

Candela



Newsletter of the Swedenborg Association of Australia Inc.

Organisational Details are provided on the next page

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

DECEMBER 2023

ISSUE 114

Here's our December-so-Christmas issue of the Candela. Enjoy what's inside it.

It's also the period we call Advent, starting December 1st through 24th, followed by Christmas Day and the birth celebration. Advent means 'to come to' which includes coming to each of us as well as God entering the physical world. Advent is a preparing time, a getting-ready time, but not only the shopping and planning but our spiritual receptiveness.

Swedenborg makes a very big deal of our need to do things before God can start doing things. This is Advent. We need to recognise our need, look honestly at our recent states, notice our reactions, how we behave, and bring on in us a wish to take

Next Issue – March 2024

I hope our magazine will inspire you this Christmas. Our next edition will be in March. Please send any articles to me by February 18th.

Email to ruth@duckworth.me or post to the registered office.

Ruth



up new ways of being in our relationship with God who will birth in us when we do respond with that wish.

Along with others, I have been working on using quotes in Swedenborg for people in today's world and culture. Really enjoyable and stimulating work. The first set have been about our need to turn away from our wrongs, **Continued on page 2**

MAIN CONTENT

President's Message	Julian Duckworth	1
A Christmas Message	Howard A Thompson	3
Reflections on Mormonism and Swedenborg's influence	Wayne Kasmar	5
Bricks	Julian Duckworth	8
Pondering these things....	Lori S Odhner	10
Remembrance: A Christmas View	Dr Philip Groves	11

Please note: the views expressed in this Newsletter are those of each contributor and do not necessarily reflect any particular position of the S.A.A. or its committee.



**SWEDENBORG ASSOCIATION
of Australia Inc**

ARBN 109 811 985

Registered Office:

Swedenborg Centre

4 Shirley Road, Roseville NSW 2069

Tel: 02 9416 2812

Email: saa@swedenborg.com.au

Website: www.swedenborg.com.au

National Committee Members:

Julian Duckworth (President)

Wayne Kasmar (Secretary)

Michael Chester (Treasurer)

Caroline Neave

Debra Thompson

Howard Thompson

Ruth Duckworth (Candela)

Joe Vandermeer (Public Officer)

Membership of the Swedenborg Association of Australia Inc. is open to anyone who wishes to pursue an interest in Swedenborg, the man, his science and his spiritual teachings.

For details on how to join, call (02) 9416 2812 or browse <https://swedenborg.com.au/contact/>

* * continued from page 1 * *

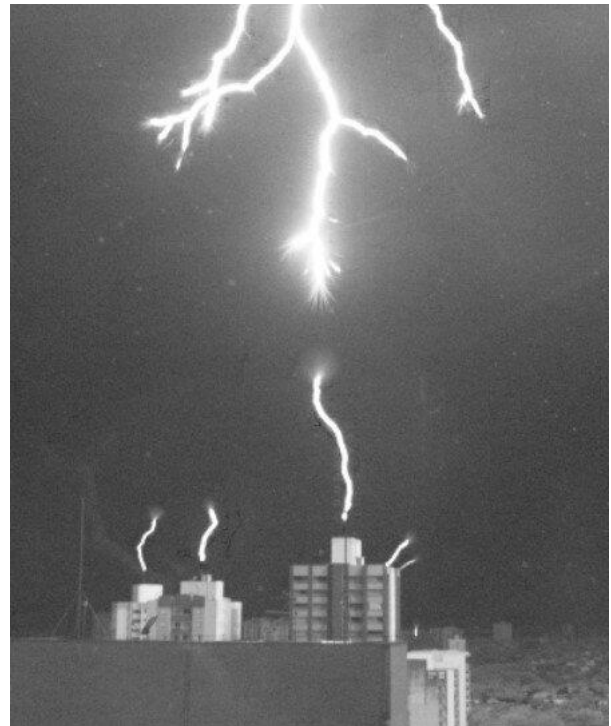
or as Swedenborg puts it, to shun (what a powerful word!) shun evils as sins. We don't turn away or shun because what we've been doing is morally wrong - although that's part of the need - but because if we don't...if we just carry on the same, we simply cannot receive the light and love of God. Oh yes, God still loves us, but we can't be aware of it.

Fascinatingly, to get the point across, Swedenborg picks on pretty obvious examples from everyday life. Things like ploughing a field before you plant it, shutting the gate on an angry bull. We could add getting a suit before a job interview and checking there's enough milk for the family's breakfast. You get the point. But *do* get the spiritual point of preparing ourselves. This is, after all, why Swedenborg gives his common-sense examples...!

I'm feeling the need also to say that while Advent signals our need to do this -

to prepare ourselves for the coming of God - and yes, Lent does it too before Easter but slightly differently - we simply should be doing this check-check-check all the time on a regular basis. Not all the time or we'll be too self-preoccupied, but (and here's my Advent Calendar for you) ... about twice a week. If you'll do that, I'll make sure I do it too.

I want to share an astounding graphic image for nature with you which has only become known-about since the advent of ultra-ultra-slow camera footage. It shows a lightning strike coming down to release its energy into the ground. But look at the up-strike from the top of the building which flashes upwards to join the descending energy. I've only a still shot, but a video will show it up-surges micro-seconds before the down bolt reaches the earth.



What a discovery! What a natural illustration of so many spiritual realities! What an Advent!

Have a lovely Christmas,

Julian



A Christmas Message

...and they will call him Immanuel, which means 'God is with us' (Matthew 1:23)

by Howard Thompson

Looking around today, at the state of our modern western society, I cannot help but feel that there is a cancer growing among us. That cancer is selfishness; characterised by materialism, mistrust, and transactionalism. From our own households, to civic duty to our approaches to faith, altruism and selflessness have been replaced by 'what's in it for me.' This shift has led to a culture where personal gain often trumps communal welfare, where relationships are viewed through the lens of personal benefit, and where even acts of kindness are sometimes tainted by underlying self-interest. The result is a fraying of the social fabric that once bound communities together; a decline in the quality of our interpersonal connections, and a growing sense of disconnection and isolation. With Christmas upon us, I cannot help but long for each of us to truly feel in our hearts that sense that "God is with us" that God is with you!



It is interesting to note that for all his writing on the subject of the Lord's life, the nature of God and the coming

of a New Christianity, Swedenborg says very little about Christmas. Christmas, that is, as most people experience it today with Herculean efforts going into decorations, trimming the tree, shopping for just the right gift for each person on our lists and cooking for days before the big day to set just the right table. Of course, in the face of the "lengths" to which people prepare for Christmas, from Scrooge to The Grinch many "prophets" have observed:

It came without ribbons, it came without tags. It came without packages, boxes, or bags...Maybe Christmas (he thought) doesn't come from a store. Maybe Christmas perhaps means a little bit more.
The Grinch

While Swedenborg never writes of cultural Christmas traditions, how his own family



celebrated Christmas, or even a favourite memory of a special childhood Christmas, all that he wrote was about the reality that "God is with us."

From Swedenborg's view Christmas isn't just a historical event; it's a symbol of the Lord's presence in our lives, marking a shift from childhood and youth into a phase of spiritual maturity and responsibility. It's a time when we start embracing spiritual principles and taking personal responsibility for our regeneration.

The Lord is present with each and every human being. He exerts insistent pressure on us to receive him. When we do receive him, which occurs when we acknowledge him as our own God, Creator, Redeemer and Saviour, his First Coming occurs [in us], which is the twilight before dawn. From then on, we begin to be enlightened intellectually in spiritual matters and to grow into deeper and deeper wisdom. True Christianity 766

Thinking of my opening paragraphs and my sense of the state of our world, perhaps we can find solace in the knowledge that now is not the first time our world has seemed dark. Let's consider the state of the world at the time of the Lord's birth, which mirrors our own mental state as we prepare to embrace adulthood's



responsibilities. Back then, the world was under Roman rule, a time characterised by materialism and self-interest. Herod, not a Jew but an Arab, ruled Judea and Palestine, symbolising the loss of spiritual focus. Despite rebuilding a magnificent temple, Herod couldn't win the hearts of the Jews. This period, marked by spiritual decline, sets the stage for the Lord's arrival.

Nevertheless, that time of darkness and despair will not go on forever. The land of Zebulun and Naphtali will be humbled, but there will be a time in the future when Galilee of the Gentiles, which lies along the road that runs between the Jordan and the sea, will be filled with glory.

The people who walk in darkness will see a great light.

For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine.

(Isaiah 9:1,2)

The Lord's birth during this spiritually dark time was intentional, aiming to uplift people from their lowest spiritual state. Prophets like Isaiah and Joel foretold this era of darkness, but also the coming of divine light. John described the Lord as "the light shining in darkness," highlighting His role in dispelling spiritual darkness.

Our readiness to welcome the Lord into our hearts is similar. We must acknowledge our spiritual needs, which opens the way for Him to enlighten our lives. However, not every part of our mind might accept Him immediately. The Lord is welcomed in our 'Bethlehem' - the pure and genuine parts of our minds, represented by Mary and Joseph. Mary symbolises our love for truth, and Joseph represents our understanding of it. Their roles in nurturing the Lord within us echo how we internalise divine truth in our lives.

The Lord's birth in Bethlehem, "the house of bread," signifies His role as the spiritual nourishment for our souls. The simple circumstances of His birth, in a stable among animals, reflect the

purity and humility needed to receive Him in our lives.

An innocent sense of self is the awareness, acknowledgment, and belief that our insistence on self-direction is totally black, whether it is self-direction of our will (evil) or of our intellect (falsity). When we confess and believe this from the heart, the Lord flows in with goodness and truth and instils in us a heavenly autonomy, which is a bright, shining white. We cannot possess true humility until we acknowledge and believe this at heart, because that is when we become self-effacing, self-averse, and in the process, self-forgetful. So that is when we have a welcoming attitude toward the Lord in his divinity. (Secrets of Heaven 3994)



In today's world, filled with ambition and materialistic goals, it's even more challenging to find a place for the Lord. Modern interpretations of religion often diminish the spiritual truths of Christianity. But as it was on the first Christmas, the Lord finds a way to reach us, even in times of darkness. Through the teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg, we gain new insights,



allowing us to see and internalise the truth.

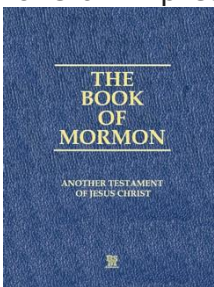
So, as we celebrate Christmas, let's remember that the Lord's presence is quietly working within us, just as it did on that first Christmas. The Word becomes a living part of us, making Him our Immanuel - God with us.



Reflections on Mormonism (and Swedenborg's influence on it)

By Wayne Kasmar

Anyone interested in the influence that Swedenborg and his writings have had on significant cultural movements in the world may be interested in a recent video on YouTube that raises the question whether his writings have any connection to the concept of heaven that is held by the Mormon religion. While in this video the question is left unanswered, the overall impression one is deliberately left



with is that the founder of Mormonism, Joseph Smith, basically stole the idea from Swedenborg, being one of many ideas he stole from others.

This YouTube channel, 'Mormon Stories Podcast', is by ex-Mormons - people who are so unhappy about the religion they were formerly part of that they now want to warn the world all about it, and offer support to others who have left it or are thinking of leaving it. And this is not the only YouTube channel doing it. There are many of them.

Watching these channels leaves you with an overwhelming impression that there is something seriously wrong with Mormonism, or the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, as it is officially called. According to its critics it has two basic problems. Firstly, the ideas the religion is based on do not have a divine origin, as claimed, but were put together by Smith in a concoction that today can be easily be seen to be a fraud. Secondly, the religion controls people in an unhealthy way that is often said to be cult-like, and that it actually ruins people's lives.

It might surprise you to hear that Mormonism has this dark side. The image it tends to have is one of



brightness and positivity. One thinks of it being made up of moral clean-cut people who seem to have a firm grasp on how to be happy. Older people may even think back to the Osmonds, the famous Mormon family of entertainers, who seemed to embody all those good, wholesome, positive qualities.



I can't help contrasting them to the Jacksons, that other iconic entertainment family of the 70's, who happened to be Jehovah Witnesses. There are probably just as many ex-Jehovah Witness YouTube channels as there are ex-Mormon ones, if not more, and they tell the same baleful stories. But I don't think the Jehovah Witness philosophy has as a decidedly bright and positive outlook as does the Mormon one. I can't say that the disturbed behaviour of Michael Jackson is the result of the experiences he had with the Jehovah Witness religion, but the sharp contrast he has with his well-adjusted Osmond counterpart, Donny Osmond, has undoubtedly got something to do with the latter's unquestioned commitment to his wholesome religion.

Yet ex-Mormons will tell you that the brightness and positivity on display is for show. Indeed, Mormons are often accused of putting on fake smiles. That



is understandable if they are actually REQUIRED to be happy. Ex-Mormons state that believers are told that the only way that anyone can be truly happy is to be a member of the Mormon church. All other seemingly happy people are faking it or they are deluded.

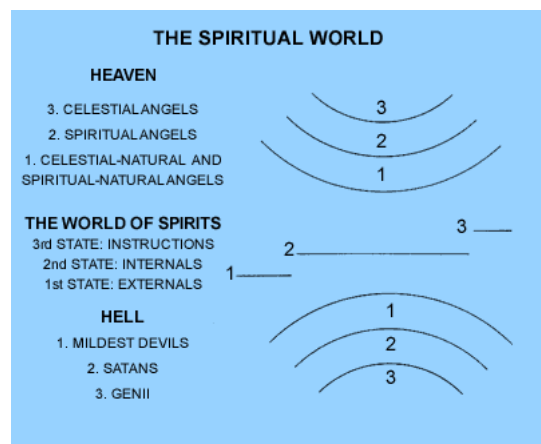
And if you are a Mormon and you are not happy, then you must be failing in obedience to what the church requires of you. You effectively mark yourself as a sinner if you are not constantly happy. So, the positive happy side of Mormonism may be just a superficial reality.

But I personally wonder how much of the positivity that Joseph Smith was able to introduce into his religion, even if superficially, was inspired by what he found in Swedenborg's writings (which we know he was definitely aware of). The brightness and positivity in Swedenborg's theology is based on not only its unparalleled rationality, but the description he gives of God's wonderful nature. In his writings the conventional image of the Judeo-Christian God as spiteful, angry and vengeful is banished. God is completely rational. He is all-loving, all-merciful and entirely reasonable. He seeks to punish no-one. Swedenborg gives us something here that is so much more positive than what the Western world was familiar with.



It is easy to believe that if Smith was a conniving schemer he could have picked up on this new and different understanding and used it in his own religion, thereby making it much more attractive to people than what they had generally been used to.

So, not only do we have Smith perhaps appropriating Swedenborg's idea of the existence of three separate heavens, there is a possibility that he adopted the overall positivity and beauty he found in Swedenborg's philosophy to his advantage. But I suspect that if Smith did concoct his religion in order to basically scam people, he actually even used Swedenborg's overall system of thought as a general model for creating Mormonism.



This idea started to develop some years ago when I was approached by Mormon missionaries who I subsequently met up with on quite a few occasions. I even went to their church when invited. Eventually they realised they were not going to convert me, that my interest was in their ability to approach people to discuss their beliefs - something a Swedenborgian can envy, and in the end, I was left with a Book of Mormon and some introductory pamphlets.

When I look at the outlines of the important Mormon beliefs that feature in those pamphlets, I would say that two thirds of them look similar to the things you find in Swedenborg's writings, albeit often with modifications. If Smith was, as his critics assert, a conman, would it have been possible for him to come up with anything nearly as successful as a religion as he did without incorporating so much of quality from Swedenborg's writings? Personally, I very much doubt it.

Surprisingly, when the 'Mormon Stories Podcast' YouTube video I previously



mentioned discusses Swedenborg (starting at the 1:4:15 mark for those interested) there is mention that the Mormon church actually acknowledges that there are many similarities between Mormonism and Swedenborgianism. It however explains away the similarities by allowing that Swedenborg must have been capable of a similar quality of vision in which he saw God and angels as did Joseph Smith.

It is curious that the panel of ex-Mormons in the video did not pick up on this high level of correlation allowed by the church. They focused on Swedenborg's concept of the existence of three heavens and his ideas of the afterlife and altogether failed to see a bigger picture. If they had seen it I think they could have made their overall case that Smith stole from others a great deal stronger.

Still, I'm not sure if we would have done Swedenborg any favours in pointing out a bigger contribution that he may have made to the designs of a charlatan. Human psychology seems to work according to associations. To a bitter ex-Mormon, if Swedenborg contributed anything to the perceived lies of Smith, the ex-Mormon is likely to view our man quite negatively. It's neither rational nor fair, but when there is an emotional element to an issue, as there very much is in this case, people tend to view things in this distorted way.

And this raises a question. How fair and objective are the anti-Mormon YouTube channels? As you would expect there are plenty of pro-Mormon channels. And they don't necessarily always just spout the standard church line. They can sometimes be quite thoughtful and reasoned. But the existence of the internet is making it very challenging for Mormonism. To see what appears for all the world to be damning evidence showing the church to be a giant con, a believer just has to get online.

The church has traditionally told its people not to look at anti-Mormon material, that it is the Devil speaking. Not

surprisingly believers have been looking in greater and greater numbers. Typically, they find themselves surprised that they then start questioning their personal beliefs. Mormons aren't used to thinking all that rationally when it comes to spiritual matters it seems.

For a religion that is used to being so certain and confident in its teachings and beliefs it is beginning to look very worrying. It will be fascinating to see how it all ultimately ends for it.



Welcome

Welcome to our newest member from Sydney, Silvia Viaggio. We hope you enjoy all that the S.A.A. has to offer.



It's really nice to be loved. Can you remember when your Dad tousled your hair, or your Mom read you a story while you curled up next to her? Or when your sweet daughter smiled at you? We love that inbound love. It's such a good feeling.

And... we need outbound love, too. You've heard the old adage, "It's better to give than to receive". It's a great feeling to be able to love someone else, and to try to make them happy. What are the roots of that need? Is it coming from a spiritual origin?

Does the Lord "do" outbound love? Here are some Bible quotes about this.

"Surely goodness and lovingkindness shall follow me all the days of my life; And I shall dwell in the house of Jehovah for ever."(**Psalm 23:6**)

"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"(**Matthew 7:11**)

So, knitting this together, here's what we get:

- 1) God is full of love. In a sense, He IS love.
- 2) He loves others outside of Himself (outbound love), wanting to be conjoined with them, and to help them be happy.
- 3) And we're made in His image and likeness. Small wonder that outbound love is so important to us.



BRICKS

By Julian Duckworth

Bricks are about the most obviously man-made things that you will ever come across. They are 3D geometrical rectangles with six sides (more on that in a moment), eight corners, and twelve edges. Intensely boring in a way. They're mostly made of clay which, please note, is not man-made but globally natural. Clay is associated with rivers, where minute silt deposits, carried downstream, sink and become sediment over millennia, bringing about malleable clay which can be shaped, dried, burned ... and there's a brick. Just notice the involvement of earth and water, two elements with a spiritual correspondence, of life and of truth. Both together can turn us into a spiritual "brick"!

St Thomas Port Macquarie



Where we now live there is a historic church on a hill in the centre of town. Lachlan Macquarie, governor of New South Wales, commanded the building of a church centrally and on that hill. I happen to play the organ several times a month (the third oldest organ in the southern hemisphere!) and on Thursday mornings, people, often tourists, come and get a tour round this convict-built and brick-built church. Many bricks have marks on them like < and > and ^ or a hole or a number, and this was intentional to show brick numbers, starts and endings, and an overall composition that was going to stand and last, as this Port Macquarie Anglican Church certainly has. 2024 will be its celebration of two hundred years of continual worship.



Back to the brick. The Bible has about five references to bricks, the most famous one being the making of bricks with clay and straw by the Israelites in slavery in Egypt, that powerful rich civilisation but often cruel, and certainly to those Jews, for they were told to gather their own straw and *still* come up with the same daily total. And they cried out to God.

So, in several ways - the manmade shape and the basic clayness being two - bricks carry the spiritual idea of self-life and self-centred life, but also functional life and responsible daily-doing life. We build ourselves brick by brick which is pretty good, but we can build brick walls or even our own Tower of Babel reaching our self-estimation up to almost heaven.

This brick-almost-Lego way of things stands in sharp contrast to the other natural building material - stone, hewn or even better unhewn. The Bible makes this contrast between brick and stone and between hewn and unhewn stone, to get across to us our need to build our lives on God and not on ourselves. We do not 'make' stone, but we do use it.

I was once one of four primary school teachers who took forty school children to North Wales and we climbed Snowdon and so on, but one day we went down a slate-mine. A worker got us all together and took a large slab of green



Welsh slate and softly tapped it with a mallet on a chisel. Wow! The whole slab fell perfectly into two equal halves, and he repeated this action on one half again and again and again - the kids were wide-eyed - until he had slate for roofing. Brick does not do this! Slate is the gift of divine creation.



So then, is brick good or not good, understood spiritually and personally? It's really good when we get a true idea or helpful thought and say that we can and now must implement (notice the word...) this in our life in a useful and meaningful way. That's great and very much a God-centred goal.

But if we (brick by brick) start over-seeing it is me doing this and look at how good it is and how good I am, then obviously it's not good any longer, but sad, rather tragic, and like those Jews, we are enslaved to something else which is not of God. We should cry out then, to God, pleading some way out of being like this.

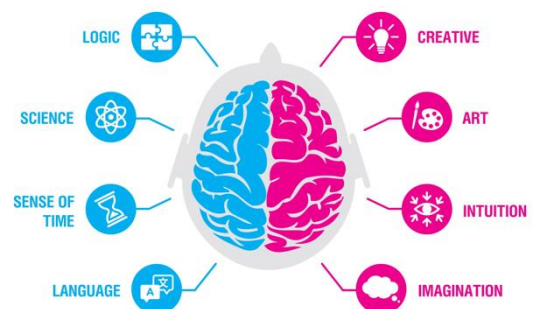
Now - as I mentioned much earlier - let's make use of the fact that your average brick has six faces. This gives us a great opportunity to see ourselves in a pretty special and helpful way.

Either take a brick or just think about one. Position it so that the smaller faces are at the far and near ends. Okay, we are going to work in pairs and think spiritually and think personally about ourselves. See yourself as this brick.

First, look at the far end face pointing ahead and the near end face pointing behind. Immediately this tells us something very basic and important about ourselves. We have lived and moved on from quite a lot of living and we have still to live and move towards a certain amount of living in this world and a whole eternity in spirit. Each moment, this position changes, but each moment we are in where we are at.

Thinking about this 'future' and 'past' situation can also bring us to think about our long-term personal goals and spiritual process and progress. See if you can give expression to these and put them into your own words. Conversely, this back face near us helps us to think about things we have left and aspects of ourselves that we would love to be released from, without, or which we can turn away from or shun.

Okay. Now look at the two sides. Left and right. Let's link these with our thinking and feeling, or if you like with left brain and right brain. Just be aware of these two faculties in us which ideally should work closely together. Think whether there are for you any other meanings in these two sides.



Finally, obviously, there is the top and the bottom, which can easily be seen as the direction towards and from God, and the direction towards and in the business of living and being who and what we are. The base. Here and now in this moment. Solid ground. Personally, I would avoid thinking of the brick base as the hell opposite to God.

Enjoy thinking of yourself positively in being a real brick.



Pondering these things...

By Lori S. Odhner

"But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart." ([Luke 2:19](#))

What does it feel like to ponder? Mary had given birth to the Light of the World. Did she have any idea what that entailed?

She wanted to. Mary was innocent enough to walk a path with no trail to follow.

Women have a penchant for words. They want to speak them, they long to hear them. But sometimes even words are unworthy containers for what must be known.

The paradox is that here I am, expecting words to convey to you an experience of pondering. It cannot be done. But if that same experience is shining wordlessly inside of you too, then the wires connect and we all light up.

Pondering happens when we lay down our assumptions. We are rendered vulnerable, because the terrain is new.

Once I was pondering about how to bridge the cavern between What I was Given and What I had Hoped For. I talked less, because words were not my stepping stones. Sometimes I just stared vacantly, chin in my palm. I suppose my family whispered about it. But pondering usurps energy, and shuts down my mouth just like digesting lunch shuts down my strength to swim, reprimanding me with a cramp in the side.

There are no Cliff Notes for pondering. You have to let it set awhile, like bread rising.

On the other side of pondering is a resting place. There are no celebrations, or ribbons to run through. You know you are there because the floorboards are beneath your feet again, not like when you sat on your



grandmother's couch and your legs dangled in the air.

Mary found the new terrain to be marvellous, but that did not also provide protection from pain.

"And Joseph and His mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of Him. Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, 'Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.'" ([Luke 2:35](#))

In the aftermath of pondering, hearts are revealed. That aperture is an invitation to see brightly what had been in darkness. Life breaks us open too, and it hurts. But the agony of cracking open is short-lived, not like the paralysis of staying shut.



Remembrance: A View of Christmas

Condensed lecture by **Dr Philip Groves** (21 December 1994)

In the west, Christmas is regarded as a holiday season, including Christmas trees, shopping, exchanging gifts, and a break from daily work. This is far removed from the original commemoration of Christmas as the time of Christ's birth and its psychocosmological consequences. To understand its deeper implications, we must develop a larger view of the pattern of creation and put the human race in its proper perspective.

Light is one of the major representations of Creation. Wherever we look we see light, and sunlight illuminates all things, enabling us to enjoy visual perception. These are part of the created universe which we can experience by means of the light of consciousness, which is an inner light. Many prominent creation myths including the accounts given at the beginning of Genesis, describe the pre-creation state as one of darkness. Creation begins with the appearance of light and this is sometimes represented as the first sunrise.



Such stories are not scientific or eye-witness accounts of creation, but symbolic descriptions of spiritual light entering the human psyche, and bringing to birth a new kind of life. They refer to the cosmic process of creating conscious light-filled souls. Before Divine light enters them, human beings are dark formations who neither see nor understand their situation. Perceptively they are blind to all that is real and true and are not much better than animals. In all worlds and on all inhabited planets souls must be created and vivified by the light of Divine truth, and it is through the instructions of truth that people learn they are souls and have cosmic responsibilities.

Those living on earth who possess the Word have all the necessary truth, knowledge and instruction which can lead

them to regeneration and the awakening of the immortal soul. If they do not search for the inner instructions of the Word and obey them, then nothing will change their way of life, not even the re-appearance of one who has died and now dwells in the spiritual world.

The whole universe is permeated by the ultra-fine energy substance of God. There is no place or structure where the energy of the Divine is not present. Without this enduring presence nothing could exist. Through living things a new potency entered the world because organisms are able to manipulate the environment and cycle various terrestrial substances through themselves. All of us are sustained and made alive by the all-presence of the undivided one Lord God. It

is our part to dissolve the barrier which separates the outer sensuous self from the inner spiritual self so that we may see or experience the actual presence of what proceeds from God. A major part of Christ's work was to show that the Kingdom of God is within you. The season of Christmas should bring the remembrance of our being duties in this universe. We live not merely for the sake of fulfilling our wishes and desires, but principally for the sake of conjoining heaven and earth. Jesus demonstrated this in His own life by showing how heavenly powers can be brought to bear upon physical ills, and even natural phenomena such as storms and large waves which were stilled. Such dramatic demonstrations serve to draw our attention to the truth that in every individual there dwells a mighty power which can manifest in useful external ways.

Pay careful attention to various prominent aspects of the Teachings and explore them as fully as possible. Consider this point "*Cleanse thou first the inside of the cup*

[continued next page]



WHAT'S HAPPENING?

To become a member of the Swedenborg Association of Australia, check the website at www.swedenborg.com.au and click "Contact" in the top menu, which has details on benefits of **membership** and an application form listing current membership rates.

Also check the website at www.swedenborg.com.au for details of **group events** which are held online, but you can also be physically at various locations around Australia. Follow the "about → contact" menu items on the website for a list of locations and contact info of your nearest group convenor, and see the "events" menu item for Zoom links so you can join online events.

Our new website is continually being updated with new study material and latest news and information.

that may be also the outside of it clean" in Matthew 23:26. This means far more than cleaning up one's act, but involves everything that concerned with facing the outer self which fills the cup to overflowing. The outer self should be the instrument of the inner self and of Higher Life, and indeed this can be made so. But in its present mixed up state it lives only for its self and has virtually no connection with its higher counterpart. The outer self clings to many unproven assumptions and never realises the whole being of which it is part. It is often ruled by a self-loving ego and is motivated by impulses it never sees or understands. Whoever lives exclusively in the outer self is only fractionally alive and is often in the grip of false ideas, evil states and mechanical habits. Before a real transformation can take place in any persons being all this material must be examined in the light of reason and then corrected.

Christmas represents the coming into the world of a set of teachings, methods, through the being of Jesus Christ. These teachings are available for all, if only people would open their eyes and be prepared to work upon themselves. At Christmas we should especially remember the availability to us of processes, methods and teachings which become ours as soon as we are willing to accept what they teach as truth, what they're able to give as methods which can be felt and appreciated, and what they lead to as a result of a lifetime of work upon ourselves in the light of these teachings.

Christ's birth was a cosmological event, the entry of heavenly states into planetary conditions. Unless Higher help comes to us we are doomed – of ourselves we haven't the slightest idea of how to transform ourselves or prepare ourselves for cosmic, timeless immortal life. Being alive is a big responsibility. We are made alive so that we can change something in us to become useful elsewhere, which is part of the remembrance of Christmas.

Our task is to remember our duties and to remember what is possible for us. Remembrance is a dynamic process that sets each day into a pattern of endeavour, of new feelings, new hopes and new resolves. If we carry out remembrance in this manner, then indeed we become eventually the living vehicles of the energy of God. Remembrance forms part of the pathway that leads to our inner reality.



The Mystical Nativity by Sandro Botticelli (1500)