



The New Church Newsletter

Hurstville Society May 2017

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Tainted

By Rev Todd Beiswenger

While it is generally not a good tactic to assume things, I'm going to assume that you know who Bill Cosby is. First, famous as a stand-up comedian, he became even more famous as he took his talents to the TV. Cosby created a cartoon for kids, "Fat Albert" that was about a bunch of teenagers who played around in a junkyard. There was always a moral to the story so as to teach children how to properly behave. Then there was "The Cosby Show" which was a big hit in the 80's, which was an example of fine family values. Bill Cosby was on top of the world, and he was doing it while promoting clean living.

He also used his fame and influence to try to speak out to the young, black, urban communities trying to get them to stop blaming the system for their failures in life, and to take advantage of the hard won civil rights now afforded to them. He became a moralist for the black community. Here's a short excerpt from one of his speeches:

"They're standing on the corner and they can't speak English. I can't even talk the way these people talk... Where you is...What he drive...Who you be... And I blamed the kid until I heard the mother talk. And then I heard the father talk.

Everybody knows it's important to speak English except these knuckleheads. You can't be a doctor with that kind of crap coming out of your mouth. In fact, you will never get any kind of job making a decent living. People marched and were hit in the face with rocks to get an education, and now we've got these knuckleheads walking around. The lower economic people are not holding up their end in this deal."

For the better part of 40 years he was at every opportunity giving us examples of how to live a good life, and encouraging people to make something more of their life by stopping playing the victim and start taking personal responsibility.

Then, in 2004 it all started to fall apart. He'd been accused by multiple women of sexual assault, some of the instances dating back to the 1960's. The initial allegations were made in 2004-2005, but since the crimes had exceeded the statute of limitations, there was little that could actually be done. But then new allegations from more women kept coming out, and when in 2015 a court unsealed documents from an interview relating to a prior sexual assault case, the public got to see testimony where Cosby admitted to drugging women to have sex with them.

The backlash against Cosby has been very strong. Numerous organizations have severed ties with the comedian, and previously awarded honours and titles have been revoked. Reruns of The Cosby Show and other shows featuring Cosby have also been pulled from syndication by many organizations. Twenty-five colleges and universities have rescinded his honorary degrees. In addition, all of his moral crusading has now been under fire as

well, and the people whom he was trying to reach are turning their backs on him saying in essence, “Why should we listen to you?”

Bill Cosby's once pristine image has been thoroughly tainted. The good that he has done, the ideals that he taught and exemplified are all now disregarded. Because of the backlash, people today won't get to see the shows that provided the good examples. Now, Bill Cosby isn't the first person to have fallen from grace. We've seen plenty of Hollywood darlings fall, as well as politicians and preachers... and with their fall goes all of their good works and speeches about living a good life. So I've wondered, is this right? Is this what we're supposed to do?

One of the teachings that we have in the New Church is that the Lord has in fact used evil people, kings and priests to represent Him and heavenly things. By virtue of the office they held, they would perform actions that would represent the Lord's actions.

Indeed in representations no attention is paid to the person who represents, only to the thing represented by him. Consequently not only persons represented Divine, celestial, or spiritual things, but also inanimate objects, such as Aaron's garments, the ark, the altar, the oxen and sheep which used to be sacrificed, the lampstand with its lamps, the bread of the presence on the table of gold, the oil with which they were anointed, the frankincense, and other objects like these. This was why their kings, bad ones no less than the good, represented the Lord's kingship, and why their high priests, bad ones no less than the good, represented the things that belong to the Lord's Divine priesthood, when they performed their own function in external form according to the prescribed rules and commands. (Secrets of Heaven 4281)

Based on this alone it would seem that evil people can stand for and demonstrate what it is to live a good, Godly life. Key to it is receiving from them the actions they are depicting, even if it is not their true self. In the Cosby example it would be to take the moral lessons from his shows, and receive them into our life, while paying no attention to who Cosby has shown himself to be.

When we research more into this line of thinking in Secrets of Heaven, we are taught that what actually matters more isn't the state that the other person is in, but the state WE are in. When we are reading about evil priests in particular it says that unlike good priests who have communication with heaven, “[evil] priests and ministers do not themselves have any communication with heaven, but those who hear and receive the words coming from their lips do so if internal reverence and holiness exists with them. For it does not matter at all who declares what is good and true...” (#4311)

It seems that we can indeed be taught the Word of God from an evil priest. We just have to have the right attitude towards receiving the truth, right? Almost. You may have noticed that I cut off the end of the last quote, so let me give you that complete sentence: “For it does not matter at all who declares what is good and true, provided their lives are not openly wicked, because that would give offence.” What we see now is that Cosby

can, and did, demonstrate good values and morals while at the same time being a sex offender... as long as we don't know about it.

Personally I tend to think that the media tends to overreact when it persecutes people who have fallen. Yet in this case I don't think so. Cosby has been shown to be a hypocrite, the kind of person who is regularly scorned by the Lord. The Lord teaches us that we are to first stop doing evil, then learn to do good, and this is exactly why: because if you don't, your good will be hypocritical just like Cosby's - tainted, corrupt and worthless.

A man may see from reason itself that as far as the evil implanted in his will is not removed, it taints the good he does with evil; for evil lies within the good like a nut in its shell, or marrow in a bone. Although what a man then does has the appearance of good, yet inwardly it is not so, for it is like a beautiful shell containing a worm-eaten nut, or like a white almond that is rotten inside, with its corrupt veins extending even to the surface. (True Christianity 435)

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Failing to Succeed

by Jenn Beiswenger

I don't often play piano for our church services – there are only a few songs that I play, and only play them occasionally. Recently I played a song for our Easter worship service. It's a fun song, quite up-beat once it gets going. I know it well enough, now, that I'm prone to having my mind wander while playing it, if I'm not careful. It was going well, I was staying with it, until about two-thirds of the way through when I just completely up and drew a blank. I knew exactly where I was in the piece, I just couldn't think of what came next – and even when I looked at the sheet music (which I hadn't been following), ...they were just dots on the page. I might've been able to pick up where I left off, but I wanted to find and pick up where I ought to be, had I kept playing, which of course kept moving further and further along in the song.....

The people managed to pick up and keep singing, and I eventually did start playing again, towards the end, and fortunately finished on somewhat of a good note (literally!), however I had completely and utterly dropped the ball!! Woah; serious fail. My usual reaction would be to immediately plunge into the depths of despair, feeling like a COMPLETE LOSER and failure but somehow, from Somewhere, I just knew that it was the hells who wanted me to feel that way, who wanted me to feel worthless and like an epic failure. I knew it was them, and I knew that this whole piano business was (is) just something of this world, something so superficial and non-game-changing, something I should not get down over. I had a couple of brief moments of 'plunging', but they passed really quickly, and I did not get down on myself, did not feel upset for the whole rest of that day. Woah!! It wasn't that I felt elated or anything, I just didn't feel..... down. That in itself was pretty amazing.

Not only had I failed to succeed, I had failed in order to succeed.

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Come Walk With Us!

We haven't had an outdoor social event in a while, so you are invited to join us on the Bondi-to-Coogee walk on **Sunday afternoon, May 21st**. We'll leave from the church, not too long after the service ends. Bring a picnic lunch to enjoy somewhere along the way! There will also be restaurants aplenty in Bondi. The plan will be to start at the Coogee end, actually, and wind our way up to Bondi. It's touted to be a 6km-long walk, consisting of paved paths, boardwalk, hills and stairs, which should take 2-3hrs to complete. While they say not to bring bikes on this walk, kids can use scooters too if they want, though they have to be prepared to carry them up and down the stairs.

Also, if 6km sounds like too much, you could perhaps join us for some of the shorter/easier parts of the walk; feel free to check out this website for details: www.sydneycoastwalks.com.au/bondi-to-coogee-walk/

We look forward to a fun, active, social adventure together!

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Youtube Broadcasting Update

It was just over 6 months ago now that I started live-streaming our church services on Youtube. I really didn't have expectations of them getting thousands of views, and to that extent I was right. Overall, they're not getting a lot of views. As it sits right now the most viewed service is actually the memorial service for Graeme McLeay at 30 views. Everything else is between 3 and 25 views. There is one video at zero views, but more on that in a moment.

When I first was ordained, there was one minister who suggested I should do videos of short sermons, something like 3-5 minutes long. I did several of these, but didn't really get the response I was hoping for and so I stopped. They've sat there on my channel for the last 5 years or so, and have managed to get around 90 views, which is still rather unimpressive considering how long they've been there.

Recently though, I've been talking with Daniel Coates, who promotes his music on Facebook. He's telling me that he's had much more success by posting videos on Facebook than Youtube. As an experiment, I did just that. I made a new video, using the essential content of my ANZAC day service, but condensed it down to 4 minutes. I posted it on Facebook and Youtube about 24 hours ago. There are zero views on Youtube. Facebook however says the post of the video reached 430 people and has 234 views. That's a huge difference, especially when you consider that my old videos haven't hit half that many views in 5 years! I guess in some ways I shouldn't be surprised that Facebook performed better because the church page does have 187 "likes" compared to only 46 subscribers to my Youtube channel. Still, to get that strong of a result so quickly is much more than I would have imagined.

I'm still going to continue with the live-streaming on Youtube because it is now easy to do, doesn't cost anything, and still serves some people. However, I'm also going to start doing more video on Facebook and we'll see where it goes.

Looking ahead.....

Movie Night: Friday June 2nd –

Everything is better with ice cream, so we'll do another movie & ice cream night at this early New Church Day 'birthday bash!' Ice cream at 6:15pm, movie “Up!” at 6:30pm. It's a fun movie, but also teaches a few lessons like: acting good in small ways can bring bigger rewards than expected, the joy that marriage can bring, and how help can come from unexpected places. Flyers will be available for distribution - and please 'share' the event on Facebook, if you can! **RSVP by Thurs June 1** to Jenn (jenn@beiswenger.net, 0411 719 754) to make sure we have enough ice cream to go around. ;)

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Society Meeting: Sunday June 4th

Come to hear what's going on at Hurstville New Church and share your thoughts as well.

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New Church Day Celebrations: Sunday June 18th

Join us for a worship service about the 'birth' of the New Church, followed by a friendly potluck lunch, gifts for the kids and the ever-popular great red seven-headed dragon piñata! *(Please notify Jenn (jenn@beiswenger.net, 0411 719 754) ASAP if you know that a visiting child will be attending.)*

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Swedenborg and the Arts Conference, June 5-9, 2017

Bryn Athyn College is hosting the first-ever international conference dedicated to examining the influence of Emanuel Swedenborg's writings on the arts. More than twenty-five scholars from ten different countries will be at the conference to explore and discuss Swedenborg's substantial influence on literature, painting, architecture, music, and other forms of art.

To join us for this exciting event, please visit our registration page at [Swedenborg and the Arts Registration](#) or go to the Bryn Athyn College/Swedenborg and the Arts page and follow the links.

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Academy Journal

The 2015 – 2016 Academy Journal has been posted on both the Bryn Athyn College and the Academy of the New Church Secondary Schools websites. To view the Journal, please go to either of the links listed below:

<https://brynathyn.edu/alumni/> or <http://www.ancss.org/one-school/>

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Birthdays

Happy Birthday to **Hugh O'Brien** (5th), **John Sandow** (18th), **Naomi Heldon** (20th), **Matthew Cooper** (25th), **Daniel Walsh** (27th), **Brian Walsh** (31st)

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