

## **Resurrection Address**

**for**

**Alan D. Childs**

Delivered November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2011 at Boynton Beach

by the Rev. Kurt Horigan Asplundh

Come, and let us return to the LORD;  
For He has torn, but He will heal us;  
He has stricken, but He will bind us up.  
After two days He will revive us;  
On the third day He will raise us up,  
That we may live in His sight.

(Hosea 6: 1-2)

The New Church teaches that the Lord continues to hold us in His merciful care whatever the circumstances of our natural life may bring. Sad and tragic events still happen but the Lord's providence turns even these to some good purpose. The Lord knows when a sparrow falls to the ground. Surely, He watches over all His children. "Nothing is therefore allowed to happen," we are told, "except to the end that something good may come out of it" (AC 6489). Difficult as this may be to accept at the time, nevertheless it is true. "He has stricken, but He will bind us up" (Hos. 6: 1).

There is stark contrast here. The terrifying turmoil, confusion and pain surrounding an accidental death is such a contrast to the peaceful introduction to spiritual life that comes next. After we die, loving celestial angels come to guard our spirit until it is ready to be resuscitated. They surround us with a quiet sphere of peace. Later, as we enter that world, other angels come to provide every service we may need or want, and to tell us that we are now living in the spiritual world. This beginning of our life after death is brief, but sweet. "After two days He will revive us," as the prophet says, "On the third day He will raise us up, that we may live in His sight" (Hos. 6: 2).

We think of Alan Childs beginning life in the spiritual world. Whatever pain and suffering he experienced at his death is gone. While it may be some while before he grows noticeably younger as to his spiritual body, surely, he is already walking more steadily and confidently in that world than here. Miraculously, he will now see clearly where his vision before was dim. Not only will Alan's sense of sight be restored, he will be looking out on a world that is clearer, brighter, and more colorful than anything he has ever seen. This is because that world is bathed in spiritual light from the Lord's spiritual sun, many times brighter than natural light. A remarkable thing about this heavenly light is that it illuminates not only the sight but the understanding of angels and spirits. As it is said of the Lord, "In your light we see light (Ps. 36: 9). The more heavenly light we admit to our spirit, the wiser we become.

Alan has been prepared for his introduction to the spiritual world. Following his initial introduction which has just taken place in these last few days, he will recognize the reality of that world as he has understood it from his upbringing and education in the New Church. This is not to say he will have no surprises, for we all are limited by our natural perception and by the limiting ideas of time and space when we pass to the spiritual world. But Alan will not be surprised to find himself in a real spiritual body with its gender and all its human features; nor will he be surprised to be among other people in an environment of homes, gardens, communities and businesses. Happily, he will meet and be reunited with family members and other good friends already in that world. Alan's rejoining the Childs family, of which he was the last surviving member of his generation, might constitute a call for a Childs' reunion celebration according to a long-held tradition of the family. There may be a call for Alan to report "What news from earth." (Would that we could listen in.) Undoubtedly, there would be family tales, toasts and song, not quite in heavenly harmony. Underlying all, would be confidence that in spite of "earthly prattle," with the Lord in charge, "we will be all right!"

Alan was born the spring of 1930, sixth and last in the family of Geoffrey and Olivia Childs. The Childs family was devoted to the New Church. During much of Alan's childhood, the family lived isolated in Saginaw, Michigan, where his father,

Geoffrey, was in charge of the Michigan Sugar company. To keep the things of the church alive in their isolation, the Childs', over the years, developed various occasions and unique family customs, many of which have been passed down the generations.

So it was that Alan was first imbued with things of the New Church by his parents and siblings in the home where he spent the happy years of his childhood and youth. Later, he graduated from the Academy Boys School, gaining there a more academic understanding of the church as well as having a good old time in the process and making life-long friends in the church.

Throughout his life, Alan treasured his formative years and continued his loyalty to the principles he had learned. We know that early remains impressed on our spirit by happy experiences in childhood are powerful incentives for the love of the church in later life.

We are taught that love is the life of man and we could say that the three primary loves that characterized the life of Alan Childs were the love of the church, the love of his family and the love of his business.

With regard to the church, Alan was not only a life-long pillar of the General Church and Academy, serving on boards and committees, he was knowledgeable and interested in doctrine and life. Over the years, Alan and Lucy have supported the church in Chicago, North Ohio, and, most recently, in the Boynton Beach Society.

But religion is more than participation in a congregation. "Essential Divine worship in the heavens," we are told, "does not consist in going to church and hearing preaching, but in a life of love, charity, and faith, in accordance with doctrine..." (HH 222). Alan tried to model in his own life the application of the precepts that doctrine teaches.

Alan married Lucy Lindsay in June of 1954. In time, their family of four was born: Janna, Martha, Carrie and Stephen. Over the years, Alan and Lucy provided a fun-loving home life for their children. Alan's love of the children took on a playfulness typical of Alan that expressed itself in various games and tricks. He became well known in the family circle as "Uncle Al, the kiddies' pal." Everyone under ten loved Uncle Al, and most of those above ten, as well.

His relation to the family was not only in fun. He and Lucy sought to pass on moral and spiritual values that they held to be important in their life and marriage.

The death of a spouse and separation from one's partner after a long life together brings a new state to each one difficult to accept, but the Heavenly Doctrine comforts us. Marriages of true love are not ended by death, we are told (CL 49,50). Partners who share conjugal love meet again in heaven after death where they can live together to eternity. The Heavenly Doctrine reveals something else that is new: that the death of one partner before the other does not mean complete separation from him, even then. His spirit continues to dwell with the spirit of his wife until her death, "when they meet again and reunite and love each other more tenderly than before" (CL 321). May the promise of this reunion give them strength in the days ahead.

Alan was a man of business as was his father before him. And both loved the work they did. The Heavenly Doctrine speaks to the issue of business life, some believing that a successful business life is incompatible with a devout religious life. Nothing could be further from the truth. While abuses and self-love are possible in business as in every worldly endeavor, this need not be so. People of business skill have the ability to serve in greater uses to the neighbor than others. The reach and effect of their work touches a greater number.

The Heavenly Doctrine teaches that "the Lord performs uses to man through man...." Therefore, it is added, "everyone who loves a good use and does it from a love for it is loved by the Lord, and is received with joy by the angels in heaven" (AE 1226).

The key is revealed in the Doctrine of Charity. If the man of business “looks to the Lord and shuns evils as sins, and transacts his business sincerely, justly, and faithfully, he becomes charity” (Char 167). The true reward of charity is not remuneration or honors, but the delight of doing good to others.

Alan found delight in the challenges and responsibilities of the workplace. He was a bright and effective executive during his lengthy career with the Sherwin-Williams company where he became General Counsel of the company. He worked his way to the top by dint of hard work and through his innate business intelligence. , To attain his goal, Alan sacrificed spare time and sleep for a period of several years to earn a law degree. He attended the John Marshall law school in Chicago at night. He graduated at the top of his class.

Alan’s approach to business life was influenced by principles of the Heavenly Doctrine. There we are told, “It is written in the wisdom of the wise that no one is wise or lives for himself alone, but for others.... Living for others is being useful” (TCR 746).

Nor is such a life joyless, cold and calculating. A religious man of business lives outwardly like others, we are told. “He may grow rich, but not by craft and trickery; he may eat and drink well, but not place his very life in those things...he may be well, and even, according to his condition, handsomely, housed; he may associate with others, like other men, amuse himself in their society; discuss the affairs of the world and the various things in domestic matters: in a word, without any difference in externals....” To this the passage adds: “Neither is it necessary that he should appear devout, so as [to go about] as it were with a sorrowful countenance, and with shaking head, and with sighing; but...he [may] be cheerful and merry...” (SD 5794).

We think particularly of Alan as a “cheerful and merry” man of business. No doubt the humor that bubbled from his being when he was with friends carried over into the boardrooms of industry where he sat. Well-loved and respected by his associates,

Alan was a most useful man. Also, he was a mentor to others in business and executive positions. He loved to share his insights and experience.

For Alan, perhaps this was a foretaste of delight in some heavenly use that lies ahead, for the life of heaven is a life of use.

We think now of the resurrection of a man of the church.

There will be a sense of loss and deep grief, particularly for his wife and children, and their children. Let them remember that this is in the Lord's providence. "In order that a person may live to eternity, it is necessary that what is mortal, or the material body, should be taken away from him by death" (DP 324: 3). Only then, after our preparation on this earth, can we enter into the joy of our Lord in His eternal kingdom.

We ask the Lord to give us the strength to accept our loss and to say, with full heart, "Not my will, but Thine, be done!"

"For, behold, I come quickly," says the Lord, "and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.... Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Rev. 22: 12, 14). Amen.

**Readings:**

**Psalm 90: 1-6, 10, 12 (Lit. 324)**

**Psalm 139: 1-10 (Lit. 397)**

When any man after death comes into the spiritual world, which for the most part takes place the third day after he has expired, he appears to himself in a life similar to that in which he had been in the world, and in a similar house, chamber, and bed chamber, in a similar coat and clothing, and in a similar companionship within the house.... This happens to everyone after death, to the end that death may not appear as death, but as a continuation of life, and that the last of natural life may become the first of spiritual life, and that from this a man may progress to his goal, which will be either in heaven or in hell (5 Memorable Relations 4).

That after death a person lives to eternity is manifest from the Word where life in heaven is called life everlasting; and the Lord said also to His disciples, "Because I live, you shall live also." And concerning the resurrection He said, "God is the God of the living and not of the dead, for all live to Him, and that they cannot die any more." (John 14: 19; Luke 20: 36, 38; DP 324: 5 see **Liturgy 340**)

When anyone passes from the natural world into the spiritual, he carries with him all his possessions, that is, everything that belongs to him as a man, except his earthly body. For when man enters the spiritual world or the life after death, he is in a body as he was in the world, with no apparent difference. But his body is then spiritual, and thus separated or purified from all that is earthly.... The person, now a spirit in a spiritual body, enjoys every sense, both outer and inner, that he enjoyed in the world.... In a word, when a man passes from one life into the other, or from one world into the other, it is like passing from one place into another, carrying with him all things that he had possessed in himself as a man; so that by death, which is only the death of the earthly body, man cannot be said to have lost anything really his own. (HH 461)

Use is the neighbor, because every man is valued and loved not for his will and understanding alone, but for the uses he performs or is able to perform from these.... When use is in the first place, the Lord, from whom is all good, is in the first place and rules, and gives whatever contributes to eternal life and happiness...(AE 1193).

Those who renounce the world...acquire a sorrowful life that is not receptive of heavenly joy....On the contrary, to receive the life of heaven a man must needs live in the world and engage in its business and employments, and by means of a moral and civil life there receive the spiritual life. In no other way can the spiritual life be formed in man, or his spirit prepared for heaven (HH 528).

(Finally, concerning marriage)

When married partners [on earth] love each other tenderly, they think of eternity in regard to the marriage covenant, and not at all of its being ended by death. Or if they do think about this, they grieve, until strengthened again with hope by the thought of [their marriage] continuing in the life to come (CL 216e).