

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 March 2009

In The Garden Of God

by Anders Hallengren

When I arrived to Sydney in January, on my first visit to Australia, and went for a walk late in the evening, I found a quiet little church in the neighbourhood where I sat down on a wall in the darkness. Dim moonshine fell upon a white garden stone, inscribed with a poem, "God's garden", written by the English poet Dorothy Frances Gurney:

The Lord God planted a garden

In the first white days of the world,

And He set there an angel warden

In a garment of light unfurled.

The kiss of the sun for pardon,
The song of the birds for mirth, --
One is nearer God's heart in a garden
Than anywhere else on earth.

This is close to Swedenborg's teaching. When I came to the garden of the Hurstville Society in February, I at once noticed the wooden signboards in your wonderful garden, with quotations from Swedenborg's writings, and in particular one, saying that the angels in heaven live in beautiful gardens where the flowers and the trees represent their intelligence and wisdom.

These beautiful words reminded me of a famous 19th century Harvard oration.

But first a personal note on why I am here, and that is the story of some relatives. In 1886, my grandmother and her sister arrived to Australia with the Swedish barque ship Atlantic, owned by their father who was the captain of the ship. One of them married a steer man of another ship, and their son, the cousin of my father, was enrolled in the Australian armed forces and was seriously wounded in the battle at Gallipoli in World War I.

The second reason for why I am here, tracing roots and connections, is Swedenborg's cousin Carl Linnaeus, the famous botanist, honoured by the Linnean Society of New South Wales, which invited me to lecture. Linnaeus and Swedenborg had many things in common. They were both pious naturalists, and the two most famous Swedish citizens of the 18th century, in fact: ever. To both of them, the Garden was holy. The third reason why I am here is you, Swedenborg's followers in Australia.

The date of the landing of The First Fleet, 26 January 1788, was celebrated at Australia Day last month, and I was then told that the Writings arrived with the ships. The church that gradually took form among Emanuel Swedenborg's following, The Church of the New Jerusalem, held its first meeting in London the same year, in 1788. But even before this, Swedenborg's doctrines had reached America. A Scot named James Glen visited the capital city of Philadelphia in 1784 (and also visited the centre of

Lori Heldon.

Visiting Sydney recently are **Endrede Gladish** from Bryn Athyn, especially for granddaughter Naomi's wedding, and **Carla Schorran** from Kempton USA along with her friend **Kelsie Odhner** who have worked on a horse stud in the Hunter Valley and now plan on working on a cattle ranch in far north west Queensland before returning home. Carla is the daughter of Rev Paul and Nina Schorran and was last here 10 years ago.

Wedding of Naomi Heldon and Nick Smith

28th February 2009



McKell Park at Darling Point on the banks of Sydney Harbour on a glorious sunny late summer day was the magnificent setting for the marriage of Naomi Heldon and Nick Smith conducted by Rev Julian Duckworth. The wedding brought to Sydney many friends and relations from other parts of Australia and the United States.

Following the wedding guests were invited to a rooftop reception in Surry Hills.

Birthdays

Happy Birthday to **Tracy Hinds** (4th), **Mikayla Hinds** (4th), **Don Macfarlane** (7th), **Debbie Walsh** (7th), **Graham Horner** (12th), **Edward Horner** (18th) and **Bill Hall** (26th)

Visit of Rev Stephen Cole

In the last few days we have had a communication from **Bishop Brian Keith** advising that **Rev Stephen Cole** and his wife **Jennifer** can visit Hurstville for five to six weeks in the March – April timeframe including Easter. It is expected Stephen will be here for Sunday March 22nd through Sunday April 26th though final arrangements are still pending.

Bishop Brian Keith also advised that there is a chance of a theologian visiting in the June – August timeframe similar to the visit by Coleman Glenn last year. No other information is available at this time.

News Notes

Jan Lindsay and **Margaret Ward** went to Adelaide in February to attend a conference that empowers people to create healthy homes and healthy lifestyles.

Some of you may know **Patrick Morahan** from the last two Summer Camps. Sadly Patrick lost his home in the recent Victorian bushfires. Patrick who lived at Kinglake escaped unhurt thanks to a last minute rescue but lost virtually everything. Our heartfelt sympathy goes out to Patrick and all affected by this tragedy.

Some of you may know **Tammy Keal** from New Zealand who attended Summer Camps in the past. Tammy has recently become engaged to Anthony Rush in the United States. The wedding is planned for next February in New Zealand.

Grace Horner recently spent a few days in hospital in Tamworth. She is now back home under the care of her daughter **Margaret Heldon**. **Ralph Horner** is also visiting the farm near Tamworth where she lives allowing Margaret to attend her niece's (Naomi's) wedding.

It will be nice to welcome **Callista Barritt** from Canberra who will be attending the University of New South Wales and boarding with Murray and

trade and shipping, Boston), where he gave a lecture on the basic principles of Swedenborg's doctrinal system. The news on the new gospel spread rapidly.

In the 1820's, there were many students at Harvard College and its Divinity school that were attracted to Swedenborg: Ralph Waldo Emerson, Thomas Worcester, John H. Wilkins, Theophilus Parsons Jr., Warren Burton, and first and foremost Sampson Reed.

The young New Churchman Sampson Reed, who became the editor of the Boston journal *The New Jerusalem Magazine*, had a tremendous influence in these intellectual and spiritual circles. First came a remarkable lecture Reed gave at Harvard in 1821, his "Oration on Genius." This speech echoes Swedenborg's philosophy of language, his interpretation of the lost paradise in *Arcana Coelestia*, and his creation drama *De cultu et amore Dei*, "On the Worship and Love of God." Reed set the divine understanding of the lost paradise and the living language of Adam in a contemporary perspective. It is the most inspired, and one of the most pregnant and influential college orations ever in the history of literature:

Because God is love, nature exists; because God is love, the Bible is poetry... When the heart is purified... The harps which have hung on the willows will sound as the first breath of heaven that moved the leaves in the garden of Eden... There is a unison of spirit and nature. The genius of the mind will descend, and unite with the genius of the rivers, the lakes, and the woods. Thoughts fall to the earth with power, and make a language out of nature.

Adam and Eve knew no language but their garden. They had nothing to communicate by words; for they had not the power of concealment. The sun of the spiritual world shone bright on their hearts, and their senses were open with delight to natural objects... The people of the golden age... possessed nothing which evil passions might not obliterate; and, when the "heavens were rolled together as a scroll," the curtain dropped between the world and their existence.

Science will be full of life, as nature is full of God. She will wring from her locks the dew which was gathered in the

wilderness. *By science, I mean natural science...*

The time is not far distant. The cock has crowed. I hear the distant lowing of the cattle which are grazing on the mountains. "Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman saith, The morning cometh."

(These words are from Isaiah 21:11; Cf. Revelation 22:16: "I, Jesus ... am the bright Morning Star!")

The text refers to the divine language of nature: The Author has written two books: The Holy Scripture and the Book of Nature.

To experience the world as a text, to try to interpret nature's book, the *Liber Naturæ*, leads us deep into our past, into the inner sanctum of our culture and spiritual life, where the ever-desired view of the inner nature of reality face-to-face has never been considered a part of our human lot. We live in a world of mirrors; we see the divine things as in a mirror, darkly; but "ever since the world's creation, its unseen qualities . . . could be grasped in its workings and become visible." What we see is emerging from the unseen. The essence of being is transcendent. That is the teaching of the Bible. I Cor 13:12, Rom 1:20, Hebr 11:1-3. The epiphany of Swedenborg's contemporary Carl Linnaeus, the experience of Nature as seeing God as if "from behind," has precisely this background: Cf. Exodus 33:20-23 where the Lord said to Moses:

"You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live ... While My glory passes by, I will ... cover you with My hand while I pass by. Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen."

In raptures over the wonders he perceived, the botanist Carl Linnaeus wrote:

I beheld God from behind and I felt dizzy.

Swedenborg found different layers of content in God's Word. Since the transcendent is expressed by the physical, the visible, two levels of meaning

beginning of life on earth. To quote from the Sydney Morning Herald (10/11/2008) "Scientists have identified the single chance encounter about 1-9 billion years ago to which almost all life on earth owes its existence. It happened they say when an amoeba like organism engulfed a bacterium that had developed the power to use sunlight to break down water and liberate oxygen. Imagine that, a "chance encounter" of two organisms leading to the development of this wonderful earth and human life.

A true explanation of the way the Lord began the creation of the universe is given in the work Divine Love and Wisdom, especially numbers 300-305.

I quote just from the beginning of No. 302. "The atmospheres which in both the spiritual worlds and the natural worlds are three in number in their ultimates terminate in the substances and matter from which form the material world."

A Thank You For The Stamps

Rhonda Hall, who has organised the stamp collecting has received a thank you card from **Margaret Skinner**. The card which is itself a work of art done by Margaret herself says in part:

"Thank you so much for collecting and sending the stamps for the Leprosy Mission – it is most appreciated. The stamps are sorted and sold to either stamp dealers or individuals and the money is then sent to missions in various countries to help people less fortunate. So your contribution and any others are certainly going to a worthy cause for which they thank people for their continued support."

So keep saving your stamps and put them in the box in the front of Baringa.

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Atheism

by Norman Heldon

Recently in London some atheists paid for ads on buses that read “There is probably no God, so relax and enjoy life.” Then, so that the ads could run for longer they appealed for contributions. Surprisingly they received much more than expected so perhaps the ads are still appearing. Perhaps there are a lot more atheists in England than we might expect.

To anyone with a firm belief in the Creator, atheism is irrational, illogical, without any sense of the meaning and purpose of life. Nor can it offer any explanation of the wonders of the universe and the laws that govern its operation. Yet, as Swedenborg notes, a great number of atheists are among the learned. One is the well-known Englishman Richard Dawkins of whose book “The God Delusion” many copies have been sold. There are many who misuse the sciences to back up their rejection of God. Religion and science are actually in perfect agreement with each other.

Rejection of the Lord is not just a present day phenomenon. Remember the sad fate of the Most Ancient Church. Before its decline the Garden of Eden represented the wisdom of that church. Two trees were especially mentioned, one was the Tree of Life and the other the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The people were warned not to eat the fruit of the latter tree. However the Lord had given them free will and their sensual and proprium represented by the serpent swayed them to disobey. They rejected God and were sent from the Garden. (see Divine Providence 313)

The same thing happened in following churches as people chose the love of self and their own prudence instead of the Lord and His Word. So that is what is going on at present, with a growing number glorying in their own intelligence, if it can be called that, proclaiming that there is no God and no life after death.

So desperate are some scientists to prove that there is no Divine Creator that they seize on anything that seems to offer an alternative explanation of the

always exist by correspondential means in the basic text itself and its events. Swedenborg's exegesis begins from this insight, and from his interpretations his followers later extracted comprehensive dictionaries dealing with correspondences. The principle which pervades all this is not totally obscure to us today, either, but is partly natural — just as we still acknowledge today that “light” stands both for something visible and for something spiritual, for enlightenment and for insight. So too “warmth” has both a physical and an inner, spiritual content for us — quite simply, love. This two-faced linguistic reality was always present for Swedenborg when he explained things in his theosophical and exegetical works; the light and warmth of the sun in our biological world correspond to divine love and wisdom in the spiritual world.

"Heaven," therefore, like everything else, is twofold. Thus, the kingdom of heaven can never be sought “above” or on high in the region of our own world. Consequently, ever since the times of Jesus, it has from time to time been found necessary to point out that “No one can say, ‘Here it is’ or ‘There it is’; No, the kingdom of God is within you.” (Luke 17:21)

Heaven is near: it is the heart, the kingdom of love. And Swedenborg says that the love between the angels in heaven is felt as the fragrance of wonderful gardens.

Footnote:

Anders Hallengren signs his emails as follows:

Anders Hallengren, Swedish author;

*Life member of the Swedenborg Society, London
and Fellow of the Linnean Society of London*

Anders is also an Associate Professor in the Department of Literature and the History of Ideas at the University of Stockholm in Sweden. The Hurstville New Church was pleased to provide accommodation for Anders in Baringa next to the church for several weeks during February. He is a charming gentleman who has been lecturing and collecting material for a book whilst here in Australia. He says he much appreciated his stay at Baringa.

More Gifts Than We Realise

By Rev Don Rose
Assistant pastor Bryn Athyn Cathedral

We benefit inwardly from occasions when we deliberately count our blessings. They enhance within us a spirit of thanksgiving, and we are inclined to notice things, to savour them and to appreciate them.

More than we know, we are on the receiving end of true gifts. Jesus, speaking to a woman at a well, used a striking phrase, “If you knew the gift of God” (John 4:10)

If only we knew what God is giving us. Listen to some words of Jesus. John 6:
“The bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

“I am the bread of life, he who comes to me shall never hunger and he who believes in me shall never thirst.”

“The water that I shall give shall become in him a fountain of water springing up into eternal life.”

In John 10: “My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life.”

This is a theme of a God whose nature is to give, to give and to give. This is a basic theme in the theology of Emanuel Swedenborg. We are receivers. God is a constant giver. From our early childhood, God is giving us precious moments which are never lost even if it may seem that they are forgotten.

Thereafter God’s ideal plan for our lives includes special gifts, none more special than true marriage love. Although it may be rare, we read, “The possibility of such a love may indeed be recognised from the earliest state of that love when it is first stealing into and entering the heart of a young man

and woman as it does in the case of those who are beginning to love one only.”

“Into this love the Lord has gathered all the blessings and delights which may be given.”

“Can you not see that there must be some love in which the Lord has conveyed all the blessings, joys and delights that can be given?”

Another gift Swedenborg emphasises specially is the joy we feel when we are involved in useful endeavours. When we are able to make a difference for good, there flows into us from heaven an inward joy. If you feel it, thank God for it.

And what does God give us when our private world looks bleak?, or when the state of the world as a whole seems ominous? What does God give us when we have endured hurt and loss?

The answer is offered in one short word. That word is “hope”. In a way, hope almost seems to be quite unreasonable. Despite this somehow we have the audacity to entertain it.

Underlying the feeling of hope is a trust. It is a sense that there is a wisdom and power that transcends the forces and influences that confront us.

If you are touched with hope, you need not explain it. Just let it dwell within you. Let it stir and motivate you. And, above all, give thanks to God. For God in His love is extending and conveying to us this priceless gift.

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Footnote: Rev Don Rose regularly has articles published in a local Philadelphia newspaper. This article is a reprint of one of these articles.