

OF BISHOP PHILIP N. ODHNER BY MR. PRESCOTT ROGERS.

August 31st, 1982

Mr. Rogers: I would like to welcome you to the home of Bishop Philip Odhner. We are here to interview Bishop Odhner, and I would like to thank you, Bishop, for taking the time and also for showing us the hospitality of your home. The purpose of the interview is twofold. The first reason for the interview is to record you on videotape for the sake of posterity. Siri Yardumian and I have found that there are many individuals who are excited about the idea of having interviews with the leaders of the Church preserved on videotape, and there are many people who from affection for you would like to see this tape. There are many, many others who will never have the chance to meet you, but at least they will have the opportunity to see you and hear you.

The second purpose of this interview is to ask certain questions about The Lord's New Church which is Nova Hierosolyma, and I am particularly interested in three areas: first, the causes that led to the existence of The Lord's New Church; secondly, what issues distinguish and separate The Lord's New Church from other bodies and branches of the New Church; and, finally, what has been the history of the official communication between The Lord's New Church and other branches of the New Church?

So let me enter into the first question. From your knowledge and experience, what were the causes that led to the existence of The Lord's New Church?

Bishop Odhner: As I see it, the main cause was the doctrinal differences regarding the nature of the Writings or, as we call it, the Third Testament. In the beginnings of this movement it was seen that there was a great difference between the sense of the letter of the Writings and the Doctrine of the Church. The Doctrine of the Church, as it was then seen, as spoken of in the Arcana Coelestia, is to be drawn out of the Word by those of the Church, and later it was seen also that the Writings, being a revelation of the truth of the Divine Human of the Lord, had their own ultimates, and these ultimates had the same purpose as the ultimates of every other revelation, namely that they might be the means of conveying the Divine Truth to men, and also of concealing it. And that the revealing of it comes through the preparation of the mind to receive it. This led to the idea that the Writings have an internal sense in which the real Divine Truth of the Divine Human is, and that the Church must strive to come to see that sense in order that men might come to it for conjunction with the Lord.

Now, that also led to a difference of view as to the character of the good and truth that come from the Lord into the minds of men. The General Church held that that truth was human good and truth, whereas those of The Lord's New Church, which did not yet exist, of course, held that it was of Divine origin and essence. That was the second great difference, doctrinal difference, which arose from the first. They were not separate things, but the one came from the other. And as we see it, the whole end and purpose of the Church is to work to come into its internal things, and

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Bishop Odhner (continued): there lies the path for the true development of the Church and for the fulfillment of that which the Lord wills. As you know, it is taught in the Arcana Coelestia and elsewhere that the Church is external and that it is internal. The external church in general is that which sees the truth in the sense of the letter of the Word, and the internal church is the church which, by means of that truth which its members see in the sense of the letter of the Word have their minds opened to Heaven so that the light of Heaven coming down into it can show them that genuine order of the truth as revealed in the sense of the letter. That is the thing for which we are striving. Sometimes it is said, "well, why can't you and the General Church come together?" We can only come together in so far as that end is very clearly existing with both of us.

Mr. Rogers: Were there other causes? Was that the fundamental cause, or was that, in your mind, the only cause that led to the separation?

Bishop Odhner: I think that was the fundamental cause and, of course, without that there would not be any separation at all. There may have been other causes. Some say there were personal causes, but of course there are personal causes that surround any dispute, but I cannot say that these personal causes were any greater, or had any greater part in this dispute than any other, whatsoever.

Mr. Rogers: As a historian, I find it sometimes hard to know which is the cause and which is the effect. Were the personal disputes the cause of the differences that led to the decision to have a separation, or did the decision to have a separation, as it was becoming more and more clear in people's minds that the separation might take place, did that end up causing it?

Bishop Odhner: As I see it, it was the latter, yes, that as the distinctions and differences could not be resolved, the personal feelings got more and more excited and involved.

Mr. Rogers: Were there any ecclesiastical causes, that is having to do with church government either in theory or structure or, on the other hand, in terms of person? Was there any dissatisfaction with the [idea], at that time, of an episcopal office?

Bishop Odhner: No. You can see that from the fact that, of course, we also believe in an episcopal office, that we believe in an order of the priesthood, in a similar order of three degrees, and that was not a cause for the disruption of the church then. The idea that we have with regard to the government of the church is now different than that which exists in the General Church. But that arises from the fact that we believe it to be the duty of all the men of the church to work towards the state in which they can receive enlightenment and see genuine truths in the Word, and that this can be done whether they are priests or laymen. And therefore the laymen have just as much place in that function as the priest. We see the function of the priesthood to be to lead through truth to the good of life, and to be able to see new truths in the sense of the letter of the Word which can lead to a more pure interior life of man, whereas

Bishop Odhner (continued): we see it to be the function of all the men of the church to enter into the interior truths of the Word, the doctrinal things of the Word. Therefore we do not see that the Doctrine of the Church is the particular function of the priesthood.

Mr. Rogers: I believe that in the General Church we would accept the very same position, that it is the responsibility and the pleasure of every individual to go to the Word himself and draw doctrine from it, by which his life is led.

Bishop Odhner: Yes. Well, you see, we recognize the place of the laymen in what we call the International Interior Council, wherein priests and laymen sit as equals, so to speak, where the first consideration of doctrinal matters of the church takes place, and of course the General Church does not have that, and I think that they should. If they had had that, there may have been a possibility that there would not have been a split in the church.

Mr. Rogers: I think it should be recorded for those who do not know the history of The Lord's New Church that some of your leading individuals who brought into existence The Lord's New Church were laymen.

Bishop Odhner: Yes, that is right, primarily Mr. Harry Groeneveld.

Mr. Rogers: And that it was their sight that gave the vision to the movement.

Bishop Odhner: Right. That is correct.

Mr. Rogers: I am interested in the International Interior Council because I, myself, do not understand what its duties and responsibilities are.

Bishop Odhner: The duties and responsibilities of the International Interior Council are to give a first consideration to new doctrinal things that are brought up in the church, and to hear any disputes, too, about doctrinal things that are brought up in the church.

Mr. Rogers: And, in a sense, a review of doctrine?

Bishop Odhner: Yes, but then the Council's findings are not sent out by the members to the church. They are given to the priesthood, and the priesthood has charge of sending out whatever the decisions have been to the members of the church.

Mr. Rogers: There is also an international council of ministers?

Bishop Odhner: Yes, an International Council of Priests.

Mr. Rogers: It sounds as if you are saying that the Interior Council reviews doctrine, and if they as a Council, as a unit, see the light or the goodness of that doctrine, they would then communicate that to

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Mr. Rogers (continued): the International Council of Priests.

Bishop Odhner: They would make a decision as to what they would do with it.

Mr. Rogers: And the Council of Priests, is it not its responsibility to review, then; and to see whether the Interior Council was correct in its view, or not? Its purpose is to disseminate it?

Bishop Odhner: Its purpose is to decide whether to disseminate it or not.

Mr. Rogers: That's important, then.

Bishop Odhner: That's right.

Mr. Rogers: The layman's role in this Interior Council, is it one of a teaching function at all?

Bishop Odhner: It could be, but it generally is not. It is just the presentation of papers and things of that kind in the Council.

Mr. Rogers: I appreciate the fact that it is the responsibility of the priest to disseminate. I am thinking of the number in the Arcana Coelestia that refers to the dissemination of truth that is proper to the priesthood.

Bishop Odhner: Yes. And I would imagine that the General Church would have trouble with such a Council involving laymen with that number in mind. Well, certainly a layman might teach that Council if he had the illustration to do it, and if they thought he did. If they recognized it. But he would not teach directly in the church without the full appointment by the priesthood to do so.

Mr. Rogers: We have to make a careful distinction between teaching and discussing. If we strike fear into our laymen that it is only ministers who should teach the truth, they themselves will not develop doctrinally, which of course is what we want to do, have everyone do. How long have you been the Bishop? And what led to the decision to appoint you? Are you the first Bishop of The Lord's New Church?

Bishop Odhner: Yes.

Mr. Rogers: What issues led to that decision?

Bishop Odhner: Well, the history of the government of the Church, briefly, is this: the separation from the General Church took place in 1937, and before any form of government could be decided upon, the War came, the Second World War, and that cut off all communications between Holland and America, and all the other countries that were involved in the church, so that no real form of government could be set up in the church until after 1947. That is really when the first meetings were held, to consider the government of the church. And at that time there was set up a Provisional International Council of Priests which governed the church, and two laymen sat on that Council because of their prominence in the doctrinal things that were brought forward



Bishop Odhner (continued): in the church. They were Mr. Groeneveld and Mr. Anton Zelling. And that International Council of Priests governed the church from 1947 until 1956, nine years. And in 1956 it was seen that the priests themselves should have a greater part in the government of the ecclesiastical affairs of the church, not interfering with doctrinal questions but in the ecclesiastical affairs of the church.

They set up a president of the International Council of Priests, and that International Council of Priests with its president then had episcopal power together, provided they were unanimous. If they were not, they would have to consult with those other members of the Provisional International Council. This went on for some years, and then in 1965 it was seen that it would be a stronger government for the priesthood if they had a bishop. We always did believe in having an episcopal form of government.

Mr. Rogers: I am glad you mentioned that because my misunderstanding, at least what has been passed down to my generation, is that the reason you did not have a bishop is that the enlightenment required for a man to be the bishop had not been realized, until they felt that that was the case in the late 1960's.

Bishop Odhner: Let me put it this way, that in 1947, when our ideas were put forward, it was felt that a bishop should have an ability to have a pretty universal sight as to all the functions of the line of the men and that doctrinal line and of the priestly line as well. And I think at that time we had an idea that was too high for that function, and when I was made a bishop, it was not done with the idea that I had fulfilled what was originally foreseen in 1947. It was not done with that idea, but it was simply done from the fact that they felt that I had things with me that were capable of developing in regard to the work of a bishop.

Mr. Rogers: That was a mistake on your part.

Bishop Odhner: That's right.

Mr. Rogers: I get my learning from these interviews. When were the two Councils formed, the International Council of Priests and the International Interior Council?

Bishop Odhner: That was in 1956, when I was made President.

Mr. Rogers: Does the International Council include all priests? Is there a standing number [of members]?

Bishop Odhner: No.

Mr. Rogers: Is that an episcopal appointment?

Bishop Odhner: It is by episcopal nomination, but it is by the election by the Council of Priests.

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Mr. Rogers: And what are the functions of the International Council of Priests?

Bishop Odhner: Well, we feel that if ministers have come to have a fairly good, independent grasp of the Doctrine of the Church, and also if they are able to see things in the sense of the letter of the Word which can lead the people in a more interior plane of life, that then they should be on that International Council of Priests.

Mr. Rogers: So there is doctrinal light as well as priestly light?

Bishop Odhner: That's right, both priestly and doctrinal light.

Mr. Rogers: I am interested in the distinction between terms. What is the difference between "priestly" and "doctrinal"?

Bishop Odhner: We understand the priestly light, particularly, to have to do with those truths that immediately lead to the good of life, because that is what the Word says the function of the priest is, to teach the truth and thereby lead to the good of life. It does not say that his function is to enter more interiorly into the Word, to bring forth or formulate the doctrine of the church. It doesn't say that, but that he is to lead through truth to the good of life. And we think that all the priestly enlightenment really rests in that field, and not in the other. We make a great distinction between the two.

Mr. Rogers: I understand. And is it a horizontal distinction or a vertical distinction? Is the priestly light in some way more interior, or deeper?

Bishop Odhner: No. It is just different, that's all. The priestly light is not considered deeper than the light to understand the interior things of the Word.

Mr. Rogers: The International Interior Council: I am interested in the term "interior". What, in that context as the title, does that word "interior" refer to?

Bishop Odhner: Well, it really means that it has to do with a function in the church that is interior to its external life. As we said, the Interior Council does not deal directly with the people, for example. Anything for their consideration goes to the priesthood.

Mr. Rogers: About how many people serve on this Council?

Bishop Odhner: It might be any number. Right now there are seven.

Mr. Rogers: And how does a priest or layman enter the Council?

Bishop Odhner: They have to be nominated. They can be nominated by the bishop, or they can be nominated by other members of the Council. But, of course, it would have to be after some performance on their part which demonstrated that they had a good understanding of the Word so that they could take part in the discussions and considerations.

Mr. Rogers: So the Council is responsible for its membership?

Bishop Odhner: Yes, that is right.

Mr. Rogers: As the bishop, do you serve as head or chairman of both those Councils?

Bishop Odhner: Yes, I do.

Mr. Rogers: We have talked about ecclesiastical matters and church government. I am particularly interested in the doctrinal issue of the Word because, as you mentioned earlier, it is the view of the Writings and the function of the Writings, and their very form, that and the use of the Writings, which distinguishes The Lord's New Church from the General Church and from the Conference and Convention. So, in respect to the Word, the Writings, the General Church is getting back more and more, I perceive, to wanting to call the theological works the Heavenly Doctrines, and I think they have taken the title from the work, The New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrines, whereas I know that The Lord's New Church prefers to call them the Third Testament. As a footnote, or a sidelight, I personally like all those names, because a name can help a person understand as they are introduced [to the church] what the church is. What is your reaction to the General Church referring to the Writings as the Heavenly Doctrines?

Bishop Odhner: Well, of course, we would believe that the doctrine, the Heavenly doctrine, in itself, is only seen in the spiritual or celestial light of Heaven that has to be received in the mind through regeneration, whereas that term gives the idea that already, just by reading it, from reading the sense of the letter of the Writings, you are in that light, you see, whereas we do not believe you are, from that.

Mr. Rogers: We would have a much closer association between the doctrine of the church and the letter of the Writings.

Bishop Odhner: Right.

Mr. Rogers: The Writings have a literal sense?

Bishop Odhner: Yes.

Mr. Rogers: And an internal sense?

Bishop Odhner: Yes.

Mr. Rogers: Does the internal sense, the literal sense of the Writings, differ from the literal sense of the Old Testament and/or the New Testament, or not?

Bishop Odhner: We believe it does.

Mr. Rogers: The letter itself differs. How?

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Bishop Odhner: It differs as to its origin. The Old Testament was the ultimate of that truth that proceeded from the Human Divine before the Lord came and took on the Human. The New Testament is the ultimate of such truth as was with the Lord when He was in the world making His human Divine, and the Third Testament is the ultimate of the truth of the Divine Human.

Mr. Rogers: So you also see the threefold Word in one sense?

Bishop Odhner: Yes.

Mr. Rogers: I think The Lord's New Church more clearly presents it as a process.

Bishop Odhner: Yes.

Mr. Rogers: And the three become a unity?

Bishop Odhner: Yes.

Mr. Rogers: So the literal sense of the Writings is different from the literal sense of the previous two Testaments, but at the same time they have a similar function?

Bishop Odhner: Right, the difference is internal.

Mr. Rogers: And the similarity is external?

Bishop Odhner: Yes.

Mr. Rogers: What is the process by which one can use the literal sense of the Writings and somehow see the internal sense?

Bishop Odhner: Of the Writings?

Mr. Rogers: Of the Writings. It is interesting, just the way you phrased that. Is the internal sense of the Writings then similar or dissimilar to the internal sense of the Old Testament and New Testament?

Bishop Odhner: Well, as we see it now, a man could only first come to the internal sense of the Writings. He has to come to that before he can really see the internal sense of anything else at all.

Mr. Rogers: And that's one reason why the Writings were given to the world?

Bishop Odhner: Yes, that's right. And you can only come to the internal sense of the Writings through, first of all, seeing the truths of the sense of the letter of the Writings and living according to them, and passing through the order of regeneration whereby your understanding of them can be liberated from your proprium.

Mr. Rogers: That is, in a capsule, how a person can come to the internal sense? It's a big job.

Bishop Odhner: It's a lifetime's work.

Mr. Rogers: To go back to my previous question, is the internal sense of the Writings distinguishable from the internal sense of the Old and New Testaments? You mentioned that you cannot get to the internal sense of the previous two Testaments without...

Bishop Odhner: No.

Mr. Rogers: But once you get to the internal sense of the Old Testament, is it the same as the internal sense of the Writings?

Bishop Odhner: As to what you could see in quality, it would be similar, yes. I would like to ask you a question here. As it has been expressed by some, both in the Convention and in the General Church, they saw it as the duty of the church to open up those books of the Old and New Testament that were not opened in the Writings. And yet they have not done it, neither in the Conference or the Convention, nor [in] the General Church.

Mr. Rogers: Not in the series?

Bishop Odhner: No, not in the series. But of course they have taken numbers here and there and applied the general teachings of the Third Testament to that number and brought something out of it.

Mr. Rogers: There are such things as expositional works on a limited basis.

Bishop Odhner: Right, but not in the General Church. The Expository Works were written by Conference men, Bruce and McLaughlin.

Mr. Rogers: Well, I'm thinking more of the doctrinal classes and the sermons done by individual ministers. We in the Theological School of the General Church are taught to write two types of expositional sermons. One, in which even though they do not belong to the Arcana series, the Exodus series, or the Revelation series, there are enough passages about a given text that through the expositional process one can pull what we believe to be the internal sense out of it.

Bishop Odhner: I see.

Mr. Rogers: [We would do this] in a sense by the collation of passages, which is referred to in the Sacred Scriptures.

Bishop Odhner: Yes.

Mr. Rogers: There is also the second type of sermon which is an "unexplained text" in which there are not those passages scattered within the Heavenly Doctrines that would give that kind of light which we would need to search through for the light in other ways. But that, of course, has to do with the Old and New Testaments, not with the Writings themselves.

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Bishop Odhner: Have they ever tried to see any series in that, when you have Genesis and Exodus unfolded, and what about Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, and so forth?

Mr. Rogers: Not beyond the Exodus series that I know of, except of course the very early men of the Church that you mentioned, before the various factions occurred. Let me ask the same question. Has The Lord's New Church which is Nova Hierosolyma....?

Bishop Odhner: We see it quite differently. For example, we believe that the Third Testament is in its own series, and that if you follow through, for example, what is said about the Lord's Glorification, in the Arcana Coelestia, in Genesis and Exodus, that is a complete series. It does not need all those other books, such as Leviticus and Deuteronomy, to be opened up to finish it. That's a complete series in itself. And this revelation being given from the Lord and being the truth of His Divine Human has to be in its own order, in its own series. Whether it has any connection with the Old and New Testament or not, you see, it has to be in its own series. And it is that series towards which we look, of course.

Mr. Rogers: It is true then that The Lord's New Church in its scholarly, doctrinal pursuits, has concentrated more on the Arcana Coelestia, for instance, than on any of the other works?

Bishop Odhner: Yes, very much more.

Mr. Rogers: And is that the reason?

Bishop Odhner: Well, that is certainly part of the reason, because we think that really all the meaning of those works has to be found out anyhow. Not that you cannot get a sense out of them without the Arcana series. Say you read the Divine Providence, and anyone can get a sense out of it, but to get the real meaning of such an expression as "the genuine truth", as to what it really means, I think you have to go the Arcana Coelestia to find out.

Mr. Rogers: And I believe that the Arcana Coelestia has a very important role but that, of course, all passages that refer to the genuine truth are of equal weight.

Bishop Odhner: Yes.

Mr. Rogers: And the ways in which they can be brought together, the light that comes from the collation of passages, is greater than the light of the sum of the individual parts.

Bishop Odhner: But you notice about that collation of passages, in that number, Arcana Coelestia 7233:3, that you have to have illustration from the Lord. It is that illustration that you have to be concerned about, and that can only be given through the shunning of evils and self-examination, and the other things of regeneration.

Mr. Rogers: As a personal point, I have studied Biblical criticism, and I



Mr. Rogers (continued): was going to set the church and the world right until I came to that passage and other passages, and saw what was really important for me was to become a good person.

Bishop Odhner: Right.

Mr. Rogers: It was a humbling experience. Does The Lord's New Church believe that since the Writings have a letter and a literal sense, that the expositional, or the process explained in the Sacred Scripture, can be applied to the letter of the Writings as it can be to the Old and New Testaments, that is to the Doctrine of Genuine Truths, the Doctrine of Enlightenment, and the Doctrine of Correspondences?

Bishop Odhner: Yes. But that does not necessarily mean that anybody has understood as to how it really ought to be done. But we believe that those three things must be applied, yes. Correspondences, for example, I do not believe that people have much idea what is really meant by them.

Mr. Rogers: I am curious, why do you believe that?

Bishop Odhner: Because when you are reading the Arcana Coelestia, if you see all those chapters about correspondences, about the Grand Man of Heaven, they are all there where it is treating of the regeneration of the natural of man. And a correspondence is really between a rational and a natural that are regenerated, between an internal and an external that are regenerated — the regenerated rational and the regenerated natural—that is where the correspondence is, and that's why, I think, it is treated in those chapters. But that the correspondence is always a living relationship between some internal that has been developed in a man and some external that still has to be, and that you cannot just say, well, this corresponds to that and the other thing and come to any definite idea out of it at all, you see. You have to see what the real relationship of an internal thing to an external thing is. Then you can see what the correspondence is, a living thing.

Mr. Rogers: So it's not a matter of application of a simple formula?

Bishop Odhner: No.

Mr. Rogers: That rock equals truth....?

Bishop Odhner: No, not at all. That would be all right as far as it goes, but it's not going to be the real application of correspondences.

Mr. Rogers: The Writings themselves use that sometimes formulaic process in explaining the words in the Arcana Coelestia, for instance, when they take up a passage from the book of Genesis or the book of Exodus. In their explanation they will start off with "this word signifies this, this word signifies that" and then go into a doctrinal discussion from that.

Bishop Odhner: Right.

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Mr. Rogers: That would not be the same type of process that the Writings have applied to the Old Testament, especially, and to the book of Revelation, that would not be the same process that a priest of The Lord's New Church would apply to the letter of the Writings?

Bishop Odhner: No, he could do it. Nothing is going to stop him from doing it, but we do not see that that is going to yield him any immediate light on the subject.

Mr. Rogers: What does a priest do, then, to formulate a sermon?

Bishop Odhner: He studies what the Word says about a subject, hard, and tries to come to some interior, natural idea about it. Then he tries to see what is said there, how it applies to the regeneration of man, of one man. That's an idea, too, that has to be seen, that we believe that the whole Word should apply to one man. I don't mean just to you or just to me, but each man ought to see how it applies to himself, and if he doesn't, why then he cannot see how it applies to his regeneration at all.

Mr. Rogers: Yes.

Bishop Odhner: And this is the "one man" principle. He has to have such a thing in his mind and from a deep study of the Writings, see just how that would apply to one man. Otherwise, he cannot see any more interior application at all. For example, you study the Most Ancient Church, the Ancient Church, and all those churches. Now, what do they have to do with your regeneration? It is a principle of the Writings that everything of the Word has to do with the Lord and with the regeneration of man. And with what do those things have to do? I mean, are they mere history, even ecclesiastical history? It is a certain order of development, or an order of relationship between the Lord and the human race.

Mr. Rogers: In the Arcana Coelestia there are three distinct series—the glorification series of the Lord, the regenerative series of mankind, man as the individual, and the process of the church on earth, the interior historical sense. What I understand you to say is that sometimes the passage would emphasize one, or sometimes two, but rarely all three series when giving what we believe is the internal sense of the Word of the Old and the New Testaments.

Bishop Odhner: Yes, that is correct, right.

Mr. Rogers: But, for instance, we have a passage that deals with the internal historical sense or about the church, let's say the Most Ancient Church and the Ancient Church, and it does not refer particularly or clearly, explicitly, to the Lord or to man as the individual, but from an understanding of the other degrees that are more interior, you, from that one degree dealing with the church, can understand how it applies to the individual man?

Bishop Odhner: That is what we strive to do, yes. We believe that that whole order of the churches, right from the Most Ancient Church to the New Church, involves a Divine order for the development of man's spirit. We strive to see what that order is.

Mr. Rogers: And the order and process that is explained in the series about the Most Ancient Church have relation to my individual life and everybody's individual life?

Bishop Odhner: Yes, that's right.

Mr. Rogers: So there is direct application?

Bishop Odhner: Yes.

Mr. Rogers: Does it lead to life?

Bishop Odhner: It does. Yes. See what the real quality, for example, of the first state of the church with a man is, and what happens to it.

Mr. Rogers: So it is a matter of a state of the church with a man, which is an adult state rather than.... There are people who would associate the Most Ancient Church with the infancy of a man.

Bishop Odhner: Yes.

Mr. Rogers: And that it is not until you get to the series of the Israelitish Church or the Christian Church that you are an adult? When a person can turn to the Lord and receive the truths of the Lord from the Word, and look to the good of life, that man is then going through the state represented by the Most Ancient Church?

Bishop Odhner: Right. As we see it, while there are many things said in the Writings about former states, infancy, childhood and youth, those things do not apply there. Just as we do not believe at all that the things that concern the Glorification of the Lord, as for example about Ishmael, that that has any relation whatsoever to what is called the "wild ass rational of youth", none whatsoever. That state which is meant by Ishmael is a very interior state in the regeneration of man, involving his rational, a development after he has lived according to the sense of the letter of the Word and had his mind opened to Heaven and his rational formed out of that. And then you get Ishmael and all those others that....

Mr. Rogers: You mean I haven't entered through the Ishmael state yet? I thought I had gone through it.

Bishop Odhner: Well, I know that in the General Church they speak of going through it in high school, you see, and we do not believe that at all, no.

Mr. Rogers: What about the possibility of both being right? Because are there such things as series within series?

Bishop Odhner: Yes, but still you cannot say that that would have anything to do with your regeneration.

Mr. Rogers: It helps me as a teacher of adolescents.

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Bishop Odhner: Yes, but it does not help them as far as their regeneration. We don't agree with that idea. There have been many ideas about the application of the Most Ancient Church to prenatal states, all kinds of things, but we don't see any relation to that.

Mr. Rogers: I perceive from this brief discussion, I may be wrong, that the three doctrines that I mentioned before, the doctrine of genuine truth, the doctrine of correspondences, and the doctrine of enlightenment, are much closer together. In other words, the way you have explained the use of correspondences seems to me so intertwined with the idea of enlightenment that they really cannot be separated.

Bishop Odhner: That's right.

Mr. Rogers: Whereas I would think that the General Church would feel that they are distinct, that as a man becomes more and more regenerated, that's when they become one. That a person can learn correspondences and apply them to the Word, that a person can see the genuine truths and apply them to his life, but that he might not even necessarily be in the process of regeneration, but that the enlightenment comes when a man is seeking the Lord and is beginning to be regenerated.

Bishop Odhner: Yes, that's right.

Mr. Rogers: But you would feel that they were much closer together in the beginning point.

Bishop Odhner: You can use them otherwise, but it's not an essential use of them, that's all. This can be seen from the fact that the science of correspondences perished when the internal and the external of the church perished, when their conjunction perished, in the Ancient Church. That's when the science perished.

Mr. Rogers: Before or after the time of the Lord's Advent?

Bishop Odhner: Before the Lord's Advent. In the Ancient Church it perished, because their internal and their external became separated, and they lost that science of correspondences. It was turned into magic and all kinds of things.

Mr. Rogers: They perverted it, and therefore the communication between Heaven and earth, although the science of correspondence became magic, that no longer served the purpose?

Bishop Odhner: That did not serve Heaven, no. I want to say something about genuine truth if we have the time.

Mr. Rogers: I would like to hear that.

Bishop Odhner: In the first place, in the history of the controversy and in the history of the years since, people have felt that this church was seeking to see an internal sense that was such as it is nakedly in the spiritual or celestial Heaven. And that was a mistaken idea. The idea of the

Bishop Odhner (continued): church as is taught in the Doctrine of the Sacred Scripture, that there is an outer surface of the sense of the letter, and a bosom of the sense of the letter, and that if a man's mind is open to Heaven, he sees the sense in the bosom of the letter. In other words, he sees it there, taught in the sense of the letter. Not everyone sees that bosom of the sense of the letter, but it is there. That shows that the internal sense of the Word is going to be in the natural, it is going to be in the natural sense. It's going to come down into a natural sense. It cannot be nakedly celestial or spiritual, not as long as man lives in the world. But to come to that bosom of the sense of the letter requires not only a great study of the Word, but as I say, the casting away of those things in your mind that would prevent the light of Heaven from shining out in that bosom. Now, there are two teachings in the Word, and I think that this is important, although I don't think they have ever been made important before in a discussion: it says in the Writings that certain passages are naked as are the hands and the face, and that any man can see them.

Mr. Rogers: For example, the Ten Commandments?

Bishop Odhner: Yes. And it also says that the essentials of faith are naked, such as that the Lord is God, for example. Those are naked truths, so to speak, and it has been thought that that means the same thing as when it speaks of the internal sense shining out in the letter, the translucence of the internal sense in the sense of the letter. But, as I see it, that is not the same thing. Those naked passages can be seen by a man whose mind is not closed to Heaven, not closed to Heaven but not open to Heaven through regeneration. There is a certain presence of the light of Heaven in those open passages through which he can begin his regeneration. He could not begin otherwise, and this, in general, is likened to an obscure cloud in the Arcana Coelestia, and other places. Now, that is where you begin, in those naked passages, but that is not yet the internal sense shining through the sense of the letter. But through regeneration, as the mind of man is opened towards Heaven, then the spiritual and celestial things shine out in those passages, and possibly others too, which are not so naked, as is taught in the Doctrine of the Sacred Scripture.

Mr. Rogers: What is the celestial and the spiritual you can see in the natural?

Bishop Odhner: It likens the bosom of the sense of the letter to a ruby and a diamond in the Doctrine of the Sacred Scripture. And that light of Heaven can shine through there. Now we go to the Writings and see a truth—in the beginning that has to be accommodated to our proprial states.

Mr. Rogers: In other words, we would not otherwise even bother to receive it.

Bishop Odhner: We would not care anything about it. So the proprium attaches itself. Now, so long as a man's proprium attaches itself and influences a man's understanding of the truth, it is not yet genuine,

Interview of Bishop Odhner by Mr. Rogers.

Bishop Odhner (continued): no matter what the external truth is that you take up. Take the truth that the Lord is God, or any of those truths, in themselves you can say they are genuine from the Lord, but in your mind they are not genuine because that proprium influences it.

Mr. Rogers: Even what I say with the lips, unless it is from the heart?

Bishop Odhner: Unless it is out of the heart, and your mind is open to Heaven and the light of Heaven, that orders those things in your mind. When those proprial influences are cast away and this is done, and especially in the combats of temptation, that truth is ordered by the Lord in your mind. It is ordered by the Lord in your mind and the proprial influence is away, and that is the genuine truth.

Mr. Rogers: Is it a situation like the difference between a square and a rectangle? All squares are rectangles, but not all rectangles are square. All those naked truths are indeed genuine truths.

Bishop Odhner: Well, they are all genuine truths of course, in themselves, but as far as we are concerned, in our taking them up, that is what matters there. If there were not such truths in which we, before our minds are opened to Heaven, while still not closed, if we could not see those, then regeneration would not be possible at all, for anybody. But it is quite different from when after the mind is opened and the celestial and spiritual truths shine out. All those things said about the precious stones in the breastplate, and the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, and so forth, those are all translucent truths that are shining out from Heaven in the mind of a man who is ready to receive them.

Mr. Rogers: Is a recognition and appreciation of that bosom a requirement for becoming a priest in The Lord's New Church which is Nova Hierosolyma?

Bishop Odhner: We couldn't possibly require that he see it, but he must acknowledge that it is there, yes.

Mr. Rogers: Can an individual reach that vision without the life of regeneration?

Bishop Odhner: No.

Mr. Rogers: I read a doctrinal presentation by you on the commonly misconceived ideas about The Lord's New Church, one of which is the claim that you are regenerated. How can you distinguish between the idea then that there are individuals who are in the International Interior Council, and the priests have a light that leads to the good of life, unless they be individually on the path to regeneration?

Bishop Odhner: We certainly hope so.

Mr. Rogers: That is different.

Bishop Odhner: We don't say, here is a man, he is regenerating, let's put him on the Council. That would be impossible.



Mr. Rogers: When I first heard about the Council, I was struck by the [kind of] individual who would accept it. It would be easier for me to turn to someone like you and say, from what I see, you are the man for the job. You have a light, and I see that you are leading a good life from what I can see. But, on the other hand, if somebody came to me and said the same thing, I don't know whether I could accept it, because essentially, by joining it, I would be saying, yes, I must be on the path to regeneration.

Bishop Odhner: No, by joining [the Council] all you are saying is that the church leaders who are on that Council see that you are capable of considering doctrinal things, and that as far as they can see, you are capable of considering it apart from your personal feelings, and so forth.

Mr. Rogers: In a sense, then, it is more of a humbling experience rather than an elating experience?

Bishop Odhner: Yes, there is nothing of elation in it at all. How could you be elated?

Mr. Rogers: I know some people at my university who would have been. Do the Writings reveal the spiritual sense of the Old Testament and/or the New Testament?

Bishop Odhner: They reveal parts of it.

Mr. Rogers: In the letter itself?

Bishop Odhner: Now, the question is, how can you say that that is the internal sense?

Mr. Rogers: That's a good question. I wasn't going to ask that.

Bishop Odhner: It's certainly laid down again in an external sense. And, moreover, how can you say that you can see it?

Mr. Rogers: I myself, in my study of the Word, the threefold Word, I feel I have seen it at times, but I have a hard time telling somebody else that I have seen it and explain to him what I have seen.

Bishop Odhner: You mean you see something of an internal sense of the Old and New Testament?

Mr. Rogers: Something. Every once in a while there is some kind of life, some kind of flash that happens, and seems marvelous, and with it goes a warmth, an excitement, a vivification, I guess, would be the term. But I wouldn't be able to explain just what it was or why I felt the way I did, but the light is obviously there as far as I'm concerned.

Bishop Odhner: Where? I mean, where was it?

Mr. Rogers: Exactly where? In the Writings or in the Old and New Testament? In my understanding of them.

Interview of Bishop Odhner by Mr. Rogers.

Bishop Odhner: Of what, of the Writings, or of the Old and New Testament?

Mr. Rogers: I haven't distinguished them. I would say it is from what the Heavenly Doctrines or the Writings have explained to me about the Old and New Testaments in an expositional way.

Bishop Odhner: Yes?

Mr. Rogers: My question is, even in those cases where the Writings have revealed the internal sense of the Old Testament, does that part of the Writings then have its own internal sense?

Bishop Odhner: It certainly does, because you have to see the order in which it applies to man's regeneration.

Mr. Rogers: Could you expound on that?

Bishop Odhner: Well, when you take the first eleven chapters of Genesis, and they are about those churches, you have to see how they apply to the order of the regeneration of a man. Now, the rest of it is mainly concerned with the Lord's Glorification, although occasionally other things are put in and you have to see what that order is.

Mr. Rogers: I have been struck by the fact that those passages in the Arcana that deal with the Glorification of the Lord usually have another subsection dealing with the regeneration of man, but those sections dealing with the history of the churches usually do not.

Bishop Odhner: That's right, they don't.

Mr. Rogers: The unity between the Glorification of the Lord and the regeneration of man, at least in the letter, seems to be much more. They are distinct degrees, discrete degrees, but that linking is much clearer in the letter.

Bishop Odhner: But now the question is that theory, what do you see in that series of the regeneration of man in the Arcana Coelestia beginning with the twelfth chapter of Genesis?

Mr. Rogers: I have a tougher question, what do you see in the Glorification of the Lord in those passages?

Bishop Odhner: No, in the twelfth chapter, beginning with the twelfth chapter, that is where the Glorification begins.

Mr. Rogers: I was referring to the first eleven chapters.

Bishop Odhner: Well, in the first eleven chapters you could say they treat of the Lord in this sense because of the coming down of the Human Divine into the world, the descent was through the celestial and the spiritual and the natural, into the ultimates. But what I wanted to see is what you have seen as a parallel between the Lord as an infant in the twelfth chapter and man's regeneration?

Mr. Rogers: What did I, personally, see?

Bishop Odhner: Yes.

Mr. Rogers: I feel somewhat like one of my students when I have a degree in a course and I ask that student a question, and he knows I know that answer and is not sure he does. I feel like that student. What do you want me to tell you?

Bishop Odhner: Well, I was going back, in a sense, to what we were talking about before, the Ishmael rational.

Mr. Rogers: And the idea of the entrance into, not so much the infancy of the individual, but the infancy of the individual in terms of his regeneration?

Bishop Odhner: Yes.

Mr. Rogers: Those states of innocence that are required before he even starts, the process of regeneration itself. He may know the truths of the church from the Word but the innocence that is required, from a willingness to follow the Lord....

Bishop Odhner: In our studies of the Arcana Coelestia, we see that those first eleven chapters treat of a more external state of the church with man, with an individual man, when he lives according to the sense of the letter of the Word, looking to a coming of a more internal state with himself. And we see that the Advent of the Lord is what is meant by the twelfth chapter, the advent to the individual. And that that is the opening of a new internal which the Lord has been preparing by the life that he leads according to the external sense of the Word.

Mr. Rogers: Is the regeneration of the individual, then, first a descent and then an ascent?

Bishop Odhner: Yes, and then an ascent. Now, that first one, you might say that coming down from the Adamic to the Jewish Church at the time of the Coming of the Lord, that is a preparation of his mind, actually not a decline at all. It's actually an ascent as far as he is concerned, but it is a decline as far as the operation of the Divine Truth in his mind is concerned.

Mr. Rogers: So the negative aspects of what happened to the church on earth is a positive thing in the discussion of regeneration? In those first eleven chapters, is the individual becoming more and more external?

Bishop Odhner: More and more externally developed, yes.

Mr. Rogers: And that in itself is not a negative concept?

Bishop Odhner: No. And he sees more and more what he is of himself, of course.

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Interview of Bishop Odhner by Mr. Rogers.

Mr. Rogers: It would seem to me that when a person is able to be in order in the external, that is the accomplishment of regeneration, not a part of the process. In other words, it is like the sole of a person's feet that need to be washed last.

Bishop Odhner: Yes, but that's the regeneration of the natural you are speaking of.

Mr. Rogers: What were you speaking of?

Bishop Odhner: I am not talking about the regeneration of the natural. I am talking about a preliminary, external living according to the sense of the letter of the Word. Now, that may appear to be a cleaning up of the external life, you see, but that's not true regeneration.

Mr. Rogers: Is it more the idea that a person has to live according to the...in other words, proper action, just do it because that's what...?

Bishop Odhner: Yes, but he does it because of what the Lord is doing within him.

Mr. Rogers: Okay.

Bishop Odhner: And when the Lord has done sufficiently within him, there is an opening of that internal into his external, and that is the Advent of the Lord.

Mr. Rogers: That is when the Lord appears to him?

Bishop Odhner: Yes. That is why we would see the Ishmael state and those things as being entirely too interior to anything we can possibly liken [it to] in youth.

Mr. Rogers: Let me jump to a question I was going to save to the end. Have ideas such as this been published and made available to people within your church and to people outside, within other bodies of the New Church and to a general audience beyond? I am aware of very little publication.

Bishop Odhner: Well, you see, in the beginning we had the magazine, De Hemelsche Leer, a Dutch magazine.

Mr. Rogers: For about six years?

Bishop Odhner: That's all. It stopped during that War, you see. We have no magazine now. The only thing that we send out are mimeographed, copied sermons and doctrinal classes, which anybody can get, of course, and some people, like Bishop King, they get them. Several others in the General Church get them, too. Anyone can sign up for them. They go free for the first year. After that we charge five dollars a year for them. It is a lot of sermons and classes.

Mr. Rogers: Just those given in Bryn Athyn?

Bishop Odhner: Yes.

Mr. Rogers: Do you feel that there is a need for publication?

Bishop Odhner: Oh, yes.

Mr. Rogers: I am thinking also of this, an idea as you explained it to me. I have been exposed to it before, and I'm trying to play the role. It's very hard for Prescott Rogers, the theologian and student, to force himself to be Prescott Rogers, the interviewer, but I have been trying to be an interviewer. I know that there are many people, especially in the General Church, who are not aware of even the teaching existing, let alone how it works. Are there the funds and the means available to publish pamphlets or books on such things?

Bishop Odhner: Yes, and we have published very little, actually.

Mr. Rogers: It would seem to me that if the light is there, and the doctrine has been developed, since the doctrine is for the church, it would seem to me there would be a need to preserve such doctrines in a form for the sake of dissemination, preservation, and other uses.

Bishop Odhner: Yes. All we have now are these duplicated things, and they go to all the members of the church, and anybody that wants them, in other countries as well.

Mr. Rogers: How about what we were talking about earlier, a series? How about a series such as seeing the whole series of the regenerative series we were mentioning before, the internal sense. Something from Leviticus, of the series...that really cannot be expressed in as small a form as a doctrinal class?

Bishop Odhner: No. But we don't do that, we give a series on the Arcana Coelestia. Well, you could say that is Genesis and Exodus.

Mr. Rogers: Going back to the earlier question, I think it is a very important question for the New Church as a whole, and for the General Church in particular, that is to understand what the position is in terms of enlightenment and the internal sense, with that teaching of the six degrees of Divine Truth. I believe that the theologians of the General Church have used that teaching more than any other to refute the claim that the celestial and the spiritual can be seen in the natural while in this world. I know you have touched on it before and the answers can be drawn out. What I am asking you to do here is to take that teaching of the six degrees of the Divine Truth and tell us in what way they apply to what the doctrine of The Lord's New Church is and can be.

Bishop Odhner: What we said first about the bosom of the sense of the letter, it is in the sense of the letter, which is in the world. It is in the sixth degree.

Mr. Rogers: That is the sixth degree, or it is in the sixth degree?

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Bishop Odhner: It is in the sixth degree, and it can appear there.

Mr. Rogers: The vast sense that is revealed to the celestial angels in the third degree, can that be seen in the internal sense of the Writings?

Bishop Odhner: Yes, but it has to have a natural form in that bosom of the sense of the letter.

Mr. Rogers: In semantics the word "see" indicates a conscious awareness of existence.

Bishop Odhner: Right.

Mr. Rogers: And so it is not only there, and I can assume it is there, but it is more than just a perception of its being there. I can see it with my understanding. And if I can see it with my understanding, then I will be able to explain it to other people. And so The Lord's New Church believes that the celestial sense can be seen ...?

Bishop Odhner: Right, but in the natural form.

Mr. Rogers: While in the natural form and, of course, if the celestial can do it, so can the spiritual?

Bishop Odhner: Yes.

Mr. Rogers: The fourth degree and the fifth degree?

Bishop Odhner: Right.

Mr. Rogers: And that I think is a very great distinction between the General Church and The Lord's New Church.

Bishop Odhner: Yes.

Mr. Rogers: We would assume that it is there, the Lord told us it is there, and we can have certain momentary perceptions that it is there, but the highest we can raise our conscious understanding is to the rational of the interior of the sixth degree.

Bishop Odhner: Tell me, if a man was a celestial man here, what would he see?

Mr. Rogers: He would see the light from the Lord in the Word more clearly than anybody else, but it would still be natural from an internal from the spiritual. He would not be able to see or act in any way like a celestial angel until he had left his external memory and the imperfections of his mind and body behind.

Bishop Odhner: What a celestial angel sees and what a celestial man sees are essentially the same, but they are not formally the same.



Mr. Rogers: Explain that.

Bishop Odhner: Well, a man has to see it in a natural form. We certainly believe that we cannot see it in a celestial form. We think you see that celestial truth in a natural form.

Mr. Rogers: In Heaven, a spiritual angel, that is not of the spiritual kingdom, but of the spiritual Heaven, certainly can see the celestial sense in his degree of truth if we in this world can see the celestial sense in the internal.

Bishop Odhner: Yes.

Mr. Rogers: When that happens, is he raised up into the celestial Heaven?

Bishop Odhner: A spiritual angel? He sees it in his own degree; he cannot see it in that degree that the celestial angel sees it, not even in that [degree in which] the celestial man sees it.

Mr. Rogers: And yet he is conscious of that celestial nature of what he sees?

Bishop Odhner: You mean he is conscious that it is about the celestial?

Mr. Rogers: He sees the celestial sense, which means as I was mentioning before, the conscious in his understanding. That is what the word "sees" means to me.

Bishop Odhner: You have the idea that a spiritual angel sees the celestial sense?

Mr. Rogers: Or is capable of seeing it. In other words, if we in this world are capable of seeing the celestial sense....

Bishop Odhner: Yes, but you are only capable of seeing the celestial sense provided your mind is open to the celestial degree.

Mr. Rogers: While we are in this world?

Bishop Odhner: Yes.

Mr. Rogers: If that is possible.

Bishop Odhner: Yes, certainly. How could you become a celestial angel otherwise?

Mr. Rogers: I think that before you would become a celestial angel that the imperfections have been so removed from you....

Bishop Odhner: Yes, certainly, but still that has to be done in this world. It can be done in this world; put it that way.

Mr. Rogers: That is true. Regeneration can take place in this world.

Interview of Bishop Odhner by Mr. Rogers.

Bishop Odhner: Yes, he can be regenerated to the celestial degree; then he sees the celestial in the sense of the letter. But a spiritual angel can't.

Mr. Rogers: What I am trying to lead up to is the distinction between seeing one form and knowing the essence exists inside of it as opposed [to], or as distinguished from seeing the essence itself.

Bishop Odhner: Do you remember [in] the fourth fascicle of De Hemelsche Leer, a big argument, Mr. Bjorck, Mr. Pfeiffer and Mr. Pitcairn? This was all on this subject. Mr. Bjorck's idea was that the natural degree is said to be not discrete in itself, but only by correspondence, therefore he was arguing against the position, as you are right now, that the celestial and spiritual cannot appear there in their own forms. But the other argument, raised against Mr. Bjorck, was this: look, here in nature we have all these different kingdoms, the mineral, the vegetable, animal, human. They're all here in nature, and as far as nature is concerned, it is all in one degree. But by virtue of correspondence to a higher degree, they are distinctly different, and so the Word becomes, when it embodies the enlightenment of the spiritual and the enlightenment of the celestial and the enlightenment of the natural.

Mr. Rogers: The Writings, when they refer to these kingdoms, at least in two passages I'm aware of, use the term "quasi-discrete" degrees.

Bishop Odhner: Yes, it's discrete.

Mr. Rogers: Whereas in referring to the celestial, spiritual and natural, there is a discrete degree.

Bishop Odhner: Quite, but by correspondence, these quasi degrees embody those higher degrees, otherwise you couldn't say there was any essential difference between humans, animals, vegetables and minerals. They are all in that sixth degree, (from the number speaking of the enlightenment), but the effect of the higher degrees on bringing them into correspondence with the higher degrees changes the whole order of organization of that. Just as an animal or human is so different from a vegetable, and a vegetable from a stone, and so forth. That is where the difference between a celestial man, a spiritual man and a natural man comes in, and that is possible here, and if it was not possible here, you couldn't have a celestial man or a spiritual man. You would have only natural men. There would be nothing at all to distinguish them.

Mr. Rogers: And so the interiors of the human mind can be raised into the life of Heaven in the various degrees?

Bishop Odhner: Yes.

Mr. Rogers: While he is in this world?

Bishop Odhner: Right, and that light can come down and order his sixth degree in another order so that it has another life in it, too, than it had before.

Mr. Rogers: That's good. That helped me alot. I am interested in my other

Mr. Rogers (continued): question, in the official communication among the bodies [of the New Church]. I am not looking for reconciliation, or ecumenical movement or what have you, but I do believe that everyone in the New Church can benefit from communication, as the Ancient Churches had a communication, not just an internal communication, but there was an external communication among them. I am interested, since you have been bishop, is there an official communication or a line between you and the leaders of the other bodies of the Church?

Bishop Odhner: No. I'll tell you the extent of the official communications—I deplore the fact that there is so little—the President of the Conference wrote us a greeting about the Nineteenth of June, which we replied to.

Mr. Rogers: What year?

Bishop Odhner: Oh, this was years ago now. Seven or eight years. That was not kept up. This was the only piece of communication written between us and any other body of the Church. Bishop King has visited me for various purposes.

Mr. Rogers: As bishop with bishop?

Bishop Odhner: Right, and we have talked over certain problems and things of that kind that have arisen, and that is the only communication with the General Church, except I have been asked to speak to the theological students, and once even to a high school class. That is all.

Mr. Rogers: So, in effect, what you are saying is that there is no, or extremely little, official communication?

Bishop Odhner: There isn't even official recognition.

Mr. Rogers: Still?

Bishop Odhner: No.

Mr. Rogers: Does The Lord's New Church feel that they are persona non grata?

Bishop Odhner: Not particularly. I mean, it doesn't worry us, particularly, but that's the fact.

Mr. Rogers: I can understand your not being worried. Have you, has The Lord's New Church in any way sought such recognition, or contact?

Bishop Odhner: No.

Mr. Rogers: Is there a reason why?

Bishop Odhner: I suppose it's the fact that the General Church does not like our use of the name, "The Lord's New Church."

Tape ends here.