

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.



*“Seek the Lord while he may be found;
call upon him while he is near.”*

Isaiah 55:6

*“Seek and you will find, for he who
seeks, finds.”*

Matthew 7:7-8

*“Seek first the kingdom of God and
his righteousness, and all these
things shall be added to you.”*

Matthew 6:33

Our Bible studies this month are Tuesday October 2nd, 16th and 29th

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The new Minister of the Sydney Society is Rev. Howard Thompson and from now on he can be contacted at any time by phoning the church office (02) 9416 7026 or by a personal visit to 4 Shirley Road, Roseville, for any pastoral help or guidance. Please let Howard 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

“US THEM OR THEY THEM”

“The character of members of the Christian Church at the present day was demonstrated to me visually by means of representations. Enveloped by a dark cloud there appeared spirits so black that I shuddered. After that others not so terrifying made their appearance; and then it was indicated to me that I was about to witness something. First of all I saw children who were being combed by their mothers in so cruel a fashion that blood was running down. This represented the nature of young children's upbringing nowadays.” (Heavenly Secrets 2125).

Think about this picture of the “members of the Christian Church at the present day.” Consider honestly your thoughts about those people the passage describes. I say again, even take a break from reading this piece, think about your thoughts about those people described.

There was, in the 1970's and early 1980's, an American television series called 'M*A*S*H.' Set in Korea during the Korean Conflict of the 1950's, M*A*S*H told of the comedy and drama of the lives of doctors and nurses serving in a Mobile Hospital not far from the front lines. In one memorable episode a North Korean soldier was brought in to the operating room for surgery. Major Frank Burns, the by-the-book U.S. Army Major and somewhat bumbling surgeon said; “I'm not going to

operate on him, he's one of them." To which one of the other surgeons in the room ask; "which them Frank, us them or they them?"

To what extent do you see yourself in this story? Reflect on your thoughts from the first reading about those of the Christian Church at the present day." Reflect on your thoughts of those of the Christian Church of THIS day. There are times when some of us can feel quite smug, thinking "I am of the New Church, I am one of us, he is one of them."

When I find myself caught up in 'us and them' thinking I am reminded of this parable from the Lord:

'Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted' (Luke 18:10-14).

The Word is, at the same time, about the Lord and about the person reading it. Every character in the Word represents an aspect of our own spiritual life. In other words, each of us are, at the same time, both 'us' and 'them.'

Good wishes to you all, Howard

THE INDUCTION SERVICE ON SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 2nd

(This article originally appeared in the September/Spring issue of The New Age and was our quarterly Sydney Society report along with those from other societies around Australia.)

Well, the moment finally arrived when the Thompsons, Rev Howard, Debra and Lance arrived in Sydney on August 15th. Pretty tired after their long journey and from packing up their personal effects several weeks before, to be shipped here, arriving later in September. They have been staying in a delightful serviced apartment in Chatswood before moving into the manse and settling in there.

It is a lovely thing too that the Thompsons arrived soon after the Swedenborg Centre moved into the two front rooms of the building. The Induction service

was on Sunday September 2nd, led throughout by Rev David Moffat, the President of the New Church in Australia. A good number of people came for this occasion and the service went very well. The Sydney Society representative, Graham Hall, presented Howard for ministry of the church and promised our support and respect. Howard, with Debra and Lance nearby, was inducted, blessed, hugged and applauded. A happy



barbecue lunch followed, giving hopefully everybody present the opportunity to have at least a few minutes chat with the Thompsons.

David Moffat spoke with the children about the way he dresses when he cycles around Canberra and linked this with the way we need to be prepared properly when we get involved in living our lives.

David's address started with a question: "Are you a pipe or a bucket?" He showed us in several ways – biblically, doctrinally, life-relatedly and really that the Lord wants us to be a pipe through which things can flow from the Lord through us and shared with the people around us.

(End of article)

Thank you very much indeed to those who joined us for the service and the lunch and the great amount of help that was given in preparing things and making the whole occasion a great bookmark in the history of the Sydney Society.

SWEDENBORG CENTRE NEWS

The new Swedenborg Centre at Roseville has so far been a very happy and buzzing place ever since we relocated. We have been missed by our old neighbors in North Ryde, but have already found some new friends around us in Roseville. Thanks to everyone for your support of the transition and the work of the Centre. Many visitors have already come to check out the place and enjoyed the flowing coffee and conversation which is now a frequent sight at 4 Shirley Road.

Limelight on Dr Maurice Nicoll

I was delighted to see a very good article by Jeffrey Adams on the work of psychologist Dr Maurice Nicoll appear on the Swedenborg Foundation's online blog. Dr Maurice Nicoll had a deep understanding of the Swedenborg writings yet rarely presented those teachings by using Swedenborg's name. Nicoll was a capable author who digested and then translated that understanding of Swedenborg's works into language and concepts that you and I can easily understand, and thereby contributed much to the greater uptake and application of Swedenborg's

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key message, namely to 'do what we know.' Nicoll worked closely with Dr Carl Jung and became an excellent teacher of spiritual development work as brought to the west by George Ivanovich Gurdjieff (a method called The Fourth Way). Gurdjieff focused on teaching methods and processes he has learned from all manner of various schools and Christian esoteric centres around the world. Meanwhile Swedenborg exposed the entire spiritual reality and framework standing behind the need to do inner work on oneself, but although Swedenborg did hint at the general process, he was fairly light on with details on methods. The value of Nicoll is in his long contact with the works of Swedenborg, which helped greatly to complete his deep understanding of the process and means of spiritual development as well as being very familiar with the methods which Gurdjieff taught. This is evidenced in the good books Nicoll wrote, namely The New Man, and The Mark which have a place in the Centre's library as erudite expositions about the use of parables for inner growth and New Testament interpretation.

I have put Nicoll on the same high mental shelf as Dr Wilson Van Dusen and other synergistic teachers and authors like Leon Rhodes ('Aim'), Edward "the God Guy" Sylvia ('Proof of God'), and Lee Van Laer ('Regeneration', website linking Zen, Yoga, Gurdjieff, and Swedenborg), and my own teacher Dr Philip Groves ('Beyond the Fourth Way', 'The Esotericism of Emanuel Swedenborg'). For the blog article, see <https://swedenborg.com/scholars-the-swedenborgian-tree-gracing-maurice-nicolls-garden-of-esoterica/>

For the Love of God, how the church is better AND worse than you ever imagined

Recently the screening of a documentary movie was brought to my attention via ABC Radio National's show God Forbid. When it again hit my inbox as an invitation to attend a screening of the film I jumped at it. The film is a documentary called 'For the Love of God' and is an honest balanced look at how the church is (and has been) better AND worse than you ever imagined.

The screening was cancelled due to lack of ticket sales, so I bought a copy of all four hour-long episodes to watch at the Swedenborg Centre (for personal viewing, with any visitors present of course!) if you are interested. It is well worth a look for some thought provoking questions about religion and its mixed history, understanding and application. The film has been contributed to by the Centre for Public Christianity (alongside the Bible Society Australia) who do a lot of very good research into getting science and religion aligned as well as helping the public to understand religion and religious trends. Feedback for the film so far has been beyond our expectations and overwhelmingly positive. People have said that this is both an excellent tool for understanding religion and to equip and encourage individuals in their spirituality. You could also check the FanForce website to see if there are any screenings scheduled in cinemas near you soon. To watch the trailer, see <https://vimeo.com/257438531>

AV upgrade

We are looking forward to the imminent audio-visual upgrade of the equipment in the church in Roseville, both to expand the potential range and frequency of activities there, but also because it is now one of the main meeting venues for the events of the Swedenborg Association of Australia who will be happy beneficiaries of the new gear.

For updates on SAA events as well as updates from the Centre, do keep your eye on the website at www.swedenborg.com.au

Best wishes for a wonderful month ahead,
Joe

STEWARDS AND FLOWERS ROSTER FOR OCTOBER

Sunday	Steward(s)	Flowers
7 th (Sacr.)	Rhonda Hall	Debra Thompson
14 th	David Curry	Synthetics
21 st	Wayne Kasmar	Glen Hart
28 th	Michael Chester	Philip Brodsky

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SNIPPETS FROM THE SCRAPBOOK

An archaeologist is the best husband a woman can have. The older she gets the more interested he is in her.

- Agatha Christie

Walking with a friend in the dark is better than walking alone in the light.

- Helen Keller

The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.

- Stephen Covey

If a writer knows enough about what he is writing about, he may omit things that he knows. The dignity of the movement of an iceberg is due to only one ninth of it being above water.

- Ernest Hemingway

In the absence of any other proof, the thumb alone would convince me of God's existence.

- Isaac Newton

I write from my soul. This is the reason that critics don't hurt me, because it is me. If it was not me, if I was pretending to be someone else, then this could unbalance my world, but I know who I am.

- Paulo Coelho

A SAD PASSING

Our four children made wonderful friends during their time at school, and some of these continue on still. More friends came with them being friends of friends and Ruth and I got used to regular visits to our house, the manse, of lots of delightful young people. I remember one teenager who had come and gone straight to our son's room to chat and watch movies. As he left, he came to my office and said, "Mr Duckworth, thank you for having me." I said, smiling, "It's a pleasure but I didn't even know you were here!"

But one friend has recently died, at 29, with an accidental drug overdose. Like so many, he had taken drugs but as time and rehab treatment and other help came, he really wanted to kick it. The last months were good ones, with some relapses, but he was getting his life

back together. But something went wrong and on Sunday September 16th he was found lifeless at home in his room by his mum.

So tragic – so common. No blame – no easy explanation. Just the fact from our end that it has happened, and the hope/belief/conviction that he is, as we all are in any world this or the next, absolutely in the care of the Lord over everything, seeking the best for each of us to eternity.

I am privileged to be taking the funeral service – a celebration of him – later today, here in our church. There will be many young people gathering as well as family and relatives and friends. Do I launch into the dangers of drugs, the marvellous comforting teachings of our church about the afterlife? I don't think so. It is a time to be with people not over the top of them.

The thought crossed my mind a few days ago that this young person's passing may well be the first death experienced by quite a few of the young people at the funeral, and every death raises the most basic of all life's questions. I will be asking them to explore the feelings they have about seeming to lose a close friend and to let the insights and thoughts come to them and sit inside them and develop. In that way, as in other ways, while this death is terribly sad, there are potentials from it.

Those very close friends, including our son, have worked incredibly hard to help the commemoration be right and go well. It's been the way they can demonstrate their feelings through quietly rallying and being useful, bless them.

Several times over the last week, I've found myself saying the words of the ANZAC Ode commemorating young people about the same age as this young man, so I share the ode with you for reflection.

*They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.*

Julian

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FRIENDSHIP GROUP

The next gathering of our friendship group will be very soon, on Wednesday October 3rd, beginning with coffee at 10.45 a.m. Later we will enjoy our shared lunch together.

This will be the first time that we will have Howard and Debra with us and we look forward to that enormously.

Everyone is very welcome to come and join us and we hope to see you there.

Glen Hart

THE NEW AGE

The latest Spring 2018 issue of The New Age (the national church's quarterly magazine) is now out. There are few if any spare copies so if you have one it could become a collector's item. However, all is not lost, as it is also up online at (or @) www.thenewage.net.au where all previous online editions are archived.

If you aren't a computer user, fear not, because I have all the articles in one print-out-able file and would happily either email you the file or even print out the issue for you. Let Julian know if that's for you. Which leads me to tell you what is in this new issue...

An editorial about 135 years of The New Age, from 1883, and what went on that year.

A great sermon by Rev Todd Beiswenger on the amazing faithfulness of the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob) when faced with fear and uncertainty.

The President's Page, a report on current activities, from David Moffat. Society Reports: Adelaide, Brisbane, Perth, Roseville, and Victoria.

Introducing the Thompsons, including several lovely photos.

An interesting article from one of our church members in Sydney.

A longish but fascinating set of testimonials from people who take part in and get so much from Logopraxis.

THE SUN AND THE MOON



The sun and the moon are so obviously there day after day, night after night, that we don't give them the attention they deserve. So let's do that for a bit and see their meaning.

In the New Church we have the teaching that the Sun represents **everything** about the Lord and the moon represents the place of faith in our lives. We'll come back to these meanings later.

One remarkable thing about our view of the sun and the full moon is that they appear to us to be the same size, as the picture shows. Of course they aren't the same size at all! So, this similarity helps us. We can see the moon at night (and sometimes it's there during the day too) and a split second before we realise this is the moon we think about the sun. That is interesting and you can see a helpful meaning to it. The moon's light is the reflected sunlight bounced off the moon back to us on earth.

For reasons I won't go into, we always see the same side of the moon which faces our planet earth. So there is a kind of constancy to the moon even though it goes through its monthly phases of new, half, full, waxing and waning cycles. Link that with 'faith' and both of them say much. Our belief and trust in the Lord needs to have a constancy for us and yet our experience is that we have a stronger surer faith at certain times than at other times.

The sun is the source of all life, for obvious reasons. It's heat (I prefer 'warmth') and light speak to us about the Lord's love and wisdom. We actually cannot see the mass of the sun itself but only what proceeds from it (the rays) and this fits in very well with the teaching that we cannot comprehend the Divine Itself but we can see what comes to us from the Divine (the Lord), his power, presence, creation, providence

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Because the sun means the Divine (or God) there is an interesting point made by Swedenborg in 'Heaven and Hell' (where there's a whole chapter about the Sun in Heaven) about the angels. The angels always see the sun before them no matter in which direction they are turning. Try that out here and it won't work, but it is a great spiritual world truth that angels always face the Lord or turn to the Lord whether they are doing this or doing that.

The moon's spiritual idea of meaning faith is due to two things; first the fact that we associate the moon with night time and darkness which is when we can be in a more confused state (unable to see) and the light of the silvery moon provides our reminder of the continuing presence of the Lord with us even though we don't feel it. Secondly, this is due to, as we said earlier, the reflected moonlight coming from the sun. How wonderful that nearby astronomical set-ups are so descriptive of our spiritual states and changes.

Lastly, the tremendous energy in the sun would fry us in an instant if we approached it. But the sun's heat and light is dispersed in all directions all around it and from it. From where we are and where every living thing on earth is, the amount of warmth and light is perfect for us to sustain us. Divine dilution and accommodation.

FINAL FABLE

The local synagogue arranged an outing for the whole congregation and decided to make it a day in the forest. So off they set, with picnics and ground rugs, and came into the forest where they had a remarkably good time.

After roistering for several hours the congregation packed up and set off for their village. But they took a wrong turn and found that they became progressively more lost in the forest. The 'oi vays' became louder and more afraid. But then, suddenly, their own beloved rabbi appeared in front of them out of the blue. "Ach, ve are saved!" was the cry. "Rabbi! Lead us out of the forest!" The Rabbi lifted his hands. "My children, I too was lost and seeing you I thought that you would lead me out of the forest."