

THE NEW AGE

Journal of The New Church in Australia and New Zealand

Volume 139 No. 1 WINTER 2022



Issued by The New Church in Australia
4 Shirley Road, Roseville NSW 2069

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THE NEW AGE

The Official Journal of the New Church in Australia
Editor/Publisher: Council of Ministers 4 Shirley Rd Roseville NSW 2069
New Church in Australia website: www.newchurch.net.au

CONTENTS

Editorial page 2

Sermon "...and there was no more sea." page 3
given at Roseville by Julian Duckworth June 19 2022

Another and different spiritual meaning page 8
to the Bible

President's Page page 11
Continuing The Lord's Prayer:
"Give us this day our daily bread"

Society Reports page 14
Brisbane, Auckland, Perth, Roseville, Victoria (SCV)

The Lord, the Redeemer page 21
a look into redemption

Some NCIA notices page 24

Here's the next and Winter issue of The New Age for you to enjoy reading and find helpful things for your spiritual and personal life.

There is a significant milestone in July which is important to mention. The Swedenborg Association of Australia (SAA) will have been thirty years in existence on Saturday July 2nd. It began in 1992 when quite a number of people felt that there was the need for a Swedenborg-based organisation with activities which were independent of the church organisation.

This idea wasn't a new one because for many years there had been The Swedenborg Society in London and The Swedenborg Foundation in the USA (and others elsewhere) which aimed and still aim to provide Swedenborg material and publications for anyone and everyone.

The SAA began, and pretty quickly got a significant membership and developed a good range of activities. People joined, some, church members around Australia, some who were students of Dr Philip Groves, some who were individuals interested in Swedenborg in various ways. The quarterly journal 'Candela' started up early, and monthly meetings at the Swedenborg Centre in North Ryde became a feature.

One event to pick out is the annual 'Celebration of Spring' which ran each September for a good number of years, with art, music, group activities, comedy, discussion, socialising and good eats and drinks.

Life and activities have changed, especially over the last thirty years and the SAA has always wished to be relevant and useful in a fast developing technological world. It now has a wide range of online features, links, websites, information tools and other things to bring Emanuel Swedenborg and his writings and their wonderful new spiritual help and teachings to people who are searching for truth and sacredness. We wish it a happy birthday and a flourishing future.

SERMON for NEW CHURCH DAY

Rev Julian Duckworth

".....and there was no more sea."

Revelation 21:1

*I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. **And there was no more sea.***

Readings: Psalm 107:23-32 and Revelation 21:1-7; 10-13

Arcana Caelestia 4394

When someone is thinking more inwardly about things to do with faith and their place in life, they are in the Lord's kingdom, and they are then in a very tranquil state, and when they look out and see worldly things and things to do with natural life, it's like someone who is on a high hill looking out over a tempestuous sea.

Apocalypse Explained 514.21

When Jesus walked upon the sea, it represented the Lord's presence and inflowing into the ultimate or lowest and outermost things of life, because the Lord governs and controls all these. But when Peter in turn began to walk upon the sea and started to sink, it represents our obscurity about such truths and our wavering faith in them, yet, being caught hold of by the Lord, he was saved.

So often, for our celebration of New Church Day with its new understanding of the Word, of the Lord, and of our life and eternal life, so often, we go to the vision of the holy city with its descriptions of gold streets, crystal walls, gems, pearls, gates and cube shape, all giving us a picture of openness, equality and well, basically, absolute perfection. It's a glorious sight.

At the start, it tells us that a new heaven and a new earth have come about and the first heaven and earth have passed away. We can understand that fairly well and it seems right that new things replace old things. But... then it says, '...And there was no more sea.'

Well, that sounds odd, doesn't it? No more sea! How do you feel about that? We'll probably say, 'Oh my, what a shame because I really like being by the sea,' or 'Why has the sea got to disappear?' or 'But what about all the water

page 4

that's needed! It's going to be a bit dreary just having dry land going on and on everywhere!' We might well protest!

Whatever WE think, though, there it is, it still says that, there in the Bible ... 'And there was no more sea.' Whether we like it or not! So instead of us objecting and complaining, let's spend a bit of time thinking positively about why, in this new prophetic state of glory and perfection, there is No. More. Sea. And I'm going to offer several suggestions. You may come up with more...

First, one thing about the sea is that it **divides and separates**. Islands, countries, continents. I grew up knowing that the English Channel separates Britain from Europe. I sailed across that many times and recently went through the tunnel, but the water itself stops you. Moses and the people of Israel got caught between the Egyptians behind them and the Red Sea there in front of them and the Lord delivered them. So, if the sea is a barrier, that's not a good thing, and anything which alarms or frightens us isn't heavenly. So, no more sea = no more division or separation. That's better, isn't it? John Donne, the poet said, 'No man is an island, but is everywhere part of the main.'

Another thing the sea does is **stir up and get rough**. Dangerous if you are in it in a boat, and of course, the story of the storm on the sea of Galilee describes the tumult, the frightened disciples who are like that stormy tumult, and Jesus asleep in the boat ordering the sea to calm down and be still. So, no more sea = no more tumult in the new heaven and earth where everybody feels they are in exactly the place they want to be in.

A third thing about the sea or the ocean is its **enormous and unfathomable depth**. There are places in the world's oceans which are so deep they are one and a half times deeper than the height of Mount Everest and the pressure down there would crush you to bits. There are fish that live in total darkness and species of things nobody has ever yet seen, down there. So, here, no more sea = no more unknowns and

baffling mysteries, no more hidden-away things, because in heaven, in the Holy City, everything is clear, open and shining, its gates never shut. And I'm a bit tempted to add that there's no more pressure in heaven! Heaven is where there is real freedom; it's hell that lays on all the pressure.



Well, there are some suggestions. The thing that I want to emphasise is that there's NO spiritual idea that the sea is bad, or evil or to do with hell. That's not

why there is to be no more sea. The sea is wonderful, colourful, teeming with fish in places, coral reefs and a means of trade, travel, swimming, and so on.

We know a lady who has quite a lot of difficulty when she's walking, but she swims like a fish in the sea and takes part in vigorous competitions like our Port Macquarie recent Iron Man. So the sea is good and its overall spiritual meaning and correspondence is about all the things we know, all our memories, all our facts and figures, and everything we deduce from having them. The ocean is a huge reservoir of water. The spiritual sea is a huge reservoir of information and truth, ranging from if today's Thursday, tomorrow will be Friday through to 'If I really am a spiritual person I will be looking carefully at what I say, what I do, and what other people need.'

But while the sea is a good thing, eventually there is to be no more sea. We are to go beyond the sea of memories and eventually be completely true to what we have become. That's probably not going to happen while we're here in this world because here we have to cope with facts and rules and things like time and space. But in the spiritual world - which I think is the idea of the new heaven and earth after the

page 6

old heaven and earth has passed away - in the spiritual world we're going to be far more authentic, led by what we love (whatever that is!), gravitating to what we want, and less reliant on thinking about what I know and remember. And that is why there'll be no more sea!

This is wonderfully illustrated in the incident of Jesus walking on the sea and what happened when Peter leapt in to do the same. Jesus made the disciples get into a boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after this he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, because the wind was against them. And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea. When the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear.

But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; don't be afraid." Peter said to him, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to you on the water." He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. But when he noticed the strong wind he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" When they got into the boat, the wind ceased.

Jesus walked on the sea, Peter did too but then he began to sink. Here's the spiritual idea of this. Jesus walking ON the sea is a bit like Jesus riding ON the donkey on Palm Sunday, a donkey that had never been ridden, but it obediently carried him. Walking on the surface of the sea stands for the Lord's control and management and providence over everything that goes on, which is the idea of the vast sea. That great truth of Divine government of everything is one of the most tremendous truths. Whatever you do you can't be out of that government by God. Jesus walking on the water is Jesus walking on all the situations we can be in, left, right, and centre. If you get cancer, or win the lottery, or

invaded by Russia, God is still right there with you. So Jesus walking on the sea is not such a difficult thing to explain and apply.

Now, when we come to Peter, it's not so straightforward. For one thing, Peter actually started walking on the sea towards Jesus. Jesus invited him, "Come!" So he set out, but he saw the wind and waves and fear took him and down he went. So there are two situations with Peter, walking and sinking. And Jesus caught him safe.

I'm going to explain this in terms of us. I can't, and you can't, physically walk on water. Water doesn't allow it. But you can spiritually walk on spiritual water which is truth, and be buoyed up by it, IF you are responding to the Lord's "Come!" and obeying and looking to Jesus there with you. The truth will support you and give you confidence about life, death, peace, purpose, everything! But suddenly you see the spiritual wind and waves building up and you're torn, and you're no longer looking only at the Lord but at how hard it is, life is, you are, they are, and truth can't now hold you up so you start sinking. And Jesus, always right there with you, reaches out and gives you his anchor, some memory, a verse, a feeling of trusting, a feeling it is okay, and you are back in the safety of the boat where you don't walk on water but get carried along by your personal beliefs.

Now, take all of that story and go back to the new heaven and new earth after the first heaven and earth, and that strange little extra bit ... 'And there was no more sea.' What that's really saying is that at some point for each of us there will be an end to the imponderables, the complexities, the appearances, and the guessing, an end to all these tumults that blow up for us now, and we will walk on spiritual solid ground into which we will never sink. Heaven's floor is rock hard and firm because of the Lord and that Holy City, the New Jerusalem which has streets that are paved with gold. We walk safe on loving trust. Amen

ANOTHER AND DIFFERENT SPIRITUAL MEANING TO THE BIBLE

Let me explain...

One of the core teachings of the New Church and one which revolutionises the text of the Bible is that it has a spiritual meaning within it, within the literal text. This spiritual meaning is not a code; it is found in the living language of correspondence. Through this spiritual meaning we are able to see and understand many things: the Lord's nature and purpose, the real meaning of both heaven and hell, the union of good and truth in everything, and, most importantly for us, the patterns and pathways of our spiritual life and regeneration.

The opening five paragraphs of the great work 'Arcana Caelestia' point this out. To meet the New Church is to meet the astounding spiritual meaning within the text of the Bible, the Word.

Now let's start...

An interesting question would be, "Are there other spiritual meanings to the Bible that have been put forward?" (Some would say, No! Not so, because the Bible text itself is the very truth, and nothing must be added or made out from that.) An early Christian leader, Origen, around 185 AD. approached the Bible text with a sense that it is allegorical, that it is speaking about deeper things than just what it is saying, rather like a parable. But his influence quickly faded as the church hammered home its creeds and doctrines to protect the church from outside influences like Greeks, Jews and Gnostics.

There may have been others here and there who felt there was something more in Biblical language, but they aren't renowned. They may well have kept quiet, or been done away with, or just towed the line to keep their place and payment. Histories of Christianity don't give much if anything.

An interesting person is the Spanish theologian Michael Servetus (about 1511 to 1553) who developed a theology which emphasised that Jesus is fully God. He certainly used Bible passages and texts to support and expound his beliefs but there is no idea that he saw deeper spiritual meanings running through the language of the Bible. Servetus was burned at the stake by order of John Calvin.

Coming much more to our own time, we can mention John Allegro, one of the Dead Sea Scrolls six experts who, around 1966, published 'The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross' (a real best seller!) which put out that under hallucinatory fungus eating, another meaning becomes apparent in the Bible. But it's not spiritual imagery but sexual imagery. Years later, he owned it was all a hoax, as he had had a big row with the other Dead Sea Scrolls people.

At this point, I would like to hear from anybody who has come across any whisper of a spiritual meaning within the Bible from any other source, ancient or modern. If I say that it seems obvious that the Bible has a deeper and spiritual meaning - Jesus spoke in parables and Psalm 78 begins by saying "I will open my mouth and speak parables, dark sayings of old which we have heard and known..." and then basically recounts the story of Israel wandering in the wilderness - if I say it's obvious there is, don't forget I'm pre-conditioned to that claim.

But there's more...

I want now to introduce you to a website and set of podcasts called 'The Symbolic World'. I was introduced to this earlier this year in some facetime discussions with one person I was asked to share religious ideas with, all good stuff and still ongoing. She brought my attention to 'The Symbolic World' and sent me a podcast to maybe listen to. It was about King David who had come up in our sharing.

I'm avoiding giving names because I want to keep very much with the ideas that were given in this and other podcasts. I'll just say that there are two brothers who have done a lot of material. But the website is run

page 10

by someone else. One brother has written a book about the extensive symbolism in Genesis. The other brother is the one who does the podcast or podcasts on David. These are from the last two or so years, a point which you will understand from something later.

I'll run through some of the things I picked up in listening. The first one is that David played the harp to soothe Saul's mood. This got described as being like the court jester in medieval times whose purpose was to entertain but also to tease out with much merriment. Why? In order to force the king and court to think differently than their own ruling rigid fixed views. The point is that symbolism demands different thinking and you have to be opened up in order to have symbolism open up for you. I thought that was pretty good.

Then there was Saul throwing his spear to try to kill David by pinning him to the wall like a fly on a board. Saul misses and David flees. The symbolism here is that surface or superficial thinking wants, even demands, that the truth is something we can pin down and be in control of it, whereas symbolic understandings are fluid, unpinable and will always evade us, which is their nature and fascination for us to explore.

A bad moment came when, in all of this rich material, the comment was made that Saul's spear is actually also depicting Covid vaccination where authority is out to control everyone.

That apart, I found all this intriguing and it set a whole lot of questions going off inside me about whether people are intuitively sensing meanings and symbols, whether it's okay (or not) to get what you get from something like the Bible without any framework to start from. But I think I prefer that to disclaiming everything than the inerrant text as truth.

Apparently there's heaps more on The Symbolic World website. You may find good things (or not) but it's there, another furrow of deeper meaning than what we just have on the surface. And keep your eyes

open and ears pinned (not by Saul though) and you may come across yet other areas..... and I for one would be very interested to hear about this.

Julian Duckworth

PRESIDENT'S PAGE

Continuing with The Lord's Prayer

"Give us today our daily bread"

τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δὸς ἡμῖν σήμερον



Why is this simple request included in the prayer? It's so easy to gloss over, especially in a prayer we know by heart and one we tend to speak unconsciously by rote. But, the longer I spend contemplating this, the deeper - and more challenging - it reveals itself to be.

This sentence relates directly to Jesus' words later in the same chapter:

"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ... For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things." (Matthew 6:31, 32)

Doesn't it seem odd that we are asked to pray for the very things we are then told not to worry about, because the Lord already knows that we need them? Clearly, something else is going on here.

page 12

Bear in mind the other ways Jesus talks about food. In particular, we bring to mind the statement from John, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst." (John 6:35)

The Lord is not just giving bread here, He IS The Bread. Earlier in the Gospel of John, after the Lord's interaction with the Samaritan woman, and the disciples return, urging Him to eat, these words are recorded: "I have food to eat of which you do not know. ... My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work." (John 4:32,34)

Perhaps you're left scratching your head? Don't worry, it stumped the disciples too.

Then, I was reminded a few weeks ago of Jesus' response during his temptations in the wilderness, recorded in both Matthew chapter 4 and Luke chapter 4, word that comes from Deuteronomy: "... man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord." (Deuteronomy 8:3)

Clearly we're not talking about material food here, but let's not pin it down too rigorously just yet. Expanding our view a little to "Daily Bread", we gain some more important insights. The Greek word, *epiousion* (*epiousion*, translated as "daily"), holds within it the idea of being "needful" or "necessary". You could think of it being the day's rations: whatever is required to get you through the day, no more and no less.

I'm reminded of the children of Israel collecting manna in the desert (Exodus chapter 16). But we can see that we need so much more than just food to get through a day, or any given specific circumstance: "But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks through you." (Matthew 10:19-20)

No, we are not just asking for food here. We are asking for sustenance at every level, whatever is necessary to get us through whatever we are facing, right here, right now. It's very specific: TODAY'S daily bread. Once more, that ties in to something else Jesus says later in the sermon, "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." (Matthew 6:34)

But there's another side to "necessary" we also need to consider. "Necessary" is not necessarily "pleasant". An appropriate analogy might be a parent encouraging their child to eat vegetables ("Don't you want to grow up big and strong?"). Just because something is necessary, or good for us, doesn't mean we have to like it. In fact, there are many things we know are good for us that we also know we do not like. Can you think of any examples? I have often said that my most challenging classes made me a better teacher in ways that the easier classes (filled with happy and compliant children) never could. It's the really tricky pieces of music that make me more technically proficient as a musician. The longer rides (or runs) leave me with more stamina. That same principle applies at every level and stage of life. Challenges, be they physical, mental, or spiritual, are rarely welcomed, they are enjoyed even less often, but we come through them better and stronger people. We can be sure that our heavenly Father, with our spiritual best at heart, provides for us exactly what we need - whatever that may be - to thrive.

And this is what we're asking for - which is perhaps the most important point. We already know that, "your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things", but there are two sides to every request. On the one side, we are acknowledging that the Lord is the source of all that we need, and that only He has the wisdom to understand what that is. On the other side, we (for the most part) are terrible judges of that, yet we are opening ourselves to receive whatever it is we are given, irrespective of whether we "want" it or not. We are making ourselves fully reliant upon the Lord, trusting that He will provide whatever is

page 14

needed, and preparing ourselves to receive it, no matter what our reaction to it might be.

As Thayer's Greek Lexicon says, "... what he is said διδόναι [to grant or give]... he is conceived of as effecting, or as becoming its author". In this regard at least, perhaps the Lord's Prayer is more about changing our own heart and mind than the Lord's, subjecting ourselves to His Divine Love and Divine Wisdom.

David

SOCIETY REPORTS

BRISBANE

Every service we hold is faithfully recorded by Guang bin Liu and perhaps enjoyed by others not in attendance on the day or from further afield. Either way we are extremely grateful to Guang for all that he does in making these available, testing each week his technical recording skills that is no mean feat.

Good news - Jordan Brunne has very successfully graduated from Bryn Athyn College and has been appointed as a teacher at the Washington New Church Day School. An exciting and challenging time for Jordan and we wish her the very best in these new endeavours.

It was a real pleasure to see Doug and Rae Nash this month at church after some very prolonged hospital visits and ongoing treatments that Doug has had and continues to endure. We wish him well and keep them both in our prayers, as indeed our thoughts are with those who have been affected by the terrible flooding caused by exceptional rainfall in April and May, especially Paul, Ruth and Alexis Evans, whose home was inundated for the second time in 11 years, and Lorine Newton who had to be rescued by boat from her home in Gympie.

On a less physically challenging note, we are delighted to report a new mid-week coffee shop meeting at Southbank, that has now moved to our church premises, led by Darren Brunne that is focussing on excerpts from the book 'Heaven and Hell'. The weekly Chinese Swedenborg Study Group meeting led by Guang is well into a study of 'True Christian Religion'.

Guang continues his translations of many of Swedenborg's Writings into Mandarin Chinese, which is an enormous task and for which we are so grateful.

At the AGM in May of the Board of The New Church in Australia Bev Sheppard retired as a Member and we thank her for her dedicated service.

We have also had a most welcome sprinkling of visitors to our services and trust they found something of value upon which to cogitate. Very often the comments seem to focus on their enthusiasm at hearing the Word brought down to a really practical way of understanding and implementing these treasured values, truths and insights.

We have recently heard that Rev Mike Gladish will be visiting Australia in October and we are hoping that he will have the opportunity to visit the BSNC too. Dates to be advised in due course. There are still a few of us who will remember Mike from his days as Minister in Hurstville in the 70's.

Winter temperatures have set in early this year, so keep safe, healthy and warm everyone.

Gaye Heldon

AUCKLAND

Greetings to all.

We continue to hold bi-monthly Zoom services. One is a smorgasbord service in which people are invited to present thoughts, prayers, hymns on the chosen topic or passage from the Word. A recent one

page 16

produced the passage from the Heavenly Doctrine stating that the Lord asks for our total submission so that He might bless us. The idea of total submission stimulated a great deal of thought for us. The other monthly service is a more formal one which John prepares and leads. The latest one was our New Church Day Service it was held at John and Jenny's but zoomed live to 7 other people. It was also recorded and made available for other members who could not join us. Zoom has proved to be a wonderful resource for us as we are scattered and many becoming more elderly. We thank the Lord for providing it. Several members are enjoying being part of different Logo Praxis groups and as well as being inspired by the passages also meeting people from the WWNC.

We have discovered that the Nile online shopping company is selling Swedenborg Society introductions to Swedenborg and his thought on NZ's TradeMe site. It illustrates to me that the Lord works in many ways which we are unaware of and which have nothing to do with us at all.

An interesting debate is taking place in the public arena here in NZ. A Christian School is being taken to task by a LGBT advocate for insisting on teaching that marriage is between a husband and a wife. They also insist that children are born either male or female and therefore insist that children who come to their school accept that they are one or the other and have names which do not suggest another gender. The LGBT advocate is calling their stance homophobic and is asking the Department of Education to persuade the school to alter its stance. Watch this space.

I notice that the Convention Church in America was debating these challenges at its recent annual meeting and some of the papers presented are available on line.

It all makes for interesting times. I am relieved that I am not publicly involved in the debate as I feel ignorant about the issues which appear to challenge the Biblical statement that 'male and female He made them.'

Wishing you the Lord's blessings from your Kiwi cousins,

John Sutton

PERTH

At the time of writing this report it is the evening of New Church Day. This is a report from one of our friends attending the service at the home of Trevor and Joy Moffat. "Despite all our physical problems plus Mary Smuts being unable to attend, with being a COVID close contact at the last minute, Trevor once again gave us much to remind us of the 2nd coming and of Swedenborg, the spiritual Columbus giving light to the world. It was a smorgasbord of worship, wonderful hymns, food and friendship. Happy New Church Day to all."

We were a small number but all enjoyed the day. It was lovely to have Helen Cozens with us today as Helen has had some health issues recently and has missed several services.

Talking of health issues we realise we are all ageing. Ros and David Walker have both had surgery recently but both are now recovering from successful procedures Trevor too has not been immune with having had a pacemaker fitted. It makes us realise how fortunate we are with so many advances in medicine these days. It is just amazing what can be done in this area. Praise be to God for the skills of surgeons.

Trevor and Joy have spent the month of May as camp hosts at Yanchep National Park. They enjoyed the month amongst the bush, many birds and kangaroos and assisting the many campers who visited the camp ground. Several friends from our church group visited one day for a lovely bush walk followed by a BBQ lunch in the wonderful camp kitchen.

Joy Moffat

SYDNEY, ROSEVILLE

During July we've been without our minister, Howard, who has been in his native America to attend a conference of ministers of the General Church. But conveniently he was able to also attend, whilst there, the wedding of his only sister beforehand. During his absence

page 18

our previous minister, Julian Duckworth, was able to step in to take this year's New Church Day service. It might well be the first time since his retirement nearly four years ago that he has stepped back into the pulpit. He did an admirable job having returned from the UK only during the previous two days.

Since our recent AGM we've turned our minds to the question of attracting more people to church services. We've had a couple of evenings during which people particularly interested in the matter have met as something of a subcommittee. Howard has a business background (in insurance) and we've been exploring the insights that an approach along these lines affords. He anticipated that the conference he is currently attending will feature plenty of informal discussion that will hopefully prove useful to us in this regard when he returns to Sydney.

By contrast to church services, the activities at the Swedenborg Centre have generally had good numbers participating. A new concept we've successfully tried here is a six week batch of drawing sessions. This involved combining images and stories and correspondences of Egyptian gods, courtesy of centre manager Joe Vandermeer, and drawing tips from Philip Ashton, former principal of the well-known Julian Ashton Art School. Through the medium of Zoom we've had people participate online even from interstate. So well have the sessions been enjoyed by the participants there's a good chance we might do more of this format in the future.

Wayne Kasmar

VICTORIA

SWEDENBORG COMMUNITY VICTORIA

More than two years have passed since Covid-19 pandemic reached Australia. While the beginning of that nightmare may seem a distant memory to Victorians, the lingering effects of the dark days of lockdowns are clearly still present. The lockdown of 263 days devastated not just livelihoods, but also battered a generation of children who not only were locked out of their classrooms for 34

weeks but also separated from their friends. It is apparent their time in isolation has had lasting impact on them and on their future. Mental and social trauma felt by a generation of children subjected to strict stay at home orders has been immense.

Lockdowns took them away from their normal life and left them stricken with anxiety about an uncertain future. Psychiatrists are saying that there is already a “significant increase “ in children presenting with eating disorders, suicidal thoughts and self-harm. The government now plans to open three mental health hubs for primary school children. They have to make sure that every child need help gets it.

Church News

We all feel privileged to work with Rev. Moffat within our local Church. Since he joined us and under his leadership many new measures were introduced, and initiated by him. Using his extensive knowledge of computers helped us all to learn the art of modern communications, and enabled us to conduct our business in a more efficient manner. During the time he spent with us so far, he has passed a great deal of Swedenborg teachings onto us for which we are thankful and appreciative.

During pandemic close down we were able to conduct our Church services via Zoom or You Tube. It clearly indicates that the changes he has implemented have resulted in positive outcomes. Whilst currently Church services are conducted face to face, those Church members whose mobility is restricted by medical reason, can still participate in the services via Zoom or You Tube.

Question Time

Each Thursday of the week at 10.00 a.m. and 8.00 p.m. respectively set aside for question time on a weekly basis to give the opportunity to those members living in remote locations to communicate and keep in touch with other members of the congregation. It would be nice if other

page 20

Society members from different states would also join us. It is always a pleasure to catch up with old friends, and who knows we may even end up with some new ones. We invite you to take up the challenge and join in our weekly discussions. The various topics discussed provide a rich foundation for learning and help us to develop meaningful friendships.

Bible Studies

Are conducted fortnightly on Mondays at 8.30 pm. We are continuing our journey through the Book of Genesis.

Heaven and Hell

In May 2021 Rev. Moffat has started a comprehensive study of Swedenborg's best known work "Heaven and Hell". As he progressed with the work, each chapter of the book was summarised, written down and recorded. This work will be completed by July this year. It was a demanding task top of his normal duties which was carried out with dedication and produced a high standard of result.

News of People.

Covid Pandemic has finally infiltrated our Church community, During April, both Karl and Rose Robinson become exposed to its effects. They both have recovered without any lasting damage.

Colin and Davy Batchelor tested positive in early May resulting in the required isolation with flue like symptoms. Thankfully they to have safely come through it in time for their planned trip to New Zealand in early June, visiting family.

At the same time Rev. John and Mary Teed also caught the virus. Due to both having medical issues, they have decided to have a short period of respite care in a local Aged Care facility. Unfortunately, covid found its way in with a number of those staying there succumbing to it, including John and Mary. Thankfully, they are now through the worst

of the symptoms and send their best regards to all members of the Church.

Lynda Francis contracted covid early in May. she kept the children at home for the isolation period. They are all well and back to the usually family activities.

News has come from David and Pam Moffat that their son Alex, who has been staying with them, has tested positive and remains in isolation in his bedroom. Alex has improved very quickly and went back to life as normal. Unfortunately, Pam Moffat tested positive to covid on 23 May and therefore was in isolation; luckily David remained negative. Pam has recovered very quickly and returned to work.

With Love and Light,

Marika Sivak

THE LORD, THE REDEEMER

a look into redemption

I have a vivid memory of a moment way back, somewhere in England, where one of our ministers made a comment. "The Christian church generally mixes up redemption and salvation but in the New Church we keep them separate." And he went on to explain that if you are a mainstream Christian, you generally believe that Jesus, the son of God, died on the cross as a sacrifice, to save us, and if you believe this to be true and accept Jesus, then you are saved. The two go together and become virtually one thing.

But in the New Church - he continued - we don't lump them together like that. We believe that Jesus - God himself - came into the world and took on the work to overcome evil by going through temptations and never giving in to them. This victory gave Jesus the power to hold evil, hell, at bay so that our spiritual freedom can be assured. Notice the wording of that - **our spiritual freedom**. If we believe in this work

page 22

of God it doesn't **save** us like a sacrifice. It provides for us, and we then need to work on ourselves, see our weak points, our self-centred states, really our humanity, and, through repentance and no doubt prayer, we are saved. We're saved by the Lord but we are active co-workers by acknowledging our need and by then shunning evils as sins against God.

So the New Church keeps redemption and salvation as two things where the one allows for the other to happen - redemption and salvation. When we pray to the Lord, we address Him at times as our Creator, Redeemer and Saviour. It was often in our liturgies.

Being me, I looked up the word 'redeemer' wondering what it actually means. Re- is easy because it nearly always means 'again' or 'back' like re-turn, re-fresh and so on. But what about 'deem'? It was ringing subdued bells in my head. If you deem something to be suitable, you judge that it is right, so 'deem' means 'to make a judgement about something'. But it has another related meaning. It means to secure something, often by buying it. Think about that a moment and you might begin to see how it relates to the Lord's work on earth.

The Old Testament story of Ruth, and the owner of the field where she gleaned, Boaz, reaches the point where he arranges to buy and secure rights for Ruth and her mother. He redeems a commercial arrangement for their wellbeing, and later on he marries Ruth which may have been the purpose of all this from the start.

Then I remembered how in Sydney I had accompanied one of our church members to the bank to arrange for her to open a 'deeming account' (a new one to me!). This would bring security and would gain interest but also be drawable. Now, having got this far with the subtleties of 'deem' I checked up its etymology and the Online Etymology Dictionary basically confirmed I was on track, but it added that 'deem' meaning 'judging' gave way to form a surname, mostly in Scotland, 'Dempster'. I laughed because the lady I'd accompanied to the bank had that very surname!

Having introduced the idea, we'll go on to use some passages from Swedenborg to say more things about redemption.

The main thing to remember is that we are involved in our salvation, as I said above. The Christian church tends to frown about the place of 'good works' in saving us, but that's because doing good can become meritorious - 'Look at me; I do good; I deserve heaven.' - but Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount says of such claims, 'Depart from me, I never knew you.' However, working on ourselves and shunning evils is a different and necessary involvement where our merit doesn't come in to it. We realise our state and our need.

So, over to Swedenborg, without further commentary. Just see what you get from each reference and let it speak to you and in you.

True Christian Religion 81

By the Lord the Redeemer is meant Jehovah in the Human.

Apocalypse Explained 328:10

Those who are reformed and regenerated by the Lord are meant by 'the redeemed of Jehovah'. The reason they are called 'the redeemed' is that by regeneration they have been liberated from evils, and made over to and conjoined with the Lord.

Arcana Caelestia 6281

To redeem is to restore and allocate back to oneself what had been one's own. This is to do with the spiritual states of slavery, death and evil. With slavery, those who are meant are those who are enslaved to hell. With death, those who are meant are those who are in damnation. With evil, those are meant who are in hell. As the Lord delivered mankind from these things by making the Human in Himself Divine, His Divine Human is what is called 'the Redeemer'.

page 24

Arcana Caelestia 7205

'I will redeem you with an outstretched arm' (Exodus 6:6) means a leading out from Hell by Divine power. To 'redeem' is to lead out of hell.

True Christian Religion 378.3

The causes of so many divisions within the Christian church are principally due to the Lord's crucifixion and death being taken for redemption itself.

True Christian Religion 579

Something needs to be said about redemption. The Lord came into the world to remove hell from angel and man, and to glorify his Human. Total damnation was threatening the whole human race, and the angels could not have continued in their integrity. So, the Lord removed hell, subjugated it (held it away) and so opened heaven.

All this so that afterwards he could be present with men and save those who would desire to live according to his commandments. And by glorifying his Human and making it Divine he became the redeemer, regenerator and saviour to eternity.

It shouldn't be believed that by the redemption once brought about in the world, all after it have been redeemed as a result, but that the Lord perennially redeems those who believe in him and do his words.

SOME NEW CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA NOTICES

1. The Council of Ministers is having a face-to-face meeting in Port Macquarie from Monday to Thursday September 5th to 8th.

2. There is a Virtual Retreat (Zoom) available for all who would like to join in from Thursday July 7th 8pm, Friday 8th, 10am and 8 pm, Saturday 9th, 10am and 2pm. People are invited to join the Worship Service on Sunday 10th and 10.30 am.

More information and details and Zoom link from David Moffat 0402 944 889 and d_a_moffat@yahoo.com.au

3. Another face to face Womens Weekend at Stanwell Tops is happening later this year and a date has been booked. Contact Jenn Beiswenger for details 5480 1589 / 0411 719 754

THE NEW CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

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LOGOPRAXIS

A spiritual community based on the practice of the Word : online and face to face groups
<http://logopraxis.online>

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