

New Church LIFE

A monthly magazine devoted to the teachings
revealed through Emanuel Swedenborg

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Alternate Ways To Heaven
A Sermon by Scott Frazier

Address on Cultural Renewal
By Walter Orthwein

Pictorial Church News

January 2008

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Notes on This Issue

Our Sermon by Rev. Scott Frazier is a useful reflection for the New Year. Depending on our initial response and while the goal of heaven remains the same, there are alternative paths for each one of us. See how the year ahead can hold more promise for you.

The article on Renewing the Culture by Rev. Walter E. Orthwein was delivered as an Address at the Banquet at Glencairn, Oct. 6, 2007 ending the exciting two day Last Judgment Conference. He revised this version for publication, and full copies are available upon request. A separate publication of the entire proceedings is also expected. Mr. Orthwein examines the prophecies of the New Church. How can it establish or maintain its distinct form in a current world? Can it select movements with which to make one, while avoiding others?

All readers are invited to find the invitations to send or become students at the Academy of the New Church Schools. The Secondary or High School has its page of exciting offerings, the Master of Arts in Religious Studies (M.A.R.S.) appeals to graduate students of all ages, and the Bryn Athyn College is offering a top-drawer sine qua non Liberal Arts education to all High School graduates. These schools and programs are power-houses for New Church Education, pocket battle-ships offering thousands of student-hours in the heavenly doctrines, competing with some excellent heavy cruisers of secular or parochial leanings.

May the New Year of 2008 bring all our readers an increased measure of prosperity and spiritual calm!

Three Paths Into The Kingdom.

By the Rev. Scott I. Frazier

Our story today is about the three ways the Children of Israel could have entered the Land of Canaan. Our story today is also about the three ways we can enter the Lord's Kingdom and become angels. The different ways available to Israel are pictures of the different paths the Lord offers us in His mercy as we hope to be regenerated. Just as Israel is eager, even desperate, to enter the Land of Canaan, we are eager to enter His Heavenly Kingdom and dwell in happiness and peace. This is a story about becoming better people.

The Children of Israel are trying to leave the wilderness and enter a land they know has been promised to them. Unlike the wilderness, a harsh place with little water and little food, the Promised Land is "flowing with milk and honey". That famous phrase is a perfect description of what the children of Israel are hoping for an easy land, a land of plenty, a land seemingly free of need and toil. Imagine the anxiety and expectations of the massed multitudes as they wait for the twelve spies to return with their report of what the land was like. When the spies do come back, they bring back not only reports of the land, but a great sample of grapes brought from the land as proof of its bounty. This is a good land that has been promised them, truly a land flowing with milk and honey.

The internal sense revealed in the *Heavenly Doctrines* tells us that this is a picture of a blessed state. This is a picture of the promise of regeneration: a life of heavenly things that make us happy. Imagine a life where we feel happy when we help the people around us, a life where we look at the people around us and take pleasure in thinking of ways to help them. This is the

milk and honey of the land we hope to enter. The grapes symbolize charity, the ability to help the people around us. When the spies bring the grapes back, we see that the Promised Land includes doing good things, being charitable. The spies bring back evidence that the Promised Land is a wonderful place. If we can get to the Promised Land, we will be the kind of people who take delight purely in helping the people around us and loving the Lord. Who wouldn't want to live there?

But this is not all that the spies reveal. They admit that to enter the land and possess it, Israel will have to defeat giants and fortified cities. It will not be without some combat. Israel may want the land very badly, but the thought of facing giants and fortresses causes fear and doubt. Maybe Israel will not be able to defeat the inhabitants of the land. We also learn that combat is required of us; to become heavenly people, we must defeat our own giants and fortified cities. We must also face and defeat our own pride and false beliefs – the giants and fortresses—before we can truly be regenerate and heavenly. This is no easy task – just as the spies felt like grasshoppers before the giants, so we feel small and helpless against our own evils when we first see them in ourselves.

Faced with this situation, the Children of Israel have a choice. Joshua and Caleb urge the people to go up. They insist that the Lord will give Israel victory. The other spies, however, insist that the task is too great, and imply that the Lord cannot be trusted to follow through on His promise. They can either go into the land now and trust the Lord or not go in and abandon the Lord. We have the same choice. When we are first offered the path to His Kingdom, we can either trust Him and go immediately, or reject His offer and not go. These are the first two possible paths. The third path we will examine later.

Going immediately is the easy path into His heavenly kingdom. Going immediately was what the Children of Israel were supposed to do. They were supposed to listen to the report

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of Joshua and Caleb, trust in the Lord, and enter the Land of Canaan right then. Remember that this is shortly after leaving the Egyptians drowning in the sea. Moses is still with them, and they have not been in the wilderness long. Thinking of the milk and honey, and of the grapes that the spies brought back, the Children of Israel could have entered the land, fought against all the inhabitants in their way, and inherited the land soon. The Lord offered them the easy path first: believe in Me and conquer. This is the path of Joshua and Caleb, the easy path.

In our lives, we are also offered the easy path. The first time we learn of who we are supposed to be, the first time we find out another virtue we are supposed to cultivate as adults, we are offered the easy path. Take, for example, forgiveness. The Word is very clear that we should forgive people and not harbor enmity in our hearts. We should always look to the good in other people and remember that in some way every person is in the image of the Lord. To become like this, we must do battle against our own evils and falsities and see that those evil and falsities are not us. This is the promise the Lord makes. If we believe Him from the beginning, each of us can be that kind of person relatively easily and perhaps even quickly.

Is this an impossible claim? Is this too hard? Is the Lord being unreasonable? *The Heavenly Doctrines* tell us that being this kind of person is possible. Divine Providence tells us: If we believe, as is the truth, that all good and truth come from the Lord, and all evil and falsity from Hell, we will not appropriate good to ourselves and take credit, and we will not appropriate evil to ourselves and be guilty. This appears to be impossible, but this is what being human - and angelic - is all about.

Perhaps this is easier said than done, but this is the promise – the Lord says, we do. If we remember that anger and hostility are not us, that we shouldn't nurse our grudges and dwell upon others' evils, that, in a word, we should be forgiving, then we

will be forgiving. If we start this way, if we avoid forming habits of evil and anger, our spiritual path is much easier. We do not avoid combats against evils, but we enter the promised land soon and with fewer combats. This is true with every kind of spiritual struggle we have, not just with forgiveness. The Lord says, we do: this is the easy path.

But this is not what the children of Israel did. They chose not to believe Joshua and Caleb but instead doubted the Lord. They believed the other spies when they reported that the land was too difficult to possess. They not only hesitated, but they questioned Moses, they threatened, and they seriously considered turning around and returning to Egypt. They didn't merely have a moment of weakness; they decided to abandon the Lord. When they learned what was expected of them, they revolted and refused to continue. They wanted the milk and the honey, they wanted more grapes, but they were unwilling to believe that the Lord could give these things to them.

And what did the Lord do? At first it looks as if the Lord punishes them. He announces, through Moses, that Israel must wander in the wilderness for forty years. He announces that all the adults who doubted him in that moment (except, of course, Joshua and Caleb) will have to die. The Lord announces that they will not get the land. This seems to be a severe punishment, but it is merely the result of their decision to abandon the Lord.

And yet it isn't even really a punishment. As is always the case in the Old Testament, an expression of anger or wrath on the part of the Lord is actually an expression of Divine Mercy. The Lord is not punishing the Children of Israel – He is giving them a second chance. Yes, they will face forty years of wandering, and yes, all the adults must die off first, but their children will inherit the land. Even after they have abandoned the Lord and murmured against His chosen leader, He is providing them with a back-up plan. This is not the easy path He offered first, but the

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hard path. It is still a path into the promised land, but a path involving much more combat and toil than the first path. What the children of Israel will discover about this second path is that it solves their problems: they will be toughened into a desert army, they will be new people (the children of who they used to be), and they will be strengthened to try again.

In our lives, we often hear what the Lord asks, and we doubt. Sometimes we have momentary doubts; sometimes we reject Him altogether. Perhaps it is only rarely that we take the easy path and believe Him the first time. The Lord knows us very well and always has a second option, a second path, but a path made harder by our own rejection. The Lord's solution for us in our states of doubt and rejection is for us to wander for forty years and become new people. In our lives, the harder path is the path of temptation, symbolized by the forty years, by which we finally put away our rejection, symbolized by the death of the entire generation. We can still enter the promised land of heavenly life, but we must face real temptation to defeat what we have already confirmed in our lives. Temptation in this case is unpleasant, necessary, and useful. It is a second chance, not a punishment.

For example, if we have confirmed in ourselves an inclination to harbor grudges, if we have the habit of thinking ill of our neighbor, if we have already made criticism and scorn part of our lives, the Lord still has mercy on us. Our path is much harder than if we hadn't confirmed these evils in our life, but all is not lost. Through temptation we struggle to stop harboring anger in our heart, and the Lord brings us forgiveness, but it is a harder path. This harder path does lead to the promised land, and temptation does lead to a heavenly life of love to the neighbor. Temptation toughens us up to try again, and no matter how many times we approach the promised land and fail, the Lord will always offer us another path to try again.

These are the two paths to the Lord's Heavenly Kingdom that work. The easier path is better than the harder path, but both work. The Children of Israel at first took neither path. Instead, they tried a third path, the wrong path. After rejecting the easy path that Joshua and Caleb wanted, the Children of Israel then heard what the Lord had announced about the forty years of wandering. We can imagine the feeling of dread and even betrayal they must have felt as they realized what their initial rejection meant. They were doomed to wander for forty years? They would all die? What a terrible fate! They did not see the mercy of the Lord in this harder path and rejected it as well. Instead, they decided that they would, in fact, go right then into the land, as Joshua and Caleb had first insisted.

That path was closed, however. The Lord would not go with them, and neither would Moses or the Ark of the Covenant. Even knowing this, the people wanted to go up anyway. They tried to enter and possess the land without the Lord. Despite the warnings, the Children of Israel now tried to do something on their own that they had previously been unwilling to try even with the help of the Lord. As we read today, they met with total failure.

We face the same potential mistake. When we find out what the Lord offers us – a path of temptation – we can also become indignant and feel betrayed. Why does it have to be so hard? Can't we just be good the way we are? Why must we struggle to become good people? Perhaps we are good just the way we are. We want the easier path back. We want to inherit the kingdom of happiness now, without temptation. This isn't a moment of doubt, and it isn't fear of the task at hand. This is the belief that we can be good and defeat our evils on our own. The Lord warns us that we need His help, but we don't believe Him. We can live without His Word, without His revealed truth, without His Ten Commandments, and we can be happy.

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What if we decide that we can be happy without being forgiving? What will happen if we do not struggle against anger, scorn, and enmity? What if we are just going to be happy and maybe help people without addressing our own anger. We'll keep our anger because it's "who we are", our personality, our style. We don't have to repent; we can just stay the way we are and find eternal joy.

This is when the Amalekites attack. The Amalekites attacked and defeated the Children of Israel before they even got to the Land of Canaan. Israel didn't win the battle and had to retreat. We face the same defeat at the hands of our own evils. *The Heavenly Doctrines* tell us that the Amalekites symbolize hidden evils that pollute our thinking. Amalekites don't offer arguments against the truth; they hide in our loves and destroy whatever good we try to do. The Amalekites are going to defeat us every time we think we don't need the Lord. Our own evils will defeat us until we admit that we have to change and that we need to change because the Lord says so.

Even in this case, though, the Lord shows the Children of Israel mercy. After they have rejected his first path, after they have rejected his second path and tried their own, He is still willing to help them. They still have the second, harder path available to them. In the same way, no matter how many times we try to be happy on our own, we can always go back to the Lord and accept his path of temptation. The Children of Israel eventually do possess the land flowing with milk and honey. We, too, always have the opportunity of living the will of the Lord and being happy in His Word and His Kingdom.

There are three paths to heavenly happiness. The easy path is to believe the Lord from the beginning and resist evils before we confirm them. The hard path is to defeat through temptation our confirmed evils, with the Lord's help. The wrong path is to believe we do not need His help and can be happy with our evils.

When we see the easy path, we should believe the Lord and take it. When we see the hard path, we should believe the Lord and take it. When we see the wrong path, we should reject it and return to the Lord and His Word. “As for Me and My House, we will follow Jehovah.” Amen.

Lessons: Numbers 13:1-3, 21-33; 14:2, 26-33,39-45; *Divine Providence* 320, 321

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Scott obtained an M. A. in history from Villanova University. Scott was already an Instructor in Latin and Hebrew in the Bryn Athyn College, and after his ordination added Religion to his schedule. He is also on the Translation Committee of the General Church, and serves as occasional visiting Pastor. Scott and his wife Nicole (Hill) and family live

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RENEWING THE CULTURE

BY THE REV. WALTER E. ORTHWEIN

"..no idea can be had of spiritual life except from the things that are in civil life; therefore, if the latter is set aside, the former falls to the ground, until at last it is no longer believed in." (Arcana Coelestia 4366.2)

Because this world is an outgrowth of the spiritual world and lives every moment from it, it follows that a new order in the spiritual world cannot but affect the state of things in this world. For example, the Last Judgment of 1757 cleared the way for the establishment of a New Heaven in the spiritual world and its outgrowth will be a New Church on earth. That is why the New Jerusalem was seen coming down from God out of heaven into this world. "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth.." (Revelation 21:1). We can therefore think that a new world, a whole new way of life, is being created, from the inside out. A new civilization is being created, or, as people are wont to say these days, a new culture.

We are told, at the end of the work on *The Last Judgment*, that the state of the world after the judgment would be similar to what it had been before, with civil affairs, wars, peace treaties, and so on. The church, though, while similar outwardly, would be different internally: "..henceforth the man of the church will be in a more free state of thinking on matters of faith, thus on the spiritual things which relate to heaven, because spiritual freedom has been restored to him. For all things in the heavens and in the hells are now reduced into order, and all thought concerning Divine things and against the Divine inflows from thence—from the heavens all thought which is in harmony with Divine things, and from the hells all which is against Divine things" (*Last Judgment* 74, emphasis added).

The fact that the freedom we now have is freedom to think about "spiritual things which relate to heaven" shows the

importance of the new knowledge about such things which the Lord has revealed in His second coming. Greater freedom of thought about spiritual things presumes greater knowledge of them. And since this knowledge is meant to be applied on the natural plane of life, I think the need for greater civil liberty is also implied. Greater spiritual freedom requires a corresponding expansion of such civil liberties as freedom of speech.

Generally speaking, freedom means the ability to do what you wish, but spiritual freedom only comes with desiring the right things -- namely, things in harmony with the truly human order of life produced by Divine love and wisdom in heaven. True freedom is the freedom to think, will and do, not just anything, but that which is good and true (*Divine Love and Wisdom* 240, 264, 425).

There is confusion in our society about what freedom means, a lack of understanding of the difference between freedom and license, or between genuine freedom and the illusory freedom of hell, which is really slavery. What good is civil liberty if the soul remains imprisoned by "the vanity of the world and the allurements of the flesh, the pride of self-intelligence and the lust of power, sordid avarice and covetous desire?" The Last Judgment gave us the freedom to follow the Lord, but also the freedom to turn away from Him. If the loves of self and the world cause us to turn away from Him, then the new freedom we've received has not served the purpose for which it was intended. A sense of responsibility to the One who restored our freedom is part of the situation.

"Separation of church and state" is necessary for the protection of both; but banishing religious ideas from public discourse of civil affairs is a destructive modern perversion of that principle. Adhering to the truth of the Word is not contrary to civil liberty; just the opposite -- this is the truth that makes us free (John 8:32). Were not appeals to that truth a major element in the abolition movement, and later in the civil rights movement?

Why should religious truths now be excluded from the debate on such topics as abortion, stem cell research, euthanasia, and what constitutes marriage? Of course we have to distinguish between Divine truth and the human inferences drawn from it and proposed applications of it, but we can do that. One of the uses of discussing these things in the public square is to separate the wheat from the chaff.

All logic rests upon some premise, which is simply assumed as self-evident, or axiomatic. The premise is not arrived at by logic; rather, it is the starting place and foundation upon which reason and logic rest. Facts and logic can confirm a theistic premise or paradigm just as well as a materialist one. So there is nothing inherently "logical" or "reasonable" about materialism, and nothing illogical or irrational about the theistic paradigm.

The specter of "theocracy" has been raised, but this is a red herring. Accepting a theistic paradigm—much less even considering one along with others — is hardly theocracy. In fact, since everyone's "God" is what they value most highly, then the basis of all passionately held opinions could be said to be "religious." The god in question may be nature or human reason, but if that is what is accepted and appealed to as the highest good and source of truth, then that is "god," and those who appeal to that god as the basis of their arguments could, ironically, be said to be trying to "impose their religion" on society. Forcing the removal of the Ten Commandments from a courthouse wall would in that case be really just as "theocratic" as placing them there in the first place, although the "religion" that dictated their removal is a secular one.

The Culture Wars:

Leading up to the Last Judgment there was "war in heaven," in which "Michael and his angels fought with the dragon, and the dragon fought, and his angels..." (Revelation 12:7). The war was a "spiritual war, which is of falsity against truth, and truth

against falsity." The "heaven" referred to is "the former heaven which passed away," spoken of in the 21st chapter. It was an imaginary heaven produced by evil spirits in the world of spirits. "Michael" stands for *"those who confirm from the Word that the Lord is the God of heaven and earth.."* It is from such people that the New Church is formed. The "dragon" represents those who turn from the Lord to themselves, and from heaven to the world, and thus become *"sensual from the corporeal"* (Apocalypse Revealed 548).

The description of the "dragon" seems quite pointed when we consider the strains of extreme individualism, intellectual conceit, materialism and hedonism in our "post-Christian" culture. In saying this, I do not mean that these are the only traits or even the dominant ones in the culture, or that there is an absence of beneficial influences which are favorable to the establishment of the New Church. The "Michaels" of the New Church are not alone in resisting the dragon, and we should gratefully acknowledge the help provided by many others whose thought is based on the Scriptures and whose work is especially impressive because they are doing it without the additional support of the Heavenly Doctrine.

The war in the spiritual world was won by the armies of the Lord, and a new spiritual order was established. On earth, however, the battle rages on. Along with thoughts inspired by new truth from heaven, we are also influenced by thoughts from hell which are against Divine things. This is as true of New Church people as anyone else.

This, I believe, is the spiritual cause behind the so-called "culture wars" in which our society is engaged at present. What are we to make of these "culture wars?" I find myself in sympathy with many of the stands taken by Christians, but, knowing what *The Writings* say about the state of the former church, as well as being aware of some of the incredibly wicked things in history which were carried out in the name of

Christianity, my sympathy with the Christian position in the culture wars is not absolute. I assume that some of the Christian leaders whose analysis of social trends I find illuminating would take a dim view of the New Church. But there are some particulars on the agenda of religious groups responding to the extreme secularism and moral disorders of contemporary society with which I think New Church people can make common cause.

The doctrine of conjugal love—and the whole relationship of the sexes and their respective uses—has often been a focus of controversy within the New Church, and occasionally between the New Church and the world around it. And this same area of life is very prominent in the "culture wars." This is not surprising when we consider who the central figure is in the story of the "war in heaven": a woman about to give birth. Later, in Revelation 21, the New Church is compared to "a bride adorned for her husband." It is not surprising that marriage and childbirth are two of the main fronts in the culture wars.

Freedom is a property of love, and since conjugal love is the highest of all loves it brings the greatest freedom (*Conjugal Love* 257). We can see, then, that the restoration of both freedom and of conjugal love are closely linked. Both have been renewed in the new heaven; both are in the process of being established on earth. It is a difficult, laborious process of birth. But the Lord has provided for new and expanding freedom in this world, and has given us the promise that "*conjugal love will be raised up anew by the Lord....such as it was with the ancients....with those who are made spiritual by Him through the Word*" (*Conjugal Love* 81e).

The New Church on earth has not been persecuted so violently as the Christian Church was in its beginning, but when it comes to the application of its doctrine to how we actually live—that's where the challenge comes. The challenge from our own contrary inclinations should be our primary concern, but the culture around us is also challenging.

There are two opposite errors we must avoid: one is self-righteous accusation of others—pointing out the speck in others' eyes while ignoring the plank in our own; the other is to be so paralyzed by awareness of our own sin and unworthiness that we fail to sound a warning when we see a wolf approaching the fold.

The Last Judgment culminated in the formation of a new heaven and the birth of a New Church on earth. The next step—what we need now—is a new culture, which will support and help nurture the order of life the church is seeking to establish. Here is the progression: The Word comes from the Lord. The church comes from the Word. The culture comes from the church. And (ideally) the church, in turn, is supported by the culture.

I would compare the culture that surrounds the church to the atmospheres derived from the spiritual sun which serve to receive, store up, accommodate, and transmit the life from that sun to the heavens (*Divine Love and Wisdom* 174). Similarly, all aspects of a culture -- the traditions, customs, mores, the kind of language used, art and entertainment -- can serve to communicate the life and faith of the church from which the culture is derived. The culture diffuses the faith just as the atmosphere diffuses the sun's energy.

Or, to change the analogy a little, the culture is like the natural sun in relation to the spiritual sun--that is, an "aid and support" to the spiritual sun. Ideally, this is what a culture should do: aid and support the church in bringing the life of heaven to people on earth. The culture lives from the church and receives its goods and truths, and conveys them to society. It makes those abstract, spiritual, transcendent things real and visible and present with people; it weaves them into the fabric of their daily lives. This is why the state of the culture around us is a matter of concern for the church.

One more comparison: the truths of the church are like the tea leaves that impart flavor and color to the whole cup. The "leaves" are rational truths from the tree of life in the midst of

the New Jerusalem; the "tea" is the culture that surrounds the church and gets its quality from the truths of the church.

I once read an interview by Bill Moyers with Isaac Asimov, the great science fiction writer. Asimov did not believe in God or an afterlife in which we would be judged, and he rejected the idea that human morality depended upon such belief. Human reason is enough of a basis for morality, he said, and claimed that he was a moral person. I don't doubt that he was, but I think that his morality was very much derived from religion, although indirectly. His mind was formed within a culture produced by the Judeo-Christian tradition. The ethos, the character, the mental atmosphere that surrounded him was steeped in that tradition. In his mind the "tea bag" may have been removed, but the water Asimov was imbibing and swimming in retained the quality it had received from it. The moral sensibility that persists among people in a secular society is a remnant of a departed spirituality, not the product of human reason. And as the "tea" becomes increasingly diluted by secular thought, the moral influence from the former age also weakens.

We're told in the Writings that the angels think of God as Human, and cannot think of Him in any other way. The reason is that "their thought proceeds in accordance with the form of heaven" (*Divine Love and Wisdom* 11). Our minds, also, are strongly influenced by the culture in which we live.

People whose minds are thoroughly grounded on the Word are immune, more or less, to false assumptions, attitudes and currents of opinion in society, but still, the culture should reinforce and nurture and enrich their spiritual outlook, not continually work against it. A supportive culture is especially important for those whose minds have not been formed by the Word, and who are thus ill-equipped to order their lives according to its truths. The culture should strengthen what is good and true in people, rather than pander to the worst inclinations of human nature and constantly try to lead people

astray.

I am trying to present a general idea, which I think is true, but I am aware that it could be used to justify a stifling atmosphere of intrusive moralizing by professional scolds. That would be an abuse of the principle. But real freedom and happiness can exist only with order; not an order that depends mainly upon external enforcement, but which arises spontaneously from within people who love the end for which the order is maintained. The kind of cultural matrix I have in mind is nothing like the oppressive culture of political correctness that prevails on so many college campuses. Rather, think of the "micro-cultures" (as we might call them) composed of people in certain professions: historians, scientists, doctors, lawyers and educators all belong to a culture that maintains the standards of the profession. The general culture of the whole society should perform a similar use, upholding and inculcating basic human decency, including reverence for the things of religion and marriage.

Our culture today does exert a positive influence in some areas: regarding the way we speak about people of different races; the abusive language that once was acceptable and now is not, language which society simply won't tolerate. On the other hand, taking the Lord's name in vain is now something even little children assimilate from the popular culture. The culture (and even civil law to some extent) could just as well inculcate reverence and chastity instead of blasphemy and obscenity. And this is what it ought to do. (see *Divine Providence* 129:2 and 136:2)

The Writings explain that the flowing of the spiritual into the natural depends upon favorable conditions in the natural. If spiritual truth finds an inhospitable environment in the natural, it recoils and withdraws (*Divine Love and Wisdom* 254). It is like something touching a nerve in your tooth. Or like hopping out of a warm bed onto a cold floor -- you want to hop right back in again.

This shows how important the culture is. It can either invite the presence of angels, or repel them. Just as animals need a suitable habitat in the natural environment, so angels, and people on earth who get along with angels, need a habitat in the spiritual environment. We want to establish a culture on earth in which angels can feel at home.

If this sounds too idealistic, substitute the word "children" for angels -- we want a culture in which children will be valued and safe and encounter good and true and beautiful things to enrich their minds and character.

Therefore a church can't be indifferent to the state of the society around it. Just as a culture needs a church to give it its vital essence, so a church needs a culture in which the spiritual life it seeks to convey to the world can be expressed and find a foundation. Luther said "the world is God's enemy," and there is a certain truth to this; a certain amount of tension between the church and the world is healthy, just as it is healthy for a person to be troubled by conscience at times. But this does not mean it is healthy for the world in which the church must exist, and which depends upon the church for its spiritual life, to be hostile to the church.

The Writings tell us that in the spiritual world whenever any new truth is introduced into a person's mind, some reason for doubting it also shortly arises. Doubt is a useful thing. It causes us to consider carefully what is actually true. A truth which is accepted too easily is likely to be understood shallowly, without nuance or subtlety, and with little sympathy for those who see things differently (see *Arcana Coelestia* 7298).

I think this applies to society as a whole, also. Each new truth introduced into society is met by an opposing falsity; each new falsity by an opposing truth. This produces a combat, which the Writings compare to the chemical process of fermentation. Eventually what is false and useless is rejected, and the issue becomes clear—just as the lees sink to the bottom of the bottle as the wine ferments and becomes clear (*Divine Providence* 25, 284).

I think this is a good way of viewing the "culture wars" going on around us in the wake of the Last Judgment and the publishing of *The Heavenly Doctrine*. New truth, introduced from the new heaven, meets with opposition and there is heated debate, but eventually greater clarity results.

Judgment is the opposite of profanation, which is the mixing together of what is good and evil, true and false, so completely that the good and true cannot be distinguished and extricated from the evil and false. Getting in the habit of self-examination and clearly labeling the evils we discover in ourselves as evil is the first step in getting free from them. Fulfilling the promise of the Last Judgment—spiritual freedom and the creation of a new world—requires a change in our hearts. "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Psalm 51.10).

But in addition, I think *The Heavenly Doctrine* also challenges us to do all we can to create conditions on earth, in our culture and civil order, which will make it possible for the new spiritual freedom people have to be brought down to earth and made tangible in the way we live. We need to create a culture which will encourage and support and nurture the "better angels" of our nature. The decline of the former church as a force in the world is partly a good thing since that church embraced much that was false, but it has left a vacuum at the heart of western civilization (once known as Christendom) which the New Church must fill.

In conclusion, consider the rich meaning of the word "culture." We see the word "cult" in it, which reminds us that a culture is produced and sustained by a church. We see the resemblance to the word "cultivate," which reminds us that a culture is an on-going work that needs to be tended, that it is the ground in which truths can take root and grow to produce good fruits. And then think of what the word "culture" means in biology and medicine: a medium in which an organism is grown. A civilization is the medium in which we humans grow, and the church is composed

of human beings.

A culture is a living thing, and like all living things, it receives its life from the only source of life, the One who says: "It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). The One who says: "Behold, I make all things new" (Revelation 21:5).

In celebration of Swedenborg's birthday, January 29, 1688, we print a picture of Swedenborg's home on Hornsgatan, Södermalm (Southwark), Stockholm. Swedenborg bought this house with a large property ca. 1747. It also contains another house for a caretaker and gardener and his family. Several other buildings were a library, stables, a mirror pleasure-house, a root cellar, a shed, an aviary, and a



labyrinth for the children. There was still room for an orchard and gardens. The property served Swedenborg for his entire enlightenment period of writing and publishing the *Writings*. It was

his home-base when sailing or sending copies overseas to publishers in London or Amsterdam. The building was torn down in 1888. His Summer House, which has been preserved and can still be visited at Skansen, Stockholm, was yet another building located at the other end of the property. This is a copy of a painting by Nils Anderson, 1853. Photo by Ed and Kirstin Gyllenhaal.

Editorials

The Case Herein Is This, In the Lord's Mercy below..

Swedenborg was born on January 29, 1688, 320 years ago. Let us look at some aspects of his role as revelator. The first book of *The Writings* he published using Lewis and Hart in London, was the *Arcana Coelestia*, starting in 1749. Did you know that the years of publication for the eight Latin volumes between 1749 and 1756, did not come out one per year? Volumes I through IV came out annually alright from 1749 through 1752, but then in 1753, both Vol. V and VI came out, in 1754 Vol. VII, but 1755 went by with no publication, and at last, in 1756 Vol. VIII came out. It was in these volumes that the phrase “*the case herein is this*” occurs over 800 times. Why so often, and why in this first work of *The Writings*?

In order for Swedenborg to be able to write, “*The case herein is this*,” first there had to be Divine enlightenment from the Lord who is the Divine Human, the glorified Christ. We know Swedenborg received this from the Lord. “*The Lord opened the sight of my spirit, thus admitting me to the spiritual world*” (*True Christian Religion* 779). “*Such immediate revelation is now made because that is what is meant by the Coming of the Lord*” (*Heaven and Hell* 1). This enlightenment from the Lord is necessary in order to see the internal sense of the Word (*De Verbo* 21 or 7:8). With such enlightenment, “*genuine truth which is to be the source of doctrine, is manifest in the sense of the letter of the Word*” (*Sacred Scripture* 57 title). The sense of the letter always refers to the text of Sacred Scripture, thus the Bible verses themselves. Swedenborg even gives an example of how “*I myself can certainly say that when I read the blood of the Lamb and think of the Lord's blood the angels present with me know no other than that Divine Truth emanating from the Lord*

is what I read and that that Truth is what I think of” (Arcana Coelestia 9410).

However, the doctrine is never seen from the internal sense. *“The teaching can never first be seen from the spiritual sense” (De Verbo 21).* In other words, the Lord does not whisper the internal sense just as Swedenborg reads the text where it is contained. No—Instead, the *“doctrine of genuine truth can also be drawn in full from the sense of the letter of the Word, because in this sense the Word is like a man clothed whose face and hands are bare” (Sacred Scripture 55).* Swedenborg had to draw out the full meaning. Every doctrine we take for granted in the New Church, was first extracted from the text of Sacred Scripture. Swedenborg was enlightened to do this, first by seeing the “hand and face” parts of the Sacred Scripture, i.e. the Schmidius Bible he was reading in Latin. And so, when reading, *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”*, Swedenborg’s enlightenment allowed him to understand that God starts life by making human beings with an internal man or soul and an external man or body (*Arcana Coelestia 16*). Swedenborg then used this “face truth” as a “lamp” to light up later “clothed” passages, where the spiritual sense was deeply concealed. For *“the Word cannot be understood without doctrine, and that doctrine is like a lamp that enables genuine truths to be seen” (Sacred Scripture 91).* In this manner, the correspondences between the spiritual and natural senses were gradually opened up, and the “signification” or “correspondence” of each word revealed. Both the “lamp” i.e. the “doctrine of genuine truth” and the spiritual sense that the lamp has uncovered, were revealed to Swedenborg. He had much help to move the process along very rapidly! *“The reason why the spiritual sense of the Word has been at this day disclosed by the Lord is that the doctrine of genuine truth [lamp] has now been revealed; and this doctrine, and no other, is in accord with the*

spiritual sense of the Word” (Sacred Scripture 25).

Therefore, as the internal or spiritual sense emerged bit by bit from the literal sense, it was then stated on its own as “doctrine.” *“Doctrine is what the internal sense teaches...The internal sense is doctrine itself...the internal sense is the same as the Doctrine they have in heaven” (Arcana Coelestia 10400, 9380, Heavenly Doctrine 7). The Writings* therefore not only describe their own method but also follow it. Since the process is by now a *fait accompli*, however, we can go right ahead and just read them! Their meaning is self-evident.

The internal or spiritual sense of the Word, and Doctrine (or Teaching) are thus on a par, and constitute the contents of the Word of Lord in His Second Coming. We call the *Writings* or the *Heavenly Doctrine* “the Word” because the *Writings* often identify themselves with doctrine. *“Because this was revealed to me out of heaven, it is called HEAVENLY DOCTRINE, and to present this is the purpose of this book” (Heavenly Doctrine 7). “Divine doctrine itself constitutes the Word in the highest sense... Divine doctrine also constitutes the Word in the internal sense” (Arcana Coelestia 3712).* Moreover, since the internal sense—thus also doctrine—is as a soul to the sense of the letter (*Sacred Scripture 4*), consequently the Word of *Heavenly Doctrine* thus the *Writings* as books, constitute the “soul” to the “body” of the Scriptures as books. These scriptures are Sacred, “the Word in the literal sense” (*Arcana Coelestia 3712*). Because the Lord Himself who has revealed the Word of *Heavenly Doctrine*, is “doctrine itself” (*Arcana Coelestia 5321, 3364*), it is consequently clear how Swedenborg could at the end of the above process state *“Ita Se Habet.”* The Lord taught Swedenborg the process, and you can read the product after these words: *“The Case here is this.” “The situation is as follows.”* How often have you read this phrase in the *Writings*? Do you recall where?

Practically all such phrases occur in the *Arcana Coelestia*, or in works published in 1758 but written during 1757. Thus, they occur mostly prior to the Last Judgment. There are 546 instances in the *Arcana* of “*ita se habet*” and 3 in *Heaven and Hell*. There are 248 instances of “*hoc se habet*” in the *Arcana*, 3 in *Heaven and Hell*, 2 in the *True Christian Religion*. There are 20 instances of “*ita enim habet*,” only in the *Arcana*. There are still other variations of the phrase. All can translate into “*This is the case*” or “*The situation is as follows*.” A clear doctrine follows. All the later works are extracted either from the *Arcana* or from the *Apocalypse Explained*, and so are doctrinal works. *Apocalypse Revealed* is a new start. All through these works, doctrine is just presented as the staple diet, having been drawn from Scripture already.

Now we come to another phrase, “*more in the Lord’s mercy may be seen below...*” “*Ex Divina Domini Misericordia, in sequentibus*.” It occurs over 120 times. Do you remember reading that one also? Where? We find also this phrase only prior to the Last Judgment, and almost exclusively in the *Arcana Coelestia*. Why? Well, in *Lord 61:2* published in 1763, we read: “*This was not seen from the Word before, because... the Last Judgment had not yet been accomplished; ...hell, would have plucked it out of the hearts of men, and would...have profaned it. This power was completely broken by the Last Judgment...After that ...every man who desires may become enlightened and attain wisdom.*”

Prior to 1757, it was too dangerous to publish plainly stated doctrines! There had to be some protection offered to the truths. Since the *Arcana Coelestia* did come out before 1757, what was its protection? It was by scattering and postponing. What better protection than to “scatter” the plain doctrine into an excruciating maze of “this signifies this, and that signifies that,” etc., phrase after phrase. Nothing is clear. “That this is the

[internal] sense cannot be seen from the first exposition wherein everything is scattered, that is to say, from what was said in #3366” (*Arcana Coelestia* 3376). “*These things are disconnected, [and what] they involve in their series cannot appear unless they are all collected together into a single idea*” (*Arcana Coelestia* 3074). Well, “*ita se habet*” does collect all things together into a single idea. However, just when a profaner thought he could gather enough truth to profane it, along comes another “*but more of the Lord’s mercy below.*” The truth is postponed until later. Without the reference-tools we have today, the profaner would have been frustrated and put the book down, or died of apoplexy, thus unwittingly saving him from grievous harm. Only good people have the patience to read a few more pages until along comes another “*the case herein is this*” which puts everything into “*a most beautiful sequence*” (*Arcana Coelestia* 3376) again. After 1757, the Writings can therefore declare, “*Now every man who desires may become enlightened and attain wisdom.*” “*More mercifully later*” is no longer needed to prevent profanation, but was once needed. The danger is past. Now it is all “*Ita se habet*” even for readers of the *Arcana*! Just keep on reading until the next “*the case herein*” comes along. Alternatively, read the summary doctrinal works.

It was no doubt because the Last Judgment had removed the danger of profanation, that in 1758, five small works were published. They summarize or “bring into a single idea or beautiful sequence,” the doctrines found scattered and postponed all through the eight volumes of the *Arcana Coelestia: Heaven and Hell, The New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine, The Last Judgment, The White Horse, and Earths in the Universe*. Each contains a more or less massive reference system to the *Arcana Coelestia*. Of these, *Heaven and Hell* is such a best seller that it should be a Guinness Record: most widely read book of the *Writings*, translated into more languages than other works of the *Writings*, most continuously read modern work, etc. This year 2008 marks the 250th anniversary of its publication. That is the case!

The History of the Word on Earth: The Old Testament

After the first Ancient Church was established after the Flood, using Enoch's Word derived from the mouth of the Most Ancients, the Ancient Word came next. That Word was used in every part of the Ancient Church, until it became "too remote" (*Sacred Scripture* 102). The causes were various: idolatry, magic, dogmatic systems, the love of dominion, and mythology. It was magic that killed the Ancient Church in Egypt, and under a "special providence" the sons of Israel were born (*Arcana Coelestia* 6025) and went there so that "another Word less remote" (*ibid.*) yet "Divine in every syllable" (*Arcana Coelestia* 10632:4) could be written. This was the Old Testament, covering the history of the Hebrews from Abram ca. 2000 b.c., and receiving continual supplements down to Malachi ca. 400 b.c.

How was the Old Testament composed? Well, first events happened so that they represented the Lord's life on earth, the spiritual world and the Word of the Lord. Spiritual or heavenly conditions were actually realized through correspondences on a daily basis back in those days. The scenario is of great interest, because the era of miracles came at this same time: "At that time representatives came forth into actual realization," (*Arcana Coelestia* 1675) and "representations commanded by the Lord had force and effect." "Miracles ... were done by means of correspondences" (*Arcana Coelestia* 8615:3) to stand for the things of the Church. One example given is Samson's great strength merely by the correspondence of his hair! (*Arcana Coelestia* 3301.4) Just because miracles do not happen today, does not mean that they could not have happened during this special era of human history. (See "A Unique Human Era," *New Philosophy* April 1986) The spiritual conditions required for miracles back then were so different that the same miracles performed today would destroy us.

Part of those conditions was the angelic protection afforded to the encampment of Israel during the 40 years of wandering, extending also to the miracles performed by means of the Ark of the Covenant. Angels attended the Ark so that the “outward worship” of the Children of Israel was “conveyed” first to interiorly good simple spirits who “give no thought to inward values,” and then to internal angels who could see in these spirits “the realities representing heavenly and Divine values” (*Arcana Coelestia* 8588:6). The rituals in the Tabernacle were thus “carried up in a miraculous fashion” (*Arcana Coelestia* 4307) while also covering over the idolatrous thoughts and affections on earth which “would have defiled” everything (*Arcana Coelestia* 8788). This angelic presence brought about a “rearrangement of Divine Truth” which resulted in the pillar of fire and cloud which protected Israel’s encampment surrounding the Tabernacle (*Arcana Coelestia* 8192). Heaven’s order was so powerful that Balaam could not curse but only bless it! (Numbers 22-24) Even the “pattern” for that Tabernacle had been “shown to Moses on top of Mount Sinai” (*Conjugal Love* 75) citing Exodus: “the pattern of the tabernacle that I show you...on the mountain” (Exodus 25:9, 40, 26:30).

It is interesting to detect the sequence in how the Five Books of Moses were written. We would think Moses just started writing. But no, first the history had to happen, and that began with Abram’s story in Genesis 12. However, there is a surprise: before Moses even wrote the first word, the Lord wrote “The Ten Commandments”! These “were the first of the Word, being promulgated from Mount Sinai before the Word was written by Moses and the Prophets” (*Apocalypse Explained* 939, emphasis added). In other words, the first writing of the Old Testament was by the finger of God. That is why it was such a great miracle: the Ten Commandments were “uttered and heard in heaven as to their internal sense, while in their external sense

they were uttered and heard on earth” (*Arcana Coelestia* 2609). Angels and men heard them simultaneously. Moses destroyed the first tables together with the golden calf, and later transferred the second table he himself cut, to the text of the Old Testament. However the Decalogue is not on the first page, but in Exodus 20! Moses inserted them in the sequence of history when in fact they were written first. However, Moses also inserted sections from the Ancient Word to constitute Genesis chapters 1 through 11.

Once Moses and others started writing, they had no trouble keeping up with the work: “It was by dictation” (*Heaven and Hell* 254). The Old Testament was dictated so as to be “divine in every syllable” (*Arcana Coelestia* 10638). The wording was exact: “The prophets...wrote exactly as the spirit from the Divine dictated, for the actual words which they were to write were uttered in their ears” (*Arcana Coelestia* 7055:3). Spirits newly arrived from earth could presumably speak Hebrew in dictation: “How the Lord spoke with the prophets through whom the Word was given, through spirits who were sent to them, whom the Lord filled with His aspect, and thus inspired the words which they dictated to the prophets. So it was not influx but dictation. As the words came from the Lord, each one of them was filled with the Divine and contains within it an internal sense, which angels perceive in a heavenly and spiritual sense, while men do so in a natural sense. Thus has the Lord conjoined heaven and the world by means of the Word” (*Heaven and Hell* 254).

So a grand time chart for the Old Testament would be: 1. Finger of God writes Ten Commandments. 2. Moses copies second Tables of stone. 3. Ancient Word copied for Genesis 1 to 11. 4. Dictation of Genesis and of Exodus 1 to 19. 5. Insertion of Ten Commandments miracle and related events. 6. Dictation of rest of books of Moses. 7. Dictation of all subsequent books to

constitute the Old Testament.

Since the events which were to be recorded first occurred under Providence, yet in such a way that all involved were free to follow their own loves, consequently their activities could represent heavenly things and most deeply the Lord's life. "Things happened the way they did for the sake of the representation of what is contained in the internal sense." (*Arcana Coelestia* 4756) Joseph came to Egypt and served under Potiphar for no other purpose than "that he might represent how the Lord progressively made the Human in Himself Divine, about which the Word was to be written, that it might contain Divine things in the internal sense" (*Arcana Coelestia* 5307:3). Joseph himself also said "God sent me before you" (Genesis 45:7).

And once they actually starting writing, the stories were assembled just into such a sequence that the Lord's "life on earth, such as it was to be in the world, even as to perceptions and thoughts" (*Arcana Coelestia* 2523) could be contained in them. The sequence and the wording were "edited" by dictation: "No other historical details have been brought in, and those that have are not presented in any other sequence, nor expressed in any other words than such as in the internal sense may express these arcana" (*Arcana Coelestia* 1468e). Only a Divine dictation could accomplish such an intricate rendition. The Old Testament is consequently holy and powerful down to every jot and tittle. (*Arcana Coelestia* 4868:3, 8862:2, *Sacred Scripture* 37, 38, 49, 50)

The reason the Lord's glorification underlie every single word dictated was for the sake of the angels, -- so that they could behold Lord's glorification "as if present." If the internal sense of the Old Testament had not presented the Lord's Advent as if already accomplished, "*the Lord would have been obliged to come into the world immediately after the fall of the Most*

Ancient Church” (*Arcana Coelestia* 2523). In other words, unless the Lord had foreseen that the Hebrews would love to reenact rituals, and that their stories could be dictated in this manner, the advent would have happened thousands of years earlier when Noah came out of the ark. Christmas would have come early! The Old Testament postponed the need. However, when the Lord did come in Bethlehem, He grew up more quickly than other boys (*True Christian Religion* 89) and studied His own scriptures (*Arcana Coelestia* 1461). He began His mission in the synagogue in Nazareth, by reading out loud: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,..to preach the acceptable year of Jehovah. And He rolled up the book and said, This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears”(Luke 4:16-21, Isaiah 61:1,2, Lord 11). The Lord began yet another dispensation of the Word, —from His own mouth.

Communications

To the Editor:

First I would like to thank Bishop Acton for his thought provoking articles on Paradigms Revisited. His statement “of course, without the Roman practice of crucifixion the entire resurrection story would not have happened.” I concurred in this assertion as a given.

Shortly after reading the above I was reading in the *Apocalypse Explained* and specifically # 655:5 which to my understanding plainly teaches that the crucifixion was a Jewish custom, instituted by Moses: “And if there be in a man sin and judgment of death, and he be slain, thou shalt hang him upon wood” (Deut. xxi. 18, 20-23). This seems to shed quite a different light on the story, the implication being that it signified the destruction of good in the Church. Comments by bishop Acton would be most welcome.

Sincerely,
Stanley Hill

Bishop Acton’s answer:

I realize the *Apocalypse Explained* uses the term “crucifixion” as a Jewish custom but it doesn't seem to be the same kind of “crucifixion” which was Roman custom. Schaff’s “Religious Encyclopedia” of 1882 explains the difference: “Crucifixion as a punishment of death was common among the old Indians, Egyptians, Phoenicians, Carthaginians, and even among the Greeks and Macedonians.” For example, after the conquest of Tyrus, Alexander the Great ordered the crucifixion of two thousand Tyrians as a punishment for the resistance that the city had made. The Israelites however used to crucify those who had

been decapitated or stoned, as a further aggravation of the punishment. From the "Interpreter's Bible" on Deut 21: 22,23 under the title of "The Body of a Criminal": If a man has been proved guilty of a capital charge and is put to death (usually by stoning), as an additional disgrace and lesson to the community his body might be hung up (or perhaps impaled) for all to see after his death (cf. Josh 8:29; 10: 26-27; I Sam. 31:10; II Sam. 4:12). As an object accursed of God, the body must be taken down and buried by evening so that the land may not be defiled with that which is taboo or unclean.

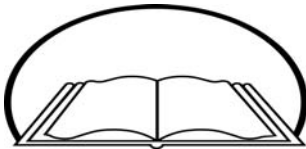
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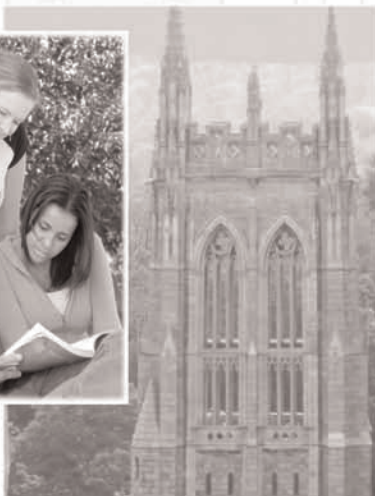
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Church News

October 21, 2007 in Seoul, Korea—Bishop Kline is pictured with the Rev. Dzin Kwak and the Rev. Kyu Yang (left), newly ordained into the pastoral degree. Rev. Yang will be succeeding Rev. Kwak as Pastor in Seoul upon Rev. Kwak's retirement in 2008.



The Rev. Kyu Dae Yang (left ordained into the second degree, Rt. Tev. Thomas L. Kline officiating, together with the Rev. Dzin Keak. Seoul, Korea, October 21, 2007



On December 2, 2007, the Rev. Alan Lewin was ordained into the second degree of the Priesthood of the General Church, the Rt. Rev. Thomas L. Kline officiating. The photo shows the chancel of Michael Church, London.



Bishop Thomas Kline, Rev. Dzin Kwak, and some members of the congregation at the dedication of the church building in Gwangju, South Korea on Monday, October 22, 2007, Rev Yang was there too, but he is not in this photo.