



The New Church Newsletter

Hurstville Society July 2017

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The Downside of Rationality

By Rev Todd Beiswemger

I found myself recently sitting in a solicitor's office, waiting for a friend to finish up some business. As I waited I picked up a copy of National Geographic that they had in the waiting room. There was a really interesting article about a man who was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 2004. He was only 42 years old, and the doctor was telling him that within a decade he wouldn't be able to even feed himself. For the next seven years he would deteriorate, though not as much as the doctor had predicted, but even simple things such as talking and writing had certainly become harder.

By 2011 a company had developed an experimental procedure that had some promise. Essentially they had found that in monkeys a particular protein called Neurturin could halt the progress of Parkinson's and even undo some of the damage to the dopamine secreting neurons. For humans they created a procedure to actually drill two holes into the skull so they could inject the protein directly into the target regions of the patient's brain.

The patient showed almost immediate improvement. Where he was struggling to get around before the surgery, he was no longer. His speech had become slurred to the point that if you didn't know it, you'd have thought he was drunk. But no more. His doctor was astonished. Parkinson's had never before been reversed. Halting it was the best hope, but reversal? Absolutely unheard of.

In 2013 the company announced the findings of the trial: Neurturin had failed. What?! How could that be? Well, as it turns out, this particular patient had not received Neurturin. He'd received a placebo.

People have known about the placebo effect for over 70 years now. While treating wounded American soldiers during World War II, Henry Beecher ran out of pain-killing morphine. Desperate, he decided to continue telling the soldiers that he was giving them morphine, although he was actually infusing them with a saline solution. Amazingly, 40 per cent of the soldiers reported that the saline treatment eased their pain.

The mind is a powerful thing. But it seems that many of us choose to limit the mind's power and opt for what we call "rationality." Now, what I'm about to say is completely speculation on my part, but my speculation is that because the New Church does believe in the usefulness of science, we have over time given our "faith" to science when it comes to matters of the physical world. Some of this is well founded... we don't want to be turning to the Bible like it is a science book, because it isn't. We aren't to believe that the universe was literally made in 6 days. For some people the belief that the universe was more than 6,000 years old was a belief that called for rationality within religion.

Yet as the scientific world learns more about how things work, it seems that we have ceded that all happenings can be explained in merely mechanical or biological terms. There's a spark from the Lord that gives life... and then it just goes.

But that isn't the picture that the Writings actually give us. In fact, I would argue that in fact every moment is an amazing miracle. Without God's life, everything ceases to exist. Every moment, God is creating this reality. There really is no continuous reality, but a re-creation of reality every moment. In these moments God works in our lives, closing some doors, opening others. Shielding us from danger in one moment, but allowing us to experience our own stupidity in the next. All done to bring about a good end for us. He's in every single detail.

I've heard New Church people say, "The Writings teach that God doesn't do miracles anymore!" Nonsense I say! It is true that the Lord doesn't perform miracles like He did in the Old Testament times. But He certainly does perform miracles. As a pastor, I've heard many stories of people who say they have been miraculously healed by God. Some have been healed from a physical disease, others from mental problems, and others from addictions. Oddly enough, most of those stories have come from people who aren't involved with the New Church, which makes me wonder if we have actually closed our minds to God's possibilities because we have become so focused on being a rational church.

Do you believe that God can heal you? Physically? Or do you believe that isn't rational? Have you been struggling for years with some issue, and feel that it is impossible to change? Or that change can only come through a slow, gradual process of change? Or do you believe that your life can change in an instant? Do you believe that God can come over you so completely that those nasty habits can leave you forever in a moment? Do you believe that God can heal your physical problems?

I think we're missing out on God's power in our lives at times, only because we don't let it in. We fail to give all power over to Him and let him do His work. Peter has initial faith in Jesus, and walks on water, but his rationality comes forward and he loses his faith in the miraculous, and sinks. That's what I see, and I'm willing to admit that I see it in myself too. But I'm trying. I want to believe. I want to see the miracles. I want to experience religion. I don't want to say to others, "Join the New Church because it makes sense." I want to say, "Join in with us. You'll see a miracle every day."

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New Church Bible Study Tools

While we've run entries about this site before I got this email from them recently:

We keep running into people who don't realize that the New Christian Bible Study Project exists, or, more commonly, they haven't visited the site and seen all the things that it offers. So, we're making a concerted effort to communicate with New Church people, so they are at least aware of the site, and hopefully have bookmarked it and gotten in the habit of using it. With that in mind, here's our basic pitch:

Have you ever wished that you could read the Word and the Writings side-by-side? Would you like to be able to look up the correspondence of words in the literal sense, as you read? Would you like to be able to see New Church commentary on the internal sense? You can do all that, and much more, on the New Christian Bible Study website.

More than 100,000 people visited our website last month. This crowd is growing quickly. Bible readers and spiritual seekers are coming from all over the world. It's one of the most exciting projects in the church today. Check it out! Look us up at <http://www.newchristianbiblestudy.org>

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No Church July 2 or July 9

With the Beiswengers away for a total of four Sundays, we have decided to not have church on two of those dates. There will be lay services offered on June 25th, and July 16th, with regular services starting again on July 23rd. But as the headline says, no church offered in Hurstville on the 2nd or 9th of July.

Roseville is offering services those days, or feel free to try out a local church and see if you can pick up any good practices that we should be incorporating.

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New Minister for Roseville



A couple years ago, Rev Julian Duckworth at the Roseville New Church announced that he would be retiring in May 2018 after 27 years of service. Since then there has been a search for his successor. Letters went out to the various New Church organisations around the world to see if anybody was interested. There is! Roseville offered the job to **Rev Howard Thompson**, and he has accepted. He's currently serving the General Church in Colchester England. They're a family of 5, but the oldest daughter is an adult, and the

middle son is attending the Academy and living on campus, so it will just be Howard, his wife **Debra**, and their youngest son **Lance** who will be making the move. In theory they'll take over July 1 2018, but of course that is immigration permitting.

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Working Bee

Our next quarterly working bee will be on **Sunday July 23** after church from 11:15 until whenever you leave. Usually the latest it goes is about 3pm. We hope to have lots of you join us in once again chipping away at beautifying our gorgeous gardens! If you have already adopted a garden, this will be an opportunity to work on it; if you haven't, there are still plenty of garden plots to adopt -- and you are certainly welcome to pitch in without ever adopting a garden, too. There's lots of work to go around! A **pizza** lunch will be provided; **RSVP to make sure there will be enough**. Thanks, in advance!

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Norm Heldon's 100th Birthday!

Is it possible that this is the most anticipated event in the history of Hurstville New Church? The buzz has been happening for years. I mean, is there anybody who has passed through this congregation that has yet to hear that Norm is looking forward to getting his letter from the queen? Well the day is fast approaching as he turns 100 on 1st of August. I've asked him on a number of occasions what he wants for his birthday. I offered some suggestions like, maybe have a woman pop out of a cake! But no, what he wants is a nice bottle of wine and some fruitcake. Simple tastes for a good man.

Just for a little perspective, the church building was built in 1921. So Norm is 4 years older than that! When he was born in 1917, the life expectancy of the average male was 48.4 years, so he's more than doubled that! Over these past 100 years Norm has been to a lot of church services, rarely missing them. But these days you'll still find him in the front row of the church nearly every Sunday. He might be sleeping, but that's probably because he's already figured out this regeneration thing! After all, I heard he actually knew Moses.

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Movie Night Recap

While the month of May was a warm one overall, we seemed to have picked the coldest night of the month to serve ice cream to go along with the movie night! We had our regular crew of Sunday school boys along with some of their friends to enjoy the movie "Up!" and partake of a cold treat on a cold night. While our aged 11 and under crowd wasn't into having a discussion about the teachable moments within the movie, hopefully they were able to observe and take in some of the good examples shown to them. There's a great example of marrying your best friend, and how we learn to realize that the adventure of life is just going through it together with that person, no matter where it does or doesn't take you. So while that conversation was difficult to have with the kids, if you haven't seen the movie, watch it, because there's a good message there for you too.

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New Church Day

Once again, we had a nice New Church day celebration. To lead us into the day, the last three worship services were also based on the book of Revelation. We noted three main points that led up to the New Jerusalem, which was turned into three things we can do in order to have happiness. After all, isn't that what the New Jerusalem is? Heaven on earth! So the idea was to have a little heaven on earth right now, and so the final talk in the series was about the joy we can have when we follow the stories of Revelation.

Afterwards we had a potluck lunch, which is always a good way for some good social time and community building. The favourite part for the kids though is the slaying of the dragon piñata. I think we have now had one 4 out of the past 5 years, and we're starting to learn how to make the piñata strong enough so it doesn't burst on the first hit, but not so hard that it can't be broken either! Most of the time children are told not to break things, so it's a great time for them as they have permission to destroy something... and get candy when it breaks. Life doesn't get any better than that!

The kids also received New Church day gifts. This year a particularly large effort was made to recreate a children's book that had been given out in years past. It's a touch and feel book, one that is designed for the littlest ones. They are no longer available from the New Church bookroom as they were deemed to be too much work to make. Despite this, our local ladies took on the challenge and created 10 copies, two of which were used this year for the Evans girls. A lot of work went into these books, from reformatting to Australian paper sizes, to locating the various items for the child to touch, to cutting things out, decorating, printing and binding. It was a big task. A big thank you to everyone who helped - from the gifts to the meal and everything in-between, thank you; we couldn't do it alone. Special thanks to **Carolyn, Huily, Karen, Kristen, Jenn** and **Monika** for their dedicated help with the gifts. It was greatly appreciated!

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Birthdays

Happy Birthday to **James Kermond** (10th), **Babbette Horner** (14th).

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