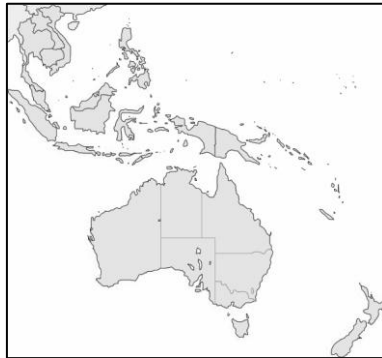
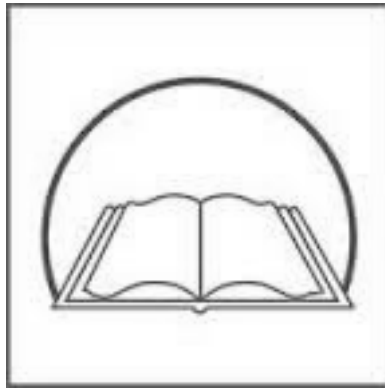


# THE NEW AGE

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## Editorial

Here is another issue of The New Age to read and enjoy. I once got a comment from a church member that she could always tell which minister had written an article or sermon *even if their name didn't appear on the document*. I suppose in a way that is fairly obvious, especially if you have been reading for decades (which this person had). Identification is a matter of a personality (which comes through in the writing) plus giveaway turns of phrase that are used excessively which become a kind of fingerprint.

Well, you may have already worked out who has written this editorial, and, interestingly, a week or so ago, an overseas minister enquired of our President exactly who edits The New Age. I missed the boat by not telling David Moffat to tell him to work it out! So, I could be mischievous and, in the various articles and things in this particular issue, remove the writer's name and leave us all guessing. But I won't because I'd much prefer us all to get things that this writer is pointing out to us rather than running a kind of "author check" all the way through reading it, and actually getting precious little enlightenment in the process.

So, this idea of our writing-signature is yet another instance of the teaching that says that in the spiritual world, spirits get recognised by a variety of indicators as they approach – deportment, tone of voice, touch of hand (no coronavirus there of course) and other recognisable means. Even their present state is very observable, perhaps with a surrounding colour or brightness. All this, in a less-prominent way, is there in this world if we are up to noticing it. For example, a person you know comes up and gently asks if you are alright, but you haven't said a word or shed a tear.

The basic point is that the Lord brings us into being with a fairly set identity. That's the part of us we really need to come to terms with because it isn't going to change. It's neither good nor bad. But our life's learning and activity plus our will and understanding and all the work involved in making choices and examining ourselves plus our faith in the Lord direct this God-purposed identity more and more towards heaven or towards hell.

Julian Duckworth

# 'FOR HIS MERCY ENDURES FOR EVER' A short sermon message by Rev Peter Buss Jnr.

One of the things I love about the Psalms is that they are spoken by a person, not unlike ourselves. Someone experiencing the ups and downs of life took the time to turn to the Lord with poetic words of praise or supplication. Psalm 136 is a perfect example. A human being set out to offer thanksgiving to the Lord, and did so with a repeated refrain: "His mercy endures forever." In fact so dominant is this theme that it is repeated 26 times.

What is the mercy of the Lord, and why should it evoke similar gratitude in our hearts? Consider a 10-year-old boy who, in a state of anger, calls one of his classmates a name. We can easily imagine the response of that other child, and, if we happened to be the adult in that situation, the need to intervene with words of reprimand. Does it change the situation if you know some things about that person who did the name-calling?



What if you knew he didn't get enough sleep the night before, couldn't find the right clothes to wear and because he took so long, didn't get a lot of breakfast. We might also know that he has a bit of a headache, and his pet hamster died the day before. None of that makes the name-calling okay, but it might make you a little more understanding and forgiving if you knew all this.

A thought for today is that the Lord knows all those extenuating circumstances for all of us, and takes them into account in every wrong thing we do. He looks on us with compassion. He does not think less of us for the

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bad things we do. Instead He tries **to lead us to see how to make better choices the next time.**

Regarding the Lord's attitude toward us, we read: "The Lord's mercy remains constantly with every individual person; for the Lord wishes to save all the people there are." (Arcana Caelestia 8307) Another teaching says that "love itself is converted into mercy and becomes mercy when anyone in need of help is regarded with love or charity." (Arcana Caelestia 3063) This does not negate the need for change, because it is also true that the Lord's mercy is not received by us until we get rid of what stands in the way.

As with the child having a bad day, the Lord can work with us to prompt us to wiser decisions that don't cause hurt. As one of the passages we've just referenced concludes: "The Lord's mercy is universal, that is, is directed toward all people, and is also particular toward those who refrain from evils." (Arcana Caelestia 8307) So we return to Psalm 136 and the psalmist's great gratitude for the Lord's mercy. For ourselves, our thanksgiving to the Lord can be inspired when we realize how He regards us. He sees all that is good, and all that is self-serving, and He loves us anyway.

Not only that, but He works with us in long-suffering ways to mend those hurtful parts of us, so that we are less apt in the future to cause pain to others and experience sadness ourselves. It is this full way of us receiving the Lord's mercy into our lives that can inspire our deepest gratitude to Him.

*"To Him who remembered us in our lowly state..., and rescued us from our enemies... O give thanks to the God of heaven, for His mercy endures forever." (Psalm 136:23,24,26) Amen*

The Board of the New Church in Australia had its last face to face meeting in Adelaide, in what now seems like ancient history: November 2019! At that time, I was asked to make visits to the different societies and groups around the country. So, I began making plans. The assembly planned in Brisbane in May and a family wedding to attend in Perth offered perfect opportunities to include an official visits to those locations. I made preliminary enquiries elsewhere. Of course, you know what happened next, and those plans have gone on hold for the foreseeable future.

One of the purposes of those visits was to reflect upon the successes we have been blessed with, both nationally and locally. What has been achieved? It does seem like that is a difficult task. For one thing, we're terribly modest, and don't like to dwell on our achievements too much. For another, we quickly forget those successes in the face of challenging and troublesome events. Nevertheless, let me share with you the successes I see from my position, as president since 2016.

We've reviewed and redefined the Council of Ministers, its role, rights and responsibilities. That's one of those hidden changes that we don't really get very excited about, but I hope it's been a useful exercise, and clarifying for the Council itself and the Board. The Council of Ministers has been active on a number of fronts, meeting regularly via video conferencing, providing resources for worship leaders through the establishment of a Google Drive for leaders, and providing leadership training for bereavement and weddings.

Through the NCIA strategic plan, we've encouraged societies to have a strategic plan in place, or at least some sense of their vision and opportunities for ministry.

The NCIA has held two assemblies - 2016 and 2018 - as well as planning a third (on hold for the present) to encourage communication between societies, and with the board.

The Australian New Church College continues to go from strength to strength, under Rev David Millar's leadership, with increasing numbers

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participating in the Logopraxis programme, and that has also driven new students to engage with the college's certificate and diploma courses. Significantly, these programmes have put the Australian New Church on the map, as an international leader in spiritual education.

In recent years we have undertaken a review of the "family camp" and reframing it as a "retreat", to attract a larger clientele to these already successful events. Providentially, and totally unaware of the significance of our decision, we decided not to hold a retreat at the start of 2021, and Rev Todd Beiswenger subsequently took the initiative of trialling a mid-year event instead.

What brings me the greatest satisfaction, though, is our increased provision for isolated members. We've been talking about them for years, but given that everyone has been isolated to some extent this year, we've been pushed to provide a range of services and ways to connect. The national New Church Google group has come into its own, as a forum of connection and inspirational material. The New Age provides another important and useful avenue for communication, especially for those who do not have access to the on-line world. A number of our churches are now also providing access to services of worship, Bible studies and other meetings via video conferencing. It is my hope that these initiatives continue well after the current need for social distancing, and that they remain a feature of the Australian landscape well into the future.

Now, I wonder what other successes have not been mentioned? I would encourage you to write, either to myself or to the editor of The New Age, to draw our attention to the excellent work being done around the country and around the world to bring the Gospel and the works of Swedenborg to a wider audience.

David Moffat





## THE FRIENDSHIPS WE MAKE AND HAVE



People, of course, are social beings who meet and mix and enjoy being together in all kinds of ways spontaneous or planned. Little children romp, teens hang out, adults meet up and the elderly like someone with them at times on the park bench or there on the nursing home lounge.

One of the things which 2020 has brought about is the hardship over the inability to get together with friends, felt by an incredibly large number of people. There's the phone for sure, and some still write letters and others meet online, but if we are not allowed to actually meet up, there's a sense of loss and an ache for normal human company. We are social beings! So, looking on the bright side, hopefully one of the outcomes from recent restrictions (or possibly still current) will be to value our friendships more than ever.

The whole area of forming friendships and having friends is a fascinating one which covers a lot of ground. Why exactly do any two (or more) people feel they want to become friends? Is it that there is a lot to be shared or is it an attraction in having differences? Maybe both are needed. Some might say that you just make friends with the people who happen to be there. If I can mention cruise ships in current times, there'd be a lot of people who swap contacts and promise to stay in touch after several weeks on board.

Then there are those people with whom you know you definitely would not be making friends. I wonder if they feel the same about you too? And there's the end of a friendship when one of two friends moves away, or dies, leaving a big hole hard to fill. This can also happen from some awkwardness that comes about and the friendship changes or simply fades. It served a real purpose but some things in life can't stay the same for ever.

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Marriage is an interesting area from which to look at friendship. A married couple can also be each other's best friends or they may need others for friends to balance the relationship.

One teaching we have says that in real marriage love the joining of minds increases and so does friendship, so that friendship becomes as it were the face of that love and its outer garment. It says that friendship brings stability into marriage. (Have a look at Conjugal Love 214)

I have always deeply felt that when we are blessed with children who of course grow up for years in our home and receive parental care and direction, even discipline, that there is a time around a certain age where the parent-child relationship best changes into a friend-friend one. I suspect that this is how it is well likely to be in the spiritual world too, so let's start that here, but still honour our parents too.

The purest friendship in the Bible was the love of David and Jonathan who felt affinity and who exchanged possessions, and Jonathan sought to save David's life from the attacks of King Saul, Jonathan's father. Full of meaning of course, but a picture of close loyalty and unswerving friendship. Still with the Bible, there is the tragic picture in Psalm 55 where it says that "It is not one who hates me who exalts himself against me; then I could hide from him. But it was you, a man my equal, my companion and acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in the throng." (55:12-14) What on earth would have been happening to bring such a friendship to the point of betrayal?

In one of our teachings we are advised by Swedenborg to take care at the deeper level of our being about whom we make bosom friends with. The reason for this is not so much about this world but the spiritual world where people's true natures and states become more open. Many friendships will no doubt be kept to eternity, but suppose there is a one-way friendship, an over-dependency or a simulated friendship, then after death, such associations can be incredibly hard to disengage from, and be distressing. (True Christian Religion 446-449)

We have the delight of having friends and meeting up or keeping in good touch with them because we love each other. Something 'works' between us. And we also need to be wise for everyone's sake and realise that friendship is precious, a gift from the Lord, and to be handled well.

Julian Duckworth

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## **SOCIETY REPORTS**

### **PERTH GROUP**

We in Western Australia are very conscious of our family and friends in the east especially those in Victoria. We pray that the strict measures in place will fairly soon bring the virus under control. There are those we know are hoping to travel interstate and those of us in WA hoping to get east to family.

Fortunately we have been able to resume our regular services on a fortnightly basis. Some of these have had to be held in members' homes due to our regular meeting place being unavailable. For now at least we are meeting back at the environmental centre in North Beach. Conducting of services is being shared among Sarah Walker, David Walker and Trevor Moffat. Sarah is also continuing to oversee two Logopraxis face-to-face groups on a monthly rotation. We thank Sarah for this continued commitment .

New Church Day was celebrated with a lovely picnic in King's Park on the Friday, June 19<sup>th</sup>, followed by a service on the Sunday, conducted by Reverend Trevor Moffat, at the home of Ros and David Walker Following the service we acknowledged the 80th birthday of Mrs Lyn Rocke. King's Park is a favourite and the ladies met there in a very popular cafe for lunch recently.

Now that our travel restrictions within our the state are lifted Joy and Trevor have taken to the roads north back to Koordarrie Station for a REVISE teaching stint for Joy and handyman, roustabout for Trevor. Their departure was slightly delayed by the need for Trevor to undergo surgery to remove his right thyroid. Trevor has recovered really well and is now enjoying the warmth of the Pilbara area of WA.



We wish all readers well with continued health and happiness.  
Above is a photo of our group following a service and over lunch.

Joy Moffat

## **BRISBANE and SOUTH-EAST QUEENSLAND**

Rev Darren Brunne has done a wonderful job keeping everyone motivated through the lockdown with Zoom doctrinal group sessions, podcasts, and videos instead of services, but since the beginning of August we have been able to return to our normal church services, without our usual delicious culinary tidbits.

Rev Ian Arnold continues to be a beacon and support to our community and very rarely misses a service.

As a result of 47 podcasts, Darren tells me there have been over 1100 listeners and our Facebook site is attracting some 345 readers to date. Very encouraging.

We trust that our fellow New Church members and friends are keeping in good health and gaining greater strength in patience and resolve during this particularly testing time.

Gaye Heldon

## **SYDNEY**

Technology comes to the rescue in the time of COVID. Whilst we've able to resume services and classes in the last couple of months, our minister Howard has continued his 'Spiritual Shorts' - You-tube videos that are along the lines of being a brief service of worship, and something that was greatly appreciated during the period of social isolation.

Whilst Sunday services have resumed and physical distancing has had to be observed, the main restriction is not being able to sing hymns. Fortunately the church has been installed with an excellent audio-visual system so we are getting to see and hear the best of the world's virtual choirs that have sprung up in the last few months.

Less high-tech will be a new church sign at the front of the church property to replace the old wooden one that fell down some time ago. It is in the process of being made and will have no electrics or electronics connected to it apart from simple night-time illumination, something that will be appreciated by locals as it lights up a very dark stretch of footpath at night.

It will also serve as signage for the neighbouring Swedenborg Centre which occupies the front of the manse building. Here centre manager Joe Vandermeer has been busier than ever during COVID times hosting numerous ZOOM meetings, one of which is Swedenborg Saturdays, a twice monthly get together for anyone interested in discussing anything and everything to do with Swedenborg. Should you be interested in joining us for these there are details on the Swedenborg Association of Australia website.

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Wishing everyone blessings in these difficult and uncertain times.

Wayne Kasmar

## THE NEW CHURCH IN VICTORIA

- 4' 33"

With the good ship Melbourne unable to have its passengers disembark any further than 5 km from their moorings and required to be tucked safely in their cabins by 20:00 hours, it was tempting to follow the example of the unconventional American composer John Cage.

John's composition 4' 33", consisted of 4 minutes and 33 seconds of silence. By analogy, it would tempting to present 433 blank lines to symbolise the action taking place in Victoria.

Ergo, this month's offerings, while not quite blank, are well to the left of copious.

- New Building

Demolition of the innards has taken place and some preparatory work completed.

- Spiritual Leadership

Attendance via Zoom and YouTube continue to average more than physical attendance in days of yore.

David has started a program of Correspondences For Children. The first session - on smiles - was published on 20 August, with 68 views in the first week. The next session, on the face, is due for publication around 20 September.

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Helmut Lopaczuk, Secretary, NCIV

## AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND



### Church for Sale

As some of you will have seen from our church Facebook page, or newsletter, the Auckland Society has been talking about the possibility of selling the church building for some time. At a recent Special General Meeting, after discussion, the decision was made to sell the building, and sadly, it has gone on the market this week.

We all have mixed emotions about this, but are looking towards a new beginning. The Covid Pandemic helped to launch us into the world of Zoom meetings, and we discovered that we can still meet and share from the comfort of our own homes. As well, the Zoom service provided the opportunity for people who live too far away to physically attend, to meet with us.

We are also thinking about other options for worship once we leave the building.

Meanwhile, the Logopraxis group is established and up and running, meeting fortnightly on Wednesday evenings via Zoom. Susan Heeps sends a word of encouragement for others to join the group.

Hoping this finds you all well.

Regards,

Lis Keal

## **AN IMPRESSION OF LOVE- THE GIFT OF THE PROPRIUM**

The irony of the remembered delight of childhood innocence of ignorance, is that we then spend the rest of our life acquiring knowledge with the hope that it will lead us back to that feeling of awe and wonder and unadulterated delight. We are chasing the state in which we receive love and instantly offer it to others around us, without expectation of return.

But although childhood is steeped in the magical delights of new discoveries that each day brings, it is also deeply based in the life of the proprium that is anchored in hell.

"What?" I hear them say.

"How can the delight of innocence be steeped in what is evil?"

Well, that's the irony I was talking about. To all appearances its innocence on the outside but its self-love on the inside. The life of the toddler revolves around the life of the toddler. The young child expects food instantly when it cries. It expects all its needs to be met and is not yet aware that it needs to hide its automatic displeasure when these needs aren't immediately satisfied. It sees all people and things in its environment existing only to serve itself and the centre of its world... is itself. The young child takes delight in owning what it learns and acquires. All knowledge it acquires belongs to itself. In essence, the young child is its own god. It is the lord of its environment and all around it are subject to it. It has no awareness that there exists any other state apart from this one. It is not awake to any other reality than the one that it lives in day to day.

And it's not a coincidence that the Word describes the developing sense of self like an infant, when it first starts out in the world. It tells us time and time again that we are born into evil.

DP 83 . No one can come into the kingdom of God unless he has been born again, for the reason that man by inheritance from his parents is born into evils of every kind, ..... Man's first state, which is a state of damnation, every one



has by inheritance from his parents; for man is thereby born into the love of self and love of the world, and from these as fountains, into evils of every kind

And what else can evil be but anything that is not the Lord.

It is the absence of the Lord.

It is the absence of light.

It is the absence of awareness.

It is the absence of any type of consciousness that anything exists outside of the immediate reality that one that can see and touch.

This is the innocence of ignorance. It simply knows nothing else because there is nothing present in which to contrast it with.

Now we might look at this state and see its pathetic, sad, unfortunate existence. We might even look at it and know that it is death, that it has no real life. But the mercy in it .... the thing that brings me to my knees every time I look at it, is that without it, we have no sensory experience of what being a God is. Of what it means to be all-present and all-potent.

*DP 51. From all this it can now be seen that the Infinite and Eternal, thus the Lord, must be thought of apart from space and time, and that such thought is possible; also that those have such thought who think interiorly in the rational; and that then the Infinite and Eternal is the same as the Divine. Thus do angels and spirits think. From thought abstracted from time and space a comprehension of the Divine Omnipresence and the Divine Omnipotence, also of the Divine from eternity, is possible, but none at all from thought to which an idea from space and time clings.*

The hellish proprium lives from the natural world and is focused on space and time. It believes that the appearances of the finite senses are what is real and true . It believes that it is all seeing, all knowing and all powerful. It therefore offers sensory impressions of what it means to be worshipped and loved; of what it means to be the source from which one lives their life from. Without this darkness or this self that is dead, then we have nothing that can be inverted. The proprium that is steeped in self-love provides an impression in our life which the Lord can later invert and embody.

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Like the negative of the film that gets developed, to unveil what was exposed to the light and show us what is real.

Or the process of relief woodcut printing, where the negative space is carved out, leaving only the lines and shapes that are wanted to appear in print. So what is carved out is actually the opposite of what is wanted to be seen and brought forth into life.

How can we know that the image of the Lord is in everything in the universe, unless we have looked upon the universe and seen an image of ourself in everything?

How can we know that the wisdom of the Lord is the only true wisdom, unless we have looked upon our own intelligence as the only true wisdom?

How can we know that the Lord's love is the experience of feeling love's presences in another's delight, unless we have experienced love in our own delight ?

How can we identify the nature of an affection or thought and whether it be of the Lord or not of the Lord, unless we have first experienced it and identified with it and felt it as our own?

How can we know that the Lord owns all and is the only owner, unless we have participated in self identification and claimed ownership?

How can we experience the spiritual sensations of the affections of love in the Word when the truth opens up an insight into our own process, unless we have experienced the delights of the affections for the literal, historical story as it reads on the page unrelated to us?

How do we experience the awakening of consciousness to the inflow of the Divine into everything created, unless we have experienced what it means to be sleeping and not awake to anything other than what our physical senses immediately communicate to us?

And how do we know what it means to be somebody unless we have first been nobody that believed it was somebody?

AC141. Countless things can be said about the proprium - about what the proprium is like in the case of the bodily-minded and worldly man, what it is like in the case of the spiritual man, and what in the case of the celestial man. With the bodily-minded and worldly man the proprium is his all. He is unaware of anything else but the proprium. And, as has been stated, if he were to lose his proprium he would think that he was dying.

With the spiritual man the proprium takes on a similar appearance, for although he knows that the Lord is the life of all, and that He confers wisdom and intelligence, and consequently the ability to think and to act, it is more a matter of something he says and not so much something he believes.

The celestial man however acknowledges that the Lord is the life of all, who confers the ability to think and act, because he perceives that this is so. Nor does he ever desire the proprium. Nevertheless even though he does not desire it the Lord grants him a proprium which is joined to him with a complete perception of what is good and true, and with complete happiness.

Angels possess a proprium such as this, and at the same time utmost peace and tranquillity, for their proprium has within it things that are the Lord's, who is governing their proprium, that is, governing them by means of their proprium.

Once we can see that the initial impressions of self-love is Mercy itself at work, then we can accept the gift of the proprium.

We know then it's true nature.

That it is ... a gift.

Sarah Walker

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## 100 FABLES

Over about fourteen years, I rounded off each monthly issue of the Sydney Society Newsletter with a "Final Fable", brief tales from around the world and various cultures with an entertaining story containing a spiritual point or suggestion, (not really a moral meaning such as you get in Aesop's Fables).

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Well, one of the blessings of online life is that all these were on my computer! So I spent a happy morning recently culling them and putting them into a single Fables File. There are a few more than 100 but it's a good number. If anyone would like the file, email me [julian@duckworth.me](mailto:julian@duckworth.me), phone me 0427 938 732, or meet me for a coffee. No charge for the file and so the coffee payment is on you.

Here are just two (of my favourites) to whet your appetite:

An eagle was soaring through the air when suddenly it heard the whizz of an arrow, and felt itself wounded to death. Slowly it fluttered down to the earth, with its life-blood pouring out of it. Looking down upon the arrow with which it had been pierced, it found that the shaft of the arrow had been feathered with one of its very own plumes. "Alas!" it cried, as it died, "we often give our enemies the means for our own destruction."

The Minister travelled for days by train and car and boat to one of the furthest islands in the nation to visit a past member of his flock. The following day the two of them went for a rugged walk, and, as he surveyed the bleak but inspiring landscape, he turned to his friend and said: "You're very remote here, aren't you?" She responded: "Remote from what?"



## ADVENTURES IN EVANGELIZATION ON YOUTUBE

Rev. Todd J. Beiswenger

If Dr. Emmett Brown from the Back to the Future movies had a brother, one who was a minister, I think he would have been the Rev. Christopher R. J. Smith. I remember sitting in that classroom in de Charms Hall and Rev. Smith would come in with wide eyes, an odd little look on his face, and then start to speak. We couldn't help but pay attention, and like Dr. Brown, CRJS as we knew him seemed a little crazy, but we also wanted to know what he was up to. Like him or not, he was interesting.

One of his favourite things to say was something like: "Boys, I want you to burn this into the back of your eyeballs! The most important thing the Lord said, it was His first words in the book of John, 'What do you seek?'" As you can see, it has stuck. What do you seek? (John 1:38)

Going into Theological School I was very clear as to what I sought. I felt that I was on the path to being a better me, and I wanted to share that with others so they too could feel free from their bondage. In my mind, modern people already believed much of what the New Church taught, and therefore getting them to join in with a congregation wouldn't be hard. I was optimistic, and as it turns out I was, maybe, half right. I did my best to get out into the local area and meet people, and yes, many people do believe what we teach.

A few years ago it was our turn hosting the Christmas party for our block, and I got to talking to my neighbour who lives across the street from the church. I found that she already believes much of what we believe! But getting people to come to church and join in with a congregation has shown to be a much more difficult task that I had ever imagined. Despite the shared beliefs, she sees herself as part of a different church, and so has never come to ours. I've encountered this many times. "Oh, I believe that too, but I'm Greek." Or "I'm Jewish." Or I'm a [whatever]. Their personal identity is wrapped up in their cultural community. This was not something I had ever considered. Yet these very same people still wanted some explanations about the Bible.

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Well, Jesus didn't wait for people to come to Him, so He went to them. I decided to do likewise and start working on a YouTube channel that would give short explanations concerning the internal regenerative sense of the Word. It was an area in which I didn't see much competition, and therefore was fertile ground for exploration. As with many other endeavours of my life, my optimism regarding the ease of pulling it off has been met with a reality of it being harder than I had anticipated.

Oh, it's not hard to put a video on YouTube, but there are a lot of videos on YouTube, so getting somebody's attention is akin to going to a football game, standing in the stadium with thousands of others screaming, and trying to get the attention of the quarterback. You've got better odds of getting that elusive afternoon tea with the queen. However, I had at least one trick up my sleeve. A church friend of mine was doing his own YouTube channel, and he introduced me to a program that would help me choose key words that would work well with my content to help it rank better in search results. It worked.

I created two videos to start with: "How to Understand the Bible for Beginners" and "The Creation Story Explained." I had no camera and a \$10 microphone but had figured out how to record what was on my screen so people could see images and text that I had put together in PowerPoint. Without my spending a cent on advertising my videos were getting views. For the first year they were getting about one view per day. People started to subscribe to the channel too, not a lot, but around one a week. "Not bad for free," I thought. There was enough success that I decided to upgrade some equipment. I got a green screen, some lights, a better microphone and despite the fact that I have a face better suited to radio, I decided to use my phone as my camera. The goal was to create a studio that was similar to what had been successfully used by the Swedenborg Foundation's offTheLeftEye channel.

I decided that people wanted good explanations of those vexing stories of early Genesis that didn't make any sense that Adam and Eve were literally the first people, right? But if not, what was this story about? Again, it turns out I was half right. More people believed in a literal interpretation of this

story than I had suspected, and they kindly let me know in the comments. Here's one example: I have to be honest, this is probably the most ridiculous thing I ever heard! The bible is the literal infallible and inspired word of GOD!!! End times are here! Everyone who believes this fool, better get to know GOD find out what HE wants and do what HE says!

Hmmm, sticks and stones won't break my bones, and all that, but still I've got to say I wasn't really expecting comments like that. I can think of more ridiculous things, so maybe that person just lacks my imagination for the ridiculous. I do consider myself willing at least to entertain odd ideas. I've found that this ability isn't universal: I can't listen to this. Adam and Eve were literally the first two people on earth. First of all God does not lie, and it is never okay to take a literal passage of the bible[sic] and figuratively interpret it. Bad interpretation makes for a bad doctrine for us to follow and will lead us right off a cliff. WOW! Listening to the first 7 seconds of this and truly offended. False teachers are BAD!!!!

Funny, because I thought everybody's Mom taught them, "If you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything at all." Oh well, at least that commenter didn't make it personal. Okay, I'm just having some fun in presenting one side of it, because while I didn't expect this type of comment, I'm actually quite capable of laughing it off. I've engaged with them, but it ultimately goes nowhere. The Lord teaches His disciples that if you're not welcome, don't let the dust settle on your feet, just keep on going to where you are welcome. That and the harvest is plenty, so no need to sow new seed when there's much work to be done harvesting.

In fairness, there actually were some positive comments too. There were more views, more people subscribing too, so I created more videos hoping to do some harvesting. In all of my videos I was stating that these ideas weren't my own, but that they are found in the works of Emanuel Swedenborg. I also made the effort to prove to people that these ideas were actually Scriptural by bringing in other quotes to bolster the argument where I could.

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I was getting some positive feedback in the Australian New Church community, and last July was able to secure some money for advertising and a better camera. You can guess what happened, right? As history would suggest, I was optimistic about how easy it would be, and I would be proven to be half right. I didn't expect amazing results, and well, I didn't get them. They were decidedly mixed. I was getting more subscribers for sure – somewhere around 50 a month – so it went from one or two a week, to one or two a day. But I was getting even more negative feedback. The ratio of people clicking “like” to “dislike” was trending more and more in favour of the “dislikes,” and still more negative comments, including my personal favourite: “Most Christians don't believe their own Bible. God doesn't love everybody and he doesn't hate sin, He hates the workers of iniquity like you.” Feel the love.

Maybe in my optimism I was over-estimating the readiness of humanity for these teachings. But I couldn't help but notice that offTheLeftEye just didn't get the same level of negative comments and “dislikes” as I was. Clearly there are some people who get it. However, at this point in the venture even I was starting to learn. I may be a slow learner, but like the Little Engine that Could I can huff and puff and eventually get over that mountain. Eventually. Instead of using Google's “expert” suggestions on how to best advertise, I decided that changes would be made to the program.

I added some key phrases like, “Bible Study,” “Understanding the Bible,” and “Bible Explained” to narrow my target audience. I ended up with fewer views, but those who did watch, watched more and were much more positive to what they saw. The subscriber rate doubled to around 100 a month. Comments were better too: “This [Noah's Ark Explained] is fantastic!! Thank you. I am sharing this with my 6th grade [Roman Catholic Children's Education Program] class tomorrow and it's perfect – they are just at the age to create their conscience and be aware of it!! LOVE !!!” “I think I will share this [What is the Meaning of Bread in the Bible?] with my daughter for part of homeschooling . . . great message even for kids”

There were still some negative comments, including some users whom I had to ban from commenting. But things were getting better. The channel had



developed to the point where I felt like I was winning some victories. I'm getting around 9,000 views and 400 hours of watch time on the channel per month. My videos were ranking in the top five in YouTube searches on the subject. I was noticing that videos I wasn't advertising were actually doing reasonably well. During the first quarter of 2020, "Adam and Eve Explained" received 683 views, and "David and Goliath Explained" received 677. "Creation Story Explained" video got 767, and the last couple months it's getting more like 30 views per day. For free.

Yet there was still one problem that I couldn't quite explain. Despite picking up more and more subscribers, when I would publish a new video I didn't find that I was actually getting more views on it than previous videos. Clearly I was doing something wrong. But what? I was given the opportunity to take a class for people who wanted to raise their skills on YouTube, and I figured this was what I needed at this point. Less guessing would be nice for a change.

The class showed me there were two fundamental problems. The first was while the videos were doing well with YouTube's search features, the reality is that they weren't holding people's attention once they clicked on it. This led to the second problem because it meant that YouTube wouldn't "recommend" the video to a person. YouTube will put a video on your screen even if you didn't search for it, if it thinks it's a good match for you and that it will keep you watching more on YouTube. The key to going "viral" is having YouTube do that for you. Believe it or not, these are obstacles that can be overcome. Yeah, I know, there I go being overly optimistic again, but it's not blind optimism. I've got some results to back it up!

The first change was easy. With a last name like Beiswenger – that even some of my friends can't spell (they think they know how to spell it) – I decided that having the channel named "Todd Beiswenger" wasn't a good idea. A new channel name was in order, something... simple. "Lord, I'm Trying" is what I finally came up with. I like it. I think, hope, it conveys a sense of humility about what I'm offering.

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Another simple fix was just to the production of the video, which essentially means a better studio and editing the video in a way so that there are more changes on the screen. You can't keep things static. That was actually a pretty easy fix, and the results were impressive. Before that, on average about 30% of the people who clicked on the video would watch it to the end. With this change it moved up to 41%. The target is 50%. I was moving in the right direction, but still seeking more. The other fix was a change to a storytelling format. Instead of just giving information, like "Goliath represents a life of faith separated from charity," I had to turn it into my experience with the teaching. It then becomes something like: "Goliath is like those voices in my head that want me to give up, and do nothing, despite the Lord's call for me to be useful." It makes sense. You probably wouldn't still be reading this if all I had done was given you a page showing the data of my channel. But I wonder what percentage of people made it to the end of this story? Probably more than if I had just given data.

Using stories as a teaching device makes sense. After all, Jesus did it, and the whole Word is a story, so it isn't hard to see how we, too, can use stories to connect with people. Using all of this, my video on "Dealing with Self Doubt and Insecurity" was getting 60% of the people to the end. Nailed it. I'm not convinced at this point that every video needs or should be in a storytelling format. There is a place for the straight-up educational video, but the stories will help people connect with both me and the material better. The more they connect, the more likely they are to come back and watch the next video I post, which will inevitably be full of New Church theology, and they will be more likely to watch the video that I do create that isn't in storytelling format. I know some will argue that we're not supposed to make ourselves the centre of attention, and I get it. Making me a YouTube celebrity is not the goal. It comes back to this: what do I seek? I want people to experience the power of living a God-centric life, to feel what it is like to live free from the bondage of our past and create a new identity for ourselves in God, not one based on who we have been, who the world tells us we are, or who we think we are. They're only going to get there if they are exposed to the teachings of the Word, and if I have to come off a little crazy, tell some stories about myself, or use some self-deprecating humour to keep things interesting and hold their attention, well, I'm good with that.

## **THE SWEDENBORG ROAD MAP 2**

A new, improved, e-x-p-a-n-d-e-d version  
by Julian Duckworth

In 1994, I produced a booklet called 'Presenting Swedenborg, A Roadmap' which aimed to introduce the writings of Swedenborg and help people find their way around the contents of these numerous volumes. Lists of contents were given and short paragraphs about most of the books' focuses.

Other things like a short Glossary of Swedenborg's terms and a set of the underlying teachings (i.e. non-book titles) running through the writings were given. The booklet served a purpose and was reprinted twice.

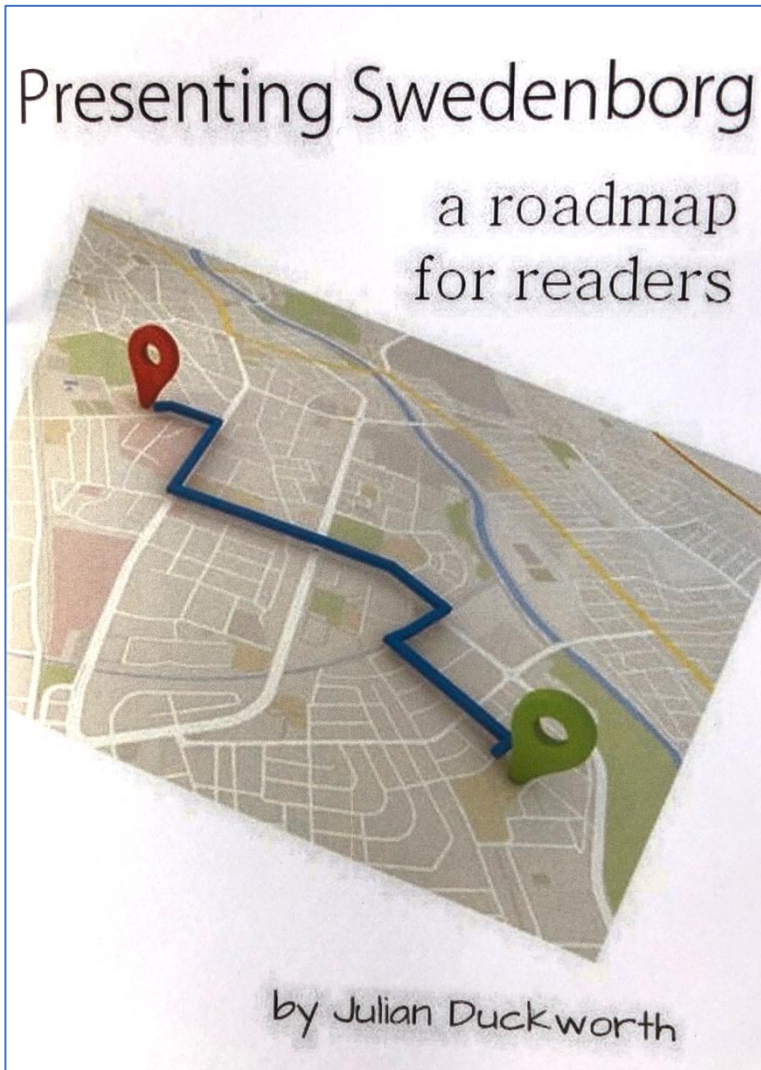
In 2018 I felt that something needed adding, which was a detailed set of the composite teachings along with references back to the writings. I used two excellent books by earlier 'distillers' of Swedenborg, John Ager and Julian Smyth, who both did an excellent job with 'The Path of Life' and 'The Gist of Swedenborg'. The collation I did got finished early this year.

It has now been worked on and brought to print and is an inclusion in a reprint of the original Roadmap, therefore it is The Swedenborg Roadmap part 2. The two go together.

Enormous thanks go to Elizabeth Kemmis and Joe Vandermeer for bringing this to an attractive conclusion. It is available by 'print on demand' from the Swedenborg Centre (info@swedenborg.com.au) or phone (02) 9416 2812. I believe this print version is priced at \$10. It is also available on the Swedenborg Association of Australia website homepage (swedenborg.com.au) for a download without charge.

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Note: The free download version has all the hundreds of reference numbers to Swedenborg's works [hyperlinked in blue](#) which takes you to the whole paragraph thanks to New Christian Bible Study website and Steve David. Thanks to Michael Chester for uploading the hyperlinks.



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