

**Al-Amin Ajibade, Evan Buss,**

**Benjamin Evans, Terry Farrell, Lucas**

**Flynn, Grayson Henderson, Ian**

**Kistner, Leopold Kline, Trent**

**Layton, Linus Orthwein, Lucas**

**Synnestvedt, Isaac van Zyverden**

## **A NEW PLAN FOR ACADEMY DORMITORIES**

The May/June issue of *New Church Life* included an April 4 letter from the Secondary Schools principals, the Chancellor and the Board Vice Chair announcing that “effective June 30 the dormitories at ANC will no longer serve as residential spaces for students during the school year.” It was noted that this was a regrettable but necessary decision – and “temporary.”

As that edition was going to print, a new letter came out from the Academy on May 22 announcing “a creative new way of providing housing.”

The letter acknowledged “the enormous amount of sentiment and questions relating to the necessary changes that were announced in April.” It spelled out the need to act decisively to be financially responsible. But “the good news is that through the dedicated hard work of our task force and a core of supportive dorm families, we have developed a plan that modifies how we handle housing at ANC and continue to use the existing dormitory buildings.”

It is designed as a “bridge plan” – a “hybrid housing solution” – for the upcoming school year. It includes using parts of the existing dormitories and dining hall, plus a Student Union Center in Glenn Hall. All of this is spelled out in **The Academy of the New Church Secondary Schools Housing Plan for the 2023-2024 School Year** – including costs for housing and meals. That



document is available from the schools at: [https://docs.google.com/document/d/14WFSLYnTRer\\_b0ZRnF\\_qPD467KYv1C\\_FyDRzEd3abgM/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/14WFSLYnTRer_b0ZRnF_qPD467KYv1C_FyDRzEd3abgM/edit)

## YOUTH WEEKEND IN CANADA

*Naomi Reid*

The 2023 Spring Youth Weekend was hosted in Caryndale, Ontario, Canada, over the weekend of April 21-23. The **Rev. Justin Schorran** and his wife, **Denali (Heinrichs)**, were the hosts. A record-breaking number of attendees included 58 teens and 14 chaperones/drivers from seven New Church societies.

The **Rev. Brett Buick**, the **Rev. Calvin Heinrichs**, **Brooke Brown**, **Ahmai Cole** and **Nicole Frazier** brought 25 teens from Kempton, Pennsylvania; the **Rev. Jared Buss**, **Gabrielle Uber** and **Burgundy Smith** nine from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; the **Rev. Elmo Acton** and **Phil Parker** three from Glenview, Illinois, and six from Oak Arbor, Michigan; the Rev. Justin and Denali Heinrichs 10 from Caryndale; **Jana Sprinkle** two from Mitchellville, Maryland; and **Naomi Reid** three from Olivet Church, Toronto.

The male chaperones and boys stayed overnight at the Caryndale church, while the female chaperones and girls were hosted by Denali Heinrichs in the nearby manse.

The spiritual theme for the weekend was based on a concept in the Writings called “the affirmative principle.” The Rev. Brett Buick introduced it in the Friday evening vespers service and the Rev. Jared Buss explained it further in the afternoon doctrinal class discussion.

Through their explanations we learned that the affirmative principle means accepting and affirming that what the Lord says in His Word is good and true because it comes from Him. This attitude leads to intelligence and wisdom, while acting on the belief that we know better than the Lord leads to a life of folly and insanity. This idea comes from Arcana Coelestia 2568.4 and opposes the ways and common thinking of the world which would like us to think that we can decide for ourselves what is right and wrong while ignoring what the Lord says in His Word.

The Rev. Calvin Heinrichs conducted the Saturday evening vespers service, sharing more in-depth ideas on the topic. After the service, **Kai Smith** (one of the Mitchellville students) shared his musical talent by playing two beautiful songs on the piano: *Comptine de Autre* by Yann Tiersen, and *Marriage de Amour* by Paul Senneville. If you aren’t familiar with these lovely songs, they are worth finding and listening to.

The Rev. Calvin Heinrichs and his sister Denali Schorran ran a lively, interactive and fun ice breaker game on Friday and Saturday evenings. Since

the teen group was large and it would have been hard to get to know so many individuals, they divided the group into four smaller teams and competitions were held, including guessing Disney movie lyrics, stacking cups, then knocking them down with ping pong balls, and a lively hockey game outside.

On Saturday, the group planted trees for the new and emerging outdoor space and future steps that will go from the Carmel Church down to the valley and houses below. The teens were good natured about planting trees in the rain. After washing their muddy shoes they attended a doctrinal class, had a BBQ lunch, and went to the Skyzone Trampoline Park. They were then invited into Caryndale Church homes for showers. Thank you to the hosting families.

After a pizza dinner on Saturday evening, Naomi Reid taught the teens to make twisted wire trees, which they mounted onto semi-precious stones from a local store, with other stones collected from the shores of Lake Ontario. The final results were displayed for everyone who attended church on Sunday morning.

Meals were planned with care by Justin and Denali Schorran. Thank you to the Caryndale Church members who assisted in the kitchen. The weekend concluded with a society pancake breakfast, cooked by the teens, and a church service led by the **Rev. Mark Allais**, who asked the attendees to consider if they had asked the Lord to be a central part of their lives.

Being willing to ask this is the capstone to the affirmative principle of being willing to accept that what the Lord says is true, and not putting our own ideas about life above what the Lord says in His Word. This resonated with me as I observed young people and adult leaders gathered together in church that morning.

This was perhaps the largest group ever in the history of young people's weekends. Throughout, I witnessed teens making positive connections with each other and displaying helpful attitudes toward their peers and the staff. I noticed the ministers and chaperones sitting among the congregation. They hold a high value on supporting the youth in our church, as evidenced by their willingness to drive many miles to bring their young people to these events and their dedication to ensuring them a safe and memorable experience.

As I looked around that morning, I felt a strong sense of gratitude and connection to everyone who helped make these weekends possible. Without the hard work of those who plan and organize the events, as well as the dedication of those who are willing to drive and chaperone from as far away as Maryland, Glenview and Kempton, these weekends would not be feasible.

It is heartening to know that these youth weekends are made affordable through the generous support of the Board of General Church in Canada. Thank you for your continued support of this invaluable resource for the young people in our wider church community.

## NEW CHURCH BIBLE STUDY

*Steven David*

The New Christian Chatbot is relatively new and already helpful. The link is on the home page – [www.newchristianbiblestudy.org](http://www.newchristianbiblestudy.org) – under the Tools menu.

Newly published is *Arcana Coelestia* (for *Genesis 1-6*) in Spanish, which fills one of the biggest gaps in our lineup. Many thanks to the Heavenly Doctrines Publishing Foundation in Kempton, Pennsylvania.

Also newly added are the Bible and a handful of Writings translations in Bulgarian.

We have created a Sermon Storehouse, thanks to impetus from The Lord's New Church. It is pretty rich already and it's just the beginning.

## GATHERING LEAVES

Please join us August 24-27, 2023, at The Lord's New Church in Bryn Athyn for *Gathering Leaves*, the eighth international retreat for Swedenborgian and New Church women.

The retreat was started in 2004 to bring women of all branches of the Swedenborgian tradition together to learn from one another, make new friends and heal any misunderstandings or divisions. It is founded on *Revelation 22.2*: "*The leaves of the tree were for the healings of the nations.*"

There will be workshops, worship and the overall joy of getting together. Limited financial assistance is available for travel and registration. Please contact **Jane Siebert**, Steering Committee chair: [janesiebert@gmail.com](mailto:janesiebert@gmail.com).

Join us in *Delighting in Our Spiritual Variety*. Registration is open. Visit our website – [www.gatheringleaves.net](http://www.gatheringleaves.net) – and visit our Facebook page for information.

# Life Lines

*Bruce M. Henderson and the Rev. Jeremy F. Simons*

## THE REV. ROBERT S. JUNGE: CONSUMMATE PASTOR

*(Editor's note: At the memorial service for the Rev. Robert S. Jungé in Kempton, Pennsylvania, on June 3, 2023, the Rev. Lawson Smith distributed this biography (here slightly edited) with this note: "Bob requested that the service at the time of his death not be a eulogy, but a service of gratitude to the Lord for eternal life. Instead of a eulogy, here are some of the details of his life in this world.")*

Bob was born on June 15, 1930, to Felix and Amy Doering Jungé. He was the youngest of their four children: Ralph, Helena (Schweikart), Hubert and Bob. He grew up in Glenview, Illinois. Bob went to the Academy as a sophomore, where he joined the football and wrestling teams, became Student Council president, and most importantly, he met Vera, one class behind him. They were secretly engaged while she was still a senior, and were engaged for three years, until they were old enough to get married, on June 12, 1953. Their first child, Kent, was born in April 1954.

In 1951, as a sophomore in college, Bob became a founding member of the Epsilon Society for spreading the knowledge of the Writings, under the direction of the Rev. Karl Alden. Sharing the New Church was a strong interest throughout his life.

While still a candidate he gave a talk on "the protection and preservation of innocence, stressing that our first duty to our children is to hold their thought in the idea of the Lord as the center and foundation of their lives" (*New Church Life* 1955), a topic dear to his heart throughout his life.

Bob was first ordained in 1955, and into the second degree of the ministry in 1957. His first assignment was to Denver, Colorado, with responsibility for visiting families and groups throughout the Midwest: Colorado, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Arkansas, Texas and Louisiana. "He reports that . . . the biggest task has been to maintain religious instruction for 52 children already of an age to receive such teaching. His travels carried him

some 10,000 miles and included about 50 services, 23 adult classes, and many individual services and classes for adults and children.” (*New Church Life* 1960).

In 1957 Bob and Vera’s first daughter, Shanon, was born, not long after the bishop’s visit to Denver to ordain him, followed by Brandon in 1959, Erin in 1961, and Bryn in 1963.

Later in 1963, Bishop Willard Pendleton called Bob to be the Secretary of the General Church, a position like a Bishop’s Representative today. He served for seven years, until 1970. He kept a flow of information going out to ministers in faraway places to help them feel a part of the church. He and Vera established a fund to pay for ministers to travel to the clergy meetings, and another fund to help pastors’ families when they had a child. He visited congregations all over the world, including South Africa, Rio, Sydney, and Auckland, New Zealand.

During his time as Secretary, Bob and Vera built a beautiful colonial home, where they loved to put on a supper for the whole clergy during the clergy meetings. They also bought a farm in Kempton as a summer home. In 1968, they began to invite boys and then also girls to the farm to work over the summer. Besides farm work, Bob’s crews helped with construction, maintenance and building colonial style furniture. Bob was remarkably skillful in that way, too. In 1966 Tavis was born, and Leland in 1970.

Bob then became the Acting Principal of the Bryn Athyn Church Elementary School, a position he held for two years. Then in 1972, he became an instructor at the Academy, first in the Secondary Schools and later in the College, teaching courses in religion and education, especially *The Growth of the Mind*. He was first nominated for bishop in 1972. In the summer, he presented his study, *Human Prudence and the Love of Offspring*, at the Laurel Family Camp.

In 1978, Bob became Dean of the Theological School, serving for 12 years. In 1979, Vera was found to have an inoperable brain tumor. She passed into the spiritual world in December.

Bob made up his mind that the best way to prepare for rejoining her someday was to be as useful as he could be. While raising his children, he presided over a District Assembly in Ohio, and made trips to Ghana, Korea, Okinawa and Japan. He dedicated a building in Seoul in 1989. He baptized 27 people in Japan. He gave support and oversight to a candidate for the ministry in Ghana. He was the visiting pastor to an English-speaking Korean group in New York.

Meanwhile, he was also engaged in developing satellite congregations around Bryn Athyn, especially the Hatboro-Horsham Circle, which became the Ivyland Circle in 1992, then a society in 1996. Bob led a crew to remodel

the building that became the church there, dedicated in 1993.

In 1996, Kempton needed an interim pastor. He brought stability and healing to a congregation that had been hurting.

In 2000, at age 70, Bob became the pastor of the Baltimore Society, driving down from his home in Kempton nearly every week. He also helped the group in Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania, to get established and he provided services and pastoral care to them as well. He continued in these uses till at least 2007.

In his third or fourth retirement, he continued to study the Word and write about many different topics. He gathered 200 pages of passages relating to a truly Christian approach to business, with lots of discussion questions. He assembled another large study, this one on evangelization, applying the many teachings about the states of the former Christian Church. These are just two examples.

Not counting hundreds of sermons, classes and articles, here are some of the studies he produced:

- The Holy Supper by George de Charms with Notes by Robert Jungé 1961
- Study of Mohammedan Religion 1961
- Toward a Philosophy of Missionary Work: Parallel with Entrance into Heaven 1965
- Nationality and Race (Leading to the Question of Inter-Racial Marriage) 1971
- A Heritage from the Lord: Selected Readings on Infancy 1984
- What Shall I Do to Inherit Eternal Life? (book – 2008)

Bob's most recent project was inspiring and leading a team to create Old School Village, apartments for retirees in Kempton. He had 24 grandchildren and 39 great grandchildren.

He seems a good example of someone who invested his talent very well, to whom his Lord might declare to him: *“Well done, good and faithful servant. Thou hast been faithful in a few things; I will appoint thee over many. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”* (Matthew 25:21)

## **ROBERT JUNGE: A TEACHER TO THE END**

As noted above, the Rev. Robert Jungé did not want a eulogy at his passing – a song of praise for his lifetime of serving the Lord and the Church. His son-in-law, the Rev. Lawson Smith, honored that wish in his memorial address. (See page 266.) But everyone attending got the handout above, filling in the highlights of his life.

Bob Jungé deserves even more than a eulogy – a grateful acknowledgment of all that this visionary, devoted and energetic man accomplished, right up to the end. Lawson covers the basics, but there is more to be said about the man. He was revered for his wisdom, his kindness, his caring. For those who did not know him, his Amish-like beard may have lent to a stern countenance; but he always had a glint in his eye, a playful sense of humor, and loved to be with children. And they loved being with him.

When he passed into the spiritual world at age 93, his eyes and ears may have been failing, but not his mind. One of the last things he did before leaving this world was to write an article on a subject close to his heart – *Why Some Live Long and Some Not So Long* – which will be published in the September/October issue of *New Church Life*.

Another article he wrote for the July/August 2019 issue of the *Life* – *Cramming for Our Finals: Thoughts for Some of My Old Friends* – revealed both his pastoral devotion to helping people with their lives and his absolute trust in the Lord. It speaks to the essence of the man.

Bob lost his beloved wife, Vera, at age 48, after just 26 years of marriage. He lived on for 43 years – and every day longed to be reunited with her. But he never lost trust in the Lord – that there was a reason why his wife died young and why he had to wait until he was an old man to be with her again.

He saw old age as “the graduate school of life” and his article was a way of helping others cope in preparing for their “finals.” Some of the courses, he knew from his own experience, “are harder than others, but they all look forward to graduation when we can take up our eternal use in heaven.”

What he was sharing were life lessons to his fellow students – “some of my efforts to try to think positively and from use about what confronts us.”

He offered the cheering conviction – for others sharing his solitude – that he and his wife “still perform a use together. We may not be in the same classroom but we’re in the same course and often do our homework together. We pray together as always. We read the Word differently but still together.”

“Having completed some lessons first she may be subtly tutoring me, but we can still be in the Lord’s plan together. So, I tell myself, ‘Just do the assignments, Bob, and eventually you’ll graduate too.’”

He preached patience as well as trust. “The goal of our education is not just to change our way of thinking, but to open our hearts so the Lord can change the very loves that make our lives. And like all education, it is one step at a time, one state at a time. We can’t afford to stagnate spiritually, just because we are old. The Lord knows and is in charge.”

And finally: “In post-grad school, we may need to take some courses over. We may find a sense of wonder over a host of things we never thought of before. But one thing we can know for sure: ‘The life of every man is foreseen

by the Lord, as to how long he will live, and in what manner; wherefore he is directed from earliest infancy with a regard to a life to eternity.’

“The Divine Teacher is preparing every single one of us for an eternal use if we can find it in our minds and hearts to follow His leading.”

That’s the ultimate tip for passing these finals.

(BMH)

## INTENSE DESIRE

We are told in the Writings that people in the spiritual world have much more intense feelings than we do in this world. Apparently, the desires that we feel are pale shadows of what we can expect to have in the next life. At the same time, all the feelings that we have come to us from the spirits that, unknown to us or to them, are associated with each of us. These spirits communicate their feelings to us, even though we feel them less acutely.

For example, Swedenborg reports that when he wanted something, he discovered that the spirits with him

*“were much more desirous than I myself, even to the point that they could hardly control themselves, without almost perishing, if they were not indulged and given those things.” (Spiritual Experiences 2169)*

*“One spirit longed so much for me to put on a certain suit that unless I did so, according to him, he could hardly live. And when I was dressed in it, he got such enjoyment from it that nothing could have been more enjoyable. He begged to be left in that joyful state.” (Spiritual Experiences 1564)*

*“Among the spirits there are many who love white clothing, and indeed, with such intense desire that they aroused in me a kind of longing to buy white clothing.” (Spiritual Experiences 1333)*

Because of the nature of Swedenborg’s open communication with these spirits, both he and they knew what was happening. Normally, spirits have no idea about this kind of thing and do not realize that their desires are communicated with us. Similarly, we have no idea that this kind of connection is happening, and that the events of our lives, our thoughts, and our feelings have this kind of reciprocal effect on the spirits that surround us.

This is illustrated by another passage:

| *I was in a shop to buy cheese, and while I was buying spirits poured*



*into me a desire to buy this one or that one, to choose one above another, and to change [my mind], which I did not notice. As usual I was in their company, without reflecting on the spirits.*

*When it was finished, spirits were allowed to reflect on their state while they were making me buy and change [my mind], and they said that it was exactly as if they themselves were doing it, not knowing otherwise. It was also granted me to see this by their inflow into the outward organs of my mind.*

*So, spirits have a life within people exactly as if they themselves were the person and it were their action and desire. (Spiritual Experiences 2954)*

The way that this reciprocal influence happens is hard to understand. One thing to realize is that the spiritual thought which people have in the other world is completely different than the natural thought that we experience. It is not as if our spirits are watching us or have any comprehension of what we are doing. It is just that our feelings coincide, or that we attract to ourselves spirits whose feelings coincide with ours.

The intensity of the desires that spirits have is a remarkable thing. We read:

*For it is the nature of spirits to desire intensely, and then to persuade regarding some matter as if it were a most definite cause, and should by all means be done. (Spiritual Experiences 2176)*

This may explain, for example, why we are so sure that we are right if we have a strong opinion about something. Our associate spirits communicate these feelings to us without realizing it simply because it is what they feel as well.

Why is it that “*it is the nature of spirits to desire intensely*”? One answer is that everything in the spiritual world is more clear and powerful than in this world – both for good and for ill. They are closer, as it were, to the Source, for all love emanates from the Lord and is received differently by those in the spiritual world than those in the natural world. Similarly, different people receive things differently, according to their nature.

This intensity of feeling reminds me of a magnet on our refrigerator which reads: “*I wish I loved anything as much as my dog loves whatever I’m eating.*”

The same kind of thing is true of most animals. Whether displaying affection, desire, or aggression, they do these things with a certain intensity. Maybe dogs and other animals display these kinds of concentrated feelings because, being in the order of their existence, they have a closer and more

direct connection to the spiritual world.

Like dogs and spirits, children also often display strong feelings about things – things like joy at the prospect of vacations, Christmas, seeing their friends, and too many other things to count. They just as readily cry because of hurt and disappointments. They, too, may have a purer connection with their spiritual environment.

These thoughts remind me that we all experience intense feelings when our internal barriers to their sources are removed. This happens in negative ways when we give in to self-centered desires. It happens in positive ways when events touch us with unselfish love – whether as a result of our work, our relationships, our community and nation, or our church. People experience intense emotions at personal events like weddings, memorial services and graduations; at religious events like pageants at Christmas and June 19th; at performances like concerts, plays and movies.

Why do we sometimes cry? Sometimes our inner barriers are pulled aside, and the emotions coming through our spiritual associations flood our minds and hearts.

It makes you wonder what life in the spiritual world must be like.

(JFS)

## INSIGHTS INTO GOVERNMENT

The editorial on page 257 – *Change and the Church* – concludes with a quote from a 70-page book by the Rt. Rev. George de Charms published in 1960: *The Principles of Government*. Because circumstances are ever changing, he said then, “the government of our church can do no more than provide the necessary conditions and the opportunity to approach more nearly [an ideal] from generation to generation. Every generation must enter the ranks and assume the burden of conflict for itself.”

This profound book came at a time as tumultuous – for the church and the nation – as we find ourselves in today. His wisdom remains relevant and worth heeding.

He begins in his Introduction with the observation: “Because of the present worldwide struggle between two completely opposite political ideologies there is widespread interest in the subject of government. In spite of the fact that two world wars have been fought presumably ‘to make the world safe for democracy,’ there is great uncertainty and confusion of thought as to what ‘democracy’ really is.”

There was as much confusion then as there appears to be today. “What is lacking,” he wrote, “is a common understanding of basic principles. There is no agreement as to the origin of government. There is wide difference of

opinion as to whence the authority to govern is rightly derived. What is the real purpose of government, and what are its limitations?”

These are still insistent questions in our own contentious times, so we would all do well to apply Bishop de Charms’ wise perspective, which is rooted in Divine government. In brief but penetrating chapters he focuses on:

- The Nature of Divine Government
- Divine Government in Heaven and Hell
- Divine Government on Earth
- The Theory of Democracy
- Ecclesiastical Government

Between the opening quote in this book and the concluding charge there is great wisdom to guide our own thinking about church and civil government. As we look forward with almost desperate hope for better answers, we need to look back as well to where we are grounded – in the *Divine Principles of Government*.

(BMH)

### SEEK PEACE AND PURSUE IT

The first obligation of government – on earth and in heaven – is peace.

However, when Jesus was charging His disciples, He said:

*Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I come not to send peace, but a sword. (Matthew 10:34)*

It takes the sword of truth to drive out evil. It can take a sword to win peace. Two American presidents who took up the sword for victory over oppression – and then devoted their lives to preserving that peace – were George Washington and Dwight Eisenhower.

There were 32 presidents and 155 years between them, but they were kindred spirits: celebrated war heroes who led their armies to victory; who embraced political power only reluctantly to preserve peace; who warned the country and their successors against threatening powers – from “foreign entanglements” to “the military-industrial complex”; and who were unabashed in fidelity and humility in following the Lord.

An inciteful book by Brett Baier – *Three Days in January: Dwight Eisenhower’s Final Mission* – sets the stage for his farewell address to the nation in the transition to President John Kennedy.

Eisenhower fretted that his presidency was a failure because he had been unable to secure “a permanent peace with justice.” After World War II he

helped to champion the rebuilding of Germany and Japan as peaceful nations, he negotiated an end to the Korean War, and he led the delicate diplomacy to avoid a nuclear holocaust in the Cold War. But he was worried – with more good reason than he realized – that the quest for world peace would become ever more elusive, but no more consequential.

It was George Washington's Farewell Address in 1797 that set the standard:

Observe good faith and justice toward all nations. Cultivate peace and harmony with all. Religion and morality enjoin this conduct. . . . It will be worthy of a free, enlightened, and at no distant period, a great nation, to give to mankind the magnanimous and too novel example of a people always guided by an exalted justice and benevolence. . . . Can it be that Providence has not connected the permanent felicity of a nation with its virtue?"

When Eisenhower completed his own farewell – after days of laboring to get it just right – he invited close friends to join him in church the next morning. They prayed together for the Lord's guidance in an uncertain and threatening future. The gist of his parting message was this:

We face a hostile ideology global in scope, atheistic in character, ruthless in purpose, and insidious in method. Unhappily the danger it poses promises to be of indefinite duration. To meet it successfully, there is called for, not so much the emotional and transitory sacrifices of crisis, but rather those which enable us to carry forward steadily, surely, and without complaint the burdens of a prolonged and complex struggle – with liberty the stake. Only thus shall we remain, despite every provocation, on our chartered course toward permanent peace and human betterment.

He concluded with a bow to another kindred spirit, Abraham Lincoln, who also knew the agony of fighting a brutal war to win a lasting peace, and bestowed the perfect prayer in his second Inaugural Address – just five weeks before his assassination:

With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.

| *Blessed are the peacemakers. (Matthew 5:9)* (BMH)

## THE ULTIMATE EXAMPLE

The Rev. Derek Elphick preached a sermon in Bryn Athyn last spring on “Making Judgments.” We make judgments all the time, he said – small and great. Our minds are “judgment-making machines.”

Some of this is proper and useful; some is not. We need to be aware of the difference. Many of the myriad decisions we make each day are inconsequential and we are hardly even aware of them as judgments. Some are important and necessary. Others are personal and inappropriate. They all come to define who we are.

We are told in *John 7:24*: “*Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.*”

Righteous judgment is how we define and uphold our basic sense of morality – from our personal life to the culture and politics around us, the way we want our world to operate. Judging according to appearance is shallow and often uncharitable. It tends toward snap judgments, based on appearance or impressions. It makes the judger feel better than, looking down on others.

We know the warning: “*Judge not, for with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged.*” (*Matthew 7:1*)

We do not want to be judged solely on our appearance, but for who we are. We should strive to be like the angels who look always for the good in others.

We are constantly challenged to live up to the fact that we are created “*in the image and likeness of God.*” He loves everyone and is constantly trying to raise all of us to heaven – no matter what we look like or how we speak. He does not glibly dismiss some people, as we may be wont to do.

So, when we are tempted to judge someone harshly – without really knowing anything about the person – let us remember: the Lord loves that person as much as anyone and is trying to raise him or her into heaven. It’s a humbling lesson in charity.

(BMH)

## THE LORD WORKS IN MARVELOUS WAYS

In his church newsletter from Australia, the Rev. Todd Beiswenger included a wonderful story from a memorial service for long-time member Lenore Sandow, age 97. It came in an email from former pastor, the Rev. Michael Gladish, and his wife, Ginny, which was read at the service by Gaye Heldon. It was reprinted among all the fond eulogies because “it gives a wonderful illustration of the reality of life after death”:

“We rejoice with all of you that our dear Lenore has now entered, whole and healthy, into the delights of spiritual life. Of course, she will be missed

here, and for good reasons! But her spirit lives on, as she herself very well knew from experience.

“Some of you may not be aware that John and Lenore’s young adult daughter, Victoria, was killed in a car crash when they lived in Hurstville.

“Grieving her loss, one day Lenore had a vision of Vicki comforting her and telling her she was all right, and very much alive in the other world. Lenore could hardly believe it, but as proof, Vicki told her where to look for something that no one else could possibly have known, and when Lenore found it she was convinced. Still, she wondered about this life after death.

“Meanwhile, one of the Sandows’ neighbors was a New Church woman named Mora Fletcher, and when Lenore came to her and asked where her daughter had gone, Mrs. Fletcher told her about the teachings of the New Church. And that was their introduction to what became an enduring commitment to the church and its very specific revelations about eternal life.”

(BMH)

# Announcements

## ORDINATION, Second Degree

*And I will give you pastors according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding. (Jeremiah 3:15)*

### **Schorran, Justin Eric**

At Kitchener, Ontario, Canada,  
May 7, 2023, Rt. Rev. Bradley D.  
Heinrichs officiating.

## BAPTISMS

*Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them' for of such is the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it. (Mark 10:13-15)*

### **Baehr, Elizabeth Rose**

At Alpharetta, Georgia, March 26,  
20023, Rev. Nathan Cole officiating.

### **Baehr, Finn Carl**

At Alpharetta, Georgia, March 26,  
2023, (born April 14, 2020), son of  
Sean and Elizabeth Rose Baehr, Rev.  
Nathan Cole officiating.

### **Baehr, Reagan Holly**

At Alpharetta, Georgia, March  
26, 203, (born January 10, 2022),  
daughter of Sean and Elizabeth Rose  
Baehr, Rev. Nathan Cole officiating.

### **Baehr, Sean Carl**

At Alpharetta, Georgia, March 26,  
2023, Rev. Nathan Cole officiating.

### **Bloae, N'Dri Amandine**

At Duekoue, Côte d'Ivoire, April 23,  
2023, Rev. Bab Moise officiating.

### **Bonebo, Florence**

At Duekoue, Côte d'Ivoire, June 10,  
2022, Rev. Bab Moise officiating.

### **Dago, Omer**

At Duekoue, Côte d'Ivoire, April 23,  
2023, Rev. Bab Moise officiating.

### **Douh, Ange Deborah**

At Duekoue, Côte d'Ivoire, April 23,  
2023, Rev. Bab Moise officiating.

### **Duroud, Serge**

At Duekoue, Côte d'Ivoire, April 23,  
2023, Rev. Bab Moise officiating.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### **Gaha, Romaric**

At Duekoue, Côte d'Ivoire, April 23, 2023, Rev. Bab Moise officiating.

### **Gnankoin, Emmanuela**

At Duekoue, Côte d'Ivoire, April 23, 2023, Rev. Bab Moise officiating.

### **Gnomblei, Priscillia**

At Duekoue, Côte d'Ivoire, April 23, 2023, Rev. Bab Moise officiating.

### **Goh, Joel**

At Duekoue, Côte d'Ivoire, April 23, 2023, Rev. Bab Moise officiating.

### **Goh, Lenouin Olivier**

At Duekoue, Côte d'Ivoire, June 10, 2022, Rev. Bab Moise officiating.

### **Goule, Botibo Alfred**

At Duekoue, Côte d'Ivoire, April 23, 2023, Rev. Bab Moise officiating.

### **Goule, Sede Francis**

At Duekoue, Côte d'Ivoire, April 23, 2023, Rev. Bab Moise officiating.

### **Gnonkdin, Emmanuela**

At Duekoue, Côte d'Ivoire, April 23, 2023, Rev. Bab Moise officiating.

### **Guei, Joel**

At Duekoue, Côte d'Ivoire, April 23, 2023, Rev. Bab Moise officiating.

### **Gunther, Holden Brooks**

At Rochester, Michigan, April 23, 2023 (born December 17, 2022), son of Steven and Rickie Aaliya Mapp Gunther, Rev. Alan M. Cowley officiating.

### **Kla, Rosine Epouse Durouo**

At Duekoue, Côte d'Ivoire, April 23, 2023, Rev. Bab Moise officiating.

### **Lorefice, Emerson Marie**

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, March 18, 2023 (born August 28, 2022), daughter of Matthew and Jillian Gibson Lorefice, Rev. Charles E. Blair officiating.

### **Santoro Antanaitis, Julie Samy**

At London, United Kingdom, May 28, 2023 (born April 27, 2021), daughter of Andrius Antanaitis and Bianca Samy Santoro Machado, Rev. Grant H. Odhner officiating.

### **Schrock, Elowyn Angela**

At Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania, June 10, 2023 (born December 13, 2022), daughter of Benjamin and Shilah Rose Schrock, Rev. Scott I. Frazier officiating.

### **Smetanick, Cooper C.**

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, May 7, 2023 (born August 22, 2022), son of Jonathan and Stephanie Larry Smetanick, Rev. Charles E. Blair officiating.



**Tchea, Lea Epouse Zoh**

At Duekoue, Côte d'Ivoire, June 10, 2022, Rev. Bab Moise officiating.

**Tiekoura, Madeleine**

At Duekoue, Côte d'Ivoire, June 10, 2022, Rev. Bab Moise officiating.

**Machado, Isabella Melo**

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, May 28, 2023 (born November 26, 2014), daughter of Frank and Helca Melo Machado, Rev. Jeffrey O. Smith officiating.

**Nutche, Jackson Daniel**

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, March 18, 2023 (born September 3, 2022), son of Jason and Meghan Gibson Nutche, Rev. Charles E. Blair officiating.

**Wiltshire, Mark John**

At London, United Kingdom, June 11, 2023, Rev. Grant H. Odhner officiating.

**Zionka, Christ Landry Junior**

At Duekoue, Côte d'Ivoire, April 23, 2023, Rev. Bab Moise officiating.

**Zoh, Toundy James Ephraim**

At Duekoue, Côte d'Ivoire, June 10, 2022, Rev. Bab Moise officiating.

**BETROTHALS**

*Thus says the Lord: "I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your betrothed, when you went after Me in the wilderness. In a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness to the Lord, the first fruits of His increase."  
(Jeremiah 2:2,3)*

**Boyesen-Smith, Eyvind Carl  
Boyesen and Megan Renee Smith**

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, May 6, 2023, Rev. Derek P. Elphick officiating.

**McCurdy-Elphick, Shane McCurdy  
and Rachel Elphick**

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, April 8, 2023, Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr. officiating.

**Coffin-Lopez Arias, Brendan  
Philip Coffin and Diana Carolina  
Lopez Arias**

At Lafayette, Colorado, July 26, 2022, Rev. David C. Roth officiating.

MARRIAGES

*Love truly conjugal is from the Lord alone, and exists with those who are in the conjunction of good and truth from the Lord. When two minds are conjoined as to be one mind, there is love between them. (Apocalypse Explained 983)*

**Antanaitis-Santoro Pinto  
Machado, Andrius Antanaitis  
and Bianca Samy Santoro Pinto  
Machado**

At London, United Kingdom, May  
28, 2023, Rev. Grant H. Odhner  
officiating.

**Bass-Pitcairn, Aaron Bass and  
Natalie Pitcairn**

At Bensalem, Pennsylvania, May  
28, 2023, Rev. Barry C. Halterman  
officiating.

**Coffin-Lopez Arias, Brendan  
Philip Coffin and Diana Carolina  
Lopez Arias**

At Rollinsville, Colorado, August 6,  
2022, Rev. David C. Roth officiating.  
Delayed report.

**Gilchrist-Poynter, David Wayne  
Gilchrist and Carol Evans Poynter**

At Lafayette, Colorado, July 1, 2022,  
Rev. David C. Roth officiating.  
Delayed report.

**King-Swartley, Levi Snowden King  
and Kayla Ann Swartley**

At Kempton, Pennsylvania, May 6,  
2023, Rev. Brett D. Buick officiating.

**Kistner-Abele, Baird Jungé Kistner  
and Carey Alisha Abele**

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, June  
23, 2023, Rev. Christopher A. Barber  
officiating.

**Nowels-Steen, John Rink Nowels  
Jr. and Amanda Orr Steen**

At Rochester, Michigan, April  
29, 2023, Rev. Alan M. Cowley  
officiating.

**Olson-Metroka, Curtis Warren  
Olson and Mara Christine  
Metroka**

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, May  
6, 2023, Rev. Jeremy F. Simons  
officiating.

**Scull-McCarthy, Brad Joseph Scull  
and Erin Rose McCarthy**

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, May  
20, 2023, Rev. Solomon J. Keal  
officiating.

**Stefanescu-Bleeke, Andrei Edward  
Stefanescu and Sarah Elaine  
Bleeke**

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, April  
22, 2023, Rev. Charles E. Blair  
officiating.

**Walbert-Smith, Alexander Peter**

**Walbert and Janina Smith**

At Lenhartsville, Pennsylvania, June 24, 2023, Rev. Malcolm G. Smith officiating.

**IN MEMORIAM**

*Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.*

*(John 14:1-3)*

**Bostock, Willard Glenn**

June 26, 2023, of Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania. 61.

**Gladish, Stephen Geoffrey**

May 20, 2023, of Tucson, Arizona. 83.

**Coffin, Philip Dahms**

December 9, 2021, of Montrose, Colorado. 86. Delayed report.

**Holmes, Desmond John Francis**

May 3, 2023, of Toronto, Ontario, Canada. 89.

**Cook, Stephen Eustice**

April 15, 2023, of Bryn Athyn Pennsylvania. 76.

**Hummer, Patricia Davis**

March 28, 2023, of Flourtown, Pennsylvania. 92.

**Ebert, Rachel**

June 15, 2023, of Boynton Beach, Florida. 86.

**Jungé, Rev. Robert Schill**

May 26, 2023, of Kempton, Pennsylvania. 92.

**Evans, Merrily Alden**

April 8, 2023, of Kempton, Pennsylvania. 76.

**Klippenstein, Sherry Lynne**

January 5, 2023, of Las Vegas, Nevada. 62.

**Gladish, Claudia Cranch**

June 22, 2023, of Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania. 75.

**Kuhl, Denis Major**

March 12, 2023, of Kitchener, Ontario, Canada. 88.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Kuhl, Theodore Edward**

May 7, 2023, of Stratford, Ontario,  
Canada. 86.

**O'Farrell, Jennifer Lynn**

May 14, 2023, of Willow Grove,  
Pennsylvania. 49.

**Smith, Jessie**

April 17, 2023, of Warminster,  
Pennsylvania. 80.

**Synnestvedt, Gretchen Anne**

**Timmins**

May 7, 2023, of Bryn Athyn,  
Pennsylvania. 88.

**Waters, Gabrielle "Gay" Mansfield**

June 2, 2023, of Westville, South  
Africa. 86.

**Weaver, Theresa Georgette**

**Taragna**

May 18, 2023, of San Diego,  
California. 92.



# New Church Life

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