



## **The New Church Newsletter**

**Hurstville Society November 2019**

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by Rev Todd Beiswenger

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## God Loves the Evil Too

By Rev Todd Beiswenger

I know that I've talked and written about this before, but it's one of the things that I don't think we really integrate into our thinking: God loves evil people too. It's not that he wants them to be evil, but that He does look out for their long-term spiritual well-being. He wants them to become more spiritually successful. It's a teaching that in many ways runs contrary to what we read in the Bible. Psalm 11:5 puts it bluntly: God hates wicked people. "The LORD tests the righteous, but his soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence." People will use quotes like this to basically assert that God is going to punish the wicked because he hates their ways (Proverbs 15:9), their thoughts (Proverbs 15:26), their worship (Proverbs 15:8), their actions (Proverbs 6:18), and their evil deeds (Psalm 5:5).

When we read Swedenborg however, we get a different perspective. Basically that God is doing everything He can to get the evil to turn to good, and if they won't turn to good, He's working hard to get them to be less evil, and at the very least prevent them from being *more* evil. Recently I came across the following quote which speaks to this idea:

"The Lord lived in so humble a way as scarcely to be distinguished from an ordinary man, and not in splendour as God, that the Jews might not acknowledge Him as the Messiah from externals, but from internals; and for the same reason He was not willing to give them signs from heaven; for if they had acknowledged Him in any other way, and afterwards had not seen themselves exalted to be the lords of earth, they would have fallen back, and so would have become profaners; it was for this reason that He was not willing to give them a sign.

That He was the possessor of all things, may be manifest from this: that He fed the five thousand, then the four thousand, also that He gave them wine to drink at Cana, and that He was able to pay the tribute money from the mouth of a fish. But that He willed to seem poor, was for the reason already given." (Athanasian Creed 98)

Jesus would not give them a sign because He did not want them to end up spiritually worse off. I would bet that there were plenty of good people who could have benefitted in some way from a sign, yet the good didn't get it because He was protecting the evil from themselves.

I know that among many people this isn't a popular idea because they want to know that God is punishing the evil. I get it, we all want to see justice in the world. But that just isn't God's priority for this life. Our life on this world is short, very short compared to eternity, and so God is using this time to better the eternal fate of the evil too. When you look around at the world, and you see that things are not as perfect as they could be, maybe remember this teaching... that the Lord attends to the evil as well as the good, and that there are times when the good don't get something because He's trying to prevent the evil from becoming worse off. That my friends, is really, truly, a loving God.

## Responses to "Thoughts on Abortion"

After last month's article on abortion I received a number of comments, and a common theme was people questioning the quote from DLW 401 that states that the foetus cannot move in the womb. I asked **Heulwen Ridgway** if I could publish her email as others had voiced similar concerns and question, and she kindly agreed.

Dear Todd,

1. Overall I found your article on abortion, Newsletter October 2019, both interesting and useful. However, I found the passage from *Divine Love and Wisdom 401* to be troubling. This passage states that ... "the foetus cannot move any part of its body, but lies bound, nor is it capable of any sensation, its sensory organs being closed." Every pregnant woman knows that after a certain time in the womb the foetus starts to move and quite vigorously at times.

2. As to the foetus being incapable of any sensation, I wonder about that. Pregnant mothers have claimed that if angry words are traded with or near the mother, or following a dramatic incident like a terrible shock to the mother, the foetus may stop moving for some time, even several days. Also, many years ago I read about a world famous music conductor who said that when he began to rehearse a particular piece that he had never heard before, the cello line seemed to "jump out." He spoke to his mother who was a cellist and she said that she had been practicing that piece when she was pregnant with him. All this implies that the foetus does have some sort of sensation. Then again, could it be that the foetus does not have independent sensation but is reacting to something transmitted from the mother?

It is known that in the Writings there are a small number of other statements that are incorrect. I can only remember two others:

3. The baby of a white woman and black man is always black or *vice versa*, *Divine Providence 277*. Swedenborg was an eminent scientist of his day and one might think that he would have known that this statement was incorrect.

4. Ivory comes from camels, *Apocalypse Explained 1146*. However, Swedenborg correctly states in *Apocalypse Revealed* that ivory comes from elephants. He got it right in AR which was written later than AE but whereas AR was published by him, AE was published by others after his death. So was the incorrect AE statement just a careless slip?

Many years ago my mother and I discussed these known errors and wondered if there could be some spiritual significance to these "contrary" passages. I don't think that this cause should be dismissed but think it is less than likely, considering that there are also a small number of apparent errors in the Latin wording. In these

cases the translator puts in the wording that needs to be given to make sensible reading, together with a footnote explaining the necessary departure from the Latin. All errors in the Latin seem to me to be inadvertent errors. I also think that the scientific errors are either inadvertent errors as in 4. above in AE, or lack of knowledge as in 3. above in DP. Considering the volume of work that comprises the Writings, I can understand that some inadvertent errors might have occurred and not been spotted.

Although the errors in Latin are easy to fix, I don't know how we are meant to view the scientific errors. This leaves me in a place of indecision and undecided on the question of when life begins.

Sincerely,  
Heulwen Ridgway.

Now thankfully, I have an answer for this! It comes courtesy of **Rev Kenneth Alden**, from his paper titled, "The Womb of Eternal Life." Here's what he writes:

This often-repeated statement about the foetus being unable to move or sense anything usually bears some reflection before we pass judgment on the truth it contains. Swedenborg was highly educated in anatomy and surely knew that foetuses moved in the womb. Surely he knew what happened when Mary visited Elizabeth and "the babe leaped in her womb." (Luke 1:41, 44) How could he be so out-of-touch as to not know what most pregnant women know: that foetuses regularly move about and respond to the poking or pushing of the mother's hand on her abdomen? A closer examination of what the Writings say shows that it is voluntary action and conscious sensation that foetuses lack. (cf. AC 3887:2, D. Wisd. VI) The Writings directly speak of foetal motion which is described as "pulsative" and as not existing from any life proper to the foetus. (D. Wisd. III. 5) Foetal sensation is without anything of understanding. (D. Wisd. VI) They even speak of foetal learning--a topic popular nowadays.

They say that a newborn "knows only how to suck, and that it has acquired this from continual suction in the womb." (CL 133) So when the Writings say that there is not motion or sensation, they are not contradicting our observations, but telling us the meaning of them. The meaning is that the motions and sensations of the foetus do not belong to its' life, but to the Lord, and possibly to the angels with the foetus.

I think Rev Alden's explanation is quite good, and I hope you find it satisfactory as well. I do appreciate all the comments I received, so do feel free to write in when you find something that needs further explanation or if you think I've missed the mark!

## Lovers & Haters

A couple of months ago I updated you on an advertising experiment with my YouTube channel, and with some recent changes it seems worthwhile to update you again. Just as a quick recap, before I was advertising the videos I was getting about 5 new subscribers a month, so about 1.2 a week. With the first advertising experiment that moved to 1 a day. Then I switched to advertising on “Offthellefteye,” and was given a larger budget to work with, and I was getting 2 subscribers per day. This all felt pretty good, but there were two things that were bothering me.

The first is that other channels seemed like they were getting subscribers at a much quicker rate. It’s true that I don’t know what their ad budget is, or even if they were just buying subscribers, so it may just be a case of greater financial might. But it still felt like there was room for improvement. The other thing that was bothering me was the increasingly negative feedback. When the campaign first rolled out it seemed that there were more lovers than haters, but the longer the campaign went it seemed that the videos were generating a lot more “dislikes” than “likes.”

As a result I stopped the advertising to regroup. Using a bit of software for determining the quality of various search terms, I decided to advertise solely based on a list of key words and phrases as opposed to a particular channel. I ran that campaign for a week, got no new subscribers. However, when I dug into the details of what happened, I found that there were 4 YouTube channels that my ads did very well on. Oddly, YouTube had placed the bulk of my ads on a particular channel that wasn’t performing well, and their algorithm didn’t adjust to the channels performing well. So I did it manually, and took the same ads that were used for the Offthellefteye campaign and put them on these 4 newly discovered channels.

The results have been very encouraging! Now, it’s early going, as I made these last adjustments only 3 days ago, but over the past three days I’ve been getting 6 new subscribers per day! Also there are some positive comments now to mix with the negative. Oddly it seems that the video that attracts the most negative comments is the Noah’s Ark one. People really want it to be a literal story.

However it seems that as with many things in life, the people who are negative shout the loudest, even if the numbers suggest there are plenty of people who DO like what is being presented. At this point I’m going to let the campaign continue to run as is for a little while and see what happens over a week or two and re-evaluate again, but I am really encouraged with the increase in daily subscribers.

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## Movie Night

*Chris Nielsen dies in an accident, and enters Heaven. But when he discovers that his beloved wife Annie has killed herself out of grief over the loss, he embarks on an afterlife adventure to reunite with her.*

This is a synopsis of the 1998 major motion picture 'What Dreams May Come', starring Robin Williams, Cuba Gooding Jr. and Annabella Sciorra. On **Saturday, November 23rd**, adults are cordially invited to come to a screening of this movie in the Richard Morse

Room in Baringa. Bring a plate of nibbles or bottle of beverage to share; festivities begin at 7pm.

Accompanying children of grown-ups watching this film are welcome to retreat two doors down to the manse during this time to watch "Jumanji 2 Welcome to the Jungle." (*Please note that parents are welcome to pop back and forth between the two buildings, as there will be no formal supervision of the kids.*) Bring a plate, bowl or bag of nibbles to share.

We hope you will join us. Bring a friend!

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### **Society Meetings**

We have a Society meeting coming up on 3rd November after church. There will be an AGM followed by a regular meeting in which we'll consider, in addition to all the regular things we deal with at this time of the year (like Christmas - yes it is just around the corner) a detailed quote from **Reality Escapes Landscaping** for rejuvenating the entire gardens behind the church and Baringa.

Following the working bee on Sunday 20th October in which those present were able to express their views, **Margaret** and **Owen Heldon** and **Ralph Horner** met with Reality Escapes to address the issues of edges, paths, drainage and weeds and to generate the quote. It is a relief to finally be getting somewhere on this project and if approved we might even have a makeover before Christmas, something that looks great and will be low maintenance for the future.

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### **Birthdays**

Happy Birthday to **Cliff Adamou** (2<sup>nd</sup>), **Jesse Horner** (3<sup>rd</sup>), **Brian Heldon** (8<sup>th</sup>), **Cathy Kermond** (11<sup>th</sup>), **Skye Horner** (11<sup>th</sup>), **Lori Heldon** (30<sup>th</sup>)

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