

The New Church Newsletter

Hurstville Society August 2002

What Is the Meaning of Life?

By Rev Erik E. Sandstrom

Perhaps we do not ask "Why am I here?" very often! Or do we? Or have you wondered, "Why did this happen to me?" Or just "Why did that happen?" Or, "Why did God let that happen?" So there are plenty of times we ask the reason for existence, the reason why we are here, or what is the point of our life.

We need answers, of course. But although the reason we ask "Why?" may be trivial at times, the answers are really very deep. The purpose of life is not just to find a better house or car, or more up to date conveniences, or to enjoy a sport activity etc. These are part of our existence, but don't answer why we are here.

We don't remember it, but the very first thought all of us had after we were born, was "inmost thought which was a perception of end" or purpose. That is the "first effect of life", even before there is "sensation and action." (DLW 2) Just think of that: before there is sensation and action, before a baby is even responding to our loving care, the baby has "inmost thought." That is why the reason for existence lies so deep in our consciousness. That is also why we always say after some particularly gruelling hardship, "Life must go on." We don't know exactly the purpose, but we know there is a purpose: a "perception of purpose". We do serve a purpose, and the Lord knows it. He gives us our purpose right up front in our lives.

Another purpose has to do with other people. "Man was not born for his own sake, but for the sake of others; that is, so that he should not live for himself alone, but for others. Otherwise no society could hold together, nor could there be any good in it." (TCR 406)

Here is another answer to the purpose of my life. In addition to "Life goes on," there is also, "You exist for the sake of other people." Isn't that wonderful, really? Other people may come to depend on us, as we depend on others. There is always a place in society for us to fill.

But what are we to do in society? We have a use to perform. Not only are we born for the sake of others, but to perform a use for others: "A person is born ... that he may perform a use to the community he is in, and to his neighbour, while he lives in the world, and in the next life may perform a use in accordance with the Lord's gracious purposes." (AC 1103.2)

Wow. The Lord has gracious purposes for us. Our use, our job or occupation which we thought we found on our own, and worked so hard to qualify for, etc., is actually according to the Lord's gracious ends. These "ends of God" are what we usually call "God's plan for us." And what is the gracious purpose of the Lord with my life? Well,

"THE END OF CREATION IS A HEAVEN FROM THE HUMAN RACE. Every person is created that he may live for ever... in a state of happiness... and that he may enter heaven." (DP 323)

Here is a major purpose, or reason to exist. Not only do we exist for others, or to perform a use, but we exist in order to become angels.

Many people are of course married, and they may look at their partner and wonder, "Now tell me a reason for this!" All reasons for living come together in a home. Not surprising, really, since in order to have a "heaven from the human race", people have to be born to begin with. The first effect of life, no matter who the baby is or how conceived, is inmost thought about the purpose of life, given directly from the Lord.

Since marriage is the Divinely ordained means for procreating offspring, it certainly contains all of the purposes of life: children born in a family receive an upbringing and education, which teaches an occupation or use. Children are instructed by parents, and this goes together with marriage. Why? Because instruction in the Word is also part of our existence: "The purpose [is]...that heaven may conjoin itself with man by means of the Word, consequently the Lord through heaven by means of the Word as a medium." (AC 10137.7)

So the highest end or purpose of existence is a "heaven from the human race" or "conjunction with the Lord by means of the Word as a medium." Just such a conjunction is by itself a purpose for existence.

Since procreation is the means of getting angels out of humans, therefore all the delights of life are given in propagating children. The higher the use, the higher is the delight. Since the "purpose of creation is a heaven from the human race", consequently there are three delights which are part of created life for us: "Conjugal love, love for infants, and the love for society, or mutual love." (AC 2039)

Creation or human existence "gives birth" to these three additional "purposes" of life: getting married, having children, and being neighbours in society caring for each other. All of these purposes combine in the use of propagation: "The delights of conjugal love ... are heightened over all other delights that exist in heaven and in the world, because the use served by conjugal love is the most excellent use of all; for it results in the propagation of the human race, and from the human race comes the angelic heaven." (CL 183 .7) "The most delightful is the sense of conjugal love, on account of its greatest use, because from this comes the propagation of the human race, and from the human race, heaven." (AC 7038.2)

So if you wonder about the meaning of life, or feel down in the dumps, or wonder why something happens to you, then select an answer from all of these reasons, and take comfort: 1. We exist for a purpose, and we know it deep down. 2. We exist for the sake of others who may depend on us. 3. We exist for a use that only we can choose to perform. 4. We exist to make society work. 5. We exist to promote religious marriage. 6. We exist for the purpose of procreating more people. 7. We exist to become angels. 8. We exist in order to be conjoined with the Lord by the Word.

After seeing these answers, all we have to do to find meaning in life is to get up and go shopping, and we are in society; say "hello" to strangers; or visit the kids; or go out and dine with your married partner; or help others in some way; or go

to work with a renewed view of the interdependency of society and your contribution. And even if we don't know about all these reasons for existing, most people can feel them or work them out anyhow.

The following article is a talk given by a young person in the Perth Circle at the June 19th Banquet in Perth Western Australia.

Direction Home

By a Perth Member

Earlier this year, we set sail across the world in a search for adventure and a cheap trip to Europe. After having been given the opportunity, we dropped everything and were gone in three days. The almost four month voyage which dotted our tracks steadily across the globe, ended suddenly one day when I flew home in a twenty four hour blaze of inspiration.

Having met our crew of six in a club in Thailand, we felt destined for the cruise of a lifetime. Embarking on the longest and most formidable trip the yacht had ever tackled, we set off in tentatively high spirits, knowing that the adventure could just as easily swing both ways, exposing us simultaneously to life threatening brushes with the unknown and enchanting lands. We risked it.

Looking back in retrospect at the journey, I am always filled with great amusement. Our amateur efforts at sailing and navigating the high seas seem ridiculous in their peril. To think we had all left the safe happy comfort of our homes to endure over exposure, extreme discomfort and months of isolation on the seas is respectfully irrational. Yet each of us for our reasons had done so. The hours we spent discussing our travels and efforts gave me insight into each of our responses to our lives back home. I concluded that we were united in a common search for the bigger things in life. Dissatisfied with routines and obligations, each of us was searching for greater meaning.

The funny thing was that the yacht demanded more routine and greater monotony from us, than anything any of us had previously had to deal with. The months at sea blurred away the intermittent weeks on land and left a greater void of meaninglessness than any of us had foreseen. After more hours of unstructured recreational time than we'd ever dealt with before, it slowly occurred to me that all I dreamt of was what I'd left, and that what I had was in fact all I wanted. I laugh at this realisation now, knowing what I went through to reach it and at my very human efforts at a search for meaning. That I should go full circle to find what means most to me filled me with a gratitude for everything that has occurred in my life and makes me wonder at the perfection of God's plans.

To think of all the years I had spent resisting and taking for granted that which I had, looking for more and being restless and greedy, highlights the fact that as humans we often have no directional compass. On our own we will scratch around, bumping repeatedly into each other and obstacles on a purely natural plane, that what we think is good for us is often short-sighted, mean and trivial and that ultimately it is all taken from out of our control by the Divine Creator. He has our lives guarded in infinite detail and allows everything to occur as it does for the good of our regeneration.

In Swedenborg's Divine Providence, it's beautifully states that,

"The Divine Providence of the Lord is universal from the most individual things because He created the universe in order that there might exist in it an infinite and eternal creation from Himself; that this creation exists that the Lord might form from men a heaven which should appear before Him as one man who should be the image and likeness of Himself".

This truth helps realign our desires and choices with the bigger picture and gives us a direction in which to navigate our lives. It is the greater meaning, which I feel very fortunate to have been given so early in my life. I realise now more than ever that God is patiently waiting for us to look outside our self-involvement to ask for the right direction home.

From the Heavenly Doctrines

The Divine Providence differs from all other leading and guidance in the fact that providence continually regards what is eternal, and continually leads to salvation, and this through various states, sometimes glad, sometimes sorrowful, which a person cannot possibly comprehend. But still they are all profitable to his eternal life. (AC 8560)

Rev Jacob Pitman Discovered in Rookwood Cemetery

At the patient persistence of Rev. Donald Rose, a former Pastor of the Hurstville Society and a New Church history buff, I (Rev Erik Sandstrom) finally arrived at Rookwood Cemetery, in Sydney near Homebush. It is by some reports the largest cemetery in the world! The purpose was to find the gravestone of Jacob Pitman, and the phonetic message written on it.

I called ahead and finally found it was located in the Anglican section, lot GG 482. When I turned up, I received the same information, plus a map. Once you drive in a graveyard, your errors accumulate pretty fast, so I was dubious enough about directions to stop and ask two workers by their pick-up truck. In pure Aussie accents they checked the map and told me I was "right mate", and keep going past this and turn right at that, and I'd be right there. As it turned out it didn't quite happen that way. When I got "there," "there" wasn't "there"! But as Providence would have it, no doubt seeing my former errors being topped by new ones, the two workers had their next assignment in my directions. They tooted at me at one particularly confusing intersection, and through lowered windows I received a hearty, "Follow us mate! We'll take you there." Before long, we had come to the end of a gravel path, and onto actual grass, right next to a highway with chain-link fence between. The grave markers had grown considerably in size as we drove back in time. It was clearly the earliest part of the cemetery. What is the irreverent humour about gravestones? The older they are, the higher they grow? The two hobbit-like workers led the way, and soon they were standing casually but professionally inspecting the strange stone.

When I hove to, they asked, "Related, are you?" I saw the stone, and it was quite legible, with a lot of phonetic writing on it. The lads were obviously well enough educated to know it was spelled all wrong! Perhaps I being lost and this funny spelling went well together in their minds. "Nah, just connected with the outfit I work for," I adlibbed. Then I explained Jacob was the brother of Isaac Pitman who invented shorthand, what secretaries used when taking letters from the boss, etc. Anyhow, they soon left me, and I thanked them as I pondered the writing, as reproduced below. I took three photos, two close up from different angles, and one standing back a bit for background and surroundings.

I then decided that I really should copy the written material exactly, since you never know how a photo will turn out. So back to the car I went. Paper I had. Now for a pen. Rats, forgot to put the pens in my vest pocket which accompany me as faithfully as the sword of a knight of yore. If I had to go back to the Anglican Office just for a pen, I suppose I could find my way back again. I checked glove compartments, the floor, door hollows, to no avail. How about the back seat? There's a pen! My pen! I must have lost it when I was picked up at the airport when we arrived a few days before

I was ready to copy out the writing. Now, where was that gravestone? I confidently walked back to where I thought it was, but a whole lot of other gravestones threw me off. It was so high, so wide, I wandered. I remembered the background in the photo, and tried stationing myself to see the same thing as my memory told me. No, not that one. And that one was blank. Here was one from 1800. Two kids who had died, months apart. Pitman had died in 1890. That I remembered. Then I thought, right GG 482. Where in heaven's name were the numbers? I looked at one grave, finally discerned faintly chiselled into the stone paving round the base, a number! 498. OK. And before long, there I was, reunited with the strange writing.

Later in the week, I sought out the peerless [History of the New Church in Australia](#), 1832-1980 by I.A. Robinson (Melbourne, 1980). There indeed both in chapter 1, and in a lengthy biographical note at the end, is a grand view of Jacob Pitman as the first minister of the New Church in Australia, and his struggles to establish the New Church in Adelaide, his ordination by the consent of 12 men, the hymn book used, the ostracism from the town, his involvement in constructing various buildings, the support and friendship with a Mr. William Holden, etc. His wife died, he later married again and ended up teaching phonetic shorthand at Sydney Technical College at the ripe age of 73.

The grave-stone inscription may have been noted previously, but it probably has not been seen by many New Church people. Mr. Robinson's book contains an OBITUERI in the same 'fonetik' language (p.179). Here is the epitaph in the same vein:

"IN MUVING MEMERI OV JACOB PITMAN, BORN NOV. 28, 1810 TROWBRIDGE ENGLAND, SETELD IN ADELAIDE 1838 DEID 12TH MARCH 1890 ARKITEKT INTRODUIST FONETIK SHORTHAND AND WOZ THE FERST MINISTER IN THEEZ KOLONIZ OV THE DOKTRINZ OV THE SEKOND OR NIU KRISTIAN CHURCH WHICH AKNOLEJEZ THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IN HIZ DEVEIN HIUMANITI AZ THE KREATER OV THE YUNIVERS THE REDEEMER AND REJENERATER OV MEN GOD OVER AUL BLESSED FOR EVER."



No Peace for the Wicked

By Norm Heldon

I was reading Isaiah chapter 48, and came to the last line - "there's no peace says the Lord, for the wicked." Immediately my mind went back to my early boyhood days, when it was a favourite saying of my mother, shortened to "There's no peace for the wicked." I've realised since that it wasn't self-reproach on her part; she didn't think of herself as wicked. It was a cry of despair; indeed there was little of peace or rest in her life at the time, left a widow with seven young children - no widow's pension then: housework, cooking, sewing, mending, getting children off to school, with one boy epileptic. Epilepsy can be treated now but then it was thought to be a mental disorder. She couldn't even find time to play the piano, which she loved.

However the thought comes now, "What is this peace that the wicked cannot have?" Certainly it doesn't mean peace in this life; some interiorly wicked might enjoy what seems to be peace. "It is believed that an evil man is in peace when he is in gladness and tranquillity because all things succeed with him. But this is not peace." (AC 8455) True peace, the peace of Heaven, is out of their reach.

"The sweetness of the angels is perceived by them from the fact that they do not think and will from themselves but from the Lord. Thence they have tranquillity and happiness." (AC 6469)

The Lord is called the Prince of Peace. Divine peace is in the Lord, from the union of the Divine Itself and the Divine Human in Him. The Divine peace in heaven is from the Lord, from His conjunction with the angels of heaven. Peace in the heavens is the Divine inmost affecting with bliss all the good there, so from which is all the joy of heaven. This joy perceived by the Lord in the angels, and by the angels from the Lord, is peace. Through it the angels have all bliss, delight and happiness or that which is called heavenly joy." (HH 286)

Innocence and peace go hand in hand. This is shown in the chapter in Heaven and Hell on innocence, and summed up by the Lord's words, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven. Truly, I say to you, whoever shall not receive the kingdom of heaven as a little child shall not enter therein."

It seems likely that "peace" and many other words must some day be redefined in Dictionaries. It may be difficult with this word, for Swedenborg, who was allowed to experience heavenly peace, reflected on how inadequate our words are to describe it. (see HH 284)

Arrival of Rev Garry Walsh and Family

Garry and **Laurel Walsh**, and children **Deanna** and **Ashley**, plus the recently born baby **Heather Ellen**, will arrive late in August. The Rev. Garry Walsh will take up the position of Pastor of the Hurstville Society. His first Sunday Service will be September 1st. A warm welcome awaits them all.

Visit of Bishop Peter and Lisa Buss

Bishop Peter M. Buss will preach in Brisbane on Sept. 1st, and he and his wife **Lisa** will be arriving later that afternoon in Sydney. On Sunday Sept. 8th you may witness the Bishop's ordination of Garry into the second degree of the Priesthood. They will be staying till the 9th.

News

Congratulations to **Ken** and **Kerry Horner** on the birth of a baby daughter, **Babette Helen** (7lb 11 oz) on July 14th. Our love to you as a family.

Congratulations to **Garry** and **Laurel Walsh** on the birth of a baby daughter, **Heather Ellen**. She was 7 lbs. 13 oz, and was born on Tuesday July 16th. We look forward to the arrival of the whole family later this month!

Tom Taylor is in good spirits despite some grave news of more medical care in the future. Erik and Lynn-Del Sandstrom joined Norm Heldon for a visit. Tom and **Shirley** are most gracious hosts, and good humour seems to be one way they are coping and giving their friendship to all who can call or visit. Our love and care are with you both as you face some tough times ahead.

Rob Hart has a good verdict from his doctor on his remaining lung, we hear. After post-operation pains, Rob is steadily improving. Our thoughts and prayers go out to Rob and Glen as they work on his full recovery!

Patricia Walsh has received her last chemo treatment, and feels relieved that is now past! Our care and thoughts to Pat and Brian as they look to a more carefree future.

It was good to see **Colin Terry** and helper **Ian**, at Church. Colin is in good spirits despite suffering from cancer. Colin's favourite passage is AC 8478: "Those who trust in the Lord." Our good wishes to you, Colin!

Greetings to **Raymond** and **Mary Smuts** and family in Perth. Mary is active reproducing articles by ministers for their local newsletter.

Erik E. Sandstrom, interim Pastor of Hurstville, and **Lynn-Del**, have enjoyed seeing all of you again! We enjoyed so much a visit to Vaucluse House with **Patricia Walsh** and **Rhonda Hall** in the lead. Many thanks for a peak day! We were generously invited by **Brian** and **Gaye Heldon** to visit the Gold Coast. There was time for a breathtaking boat ride with **Shane & Lina Heldon**, and the Tambourine mountains for lunch. A church group met at the Heldon's for a lively discussion of two sermons by Rev. Fred Schnarr and Rev. Douglas Taylor. Greetings to the Hurstville Society from **John** and **Lenore Sandow**, who, together with Roseville pillars **Kevin** and **Linda Attwater**, **Jack** and **Joanna Bensen**, and local talent Barry, are part of this group. Thank you Brian and Gaye.

Erik and **Lynn Del Sandstrom** have also found time to fulfil a long held desire to visit the **Centre of Australia** and spent 4 days there visiting Uluru, the Olgas, Kings Canyon and Alice Springs. Their verdict was "Stupendous!" They slept under the stars in swags and learnt a whole lot of bush lore from an excellent guide.

On Saturday 20th July a group of 17 people travelled to the **Blue Mountains** to enjoy a bush walk in perfect weather at Wentworth Falls. The walk chosen began in the Valley of the Waters and descended to the Wentworth Pass which led to the base of Wentworth Falls. Lunch was taken at the base of the falls after which we managed the vertical climb to the top of the Falls several hundred metres above.

Birthdays

Birthday Greetings to **Norm Heldon** (1st), **Grace Horner** (7th) **Rhonda Hall** (12th), **Rebekah Horner** (17th), **Graeme McLeay** (22nd) and **Ralph Horner** (30th)

August 2002 Calendar of Events

Note: All events are located at the church at 22 Dudley St, Penshurst 2222 (off Hillcrest Ave) unless otherwise stated. Contact the pastor **Rev Erik E Sandstrom** on (02) 9580 1589 for more information or email Erik at newchrch@tpg.com.au
All are welcome and refreshments are served after church each Sunday.

Friday	August 2nd	7.00 p.m. Tea and Class
Sunday	August 4th	10.00 a.m. Worship and Sunday School followed by Property Trust Meeting
Wednesday	August 7th	10.00 a.m. Discussion Group
Sunday	August 11th	10.00 a.m. Worship and Sunday School
Monday	August 12th	7.00 p.m. Young People
Wednesday	August 14th	10.00 a.m. Discussion Group
Friday	August 16th	7.45 p.m. Swedenborg Enquiry Centre (North Ryde) Talk by Rev Erik E Sandstrom
Sunday	August 18th	10.00 a.m. FAMILY SERVICE followed by Theta Alpha Guild Meeting
Wednesday	August 21st	10.00 a.m. Discussion Group
Friday	August 23rd	7.30 p.m. Doctrinal Class
Sunday	August 25th	10.00 a.m. Worship and Sunday School
Monday	August 26th	7.00 p.m. Young People
Wednesday	August 28th	10.00 a.m. Discussion Group
Friday	August 30th	8.00 p.m. Sons Meeting (home of Mike Lockhart)

Daily Calendar Readings

August				September			
		Joel	Arcana Coelestia			Zephaniah	Arcana Coelestia
1	Thu	2: 18-32	4188-4190	1	Sun	1: 1-9	4291-4293
2	Fri	3: 1-8	4191-4196	2	Mon	1: 10-18	4294-4295
3	Sat	3: 9-21	4197.1-3	3	Tue	2	4296-4299
		Amos		4	Wed	3	4300-4301
4	Sun	1	4197.4-9			Haggai	
5	Mon	2	4198-4205	5	Thu	1	4302
6	Tue	3	4206-4208	6	Fri	2	4303-4310
7	Wed	4	4209-4211			Zechariah	
8	Thu	5: 1-15	4212-4214	7	Sat	1	4311
9	Fri	5: 16-27	4215-4217				
10	Sat	6	4218-4222	8	Sun	2	4312-4316
				9	Mon	3	4317
11	Sun	7	4223-4225	10	Tue	4	4318-4321
12	Mon	8	4226-4228	11	Wed	5	4322-4326
13	Tue	9	4229-4231ff.	12	Thu	6	4327-4329
		Obadiah		13	Fri	7	4330-4333
14	Wed	1	4232-4235	14	Sat	8	4334
		Jonah					
15	Thu	1	4236-4237	15	Sun	9	4335ff.
16	Fri	2	4238-4241	16	Mon	10	4336-4341
17	Sat	3	4242-4245	17	Tue	11	4342-4345
				18	Wed	12	4346-4351
18	Sun	4	4246-4248	19	Thu	13	4352-4354
		Micah		20	Fri	14: 1-11	4355-4362
19	Mon	1	4249-4251	21	Sat	14: 12-21	4363-4365
20	Tue	2	4252-4255			Malachi	
21	Wed	3	4256-4262	22	Sun	1	4366-4368.1-3
22	Thu	4	4263-4266	23	Mon	2	4368.4-5, 4369-4373
23	Fri	5	4267-4271	24	Tue	3	4374-4379
24	Sat	6	4272-4277	25	Wed	4	4380-4385
						Matthew	
25	Sun	7	4278-4280	26	Thu	1	4386-4390
		Nahum		27	Fri	2	4391-4395
26	Mon	1	4281-4283	28	Sat	3	4396-4402.1-5
27	Tue	2	4284-4286.1-5				
28	Wed	3	4286.6-8	29	Sun	4	4402.6-11
		Habakkuk		30	Mon	5: 1-26	4403-4408
29	Thu	1	4287				
30	Fri	2	4288				
31	Sat	3	4289-4290				