

A Testimony to Theistic Science - From the Classroom

Maxwell Blair¹

This article is based on my ten years teaching physics at Bryn Athyn College again of the New Church.

I conclude that doctrinally inspired college textbooks in physics (and all sciences) is critical to Bryn Athyn College of the New Church (BACNC) science education as envisioned by the Academy Movement. BACNC is a unique institution dedicated to knowledge and practices that bring spiritual reality closer and above sensual life. In my life. In every life. The Theistic Science Group (TSG) opens that path for me. The following offers insight on how that path opened. Do read this article as a well-founded testimony of how I came to this conclusion.

The TSG meets weekly. This doctrinally-inspired science group identifies spiritual necessities where science clearly drops off. The participants are on the wise side of life having read much and lived much. I learn with the various threads of conversation. I write notes wishing or hoping all this confidence could be captured in New Church inspired science textbooks. The following are captured from such notes and might be a support to like-minded science educators.

The members of the TSG articulate a devotion to the Lord, the spiritual world and life in every soul. Even mine. This in terms ABOVE the powerful forces of hard-science. The hard science that promises life in a test tube AND thought in a computer - as if hard science alone were sustainable answers for the human race. However, hard science together with an affirmative spirit opens the mind to unexpected truth.

. . . people who have an affirmative frame of mind, that is, who are ruled through and through by an affirmative attitude, turn away small difficulties which are based on the illusions of the senses and go against truths; and any things they cannot grasp they cast aside, saying that they do not yet understand them, and in so doing hold fast to their belief in the truth. But the spirits mentioned above paid little attention to what they were told because of their negative frame of mind. [AC 6479]^[1]

Internally, in weekly Theistic Science zoom sessions, I am allowed to think and maybe say what I fear is not obvious to the speakers themselves. An easy example: When a scholar describes a spiritual origin, naturally I speak up with a question. I am learning alternative ways to engage. Years ago, I might have burst out with: “Are you serious? Conatus? Endeavor? Life on Planets?”. On the other hand, with affirmative doubts, I am open to testing:

- “Can I really believe what the New Church teaches?”
- “Am I ready to see that from a spiritual reality?”

¹ Maxwell Blair, PhD. graduated ANC Boys School, 1971, Virginia Tech with BS, 1979, MS 1981, Purdue University with PhD, 1989. In 2012, he retired from Federal Service as Aerospace Research Engineer at the Air Force Research Laboratory at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, OH. He served as adjunct professor at Bryn Athyn College in teaching Introductory Physics and Mathematics from 2012-2022.

With eyes and heart wide open, the answer is “YES! In a Burning Bush!”, the theme of the 2025 SSA/TSG Symposium. I continue to find the space to pose affirmative doubts that lead to genuine confidence in the Lord’s Kingdom.

The following article develops in four parts that reflect personal growth beyond the secular textbook:

1. I offer a personal testimony in light of my experience as a textbook instructor and my aspiration to serve genuinely higher education as depicted by Laban and Jacob parting.
2. I present a video from the first day of a New Church Physics course. This video is distilled into a diagram without and then with a sense of spiritual reality.
3. Beyond the physics course, actual physics is integral to what the Writings reveal as spiritual kingdoms in every mind. The diagram is annotated accordingly. This hierarchy of particle systems is sensible to spiritual observation starting from the finest things of nature at the nexus [CL 416]^[2].
4. This mindful diagram serves as a simple map to navigate something complex like a relationship.

And these four parts form a pattern for New Church educators to develop physics and other science courses. This pattern, starting from scripture and leading into traditional textbook content results in spiritually relevant and revealing content.

The outward effort to compose real educational content affects me inwardly. And, thus, in this article, I often change person to “me” in the spirit of testimony. You will see some hint of a LogoPraxis^[3] technique with the “in-me” tool to rephrase the Word and make a transition from historical context to a call for personal spiritual growth “in us”.

PART 01: A Testimony from the Word

True to the doctrine of spiritual causation, it makes sense to start every class lesson with a spiritual workout from the Word. In this case, a testimony. Testimony follows one’s calling. This is true throughout the Word. For instance, the symposium theme, the burning bush is a calling to be instructed. Exodus is a testimony - to spiritual regeneration and the path to heaven.

Likewise, this article is my testimony in reply to a calling.

The parting of Jacob and Laban (Genesis 31), as depicted in Figure(1) takes on relevance as a testimony or witness to the ordering of the Divine Natural (Jacob) and external-good (Laban). In the Word. In me. [AC 3727:2, 4189, 4202-4208]^[1]

Together, upon Jacob’s calling, his extended family laid a ‘heap of stones’. This heap is an altar. It serves as a foundation for the Word. It conveys a sense of solidity and simplicity. Like the burning bush, this simple heap invites contemplation. Simply stated in Matthew: “On this rock I will build My church . . .” [Matthew 16:18] Jacob and Laban are of one mind - my mind. The point being, I see myself as both Jacob and Laban:

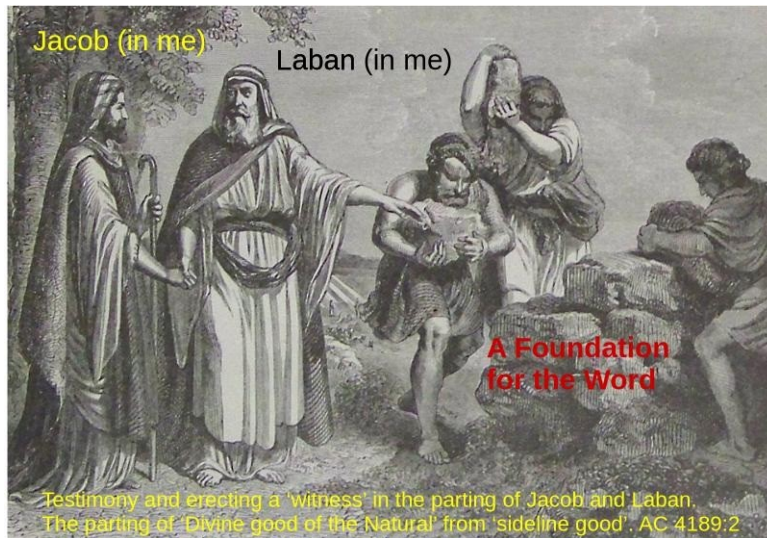


Figure 1: Jacob and Laban Parting

- Laban, in the Physics classroom, thinks that being kind means worldly-based instruction from the textbook - because that is how a secular world works - and the students are paying for such. Laban, as instructor, is focused on delivering facts and knowledge. Laban, as educator, is reading the students as best one can. And there is testing and grading. All this (in my-Laban) is my natural self unable to see beyond and for a spirited student. “The Lord is received as a guest”.
- Jacob - as depicted here - represents a higher me - the educator putting spiritual reality above physical actuality. Genuine faith of course is given from heaven; for every student to know as represented by Jacob. The acknowledgment is fundamental to the Jacob in me. This altar stood as a witness to the Lord. ““Let Jehovah watch between me and you’ means the presence of the Lord’s Divine Natural” [AC 4194]^[1] - even in a Physics Lab.

I was surprised to discover so much developmental content in this relationship between Jacob and Laban. It’s even about education in the appearance of physics.

PART 02: What is: Magnified

I taught “Introductory Physics” at Bryn Athyn College from 2012-2022. This, following a career as a research engineer in aerospace design. Surviving the panic of designing a new course in 2012, I quickly became an effective secular instructor for the students who signed up. I felt helpless to be anyone but Laban. By the time I retired in 2022, I asked myself some hard questions about being of genuine service to the students in the classroom. But, I was in no way capable of pulling together an entirely different course. And what kind of course? Letting go in 2022 was the best thing that could have happened.

Secular science textbooks are typically a collaborative effort involving a small army of expert science educators. They are very good at what they do. Yet, every year, I was aware that I was NOT opening many doors for spiritual awareness. The secular physics textbook is entirely geared to frame physics in terms of mathematics and solving mathematical word problems. And such mathematical development is very useful in the mind of STEM researchers.

In the collage of Figure (2), I have collected snapshots from a Physics Lab in our Doering Atrium. Here, we see a pendulum fashioned with a bowling ball. This 3-story conical pendulum orbits very slowly with a period of 6 seconds - perhaps giving the sense of planetary motion. Or perhaps a sense of our cycles of spiritual state.

As a lab experience, this pendulum works well for a group exercise with students with various skills and interests. And I vaguely hoped to recreate this very same setup as a hands-on New Church Physics experience. BUT the physical truth is: developing a genuine dual-reality physics course is time-consuming and mentally challenging.

Teaching physics prepared me. It gave me a thirst for something deeper - something of innocence.

In my “retired life”, after every TSG discussion, a small quiet voice lingers. I, the amateur educator, wonder about developing course modules introduced by a world without space and time.

Back to Laban. On the first day of my secular physics course, the goal was to remind students about scientific notation and provide the end-in-view for a physics course. “Cosmic Eye”^[4] is a video that is something of a spinoff of the 1982 book Powers of Ten^[5] by Phylis Morrison and Philip Morrison. This is a fun video to watch. It is freely available on the internet. So it makes sense to take a few minutes to watch this video “Cosmic Eye” on the first day of class. It starts with a birds-eye view of a student relaxed in their back yard and then zooms out to the largest physical concepts of the universe and then back to the familiar birds eye view. Then the video zooms INTO the eye and into the finest things of nature stopping at the scale of subatomic quarks and then back to the familiar birds eye view of the back yard. There is actual

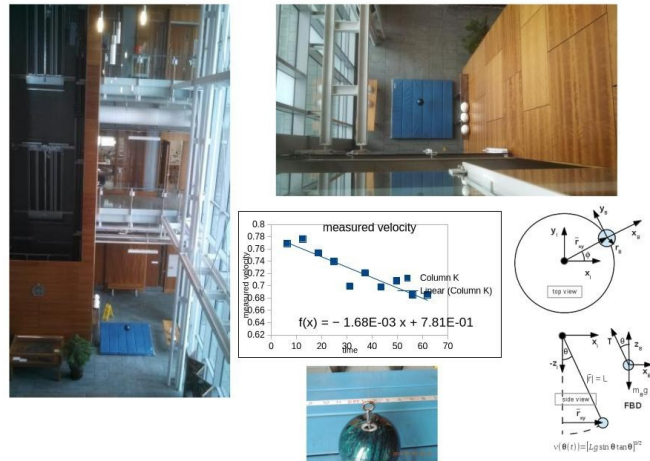


Figure 2: A Classical Physics Lab Experiment: The Pendulum

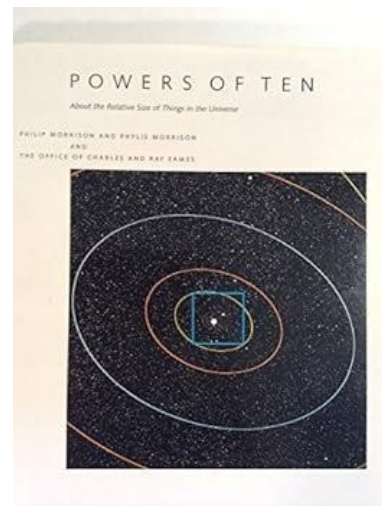


Figure 3: Powers of Ten

usefulness in seeing scientific notation measuring physical space in both the expanse and the minute (extremely small). If possible, you should watch this video at this point.

What do you think? I think: any student would see a very material universe and I FEAR a complete disconnect with Creation concepts from religion class. There is nothing physically wrong with the video. It is good with what it does. And Laban from Genesis, if he is wanting a hard science education, would be totally on board.

On the other hand, as the instructor, the Jacob in me is wondering if I am presenting a god of the material and ignoring some god of the spiritual. I am not sure if I am representing God at all!

- What is a physics educator and a New Church believer to teach?
- How much secular science can I teach before I lose hope in spiritual capacity?

Having passed through these questioning times, and with time to compose my thinking theistically, let's start with this: Fundamentally, the New Church is clear about the distinction and correspondence of the material and spiritual worlds. Likewise, the distinction and correspondence within every natural and spiritual mind.

With doctrine leading the way, we can enlighten our natural mind. We are invited to relax "space" in the physical world - to submit to "state" (state of mind) in the spiritual world - with the appearance of space. The Lord invites each of us to bring state and space together toward useful service. How might all that usefully appear in a physics class - in a physics class in the spiritual world even? Hold on!

To begin, Figure (4) captures seven representative snapshots from the second half of the "Cosmic Eye" video we just watched. (The first half zooms out to the cosmos and back.) And these are in a sequence of diminishing scale from coarse to the finest scale - at which point hard physics has reached its experimental limit - the quark. So, every physicist should wonder (and many do wonder): what lies under this finest scale?

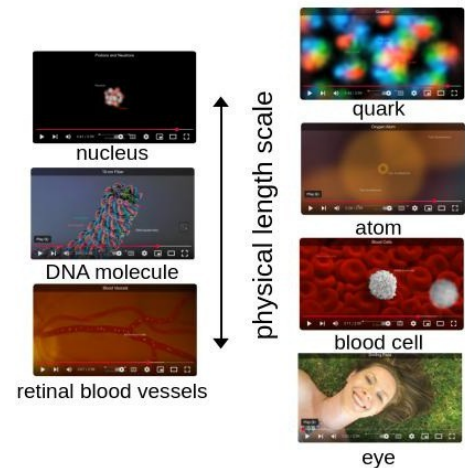


Figure 4: Seven Snapshots taken from Cosmic Eye Video

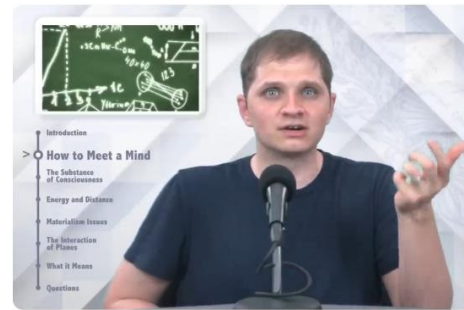
Before responding, here is a short account of how Ian Thompson (a New Church quantum physicist) appeared in my life as a physics instructor and how I was with him as a fellow presenter at the 2025 SSA/TSG Symposium!

At Bryn Athyn College, it was "beyond the pale" to drag most Biology students through a thousand pages of textbook in two terms (20 weeks). Introductory physics textbooks afford students a chance to apply mathematical skills, thus build confidence in such at the college level AND to NOT frighten the same students with the complexity of atomic and quantum physics.

In contrast, this engineering instructor (me) was actually drawn to the back half of the textbook. This back half is where modern physics picks up with space-time relativity and the spooky world

of quantum physics. In 2017, there were four exceptional students who were game to follow with me. And I believe it was a successful endeavor. I felt like a real physics teacher.

About this time, I became remotely aware of Ian Thompson’s existence. It turns out Curtis Childs interviewed Prof Thompson in 2015 as part of the “Off The Left Eye” channel on YouTube [OTLE]^[6]. His books were definitely a curiosity AND a challenge for my engineering brain. This quantum physicist wrote, *Starting Science from God*^[7], a book without equations and formulas. In contrast, my engineering mind questioned my role as a physics instructor in a New Church college. I was almost fearful to meet him. I need not have worried.



Spiritual Physics - Swedenborg and Life

Figure 5: Snapshot from Off the Left Eye Channel

Fast forward to 2022 when I got a long-term chance with the Theistic Science Group to learn about the author behind the book. But it was not until this symposium started to take shape in 2025 that I considered searching “Off The Left Eye” for Ian Thompson. I was very surprised and pleased to find this 2015 interview in early 2025. And I was eager to listen - with much appreciation to Curtis Childs’ skill as a host. And so glad I took this step.

Just a few months earlier, it felt a bit odd that I (a retired physics instructor) would ask the physics members of the TSG about this interview and whether they really saw the quantum world as a physical door into the spiritual world. After a pause, the answer: “What else could it be?”.

I was quick to search the Writings. And pre-theological works. They strike deep! Then, I remembered the “Cosmic Eye” video and roughly recreated it in the form of this diagram that zooms in with a series of snapshots. A word of explanation: this gray triangle is actually something of a two dimensional graph with x and y axes.

The vertical axis is a measure of scale (field of view) during the zoom process. This scale spans from a single material (quantum?) particle down to a body of particles. By the way, when viewing the “Cosmic Eye” video, do you get a sense of motion when zooming into a fixed point? And now realize: both my eye and the object remain motionless. This is important: Nothing moves in the video or this diagram!

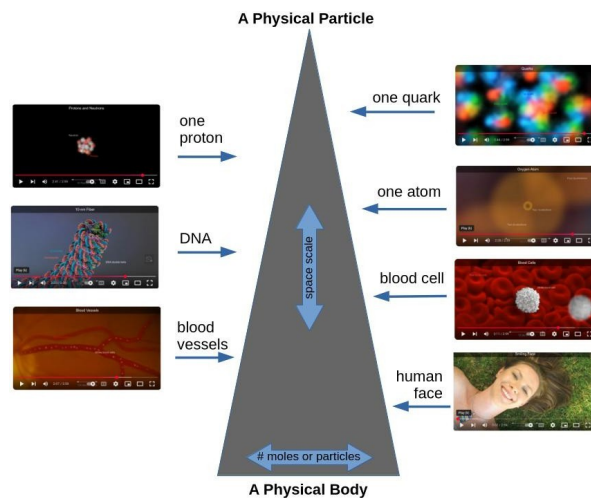


Figure 6: Zooming in to Particle Systems

The horizontal axis is the number of particles contained in the field of view.

And here I am – with diagram in hand, keenly aware of my sense of a material world with physical laws that do not really depend on or care about whatever I understood from the heavenly doctrines. Mercifully, the Writings reassure me that the Lord patiently allows my natural mind to rest easy with that material thought . . . until temptations arise. Please hold that thought.

Hard physics says sub-atomic quarks are the smallest particle - but without size or diameter. If so, that is one step toward letting go of space-based reality.

Could I construct a similar diagram with a spiritual scale - following what the New Church teaches about this world - a world without space and time - a world which has no measuring sticks or wall clocks - at least not for the purpose of tracking space and time?

So, Figure (7) is such a diagram in a simple form. The vertical scale is recalibrated as “spiritual space” or state. The horizontal scale is a number of “spiritual particulars” or truths. Passages from the Writings help dignify my doctrinal imagination. For instance:

Furthermore the good of charity also receives its particular quality from the quantity of the truths of faith, and in addition from the connection of one truth to another. This is how spiritual good is formed with a person . . . A clear distinction should be drawn between spiritual good and natural good. Spiritual good, as has been stated, derives its particular quality from the truths of faith, the quantity of them, and their connection with one another . . . [AC 7760-7761]^[1]

So the top of the triangle is a quantity or body of goods & truths. The bottom of the triangle is a single truth. Not that I have any idea what a single “particle” of truth is about. Do you wonder what the Writings have to say about a single particle?

And I was a bit challenged on how to introduce discrete degrees without drawing horizontal lines that distinguish higher and lower worlds. Without much research, I decided that discrete degrees would work horizontally (across color bands). The vertical axis is a scale of state. Thus influx (from the Divine) flows left and right in this diagram. I am challenged what to make of the relationship between large scale at the top and small scale at the bottom. So I am simply labeling such as “continuous degrees of thoughts and affections”. But I am not yet sure I want to defend that without understanding what that might mean. But, so far so good.

So, given the two graphs, I brought them together as any New Church explorer might do: Bring the natural and spiritual into close proximity. And Figure (8) is the result. Of course this is just a diagram. But, diagrams usefully encapsulate material physics and maybe some doctrinal concepts.

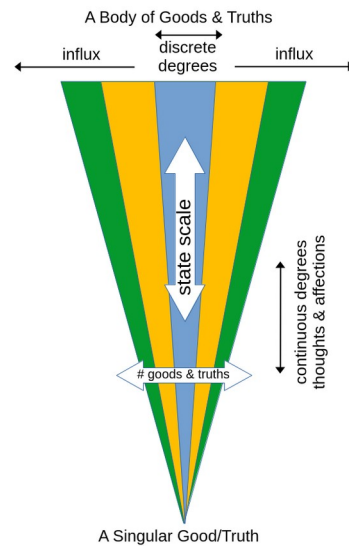


Figure 7: Zooming Out to Good and Truth Systems

I did add vertical arrows to invite thoughts of “spiritual causation” and “natural feedback”. Still, it is hard to see a functioning spiritual/natural connection in this diagram. Just arrows so I don’t forget to follow-up.

Also, it is necessary to acknowledge an “observer”. This presents a multiple-choice question: who is the observer of this diagram: (a) me in me (b) my friend/enemy in me (c) good/bad spirit (d) the Word (e) the Lord (f) all the above?

Imagine a mindful student observing this diagram. I ask: does this diagram help anyone to navigate unknown territory? Because, as an educator, I need diagrams that navigate minds.

Each triangle captures an in/out zoom experience. Does one zoom lead into the other - from natural to spiritual and out? Do you think this diagram depicts the relationship between the natural and spiritual worlds? Corresponding worlds for the doctrinally informed?

Personally, I feel VERY uneasy. This diagram depicts an alarming disconnect. A disconnect between my spiritual mind and my physical mind.

Prognosis: that uneasy feeling was the result of meditating on the Word and the Heavenly Doctrines. And the same mind studies hard physics! I am depicting two separate realities! Think: why does it matter - to ME – really?

I carry both true and false beliefs in my life.

Figure (8) is screaming a **false belief**: “There is no spiritual influx in physical matter”.

In contrast is a **true belief**: Physical matter has existence from spiritual causation. From: [DLW 340]^[8]: “. . . there is a continual influx from the spiritual world into the natural world. ”

In the classroom, read [DLW 340] with an affirmative spirit and ask: How might you usefully diagram a true belief in terms of the two realities with end-cause-effect in play?

The Burning Bush in me saw the crisis. I bravely colored in the black physical scale with an overlay of spiritual content with stripes of discrete degrees as seen in Figure (9).

Again, there is no physical displacement or motion represented in this diagram. This is all about scales both physically measurable on the bottom and spiritually fundamental on the top.

So, looking at my body, I can mentally zoom in without moving and develop a sense of intimate spiritual proximity - down to the finest things of nature - and in to the finest things of spirituality.

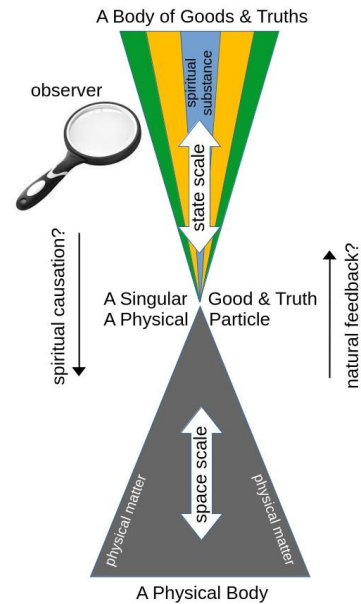


Figure 8: Zooming Past Both Systems of Particulars

For the New Church physics educator in me, I still depend on the laws and math formulas from classical physics. But, now I observe my reaction as I color these as physical effects that arise from spiritual causation. I sense both self alarm (attack from hell?) and tenderness (standing for genuine truth?). The other observers in the physics classroom are now invited to share some thought as to “why am I here”. This in terms of a spiritual observer in a physical body. They will be glad you asked. This invites a very different sphere than the material and purely mathematical fixation which might be intimidating for students who are struggling to be present. But do expect to be challenged from within and from students. Listen charitably!

The nexus as annotated between the physical and spiritual triangles is described in Ian Thompson’s book^[7] in terms of potentialities, dispositions or propensities and physical selection.

His book is methodical in its presentation. It starts with basic philosophical principles from which logical conclusions (or possibilities where quantum effects enter) follow. The target audience is the community of scientists at large. That is one way to read the book. As a New Church believer, a reader may be looking for doctrinal agreement or expansion. And as an engineer (and not at all trained in modern physics), one can be fascinated to think along with the author. Section 4.2 introduces the nature of dispositions (or propensities) which are integrated in a quantum world that is wide open for interpretation. Throughout, we are invited to consider mechanisms of spiritual causation (as continuous Creation) from the Divine and corresponding feedback. To be candid, I am still absorbing this book.

Quantum feedback invites the possibility of physical consequences and human choices - something that produces spiritual effects. Spiritual causation arrives from within - top to bottom on this diagram of physical and spiritual scale. The Lord is always accommodating the path to our heavenly potential.

The nexus, labeled in the diagram, at the “point” between the natural and the spiritual might give the impression that the spiritual world is totally fixated on supporting our physical world point-by-point. From [DLW 229]^[8], we are to understand: that at the finest material “particle” there are yet myriad spiritual constituents in play. I can imagine that this diagram supports this possibility. Yet, paradoxically, the entirety of the spiritual triangle is seen to feed to one point.

Some people maintain that there is a substance so simple as not to be a form composed of lesser forms, and that through conglomerations there arise from that substance secondary or composite substances, and finally the substances called material substances. But in fact such

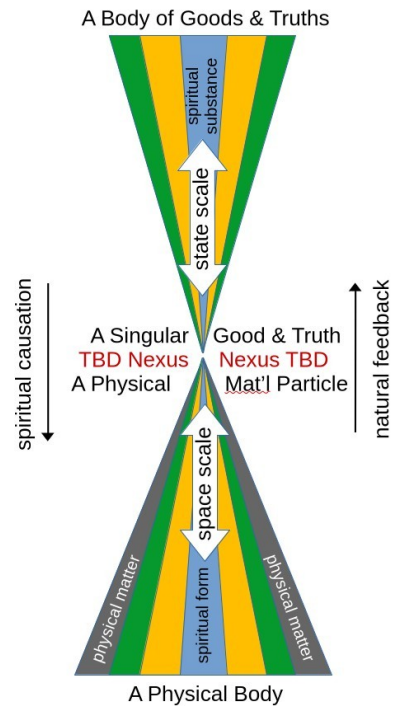


Figure 9: Zooming Spiritually Caused Systems of Particulars

simplest substances do not exist. For what is a substance without form? It is something of which nothing can be predicated, and from something of which nothing can be predicated, nothing can be composed through conglomerations of it. The fact is that the very first created substances, which are the least and simplest substances, have in them constituents beyond number, as we will see in subsequent discussions where we take up forms. [DLW 229]^[8]

But there are other possibilities in terms of parallel universes. In the secular world, we read of a multiverse and string theory. What are other theaters of possibilities? The Writings reveal imagery based on actual and useful and thus humanly meaningful experiences.

. . . Now because every single thing remains in being from the Divine, that is, is constantly coming into being from Him, and every single thing from that source is inevitably a representative of the real thing by means of which it has come into being, the whole visible universe is therefore nothing else than a theater that is representative of the Lord's kingdom. And this in turn is a theater representative of the Lord Himself. [AC 3483]^[1]

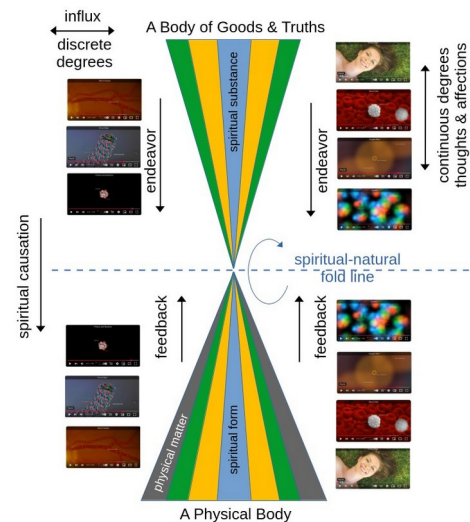


Figure (10) captures the snapshots from “Cosmic Eye” on the physical scale and repeats the same on the spiritual scale. We see that the spiritual imagery does not appear different than the familiar imagery of physical life.

Figure 10: Zooming Corresponding Systems of Particulars

Do keep in mind: The vertical scale is a zoom (in and out) action relative to a particular point. To ANY point! Any point is a nexus between physical and spiritual. Every point! Thus, every point seen in the physical body at the bottom has its nexus with the corresponding spiritual body depicted at the top. ZOOM IN - ZOOM OUT.

Correspondences are the mechanism for a natural mind to understand and be one with its spiritual counterpart. Thus, the physical image on the bottom mirrors the spiritual image on the top. The heavenly doctrines use our natural familiarity to paint heavenly imagery. And from such imagery, we develop spiritual substance in our life experiences. Rationally understood substance. This is a spiritual invitation offered by New Church doctrines. And I am clear that it takes effort to accept. The effort to develop our mind with love and wisdom eternally.

And, now the diagram is starting to look like something my TSG mentors were revealing: The quantum is a portal to something both familiar and spiritual in me. Sometimes, I wonder if I am more awake to the spiritual world than my sensual mind can possibly perceive.

The black triangle is still there for the sensual experience of the physical world. You can see it hiding behind the colored bands. The close proximity of spiritual reality (color bands) is preserved within every bit of every particle at every scale.

This diagram conveys a merciful New Church understanding of physical/spiritual duality. Something we can discuss.

And again, this is just a diagram of a theater stage within me.

- Does it help my doctrinal understanding?
- Does it provide a path for spiritual being?

PART 03: The Corresponding Kingdoms of the Natural and Spiritual Worlds

All earthly things are differentiated into three classes that we call "kingdoms," namely the animal kingdom, the vegetable kingdom, and the mineral kingdom. Members of the animal kingdom are correspondences on the first level because they are alive. Members of the vegetable kingdom are correspondences on the second level because they merely grow. Members of the mineral kingdom are correspondences on the third level because they neither live nor grow . . . [HH 104]^[9]

We should look to the spiritual world for images of order that can be reflected in our natural conscious mind:

Kingdoms in the doctrines reflect our sense of order - something associated with heavenly government. Over a lifetime, we come to see spiritual order as the basis for natural order in terms of kingdoms and heavenly government. With spiritual causation in mind, [HH 104]^[9] (above) provides a spiritually meaningful classification of the natural world. Of course, these are the mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms - two each in correspondence in the spiritual and natural worlds. In Figure (11), each succeeding kingdom zooms out to a higher manifold of particulars.

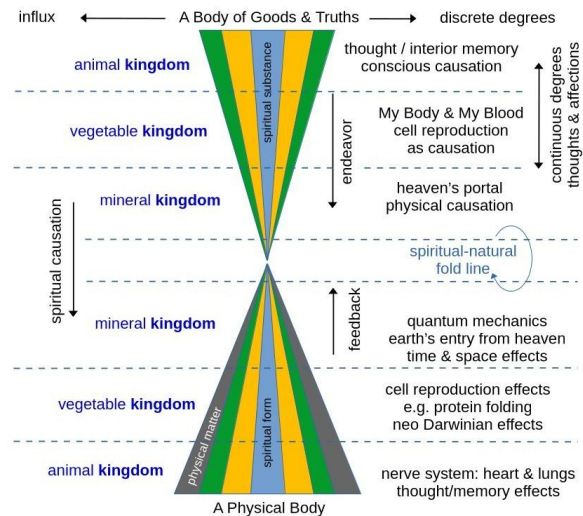


Figure 11: Zooming Corresponding Kingdoms

Observe the two Mineral Kingdoms: (on scale with gems and DNA and quantum physics):

- on top: kingdoms as spiritual **causation**
 - Thus enters endeavor as physical causation at the finest spiritual scale
- on bottom: kingdoms as physical **effects**
 - Enter atomic and quantum laws at the finest physical scale
 - Space and time effects correspond with state and transitions from above [DLW 73]^[8].
- as seen through quantum science in Ian Thompson's book Starting Science from God^[7]

Observe the two Vegetable Kingdoms (on scale with biological cells):

- on top: kingdoms as spiritual **causation**
 - Enter spiritual life systems - visualized as biological cells in reproduction as to cause
- on bottom: kingdoms as physical **effects**
 - Enter physical cell reproduction - contrast: life in a womb and life in a test tube
 - protein folding (where extreme physical complexity begs for spiritual direction)
 - Smith^[10] presented on protein folding at the 2019 Theistic Science Symposium
 - Enter physical evolution and compare:
 - Neo-Darwinian Evolution
 - Intelligent Design fits here – but is blind to causation described in the Writings.
 - Intelligent Default^[11] points to spiritual causation in macro-evolution.

Observe the two Animal Kingdoms (on scale with a central nervous system):

- on the top we have : Spiritual **causation**
 - (animals) receive (natural) **afflux** and (spiritual) influx with soul receptor [AC 3646]^[1]
 - (humans) have free will and rationality as substance and form of spiritual regeneration
- on the bottom we have: Physical **effects**
 - Enter sensory, nervous, motor systems
 - Enter physical thought and external memory effects (see below)
 - Enter sacrificial offerings in the Old Testament (see Conclusion)

The spiritual and natural worlds are ordered as something outside of the mind. The soul is a level above the mind that actually belongs to and is tightly protected by the Lord. The mind is where we are conscious. The mind resides “below” the soul.

In the above diagram, the animal kingdom is descriptive of any creature with a brain and its nervous system. On the highest level, a brain is guided by a human mind with rational freedom.

There is much to understand where the souls of humans are a higher level than that of the “animals”.

So far as influx and correspondences are concerned, it is similar with animals as with men. That is to say, with an animal there is an influx from the spiritual world and an afflux from the natural world which hold it together and give it life. But the actual operation of that influx and afflux varies according to the forms which animals’ souls take and consequently which their bodies take . . .

[2] For the souls of human beings exist on a higher level and in a more perfect state, and are such that they are able to look upwards, and so to heaven and the Lord. Consequently the Lord is able to join them to Himself and grant them eternal life. . . .

[3] The reason why most people do not know how to distinguish their own life from that of beasts is that the two are externally alike . . . [AC 3646]^[1]

Understanding the mind is to see this in terms of spiritual capacity. Given human capacity, we have been given agency that is self-conscious in terms of love and wisdom. And heaven is our collective agency from the Lord to be discovered.

A kingdom (see above) implies order and the government thereof for the sake of collective freedom in life. The freedom to discover relationships and endeavors. In heaven, the freedom to rise above ourselves. On earth, order is a hot topic in every discussion. Do I communicate order or disorder? For instance:

- These days, we are hard pressed to say what order is
- It is sad to say: my natural mind is fast to point to disorder.

Order is a concept that became paramount for the spiritual minded after the fall. And order is understood differently in every individual mind – according to freedom – as is fundamental to New Church doctrine. Genuine order and freedom begins in the Lord. [AC 6472]^[1]

The truth that the Lord governs what is last and lowest in a person just as much as what comes first may be recognized from the consideration that order begins in the Lord and proceeds in consecutive stages from what comes first to what is last and lowest. Genuine order has nothing else than what is Divine within it, which being so, the Lord is inevitably present in what is last and lowest just as much as in what comes first; for one follows the other in an orderly sequence. [AC 6473]^[1]

The Lord's influx is described as both a stream as well as a myriad of pointed details. This could invite discussion on wave-particle duality in thought.

Influx as a flow or stream of thought:

An experience which lasted for an hour showed me how all a person's thoughts are governed by the Lord. An influx took place, like the flow of a very gentle, almost in-discernible stream, whose current is invisible but nevertheless guides and drives whatever is in it. What was flowing in from the Lord was in a similar way guiding me towards conclusions in all my lines of thought, doing so gently yet forcefully. I was being led so forcefully that I could not by any means wander away into other thoughts. I was even allowed to try, but all to no avail. [AC 6474]^[1]

The Lord's Prayer as influx of details:

As often as I have recited the Lord's Prayer I have had the plain feeling of being raised towards the Lord, as though I was being hauled up. At these times my ideas were open and communication with some communities in heaven was consequently established. I have also noticed that the Lord flowed into each detail of the Prayer and so into every specific idea in

my thought gained from the meaning of the things stated in the Prayer. This influx has been indescribably varying, that is to say, it has not been the same on one occasion as on another. This also proved how boundless were the things contained in each detail of the Prayer, and that the Lord was present in each of those details. [AC 6476]^[1]

Thus, Figure (12) captures the layers of kingdoms within personal experience – in me and each of us. The magnifying glass “observers” of the previous diagrams are re-framed here as an outline of “me”. In this way, the Lord invites the reader to be **their** observer as much as I am inviting **my** self. This observer-in-me still invites the many (stand-in) observers as listed earlier.

The abstract space-state diagram with many colored bands is now positioned as a map (or navigational aid) of the dual brain-mind within “me”.

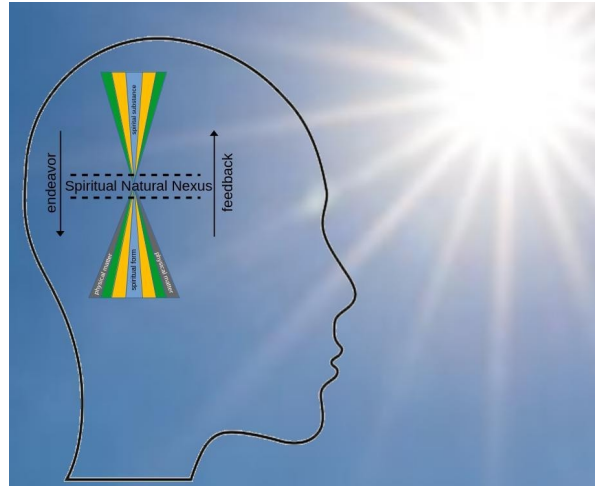


Figure 12: The Particulated Mind/Brain

This diagram inset is positioned over the brain and thus implies both the physical chemistry and corresponding spiritual causation of thought coming together at the finest things of the brain - the nexus - the quantum portal - in me.

My mind - every mind - contains REAL physics as diagrammed here and introduced earlier.

And speaking of observers, the Lord is said to appear as

- a spiritual sun always in front and above my every gaze - a head-turning thought for certain.
- a burning bush as representative of my most interior that is depicted through the Moses account.

The spiritual world endeavors effects in the natural world. And physical actions feed back real consequences. But to see this, we need and have our rational mind. Thus, in the context of that rational mind: “Theistic Science Makes the Spiritual World a Necessity”. This aphorism makes for good signage in the classroom.

The Hidden Levels of the Mind^[12] by Douglas Taylor is both insightful and to-the-point. This book serves as a prerequisite for learning how spiritual physics is conjoined to the physical mind prior to the study of physics and the physical world. And, to-the-point, this conjunction is consciously understood in the natural mind as spelled out in the following:

(5) A person’s natural mind consists of spiritual substances and at the same time of natural substances. It is owing to its spiritual substances that thought occurs, and not because of the natural substances. These latter substances are left behind when a person dies, but not the spiritual substances. Consequently, after death, when the person becomes a spirit or angel, that same mind remains, having the same form that it had in the world. [DLW 257]^[8]

Following a quick orientation on the celestial and spiritual as discrete degrees of the mind, [DLW 257]^[8] is summarized on page 6 of [Taylor]^[12]. “We need to realize also that the mind that we use while living in this natural world ‘is made up of both spiritual substances and earthly substances’ . . . ” [Taylor]^[12]. On page 12, it is clear that we are challenged to differentiate spiritual and earthly substances in our natural (thus conscious) mind. Thus, the conflict and the cause of our temptations as the natural mind struggles to allow our external conscious mind submit to our higher levels. **Before regeneration**, the struggle is synonymous with free will. **After regeneration**, the natural mind in the spiritual world is at peace following our higher mind and thus the Lord as our shepherd. After regeneration, as an angel, heaven is perceptible to the natural mind as genuine appearances. Otherwise, the natural mind is stuck in hell with fixation on self and its physical-as-spiritual illusions.

- Before death: The natural mind is conscious of the physical world.
- After death: The natural mind is conscious of the spiritual world.

A full reading of [DLW 257]^[8] is relevant to avoid taking the above summary statements out of context. It makes all the difference to realize the conscious state of the natural mind is changed once reaching the spiritual world. For example, we read in the Word, of a marriage of the Lord with His Church [SS 82]^[13]. I have to ask if I consciously understand and live in such a bond.

QUESTION: Does the Lord seek this marriage? Is this a marriage relationship? Is this a conjunction? Does this imply a marriage of the natural and spiritual minds? And in the scheme of the ONE creation (heaven and earth) does the Lord join the physical world with the spiritual world? Is this a necessary conclusion? Is this inquiry an orderly pursuit? How might science profane marriage?

THE CONSCIOUS ANSWERS depend on the state of one’s natural mind and the view toward regeneration. After all, we are all showered with the Lord’s Influx. The answer depends on how this Influx is received. Does the receiver refract influx toward heaven or hell? Does one form an image of the Lord or self?

The doctrines of the New Church are the means to introduce our unregenerate natural/rational mind to the spiritual world. Redemption is possible when the understanding receives truths that engender belief. In this way, heaven leads the will. In heaven, where charity is core, the regenerated mind produces genuine forms for the understanding to confirm and thus invoke useful outcomes – where it is needed and appreciated. A free will reconciles the physical with the spiritual and determines our spiritual home. The particulate diagram implies a rational understanding of the physical and natural.

Thus, this paper seeks words that reconcile the activity of the **mind** with respect to the operations of the **world** (beyond any one mind). And, again, the natural mind is challenged to choose order in the balance between the spiritual and natural worlds.

In chapter 2 of The Levels of Our Natural Mind, [Taylor]^[12] describes the rational mind as the highest level of the natural mind. In chapter 5 (Our Rational Mind), we draw on a level deeper from the Writings. And this level is most relevant to college level education and the study of

Physics as seen from heaven. Earlier/above, in our zoom experience, we passed through the mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms as a description of the physical world in correspondence with the spiritual world [HH 104]^[9]. These kingdoms are levels of worlds AND any one mind as contained in natural and spiritual environs.

As orderly as this appears doctrinally, it might also appear abstract to the conscious (not-yet-regenerate) natural mind. In as much as regeneration is work, ordering the natural to a spiritual life of charity is work, and ultimately, to see spiritual causation as effects in the material world requires mental effort. A spiritually guided course in physics can be a start and part of regeneration – perhaps a measure thereof. The Jacob in each of us is encouraged to believe that the physical effects of the brain are spiritually grounded until we are elevated.

. . . unless he knows in what way **the spiritual buys the natural for itself**, that is, acquires and makes it its own. When a person is being regenerated his internal and external, that is, his spiritual and natural, are at variance with each other at first; for his spiritual desires the things of heaven, whereas his natural desires those of the world. But at this time the spiritual is constantly entering the natural and bringing it into agreement. This is done by means of truth; and what the spiritual brings into agreement with itself within the natural is said to be ‘bought with silver’, that is, acquired and made its own by means of truth. [AC 7999]^[1]

Thus, “the spiritual buys the natural for itself” becomes conscious reality AFTER regeneration!

We are cautioned: The path to heaven may not be what one imagines. In the following passage, Swedenborg interacts with a dark spirit who has distorted the Lord’s heaven into something of his own creation.

I talked to him and he said that he was in his heaven when things were thus, and that no other heaven could possibly exist than that which he created for himself. But I was led to reply that his kind of heaven is turned into hell as soon as heaven as it really is flows into it. [AC 6484]^[1]

The caution is actually encouragement to read and meditate and practice the Word regularly. My natural mind is often surprised to wake up to what the Word and the Heavenly Doctrines want me to understand.

Thus, the first of the two great commandments is to “love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength”. The second of the two great commandments tells us to “love the neighbor as one’s self”. [Matthew 22:37-40] These two commandments are both necessary in heavenly life. We can see the Lord in terms of our relationships. The Lord sees our relationships. Science is all about relationships, as consciously seen by the Lord in us.

Part 04: The Lord in Every Relationship

Before heaven and hell become a commitment, we wake into the spiritual world where we are conscious of good spirits and bad spirits in tension. This spiritual world is hardly a lonely existence. To the contrary, heaven is constantly encouraging us to work together and for one another.

- Hell thrives on self-serving relationships.
- Heaven thrives on healthy relationships in forms of charity as depicted repeatedly in the Writings.

While my natural mind thinks of the “human condition” as a problem, we are invited to celebrate our “spiritual condition” as an opportunity to trust genuine relationships by trusting the Lord in every relationship. Thus, the human mind is designed for engagement – with the Lord – with others – charitably and usefully. The other spirited people in my life are my first reality check.

We find our being in a relationship. Starting with common wisdom from songwriter Joni Mitchell as recalled by Maureen Matthews – in the context of dating and marriage:

“If you want endless repetition, see a lot of different people. If you want infinite variety, stay with one.” Mitchell’s interpretation of this statement is powerfully insightful. “What happens when you date is that you run all your best moves and tell all your best stories – and in a way, that routine is a method for falling in love with yourself over and over. ”You can’t do that with a long-time mate because [s/he] knows all that old material. With a long relationship, things die, then are rekindled, and that shared process of rebirth deepens the love.” [Mitchell]^[14]

These words are enriched by teachings of the New Church as summarized by Rev David Millar:

“Connections are generated when we focus on our own states that arise in the contact with others . . . And so, when we’re operating in connection with others, the closer we can move to the Lord and become aware of what’s operating so far as our own sphere is concerned, and consciously work at acknowledging the Lord and recognizing what is opposed, that activity is what brings us closer to the neighbor in the other. Now, the neighbor-in-the-other isn’t the other person. The neighbor-in-the-other is the Lord himself. So what is of the Lord and others, that’s what brings connection. Anything else is proprium to proprium. But when we are conscious in the contact, then something can happen. And it’s not about us presuming that we know who the other is or what they’re having to deal with, we don’t. But we know our own state; we are learning how to discern what’s arising within. And as we attend to that, the miracle of connection happens. . . .” [Millar]^[15]

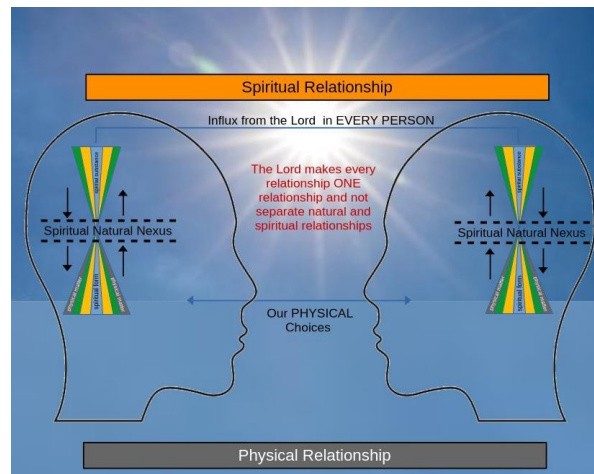


Figure 13: Two Particulated Minds

Thus, the Lord’s words: “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” [Matthew 18:20]

Figure (13) depicts a heavenly relationship with the Lord viewed in place. Each mind is mapped to receive influx from the Lord which accommodates naturally apparent uses in the physical. The

relationship is a closed loop with wise choices made in the context of the marriage of the Lord and His Church.

See: The Marriage of the Lord and the Church and Correspondence to It. [CL 116]^[2]

Since a marriage of the Lord and the church is present in each and every particular of the Word, it can be seen that each and every particular of the Word has the Lord as its subject, as we demonstrated to begin with in The Doctrine Regarding the Lord 1-7. The Word also has the church as its subject, and the church likewise embodies the Lord; for the Lord teaches that a person of the church is in Him, and He in that person (John 6:56, 14:20-21, 15:5, 7). [SS 89]^[13]

. . . Now because all those who are in hell are caught up in the connubial alliance of evil and falsity, and this is the essence of spiritual adultery, and all those who are in heaven are caught up in the marriage of good and truth, and this is the essence of marriage, therefore the whole of hell is called an adultery, and the whole of heaven a marriage. [CL 520]^[2]

The diagrams in Figure (13) reinforces the necessity of the spiritual world - certainly from a New Church Theistic Science understanding. Keeping this necessity in mind is a comfort when I am feeling relationship-challenged. And seeing such in this simple diagram is a comfort. There is comfort for my natural mind knowing there are powerful spiritual forces in play in every life. And these forces are working very close from within.

The Lord makes every relationship ONE relationship and not separate natural and spiritual relationships. Confidence in the Lord's spiritual world offers up the possibility to:

- realize actual relationships - foremost in college students willing to prepare for heaven.
- see the Lord operating in every person I meet - in a world of mixed motives.

The above diagram-within-a-diagram depicts multiple closed loops in every human relationship. When I think about our marriage, I ask to to be conscious of closed loops of awareness with the Lord as the medium of conjunction. In every relationship, the very person I am talking with may be the Lord reaching out to me. HE IS! Even through a physics course.

PART 5: Conclusion

It should be clear to anyone, that this article covers more material than can be engaged in a single class hour. Perhaps, there is material here that could be spread out over many weeks – or a lifetime of practice.

This article starts with what could be presented as an invitation to physics which by necessity invites the spiritual world in every physical particulate – in every physical body. Thus, this article reinforces philosophical physics with doctrinal knowledge. Prospective science faculty in Bryn Athyn College of the New Church will find rational confidence in heavenly teachings that can and should be transmitted to students who are open to - or eager for - the New Church in their life.

The above development introduces the study of physics with a zoom into the finest things of nature and a nexus into the spiritual world as reported in the Heavenly Doctrines. As made clear in these works, it is possible for the natural mind to absorb the miraculous-yet-familiar imagery of the spiritual world and to read these inspiring words - words that offer a path that sees into the spiritual substance behind this imagery. And believe the substance of the spiritual world that awaits each of us when our natural body passes.

But, none of us in this natural world with natural minds is conscious of the spiritual world. How are these teachings to be received by college-age students? After all, there is no way to control such reception. At best, a seasoned New Church educator will:

- wisely shepherd the flock with effective stories from the Word,
- inspire and initiate group discussion,
- present applications on many levels of the rational mind – the rational minds in the physics lab.
- introduce laboratory explorations and measurements.
- strongly encourage every student engage with hands and mind.
- look for and reinforce the good and genuine truth in student submissions while taking individual strengths and challenges into account.
- demonstrate genuine charity

The spiritual sense of physics enters the natural mind as good fables and thus is an opportunity for the educator to become a good story teller. But, as for genuine education that invites influx from the Lord, we have to be honest. Right from the opening of the Word, we have been banished from the Garden of Eden. At least, the natural mind is quick to see punishment – as the world will be sure to reinforce. But with teachings of the New Church, the rational and loving mind is amazed to learn that the Garden of Eden, our most interior mind, is always protected by the Lord and His highest angels (with flaming swords). Thus, the question remains for each of us: How is it possible to be restored to heaven, our Garden of Eden perhaps?

One answer comes from [AC 302]^[1]: “. . . Getting rid of unholy things such as are joined on to those that are holy is not possible without hellish torment . . .”. In other words, there are spiritual laws that must not be violated. In fact, these are laws to be learned and followed before we can wake up to our heavenly path and home. Perhaps, the study of physics (as traditionally taught as secular requirement) is a torment. For the physics educator, the removal of torment is paramount before students will wake up to the beauty of physical order. Mathematical prerequisites come to mind as part of this process. But before that, the educator invites spiritual order with accuracy, precision, patience and charity of mind.

With unholy things removed – from our natural mind – we will see past Eden’s “flame of a sword which turned every way” and its meaning “self-love together with its insane desires and derivative persuasions, which are such that he does indeed wish to enter in but is in fact led away from there towards bodily and earthly interests.” [AC 306]^[1]

The study of physics might be compared to the various offerings as sacrifices elaborated in the Books of Moses. “Sacrifices were not commanded, only permitted” [AC 10042]^[1]. Likewise, physics is very procedural and not commanded.

NOT attributing such procedure to the Lord and our inmost being is spiritually deadly. The inmost of every student must be acknowledged. From [AC 4581]^[1] : “[7] But when people fell away from the genuine representative kind of worship of the Lord and turned to other gods and poured out drink-offerings to these, ‘drink-offerings’ came to mean things that were the reverse of charity and faith, namely the evils and falsities that go with the love of the world . . . ”. Thus, these thoughts on physics and science education return to the opening testimony of this article, as seen in the parting of Jacob and Laban.

Educators cannot control how students receive direction. In the same breath, it is depressing to think of depriving students an invitation to their spiritual capacity. Education is never over and done. College is simply an introduction to learning. The spiritually motivated educator has an obligation to emphasize the power of rational observation. Students can and should reframe failure as success when seen in light of revealed truth. And see our competitive physical world in such light. I can pray to be such an educator.

In the following, I invite a discussion on: “Taking Small Steps Toward a New Church Physical Science Major” that emphasizes philosophy and theology - but also includes advanced electives in mathematical aspects.

This is happening now with Rev. Andy Heilman’s course on New Church Physics at Kempton New Church School. Many insights and practical advice are found in his article [Heilman]^[16]. Every class/module starts with a doctrinal concept that leads into spiritual causation of the physical. These class lessons can be developed somewhat independently by various authors in collaborative discussion. My observation and experience makes the delight of this clear.

Lesson plans do not have to start from scratch. Very much can be adapted from the secular textbook with emphasis on mathematical application. These mathematical aspects are still relevant. But in New Church Physics, there is a real story to tell in every useful application.

True to the early pioneers [Academy 1878]^[17] we are encouraged by the Writings to start from spiritual principles. [Heilman]^[16] restarts the development of New Church Physics with 21st century modern physics discoveries in tow. New Church students are certainly invited to bring LIFE into the study of physics. Like the levels of the mind, we students can observe our natural mind in proximity to knowledges of the spiritual mind in light of spiritual revelation. We students can understand spiritually caused LIFE and the appearance of natural LIFE effects and discuss the resulting theater.

Examples:

- students can debate the reconciliation of inertial mass and gravitational mass as spiritually caused and naturally executed.

- Does space-curvature do away with gravity? Or does spiritual-state-curvature arise as love accommodates what appears as gravity?
- Einstein's "spooky action at a distance" (i.e. quantum entanglement) is impossible in the physical world - except that it is well established experimentally.

Before faculty can be developed to teach New Church or Endeavored Physics, a textbook needs to be developed. Every New Church physics expert or novice with educational aspirations can enter the arena with development of this textbook.

Of course, the final product(s) will require an editor-in-chief(s). The textbook development starts with the editor's vision composed as the textbook preface and an outline of chapters. The preface specifies what a student might expect from a course. Chapter headings (each with a brief synopsis) invite individual contributing writers to channel their offering from Within. The TSG will be a valuable forum for sharing individual course modules.

References

- [1] Emanuel Swedenborg. "*Arcana Celestia*". London, 1756. Elliott translation.
- [2] Emanuel Swedenborg. "*Conjugial Love*". London, 1768. Rogers translation.
- [3] Danial Obreschkow. "Cosmic Eye". <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Are9dDbW24>, 2012. note: Wikipedia article: Cosmic Eye.
- [4] Phylis Morrison and Philip Morrison. "*Powers of Ten*". Scientific American Books, 1982.
- [5] Curtis Childs. "Spiritual Physics - Swedenborg and Life", 11 May 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ndTtR9qKsH0>. Off the Left Eye is a YouTube channel.
- [6] Ian J. Thompson. "*Starting Science from God - Rational Scientific Theories From Theism*". Eagle Pearl Press, 2011.
- [7] Emanuel Swedenborg. "*Divine Love and Wisdom*". London, 1763. Rogers translation.
- [8] Emanuel Swedenborg. "*Heaven and Hell*". London, 1758. Harley translation.
- [9] Stephen H. Smith. "Protein Synthesis and Fine Tuning Paradigms for the Discrete Degrees", *New Philosophy*. (January-December, 2018, Vol, CXXI, Nos 1-4).
- [10] Reuben P. Bell. "*Intelligent Default: Swedenborg's Theistic Science and the Problem of Organic Form*". Swedenborg Scientific Association, 2019.
- [11] Douglas Taylor. "*The Hidden Levels of the Mind*". Swedenborg Foundation, 2011.
- [12] Emanuel Swedenborg. "*Doctrine of the Sacred Scripture*". London, 1763. Rogers translation.

- [13] Maureen Matthews. "About Last Night: Joni Mitchell's thoughts on long-term love". <https://www.smh.com.au/lifestyle/life-and-relationships/m23aboutlastnight-20180613-h11bex.html>, 24 June 2018. The Sydney Morning Herald.
- [14] David Millar. "What Generates Connection", 2025, Logopraxis Third Round Series . <https://logopraxis.online/the-third-round/what-generates-connection-is-when-we-foucs-on-our-own-states-that-arise-in-the-contact-with-others-5-mins/13814/>.
- [15] Andrew Heilman. "An Invitation to New Church Physics: An Introduction to the Study of Physics in the Light of the Heavenly Doctrine". *New Philosophy*. (not yet published as of this paper).
- [16] "Words for the New Church", 1878. Reprinted by Swedenborg Scientific Association in 1976.
- [17] Logopraxis [<https://logopraxis.online/>]