

THE NEW AGE

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THE NEW CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

PRESIDENT

Rev David Moffat
P O Box 2224
Mt Waverley VIC 3149
0402 944 889

TREASURER

Mr Graham Hanna
75 Regent Street
Bonnells Bay NSW 2264
02 4973 4141

SECRETARY

Mr Kevin Attwater
P O Box 9043
Port Macquarie NSW 2444
02 6582 7229

SOCIETIES AND GROUPS ARE LOCATED AT

ADELAIDE

287 Oaklands Road
Marion SA 5043
08 8277 1891

Leader

Mrs June Johnson
33 Freebairn Drive
Hallett Cove SA 5158
08 8326 9665

Secretary

Mrs June Johnson
33 Freebairn Drive
Hallett Cove SA 5158
08 8326 9665

BRISBANE

1/24 Railway Terrace
Dutton Park
QLD 4102

Minister

Rev Darren Brunne
9-11 Dunbar Road
Burdpengary East QLD 4505
0421 319 252

Secretary

Mr Cor Visser-Marchant
0416 243 242

MELBOURNE/SCV

3 / 20 Duerdin Street
Notting Hill VIC 3168
P O Box 2224
Mt Waverley VIC 3149

Minister

Rev David Moffat
P O Box 2224
Mt Waverley VIC 3149
0402 944 889

Secretary

Neville Jarvis
"Ellsmere" 1/15 Parkside Street
Beaumaris VIC 3193

BALLARAT

318 Fussell Street
Ballarat VIC 3350
03 5331 5638

Leader

Mr Len Robinson
318 Fussell Street
Ballarat VIC 3350
03 5331 5638

Contact

Mr & Mrs Len & Judy Robinson
318 Fussell Street
Ballarat VIC 3350
03 5331 5638

PERTH

SYDNEY

4 Shirley Road
Roseville NSW 2069
02 9416 7026

Minister

Rev Howard Thompson
4 Shirley Road
Roseville NSW 2069
02 9416 7026/0432 357 475

Secretary

Mr Graham Hall
263 Trafalgar Street
Annandale NSW 2038
02 9692 0941

CANBERRA

Convenor

Philip Richards
02 6282 1157
philip.richards01234@gmail.com

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Here's the Spring 2023 copy of The New Age. Enjoy reading and longer evenings.

One hymn runs "Graces human and divine; Flowers of earth and buds of heaven", which poetically and hopefully for our endeavours accurately describes this present life we're in. Spring is the season for buds and budding. Personally and spiritually, for buddying?

So it shouldn't surprise us that 'buds', those short-term pre-leaf and physically small things, figure fairly prominently in the text of the Bible. I'll just offer four. Numbers 17 is the command for each tribe to bring an almond branch, and it was Aaron's branch alone that budded overnight. "For as the earth brings forth its bud...so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations." (Isaiah 61:11); "Behold, in my dream, a vine, in which were three branches. It was as though it budded and shot forth blossoms, and its clusters brought forth ripe grapes." (Genesis 40:9-10); and on the negative side, "The stalk has no bud, it shall never produce meal." (Hosea 8:7)

And there are more. The reason, as I understand it, is that a 'bud' is a perfect picture of spiritual potential and something waiting to break out into manifestation and God's glory. It's also a picture of God's latent gift of life for purposes in which we have our part. It's all there in the bud, but a bud is not a bud for long. Nor are we here for long...

I also really like the way the word 'bud' matches the brevity of it. You almost don't say it! Maybe someone back in time had to name these tiny nodules and ended up with a hesitant '...but'. Whatever, they are living things lying in wait. What a perfect picture, "buds of heaven".

"By watering the earth so that it may bring forth and bud, means to enliven the truth and the good of love and charity; truth being the seed, and good being the bread which is given to be eaten." AE 644:13

GRATITUDE

A sermon by Rev. William (Bill) Woofenden

"Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; for His love endures forever."

(Psalm 107:1)

"Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving" means the divine spiritual things of the Lord. All acknowledgment and confession of the Lord in general encompasses these two things: that He is the divine love itself and He is the divine wisdom itself. For those who are in heaven and in the church, love and everything that has to do with it comes from him. It is the same with wisdom and everything that has to do with it. (Apocalypse Revealed 372)

Everyone has many things for which to give thanks. Expressions of gratitude are possible on all the planes of our life. Even some animals seem capable of feeling and showing gratitude.

Natural-minded people may give thanks for things of a worldly nature, which they see as blessings. For instance David, in one of his psalms written after a victory over his enemies, said, "He is the God who avenges me.... Therefore I will praise you among the nations, O Lord; I will sing praises to your name" (Psalm 18:47, 49). And the self-centered Pharisee in his conceit thanked God - that he was not like other people. (Luke 18:11).

Spiritually-minded people may give thanks also, but they express a wholly different kind of gratitude than that which affects the worldly-minded. The possibility of giving thanks extends through all lifestyles, from the godless up to and including the highest angels, for we are told that they, too, give thanks to God. But through all the planes of life, from animals to angels, the nature of thanksgiving or gratitude changes. It is one thing with a worldly person, quite another with a spiritual person, and still another with angels. Every higher expression of gratitude is from a higher state of life, and continually embodies more unselfish thoughts and feelings, more heavenly states of life.

The good naturally-minded person is grateful for the good things of life, This person gives thanks to God for food and clothing, for health, and for worldly

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success. And this is good. It is far better to recognize our heavenly Father in this way than to attribute all our blessings to ourselves, without any thought of their real source.



But spiritual thanksgiving is of an entirely different order. It indeed includes gratitude for all the blessings of this natural life, but it is not primarily for things. Our text reads, "Give thanks to the Lord," not because He has given us material things, but because "He is good; His love endures forever." Spiritual gratitude is based on recognition of the goodness of God. And this means the acknowledgment that all goodness and truth are from the Lord, and consequently all our intelligence,

wisdom, gratitude and happiness are also from the Lord. This is what is meant at the spiritual level by gratitude.

Gratitude of this sort lifts us out of the limitations of natural thinking about thankfulness. It includes a recognition that all our natural blessings are from the Lord; but it is not for these, nor even for the goodness and truth we have, that we give thanks. It is simply for the goodness and mercy of God.

Thus spiritual gratitude is not limited to the good things, either natural or spiritual, that happen to come to us. Instead it involves awareness of what is a central teaching of our church: that our heavenly Father is infinitely loving.

And this is entirely apart from our personal experience regarding the natural blessings of life, being more inward than (or perhaps I should say "above") all ideas of self. Such gratitude is merely the humble acknowledgment that God is good.

But of what practical value is this? Or, as I sometimes used to say to a theological student who had just proclaimed some heavy theological maxim...."So what?" We all know what it is to be grateful for natural blessings. We know the happiness we get out of them. We know the anxieties and hardships that would be ours if we were denied them, and we are naturally thankful that they have been given to us. But, in practical terms, how can we give thanks because God is good?

This, surprisingly, involves something we have been taught from childhood, without realising its lifelong significance. I doubt that any one of us would question the statement that God is good. We have probably heard that God is good all our lives. It has become an axiom of spiritual thought which we take for granted. Yet at the same time it is apt to be merely a matter of our thought, rather than a significant feature affecting our everyday life.

Gratitude for natural blessings seems to come naturally because such blessings are so definite, so tangible, apparently so real. Yet as we all know, eventually we all leave these things behind. And we should realize that although our spiritual gratitude should not be separated from our natural experience, it is not measured or determined by it. We can, in fact, make our natural blessings real and lasting by bringing the spiritual down into them.

Spiritually, we give thanks to the Lord for the natural blessings of this life by learning to value them for their spiritual uses. If, for instance, we are grateful to the Lord that we have a happy and comfortable home because it renders us more fully able to perform useful services for our community and nation, then we know something of what spiritual gratitude is.

Thankfulness at this level gives the natural experiences of life a new interpretation and a new meaning. They become expressions of divine love, and thus openings for heavenly usefulness. We give natural thanks for prosperity when we are grateful for the personal happiness

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that such prosperity brings; but we thank the Lord spiritually when we use our prosperity to increase our usefulness to the world. With this understanding of the nature of true gratitude, we may, if we will, go over all the good things of life: the things that we naturally call good. We may be grateful for each of them in turn in a spiritual way by recognizing their relation to the spiritual dimension of life and prizing them on this account. In such a case we are gratefully aware that our making use of them is primarily a means of appreciating God's love; and secondarily that they can be means for making God's love operative in the world through us.

When we do this, we are no longer thanking the Lord merely because He has given us these things for our enjoyment; we are now truly thanking Him because he is good. The gratitude of the spiritual person does not limit itself to the things that the natural person calls good; indeed, spiritual people do not in any special degree connect their conception of gratitude with the natural blessings of their life.

Although it is a hard fact to learn, it is nevertheless true that the goodness of God is just as much present with us in our trials, temptations, and misfortunes as in our times of prosperity and ease. Such so-called "negative" things are also a means by which the Lord's mercy is revealed to us in many ways. This principle is stated clearly in Scripture. For instance, we read, "When you eat and are satisfied, be careful that you do not forget the Lord" (Deuteronomy 6:11-12).

Sometimes it takes an experience of dishonour, embarrassment, or need to bring it to our consciousness that the goodness and mercy of God are present through all the moments of our life. And sometimes the humbling or the sense of need may have to come to us through affliction. Just as sickness may serve the use of showing us that something is wrong with our body and needs attention, states of adversity may be needed to show us that something is wrong with our soul and needs attention.

By the same token, if we seek to find out why troubles come to us, not simply because they cause us unhappiness or bring us pain, but because we want to know the real nature of evil in order to be led out of it, we shall learn the lesson, and be able to give thanks to the Lord for his goodness. If we could even begin to realize what positive qualities of character come to us through the things we tend to count as our burdens, we would be amazed.

Therefore, whether we think of the pleasant or of the unpleasant things that come to us in life, we shall find that all of them - as to the eternal purposes that are within them - are expressions of God's goodness. Anything that comes to us may be made to contribute to our eternal welfare, if we will seek in it for spiritual good and spiritual truth.

Instead of thinking or saying in our times of distress that God is treating us badly, we need to look at such times as opportunities to learn something that God is trying to tell us. And, paradoxically, as we do this we are at the same time giving spiritual thanks to the Lord.

To sum up: It is the Lord's intent that we live in constant recognition of his goodness and of his loving relation to us. But we are prone to acknowledge the concept of the goodness of God at about the same level that we acknowledge something like the existence of a planet called Jupiter, that is, as a teaching that doubtless is true, but very far off, very remote from our everyday life. But this is to miss the whole point.

The teaching that there is a God, that he is love, and that he is always present with us, should affect everything we say or do. To trust implicitly that God's providence and wisdom are with us every moment, and therefore to be motivated continually to learn his commandments and live according to them, is spiritually to give thanks to the Lord because He is good.

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People who express gratitude in this way are thankful right to the core of their being. This sort of gratitude rises above all the vicissitudes of our experiences on this earthly plane. Whatever our outward circumstances may be, spiritually we are "giving thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His love endures forever." Amen

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, we do go through many vicissitudes in this life, many ups and downs, many joys and sorrows. Yet we know and trust that you are with us through them all, and that under your providence, all of our experiences are building within us character of strong faith and deep compassion. We give thanks to you, O God, for your goodness, and for your eternal love, and we pray that it may be expressed in all our experiences and in all our actions. Amen.



President's Message:

Continuing The Lord's Prayer

"For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen"

οτι σου εστιν η βασιλεια και η δυναμις και η δοξα εις τους αιωνας αμην

As we reach the end, there's a profound sense of completion. My will, understanding, and subsequent actions in life are renewed. By this point, we fully acknowledge that we are entirely subject to the Lord. Any power we possess to will and do good originates solely from the Lord, and this principle radiates through our lives.

Here, we come full circle to the beginning. In a way, the cycle starts anew. In another sense, there is fulfilment and return.

"As the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven,
And do not return there,

But water the earth,
And make it bring forth and bud,
That it may give seed to the sower,
And bread to the eater,
So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth;
It shall not return to Me void,
But it shall accomplish what I please,
And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it." (Isaiah 55:10,11)

This is mirrored in the word "kingdom." However, if we've returned, it's with more than mere repetition, it's with renewed conviction following the culmination of an essential process. This confirmation arises because we've established the truth of it, not only in words but by living the Lord's Prayer. We have:

- Started with recognition of the Lord.
- Been obedient to His rule.
- Recognised the need to align our will with God's.
- Brought our external lives in harmony with our internal ones, making our internal faith visible.
- Acknowledged that all our goodness stems from Him.
- Recognised our indebtedness to the Lord and our duty to forgive others.
- Acknowledged our natural tendency toward selfish desires and sought the Lord's help to overcome them.

Only after undergoing all these stages can we truly say, "Yours is the kingdom." Initially, we sought it, but now it exists as an established reality in our lives. The first acknowledgment may have been sincere, but now it provides a new, deeper foundation for our lives. This richness and depth are bestowed upon us along with "the power and the glory."

"Yours is... the power"

We are no longer in a state of mere obedience, nor do we rely solely on our individual efforts. We see clearly that any good we do comes

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from the Lord. Any power we may have claimed as our own, we now acknowledge as coming from another source. It may seem like we act independently, but the reality differs. The Bible shows us that the power of the doer originates from elsewhere.

"But indeed for this purpose, I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth."
(Exodus 9:16, see also Romans 9:17)

"When He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease." (Matthew 10:1)

"The angel answered and said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.'
(Luke 1:35)

"Jesus answered, 'You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore, the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin.'" (John 19:11)

"My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore, most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." (2 Corinthians 12:9)

"Yours is... the glory"

But it goes beyond that. It's not only the power, the ability to act that we derive from the Divine, but also the inspiration and impetus to act. Even the desire that seems to prompt us into action comes from the Lord. The very idea that we should lift a finger originates from above. Once again, we can see this principle in the Word.

"Give unto the Lord, O you mighty ones,
Give unto the Lord glory and strength.

Give unto the Lord the glory due to His name;
Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." (Psalm 29:1,2)

"He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him." (John 7:18)

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23)

"He who glories, let him glory in the Lord." (2 Corinthians 10:17)

"The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light." (Revelation 21:23)

There is no thought that enters our minds and no effort we undertake, bringing those thoughts to fruition, that doesn't originate from the Lord. Thus, in both inspiration and the ability to act, the Lord is revealed as the ultimate ruler.

"Amen"

And so, the Prayer concludes. While researching, I stumbled upon an intriguing connection that seems to tie everything together: the link between "Amen" and Benjamin, the youngest of Jacob's sons. Rachel passed away shortly after giving birth. She named him Ben-Oni, meaning "Son of my Sorrow," but Jacob renamed him Benjamin, meaning "Son of my Right Hand" (Genesis 35:18).

You're likely most familiar with "Amen" as meaning "So be it." That might seem like a final plea to fulfill our prayers' purpose, but it's truly an acceptance of the Lord's will for our lives, regardless of how it unfolds. But if you trace the word through the Hebrew, as I did using Strong's Concordance, it originates from a word meaning "assurance, belief, establish, steadfast," which, in turn, derives from another, meaning "turn to the right hand."

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Benjamin, the twelfth and final son, the culmination of immense trials and temptations, becomes the Son of "Amen," signifying completion and rest. It acknowledges that all the challenges and sufferings we've faced are integral to who we've become, without which we would be less than we are now. This is an acceptance of the twists and turns of Divine providence rather than mere fate.

However, just like any birth, the end of the story marks a new beginning. In one sense, Jacob's family is complete with Benjamin. But the trials are not over. Our journey continues, as does our growth and development. In part, there is completion and return, but in another part, the cycle begins anew.

David

SOCIETY REPORTS

BRISBANE



The Golden Age

PUBLIC LECTURE
The Coming Golden Age

Wednesday 20th September 2023 | 7:30pm - 8:30pm
355 Wickham Terrace | Spring Hill Qld 4000

PRESENTER: PASTOR DARREN BRUNNE

How can we navigate Earth's current changes and prepare for this new age?

Swedenborg's spiritual writings included teachings about the New Church. Rev Darren will discuss how many believe this final Church will restore lost and ancient secrets of past eras and assist us into our highest form of charity or love. He will focus on Biblical Archetypes used in prophecy and referred to in the Apocalypse as the 'New Jerusalem descending from Heaven'.

A lot has been happening here in the Brisbane New Church community over the last three to four months. Each month we have someone new joining us and finding the joy of the Inner Sense of the Word along with Swedenborg's heavenly revelations. Most recently are a younger couple who I first met this time last year at our annual talk/presentation to the Theosophical Society.

Last year I talked about the Seven Days of Spiritual Work we all need to engage in if we are to experience regeneration (drawn from Genesis One) with a special

emphasis on Day Two spiritual work - The power to separate from the 'ego 'and observe – (the Seer/eagle). This year the talk will be on:-
The Coming Golden Age – How can we navigate Earth's current changes and prepare for this new age?

During August (8th to 11th) Brisbane City hosted the Council of Ministers annual meeting. That following Sunday most of the ministers remained in Brisbane to come along to our second Sunday of the month Sacred Circle. This involves our gathering together in a circle with the Word as the centre of our focus. Everyone is encouraged to share their thoughts, insights, and questions around a set reading of the Lord's parables. We had nine extra people attending because of the minister's visit and for the first time our circle had over 30 people present. Wonderfully, the circle was warm, loving, and insightful. The extra numbers added to the open and caring format of the Circle.

Relaxing afterwards this lovely gathering provided a beautiful opportunity for us all to form a circle around Sally Visser-Marchant as prayers were said for her as she navigates (with husband Cor's loving support) her present serious health challenges. Sally noted that during the prayer all the pain left a certain part of her body and she has remained pain-free up till this present day. Thank you Lord.



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ROSEVILLE

We have recently had the pleasure of being with Rev John Teed a fair bit, as he was spending a couple of weeks in Sydney visiting with his daughter Margaret. As well as twice attending Sunday services he was with us at our regular mid-week bible study at the Swedenborg Centre. The location prompted a fair amount of reminiscing about when he himself was the first manager of the Swedenborg Centre starting back around 1960. At that time John also became the first ever minister that the Sydney society ever had. Previously it had lay-leaders going right back to its formation in 1874.

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Our current minister, Howard, is an enthusiastic participant in the fitness programme offered at the CrossFit gyms. CrossFit might be described as a gym with more of a community feel to it. He has recently undertaken training to become a qualified trainer there, and sees this as an avenue of expanding his ministry. Providing free training at this gym for people struggling in life might prove a very good way to reach those that he would otherwise not come in contact with and be able to help.

While his training to become a CrossFit trainer required a full weekend's attendance on this weekend past, It did not mean we were without a minister to take the Sunday service. Our former minister Julian Duckworth and wife Ruth just happened to be in town, down from their retirement home in Port Macquarie, and luckily for us he was very happy to fill in in his old capacity.

Wayne Kasmar

SWEDENBORG COMMUNITY VICTORIA

Weekly activities continue: Sunday morning services are attended in person and simultaneously live-streamed, Question Time (on Zoom) take place morning and evening on most Thursdays, and fortnightly Bible studies continue through the prophecy of Ezekiel. our social media presence continues to grow and develop. It was a joy, recently,

to welcome Karl and Rose Robinson back to our service in person, after Rose spent many months in hospital, rehab, and then confined to home.

It is with some sadness we mark the passing of two members of our congregation: Mrs Mary Teed, and Mr Mathew Arnold.

Mary passed into the spiritual world on Tuesday 11 July, in familiar surroundings at Woodend, Victoria, with her husband John and their daughters, Rosemary, Pamela, and Margaret present. Mary will be known to many readers of The New Age, having served alongside John in every society of The New Church in Australia.

In later years, Mary had suffered the ravages of Parkinson's Disease. Her funeral was held on Thursday 13 July, at Kyneton, Victoria.

Matthew passed five days later, on the afternoon of Sunday 16 July. He had spent a few months in and out of hospital with various ailments, and had recently found high-care accommodation in Canterbury, just around the corner from the home he shared with his wife, Louise, for many years, before her passing in 1995.

Until that time, Matthew had remained staunchly independent, and he was generally in good health and in good spirits. Matthew had come into the church through his school friend, John Teed, and had the distinction of being Melbourne's second longest standing member. In the latter years of life, he had found much joy in re-established family connections.

Rev David Moffat, for Mr Neville Jarvis (who is currently overseas)

LOGOPRAXIS SERMON

"WE ARE BECAUSE GOD IS"

by David Millar

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Genesis 1:1-2 *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters."*

Divine Providence 46.3 The divine essence is love and wisdom.

Divine love and wisdom are substance itself and form itself.

Divine love and wisdom are substance and form in and of themselves.

God created the universe and everything in it not from nothing but from Himself.

... It follows from this that everything that has been created, especially ourselves and the love and wisdom within us, is real, and is not just an image of reality. If God were not infinite, then, nothing finite would exist; if the Infinite were not the All, there would not be anything; and if God had not created everything from Himself, there would be nothing real, nothing at all. In short ... *We are because God is.*

Today I want us to focus on the idea that "...we are because God is..." You will all be familiar with this reading from the Bible, it is of course the opening verses from the book of Genesis. I selected it as the basis for this talk because, as the first thing said in the Word, it has a special place in preparing the mind for everything that follows. This is particularly true for those who look to the Lord's Word in an effort to think and feel from the wisdom and love that the Lord provides. It should be said from the outset that these verses from the book of Genesis describe in general how all things that truly exist come into being.

The other thing that should be stated up-front is that from the perspective of the teachings for a new church to be formed in us what's being spoken about here has nothing to do with the creation of the material world as something independent and existing outside of ourselves. From a spiritual perspective the Bible when speaking of creation is talking about the creation of a new mind that lives a love of what is good and true.

It is clear from what the doctrines for a new church teach that our spiritual or mental health is a reflection of the quality of the thoughts and feelings that dominate the inner landscape of the mind. The phrase, ...we are because God is... is a helpful reminder in this regard as it draws our focus back to the source of our mental health and wellbeing by emphasizing that if the life of our mind is to be something truly spiritual then its activity needs to reflect something of what God is.

When we talk about being or existing, or that ...we are because God is... we need to be aware that we only truly exist as human beings when our mind is in the human form. You see it is not a given that our mind is human because we exist in a body that carries the label human being. What science calls a human being is not the same as what is defined as being human in the Heavenly Doctrines.

A healthy spirit or mind is one that is open and receptive and so attuned to the inflow of the Divine's life i.e. of what is truly loving and wise. Unhealthy states of mind arise from being closed off to this inflow and this occurs when we fail to acknowledge our spiritual origins and end up being so tied up in lower earthly interests that higher things can't really be said to be living in us. When spiritual things are not alive for us we can be said to be without form and void.

We are, or live, when we have what is truly living alive in us. Living things are spiritual things, heavenly things, things that have to do with producing what is good and true in us. To live spiritually and so become a genuine human being one must love what is spiritual. When this kind of love is active in us then we will find the motivation arises within us to seek out and have removed those things that rob us of our humanity.

It is so that such things can be removed that we are given truths in a textual form called the Word and are then commanded to take these truths and live from them. To possess a love for what is spiritual will

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mean we will grow in our love for what is true or the Word. The first thing said in the Word is that..."In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Spiritual wholeness for those who look to the Word proceeds from accepting that what is offered in the text of Scripture is first and foremost from the Divine, and secondly, because it's from the Divine it must be true. It must be true because by definition nothing false or evil can come forth from God.

So we can have full confidence that all Scripture is true and because it is true it must lead to goodness in people's lives. This doesn't stop it being used in ways that are destructive but the mishandling of truth doesn't do away with the fact of its divine origin or its value as truth.

To accept the first statement of the book of Genesis a person has to accept that God is and that through God what is called, "the heavens and the earth" are created. To see what's involved here in terms of its application to the life of the human mind we need to begin to see that the terms used like God, Beginning, Heavens and Earth as well as the term Created don't mean what they appear to mean on the surface. The natural meaning conveyed by the words is not their spiritual meaning. We can see this because the natural meaning gets us to focus on and understand the text in terms of the natural world we perceive in our senses.

Meaning that is spiritual in character doesn't direct our focus outward but rather it draws our focus toward internal things, the things within our minds. What the natural level of meaning does is two things, 1. It provides us with a container out of which spiritual meaning can be drawn and 2. It presents us with general principles that can lead us to see more universal applications of the text to the life of the mind.

The natural meaning of the words of the first verse of Genesis offers us a general principle that is so central to the idea of spiritual wholeness that we can miss it, and it is this: All things that come into

being do so from a single source and that source is called God. But here is the question ... what do we understand by this term God?

Now the key to understanding what this term God means spiritually requires us to ask another question: What does the word God relate to so far as my inner mental life is concerned? Clearly if the spiritual meaning of the text relates to our inner life then God too must be present as some form of spiritual phenomena related to human consciousness.

Most of us have grown up with ideas of God that attributes natural human tendency and characteristics to the Divine. While this is appropriate for a religion of the natural man where the opening up a spiritual understanding of God is concerned the ideas of natural religion and in particular ideas that attribute finite human attributes to God are not overly helpful. We have to be able to lay aside to the best of our ability the natural ideas we carry associated with the term God if we are to see things in a different light.

The term "God" in the Hebrew text is Elohim. This is one of the two main terms (there are others) used to refer to the Divine in the Bible, the other is Yehowah. In the Old Testament of our English Bibles Elohim is translated God and Yehowah is translated LORD. Both refer to the One God but they refer to specific aspects of the Divine nature. Elohim or God is used where the subject has to do with the activity of Divine Truth or Divine Wisdom whereas Yehowah (Jehovah) or LORD is used where the subject is the activity of the Divine Good or Divine Love.

So where we read the word God in the Bible it means the Divine Truth. It follows then that if God means Divine Truth we can legitimately transpose the term Divine Truth where the term God occurs. If we do that with Gen 1:1 we have... "In the beginning Divine Truth created the heavens and the earth." Now the Divine Truth is nothing other than the Word, for the Word is Divine Truth. So now the

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verse can be read; "In the beginning the Word created the heavens and the earth."

The Word is the agent by which the heavens and the earth are created. This is a remarkable thought. The Word or the Sacred Scriptures that you hold in your hands today are the agent by which the heavens and the earth are brought into being. Now just as the term God has a meaning that applies to the internal world of mind so too do the words "heavens and earth." The heavens being spoken of here are not those that make up the sky above us, nor does the term earth refer to the planet beneath our feet. These are natural ideas tied to the literal meaning of the words used. In very general terms though the word heavens gives us the idea of what is higher and the word earth of what is lower.

So in simple terms heavens and earth refer to what is higher and lower within the human mind. In spiritual terms higher means what is more internal and lower what is more external. When we talk of internal and external things that belong to the mind we can only be referring to mental phenomena or thoughts and affections that can be divided into what is of a higher and lower quality.

We now come to the term beginning. Again this word like the others we have looked at has a spiritual application and as such doesn't mean a point in time when the external physical universe came into being. Spiritually it refers to the first state of a genuine spiritual life. This first state of life is called the beginning and is when a person is receptive and so begins on the path of regeneration or being born again.

That beginning is a state of mind in which the Divine is first acknowledged and is seen as the source of one's life. It is only when Divine Truth is freely accepted into the mind that the heavens and earth or the internal and external mind of a person can begin to be created in the image of God.

The word 'created' is only ever used in the Word in relation to the renewal of the human mind. The Hebrew Word is bara and it means to form or fashion by cutting. The Heavenly Doctrines for the new church teach that implements, tools, and weapons that are associated with the idea of cutting in the Bible correspond to the things of our thought life. The material that enables us to cut down false ideas, or dividing and separate what is useful from what is not are truths which are able to shed light on things.

So what we have described in this the first verse of Genesis is the means by which all that is truly real, or what is spiritual within the human mind comes into being. We see that for things to progress spiritually for us, truths must be active in our life. It is the Word and the Word alone that provides the material through which the mind can be re-fashioned and built up in the image of God or what is reflective of the Divine Truth.

On the use of the term bara in other places in the Word we have the following...

Psalm 51:6-12 "Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, And in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me hear joy and gladness, That the bones You have broken may rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins, And blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me by Your generous Spirit."

Psalm 102:15-22 "So the nations shall fear the name of the LORD, And all the kings of the earth Your glory. For the LORD shall build up Zion; He shall appear in His glory. He shall regard the prayer of the destitute, And shall not despise their prayer. This will be written for the generation to come, That a people yet to be created may praise the LORD. For He looked down from the height of His sanctuary; From heaven the LORD viewed the earth, To hear the groaning of the

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prisoner, To release those appointed to death, To declare the name of the LORD in Zion, And His praise in Jerusalem, When the peoples are gathered together, And the kingdoms, to serve the LORD."

We can see from these quotes from the Word that bara or to create has to do with the recreation of the human the mind – Create in me a clean heart O God and renew a right spirit within me – the clean heart is a heart centred on love to the neighbour and a renewed spirit is a new understanding of the Word based on that love. Notice that in Psalm 102 it speaks of ...a people yet to be created... being able to ...praise the LORD... This speaks of those who are yet to be regenerated. But what is it that is regenerated in us? It actually is the Word itself that is regenerated or made alive in us and this occurs through the opening of its spiritual sense.

The spiritual sense exists within the letter and it is when its inner meaning is released into our life that we are empowered to deal with those things in our inner life that rob us of our true humanity. The spiritual meaning of the text exist to address the inner life issues of a person. But it remains bound up in the literal meaning of the text until a person is prepared to use truths as the basis for self-reflection. Until then it is described in Psalm 102 as the “groaning as a prisoner” in need of liberation.

This is why in the second verse of Genesis it says of the external mind or earth that it is “...without form and void;” and that “darkness was on the face of the deep...” This is the state of mind of those yet to be created or regenerated. It’s important that we see here that the human mind can only be said to be created once it has been raised up into the goods and truths of the internal sense of the Word.

Prior to this a person can’t be said to really alive, for to live means to be spiritually alive to the inner things of the Word, to love them and to be living from them. Where this is not the case the mind is effectively

without form and void and filled with the darkness due to it being ignorant of what good and truth really are.

Moving back to the statement ...we are because God is... we can see that we only truly come into being when Divine Truth is allowed to recreate our minds. This occurs when we recognise that the Word we have access to as the Sacred Scriptures is the basis for the life of our minds. The last part of verse two is filled with hope for where the Word is, so is the Spirit of God.

The Spirit of God being the Divine Truth that comes forth from the Word and is able to enter into the darkness and void to brood, or hover or vibrate over the faces of the waters. These waters represent those things of a higher quality planted within us that the Spirit of truth is drawn to. This is the mercy of God protecting what can be used to lift us out of the darkness of a self-centred life.

But the spirit of truth makes its presence felt only as we look to apply the commandments or the Word to the inner life of our mind. Truths need to be used to assess the quality of our thoughts and affections if we are to be empowered to use them to reject what is detrimental to our spiritual well-being...so it is in the Gospels we read...

John 14:15-17 "If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you."

It is right and necessary that we live from the commandments as to our external life but this is not how a person is regenerated, it is merely the stepping off point. For regeneration to begin we have to discover how these commandments are to be applied to the life and activity of our mind as well. The Helper is the Spirit of Truth who dwells with us but it is not enough that it is with us it must be in us and

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this can only occur when we take truths and apply them to our internal life so that we can live from spiritually sound principles.

John 16:13 "...when...the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come."

So it is that ...we are because God is....

Amen

David Millar

THE NEW CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

MINISTERS' EMAIL ADDRESSES

Rev. David Moffat	d_a_moffat@yahoo.com.au
Rev. Julian Duckworth	julian@duckworth.me
Rev. David Millar	dwmilla@gmail.com
Rev. Darren Brunne	drbrunne@gmail.com
Rev. Howard Thompson	revhathompson@gmail.com
Rev. Ian Arnold	im.arnold@bigpond.com
Rev. Sarah Walker	sarah.walker@logopraxis.online

RETIRED MINISTERS' CONTACT ADDRESSES

Rev Julian Duckworth 9 Catherine Street, Port Macquarie NSW 2444 0427 938 732
Rev. Ian Arnold 12 Norell Place, Eight Mile Plains QLD 4113 07 3841 2552
Rev. Trevor Moffat, Unit 137, Walridge Country Estate, 45 Berkshire Road
Forrestfield WA 6058 08 9359 5137 (m) 0427 995 879 moffattrevor1@gmail.com
Rev. John Teed, BUPA Aged Care, 2 Sullivan's Road, Woodend, VIC 3442

NON-ATTACHED MINISTERS

Rev. Brian O'Neill 0478 686 701 oneillpsychology@gmail.com

SWEDENBORG CENTRE

Mr. Joe Vandermeer (Director) Centre Address is: 4 Shirley Road, Roseville NSW 2069
Centre ph: 02 9416 2812 Joe mobile: 0402 202 456 website: www.swedenborg.com.au

AUSTRALIAN NEW CHURCH COLLEGE

Rev David Millar - Director of Spiritual Training - mob 0412 492 587
dwmilla@gmail.com website: anccollege.org email: enquiries@anccollege.org

LOGOPRAXIS

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<http://logopraxis.online> Email inquires: enquire@logopraxis.online

Rev. Sarah Walker Email: sarah.walker@logopraxis.online

THE NEW CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

Mr Kevin Attwater (Secretary) P O Box 9043 Port Macquarie NSW 2444
02 6582 7229 email: attwaterk@bigpond.com

HURSTVILLE SOCIETY OF THE GENERAL CHURCH

22 Dudley Street Penshurst NSW 2222 www.hurstvillenewchurch.com

Minister: Rev Todd Beiswenger 26 Dudley Street Penshurst NSW 2222

02 9580 1589 todd@hurstvillenewchurch.com

PERTH GENERAL CHURCH GROUP

The General Church in Perth: Aurora Circle

20 Clydesdale Road, McDougall House, Como

Rev Todd Beiswenger www.newchurch.org/perth-gcnj

NEW ZEALAND

Auckland Society www.newchurch.nz secretary@newchurch.org.nz

Secretary: Mrs Lis Keal, 46 Daffodil St, Titirangi, Auckland New Zealand

Minister (Retired)

Rev John Sutton 59A Balmain Road, Birkenhead, Auckland 1310 NZ

0011 649 419 7509 johnsutton41@gmail.com

