

***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 (prior notice required).

**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.

Temporary editor – Rev Doug Taylor  
22-24 Dudley St., off Hillcrest Ave. in Penshurst  
Tel (02) 9580-1589. Fax (02) 9570-8447  
Email: [newchurch@optusnet.com.au](mailto:newchurch@optusnet.com.au)

<http://www.newchurch.org.au/hurstville>

Call or come at anytime.



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**The New Church Newsletter**

**Hurstville Society February 2007**

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**Mediate Good**

A Sermon on Genesis 31:2 by the Rev. Douglas Taylor

"And Jacob saw the faces of Laban, and behold he was not at all with him as yesterday and the day before" (Genesis 31:2).

The situation had changed dramatically. Previously, Jacob had been on friendly terms with his father-in-law, Laban, in whose household he had lived for twenty years. He had worked for Laban for seven years for his older daughter, Leah; and for a further seven years for Laban's second daughter, Rachel, whom he loved. He had now completed another six years in the service of Laban, during which time there had been nothing but friendly relations between them.

Only once had Jacob expressed a wish to return to his homeland, the land of

Canaan. This was following the birth of Joseph to Rachel. But on that occasion Laban had prevailed upon Jacob to remain in his household and continue to work for him. It was agreed between them that Jacob was to take from the flocks of Laban the speckled and spotted cattle, and the black lambs, together with the spotted and speckled among the goats. In this way Jacob was rewarded for his service to Laban, and became quite wealthy by means of the flocks of Laban.

But now Jacob perceived a change in the attitude of Laban. First, he overheard the sons of Laban complaining that he (Jacob) had taken what was their father's, that he had become rich from what belonged to their father. "And Jacob saw the faces of Laban, and behold he was not at all with him as yesterday and the day before" (text).

Presumably, Jacob noticed an expression of unfriendliness on the face of Laban, his father-in-law. When the Lord subsequently told Jacob to return to the land of his fathers, Jacob fled from Laban, together with Leah and Rachel, and the flocks and herds that he had acquired while working for Laban.

Those who do not yet realise that every story in the Word of God is indeed a parable, having an internal, spiritual meaning within it, may be excused for thinking that this story about Jacob and Laban is too trivial a matter to be a part of the Word of God. The internal sense alone can convince even the natural man, if he is willing to be convinced (Sacred Scripture 4).

The internal meaning reveals the representation of Jacob and of Laban. Jacob, at this stage of his life, represents what is called "the good of truth" (AC 4063), that is, the good of obedience to the truth, as seen on the natural plane of the mind. This kind of goodness has developed because of a conscientious application of the truth to life - not from delight but from *duty*. That is why the whole life of Jacob has been such an arduous one, full of trouble, full of trials and tribulations. But now, as a result of all his labours, Jacob has acquired considerable wealth and a large family.

But the key to understanding the text in its internal sense lies in the

## Sermons for February

- 4th With God All Things are Possible
- 11th Lay Service. Pastor in Perth
- 18th How to Escape from Evil Feelings
- 25th When Guilt Feelings Are Good

## Doctrinal Classes for February

- 2nd Brainstorming on Evangelization
- 16th Reflection

## News Notes

**Farewell to the Taylors:** After church on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> February there will be a Pot Luck Luncheon in Baringa to farewell our visiting pastor. *Please bring a savoury and sweet to share.* Drinks will be provided.

During January **Rev Doug** and **Christine Taylor** visited with church people on the **Gold Coast** and surrounding areas. In the last week of January they will visit **Canberra** and then during the second weekend of February will visit the **Perth Circle**.

We have just received news that **Rev Dick Keyworth** in New Zealand has had an urgent triple bypass and at this early stage the operation has been successful. We sincerely pray that his recovery continues and he returns to good health soon.

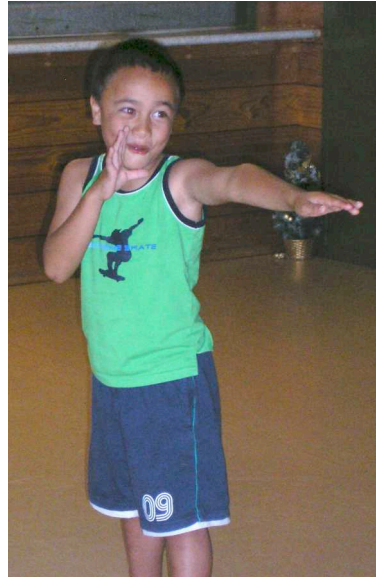
Our thoughts are with **Grace Horner**, daughter Pam Lowick and husband Ted on Baringa-Vale farm south east of Tamworth due to a major bush fire, started by lightning on January 17<sup>th</sup>. It has progressed onto their property at Thornton's Bluff but thankfully at present is 'being controlled' by firefighters, water bombers and bulldozers. No houses are threatened; however the nearby Nundle pine forests are a concern.

## Birthdays

Happy Birthday to **John Hicks** (9th), **Mike Lockhart** (11th), **Anne Lawrence** (21st), **Kathryn Kennedy** (24<sup>th</sup>)

Hot Springs mineral pools (enjoyable and relaxing except for the sunburn). On Sunday afternoon some people went to Rainbow's End Amusement Park (think Australia's Wonderland) while others went on a steam train outing on the Glenbrook tourist railway.

On going during the week was the table tennis competition, won again by Cameron Robinson, a sing-along game "Sing Star" (played on a Playstation 2) won by David Robinson. Michael and Holly Mead provided their windsurfers for use on the bay, there were puzzles to do and a trivia night and the youngsters managed to get lots of enjoyment from piggy back rides with the Robinson boys the most common target. The Talent Night featured magic tricks, a camp song, people acting, singing, piano and Tumanako (age 6) gave a demonstration of the Maori Haka. (see picture at right)



The accommodation in wooden, rustic cabins was comfortable and included an ensuite. The metal roofing sheets shaped like tiles provided some interesting sound effects (similar to a shotgun) as the temperatures changed at night. Food was basic and washing up was done outside in a water trough. But none of this detracted from the good spirit of what was a very successful camp. Special thanks to Holly and Michael Mead who were in charge of organising the camp. Special thanks also to Rev Dick Keyworth and his wife Gill.

Next year's camp is planned for a new location at Mangrove Mountain west of Gosford about 1 1/2 hours north west of Sydney.

Footnote: This year's camp in New Zealand was attended by Murray and Lori Heldon and Carolyn Heldon from Sydney, Phillip and Eleanor Richards from Canberra along with many friends from Australia, New Zealand and England.

representation of Laban – "mediate good" (AC 4063). What is meant by "mediate good"?

"Mediate good" means the natural delights that have served for introducing genuine goods and truths into our mind (AC 3974), "a good that partakes both of the affections of the world, and of the affections of heaven" (AC 4063:3). It could equally well be called middle good or medium good. It is in the middle between what is completely earthly and worldly and what is heavenly - so it is a middle good. It is also a medium or means whereby the affections of the world are exchanged for the affections of heaven - which is what happens in the process of regeneration.

But what would be examples of this mediate good?

One example given in the Arcana Coelestia is the delight that children experience in learning the historical matters of the Word, which, we read, "contain within them what is Divine, and thus are capable of admitting genuine goods." The passage goes on to say: "When such things as these are known and thought of by a young child, the angels who are with him think of the Divine things which they represent and signify; and because the angels are affected with them, their affection is communicated, and cause the delight and pleasure that the child experiences in them; and prepares his mind to receive genuine truths and goods" (AC 3665:5). Clearly, the delight given by the literal stories of the Word is not a genuine spiritual delight, but it prepares the way for it.

Other examples given in the Writings include the love of excelling others, either in moral and civil life, or in learning and in doctrinal things (AC 3993:9). Even this worldly kind of delight serves as a means, a medium, by which we learn what the Lord tells us, by which we can be brought to live a good life, at least on the civil and moral plane. Without the desire to excel, there are many things that would never be learned. Psychologically, this desire is necessary for the development of the mind. These mediate goods are not good in themselves, but they can be used by the Lord in the service of what is good.

Another mediate good is the love we have for those who teach us the things of religion - our teachers and preachers – indeed our love, respect, and admiration of any good people. All these things the Lord can use for introducing heavenly affections.

Our love of the external things of our church - our love of the form of worship to which we have become accustomed, our delight in the hymns and music of the church, while not a spiritual good in itself is nonetheless a mediate good, useful as a means to what is truly good.

Likewise our fear of going to hell. This is a natural affection or feeling, but it does look towards spiritual goals. It is sometimes the only bond between us and the Lord, the only means by which He can lead us to what is good.

Perhaps the most common form of mediate good is the belief we all have in the beginning of our regeneration - that the good we do and the truth we think are from ourselves, that they are our own, and that we are therefore entitled to heaven. We feel (usually unconsciously) that we should be rewarded for the good that we do. The Writings say that unless the regenerating person at first believed this, "he would never do any good" (AC 4145:2). Here again is mediate good serving as a medium by which the genuine affection of doing what is good is implanted.

The *Arcana Coelestia* gives the further example of conjugal love, saying that "the good which precedes and initiates is beauty, or agreement of manners or an outward adaptation of the one to the other, or equality of condition, or a desired condition. These goods are the first mediate goods of conjugal love. Afterwards, [through steps and stages] there comes conjunction of mind ... and the Lord then flows into the affections of both as into one affection. This is the good that inflows directly (or immediately); but the former goods, which inflowed indirectly, served as means of introduction to this." (AC 4145:3)

Mention is also made of certain falsities that serve as means of introducing us into more interior states – as for example, the false ideas of the Gentiles, who are ignorant of the Word of God. Their Gentile good, if they live in

## Family Camp in New Zealand

Based on an interview with Carolyn Heldon

This year a smaller than usual but very friendly camp was held at camp Morley located at Clarks Beach on the shore of Manukau Harbour less than an hour away from the city of Auckland. And it was right on the beach which was just outside the front door, a fitting location for a camp whose theme was "Fishers of Men".

About 60 people attended the camp at some point during the week but at any one time the numbers were generally between 35 and 45 people. This made for a compact, friendly camp that was enjoyed by all.

The week-long camp began on Thursday afternoon 5<sup>th</sup> January and the evening "get to know you" included a traditional Maori welcome from Stephanie, Laisa and Tumanako (Keyworths). Each day's program followed the usual camp format of a family session, then a break for morning tea and then sessions for each of the age groups, 5 and under, 6-10, 10-18, 18-20 and adults. Sessions were led by Revs Dick Keyworth, Julian Duckworth, David Millar, Brian O'Neill (weekend only) and John Sutton.

The Bible has a number of stories about fishermen which were used as the basis for the sessions. Practical enactments in the bay, showing how to use a casting net<sup>1</sup> and a dragnet were given and even some small fish were caught (though due to their size were returned to the sea). On the final day an enactment of the feeding of the 5,000 using smoked fish and bread brought the week's lessons to a close.

There was plenty of time for fun. There was an enjoyable day outing on Monday to the Miranda



<sup>1</sup>A casting net is circular with a weighted periphery. Sizes vary up to about 4 m diameter. The net is thrown by hand in such a manner that it spreads out on the water and sinks. Fish are caught as the net is hauled back in. [source Wikipedia] see above - Rev Dick Keyworth casts the net

It is very comforting and encouraging to realize that even our natural delights can be used by the Lord to a good end. After all, He makes good to come even out of *evil*. How much more, then, is He able to bring forth good, genuine good, out of worldly delights and falsities, when these are not directly opposed to heaven. There are, of course, evils and falsities with which goods and truths cannot be mingled, because they are contrary to love to the Lord and charity towards the neighbour, such as hatreds, revenges, cruelties, and contempt for others in comparison with oneself (AC 3993:8). These things can never serve as means to good. But there are also, as we have seen, many things in the natural man that can be used as mediate goods.

But the great point of our text is that the time comes when the real nature of the mediate goods that have helped us must eventually become known to us, and that we must then separate ourselves from these former delights, just as Jacob separated himself from Laban and his flocks. When we see the “faces of Laban,” we must separate from him. The face, being the mirror or index of the mind represents the interiors - the interior quality of mediate good.

When this enlightenment is given by the Lord, as a result of our faithful and assiduous application of the truth of His Word to our lives, we must turn our backs on the merely natural things that have served as means to genuine good. We must return to Canaan, that is, advance to what is more heavenly.

We should realise, however, that the societies of mediate good are not thrown off easily, just as Laban wished to hold Jacob and his household and his flocks as his own.

Let us by all means take comfort from the teachings concerning mediate good, but let us also strive, when we see for ourselves its real interior quality - that it has become unfriendly towards us - let us strive then to separate ourselves from it, and advance along the path that the Lord has indicated - to the deeper delights and happiness of heaven itself that He wishes and intends for us. Amen.

Gen. 31 : I – 18

Luke 9:46-50

AC 3690: 2-5.

charity with their neighbours, is a clear example of mediate good.

But as already seen, if we are to advance to heavenly things that are genuinely good and true, we have to separate ourselves from the delights that have served as mediate goods.

It is well known that when our mind has been regenerated, we are altogether a different person, a new person. It is as if we have been born again. Our mind is no longer merely natural in quality, but heavenly. Whereas before regeneration, we were affected with delight by worldly and earthly things, and found them to be supremely pleasing, after regeneration we place our supreme delight in the things of heaven. We look to the Lord and to the good that proceeds from Him. Our end or goal is love to the Lord and charity towards the neighbour.

But for this great change to be brought about, it is necessary that the lusts of worldly eminence and self-centredness be gradually removed to the outer boundary of our mind, so that heavenly delights and affections may flow in and take possession of the centre of our mind.

Obviously, this cannot be done instantly. Despite the belief of those who think they were saved in a moment, the regeneration of mankind goes on throughout one's whole life; because, as we read, “the person has to be gifted with a life which he did not have before, and of which indeed he knew scarcely anything. Seeing therefore that the person's states of life have to be so greatly changed, it must necessarily be that he has to be kept a long time in a kind of mediate good, that is, in a good which partakes both of the affections of the world, and of the affections of heaven; and unless he is kept in this mediate good, he in no way admits heavenly goods and truths. This mediate or middle good is what is signified by “Laban and his flock.” (AC 4063:3,4)

The Lord's mercy can be seen in this provision. He does not act hurriedly or abruptly. He prepares the way at all points. He does not tear us away immediately and roughly from our strong worldly affections. He gradually weans us from them, gently withdrawing us from them - little by little.

Rather than make a sudden, drastic change, which, spiritually, would be like tearing our heart out, the Lord allows us to be for some time, some considerable time, in a state of mediate or medium good, a state in which we look from earth towards heaven. For this merciful permission we can be profoundly grateful.

However, we are not kept in this middle kind of good any longer than necessary, but only until it has served its purpose, that is, to introduce us into genuine heavenly goods and truths. When this has been achieved, the delights of mediate good are separated. This is meant by the separation of Jacob from Laban.

In our natural life there are many changes of state that serve to illustrate the spiritual principle involved in our text. We know that our state is of one kind in infancy, of another in childhood, another in youth, another in adult age, and another in old age (AC 4063:4). We also know from experience that the delights that we derived in infancy from our toys, for example, fade away in upper childhood, and completely disappear as we enter our youth. Every age has its delights, and these delights serve to introduce us step by step into the delights of the age that follows next.

In our natural life the former things are always left behind when we enter a new state or age in life. It is somewhat similar with regard to our spiritual life. In this, too, delights are the means by which we are introduced into more interior and heavenly states of mind, and these are left behind when we enter the state that follows next in order. But there is this difference; that during the process of our regeneration, our state of mind becomes altogether different from our merely natural state. Furthermore, we are led to our heavenly state, “not in any natural manner, but by the Lord in a supranatural manner; nor does anyone arrive at this state except by the means of regeneration, which are provided by the Lord alone, and thus by the mediate good, of which we have been speaking” (AC 4063:5). When we have been brought to that state, then this mediate good can and must be completely separated.

The question is: How is this separation brought about?

To understand this, we need to recall the basic teaching that our minds are in the spiritual world, that we are therefore unconsciously surrounded by angelic people and spirits, all of whom had once lived on earth. There are endless numbers of societies in the other life that are arranged and set in order by the Lord according to all the varieties of good and truth. Since our minds are in the midst of these societies, the Lord can lead us out of evil societies, through societies that are in mediate or middle good, into the societies of heaven. Although we are completely unaware of it from any sensation, our minds are at this very moment in some society in the spiritual world, so that instead of speaking of our affections, we could equally well speak of the society with which we are associated. Everything that we think and will is from this source, even to the extent that if the societies of spirits and angels in which we are were taken away, we would at that moment have no thought and no will, and fall down absolutely dead. This is really the state of affairs, although people in general believe that they are doing all things from themselves, and that there is neither a heaven nor a hell; or, as the Writings observe, “that hell is far removed from (them), and heaven also” (AC 4067:2).

The teaching is that man summons evil societies to himself, that is, he places himself in a society of such spirits; for like is associated with like (AC 4067:3). But it is the Lord who associates a regenerating man with the societies of heaven, and it is the Lord also who brings about our association with societies of mediate good. “Mediate goods”, we read, “are nothing else than such societies that are applied to man by the Lord, to the intent that by their means he may be introduced to spiritual and celestial goods and truth; and when he has been brought to these (good and truths) the (former) societies are separated, and more interior and more perfect ones are joined to him. Nothing else is meant by the mediate good signified by ‘Laban’, and by the separation of that good, which is the subject in this chapter.” (AC 4067:4)

From this it is clear that as we shun our evils as sins against the Lord, we come more and more directly under the rule of the Lord, first by being associated with societies that are in mediate goods, and finally with angelic societies.