

The New Church

Roseville

March
2019

Directory

Society Minister

Rev. Howard Thompson

Officers

Secretary

Graham Hall

Treasurer

Graham St. Quintin

Church Officer

Debra Barratt Thompson

Sunday School

Sunday School is held at the same time as the 10 am service each Sunday (children meet in the church to begin with).

Sunday Social Hour

After every service we have tea and coffee in the hall and the opportunity to meet socially, sometimes more formally.

The Angel Service

The Angel Service is an informal service that invites participants to reflect on the active role the spiritual world plays in our physical lives. The service involves reflection, discussion, sometimes a brief talk and always concludes with prayer. It is held by the participants as an invitation to healing.

The Angel Service is held on the 2nd and 4th Saturday at 5 p.m.

Different **classes on New Church teachings** are held midweek. These are generally fortnightly but vary. Consult the coloured accompanying calendar inside the Newsletter.

The Swedenborg Centre can be visited at 4 Shirley Road, Roseville NSW 2069. You are welcome to drop in and look around. The Centre is generously supported by the Sydney Society of the New Church and provides an independent and relaxing place to meet and discuss a personal approach to finding spiritual meaning. The Centre has a wide range of study materials, Swedenborg's works, and books by supporting authors. The Centre and its director Joe Vandermeer can be reached on phone (02) 9416 2812 or email info@swedenborg.com.au Opening hours are Monday to Friday 9.30am to 4.30pm. More events details at www.swedenborg.com.au The Centre can also be used to answer enquiries about the New Church, its literature and its teachings.

Sydney Society Newsletter

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

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

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On Facebook – Sydney Society of the New Church - Roseville

March 2019

The Faith of the New Church is summarised 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.



On Miracles

“Divine miracles are as different from miracles involving the use of magic as heaven is from hell.”

Arcana Coelestia 7337

“The reason miracles are not happening today the way they used to is that miracles are coercive; they take away our free choice in spiritual matters. They make us more earthly than spiritual.”

True Christianity 501

“You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing me.”

John 20:29

Doubt

As many who know me know, I have spent a good deal of time on my bicycle. It is, in many ways, how I meditate or how I process the many thoughts that flow through my mind on a daily basis. Now I know that not everyone approaches their meditation or problem solving in this way. I do, however, hope that each of us spends some quiet contemplative time several times each week. On one ride I found myself reflecting on doubt. This was not a conscious effort on my part but more the reaction to a volley of negative thoughts likely from hell that made me feel rather bad about myself. ‘Your a terrible father’, ‘your a failure as a husband’, ‘who are you kidding calling yourself a priest?’ These were just some of the thoughts that came racing into my mind and I can tell you that by the end of the ride I wasn’t feeling very good about myself.

Now I am not about to compare myself with Mother Teresa of Calcutta but I recall learning of her doubts, shared with a spiritual confidant many time over the last 40 years of her life. Here is just a sampling of some of what she shared:

“Lord, my God, you have thrown [me] away as unwanted - unloved...I call, I cling, I want, and there is no one to answer, no, no one. Alone. Where is my faith? Even deep down right in there is nothing. I have no faith. I dare not utter the words and thoughts that crowd in my heart...I am told God loves me, and yet the reality of the darkness and coldness and emptiness is so great that nothing touches my soul. Did I make a mistake in surrendering blindly to the Call of the Sacred Heart?”

And yet, throughout those 40 years Mother Teresa faithfully served the poorest of the poor in Calcutta and served to inspire thousands more to follow her example of how to truly love the neighbour.

The Word, too, is full of examples of people who doubt the Lord. Peter, the ‘rock’ upon which the Lord will build His Church, famously doubted when the Lord told him to get out of the boat and walk to Him on the water. When Peter began to sink the Lord took his hand saying; “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”(Matthew 14:31).

The Doctrine for the New Church tells us that doubt is an essential component of true temptation. Or, to put it more clearly, temptation is always accompanied by doubt. Secrets of Heaven says this about doubt and temptation: “Anyone who is undergoing temptation experiences doubt as regards the end in view. That end is the love against which evil spirits and evil genii fight and in so doing place the end in doubt. And the greater his love is, the more they place it in doubt. Unless the end in view which a person loves is placed in doubt, and even in despair, there would be no temptation. A feeling of certainty about the outcome precedes, and is part of, victory.” (AC 1820)

Maybe the next time I am experiencing thoughts of doubt concerning who I am and what I am doing, I will be able to draw on other thoughts. Maybe I will be able to draw on the knowledge that my doubts are being initiated by evil spirits who wish me to be doubting, both myself and the Lord’s help and presence. And maybe, just maybe, I will be able to remember what a humble nun did in the face of longer and deeper doubts. She served the neighbour for 40 years.

Good wishes to you all,

Rev. Howard A. Thompson

Minister’s Question?

The February Newsletter introduced a segment called “Minister’s Question” with a look at why the Lord’s Prayer appears to suggest that the Lord leads us into temptation. Next month I will be answer a question generated from the piece; “How are we led into temptation?” If you have a question, no matter how simple or silly you may feel it is, please feel free to submit it. I can guarantee that among our readers any question you may have will be a query another person has.

Questions can be submitted to the Newsletter via email (revhathompson@gmail.com) or post (Newsletter, 4 Shirley Road, Roseville NSW 2069).

News from the Swedenborg Centre

by Joe Vandermeer



The Swedenborg Association of Australia have kicked off the year with their first event using the new audio visual equipment in the church in Roseville, which they are very excited about. That event is on Friday, 22nd February 2019 (and generally these events are on the fourth Friday of each month). The event will make use of some useful content provided by the Swedenborg Foundation from their YouTube channel called OffTheLeftEye. The topic of the video material is How Angels Talk to Us (facilitated by Michael Chester).

Incidentally, where did they come up with the name for their channel "Off the Left Eye"? It has to do with spiritual sight. In *Heaven in Hell* 450 (and in *Secrets of Heaven* 183) Swedenborg is shown what it's like to be revived from death. He was having sort of a near-death experience but conscious enough to be able to record it. So he died and is being woken up in the spirit. When he's ready to be given his spiritual sight he says: "The angels appeared to roll off, as it were, a coat from the left eye toward the bridge of the nose, that the eye might be opened and enabled to see." And in *Secrets of Heaven* 2701 he explains that the left eye is the understanding part of the mind whereas the right eye is its affection. So the left eye is associated with our intellectual part, which is always learning (just like the YouTube channel is trying to convey information for the purpose of learning). And the right eye, or the right side represents the emotional part and so the doing part. The idea is that through YouTube the channel provides you with the left eye side, the thoughts, so that you might take those thoughts and act on the content.



One response to the email campaign which advertised the above SAA event made me realise that perhaps I had taken it for granted that people already understood what angels are. But people unfamiliar with angels might consider them a special creation, separate from us, having arisen independently and therefore they might be thought of as somewhat alien and unlike us, and a belief in them could easily be

regarded as naive, even childish. Therefore to avoid such mistaken assumptions, it is important to occasionally reintroduce the background of who Swedenborg is, and what we mean by the terms and the understanding which New Church members would be well aware of. So, by adapting some phrases provided by David Moffat and Neville Jarvis for another event, here is how we adapted the brief outline of the Roseville event in a subsequent promotion:

Emanuel Swedenborg, a renowned Swedish investigator of the sciences, after a series of spiritual experiences in the mid-1750s was granted an ability to witness the process of how our mind's thoughts and feelings interact with the minds of people living in the spiritual world. He reported that all those living persons in the spiritual world began life as an inhabitant of the human race in our world. The most loving, caring and wisest of these spirits are referred to as 'angels'.



When this church newsletter has been circulated the event will most likely already have occurred and been enjoyed by many, but the idea above is still valid, namely that basic understandings of things very familiar to those in the church need to be introduced from time to time afresh with gentle introductions to any jargon or unique concepts introduced by Swedenborg's writings. If you missed the SAA presentation, you can still enjoy the video content on which the evening was based by looking up Google for "OffTheLeftEye How Angels Talk With Us".

For those in Melbourne on day 1 of March, you may like to enjoy a presentation to the SAA group at Mt Waverley on Correspondences Made Easy presented by David Moffat (contact Neville Jarvis).

For details and flyers of those and other SAA events, please visit the website at www.swedenborg.com.au or the Swedenborg Association of Australia page on Facebook.

The SAA's Candela magazine has released its latest issue, which can be read online or downloaded from the same website mentioned above.

The next open discussion day at the Centre will be on Tuesday 11th March (and generally occur on the second Tuesday of each month). Details can be found on the website, but there's no need to wait for

such an advertised special occasion. If you have something on your mind, do please come to visit the Centre at any time. Drop in at 4 Shirley Road, or phone us on 02 9416 2812 or email us at info@swedenborg.com.au Feel free to come and check out the latest books which we have recently purchased.

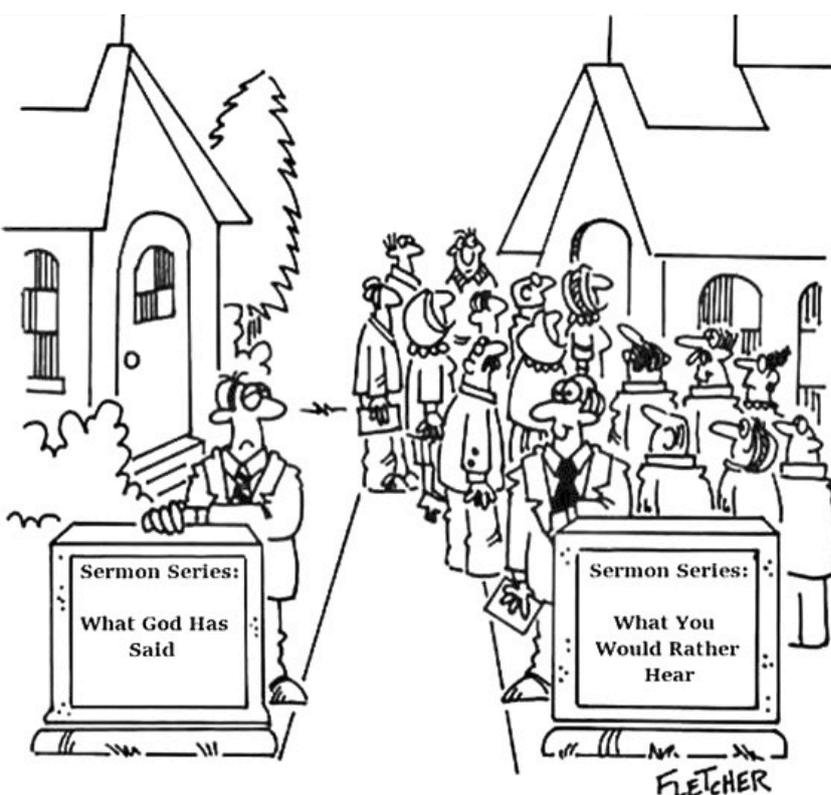
One of the places we regularly advertise to attract attention of readers to Swedenborg is the New Dawn magazine. We have in the past also written articles for them specifically about Swedenborg (the home page of our website has a copy of a previous article entitled Swedenborg, Afterlife Eyewitness). Keep your eye out for the next issue of New Dawn in which well-known author Gary Lachman will be contributing an article mentioning Swedenborg.

Have an enjoyable month.

Joe

Harvest Service

As Autumn begins to creep in all are invited to join us for a celebration of The Harvest on 10 March at 10:00am. A celebration of the Harvest gives us an opportunity to reflect on the many blessings we have from the Lord. Gifts of fresh fruits and vegetables collected during the service will be distributed to local charities.



Pulpit Humour

The Sabbath Day

In the Bible there are more commands about observing the Sabbath Day than any other divine command. It comes more than ten times and that's just the Old Testament. This is quite strange because Jesus, in the New Testament, often broke the Sabbath Day, saying that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath, and similar things.

Very often, any discussion about the Sabbath is whether it should be seen as being on Saturday or on Sunday, and yes, various Christian denominations are absolutely sure which is right! The Jews had Saturday, the seventh day of the week, to fit in with the first mention in Genesis that God made the world in six days and rested on the seventh day and declared it holy. But Christianity, with exceptions, made the Sabbath Day a Sunday because Jesus rose from death on the first day of the week, the day after the seventh, and so Sunday traditionally became the Christian sabbath day.

Now, put all that away because it is purely argumentative. It has very little to do with the purpose of the Sabbath Day which for us is such a frequent command because it is so important that we remember and acknowledge the Lord in all that makes our lives. The command not to do any work on this day isn't really about whether we cook or dig the garden on a Sunday but far more about not doing our own selfish wrangling about what I want and what I don't like, but turn our minds to the blessings from the Lord. And sure, this can be done on any and every day of the week.

A different day does us good; a set different day also does us good because it keeps us mindful. Observing the Sabbath Day is finally for us about deciding and keeping those life values and thoughts which honour our faith in the Lord.

Here are two quotes to think about:

“One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord. He who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself.” (Romans 14:5-7)

“By the sabbath is meant a person’s conjunction with the Lord, a state when we are led by the Lord and not by ourselves, which is our state when we are in what is good. For a person to be led by the Lord and not by self, is to “turn away the foot from the sabbath and not to do his own will, not to do his own ways, not to find his own desire, and not to speak a word.” (See Isaiah 58:13-14) Then, the church and heaven is in such a person which is meant by being exalted on the high places of the earth.” (Arcana Caelestia/Secrets of Heaven 10360.5)

Julian

Marriage Moats: “Old Fences”

Clear edges on a relationship are hard to keep. Personal boundaries are more permeable than a split rail, or a brick wall. And so they should be. And yet, there are troublesome questions around what is or is not my concern.

It all starts in the womb. Each time I carried a tiny body or two within my own, the distance between us was fluid. Literally.

Is the vitamin C from that orange juice at breakfast going to my stomach, or yours? That space between my ribs, is it for your legs or my breath? Do I get to have an opinion about your hiccupping marathon when I am trying to sleep?

Then the baby makes the dramatic separation of a cut umbilical cord, and spends the next few years begging to be reconnected. The other day I was at a school orientation event and the teacher's young daughter made it clear that there was no place better than her mother's hip. The older brother, on the other hand, enjoyed the freedom of racing up and down the hall.

When a couple starts out they are often only too eager to smash into a single chair, borrow one another's jacket, share a fork. But gradually the need for elbow room shows up, and different hobbies fill the space between.

The other day I walked into church alone. John was preaching at a different service, and I was not sad to sit without him. Across the room was a couple that have been married for over sixty years. It

occurred to me that they are always together. Always. One of them is getting wobbly, and the other offers stability when they walk. They were not giggles and chatty, like the engaged couple near the back. They sat quietly, as if words were no longer the primary avenue for connection.

In the afternoon John needed to get a few errands done. Twenty years of parenting ingrained the need for efficiency, and we long ago stopped shopping together. But at the last minute I climbed into the passenger seat next to him. Just because I could.

Lori Odhner
Caring for Marriage

**** What are “Marriage Moats” you ask? ****

“Marriage Moats” is a daily reflection on marriage from someone who could be legitimately called an “expert” on marriage. Lori Odhner is a wife and mother of 9 children who, along with her minister husband John began a marriage ministry in 1988. Together they manage the www.caringformarriage.org website, organise an annual marriage conference and put out a monthly newsletter. Lori writes daily e-mails called Marriage Moats intended to support people who value marriage. Debra and I enjoy reading these daily reflections and I have decided that each month I will choose one to share with our Newsletter readers.

“When the master of ceremonies tasted the water that was now wine, not knowing where it had come from (though, of course, the servants knew), he called the bridegroom over. “A host always serves the best wine first,” he said. “Then, when everyone has had a lot to drink, he brings out the less expensive wine. But you have kept the best until now!”.”

John 2:9,10



Minister's Availability

With the arrival of a new minister for the church and the repurposing of the from rooms of the manse as the new location for the Swedenborg Centre, you may be asking yourself; 'Howard, where and when do you work and how can I get in touch with you?'

Well, have no fear, much thought and work has gone into addressing this question. First let me note that having spent 20+ years in the business world before entering ministry I have come to value a work space separate and distinct from my home space. Aligned with this approach is a preference for "set" office hours. Will I often work at the island in the manse kitchen? The answer is; 'of course.' Will I often work outside of "set" office hours? Again, the answer is; 'of course.' But experience has taught me that endeavouring to follow a regular practice of being in a dedicated work space for a designated span of time aids and improves my focus.

With this in mind I spent several weeks before Christmas re-establishing an office in the church vestry (the small room to the left of the church chancel). This is office is accessible from both within the church and by the set of stairs down the path to the left of the church. Going forward my availability and contact information will be as follows:

Minister's Contact Information and Office Hours

Rev. Howard A. Thompson

Office Hours: 11.00 am - 4.00 pm

Tuesday through Friday

Email: revhathompson@gmail.com

Phone: 0432 357 475

THE LAST WORD

The Sydney Society of the New Church will hold its **AGM** on

Sunday 24 March at 11.30am

4 Shirley Road Roseville NSW 2069.

The purpose is to discuss and manage the affairs of the church as an organisation. All are welcome though only formal members may vote.