



## **The New Church Newsletter**

### **July 2023**

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## Mirror, Mirror, on the Wall

by Rev Todd Beiswenger

We know the story of Snow White, who invokes the wrath of her stepmother, the queen, for the crime of being more beautiful than the queen. However, I'm sitting here at a local coffee shop, and I'm trying to think of a character in the Bible that would be equivalent to the queen... someone who is just really into their own physical beauty. I'm not coming up with anything. I started doing some Googling, and searching through the Writings, and still I'm not finding an equivalent.

Why am I looking for this? Well, recently I came across an article in *the Sydney Morning Herald* titled, "Barbie has evolved over 64 years, but has she changed enough?" This is one of those articles where you can easily guess how it is going to go. If you guessed that according to this author Barbie *hasn't* changed enough, you'd be right. It's not the first Barbie take-down article to be written, and it won't be the last. The charge against Barbie is that she has unrealistic proportions and therefore sets a bad example of what young girls should strive for. While it's not a hill I would die on, I get the point.

The odd thing for me, is that in my mind it was Barbie's unrealistic proportions that almost make her *more* acceptable. When I was a kid, the hot action-figure for boys (boys didn't have dolls!) was He-Man. He was a ridiculously over-muscled hero, a true caricature of a man, and at least for me, I never aspired to be like that. There was no point because it was impossible! I saw Barbie in the same light: a caricature of a woman. I mean, really, who lives in a world where everything is pink anyway?! Women, real women, just don't have proportions like that. Yes, I'm aware that there are some women who have gone to great lengths, including cosmetic surgery, to make themselves look just like Barbie. But these people are the exception, right?

Well, in a moment of seeming providence, when I was driving to the store later that day, I heard a report on the radio. It said that Australia was now number one, passing the US of A, for the most amount of money spent per capita on cosmetic surgery. It's not really a distinction to be proud of, is it? What is the most popular change? Breast augmentation. Second on the list? Liposuction. Clearly what we want as a culture are bigger boobs and a skinnier body, which I guess is a surprise to no one, even if they are two things which don't usually go together naturally.

So I thought I'd write a newsletter article showing how the Word tells us personal vanity isn't a good thing. We shouldn't value ourselves based on our appearance, right? What has confounded me is that there really aren't Biblical examples that illustrate this. If you can think of one, enlighten me! I started with looking up search terms like, "vain" and "vanity," but they're used to mean "meaningless" rather than a high opinion of one's appearance. Think of examples like "You shall not take the Lord's name in vain," or "unless the Lord builds the house, they labour in vain" and you get the idea.

I searched through the Writings as well, and had similar results. I kept coming up with things like how “conceited” we are when we think we’re so smart, i.e., pride of self-intelligence. I did find one passage in *Apocalypse Revealed* that I thought was relevant:

A natural sight may be due to a desire for glory springing from conceit, or it may be due to a desire for glory that does not spring from conceit. A sight out of a desire for glory springing from conceit is found in people caught up in a love of self and so in evils of every kind. If they do not do those evils for fear of losing their good name, and if they also condemn them as being destructive of morality and the public good, still they do not regard them as sins. (AR 940)

I think a desire to look like Barbie, or a Kardashian, is a desire for glory, i.e., fame, springing from conceit. Still, I’m not able to find Biblical examples of this excessive love of being beautiful.

Which isn’t to say there aren’t beautiful people in the Bible. Sarah, Rebekah and Rachel are all described as “beautiful,” while Moses, Saul and David are “good looking,” so perhaps the choice of Charlton Heston to play Moses was more realistic than we realized! But Moses, Saul and David are all – mostly – good characters, and don’t revel in their personal beauty. David’s son, Absalom, is in particular noted for his good looks, especially his hair. Ironically, he dies because his enemies find him with his hair all tangled in a tree, so they plunge their swords into him. But before you go saying long hair is bad, well, all you have to do is remember Samson. Long hair is good! Just be careful when riding your horse under a tree!

So I’ve been ruminating on this question: why aren’t there any clear examples of human vanity when it is clearly something we struggle with? This is my speculation, so take it with a grain of salt, but is it because there is a redemptive quality in working on our appearance? It takes discipline to get in shape. You’ve got to seek out the truth in order to create a diet that will help you lose weight. You’ve certainly got to do some self-examination, and be honest with yourself when those clothes no longer fit. Your wife didn’t shrink them! Your belt doesn’t lie. These are the same things we have to do with our regeneration, so maybe the Lord doesn’t mind us working on our appearance?

I suspect that the real reason we don’t have any explicit examples of this behaviour is that vanity is really just a subset of pride, and there are plenty of examples of that sin. Like with most things, paying attention to our appearance in moderation is fine. If we’ve let ourselves get too far off track, putting extra attention is probably in order just for the health benefits. At the end of the day, I guess I really don’t have any issue with Barbie, as long as the kids are taught that they shouldn’t aspire to look like her.

It seems simple, right? Don’t worry about your appearance. Much. But as much as all the ruckus around Barbie is about teaching good self image to *children*, I know that us adults have days where we look in the mirror and we notice that the fat and hair are in the wrong places – or missing altogether – and the hells tell us that we’re ugly and therefore nobody

could love us. When that day comes, be like David, and reach into your pouch and sling this truth at your enemy:

...the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7).

If you can do that, it doesn't matter what Barbie looks like. So the next time somebody tells you that religion is judgmental and dumb, you can tell them that your faith is actually quite practical! Why? Because it allows you play with Barbie and not feel the need to *be* Barbie!

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## **The Asian New Church Comic Book Project**

by Rev Jon Jin

In the East, people do not have a clear concept of who God is. They have different names for God, but have lost attributing love and wisdom to God. In Korea people normally say God's name as Hanulnim, the Lord of Heaven. They see God as a protector, guider, judge, giver of fortune and/or misfortune – but there is not a sense that God loves you and guides you to heaven. I would ~~like~~ to recover that sense by sharing the Heavenly Doctrines.

In Tokyo, for Reverend Shiro Matsumoto's sermon one time, he made some pages of a comic book of the Writings. The idea came from the Unification Church that made a comic book of Heaven and Hell and the Spiritual World, and it was very popular. But it was full of wrong concepts. My goal is to make a comic book or web cartoon of the Heavenly Doctrines and have it available in Asia. I also will have it available for people anywhere in the world who want it. If it is done well, then it will help people, especially simple people and gentiles, to feel that God loves them. Without a clear concept of God, we cannot make heaven in us because the Lord's Divine, or the light and heat coming from Him, makes heaven. The light and heat in the heaven are love (DLW 113).

Right now the comic book is being produced by one woman in Japan, Junkor Takahashi, and one man in China, Su Zhihao, so this is a baby step. The woman is a volunteer, and doesn't want any pay for her work, so it will take a while to finish the project. I want to make sure that it starts with good quality story telling, then turn it over to a professional to publish. If I meet the right person, that will speed things up. It is also possible some other people will want to contribute their skills, and we do have a small fund as well.

Being a missionary is a risk taking business. I don't mind failing. I keep trying new things with an attitude of "Let's try it now!" The Writings will spread in Asia through the gentiles. The close of the age and the coming of the Lord constitute the last time of the old Church and the beginning of the new (AC 4535). When the old Church is being vastated, interior truths are revealed that will be of use to the new Church which is then established (AC 3786). Concerning the establishment of the Church with the Gentiles, see AC 1366.

Another reason is because the Ancient Word was in Asia. The Writings say it was over the great wall or in Great Tartary (TCR 279). There are remains of those teachings in the East, especially in the villages where people practice love and charity to one another. Loving others, or charity, is for the human mind.

Rev John Jin is the Regional Pastor for Asia. He can be contacted at:  
[pncjin@gmail.com](mailto:pncjin@gmail.com)

This sample [following pages] of the graphic novel is being written by and for Asian people, translated for the Journal's English-speaking audience.

*Republished with permission from the April 2023 issue of the Theta Alpha Journal.*



For Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian,  
which she had born unto Abraham, mocking.



Cast out this  
bondwoman and her  
son, for the heir of this  
bondwoman will not be  
heir with my son, with  
Isaac.



There is an inner  
sense which is  
different from the  
literal sense.



From the literal sense,  
this seems to be a  
leadership struggle  
within a family.

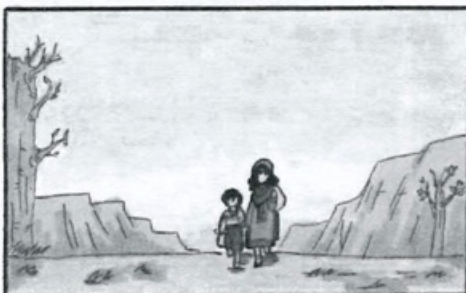
"Hagar the Egyptian"  
represents a desire for  
knowledge and also change.  
(SH 2652)



The contents of the outer, earthly  
memory are called facts. (SH 9922)



There are many kinds of facts focused  
on the external world, but not on the  
Lord and heaven.

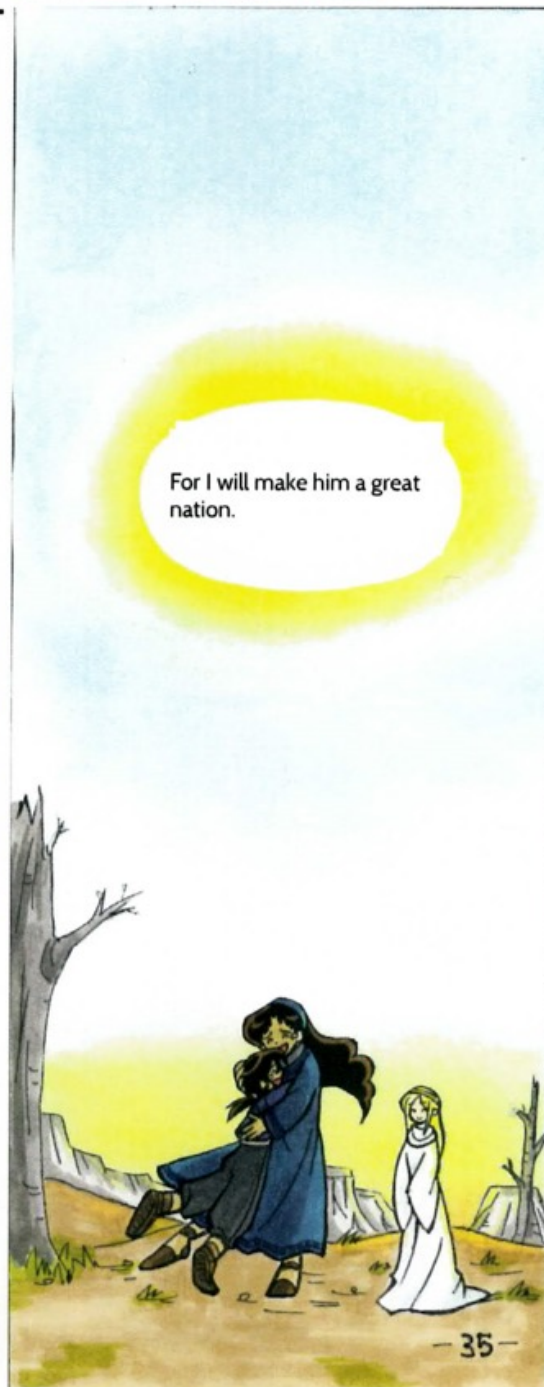


Drinks water  
heavily.











## **A Visit & Tutorial with Rev HyunJin Yang and Young Hee Jeong**

*Arriving from Korea on June 28<sup>th</sup>, Rev Yang and his wife Young Hee will be staying in Baringa for a month for the purpose of getting some more preaching experience as well as getting a tutorial on video production. HyunJin provided the following as an introduction for them:*



Born in 1987 in South Korea, I was raised by the parent with a strong Christian background. Both were dedicated Presbyterian Church members. I remember the whole family going to the church every Sunday.

As a man of Christian faith though, I struggled a lot. There were life-questions that I did not feel that the church was giving answers to. The Lord helped me through my father who found teachings of the New Church online and shared with me some essential teachings of it. I almost immediately fell in love with them.

The first time I ever attended a New Church service was in 2009. After the church service, the head-pastor, having known that I was doing English major at a university, tipped me off about Bryn Athyn College as being affiliated with the New Church. I loved to go and study there. After three years of intense preparations, I got finally admitted to the college. In 2012, I transferred to the college as a sophomore, graduating in 2015 with a bachelor's degree in psychology.

While at the college, and even after graduation, I did not find ministry as my thing or calling. I just wanted to help people. And the field of psychology was where I was going with that general affection. Around 2017, I had a very difficult time struggling with my own mental and spiritual crisis that in a way haunted me for a long time. During this period of this difficult time, I found the teachings of the New Church enlightening like stars in the darkest time. They helped me get back on my feet again. I still wanted to help people, and now I wanted to be of help by means of the teachings of the New Church.

Young Hee(my wife) and I married in May of 2018. Three months later, we flew to the States for the beginning of my M. Div. program at Bryn Athyn College. Since my graduation and ordination last year, I have been stationed back to my homeland, South Korea. My major job has been translating *Arcana Coelestia* (or *Secrets of Heaven*) into Korean. Also, I am currently developing a Korean outreach website. And I want to learn from Todd, your pastor, how to get New Church messages across to more people through YouTube or the like.

I have been married for 6 years now. Young Hee loves cooking and baking. She is the housekeeper. She is a shy person. Sometimes she can come across as reserved. Yet, it is not so much when it comes to her willingness to help me and my work. During my theological school years, she helped me work on Korean interface of New Christian Bible Study website. And now she is giving me a great deal of help on developing the Korean outreach website.

We appreciate your hosting us. We look forward to our visit there!

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### **July Class – Faith Green’s Near-Death Experience**

I came across this story a few years ago, and you may recall that I’ve tried to get Faith to show up in person and tell us her story. However, that just isn’t going to happen, so I’m going to go ahead and present her story in class, and maybe two classes.

What makes her story unique to me is the length and depth of it. So many NDEs I come across the person dies, has a quick encounter of “seeing the light” and they return. Faith has what is often categorized as a “hell-ish” NDE, which are less than 10% of all reported NDEs. So come and join us for this amazing tale of death and redemption.

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### **Spring 2023 Women's Weekend**

We're doing it again! Ladies, you're cordially invited to join other New Church-minded women across Australia and New Zealand for our spring women's weekend. We'll be gathering Sept 8-10 in Stanwell Tops, NSW and via Zoom. There will be a nice combination of fun and inspiring sessions on offer, including a guest speaker chiming in virtually from the U.S. and once again assembling birth kits for disadvantaged women in developing countries plus down-time to spend visiting with our 'sisters'. If this interests you and you haven't already signed up, please let Jenn know ASAP! ([jenn@beiswenger.net](mailto:jenn@beiswenger.net)) The deadline is August 25<sup>th</sup>.

On the subject of assembling birth kits, we need to raise \$1000 to pay for the supplies, and we've got until August 10<sup>th</sup> to do it. If you feel called to support us and this cause, a donation would be greatly appreciated. The online process is quite straightforward: simply go to

<https://www.mycase.com.au/p/315835/womens-weekend-sept-810-2023> (or [www.mycase.com.au](https://www.mycase.com.au) and search for 'women's weekend') and click on the big 'donate' button. For more information about the cause and the birth kits, visit <https://www.bkfa.org.au/>. Thank you for your consideration!

## Transition

**Bev Horner**, wife of Graham Horner passed into the spiritual world on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> June. Our condolences to Graham and families.

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## Birthdays

Happy Birthday to **James Kermond** (10<sup>th</sup>), **Babbette Horner** (14<sup>th</sup>) and **Danita Horner** (15<sup>th</sup>)

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