



The New Church Newsletter

Hurstville Society June 2017

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Falling From Grace: Scandal in an ATO Family

By Rev Todd Beiswenger

Just recently a story broke in the news about corruption in the Australian Tax Office (ATO). The story centres around a young man named Adam Cranston who, along with his co-conspirators, defrauded the ATO out of millions of dollars. As I understand it, Cranston was part of a payroll company that made payments to employees and distributed tax money withheld to the ATO. They advertised as a “zero fee” payroll company, but what they did in reality was skim some of the money destined for the ATO and kept it for themselves. They used the money to provide lavish lifestyles for themselves.

Apparently this was a well thought out scheme that involved a complicated network of other companies that the money was routed, i.e. laundered, through. This is where Adam Cranston got his sister involved in the plot, as she was the point person who would direct the money through the web of other companies in order to make it disappear. At least, that was the plan.

The great irony in this is that their father, Michael Cranston, is a deputy commissioner at the ATO. He too is in some trouble with this scandal, but not for theft, but rather accessing information he wasn't privy to. However, his crime is relatively minor, and is likely a result of him trying to understand or sort out the troubles of his children. Up to that point though, he'd made quite a career for himself as being the “good guy” who goes after companies and individuals who unlawfully avoid paying their taxes. Regarded as an “old-school” tax man, Michael Cranston had an untarnished record of doing what was good and right for the ATO. Which of course is what provides the irony when his children come to be the very criminals that their father made a sterling career out of prosecuting. Crazy. Well, actually, not really.

When you think about it, these kind of fall-from-grace stories are actually quite common. The Catholic church is full of them. They're not the only ones. There are plenty of other churches, including the General Church, that have had priests who have done deplorable acts. Why is this? Well, it all starts with a good love. My guess is that Michael Cranston actually had a strong, good love as the basis for his excellent work at the ATO. Through heredity, he passed on that love to his children. However, things that we are given by heredity are not really ours until we make them our own, and we make them our own by being tested.

The teachings for the New Church tell us that we are tested when evil spirits put evil thoughts and ideas in our mind that are contrary to our loves. In fact, they especially attack the things that we love:

“Evil spirits never contend against any other things than those which a person loves, and the more intensely he loves them the more fiercely do those spirits contend... As soon as they detect even the smallest thing that a person loves or get a scent, so to speak, of what is delightful and precious to him, they attack it instantly and try to destroy it, and so the whole person, since his life consists in his loves. Nothing ever gives them greater delight

than to destroy a person; nor would they leave off but would continue even for ever, if the Lord did not drive them away. (Secrets of Heaven 1820)”

We are taught elsewhere that the hells specifically target the loves we hold dearest to us, because they know that if they can destroy that love, they can completely destroy the person. So the person who has a love of tax justice, as odd as that sounds, will be tempted to do the exact opposite. While the father in this case was seemingly able to withstand the temptations, his children were not. But this does explain why it is that priests, ministers and pastors are so susceptible to terrible things. Because they do have a very high love of the Lord, which would be a love of innocence, they would be tempted by the hells to destroy that innocence. Those who fail in this temptation could be the ones who end up as paedophiles, child pornographers and such. Not a pretty picture.

But it is consistent with what we are taught in the Scriptures. In the beginning we have the story of Adam & Eve in the Garden of Eden. Everything was great. The garden was great, the people were great. The New Church sees that this story represents an ancient people, not just two people, and these people are described as having perception from the Lord continually, and when anything false was presented they felt not only aversion, but also horror (AC 125). These could be called the “best” people ever. They were innocent, and spirituality was just part of who they were. Eventually they had their fall from grace too. They fell by wanting to probe into the mysteries of faith through sensory evidence and factual knowledge.

The once good and pure people became their exact opposite, “who, persuaded of their own prominence and superiority, treated everything holy and true as being worthless (AC 581).” They became known as the Nephilim, Rephaim, and Anakim (Star Wars fans will undoubtedly note the similarity of “Anakim” and “Anakin”... another fallen hero). What happened to them? Well, they ended up in the worst hell.

“The worst hell, [is] where those are who were called Nephilim, and who are called, by David, Rephaim. It is the worst, because they were exceedingly in self-persuasion, and the persuasion that there is no Divine except it be in themselves. They lie there in an exceedingly dense cloud (SE 4933).” Quite the contrast to the other earliest people of whom we are told are in the highest heaven!

I believe it is because of this nature of things, that when we look at the correspondences in Scriptures we are told that things have a correspondence AND their opposite. For example, water corresponds to truth, but it also corresponds to falsity. We can tell which it corresponds to based on the context.

My point in all of this though is that we should not be surprised when we hear about stories of fallen heroes. Or even when the children of our heroes fall. Last month's article about Bill Cosby can be taken in the same way. Here was a man who must have had some real love of marriage and family values, but during the course of his life he became his own opposite as well. At this point, the Cranston children are going to have to do a lot of soul searching to figure out where things went wrong. I know I have my theory: because

of the strength of the good love they had passed on to them, they were under a consistent assault from the forces of evil. Unfortunately, the hells won that battle. The question is, will the children use this experience to strengthen them, or will they further commit themselves to being the kind of villains that their father liked to prosecute?

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Society Meeting: Sunday June 4th

Come to hear what's going on at Hurstville New Church and share your thoughts as well. One item is a quick discussion about what the congregation wants regarding **church services during my absence**. I'll be gone for 4 Sundays, (see page 6) so we can do lay services for all of those services, or we can choose to take one or more of those Sundays off.

I also plan to bring up the idea of how we could **advertise our church on Facebook, and possibly YouTube as well**. We need to figure out a good way to reach more people! While this isn't exactly a new idea, it is one that needs our constant attention. Come along and hear my ideas, and of course feel free to propose your own. The Lord has given this congregation a lot, and so in light of the blessings we have received we have to be mindful of how useful we have been with them. Let us not bury our talents in the ground, but instead use them so they will grow even further.

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Movie Night! – Friday 2nd June

Everything is better with ice cream, so we'll do another movie & ice cream night at this early New Church Day 'birthday bash'! Ice cream at 6:15pm, movie "Up!" at 6:30pm. It's a fun movie, but also teaches a few lessons like: acting good in small ways can bring bigger rewards than expected, the joy that marriage can bring, and how help can come from unexpected places. Flyers will be available for distribution - and please 'share' the event on Facebook, if you can!

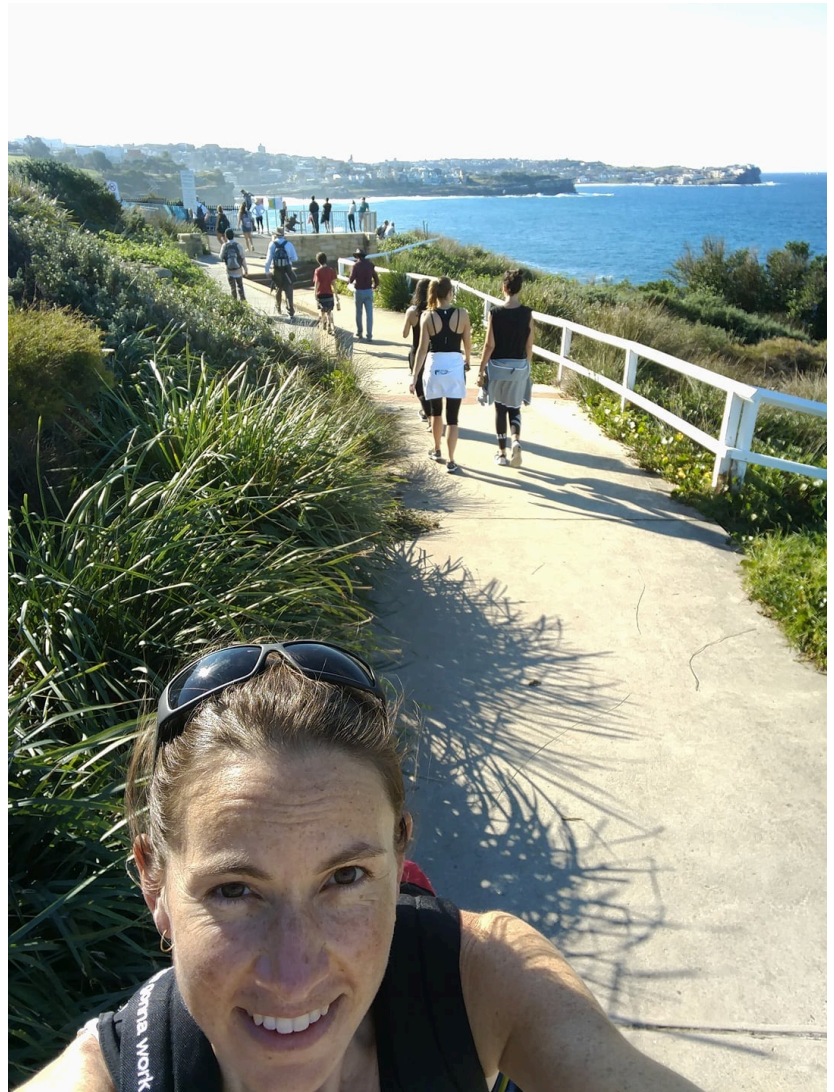
RSVP by Thurs June 1 to Jenn (jenn@beiswenger.net, 0411 719 754) to make sure we have enough ice cream to go around. :)

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Coogee to Bondi Walk Recap

Despite uncertain predictions from the weather forecasters, we woke up on Sunday morning to a beautiful day for a coastal walk. There were twelve of us that went out to Coogee and walked along the trail to Bondi Beach. It was fantastic. The sights really were something special, and for many of us it was an opportunity to revisit some fond memories of things that happened at these beaches in the years gone by. But for all of us it was an chance to make some good, new memories, on a beautiful Sunday afternoon.

The two boys, Zach and Matthew, survived the “boring” 6km walk as well, despite not having a single electronic device between them. While they seemed to be concerned that they would die from electronic deprivation, they eventually adapted to their “new” environment and did as children from days gone by would have done and created little games and amusements for themselves along the way. In the end they got some ice cream too, which they enjoyed, but were unwilling to admit it was worth the cost of having to do a 2 hour walk for this final enjoyment. Somehow they failed to realize that they actually did have a good time along the way. Such is life for a child, but it makes me wonder how often we as adults do this too: complain about a life that we actually enjoy.



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New Church Day Celebrations: Sunday June 18th

Join us for a worship service about the 'birth' of the New Church, followed by a friendly **potluck lunch** (please bring some food to share), gifts for the kids and the ever-popular great red seven-headed dragon piñata! *(Please notify Jenn (jenn@beiswenger.net, 0411 719 754) ASAP if you know that a visiting child will be attending.)*

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Clergy Meetings and Beiswengers On Holiday

Annual clergy meetings are happening this year in Bryn Athyn starting June 20th and running through the 23rd. It'll be four days packed with doctrinal discussion, sharing of ideas, and just some plain old socializing amongst colleagues. Unlike some years, these meetings don't have a singular purpose, e.g. no bishop selection process, or women in the priesthood, so there will be freedom for ministers to present their ideas without being over-run by a theme.

Here's a quick run-down of just three of the papers that will be presented and discussed:

“Testimony: Speaking From Life” Many are struggling to get what they need out of going to church. They need evidence of God's power in the lives of people. That evidence is called in the Word “Testimony”, and this in simple terms means confession from the heart that the Lord is real and powerful enough to conquer our sin.

“Report on Liturgy Usage in the General Church” It's been 22 years since our last printing of the liturgy. Do we need another printing? An update? Or do we even need a liturgy at all anymore? Many congregations have moved away from using it. Here's the results of a recent survey of pastors as to how they are or are not using the liturgy.

“A Taxonomy of Doctrine” Could we and should we categorize, prioritize and grade various doctrinal positions? We know that some teachings are very clear, yet other beliefs within the General Church are beliefs that are derived from the foundational principles and not bluntly taught. Therefore, should we organize our beliefs in a system so we can all view them in a way that lends priority to the important, fundamental teachings and lets us dial down the discussion on the items on the fringe?

Several other papers will be presented as well, but this gives you some idea about the breadth of discussion that will be happening.

After the meetings, we're going to stay for 5 days in Bryn Athyn to visit with family, in particular Todd's 97 year old grandmother. Then we'll head to Toronto for a week to visit the Jorgenson side of the family, and then head back home via Munich Germany and Hong Kong, stopping for 3 days in each location for a little fun time on our own. All said we'll be gone from June 19-July 18!

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A new New Church in Brisbane

I don't recall the exact timing, but it seems like it was about a year or two ago that the Brisbane congregation sold their church. Since then they've been looking around and trying to find a new home that would suit their current and future needs. Part of the problem has been just where to locate since the members of the congregation are fairly spread out. Apparently they have found a location that suits their needs.

It is technically in a commercial area, but there is residential living not far from them. In addition it is right across from a railway station, a nice public park, and a hospital. My understanding is that this property used to be used for offices, so while you won't find stained glass windows or a pipe organ in this church, the pictures I've seen show a warm and contemporary facility that should have an easy time of attracting the curious inquirers. I even spied a ping pong table in one picture, which clearly is an indication that they've got their eyes on the annual ping pong tournament. Since they're hosting the camp, they're going to try to do their best to take the trophy up north.

With this new facility there is also an invitation to join them for their grand opening service to be held on June 18th, for their New Church Day service during which there will be a dedication of the building and a message given by NCIA president David Moffat.

After the service there will be a lunch, and some social time. Feel free to join in and bring any friends to enjoy this special day.



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Birth Announcement and June Birthdays

Welcome to **Aneira Wren Robson**, born 14th April to Michelle and Dylan, a new granddaughter for **Owen and Margaret Heldon**.

Happy Birthday to **Angela Heldon** and **Michelle Heldon** (8th), **June Kirsten** (9th), **Izaak Horner** (17th)

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