

## ***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 Book-room**, 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 November 2006**

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### **SELF-ESTEEM**

A Sermon on Matthew 22:39 by the Rev. Douglas Taylor.

*“You shall love your neighbour as yourself” (Matthew 22:39).*

The idea of self-esteem is a difficult one for many New Church people. It makes them feel uneasy; they are inwardly resistant to it. The reason is that they recollect so many passages in the New Revelation which say that mankind is nothing but evil, that the human proprium (what is one's own) is essentially evil, and that the love of self is the source of all evils (DP 139:7).

For example, we read in the *Arcana Coelestia* that “man of himself can do nothing of good and think nothing of truth” (874-876, 2946:2); “that man of himself, or from his freedom, would incline toward the deepest hell” (3854:2); that “of himself man is nothing but evil, and ... what is in him, so

far as it is from him, is nothing else than infernal”(3875); that “of himself man cannot but do what is evil, and turn away from the Lord”(233:2); and that “whatever is from (man) himself, or of his own, is nothing but evil, ...which continually exhales as from a furnace, and continually endeavours to extinguish the nascent good.”(5354:2,3), besides many, many other passages to the same effect.

Those evils are well exemplified by the two characters in our readings from the Word. The insatiable love of dominion from the love of self is dramatically illustrated by the ravings of the King of Babylon, nicknamed Lucifer, in Isaiah chapter 14; and by the Pharisee’s so-called “prayer” in Luke 18. He was not really thanking the Lord, but boasting to Him, praising himself and revealing his self-righteousness and contempt for others in comparison with himself.

If we have nothing but such evils, how can we possibly have any self-esteem, any feeling of self-worth? How can we love *those* qualities in ourselves? They are directly opposite to the heavenly qualities that we wish for. We may well say to ourselves, “I am no angel, but surely I’m not as bad as that!”

No doubt you are “**not** as bad as that.” Let us be well aware that all those negative passages we read are all of them speaking of man “as he is in himself,” that is, as we would be without any Divine or heavenly influences, if we had nothing but our own natural and hereditary inclinations. We would indeed be nothing but evil. We would be ruled and consumed by the love of self, the love of domineering, and the love of the world. Self and worldly status would reign supreme. When making any kind of decision, the only considerations for us would be, “What about *me*? *What* will I get out of it? Will I lose anything?”

What is more, there would be nothing to counteract these attitudes, except perhaps some not-so-enlightened self-interest. We would not necessarily *act* on those evil feelings - for fear of the consequences to self; but they would still be smouldering within us, waiting for a safe opportunity to erupt into action.

We need to be aware of this reality, of the fact that in and of ourselves without any higher influences, we are nothing but evil. We know this is the case, not only from doctrine but also from experience, when we lapse into what is our own and forget or ignore the Lord and what comes

it has to offer? No one can be curious about something he or she is ignorant of!.

## NEWS NOTES

We were sorry to hear that **Margaret Ward** spent several days in St. George Hospital suffering from pneumonia; but are glad to report that she is back home and recovering well.

We are very pleased to welcome back **Owen** and **Margaret Heldon** and **Michael** and **Kerry Lockhart** from their overseas trips. From all accounts they all had a wonderful time. We are looking forward to hearing them tell us all about it.

## SERMONS FOR NOVEMBER

- 05. “Little by Little”
- 12. “Render unto Caesar”
- 19. “The Security of Innocence”
- 26. “Martha and Mary”

## DOCTRINAL CLASSES FOR NOVEMBER

- 03. Luther the Reformer (Protestant)
- 17. Luther the Angel

## NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Happy Birthday to **Cliff Adamou** (2nd), **Jesse Horner** (3rd), **Brian Heldon** (8th), **Cathy Kermond** (11th), **Lori Heldon** (30th)

“At the entrance to a pathway that meanders through the understorey was one of Norman’s poems inscribed on a wooden sign. Along the way there were more signs containing useful botanical information, as well as short pieces of wisdom about human experience, spirituality, and in particular, the symmetry between our lives and nature.”

“The stroll had a powerful effect on me. ...I was able to stop and appreciate the sublime beauty of this peaceful churchyard garden.”  
“Normans’ charisma, his passion for gardening and his wonderful creation are truly inspirational. As a gardener it is my great hope that one day I too could create a garden that touches the spirit of someone just as Norman’s churchyard garden touched mine.”

”I will never forget Norm nor the wonderful pearls of wisdom that touched my spirit that day. After a few enjoyable sets of tennis I headed home, reminded that gardening is about getting in touch with the natural world and, perhaps, the spiritual world.”

“As I shared a good yarn with Norman, I was aware that I was in the presence of a wise man.”

*Good spirits (are present with man) in the affection of gardening, and have dwelling places there (Spiritual Experiences 4399).*

## **INTERVIEW WITH THE ST.GEORGE LEADER**

One thing leads to another! A member of the Church wrote to the Leader, drawing attention to the article in the BURKE’S BACKYARD magazine about a beautiful garden behind the New Church in Penshurst. Nothing happened for about two weeks. Then suddenly there was a phone call from the Leader reporter asking how to get in touch with “this Norman Heldon.” As a result an interview was arranged two days ago. As we go to press, it has just appeared,

These efforts to make the New Church better known are important and worthwhile. Without them, how will anyone become curious about what

from Him. Not only do we need to be aware of the reality, but we also need to acknowledge and accept it, rather than attempt to fight against it or ignore it.

Yet this is not the whole story. We are not left *only* with what is our own, our proprium. We are also given the good affections and true thoughts that flow in from the Lord. No one is denied these heavenly gifts. Everyone without exception begins life by receiving them in his or her infancy. Even the vilest and most vicious person began life by receiving them. That is why there is such a tender sphere of innocence with every new-born babe and infant. They are all – each one of them - under angelic influences. That is why the Lord said: “Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always behold the face of My Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 18:10). These heavenly influences are called in the New Revelation “remains” or “remains of good and truth.”

While these remains of goodness and truth are most obvious at birth and in infancy, they are not limited to that period of life. For we read: “But what are remains? They are not only the goods and truths that a man has learned from the Lord's Word from infancy, and has thus impressed on his memory, but they are also all the states derived from them, such as states of innocence from infancy; states of love toward parents, brothers, teachers, friends; states of charity toward the neighbour, and also of pity for the poor and needy; in a word, all states of good and truth. These states together with the goods and truths impressed on the memory, are called remains, which are preserved in man by the Lord and are stored up, entirely without his knowledge, in his internal man, and are completely separated from the things that belong to man, that is, from evils and falsities. All these states are preserved in man by the Lord in such a way that not the least of them is lost”(AC 561). That they are not limited to childhood is revealed in this passage: “Remains are all the states of the affection of good and truth with which a man is gifted by the Lord, from earliest infancy, even to the end of life”(AC 1906).

By means of these good and true states of mind, the Lord in His mercy protects us from ourselves. He provides an antidote to the lusts and twisted reasonings that belong to what is our own. This is of the Divine providence of the Lord. It is the Lord with us. This is what we should love and cherish.

Now, our text tells us that we should love our neighbour as ourself. But *how* are we to love our neighbour?

We are constantly reminded in the New Revelation that to love the neighbour does not consist in loving the *person* of the neighbour (AC 5028,10,336). We could be deceived. We could fall victim to a charming scoundrel, male or female. Loving the neighbour does not mean deriving delight from the appealing personal qualities of a person whose character leaves much to be desired. It means considering first the *character* of the person seeking our aid. We are to be a friend to what is good. The goodness of the person's character is what we should love, cherish, and foster. Good, received from the Lord, is the neighbour to be loved. That is why the Heavenly Doctrines always say *the* neighbour, not *our* neighbour or *one's* neighbour. We are to love the Lord as reflected in the neighbour. This goodness or genuine love from the Lord is the neighbour wherever it is received, whether by an individual, a group of individuals, our country, the whole human race, the Church, or the Lord's kingdom.

In order to determine the character of those we meet, we are allowed to judge their words and actions. Not only are we *allowed* to do so, but we are also *urged* to do so, for the sake of protecting the common good, although we are not to judge their lot to eternity, for that is a *spiritual* judgment that only the Lord can make.

To *love* the neighbour, as just defined, is to work to foster, develop, and increase the reception of that goodness from the Lord. But if that is the way to love the neighbour in others, it is also the way to love the neighbour in *ourselves*. Loving, fostering, what we have received from the Lord is the only genuine self-esteem, the only genuine self-worth. "So far as anyone receives from the Lord," we read, "he is worthy" (AE 196). Just as we are to love what is from the Lord in the neighbour, so we are to love what is from the Lord in ourselves. That will save us from any proprial, egotistical self-esteem, any boastful self-love, which is from hell – provided, of course, that we really acknowledge that all good affections and true thoughts are from the Lord alone.

We all know that we have received "remains of good and truth" from the Lord in infancy. We also know from doctrine that these gifts have continued ever since. But we may be reluctant to admit this for fear of being self-righteous or conceited. Yet it is important that we look back over our

From this truth we come to understand that we have the opportunity to extend encouragement to our family and to those we contact during our life.

Maybe if Barry Jones had not received encouragement from his maternal grandmother, he would not have become one of the most knowledgeable people of this country as well as an icon of Australian politics.

If we examine our own lives we can also see where healthy encouragement has been an active influence in our lives. So we can conclude that the encouragement we receive from others is a major determining factor in the unfoldment of our lives toward a good and useful end.

"Man is born not for the sake of himself but for others; that is, he is born not to live for himself alone but for others; otherwise there could be no cohesive society, or any good therein." TCR 406

## FREE PUBLICITY

The Hurstville New Church has recently received some welcome publicity.

In September a journalist came to play some tennis at our Church tennis court. He was surprised and delighted by the beauty of the gardens at the back of the Church building "in the middle of suburbia. As he strolled slowly through the garden, taking in the natural foliage and sampling the poetry and the quotations from the Writings displayed on small wooden signs, he met the gardener, 89 year old Norman Heldon, the church member who, along with some other parishioners, was responsible for the transformation of what had been a wilderness.

The journalist, Ben Hewett, wrote a very laudatory article for the November issue of the prominent Sydney gardening magazine BURKE'S BACKYARD, replete with beautiful colour photographs of the garden and Norman Heldon ("an old Digger," as he called him) clad in his gardening clothes. The article closes with the address of the Church.

To give you the flavour of that well written article, here are a few excerpts:

youngster living in a slum area with apparently no stimulus to develop his talents? What is the outlook of that youngster living in the slums where the lack of money is a major contributing factor in his family's life? Will that youngster be inclined to give of his best in his school studies? One of his teachers may inspire him to make the extra effort to pursue his studies.

From the Divine Revelation we learn that the Lord's loving care is with all people from the moment of their first breath in the world to eternity. The Lord's loving care is with us forever.

In our daily living, the social aspects of the moral and civil life are clearly evident to all people. The big difference is when we live from a spiritual motive as well as moral and civil motives. To live from a spiritual motive means that we embrace the truth that we live after physical death and that we acknowledge a Creator.

Living from a spiritual motive means we acknowledge that our daily decisions have far-reaching effects, in fact, our decisions reach to eternity. Everything we do or say, or think or feel has a bearing on our future life, both in this world and in the life after death. Our understanding will be with us to eternity.

The Divine Revelation makes it abundantly clear that we have to think, will and do as if from ourselves, recognising that all power to think, will and to act is from the Lord. The Lord provides that we should live our lives as if from ourselves but acknowledge that the power to live as if from ourselves is given to us by the Lord. Man cannot lift a finger except from the power as given to him by the Lord. Without the Lord we can do nothing. (See HH 228,).

A striking passage from the Divine Revelation says we are not to stand with our hands hanging down waiting for influx before we begin a project. To start and to complete a project, we are to use the talent and training we have received. So we work toward the goal of performing uses while acknowledging that all the good and truth we have is from the Lord. (See AC 1712).

NO matter what our talents or upbringing, the one indispensable ingredient for the development of talents and their expression is some form of encouragement we have received from the people around us. In the TV interview, Barry Jones said his maternal grandmother encouraged him.

life to acknowledge from experience how the Lord has helped us shun our evils as sins, how He has enlightened us from time to time, and how He has sustained us in our temptation battles. To deny these things is to deny the providence of the Lord.

Our reading from the *Arcana Coelestia* gave us further enlightenment as to loving oneself. It did this by clarifying the relationship of the means to the end in view, as follows: "A person who is in the good of charity and faith loves also himself and the world, but in no other way than as the means to an end are loved. The love of self with him looks to the love of the Lord, for he loves himself as a means to the end that he may serve the Lord; and the love of the world with him looks to the love of the neighbour, for he loves the world as a means for the sake of the end that he may be of service to the neighbour. When therefore the means is loved for the sake of the end, it is not the *means* that is loved, but the *end*" (AC 7819).

The means to an end is like a servant. The end in view or the aim or goal is like the master who is to be served. If we have received charity and faith from the Lord, and if those qualities are our *ruling* love, they are like the master who rules the household of our mind. We love to serve the Lord and the neighbour. That is the love of our life. Everything we will and think, everything we do and say, serves that love. It is a means to that end or goal. We enjoy a feeling of self-satisfaction whenever we find that we have in some measure served the Lord and His kingdom, which is the neighbour. That self-satisfaction is not selfishness. It is the delight belonging to use. Use can be defined as being an influence for good in the hands of the Lord. To the extent that we have received from the Lord, to that extent we are not delighted because *we* have done something good. We are delighted because *good* has been done – because from the Lord we love what is good.

Here we also see the difference between individuality and selfishness. Each one of us has a unique use to perform. We each have our own individual way of being an influence for good and doing good from the Lord. That is our individuality. That is our use. To love that use is not selfishness, nor is *protecting* that use selfishness. It needs protection, because it is precious, and must not be destroyed. Selfishness enters in and destroys our use when we lose sight of what should be the real end in view, and instead make self the end or goal.

"Those who are in the love of self," we read, "... acknowledge as

neighbour those who love them most, that is, in proportion as they are their own; these they embrace, these they kiss, to these they do good, and these they call brothers; indeed, because they are evil, they say these are the neighbour more than others: they count others as the neighbour in proportion as they love them, thus according to the quality and quantity of their love. Such people derive the origin of neighbour from themselves” (NJHD 89).

On the other hand, if we put the Lord first in our life and therefore make *Him* the source of the neighbour, so that He is loved, served, and worshipped, we need not fear that we are being egotistical if we love our unique use, if we are pleased with ourselves because we are a means of loving the Lord and the neighbour. That love is from the Lord not from what is our own.

The self-esteem that is from the Lord also applies to our love of country. The principles are the same. There can be a merely natural love of one’s country as well as a *spiritual* love. In the natural love, there is no regard for the goodness in the country, or the lack of it. The country is loved solely because it is the country of one’s birth. This love is from what is one’s own, an egotistical love. It is epitomized in the slogan, ” My country right or wrong.” This is the kind of love of country that has given patriotism or nationalism a bad name. This is the love of self on the national scale.

However, a *spiritual* love of country is founded upon what is from the Lord in the country. A person with a spiritual conscience loves his or her country not only because of its civil and moral goodness but also because of its spiritual goodness as well. Civil good refers to the state of law and order in the country; moral good refers to the quality and quantity of the moral virtues in the country; a country’s spiritual good depends on its attitude to religion there, whether the life of religion is helped or hindered (or prevented). In the ideal state, the country is governed by the Lord. What is from Him permeates religion in that country. The spiritual conscience thus generated gives a soul to the country’s morality and its civil obedience. The laws of the land are framed, administered, and practiced from a *spiritual*-moral conscience. In such a country the citizens can have a genuine self-esteem with regard to their country, for they would be looking to the Lord and His kingdom as the end in view. This is the ideal set forth in Psalm 22: “The kingdom is the Lord’s; and He is the governor among the nations”

(Psalm 22:28).

We have a clear choice. We can love ourself and the world from and for self, that is, exclusively from what is our own; or we can love them from the Lord with us. If from what is our own, it is an infernal kind of self-esteem. If from the Lord, it is a spiritual kind of self-esteem, part of our heavenly proprium. It is something in us that the Lord can and does love and foster.

May we pray the Lord to help us shun a merely natural self-esteem, so that we may receive from Him the heavenly kind, and enter more and more into His kingdom. *Amen.*

Readings: Isaiah 14: 4-15      Luke 18:9-14      AC 7819

## THE DETERMINATION OF DESTINY

by Bill Hall

The question, what determines our destiny, is one of the fundamental questions to emerge in the minds of many people. On the physical level, the immediate answer is that the determining factors of our destiny are heredity and the environment.

As infants and adolescents we have no control over our hereditary inheritance. It is largely the same with our environment, which includes the physical environment and the people with whom we interact from the moment of birth.

Concerning talents, the two questions to consider are what talents did we inherit and what talents have we developed? Have we used our talents toward a useful end?

In an ABC TV interview on Head To Head on Monday, June 26, 2006, the well-known politician, Barry Jones, said his maternal grandmother encouraged his development. In his life and writing, Barry Jones has emerged as a dedicated worker and one of the most knowledgeable citizens of Australia.

What do we learn if we compare the young Barry Jones with a