

Selected Papers and Addresses

By Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss 2008

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Sermons on Marriage

ALL THE PATHS OF THE LORD

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

All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth to such as keep His covenant and His testimonies. Psalms 25:10.

Part of the wonder of the revelation the Lord gave in His second Advent is the vision of true married love, or love truly conjugal: a love so rare that it is scarcely known, and its quality is not known; the precious jewel of human life; a love so beautiful that the Lord made it to be His ultimate gift to all who will follow Him; a love so powerful that for its sake a man may leave the father and mother of selfishness and pride and cleave to his wife, and in becoming one flesh find heaven.

It is so great a love that we may be deceived by its power. Love conquers all, is a common saying. In a sense this is true. Because of the love of two people for each other, they have withstood torture and oppression. They have undergone hardship and misery and deprivation. They have lived in abject poverty and yet been happy.

Love conquers all that is outside of us. But the Writings tell us and experience shows that love does not conquer selfishness - not at first. The enemy within is proof against love. Love is not sufficient to banish the mean emotions of the unregenerate heart, the petty jealousies, the desire to dominate another, the spirit of distrust, the sword of anger. In a most remarkable passage, one that is key to all our understanding of the Lord's way to us, He said that when He came on earth, He came because His love was not enough. The Divine good by itself, He said, was inadequate to overcome evil. Love is like the blunt edge of a sword, or like a bow without arrows - powerless in the face of determined evil. So the Lord clothed Himself in truth, and from that truth He conquered hell (@TCR 85, 86). He established the way of truth, and this way, this path leads us to our dreams (@AC 2034).

So we pray with the Psalmist, Show me Your ways, O Lord, teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation. It is a cardinal principle of love truly conjugal that it comes only by means of truths. We have to walk in the ways of the Lord, by learning His truth and seeking it. Married love is a journey, and the path can be found only in His Word.

So we find many places in the Word which speak of the Lord's paths. I will bring the blind by a way they did not know; I will lead them in paths they have not known. I will make darkness light before them, and crooked places straight (Isaiah 42:16). Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths (Isaiah 2:3). For everyone who starts out on the path of true marriage He provides a way, and He longs to teach them of that way, because love is a journey, and truth is the guide, and without that guide we will not reach the precious goal of love truly conjugal.

Thou wilt show me the path of life (Psalms 16:11). We long for a single path in our marriages. When a young couple gets married, don't their hearts echo the words of the Psalmist, Lead me, Lord, lead my

in Your righteousness... make Your way straight before my face. (Psalms 5:8). And it seems that the Lord promises this: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters, in a straight way in which they shall not stumble (Jeremiah 31:9). It is possible to start off your married life with high ideals, to walk a straight path from that point on towards your heaven. Perhaps the path will waver a little, but for a very few, who have not confirmed themselves in evils, such a path exists. The Word speaks of it, when it says that those who have not given in to evil may walk towards heaven along a simple path. If they incline to an evil, they must just resist it. For them it is as easy as that (see @DLife 97, @HH 535). The obedience of such people, simple as it is, triumphs over the vicissitudes of life, and they walk along a relatively straight road to heaven.

But this is far from the only way and there are many married couples who, when their path is not straight, feel like failures. We know the way we should have gone, they say. The Lord's truth was very clear. We just couldn't live up to it. So we have lost our way, and our hope of a pure love is gone.

A farmer once noticed how his cattle went down to the river to drink each night. The river lay directly to the east of the field in which they grazed. But they had worn a path that started towards the north, then wound west, away from the river, then reversed itself and twisted and turned until it reached the water. At first he wondered at their meandering, but then he reflected that his life had been very like the path his cattle had trodden. He too had wandered far off course, sometimes heading in the opposite direction from his goal, and finally, by a devious course, realizing his dreams.

All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth to such as keep His covenant and His testimonies. The ways of the Lord are many, and they are merciful and full of truth. He doesn't create one path only, nor does He forsake those who stray from the straight one that He does indeed offer. All the paths of the Lord..... There are many, many truths which He has revealed which help people to journey towards the dream once again, and His mercy and truth together await those who decide - even if belatedly - to keep His covenant and His testimonies.

We must not deny the danger. The hells love to destroy marriages, and they have ways of helping us to stray from the paths. Many dreams are shattered in peoples lives. Perhaps they are trying to do what is right, and are misguided. Perhaps one of them is trying and the other is not. At times they are led astray by the allures of sexual love or the desire to dominate. And, tragically, sometimes they have their dreams hurt by predators who rob them of a sense of beauty. They look upon their lives, and feel they have wandered so far from the path of true love. They understand when the Word says, The angels of peace weep bitterly; the paths are laid waste, the wayfaring man has ceased (Isaiah 33:7, 8; see @AC 3780); or when Deborah said, The ways ceased, and they that walked in paths went through crooked ways, the roads ceased in Israel (Judges 5:6,7; see @AC 8753); or again, when the Lord lamented, The way of peace they have not known; and there is no judgment in their tracks; they have perverted their paths for themselves; whoever treads on it shall not know peace (Isaiah 59:8; cf. @AC 8941).

But all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth to such as keep His covenant and His testimonies. Consider this teaching in the Writings: when a person from set purpose commits adultery heaven is closed to him. Doesn't that seem to say that there is no path back? Yet the Writings in that same passage say that such a persons interiors can be opened by serious repentance (@AC 2750). This is the path of mercy and truth offered to an adulterer, and the many truths about repentance and

forgiveness are part of the road he may travel towards heaven. Can we help him to see that road?

There is a teaching in the Writings that the majority in young adult life turn to evil (@AC 5470). Yet the same passage says that the Lord preserves in many who do so a sense of anxiety when they reflect on their sins, and within that anxiety He preserves an interior acknowledgment of evil, which, when it is recalled, becomes confession and finally repentance. This is the path of the Prodigal Son, who confessed, and returned.

Then there is a beautiful teaching in *The Apocalypse Explained*, which speaks of how the Lord leads peoples affections, silently, gently. It says that if his affections are evil, then his spirit is in hell, even while he lives on earth. If he doesn't look the Lord he goes down deeper into hell. And yet, the passage continues, the Lord leads him as if by the hand, permitting and withholding as far as the person is willing to follow in freedom. But if the person looks to the Lord he is led forth from these societies gradually, according to the order and connection in which they stand, which order and connection no one knows but the Lord only, and thus he is brought by continual steps out of hell up towards heaven and into heaven (@AE 1174). All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth to such as keep His covenant and His testimonies.

All of us tread only those paths to which our affection leads us (@HH 496). But the effort of the Lord's mercy and truth together are to bend the pathway back towards heaven. So we find references to winding pathways through which the Lord leads us. Even people who are on the way to heaven go through winding paths, known not to any angel but to the Lord alone (@DP 164). Another passage speaks of how we would revolt against the Lord's leading if it was clear where he was guiding us, so he leads us by unknown paths. It is as if a man were in the company of an enemy who intends to kill him, and a friend leads him away by unknown paths to safety, and when he is safe, then the friend tells him what the enemy had intended (@DP 211).

There is a beautiful teaching in the Writings that says that in order to find true love, people need to understand the other person, but they also need to understand themselves, and then from this understanding the Lord leads them by gently sloping pathways up to heaven (@AC 189). To understand yourself - both your good parts and your weaknesses: to use that understanding and the truth of the Word to show real love to another - that is a path to true marriage.

There are many in this congregation who are not presently married. To them the path of true love seems to be something for the future. But all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth. He is leading you to the marriage of love and wisdom in your hearts, not matter what your married status. And if that bond - of your loves with your truths - is being forged, you are walking along a beautiful path towards love truly conjugal.

Nearly all couples marry with high hopes, deep and intense dreams for true love and charity between them. They may not understand well enough what they are doing. They may be rather shallow in the vision they have of love. They may be woefully immature. But deciding on the person with whom one wishes to share eternity is the most important decision in life, and when they take it they usually have a passionate sincerity about it. When the marriage starts to falter, the misery, the sense of failure, the sense of having wandered from the way make their lives deeply, deeply distressing. They may have walked down crooked paths - along the way of false values. But the Lord's will is to change that. I will

bring the blind by a way they did not know; I will lead them in paths they have not known. I will make darkness light before them, and crooked places straight. These things I will do for them and not forsake them (Isaiah 42:16). The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill made low, and the crooked shall be made straight and the rough places smooth (Isaiah 40:3-5).

The Lord came on earth to re-establish the marriage between good and truth, which is the origin of love truly conjugal. To all who allow Him to join good and truth in their minds and hearts, He has given his greatest gift, the privilege of loving one person truly, totally, tenderly, if not in this world, then certainly in the next. All the paths of the Writings, every truth that is there, speaks mercy and truth together, showing that precious union between love and the way of love. Each path leads to true marriage. There are no other pathways than the one's He has shown.

In this small church of ours the pathways to true marriages may be explored. We may look into the pages of the Lord's last, great revelation to humankind, and find many truths, each one showing people the way, so that they can keep His covenant and His testimonies, and then He will lead them by secret pathways known to Him alone, away from danger towards their dreams.

Let us try to picture our Heavenly Father, looking down with the eyes of mercy and truth, using all the powers of His infinite providence to work on each of our marriages. And the Lord challenges us all to help others along this journey. Prepare the way for the people; Build up, build up the highway! Take out the stones, lift up a banner for the people (Isaiah 62:10). And you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of paths to dwell in (Isaiah 58:12).

Each of us as individuals is on a journey towards the marriage of good and truth in our hearts. Each couple among us is treading a pathway towards true love. And the church as a whole is on a journey, seeking the many pathways of the Lord's truth, that they may walk towards the dream of a community in which marriage is honored and treasured, and in which the children of the church grow with a trust that the Lord will lead them to happy married love. May we find many paths as we explore His Word, and know that there are many more; for all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth to such as keep His covenant and His testimonies Amen.

Selected Lessons

Psalms 25: 4-7: Show me Your ways, O LORD; teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; on You I wait all the day. Remember, O LORD, Your tender mercies and Your lovingkindnesses, for they are from of old. Do not remember the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions; according to Your mercy remember me, for Your goodness sake, O LORD.

The blind by a path they have not known - Isaiah 42:16

I will bring the blind by a way they did not know; I will lead them in paths they have not known. I will make darkness light before them, and crooked places straight. These things I will do for them, and not forsake them.

He will teach us of His ways - Isaiah 2:2-5

Now it shall come to pass in the latter days That the mountain of the Lord's house Shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

Amend your ways - Jeremiah 7:5-7

For if you thoroughly amend your ways and your doings, if you thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor, if you do not oppress the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place, or walk after other gods to your hurt, then I will cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever.

The voice of Him that cries in the wilderness - Isaiah 40:3 The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Pave the highway Isaiah 62:10

10 Go through, Go through the gates! Prepare the way for the people; Build up, Build up the highway! Take out the stones, lift up a banner for the peoples!

DP 164: As freedom is not taken away from a person, he can be led and taught only in the measure that he receives love and wisdom as if from himself. Those who receive are conducted to their places through an infinite maze of winding paths

DP 211: The reason why the Divine Providence operates so secretly that scarcely anyone knows of its existence is that a person may not perish. If a person felt this he would be enraged and exasperated against God, and would perish; but while he does not feel this he may be enraged and exasperated against people, and against himself and also against fortune, without perishing. Hence it is that the Lord by His Divine Providence continually leads a person in freedom, and the freedom appears to him to be none other than his own; and to lead one in freedom in opposition to himself is like lifting up a heavy and resisting weight from the ground by means of screws, through the power of which the weight and the resistance are not felt. It is also like what happens to someone in the company of an enemy who intends to kill him, an intention he is not aware of; and a friend leads him away by unknown paths and afterwards discloses to him his enemys intention.

HH 519: After this each one is led by the Lord into his own society, which is also effected by various ways, sometimes by winding paths. The ways by which they are led are not known to any angel, but are known to the Lord alone.

All the paths of the Lord....

FRIENDSHIP IN MARRIAGE

A Sermon by the Rev. Peter M. Buss, Sr.

The states of this love are innocence, peace, tranquility, inmost friendship, full confidence, and a mutual desire of mind and heart to do each other every good @CL 180.

Beautiful words. But a list of words seems to slip through our minds and we don't notice what they are saying, and are left with a general feeling that conjugal love produces a lot of happy states.

This list means a lot more than that. It starts with the deepest mind, and the most precious thing there is innocence, the willingness to let the Lord lead us. That absence of pride and self-love is the spirit of all good, and when we let the Lord guide us, we feel His love flow down, softly, gently, as peace. Two people who love each other truly have peace within, and in their lower minds they have tranquility: they are content with what the Lord has given them.

Innocence, peace and tranquility: these are the deep joys of marriage love as they inflow from the Lord. Below them is friendship and full confidence, and they are delights we can recognize and understand. They produce the desire of heart and mind to do the other every good.

The subject today is friendship in marriage, what part it plays in welding the hearts of two people into one, and how it deepens until it becomes superior to every other friendship. Friendship is love on a lower plane, and sometimes it is taken for the love itself, but it isn't. It is supposed to serve and give happy expression to what is in the soul and the deepest mind. True love is a wish to enter into the life of another (@AC 2738). It is the molding together of two people on every plane of life. It is the innocence and the peace and the tranquility which are above friendship. It is the image of one, written on the heart of the other, so that the loved one is present in everything he or she wills or does. True marriage love is the human form itself, for two people, forever individuals, are made by that love into an angel of heaven.

Friendship, ideal friendship in marriage, is the garment and the face of that love. Love is the person himself. But a person has a face, and clothing (@CL 214).

Clothing is supposed to be an attractive covering to the body, but no particular dress or suit is essential. There is a kind of friendship which is like a garment in marriage, and it is our enjoyment in shared activities. Married people do things together, they have fun together. They share cultural things or sports or vacation trips or social life. These things give them things to talk about, to communicate, to show interest in each other.

When they are first married, a couple has divergent interests. Their tastes in food or music or books might be different. Probably they will never share all these things, unless they try to force agreement, and that isn't healthy. Yet as they live together, and love grows up between them, there is a tendency to wear garments that attract the other. They develop those recreations they can share, and the one's they cannot tend to get discarded, like a once-pleasing dress which has lost its charm. As a couple goes through life they also choose new recreations and activities, and tend to find one's they can share.

They will not share everything, and in the things they don't do together their love is shown by taking an interest in the delight the other person has in something. The garment is the least important, and it is a pity that quarrels can arise from trying to force agreement on this lowest plane of mental joy. A man may be offended by his wife's lack of interest in something that is important to him. He might compare her unfavorably to someone else who likes that particular activity of his, implying that she loves him less than she should. Such feelings are common even where there is love; but we should recognize that this is selfish and therefore destructive love, not true charity.

Friendship is the garment of love. It is also the face of love. The face doesn't change, it doesn't get cast off with the changing times and uses of life. Two people who are friends share their feelings and thoughts about things in life, and this is the face of love. Love itself is sharing our deepest, inmost thoughts, and that sharing is often communicated without words. But below that there is the ability to talk about the things of this world, and how we feel about them. We can communicate how we feel about life, here and now, and into the future. We can share our fears, our worries and insecurities with someone whom we can trust. We can share our joys and our successes and our hopes with someone who will always enter into them.

That ability to communicate freely is one of the most precious things in all of life, and it is learned. It is not there in a moment. That's something we know about friendship - that it grows slowly, and you have to learn it, but we sometimes don't realize that the same is true of love. People often think love is all there on the wedding day, and when it doesn't move them strongly ten years later they are disillusioned and don't feel bound by its laws. But we do know that friendship develops. We know that we care for our partners, yet find it hard, many times, to say how we feel and how we think. We may want to speak, but the words are wrong, or we seem too busy to take the time or we talk about generalities instead, or we are less than honest; or perhaps in times of cold we just don't want to communicate.

We know we have to work on friendship. As time goes on we learn how more easily to touch that other mind, what words or expressions or what kind of silence best conveys the thoughts of our hearts. We have to learn - and none of us learns it easily - that pride is a great barrier to real friendship. We have to learn when not to feel hurt, when not to read meanings into things; when to ask for help instead of standing back with injured pride, preparing to be affronted because our partner didn't see what we needed. We have to learn how to admit our wrong feelings and take a chance on his or her forgiveness, instead of finding some excuse. Then over the years comes a sharing of how we feel and think, an awareness of how the other will react in a situation, the ability to look across the room and know how she feels. This is the face of love. It is a complete friendship which often shows in the face of partners who are truly beloved and makes them appear similar, though the features are quite different. Swedenborg once saw a married couple in heaven and noticed a oneness in their faces, and he said, You two are one. The man replied, We are one. Her life is in me and mine in her. We are two bodies but one soul (@CL 75).

This is the ideal friendship in marriage. Yet friendship has its special use long before the ideal is reached, and the Lord has told us about that as well.

The love of two newly-married people isn't pure. It is full of wonderful idealism, and there is some innocence in it, a precious seed. But the love itself, that flame which starts marriage, is more of the

body than the spirit. It burns down after a while, its too intense (@CL 162). When it burns down the business of marriage, the work part becomes evident.

When this happens a couple is far from perfect. They are still natural and earthly in their values, not ready to receive the holy love which the Lord is wanting to give them - even though the seed of it is deep in their souls. Their interests are too centered on the here and now. In this state of normal human life on earth, it is friendship which bridges the gap between the first love, and the true conjugal which will follow (@CL 214; 162). As two people settle down to the business of living and the first excitement of marriage wears off, they are often held together by the fact that they are willing to be good friends. They wear pleasing garments - they spend hours in each others company, and work together, building and furnishing a home, feeding and clothing and raising children and struggling to balance their budget. They relax together, take vacations together.

They also have the face of love, for they talk of these things, and share the problems of living. They succeed together, and share that; and fail and share that too. Most of the time they are friends. It is only a few times that they remember and love the total ideal, or touch the heights when the Lord opens their spirits and lets them look at the tranquility and the peace and innocence that are to come.

What they have most of the time is not the true, everlasting love of heaven. It is a good, orderly contented state, and if two people work on their friendship, it gradually introduces them more and more into conjugal love itself. For remember that marriage love is simply charity. It is the responsibility to show kindness to a particular person - your wife, or your husband. Sometimes we think that we are free to fight with and show unkindness to this person just because we love him or her - that love sets us free from the bonds of common kindness. The laws of charity are pre-eminently the laws of marriage.

As two people try to walk the path of religion, practicing charity more at home than anywhere else, their hearts are opened to each other and they begin to know the inner blessings of love. Then too the first fires of love come back in a different guise, refined, purified, and stronger than before, because now they are the fires of true love (@CL 214).

Friendship introduces a couple into the true love of marriage. This is its holy use. It is the bridge between the honeymoon state and heaven itself, the happy walking on earth while our eyes are uplifted to heaven; and slowly as we walk we are lifted up to that heaven. Then friendship itself changes. It is purified, made more gentle and wiser from the warmth that is in the soul and mind. The fire of love that has been burned into the heart softens the outward show of love, and conjugal, or inmost friendship is born. That is the true face of love. It is because of this use of friendship that wives are especially delighted with it and foster it with their husbands (@CL 155a:3; 355). Because friendship is such a sponsor of true love it endures into old age too, and two people who have been married for decades find contentment in the care and communication with this closest friend in the last years of earthly life. Old age is a time when friendship is especially important, and if a partner has gone early into the other world, or if someone has not been married here on earth, the warmth of relatives and friends is a necessary replacement.

Finally the Writings unite friendship to full confidence. Confidence implies two things - the willingness to confide, and the ability to trust that other person. Trust is something we often want to require of a

friend, but it cannot be forced. When two people marry they want to trust one another, but in many things they cant; for without knowledge of the other person, and without experience and maturity, and especially without repentance, it would be foolish to put our most precious and tender thoughts into our partners hands. At first these things would be treated harshly, used against us in arguments, maybe scorned. But after years of living together, trust deepens and become not just a wish but a reality. At first our confidence in our loved one is often shaken, for we are all human, and we are all tempted to use our partners feelings against him or her, - abusing trust. But sincere people regret these things and try to make amends, and learn to treat with reverence the precious feelings entrusted to him or to her. Then the partner sees that effort, and accepts an honest apology when offered, and sees the growing strength we have in resisting the impulse to hurt by means of what we know of another's weakness. Trust is born; and slowly, it grows up.

Conjugal love is a gift from the Lord. We cannot create it, the Lord gives it to us when we can bear it. We can build friendship. Every day we can decide to think first of that person we have married. We can choose to say a kind word or an angry one. We can praise and support or censure and complain. A hundred times a day we have the choice to show friendship or to withhold it.

Yes, we can do a lot to build friendship. It is on this earthly plane of giving and sharing that we turn to the Lord, and into this friendship He causes everlasting love to be born. That is His creation, and we can only marvel when finally it touches us and makes our friendship conjugal also.

Conjugal love is to think and to will as one, to dwell together in all things, even to the inmost. Conjugal friendship is the delight in speaking our hearts to our partners, joy in that free interplay between two minds which have no barriers left, for they have nothing left to guard against. They may put themselves in their partners hands, and know that no harm will come to them. This trust too is a gift from heaven, the confidence of two people who both know that they are trying to be faithful to the laws of love from the King of love. Of such is the kingdom of heaven. Amen

Lessons: 1. Matthew 19:1-12 2. @CL 162 3. @CL 214

General References to Friendship in Marriage

1. Its use, especially in the first years of marriage: @CL 162; 214; 334.
2. Wives preserve friendship and confidence in a marriage: @CL 155a:3; also love with inmost friendship is with wives as wisdom and its delight is with husbands @CL 355.
3. Listed as one of the lower delights of love truly conjugal @CL 183.
4. Sometimes friendship can continue when what is eternal has departed from the thought of the partners. @CL 216; cf. chapter on causes of apparent love, favor and friendship.
5. Those in conjugal love have continual inmost friendship. @SE 6110:29
6. The chaste love of the sex is spiritual friendship @CL 55. cf. how the wife moderates friendship with any other woman @CL 75.
7. Friendship between men and women enter deeply and conjoin because a friendship of love with understanding. Friendships between those of the same sex cannot enter deeply in the same way. @CL 55.

Lessons from the Writings

@CL 214: In the case of people who are in a state of truly conjugal love, their union of minds increases, and with it, their friendship, but with those who are not in a state of conjugal love, these both decrease. We have already shown that a union of minds increases in the case of those who are in a state of truly conjugal love.... This union grows, moreover, as friendship is joined to love, because friendship is, so to speak, the face of that love and also its garment; for friendship both attaches itself to love like a garment and combines itself with it like a face.

Love prior to friendship is similar to love for any of the opposite sex, and after the wedding it gradually fades. But love combined with friendship continues on after the wedding and is also strengthened. It enters as well more deeply into the breast. Friendship introduces the love and causes it to be truly conjugal; and then the love in turn causes this, its friendship, to become also conjugal - a friendship which differs greatly from that of any other love, because it is a complete one.

@CL 162: The union (between husband and wife) takes place gradually from the first days of marriage, and in people who are in a state of truly conjugal love, it becomes deeper and deeper to eternity. The first heat in marriage does not join two people together, because it draws its character from a love for the opposite sex, which is a love belonging to the body and on that account to the spirit. And whatever is in the spirit as a result of the body does not last long. But love that is in the body as a result of the spirit does last. Love belonging to the spirit, and to the body as a result of the spirit, is insinuated into the souls and minds of married partners together with friendship and mutual trust. When friendship and mutual trust join together with the first love in marriage, conjugal love results, which opens the partners hearts and inspires in them the sweet enjoyments of love, and this more and more deeply as friendship and trust are added to the original love, and as that original love enters into this friendship and trust and they into it.

TENDERNESS IN MARRIAGE

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

Heavenly conjugal love exists when a man, together with his wife whom he loves most tenderly, and with his children, lives content in the Lord. From this he has in this world an inward pleasantness, and in the other life heavenly joy. @AC 5051

The sermon this morning presents an idealistic view of marriage. Some people here this morning may not presently be married, or their marriages may be undergoing distress. To them it may seem that these teachings are not applicable. Yet true marriage love is born of a deeper marriage. The New Church teaches that within each individual human mind, there can be a marriage of truth with good, of high principle with the practice of it. This deep marriage is the origin of marriage love between two people. If anyone has it, then one day - before they enter heaven - they will also be given by the Lord a partner whom they will love - deeply, eternally, tenderly. These ideals are for people of all time. Every angel who comes into heaven will know the blessings of marriage, and realize its highest ideals.

So let us turn our minds this morning to the subject of tenderness in marriage, and reflect that the principles which we hear will apply one day to every one of us. Indeed they apply also to most other human relationships.

Tenderness is a word we often associate with helplessness. We feel tender towards a little baby, who could easily be hurt; or to someone who is aged or infirm, or sick. We may be tender towards certain animals because our neglect would hurt them. But we are less likely to think of this feeling with another human being, healthy and strong like ourselves, who seems perfectly capable of taking care of himself, or herself. Towards our married partners, it is natural to assume a somewhat harder approach (except in affectionate moments).

Often our marriages are based on a type of friendship typical of high school boys. Boys of teenage years develop a fairly rigid code of decency which they expect themselves and their friends to observe. It is a good code, based on fairness. Each person gets an equal share of rights and benefits. Each person is expected to look out for himself, and if he is not receiving his just portion, he will take steps to correct the situation. Each is fiercely protective of his personal freedom, and resists any attempts to get him to do things he does not feel like doing. As long as rules like these are observed, the friendship can be a rewarding thing.

Couples are tempted to adopt a similar attitude in marriage. It is a partnership, each person putting in a degree of effort, accommodating up to a point, but guaranteed a degree of freedom. Within those parameters, love is enjoyed, and shown; but if a partner steps over the bounds, then he or she has to be brought back to a sense of the limits, and this is often done by rebuke, threats, or quarrels. It is easy to slip into a pattern of marriage like this, feeling you must guard your rights, but being prepared to be kind and loving as long as they are recognized.

There is a practical side to this attitude, but it is far below what the Lord offers us. The Lord in the Writings for the New Church speaks of tenderness as the ideal in marriage. He asks us to rise above the schoolboy relationship of a reserve of love, of the threat of punishment and unpleasantness if our will

is not done. He speaks of a tender love between husband and wife (@CL 321[7]), which softens hearts towards each other, and breeds in time complete trust in one another, and a desire to do him or her every good (@CL 181).

This ideal is far above the normal concept of marriage. The cynic in us says it cannot be. The practical part of us looks at our own relationships and says, I won't be able to live up to that ideal. Perhaps that is why the Lord says in His new revelation that true marriage love is so rare that its quality is not known. But this is His promise. It is the true relationship between husband and wife. It is what every angel feels for her or his consort. It is what you will feel, when you enter heaven as one of a married pair.

The Writings speak in beautiful ways of the gentleness of love between a husband and wife. On one occasion Swedenborg was invited to a temple of wisdom in the other world, and the men talked about the beauty of the female sex. We must understand this to mean the internal beauty of womankind - the wondrous form of their minds. Some of the men said that of themselves men are harsh, and their hearts cold. Their understandings like a good fight and they are proud of them. But when love is added through marriage, they become gentled, and through tenderness they learn wisdom. The Lord took the beauty and grace of life from man and transferred them into woman, said one, and that is why a man not reunited with his beauty and grace in woman is stern, severe, dry and unattractive, and also not wise except for his own sake alone, in which case he is a dunce. On the other hand, when a man is united with his beauty and grace of life in a wife, he becomes agreeable, pleasant, full of life and lovable, and therefore wise (@CL 56).

Then the wife of one angel husband came into the room and invited him to speak. In her presence the love that came from her softened his voice, and gave a gentleness to the thoughts he uttered. The life of wisdom from the wife was perceived in his speech; for the love of it was in the tone of his voice. So it will always be with a man who loves his wife tenderly.

Tenderness is a property of love. Therefore the Lord created it in women, and by it human life is made warm and loving. By it we escape from guarding our rights, and protecting our freedom, and getting our fair portion, into the security of a love which is innocent, and not proud. So the Writings teach: As woman is beautiful, so she is tender; and as she is tender, so she has the ability to perceive the delights of conjugal love; and because she can do this, she can look after the good of both people, fostering love, and inmost friendship. (Index on Marriage 2019).

The sphere of a wife who is tenderly loved by her husband is perceived in heaven most beautifully fragrant (@CL 171). Those who love each other tenderly on earth are certain they will live together forever. When they think they will be parted by death, they grieve, but then they are revived by the hope of an eternity in heaven (@CL 216). The Lord speaks directly to this hope when He reveals something new: Those who have lived together in love truly conjugal are not separated by the death of one, for the spirit of the deceased partner continues to dwell with the spirit of the one not yet deceased, and this until the death of the latter. Then they meet again and reunite and love each other even more tenderly than before because they are in the spiritual world. (@CL 321)

Yet tenderness seems to be a weakness! If you feel tender towards someone else he or she can take advantage of you. Beware! Protect yourself. Weave a shell around you so you can't be hurt. Even wives in heaven fell into this error, for when Swedenborg learned that wives love their husbands tenderly,

they asked him not to tell people on earth. They feared it was a weakness of women. Perhaps their husbands would take advantage of them, perhaps they would despise them for such a tender love. Swedenborg refused, saying that tender love is the greatest strength there is. It is goodness itself, and truth itself, he said (SE 6110:2).

Tender love is amazingly powerful. It can accomplish more than any other kind. It is time that the world knew this!

There is another reason why tenderness is so important in marriage. In the internal sense of the Word, it has reference to loves which are just beginning to grow, which have not yet come to full strength, and so are fragile, easily hurt and destroyed (@AC 4377). Each of us is learning to love, and what we presently have is often in need of protection. The loves that belong to heaven are tender, newborn at first inside of us, and it is these growing feelings from heaven that we want to share with the person with whom we will live in heaven. We want to explore them, to have him or her rejoice with us in them.

We need to be tender with these growing feelings. If we do, our partners can open their hearts and share their new-found joys with us without fear of having them trampled or scorned, without being afraid that we will use them against them. May the Lord teach us this deeper gentleness towards the precious loves that He is giving our partners! In the communion of these inner joys there is heavenly happiness. They dwell together in all things of life, even to the inmost ones. They who so dwell together on earth dwell together as angels after death (@AC 2732).

Here are some examples. A couple has their first child. They want to be good parents, and they are aware how inexperienced they are. At times each will be tempted to criticize the other, partly to cover his or her own insecurity, partly because they want so much to do what is right for the baby. But this is a time for being gentle with the others uncertainties, for encouraging, not finding fault.

Perhaps a husband loses his job. His self-respect is threatened. He is hurt at what happened, hurt with others, angry perhaps at himself. The wife is hurt too. She is frightened for the future. It can easily be a time of recrimination - or it can be a time when they are tender with each others feelings, and draw strength from each other.

A mother is trying to treat all her children fairly, but one of them is going through a difficult phase. She wonders if she loves him as much as the others. This isn't the moment, perhaps, for her husband to point out what shes dong wrong, but to be aware of her fears.

Then there are growing feelings which should be cherished, and not allowed to go unnoticed. The first Christmas you spent together, the first birthday of a child - these are wonderful memories. There is that time when you were in a crowd at a party, and looked across the room, and knew just what the other was thinking or feeling, and felt a rush of tenderness for each other. Or the time when you were apart, and remembered how much you love each other. Sometimes we let those moments pass, and don't recall them and share them. Those are the moments of great strength in our lives. Tender love is more powerful than any other kind. It is the wonder we feel, that the Lord could take two ordinary, simple, unpretentious people like you and fill your hearts with such amazing love. Deal gently with those feelings, and treasure them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.

Yet such feelings can't grow if we are too often inconsiderate or harsh with each other. We know how often precious moments are spoiled. One person wants understanding or sympathy or consolation, and receives instead coldness or impatience. A partner may feel excited about something that happened in the day and is squashed because the other feels aloof or bad-tempered. One partner is considerate all day, and then is berated over some tiny bit of neglect. Negative feelings like these hurt the gentle, growing loves in the mind, and cause them to shrivel up and form a protective layer against further hurt. Hearts become hardened and draw apart. Each feels, If I can't trust him/her with my normal feelings, how can I share the precious ones?

When we look at our own relationships, we may easily feel hopeless. How often have we been harsh. How seldom tender? What hope is left? Why not relegate tender love to some other lucky people, and go on with our schoolboy relationship, protecting ourselves, fighting for our rights, and being loving now and then? Its a practical relationship - the most we can feel on this earth. Weve blown our chance for tender love. We might even think, If I tried to be tender now, he or she would wonder what I wanted.

Human life is not about being faultless from the beginning. The love of marriage is tiny at first. Often it is going to forsake us when the strong, robust love of self rears its head, and we will be anything but tender. But the Lord doesn't condemn us if we have slipped, and neither in time will our partners if, and only if, we admit that such harshness is not good! The path to true married love is also the path to heaven. They are the same path. It is beset by many pitfalls, shadowed by many regrets. But a couple who keeps walking forward leaves those things behind as the Lord's mercy softens them through the years.

The important thing is to admit that tenderness is essential, and that harshness is wrong. Don't justify ourselves. Don't excuse hardness. Don't suggest that the other person deserves to be treated less than kindly. Believe, with all your hearts, no matter what the failures of the past, that the Lord can build a beautiful, gentle, sensitive love in your hearts. Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow. Though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool (Isaiah 1:18).

Perhaps the most difficult thing in all of life is to admit that your own anger was wrong. Everything in us fights against it, because that admission is the beginning of repentance! The Lord asks us, when our hearts feel hardened towards our partners, to look at this person whom above all others in life we love, and force ourselves to admit the wrongness of what we feel, to admit that the negative feelings we have at the moment are against the deepest hopes of our hearts. We can make ourselves do that, and resist the temptation to hurt, and pray and work for the return of tenderness. It is hard, sometimes very hard; but not impossible, for with God, nothing shall be impossible. It is hard because hell fights against tender love between partners more than against any other feeling, and glories in combat and strife in the home. It fights tender love because it knows that it is the most powerful love of heaven.

We know it too. In our moments of tender love we know that we can overcome hardness, that for the sake of a love which will soften us eternally, the effort, and the apology are worth making. For whatever the right or wrong of an argument, we are being untrue to our bond of love if we are not gentle. For what married couple does not feel, sometimes too deeply for words, that their greatest happiness will come when never again will they hurt each other?

And the Lord promises that it will be so, because it is from Him that love truly conjugal, with its tenderness, inflows into two hearts. Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them; and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes, and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God (Ezekiel 11:19,20). Amen

Lessons:

Matthew 19:1-11;@SE 6110:2; Index s.v. sex, 2019; @CL 330; @CL 216; @CL 321; @CL 171; @AC 5051

Women have a twofold beauty, one a natural beauty having to do with their face and figure, and the other a spiritual beauty having to do with their love and demeanor. These two kinds of beauty are very often separated in the natural world, but they are always united in the spiritual world; for outward beauty in the spiritual world is an expression of a persons love and demeanor. A womans beauty lies in her gentle tenderness and in her consequent keen sensitivity of feeling. That is what occasions a womans love for a man and a man's love for a woman. @CL 330

Those who have lived together in love truly conjugal are not actually separated by the death of one; for the spirit of the deceased continues to dwell with the spirit of the one not yet deceased, and this until the death of the other, at which time they come together again and are reunited, loving each other even more tenderly than before, because they are in the spiritual world. @CL 321[7].

The atmosphere of love emanating from a wife who is tenderly loved, in heaven is perceived as sweetly fragrant, considerably more delightful than the one which is perceived in the world by a newly married husband in the first days of marriage. @CL 171.

THE LOST IDEAL

A Sermon by the Rev. Peter M. Buss

Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so (Matthew 19:8).

Although our text speaks of divorce, yet its spirit breathes of the smaller and more common problems which sully marriage, and make it unlike what it was when God ordained it in the beginning. This is the subject of our sermon. In the beginning of almost every marriage within the church the ideal of conjugal love holds sway; but when the hearts of married partners become hardened, one against the other, the ideal becomes dimmed, and then forgotten. Our text speaks of the lost ideal, and in so doing it speaks a warning to every married couple.

The work entitled *Conjugal Love* states the ideal as it was in the beginning, in the intention of the God who created it. It does so in order that what was so then may become so again at the end. Conjugal love is celestial, spiritual, holy, pure and clean above every love from the Lord (@CL 64). It is the fundamental love, and every joy takes its spring from it (@CL 65-68). Its states are described, from inmost to outmost. The first is innocence, a living trust in the Lord. Then there are peace and tranquility, the quietness, or rest of mind which from time immemorial men have acknowledged as a heavenly blessing. There are friendship and complete confidence; and no one who has lived in a world where distrust is a necessary armor will fail to appreciate the benefit of having one whom we trust with all things of our minds. Finally in the lower mind and body there is the heartfelt desire to help and bring joy to the other in every possible way. (@CL 180).

All these things spring from conjugal love, because in the total communion between two, in which love of self becomes a servant, and love of the consort is the master, in which two hearts go outwards, and do not turn in towards themselves, there is the perfect resting place into which the love of God can descend.

Most of the world accepts these ideals, for a time. When two people fall in love, and during the first days of marriage, nothing seems more natural to them than that all the happy states of life will spring from their love. If there has been some order in their preparation for marriage, especially through the teachings of the Writings, then in those first days they are moved by the greatest reality in creation. A window has opened in heaven; through it they have caught a glimpse of eternal happiness, out of it has poured a measure of conjugal love.

The lost ideal is something that we see a few years later, when the first excitement has worn off marriage. We are not speaking here of the lack of love patent in ill-formed marriages, nor of these unions which are no longer of love, but are a partnership for the sake of the children. But it is necessary to speak of the many people who say they are still in love; but love to them is very different from the ideal of which the Word speaks. That is a lost ideal; love has become something far more earthly, far less uplifting, far more cynical, far less pure.

As the honeymoon wanes, many partners find that affection between them is absent, sometimes for long periods of time. Often, unfortunately, they draw their own conclusions as to the causes of this

state. But the Word for the New Church gives the cause, in a passage which begins its treatments of cold in marriage. There is a spiritual sun, and a natural sun. The spiritual sun sends out its warmth through the universe, and that warmth is the Lord's love. It pervades the universe, gives life wherever it is received. From it comes conjugal love. The natural sun, whose warmth is physical, material fire, nevertheless is the agent through which all the things of this world live. We delight in the things of this world, and so earthly delights are symbolically said to come from the natural sun. When the warmth of the sun of heaven governs earthly delights, conjugal love can be received, in increasing measure. But when the minds of two people become occupied solely with the things of the world, then the order is inverted. The love of marriage is being made to serve selfish wishes; it will not do this, so spiritual warmth from the Lord's sun in heaven withdraws, and the result is a lack of love - a coldness towards the consort (@CL 235).

Coldness in marriage comes from this source alone, from the lack of religion (@CL 239). (We are tempted to ascribe it to differences of opinion, or annoying habits, of the challenges of life, but it is the lack of charity making these unbearable which is the true cause.) This does not mean primarily a lack of doctrinal beliefs, or a difference in beliefs. It is partly that, but it is also a lack of interest in and attention to the goods which religion teaches; and an interest in and attention to things that may lead to the evils which religion forbids.

As the business of marriage settles in, people tend to turn their minds from thinking about the need to love each other forever, to care for each other forever, and start thinking about themselves instead. They start to expect and demand things of each other, instead of waiting for them to be offered, and offering in return. They plan their future together, as is necessary, but now, instead of their love and its uses being the primary things, they are interested in what they are going to acquire, what they are going to accomplish so that they can be proud of themselves. Ambition, acquisition, popularity, just ordinary enjoyment, become uppermost in their minds, and the things for which the sun of heaven shines brightly, fade, and become darkened in their minds. Intrinsically there is nothing wrong with concentration on the needs of this world; it is the totality of the concentration that matters. Then there are also the challenges of life, the tragedies or the problems which at times overwhelm us. Feeling overwhelmed, we are tempted to seek solutions based on the present, rather than on eternity.

In this sphere the vision of love is obscured. Quarrels arise, or with those of more mature dispositions, tense discussions. Solutions are not always found, for each insists on the portion in which he or she is in the right; and so a lingering sense of resentment exists against the person whom, above all other humans, we are supposed to love. Even the physical expression of love can become a selfish thing, serving rather to disjoin than to unite.

This is not a picture of an openly unhappy marriage. Perhaps every couple goes through these things, in small ways. There is impatience with the others perspectives, a wish to win an argument, the little remarks which put the other in the wrong, a wish to get one's own way when each wants something different, a feeling that we are not being honored and are putting more into the marriage than the other is. We could add insensitivity to the states of the other, a preoccupation with our own issues, spending too much time at work or with other friends, attending to the children to the exclusion of the spouse. The list is long. And attitudes like these, because they partake of this world only, and because they are excluding the thought of an ideal love for another, exclude also the warmth of the sun of

heaven, if we allow them to dictate to us.

Cold arises. But because people are loath to admit to themselves, let alone to someone else, that their marriages are not happy, they continue to tell themselves they are in love. And unconsciously, or even consciously, they lower the ideal of love, to fit their own feelings into it. They try not to think of the ideal that the Word has described. Love is not something high in the sky, they say. They think of their own relationship, one of friendship in some things, tolerance in others, one in which certain things seem as though they will never be solved, one of alternate cold and heat, one in which marriage is just a general feeling of comfort and well being and at other times of frustration, as love. They even begin to talk of marriage in terms of this world only, giving little thought to the fact that while on earth we are supposed to be developing a relationship which will have ties in heaven as well as on earth - and that means the bond of a heavenly principle which is shared, for this alone unites people in heaven. They may even avoid these thoughts because they are not particularly affected with the thought of living forever with their partners.

So the ideal can become lost. We could come to pay lip-service to it, and no more. We could stop aiming for it, feeling in our hearts that it does not exist, that the description the Writings give is just not practical, in the light of our own experience. Then although we may not agree in words, yet in spirit we would concur with the nine companies of spirits from the European world who were asked to decide on the origin of the love which belongs to marriage. They said this love comes from the desire for an orderly society, for a home in which to educate children; that it springs from the physical desire for one particular person; that it comes about when people think of the delights and comforts of marriage; that it arises from the desire to have a legal heir for one's possessions; or that it is merely the response between two harmonious natures. Then an African spoke, and said, You Christians deduce the origin of conjugal love from the love itself. But we Africans deduce it from the God of heaven and earth ... Love truly conjugal is known only to the few who are near to God (@CL 113).

What a contrast! How obviously true what the African said; how it sweeps away all the other mechanistic theories! Yet how easy to deny it by looking to various physical solutions to problems as our source of marital happiness. There is no way around it, there is no sidestepping the problems; we cannot enjoy conjugal love if we neglect our spiritual duties. What we have will be of this earth; it will not give inner peace of mind; it will not breed complete trust in our consorts; it will not permit true friendship; and it will not at length produce the full desire of heart and mind to do whatever will bring joy to the heart and mind of the other.

Conjugal love is from the Lord, not from ourselves. Through the sun of heaven, He sends out His warmth, which joins together the souls and minds and bodies of two people who worship Him, in their words, and in their deeds. They cannot build that love, He builds it. They cannot even know its power, until it moves them. This is the tragedy, that so many couples feel that they build marriage by their relationship with one another, that the power to create a love between them is theirs. Then they must lose the ideal, for they must see that they are both human, limited, frail in vision as well as in will. So they feel that marriage can at best be an affectionate accommodation between two normal, fallible people. And if they try to build marriage, they are right! They will miss its life. But the Lord builds marriage. The love inflowing from Him is real, the greatest reality in the universe, the one power which can stir two hearts, move them with a tenderness towards each other that they could not before

have believed possible, make them believe that a total commitment to each other is possible and must be sought. Only those things which are the Lord's doing are truly marvelous in our eyes, for they are living, as no creation of man's can be. And this is so of marriage, which is the more interior reason why the Lord said, when ordaining Christian marriage, What God has joined together, let not man put asunder..

The fire of many marriages burns low, threatens to go out, and cold remains; and the danger is potential in all marriages. But from the beginning it was not so. The beginning of anything is the intention. So when the Lord brings two people together, it is never His intention, nor is it then their desire, that their hearts should be hardened one against the other.

The beginning, what God ordained and intended, that is important. And the end, what we actually do become, that is very important. If through re-dedication to the ideals of marriage love we strive to let the Lord soften our hearts with love towards each other, so that the end is the same as the beginning, then what has happened in between does not matter. The ideal we see in the beginning of our marriage is bound to fade, because human beings are what they are, but the most tragic thing of all is that many then accept the lost ideal as the reality. They resign themselves to the idea of marriage as a friendship, a partnership, not an everlasting bond of love. They cease to strive, when through striving, through clinging to the memory of the love in its purest phases, they could have enabled the Lord to return them to that love; but to that love refined and purified through temptation and through living instruction.

Nor does the Word merely assure those who are in states of cold that the ideal is ahead. It abounds with ways in which we can return to the ideal. In the teachings on acting as if from love though it appears to be absent; in the reflection on the nature of the little faults which assail marriage; in all the teachings about mediate good and the way in which the Lord's mercy leads the natural, unregenerate man who loves the things of this world too much, into better states, we may find ample consolation, encouragement, and understanding. The wisdom of the Lord would hardly be infinite were He to ordain an ideal, a dream set on high, without pointing out to ordinary people how they may climb up to it. But the wisdom of the Lord is infinite; the pathway is there; and the dream can become the greatest reality.

Lessons:

1. Matthew 19:1-11
2. @CL 280
3. @CL 235

Matthew 13:44-46: Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

Matthew 19:1-11: Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these sayings, that He departed from Galilee and came to the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. And great multitudes followed Him, and He

healed them there. The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason? And He answered and said to them, Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate. They said to Him, Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away? He said to them, Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery. His disciples said to Him, If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry. But He said to them, All cannot accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given.

Married Love 235: People experience spiritual warmth and spiritual coldness; and spiritual warmth is love, while spiritual coldness is the absence and loss of love. Spiritual warmth originates from no other source than the sun of the spiritual world. For the sun there is an outpouring from the Lord, who is in the midst of it. Since it is from the Lord, that sun in its essence is pure love. It appears to angels as a ball of fire, just as the sun of our world does to human beings. It appears as a ball of fire because love is spiritual fire. From that sun emanate both heat and light, but because it is pure love, the heat from it in its essence is love, and the light from it in its essence is wisdom.

This makes clear the origin of spiritual warmth and the fact that it is love. The origin of spiritual coldness, moreover, will also be briefly explained. It originates from the sun of the natural world and its heat and light. The sun of the natural world was created so that its heat and light might receive into them spiritual heat and light and by means of its atmospheres convey them even to the lowest elements in the world.This is what happens when spiritual heat is joined to and contained in natural heat.

The contrary happens, however, when natural heat is separated from spiritual heat, as is the case in people who love natural things and reject spiritual ones. In them spiritual warmth becomes coldness. In this way these two kinds of heat, by creation in harmony, become opposed to each other, and the reason is that the master heat then becomes the servant heat, and the servant heat the master. So to keep this from happening spiritual heat, which by right of its origin is the master, withdraws ; and spiritual warmth in these recipient vessels then grows cold, because it becomes opposed.

It is apparent from this what spiritual coldness is - that it is the absence and loss of spiritual heat.

YOU CANT TAKE LOVE FOR GRANTED

A sermon by the Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss

But if a wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed, and keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. None of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him; because of the righteousness which he has done, he shall live... But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live? All the righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; because of the unfaithfulness of which he is guilty and the sin which he has committed, because of them he shall die Ezekiel 18:21, 22, 24.

These are words of comfort and of concern. We do not need to be afraid of the penalty for past sins if we repent. The Lord wont remember the weaknesses of bygone days. On the other hand, we cannot trade on our past goodness if we sin in the present.

The message is very clear. It is what we do in the present that matters. We cannot build up credit with the Lord and then sin for a while. Our old goodness is then of no use.

This text highlights a most important rule of life. It is simply this: You can't take love for granted. If someone loves you, you must continue to court that love in the present, and in all the days that are to come.

At first this might seem like a disquieting idea. Does it mean that we can never be sure of someones love? Does it mean that maybe one day someone we love will stop loving us because you can't count on that love? Not at all. Love is a gift from the Lord. It will never cease to flow into the hearts of people to warm them.

The point is that we must receive that love. We must do something to make it our own. And we must receive, freely act to receive the love offered by someone else, or else it will wither away for the lack of nurturing.

No one likes to be taken for granted, because the person who is doing so seems to be saying, You don't mean very much to me. Yet we have a tendency to take love for granted, and to take advantage of it. A young couple gets married. He loves her deeply at first. He tells her so, he finds special ways of showing how much she means to him. But then he gets involved in his work, and used to having her at home. He comes home late and tells her his problems, but when she tries to get him to help with the children or to discuss the problems at home he tells her how tired he is and how he doesn't have the energy to deal with those things now. Slowly he stops communicating with her as a treasured, special person. He comes home and turns on the television (insisting on the channel he wants), or buries himself in a book or a hobby.

Maybe she continues to give of herself, showing understanding for the pressures hes under, and he finds that her service to his emotional needs is pleasant. Instead of giving in return he expects support more and more. He is trading on her love, taking it for granted. After all, shes his wife, she promised to love him, he is sure of her love. Sometimes, perhaps, he is kind and attentive, but she senses that it is

usually when he wants something special from her.

She cannot help it. Her love begins to wither away. You see, in the past it fed itself on the respect she felt for him and on the sense that his concern for her was an unselfish, caring one. Maybe he thought it was. But his behavior in the present is untrue to that love. It is saying, louder than words, that he does not think her love is worth courting and nurturing at this moment of time.

This is an extreme example, but perhaps it points to a tendency in all of us to assume the love of somebody instead of seeking that love anew.

We mustn't do so. We cannot take love for granted, we must seek it anew each day. For it is a spiritual law that although love is always offered to us by the Lord, it is not ours unless we choose it, and continue to choose it in the present.

Let us reflect on this idea. First of all, notice how all the things of this earth are constantly being created anew. The food your body eats doesn't last. You need to eat again and again. Almost all the cells of your body are renewed regularly. Your garden is constantly changing, because it is being recreated by the Lord. A tree grows; even the mountains are not the same, although they change more slowly.

This is because if a thing is to last it has to be recreated constantly (@CL 86, cf. 183). It is the nature of love to act. Love has to act, each single day. If it stops acting, it begins to wither.

Why does the Lord require that love be renewed each day? Because the one thing that we have that is truly our own is freedom of choice. When we choose something it becomes ours. We don't exercise that choice once and not again. We feel life as our own because we exercise choice all the time. The Lord wants us to choose love again, and again and again, and in each choice to find our blessedness. More than anything He wants us to choose, again and again, to love that one person who will be closer to us than anyone else.

There is another reason for this aspect of love. When we fall in love with someone we are far from perfect. There is someone else we love a great deal - ourselves. Love of self is actually the opposite of true marriage love, and if we don't actively choose, and continue to choose conjugal love, we revert to the natural state into which we were born - loving ourselves the most.

We must not take love for granted. Yet, people may ask, shouldn't we expect some gratitude for past kindness? Doesn't the care of the past mean anything in the present? The Writings for the New Church certainly speak of such gratitude. A husband, for example, regards his wife with kindness and favor, because she bore their children, and fed and cared for them with unwearying care (@CL 284). Yes, we owe a debt of gratitude for past kindness. But that is very different from expecting gratitude for past kindness! For a husband to feel gratitude is proper. For a wife to require it is less so, and certainly she must not trade on it.

But aren't there times when we have to take someones love for granted? What about when we are sick on under tremendous pressure? If a man is facing such things wont he hope he can count on his wife to support him? Inevitably he will be somewhat wrapped up in himself. If he is sick he will be concentrating on getting well; if under great pressure, most of his effort will be spent on getting through each day. He will be asking a great deal of the person who loves him.

At such times his wife would want him to count on her love, to take it for granted, and not to worry that he is giving so little in return. However that cannot become a permanent condition. Sometimes we receive more than we give, but it should be with the intention that the time will come when we can reverse the roles, and let our love be an active force, going out to benefit the other. A dependent role can only be temporary in any healthy relationship.

What about the dependency of old age? Don't aged parents have to take their children's love for granted? Don't they have to resign themselves to receiving far more than they give? Yes, they do. But have you noticed how much people of the older generation worry about this? They worry about being a burden. Why? Because the love inside of them, which is not old, but is ever young, is longing to be active, to nurture and give to those it cares for. They feel, very deeply, their inability to return kindness, and they show it by expressions of gratitude.

We cannot deny that age brings infirmity, pain, and frailty, and people have to concentrate more on themselves than they would if they were healthy. But it is also a fact that we do not fully appreciate as yet the true contribution which the older generation makes to our society. We notice it sometimes. We see a grandmother smile and it lights up the room. We see how little children and the aged seem to respond to each other, as if they share of bond of innocence that is not known to the rest of us. But as a culture we tend to measure someones contribution to society in terms of things done, not as much in the sphere of love which flows forth, often silently, to touch the lives of others. We tend to measure wisdom in terms of things spoken, not so much in terms of the patience with and understanding of others which belongs more to advanced age. One day the Writings will enable us to become truly sensitive to the contributions which old age can make to our culture.

In the meantime, the aged appear to take love for granted, but they don't. They are perhaps more truly appreciative of it than anyone else.

Are there not some people whose love we can take for granted? What about a mothers love, or a grandfathers? Don't we take advantage of Mom, knowing she will always be there, no matter what? Doesn't her love endure, even when it is not properly treated? In a sense, yes; but the simple fact is that its quality will depend on how we treat it. If we abuse it, it will change shape over the years. From being a beautiful and trusting thing it will become more reserved. It will have certain calluses where it has been hurt, there will be a quality of sadness to it. But if we court it, it will deepen and become both more mature and more gentle.

But let us return to marriages. If love is to endure, it must be cultivated each day. It can feed for a little while on the past, but not forever.

Yet doesn't it get recharged by our memories of past states? Don't we love to look back on our courting days, on our honeymoon, on the day when our first child was born? Don't we indulge ourselves with those familiar words, Do you remember...?

Of course we do. Every state of love in the past which we have freely chosen remains with us as a part of our lives. It is woven into the fabric of our spirits, and it can return. One of the beautiful teachings in the Writings, however, is that when we freely recall these states, when we choose to remember them, they cease to be memories of the past, they become a part of the present. Not only does the memory

return, but all the joy of that state, and it becomes a present joy.

Yes, it is true that love builds on the past. It grows stronger with each new memory. The point is that it does so because in each present moment we choose to remember our love, and we choose to make it our own. Those words, Do you remember...? are a way of saying, I love to remember, because I love you.

Let us never take love for granted. Let every husband continue to court his wife for as long as he lives upon this earth and to eternity in heaven. He wont court her as he did before they were married, but he can be solicitous of her good opinion, anxious to behave in ways that will serve her, happy, in a deep and mature way when he reflects on the fact that she still loves him. Let every wife actively accept her husbands love and foster it, and use the wisdom with which the Lord has endowed her to turn his affections into useful paths.

The same principle applies to all human relationships. Whether with children, parents, or friends, we should nurture the bond that we share, not take it for granted.

For it is a paradox of life that if we never take love for granted, we can be sure it will always be there. If we work each present moment to foster it, then every act of choice brings with it a new delight, and that delight adds itself to all the one's that have gone before, and our love grows from a small stream into a mighty river.

But even the Amazon needs to be replenished at its source. By our acts of choice we keep in touch with the author of love, and He will ensure that there is an ample supply for us, every day of eternity. Amen.

Lessons: Ezekiel 18; @CL 183[3]; @TCR 347[3].

Education

THE SOUL AND ITS TRUTHS

An address by the Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss

Ed Council

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How do you prove religious truths? There is no proof. You cannot see God, visit the after-life, prove that married love is eternal, that the souls of men and women are eternally different and perfectly complementary.

How do adults know that these are true? The deepest answer is that there is a message from within, from our souls, that lets us see that truth is true.

How do we choose what is good? What power can cause us to choose the inconvenient good over the much more convenient evil? What causes a mother to waken out of exhausted sleep at the cry of a child and go to its help? What causes a normally selfish man to put himself to great inconvenience for a distressed friend? The deepest answer is that the soul gives us the freedom to make these choices, and it inspires a desire to make the right choice.

How do little children respond to truths and see that they are good? Well, we might say, they tend to believe what trusted adults tell them. True. Or, we may say, the angels give them a delight in truths. Very true. But the deepest secret lies in their own souls. The thing the Writings call intellectual truth or celestial truth is speaking to them when they hear the truth their teachers speak. Perception is teaching them.

What do we mean by the soul?

In general the Latin word refers to what is living, and thus often to the spirit that lives after death (@DLW 394, cf @DLW 379, @DLW 383). In one passage the Writings say that the soul of something is just whatever gives it life. Thus the soul of the body is its spirit, for from this the body lives. But the soul of the spirit is still more internal life, from which it has wisdom and understanding (@AC 2930).

The way I plan to use this term is that the soul is the inmost part of us, that unpervertable entrance of the Lord into us. This is the way the term is used very often, as for example in the following passage. Every person consists of three components which follow in order in him: soul, mind, and body. The inmost one is his soul. The intermediate one is his mind. And the outmost one is his body. Everything that flows into a person from the Lord flows first into his inmost component, which is the soul, and descends from there into his intermediate component, which is the mind, and through this into his outmost component, which is the body (@CL 101, cf. @CL 158 @CL 206, et al).

The degrees of creation

There are three amazing passages in The Arcana Coelestia which speak of the way in which the Lord creates human life on different levels, and how He accommodates Himself to them. The following - **diagram (not reproduced here)** - is an interpretation of @AC 1999, @AC 7270 and @AC 8443.

THE SIX DEGREES OF TRUTH DIVINE IN CREATION: WHAT DEGREE OF THE MIND IS IN EACH

FIRST: In the first radiant belt, above the heavens The human internal, or soul

SECOND: In the second radiant belt, above the heavens The truth from the internal, or intellectual truth. Not conscious

THIRD: In the celestial heaven The celestial or inmost rational

FOURTH: In the spiritual heaven The spiritual or interior rational

FIFTH: In the natural heaven The genuine natural rational or the external rational

SIXTH: On earth - specifically in the Word and thus in the church.

The natural, divided into three degrees or planes:

- A. The merely natural rational
- B. The middle natural
- C. The sensual

The Writings teach that the Divine flowing from the Lord is at first too full of love and wisdom to be received by any conscious thought and feeling. Therefore, in the heaven of human internals (@AC 1999) or the two radiant belts around the spiritual sun (@AC 7270) there are degrees of life which are not conscious, but through which the Lord acts into us. These are the realms of the soul.

The soul is the inmost dwelling place of the Lord in us. It is made of superior spiritual substances, and thus receives influx directly from God (@ISB 8). It is above consciousness. It is into the soul that the conjugal of love and wisdom or good and truth from the Lord first flows. They are imperceptible and hence ineffable, being delights of peace and at the same time of innocence. In their descent they become more and more perceptible - in the higher regions of the minds as blessings, in the lower as happiness, and in the bosom as the delights from these (@CL 69. See also @CL 16, 46, 69, 183, 203, 236, 302).

The important thing is that there is this hallowed place where the Lord can touch us, and we can't spoil it. The soul is in the image and likeness of God. The Divine truth flowing in from Him enters the soul and causes the soul to be what it is (@AC 6115[3]). It is the love and wisdom from the Lord in us (@DLW 395).

It is the soul that makes the body. Think of the incredible way in which the body operates - almost as if it is wise from itself. The Writings describe it thus: Unless the soul in universal and in singular flowed into the viscera of the body, nothing could take place in the body with order and regularity; but when

the soul flows in singularly and thus universally then all things are set in order as if of themselves (@AC 6338[2], cf @AC 3570[4], 4727:2; @DLW 269). Thus conjugal love is implanted in the soul (@CL 46, 69, 183, 203, 236, 302). In fact there it is in its spiritual holiness and purity longing to flow down into our minds and bodies (@CL 482). For the genesis of conjugal love is the marriage of good and truth, and these are one in the soul. They are only separated as they descend lower into the mind, and are reintegrated in those who follow the Lord (ISB 8e).

The soul is not life itself, but the first receptacle (@AC 1999, 1940, 2004, 2019, 2025:4). He gives life to us as if it were our own (@AC 1594[5]). The soul is a form of all things pertaining to love, and all things pertaining to wisdom. Being the inmost human, it is the person himself, and therefore its form is the human form in all fullness and perfection. Yet it is not life but the nearest receptacle of life from God, and thus the dwelling-place of God (@CL 315).

All the love and all the wisdom....

Therefore the soul is most loving and most wise. All the love of which we are capable has been written on our souls. That love has truth within it, married to it. It is called celestial truth, and is represented by Sarah in the Word, while Abraham represents celestial good. Celestial truth is said to be beauty itself (@AC 1470; cf 1598).

This love and wisdom - though separated as they flow on down (See @ISB 8) - unceasingly look for an opportunity to be received in the mind. For until we willingly receive it, a love from the soul is not ours, but is in potential.

So what do we receive from the soul? The Writings make it clear that the ability to be human comes from there; and the twin faculties that make humanity - freedom and rationality - flow from it. In addition all delights spring from the soul, for the Lord through the soul activates them (@CL 461). Otherwise there would be no delight in the mind and body.

And what about our reception of truth? Well, living truth is from the soul. Knowledges and memories are not truths, the Writings say, they are receptacles of the living truth that flows from within (@AC 1469). And especially does the soul rejoice in the deepest truths - about the Lord and His kingdom, about love to Him and mutual love. These truths, the Lord says, become happy in the internal man, and delightful in the external man (@AC 1470; cf also 1495).

In summary, the soul is constantly seeking for a home for its loves and insights in the mind. To that end it inflows into true affections and vivifies them, and into knowledges which are genuine and gives them life. This is the meaning of the strong statement in the Writings that all instruction is simply an opening of the way for heavenly things to inflow. When the receptacles are there in the mind, the soul flows down and gives them life (@AC 1495) That is an essential principle of our educational philosophy. We don't teach. We open the way for the Lord to teach through the souls of our students.

Poor education

When there is disorder in the mind, the soul wont support it, and separates itself from it. One passage simply points out that all external loves, if considered to be paramount, try then to dominate higher ones, and the higher one's wont allow it. They withdraw (@CL 235). The soul wont be ruled by the mind, so it cannot send down its messages, and this - a frightening, and inevitable consequence - produces separation from the Lord (@AC 1999[3]). The soul can look down on disorder in the mind and dissents and disagrees with it (@AC 1999).

What happens then? Two things. First, when the soul as it were withdraws, then true delight is no longer felt. The pleasure we then feel is from some outside source - not from the true source of all love and joy but from some ancillary or collateral source. When the Lord gives us the power to love and we choose to love ourselves above others, then we are cut off from the purpose of that gift. The result is coldness - an absence of the internal warmth of life. As the Writings put it with regard to married love, the striving seated in souls for that love can't affect the person, and coldness results (@CL 238; 240, 236).

There is a second result. Because the soul is still trying to send its messages into the mind, there is a conflict between its activity and what a person has chosen. Evil is contrary to order, and the soul is trying all the time to produce order. So the soul keeps sending its message of discontent into the mind, and that produces a state of unrest, and eventually of undelight in the evil one has chosen.

An ancient Jewish poet said, Evil shall wax old with them that glory therein (Ecclesiasticus: Book of Sirach 11:16). Swedenborg reflected in The Rational Psychology that the soul (or pure intellect) opposes disorder or evil in the mind and produces a loathing for that evil. This is reflected in the fact that evil delights lose their charm, and people plunge into deeper and deeper perversions.

An illustration of this is that the devils of hell cannot enjoy their evils for long. The misers close to hell pretend that they possess all the wealth of the kingdom, but after a while they lose the ability to enjoy this phantasy, and they have to return to work. Through use of some kind, the soul sends new power into their minds, which they immediately pervert and now they can enjoy their evils again - for a short time. Then it grows cold again, and they have to go back to work once again. For it is only in use that the soul can continue to send messages to their minds (See @CL 268).

Two things separate the soul from the mind. The first is ignorance or unbelief. Far more important is the choice to follow the loves of self and the world, which when we get them out of order stand against the very pulse of heaven - that we should love the Lord and our neighbor (@AC 1594[1-3]; cf. @CL 236, 238, 240).

Perhaps one may also say that the soul leads from without when there is disorder. The world that the Lord created is generally in order, and the Word itself is perfectly in order, and when these come into the mind, especially through sight and hearing (@AC 2557), the soul recognizes them. Then the person sees that his life and his feelings are discordant with what he is learning, and there is a feeling of fear or anxiety or perhaps depression - which spur him to reflect and perhaps repent (see @AC 5470).

The important thing to realize is that the soul is always seeking to express itself in the mind and body.

A persons soul, being in the marriage of good and truth, is not only in a perpetual striving for union but also in a perpetual striving to be fruitful and produce a likeness of itself (@CL 355). When it can, there is peace. If it cant, then there cannot be peace.

Application to education

The love of the soul is turned into the natural delight in learning with a little child (@AC 1472, 1480). This is because learning is a means to the end of charity. Or, as the Writings say, learning produces first the ability to think, then the power to see the use of a truth, and finally the power to use it (@AC 1487).

So a little child feels a delight in sensing things. She or he didn't make that delight. That is the first touch of the soul. As a baby grows it finds an innocent joy in reaching out towards the world, feeling, touching, tasting, seeing, hearing. His joy in his senses is from his soul. He is learning. He is recognizing things - and it is the wisdom of the soul that recognizes them!

As he grows older he begins to want to know things. He enjoys learning to read and write, he delights in stories that tell him of lands he has never seen, events that he has not heard before. He imagines things, and often lives in a world of make-believe. He plays, and develops a kind of knowledge - or skill.

Why do children develop as they do? We take it for granted. It is because his soul is causing him to delight in learning. It is so very wise! It knows what things he cannot yet understand or appreciate, so it does not yet inspire a delight in those things. Have you wondered why all children show no interest in certain moral issues, or in reasoning or politics, or indeed in working eight hours a day when they are eight, but develop some of these things later? Well, it is partly because the child does not have the background to comprehend much of these things, but also because the soul takes care that first delights come first, and it is most sensitive to the ability of the mind to respond to it. With incredible wisdom it inspires the right affections in each age for the mind to grow.

So gently does the Lord allow the child's mind to grow. Working through the soul, He causes it to develop in an orderly way. As knowledges fill the mind the young boy or girl begins to be ready to bring various facts together, to reflect on them and to begin to reason about them. Before that he doesn't reflect. Now he begins to be able to do so, and to draw conclusions for himself. Does he always use that power wisely? Of course not, but the Lord works through the soul, and through angels and good spirits even in negative states. The soul works with the young man's pride and even his obstinacy to make him hone his reasoning skills and to seek for excellence in whatever field he is good at. Then it bends him, ever so slowly, towards wisdom and humility and the service of others.

There are many things that obstruct the work of the soul. If what a child is being taught is not true or what he is experiencing is not good, then there is a barrier to its work, and it labors to get its message through to the mind. On the other hand, when the child is learning good and true things in life, there is a beautiful harmony between the soul and the mind. The child's mind is growing in harmony with his own soul. It has truths in it which the soul can touch.

As we look at certain truths or falsities, think of the fact that the soul itself already knows the truth. It is wise; the Lord has implanted both love and its wisdom there. It does not teach directly, but it senses falsity in the mind and there is a lack of harmony with the soul whenever falsity is taught.

You can go to school in this world and learn all about geography and nature and biology and these studies can illustrate how God made the earth. If so, the soul is delighted as a child learns these knowledges. It senses the truth in them, it supports them, it gives the child a deep delight in learning

them.

You can go to school and learn the same things, yet they exclude the idea of God. They make the child feel that the universe happened by accident, that the original form of nature was chaotic, unplanned, that the disorders of nature point of harshness in creation, not to a loving God. If a child is taught this, his soul grieves. It can't work together with the mind as it wishes. How can the soul, which is the Lord's first gift to us, rejoice in knowledges which deny Him?

Take another kind of falsity. People are sometimes taught that if they do something wrong God is looking for a way to punish them. Therefore if they get sick or if a loved one dies they assume it is because God was angry with them for some evil and this is their punishment. That's not true. The Lord doesn't dream up cruel ways to punish His children. But if a loved one dies in an accident, and a person believes this was Gods way of punishing her, there is a barrier to the deepest healing powers from within.

Wherever there is grief the soul labors to heal. Its work is so much harder when people are oppressed by false notions. It doesn't have the corresponding truth in the lower mind with which to work. But if a person loses a loved one, and knows the true God as a loving, merciful One who works every second to bring good, even despite evil; if she knows that the Lord provides true and everlasting happiness to His faithful children and that tragedy is only for a period of time, she can be healed. Her soul can find these truths, truths that harmonize with its own wisdom, and slowly bring peace back to the mind.

We can teach a student the Golden Rule - Do unto others as you would that they do to you. But we can teach it backwards. We can make him think that being nice to others is a good plan because others will be nice back to him. The soul cannot rejoice in teaching like that; but it does rejoice if he learns that it is good to treat others in a way that he would like to be treated.

When the teaching is true, there is a harmony between the soul and the mind. The person has a peace with him, peace between his deepest sensitivities and those things he is being taught. That doesn't mean he wont have to fight battles in life, or that everything will be plain sailing. But what it does mean is that those who teach him on earth are doing the same kind of work that the heavens and his own soul are doing. They are making it easier for him to find the path to heaven and to choose it himself.

And, of course, the wonder of the Lord's glorification is that the truth of the Word He made flesh is perfectly attuned to that life that inflows through the soul. It is that truth which the soul recognizes as its God, and it worships it.

That is why in the New Church we feel so very deeply about the proper education of our children. We want to work together with the Lord Himself in guiding our children's minds, so that He and the child's soul, and the truths of the Word and the truths of nature may be in harmony.

What more precious gift can we give to our children than truths which the soul can reach down and touch? It can make them live, make them delightful, cause them to grow strong. What better way can we show our love for them than by allowing them to learn things which delight their deepest beings, and induce a harmony on the mind?

We are told that the truths which the soul loves above all are those which teach mutual love and charity (@AC 1999). That should be the goal in all that we introduce them to - for all knowledge looks to love and to use. It is a momentous challenge, for we are very ordinary people, prone to all the uncharitable failings there are. We are bound to look at our efforts and at the many times we don't come anywhere close to such an ideal, and get discouraged. We know that our goal should be that mutual love is taught in all we say and do: that is a large challenge.

What we don't see is the secret, the deep success of our teaching if we are sincere. It must often seem that all we do is teach and instruct, and maybe the children do get these deep messages and maybe they don't. But we wonder what we've done to affect the outcome.

To encourage us the Lord has told us of the incredible effect on the mind if it is the truth that is taught, with charity. It does matter. It matters very much, for when we teach the truth, from a love of truth and the goodness it produces, the result far exceeds anything we did. We communicate an idea and a feeling about it. But the heavens and the soul and the Lord Himself take over. They take that truth and store it up safe and sound. They give it a delight. They arrange it in the proper place of the mind so that it is there, ready for use at the appropriate time.

So when the child becomes a young man or woman and decides to follow the Lord there are riches beyond compare present to speed her or him on the way. That is what we are a part of doing.

The education of our children in the truth - any truth, whether natural or spiritual - if done with gentleness and the sphere of mutual love, bears fruit beyond our wildest dreams. There are forces mightier by far than we are which ensure that. And we do have a power - to let our children drift through the world, learning values sometimes true, sometimes false, learning about the world without any connection to Him who made the world - or to dedicate ourselves to providing them with the truths which the soul can touch and quicken to all eternity. It makes a difference!

This is our dream. And in seeing the effect on the minds of those we teach we find our reward. Whoever gives to one of these little one's only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, truly I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward (Matthew 10:42).

THE HUMAN MIND

Definitions

1. It is the spirit. see @DP 196, 299; cf. @DLW 199, 386, 387
2. Its laws are those of the spiritual world @DP 299, 300; Cf. @DP 307
 1. Notice how the mind obeys those laws - time flies when you're having fun. The wish for spiritual distance. Turning our backs on the Lord - people forget Him or eternity soon after coming into eternity.
 2. Positives - the ability of the mind to feel close to a far off loved one.
 3. The mind is never old - for its laws are eternal.
3. The mind is spiritual, and the body is its external. Cf. @ISB 14; @HH 356.
 1. The term natural refers to
4. It is the intermediate between the soul and the body @CL 101;@ISB 8e
5. It is made up of will and understanding. @DLW 372 et al.
 1. These are now separated, but in the other world they are conjoined again @HH 425; @AC 8250.

What makes up the mind?

1. Spiritual substances. @DLW 257.
2. Made up, not of 102-odd elements, but of our loves and truths DLW 372; cf. @DP 326[3]; @AC 4390
3. Our affections and thoughts. @ISB 8
4. The human mind is nothing but a form of Divine good and Divine truth spiritually and naturally organized. @TCR 224
5. The truth of faith and the good of charity constitute his more interior mind @AC 6158.
6. The soul is a superior spiritual substance, and receives influx immediately from God; the mind, an inferior spiritual substance, receives it from God mediately through the spiritual world. @ISB 8e.
7. Thus there are three influences on the mind: the soul, the spiritual world, and the natural world. @ISB 8.
 1. Note the term natural nearly always refers to what comes to us through our senses, or through our heredity.
 2. The term spiritual means what is living. It has spirit within it. @DP 321.

So what does this mean?

1. Think of knowledges as real substances.
2. They gather around affections. Bound into bundles around affection @TCR 38.
 1. The initial way we learn of something is from many different sources. Affections pull them

together

2. First natural affections, later spiritual affections.
3. The mind has extension. It is like a landscape. When you learn new things, a new field opens up, and it grows grass and trees and flowers, and is peopled with animals and birds.
4. Think of a little child's mind as an empty space.
 1. At first, its goods are a delight in toys, a love for his parents, a need for security, etc.
 2. Note the hierarchy. Even to a little child, the security and love are more important than the toys.
 3. As it learns, it receives fields into its mental landscape.
5. Journey to Brazil, Japan. A new field, a new set of affections and thoughts
6. Get married, have a child, become grandparents, retire. Each opens up new vistas. 7. And when we are being regenerated, new loves are born of the Lord from within, creating new realms.
 1. For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth.

Can the mind be organized around the wrong affections?

1. Yes, indeed. We can learn the truths of the Writings because we are vain and we are proud of ourselves above others. Then those truths gather around a selfish, maybe an evil affection.
2. Think of the great scientists who have used science for evil.
3. Such a mind, instead of being a heaven in least form, is a hell.

Memory

1. All memories are the storehouse of a sense impression (or a thought) together with the affection that belongs to it.
2. Note that through regeneration the memory is reorganized. We learned for bad reasons, and then the truths are shaken up and rearranged around good affections.

Degrees of the Mind

1. The mind is composed of discrete degrees of life
 1. Delight in friendship is natural
 2. Delight in love is spiritual
 3. Things that belong to friendship are natural - communication, trust, shared ideas about values of this earth
 4. Those that belong to love are spiritual - are not really articulate on this earth.
 5. Degrees of attraction to the opposite sex.
2. Most general are natural, spiritual, celestial. cf. @DLW 222, 236, 186, et al.
3. There are three degrees of the natural, and they are opened by education.

4. The higher degrees are opened by regeneration. @DLW 237; @CL 305.
5. Note that the natural degree cannot flow into or order the higher degree, but the reverse can happen! It is called regeneration
 1. A natural illustration: the rational mind can see that the sun doesn't set (while still enjoying the appearance that it does); but as Galileo found to his cost, the sensuous mind can only see the evidence on its level of thought.
6. The three degrees of the mind correspond to the three heavens. @DLW 186, 239.
7. The spiritual mind is closed because of hereditary evil. It has to be opened by regeneration. @DLW 269, 138, 270
8. How are the degrees of the mind opened? By receiving terminations into themselves. @AC 5145.

Summary

1. The whole education process is to allow the mind to assume an ordered form. If it comes to adult life in such a form, then it is prepared for regeneration.
2. The affections around which truths are arranged in the natural mind will be orderly, natural affections. These affections will have affinity for each other.
3. The truths in the interior mind will be remains, ordered around heavenly affections for truth. Inmosty there will be affections for good.
4. Through obedience to the Lord, and the temptations that follow, those natural affections become re-ordered around the spiritual affections which flow from within.
 1. Note that there are spiritual affections hidden inside natural ones, because the natural one's correspond to spiritual ones!
 2. The negative natural affections will be cast out. This is the story of the butler and the baker in Egypt.
5. Finally, this means that we cannot teach a spiritual truth! We can teach a natural truth which contains a spiritual one within, but only the Lord can inspire that life of truth from within and make it spiritual, living, in another persons mind! @DLW 237; @AC 3185, 3207; cf. @AC 5580, et al.

The Sensuous Degree of the Mind

It is the lowest plane of the human mind

1. It is not the actual sensing of things from the world. That is something the body does, and the experience is called the corporeal.
2. The sensuous is spiritual. @AC 1718. It is formed from the sensations from the body. @AC 5157, 4570.
3. That part of us which knows about, thinks of, and delight in the things of this world. @AC 5094, 6844.
4. It is the source of communication between both world, for it is spiritual, but its ideas are material.

@AE 543.

5. It is the natural world for a person. Our idea of Singapore is what is in our sensuous mind, not the real Singapore. We make up our minds about Austria based on what we know (or what we can learn) about that country, not on the real Austria.
6. Yet although the sensuous mind takes its quality from nature, it takes its life from the soul.
7. Sensuous thought and affection arise out of the determination of the soul to the things of sense.
@AC 1436, 5094.

The contents of the sensuous mind

1. Sensuous truths: The various natural things (or studies) that are called physics. @TCR 402[15].
 1. Note that not just the things themselves but the study of them is of the sensuous
 2. Thus after death we lose our memory of material ideas, and with it the knowledge of science and of language. @AC 2477-2480.
 3. So in our educational process, let us distinguish between the subject matter and the principles of thought. The one may be sensuous, the other rational.
 4. And sensuous knowledge can be a contaminant of spiritual truth.
2. Sensuous goods: The delights of the senses and of the body. @TCR 402[15].
 1. These goods are perverted, and cannot be restored. They have to be replaced by good affections, flowing from within, in the understanding.
 2. Note that the affection for studying a subject may be peculiar to the understanding, and thus natural not spiritual. For it is in the understanding. Hereditary evil may be in it, but it may be removed. This affection can be inspired by remains.
 3. So what are the non-savable affections? Those delights that come to us through the senses, which we seek out again. Our first response is always negative.
3. Summary: When the Writings speak of the sensuous person they refer
 1. To a person whose concentration is determined entirely to the knowledges and delights that come from the sensuous; or
 2. To that realm of the mind whose function it is to concentrate on these things.

The Writings are not puritanical. They don't condemn sensuous pleasure or knowledge

1. There is that in all of us which is tempted to do so.
2. This is a mistake, because the Lord gave us this level of the mind. @AC 995.
3. The purpose declares the quality of sensuous things. @AC 995, cf. AC 2204; @SE 5552.
4. Heaven rests upon the natural world as a house on its foundation. @SE 5552.
 1. Thus our heaven rests on our sense of this world - in our sensuous, in our memories
 2. All the interior thoughts and feelings are enacted through that mind @AC 4009, 5165, 9216.

3. Without the sensuous plane all spiritual effort and thought, and thus all rational efforts and thoughts would be dispersed. @AC 9216.
4. How do we know a friend? From the actions, words, gestures, etc, that come through his sensuous. They come from his interiors, but through the sensuous.
5. So the sensuous of a good person perceives what is true and senses what is good. It even sifts out those things not true and not good. It is the place where goods and truths are perceived and felt in their fullness. @AC 9726.
 1. Another description: it contains all the vessels for love and thought: its delights are the vessels for love, and its thoughts the vessels for truth. @AC 1435.
6. So the sensuous is the essential containant for all interior levels. Nothing is possible in a persons thought, even to the deepest secret of faith, that is not attended with a sensuous idea. @AC 3310, cf. 1435, 2553, 3098, 5114, 5130.
 1. Of course we don't always notice the sensuous image.
7. They are the basis for interior ideas. Cf. A father; the hands of the Lord. Even the angels have the idea of God in a human shape. @AC 7211.
8. So the Word is written in sensuous imagery, for all interior ideas are there at once. @AE 71[4].
9. The sensuous is thus used for seeing inwardly. e.g. The Lord is my Shepherd... He leads me beside the still waters; He restores my soul. @AC 5165.
10. It becomes a plane of fixity. @SE 5552; @Dmin 4645, 4646.
 1. Why? Because on earth we decide either to let good interiors terminate in it or bad ones.
 2. The same sight can arise good feelings in a good person, and evil one's in an evil one. - a baby, a beautiful car, a lovely person.
 3. The one we choose on earth becomes the one we will choose forever.

Summary points

1. Hereditary evil affects us in that all our sensuous feelings turn to evil
2. Also, all our learning has something of hereditary evil in its motivation - unless remains are active
3. Thus the quality of our sensuous feelings need to receive new life from within from the Lord
4. This is not done by afflicting the flesh - regarding all sensuous feelings as evil, but by guiding it - allowing the enjoyment of the sensuous in the light of the Lord's Word
5. The deepest remains are instilled on the basis of sensuous delights! They are what replace those delights.
6. They are formed in the understanding
7. The delight in learning with a little child is nearly always from remains, not heredity.
8. The delight in sensuous pleasures with a little child is from remains; but gradually the perverted sensuous will take over, forcing a reorganization around conscience.

9. When conscience gives permission, sensuous pleasures may be enjoyed as the Lord intended them to be.
10. When the Lord makes us celestial, then we will be able to respond instinctively to sensuous impulses.

THE SENSUOUS DEGREE OF THE NATURAL MIND

Notes, with applications to education, by the Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss

General Faculty 1984

Introduction

For the general levels of the mind, and for the way in which the sensuous mind is opened, see the address on the mind in general.

The Writings are not puritanical. They don't condemn sensuous pleasure or knowledge

1. Religious people can have a tendency to condemn all sensual things
2. This is a mistake, because the Lord gave us this level of the mind. @AC 995.
3. The purpose declares the quality of sensuous things. @AC 995; cf. @AC 2204;@SE 5552.
4. Heaven rests upon the natural world as a house on its foundation. @SE 5552; @AC 9216
5. So the sensuous of a good person perceives what is true and senses what is good. It even sifts out those things not true and not good. @AC 9726.
6. It is the essential containant for all interior levels. Nothing is possible in a persons thought, even to the deepest secret of faith, that is not attended with a sensuous idea. @AC 3310, cf. @AC 1435, 2553, 3098, 5114, 5130.
7. It is the basis for interior ideas.
8. The Word is written in sensuous imagery, for all interior ideas are there at once. @AE 71[4]
9. The sensuous is used for seeing inwardly. e.g. The Lord is my Shepherd. @AC 5165.
10. It becomes a plane of fixity in the world to come @SE 5552; @Dmin 4645, 4646.
11. The Divine truth proceeding from the Lord flows into everyone, through his interiors into the exteriors, even into the external sensuous... and calls forth everywhere things correspondent in their order; in the sensuous, things correspondent such as appear in the world and upon the earth. @AC 6948.

The Perversion of the Sensuous

1. The sensuous tells you that its feelings are good because they feel good. The Writings say you cannot trust those instinctive reactions. They lead us towards evil. Only those sensuous delights which are under the control of conscience can be enjoyed.
2. Celestial people had their sensuous in order. It responded to the internal. @AC 245.
3. Nowadays the proprium resides in the sensuous. Why? Because there we have the most complete sensation of self-life. @SE 5464:8
4. Thus when people turned to evil they turned to the sensuous, which is the easiest place to feel delights apart from the Lord. @AC 6948. People do the same today.

5. The result: Most people today are merely sensuous. @AC 4330.
6. Its effect is to prompt us to indulge one's natural inclination, to live for self and the world, but not for others unless they favor self and its pleasures. @AC 6201.
7. Note that to escape the prompting of the sensuous we are urged to think of eternal life. @AC 6201. The influence of the sensuous spirits is to remove such thought, and to make us averse to thinking of eternal life! Ibid.
8. The story of the fall is the story of the victory of the sensuous over the rational, and how it became condemned.

The thought proper to the mere sensuous

1. This is with the person who thinks from what is sensuous. @AC 7693.
2. When we think from the sensuous, things appear otherwise than as they are. @AC 6948. Because therefore truths of faith are above the sensuous, and appear different, they are rejected.
3. The light from which the sensuous thinks is called lumen instead of lux. It illuminates the appearance rather than the reality. @AC 6948 cf. 6310
4. What states in us encourage merely sensuous life? Greed, adultery, pleasure for its own sad, and disgraceful idleness. @AC 6310.
5. There are states not so evil which can also encourage it: specifically the failure to cultivate rational thought. @AC 6311
6. The fact, however, that a person is learned does not mean he/she is not sensuous. Such people, once they have attained their personal goals live more sensuously than others. @AC 6310. The learned seem very clever because sensuous things are their intellectual tools, and they appear very clearly to the natural of all of us. @AC 5700
7. A quality of the sensuous that we can observe in ourselves and others - and in little children, of course - the tendency to judge from experience and memory, not from perception or reason. This leads to an outward sense of what is just, not a living one. @AC 9127, 6839.
8. In a merely sensuous person the rational is kind of merged with the sensuous and does its bidding. @AC 1935.
9. Merely sensuous people are tempted to enjoy scandalous ideas about heavenly and Divine things, and also things filthy and foul. @AC 6201, 6310

What do merely sensuous people think about religion?

1. Those who have once known the things of the spiritual world and rejected them become sensuous. @AC 6971. This applies to those in the New Church, but also to others. @DP 254.
2. With such, there is no longer heavenly light, although there may be the memory of a time when they had that light. @AC 6971
3. Such people can use the forms of truth, but they do not see its reality. @AR 692; @AC 5089; cf. @SE 805

4. Sensuous people can confirm a tenet of their religion - whether it is right or not - but they cannot see if it is right! @AC 6222, cf. AC 544
5. All spiritual truth is merely natural with them. @DLW 261; @AC 6844.
6. Basic principle: sensuous sight can't see the things above it, so it denies them. @AC 2196
7. While the imagery of the Old Testament is for children and for the simple, it is also for those who are in the loves of self and the world. They think in these negative images, and can only be led from there as a starting point. @AC 8781, 3425, 3605, 4180, 2395.

Yet there are good sensuous people

1. They obey the Lord, but don't understand His purposes. @AE 714[29]; AC 926; @AE 342b. They can understand civil order but not spiritual order
2. There are an immense number of such in the spiritual world. @AE 342b
3. They understand the literal commandments, such as Thou shalt not kill, but not the inner burden cf. @AC 6839.
4. They are saved because they are willing to obey the Lord. @AE 375.

How do we rise above the sensuous?

1. Remember it always drags us down. @AC 6312, 6845
2. So the spiritual person has to fight it - by rising above it. @AC 6313
3. Then he can enjoy it because he can see how it is to be enjoyed. @AC 6954
4. Then the Lord can temper it and make it somewhat innocent. @AC 5130[e].
5. However, note that the sensuous is put in order by the Lord in states of innocence. @AC 7442, 5125
6. When good people sink into sensuous things, the angels protect them, and raise them up when they are in danger of rejecting or profaning their values. @AC 6315, 5159
7. Remember, it is the sensuous things of the will that cannot be put in order. The sensuous things of the understanding can be reorganized. @AC 5072, 5157.

Some applications to education

1. Combine the teachings about heredity, innocence, and the sensuous, and you have the New Church principles for the education of infants - that is, up to age ten.
2. Heredity and the sensuous: Even innocent little children will respond inappropriately to the sensuous the moment heredity appears
 1. Distinguish between the tremendous delight a child has in the sensuous (e.g. loving a toy so much she can't let go of it); and the excessive delight (e.g. responding with anger to a child who is playing close by)
3. Innocence and the sensuous. When there is innocence, the highest angels need to use the sensuous to inspire their most holy delights. This is because:

1. Sensuous things correspond to celestial things
2. There is nothing between the sensuous and the celestial angels to impede their influx
3. There is no deliberate evil - which matches the state of the celestial angels
4. Higher levels are - until the person is totally regenerated - more consciously of thought than of affection, and so attract spiritual angels
4. The world, and external images are powerful in connecting with the heavens - although some sphere of innocence must be present as well. That is why the externals in worship are so important - beauty (candles), a lovely copy of all books of the Word, and so on
5. Sensuous teaching and the letter of the Word
 1. The stories of the Old Testament - the actual stories - appeal to the sensuous
 2. The angels are present in them
 3. They are present even in the negative things! Note that the sensuous is not troubled by the violent things in the Old Testament. It might have been in the Most Ancient Church, but not today
 4. It is very important to teach what the letter says - don't change it.
 5. Use the name Jehovah in preference to the Lord when teaching these stories
 6. In general we will not need to contradict the letter of the Word, even when it is teaching about the Lord's anger, etc.
 7. Why? Because the sensuous is not necessarily consistent! It does not see the contradictions between the New Testament and the Old.
6. What does an infant learn with eagerness and believe? @AC 5135
 1. There is a God and He is one
 2. He made everything
 3. He rewards the good and punishes the evil - there is a heaven and a hell
 4. The life after death lasts forever
 5. We should pray every day in a humble way
 6. Keep the Sabbath, honor parents, do not commit adultery, kill, steal, etc.
 7. This is the basis for our Kindergarten and First Grade religion curricula.

IMAGES

An Address to the General Church In-Service Banquet, February 9, 1984 by the Rev. Peter M. Buss

Let us consider two stories from the Lord's Word. The first one needs no pictures. It is part of the oral tradition to which we attach images of our own. It is called the parable of the Prodigal Son. (Luke 15:11-24).

Then He said: A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father. Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me. So he divided to them his livelihood. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself, he said, How many of my fathers hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants. And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son. But the father said to his servants, Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found. And they began to be merry. (Luke 15:11-24)

The second story comes from The True Christian Religion (@TCR 187) or The Apocalypse Revealed (@AR 926). This time I will show some slides to go with it, since the images are a little more complex.

Once when I was meditating on the dragon, the beast and the false prophet described in Revelation, an angelic spirit appeared to me and asked: What are you meditating about? The false prophet, I told him. Then he said: I will take you to a place where those live who are meant by the false prophet. He told me that the same people are meant in chapter 13 of Revelation by the beast from the land, which had two horns like a lambs, and spoke like a dragon.

I followed him, and came upon a crowd surrounding some leading ecclesiastics, who taught that nothing but faith in Christs merit confers salvation on people, and that deeds are good but do not contribute to their salvation. None the less, they said, these should be taught in accordance with the Word, so that laymen, particularly the simple, should be kept more rigorously subject to the dictates of magistrates, and thus be impelled, as if by religion and thus inwardly, to exercise ethical charity.

Then one of them saw me and said: Would you like to see our temple, which contains a statue representing our faith?

I approached and looked; and there was a magnificent temple, and inside it a statue of a woman wearing a scarlet dress, holding a gold coin in her right hand and a pearl necklace in her left. But both the statue and the temple were imaginary, for the spirits in hell can by their imagination produce

magnificent representations, by closing the interiors of the mind, and opening only its exteriors. When I realized that all this was mere conjuring, I prayed to the Lord, and the interiors of my mind were suddenly opened. Then in place of that magnificent temple I saw a ruinous building with cracks in the walls from ceiling to floor; and in place of the woman I saw hanging in that building an image with a head like a dragons, a body like a leopards, feet like a bears and a mouth like a lions, exactly as the beast from the sea is described in Revelation 13:2. Instead of the floor there was a marsh teeming with frogs. I was told that beneath the marsh there was a great squared stone, beneath which lay the Word, deeply hidden away.

On seeing this I asked the conjurer: Is this your temple? He said it was. But then suddenly his interior sight was opened, which made him see what I saw. At this sight he shouted very loudly: What is this? Where has it come from? I told him that it was the result of light from heaven, which reveals the true nature of every form, and consequently the true nature of his faith separated from spiritual charity.

Presently an east wind sprang up and blew away the temple with its statue. It also dried up the marsh, thus laying bare the stone beneath which the Word lay. After this a warm wind, as in springtime, blew from heaven, and then in the same place was to be seen a tent, of simple external construction. The angels with me said: This is what Abraham's tent was like, when the three angels came to him and told him that Isaac was to be born. This may appear to view as simple, but it becomes more and more magnificent as light flows in from heaven.

They were allowed to open the heaven where the spiritual angels are, who possess wisdom, and the light which poured in from there made that tent look like a temple such as that in Jerusalem. When I looked inside, I saw the stone base under which the Word was stored inlaid all around with precious stones. A sort of radiance was projected from these on to the walls, which were decorated with figures of cherubs; and these the radiance beautifully picked out in various colors.

When I admired this, the angels said: Now you will see something even more wonderful. They were allowed to open the third heaven, where the celestial angels are who possess love. Then the flame-colored light flooding in made that whole temple vanish, and in its place was to be seen the Lord alone, standing upon the stone base which was the Word, in appearance as He was seen by John (Revelation 1). But because a feeling of holiness then filled the interiors of the angels minds, which impelled them to fall on their faces, the path of light from the third heaven was suddenly blocked by the Lord, and the path for light from the second heaven was opened up, thus restoring the previous appearance of the temple, and also of the tent, but this was inside the temple. These sights provided an illustration of what is meant by the verse in Revelation:

Behold, the tabernacle of God with men, and He will dwell with them. (Revelation 21:3)

and also this:

I saw no temple in the New Jerusalem, for the Lord God almighty and the Lamb are the temple thereof. (Revelation 21:22) (@TCR 187).

In the last few minutes we have been using the middle natural degree of our minds, in one of the most precious ways we can. We have been seeing in our minds eyes eternal images of heavenly truths.

We know a great deal about the rational mind, and about the sensual, but we seem to have a scarcity of teaching about the middle natural. We spend a lot of time in our schools teaching the Old Testament and the Writings, which in general appeal to the sensual and the rational respectively. We do spend a lot of time teaching the New Testament too, but perhaps we are less aware of how it touches us. We know its stories are perhaps the most appealing, the most directly delightful. If we are to teach them well, we should know the cause of their power to touch us; and where they touch us.

We also need to know that there are stories in all three Testaments which address the middle natural degree of the mind. That is one reason why I chose a story from the Writings to illustrate the point.

I believe there is a great wealth of teaching in the Writings on the middle natural in fact, an incredible amount. From the few teachings which speak of this level of thought we find the clues.

We must start with the general principle that each level of the mind is filled with substances. What are those substances? Goods and truths. Those are the things of the mind. Also, each level of the mind has discretely different substances.

We can easily see what substances are in the sensual mind. They are the things that we see and delight in here on earth. These are stored up in our external memories, and they present to us our picture of the world we live in. If you want to think of ice cream the sensual will do it for you. It will also remind you how much you enjoy it. If you want to think in Latin or French or German the sensual mind will also oblige this learning belongs to the natural world alone. The substances of this mind are the things of earth, and our delight in those things. That is one reason why the sensual is laid to sleep in the world to come it is of real service only on earth, except as a plane of fixity in the spiritual world.

Lets jump up to the rational. Its substances are immaterial, abstract ideas. The ability to separate your thought from pure sense impressions is the rational ability. How do you know that your eyes deceive you when it seems the world stands still and the sun rises and sets? Your rational mind tells you. How do you know that the airplane that is carrying your friend to Hawaii is not really getting smaller as it goes up into the sky (little children think that it does and so do the people, and the suitcases)? How do you know that there is a God in heaven, or that you should love someone else as much as or more than yourself? Only rational good and truth can tell you that (@AC 3175).

What, then, is in between these two? A level of thought that partakes of both. It doesn't use abstract ideas, it uses the external memory. But it doesn't use sensual things or delights for its substance either! It is the realm of spiritual representatives those pictures which appear in the spiritual world.

This is the exciting middle ground of thought which I hope we will glimpse tonight. The things of this world are fixed, they appeal to the sensuous degree of the mind. The things, the scenery of the spiritual world are representatives. They represent loves on a lower, apparently physical plane. They are the substances of the middle natural degree of the mind. The whole panorama of the spiritual world is made up of this mental level. It has to be, you see, because in that world the sensuous is laid to sleep. The next higher degree is the ultimate of life there.

We are going to be teaching that degree of the mind a great deal of the time. It is particularly active in the teenage (and even pre-teenage) years. It is that level that most powerfully delights our children.

The world that moves them is the world of images. It is a world re-shaped to delight them more than the actual world. It is their spiritual world.

I believe that this degree of the mind is called both imaginative, and the internal of the natural two levels within that one degree. I know there is a debate about the use of the term Imaginative, and don't want to open that here. Let me merely say that the way in which I use this term applies to the middle natural degree, for I am speaking of how the images of the spiritual world represent higher loves.

Once this basic principle is seen, then the middle natural degree of the mind is laid open for us to probe. All the teachings about the phenomena of the spiritual world tell us how this part of the mind works. All the teachings about fantasies tell of its perversion. Dreams are a manifestation of the substances in that mind. The Writings abound with teachings about these things.

But let me turn to the main teaching about the middle natural, and illustrate it by our two stories. The teaching is this. The middle natural uses things drawn from the senses for its conclusions, but it communicates with rational thought by analysis and analogy (@AC 4570).

Analysis and analogy. Ill start with analogy, and talk about the Prodigal Son. Take the sensual idea of food in the story. There are four different kinds of food. He wasted his money on rich food probably food that wasn't good for him. He got terribly hungry when he had lost his money, for there was a famine. He wanted to eat pigs food a most horrible fate for a Jew and that brought him to his senses. He decided he would go and ask his father to hire him and give him the servants bread. He returned home and was given instead the fatted calf.

With hardly a thought we can see that food represents the happiness of the spirit. Analogy opens the secret of this story for us. The rich food that he ate in company with harlots probably represents the excessive delights of a person choosing evil. At least that food seemed good; but to eat of the pigs food was a perversion it symbolizes a turning to unclean and horrible delights. The food of the servants in his fathers house well, we sort of need the Writings to tell us that it represents mediate good the delights we feed on our path to heaven. The fatted calf for the long lost son is the joy of heaven, offered out of pure mercy.

Take another analogy in the story distance. He went a long way away to misbehave. It was a country unknown to his father. Yet his father and his brother knew what he had been doing. The father thought of him as one who was dead, and lost. In that far country no one cared for him. What more powerful analogy of hell. It welcomes you while you have something to give, and cares nothing for you once it has stripped you.

And here is an image I think most effective. The prodigal son went a long way away. Perhaps he rode a horse or went in a carriage. The journey was easy or so it seemed. How did he get back? He walked. He had to retrace every single step. How clearly is the teaching of the Writings illustrated that all the states of evil we put on if we sin must be put off, one by one, as we reach out for the Lord once again. Each delight must be re-visited and rejected. Picture that hungry young man, with his shoes worn out and his clothes in tatters, walking every step of the way he had come, and regretting the carefree selfishness with which he had made the initial journey.

But the interesting thing is that before he decided to go back he knew how far he would have to go! He knew! He found the strength to do it, because he had no choice. It was that or die. He found the strength to do it because there was definitely food at the other end. He remembered that. He found the strength to do it because he trusted in his fathers mercy. But in that his father surprised him. He showed even more mercy.

By analogy we discover the hidden secrets of the Lord's workings. I could list all the doctrines in this story, and they would touch your rational minds. But once you know them once you know them this story makes one want to weep for joy. It touches the natural mind, which is the plane of our lives. Hence the teaching that to us natural people rational ideas sometimes flow in but they do not touch our affections. This is because our hearts are not up there yet (@AC 5141).

Analysis is the other way in which we discover truth by means of parables. Take the temple that changed. The first thing we need to know is that this story tells about worship. It tells about the five general kinds of worship there can be with you or me or anyone else. Worship from faith alone seems like a beautiful, ornate temple. Interiorly it is a clapboard house with a beast in it, and the Word is buried. But when we turn from faith alone when we repent why then in the same place in our minds (do you remember it said in the same place?) a simple tent of worship is formed. It is not ornate, but it is serviceable. When the Lord makes us into forms of charity the more beautiful stone temple appears, with the Word under a stone, refulgent with light. This represents the insights of a man who worships the Father in spirit and in truth. The Word illumines his life, which is a life of worship.

And deep within is the celestial. When that is opened there is only our Lord. Behold the tabernacle of God is with men. And I saw no temple therein, for the Lord God almighty is the temple of it, and the Lamb.

And there are times when each of these is active in us mortal man trying to worship his God. Sometimes we go through the motions, and talk about what a great church we have, and it is so many words. We have an ornate type of worship then which is an illusion. Sometimes we see that we pretend too often we see the worship of faith alone for what it is. In our states of obedience our worship is simple but effective. And even early in our lives we may know moments of spiritual joy, or heavenly love to the Lord when He seems to be in our hearts. We too cannot bear that sight for long. It quickly fades, but what a beautiful memory it leaves behind, to inspire the lower forms of worship, so that we try to find Him again.

We can analyze this story, and see how each part of it is symbolic, and feel the beauty of the spiritual story it tells.

By analysis and by analogy we see deep truths in a mental picture. When we do so we are touched. The natural mind rejoices together with the rational.

There is something else about these spiritual representatives. They are more real than sensual images. It doesn't seem so. The city of New York seems more tangible than a story does. Yet the angels told Swedenborg that their world is more real, because it reflects their interior loves. New York might not reflect at all the loves of the people who live in it. Every town and village and country home in heaven is a perfect mirror of those who dwell therein, for the scenery is created out of their loves. A town in

heaven is more real than a town here today. A hundred years from now the houses we live in might not be standing.

Take these two stories. They didn't really happen, did they? Was there a prodigal son? Did he want to eat pigs food? If you go into the spiritual world will you see that temple if you follow a map?

Yet these stories are more real, more effective than anything on earth. The prodigal son tells of a path to heaven, a wandering, sometimes bitter path which has been walked millions of times by real, living people. The temple that changed is a story of how worship develops in every human heart.

Another thing: you have heard those stories. They are indelibly stamped on your minds, and no power will ever erase them. Because they are stories of the Word they will remain in your minds in a most precious place. Yet interestingly, even an earthly story which uses analogy is more real than many so-called happenings.

Take *Pride and Prejudice*, the love story told with such gentle art by Jane Austen. Elizabeth and Darcy are real people to me. Take the paintings on the Sistine Chapel by Michelangelo. Did God create Adam in the way he portrayed it? No; but the symbolism is so beautiful, it captures some true qualities of innocence, and of Divine love and power and therefore it is engraved on the minds of millions as a picture of some of our Lord's qualities.

The language of the middle natural is the language of symbolism. It is the creative medium of the mind. It is not the creative force of the mind! The rational mind is the only creative force and by that I mean a mind which is rational on the planes of the three heavens. It is the rational that analyzes, and the rational that sees by means of analogy (@AC 4570). But when it does so it sees in the natural mind.

Which brings us back to the New Testament. Its power is in its language of parable and of moral or social truth. Its power is because all the qualities of the Lord Jesus Christ are seen as in an image the image of His life on earth.

Those three things a picture of our God; a sense of moral truth, which is truth in speech and act; and the power of parable capture the appeal of the New Testament to the spiritual man, to the man whose natural mind is where his heart is, and whence his heart needs to be lifted up (cf. @AC 4286, 4292, 4570 et al).

These principles don't only speak to the teaching of religion. I think our teachers have seen applications here better than we ministers perhaps because they are better teachers. They know how important it is to give visual form to an abstract idea. Winston Churchill said that you must never give an abstraction in a speech without some image to illustrate it. Think of some of his images, and how they stirred a nation on the brink of defeat and turned the tide of history.

These teachings help us to sense how better to touch the hearts of our students, and feed them food which they will delight in. Moral truth, the beauty of parable, the power of illustration and experiences, the picture of our Lord Jesus Christ, the storybook tales of the Old Testament these appeal to the middle natural degree of the mind and inject into it a life which enriches and uplifts, because from within.

In closing I would like to add two thoughts. We have been struggling to find a place for the New Testament in our religion curriculum. The middle natural degree of the mind inevitably draws from the level below and the degree above. While the New Testament was the highest form of revealed truth it was the source of interior truth. I wonder if today, now that the Writings have come into being, we would not be foolish ever to teach the New Testament in isolation from them. They are there. Their rational, abstract ideas are illumining all that the Lord said on earth. Should we not rather use our Word as one Word? The New Testament contains an expression on a lower plane of what the Writings say. Why not use them both together? I think there is a time to concentrate on the New Testament, but perhaps we would err if we tried by a more laborious means to teach truths by analogy and analysis that are clearly stated in the Writings. Is it not better for us to use the rational statements in the Writings, and merely concentrate our efforts on a better illustration of them while our students are growing towards rationality?

Finally, I hope we will look at the many elements in the New Testament. Bishop de Charms in his book *The Life of the Lord* concentrated on the sequential story and on the miracles and events of Jesus life. We could, some other time, emphasize the parables and use them to show how analogy draws our minds upwards to the internal sense. Another time we might search the scriptures for moral truths, emphasizing life in the world. And we could emphasize and illustrate how each doctrine is taught in the New Testament, or in the Prophets and Psalms.

There is such a wealth of beauty waiting to be seen. In our teaching we must seek for affections in every level of the mind. That is an art and art, I would suggest in closing, finds its expression in images in this creative medium of the mind.

THE RATIONAL: GENERAL DESCRIPTION

First in a Series of talks to the General Faculty By the Rev. Peter M. Buss

October, 1985

Introduction

When the Writings use the word rational they are speaking of a power of the mind to see and be affected by truth and good. It is a gift from God, which makes it possible for us to be in His image. Rationality is human nature itself, for by it man is a man, and is distinguished from the animals (@5M 1; cf. @AC 3175, et al). The ability to reason is one of the lower functions of the rational mind, and a persons skill in this does not necessarily render him rational. Therefore that man is rational who recognizes truth to be true and good to be good on whatever plane he is thinking. I believe it is safe to say that even when young children see or are moved by a truth, the rational faculty causes them to respond. They may respond in a sensuous or natural manner, but seeing truth outside of oneself is a gift of God - it is the beginning of human nature, and the stirring of that power are present from birth.

Three uses of the term rational

This most general definition of rationality applies throughout the Writings. It is always speaking of the power of the mind to see and be affected by truth and good. Within that most general concept, however, the Writings then use the word in three more specific ways. It is a faculty which the Lord has given us. It is a function of the spiritual mind. It is a function of the natural mind.

A faculty

As a faculty of the mind, it is the gift of understanding. There are in man from the Lord two faculties whereby he is distinguished from beasts. One of these is the ability to understand what is true and what is good; this is called rationality, and is a faculty of his understanding.... Man has these two faculties from the Lord, and they are from Him every moment; nor are they taken away, for if they were, man's human would perish. In these two faculties the Lord is with every man, good and evil alike; they are the Lord's abode in the human race: from this it is that all men live forever, both the good and the evil (@DLW 240). The other faculty, of course, is liberty, which is of the will.

The faculty of rationality exists with the good and the evil, and makes it possible for us to see truth on the spiritual and natural planes. Therefore it is called the ability to receive spiritual light, to think and also speak from thought (@DLW 247; cf. @5M 1). It enables us to understand things interiorly, and to draw conclusions about what is just and right, and about what is good and true (@DLW 413).

A function of the spiritual mind

In the Isaac series of the Arcana Coelestia the Writings seem to use the term the rational interchangeably with the spiritual degree of the mind (@AC 3020 et al). They do this because the ability to see and love what is good and true is of itself an eternal, or spiritual quality. In the process of regeneration it is formed in the interiors of the mind and then comes forth into the natural. Such a vision is formed from the spiritual affection of truth, which joins itself to the knowledges of the

memory, and produces the rational (See @AE 208[3]; cf. @AE 654[16]).

A function of the natural mind

The use of this term that seems most common, however, is as a function of the natural mind. The Writings talk of degrees of the natural mind, but if we view that mind as a whole, then one of its functions is to see truth.

The rational is the intelligence of the external man (@AC 1588). True intelligence is of the soul, and therefore intellectual truth is in the soul of man (@AC 2621, cf. @AC 1901, 1904, etc). Intellectual truth is internal, rational truth is intermediate, and scientific truth is external (@AC 1904). But we cannot think from intellectual truth, all we can do is be moved by its power, and therefore perceive in our rational minds that certain things are true (@AC 6222[5] cf. @AC 6125, 6055). The rational is thus called the imitative or quasi-likeness of intelligence (@AC 265).

The rational is also called the perceptive faculty of the mind (@AC 3020), and once again this draws the attention to its function of seeing truth. By rational truth is meant that which appears as true according to the apprehension (@AC 3386).

Below perception is the power of reason, and that is a servant of rationality. The man who has been imbued with sciences can see things in a series, from first and mediate things to the last, which is called the conclusion, and can therefore analytically arrange, turn over, separate, conjoin, and at length conclude things, even to a further end, and at length to the final end (@AE 569[6]). This is what we tend to think of as the rational ability - that examination of facts, analysis, rearrangement and synthesis leading to a conclusion. What we must remember is that this process is not what determines truth. All it does is express and explain truth. The sight of what is true comes from above.

This is most clearly seen from the many teachings that the imperfect arrangement of truth which leads to a persons seeing falsity is not a rational exercise. It is not the man who can reason from scientifics, even when he can apparently do so in a more lofty manner than others, who is in the enjoyment of the rational faculty; for this skill is the result of a mere fatuous light. But that man excels in the rational who is able clearly to see that good is good, and truth truth, consequently that evil is evil, and falsity falsity; whereas the man who regards good as evil; and evil as good, and also the man who regards truth as falsity and falsity as truth, can by no means be said to be rational, but rather, irrational, however able he may be to reason (@AC 4156[3]).

Nothing is less the part of a wise man, nay, nothing is less rational, than to be able to confirm falsities; for it is the part of a wise man and it is rational, first to see that a thing is true, and then to confirm it (@AC 4741, cf. 6222[5], et al).

The Rev. Erik Sandstrom Sr. is fond of saying that it is not possible to convince a person of a falsity. A person can be persuaded to believe a falsity, but only by making him or her miss a mental step, or accept some conclusion that does not follow. A person may choose to see a falsity because it promotes an evil or selfish or purely natural love. There is no such thing, however, as an internal conviction of falsity, whereas faith is an internal conviction of truth. We have a faculty for seeing truth: we have no faculty for seeing falsity.

The essence and the form of rationality

This section of the treatment is most applicable to education at any level. We tend to think that in order to teach we need to be able to persuade a child of the truth of something. If his or her rational is to be opened, then truth needs to be presented as clearly as possible.

True; yet the deeper reality is that it is good which causes people to see. The genuine rational is from good, but it exists from truth, the Writings say (@AC 3030, cf. 3074).

The Lord wants us to feel that what we see is ours (cf. @DP 290). Therefore when a truth is recognized we feel it as our truth. When a child sees something he has been taught, we think it was the result of his understanding functioning efficiently. Man's thought is from the rational, and appears to him as from himself (@AC 2552); but the truth is that when he sees a truth, it is because of an affection which flowed in from the Lord. Consequently an answer is given him by the Lord in accordance with his state of life, his affection, and the truth of doctrine implanted or impressed in agreement with it (@AC 2552).

The all-important point is that it is good that forms truth, and therefore it is good that recognizes it. One of the most exciting teachings about what is human concerns rational good. The human is more internal, being in his rational; for unless man is rational, he is not a man; and therefore according to the quality and quantity of a man's rational, such is the quality and quantity of the man. Man cannot possibly be rational unless he possesses good. The good whereby man surpasses the animals is to love God, and to love the neighbor; all human good is from this (@AC 3175).

This remarkable passage ends by saying, These and similar truths can never be believed unless the man is in good; for it is good which comprehends, because the Lord through good flows in with wisdom.

There are many ways in which we can encourage rational thought. We can do it through teaching about the sciences, for example, for the study of such things are uses that perfect the rational (@DLW 332). A person may learn these things from rational freedom, which is wanting to succeed in this world and have its reward, which are honor and gain (@DP 73). We can encourage rational thought by appealing to the loves of self or to mediate goods - a huge subject all by itself.

The main point being made here, however, is that the good which is proper to rational thought is the ability to care for living beings other than ourselves and our next of kin. To love God and to love the neighbor is rational good. When we speak to those loves then the mind is stirred to see truth. It is good which comprehends. The wills love inspires the understanding with whatever it desires... It even destroys in the understanding everything that is not from itself (@DP 209; cf. @AC 1589, 2480, 2621, et al).

If you ask someone to help you, you are appealing to a universal human need - to be of use. Most people will stop what they are doing, and give you their best attention. They will put their rational minds to work to help you. For if the love of others is active, the rational mind is doing that for which it was created.

This idea - that the rational is active when love to the Lord and to the neighbor are appealed to - must be a central principle of education.

And since these two loves are the law and the prophets, it is an influx from Him who wrote those laws that creates rational good. Rationality is not the result of education, although the rational mind is opened by education. It comes into being because of the Lord's presence through the interior degrees of the mind (@AC 1495, 2480, 2552, 2557, 2621, 2701, 3074, 3175). This seems obvious, yet the Writings state it again and again - probably because we tend to think of the rational power as being our own, as being the product of environment and training, and not of the Lord's presence.

It is known that a man is born into no science nor into any rational thing, but only into the faculty of receiving these things; also that ... as he learns and imbues himself with these, he so becomes rational. That these things take place by way of the body, that is, by an external way, because by hearing and sight, is evident: but what man does not know because he does not reflect upon it, is that something from the interior constantly flows in, which receives those things which then enter and are insinuated and disposes (them) into order. That which inflows and receives and disposes, is Divine celestial good, which is from the Lord, whence is their life, whence the order From these things it can be shown that the rational of man is from Divine celestial good as a father (@AC 2557, cf. 2577 et al).

It is also true that evil affections can flow into the rational, and then he has an affection for falsity, and a disposition to confirm falsities. When the affection of good flows in, it becomes in the rational the affection of truth. The contrary is the case when the affection of evil flows in (@AC 1589). Once again, the Writings do not call this rationality, but they insist that it was the Lord's influx from above which gave the power, even to pervert truth into falsity (Ibid.).

The rational and its memory

The rational mind uses the interior memory. The two naturals below it use the external memory (@AC 2480, 3020, 1408[2], 2503; @HH 464). The external memory records the objects of the senses, the words of languages, and the scientifics that belong to the world (@AC 2471). The interior memory is a record of abstractions, or of immaterial ideas (@AC 1900, 2471; cf. 2480). It is also the memory of things from the spiritual world, and is used after death (@AC 9992[2], 2494; @HH 467). The external memory is laid to sleep.

Sometimes the Writings seem to speak of the interior memory in two different ways - as the memory that serves the rational, even here on earth, and as the memory that is used only in the other world. In the second usage, it is said to be a kind of nature, or our book of life, and is sometimes called the more interior memory, or the spiritual memory (@SE 1078-9, cf. @SE 2154, 2251e; @AC 4469, 3843[2]).

I would like to concentrate on how this memory serves the rational, and compare it to what we normally call memory. It is clear to us that remembering things and events and the words of language belongs to the outer memory. What is a little more surprising is to learn that those things that are philosophical and concern universals also are of the external memory. So are celestial and spiritual truths (SE 1078). However the passage explains this by saying It is only the apprehension of them that pertains to the interior memory.

When your students write a test and they relate the things you have taught them, they are using the outer memory. Even if the test is in Philosophy that is true, if what they write is what the philosophers said, and what the lecturer thought about what was said. Up to this point the students have given little

evidence of rationality. What they are doing is superior to animals, but not markedly. It is this kind of observation which has led some to suppose that people are superior to animals only because they have a more developed brain.

For it is not only in the faculty of remembering immaterial ideas, but in the faculty of conceiving them, that man is superior to the animals. He can look down on the things in his memory, see the essence of truth in them, and then form ideas about them, which appear to him as his own ideas. This is his response to the Lord's inflowing life (@AC 1589, 2557, 2577 et al).

What is the interior memory? It is the record of what he understands. To know these things, and not to see them in their applications to existing things is simply to know abstractions, which remain in the memory only so long as the mind is in analytical ideas.... A mere knowledge of abstractions is like an airy something which flies away (@DLW 189).

The purpose of rational thought, therefore, is to see truth and good - to see them in their essence, and to be moved by them. Then he brings them down into natural ideas and organizes those ideas. The memory that serves the rational is a recollection, not of ideas, but of his peculiar understanding of them. The interior memory contains ideas, concepts of what things mean.

If we apply this to education, we see how important it is to guide our students to think for themselves, and to find ways of expressing that individual thought. For the creative force of the mind is the rational: it alone can produce a human idea, for it alone is moved by human good. Once that mind produces its own understanding, it then remembers what it thought. When the subject comes up again, it starts from that basis.

There are people who talk from their external memories. They can tell you all sorts of facts, without showing much judgment in using them. There are also people who can use the interior memory similarly. Talk to somebody about a subject dear to his heart, and you will probably find his mind turning into familiar patterns of thought and reasoning. Useful as that may be, it is not really a part of his active human life now. It is a record of active life and thought in the past. Rational people add to such thought patterns, and explore them anew each time, and go to the Word to find out how valid they are, in the light of new learning and new experiences. Thus the interior memory is perfected.

Clearly we must help our young students, both to develop an interior memory replete with the understanding of truth, but also to hone and perfect that memory by continuing rational inquiry. Can we say that an education that emphasizes patterns of thought rather than the dynamics of thought will encourage memory rather than rationality; or that teacher-directed learning is less productive of true rational thought than are those forms which encourage the student to solve problems, using the truth the Lord has provided?

The rational is built upon the foundations of sense-experience

We know that the sensuous mind is a containant of the higher degrees. The ideas of thought are founded upon those things which have been impressed on the memory from the things of sense; and therefore scientifics are vessels of spiritual things; and affections that are from good pleasures of the body are vessels of celestial things (@AC 1435 cf. @AC 9216, 9726; @SE 5552). The knowledges of the

external memory, therefore, are also the basis upon which rational thought is built. They are not the origin of that thought, but its foundation (@AC 1600[e], 1472, 1964; note especially @AC 3161). A particularly important passage makes this point. The good of the rational is from Divine good, whereas its truth is not from Divine truth; for the truth of the rational is procured by means of sciences and cognitions, which are insinuated through the external and internal senses, thus by an external way (@AC 2524).

Part of the reason the rational is not fully opened in childhood is that the knowledges necessary for opening it are not complete enough. It takes a wealth of knowledge to allow that faculty to search among them for ideas which it can make its own. That is why studies in worldly things are called uses for perfecting the rational (@DLW 332).

The rational faculty itself, however, is opened by a sense of the uses of things. This concept reminds us once again that the good of the rational mind is love to God and to the neighbor, and we love the neighbor through performing uses. When a child asks Why am I studying Math, or Geography, he or she might be asking a negative question, or perhaps enunciating a need deep within her or his being, to discover the purpose of the learning process. Be it known that the rational cannot possibly be conceived and born, that is, formed, apart from scientifics and cognitions; but these scientifics and cognitions must have use as their end, and when they have use, they have life as their end (@AC 1964).

A large portion of what we do and think is based upon knowledges which have long since passed out of our conscious recall. This great storehouse was once used, and may still be used in a semiconscious way, to enable deeper functions of the mind to operate. We know this takes place in the spiritual world, where the knowledge of language or science is lost, but the quality of thought built up around them remains (@AC 2480). In a sense it happens here too, because much that we once knew, we no longer need to remember. It has shaped our thought, and it is now the thought that matters.

We can see this when we teach a child to play the piano. The fascinating thing is that just as a child forgets his finger exercises and begins to develop a style of playing and an individuality of expression, so in the great lesson of life we forget certain knowledges as intelligence begins to dawn. When a person lives according to a certain truth, it vanishes from his external memory, and passes into the internal memory; or what is the same, it vanishes in the natural or external man, and passes into the rational or internal man, and puts on the very man, and makes his human, that is, his quality as to the human (@AC 3108, cf. 3161, 3182, 3175, 3203[2, 3]).

This principle is beautifully illustrated in the story of Elijah. He was taken up into heaven and no trace of him remained on earth. Elijah represents the Word producing faith that Jehovah is God. At first that faith is a conscious thing. We reflect on it, act from it, debate it. Later, however, the reasons which apparently built up that faith disappear from the natural mind. They are lifted up into the rational (here meaning the spiritual); and he no longer allows the natural man by any of its sophistry to call it into doubt (@AC 3182). The faith is certain. It is wedded to good in the rational. From its height it now looks down on the memory and uses what is there to express and confirm what it knows is true.

The story of Rebekah's being found for Isaac, and of her leaving her land for the land of Canaan tells of this process when a person is reformed. Once this process is finished, it doesn't mean that the rational no longer uses the lower memory, and the knowledge of things and events and experiences. One of its

most important powers is to look down into the natural realm and find, not only knowledges, but also affections, and take them to itself. This power to rearrange knowledges or experiences is what we most usually call reason. But remember, it always works from a certain affection. If good, then it is rational, if not, then it uses falsities which render him irrational, although he seems to himself, in the darkness in which he then is, preeminently rational (@AC 3108, cf. 4156[4] et al).

The power of selection. The power to arrange and rearrange. The power to bring certain things together in the mind and arrive at a conclusion (@AE 569[6]). These things depend upon the wealth of and the order of the knowledges which a person has. Even very little children select things from their memories and produce ideas concerning truth by their means. They are able to make up a story in which one person was wrong and the other right, and although they may be rehearsing principles that they were taught, without any deep understanding of them, the creativity is a herald of the human faculty to come.

It is clear, however, that knowledges have to be put in order in a fuller sense before the rational can be said to be opened. Before the twentieth year truths and goods have not been so set in order as to enable them to go forth into the army and into warfare, because... they do not as yet from themselves discriminate and form any conclusions; consequently they cannot as yet by means of the rational dispel anything of falsity or evil (@AC 10225 refs, also 4248, 8963; @CL 456).

The rational with evil and sensuous people

An evil man cannot be rational (@AC 1914, 1935, 2851; @TCR 564, et al). He has the faculty - the ability to see truth and speak about it. He has the external manifestation - the power to reason, to analyze knowledges and reach conclusions from them. What he does not have is the internal reality. He does not see truth and consciously acknowledge it in his life. Those who think evil and falsity are insane in their thought, and therefore the rational can by no means be predicated of them (@AC 1914). (It is not those who think about evil and falsity, but those who think it who are insane).

One of the most powerful teachings about the abuse of the rational faculty speaks of certain devils imbued with the doctrine of faith alone who had been told there was not a grain of truth with them. They were incensed, and 300 of them got permission to come into the world of spirits to state their case. They listed truths which they had - such as that there is a Trinity; that Christ is the Redeemer and Savior; that He alone is justice, and He alone has merit. They were told that these are indeed truths, but with them they had been so twisted to confirm falsities that their truth was extinguished (@AR 566).

Thus the rational mind is closed over a period of time with those who choose evil. It is not that the faculty is taken away. Even in the other world they retain this, but it is said that they are not willing to understand truth, and not to be willing is just like not being able (@AR 765).

How does the rational faculty come to be closed? Through a concentration on lower delights and thoughts which slowly takes up all the available time of a persons life, and gradually makes him a stranger to deeper thought. He can respond to a call to exercise rationality, and seem quite intelligent; but he does not do this from his own free will, and so that realm of his life becomes a closed book. Eventually it is not used at all - it is like a language in which he once excelled, but has not spoken for fifty years.

Knowledge is neutral to good or evil: it is the order into which it is put and the ends which it serves which determines its truth. The rational faculty can be and often is the servant of the sensuous. It confirms what appears to be true rather than what is true (@AC 268, 270); and this has been the cause of the fall of every church (@AC 127). Yet it retains the appearance of being rational, and therein lies its power to hurt (cf. @TCR 564; @5M 1; @AC 1914).

The Writings speak again and again of the melancholy fact that rational considerations will not persuade someone who is confirmed in falsity to relinquish his opinions. With such people one small idea which seems to prove their point will prevail over thousands of good reasons why their stance is untenable. At first our young people find this hard to accept. It seems that if the truth is clear it should sweep all before it. Part of our education is to let them see in themselves and in others the tendency to use reason as if it were true rationality - to prove a point rather than to see the truth.

The Writings do not teach that truth is determined by those who are skilled in knowledges or experienced with the philosophies of the world; but that doctrine is seen by those in enlightenment (@LJ 14 footnote - many references). Nor do they say that the wise men of the church are those who are learned in its tenets, but those who believe the Word and what it says (@AC 2568, 2588); and who from the Lord have the power to see that truth is true. It is believed that those have an understanding in the things of the church who are skillful in confirming the tenets or doctrinals of their own church by many things, and this even to persuasion that it is so, and who also are skillful in dexterously confuting many heresies. But this is not the intellectual of the church; for to confirm a tenet is not of the intellectual, but of ingenuity in the sensuous, and it is sometimes found in the worst of men, and can also be done by those who believe nothing whatever.... But the understanding of the church is to perceive and see, before any tenet is confirmed, whether it is true or not, and then to confirm it (@AC 6222[5]).

The potential for human life exists because we are gifted by the Lord with the power to see what is true and good. Our education seeks to foster that power in all that it does. Whether it is teaching first grade children how to read or tenth graders how to wrestle with Algebra I or college students to confront the mysteries of Physics, we are helping them to use that human faculty which will bring them closer to, and make them more like their God. All human good, all human creativity, and all human accomplishment will finally be measured by the standard of rational good - did it promote the love of God and of the neighbor? Our ability to measure knowledge, and people, and human events in this way is the rational sight of truth.

THE RATIONAL: THE FIRST RATIONAL

Second in a Series of Talks to the General Faculty by the Rev. Peter M. Buss

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Introduction

When the Lord spoke with a woman at Jacobs well in Sychar of Samaria, He showed her that He knew of her past life. He also told her He was the Messiah. She left her water pot and went into the city, and said to the men, Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ? (John 4:28, 29).

There are times, when we read the Writings, that they seem to be talking to us about the very things we have thought and done. They address our lives so clearly that surely they are revealed by Him who knows all things that we have ever done.

The teachings about the first rational are a good example of this. Only the Lord Himself could trace the growth of human reason, make us see ourselves, our weaknesses and our opportunities. As we read the spiritual story of Hagar and Ishmael, we are tempted to smile, if a little wryly, at its catalog of hesitant human progress, of unjustified pride in this nascent rationality, of stubbornness in the presence of a superior truth, and of the proneness of human nature to use truth as a weapon, in self-justification and in accusation of those who incite us to anger. We recognize these traits in others, and, if we are wise, in ourselves. Come see a Man who told me all things that I ever did.

Yet the birth of rationality in human minds is a miracle, a wondrous work of the Lord's mercy, an accommodation to mortal man in the place where he is so that he can leave that place and walk a sometimes rocky path towards heaven. Despite its twists and turns, the path the Lord has laid out for us is one of progress towards true rationality - the ability to love God and the neighbor, and to see the truths which express those loves.

Ishmael had to be born - of a less than orderly conjunction with a handmaid - before Isaac, the son and heir, could be born of Sarah, Abraham's wife.

When is the Rational Born

It is not the purpose of this study to tackle the complicated issue of what the Writings mean by childhood, adolescence, youth, young manhood, and so on. The Writings do not spend a lot of time speaking about chronological ages. They tend instead to speak of states of mind. When we see those states in people, be they fifteen years old or seventy five, we may understand something of their mental processes.

For the first rational is a human condition. It is not a state of mind from which we graduate on our thirtieth birthday, nor has it departed when some more gentle qualities begin to appear. It will rear its head time and again throughout life, with everyone who is of the spiritual church. In fact, in its orderly state, it is the understanding of a spiritual man, and in its disorderly state it is his cross.

When does the rational begin to develop? In general the teaching is clear that a man or woman is not rational until adult age, for only then are truths set in order by a mind which can discriminate as from itself (@AC 10225, 4248, 8963; cf. @CL 456).

It seems however that the rational faculty begins to develop in the teenage years, beginning with puberty. Prior to this, the boy has thought only from things introduced into the memory, meditating on them and obeying them. After it, he thinks of them from reason; and then, under the leadership of his love, he disposes the things seated in his memory into a new order and begins a life of his own in conformity therewith, gradually thinking more and more according to his own reason, and willing from his own freedom (@CL 446, cf @CL 90; @AE 543[2-4]; @AC 5126[2-4]). The development of the rational is gradual. It reaches its strength in adult age, and only then is a young man or a young woman accountable for his or her deeds and intentions (@AC 10225 et al).

In this study, therefore, the emphasis is on recognizing the characteristics of the first rational in its conception and development. From the ability to recognize these characteristics we can more easily adapt ourselves to those we teach or serve.

Hagar and Ishmael: Order from Disorder

The Old Testament was written when concubinage and polygamy were permitted. The Lord used this permission to reveal the miraculous ways in which He leads people in disorderly states towards order. The birth of Ishmael is one example. Sarai was childless, so Abram was sent in to Hagar, her Egyptian handmaid, and she conceived a child who would for a time be their adopted son (see @AC 1901). Ishmael represents the beginning of rationality in the person of the spiritual church - and we are all of the spiritual church today.

Abram represents the good of the internal man, or of the soul. Sarai represents its truth. The Writings make it very clear that the ideal way for the rational to be born is from the union of the good and truth in the soul, flowing down into the mind. That should produce the conscious ability to recognize and be moved by good and truth - which is rationality (@AC 1899-1902).

But that can't happen. The growth of hereditary evil has made it impossible. Today, if goods and truths were to inflow from the soul and be seen, he would adulterate and falsify them, and thus he would perish to eternity (@AC 2557, cf. 1902, 6323[3]). The old order will not work.

Therefore the Lord has ordained a new order. It seems wrong, and that is why it is represented by the conjunction of Abram with a handmaid. Yet a child is born of the union, who is a temporary heir to the family. Hagar the Egyptian represents the affection of knowledges (@AC 1895, 1896). This is a natural delight, and by the application of internal love (Abram) to this natural affection (Hagar) the rational begins to be born.

It seems disorderly, but it is not. It is a new order (@AC 1891, 1902). For the rational to be born today a child must be imbued with knowledges, for it is on the foundation of them that interior thought is built (@AC 1472, 1600, 1964, 2524, 3161, 4156:4; @HH 469 et al). Knowledge is the essential precursor of rational thought, and the more numerous the knowledges the more sound the basis for future rationality (@AC 1901; cf. 1900, 1893, et al).

Knowledges are not enough - they have to be ordered. There is great confusion if the order is not right, for the ability to think clearly is according to the arrangement of truth in the mind (@AC 5700, 2556; cf. @AC 4552, 5122; see also @AC 1900).

In our story, Hagar the Egyptian represents the affection for knowledges. The Writings tell us that there are many affections which influence the order and arrangement of the things we know, but this affection - the delight in knowing things - is a vitally necessary one. There are many affections belonging to the exterior man, all dedicated to their uses; but the affection of cognitions and sciences stands pre-eminent above them all when it has for its end that we may become truly rational (@AC 1909).

Affection disposes what we learn into an order, by drawing knowledge to it like a magnet (@AC 3849 cf. 3913, 3915; also @TCR 38, 351 et al). The affection of knowing is thus the maternal into which the love of the soul can inspire the beginnings of rational thought. This affection is his good, from which he acts (@AC 1940).

The rational can be born in no other way at this day (@AC 1902). People are in natural delights. They think about this world and its pleasures and rewards. If they think of knowledges it is often from a very worldly motive - such as the wish to get on in the world or a certain intellectual pride (@AC 3603, 3849).

The Lord in His mercy has adapted Himself to our delights and used one of them - the interest in learning - to lift us to the plane of rational thought.

The trouble is that this rational thought is tainted because of its birth. Its affections are of this world, and therefore self and personal advantage figure largely in its formative years. Inevitably it is not well-disposed to the things the soul loves. When we discover our rational power, we are much more interested in using it to fashion our own kind of heaven, one in which we play the central role.

This is why the Writings make a strong point that the rational must be built on knowledges which are true, for the celestial and spiritual things of the internal man find no correspondence for themselves except in truths (@AC 1900).

This brings us to the whole point of the Lord's first advent. After the fall of mankind the rational needed to be built up on the foundation of knowledge. But his fallen condition meant that truths, which were needed to establish true rationality, could not be recognized. The truth that the Lord revealed through the heavens before the advent were not clear enough to the natural mind, and were being neglected and lost. Jehovah could not flow in through the soul to form a rational capable of seeing eternal truth (@AC 6280, 6371, 6371, 3061 et al).

Therefore He was born on earth. He revealed truth that could be spoken by the mouth of God-Man on earth, and could later be revealed by the apostles and through Swedenborg. This was spiritual-natural truth, truth grounded in natural things (SE 1531; cf. @SE 4782); and by it the man of the spiritual church could be enlightened (@AC 2776).

So through the glorification the Lord came near to people who had removed themselves far from Him (@AC 1990, 6280). He was immediately present with them, and able to teach them (@TCR 109, 786; @AC

Therefore it is taught that the Lord Himself took on a rational according to the new order. The Lord, being born as are other men, and because He had a nature inherited from the mother, was like other men also in respect to the miraculous formation of the rational by means of knowledge, to the end that by combats of temptations and by victories He might reduce all things into order. Therefore His rational was conceived and born in the same way as with other men (@AC 1902[3]).

All of which brings us to New Church education.

Why is it the hope for the world in the centuries to come? Because it is dedicated to working with the Lord in the very reason for His advent - that people should be able to see the truth according to this new order of His. Consider:

1. The threefold Word is revealed clearly, perfectly, so that its knowledges are understandable even by people with very natural affections.
2. Its truths are perfectly ordered by the Lord Himself.
3. Its truths enable us to teach any secular subject in such a way that there is a harmony with that celestial and spiritual truth which the soul of every child loves.
4. When a harmony exists between natural learning and spiritual truth, the love of the soul (Abram) can inflow into the affection of learning (Hagar) and begin to produce a rational.
5. The more perfect this process the more easily does a person come to recognize truth when he sees it, and submit himself to its government. This is the way of truth, which leads to heaven (@AC 2034).

This is why New Church education is not merely a theory of teaching. It is an attempt to cooperate with the Lord towards His end of leading His children to truly human life. We may be - we surely are - imperfect stewards of this charge. But the goal itself cannot be challenged. If we teach knowledges which are true, and present them according to an order which the Word indicates. If we seek to inspire an affection for them. If we allow the Lord to be seen through them: then He will be immediately present in those children's minds and fulfill His promise - You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

And it is only in the New Church, where the doctrine of genuine truth - the perfect order of truth - has been revealed, that such education is possible on earth today. No more important effort in human education exists - and the principle is exactly the same in our evangelization efforts in our church.

THE RATIONAL: THE REFORMATION OF THE RATIONAL

Third in a Series of Talks to the General Faculty on the Rational by the Rev. Peter M. Buss

April 24, 1986

Introduction

Everyone who aspires to wisdom has to fight the spirit of hatred, unjustifiable anger, and resentment. In winding up the series on the rational and its place in our educational philosophy I would like to discuss how the rational develops and is reformed as we wrestle with a universal human dilemma: How do we deal with injustices real or imagined, and not show resentment, excessive anger, or hatred?

Let us take as our specimen for this experiment a young man starting out in his teaching career. He is well trained in his subject matter. He has taught for two or three years. He is married with two small children.

He cares a great deal about what he is trying to do. A lot of the time he's happy, but certain things frustrate him no end. Some of the students won't study, even though they could. Others fool around in class and although he corrects them, he doesn't seem on top of his discipline all the time. He hears about former students who went on to Mathematics II after he broke his back teaching them Mathematics I and their new teacher (a respected veteran, that one) has been heard to comment that they know nothing about x and y , and can hardly add 6 and 4 together.

How does he feel at those times? Angry. He'd like to give a whole lot of assorted people a piece of his mind.

Usually he gets on well with the parents. But some of them have been known to phone him and explain that little Johnny is a special kid who learns Mathematics in a whole different way from more pedestrian students, and doesn't take to stern tactics when he gets caught up watching the A Team and forgets his homework for the 15th time. The times our young educator gets most angry is when he knows he has done something wrong and it is pointed out to him - whether by students, or parents, or his boss.

At other times he gets mad at the administration, the maintenance department who didn't fix the light bulb that blinks in his classroom, the computer that went on the fritz just as he was asking it to print that fancy new program he'd worked out, or even his wife who doesn't know what he suffers at the hands of all those other nitwits he has to deal with.

He's a normal, caring person who is dedicated to something and puts a lot of effort into it, and when people make him angry he gets very angry. Even when they don't make him angry he can get frustrated, and that turns to irritation against whoever is in his path at the moment, and then he starts thinking about all sorts of past problems and his sense of previous resentments return to plague him.

The Writings describe his transformation, if he is willing to be reformed, into a man who will restrain his anger, who will act at times from zeal and strong feelings, but who will live according to the

universal principle that hatred and resentment are wrong.

The summary in @AC 3182 is brief. At first he doesn't even think hatred is wrong, unless it leads to murder or something like it. Then he reflects, and realizes that doctrine teaches the truth that no one is to be held in hatred; for whoever holds another in hatred, kills him every moment (@AC 3182). He starts to live according to this principle. After a while it becomes a habit to obey it, no longer as a concept but as part of his life. Then the principle is lifted up out of his natural mind. It becomes unconscious to him. It is joined to rational good, which is love to the Lord and the neighbor. He no longer questions it, because it is something which rules him.

The story of Abraham's servant finding a wife for Isaac is the story of this process. It tells how the rational goes to work in the natural mind and finds principles with which it can be in harmony, and purifies our affection for those principles, divests them of their more earthbound form, lifts them on high, and marries them. It is a most remarkable tale of human endeavor guided by Divine Providence, and promoted and supported by the angels and spirits who are our unseen friends.

I would suggest that this process sets the pattern for the way in which every human love which looks towards use can find its tools - the knowledges or ideas from which it can work - and through reflection, purification and practice make them habitual and finally spontaneous. They become part of that person, a measure of his or her abilities and character. The love might be a love of carpentry or of music - some realm of human endeavor whereby the person may serve. The pattern of learning, discovery, improvement and final proficiency will be essentially the same. But more of this towards the end of the address.

In the meantime let us return to our young teacher and follow him through this process, as it is told in the 24th chapter of Genesis.

Some Basic Definitions and Concepts

In our story we have two arenas - Canaan, where Abraham and Isaac were, and Haran, where Rebekah lived, where the servant went to find a wife for Isaac. They represent the two great divisions of the human mind - the spiritual and the natural. The land of Canaan represents the realm of spiritual or rational thought. The rational mind is often equated with the spiritual mind, a plane above our conscious thought on earth (See @AC 3020, et al).

The celestial mind (Abraham) operates in the natural mind through a servant. The servant, who administers all things of Abraham's house, represents good in the natural from within, or remains. Remains are the good from heaven above, which we feel, here on earth (cf. @AC 3019, 3030; also @AC 561, 2284 et al).

We must remember the fundamental principle - that the rational faculty is human nature itself, and is what distinguishes us from the animals (@5M 1). Whenever there is a sight of truth, wherever truth is loved, there the rational has been, and there it operates once more. But whereas rational good flows in from the soul, truth is learned from without, through sight and hearing. First of all it lodges in the natural mind and memory. It is associated with many different kinds of affection - some of them worldly and selfish ones. The rational caused truth to be seen, but that truth is natural, clothed in

appearances (@AC 3098, 3161, 3175).

It is not in the natural mind that the human is formed, but in the rational (@AC 3175). Truths therefore have to be called forth from their resting place in the external memory, stripped of appearances, made alive by the love of God and the love of the neighbor, thus joined to good in the rational. Then they are true (@AC 3030, et al).

The Process

Abraham calls his servant and tells him to swear that he will not take a wife to Isaac from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom they dwell. He is to go to his fathers house and find a woman.

The soul stirs our young teacher, making him long to get rid of some of the angry and resentful feelings he has. There are lots of philosophies or attitudes in the world that would let him keep his bad temper and merely make sure it doesn't hurt him too much. Those are the daughters of the Canaanites and we dwell among them. It is easy to feel that we ought to be able to hit back, hard, when we are attacked; or that we must express anger lest it get bottled up and give us ulcers (See @AC 3024, 3020). We need a true philosophy.

What does the soul stir? It is said that the servant administered all that Abraham had. Remains, good feelings in our natural minds, can administer the things of the natural, if we will give them that permission. When the Lord leads us, He stirs our remains. We feel a wish to live in charity and harmony. We want to espouse a philosophy which makes it possible.

The servant wondered: Is it possible that there is such a woman? What if she refuses to return? Should Isaac go to Haran to find a wife himself? Don't you dare do that, said Abraham. Isaac must not return to Haran.

In our early days we wonder if there is a way to combat hatred and its accouterments. Is there an overall philosophy powerful enough to guide us to that perfect charity of the angels? Should we perhaps settle instead for some less idealistic, but more workable philosophy? (@AC 3030-3033). This is a test of our faith whenever we lift our eyes to the mountains. Are the mountains there, or when we scale them will we find them to be flat-topped hills, little higher than the ground we now stand on? Is it worth the effort? But our young teacher overcomes these hurdles. His faith in the Lord is strong, and he chooses to confirm it once again. I can overcome hatred. I can scale that mountain, and it is indeed a high one.

The servant goes off to Haran, and makes his camels to kneel down by the well of waters. It is interesting how often the camels are spoken of in this story. They represent the knowledges of the memory. In this example, they would represent the things we know about anger, hatred, revenge, and similar subjects. In general we learned them from the Word, but we also gleaned them from others, and perhaps even saw them illustrated in personal experience (cf. @AC 3098, also 3040, 3128:2, 3030).

Rebekah is said to represent the affection for the doctrinal things (@AC 3077, et al). In describing the difference between scientifics, or knowledges of the memory, and doctrinal things, the Writings say that doctrinal things look to use and are acquired when we reflect on scientifics, or things known (@AC

3052 - 3058). They are, therefore, our sense of what the truth means.

But at this stage of the process, when a young man is trying to develop a way of combating his immoderate anger, doctrinal things are remote (@AC 3057). Rebekah isn't there yet. Instead the camels are kneeling down by the well of water, wanting to drink.

A striking point is being made here. When we start to develop a true philosophy of life, the right thing to do is to abandon our previously held concepts about this subject, and start afresh with what we know! The camels kneeling before the well of water represent our willingness to take what we have learned, submit it to the Word, and see if it is true, and then from those truths to develop new concepts, new doctrinal ideas, which will guide us.

I would like to spend a little time illustrating this. Young people grow up with all sorts of ideas about anger and hatred. Much of it is learned without much reflection, although they have thought about it from time to time. The trouble is that some of it bears little relationship to what the Word says about the subject, although they think it does. Various experiences, the simplistic formulas of their youth, careless comments or behavior by people they respect may have formed their doctrinal ideas.

But now our young teacher reflects on what he knows about hatred. He opens the Word itself and reads. He finds some remarkable teachings. For example, the Lord allows people to think of Him as angry in certain states, although He is never angry. That is an idea that needs reflection, study, pondering. He finds anew the teachings about zeal. He learned them for a sophomore college paper once, but hardly remembers what they said. Now they will make a difference to his behavior patterns. He discovers that zeal and anger look the same. How do you tell them apart? Well, in Zeal there is a regret that the situation arose in the first place. There is the wish to defend, rather than to attack. There is peace, or the longing for peace within. There is the willingness to drop the subject once the problem has been dealt with, instead of harboring grudges and wanting to start the fight again. There is forgetfulness afterwards, not a keeping of score for the next time something happens. Learning these teachings is represented by the camels kneeling before the well of waters. By means of them he learns a lot about anger. But he still doesn't have his philosophy of life to guide him.

Neither has the servant found the woman who will marry Isaac. So he sets a test, and it is a good one. The young women will be coming to draw water at the well. He will ask them to give him water. The one who answers that he may drink and she will draw for the camels also is the wife the Lord has chosen for Isaac. It is a good test because it leaves the choice in the Lord's hands. It is also good because the woman who would willingly draw water for camels who had been on a long journey must have a kind heart indeed.

The servants speaking to the Lord and asking Him to be there that day has a peculiar importance (@AC 3061-3063). If a person is to formulate a principle for dealing with anger and hatred it must be an eternal solution. It cannot last for a little while. It is from the Lord, it will be present every day of eternity, whenever he has need of it, for the Lord's mercy is there when anyone calls. This is what is meant by the seemingly innocuous words, Jehovah God of my lord Abraham, cause to meet I pray before me this day, and do mercy (Genesis 24:12).

The girl must be a damsel, representing innocence. She would give him to drink, for that represented

the ability of this affection to bring truth to the good of remains. She must give the camels drink, for this represented its ability to enlighten the ideas one has (@AC 3067 - 3071).

Hardly had he finished when Rebekah came. She was a damsel beautiful to look upon and a virgin, and she was of the house of Bethuel, Nahor's son. She went down to the well, filled her pitcher, and came up. Rebekah represents the affection for doctrinal things, and her drawing water represents that this was the affection which would pull together all the truths that had been learned into a unified philosophy. Her beauty and her virginity represent her innocence, and the absence of falsity.

What is this affection of doctrinal things which Rebekah represents? It is a peculiar and beautiful treasure in our minds, and it appears when we study truth in order to arrive at a philosophy of life. From infancy we have been taught by heaven and by adults to care about the truth, and to try to formulate that truth into a way of life. The affection for doing this, if it is rightly cultivated, is an innocent one. We might be very stubborn about our own opinions in many areas, but if someone can stir our wish to see the truth inside of doctrine, why then we become open-minded, inquiring, willing to be helped to see something new (@AC 3077, 3078).

So as our young teacher studies the Word and reflects on what he knows about hatred, longing to find the answer to his search, this lovely affection appears.

And just as Rebekah passes the test, and the servant watches her watering the camels and wonders if the Lord has prospered his way, so we find that this affection begins to guide us so that we see principles of life. Consider an example dealing with anger. The Writings teach that little children believe the Lord is angry, and that zeal, which is what the Lord has, looks like anger in outward form. That would seem to teach us that in dealing with our little children its a good idea to let them see you angry. On the other hand, children, we are told, are introduced by mutual love, and by love towards their little friends into heavenly love. If we teach them anger in the wrong way, we may extinguish that good.

The affection for drawing these ideas into a doctrinal concept where the truth shines forth is represented by Rebekah. How do we let little children know that if they do wrong were angry with them, and yet teach them that love and forgiveness are at the center of the Christian home? The affection of doctrinals gives light to these ideas, as Rebekah gave water to the camels.

The servant wondered. He gave her gifts. He asked her whose house she was from, and she told him and invited him to stay. He praised the Lord, and then she ran and told her mothers house about him. Laban her brother came out, and saw him and his gifts.

There are many details in the story, but in general they tell of the inquiry which must precede before we embrace a certain philosophy of life. The truths which we will have lifted up into our rational minds and joined to good there must be most carefully sifted so that nothing false comes with them.

The Writings speak very specifically about this. Many false ideas cling to our knowledges, they say, and many appearances of truth (@AC 3110, 3116, 3098). There must be a most careful exploration of each truth which is to be elevated. Twice the Writings comment on the fact that we don't think there is such a searching, since it is almost unconscious, yet it must be so, for the Lord aids in the process (@AC

3116). And yet, they add, it is done in the most perfect freedom, for we must choose that truth which we wish to be joined to our rational good (@AC 3132, 3158, 3161).

A young man thinks that acting from zeal means he should punish his children (or his students), but he should not show temper. So when he is made angry he turns very cold and controlled, and decimates them with the power of his mind. That is not a genuine way to show zeal, it is simply a cloak for the anger to continue unabated. He has to realize that anger can express itself more powerfully by means of truth than it can by means of brute force, and that cold anger is as hurtful as the more fiery kind.

In other words, he needs to examine each principle he is developing to see if it is in harmony with the rational good within. That is the point - for rational good, the Writings clearly teach, is to love God and to love the neighbor. No truth can ascend to that good which does not harmonize with it.

Gently the Lord helps that young man to examine the truths he learns, to organize them into a doctrinal concept, to search diligently to see if some apparent truth is creeping in and if so to cast it out (see @AC 3161).

The servant was convinced that he had found the right woman, so he made his case, and asked for consent. Once we have found a set of concepts which will enable us to fight the wrong kind of anger in all its manifestations, we want to make it our own. It must be in freedom, which is represented by the servants inviting them to respond to his proposal. But Laban and Bethuel see that the thing is of the Lord, and they agree.

In explaining the consent of Rebekah to go to Isaac, the Writings proceed to the next step, which is that truths now seen and embraced must ascend out of the realm of natural thought and feeling. Man is born into no truth, but he has all to learn, and this by an external way, namely that of hearing and seeing. By this way truth has to be insinuated, and implanted in his memory; but as long as the truth is there only, it is merely scientific; and in order that truth may pervade the man it must be called forth from there, and be conveyed more toward the interiors; for his human is more interior, being in his rational (@AC 3175).

How does truth ascend? By being practiced. When the young man starts to exert himself and apply the concepts about fighting hatred, he begins that spiritual journey, taking his truths back to the spiritual Canaan. He says in effect, These are beautiful truths. I will take them home with me and cherish them. We nurture and protect truths by putting them into practice.

Yet there is a temptation, and a hard one to resist. Laban and Bethuel were not happy with the servants wish to go back to Canaan right away. Stay with us ten days, they said. It seemed a reasonable request. Their daughter or sister would soon be gone and they would never see her again. Why not keep her at home for a few days. But the servant knew better. If she delayed, perhaps she would feel afraid of this journey which she knew was of the Lord's will. Maybe she would never set out. Let us go now, he said.

What a fascinating human weakness this reveals. Our young teacher has now decided on an approach to his more angry emotions. He knows how he should behave when faced with difficult students or complaining parents. He even knows how he should react when he is in the wrong but wants to hide from it. He has a set of doctrinals concerning hatred which he wants to lift up on high and obey. He

knows it is not going to be easy, but he feels sure that it is the Lord's will for him to act this way.

Delay, the hells whisper; and delay is the echo of his natural man. It seems reasonable. Why don't we think about these things a little bit? After all, trying to be kind all the time is a bit of a risky business. People might take advantage of you or walk all over you. Think about it for a while. Perhaps you can show this sort of kindness to your best friends, but not to the undeserving. In any case, why don't you take this marvelous philosophy of yours and look at it for a while and talk about it and feel good that you were clever enough to think of these things?

The Writings call this the sophistry of the natural man - that seeming wisdom which cautions prudence when action is necessary, or counsels delay when delay will merely weaken our resolve. It is hard enough to fight our own anger, even when we have embarked solidly on that course. If we hesitate, we might not get started. No man, having put his hand to the plough and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God. The servant sets off on his journey with Rebekah, and they come to Canaan. There Isaac is meditating in the field at evening, and he lifts up his eyes, and Rebekah is coming. She gets down off the camels - note the camels again - and goes to meet him with a veil on her face. He takes her to his mothers tent, and he discovers that he loves her.

By constant practice, the principles of fighting against unrestrained anger and resentment become natural and spontaneous. They are ideas that at first we had to consciously bring to our attention, but slowly they became automatic. Now, many years later, our wiser and older teacher finds that when people irritate him, he has an instinctive resistance to those angry and resentful feelings that used to attack him. He doesn't want to feel that way. Feelings of hatred are a torment to him, and he immediately sets out to work against them.

This is the kind of principle which rational good can love. When Rebekah lighted off the camels, that represented that the principle of truth was now universal. It didn't depend on knowledge, it was spontaneous, part of the life. It was almost separated from knowledge - as a skilled pianist after many years of practice can no longer tell you how he finds the right notes on the keyboard. He has progressed beyond external learning.

This process must take place before anyone can come into true charity. The internal man must be reformed before the external (@TCR 591-595). There must be glory to God in the highest before that can be peace on earth and good will towards men. And it is only when rational good and truth are joined in holy wedlock that we can be truly creative, and put our natural minds to work to do the Lord's will.

Application to all learning

Now this would seem to be a process which applies only to the regeneration of people, and not to anything else. Interestingly, it applies also to the learning process of evil people (@AC 3108). The only difference is that the joining of evil with falsity makes evil people insane, not rational.

It was this that caused me to reflect that what is being spoken of here is a process whereby the inner longings of people cause them to learn and become proficient. It is not describing every learning process, but specifically those where the student is truly excited about the use of what he or she is

imbibing.

Why is it that one person cannot saw wood in a straight line or hang a door? His eyes are good, his hands coordinated. Another, similar person learns these skills and learns them so well that accuracy in woodwork is a second nature to him. What is the difference? Mainly that the inner longing to use that particular skill was there.

If so, then his learning follows the pattern of the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah. A servant of his longing is sent - perhaps we could call it an aptitude for and an excitement with that kind of work. There is hesitation and unsureness at first - even as the servant wondered if his journey would be fruitful. He sets aside his earlier notions of how to do the work, and studies and learns all he can about the subject - the servant making the camels to kneel by the well of waters. He looks for some general guiding ideas which belong to this task - the servant set a test which required the camels and him to be watered. He finds an affection for just those kinds of skills within him, and it seems to make his learning easy - Rebekah appeared and passed the test. He searches carefully to make sure no false notions of how to proceed are mixed in with his ideas - the questioning and the wondering of the servant and Rebekah's family. He decides to pursue this path of expertise - the proposal. He works at his task and it becomes second nature to him and a part of the delight of his life - the journey to Canaan.

And the two marvelous things about this process in all of learning are (1) that the Lord is guiding each step of the process, and (2) that it is the power of rational good which accomplishes all these things.

For the rational is the creative faculty of the mind. It is this which causes truth to be seen, and which harmonizes and orders the ideas in the mind. It is for the cause of rational good - the good of service - that we have the power to read books or chop wood accurately or make watches or teach fractious kids Latin. In each of these endeavors the ability to see and be affected by truth is the guiding light, and the need to love others outside of ourselves is the force that moves us. These are rational truth and good - human nature itself, and the image and likeness of God.

THE LEARNER AND THE LORD

An Address to the Education Council by the Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss

August, 1988

We must teach the Visible God

This New Church is the crown of all the churches which have hitherto existed on the earth because it is to worship the one visible God in whom is the invisible like the soul is in the body. Thus, and not otherwise, is a conjunction of God with man possible because man is natural and therefore thinks naturally, and conjunction must exist in his thought, and thus in his loves affection, and this is the case when he thinks of God as a man (@TCR 787).

The visible God: this is the Lord's gift to His New Church. The New Church alone, He teaches, can worship Him in His glory. Why? Because only now is He clearly seen. He wants all people who do what is right to see that glory, and in the world to come they will. He created the New Church so that more and more people, from birth onward, may know Him as the visible God, feel close to Him, worship and love and obey Him.

The first principle of teaching our children should be that we present to them the vision of the Lord God Jesus Christ, the visible God. What we teach in secular subjects should enhance this purpose; nothing should take away from it.

The Old and New Testaments also present the visible God

The Lord is visible in all three parts of His revelation. At first glance we may doubt that. The Old Testament talks of a time before His advent, does it not? Doesn't it present to our sight a remote, somewhat harsh, invisible God - Jehovah the despot, the stern yet just ruler who does not hesitate to punish transgressors yet is mollified by their repentance?

Yet the Old Testament in its spiritual sense tells of the glorified Lord. Every verse tells of the Lord's life on earth, and it does so in a wonderful, completely coherent series. Bishop de Charms makes the point that the New Testament tells that story in four different ways. The Old Testament tells it in only one, complete way. Under heavier correspondential veilings, the Lord here lives, as it were, in the body of the Jewish Nation. This revelation was hidden even from the heavens, He said, until Jesus was glorified (The Old Testament and Education, Journal of Education. 1930, page 180).

I believe that the letter too of the Old Testament now presents us with the glorified Lord Jesus Christ. (This will come up later in the talk). So does the New Testament. It seems to speak of Jesus while He was not yet Divine. It speaks of His weeping, of His temptation, of His doubts.

But today we know that He Himself declared the manner of His birth and life. Revealed in that process is the work of the infinite love and wisdom of God! It is a work made visible in the life of Jesus Christ. In His trials and His victories we see infinite love and wisdom accomplishing its ends. We see the visible God in whom is the invisible, as the soul is in the body.

Let us be very clear then: whenever we teach any part of the threefold Word we can - or at least we should - be teaching the visible God.

What is the essence of that God? To love others outside of Himself, to want to be conjoined with them, and to render them happy from Himself (@TCR 43-46). His love wants this, His wisdom makes it happen. An infinitely loving and wise God: this is the Divine Human.

The Lord builds the idea of God in our minds

How do children acquire that vision? One answer is that the Lord alone provides it. I think we should be comforted by the teaching that the Lord builds the picture of Himself in a child's mind - in an adults mind too. The Writings teach that every persons state after death is according to his idea of God (@DLW 13). A closely related passage says that all good people on earth, when they think interiorly in themselves, that is, in their spirit, think of God as a man (@DLW 11).

These teachings make it clear that the Lord alone, who leads people to their place in the other world, is inmosty in charge of forming their idea of Himself. There are, in fact, two ways in which angels (and by derivation good people) think about God: one from instruction and one from influx from within. An angel can see God, that is, the Lord, both within himself and without himself; within himself when he thinks from love and wisdom, without himself when he thinks about love and wisdom (@DLW 130). This is given as evidence that angels do not turn themselves to the Lord, but the Lord turns them to Himself (Ibid.).

The importance of right education

Nevertheless all these passages make it clear that teaching the right idea of God is also vitally important. The True Christian Religion speaks of those who teach a trinity of persons in the Godhead. To implant in infants and young people the idea of three Divine Persons, with which is inevitably associated the idea of three Gods, is to deprive them of all spiritual milk, thereafter of all spiritual food, and finally of all spiritual reason, with the result that spiritual death is brought upon those who confirm themselves in such an idea (@TCR 28; cf. @DLW 13). (Note that people must confirm themselves in a false idea to be spiritually judged, and the Writings are clear that it is evil loves that confirm falsities in life - see @TCR 254).

Another set of teachings makes it clear that the ability to see deeply, and to know the genuine truths about the Lord makes a huge difference in how we understand Him. Everyone who is in faith in the Lord has an idea of Him according to his faculty of elevating his thoughts, for they who know the nature of what is internal can have an idea of what is internal (@AC 6380). Hence it is plain how important it is that internal truths be known and received (@AC 2531, speaking of the same point).

The Academy college has a special use to perform in this regard. Through challenging the minds of our young people to think deeply it can provide them with the opportunity to see the Lord interiorly, rather than in a surface manner.

The state of children is peculiarly receptive to the vision of the visible God

One of the founding principles of New Church education has been that our children can learn about

the visible God far more easily than we adults (cf. for example Thoughts on Education, by Homer Synnestvedt, Journal of Education 1902, page 11; and Conversations on Education, by W.H. Benade, Journal of Education, 1914/5, page 86). They have no false notions about God, and they imbibe readily the idea of one God who is a Divine Man, their Father in the heavens.

There is another concept which we have held dear in our education - the knowledge that children are in love more than adults are, and that makes them beautifully receptive of the love which is the essential of the visible God (@AC 1453, 1773:2, 1776, 6107; @HH 277; @CL 395; see also @AC 7280; @HH 515; @SE 221). At first they receive this love from the Lord without knowledges, and later they receive it together with knowledges (@AC 1450, 1451, 1616:4).

Here is the very cornerstone of the relationship between the child and the Lord. The Lord is love itself. Children are in love from Him, even before they begin to learn, and they imbibe truths which belong to love as they grow. More than anything we must emphasize the Lord's love, if He is to be visible to them. Then we can gradually show them that as the Lord's love is wise so their love of Him must be wise - or, in other words, obedient.

The power of this teaching in later life cannot be underestimated. The holy state of worship that has been rooted in from infancy is of such a nature that it cannot endure violence, but only a gentle and kindly bending (@AC 1992[3]). The principles which a person imbibes from infancy the Lord never breaks, but bends (@AC 1255; cf 2180).

Nor is the state of love only with infants. The Writings make it clear that celestial things are implanted in childhood and youth also, and they receive knowledges appropriate to them. The celestial things of love are insinuated from the earliest infancy up to childhood, and also to youth, when being a man he is then and afterwards imbued with sciences and cognitions. If the person is such that he can be regenerated, these sciences and cognitions are then filled with the celestial things that are of love and charity, and are thus implanted in the celestial things with which he has been gifted from infancy up to childhood and youth... They are first implanted in the celestial things with which he was gifted in youth.... (@AC 1616[4]).

We tend to think that the state of adolescence, and of young men and women is not one where inflowing love influences them deeply. It does. They respond to truths taught from love, for love is still being implanted by the Lord in their internals. It is possible for Him to do this because young people are in a state of some innocence as yet unspoiled by evil which they themselves have chosen.

The principles which should guide our presentation of the Lord to our children is summed up in the education of children in heaven. By means of the understanding of truth and the wisdom of good they are introduced into the angelic life, which is love to the Lord and mutual love, in which loves there is innocence (@AC 2309). We may not be as skilled as the angels are but we should aim for no less than they do.

Accommodation

How do we teach children, from the ages of 5 through 23, the immeasurable things of love? The answer, of course, is through accommodation to the state in which they are.

In a paper delivered in 1930 Bishop de Charms observed that teachers have an instinctive awareness of children's states, and the ability to relate to them, but he added that clear doctrine gives clarity and focus to that sense (The Old Testament and Education, by George de Charms, Journal of Education, 1930, page 177). Let us look therefore at some principles of accommodation.

It is well known in the church that we cannot know God as He is in Himself (@AC 7211; 4211; Q vi; et al). The human mind, although highly analytical and elevated, is itself finite, and its finite quality cannot be separated from it. It is therefore quite incapable of comprehending the infinity of God as it is in itself, and thus God (@TCR 28; see @CL 66; @AC 5110, 3938 et al).

There are many passages that say that unless something concrete attaches to our ideas we have no understanding of it (@AC 7211, 4211, 4408; @TCR 296, 787; @AC 6876). We need to think of the Lord in the human shape (@AC 7211). We have to have a natural idea of Him or we won't have any idea (@AC 5110). In fact, unless the Lord is in a form that we can comprehend, we cannot be conjoined in faith and love with Him (@AC 6700; cf. @TCR 786; @AC 4211).

It is the objects of the earth that enable us to understand the Lord (@AC 5477). We have to see Him in terms of things we know. Therefore it pleased Jehovah to present Himself such as He actually is, and such as He appears in heaven, namely as a Divine Man (@AC 5110).

God became Man

Accommodation on the part of God was that He became Man (@TCR 370). This concept is the stone which the builders rejected, which has become the head of the corner. When we see it in heart and life, why then the day that the Lord has made will dawn upon our church, and we will be glad and rejoice in the salvation He will wreak within us. God is Man. We see Him as Man, we understand Him as Man, we obey that Man, and love Him. But most of all we acknowledge Him, the Lord Jesus Christ to be our God.

He has always revealed Himself in that way. Through the prophets and through angels He appeared as Man before the Advent. He spoke of the child who would be born. He was born. He rose triumphant and revealed His glory. Bishop W.F Pendleton summarized it beautifully: Through the Jewish Scripture... we see the Angel-God Jehovah; through the evangelists we behold the Lord, the Man-God on earth; through the Writings we behold the glorified Man revealed in forms of Divine Wisdom (Divine Accommodation: Its bearing upon the process of education, Journal of Education, 1916/17, page 72).

Just as important is the fact that He revealed His humanity in ways that appeal to all states of human life. As the Word has descended, it has on the way been accommodated to all... for unless truth Divine were presented in an accommodated form it could not be apprehended; for if it were in a more exalted form that the state of perception it would not fall into the understanding, thus not into the faith (@AC 8920). A following passage says that if the Lord didn't accommodate Himself to people, they would suffer spiritual death (@AC 8922; cf @AC 8783, 8760, 9433). Another passage speaks of how every angel is veiled over by a certain thin and suitable cloud so that the love of the Lord, as well as His truth, is accommodated (@AC 6849; cf. also @AC 9946, 9956).

Bishop W. F. Pendleton points out that the Lord always reveals Himself by putting on something or somewhat finite. By virtue of this something finite, the Infinite is brought within the range of human vision and made manifest (WFP, op. cit., page 70). Of course the Human the Lord assumed was an added something, which He cast off. But, Bishop W.F. Pendleton says, in revealing Himself through the threefold Word, In each case He put on something finite, and left something finite with man as an ultimate testimonial of Himself, as a permanent sign of Him, and as a continuing means of His manifesting Himself to, and conjoining Himself with men. This ultimate was of necessity drawn from the finite planes of creation (Op cit. p. 72).

The simple ideas which we here on earth have of man are the primary one's which the Lord has used. All of them have a sensual basis, all are built up on what we have learned through the five senses. In the Word, therefore, which is the Divine Human of the Lord, we find many types under which He is known. Here are two lists: the first is one which Bishop de Charms used as the basic guide for the 1926 religion curriculum, the second is a random sampling of other types of God which can be found in the Word.

A few of the types under which He is seen

- * A loving heavenly Father (K/1)
- * Creator (2)
- * Redeemer (3)
- * Hero of War (4)
- * King (5)
- * Governing the evil (6)
- * On earth (7/8)

Some others

- * A revelator
- * A forgiving or merciful God
- * A Shepherd
- * An angry God
- * An avenging God
- * A punishing God
- * One who leads us
- * A patient God
- * A God who grieves
- * A God who suffers
- * A balanced God: love and wisdom always together
- * A joyful God
- * A healing God
- * A disapproving God
- * One who has answers to all questions.

You can make your own lists. But in every subject we teach we should ask what human picture of our God we are presenting to our children. Can we, if we teach poorly, present a picture which is not in

harmony with the Word? Can we, if we are conscientious, enhance the sense of their heavenly Father with each subject we teach?

The different images of God appeal to one or two or all three of the degrees of the natural mind. It is clear, for example, that only to the sensuous does Jehovah truly appear angry, although to the imaginative He is certainly displeased and disapproving. To the rational mind He is always forgiving.

When the images of God at different levels conflict

This brings us to a most important question: What do we do when there appears to be a direct conflict between what is taught in different parts of the Word? The Lord appears so differently in the Old Testament from His manifestation in the Writings.

One thing we must not do is deny the truth that is present in the earlier revelation - especially when it is more appropriate to the state that is being addressed! People are tempted to do that - to deny that the Lord is angry in such a way that some doubt is cast on the Word itself. For example, some people have trouble teaching the stories of Joshua and Judges. They seem to present the Lord as a God of war, and one who punishes very harshly. Yet what does that say to children about the Lord's Word?

The other thing we must not do is teach the stories in such a way that the love which is the essence of the visible God is harmed.

Correspondence

The answer is to teach the letter of the Word as it appears, but always with an awareness of the correspondence between the levels of truth in the mind. If we do this, then the Lord can lead the student to a proper idea of His Humanity.

We know the doctrine of correspondence well, but let me make a few points here. The first is that as interior truths flow down into the lower reaches of heaven and of mental life on earth, they clothe themselves with substances taken from the lower realms (@AC 5689, 10126, et al). So, for example, the love of God can descend to the natural and manifest itself as zeal - as a strong, apparently angry reaction to evil. It is clothing itself with those things whereby the natural protects itself from evil. The spiritual protects itself by the sphere of love and wisdom it has. The natural does it by argument, or disapproval, or even by using physical force. It is quite appropriate in certain circumstances for love to clothe itself in this way.

Another principle is that in the sensuous realm things often appear opposite from the way they really are. When people are in the sphere of evil, or tempted to do evil, they see things according to that state. Therefore they may be withheld from evil by the fear of the Lord's wrath, where they would not have been withheld by the thought of his sadness, or of His love grieving (See @AC 4180[4], 2395, 3425, 3605, 6948; et al).

A good example of how the genesis and the outward manifestation of something are opposite is found in the passage on sibling rivalry. Little children fight with each other for the mothers love. Swedenborg was told that the angels perceive the sweetest love as the cause of these conflicts; yet it may manifest itself in a big brother hitting his sibling over the head with a wooden spoon. The passage makes the

point that beautiful things, as they descend, are turned into what is opposite (SE 331).

How often, when people are angry with us, do we find that the reason they are upset is because something they care deeply about is threatened? If we could only listen to them long enough, we might find that we both want the same goal, but are afraid that the other is destroying that goal, because his or her methods are different from ours.

The essence of the higher degree

A final principle: When things in the higher realm descend to the lower one, the essence of the higher realm is present (@AC 5689). This concept is essential to understanding how to teach people about the Lord.

Take some examples. You have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I say unto you that you resist not an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also (Matthew 5:38, 39). Here are two apparently contradictory teachings, one on the plane of the sensuous, one using images from the imaginative. But what is the essence of each teaching? It is to retrain the urge to hit back! The New Testament advises us to take no revenge. In the Old Testament the Lord was speaking for those people who could not see that truth, but who needed some restraint on their vengeance. Therefore they were allowed to do only as much as was done to them, no more.

It is easier to see this in other examples. Thou shalt not commit adultery, but... whoever looks at a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Matthew 5:27, 28). Clearly the message in each case is that adultery must not be committed. The sensuous truth, however, is for those people who can understand only how to restrain their bodily actions. Notice that the sensuous person does not sin - he is actually in the spirit of the truth - if he feels lust but restrains it.

How do we apply these concepts to understanding what the Old Testament teaches about the Lord? Let us teach the letter as it appears. If the Lord is said to be angry, or punishing, let us say so. But the teacher must know what kind of love is being shown here. He or she must also know what state is being addressed. For example, were the punishments because of idolatry, or cruelty or disobedience? And the teacher must try, in presenting the letter, to allow the correspondence to exist. He or she must not so change the story that the true correspondence disappears.

It does no harm, the Writings say, to believe the sense of the letter, even though the internal sense teaches something else, provided that it is done from a simple heart (@AC 2395). For most of their upbringing children have a simple heart, and they cannot yet see spiritually or rationally.

In summary: First and foremost we must teach our children that the Lord is a God of love and wisdom, infinitely merciful and patient, with all power to help and protect us. He is the visible God, visible as love in human form. Then, let us teach them each of the images under which the Lord shows Himself in His Word, using those images so that they correspond properly to the true vision of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And as we come to the older grades, and to college age, we need to revisit the sensuous images! All too often we tend to ignore the letter of the Word because we think we have progressed beyond it. Oh yes,

we remember those passages where the love of God shows through clearly, but we may not pay much attention to the conflicts between Jehovah and the sons of Israel.

Let us remember that the sensuous has a most holy use. It enables us to see inwardly (@AC 5165; cf. @AC 9726). All interior ideas come to rest in sensuous statements, even when they appear opposite. Take the simple statement in the book of Isaiah: If you are willing and obedient you shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel you shall be devoured with the sword; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken (Isaiah 1:19, 20). What a complete statement it is of the Lord's ways to His children. It can reflect everything, from the idea of a God who has no patience with the wicked to the concept of the infinitely merciful God who lets people choose self-destruction rather than take away their freedom.

I am glad our college has such strong proponents of the letter of the Word in its Religion and Sacred Languages Division. The holiness and power of the Old Testament Word, when illuminated by the Writings, should become more and more manifest in our church. The Lord is my shepherd. You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day. Nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday (Psalms 91:4). You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him innocent who takes his name in vain.

Our college students also have sensuous states when what is negative appears most delightful - don't we all? In such states the sterner pictures of the Lord are most important - they may be all that keeps the sensuous person from giving in to powerful urges. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments (Psalms 111:10).

Conclusion

In this paper I have emphasized the lower images of the Lord - those found primarily in the Old and New Testaments. It is not possible to cover all areas of learning on this subject. Let me merely remind the reader of something that he or she knows very well - that the treatment of the Lord Himself in the Writings presents all those images in rarified form. The Lord as shepherd is described in the work on The Divine Providence. The Creator appears in The True Christian Religion and in The Divine Love and Wisdom. In these works the images are more interior; but the pictures of God as Man adhere to them - for without them we have no idea, or an unbecoming one (@AC 7211 et al).

Finally, let us remember the definition of instruction which W. F. Pendleton alluded to in an address seventy years ago. Instruction may be defined as causing the mind to see that which before was unseen, to know that which before was unknown (Op. Cit, p. 68). We need to lead our students on from one vision of the Lord to an ever deeper and higher one. Let them feel that they can never be satisfied, that there is always something far more wonderful to learn about the Lord. Let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord, who exercises lovingkindness, judgment, and justice in the earth. For in these I delight, says the Lord (Jeremiah 9:24).

Miscellaneous Addresses

BAPTISM AS A REQUIREMENT FOR MEMBERSHIP IN THE GENERAL CHURCH

An Address to the Council of the Clergy

by the Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss

June, 1996

Introduction

Our church has had certain policies for many years. They were based on the understanding of the Word at that time, and sometimes they go largely unquestioned for decades. We should always be willing to re-examine them in the light, both of changing circumstances and of a fresh understanding of the Word.

From the beginning of our church baptism into the New Church has been a requirement for membership in the General Church. Membership in the General Church is required if a person wants to belong to a circle or society of the General Church. They are, after all, sub-sets of the larger body. From time to time the baptismal requirement has been questioned, but the policy has been maintained. Recently individuals have questioned it again, and a society of the church has asked for clarification. Why does the policy exist? How do we deal with certain issues which it creates?

From time to time I will quote (with slight amendments) from a letter I wrote to the Freeport Society Committee formed to consider this matter. This committee was very diligent, working under their pastors leadership. They wrote to ask for my input, and they are interested to hear what the clergy has to say. Clark reports that the committee clearly sees that this is a matter for the priesthood to consider. They have also invited me to visit with the society and hear their thoughts in person. This visit is planned for late May, so I can report on it to you at the meetings.

The following is a summary of some questions which they raised.

1. Many people who become a part of a New Church congregation treasure their earlier baptism and find it hard to enter into a new baptism that would seem to be a rejection of the old one. Yet they would like to be members of the local congregation.
2. There are a number of long-standing interested friends, or members of the congregation (this is the term we use for those who attend regularly, but have not sought membership) in our congregations, who may serve on Pastors Council or Sunday School Committees, but who have elected not to be baptized. Therefore they cannot officially join the General Church or serve on local boards. It seems exclusionary not to allow them to join without baptism.
3. Baptism used to be required for children to be enrolled in New Church schools, and then that requirement was dropped. Was this because people saw the doctrine differently?

4. What is the basis for requiring baptism for entrance into the General Church? Is there another form of commitment that would allow them to join the church?
5. The responsibilities of membership seem relatively external - voting on the affairs of the congregation, serving on its boards, etc. What has baptism to do with these? Therefore why should it be the requirement which allows people to do these things?
6. It seems that those who are baptized as infants have a more casual way of committing to the church of their own free will. They can ignore the rite of confirmation of baptism or confession of faith, which is strongly recommended in the church, and simply sign a membership application form. By contrast, those seeking adult membership from other church bodies have a soul-searching challenge, if they find baptism into the New Church hard to accept.

To these items I might add two which I have heard quite often.

7. Some people have family relationships or precious associations surrounding their earlier church. They feel that they are betraying these things. For example, it may be an uncle who performed the baptism, or perhaps a beloved sister who acted as godparent. In many cases, family members are unhappy with a person's conversion to the New Church, and the act of baptism seems such a rejection of his or her former affiliation that this is what they focus on more than anything else.
8. Some people feel that they always believed what the New Church teaches about the Lord and about the life of religion. They will say that they never believed in a Trinity of persons or in the vicarious atonement. Therefore, they argue, their baptism was the same as a New Church baptism.

To summarize: there may be tender feelings associated with a person's earlier baptism or church associations. The Writings teach that certain states of love and faith associated with these early memories are most precious - so much so that they are not broken, but only bent (cf. @AC 2180 et al). I do not believe that this means that such people can't accept the true faith of the New Church. It simply means that as they make the transfer, some precious memories are aroused, and some genuine sadness is felt. We need to deal with these states with respect and gentleness, and I feel very sure that our ministers do this.

Despite this observation, I believe that our policy of requiring baptism into the New Church for membership in the General Church and its circles and societies is very much the right one. I believe that we can show gentleness for past states, respect present freedom, and inspire towards a future, genuine faith; and that this is best done if we maintain that the appropriate entrance into the Lord's own New Church is baptism into that faith.

Don't call it re-baptism!

That term tends to create confusion. By definition it suggests that the first baptism didn't take, or had something wrong with it. Therefore it almost asks the candidate to say, What was wrong with my first baptism?

Now it is true that I will be saying below that the Writings require baptism in the New Church because the faith of the former church is false. It is also true, however, that if people originally entered the

Christian or Jewish or Muslim or other faith in sincerity, the Lord worked to encourage and deepen their faith in Him as God, and to lead them to look to Him. In that sense, a persons baptism into the Christian Church was a good thing.

The real point is that it is not the same thing as baptism into the New Church. They are so different that we should not suggest that New Church baptism is just re-doing what was done before!

To the question, What was wrong with my first baptism, we could perhaps answer, It was a good and sincere act while you or your parents held to the faith of that church. Baptism into the New Church is necessary because you are changing your faith.

Summary statement

The doctrinal points that will follow ought to be fairly simple. Baptism is not a complicated topic. Also, people ought to be able to get a clear and simple answer to this question when they ask it. So let me try a simple statement.

We honor the fact that people in sincerity were baptized into the Christian Church. The New Church, however, is not another sect of the Christian Church, it is an altogether new beginning. Baptism into the New Church represents entrance into this church, just as baptism into the former Christian Church represents entrance into it.

Many extra ideas can be added - perhaps from those presented below - and the embellishments will depend on the situation. So let me proceed to the doctrine, and at the end I will deal with some extra points which this discussion has raised.

The teachings

Section I: A new concept of baptism

The Writings make it clear that you cannot understand baptism and the Holy Supper until you know the spiritual sense of the Word. This was altogether unknown in the Christian Church, and so baptism was not understood. This is particularly clear in The True Christian Religion: The chapters on these sacraments do not appear to address the sacraments of the former Christian Church, but are establishing these sacraments in the True Christian Religion, or the New Church. (See @TCR 669, 688, 700).

If that sense were not disclosed who could think of the two sacraments, Baptism and the Holy Supper, except in accordance with the natural sense, that is, the sense of the letter? And in that case he would say or murmur to himself, Is Baptism anything but pouring water upon a child's head, and what has that to do with salvation? And is the Holy Supper anything but a partaking of bread and wine, and does it contribute anything to salvation? Moreover, where is the holiness in them, except from their having been commanded by the ecclesiastical order and accepted as holy and Divine? (@TCR 667).

This treatment ends by saying that the teachings about baptism from the internal sense are like treasures which can be dug up and brought to light only by means of the spiritual sense, which is now disclosed for the New Church, for its use in the worship of the Lord (@TCR 669).

These teachings make it clear that baptism into the New Church is not the same as baptism into the Christian Church. The symbols are the same, but the meaning to the individuals of the church has to be very different.

The Writings describe various concepts about baptism which exist in the Christian Church. In the passage above they say that, without the spiritual sense, no one can think any better of it than that it is commanded by the ecclesiastical order and accepted as Holy and Divine. (By the way, this struck a chord with me. Is it possible that we need to give more careful instruction about baptism in the New Church because, lacking such instruction, people in the New Church may think that this is what baptism is?)

The passage adds that baptism is thought of as a mere ceremony which becomes holy because the Word of God is added to it (@TCR 667).

Elsewhere the Writings say that standard Christian doctrine states that the instrumental cause of salvation is baptism (@BE 4). They also quote from the *Formulae Concordiae*, in @BE 16: There is an immense difference between baptized and not baptized men; for it is the doctrine of Paul, that all who have been Baptized have put on Christ, and are truly regenerate, having thereby acquired a freedom of will, that is to say, being again made free, as Christ testifies, whence they not only hear the Word of God, but are likewise enabled, though in much weakness, to assent to it and embrace it by faith (p. 675). Later the same authority states that those who are baptized are in a state of free will. They can hear the Word of God and assent to it, but not the non-baptized. Thus they can be saved (see @BE 28). The Writings note that this statement is in conflict with other statements in the *Formulae Concordiae* which teach salvation by faith alone (@BE 69). In another passages it speaks of people who had come from the Christian world, who believed that regeneration itself is either effected by baptism or by the remission of sins by faith (@Faith 70). Again: Many among Christians have the belief that they were elected in preference to all others because of their having been baptized (@TCR 676). These ideas have existed because it has been unknown what regeneration is (@SE 5340; 5341; see also @DMin 4786 on those who thought they were holy because of their baptism).

Now many people who were baptized as Christians may indeed reject these concepts. The point is that in being baptized they professed the faith of the church to which they adhered. Also - and this point will be dealt with later - they are associated with those in the spiritual world who are in like faith!

It may of course be true that many would say that they were baptized in simplicity, wanting to acknowledge faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. That is great: but that too is the simple message of the first Christianity. Though in accord with the new Christianity, baptism into the New Church carries with it the clear teaching about its true meaning. It is a different covenant!

So what does the internal sense teach us about baptism? In sharp distinction to the Christian Church, it teaches that salvation is not at all accomplished by baptism! This is a remarkable difference. The Writings speak of this commonplace notion in the Christian world, and say it makes no sense whatever. How could the Lord allow only those babies into heaven who are baptized? Let them know therefore that every child, wherever he is born, whether within the church or outside of it, whether of pious parents or impious, is received when he dies by the Lord and trained up in heaven, and taught in accordance with Divine order, and imbued with affections for what is good, and through these with

knowledges of what is true; and afterwards as he is perfected in intelligence and wisdom is introduced into heaven and becomes an angel. Every one who thinks from reason can be sure that all are born for heaven and no one for hell, and if a person comes into hell he himself is to blame; but little children cannot be held to blame (@HH 329).

The idea that baptism is essential to salvation comes from the letter of the Word. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be condemned (Mark 16:16; explained in @AC 9032). This is the great difference which the internal sense makes: baptism represents regeneration. It doesn't promise it (@AC 2702[17], 4255:5, 9032, 10391; @TCR 144; @HH 329; @DP 330). Baptism itself does not confer faith or salvation; but it testifies that people receive faith and are saved if they are regenerated (@AC 10391).

It is sad that good Christian parents have felt that they must rush to baptize their child if it is terminally ill, lest it not have the same chance at heaven that baptized children have. And what of those who fail to have their child baptized? What needless grief they face.

As we know, representations were banished when the Lord came on earth, because the image vanishes when the form itself appears (@AC 4904); or, to put it differently, the Lord banished figures, and revealed the forms themselves... so that interiors can not only be seen but also be approached (@TCR 670). He retained two special representations, however. Why? Because they promote in a most beautiful way the goal stated above - that interiors can be seen and approached. He retained baptism and the Holy Supper: Baptism, that by it regeneration might be remembered; and the Holy Supper, that by it might be remembered the Lord, and His love toward the whole human race, and the reciprocal love of humankind to Him (@AC 4904).

That is not the concept of baptism which exists in the Christian Church. It could not be, because the internal sense of the Word was not known.

To summarize the points in this section which indicate a distinctive New Church baptism:

1. Because of the spiritual sense, baptism in the New Church is altogether different from the former Christian baptism. It represents cleansing through repentance, and regeneration (baptism by water and the spirit). It conveys no magical salvation, but is an urging to such salvation. The Christian Church has a very different teaching.
2. Baptism represents regeneration through truth, which truth is available only in the special church of the Lord. That church is now the New Church, not the former Christian Church. New Church baptism is therefore representative of regeneration, and the former Christian baptism, although entered into with sincerity and used by the Lord to lead people, is no longer such a representation.

Section II: The first use of baptism: Introduction into the Christian Church and insertion among the angels of the New Christian heaven: The New Church is now the special church of the Lord, or the church specific

The water of baptism represents the truth of the church, and specifically the external truth which we consciously use in the process of repentance (@DP 280; @AC 5342, 2702:17). The same was represented when Naaman washed seven times in the Jordan river and was healed of his leprosy (@AC 4255[5]).

The point is that the truths by which we are introduced into the church are simple truths. They tell us how to behave, and what values to have.

These truths are available today in pure form only in the New Church! This is a vital point made again and again about baptism. Baptism was commanded when the Christian Church began, in order to distinguish that church from the Jewish Church, because the Christian Church had received the interior truths of life. But it perverted them until no genuine truth is left in its doctrine. Some truth may remain with its individual members, who look to the Lord and are led by His Word; but its doctrine is false.

Consider these teachings:

Baptism is for those who are within the church because these have the Word, in which are the truths of faith through which a person is regenerated (@AC 9088).

Baptism testifies that the person belongs to the church, and that he can be regenerated; for in the church the Lord is acknowledged, who regenerates; and in the church is the Word which contains the truths of faith whereby regeneration is effected (@AC 10387)

Baptism is merely for a sign and memorial that a person should be regenerated, and that those born within the church can be regenerated because the Word is there, and in the Word are the Divine truths by means of which regeneration is effected, and there the Lord who regenerates is known (@HH 329).

Perhaps the strongest of all is the following teaching:

He who does not know that waters signify the truths of faith, cannot know what Baptism signifies; for he believes that this external rite saves a person, when yet this external thing effects nothing; but the internal thing that is signified, which is regeneration by means of the truths of faith. For they who are of the church are distinguished by Baptism from all others in the whole world, because they can be regenerated by means of the truths of faith, but not those who are outside the church, seeing that within the church is the Word, in which are the truths of faith (@AC 10238[2]).

These passages are speaking about the New Church today.

I was speaking with a minister recently who said that he had heard from some New Church people who thought that fundamentalist Christians would qualify as those who have the Word, because they read the Bible in sincerity. This may explain why some New Church people think that Christian baptism is similar to New Church baptism - as long as sincere Christians read the Word. The Writings make it abundantly clear that people read the Word in accordance with the doctrine they have been taught and received. The reason the Lord came a second time was that the doctrine had been so perverted that no truth existed in the formal doctrine of the Christian Church. Therefore the Word could not be properly understood.

An illustration of this is found in @AR 566, in which those in the doctrine of faith alone asserted that they had many truths, and cited several of them. They were told that All the things which you have advanced are in themselves truths; but you have falsified them by applying them to confirm a false principle; and hence with you and in you they are falsified truths (@AR 566).

It is not possible to understand the truths of the Word if a person, however sincere, reads them from an imbued belief that Jesus is the Son of God who sacrificed Himself to appease the wrath of His Father. Every truth is skewed by this teaching. We know that the Lord is working against such false notions in sincere Christians, but until the great falsities of the Christian Church are consciously rejected, they cannot understand the Word rightly.

Of more importance, however, the faith into which the child or adult is baptized is one which associates her or him with spirits in the other world. To be baptized into the faith of the church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints is to be associated with those spirits in the spiritual world who still believe that Jesus is less than God. To be baptized into the faith of the Baptist Church is to be associated with those spirits who still believe that Jesus is one of a tri-personal Godhead.

This teaching appears from the first use of baptism in the Writings: Baptism is introduction into the Christian Church and at the same time insertion among Christians in the spiritual world (@TCR 677). It is merely a sign, the passage says. This is clear from the baptism of infants who don't make decisions about regeneration, and from newcomers who may know little of the truths, let alone follow them, but want to learn (@TCR 677).

The important point made here and elsewhere is that there is an order in the spiritual world. The Christian heaven is formed of all those from the former Christian church, who now believe fully in the truths of the Second Advent. All the angels of this heaven are in the purpose of promoting these truths in the minds of those on earth. But in the world of spirits, there are many people who still hold to the faith of the church in which they were. This order is described in (@TCR 677-680).

What happens when a person is baptized into the New Church? Her spirit or his spirit is associated with the angels of the Christian heaven, who are in perfect harmony with the faith of the New Church; and also, of course, with spirits in the world of spirits who are of that faith (See @TCR 677 et al). This is done according to the quality of the Christianity in him or outside of him (@TCR 680).

What, then, of those who are baptized into the former Christian Church? As I understand it, they are not directly associated with angels of the Christian heaven. They cannot be, for once a church is consummated, the church has removed itself from direct connection with the Lord (See @TCR 271; @AC 9256; @AE 1029[8]; also @AR 750[e]). They are associated with those spirits who are in the world of spirits, of the same religion - according to the quality of the Christianity in him or outside of him (@TCR 680).

Do they have angels with them? Most certainly. All infants do. But baptism seems to make a very specific difference. If it is into the church specific, there is an insertion among Christians in the spiritual world who are in a like faith (See @TCR 729). If the baptism is into a faith that the Lord Himself has declared to be false, then the association is with angels interiorly, but exteriorly with spirits who are of a like faith.

This leads to the teachings that are hard to present to those who are relatively new to the church, and are told that baptism is required. I will deal with some of them here, and more in the next section. The Writings teach that the Christian Church is just now beginning! Note these strong statements - echoed in other words elsewhere:

This (internal) sense is now revealed, because the Christian church, such as it is in itself, is just now in its very beginning. The former church was Christian in name only, not in fact and essence (@TCR 688).

Until now Christianity has existed only in name, except some shadow of it in a few individuals; for heretofore people have not directly approached and worshiped the Savior Himself as the one only God in whom is the Divine Trinity.... But now, because real Christianity is beginning to dawn, and a New Church meant by the New Jerusalem in the Apocalypse is now being established by the Lord, wherein God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are acknowledged as one, because in one Person, it has pleased the Lord to reveal the spiritual sense of the Word, to enable this church to enter into the real use and benefit of these sacraments, baptism and the holy supper; and this is done when people, with the eyes of the spirit, that is, with the understanding see the holiness that is concealed within them, and apply it to themselves by the means which the Lord has taught in His Word (@TCR 700).

And when churches are viewed in the order of their succession from ancient times to the present, it will be seen that the former churches were external, that is, that their worship consisted of externals which represented the internals of the Christian church which was founded by the Lord when He was in the world, and which is now for the first time being built up by Him (@TCR 674).

These are strong passages, which make both Christianity itself and its signs totally different in the New Church. They are hard for people coming out of the Christian church to accept, but they are a key part of the discussion. We must deal gently with people as we present such ideas; but of course we cannot ignore the import of the teachings themselves.

Hence a most telling teaching about baptism in the New Church. These sacraments (baptism and the holy supper) may be likened to a double temple, one below and the other above. In the lower one the gospel of the Lord's new coming and of regeneration and consequent salvation by Him is preached (@TCR 669; bold added).

These are what the New Church teaches, and what the former Christian Church failed to teach, or does not know about.

Summarizing this section, distinctive New Church baptism seems to be clearly taught because:

1. New Church baptism is a sign that the person is of that church where the Word is read and by it the Lord is known and worshiped. Such a description now applies to the New Church, not the Christian Church.
2. By New Church baptism a person is associated in the spiritual world with those who are of the Christian heaven and with spirits who acknowledge the revelation of the Second Advent. By Christian baptism the association is with spirits who hold a similar faith, which the Lord has declared to be false.

Section III: Signs are important

This is a short treatment of what should rather clearly appear above. Sometimes, however, people wonder if external covenants are necessary. These are free and easy days, and external rituals seem pretentious to some, of little value to others. In one sense this is an understandable reaction against the

pomp and ceremony of past centuries, and with the emphasis on the ritual over the essential. And in that sense the Writings diminish the value of ritual by emphasizing the interior burden of all worship. But we can go too far.

In one passage the Writings observe that order in this world requires signs. It is in accordance with order in the world that there should by all means be a signature, in order that there may be some certitude, and that it should follow after deliberate action (@TCR 730). This is said of the holy supper. As we have seen, the importance of the sign of baptism is stressed as a signal to earth and heaven of what one intends. In addition, the Lord very specifically kept and commanded these two sacraments as signs. They are the two universal gates through which is entrance to the church and heaven (@TCR 721). And, these two sacraments, viewed in the spiritual sense, are the holiest things of worship, as will appear hereafter when their uses come to be treated of (@TCR 667).

We might say that all external signs and covenants are necessary for the reasons given in @CL 307 for a marriage covenant. This too is an external sign which some have argued is not necessary. This passage states that such a contract accomplishes the following:

- 1 To make clear the requirements of the agreement
- 2 To keep them in remembrance, obligating the party/parties to keep them
- 3 To protect them when they are tempted to forget or be drawn away from what they promised
- 4 To warn them of the consequences of breaking their vow
- 5 To set forth the punishments if they do
- 6 To establish the beneficiaries of the covenant (in the case of marriage, the children, in the case of baptism, the individual)

Lest we become confused as to how religious signs should be administered, @CL 308 says that the ordained clergy on earth should act on His behalf in these matters.

I would add the one other value of an external ritual that we have discussed above:

- 7 To declare before heaven and earth the obligation voluntarily entered into.

All these signs deeply affect the natural part of our minds, but because they bring angelic associations, they affect our interiors as well.

True, we should not make too much of external rituals. Nor should we make too little of them

Section IV: The Second and Third uses of Baptism and the two essentials of the church

The second use of baptism is that the Christian may know and acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ, the Redeemer and Savior, and follow Him (@TCR 681). The reason is that it follows from being called a Christian that one should worship the Lord and live like a Christian (@TCR 680, 682). (By the way, I am nervous of raising a side issue which may hijack the discussion, but in four places the Writings explain why the Lord said we should baptize into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit -to acknowledge the Trinity, and what it represents - see@SE 1368, 4340; Lord 46; BE 32. The early Christians baptized

into the name of the Lord Jesus. I am assuming that we are right to continue our use of the names of the Divine Trinity in our service).

When a person is baptized into the New Church the infant or its parents answer at least two questions (there are three in the liturgy, and I am referring to numbers one and three). These two questions clearly identify the two essentials of the church - that the Lord in His Divine Human is the one only God, and that we are to shun evils and do goods because it is His will.

These two are the cornerstones of the New Christian Church. They are the essentials of faith on our part (@TCR 3). They are the two witnesses, which were killed in the former Christian Church (see Revelation 11:3-12; @AR 480 to 515): those who confess and acknowledge from the heart that the Lord is the God of heaven and earth, and that His human is Divine, and who are conjoined with Him by a life according to the precepts of the Decalogue (@AR 480; note the experience of Swedenborg in @TCR 567, which parallels the story of the two witnesses).

The Lord had to come again because these two essentials were denied by the theology of the former church. (By the way, I have often had people who are confirmed members of another church say that our doctrine - that Jesus is God - is the same as theirs. When this happens, I restate our belief in the terms of @AR 480 - We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is the one God of heaven and earth. To date no confirmed Christian I have met would assent to that phraseology).

Again, this is a hard saying, and it needs to be presented gently to those who have ties of love to that church. Yet how can we see the value of the New Church if we don't see its distinction from the old? Once upon a time it seemed we gloried in pointing out the faults of the former church. Nowadays we almost avoid the subject, with the result, perhaps, that the laity is not clear on why the Lord would prepare the world for seventeen centuries, and then provide for a huge upheaval in the world of spirits, the formation of a new heaven, and the revelation of a New Christianity upon the earth.

Certainly we should spend most of our time giving the positive merits of the New Church; but at times we will have to point out the demerits of the former one.

In describing this necessity to re-state the two simple truths upon which all of Christianity is founded, I tend to refer to @ISB 20, where Swedenborg was asked, What is the theology of this new church? His reply should give us a model for brevity in answering the same question: That God is one, and that charity and faith are one. He was asked, Who denies this? - a logical question, which many in Christianity ask. He replied: The theology of the present day, when interiorly examined.

This is why the Lord came a second time.

Then there is @BE 102: The faith of the former church cannot be in the same mind as the faith of the New Church. This is because they do not agree in one thousandth part. The two faiths are also heterogeneous, for the faith of the former church springs from an idea of three gods, but the faith of the New Church from the idea of one God.... If they are together there must inevitably be such a collision and conflict that everything of the church would perish. Thus, if a person has confirmed himself or herself in the faith of the former church, it must be rejected before the New Church can be embraced.

Of course, as a person is coming into the New Church, the two faiths are commingled, and there is temporary confusion. Also, many who come to the New Church did not confirm their faith in the former church falsities - they themselves will ardently say so.

It is just that eventually there is a moment of decision. One must be rejected and the other accepted.

I love to tell the story of my maternal grandmother. She was raised in Manchester of very devoted Church of England parents, and seriously considered becoming a nun. (Whew! close call.) She married William Ridgway and settled in South Africa and raised her children in the New Church, but for 25 years she did not join. In 1938, when Bishop de Charms came to South Africa, she told him her problem: at 16 she had taken vows of allegiance to the Church of England. How could she break these vows?

Bishop de Charms asked her to fetch the catechism which she had responded to at her confirmation service. He read her each question, and asked: Do you believe that any more? Each time she said, no. Then he chuckled as only Bishop de Charms could chuckle, and said, Then who are you kidding? Certainly not the Lord. She was baptized shortly thereafter.

I tell this story, partly because it is a touching one, but also because it illustrates how wrenching the decision can be to leave one's former affiliations. We don't know what affections are moving people. We all have experience of those for whom the transition has been hard, and we have known their peace when finally they have made their decision.

But the point has to be reached: The New Church is more than 99.9% different from the former church in its doctrine - really 100% because of the conflicting doctrines of the Lord. A person has to choose. The sign of that choice - the entrance into the New Church - is through the Divinely revealed sacrament.

And surely time alone can bring a person to this point. I believe that when a person says, I don't see the importance of baptism, it is an indication that they have not yet come to the moment when the immense importance of the New Church has been seen and felt. We can present the concept that the two churches are too different for the former baptism to be a sign of entrance into the New Church, but we should take away whatever pressures we can, so that the person can reflect from within and allow the Lord to inspire the faith that brings free commitment to His New Word.

So, in summary, in the New Church, baptism is a sacrament of repentance - of obedience to the Decalogue from a firm belief in the one only God (@BE 114; @TCR 510; 528; 535). It represents temptations, and leads to the commitment to regeneration - the third and final use of the sacrament (@AC 10389; @TCR 684, 685).

In thinking of how to present these points to the laity in summary terms we might say the following:

1. Baptism into the New Church is a commitment to believe in the Lord as the one only God of heaven and earth, and to obey the Decalogue. The Lord came on earth to give the Writings because these two, greatest truths were no longer taught in the Christian Church doctrine. Baptism into the former Christian Church does not carry this covenant.

2. People must be left in great freedom to see this truth before they make their new covenant with the Lord. To belong to the church organization, they would need to subscribe to these two essentials, and the way to do so is laid down by the Lord Himself: It is baptism into this faith.

Miscellany

You will note that I have not directly answered all the questions that I posed on pages 1 and 2, although the important one's have been covered. Let me try to give short answers to those that remain.

Are we being exclusive when we require baptism for membership?

Our people shrink from appearing to exclude someone, and that is good. But the question is backwards. We warmly invite people to join the New Church. It is just that joining requires baptism. We would love to have them join. It is their private decision, which we should respect, which keeps them from membership.

Did we once have a requirement of baptism for attendance at New Church schools, and then drop it?

Maybe we did in some school. The one's I know of did not. Baptism was required, but could always be waived at the judgment of the pastor, because, after all, we were hoping that our schools would help people learn about the New Church.

Can some other form of commitment than baptism serve as a requirement for membership?

I think this has been adequately answered. The Lord commanded baptism. It is the universal gate into the church. No other gate should be chosen by us.

Why is baptism required for membership in the General Church and a local society, when the responsibilities of membership are voting on budgets, etc? What have these to do with baptism?

My own opinion is that this argument misses a couple of steps. The organization is not formed to vote on budgets. It is formed to promote the uses of the New Church, and should be comprised of those who have committed themselves to those uses. If a person has committed to those uses, then part of her/his responsibilities may be to sit on a board. But the deeper responsibility is to the purpose of the institution.

So we should list all the steps: (1) Believe those essentials which constitute faith in the church; (2) enter the faith of the church through baptism; (3) - in one's own life - seek to live according to that faith; (4) join the organization dedicated to that faith; (5) serve on its various committees as a lower, but necessary contribution to that deeper end.

The point is that it is those who have made the commitment to the faith who should have those lower responsibilities. Until someone makes such a commitment, he/she should not undertake them.

Those who are baptized as infants may join the church in a very casual way: they just sign an application form, send it in, and sign a roll book. Those who enter as adults must go through heart-searching to accept baptism. It seems out of balance.

Now here is an interesting point. First let us acknowledge that it is easier for people born into the church to join it - for one very good reason. They have nothing to reject! They were raised in the faith they later choose (if they join), so they are not choosing between two faiths. But I too am troubled by the fact that some of our young adults are joining the church in what appears to be a rather casual way. Confirmation seems to be somewhat on the decline. Why is this? I have wondered if it started in the sixties, when external rites seemed pretentious, or whether it was simply a slow decline. Whatever the reason, it is a pity.

Should we insist on confirmation before a person becomes a member of the General Church? And if so, how would we do it? Should we offer potential members options? For example, some thoughtful young adults have felt that coming before the Lord in the Holy Supper, after careful prayer and preparation, is a service of confirmation.

So far we have said that we require baptism because the Lord has commanded it, and He did not command confirmation. Is there another way to look at this? As yet I have little light on the subject, and would value your counsel. Whatever we do, perhaps we can find ways to strengthen our commitment to the value of confession of faith, or confirmation of baptism, so that young adults can be led to see that the proper way to commit themselves to the New Church is in a service of worship before the Lord. Joining the organizational body should follow such a step.

A concern that New Church baptism is breaking the tie with some beloved people already in the spiritual world

Occasionally people are afraid of baptism into the New Church because a partner, or perhaps a sister or parent in the other world died a Presbyterian or Catholic. They are afraid that this act cuts the cord with this person.

@AE 732 seems to say the opposite. People of other churches who are in the process of entering heaven are accepting or have accepted the doctrine of the Christian heaven, which is one with the doctrine of the New Church. It is they who work to help those of their former faith to make the transition. The best way someone on earth can keep a deep association with a loved one whom she or he believes to be good is to accept the same doctrine that the loved one is seeking to inspire into people on earth.

What if we accepted some baptisms?

This is an external argument. Some people have argued that they did not think that their baptism was into the faith of a tri-personal God, therefore they see no reason to have another service.

I have tried to imagine what would happen were we to decide that some peoples baptisms are acceptable, but other peoples baptisms are not. It boggles the mind.

Would we insist on examining the statements of faith of the particular church? Would we summon the minister and the parents and question them? Would we examine the education which they had in their faith? Would we decide that some churches baptisms are acceptable - perhaps the mainline protestant one's - and reject those of other churches?

I cannot frankly think of a more judgmental way of proceeding. Our ministers would be forced to

pronounce judgment on the validity of baptisms performed on infants, decades ago. Or else they would have to waive baptism whenever someone objected to baptism into the New Church.

And how would we be able to accept some baptisms and not others? It seems to me that once we waive the requirement of New Church baptism for one situation we are forced into abandoning it altogether.

But this argument is an external one. The need for baptism into the New Church arises from the fact that the New Church is not just a new branch of Christianity. It is an altogether new church, and the sign of the former church cannot be the sign of entrance into this New Church.

A positive approach

We have all had the privilege of performing baptisms for adults, and of rejoicing with them in their newfound faith. Let us teach adult baptism in that spirit. It is a wonderful moment when a person arrives in the New Church, according to the order which the Lord has laid down. Not only does the church here on earth rejoice, but a particular society in heaven does too, and so does a community in the world of spirits. They are strengthened as the church grows on earth. This holy sacrament creates a bond between them and the church on earth, and allows them to associate with the new member and strengthen her or his faith in ways far deeper than conscious thought can sense.

New Church baptism heralds a persons entrance into the Lord's church, on earth and in heaven, if the newly baptized person does what the ceremony represents. Yes, it is a time of nostalgia also, for the person may be saying goodbye to earlier states, many of which were happy. But it is a movement towards a new destiny, not just for the person, but for this world, a destiny which is a part of the Lord's Divine Providence. It is a time for rejoicing.

ELIJAH AND THE DROUGHT: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF FAITH

Reflections on the New Church in the Wilderness

Address to the General Faculty 1984

Some years ago it struck me that the story of Elijah during the years of drought is somewhat parallel to the Revelation account of the woman in the wilderness. Both stories tell of the end of one church and the beginning of a new one, and of the state of the Word and the church during that time. The woman clothed with the sun represents the New Church from the New Word. The story of Elijah's battle with Ahab and Jezebel is speaking of the Word when all good and truth has perished, and there is a wilderness state in the church.

We live in such a time. The New Church tarries among those who are in faith alone, and among good Christians who, while seeking the Lord, are led for the moment by those who teach faith alone. The result is a parched land, where nothing grows. This harsh Judgment is not ours to make, it is made by the Lord Himself, and is the cause for His second advent.

What then should we do, we who are seeking to be a part of His church in the wilderness? What should we do in this school which is set up to establish the New Church, and help our students perform uses in this world according to its beliefs? Does the story of Elijah and his three and a half year drought tell us something about what is happening in our school? Does it suggest the strong points which the Lord gives us, the struggles through which we must pass? Does it show what will cause the rain to descend and turn our wilderness into a land of plenty?

I would like to suggest a few places in this story where these questions are at least partly answered. The answers do not say what doctrine we should teach, but rather how we can recognize qualities in ourselves and in those we serve, whatever the subject matter we are presenting.

Ahab married Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal, king of Sidon. Ethbaal had been a priest, and his daughter introduced the worship of Baal and Ashteroth (whose prophets are called the prophets of the grove) into Israel in a big way. Therefore Elijah the Tishbite called a drought on the land.

For a time he hid by the brook Cherith, apparently a stream that ran into the Jordan near Jericho. It was a wild, uninhabited area where he could be safe, and there the ravens brought him bread and flesh morning and evening. But in time the brook dried up and he journeyed north to a seaside town called Zarephath between Tyre and Sidon. There, in the very land whose gods he was to challenge, he found a widow woman and by the miracle of the oil and meal that did not run out he kept her and her son and himself alive until rain returned to the land. Her son died and Elijah raised him to life once more.

In the third year he was sent by Jehovah to find Ahab. Elijah demanded that the people be called together to mount Carmel by the sea. There he had the great contest of fire with the 450 false prophets. They could bring no fire from heaven to their altar, but he could, and the people with one voice acknowledged that Jehovah was the true God. The prophets were executed, and the drought was lifted.

Three states are described as being part of the time and times and half a time which make up three and a half years. The first is time, or a state of good, when people are united in purpose, although not necessarily in truth also. The second is times, a state of truth, when the fledgling church studies doctrine and maybe argues about it. It learns much, but loses something or its first love. The third is a state of urgency - half a time, when there is a holy conjunction of good and truth in use, and the church is about to be established (see @AE 761).

I do not want to go as far as to say that Elijah's stay at the brook Cherith represents the state of good, but there are similarities to this state. He was in a wilderness region before Jordan, and Jordan represents introductory truths. The ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning and the evening. Ravens represent falsities (@AC 865, 866, also @AE 650). Note however that he did not feed off the ravens themselves, for this was forbidden by the Levitical law (Leviticus 11:15; brief mention @AE 1100[22]). Apparently he received from them bread and flesh each evening and morning, reminiscent of the flesh and bread given to the sons of Israel in the evening and the morning in the wilderness (see @AC 8431, 8432). The bread represents interior good and the flesh exterior good.

At the beginning of a new church those in it turn to the Word and are instructed by it, and they do so from a certain love, yet they are also in falsities. Take an example: It is quite common for us to think that we are part of the New Church because we belong to the organization. If we think about it, we realize this isn't true, yet in our conversation and in our conduct we regularly talk about the New Church as if we have it and others don't. Yet this falsity is not harmful if we don't confirm it, and it can be a means whereby we turn to the Word and receive spiritual food.

In the General Church we will find notions like these for many years to come. There is goodness in our longing to belong to the church. There is an innocence to our excitement about what we can do for it. We think - falsely - that we are the New Church and that we cause it to grow. Yet through these mistaken notions we make some progress while the church is in the wilderness.

Our young people are fed by ravens also. How many times do we feel that they don't really understand a principle of the Writings yet, but they are excited about it and turn to the Word, thinking they have the truth? We are tempted to correct them, and may even try, but don't succeed. For a time they learn by means of a false opinion, and because the Word is with them they receive good affections. Ravens bring them bread and flesh.

But the time came when the brook dried up, because of the drought. The rain that falls from heaven - spiritual truth - is not present in such a state. We need to move on. There is a danger to the state where good predominates and truth is not yet learned in detail. The church has to study doctrine and put aside as many falsities as it can. It studies doctrine from the letter of the Word. Elijah went to Zarephath of Sidon, a place that seems to represent instruction in the letter of the Word, for Sidon represents the knowledge of external truths.

He met the widow woman at the gate of the city. Few stories have more human appeal than this understated tale of a woman's trials. How tragic is her quiet, futile gathering of sticks for a last meal before a horrible, slow death! Her gathering sticks represents a state of merit, which is a state common to those who place more importance in goodness than in good and truth together (see @AC 1110, 2812, 8495, 9011[4] and refs). It represents the feeling that we can pile little good acts one on top

of another and so light the fire that is true love. We cant, but each of us will try to do this many times in our lives. Well do people favors, and hope that they keep count of how nice we are. They don't, but we do! The patron remembers his kindness better than his protg.

Elijah greeted her, and asked for some water. A lesser person may have berated him. There was little enough water, and her mind must have been full of grief. Yet she observed the ancient custom of kindness to a stranger. Jesus once asked a woman to give Him to drink, as did the prophet who stood in place of the Lord in this story. It represents the willingness to be instructed, for the widow of Zarephath represents those who don't have the truth, but who long for it (@AC 4844[12], 9198[6], 9995) This signals a new state - when the church sees the need for instruction and is thirsty for it.

As she went Elijah asked another favor. Please bring me some bread. Then she told him her plight. She had enough for one meal for her and her son and then they would die. What a world of hopelessness and misery is in that short tale. But Elijah's request for food was necessary, for the truth we are seeking - the water - needs to be conjoined with the good of life represented by bread. And just as the woman and her son were going to die from lack of physical food, so we in the church will have our spirits shrivel up if we have only meritorious good.

Elijah gave her a test. She was to feed him first with a small cake, and then the barrel of meal would not run out nor the cruise of oil fail until the Lord sent rain on Israel. This is a passage which the Writings describe quite fully. She was to serve the prophet first. When we in the church are tempted to take the credit for what we do, let us start all of our actions by recognizing that everything good is from God. Let us do it consciously.

When the church is not in genuine truth it tends to honor the goodness of man. We honor others, secretly hoping others will honor us. The story of Elijah being fed first is a command to stop doing that. Let us think of the Lord first in our uses, and then we will live. If not, we will die in the wilderness. Good and its longing for truth is described by the charity toward the prophet, which was greater than toward herself and her son (@AC 9198[7]). The cake which she was to make for him first represented the good of love to the Lord (n. 2127), whom, out of the little she had, she was to love above herself and her son (@AC 4844[12]).

We are released from a sense of self-merit, and the wish to be rewarded for what we do when we turn to the Lord first in all things we do. It must be conscious. We must keep the first three commandments of the Decalogue before we will keep the rest. We must observe the first great commandment or there is no way we will honor the second. We must shun evils, not for the sake of others first, but primarily because God says they are sins. When we serve the Academy, we must strive first of all to ask how the Lord would have us do it, and then we will serve others with humility. At times all of us are tempted to perform our uses without much thought to Him who gives life to our uses.

Love to the Lord is small in our minds at first. A small cake, Elijah asked for. We don't go to work each day with a heart full of loving gratitude to the Lord. He doesn't ask that at first. He tells us instead that we should turn to Him in prayer, and consciously, deliberately ask Him what He wants of us as we work in this school that is named after His New Church. Then we will always have sufficient love for the day that is ahead. The barrel of meal did not run out, the cruise of oil continued to run, throughout the days of famine.

Elijah stayed with the woman, and her son died. And she said to Elijah, What have I to do with you, O man of God? Have you come to me to bring my sin to remembrance and to kill my son? In those days a widow was thrice cursed. She had lost her husband - a grief in itself. She felt, after the harsh ideas of the day, that her husband died because she had sinned in some terrible way. After all, Jehovah would have let him live if she had been good! And if she had no child she would starve to death when she became old and could not work. A child was her old age pension. Without him she might as well have starved before, and not been saved by the prophet.

Elijah's stay with the widow represents a state of instruction. We in the church are being instructed in the Word. The son of the woman of the house represents the doctrine that comes from that instruction. As we are instructed by the Word we develop doctrine, and the church grows. This story tells of a temptation we then face. That doctrine doesn't seem to have any life in it. It seemed vibrant with promise at one time, but now it seems dead.

There are times when we look at the state of the church and feel that our doctrine has no life. We read the Writings and they suggest precious ideals - love truly conjugal, or charity from a spiritual origin. From a love for these ideals we live with the Word, learning from it. Yet we, and the church, seem to make no progress. We look at the problems in marriage within our church. We see instances, in ourselves and the church, in which charity is the last thing being considered.

The doctrine is powerless. It isn't working. It is dead. We may well ask, Did the Lord let us have the Writings so that we could see how bad we are? Have you come to me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to kill my son?

Elijah said to the woman, Give me your son. He was dead in her arms. It must have been hard to let go of him, but she did, and Elijah carried him to an upper room where he was staying, and laid him on his own bed. Letting Elijah take him represents our willingness to let the Lord lead His church. When things aren't going well we sometimes try to take charge. The trouble is that when we take charge we see things in earthly terms, not heavenly ones. It is hard to let go, just as the widow must have been reluctant to hand the dead boy to Elijah. We treasure our own solutions to problems, even when they have proved themselves useless. We must let go.

The boy was carried upstairs to a private room, which represents the interiors of the mind. It is through seeing the deeper burden of truth, through allowing the Word to breathe life into the doctrine that we learn to have confidence in the power of the church. It will grow. It will prosper. We will allow the Lord to do His work in His own way.

Then comes the great story of 1 Kings, chapter 18. The drought is in its third year. Elijah was sent to Ahab so that rain could come upon the earth. Interestingly, Elijah didn't go to Ahab. The king and his chief servant, Obadiah, were searching for water anywhere in the land. Ahab had gone one way and Obadiah the other, the wicked king and the good servant going in opposite directions for the same purpose. Evil people and good alike seek for truth, but for different ends.

Obadiah means servant of Jehovah. A servant generally represents a natural state (cf. @AC 1713, 2567 examples). Obadiah was a worshipper of Jehovah, yet he also served a wicked king. He seems to

represent those in the vastated church who are trying to follow the Lord, but who serve the corrupt leaders of the church also, mistaking their apparent goodness for real goodness. I think he represents something similar to the earth that helped the woman clothed with the sun - those within the vastated church who do not believe in faith alone, but who follow the leaders of their church (@AE 764).

It seems that the last six months of the drought began with Elijah's coming to Obadiah. We are entering the state of half a time, - that state in which we realize that good and truth must be conjoined. Before this we have been suffering from an imbalance, even though both earlier states are not evil. The first was one of excitement and love for the church, but falsities still clung to many of our ideas. The second was one of study and learning, but something of a harshness accompanied our preoccupation with truth.

Now we are entering a state where good and truth will be united. And as Elijah came first to Obadiah, the good servant or the king, who was also and more deeply a servant of Jehovah, so the Word appears to the simple states in us when good and truth are to be conjoined.

For we all realize that we learn so that we can do what the Word teaches, not just talk about it. And we all realize that love by itself is not enough, love needs the guidance of truth. Simple, common sense should tell us that. Why do the Writings spend possibly three or four thousand pages saying that good and truth should be conjoined? Because despite common sense, most of us get these two out of balance much or the time!

It seems silly, but it is true. Many of our arguments are about this imbalance, and the false notions or confused feelings it creates. One group in our church says the other doesn't care enough for the soundness and purity of doctrine and the other group says the first one doesn't care enough about human feelings. Both deny the charges, both feel slighted. Many of us jump between the two groups, depending on the subject, and who is taking the opposite side.

That is one reason the church stays in the wilderness.

The simple principle about the church's stay in the wilderness is this: WHEN EITHER LOVE OR TRUTH IS EMPHASIZED TOO MUCH THEN THE CHURCH IS NOT READY TO GROW - IN US, IN OUR CHILDREN, IN NUMBERS. ONLY WHEN THEY ARE IN BALANCE CAN WE FULFILL OUR DESTINY AS A CHURCH. AND THEY CAN BE IN BALANCE ONLY WHEN THEY ARE JOINED IN USEFULNESS.

We could also state it this way. When good and truth are joined in equal measure, the church will come forth out of the wilderness. Any extra truth has to pass away, because it is not of the will. Any extra good will pass away, because only good which is joined to truth is genuine good.

The only passage I know which says this in so many words is in Conjugal Love: What are heat and light without their containing medium? So likewise, what are love and wisdom without their expression in use? Without expression in use, there is no bond of marriage between the two, because the objective reality in which they exist is lacking. In heaven one finds truly conjugal love wherever one finds a spring-like warmth. One finds truly conjugal love there because a spring-like climate occurs only where warmth is joined to light in equal measure, or where there is as much warmth as there is light and vice versa.... Love works its pleasure when accompanied by wisdom and conversely

wisdom when accompanied by love (@CL 137[4]).

Elijah found Obadiah. When we are ready for rain to fall upon our minds, the Word appeals to our simple, good states. It promises that it can confront the evil in the church, or in ourselves.

Ahabs greeting or Elijah was revealing. Art thou he that troubleth Israel? The evil in us finds the Word a source of grief. Conscience from the Word is what causes problems. Without it, life would be simple, we would spend our time looking out for ourselves. Conscience is the enemy. Later, when Elijah came to Ahab in the vineyard of Naboth, to accuse him of the death of that innocent man, Ahab said, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?

The contest of fire is a story of judgment: of judgment upon the states of evil with us. But it is a good story. Elijah brought faith to the people, and that faith transformed their land from the wilderness it had become into a fruitful land once more. When we find a living faith in the Writings it too transforms our wilderness into a place of beauty.

We know so well the combat between the prophets of Baal and Elijah. We have been moved by the dramatic images it evokes, imagined the priests dancing (the Hebrew says limping) upon their altar, seen Elijah with simple dignity speak to his God, pictured the fire consuming offering and wood and stone and water and dust. Few stories, even in the Word, speak so directly of the cornerstone of our faith. We believe in God because He does what no one else can do. He is alive, He answers us, He works miracles.

The contest of fire tells of the conjunction of good and truth in a most important way. The bullock which was cut in pieces represents our natural feelings - those one's which we use in the service of the Lord. Here in the Academy, for example, a teacher may be enthusiastic or a lover of art. He or she uses these things to serve the charter purposes of the Academy. The wood represents the good things we do as of ourselves. The water poured on them represents truth joined to our good affections and to the good done as from self. The stones represent the foundation truths of our faith, and the dust our sensual feelings.

Elijah said a prayer to Jehovah. Remember that Elijah represents the Word. When we pray to the Lord to have His kingdom come within us, we must utter a prayer that is from the Word, for this is the only kind of prayer He hears (@AC 10299). By that is meant that we should ask for those things He teaches us to ask for and no others.

Then the fire from Jehovah fell and consumed everything. Love from the Lord is from within, out of heaven. It infills our loves and truths, our lower feelings and thoughts. It gives life to the good done as from self. It even consumes and purifies our sensual desires.

That is the promise which makes us New Church people. We believe that if we do what the Lord tells us, if we use our natural talents and ideas and put our effort into His service, there will come a time when His love will fill our beings, and make us new creatures. It is in search of that love that every human being who longs for faith seeks the Lord. And the threefold Word has the power to call forth that fire, even as Elijah did on Mount Carmel by the Mediterranean sea two and a half thousand years ago.

Conclusion

How do these reflections help us as we start a new year in the Academy?

1. We are a church in the wilderness. We live among churches whose doctrines are not true. We live in a culture which has been formed largely on false doctrine. We ourselves have a heredity which responds to these falsities, subtly, insidiously. We are not free from falsity. It is because the falsity of evil hurts us that the church is in the wilderness, protected until the true doctrine can come forth. And the true doctrine, the Writings make very clear, is that of love and charity (@AE 732; @AR 547).
2. Yet a church in the wilderness has good things it can do. The stories of Elijah have happy endings. He is kept safe. He saves the widow woman and her son. He triumphs over Baal in the most devastating expose that a false religion has ever faced. The people confess Jehovah, the land is deluged with life-giving rain.
3. There is an imbalance in our church when we act from love and gratitude that the Lord has given us this religion, yet we cling to false notions. Our love is not matched by equal truth. In that state some progress is made. Some good feelings - deep one's and external one's (represented by the flesh and bread) are given to us.

The weakness of this state is that we are not seeing genuine truth, and that we will tend to slip into feelings of self-righteousness, wanting rewards for our good deeds. When this motive surfaces in our church, it is a sign that we need to turn ourselves to the truth, and see more deeply than presently we are seeing. We do this when we spiritually feed the prophet first - searching in the Word to find what the Lord wants us to do each day, in each situation.

4. The state of truth is ushered in when we reel our need for it. The widow represents a longing for truth, and a sense or the lack of it. To this state the Word speaks, and it gives us enough for each day. It keeps the church alive.
5. The problem with the state of truth is that, because we are studying and seeing principles, we begin to think that we need to take charge of the church, we need to protect it, we are strong because we have the Writings. As we slip into this feeling, we will face disillusionment, and our doctrine will seem to be lifeless, powerless to build the dream we longed for.

We need to relinquish the church into the Lord's hands once more, to look more deeply and see that He provides in ways we cannot possibly envision. We need to believe that if we allow our understanding to be carried up by the Word it will come alive once more.

6. There will be a sense of urgency in our church when good and truth are united, in equal measure, in uses. When we learn an ideal and set out right away to put it to work, then truth may be joined to good in equal measure. When we have a good feeling and it causes us to search for the truth that can best express it, and use it, then good is joined to truth in equal measure. Then we will not have mushy good, or harsh truth.

It is into this state that the fire of Jehovah can fall and permeate all that we do, and begin to make of our church a heaven upon the earth.

As we go through a school year we will find these many different states in ourselves, in the Academy as a whole, in the students. For we are a church in the wilderness. But a land of beauty awaits us. It is certain, the Writings promise us, that the New Church, which is the New Jerusalem, will exist, because it is foretold.... And it is also certain that the falsities of the former church must first be removed (@AR 547). Our first step is to understand the challenges that the Lord has offered the infant New Church, so that in facing them, we may allow the Lord to keep His promise.

THE PERFECT COMPLEMENT OF MALE OF FEMALE

2004

CAUTION

NOTE: This was probably a table, with the A,B series of complementary principles on the left; and a sequential numbered series on the right; with each number having supporting CL citations. I haven't tried to sort it out yet, but the numbers run right through the letters. ... i.e. 5, B, 6 which does not fit an ordered list

1. Some basic principles

1. It is hard for a man to talk about women's qualities. When Swedenborg spoke of feminine wisdom he allowed the wives in heaven to speak.

1. @CL 166: Because these are among things kept secret by wives, it is not appropriate for me to reveal them in their particulars. It is, however, appropriate for wives themselves, and therefore I have included at the end of several chapters four narrative accounts in which wives themselves reveal them.

2. @CL 169: But these things I report as they were told me; see the two relations by the seven wives sitting in the rose garden (n. 293, 294).

2. We live in a culture which emphasizes the understanding more than the will, thus a masculine perspective more than a feminine one.

1. @CL 83: Good does not appear in the light of the understanding as does truth. Therefore knowledge of it has concealed and eluded investigation. And since, from this cause, good is among things unknown, no one could conjecture that there is a marriage between it and truth.

2. @CL 126: It appears as though truth was the primary thing of the church because it is its first in time. It is from this appearance that prelates of the church have given the palm to faith which pertains to truth, rather than to charity which pertains to good.... Therefore, as regards any knowledge of what they are, the good of charity and the affection of the will lie hidden away as though in a tomb, and by some, earth is thrown over them as over the dead, lest they rise again.

3. @AC 2417[8]: The doctrine of charity has been lost. [This is a primary cause for a lack of appreciation of the feminine viewpoint even with women!]

3. The marriage between a woman and a man descends from the marriage of good and truth. Why is this point important? Because the Writings say that a woman receives conjugal love directly from the Lord. This means that she receives the love of conjoining good and truth in use! Her inmost form is the love of conjunction of these two halves of creation. This manifests itself, lower down, in a love of marriage. More on this later. Upon this principle depends our understanding of the distinctive feminine contribution in all arenas of human life.

4. Eternally complementary.

1. @CL 33: Masculinity in the male is masculine in every part, even in the least part of his

body, also in every idea of his thought, and in every bit of his affection. So too with femininity in the female.

2. @HH 369: Everyone, whether man or woman, possesses understanding and will; but with the man the understanding predominates, and with the woman the will predominates, and the character is determined by that which predominates.

5. There has to be equality.

1. @HH 369: Yet in heavenly marriages there is no predominance; for the will of the wife is also the husbands will, and the understanding of the husband is also the wives understanding, since each loves to will and to think like the other.... Thus are they conjoined into one. This conjunction is actual conjunction, for the will of the wife enters into the understanding of the husband, and the understanding of the husband into the will of the wife, this especially when they look into one another's faces.
2. @CL 125: It is a common saying in the church [said by Paul] that, as the Lord is the head of the church, so the husband is the head of the wife. But the Lord is the head of the church, and man, man and woman, and still more husband and wife together, are the church.
3. @CL 331[2], 3: If a man loves his intelligence in himself, that intelligence becomes the receptacle of his own love; and the love of what is one's own, being unable to tolerate an equal, never becomes conjugal, but so long as it prevails, it remains scortatory. [Note that it is a selfish and inherently unclean love that wants superiority.]

2. Complementary qualities (1): the soul of each

6. The soul, the deepest being of a man is the love of growing wise, or truth from good.

1. @CL 32: The inmost quality in masculinity is love, and its veil wisdom, or in other words, it is love veiled over with wisdom; while the inmost quality in femininity is that same wisdom, the wisdom of masculinity, and its veil the love resulting from it.
2. @CL 90: In the subjects of the animate kingdom, the truth of good or truth from good is masculine... . The male is born to become understanding (also @CL 159).
3. @CL 88: There are two loves with the male, of which the one, which is prior, is the love of becoming wise, and the other, which is posterior, is the love of wisdom. But this latter love, if it remains with the man, is an evil love and is called pride or the love of self-intelligence. This love was taken from man lest it destroy him, and was transcribed into woman that it might become conjugal love which reintegrates him, and that this was foreseen from eternity.

7. The soul, the deepest being of a woman is conjugal love, or the love of conjoining good and truth. Please note that this next passage is talking about the most universal sphere which flows from the Lord into all created things. No more vital influx from the Lord exists. It is called the sphere of conjugal love. Because it is the most universal, it clearly means, the sphere of the love of conjoining good and truth. Think about that: From the Lord as the Sun of heaven there is this powerful conjunctive force, proceeding, to unite the two parts of creation. Into whom does it flow directly?

1. @CL 223: This sphere is received by the female sex and through this sex is transferred into the male

sex. The masculine is intellectual and the feminine voluntary, and an intellectual form cannot grow warm with conjugal heat from itself but only from the conjunctive heat of one in whom that heat has been implanted by creation.

2. @CL 160: Women are born loves, but men, with whom they unite themselves that they may be loved in return, are receptions. Moreover, love is continually working.
 3. @CL 161: There is nothing of conjugal love [we may read, the love of conjoining good and truth into the heavenly marriage as well as the love of true marriage] with men, nor even of love of the sex, but only with wives and women. [Note, not just wives!] Wives are loves and men receptions.
 4. Complementary (II): perception with men and with women
 5. Perception with men is from rational wisdom, or from truth that is learned, understood, and perceived from good.
 6. @CL 168: It is masculine to perceive from the understanding. The understanding perceives things which are above the body and beyond the world, it being to these that rational and spiritual sight extends; while love does not go beyond what it feels.
 7. @CL 102: Rational wisdom perceives the truths and goods which appear interiorly in a person, not as his own but as flowing in from the Lord.
 8. @CL 165: Rational wisdom is proper to the understanding of men and climbs into a light in which women are not.
 9. @CL 90: The affection of the male is an affection for learning, understanding, and being wise the affection of learning in boyhood, the affection of understanding in adolescence and young manhood, and the affection of being wise from this manhood to old age.... His innate disposition inclines to the formation of an understanding.
8. Perception with women is from a wisdom inherent within her love. Note that the Writings usually speak of this perception in the married state, but three passages (@CL 21, 44 and 156e) make it clear that they have this perception in their dealings with people at large, and that they have it before marriage also.
1. @CL 166: In order that this union may be achieved, a wife is given a perception of her husbands affections, and also the highest prudence in knowing how to moderate them.
 2. @CL 168: It is masculine to perceive from the understanding, and feminine to perceive from love. What pertains to light is seen and what pertains to heat is felt. This perception is the wives wisdom, and it is not possible with the man, nor the man's rational wisdom with the wife.
 3. @CL 156[e]: They then said: Every man has five senses; but we have in addition a sixth sense, being the sensation of all the delights of the husbands conjugal love. We then discern them as exquisitely and distinctly as the ear discerns the modulations of song.
 4. @CL 156[e]: [In this passage the wives of heaven were immediately perceptive of Swedenborg's state, even though they had never met him before!] The wives looked searchingly into my eyes, and I asked why. They said, We are able exquisitely to see what your inclination is in respect to love of the sex, and hence what your affection, and from this what your thought; and we see that you are meditating on it intensely but yet chastely.

D. Complementary (III): wisdom with both

Please note a little realized fact: the primary thing of wisdom with both men and women has to do with the preservation of marriage. Sometimes we think that this applies only to a women's wisdom. It doesn't.

10. Wisdom with men is insight into truth and how it applies to life. It comes primarily from a willingness to shun adulteries, and to love one wife.

@CL 130: What is wisdom of life? In a comprehensive summary it is this: To shun evils because they are hurtful to the soul, hurtful to the commonwealth, and hurtful to the body; and to do goods because they are beneficial to the soul, the commonwealth and the body. This is the wisdom that is meant by the wisdom with which conjugal love binds itself; for it binds itself by shunning the evil of adultery as the pest of the soul, the commonwealth, and the body.

@CL 161: Men are receptions [of love] especially according to that wisdom from religion which teaches that the wife alone is to be loved.

11. Wisdom with women is to perceive the states, particularly of the husband, but of all people, and to moderate them gently. In this way women cooperate with the Lord, modeling His secret inner leading (see @CL 293 below).

@CL 168: It is feminine to perceive from love. What pertains to warmth is felt. This perception is the wives wisdom, and it is not possible with the man; nor is the man's rational wisdom possible with women.

@CL 166: With the conjunction of the wife with her husbands wisdom as an end, the wife is given a perception of the affections of the husband and also the highest prudence in moderating them.... They moderate them all unknown to their husbands.

@CL 294: The male man shall act from freedom according to reason, and his freedom which has regard to inclinations and affections is therefore moderated from within by the Lord Himself, and from without by means of the wife. This she accomplishes in a thousand ways, taking especial care that none of these ways be detected by her husband; for she knows well that love cannot be compelled, but is subtly infused in a state of freedom.

@CL 208: From the zeal of love for your happiness [said wives in heaven] and at the same time for our own, we pretend not to know them.

E. Complementary IV: each is superior in some way

12. With men, it is the ability to see in a deeper light.

@CL 168: It is masculine to perceive from the understanding, and the understanding perceives things which are above the body and beyond the world, it being to these that rational and spiritual sight extends; while love does not go beyond what it feels. When it does go beyond, it does this by drawing on that conjunction with the male understanding which was established by creation.

@CL 165: That the conjunction of the wife with the rational wisdom of the man is from within is because this wisdom is proper to the understanding of men and climbs into a light in which women are not [the passage goes on to say that they do however, recognize in their husbands, and, it seems, in men in general].

13. With women it is the ability, not just to perceive states in others, but to adapt themselves to them and to help, secretly, to moderate them.

@CL 208: You men glory over us on account of your wisdom, but we do not glory over you on account of ours; and yet ours excels yours because it enters into your inclinations and affections and sees, perceives, and feels them. You know nothing whatever about the inclinations and affections of your love, though it is these from which and according to which your understanding thinks: consequently, from which and according to which you are wise.

@CL 156e: In addition a sixth sense, being the sensation of all the delights of the husbands conjugal love.... We discern them as exquisitely and distinctly as the ear discerns the modulations of song.

@CL 294: [Swedenborg said] You continually contemplate your husbands with the eyes of your spirit and consider how to turn and guide their hearts to becoming wise.

14. Both these special qualities are from creation.

@CL 168: [If a womans spiritual sight goes beyond her own loves, it does so] by drawing on that conjunction with the male understanding which was established by creation.

@CL 293:3 I asked, Whence do you have that wisdom? They answered: it is implanted in us from creation and thence from birth. Our husbands liken it to instinct, but we say that it is of the Divine Providence, in order that men may be made happy by their wives.

@CL 223: The masculine is intellectual and the feminine voluntary, and an intellectual form cannot grow warm with conjugal [i.e. conjunctive!] heat from itself, but only from the conjunctive heat of one in whom that heat has been implanted by creation.

F. Complementary V: What first attracts a man to a woman and vice versa. Note what the Writings really mean by beauty.

15. A young man is attracted to a young womans beauty. (@CL 98)

AC 5199: Spiritual beauty is the affection of interior truth. Beauty is not produced by the truth of faith, but by the affection itself within the truths of faith, which is from good.

AC 3080: The damsel exceedingly good to look upon signifies beauty of the affection of truth in which there is good [also in which is innocence].

15. A young woman is attracted to a young man's morality (@CL 98).

AC 4574: In civil and moral life there exist what is honest and what is becoming. What is honest is to will well to others from the heart in the affairs of civil life, and what is becoming is to testify this in

speech and gesture.

G. Complementary VI: The understanding of a woman (sometimes translated intellect) is superior to that of a man before he is united to her: after union, the male understanding becomes gentle, thus a recipient of wisdom.

16. @CL 218: The intelligence of women is by nature modest, gracious, peaceable compliant, soft and gentle, while the intelligence of men is by nature critical, rough, resistant, argumentative, and given to intemperance.... With respect to their speech, men's is given to intemperance and argumentativeness, while women's is modest and peaceable.... The nature of men and the nature of women are different even from the time they are born.... [Swedenborg saw young boys fighting and being noisy, and the girls sitting quietly.] I could also see what the nature of the intellect is and what the nature of love is in their beginnings, and thus what a man's intellect in its development would be like without conjunction with feminine love and eventually conjugal love. (Note the implication of the last few words a man may be gentled by the feminine sphere before he is married.)

@CL 56: [An angel said] The Lord has taken the beauty and grace of life from man and transcribed them into woman. Hence, without reunion with his beauty and grace in woman, a man is stern, austere, dry, and unlovely; not is he wise save for himself alone, and then he is stupid. But when man is united with his beauty and grace of life in his wife, he becomes agreeable, pleasant, animated, and lovely, and thus wise.

[Later in that passage] After these sentiments had been expressed, the wife appeared through the crystal partition and said to her husband, Speak, if you please. And when he spoke, the life of wisdom from his wife was perceived in his speech; for her love was in the tone of his voice. Thus experience bore witness to truth.

H. Closing summary

17. The soul of a man manifests its strength in the regenerative series, where truth appears to lead the way. Hence the church is formed first in the husband, and if not, then order is inverted. (@CL 63, 125)

The soul of a woman manifests its strength in the conjunction of love and wisdom in use. Her soul provides the connection between truth and good, and between men and women. Such connection manifests itself in tenderness (@SE 6110[2]; @CL 330; Missing index 2019). It is also shown in the love of friendship, and the protection of it (@CL 167).

Note @CL 156[e]: The husbands then said: Our wives know all the states of our mind, nothing whatever being hidden from them. They see, perceive, and feel all that proceeds from our will, while we on the other hand know nothing of what passes with them. Wives have this gift because they are most tender loves and ardent zeal, as it were, for the preservation of conjugal friendship and confidence, and so for the happiness of the life of both partners; for, from the wisdom implanted in their love, they have this in view both for their husbands and for themselves.

Note that friendship implies also trustworthiness, and communication.

18. The souls of men and women are different, and all that flow from them are thus different, yet, of

the Lord's great mercy, perfectly complementary. If men and women are to fulfill their destinies, individually and together, they need to pursue the qualities the Lord has revealed. Pursuing something else has always resulted in an imbalance between the sexes, and a further delay in the restoration of love truly conjugal.

@CL 81e: After His advent, conjugal love will be raised up anew by the Lord, such as it was with the ancient peoples; for this love is from the Lord alone and is with those who are made spiritual by Him through the Word.

WHEN HIS COVENANT IS BROKEN WHAT SHOULD THE CHURCH DO?

Council of the Clergy 1993

When the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eating with the tax collectors and sinners, they said to His disciples, How is it that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners? When Jesus heard it, He said to them, Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance Mark 2:16, 17.

Thesis

In the Word for the New Church the Lord has revealed the complete process for repentance and forgiveness after one has sinned. Many of the steps are known and used in the world around us, but the entire journey is now laid out. Can we use this awareness to help those who have openly transgressed to be a part of the church? Can we do this in such a way that we don't also seem to say that transgressions against society are unimportant?

The problem

A member of the New Church does something which is a clear transgression against the Ten Commandments. He may steal money from a church fund or from a friend. He may commit adultery. Perhaps he is abusive to his children or his wife. Worse still, he may be guilty of some sexual abuse of children or young people. He may or may not go to jail for what he has done.

The victims

As a church we have a duty to the victims. How does the Lord indicate that we should help those who are wounded by the deeds of others? Are we doing a good enough job of this?

We also have a duty to establish a society which protects possible future victims. If we make nothing of open transgression against the Commandments, if people can disobey them and know no censure, then one of the primary barriers to wrongdoing is gone. More people will become victims in the future.

Although it does not seem so, we know from the Word that the perpetrator is also a victim. His or her wounds are self-inflicted, it is true, but they are hazardous to spiritual life and to any chance of natural happiness.

We must not help the offender without sensitivity to the primary victims. I would welcome discussion on how we can improve in caring for those in our midst who are hurt. Perhaps we are lacking in this, although we are making some progress in helping hurting people to find what the Lord's Word can do to heal them, and to be healed in the caring environment of the church.

If we are doing this, then how do we help the offender?

Sinners to repentance

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).

The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10).

This my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found (Luke 15:24).

We are a church which has strict moral standards. We should have. We also need to exert moral pressure on people. The Writings are very clear that fear of the consequences of evil is a powerful restraint, one which belongs in a proper society.

What happens, however, when our moral standards are broken? Are we in danger of saying that the only sinners who are encouraged in our church are those who successfully hide their sins? For we are all sick, and in need of the Heavenly Physician. Most of us hide our ailments from those around us, hoping that He will heal us in secret. Some fail to conceal their faults, some give in and discovery is the result.

Note how often Jesus dined with sinners (cf. Mark 2:16). He emphasized this point in the story of Simon the Pharisee, and the woman who kissed His feet, and washed them with her tears (Luke 7:36-50). Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. He purposely went among them, and earned the condemnation of the established church for doing so.

Perhaps we all feel that we have not known what to do when a person openly transgresses, especially when he or she does something which the Word indeed teaches is very bad. Have we, therefore, left them be, apparent outcasts from the church? If so, what is their likely conclusion? Perhaps one of the following:

1. Im not worthy to be in the New Church because of what I have done.
2. The New Church can't forgive what Ive done.
3. The New Church is saying that the Lord Himself will not forgive what I have done.
4. The New Church only wants people in its congregations who do not slip. It has no tolerance of sin.
5. The New Church is a judgmental church.

We need not own all the conclusions people draw about us. What we need to do is go back to the Word and ask, How should the New Church deal with those in its midst who are clearly guilty of wrong doing? What would the Lord have us do?

Mercy versus punishment

If a crime has been committed, it seems that society is commanded in the Writings to punish the transgressor. This is a civil punishment.

If it is a moral crime, then there should be a moral consequence also. If I steal money, I lose peoples trust. They have to make the moral judgment that Im not to be trusted at this moment in time.

How does a thief become reclaimed by the civil society? He serves his punishment, and then shows by

his subsequent behavior that he will not repeat the crime.

How does a person earn acceptance after a moral transgression? That is the question before us. Can we, as a church, extend the hand of forgiveness and understanding, and yet ensure that we are not saying, Oh, you did this terrible thing, but never mind: the Lord's laws are not important anyway.

The Lord's Second Covenant

In the halcyon days of the Most Ancient Church there was the true covenant with the Lord - that of love (@AC 1055, 655, 1038).

Behold the days are coming... when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah - not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says Jehovah (Jeremiah 31:31, 32).

We all have that first covenant. The Lord gives us the innocence of infancy, and He gives us innocent states in each new venture, and there is a first love. That is our first covenant with Him: Lord, I will follow where Your love leads me.

We all break that covenant. In that sense we are all sinners, sick people in need of a physician. We take the love the Lord offers, and use it for selfish ends, and the bond is broken.

I have used the example of two friends who were close all their lives. They built a business together, on trust. Then one began to overspend his income, and in order to cover his losses he began embezzling money from the company. Inevitably he was discovered, and the partnership dissolved in bitterness.

Some years later, having realized how badly he behaved, he came back to his friend and said, I was terribly wrong. But we've been so close, and so have our families. Can we try to rebuild what I destroyed? For the sake of their friendship, and because he and his family had been grieving, the innocent friend agreed.

What would the new partnership between them be like? It would be different, wouldn't it, from the one that had been broken. Now they would probably work out a careful agreement. Perhaps they would hire lawyers to protect each of them. There would be checks and balances in all the financial dealings of the company, to guard against the weakness that the one partner had shown.

What does the Lord do when we break His first covenant? What does He do when we have done evil? I think we can sum it up in two sentences. He says, You have done wrong. I have a way to help you to stop doing wrong. His mercy goes to work!

Which brings us to the Second Covenant. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: After those days, says Jehovah, I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people (Jeremiah 31:33). Note that He doesn't say He will put His love in their inward parts. It's His law. He says that He will be their God: for God means the government of His truth.

We know this teaching well: when love is rejected, the Lord provides His new covenant by means of His truth. The True Christian Religion explains this in the section on redemption.

Jehovah God descended as Divine truth, which is the Word, although He did not separate from it the Divine Good.... Jehovah God came down into the world as Divine truth, in order that He might work redemption.... This the Divine good is inadequate to effect; it can be done only by the Divine truth from

the Divine good (@TCR 85, 86).

The falsities and evils in which all hell was and always is could have been assaulted, conquered and subjugated in no other way than by means of the Divine truth from the Word; nor could the new heaven that was then constituted have been built up... nor could a new church on the earth have been established by any other means (@TCR 86).

We might add therefore that today no church can be built up in any human being except by the same means - by the power of truth.

A beautiful set of teachings is found in the explanation of the Lord's intercession. The Lord explains that there is intercession in all love and mercy. He who loves or feels compassion continually intercedes (@AC 8573). But when that love is rejected, then it is by means of truth that intercession takes place. The Divine truth which proceeds from the Lord continually intercedes... because it proceeds from the Divine love (@AC 8573). The Divine truth... is nearest to the Divine good.... Mediation is effected through it, because by means of it access is given to the Divine good (@AC 8705). The passage observes that the Lord glorified His Human because no one can come close to Him unless they see Him as a Man; for no one can be conjoined through love with the Divine itself except by means of such an idea (Ibid.).

The Lord always offers the hand of love. When it is struck aside, He offers His other hand - truth, which comes between us and the consequences of our sin; truth, which provides a way back to the Divine love. This is the new covenant. It creates a new bond between the Lord and anyone who has fallen.

But the second covenant still ends up with love

The second covenant is no different in end. It is the means which are different. When trust is broken, truth shows how to reestablish it. And of truth this is said, Since a covenant is the conjunction of the Lord with a person by love, it follows that it is also by all things that pertain to love, which are called truths... for all precepts, indeed the Law and the Prophets, are founded on one Law, to love the Lord above all things and the neighbor as one's self (@AC 1038[5]). The passage goes on to say that since a covenant is always an internal bond, it leads to love again (see also @AC 1055).

This too is meant by these well loved passages from Scripture:

All the ways of Jehovah are mercy and truth unto such as keep His covenant and His testimonies (Psalms 25:10).

The mercy of Jehovah is from eternity to eternity upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness to children's children; to such as keep His covenant, and to those who remember His commandments to do them (Psalms 103:17, 18).

Therefore the Word, written to represent the Divine love in every way, is the new covenant of Jeremiah (see @AC 10687, 9396). The Decalogue also is called the Covenant. It establishes the bond between God and humankind, restores love where once love was not (see @AC 9416[2], 10375, 10632; @TCR 456; @AE 1027[2]).

Dysfunction behavior # 1: Why can't we go back to before the covenant was broken?

People long, rather pitifully, for the time before they broke trust with the Lord. A very sad illustration of this point is with a husband who once enjoyed a beautiful trust with his wife, and then he committed adultery and she found out. They do not divorce. He doesn't want that. He gave in to something evil. She doesn't want it either, despite her terrible hurt.

Now there is a new bond between them - the bond of visible rules that need to be kept. He has to let her know where he is, because he has been lying about it in the past. He has to prove that he's not doing something that before she never suspected him of doing. Worst of all, that precious respect - a holy kind of love - is at least temporarily gone.

At times he will want to pretend it all didn't happen. Just trust me like you used to. Just look at me with the same tenderness you used to show.

We cannot re-write our choices. The bond of love once severed has to be re-established through the way of truth (@AC 2034). There's no way we can pretend that an evil deed never happened.

This is the trap that the Writings call instantaneous salvation, or mercy without means. It is impossible, they say again and again. Think of the Prodigal Son, supervising the pigs in a far country, deciding to return to his father and ask forgiveness. Wouldn't it have been nice if he could have flown back in a moment?

He had to walk back every exhausting mile, retracing exactly the steps he took in the opposite direction. At each step he had to make a decision to keep walking. And at the end he had come home himself. His confession was written with every step he took, and he found complete forgiveness.

Can the man who betrayed his wife get back to a state of tender love with her? Can he allow her to trust him again? Yes, he can. But he has to do it through the new covenant. He must not re-write the rules. He has to follow the Lord's rules.

Dysfunctional behavior # 2: Setting our own rules

A feature of choosing to do something wrong is that we are striving to reconstitute reality. Reality is that stealing money doesn't bring happiness, yet in choosing to steal, a person is saying, I want money to make me happy. It doesn't work, of course, but the will to change reality is there.

It is because of this that the Lord teaches that He never makes a covenant with us! Everyone can see that Jehovah never makes a covenant with a man, for this would be contrary to the Divine. What is man but something vile and filthy, which of itself thinks and does nothing but evil? (@AC 1864). All aspects of the covenant are from the Lord. He even gives us the power to respond.

The wish of humankind to rewrite the rules is pervasive. This is what caused the fall of the Most Ancient Church and of every church since - the desire to determine for ourselves what reality is (@AC 127). The Lord does not bargain with that desire: it is the source of evil.

What is our part in the new covenant?

In one sense that's easy - to obey.

There is this paradox - the Lord does everything, but we also participate. The Writings resolve it as follows:

1. A person does not conjoin himself to the Lord, but the Lord alone conjoins a person to Himself (@AE 1027[2]).
2. But any one can see that a covenant cannot be entered into and conjunction be effected by it unless there is some reciprocal on man's part, not only that he may consent but also that he may receive (@AE 1027[3]).
3. If he did not act of himself he would be an automaton, and all influx would pass through him (LJ Post 217).
4. Therefore the Lord has something resembling a covenant, in which there is consent by both sides - Namely, Jehovah proposes and the people answer (@AC 8778).
5. However the real covenant is made with what is the Lord's with us (@AC 8778; cf. @AC 10299 et al).
6. To make this covenant possible, the Lord gave us the appearance of self-life, so we can genuinely, freely choose to accept or not (@AE 701; @AC 1712, et al).
7. When we respond in this way, the Lord from above reduces the lower mind to correspondence with the higher, and then our lower minds, where we think life is our own, feels as the higher one does, which is the Lord's with us (@AC 8778).
8. We ought to remind ourselves constantly that the Lord is giving us the power to act.

All this is summarized thus: a person has the power to keep the last six commandments of the Decalogue, but no power to keep the first three. However much he may think he does, he cant. Its when we keep the last six that the Lord inflows, and we keep the first three (@AE 1027[2]).

Why is the resolution of this apparent paradox so important? Because it is hard for us to get the balance. On the one hand we find ourselves wanting to set the rules, and control our lives apart from the Lord. This leads to evil. On the other, when faced with an evil desire, we are tempted to feel ourselves powerless to resist. As the Writings so often observe, we let our hands hang down, waiting for the Lord to move us.

Accepting responsibility for our faults, and for changing them, is a key part of the new covenant.

Aspects of the new covenant

1. Two wills

This doctrine is unique to the New Church, and within it lies the secret of how forgiveness takes place. When the fall took place, and the old will became corrupt, it was separated from the understanding, and a new will was formed - in the understanding, by truth (@AC 652, 927, 933, 989, 1034, 1044 et al).

The entire doctrine of repentance hinges on acknowledging the power of two totally hostile forces inside of us. The old will has to be separated completely from the new will and from the understanding (@AC 933; cf. 1034). When a person has been regenerated... all things in him have life, and the life they have bears an exact proportion to the degree in which his own will - which is foul and dead - can be separated from the new will and understanding that he has received from the Lord (@AC 1040[3]).

2. The old will doesn't go away

Sincere people in the world around us have recognized the reality which this teaching declares. People who counsel alcoholics or drug abusers impress on them that the desire to drink or take drugs will stay with them all their lives: only constant vigilance will save them. It is so with many other evils - with child abuse, for example.

Every one believes at the present day that the evils and falsities in a person are entirely separated and abolished during regeneration, so that when he becomes regenerate, nothing of evil or falsity remains, but he is clean and righteous, like one washed and purified with water. This notion is, however, utterly false; for not a single evil or falsity can be so shaken off as to be abolished; but whatever has been hereditarily derived from infancy, and acquired by act and deed, remains; so that a person, notwithstanding his being regenerate, is nothing but evil and falsity, as is shown to the life to souls after death....

When man has been thus formed, he is said to be regenerate, all his evils and falsities still remaining, yet at the same time all his goods and truths being preserved. (@AC 868).

There is a strong temptation to pretend that our problems are behind us, the moment we start repenting. The desires that caused us to do something wrong have been seared upon our minds by our free choice of them, just as have the good loves we have expressed. The Lord has separated them! The old will is in a different place from the new. But it still moves us. We set ourselves up for a fall if we think that these desires will not return.

Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak (Mt. 26:41).

And what I say to you I say to all: Watch! (Mark 13:37).

3. A loss of perception

When humankind turned to evil one of our biggest losses was the ability to see clearly. We need to remember that this is not our fault, but it is a reality nonetheless.

The point is that this obscurity in our mental sight is the result of the presence of the old will (@AC 1044, 1043). Simply put, we enjoy certain forbidden delights, and so we don't see clearly when they are active. The delights captivate the thought and banish reflection (@DP 113).

This confusion is a far-reaching thing. We are inclined to accept what those whom we trust have told us. We accept the dogmas of our own church, and have great difficulty seeing the truth itself. We will tend to allow many truths to be set aside by false convictions which we have previously held (See @AC 2831, 1044, 2144:2, 203, 573, 597 et al).

The written revelation is given to the end that our false notions may be carefully weighed against what the Lord has directly said. This is the basis of the new will, and thus, again, the Word is the covenant.

In one place in the Word the covenant made with the people after the flood (and that includes us) is called a covenant not so conjugal (@AC 3246[2]). This is because they receive truth through a lower way - from learning from without - and that truth is obscure. However, I think the Writings indicate that in time that covenant can be purified and made celestial also.

The central message here, however, is that we can't trust our instincts. We must constantly measure our instincts against the Word itself. That is why the Lord has now revealed it so clearly.

How can we help those who have sinned openly to be welcomed back into the congregations of the church?

Remember that this must be done in such a way that further evils don't follow.

We must not by our actions allow the person to be free to do the same thing again.

Nor must we send a message that breaking the Lord's laws is unimportant.

Nor must we seem to say to the victims of some wrong doing that the harm done to them is of no matter to us.

1. Step # 1 is an open acknowledgment that what was done was wrong

Here, I think, is where the church could perhaps be of more help than it has been in the past. It also seems that the culture around us may be of help to us.

Secrecy helps evil to flourish. The Writings speak most strongly about this. One of the primary reasons for the permission of evil is so that it can be seen, because only when it appears can it be combated (see @DP 278; @TCR 455, 568 et al). It is true that these passages speak of the importance of a persons seeing his faults himself.

Lets reflect on what often happens in a society if a person is caught doing something very wrong. The first thing we want to do is hush it up. We have some very good reasons for doing so. Making it known abroad seems to be spreading gossip. It hurts the person who did what was wrong, but worse still, it hurts his family and many who might share in his disgrace. It shocks society. It induces suspicion that others may be doing similar things. The list goes on.

I am not suggesting that we should publish the faults of another person. What I am asking - and I ask it without feeling that I have the answer - is whether we ought to encourage someone who has committed a crime against society, and who has to a degree been discovered in it, to acknowledge it openly.

This is a difficult thing to suggest. I believe, as most of you do, that privacy is an important thing in our combating evil. The fact that we can continue to appear upright gives us an impetus in our private fight to become upright. The question is, should a crime against society - one where there are victims - be kept private?

The sexual crimes are the one's which illustrate this point most clearly. Incest or child abuse thrive on secrecy. Even when a loved one finds that a child has been abused there is the tendency to shield the victim. Often the result has been that the perpetrator hurts more people before his sin is uncovered.

But there is another result: Let us say that a few know of the faults of this person. Then there is this secret about him. People begin to suspect, but they don't quite know what to suspect. He appears to be somewhat tainted, but no one knows quite why. He doesn't know who knows what, so he gradually stays away, and the church has no way to help him.

In our society today transgressors are being encouraged more and more to admit their faults in a public way. Is this good? In some ways it seems to be.

Is it hard? Consider this passage from the Writings on why we won't even admit our evils in private. It is strange that anyone can find fault with another for his evil intentions and say, Do not do that because it is a sin, and yet find it difficult to say this to himself; but this is because the latter touches the will, but the former only the thought nearest to hearing (@TCR 536).

2. Fear of condemnation

Probably the greatest reason why people who are caught doing something wrong plead for secrecy is because they fear the condemnation of others. They feel sure people will revel in their downfall, and they will never get a chance to come back into society.

This seems to lead to the second step: a willingness in all our societies to look at ourselves and admit that we too are very flawed.

Jesus said to the crowd who had brought to Him the woman taken in adultery, Let him who is without sin among you cast the first stone at her. What was He saying? Live your lives, not in the awareness of someone else's sin, but of your own!

That 180 degree turn, so powerfully documented in the Word, could change the face of our society. How can we teach ourselves and others to think, every time we hear of a bad thing someone else did, to say, Stop! Let me take a second to remember something bad that I have recently done.

We will continue to have secrecy about our faults as long as we fear the sanctimonious disapproval of society. But if society could say, We too are flawed. How can we help this person whose flaws have appeared? - there can be a big change in attitude.

The Pharisees thought that Jesus shouldn't spend time with the sinners. There is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents....

The trouble is that condemnation is so much fun! How can we balance the appropriate disapproval of evil with that primary longing of our Lord - to call sinners to repentance?

3. Without step # 1, nothing more can happen

I am referring here to the willingness to accept responsibility for what one has done. Unless that is clearly admitted, the church cannot offer help.

The Writings teach that people have a horror of self-examination and confession. With the Reformed there is a certain inrooted objection, repugnance and aversion to actual repentance which is so great that it prevents their compelling themselves to examine themselves, see their sins, and confess them before God. It is as if horror seized them when this is proposed (@TCR 567[7]). They will try to justify almost anything (see @DP 278; @TCR 518)

So what can a minister do, or what can the church do, if it is clear that a person won't take this first step. We can try to help, but ultimately we have to wait until the person himself makes that decision.

Here, it seems, is where the church is often accused falsely of not reaching out to help someone who has committed an offense. Sometimes you have to wait for years, and in the meantime you seem uncaring. Perhaps we can suggest ways in which we can approach this problem. In some situations confrontation or intervention is clearly needed. In others, waiting may be all we can do.

The principle here is once again that the Lord alone makes the covenant. His Decalogue cannot be unsaid. People are tempted to do it all the time. I knew he was taking the money, but I had to support him. I knew he was being too violent to the children, but I didn't know how to tell him it was wrong: he always had such good reasons. I knew he shouldn't beat me, but I assumed I must have done something very wrong to enrage him so.

Society must not do anything to suggest that the Lord's commandments can be undone. When a person is in the torment of an evil he will try to get us to do that. Perhaps the most tragic cases are where a victim is made to blame. A person commits adultery, and then says to his wife, You made me do it. You weren't a good enough wife.

And society seems to support him. We hear things like, There's never an innocent party in a divorce. She must have been a part of the problem. Of course no one is innocent, because we're all human. But breaking a commandment is an individual choice. Let's be strong in supporting the victims, by standing firm in honoring the sovereignty of the Lord's covenant. Adultery is wrong.

I don't mean to suggest that people don't commit evils under pressure. We must try to excuse where excuses are real. We must have sympathy for the pressures others live under. It is avoidance, or the unfair shifting of blame that must not be encouraged.

4. After step # 1 occurs, we should concentrate on progress

I have acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, I will confess my transgression to the Lord, and You forgave the iniquity of my sin (Psalms 32:5).

We all know that lip confession does no good. Heartfelt acceptance of our faults is something very different. It allows the Lord to say, I forgive you. Now let Me really forgive you, by taking away the iniquity of your sin.

What should society do? Clearly it too should focus on how to help a person to overcome a problem. And it should offer the hope of forgetting the transgression as soon as that is reasonable. Remember, we can't forget until the danger is past.

5. Recovery is a journey

I well remember punishing a student for something he had done which was not good. Almost immediately he wanted to forget it ever happened.

That's fine for children. They don't purposely do wrong. For us adults, overcoming something wrong takes a lot of time.

6. Probing the evil

This is a step we tend to ignore. Were all embarrassed if someone has admitted to doing something wrong, so we want to pass on to the comforting phase. Yet step # 2 is Seeing and acknowledging one's evils. That means understanding them.

To confess sins is to become thoroughly acquainted with evils, to see them in one's self, to acknowledge them, to regard one's self as guilty, and to condemn oneself on account of them (@AC 8388).

That's strong language. Note the term, thoroughly acquainted with evils. If we don't understand the anatomy of our problems, we won't overcome them. They'll catch us unawares.

Surely the church can be of help here. We try hard to help people to prepare for the good parts of their lives - for weddings, or baptisms. Today we are trying, I think, to help them more and more with the hard parts. Do you have suggestions for helping people to understand the anatomy of a particular evil? One minister was once interested in preparing a dossier on each of the Ten Commandments to help people who are wrestling with a particular problem. Other ministers are trying something similar with spiritual growth courses. We can do more. Take one example. In parts of our society today sexual fantasy is considered relatively acceptable. The Writings speak a lot about fantasy and about the presence of evil in the imagination and the harm it does. Are some of our married couples being encouraged by articles they read to think that unchaste fantasy is acceptable, while we remain silent on the anatomy of this evil?

7. Making yourself guilty

We know that guilt can be a crippling thing, if we let the evil spirits take possession of our minds and condemn us. We also know that it is one, very necessary step towards recovery.

I have one thought in this area. Are we too quick to try to move people on from this phase? Guilt is

such an uncomfortable feeling that we tend to try to comfort people, to take away the feeling, to move them on.

Consider this passage, which says that the majority in youth turn to evil. If he feels any anxiety when he reflects upon his having done what is evil, it is a sign that he will still receive influx through the angels from heaven, and it is also a sign that he will afterward suffer himself to be reformed... for with those who are then in anxiety there is an internal acknowledgement of evil, which when recalled by the Lord becomes confession and finally repentance (@AC 5470).

Guilt, anxiety, remorse - even sharp pain (@AC 1668) - have their use. They inspire us to do away with the cause, which is our own evil. Of course they mustn't stay too long, or the conscience mongers will get hold of us. We shouldn't banish them too soon either.

The Lord led him to search out his evils, He disclosed them and inspired grief for them, and together with this an effort to refrain from them and begin a new life (@TCR 539).

The Lord inspires grief, yet He does not impute the evil. As the Lord is mercy itself, He forgives all people their sins, nor does He impute a single sin to anyone, for He says, They know not what they do (@TCR 529).

7. Confession

Father, I have sinned against heaven and before You and am no longer worthy to be called Your son (Luke 15:18). The church can (and does) provide help to people who feel the need to speak to the Lord about their sins. As we know, this is an internal confession. It does no harm for one burdened in conscience to enumerate his sins before a minister of the church, in order to lighten his burden and obtain absolution. But this kind of confession is natural, while that described above is spiritual (@TCR 539). What a Roman Catholic does before a priest, we all should do in private before God (@AR 531).

8. Prayer

Although it would seem self-evident, we should not omit the thought that the church should encourage people wrestling with their faults to pray regularly.

The Writings say there should be prayer morning and evening (@Char 174). My voice you shall hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning I will direct it to You and I will look up (Psalms 5:3). When we are wrestling with an evil, we should start each day asking for help.

Evening prayer allows us to look back, to see what went right and what went wrong. The Writings speak of the value of reflecting on each days evils (@TCR 563).

We should, however, remember that every truth we utter is a prayer, which the Lord answers immediately. This is a powerful thought for all who are in combat.

9. Making amends

Some of my colleagues disagree with my interpretation of the story of Zacchaeus. Im sorry to be so intransigent, and I really don't want to side-track the important subject of this paper with a debate on a

small point. I do believe, however, that this story powerfully illustrates the responsibility of one who has done evil to make amends.

Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, Behold, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold (Luke 19:8).

Zacchaeus was trying to make up for what he had done wrong. What is meant by restoring fourfold is revealed in another part of the Word. The law of Exodus stated that if you stole an ox, you must repay five. If you stole a sheep, you must repay four (see @AC 9098 - 9103). The interesting thing is that repaying fourfold represented doing more. The sheep represented interior affections which had been hurt. They should be restored entirely! The ox represented exterior affections. They should be restored - although it was not necessary to be as complete.

When we transgress we hurt other people. What do we owe them in the way of reparation? The Writings certainly teach, in many places, that we should make amends (cf. @LJPost 214, 227; @DP 114, @DLife 5-7, et al, in talking of the Anglican Exhortation to the Holy Supper).

It seems that if we have hurt their deeper affections, we need to try to restore them altogether. If we have hurt more external ones, we must restore as much as possible.

That's fine. But if we have done someone a lot of harm, it is likely that we won't be allowed to help. I have a mental picture of Zacchaeus going from door to door, trying to make amends for the money stolen by his unfair tax collections. He couldn't find some of the people. Perhaps others wouldn't talk to him.

So he had a second approach. He gave money to the needy where before he had taken from the needy. To give to the poor is to help those in need of goods and truths (@AC 10227, 10214; @AE 893).

A person who has hurt others may not be able to help them. He should signify his willingness to change by some visible effort to do the opposite of what he previously did. How he will do this will differ, but it can be done.

Making amends is important. Without some effort on the part of the transgressor, how can people know that he truly feels the gravity of what he did?

10. Desisting from evil and living a good life

Here is a real problem. If society is going to be able to forget someone's past faults, it needs to be sure that they are really in the past. How does he prove that?

After all, good behavior is the expected standard. You're not expected to steal, and you're not rewarded for not stealing. How can you persuade a community that you won't steal again? So not doing wrong is a hard thing to demonstrate. This is especially true since people hide bad deeds, so how does society know that a person isn't hiding the kinds of things he used to hide?

My mother told me about a young girl in a school that went from K to 12. In fifth grade she had been caught stealing. Now it was five years later, and she was trying so hard to live down her reputation. My

mother was school secretary, and this girl would bring her money she had found in the playing field. How many children would do that? Yet many still considered her untrustworthy. How hard it is to live down a reputation.

There are some things a person can do. He can speak of the fact that the things he did are wrong. He can demonstrate that he is taking precautions. For example, a person who has transgressed in sexual matters can take special care to do nothing that would make women uncomfortable, and avoid any situations where suspicion might arise. Unfortunately people are often foolish, and do the opposite. They go back to the scenes of their temptations to try to prove something. A man who had a serious alcohol problem told me he used to go and sit in a bar just to prove he was strong enough to resist temptation. Eventually he got the point: not only was he inviting temptation, but he was confusing the dickens out of the people who wanted to trust in him.

Perhaps we can gain some light on this by reflecting that the Lord always provides signs of His new covenant. Maybe those signs can be adapted by a person seeking to demonstrate that he has truly repented of a fault.

The importance of external signs is that they call to mind internal bonds (@AC 2032). One sign is an oath - some kind of external commitment (@AC 3375). It is true that the Writings teach that a spiritual person does not swear oaths, because it impugns his uprightness (@AC 2842, 9166). But where a person has broken a law, some type of external commitment might be useful. The alcoholic says, I wont touch alcohol. By this commitment he is measured.

Another sign of the covenant is the rainbow. The Writings say that this is a sign that there is both evil and good in us (@AC 1042; cf. 1043, 1044). Acknowledging the presence of our weakness may be a good thing.

Baptism, the Holy Supper and worship in general are all signs of our covenant with the Lord (@AC 2042, 10730; @AE 960[10]; @TCR 730). The last passage cited says that once a person makes a decision to follow the Lord, the sign that follows is a deliberate action - a conscious commitment. People who have been caught doing something wrong often stay away from church from embarrassment. In certain situations that may indeed be appropriate - if, for example, somebody whom they wronged deeply is in the congregation, and is still very vulnerable, and would be forced to stay away himself or herself. But visible piety is a sign of the wish to turn to the Lord.

Note that none of these things are proofs: they are only signs (@AC 2042). The real sign of repentance is what someone does over a period of time. Demonstrating a change of heart takes time. People may be impatient to have a phase of their lives forgotten. We can all understand that; but confidence once lost takes time to rebuild. I used to tell teenage students that I will take their word - unless I found that they lied. Then they would have to work to reestablish the trust I once automatically showed to them.

11. Constantly watchful

Nothing will help to restore a person more surely in the eyes of society than his admission that he needs to be watchful for all of his life on this earth against the problems which beset him. This takes us back to the first premise - that sins are not wiped out, that the old will is with us always (@AC 868 et al).

That humility has an appeal to which all but the most sanctimonious will respond.

Afterwards, whenever the sins of which you have found yourselves guilty recur, say to yourselves, We will not do this because it is a sin against God. This is actual repentance (@TCR 567).

Conclusion

Please let no one think that I am writing this in the spirit of having the church take charge of someones repentance. The question is, how can the church serve others, helping them to be a part of the church while they overcome a transgression which is visible and well known?

If we are to be a forgiving society, one that accepts the reality that many of us will sin, and that we all need forgiveness, we must develop a culture that encourages forgiveness. We must also, however, honor the path that the Lord Himself set out, according to which His mercy works. We must not allow any other system to replace it, nor must we leave out some steps because it would be easier on someone if we do.

He who is without sin among you. How can we make that injunction an integral part of the life of our New Church congregations, so that we too can rejoice in the happiness of one sinner who repents?

But if a wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed, and keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. None of his transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him; because of the righteousness which he has done, he shall live (Ezekiel 18:22).