



PEACE RIVER NEW CHURCH CURRENT

NEWSLETTER OF THE DAWSON CREEK CHURCH OF THE NEW JERUSALEM

JUNE 2013



IS IT BETTER TO BE RIGHT OR GOOD?

By Rev. Coleman Glenn

Is it better to be right, or to be good? That's one of the many ways of asking a similar question: is it more important to be wise, or to be loving? To have faith, or to have charity? The short answer might seem obvious: of course goodness and love is more important than being right or knowing a lot. And this is the truth, as the apostle Paul acknowledged in his letter to the Corinthians: "And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love." (1 Corinthians 13:13) Love is the purpose for which God created us, and in that sense, nothing is more important than love.

But this isn't the whole picture. Because in the truest sense, you *can't* be loving without wisdom, and you can't be wise without love. And even if you're trying to be good, it won't really be good unless you know the right way to help people. Rather than an either/or question, this is really a "both/and" thing: the

best thing is to have "rightness" married to goodness, wisdom married to love.

This month we celebrate New Church day, the beginning of the Lord's New Church. And one of the most beautiful things about the New Church is that it encourages us to find that marriage, that harmony, between the heart and the head, so that we avoid falling into either extreme: the extremes of faith without charity or charity without faith.

The Lord knows that people do have a tendency to fall too much into one extreme or the other. In the second and third chapters of the book of Revelation, John was commanded to write letters to the seven churches in Asia. According to the book *Apocalypse Revealed*, those seven churches represent all people in the Christian world who are called to the new Church. Each of the different letters describe a different type of person. For most of these churches, John praises them for doing something right, criticizes them for doing something wrong, and encourages them to repent. And usually the things they are doing wrong come from an overemphasis of love over wisdom, or wisdom over love.

We don't have space in this newsletter to look at all seven churches, but I encourage you to read about them in *Apocalypse Revealed* n. 68-223. For now, we'll just look at two of them, which illustrate what can happen when we put too much emphasis on *truth* - i.e., knowing things, being right, having wisdom - and what happens when we put too much emphasis on *good* - i.e. doing things, serving others, feeling love.

The first church that John writes to is the church of Ephesus. According to *Apocalypse Revealed* 73, this church represents people "who primarily regard the truths of doctrine and not the goods of life." Now, the Lord does have some praise for these people. They have "laboured for [His] name's sake, and not fainted" - that is, they have studied to gain an understanding of

doctrine. They have diligently sought to differentiate what is true from what is false. That is a good thing.

But there is a problem: because they have put so much emphasis on being *right*, on *knowing* the doctrine, they've forgotten about the importance of charity. The Lord tells John to write to them, "But I have against you: that you have left your first charity" (or "your first love"). As that passage goes on to explain, every church begins with more focus on *life* than on *knowledge*; but over time, people start to make beliefs and doctrines out to be more important than the way a person lives.

There is hope for this church though - they are told to repent, and return to their earlier good works. If they do this, they are promised that they will be given fruit from the tree of life - that is, that the Lord will fill them with the good of love and charity.

We may know people who seem to put too much emphasis on doctrine and not enough on living. And we may *be* those people. If we find ourselves in this category, the calling is clear. It is not to *stop* caring about truth, but it is to remember what that truth is for - to enable us to love our neighbour and love the Lord.

That church represents one side of the spectrum - emphasizing knowledge at the expense of good deeds. But what about the other side? Is it possible to over-emphasize good deeds? Isn't that what religion is supposed to be all about?

There *is* a church that is called out for over-emphasizing good deeds. This is the church in Pergamos, which represents people "who place everything of the church in good works, and not anything in the truths of doctrine." They are commended because they "hold fast to [the Lord's] name" - that is, they have a life of faith and worship. Their intentions are praised - it is *good* that they emphasize life.

But for them, too, the Lord has criticism. It is said that they have some there who "hold the doctrine of Balaam." According to *Apocalypse Revealed* 114, this means that some of these people do hypocritical good - that is, good that is only for the sake of advancing themselves in the world.

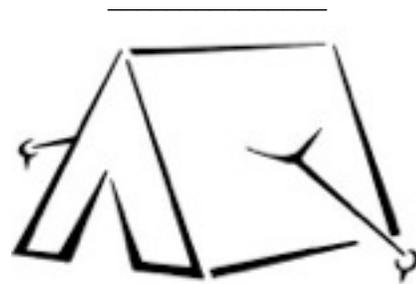
And there are also some who "hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitians," which is that they consider themselves to be *earning* heaven by the good works, as if God owed them something for doing good. This is the primary problem with an overemphasis on good works - without the wisdom and knowledge from doctrine that all good comes from God, a person cannot help but take credit for the good he does - and his good deeds become an opportunity for him to love *himself* rather than the people he's serving.

Besides this, if a person doesn't care about learning what is *really* good, then he's easily convinced to do things that are actually evil. For example, a person who thinks that it is good to give money to anyone who asks, regardless of what that money is going to be used for, can end up doing more harm than good. This is what happens with people who place everything in good deeds and nothing in doctrine.

But this group, too, is promised that they can repent and be embraced by the Lord. They are promised that if they do repent, they are given "hidden mana" - that is, a deep wisdom that goes beyond words, since they will continue to care *more* about doing, but now with a deeper knowledge of what it truly means to do good. They may never speak about the ins and outs of doctrine the way the people of Ephesus do, but their wisdom is actually of a deeper kind.

And this is one of the wonderful teachings of the New Church: that *all* kinds of people are valuable. Those who emphasize doctrine can keep on being more doctrinal than others, can keep discussing the details of theology, and that is *good* - as long as they do not forget to marry that to goodness. And those who love to be *doers* do not have to stop focusing on *doing* - they only have to make sure that they are learning truth as well, that tells them *how* to do good.

The Lord calls all to His New Church. This is not a worldly organization, although our organizations try to embody it. This church exists spiritually wherever people are worshipping the Lord God Jesus Christ as the one God of heaven and earth, and living in accordance with His commandments. And it exists where people are neither in faith apart from charity, nor in charity apart from faith, but instead are living in faith *married* to charity - wisdom married to love.



WESTERN CANADA FAMILY CAMPOUT

Another reminder: our annual campout will take place this year at Camp Emile on Moberly Lake from **July 19th-21st**. Our theme this year will be **the Grand Man** - that is, the human form of heaven and

of every heavenly community. We'll have classes and discussions about the way we each perform our roles in the different communities we participate in in this world, along with fun activities for the children (and the adults!).

This year we've decided to start charging a flat fee so that people know what they can expect to pay; it will be \$30 per family unit (e.g. parents and young children) per night. We do not want anyone to not be able to attend camp because of the financial burden, and there is money set aside to help with the cost for those who need, so please don't hesitate to ask about that if you're on the fence about coming because of the cost.

NEW CHURCH DAY SERVICE

We will have our annual New Church Day festival service at Moonshine Lake in Alberta on **June 16th at 11:00 a.m. Alberta time**. Many thanks to Danelle Kilber for organizing the gifts for the children this year! **Please bring something to share for the potluck picnic afterwards** (but if you forget to bring something please do stick around and join in anyway!).

CANADIAN FAMILY CHURCH CAMP

There is a new New Church family camp taking place for the first time this year, from **July 11-14**. The camp will take place at the Hidden Valley Christian Camp, located near Paisley, Ontario on the Saugeen River; you can explore it on the web at www.hvccamp.ca. Canoeing and fishing are available and the camp is also just 20 kilometers from the beach on Lake Huron. Visit www.newchurch.ca for the registration forms, included in the most recent issue of New Church Canadian.

CHURCH CAMPS IN THE U.S.A

July 21-27 & July 28-Aug 4: Laurel Family Camp

Laurel Family Camp is a summer church camp with activities, worship, and instruction based on the Lord's Word and the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg. The focus of this camp is to draw people to-

gether and build a true sense of spiritual community. Several sessions (one week each) are held in Laurel Hill State Park, Pennsylvania, in July and August of each year. Visit www.laurelcamp.org for more information and registration forms.

July 28-31: Jacob's Creek Family Camp

Jacob's Creek Family Camp is a summer church camp held in the mountains of Western Pennsylvania. Besides daily worship, the camp includes instruction and activities revolving around the Lord's Word and the Heavenly Doctrine as revealed through Emanuel Swedenborg. The focus of this camp is to assist participants in building a strong foundation of doctrinal understanding for spiritual growth. Visit jacobscreekcamp.alotSPACE.com for more information. Or visit their Facebook page at www.facebook.com/JacobsCreekFamilyCamp



THE DAWSON CREEK CHURCH OF THE NEW JERUSALEM

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For information on services in Grande Prairie & Debolt, please contact Mrs. Lavina Scott at (780) 957-3625.

If you have news or other information for this publication, or if you have any pastoral concerns, please call the pastor, Coleman Glenn, at (250) 782-0710 or (cell) (250) 467-2313, or e-mail pastor@dawsoncreeknewchurch.ca.

CHURCH CALENDAR

JUNE 2013

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
28	29	30	30	30	30	1
2 11 a.m. Family Service 12:30 p.m. Pastor's Council	3	4	5	6	7	8
9 11 a.m. Holy Supper Service	10	11	12	13	14	15
16 11 a.m. (ALBERTA TIME) New Church Day Service at Moonshine Lake	17	18	19 <i>NEW CHURCH DAY</i>	20	21	22
23 11 a.m. Traditional Service	24	25	26	27	28	29
30 11 a.m. Traditional Service 4:30 p.m. Holy Supper Service (DeBolt)	1	2	3	4	5	6

Note: All events take place at the Dawson Creek Church of the New Jerusalem unless noted otherwise