



## **The New Church Newsletter**

**Hurstville Society October 2020**

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## **Maybe You Don't Want That Thief Caught.**

By Rev Todd Beiswenger

Recently our Honda Odyssey was broken into. Well, not really “broken” into because we left it unlocked. They just opened the door. I leave cars unlocked all the time, and it isn't because I'm absent minded. It comes from years of owning convertibles. The basic logic is I'd rather them take whatever is in the car instead of knifing the soft top to get it AND take whatever is inside. Replacing a soft top is expensive, and I've got nothing of real value in the car. The thief made off with a \$5 note that was in the Odyssey. It would seem that they were so unimpressed with their haul that they didn't even bother to raid the unlocked BMW because the small pile of coins was still there.

Some have suggested that the way to combat this kind of theft is to put some small surveillance cameras on the house so we can spot the thieves. While this may be true, the camera is a lot more expensive than the \$5 that I lost. So I've decided that I'm happy to pay this “theft tax” every now and again. It just isn't a big deal.

What this brings up for me is that the proliferation of cameras is really changing how society operates. It is harder and harder to not be seen. There are fewer secrets. This isn't all bad, right? People will put a dash camera on their car so that if an accident does happen, there is clear proof as to what exactly happened. This makes sense, and probably makes the whole post accident process much cleaner and fairer. We've also seen that camera proliferation has allowed police brutality to be recorded, which enables the guilty to be held accountable. So there are some good things.

When we look at the Word, we're told that in the next life there aren't going to be any secrets. Jesus was pretty explicit about it, “there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known” (Matthew 10:26, also found in Luke and Mark). King David was aware of this, “You, God, know my folly; my guilt is not hidden from you” (Psalm 69:5). There are other places where this comes up as well, but some might argue that it's one thing for God to know all of our secrets, but it is a completely different for everybody else to know them!

It's often the case that people who don't like all the cameras are saying that the cameras are an invasion of privacy. How would it make you feel if a drone flew over your house while you were sunbathing by the pool, hanging out with your children, or just watering the plants? With the current pandemic climate that we're in, cameras mounted on drones have become a serious issue because the policing function of drones has spread to social distancing enforcement and biometric surveillance.

As you would imagine, there have been many studies over the past 10 years that have attempted to determine what people think about all of this. Not surprisingly, they don't mind so much if the cameras are watching somebody else, but generally people do not want to be watched themselves. They particularly do not like to be video-taped secretly from the

sky. And they really do not liked being targeted for their ethnicity, neighbourhood choices, or political affiliations.

I understand the concern. I don't really want to be watched either. But if you turn to the Writings, we're taught that once in the spiritual world, everything will be known by everybody around us. Interestingly, Swedenborg actually notes that he didn't like that himself and says, "I was indignant that I could not think anything that they did not know, and because this would be troublesome to me" (AC 6214).

So if you're not a fan of being fully transparent, you're in good company. He does say though "after I had been accustomed to it for a few days it became familiar to me," (ibid) so there's hope that at least you'll eventually get used to it. That's the way things seem to be going in this world too: we're going to be seen more and more, and we don't have much choice about it. Which leaves me to wonder if we should just get used to it? If we're really about "as in heaven so upon the Earth," shouldn't we be in favour of the camera invasion and the loss of secrecy?

I'm not so sure. I remember reading a near death experience story where a young man got sick, and his first part of the experience was more of what we'd call an out of body experience. He was still in this world, but part of what he noticed was that people in that realm were all exposed... there were no secrets. In his case, his vice of choice was lustful thoughts towards women, which for a man in his 20s isn't surprising. This young man stayed clear of people who were "pure" or chaste because he was embarrassed to be around them. So he left the company of good people to be around people who weren't so good.

If you read *Heaven and Hell*, this is exactly how you would expect things to unfold. Like attract like. It's part of the way the spiritual world works, and one of the reasons we're taught that it is easier to make life change in this world as opposed to the next: here we don't have to overcome the weight and embarrassment of our sins. This world is supposed to be a school, and one of the benefits of a school environment is the ability to make mistakes without having to bear the full weight of the consequences. If your business plan in school is a dud, your teacher writes you a correction and gives you a bad grade. If your business plan in real life is a dud, you've just lost yourself a lot of money, and maybe you've cost yourself and others a job. The consequences are much higher.

It is this line of thinking that makes me nervous over the proliferation of cameras, and the ensuing loss of privacy. I'm actually okay with the person whole stole the \$5 out of my car not being caught, and I'm okay with them being able to walk through town without the mark of a thief on them. What I care about is their eternal soul, that they change their ways and choose a life of heaven. My hope at this point is that by not having their secret exposed for all to see it will make it easier for them to change their ways.

## Phillip Island Camp 2021

As announced in a previous issue of the newsletter, we've booked in a camp at Phillip Island from 2-8 July 2021. We are now accepting bookings and expressions of interest on the website, [www.newchurch.net.au](http://www.newchurch.net.au). I realize that nobody knows what the travel situation is going to be next year, but at this point we're required to let Phillip Island Resort know by February 1 2021 whether or not we are going to proceed. We need a minimum of 50 in order to make the finances work.

What I am asking for is for people to express interest or book if they would like to attend, under the assumption that we can travel. As we get into 2021 I'll be closely observing Phillip Island Adventure Resort (PIAR) who will be monitoring the situation and see where things stand. I would imagine that PIAR would be more flexible with the booking requirements and such as well, so we may be able to get an extension on the point-of-no-return date, or a reduction in minimum numbers. However I need to know what the level of interest is to see if we've got something to work with. With that in mind, if you're interested, please book or express interest! Thanks

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## The Chosen

Want something to watch that isn't garbage? It can be hard to find these days as it seems that most programs subvert rather than uphold spiritual or Christian values. Recently, Kerry Lockhart brought this show to my attention. I'd never heard of it before, but it is now on my "watch" list.

Basically it is an 8-episode season that attempts to tell the story of Jesus from the eyes of those who knew him. They keep true to the stories in the Bible, but they also take some artistic license to fill in the details about the lives of those who followed Jesus. From what I've seen, they have done a nice job of trying to stay authentic to the culture and times and haven't layered 21<sup>st</sup> Century social and political issues on top of an ancient culture. They are however, trying to make the characters – the disciples, Mary Magdalene, etc. – relatable. Since we're really not given a lot about them, they do make things up, so the episodes are based on the Bible, even if they're not just from the Bible.

If being "based" on a true story isn't to your liking, then you'll probably want to give this a pass. However, on the good side of things is that the person behind this project is a dedicated Christian and believer in God, so the goal here is to deepen faith, not to turn the Bible into a special effects Hollywood blockbuster (remember the Noah movie from a few years ago?). In fact, this whole project has been crowd-funded, so Hollywood has not been able to get its fingers on it.

If you would like to see it, you can access it on [www.thechosen.tv](http://www.thechosen.tv), where they will happily accept a donation to help fund future episodes, or you can search "The Chosen Complete Episode One" on YouTube to see it for free. There is also a trailer on YouTube so you can

get a feel for it before you make any real financial or time commitment. I encourage you to check it out, and would love to hear what you think of it.

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## **Kogarah Store House Update**

It seems that the good Lord has been whispering in my wife's ear... Jenn decided to do our Kogarah Store House food drive a little earlier than normal, and a few days later I got their newsletter which included some stories such as this one, which I edited due to space:

My name is William, I am an international student and therefore a temporary visa holder. As such, I am not entitled to the COVID-19 Government assistance and so, this has been a very difficult year for me... Currently, I am not working and haven't been since February. I can barely survive from my savings and I have no family or relatives to support me here. Going back to my hometown is the last choice that comes to my mind since the number of COVID-19 cases in my hometown are growing exponentially...

I have been very lucky and grateful that I've been aided by The Kogarah Storehouse for several months now. They have been helping me with my Opal travel cards which are roughly \$10 per day to travel back and forth to receive food parcels, or if I have received a call for a job interview. But, if there is the opportunity, I prefer to wake up an hour earlier and walk within a 5km radius so I could save my Opal card but only cost my 'soles'. One way I have been able to pay my bills and continue to survive is by doing my neighbour's gardens, helping people move and walking their dogs for cash.

The reason I keep coming to The Kogarah Storehouse, even though it's almost 15km and one hour commuter time, is they are not only helping me with my basic needs but are very caring and concerned about my physical and mental health and my morale. The team always tries to spend time with me asking how I am going and often call to reach out to me. They try to keep me sane when we are in lockdown from the world by this pandemic. They continue to strengthen me by assuring me that there is always hope and we can do this together. Mostly, I feel really welcomed there. I believe The Kogarah Storehouse gives people real HOPE to keep going during these uncertain times. I am now volunteering at Storehouse, to give back as much as I can. I am so grateful for all the help I have been given. God bless The Kogarah Storehouse !

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## **October Classes on Greek Mythology**

For the last few months I've been running a series of classes that look at how the Ancient Church influenced religions around the world. We started off with Sumer and Egypt, then continued to make our way east all the way to Japan. Now it's time to get back to the centre and head west, starting with Greece.

In my opinion, one of the more interesting parts of these classes has been examining the stories and deities of these other religions, and seeing the similarities to the accounts of early Genesis. As we look to Greek mythology there should be no surprise that we will see some striking similarities, but what I hope we take out of this is that just as the people of the Ancient Church wrote their stories to reflect the spiritual development of people and humanity, the Greeks originally weren't taking their stories literally either.

In the beginning, before heaven and earth were created, there existed a primeval egg, a "rude and undigested mass," an inert weight in which "the discordant atoms of things inharmonious were heaped together:" heat and cold, land, sea and air, being mingled in wild confusion. This primordial mass of heterogeneous matters was known to Hesiod and Ovid and all the ancients under the name of "Chaos," by "Chaos" is meant the original state of man, before his regeneration. Historically it depicts the crude and almost animal condition of the first men created upon earth.

Mythology was at the heart of everyday life in Ancient Greece. However as time passed, the meaning of myths as spiritual tales about our regeneration was lost and they became regarded as a part of their history. They used myth to explain natural phenomena, cultural variations, traditional enmities, and friendships. It was a source of pride to be able to trace the descent of one's leaders from a mythological hero or a god. Few ever doubted that there was truth behind the account of the Trojan War in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. We'll explore the real truth of these myths, and hopefully learn something about ourselves along the way.

These classes are being recorded, so if you can't join us in person or on Zoom (the link is posted on the website, password "Baringa"), you can access the recordings on the Hurstville website.

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## **Birthdays**

Happy Birthday to **Stuart Heldon** (10<sup>th</sup>), **Zach Beiswenger** (10<sup>th</sup>), **Murray Heldon** (13<sup>th</sup>), **Darren Kermond** (20<sup>th</sup>), **Cameron Walsh** (20<sup>th</sup>), **Jenn Beiswenger** (27<sup>th</sup>)

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