

New Church LIFE

A monthly magazine devoted to the teachings
revealed through Emanuel Swedenborg

In this issue:

Trust

A Sermon by Rev. Ragnar Boyesen

Correspondence, Origins, Causes & Uses of Disease
By Fredrik Bryntesson

The Kingdom of Heaven
By Rev. Peter M. Buss, Jr.

May 2009

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Notes on This Issue

A Scandinavian flavor to this issue. First we welcome back Rev. Ragnar Boyesen, a well-seasoned Pastor of four societies and a district the size of Scandinavia! His sermon returns to a so well-known text, with a message of how we need to acquire the oil in our lamps.

Next we have Dr. Fredrik Bryntesson, a fourth generation New Church member who came to teach in our Bryn Athyn College a few years ago, with a Ph.D. in Biology from the University College London! 'Figge,' as he is known here, examines the link between the spiritual and natural worlds in regard to diseases, with light from both Doctrine and his own expertise.

We often repeat the phrase about the Lord's Kingdom coming. Now Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr., our Pastor in Glenview, explains what that kingdom involves, using parables to lead us to it here on earth.

Do you know how many editors of New Church Life there have been, and when this journal began? Several editors have written short summaries of it, honoring previous laborers in this field. Here is another one.

Pastoral Moves

I am pleased to announce that the New Church of Phoenix has called the Rev. Garry Walsh to become their resident pastor, beginning July 2009. Like previous pastors in Phoenix, Garry will also serve as visiting pastor for the group that meets in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Congratulations, Garry!

– Rt. Rev. Thomas L. Kline.

TRUST

BY THE REV. RAGNAR BOYESEN

“Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.”

(Matthew 25:1)

The parable of the five wise and the five foolish virgins is a spiritual picture of the two different kinds of religious life, one leading to heaven, the other leading to the outer darkness of a selfish life. In the one case the wise virgins trusted in the use of their lamps, while the foolish virgins did not trust in the proper use of their lamps.

According to Jewish historians, it was a custom in Israel to carry a bride from the home of her father to the home of her husband. This was done at night, when the use of lamps on sticks would light the way, both for those who waited to receive the bridal procession at the bridegroom’s house, and those who actually carried the bride from her paternal home to her husband’s home. Our story depicts specifically those who are waiting at the door of the bridegroom for him to return to his house with his bride, waiting to hear the glad shouts of the procession: “Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him.”

This parable treats of the trust which those have that wait for the coming of the Lord by being prepared for His coming. When He arrives there is a judgment, since the foolish virgins are not able to go out to meet him, but go to get oil.

The parable tells us of the state of the Church which is not yet conjoined with the Lord in a spiritual marriage. The “ten” virgins represent the entire church; both wise and unwise waiting for the Lord’s coming. Those virgins who had oil in

their lamps, picture those in the church who have a love of doing what they have learned from their doctrines. The foolish virgins, without oil in their lamps, have indeed the knowledge of scripture, or the lamp, but they do not have the fuel or the essence of the lamp, which is the oil of love, or the love to the Lord and the charity towards the neighbor.

Oil is both smooth to the touch and usually warm in temperature. Oil can be fragrant and soothing, a joy to smell and a blessing to use. All such feelings as are described by oil, is the true feeling of charity which comes from a love of doing according to the Lord's will, and not insisting on one's own.

In a technological age, we tend to pay much attention to the mechanics of how things work. In this sense, the lamp has a bowl for containing oil, a handle and a wick to draw up the oil which will be lit. If the lamp is emptied of its oil, it is the same as the doctrines of the church without the warm oil of love which makes the flame burn in the lamp, or the intellect of men and women who see through the enlightenment of true charity. The oil of love feeds the light of spiritual intelligence, but knowledge only is like empty lamps if allowed to remain only in the memory.

The wise virgins, therefore, picture all those in the Church who allow the truths from charity and from the Lord to be taken into their will, to the point where they trust that all life is from Him for the sake of the neighbor. When we trust the Lord, we see and feel in a new way. We have a lamp which is burning clearly, to give light to those around us. Neither is there a lack of supply, because the wise virgins took their vessels along with their lamps. Vessels in the Word are pictures of our ability to receive charity from the Lord when we love to do His will (*Arcana Coelestia* 3079:5).

In our lesson we *heard* the distinction between those who believe in God, and those who believe in those things which are *from* God. Believing in God is the same as to know the truths

of the church which teach love to the Lord and to the neighbor, and then to do according to our belief. To believe the things which are from God is to know and not as yet to do.

“Those who are truly Christians both know and do, thus they believe in God. But those who are not truly Christian know, and do not. These are called by the Lord ‘foolish,’ but the former are called ‘prudent’ (wise)” (*Arcana Coelestia* 9239).

How many of us are not often in this last category? We know very well what we should be doing, but because of a lack of trust in the Lord and possibly in our neighbor, we do not act according to conviction.

As long as we live in the natural world, we are asked to go out to meet the Lord. Spiritually speaking, this is to go out into our daily occupations, tasks, jobs, pursuits with that affection of doing the Lord’s will to our neighbor. With the inspiration of charity and love to the Lord, the lamps of our spiritual understanding of doctrine will be lit so that we can go out of our midnight darkness of sensuous life, to seek Him when the Lord is coming in His truth. If we have the oil of love in our understanding, we will always trust the Lord’s teachings to lead us to Him. We “go out to meet Him.”

“Then all the virgins arose and trimmed their lamps.” Spiritually understood, to arise is to start an activity. To “trim our lamp” is to use our very best understanding of the subject at hand so that our knowledge and applications may serve the purpose of our love for the Lord and those He has left in our care. We trim our lamps when we acknowledge that we have no intelligence and wisdom from ourselves, but need to lift our mind to the Lord alone. Those who are wise will trust the Lord to lead them and teach them, because they have felt His love and seen His help in their life. They have taken care of His love in their life. This is the vessel of oil, which gives an extra supply of oil to the lamp.

Those who are foolish are anxiously searching their minds

for confirmations of their preconceptions, laziness, fearfulness, and lack of willingness to work on their weaknesses. The reason is that they use the doctrine of the church to reason about truths instead of using truths in the acts of life. By reasoning that just to know and understand truth is the same as using truth practically, they neglect to take oil in their vessels for their lamps.

Such people learn to trust the goodness and love which belong to others. They even learn to depend upon it, like the unwise virgins asking for extra oil. They admire others, often wishing that they themselves lived different lives. They dare not take the steps of approaching the Lord directly, purposefully, to take His commandments into their very love and affection by doing whatever is at hand in their use, at home, in society, or when needs arise. Their lack of extra oil is a picture of a lack of love and kindness, resentment, frigid attitudes, inability to get along with others. Theirs is a representation of a church which fails from a lack of love to each other.

In order to have an extra supply of oil we are required to be loving, perceptive, reverent without pretense, inspired by justice and compassion. If we wait for the Lord with our vessels filled with oil, it does not matter that we wait. Even hardships can be faced with fortitude.

When our character is tested, what is required is that we act as if..., as if the Lord has given aid, as if the kids are darling, as if the world is coming to grips with its problems, as if we have something to contribute when called on, as if our neighbor always is worth loving. By doing what is needed in serving others there will slowly develop a deep sense of trust in the Lord's care for us and the fairness of His overruling Providence.

No one can have a working faith in the Lord unless the mind is filled with love to Him and to our fellow man. If we fall down on this prerequisite, the answer to the request for extra oil will

always be: “No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.” Unless we go for ourselves and get the oil of love, before the final call that the bridegroom is coming, no creed, no church, no individual of the church, not even the Lord can give it to us. This call is everyone’s awakening after death.

Everyone must strive against only natural goodness by practicing what is true and good in daily life, not because we are to realize ourselves, or declare our inner essence, but because it is the will of the Lord. Otherwise those blessed feelings of trusting in Him because we are doing what He wants, cannot be given to us. Believing truly, is giving ourselves to others from Him.

The heart of faith is to trust in the Lord. This is called the esse or inmost of faith. If we have trust in the Lord, we will live well, believe right and strive to fulfill our various uses.

When we are protective of the oil He has given us, that we use it wisely, the Lord can prepare us for salvation (*True Christian Religion* 344). So vital is trust in any relationship, that “no one in the world,” the Writings say, “is admitted into another’s friendship unless he sincerely trusts him and willingly serves him. Such a one and no others does he reckon among his own, and entrusts with his goods” (*True Christian Religion* 724).

When the Lord said that “My reward is with Me,” He meant that the happiness from heaven itself can come to one who is willing to go directly to Him, to trust explicitly in Him by doing according to His wishes, because conjunction with Him is according to our reception of Him:

“The Lord cannot send forth anything from Himself except it be Himself, for He is omnipresent with every man according to conjunction, and conjunction is according to reception, and reception is according to love and wisdom, or if you will, according to charity and faith, and charity and faith are

according to life, and life is according to the aversion to evil and falsity, and aversion to evil and falsity is according to the knowledge of what is evil and false, and then according to repentance, and at the same time looking to the Lord” (*Apocalypse Revealed* 949).

“Genuine truth is impossible with anyone unless they are in the good of charity. And genuine hope does not exist with anyone who is not in the good of faith” (*Arcana Coelestia* 6578).

The virgins, who had oil in their lamps, are spiritual examples of men and women who have been gifted with a heavenly proprium, a new love and wisdom from the Lord, which gives them peace of mind because they trust the Lord. They believe that “nothing of evil will reach them, and know that concupiscence will not infest them” (*Arcana Coelestia* 5660). These are they who are in freedom itself, for they love to be led by the Lord, because they are “led in good, by good, to good” (*Ibid*). With this complete trust in the Lord there is nothing that disturbs them, even if the Bridegroom is letting them wait. To wait at night is the same as to live our natural life in the world.

When the virgins fell asleep, they picture how we all at times may enter into states of doubt. Then we feel that the Lord is removed from us. Such doubt can come when knowledge alone without charity obscures our trust in the Lord.

When finally the shout is heard: “The Bridegroom comes,” we are awakened from natural life alone, to a life of spiritual service. A state of slumber is our external life of cares and worries, whereas our wakeful life is a life of prayer, of self sacrifice, of forgiveness, of love, mercy, patience. In short, states of spiritual life are where we feel closer to the Lord’s purposes as they apply to our natural life.

“Trust in the Lord (is) faith itself” (*Arcana Coelestia* 3451:3). All who are in trust to the Lord know that there is only

one doctrine in the Christian church: “That of love to the Lord and charity toward the neighbor” (*Arcana Coelestia* 3445). The purpose of doctrinal things is to teach men how to live, not to think (*Arcana Coelestia* 2982).

“It is indeed said that the very faith itself which saves is confidence; but this confidence is quite impossible except in the good of life. Without the good of life there is no reception, and where there is no reception there is no confidence except at times a certain apparent confidence, in suffering conditions of mind or body, when the desires of the love of self and of the world are at rest. But with those who are in evil of life, when this crisis passes or the condition is changed, such fallacious confidence altogether vanishes; for a confidence is found even with the wicked. But whoever desires to know the quality of his confidence let him examine in himself the affections and ends, as well as the practices of his life” (*Arcana Coelestia* 2982).

The foolish virgins went to buy oil. They went spiritually to those who sell oil, or to those who boast that what they have done is spiritually creditable and important. Such are people who do good from outward duty only, or from a will to be important—to make a name for themselves. These can be leaders and preachers who control the life of faith without the love of doing good internally. This is hypocritical good, which they try to “sell” to others, or convince others to receive. Because of this lack of love of application, the foolish virgins could not be let into the wedding feast, because their hypocritical life was not recognized as heavenly by the Bridegroom.

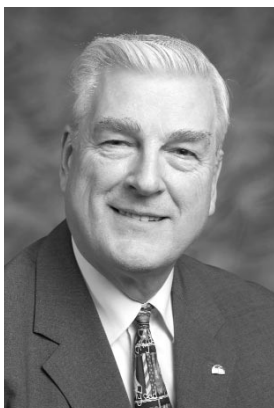
We live in this world to prepare for the wedding feast of heaven. Because it is our life and love which makes us known in the other life, we cannot and should not insist that religious knowledge constitute the church with any one earth. The enduring reality in the church is that trust of love which is charity, qualified by truth. All charity comes through our will,

because we have chosen to act in charity. “All that is essential comes from the will; and consequently neither does what is doctrinal make the church, unless both in general and in particular it looks to charity, for then charity becomes the end” (*Arcana Coelestia* 809). Our purpose, therefore, is to acquire the oil of love to the Lord and our neighbor as we live our short time in the world.

Let us use our time while we have time. Let us learn to forgive and forget that we may come closer to the Lord, that He may use us to dispense the gifts of love. “Trust belongs to love through faith, consequently trust in the Lord is possible with those only who are in love to the Lord and toward the neighbor, because with others there is no faith” (*Arcana Coelestia* 8240). “Few know that faith is trust and confidence, and among these few, still fewer know that trust or confidence is from charity, and is not possible with any one who has not lived the life of charity” (*Arcana Coelestia* 3868).

“As many as received Him, to them gave He the power to be the sons of God, even to those who believe in His name; who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:12, 13). Amen.

Readings: Matthew 25:1-13, *Arcana Coelestia* 9239-9242



The Rev. Ragnar Boyesen was inaugurated into the priesthood in 1972 and ordained as Pastor in 1973. He first served as assistant to the pastor at Olivet Church, Toronto, while also visiting Montreal, in Canada. He then, in turn, served as Pastor of the Stockholm Society, visiting also in Scandinavia, as Pastor of the Pittsburgh Society, PA in 1982, as Pastor of the Freeport Society, PA, in 1986, and in 1993 it was the Kempton Society's turn. In 1996 he moved to be the Pastor of the Jönköping Circle, Sweden, while again visiting elsewhere in Scandinavia. Ragnar lives with his wife Dorrit (Pedersen) in Jönköping, Sweden.

CORRESPONDENCE, ORIGINS, CAUSES AND USES OF DISEASE: A NEW CHURCH PERSPECTIVE

BY FREDRIK BRYNTESSON¹

Disease is a physiological condition that impairs the normal physiology, and thus the health, of living organisms. The medical community has illuminated many of the physiological processes that characterize different illnesses, so that we now understand how many diseases work and how to treat and cure them on a physiological level. But is there a spiritual component to disease? We know from the Writings of the New Church that “All things that exist in the material world correspond to something spiritual” (*True Christian Religion* 201). What is the correspondence of disease? And can we learn from the Writings about how illnesses originate on Earth? In spiritual terms, why people are subjected to, and fall ill from diseases? How can our all-loving God allow people to fall ill with sicknesses? How does New Church doctrine address issues such as why little children are born with a deadly disease? Are diseases useful in any way?

Correspondence and origin of diseases

“Nothing at all comes into being with the natural creation that does not have a correspondence with the spiritual world... Things existing in the natural world are nothing else than effects; their causes, exist in the spiritual world” (*Arcana Coelestia* 5711).

We know from the Writings that each physical component in the natural world is caused by and corresponds to a unique specific aspect of the spiritual world (e.g. *Arcana Coelestia* 5711, *Heaven and Hell* 89, *True Christian Religion* 201). Good things on Earth correspond to aspects of the heavens, and conversely, every evil thing in the natural world corresponds to

some aspect of the hells. We also know that diseases “have correspondence with the spiritual world; not a correspondence with heaven, which is the Grand Man, but with those who are in what is opposite, thus with those who are in the hells” (*Arcana Coelestia* 5712). Furthermore, “every disease corresponds to its own evil” (*Arcana Coelestia* 8364:3). Thus, every disease on Earth corresponds to a specific evil from the hells; given the observably destructive nature of diseases, it is intuitive and sensible to conclude that disease is from hell.

“No one is good – except God alone” (Mark 10:18). “The hells are the source of all evil” (*Arcana Coelestia* 6071). “Nothing but good comes from God” (*Arcana Coelestia* 6071).

How then did, and do, diseases originate on Earth in the first place? We know that illnesses correspond to evils in the hells, but how and why do evils arise? Before answering this question, it is important to emphasize that the Lord is an all-loving God, and that His Divine Love and Wisdom are utterly incapable of producing evils of any kind. The Lord loves every person in the natural world, and wants us all to be in a good peaceful place and ultimately go to heaven (*Divine Providence* 27).

Evils come from no other place than the hells (*Arcana Coelestia* 6071). But how do the evils in the hells originate? The Lord has from creation endowed individuals with free will and the ability to choose or reject the Divine order in creation from rationality and in freedom. When we want to do what is good and true from creation, we allow the Lord to work in us and thus reduce the stronghold that evils and falsities have on us. The ultimate origin of evil is the individual’s perversion of good from freedom (*Conjugal Love* 444:4). The Lord does not want this to happen, but allows it to happen in order to preserve our freedom. It is therefore a reasonable conclusion that the ultimate origin of disease lies in the spiritual choices that individuals make when they live in the natural world. Thus, a new disease

can come into being when individuals pervert Divine Good in such a way that the resulting evil can be manifested on Earth as a new type of sickness.

Why do people fall ill, and what are the spiritual components of the disease process?

If it is true to say that each disease in the natural world corresponds to a specific evil in hell and such evils are ultimately the products of individuals' perversions of Divine order, is every disease caused by its host's perversion of order? Why do people fall ill? If freedom and rationality are necessary components of the ability to choose, does a child 'pervert order' and contract cancer? Why would an all-loving God allow this to happen? These are intriguing questions and have been addressed by different New Church scholars from time to time (e.g. Odhner, 1935; Schnarr, 1959; Buss, 1972; and Bell, 1996). Consider the following teachings²:

“The reason sicknesses have a correspondence with those in hell is that sicknesses correspond to the evil desires and cravings of the lower mind (animus), and these desires and cravings are the origins of those sicknesses, the origins of sicknesses in general being various kinds of intemperance and self-gratification, wholly physical pleasures, as well as feelings of envy, hatred, revenge, lust, and the like, which destroy a person's interiors. Once these are destroyed his exteriors suffer and subject him to sickness and so to death” (*Arcana Coelestia* 5712).

“When a person falls sick in this way he has contracted his sickness from the life that is his; in his case an unclean sphere corresponding to the sickness attaches itself and is present as the cause from which the sickness springs” (*Arcana Coelestia* 5715).

“Moreover every disease corresponds to its own

evil; the reason is that everything of man's life is from the spiritual world; and therefore if his spiritual life sickens, evil is derived therefrom into the natural life also, and becomes a disease there" (*Arcana Coelestia* 8364:3).

When reading these passages we may get the sense that people do fall ill because they have chosen to live disorderly lives based on lusts and other evils. However, there are many counter arguments. Why is it that some people can commit awful crimes, or live in complete disorder and yet remain healthy? Likewise, why do some people who appear to be living a life according to the Lord's Word become affected by disease? Of course, it is impossible for us to judge other people's spiritual states so we cannot use these observations as means to fully challenge an interpretation of Doctrine. But these observations alone justify closer examination.

Perhaps a more compelling question is how do we explain congenital genetic diseases such as the Zellweger syndrome, in which little children are born with an intracellular defect resulting in death during infancy? And there are many other congenital diseases. The physiological foundation for such genetic diseases takes place at conception, and is thus present long before birth. Clearly, the passages quoted above cannot be interpreted to mean that these children are responsible for their own diseases. They have become ill long before they from rationality can choose to pervert Divine order. Another question that comes to mind is how we should understand contagious epidemics that very quickly make a lot of people living in a small area sick at the same time? Are all these people in the same evils at the same time? What about the children who fall ill from the epidemic?

The question thus arises: how do we make sense of the message in passages such as *Arcana Coelestia* 5712, 5715 and

8364:3 quoted just above? Are there other ways to interpret the message in these passages? Should we focus on the passages in isolation or should we look at them in light of all of the New Church Doctrine? Could Swedenborg's historical and cultural restrictions affect the way he wrote the Writings?

Swedenborg used his own understanding of the science of the mid-eighteenth century when the Writings were written. It is therefore important to take into consideration that the medical science of the day had a very rudimentary understanding of the biological processes underlying illnesses. Modern day elementary pathology concepts such as the genetic basis of illnesses, or the germ theory of disease were unknown to science in the mid-eighteenth century. Swedenborg could therefore not include these concepts in the body of the Writings. Instead, he had to use the science of the day, and this nowadays may provide us with some challenges when we in light of the modern understanding of disease attempt to understand cause and causality of illnesses.³

One way to interpret the above quoted passages in light of the discussion here is to consider that the Earth is governed by natural laws, which, in turn are governed by the laws of Divine Providence. There are a large number of diseases present on Earth. These illnesses are the results of evils generated by many different individuals throughout history. We know that the Lord never wants diseases and other evils to affect human beings. But we also know that the Lord from creation has given us not only freedom to choose, but also allowed evil things to happen to us by means of permissions according to the laws of Divine Providence. Therefore anyone on Earth, good or evil, is subjected to diseases, just like anyone can become a victim of other evils such as abuse, accidents, natural disasters and other types of misfortune (see e.g. Buss, 1972). Thus:

“[The Lord] causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good,

and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous” (Matthew 5:45).

With this conclusion and the previous discussion in mind, the following passage sheds more light on why people get ill:

“All who are in hell are the causers of sicknesses, though varying ones, for the reason that all the hells are steeped in desires and cravings for what is evil....[I]f those in hell are brought into contact with man they bring sicknesses and at length death. But they are not allowed to enter the actual solid parts of a person’s body, nor the parts making up his internal organs or his other organs and limbs; they do not enter anything else than his evil desires and false ideas. Only when he falls sick do they enter any further, into the kinds of uncleanness that are the essence of sicknesses. For as has been stated, nothing ever comes into being with man unless a cause also exists in the spiritual world” (*Arcana Coelestia* 5713).

Diseases are thus contracted from the natural world, and once we become sick, the spheres from the hells that correspond to the disease are permitted to affect our bodies and amplify the symptoms of the condition. Consider the example of a child who can not be in a particular evil from freedom of choice: why would the spheres of the hells corresponding to a disease be allowed to act on the body parts of a child once the illness has been contracted? A reasonable answer to this question, which also provides us with a general answer for how diseases work with all of humanity, can be found from the teaching that the general state of the human race has throughout history gravitated towards evil more and more so that we now have a situation in which anyone on Earth is “immersed in many kinds of evil from birth” (*Divine Providence* 281). Humanity in general, therefore, has become less receptive of the general

influx from the heavens and instead more affected in a general way by the spheres of the hells. Therefore we are now all susceptible to the hellish spheres that are allowed to act on us when we contract a disease from the natural world. The Rev. Cairns Henderson highlights this notion very well: “we may not say now that our sicknesses are an index to specific evils in ourselves” but that sicknesses “now are rather among the ultimate signs of the general weakness and corruption of the human race as a whole” (Henderson, 1953, p. 134; see also Odhner, 1935 p. 420).

Uses of Diseases

“From birth, each of us is like a little hell in constant conflict with heaven. The Lord cannot rescue any of us from our hell unless we see that we are in it and want to be rescued. This cannot happen unless there are instances of permission that are caused by laws of Divine Providence” (*Divine Providence* 251:2).

The Writings teach us that diseases can be useful in different ways. Fear of disease can serve as a deterrent to do evil things that could affect not only the person wanting to commit the evil but also other people (*Life* 111; *True Christian Religion* 316). For example, fear of sexually transmitted diseases can deter people from promiscuity or adultery. Diseases can also serve to re-focus a person from his or her evil desires to thoughts that focus on “higher and nobler things” (*Arcana Coelestia* 762). However, we are also taught that we are not in a state to do actual repentance when we are ill. This is because we are not in freedom during illness (*Divine Providence* 138, 142).

“Repentance has value if carried out in a state of freedom, but no value if carried out in a state of compulsion. A state of compulsion is a state in which a

person is sick, is depressed as a result of misfortune, or is about to die, in short any state of fear which takes away the use of sound reason” (*Arcana Coelestia* 8392).

Nevertheless, the thoughts we have during illness may contribute to actual repentance in times when we are healthy and thus can think and reason from freedom. In this sense, disease can contribute to our salvation.

Disease also serves as a model to illustrate how disorder works. Consider the following teachings:

“All things in the human body have a correspondence with things in heaven. So true is this that not even the smallest part in the human body fails to have something spiritual and celestial, or what amounts to the same, the heavenly communities, corresponding to it. For heavenly communities exist according to all the genera and species of spiritual and celestial things; indeed they exist in such order that all of them together represent one human being. They do so in every single detail of the human being, both interior and exterior. This is why heaven considered as a whole is also called the Grand Man, and why so many times already one community has been spoken of as belonging to this part of the body, another community to that, and so on. The reason why heaven is described in this way is that the Lord is the only Man and heaven represents Him. Also it is Divine Good and Truth received from Him that constitute heaven, and therefore as angels are in heaven they are said to be in the Lord. Those in hell however are outside of that Grand Man. These correspond to filth and also to things full of disease” (*Arcana Coelestia* 2996).

“[Diseases] do not have a correspondence with

heaven, which is the Grand Man, but with those in a contrary place, thus with those in hell” (*Arcana Coelestia* 5712).

Heaven is in the form of a Grand Man, to which the human body and its parts correspond. The Grand Man represents order. Therefore, in theory, a perfectly healthy and functioning human body corresponds to and expresses order. Diseases correspond to evils in the hells and pose a threat to the healthy human body by bringing disorder to it. Since disorder is a feature of the hells we can use our understanding of the biological workings of disease as an example of how evil and disorder work, a feature that is capitalized on in the New Church College biology classroom (Bryntesson, 2008). By illustrating the fabric of the hells, disorder – the perversion of order, by examining disease processes in the human body we can gain an appreciation for how destructive the hells are. This also allows us to learn to appreciate the beauty and importance of order, which is an essential ingredient in order for us to rationally choose to follow the Lord and thus contribute to make the world a better place.

Conclusions

This study presents an interpretation on what the Writings have to say about disease. Diseases correspond to different aspects of hell. Diseases originate in the natural world as a result of individuals’ perversion of Divine Good. Once in the natural world, diseases are subjected to the laws of nature and Divine Providence, which means that they can affect human beings in general. Diseases cannot and should never be used to infer the spiritual state of the afflicted individual. When a person falls ill from disease, the hellish spheres corresponding to that disease are allowed to affect the person and thus amplify the symptoms of the disease. Although diseases are from hell, they can serve

different uses. For example, they may deter us from doing evil things, they could help us re-focus our minds which can be useful when later in a healthy state we repent, and finally an understanding of the biological processes of diseases can be used to illustrate the nature of disorder, which in turn can help us to appreciate what order is and how it works.

A final thought: if diseases in the natural world are the products of the unhealthy choices made by individuals throughout time, we could ask ourselves if we have a responsibility, not only towards ourselves, but also to future generations, to make spiritually healthy decisions in our lives?

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² Arcana Coelestia has an entire chapter devoted to the correspondence of diseases. See numbers 5711-5727.

³ It is not the purpose of this article to examine the possible impact that Swedenborg's historical and cultural background may have had on the Writings. However, it is important to consider the possible impact that Swedenborg's understanding of the science of the day may have had on the Writings. For example, the notions of spontaneous generation (DLW 342) and that the skin color of the father decides the skin color of the offspring (DP 277) draw attention to how we should understand some portions of the Writings. It is helpful when coming across such statements that demonstrate the limitations of Swedenborg's understanding of science, to consider the fundamental point that is being made in the given passage or passages.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

BY REV. PETER M. BUSS, JR.

While on the earth, the Lord told many parables with the goal of describing the kingdom of heaven. “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field, but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat...” (Matthew 13:24-25). “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field...” (Matthew 13:31). “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field...” (Matthew 13:44). “The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son...” (Matthew 22:2). And the parable we focus on today, “the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early to hire laborers for his vineyard...” (Matthew 20:1). We also say, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so upon the earth” (Matthew 6:10).

In each case, there is a core message, naturally, about the life of those who live in heaven. They have cooperated with the Lord to separate the wheat from the tares in their life. They have allowed the Lord to plant small seeds of goodness inside them, and have done their part to see them grow. They have searched out the treasures of spiritual life. They have allowed the Lord to cause a spiritual marriage in their lives—the marriage of goodness and truth. And as we’ll explore today, they have devoted themselves to a life of usefulness.

There is an intriguing set of passages in the Writings for the New Church which speak to a fact that many of us readily accept about these parables—that the Lord was not just describing the life of those in heaven, but also the life that we are called to live if we want to be there one day. They do so by

teaching us of a similarity between heaven and one particular “place” on earth, namely the church. We read, “What makes heaven in the case of a person also makes the church” (*Heavenly Doctrine* 241).

We read further: “The Lord’s heaven in the natural world is called the church, and an angel of that heaven is a person of the church who has been conjoined with the Lord. After his or her departure from the world such a person also becomes an angel of the spiritual heaven” (*Divine Providence* 30).

What these passages do is remind us of one of the foremost entities or tools the Lord has given to allow people to learn about and live the life that leads to heaven, namely, the church. The church is the Lord’s kingdom on earth (see *Arcana Coelestia* 1607, 3858:2-3). It is the same as the Lord’s kingdom of heaven, to the extent that is one with heaven, in the truth that guides it and the life that defines it.

There are two passages from the Word which clarify this basic construct. The first comes from the Lord’s prayer: “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so upon the earth” (Matthew 6:10). In this case, doing the Lord’s will is the pivotal parameter for the Lord’s kingdom. People in heaven do the will of the Lord, and so the church’s role is to teach and lead people to do the same. The second teaching defines the church in another way: “The name of church is given where the Lord is acknowledged and where the Word is known” (*Heavenly Doctrine* 242). In this case, the operative goal of the church is to lead people to see that the Lord is the source of all that is truly good in their lives, and to teach His truth as revealed in His Word.

With these concepts in mind, we can return to the parables of heaven, specifically to the one parable we focus on today. “The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early to hire laborers for his vineyard.” If it’s true that the church and

heaven are part of the same kingdom, then we could read this parable to say, “The Lord’s church is like a landowner who went out early to hire laborers for his vineyard...” This fits with our innate sense, mentioned above, that these parables are not only about heaven, but about the life that leads there, as taught in the church.

So let’s look at some of the messages of this parable to see what they indicate about the Lord’s kingdom, in heaven and on earth. The framework of the parable is straightforward: a landowner wants people to work in his vineyard, so he hires some laborers to work for him for the agreed upon wage of a denarius a day—a full day being twelve hours. The message begins to unfold when we learn that this same landowner went out three hours later, then the sixth hour, and then the ninth hour. Finally he hired a group who had been standing idle almost the whole day, to work for one hour. The message comes home when we learn that he chose to pay all of these people, no matter how long they had worked, a denarius.

The first message is arguably the most obvious in the story: We come face to face with the outrage of the workers hired first, that those hired last received as much as they did. What is the Lord trying to tell us? In heaven, angels LOVE the fact that new people come dwell with them. It matters not whether they knew a full measure of truth their whole lives, and strived to live according to it, or whether they lived a Godless life for a while, and found true guidance relatively late in life. If they have responded to the Lord’s invitation to heaven, and willingly submit to His leadership, then they rejoice. As it says in the gospels, “I say to you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance” (Luke 15:7). So also in the church, the message is the same. There should be no tiers of membership—no in-

crowd and out-crowd. Rather the prevailing attitude should be one of delight in the goodness of others. Those on the path to heaven should hear the call to rid themselves of pride and superiority, and the church, if it is truly to be a part of the Lord's kingdom, must exude the message that all are truly welcome and on the same spiritual "footing" in terms of their ability to access the spiritual truths offered by the Lord.

A second message from this parable is that of usefulness. It is no accident that the Lord framed His message in the context of work. We read, "the Lord's kingdom is nothing else than a kingdom of useful services" (*Arcana Coelestia* 5395). Those who truly receive the Lord's spiritual messages as delivered in His Word about heaven, are those who hear His call to devote themselves to being of use to their neighbors. In fact the more people enter the Lord's kingdom, the more they will be led to love use, until "nothing gives them greater happiness than the performance of useful services" (*Arcana Coelestia* 6325). The church, then, is a genuine part of the Lord's kingdom to the extent that it leads people to a life of use. This too is a part of the prayer, "Thy will be done, as in heaven so upon the earth."

The third message of this parable has to do specifically with the context of a vineyard. A vineyard is a symbol for spiritual truth offered by the Lord. In this context it is a symbol for the Lord's kingdom itself, and the spiritual truth available in it. Those called to labor in the vineyard are those who willingly devote themselves to the learning of spiritual truth. Those in heaven are continually learning, and continually devoting themselves anew to live according to what they learn. So too, in the church, it is truly a part of the Lord's kingdom to the extent that it leads people to labor in the vineyard, to take in spiritual truths, and use them as a guide for life.

In this regard, we focus in on what "church" the Lord is specifically talking about. We learned above that the name

church is given where the Lord is acknowledged and the Word is known. Next month is New Church day, and so our minds are usefully drawn to the place of the New Church in the Lord's kingdom. We are asked to believe that the Lord has raised up His church anew, as He prophesied He would, and that He has given to it a vast "vineyard" of spiritual truths in the Writings for the New Church. Indeed, these truths are what lead us to understand on a deeper level such stories as the parable of the laborers in the vineyard—what messages they contain for our spiritual lives. They give us a full and rich picture of the Lord's kingdom, mainly in the life that people live within it—a life devoted to the Lord and a life of usefulness. This is what defines heaven, and this is what should define the church.

Whenever we partake of the sacrament of the Holy Supper it of itself brings people powerfully into the kingdom of the Lord. Here again we can focus on the vineyard, and remind ourselves that the product of such a place is wine. The New Church teaches that the wine of the Holy Supper is a perfect symbol for the spiritual truth offered by the Lord, and more nobly, a symbol for the Lord Himself as to Divine Truth—the truth defines Him, and manifests Him to us in His Divine Human. The complement to this truth is His love or goodness, which is symbolized by the bread of the Holy Supper. Those who partake of this supper then, are invited into the Lord's kingdom, by taking into themselves the Lord's love and wisdom, His goodness and truth, and letting Him guide them forward into a life of usefulness.

As we consider the New Church with all it has to offer, may we be grateful for the ways we feel called to enter the Lord's kingdom—to acknowledge the Lord in our lives, and to learn from His Word, to learn about and live a life of usefulness. May we see that the New Church exists as a tool of the Lord designed to fulfill the portion of the Lord's prayer which says, Thy will

be done, as in heaven so upon the earth. That portion of the prayer begins with the words, “Thy kingdom come,” and we can rest assured that it will come, as individual human beings such as ourselves are called to work in the Lord’s vineyard, and live the life of heaven here on earth.

If a member of the Most Ancient Church [before the Flood] had read the ... [the Old Testament], he would have seen its internal sense without prior instruction or any explanation. He would have seen it so perfectly that the celestial and spiritual things belonging to the internal sense would have instantly met his eyes, and scarcely anything belonging to the sense of the letter. Thus the internal sense would have been for him in brightness, but the sense of the letter in obscurity. He would be like someone listening to a person speaking, and taking in only the sense and paying no attention to the words used by the speaker. But if a member of the Ancient Church [after the Flood] had read the Word he would not have been able, without prior instruction or explanation, to see its internal sense, and so the internal sense would have been for him in obscurity but the sense of the letter in brightness. He would be like someone listening to a person speaking and in thought hanging on to the words used by him, all the while paying no attention to the sense of them, which would therefore be lost on him.

Arcana Coelestia 4493:4

THE EDITORS OF NEW CHURCH LIFE

There have been several notes and memorials on the succession of editors of *New Church Life* all through its 118 year history. It began as a Young People's Magazine, in 1881, with a board of editors. Both Edward Pollack Anschutz and George G. Starkey served on that board from 1881 to 1883, while Charles P. Stuart from whom Stuart Hall Boys Dorm is named on the ANC campus, served from 1881 to 1884. Andrew Czerny also served from 1881, but it is not known when he stepped down. However, in 1881 Czerny was regarded as the "Chief Editor." Eugene J.E. Schreck also started in 1881, but presumably continued solo from 1884 to 1889 when the others had moved on. He was sole editor in 1888, at least. Then the Academy of the New Church acting at that time as a Church, took over *New Church Life* as its publication. Schreck together with a Board continued as its editor under the Academy aegis from 1890 until he resigned in 1896, totaling 14 years of involvement as editor, under two directive entities.

In 1896, *New Church Life* became the official organ of the General Church of the Advent, and under this new umbrella Rev. George G. Starkey became its first editor. In 1897, however, with the final formation of the General Church of the New Jerusalem, an Editorial Board was appointed to work with Rev. Starkey, namely the Rev. Messrs. Enoch Price, Carl Th. Odhner, and Homer Synnestvedt. Rev. Starkey continued until July 1901. Starkey as also Schreck before him, thus served two stints each, Schreck's stints being contiguous, while Starkey's were at two separate occasions.

From August 1901, Rev. Carl Theophilus Odhner took over as editor up to February 1918, but with a break in 1917. Rev. Alfred Acton was appointed Assistant Editor also starting in

1901, until he resigned to move on to other duties in 1911. However, for health reasons Rev. Odhner took leave in March 1917, when Rev. Acton became acting editor for March, April and May issues of 1917. Rev. Odhner took over again from June 1917 to February of 1918, when he passed away.

With the March 1918 issue, Rev. William Beebe Caldwell became acting editor, and was confirmed as editor in the April 1918 issue. He remained editor for a total of 32 years, from 1918 to at least the November issue of 1950! This brings the history of *New Church Life* within the living memory of many of our readers, for in 1950 Rev. W. Cairns Henderson took over as editor. However, his move to Bryn Athyn delayed his first issue, which was January 1951. Once having begun, Rev. Henderson's dedicated service as editor was set to match Rev. Caldwell's length of office. After 23 years as editor, Rev. Henderson was however called to the spiritual world, in January 1974, having already prepared the February issue. The Rev. Norbert H. Rogers then was made acting editor from March of 1974. Several editorials by Rev. Henderson, prepared in advance, graced the pages of *New Church Life*, namely on the Twelve Tribes of Israel, having started in January with "Reuben." Several other tribes were published, ending with Naphtali in June 1974 issue. Rogers added his own Editorials, but made the July 1974 fully his own, up to his last in October 1974. With the November 1974 issue, Rev. Martin Pryke took over as acting editor, holding the reins until a permanent editor could be found, as he stated in his first issue. He continued until the August issue of 1976. The Rev. Morley Rich then was appointed editor, starting with the October 1976 issue, continuing until the August issue of 1978. The Rev. Ormond deCharms Odhner became editor with the September issue of 1978, and continued until the March issue of 1980, writing his final editorial for that month and other material from hospital before being called to the spiritual world.

The Rev. Morley Rich once more took over as acting editor this time, with the April to July issues of 1980. He used more of Rev. Ormond Odhner's material, appearing as articles in the May and June issues 1980. After his last editorial of the July issue by Rev. Rich, with the August issue the Rev. Donald L. Rose again took up the long-term mantle, being editor of *New Church Life* from August 1980 to June 2005, a total of 25 years! The Rev. Kurt Horigan Asplundh stepped out of retirement to be editor from the July 2005 issue to the August 2007. The present editor started with the September 2007 issue.

The Rev. Morley Rich with two stints in office, first as editor, then acting editor, joins the ranks of Schreck and Starkey who also served twice. Rev. Alfred Acton was also assistant editor, then acting editor. The Rev. Norbert H. Rogers and Rev. Martin Pryke were acting editors.

The official Announcements in *New Church Life* - birth, marriages, deaths, etc. – as also in any official religious periodical, are acceptable references for legal purposes in case other documents are lacking.

New Church Life, as

Student Paper

| | | |
|----------------------------|-------------|---|
| 1. Edward Pollack Anschutz | 1881 - 1883 | 2 |
| 2. George G. Starkey | 1881 - 1883 | 2 |
| 3. Charles P. Stuart | 1881 - 1884 | 3 |
| 4. Andrew Czerny | 1881 - ? | |
| 5. Eugene Schreck | 1881 - 1889 | 8 |

Academy of the New Church

| | | |
|-------------------|-------------|---|
| 6. Eugene Schreck | 1890 - 1896 | 6 |
|-------------------|-------------|---|

General Church

| | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|----|
| 7. George G. Starkey | 1896 - 1901 | 5 |
| 8. Carl Th. Odhner | 1901 - 1917 Feb. June – Dec. '17 | 16 |
| 9. Alfred Acton Asst. Ed. | 1901 - 1911 | 10 |
| Alfred Acton, Acting, | 1917 March, April, May | |
| 10. William B. Caldwell | 1918 - 1950 | 32 |
| 11. W. Cairns Henderson | 1951 - 1974, Feb. | 23 |

EDITORS OF NEW CHURCH LIFE

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|-------------------------------|--------------------------|----|
| 12. Norbert H. Rogers, Acting | 1974 Feb. to October 74. | |
| 13. Martin Pryke, Acting | Nov 1974 - 1976 Aug. | 2 |
| 14. Morley Rich | Sept. 1976 - 1978 Aug. | 2 |
| 15. Ormond de.C Odhner | Sept. 1978 - 1980 Mar. | 2 |
| 16. Morley Rich, Acting | 1980 Apr. - July | |
| 17. Donald L. Rose | Aug. 1980 - 2005 June | 25 |
| 18. Kurt H. Asplundh | July 2005 - 2007 Aug. | 2 |

It is clear...that nothing in the body feels or moves on its own, but does so from their sources where the Will and Understanding reside, which are their origin;...these are the first forms, while the sensory and motor organs are forms derived from them. You see, influx follows the same course that formation has taken, there being no influx from the organs into the first forms, but from the first forms into the organs. *Divine Wisdom 2: II [72]*

There are many who do not have an internal admission of truth, but still have faith of charity. They are ones who have looked to the Lord all their life, and from religious principle have avoided evils. But the cares and business in the world have kept them from thinking about truths, or their teachers had been lacking in that department. Still such ones interiorly in their spirit, admit truths, because they have a love for them. After death, ...when they become spirits and are instructed by angels, they...receive them with joy. *Faith 30*

Editorials

How Does The New Church Increase?

How will the New Church increase? “The new heaven increases, [and] the New Church descends from it...to the extent that the false ideas of the former church are set aside” (*True Christian Religion* 784). We can know for sure: replace false notions with true ideas, and watch the Church grow. We should practice saying the truth to replace the commonly held falsity, prepared for the next time the subject comes up.

No Try-Out for Evil. In film and theatre, some roles are of mischievous characters. Actors and actresses “try-out” for the role. In real life, that would be like trying the fun of hell before we settle down for the dull slog of heaven! We joke about starting our regeneration later on, after we have enjoyed the fun of evils first! We may be light-hearted, and not mean it. We do get to experience evil before we shun it, because every “good” is evil until we learn the truth from the Word. Then the “good” we have been enjoying, is no longer “good” but evil. Our evil tendencies are done in ignorance, and so innocence is combined with it, and they “appear good.”

Eventually, all evils come out into the open. War is one way this happens, and the hidden evils which started a war, then become obvious, just so that all who witness it can then combat the open evil by first seeing how they were duped by it; then removing it from where it is infesting everyone.

With evil eventually coming out into the open, we may think: “what good is an evil if I just think about it? I’ll sneak it in, just for fun.” But that is one thing we must never do, that is, consciously try out an evil, just to see if it is all that bad. That would make the evil deed deliberate, which is worse than the first tendency, acted out in ignorance.

So the rule is: “EVILS CANNOT BE REMOVED UNLESS THEY APPEAR.” That is the heading. Now the spanker: “This does not mean that you are to do evils in order that they may appear, but that you should examine...not only your actions, but also...what evils you allow in your spirit” (*Divine Providence* 278). So not only can we *not* test out an evil, nor enjoy it before giving it up; *instead* we should imagine what we *would* do if we did not fear getting caught: “What evils do you allow in spirit?” This boils down to what we end up doing in our fantasies. You need to shun them as well. This is the 9th and 10th commandments: “Thou shalt not covet...” Only when we shun “evil intentions” do we truly wish our neighbors well (*True Christian Religion* 456, *Heavenly Doctrine* 165).

To offset disappointment here, it is important to remember the great luxury of the delights and pleasures in what is good and true, which outnumber and outperform all the pleasures associated with evils and falsities.

There is No Fatalism. Another common explanation for evil happenings, such as earthquakes with so many innocent victims, is Fate: there is an inescapable destiny, and suffering just becomes one’s lot. It can’t be helped. But there is no government “by necessity.” “If a person possesses freedom, ... what happens does not arise out of necessity” (*Arcana Coelestia* 6487). Nothing needs to happen! There is no fate. Nor do people suffer because fate has allotted it to them, out of necessity, all of which is impossible just because of human free choice. All evils, whether natural disasters or murder and war, stem from any person’s evil desires, which when acted out, hurt innocent victims. It is unfair to the victim. No one can avoid being hurt altogether, which was what the parents of Gautama intended for him. But he escaped his perfectly protected environment, and immediately saw a poor man, a corpse and a sick man. That is how Buddhism started. So the question is, do “innocent victims” deserve getting hurt? Is it ‘their own fault’?

No, no victim *deserves* being harmed. However, the reason evil keeps striking also the innocent is because *none have examined themselves*, confessed any guilt of any single inherited evil! They have left alone that gross hairy mat of accumulated human hereditary evil which everyone receives the same from birth. Leaving it alone means not repenting, not even examining oneself.

Now, when people don't repent, it means they do not *see* an evil to be evil, but call it "good." So although victims are innocent, penalties are still attached to the evils. Unless shunned, there are secret desires for evils harbored, and so misfortunes and pain victimize even those who do not do evils. Thus the "innocent" are permitted to experience the pain of evil, even when they are not in that evil, so that "their suffering breaks down their evil pleasures" (*Arcana Coelestia* 762).

There are of course truly innocent people, like babies and the helpless, who suffer. But evil cannot be overcome unless it is seen, and an evil-doer will not repent unless he has first met with success. So in any case, evil will happen to innocent victims. It is therefore pointless to blame the Lord for not stopping it. We are the ones who are not clean, and we must intervene. Why ask Him to do it! The Lord answers: "Here are water, soap and a towel. Haven't you got hands and the ability to use them? Wash yourself" (*True Christian Religion* 331). So the answer to fatalism is: No! for we are free to shun evils once we see from the Word what is true and good. When evils are successful, they make the fatal error of coming out in the open, and people in their freedom then overcome them, in themselves and in others.

The best scenario is for children to be educated with love and wisdom on the parts of parents and older generations, so that they reach adulthood and right away shun the tendencies to evils, before there is even a temptation to act out a tendency. That is the "easy yoke, the light burden." It is easy to enter heaven, if

you overcome the tendency right off (*Heaven and Hell* 528 ff). Such is our freedom. Fatalism is a fallacy of retrospect and justification.

There is No Predestination. Closely linked to fatalism is the belief in Predestination. Some call it the same, but predestination is more of a religious fallacy, while fatalism is a popular philosophy. Predestination together with faith alone, i.e. we are saved by what we believe, not by anything to do with how we live, does three things: 1. it abolishes religion, and removes the Ten Commandments from any relevance; 2. it induces a false sense of security, and kills our need to exercise free choice in spiritual things; 3. it accuses the Lord of condemnation to hell, since He could save everyone from hell, and prevent all evils, but He does not, since there is a hell. Therefore, this belief, since Ancient times, is called the “flying fiery serpent” mentioned in Daniel (See *Divine Providence* 340).

There is a Providence that leads all people to heaven, so in that sense “all are predestined to heaven.” However, Predestination either to heaven or to hell, at the whim and fancy of God, without the conscious participation of us humans, is a horrible falsity, and it threatens damnation to those who believe and live by that creed. For then evil tendencies are automatically condoned as innate urges, and evil deeds are excused as of no relevance! If someone does evils, believing they don’t matter, they can be condemned by them. If “evils” are just urges to be satisfied, then everything becomes ‘good’ and just need controlled outlets. With evils condoned, there is no need for self-examination or repentance, and so the maxim becomes: “What is more pleasing than to live according to the flesh and still believe you are saved”? (cf. *Arcana Coelestia* 794, 916).

In the New Church too, we have to fight any sense that just knowing the Heavenly Doctrines bypasses the need for our reformation. At the same time, just knowing and loving the Doctrines *is* what qualifies anyone for being in “the Doctrine of the New Jerusalem” (*Apocalypse Revealed* 932, 946)... and thus “those who will be in the New Jerusalem” (*Apocalypse Revealed* 351, 352, 354, 361). Still, as the New Church message is so often harped on, the assumption is always that everyone should live by the Ten Commandments as well. For all the Doctrines stem from and rest on these. Consequently, living according to the Doctrines of the New Church or “applying doctrine to life” invariably ends up in shunning an evil named in the Decalogue.

How Easily the Lord Leads to This or That Heaven.

We are warned that all evils and falsities flow into us from below, from hell, while all goods and truths flow into us from the Lord, through heaven. If you receive anything from hell, no matter how good it looks, it is still received from below, from hell! If we could just see the *direction* of the influx, we could easily spot what to cast out and what not. Can we see this in ourselves? What are the means?

Yes, we can. The means are called the Ten Commandments. And we are told point blank, “If man believed, as is the truth, that all good and truth originate from the Lord, and all evil and falsity from hell, he would not appropriate good to himself and account it meritorious, nor would he appropriate evil to himself and account himself responsible for it” (*Divine Providence*, heading, 320). We just need to ask of our motives, “up or down?” “coming from above, or from below?” and act accordingly. Or ask: “Do I want to take credit for this? It is the Lord’s!” “Do I want to be caught openly with this? It is hell’s!”

As we detect interior desires for revenge, secret lust or

cruelty, i.e. laughing in secret at others especially when they experience difficulties, or letting slip a cutting remark, or when we exalt ourselves in secret, thinking how much better we are than others, or imagining a fantasy such as ourselves swinging on a wire above the dumb masses to do a dramatic rescue, etc; we can detect in all of this our “contempt of others in comparison with oneself.” An easy way to spot our own evils is by this simple comparison test: list all those we scorn, compared to ourselves! But why? Shame on us. Also the love of “reputation, honor and gain” (read profit). How much do we delight in having our name called out? “Please step forward, receive your deserved acclaim.” We would love it, but why? We automatically defend and protect our own reputation which begins from a natural thus unspiritual motive, but when we become spiritual, we *still* defend our reputation (cf. *Divine Providence* 73:5). A spiritual person would never boast their own virtue above that of others, not even in secret. Still, a spiritual rational person would also protect his reputation, as also that of others’. But we must not scorn others.

And as for gain, or profit, we of course are allowed to make a profit, since we can’t live without an income. Even riches are not wicked, since “everyone is permitted to enjoy the plentiful table” (*Heaven and Hell* 359). Plus a life leading to heaven is supposed to be spent “in the world” and its uses, not in a monastic or reclusive removal from it (*Heavenly Doctrine* 126, 128, 129). So we can have material wealth and high positions of honor which go with legitimate ambitions to perform greater uses. We just cannot set our hearts on these things at the expense of loving the neighbor, or loving God. We must not scorn others in comparison.

And how do we know that we love God, love the Lord? We know it by keeping the commandments of not stealing or fraud, murdering by flashes of anger, or lying and blaspheming, on all levels of meaning, and doing this even when no one is watching.

“He who keeps My commandments he it is that loves Me” (John 14: 15, 21). And unclean sexual desires are inborn, but education for adult life mostly subordinates them. However, not committing adultery in our hearts, places a great premium today on monogamous heterosexual marriages as being the only legitimate union from creation. Only one man with one woman is from creation, since it stems from the fact of One God and One Church in heaven and on earth! (*Conjugal Love* 70). It is the only sanctioned union, also because thereby the greatest love, to procreate the human race, finds its legitimate Eden.

The Lord leads all of us, all people, towards heaven by the affections of our life’s love thereby ordering even our thoughts and prudence (*Divine Providence* 192, 200). “Nothing is wiser, more infinite than the Lord’s *Divine Providence*” (*Spiritual Experiences* 2713).

The “inmost design of the Divine Providence in regard to heaven” is that everyone is “continually prepared by the Lord for his own place.” People of all nations, ages, both genders, are being led to their “own places” in heaven, which is why “heaven is divided into as many societies” so that no part can be “in any place but its own” (*Divine Providence* 68). That is why everyone, even those who enter hell, enter no place than the one “assigned to him either in heaven or in hell, and since both heaven and hell must exist in such a form as will act as one, as was said before; and since no one can be assigned in that form any place but his own” (*Divine Providence* 203). The Lord leads each one to his or her own place, by the “most individual things” and that is how our places are “foreseen and also provided” (*Ibid*). This guidance takes place on earth, which is why the laws of Providence apply here, while on earth. People who are “in hell” while *here*, are led out of hell, but only while still *here*. This governing of wicked people, or those who temporarily have succumbed to evils in temptations, or are just led astray at the

moment, “the Lord governs in hell as to his spirit in the spiritual world,” for he or she is then in some “infernal society there” but in a “heavenly society” if he is good. The Lord leads each person by transferring them “from one society in hell to another, if they are wicked” until they can “undergo reformation.” At that point, while still here on earth, he or she is “led out of hell and raised up into heaven” (*Divine Providence* 307).

This governing takes place only here on earth, and continues “till [their] deaths, [at which point they are] ...no longer transferred from society to society there, no longer being reformed, but [they] remain in that state accordance with [their] life” (*Ibid*). That is how “[t]herefore, when a man dies he is assigned to his own place.” The Lord was already leading him or her by means of these societies before they died, so now they are lead to “this or that place” (*Divine Providence* 68) that is “their own place” (op. cit. 203) in heaven, ... or in hell, but after death. This final elevation or descent depends on the person’s own reception and cooperation of the Lord’s leading while still on earth. Thus the final raising up “out of hell into heaven” awaits the person after death, either directly upon awakening, if all of regeneration has been achieved, or after some stay in the world of spirits.

Why then do some people die young, some as infants, and others in extreme old age? If heaven is the end to which the Lord in His providence leads all, how long a time is needed to achieve this?

The Lord alone knows the balance of uses, and His Laws of Providence instantly switch and become the Laws of Permission whenever anyone is striving to depart from His hand of Providence. The two sets of laws are identical (*Divine Providence* 202, 234). What alone determines whether anyone is under the laws of Providence or Permission is whether they are heading towards the Lord or away from Him! These laws act

with the same finality as gravity does, and we may compare them to a fishing-line, and we are the fish the Lord has hooked: if the Lord is reeling us in, it is Providence, if we are struggling to get away, it is Permission! The fishing line is identical. So also the laws of Providence and Permission are identical. And that is how evils are *permitted* to happen: the Lord pays out the line to leave us in freedom, while retaining His providential hand in our lives. Because we have evil tendencies of all kinds from birth, and as long as we do *not* examine ourselves and repent, the line is paid out: diseases, misfortunes and accidents may happen to us or in the places where we live. Only by regeneration does man “most commonly become exempt from misfortunes” (*Spiritual Experiences*, 4630m). Meanwhile, the Lord never wills any evil to befall anyone, but “He cannot prevent them, on account of the end which is salvation” (*Divine Providence* 234).

Now we all wonder why the Lord “lets this or that happen?” “How can there be a God if this happens?” However, if the Lord *did* prevent active evils, we would all object so strenuously that our evil tendencies would be inflamed into total conflagration, and we would enter hell on the spot! That lay behind the Lord’s response to His disciples who said, “Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?” (Luke 9:54). What did the Lord reply? “But He turned and rebuked them, saying, You do not know what manner of spirit you are of” (Luke 9:55). The meaning is that desiring to destroy those who do not receive, means that the truths you have taught and claim are from heaven, are *falsities!* (*Apocalypse Explained* 599:2). Having yourself descending in flames into hell is a heavy price to pay for wanting the Lord’s direct intervention, now! That is why wars for e.g. *are* permitted: to prevent condemnation to hell and to allow evils to come into the open, for good people to intercede and remove

them (*Divine Providence* 251). That is why war is permitted only if hidden evils can thereby come out into the open and be seen and combatted. It would be easier for people to examine themselves, see and repent of their evil tendencies to begin with, and thereby prevent a war. The same with great misfortunes, tsunamis, earthquakes, etc.: they “break down the natural pleasures” of people and fix their “thoughts on and raise them to higher and nobler things” (*Arcana Coelestia* 762). Thus, as we said, such misfortunes are never “as if the Lord willed them,” but only because “He cannot prevent them” (*Divine Providence* 16, 234). That is, prevent “all of them.” We should thank the Lord every day for the misfortunes we never see, because He did prevent them. Meanwhile, war and misfortunes will just keep happening all over the world, because a majority of people persist in *not* examining themselves for the sake of improvement! Beware of such negligence.

The “four uses” which the Lord uses as rule-of-thumb to govern the length of people’s lives, depending on their own loves and actions, are 1) to be of use or service to others while you are here on earth, 2) to serve the spirits and angels who are attending you while here on earth, 3) to serve the use of being regenerated while here on earth, or 4) to serve your own use to others in heaven! (cf. *Spiritual Experiences* 5002). Are you wise enough to decide when you are ready “to go?” No one is. So we keep moving forward, in whatever age, trusting that our own regeneration is being benefited, that we benefit others, and – hey, listen to this one: that we benefit angels and spirits who are attending us. That is at least one of the many uses performed by the elderly, some of whom at times wonder what on earth they are still here for. Angels need you here, and we need the angelic contact through you, so stay right where you are, and keep being your sweet self! Why do you think angels have delighted in your presence for so long? So they can be close to all the others who

need their presence, that's why. So don't be in a hurry to depart, just relax and live in the Lord.

What if tragedy strikes and an infant dies, is that infant better off than if he or she had lived to old age? There is an answer, and here it is: "Everyone who dies in infancy goes to heaven, and is there brought up and instructed as a person is in the world; and through his affection for good and truth he is imbued with wisdom and becomes an angel. *Such also might the man become* who is brought up and instructed in the world, for *there is inherent in him the same* as is in the infant" (*Divine Providence* 324:9 added emphasis).

It is inherent in everyone to become an angel! So the infant who dies only has a head-start in time, but not in the manner of salvation. Even infants who die have to overcome their hereditary tendencies, the same in heaven as people growing up on earth. The process is the same, either way. The laborers in the vineyard all received the same pay, one penny, no matter how long they worked! Besides, the "end of creation is heaven from the human race," but you need a *human race* to begin with; and if everyone died as children, there'd be a heaven, but no human race! Heaven can descend "so upon the earth" only if there is a human race with rich cultural heritages and long-lived people with happiness and marriage and family. That is why is it better to live to old age than to die young. Heaven can descend to earth in all instances, all the uses governing time of death are means towards the greatest possible happiness each individual can sustain. No matter how long or short one's life, there is a "fullness" to achieve, meant by a "measure to fill" (cf. *Arcana Coelestia* 7984, 10227.2).

And such societies on earth the Lord provides, and His Divine Will exercises Its infinite Love in such guidance. How hard is it for the Lord our God to do all that work, figure out the four uses of living a long or short life for 6 billion people here,

and untold others throughout the universe? How hard is it for the Lord our God, to “balance all uses,” and “where forces fail, [to bring] people ... thither”? (*Spiritual Experiences* 5003). How hard is it to provide for human freedom and see that it is “not one whit removed just because of the Lord’s Divine Foresight”? How much work is involved in all that governing? Is it hard work? Well, no: the human race “progresses according to the *Divine beck and mere nod of head*” (*Spiritual Experiences* 2234, added emphasis). The Lord governs everything as by a mere “beck and nod of the head”! You try it. There, see how easy it is? That is how easy it is for the Lord to lead us to heaven. Behind His smile, an entire era of people is wafted towards heaven, - - that is to “this or that heaven,” to “your own place in heaven.”

Truly conjugal love today is so rare that it is generally unknown...Nevertheless,...there actually is such a loveEvidences of experience testify that it exceeds love of self, love of the world, even love of life. Are there not men who, for the woman they long for and implore to be their bride, throw themselves on their knees...and submit themselves to her wishes as the humblest of servants - evidence that that love exceeds love of self?...who, ...count any price as nothing,...and spend their fortunes lavishly – evidence that that love exceeds love of the world?... who...regard their very life as worthless and wish to die if she does not consent to their entreaty [or]...battle rival suitors even to their death, – evidence that that love exceeds love of life?...who, for the woman they long for and implore to be their bride, at her refusal have been driven out of their minds?
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