

Sydney Society Newsletter

Issued by the Sydney Society of the New Church Established in 1875

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The Faith of the New Church is summarized as follows:

There is one God in whom is the Divine Trinity. He is the Lord God and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Saving faith is to believe in Him. Evil actions are not to be done because they are from hell and of hell. Good actions are to be done because they are from God and of God. These are to be done by a person as though they are done by himself, while believing that they are from the Lord working in him and through him.



“Let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord, exercising loving-kindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth.

“For in these things I delight,” says the Lord. (Jeremiah 9.24)

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Used stamps, tins & packets, and small change all help other people
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The Minister of the Sydney Society is Rev. Julian Duckworth and he can be contacted at any time either by telephone (02) 9416 7026/7032 or by a personal visit to 4 Shirley Road, Roseville, for any pastoral help or guidance. Let the Minister know in good time about pastoral concerns with people - including yourself too - so that he can give help where and when it is needed.

FROM THE MINISTER

DUAL NATIONALITY

Recent months have seen the havoc of quite a few politicians declaring or being found out to have dual nationality. And of course, the law is the law, but it is also a bit of an ass. Well, enough of all that.

This gives me the great opportunity to let you know that you too have dual nationality but not quite the same kind as is in the news. You and I are citizens of both heaven and earth and the more we begin to appreciate that, the more our lives are going to be set up on the right basis.

It not as if we haven't been told. "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And in the epistles in the New Testament, this is a theme often brought out – "Many walk who set their mind on earthly things, but our citizenship is in heaven." And one of my favourites, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

Of course, we live in the world and so we should while we're here. We do things, we contribute, we achieve various things and we make our mistakes. Overall, it's a pretty fair deal for most of us, but by itself, it isn't the point. The real point of being a citizen of the world is that it develops us as a person in what we are becoming on another level, of being a citizen of heaven.

I guess it is very obvious to anyone that each person is really two people,

the person on the outside and the person on the inside. We aren't talking about any things that are good or bad here, only about two different levels. Some people look like they veer more and more towards anything going that is physical, and yes, some people seem to be so other-worldly that they don't get involved with the world much at all – but they still have to eat of course!

For both kinds of these would-be “single citizens” that's a real shame because they miss out. Dual citizens don't, because they keep the two together and that is always the ideal.

There is a popular but inaccurate saying attributed to Jesus: “I am *in* the world but not *of* the world.” It's good, but Jesus didn't say it. The nearest he came was in the prayer in John 17, “They (the disciples) are not of the world, just as I am not of the world As you sent me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.”

Well, all this generally covers the point of our dual citizenship. So I decided to look up in our church teachings what it says about ‘citizenship’ and there are some excellent statements which you may find helpful: “The ancients believed that all people living in the world today who love the Lord and their neighbour have that law within them and are acceptable citizens everywhere on earth just as they are in the next life.”

“We can do good because of society's laws we live with, or be moral because we think things through, which makes us human, or be spiritual because of spiritual laws. So far as we practise spiritual goodness, we are citizens of the spiritual world.”

I'm sure that the current rumpus in politics (which everyone seems to be quite enjoying) will all die down in a short while. Meanwhile we should try and stay alive to our real dual nationality and the kind of responsibilities it brings on us. Live this life fully and well, but never forget for a moment that this isn't everything we live for.

Julian

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SOCIETY NEWS

We've had the pleasure of having Ruth's sister Carolyn with us several times recently and also Carolyn's daughter Sarah since last December. They have now gone back to England, very happy with having been here, as we are that they were.

The Friendship Group got together in August and looked at all kinds of searching questions that people often ask. We're not a large group but it always has a good feel about it. The next one is in early October.

Our condolences to Kathryn Baker and her family on the passing of her mother Ann in August. I had the privilege to take the cremation service and then the memorial service in our church, with touching 100 present.

A word about visas, in relation to the Thompsons. This had been stalled for over two months but recently it freed up, allowing us to get going on the extensive work of submitting our Labour Agreement to Canberra. This is nearly ready, and we hope that from now on, it keeps rolling.

Dave Probert has had successful further surgery and is now home. It was great to have Dave and Paula with us at church on August 27th.

Stella Green is having rehab in Lady Davidson in Turramurra and several of us are in touch with her. We sent a church card to her.

David Curry has had further surgery and is on the point of coming home. Ruth and I saw him in hospital last Sunday and he is doing very well.

The fortnightly Bible group has just finished working with the stories of Elijah and Elisha which we've been doing all year! It has been really good but now we will have to think about what we go into next.

I had a three-page handwritten letter some time ago from Myriam Albert in Mauritius talking about all her goings-on over there, some not so easy. Her last sentence was "I miss you all!" I wrote back to her and she also, by request, gets the sermons and newsletter.

WORTH SHARING



This is good. It shows the back and front of a piece of tapestry. Notice that the back is messy and the front is a very clear picture.

This leads on to a poem by Grant Colfax Tullar. It is called The Weaver.

“My life is but a weaving between my Lord and me;
I cannot choose the colours He worketh steadily.

Oft-times He weaveth sorrow, and I, in foolish pride
Forget He sees the upper and I, the underside.

Not till the loom is silent and the shuttles cease to fly
Shall God unroll the canvas and explain the reason why.

The dark threads are as needful in the Weaver’s skilful hand
As the threads of gold and silver in the pattern He has planned.”

STEWARDS AND FLOWERS FOR SEPTEMBER

Sunday	Steward	Flowers
3 rd (Sacr.)	Dave Probert	Philip Brodsky
10 th	Graham Hanna	Elizabeth Kemmis
17 th	Dave Probert	Glen Hart
24 th	Dave Probert	Julie Smith

The new roster has some gaps in it and people who are stewards can let Ruth know which Sundays they can do. Anyone can offer as well.

THE COMING POSTAL VOTE



I guess we're all now aware that there is a postal vote about the legal situation regarding marriage in Australia. It's not actually a plebiscite, it's more an opinion survey.

Forms start getting sent out on September 12th and the final deadline for returned forms is by 6 p.m. on Tuesday November 7th.

Well, we shall see how it goes. I'm not at all tempted to try and guide your decision which has to be up to you. But I would say, think the whole situation of marriage through very carefully and perhaps all options about it – what you believe marriage means, and what people's spiritual lives require of us all.

And indeed, I wish each of you well with that.

SNIPPETS FROM THE SCRAPBOOK

Be happy for this moment. This moment is your life. – Omar Khayyam

It is amazing what you can accomplish when you do not care who gets the credit.
- Harry S Truman

I know the Bible is inspired because it inspires me. – Dwight L. Moody

When a father gives to a son, both laugh. When a son gives to a father, both cry.
- William Shakespeare

People who know everything are a great annoyance to those of us who do.
- Isaac Asimov

Don't limit a child to your own learning for he was born in another time.
- Rabinadrath Tagore

FROM THE SWEDENBORG CENTRE

Two weeks ago I received a phone call at the Swedenborg Centre from an anonymous caller whose father had passed away some time ago and had left behind a complete set of books of Swedenborg's writings (published by Rev Benjamin Fiske Barrett, a C19th US Unitarian minister who became a Swedenborgian and started the Swedenborg Publishing Association).

The caller asked if we wanted to buy the books. I indicated we're not in the habit of buying secondhand books since we would need a warehouse to shelve them all. In any case we already have those books in our 'Rare Books' collection at the Centre. He did mention they each had an 'Ex Libris' in them indicating that they had once belonged to the library of a certain Charles Stuart Mein, and that Mein had passed the books on to the caller's father. The caller decided to advertise them somewhere to see if he could earn some much needed income from them. So I wished him well and ended the call, thinking that was the end of the matter.

Yet after the call, my curiosity led me to check out Charles Stuart Mein to see if I had missed any important clues. I discovered he was born in 1841 in Maitland as the son of bank manager John Stuart Mein and Mary Hall. Charles's stated religion had been removed from the website, but fortunately a cache (old version) of that site still showed he was listed as 'Swedenborgian'. He studied law at Sydney Uni where he made friends with (Sir) Samuel Walker Griffith who came from Wales as son of Congregational minister Rev Edward Griffith and Mary Walker.

Samuel Griffith was to remain Charles Mein's best friend for the rest of their lives. Mein went on was to become a barrister, became private secretary to the attorney-general of New South Wales , and when relocating to Queensland, entered politics during influential times, became Postmaster-General and later judge of the Supreme Court of Queensland. He was considered skillful, well read and an interesting conversationalist with a most kind and generous nature.

(this article continues on both sides of the back cover...)

ABOUT BELLS



churches are part of their culture.

This was the topic for our service last Sunday. I don't usually write about our sermons in the Newsletter, but this one was ... different. It wasn't about a teaching or an idea, it was about an 'object', a bell.

Bells ring. Bell-ringers still ring church bells, and religion and bells in eastern religions and Christian

But there are only two mentions of bells in the whole Bible! One is that Aaron's (the high priest) robe was bordered on the bottom hem with alternating embroidered pomegranates and actual golden bells which sounded as Aaron came and went. The other is in the prophets: "Holiness to the Lord" shall be engraved on the bells of the horses."

The point about bells is that they summon us. They call us. This is also the spiritual idea, that a truth from the Lord sounds in our mind and we should make our response to its call, to obey it, to do something with it, and let it be there in our heart.

I included a great story about two horses during the service. There they were in the field. One is old and fully blind, the other is younger and carries a bell around its neck. The bells tell the blind horse where the other horse is and it goes towards the sound.

And the point for us is that sometimes we are blind and we need someone else to help us find our way. But equally, sometimes we can be the belled horse and help someone else who is unsure of things, find their way through.

And we had actual bells ringing in the church service, a single dong from one and a jingling of a set on a stick, a bit like Aaron's robe.

FATHERS DAY

We shall include the fact that it is Fathers Day on Sunday September 3rd during the service. Here are two ways for us to mark it –

Here are two sets of eight Bible names. The first set are fathers, the second set are the sons. Can you connect the father to his son each time?

ZEBEDEE	SHEM
ABRAHAM	JOSHUA
JESSE	JOHN THE BAPTIST
ADAM	SAMSON
MANOAH	JAMES
NUN	ISAAC
ZACHARIAS	CAIN
NOAH	DAVID

OUR FATHER...

... Here are things said about the opening words of the Lord's Prayer

It might well be said that the word *Father* used of God is the summary of the Christian faith.

By 'Father' is meant all Divine goodness.

What charm is present in this tender opening, and even more when we see that it is the Lord himself who gives us the form for us to approach him!

We cannot begin this prayer selfishly but only by us taking with us all our brothers and sisters. As we do, we feel around us the everlasting arms.

THE START OF SPRING



Someone showed me some lavender – always out at the start of spring – and got me to smell it. They asked me why it's called 'lavender'. I said it's to do with washing: a 'laver' is a washing bowl and I found out that lavender used to be put in with the washing to scent it. But even so, the scent of lavender also washes over us as we pass by the flowering bush.

Swedenborg Association of Australia



Friday 7:45pm, 22nd September 2017

at the New Church, 4 Shirley Road, Roseville

\$5 members/\$7 non-members (see note below on donations)

When The Snake Bites The Sun

acclaimed film director Michael Edols ACS (interview by Joe Vandermeer)

Michael grew up among the Murut longhouses of North-East Borneo. Tribal life whet his interest in other ways of life. His film camera travelled the globe capturing aspects of such a life. Awards followed. Providence placed him centre-stage documenting



the loss of traditional knowledge, a fading spiritual way of living threatened by deaths of significant elders and modern life distractions. In the 1970's Kimberley elders approached Michael for help with what Albert Barunga expressing as his dismay over "the young not listening to aboriginal wisdom by the elders." Hence these Barunga elders enlisted Edols to be "their film". When Michael's skin brother, tribal elder Sam Woolagoodja came to life's end he handed over custodianship of

their ancient knowledge which Michael had captured and learned about. Amidst film snippets we'll interview Michael about his story; about correspondences in *The Snake Biting the Sun*; of his work on a custodianship syllabus; and his current project (to which tonight's door takings will be given plus any extra donations you may wish to add).

For online donations: <https://australianculturalfund.org.au/projects/the-galangala-project> We will commence with the briefest AGM possible.

More SAA events info at www.swedenborg.com.au

THE PILLARS OF NEW CHURCH BELIEFS



We're going to think about the importance of **NAMES**.

Imagine you are talking with a friend about someone else and their situation. The first thing you both must do is establish who it is that you are talking about. So you use this person's name. "Ah, him." Names give our identity.

There are many names of God in the Bible. He is called The Lord God, the Almighty, the Rock, the Prince of Peace and many more. These are all descriptive of what God is like and how he works with us.

Notice how in both the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments the idea of God's "name" – his quality – is mentioned. "Hallowed be thy name." "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain."

Names of course are often turned into nicknames by us. Children do it all the time. It can be hair colour or size, or an altered surname or just what you're like. So while we have our given names, it could be that in heaven we will be called by a quality we are associated with.

Linked with that is the idea that as we regenerate we 'make a name for ourselves' but differently from the normal idea of doing that. So someone with a quiet wisdom about them is known and appreciated for being like that.

And then there are all those often hard-to-pronounce names in the Bible, like Jehoiachin. To us they're simply a name, but each name means something and this particular name means "God establishes." That gives us a way in to work with the Bible more spiritually. If God establishes everything, what does that then tell us about our best approach to life?

Someone might see you shopping and call your name to call you over. The Good Shepherd knows his sheep by name and they follow him.

FIVE ARTISTS INSPIRED BY SWEDENBORG

The Swedenborg Foundation held a Swedenborg and the Arts Symposium in June this year and had a number of experts on art leading the sessions. Their report also covers five artists who made spiritual realities visible on canvas and who were very influenced by Swedenborg.

1. John Flaxman

a famous English fresco designer



This is Flaxman's "Deliver us from evil" which is in the parish church of Micheldever.

2. Hiram Powers was a foremost American sculptor. He said art should be spiritual, not animal. "A nude statue should be an unveiled soul."

3. William Blake, the British poet and artist, often accompanying his poems with his engravings. One of his best and most well-known poems is The Divine Image: "To mercy, pity, peace and love..."

4. George Inness, an influential 19th century American painter, often called the father of American landscape painting. He saw colours as a visible spiritual representation and used this approach in his work.

5. Dennis Duckworth, whose strong lines and pastel shades created pictures of spiritual experiences. One of his best is "The Tedium of Perpetual Worship" of a scene in the spiritual world.

FINAL FABLE

In a monastery, the students were in awe of one of their masters whose calmness and serenity was second to none. Being students, they decided to put this to the test. So they waited until morning tea and when the master came along the corridor carrying his teacup, they all rushed on him screaming and shouting. But he calmly continued walking with his teacup. When he got to his table, he sat down and cried out, "Ohhhhhh!"

Many years later he was to become the first Australian translator of Dante's *Inferno*. Later, Griffith became Queensland Supreme Court's Chief Justice from 1893 to 1903 before being appointed Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia in 1920. He was also Premier of Queensland and a principal author of the Constitution of Australia. Which I suspected would have associated Griffith directly and Mein directly or indirectly with champion of Federation, Alfred Deakin who was Australia's Prime Minister three times between 1903 and 1910.

Sure enough, I found that the National Library of Australia has the personal papers of Deakin which indicate he corresponded with Griffith and many other men of repute such as Lord Tennyson.

Deakin was known to have taken a serious interest in

Swedenborg: "My salvation and inspiration come from philosophy a little and religion a great deal, especially from the mystics ancient or modern theosophical. With them my load is lifted and I regain peace, courage, faith. Praise be to the God of Jesus, ... of Swedenborg, of St. Paul."

And: "Jesus Christ is the life of the present, the light of the future and the hope of the world." - J. A. La Nauze Biography (Deakin Manuscripts NLA- brown blue exercise book page 29-31)

Swedenborg teachings influenced many famous leaders like Deakin. 'Affable Alfred' was a keen observer of human nature. A man of strong personal ideals, a celebrated orator skilled at compromise on practical issues in order to achieve the great goal of federation. A spiritualist, he believed his role in Australian federation was pre-ordained. Deakin was prime minister three times between 1903 and 1910. Deakin wrote to his children in case he would pass away saying:

"....In case of my death, I desire and earnestly request that my children be brought up religiously, but as far as possible apart from sectarianism - the knowledge and love of God as a foundation of all life and love and power - "closer to us than breathing and near than hands and feet" by whom our prayers are always heard..." Alfred Deakin 7th Sept 1890.

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Although I could not find on the internet whether Griffith was into Swedenborg, it would be beyond doubt that he and Mein would have discussed Swedenborg, making it even more likely that Deakin and Griffith perhaps shared ideas on that subject. But until I see the actual correspondence papers, this remains speculation. But back to the phone calls. The next day, I received a call from an expert art conservator who worked in the field of art history and was looking to contact Dr Al Gabay, the author of several books on mysticism, Deakin and Swedenborg, and on spiritualism in Australian (especially in Victoria) around the time of Federation. There was a recent re-release of one of Dr Gabay's books who had once given a talk for the SAA here. I mentioned the books of the previous caller and he conservator said they would be worth a decent amount of money considering the obvious evidence of who they had belonged to and the conservator listed several possible contacts of libraries and public institutions who he worked with who might be interested. But the book seller had chosen to remain anonymous. Anyhow, I took contact details of the conservator. When I attended a dance class in the evening, a fellow student had just returned from holidays, telling me excitedly that a friend (a "Mr Bennett") had holidayed with them and somehow they got talking about him contacting me to sell some rare books! Bingo! Needless to say, not long after the original caller phoned me back so that I could put him in touch with the conservator. It has since been pointed out to me that Mein joined the New Church Society and was instrumental in setting it up in Australia by doing its legal work free of charge. Plus other references to Mein occur in "A History of the New Church in Australia". Coincidentally the first services in Canberra were given by Rev Bernard Willmott in the "Griffith Centre." Perhaps someone can tell me if that Centre was in the Canberra suburb of Griffith, a suburb named after the same Sir Samuel Griffith mentioned above. And perhaps someone knows if any of the Bennetts mentioned in that same New Church history book were perhaps related to the Bennett who inherited those books now for sale?