

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 except the first Sunday of each month. But please check the calendar for each month in case of changes.

A **tea and social** in conjunction with **discussion** meets on one Monday of each month (January excepted) beginning at 7 00 pm. This will be conducted by visiting ministers when available or lay led as appropriate. Please check the calendar for the month for the exact date. (At present additional classes/ discussion groups are being held under the leadership of visiting pastor Rev Glenn Alden.)

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 editors – Owen & Margaret Heldon
22-24 Dudley St., off Hillcrest Ave. in Penshurst
Tel (02) 9580-1589. Fax (02) 9570-8447
Email: newchurch@optusnet.com.au

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

Call or come at anytime.



The New Church Newsletter

Hurstville Society October 2011

If Only I Believed that All Goodness Flows In

by Rev Glenn Alden

Early in my theological training I came across the teaching that if a person only believed that all life, thought and feeling or love flow in, they would not make themselves guilty of any evil, nor would they corrupt the goodness they do with thoughts of reward or merit. I was so excited by this teaching that first chance I got, I shared it while giving a chapel talk to high school boys. I remember that right after the chapel service one of the senior ministers came up to me and warned me that this was perhaps a dangerous idea to teach to high school boys who might interpret it as, "Do whatever you want, just remember to say 'the devil made me do it.'"

Let's have a look at the teaching. Heavenly Secrets 6324 is a short passage which states: "everything good and true comes from the Lord and everything evil and false from hell. If people believed in this, the true situation, they could not be held accountable for any failing or have evil imputed to them. People believe that it all comes from themselves, though, so they adopt evil as their own. Their faith does this. The evil therefore clings to them and cannot be detached."

This is amazing to me. It seems so simple, perhaps too simple. If we only believed that the evil we desire and the false thinking we cling to was coming into us from the hells, we would not be held accountable for it. It seems too easy, like magic. But there is a powerful truth underlying it which we see taught in the story of Eve and the serpent.

Adam and Eve in the garden symbolize the heavenly church, which has no desire to investigate matters of faith from natural or sensual reasoning because to do so is to decide what is true and good for ourselves from our own desires, by reason. In other words those of the heavenly church accept that things were good because they were from God and true because God said so. Eating of the tree of knowledge is to decide what is good and true for ourselves and thus to guide ourselves. So the serpent appealed to a desire to decide these things for ourselves and promised Eve that she would be like God if she ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

We actually have a powerful God given perception that we live and act from ourselves. In Heavenly Secrets 4151 we read: "Everything good and true flows into us from the Lord both directly and indirectly through communities of angels, but goodness and truth still seem to be ours. They appear to be ours so that we will adopt them as our own until we reach the stage where we know and then acknowledge and finally believe they are not ours but the Lord's." This sense of ownership is given us by God because without it there can be no reciprocity in our relationship with God. However this becomes a problem when we believe that it is actually the case. The nature of the problem is explained in this month's favourite passage, namely that when we believe we are the source of the evils we desire and the reasoning that we use to rationalize our behaviour, we attach ourselves to those evils and reasonings and make them a part of who we are.

Huiling and **Matthew Cooper** are enjoying what is expected to be a lengthy stay of Huiling's parents from China. It has been a long wait but wonderful they are finally here.

Congratulations to **Stuart Heldon** and **Leanne O'Reilly** who just recently announced their engagement.

Mike Lockhart will be attending his class's 50th reunion in Bryn Athyn Pennsylvania. He'll be away for a little over a week, and is looking forward to catching up with his son, Scott who'll be on the same flight with his father from Atlanta to Philadelphia to spend the week with him while both will be staying with the Rev Erik and Lynn-Del Sandstrom. Mike hopes to also catch up with his family while he's there.

We are sorry to report that **Elena Perla** had the misfortune to have her phone stolen from her car which was parked in her own driveway! This was bad enough but made even worse because it occurred on the final night of the *Living Courageously* workshops causing Elena to miss the final session while she dealt with cancelling her SIM etc.

Owen and **Margaret Heldon** have just returned from a wonderful 3 week holiday in Western Australia where their daughter **Carolyn** now works. Apart from touring much of the South West they were able to meet many of the people from the Perth Circle and attend one of their services which included a shared meal afterwards with a large cake to celebrate the birthdays of both Owen and Carolyn. At the end of the holiday a most enjoyable couple of days was spent with Rev Trevor and Joy Moffat.

We are hoping a favourable response this month concerning **RevTodd** and **Jennifer Beiswenger's** application to Vetassess as the first and most important step in obtaining Australian residency.

Birthdays

Happy Birthday to **Vera Buck** (8th), **Stuart Heldon** (10th), **Murray Heldon** (13th), **Alyssa Wende** (14th), **Darren Kermond & Cameron Walsh** (20th), **Sonia Hicks** (22nd) and **Shirley Taylor** (27th)

News Notes

Rev Glenn and **Mary Alden** report that they had a WONDERFUL VACATION in North Queensland. Some of their highlights included one day when they took the train to Kuranda and the cable car back. They took a schooner sailboat out to the Barrier Reef and Green Island, and as they put it “positively wore ourselves out snorkeling”. They also used a motorcycle to tour the rain forest, Atherton tableland, Mossman Gorge and the beaches north of Cairns. (see picture below)



Is this why Glenn is called “The Rev?”

Glenn and Mary are off to **Perth** on Monday 3rd October for a week. Glenn will preach to the Perth Circle on Sunday 9th October, returning to Hurstville the following day. Then they will be away in **New Zealand** for the last two weeks of October (Wednesday 19th October returning Wednesday 2nd November).

The extent of that attachment is illustrated in Heavenly Secrets 4151, in several places where we see how attached spirits in the other life are to their own life and faith. “When groups of spirits who have a middling kind of goodness are in company with angels, it appears entirely as though they possess the truth and goodness belonging to the angels. They cannot see it any other way. When they separate, though, they sense that the real case is quite different, and consequently they complain, believing that the angels they were associating with have taken their (the spirits’) property.” We are so attached to “our own”. Our sense of self worth and the way we compare others unfavourably to ourselves all comes from the conviction that we *need* to be the source of our own goodness otherwise we are lifeless. So the passage concludes: “They love their independence so much that when you show them that everything flows in, they grow anxious and frantically demand to be allowed to live on their own, saying that if they are denied, they will not survive. “

I find that most of the time I am living the reality of the worldly self. I feel attached to my own thoughts and feelings. I “own” my accomplishments, and feel ashamed about my failings. I think this is how I am generally supposed to feel. However I am slowly learning the freedom that comes when I can let go of that ownership, reminding myself that everything comes from the Lord. I notice how almost instantly, when I remember to think this, I feel gratitude rather than pride or shame.

I also find that when I am in an obsessive state: obsessed by some desire, or some thought like “poor me”, or “if only”; I can get freedom from the obsession by simply reminding myself that it is probably not coming from the Lord.

In an instant the power of the desire or the thought is turned into aversion toward being controlled by evil spirits. This is not me, I remind myself, it is some malicious being who wants to control and manipulate me. Those same spirits try to tell me that my sense self will be diminished if I do this, but I find instead that I get a sense of gratitude coupled with a sense of power.

Try it, you just might like it.

Meditation

by Mary Alden

We have recently concluded a series of classes in the Hurstville New Church on the theme of Living Courageously. One of the weekly suggestions was to meditate on a particular passage from scripture. One of the seven weekly tasks was to pray and meditate to achieve inspiration for something new and wonderful from the Lord. I recall several remarks in our discussions about meditation on these themes: 1. that it is helpful, 2. that it is difficult to do, 3. that the mind wanders.

I have been a fairly regular attendee at weekly meditation classes in Tucson Arizona for the past four years. My teacher there, a wonderful man named Alan, suggests that we have a practice where we meditate for at least 20 minutes each day. I have done that for short and somewhat irregular periods of time. We actually meditate for 30 minutes during the class. Additionally Glenn and I follow the practice of a discipline called “The Way of The Beloved” which is a spiritual path for couples.

A major part of this practice is using meditation concepts and mantras to invoke the flow of Divine Love through one’s spirit to send to the spirit of the beloved. In all my experience of meditation the sum total of my “great wisdom” is that: 1. that it is helpful in my life when I do it, 2. that it is difficult to do as a regular practice, 3. my mind definitely wanders, and 4. very occasionally as to be fairly rare, something astounding and other worldly happens for me during meditation.

I would like to elaborate on the words class and practice. In meditation class I learn about a specific method of meditation – how to do it, what it is like, what to expect, how it is to be practiced, etc. In Alan’s class we are given a monthly concept to provide a framework for our meditation. Sometimes a heavenly or divine attribute is the focus such as “loving kindness” or “wisdom and compassion”. Other concepts have been “change” and “intention”. Then we are asked to simply focus on our breath, observe thoughts as they come in, and just let them go, focusing

So we may think of Dr Carson as one of the best in his field of neurosurgery and who prays to the Lord in his difficult assignments.

Classes for October, November and December

There will be a series of six sessions studying the Ten Commandments based on material from Ray and Star Silverman’s book “Rise Above It”. Each session will include a content presentation, time for discussion, and work on a practical application or task.

Classes will generally be at Baringa and follow the timing used for “Living Courageously”, that is to meet on **Monday evenings from 8 to 9 pm** (but note different time for October 17 below). Classes will meet every week with the exception of the last two weeks in October when Glenn and Mary will be in New Zealand.

Class Schedule:

October 17 **(NB 7 pm start with dinner this week)**

Commandments 1 and 2: You shall have no other Gods before my face, and you shall not take the Lord’s name in vain.

November 7 Commandment 3: Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

November 14 Commandment 4: Honour your father and your mother.

November 21 Commandment 5 & 6: You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery.

November 28 Commandments 7 and 8: You shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness.

December 5 Commandments 9 and 10: You shall not covet your neighbour’s house; You shall not covet your neighbour’s wife, etc.

December 12 Christmas Class (Final Class)

December 19 No Class - Glenn and Mary return home.

We realize that not everyone will be able to attend all classes, but we think that even those who miss several classes will get a lot out of the material.

Dr Benjamin Carson – Neurosurgeon, USA

By Norman Heldon

Dr Carson, brilliant and deservedly famous in his field, has operated mostly with success on what are called Craniopagus patients, children who are joined at the head. “Cranio” means “helmet”, “pagus” means “fixed”. He has also pioneered in a rare procedure, hemispherectomy, when he had to remove about half of a child’s brain. The damage to the brain may have been caused by accident, as with a girl who fell from a swing. He has also written three books, “gifted Hands”, “Think Big” and “The Big Picture.”

When Ben and his brother were children they were raised by their mother, Sonya, the father having abandoned them, Sonya was very young and poorly educated, but was a wonderful mother, despite having to work very hard to support them. She weaned the boys off TV and other time-wasting activities, and inspired them to study and do well in their chosen fields. Ben’s brother, Curtis, became an engineer. Ben, at thirty three was appointed Director of Neurosurgery at the Johns Hospital in Baltimore USA. He has even travelled to other countries, including Australia to perform operations.

He has an admirable philosophy of life summed up as “Love others and be useful.” Makes you think of heaven, doesn’t it? He prays to God every night and reads the Bible, finding special pleasure in reading the Book of Proverbs. That happens to be a book I had never read, but do now very often. Following is a typical passage from Proverbs.

These six *things* the LORD hates,
Yes, seven *are* an abomination to Him:
A proud look,
A lying tongue,
Hands that shed innocent blood,
A heart that devises wicked plans,
Feet that are swift in running to evil,
A false witness *who* speaks lies,
And one who sows discord among brethren.

Proverbs 6: 16 - 19

again on our breath. The intent of the practice is to eventually achieve space between thoughts in order to let God flow in. There are some older and likely more spiritual (and practiced) folks in this class who report experiences of profound and very real transport to other realms where they experience magnificent colours and scenes and from where they are reluctant to return to our circle. This has definitely NOT been my experience as of yet. Mostly I have received more subtle and less direct benefits. For instance with the focus on the concept of intention, my inner knowing and awareness of the importance, power, and quality of my own intention has been very much enhanced.

In the Way of the Beloved classes we are first taught to invoke the flow of Divine Love through our own mind and spirit and direct this to the spirit of the beloved. This is called the invocation of love and its power is in the actual doing of it regularly as a practice or means of establishing our intention of being loving. Later, we are given concepts and mantras to use for meditation. This is a more active meditation than is taught in Alan’s class because we concentrate actively using our minds to focus on the words and concepts allowing God to work through us to achieve greater love and spiritual union with our partner.

It is said that prayer is talking to God and meditation is listening for what God tells us. What makes both of these different methods “meditation” in my understanding is that they teach us to actively put our minds in a different place than we usually are to allow the Lord to work on us in whatever way God sees best. In my experience, this actually works. Classes are not only helpful for instruction, but they provide a time set aside to practice and a place to share what is gained. These offer a framework and encouragement to continue when I experience profoundly and repeatedly that my mind wanders, and I sometimes feel as if I’m getting nothing out of it.

The biggest obstacle is that my mind wanders. This is where the importance of practice comes in both as a verb and as a noun. Each time I choose to practice meditation, I intentionally put myself into a space where God can reach me. As meditation becomes a practice in my life my mind and spirit are more tuned into the frequency of God. This means that I am laying

down tracks in my brain that become deeper and easier to follow over time.

Having spent decades laying down tracks of thinking/worrying/obsessing about what has happened in the past or what might happen in the future, laying down and deepening the new tracks of being consciously present to direction from God takes lots of time and effort. To be more accessible to God, I need to practice and practice and keep practicing even as it becomes more of a habit (practice). As Alan says that there is no right or wrong way to meditate, we just need to do it. Also when we find our mind wandering, we need to just observe that it has happened, let it go, and get back to meditating. As he says, “A perfect time to meditate is when you notice you are not meditating”. Beating myself up over the fact that my mind wanders is not being open to what God is trying to tell me.

One final thought comes from the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous where 11th of 12 steps is quoted as, “Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.”

The Life Of Heaven

by Bill Hall

“. . . heaven consists in this, that from the heart we wish better for others than for ourselves, and desire to be of service to others in order to promote their happiness, and this for no selfish end, but from love.” (Heavenly Secrets 452).

What a delight is heaven for there all wish better for others than for themselves and desire to serve others to promote their happiness, and never thinking of the reward for doing these things.

So often in the world we are so immersed in our daily duties and responsibilities that we may tend to be immersed in ourselves so that our

duties and responsibilities become burdens, with only a minimum of satisfaction. However, as the above doctrine implies, the Lord always gives us the freedom to wish better for others than for ourselves.

As so many people know from direct experience, when we are immersed in performing our work to the best of our ability, all our attention is focussed on what we are doing. In those moments we are lifted above our concerns for self, for the past and for the morrow. Instead, all we wish to do is to perform our duties as well as we can with the sincere hope it will be of service to our neighbour.

When we reflect on our life in this world, we see that all people are our brothers and sisters. As Dr. Hugo Lj. Odhner says, “We, one and all, belong unto Him.” (*The Ten Commandments* p. 49). Keeping this truth in mind helps us to elevate our endeavours above the immediate moment. Even while we are working as hard as we can, we experience a sense of unity with our neighbours. We perceive that our efforts live on in the lives of others, and so what we do today has significance for others not only in the present but also in the future.

Our whole life is made up of what we have received from the Lord and from others, and how we have responded to that inflow. Our lives are made up of a huge amount of influx so that we cannot fully appreciate the influx we are receiving and have received.

Let us resolve forever to live our lives as best we can. Always acknowledging from the heart that our pathway to heaven is from the Lord and His angels and that the Lord wishes us to follow His ways all the moments and days of our lives.

Then we shall be as the angels in heaven, forever seeking to serve our neighbour and wishing better for our neighbour than for ourselves.

“The person who follows the Lord in freedom is led by Him out of evil into good, and thus into Heaven.” (Married Love 444).