

# Sydney Society Newsletter

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

4 Shirley Road, Roseville, N.S.W. 2069

Church Office phone: (02) 9416 7026

Minister: Rev Howard Thompson - revhathompson@gmail.com

On Facebook – Sydney Society of the New Church - Roseville

## *November 2018*

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.



*“Cause me to hear your loving kindness in the morning,  
for in you do I trust. Cause me to know the way in which  
I should walk, for I lift up my soul to you”. (Psalm 143:8)*

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Meditation most Tuesday mornings 9.30a.m. Phone Kathryn 9416  
4077  
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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**

### **iCloud or His Cloud?**

“I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth.” ~ Genesis 9:13

In 1982 American architect, systems theorist, author, designer, inventor and futurist, Buckminster "Bucky" Fuller, observed what he called the “Knowledge Doubling Curve.” Fuller observed that until 1900 human knowledge doubled approximately every 100 years. Starting in 1900 with the development of the internal combustion engine, the widespread availability of safe electrical power, the boom in knowledge of chemistry and physics, and most recently the explosion of the Digital Age, the “Knowledge Doubling Curve” has been increasing exponentially. Today the amount of knowledge stored on the “cloud” (the shared pools of configurable computers interconnected around the world that allows the internet to function) could arguably be 100 times that knowledge stored in all the libraries of the world in 1900. This fact came to mind as I was recently studying for a sermon on the bow that the Lord describes in Genesis 9. I find myself wondering; for all the knowledge we as the human race have access to, why do we seem to have so little intelligence or wisdom?

This modern-day cloud that so many of us rely upon to support our computers and smartphones, to glean knowledge from, to connect with our friends and families and to keep us informed appears to have one significant downside. With so much information available to the person of today, literally at our fingertips, it can be harder than ever to know what is true and how to apply that truth to do what is good. *Secrets of*

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*Heaven* (#1043) explains that the meaning of the cloud from Genesis is “falsity, which is the same thing as [a person’s] intellectual selfhood.” In other words, when we increasingly rely on intellectual knowledge and our acquisition of it, we open a huge door for our ego and selfishness to escape and direct our actions. *Secrets of Heaven* goes on to say, however, that “when [we allow the Lord to infuse our] selfhood with innocence, charity, and mercy, the cloud is no longer seen as something false but as the outward appearance of truth, together with truth that is true, which comes from the Lord” (Ibid). The downside of access to more information than any of us could ever hope to absorb, let alone process, is that it is our human nature to believe that we are becoming smarter. Often the smarter we feel we are based on acquired knowledge, the less we feel the need to pursue knowledge of the Lord. But this is a mistake. If we are to hold ourselves in a proper balance between our spiritual and natural lives we must make room for both natural knowledge and spiritual knowledge. This is why the Lord tells us to pursue know of Him first. “I believe in your commands; now teach me good judgment and knowledge” (Psalm 119:66), “If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you” (James 1:5). And, one of my favourite passages; “Oh, that we might know the Lord! Let us press on to know him. He will respond to us as surely as the arrival of dawn or the coming of rains in early spring” (Hosea 6:3). This last passage is an even more powerful pleading in the New King James translation; “Let us know, Let us pursue the knowledge of the Lord.”

I hesitate to mention politics but in many western cultures today politics seems to be doing a better job of driving people apart than ever I can remember in my lifetime. More than ever before a person is able to back up their political positions and biases with mounds of confirmatory evidence gleaned from the oceans of information available today. Many people no longer wish to listen to one another but only wish to convince one another. This observation, combined with the Lord’s teaching on the meaning of the cloud from Genesis brings to mind a teaching from *The New Jerusalem* (#121). “If all people were viewed from the

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perspective of caring no matter how they differed in the teachings of their faith and in the forms of their worship, the church would be unified. In other words, if charity were first in our minds, arguments about who is right would take their proper place in the back of our minds. The colours in our spiritual rainbow are made when light makes its way, however improbably, through our clouded understanding and produces brilliant colours as evidence of the manifestation of the Lord's truth applied to good in our lives.

“I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth.” ~ Genesis 9:13

Good wishes to you and yours from Howard



## **FROM THE SWEDENBORG CENTRE**

I'm currently preparing a presentation to the Australian Storytelling Guild of NSW by the Australian Fairy Tale Society about fairy tales, so I thought I would share some snippets from my mental scrapbook on that. The comments about stories and correspondences owe a debt to some excellent lectures by George De Charms on *The Philosophy Of New Church Education*. (George deCharms was an American New Church minister and an excellent writer in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.)



George De Charms mentions that folklore, fable and fairy tales are based on the idea of the spiritual world, that is the idea of the human mind and the way it operates. They illustrate spiritual laws, and the more ancient the stories are, the more illustrative they are because they

were written, or came into being, at a time when people had a perception of the spiritual world.

De Charms reminds us that many modern fairy tales might be interesting stories, but since they are written by people who may have very little

idea of the spiritual world, these tales are often pure fantasy creations using imagery which has no internal truth. They may even contain a very false idea of life. They might be very entertaining or interesting but they are not our only criteria to consider for a story with spiritual content. Do they give a true picture of life or not? Will they lead the mind to see what is true or do they implant some false idea?

So, is a fairy tale real? Well, it is real, only it is not factual. The reality lies in the other world, not in this one. De Charms says that children take the other world and its reality for granted, not to be questioned or proved. They believe it spontaneously. Children are created to see and understand it without hesitation or doubt. In the same way, simple people everywhere who have not been indoctrinated against it, spontaneously believe in the other world.

Poetic speech is often used for old tales, a language rich in similes, comparisons, and metaphors. When we speak about a ship that ploughs the sea we are comparing the similarity of physical appearances. But the real appeal of poetry happens in its human associations when a natural thing is compared to something we feel within, so the relation between the things used as images from this world and the things of the other inner world which they help us to feel.

Correspondence is the relation between the spiritual world as a world of causes and a natural world as a world of effects. Correspondences are something we can use, and something we cannot avoid using. We use them all the time in our speaking, consciously and unconsciously. The human mind lives in both worlds. We have no sensation that does not include an impulse from without or from the natural world and an impulse from within or from the spiritual world. We try to explain and describe the things we feel by means of what we see. So, correspondence appears in all human language which makes the study of language (for example word roots) a rich field for



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illustrating what correspondences are. In fact, speech is an effort to explain the things we feel within that come from the other world by using the things we see in the material world.

In ancient times such was the universal mode of speech. They spoke in correspondences and that form of speech has been preserved in the Sacred Scriptures. We find it in all the poetry of the Old Testament and in all the parables of the New Testament – comparison of natural and spiritual things.

In ancient times people had not learned to speak scientifically. They hadn't even conceived of such a thing. "Speak scientifically" means to speak with a definite attempt to rule out all our feelings and limit the thought to what comes from without. Scientific expression, in an effort for accuracy, yields a definition of factual content, and any feeling we might have must be eliminated. There was no such thing in ancient times. They didn't care about facts. Facts had nothing to do with human life; they were merely dead things in the world around them which had no interest for them. So, throughout the Sacred Scripture external things are used very carelessly from the standpoint of science. They are not at all accurate in a scientific sense. We find unrealistically large numbers used in connection with armies because they did not care whether they counted them right or not. The numbers expressed how they felt about their tremendous armies.

So, are the scriptures stories true? Of course, they are true – true to the way they were written. They would not be true if we try to transpose them to our world and impress the limitations of scientific fact upon them.

We also find correspondences throughout nature in organic forms. We are apt to think of correspondence as having to do with form, but primarily correspondence has to do with function. A function, or use, is always spiritual. A use exists first, and it produces the organic form. The use of the eye is to see. It appears as if we must have an eye first and



then we see. But the use was there first and the organ was created to fill that use.

Everything has its origin in the Divine Providence, Divine Love, the Divine foresight of what will serve the purpose of creation. The human body is the most perfect illustration we can have of correspondences. Yet we should be careful about referring to some organ and saying it corresponds to so and so. It is important to avoid thinking in categorical statements about correspondences, treating them as absolute facts, because correspondences are very living things and highly complex. They are based, not on fixed forms, but on qualities.



Imaginative pictures through stories prepare the mind to clothe spiritual truth. The purely scientific attitude would lead to a ridiculing of these imaginative things on the grounds that the only things of real value are those things that are factually true, and that when we tell stories and fables, we are telling something that isn't true, which is a great mistake. By understanding what the purpose of using stories and imaginative pictures is, we are telling the truth in a way that inwardly attuned people are capable of understanding.

We first learn from sensory appearances, such as that the sun rises and sets; the earth is flat; the sky is blue, which are initially accepted as truth on that plane. Then we learn that there is a difference between these appearances and what the truth behind them really is. It is true to us (to our senses and initially to our mind) that the sun rises. We see it every morning and it sets every night. But the question of why it does so, or what makes it so appear, is something else. A sensory appearance is a kind of truth, it is true to the senses.

Then there are appearances on the imaginative plane. These are also true, although they are not factual. For instance, good is always victorious over evil. The idea that the maiden who is rescued by the brave knight is always beautiful, is true but not always factual. The idea that the unknown hero turns out to be a prince with a kingdom to offer his beloved is not always factual either. Finally, the idea that they live

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happily ever after – this is truth as imagination would picture it. We like to see it as we think it ought to be, as we feel it ought to be. If you stop to consider, there is a reason we feel that way. We would not feel that way if there were not a truth behind that picture in the imagination. Why should we feel that good ought always to be victorious over evil? Because there is something in us that tells us it is true. It is satisfying to our inner feeling of what is right and appropriate. Indeed, we are created to perceive what is true.

Now that is the part that is not recognized by many who become enamoured of scientific teaching. They lose sight of the fact that imaginative things are expressing truth, a deeper truth, a truth that is of utmost importance, more important than to understand or interpret a scientific truth, which ought to be learned later than that deeper truth. And while a scientific interpretation, when we learn of that, needs us to revise our understanding of the deeper truth and acknowledge that the deeper truth is not always factual, nevertheless, because we have first learned this deeper truth, we will be better equipped to interpret rightly, in accord with that deeper truth, the appearances and the factual actualities of life which we discover later.

All the best, Joe

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## SNIPPETS FROM THE SCRAPBOOK



*A good laugh is sunshine in the house.*

- W M Thackeray

A lawn is nature under totalitarian rule. - Michael Pollan

*The Christian does not think God will love us because we are good, but that God will make us good because He loves us.* – C S Lewis

Life is the art of drawing without an eraser. - John W Gardner



*And still, after all this time, the sun never says to the earth, "You owe me." Look what happens to a love like that; it lights the Whole Sky.*

- Hafiz (Persian poet)

Before I go to bed, I thank God for all the blessings he's blessed me with, and to keep my family safe.

- Lauren Alaina

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## AT THE ELEVENTH HOUR



This November, a significant centenary occurs and will be marked around the world, that, on November 11th 1918, at 11 a.m. an Armistice was signed in a railway carriage in the forest of Compiègne marking the defeat of Germany in the First World War and leading to the Treaty of Versailles in 1919.

Around 62,000 Australian soldiers (out of a then population of 5 million) lost their lives during the First World War mostly in northern France and Flanders in such towns and villages as Villiers-Bretonneux and Posnières. All told, 20 million died and 22 million were wounded.

November 11<sup>th</sup> this year falls on a Sunday.

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## LET US PRAY

Someone once commented that the one thing we can always do is to pray. Well said, whoever that was. But it is not always easy to put the words together to catch the intention of our prayer. But at the other extreme, prayer can be a feeling we hold in our heart without any words. We shouldn't be afraid of saying or feeling our prayer to God, nor doubt its use. God knows every part and purpose of every prayer we give.

Recently, I put together 31 prayers covering quite a range of topics and all around the same length. Why 31? I don't really know but that number means you have a different prayer for each day in any month.

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If you would like to have a set of these 31 prayers, then just let me know. I can email them or print and post them. Thanks, Julian  
(see page 12 for 2 examples) [julian@duckworth.me](mailto:julian@duckworth.me) 0427 938 732

## ROSEVILLE CHRISTMAS SERVICES 2018 schedule



Please note the December Christmas services and their dates

Sunday December 2<sup>nd</sup> (1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Advent)

Service includes the Holy Supper

Sunday December 9<sup>th</sup> Telling of the Nativity Story

followed by Church Christmas Party

Gifts Collection for Salvation Army

Sunday December 16<sup>th</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Advent

Sunday December 23<sup>rd</sup> Lessons and Carols – 7 p.m.

Tuesday December 25<sup>th</sup> Christmas Day Service

Sunday December 30<sup>th</sup> New Year Service

## SOCIETY NEWS

The Thompson's belongings arrived from England and they are making good progress transforming the manse into their home.

The project to improve lighting and audio-visual capabilities in the church should be complete by early November. Come and see the changes.

## THE WORD 'GOD'



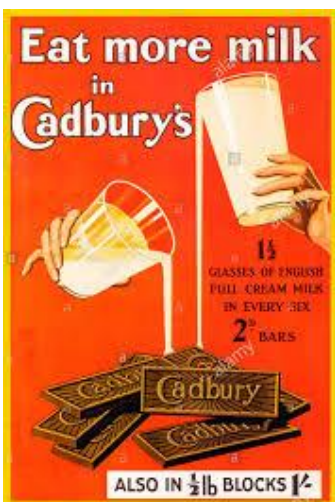
The other day, quite accidentally, but these things happen for reasons, I came across a startling re-definition of the origin of the word 'God'. Like lots of people I had always thought

that the word ‘god’ had come from the lovely fitting word ‘good’ which kind of describes God very well. But apparently not; they come from separate origins and one didn’t evolve from the other.

Okay, I thought, then where did the word ‘God’ come from? I kept reading and here is what it said. ‘God’ in English traces back to a very ancient word which was probably ‘ghue’ which always carried the idea of something being poured out.

At this point, I pricked up my ears; this was getting interesting.

“Something being poured out” or ancient ghue is a very good description of God who gives life, holds life in existence, and pours life into each of us every moment, and we are on the receiving end of this.



“No one has life in himself or herself because there is only one life which is that of the Lord which flows into every person but is differently received. The difference is in the quality we put on our soul by our life in the world.

We can compare this with the light from the sun which flows into things but gets changed by each object’s form and becomes bright and clear or dense and dull.”

Secrets of Heaven 6467

As I poured over this fascinating article, it went on to say that there are several words in common use today which, like ‘god’ have also come from this ancient ‘ghue’ with its idea of being poured. Here are three pictures to help you work out which words these are.



(from the “Let Us Pray” item on pages 9-10) here are two examples:



A prayer for when we feel uplifted

Dear Lord, my life, always in your hands, has its highs and lows. When I feel sure and confident, when I feel strong and lifted up, let me remember that this is a gift for this particular moment, and may I feel thankful and use it well. But give me humility too, so that I do not become self-assured or over-confident. I pray this because I know that at some point I will have new challenges to deal with and things about myself that I will need to

work on. In all these changes I see your loving wisdom. Amen

A prayer for those who are sick

O Lord, I pray to you about those people who are sick whether that is a sickness in their bodies or their minds or their hearts or their spirits, or their worry about something they are facing in their lives. I pray for them now to you. I hold them up to you for your care and healing. May your will be done with us all.

I pray for the people that I know have their illnesses, hardships or cares.

I pray to you for .....

and ask you to be with him/her/them as I know that you are with all of us always. Amen

### FINAL FABLE

A man owned a large dog and cared for it well. One day the dog showed signs of suffering and the man went and bought a bottle of cod liver oil to help the dog get better. He grabbed the dog, poured some out onto a spoon, opened the jaws of the dog and managed to get a drop into the dog. This carried on for several days, and was a real struggle. Eventually, the dog broke loose and the bottle fell on the floor, emptying its contents. The dog came to the spilled oil with its tail wagging, and happily began to lick it all up.