

Religion is of life, and the life of religion is to do what is good

(Doctrine of Life 8)

The New Church is an international organization of people striving to improve their conscious relationship with the Lord, Jesus Christ, the one God who rules heaven and earth.

We extend a warm welcome to everyone, and invite you to take what you like and return it freely. We use the Bible and the Heavenly Doctrine revealed by the Lord and published by Emanuel Swedenborg to guide us in our lives, especially in our relationships. We freely share our love and understanding with each other, and try to give one another support in our spiritual journeys.

Temporarily the Hurstville Society is without a **Pastor**. During this period the Society will be served by lay leaders and visiting preachers.

Worship Services are held each Sunday at 10:00 AM. **Sunday School** is held concurrently with the worship service.

Young People's Group is held once a month in conjunction with the Young People's Group at the New Church at 2 Shirley St, Roseville.

A tea and social in conjunction with **discussion** meets on the 1st Friday of each month (January excepted) beginning at 7 00 pm. This will be conducted by visiting ministers when available or lay led as appropriate.

Bible Study and Discussion Classes previously held midweek have been suspended until further notice.

The Swedenborg Bookroom, at 22 Dudley Street, Penshurst, contains books by and about Emanuel Swedenborg for sale or loan. It is open by appointment.

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Call or come at anytime.



The New Church Newsletter

Hurstville Society August 2009

**The Father Himself, Who Sent Me, has testified of Me.
You have Neither Heard His Voice at Any Time, Nor Seen His Form.**

by Brian Smith

Sometimes it gets lonely in this natural world. We tend to be so caught up with the experience of our five senses that we barely think about the spiritual world at all. A lot of our day is spent *not* thinking about God.

And then maybe we try to pray or think about the Lord. We try to lift our minds up from the tastes of food, the aches of our backs, the fears about money and the irritations of work and we find that our sight of God is quite blurry. We feel lonely, like the centre of our life is not so solid or visible a centre as we hoped.

Much of the solution to this problem can be found in a renewed commitment to living a spiritual life. Like Matthew 5:8 says, "blessed are

the pure in heart for they shall see God.” In other words, when we live in the way that keeps our conscience clear it is much easier for us to sense the closeness of the Lord.

Another piece of the solution could simply be to give more of our attention to the presence and reality of the spiritual world. When a close friend dies we may spend hours in each day thinking about the spiritual world and eternal life. When we cultivate this perspective we open ourselves to see the Lord more clearly because His life is in eternal things (AC 726; 10067).

But in this article I want to focus on our process of thinking about the Lord. When I ask you to think of the Lord, what comes to mind? Your picture of God might be quite difficult to describe. Our difficulty is that we are using a mind, usually tied up in material things, to try to think of God who is spiritual and substantial rather than material. The work *Apocalypse Explained* tells us about the difference between spiritual and material realities. It says that “the only difference” between the spiritual world and natural world is “an additional covering . . . given to things in the natural world” which makes them “material, fixed, stated and measurable” (AE 1218). The natural world has a material covering which gives it a measurable fixity. We are used to thinking on this level of measurability in time and space.

But there is another way of thinking that we can cultivate. We can learn to think from substance or essence. We are taught that the essential or spiritual world is even more “real” than the natural world because it is a world of living substances, rather than relatively dead materials (AE 1218). This may seem difficult to understand, but let's think of ways where we already think from the substance or “essence” of a thing.

Picture a baby that you know. You might be able to describe his or her face and body. Very likely you would describe the child as “cute”. Why? Little features perhaps, funny expressions maybe. But what exactly makes the child cute? What if you are holding the child and she is sleeping, maybe you put your cheek up against hers and close your eyes. Now all you can feel is the softness of her cheek, but you have an overwhelming sense of her sweetness. You are aware of something essential about this child and about

The **Brian Smith family** enjoyed a visit to **Canberra** during the month meeting New Church people there. Brian gave a class and a service.

Shirley Taylor went home from hospital on 20th July after spending some weeks recuperating after a shoulder reconstruction. Her shoulder is now much improved and she has been able to leave off the sling. Apart from a very sore left ankle the news with Shirley is good and she will be receiving assistance with things like washing, shopping, physio while she needs it.

Not so good news though about **Rhonda & John Hall**. They had a good holiday, however John had a fall the day before they flew home and has broken his fibula and will have to wear a boot and use crutches for about 6 weeks. Rhonda is also not well with a bad cough and cold. We are all thinking of you.

Ellen Walsh, youngest child of **Philip** and **Larah Walsh** was baptised on Sunday 26th July by theolog **Brian Smith**. It was a truly lovely service, Brian's first baptism.

Jeffrey Heldon was farewelled by family and friends at a party on Sunday afternoon 26th July. He is enrolled in Bryn Athyn College and will soon be enjoying all the new facilities and recent improvements - see article in this Newsletter “Recognition of Bryn Athyn College”.

Carolyn Heldon has been visiting a lot of countries recently. She is studying Swedish at the University of Uppsala but is managing to fit in trips to Finland and Estonia one week, Lappland and the Arctic Circle the next week where she climbed Mount Vallespiken (1385m) and took some stunning photos and now, as we go to press she has just returned from a weekend in Denmark meeting up with friends from the USA.

Birthdays

Happy Birthday to **Norm Heldon** (1st), **Grace Horner** (7th), **Emily Kermond** (7th), **Rhonda Hall** (12th), **Rebekah Horner** (17th), **Larah Walsh** (21st), **Graeme McLeay** (22nd) and **Ralph Horner** (30th)

Calendar Items for August 2009

Sunday 2nd : No church at Hurstville. (Pastor in Perth)

Friday 7th: 7.00 p.m. Tea and Class

Sunday 9th: 10.00 a.m. Worship

Friday 14th : 6.00. p.m. Young People's Group (at Hurstville)

Sunday 16th Joint Service with Roseville New Church

On Sunday 16th August the Hurstville Society will join with Roseville for a joint service at Roseville. **Brian Smith**, the theolog who is providing ministerial services to Hurstville for a couple of months and **Rev Julian Duckworth** will be sharing giving the sermon. We will check on the previous Sunday to ensure everyone has transport. You may wish to consider bringing a picnic lunch. If it is a nice day a picnic by the river or harbour could make for a very pleasant outing.

Friday 21st: 7.30 p.m. Class

Sunday 23rd: 10.00. a.m. Worship

Sunday 30th: 10.00.a.m. Worship followed by **Farewell Luncheon** to Brian Smith, Janine and Kai. This will be a Pot Luck Lunch so please bring something savoury and a sweet to share. Drinks will be provided.

News Notes

On the last weekend in August **Rev Doug** and **Christine Taylor** will be in Sydney from Thursday 27th August till Tuesday 1st September on their way to visit family and friends in Victoria and South Australia. It will be great to catch up with them once again. The farewell luncheon for Brian Smith, Janine and Kai mentioned above on Sunday 30th will also be a great time to meet up with the Taylors.

your connection with her. It's not physical or measurable but its more living and real than the mere parts of her body.

If we hope to grow in our awareness of the Lord's presence in our lives, we must learn to see those things in life that are living and real which underlie the material pieces around us. Unfortunately we tend to be more interested in material things than matters of spirit. The Lord and heaven are not subjects which our culture focuses on and this leaves us in a "thick darkness" when it comes to seeing the Lord clearly (EU 20; AC 9801). It is a bit of an uphill battle for us to learn to really focus on matters of substance. But the Lord is aware of our handicap and so He gives us guides.

Consider the following teaching from *Apocalypse Revealed* which is the words from an instructor in heaven to his students:

Everyone who thinks of God only from Person, and not from Essence, thinks materially; also he who thinks of the neighbour only from form, and not from quality, thinks materially; and he who thinks of heaven only from place, and not from the love and wisdom which heaven is, he also thinks materially

Therefore, my pupils, think of God from His essence, and from that of His Person, and not from His Person, and from this of His essence, for to think of His essence from Person, is to think materially of His essence also; but to think of His Person from essence, is to think spiritually even of His Person. (AR 611)

This teaching to think from essence to form, shows up in a number of places in the *Writings* for the New Church. It can seem a little abstract or philosophical at first but it is quite central to any religious understanding. If we view everything through our senses as the starting point we will never be able to see beyond them. It's like if I say, "I am willing to believe in God if I see Him with my physical eyes." In taking this position, I can only admit to physical realities and I would only believe in God if I came face to face with Jesus while He was in the world¹. In fact, people did come face to face with Jesus and still dismissed Him as just another physical person (John 6.42).

No, if we want to consider the possibility of a spiritual reality we must be willing to look with more than our physical eyes. We have to look for the Lord from His essence to His form. This means we need to start by looking at who He really is². For example, we're taught that the Lord is love (TCR 36). When we think from the idea of Love we can understand the teachings and actions of Jesus in that context and truly begin to understand who He is. This can clarify our sight of God. Whereas just thinking about the historical Jesus and wondering about the colour of His hair will distort our vision of His divine nature.

However, it is important that we think from essence to an actual form. If our idea of God is not grounded, we don't really have any idea at all. It's like thinking of the concept of infinity. Infinity is something without end. I know concept. But when I try to picture an infinity of space it becomes meaningless to my mind. This is why our idea of God must be grounded in a Person³. This is the special contribution that Christianity offers to world religions. Christianity describes the infinite Creator of the Universe grounded as a man born on earth. God is knowable and approachable. The work *Arcana Coelestia* explains the importance of a clear idea of God:

If anyone without the idea of a Divine Man thinks of the Divine Itself, he thinks indeterminately, and an indeterminate idea is no idea; or he conceives an idea of the Divine from the visible universe without an end, or with an end in obscurity, which idea conjoins itself with the idea of the worshipers of nature, and also falls into nature, and thus becomes no idea (AC 8705).

Christianity, through the instrument of the New Testament, offers us the chance to get to know God in a tangible, human way. We can read about this Person who blessed little children, healed hurting people; forgave and encouraged sinners and doubters. If we like, we can find the places on earth where He walked physically.

But as we ground our understanding of the Lord in His human form we have to remember to think from His Divine essence to His human form and not the other way around. John 5:37 holds this tension neatly. It reads: "And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me. You have neither

Daily Inspiration

Some of our readers may know about the daily inspirational readings distributed via email, by request, from the Bryn Athyn New Church website. For those who are unaware of this resource and would like to be included here is the internet address: <http://www.newchurch.org> At the bottom of the left hand side of the page you will find the current Daily Inspiration with the clickable link 'Subscribe'. Each day you will be emailed a quote from The Writings which will come with an attractive flower picture (unless you choose 'text only'.) Don't forget to put in your email address! Some examples:

"Nothing is permitted unless some good may come of it."

Arcana Coelestia 6574 Emanuel Swedenborg

"Love and wisdom, apart from usefulness, are only imaginary things. That is, they do not become real unless they are used."

Apocalypse Revealed 875 Emanuel Swedenborg

2010 Summer Camp at Elanora Heights

Please start planning for next summer's Annual Camp to be held at Elanora Heights, the location of two previous camps in 1990 and 2000. Elanora is situated near Narrabeen, one of Sydney's northern beaches and the Conference Centre provides excellent accommodation in a beautiful bushland setting. Although close to suburban dwellings, it seems miles from hectic city life, just the place to explore the theme of *Relationships* which has been chosen as the focus for this camp.

The camp will be held from Monday 4th January to Sunday 10th January. Pamphlets are available at the Hurstville New Church and can be mailed on request. Subsidies can be arranged on application to Murray Heldon (02) 9579 5248 or via email murrayheldon@optusnet.com.au. Bookings or firm commitments are needed by 1st October in order to finalise arrangements with the Conference Centre.

Andy Sullivan, with Serena Sutton, Dylan Hendricks, Stewart Farmer, Chara Odhner and Shilah Rose, the admissions team for the College – Director Sean Lawing, John Cole and Jenny Lindsay – plus partnering consultants The Lawlor Group, Digital Wave and Royall.

Andy thanks them all for their hard work throughout the year and their “unapologetic commitment to quality.” He also thanked the leadership and the faculty of the College “for supporting our ideas,” and more than a third of the student body for participating in videos, writing stories for the viewbook and appearing on billboards.

Applications for 2009-10 are well above this time last year with 40 more deposits than a year ago. Next year’s freshman class may also be its strongest ever academically.

Andy says we are “winning the race” to the goal of 170 students in the College this fall – the largest enrolment in its history – when Dr. Chris Clark begins as President and the Doering and Brickman Centers open. He also feels the College could reach 250 by 2012 if not earlier – a year sooner than projected in the Strategic Plan.

Editors Note: Here is some additional information found on Wikipedia the free [Internet] encyclopedia, under Bryn Athyn College.

Grant R. Doering Center for Science and Research (2009) Quickly rising out of the ground, the College’s state-of-the-art all “green” science building will contain classrooms, offices, and research facilities.

Theodore and Sally Brickman Center for Student Life and Admissions (2009) Also well underway is a new building, which will house admissions, offices, and dining and recreational areas.

If you are interested, take a look at the attractive Bryn Athyn College website at: <http://www.brynathyn.edu>

heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form.” It is the Father Himself or God's divine essence which testifies and sends us His tangible form, but without that form we “neither hear nor see” that essence.

So when we're feeling cut off from God and unaware of His presence we can do three things. We can check that we are living in a way that sits well with our conscience. We can give more attention to the real things in life, the spiritual world which underlies our sense experiences. And we can read in the New Testament about the God who became flesh and dwelt among us and get to know Him as a Divine Human (John 1:1-14).

¹See TCR 12 and AC 233 for further discussion on trying to view spiritual things from natural things.

²For more teachings about God's essence, see AR 611 and TCR 1-184.

³Further reading on the importance of the Lord's Divine Human: TCR 135.5; EU 7; AC 9972.

Train of Thought

by Norman Heldon

I had the pleasure of Angela’s company on the train one morning. Well, that in itself was a good enough start for the day, but then Angela said, “Grandpa, what have you been thinking about?”

I replied, “I’ve been reading in the book *Heaven and Hell* that Swedenborg was allowed to experience how people are introduced into the spiritual world after they die. I can recall a few things.”

Firstly, he or she becomes aware that there are angels around, two seated nearby, others a little further away. The close angels wished to know what his thoughts were about and they were of eternal life, which is common to people at that time. An aromatic odour is perceived and that keeps evil spirits away.

They are celestial angels present at that time. They do not wish to leave the

person for they love everyone but when the person is such that he cannot be any longer in the company of celestial angels he wishes to leave them.

Angels from the Lord's spiritual kingdom come then and they give the awareness of light. These angels tell him that he is a spirit and give instructions about life in the spiritual world. Sometimes however the spirit does not want to stay in the company of these angels either and separates from them.

Good spirits come then and give whatever help they can, but if his life in the world was such that he could not be in the company of the good spirits there is another separation and there are other changes until he or she is among those who agree with their life in the world.

There is much I could not recall and the full account is given from number 450 on.

I have read accounts by people who have undergone Near Death Experiences and who have commented on the wonderful sphere of love that they perceived and some said that it took away their fear of death.

Angela added to the pleasure of the trip by recalling something she had read, that in the spiritual world where everyone comes after death the question that is asked is not "What was your faith but what was the nature of your life?"

Brian Smith kindly did a search for that number in *Divine Providence* (101³). It continues, "the nature of your life, was it of this or that quality? Thus the inquiry is concerning the nature and quality of the life; for it is known that such as one's life is, such is his faith and also his doctrine because the life fashions doctrine and faith for itself."

At first glance this seems to belittle faith but we find in that same part of *Divine Providence* that it concerns those who have accepted the doctrine of Faith Alone, that is, without charity. These people see no evils in themselves and so do not know that they are actually in hell when they commit evils.

General Church Executive Director

Bishop Tom Kline has appointed David Frazier as Executive Director for the General Church, as of July 1. David has been the Chief Administrative Officer/Treasurer for the General Church for the past two years.

Bishop Kline says: "In order to more fully perform my duties as Executive Bishop and to give greater spiritual leadership to the Church, I have found that I need to delegate even more of the lay-administrative duties."

The new role of Executive Director was formed with a committee of the General Church Board "to provide for the orderly support, leadership and supervision of the General Church business operations worldwide."

The job description includes providing a healthy working relationship between congregations and the central offices, overseeing strategic initiatives, developing controls and measures for efficient use of resources, support for employees, and working with the Development Office to promote strong relations with donors.

David will retain many of his responsibilities as Treasurer as the Treasurer's Office is restructured in light of this new position.

Recognition for Bryn Athyn College

Bryn Athyn College has been named **Marketer of the Year** by the Philadelphia American Marketing Association. Among other nominees for the award were Comcast, Rita's Water Ice, Aramark, Drexel University, ING Direct and Dupont.

The award was based on the entire campaign for the College this year, including website redesign, viewbook, billboard campaign, tagline and other materials, as well as the outcome of increased applicants and other metrics.

Sharing in the recognition are the Marketing Department, led by Director