

Candela



Newsletter of the Swedenborg Association of Australia Inc.

Organisational Details are provided on the next page

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

MARCH 2024

ISSUE 115

How are you off for time? Probably tight, even reading this Candela could be a manoeuvre to force you to take some time out for a while, hopefully sitting down. But then, this sense of being forever rushed could be you rather than the reality; we live in a culture where we are told about our time consumption... "Your daily (device) reading time is up 8% to 5 hours 42 minutes." I leave you to sort out what emotions that information brings on.

One solution to time management is to reduce the time that things take. Three young Germans over a decade ago came up with an abbreviated reading method. Instead of ploughing through 480 pages on "Principles of Mechanics" they will give you a fifteen-minute précis of the book's main points. Their website or app is wonderfully called "Blinkist". You may have come across it, or even used it. They are all now ... billionaires.



Closer to spiritual time-saving is the world of mnemonics. The word does not look like it's English. It is Greek. It comes from a word meaning an epitaph, a memorial. The method is usually to let a sequence of first letters remind you of a sequence. So, ROY G. BIV nudges you into remembering that Red, Orange Yellow Green Blue Indigo Violet are the rainbow. Neat!

But closer still are things to consider before opening your mouth ... "THINK" = Is it **T**True? **H**elpful? **I**important? **N**ecessary? **K**ind? This is valuable pre-speak.
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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.

Next Issue – June 2024

There are some thought provoking articles this time. I hope you enjoy reading and reflecting on them. Our next edition will be in June. Please send any articles to me by May18th

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

Ruth



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Still closer is the bestseller of the 1980s "The Four Agreements" A practical guide to personal freedom" by Don Miguel Ruiz, based on ancient Toltec (Mexican and close to Aztec) wisdom. Notice these are 'agreements' not 'principles', which makes it very personal, something you and I agree to. And the four of them are: "Be impeccable in your word"; "Take nothing for granted"; "Take nothing personally"; and, wonderfully finally and all-consumingly... and can you guess it? ... "Always do your best".

This final fourth agreement is just fascinating. On one level it looks like it is generically rounding up everything else that hasn't been mentioned so far. On another level it reads like plain common sense. And on yet another it comes across as a bit of a moralistic shove... "C'mon, you can do better than that!"

Spiritually, "doing your best" must mean "living up to what you know is right, good, true, of God." But (and this is so important) not at all in the sense of "I must do things better" or "One day I might become the person I long to be" but right now, "Let me bring up out of myself what I know in my heart is good and of God" and make this our constant spiritual practice. Come another moment and the same applies.

We do not 'get better'. We do not 'become' a different person. But this does not mean that we go round in endless circles getting nowhere. It literally means that 'we' do not have it in us to achieve betterment, but God *does* have it in God's deep love and wisdom to bring us to be stronger, steadier, surer, yes, being more in the image and likeness of the divine.

So this fourth agreement, to "do our best" is absolutely right. Anything else may not work out or fail miserably, including the first three agreements, each of which is a goldmine of right conduct and attitude, but as we journey through each successive moment and incident, we do what we currently know and feel is the best that we have within ourselves to give. More than this is not possible. From God's angle, more is not demanded.

Even Jesus seems to have cottoned-on to this fourth principle: "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

Do your daily best and let God remould you.

Best wishes for every day,

Julian



Who is Jesus Christ?

By Sarah Walker

The Origin, the Infinite, cannot be comprehended.



Whilst any one of us can conceive of something that is infinite, eternal, unchanging, and perfect, the fact of the matter is, is that our finite minds can never fully comprehend it simply because we are finite and therefore temporal, mutable and imperfect. And so, we have our observations, perceptions and understandings of a manifestation of the origin. The origin is Being in Itself, the manifestation is what presents to the finite mind in a form in which it can be comprehended.

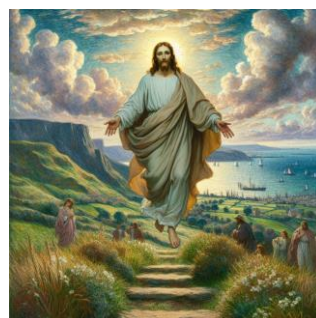


What presents to our mind is a manifestation, which will always have a flawed, finite aspect.

So, in any place where the concept of the Divine is being examined, there needs to be an acknowledgement that the Origin is unchanging and cannot ever be comprehended as it truly exists and that therefore what presents to our finite mind is a manifestation, an image, the construct of which is limited by the mind that is doing the observing and perceiving.

All understanding and experience of what the truth of the Divine is then, is not the Divine Truth in Itself, but rather a sampling of a quality of it and will always have a flawed, finite aspect to it.

... a form that our finite minds can assimilate



Of course, one of the significant manifestations of a divine being in the history of humanity, is Jesus Christ, and the text that was then produced as an account of his life on earth. This text offers a series of stories and images of a Divine being engaging in and with the finite realm of space, time, person, and matter and thus offers us a form that our finite minds can digest and assimilate.

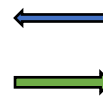
The manifestation of the Divine as we perceive it, ... is NOT Divine.



The Infinite



The finite



Jesus himself many times over, tells us that he is sent forth from the Father and that no one can know the Father except through him. Now if the Father is the Divine Being, the Infinite, that can never be known, then Jesus Christ is the Father in a form that can be perceived by our finite mind. Note here though, that we are talking about what presents to the mind in the form of Jesus Christ, as in, what the finite sees, NOT the Divine Being as It is in Itself.



So, although we may acknowledge Jesus Christ as Divine because he is of the Father and one with Him, and likewise the text, it always needs to be remembered that the finite experience of this, is not Divine.

...the story of Divine Truth as our finite minds receive and experience it.



The implications of this acknowledgment, offer a completely new way of engaging and comprehending any form of Divine Truth that presents itself to the mind and specifically here, of understanding what and who Jesus Christ is and what and who the Text is. If Jesus Christ is a finite presentation of the Divine Being, in terms our finite minds receiving it, and the Text likewise is the same, and thus both are something which conveys the truth about the Divine, then the story of the life of Jesus Christ becomes a representation of the story of Divine Truth as our finite minds receive and experience it.

Divine truth first enters in states of innocence, ignorance and vulnerability.



If we look at Jesus's life from this perspective then we see Divine truth entering into the mind like a young child; vulnerable, ignorant in its innocence,

living purely from basic instincts at first without any awareness of what or who it is.

Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." (Luke 2:10-12)

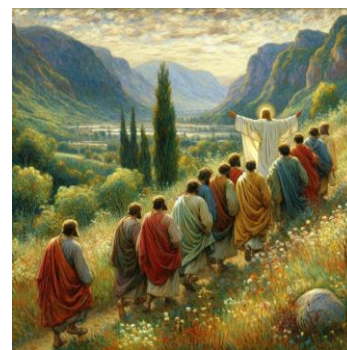
It starts to surprise and challenge.



As it matures it starts to engage with those, those things of the mind, who seem well established in their ideas of what the Divine is, with the personalities that

are ruling the landscape of our mind. It begins to surprise them and challenge them.

Some embrace, some just follow.



Some of the inhabitants of the land easily welcome and embrace this new form of truth, some just follow because it's what the crowd is doing.

Some ignore, some plot to kill it.



Some ignore it and continue on as usual, and others start to feel threatened by it and openly plot to persecute and kill it.



Jesus Christ is a symbol, his person is no more real than the other characters are.

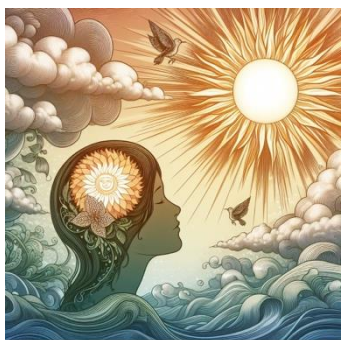


So, just as the people in the landscapes in the story are symbolic of the varied patterns of thinking and feeling that surround and engage with the

Divine truth in our mind, so too is Jesus Christ Himself a symbol. The person of Jesus Christ in this sense is no more a real person any more than the other characters in the stories are. All of them are manifestations for they are images of the variations of our finite reception of what flows into our mind as we receive the Divine Life.

Jesus Christ = Divine truth

It teaches, heals, saves and redeems.



Jesus Christ then can be viewed as a form of truth that is clearly Divine and entering into the mind to engage with the

multitudes, - the multitudes of the thinking and feeling patterns and structures that are present in the landscape. He represents a form of truth that is acknowledged as being from and of the Father and as such, is able to teach, heal, save and redeem.

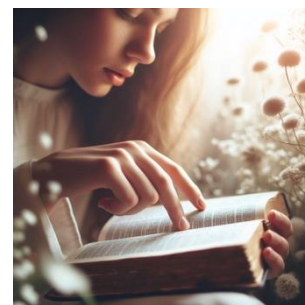
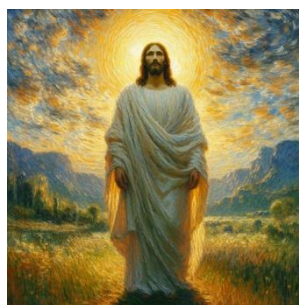
This light proceeding from the Lord is life itself, which not only enlightens the understanding, as the sun of the world does the eye, but also vivifies it according to reception; and when this light is received in the life, it is called "the light of life" in the same: "Jesus said, I am the light of the

world; he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life"

John 8:12

(Apocalypse Explained 349)

Human is not about shape, but instead about what it communicates of the nature of the Divine.



He is the Logos that is living. Jesus's life's story is the same story of the text as a form of the truth of the Divine, as it enters our mind. Jesus Christ and the text that we call the Word, are one and the same. Each offers a different manifestation but presents the same origin.

They are a truth that presents from the Divine Itself in a form that we can comprehend and engage with.

One is in the form of a person moving through the world, one is in the form of a text moving through the mind.

Both are the Divine in Origin. Both are a finite experience of the Divine as a manifestation, and so both offer the divine human, the human in this sense being what the Father can be known through. The idea of what is human then becomes not about shape, or flesh and bones, but about what conveys and communicates the nature of the Divine.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and God was the Word. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the Word became flesh, and dwelt in us (John 1:1, 4, 14).



What does the Human teach us about suffering?



So, what does the human then teach us about suffering and what causes it? What is it that inflicts pressure on the manifestation of Divine truth in our life? What seeks to harm it? What leads us away from it? Or causes us to forget it?

In a very simple way what we can see illustrated in the story of Jesus Christ is that the personalities in the mind, i.e. the thinking and feeling structures that turn and follow him, are the ones that are healed and nourished in the things of heaven.

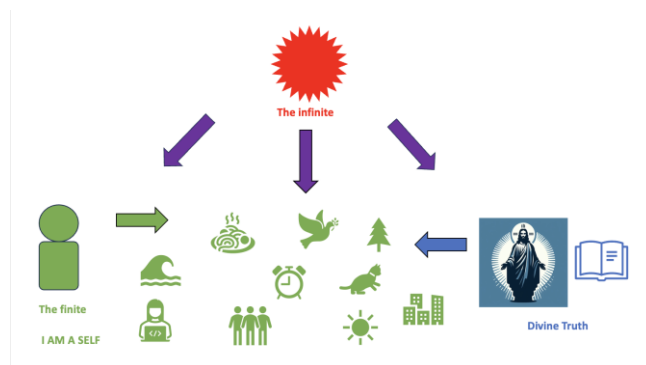
To follow Jesus is to be led by the truth about Origin and manifestation.



And this connects back to the fundamental premise that we opened with regarding the distinctions between what is origin and what is manifestation. For as we consider these questions on suffering, we first need to remind ourselves that the Divine is Origin and can never be known as It is in Itself, and that therefore all that we perceive and understand is a finite manifestation of It.

To follow Jesus Christ then, that is, to follow that which presents the truth about

the nature of the Divine, is to accept this principle and to let it lead us in how we engage with our life.



For if Jesus Christ and the text are manifestations of what presents to the finite mind's level of perception regarding Divine Truth, then everything else must be an aberration or deviation of this. That is, everything else must also be a manifestation of our reception of Divine Life, presenting to our mind to be perceived. Including the experience that 'I am real' and that 'I am a self' that lives in a world of time, space, person and matter. And likewise, the experience that other people are real, living in this realm too.

We experience suffering when we forget the distinctions between origin and manifestation

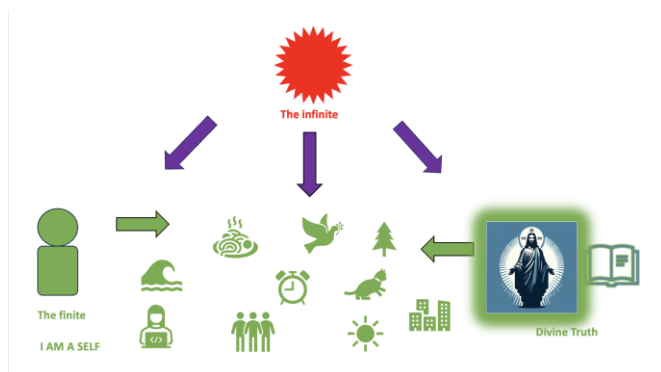


If we forget this, this truth about the nature of the Divine and the distinction between what is origin versus manifestation, then we are being led away from Jesus Christ, from the truth of the Divine, and we experience suffering. This is because we are operating from the belief that we are like the Origin, that the sense of self is a fixed and unchanging thing. We believe the state as we experience it – the grief, the anger, the loneliness, the



disconnect. We believe that it is 'me', that it is 'I'.

We believe that we have a self that is fixed and permanent that belongs to us and therefore experience a loss when it shifts or feels challenged, or anger at its apparent removal. From 'me'.



Hence, we confound what is finite with what is infinite, for only the infinite is unchanging, permanent, and fixed. And only the infinite owns.

This disconnect from what is Divine is demonstrated from the disconnect of clarity in recognising the distinction between origin and manifestation. But it is also demonstrated in our attribution of finite qualities to the Divine which so often accompany these states. When the belief that I am real is active and is what leads the state, instead of Jesus Christ as Divine truth is leading, then the mind has difficulty comprehending any other way of thinking other than the way that it does. Thus, in states of suffering the Divine is often drawn down into finite qualities.

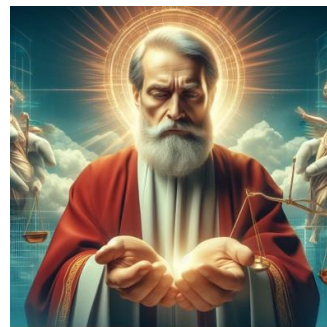
The Divine as a benevolent father



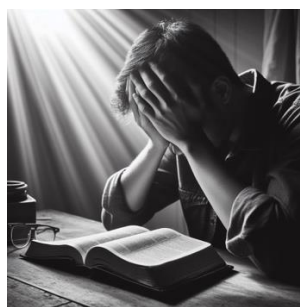
The Divine becomes more of a benevolent Father in these instances, with the power to take away things from us and likewise the power to restore a state of stability.

It becomes a parent that judges and

accommodates what it offers according to the behaviour of the child. This can then give rise to experiencing states of anger towards Him, or a sense of abandonment by Him and so a sense of helplessness, or a state of trying to bargain – 'If I do this then will you make this right again?', or a state of condemnation believing that we are being punished for something that we have or haven't done and so He is displeased with us.



The Divine becomes finite and the finite ... becomes Divine-like.

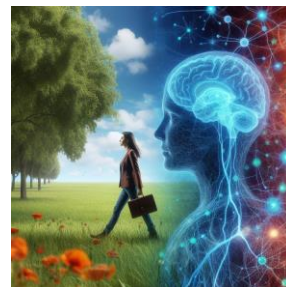


And so, the Divine becomes finite, and the finite becomes Divine-like.

If my sense of self is something real and important then the Divine becomes

something that is like me too. And so, He becomes an ordinary man and my trust in the ability of Him to carry me and help me, starts to break down. That is, the text becomes an ordinary text, and the trust in its ability to carry us through the difficult experience, starts to break down.

But this is the way of spiritual life. We move in and out of...



But this is the way of spiritual life. This is the process. We move in and out of



identification with what we experience as 'me' and of what we experience of others and the world of time and space in general. We move in and out of the truth that is the text. We move in and out of acknowledging that the Divine is the origin and that all else is a finite manifestation of this.

Divine truth slowly dispels the ways of perceiving that cause suffering.



The purpose of a manifestation of the Divine being though, and the truth that it presents, is to slowly dispel the ways of perceiving that cause us suffering. To save us from our 'self'; to undo our constructed sense of self and to offer a new way of having relationship with what a self is. And thus, also of what 'others' are. When we are released from the belief that the appearances are real then they become real appearances and when this is what leads us, it transforms our life into seeing everything as it relates to Divine Life. Becoming spiritual conscious then is about perceiving that what manifests before the mind is an appearance that can inform and assist in its education of what the Divine is and isn't. The sense of self can become a useful boundary of mind that serves the function of allowing us to have a relationship with what is Divine, as it engages with the text and manifestations of the Divine life that present to its awareness.

Our life becomes a memorable relation - an opportunity to see how it relates to the Origin.

Our life transforms into a memorable relation, just as real as what is related to us in the text or in our dreams. For then everything, everything that we perceive,



feel, think and understand is an opportunity to see how it relates to the Origin, to the Divine Life, and to be drawn up out of a life of ignorant suffering and into one of new meaning.



Let everyone take heed lest he believe that the Divine Life with anyone, even indeed with the evil and in hell, is changed; for, as said above, the life itself is not changed or varied, but by it an appearance of the receptive form is presented, through which and from which it passes; nearly in the same manner as everyone appears in a mirror according to his own quality, by light, which still remains in its own state, and only produces the form to the sight. Apocalypse Explained 349 (6).

"Jesus said, I am the light of the world; he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" John 8:12.

Sarah Walker

This presentation was given at a recent worldwide Logopraxis seminar.



The spirit of compassion – Is it within me?

By Stephen Russell-Lacy

A woman was walking along a road when she was attacked by a thief. He took her purse, beat her up, and went away, leaving her injured. A few local cars passed but nobody stopped to investigate the body lying on the path. What the woman needed was the spirit of compassion to help her.



Fortunately, someone drove by who did stop. He was feeling concern for a complete stranger who might have been in dire straights. He went up to her and stopped her bleeding, then he got her into his car, took her to a hospital, and stayed with her in the waiting area for quite some time until she could be taken into the medical room. All this even though it meant missing a night out with his friends.

The spirit of compassion can be misdirected

Giving people what they want may not be good for them e.g. money they would squander on alcohol or drugs. However, real concern for others often means being prepared to offer something of what they need even if this involves giving up more than the time and money we could easily afford. We definitely need something extra in our hearts when responding to challenges we might not automatically welcome.

The spirit of compassion can be absent

Some of us may find it difficult to go beyond a focus on 'me', 'me', 'me'. Hurry and worry for what I want. Grabbing things I desire. Never mind whether I actually need them just now. Outer worldly matters rule one's life. Success on the sports field, another sexual conquest, possession of a new status symbol.

On the other hand, you may want to face in another direction. One that follows higher values. To be more caring of others and less self-serving. Like the good person in the story. Easier said than done you might say. 'Surely I can't become a saint overnight?' Yes, that is correct. It probably takes many years to turn one's life fundamentally around, so one is looking in the opposite direction. And certainly not by one's own efforts alone.

The universal source of the spirit of compassion

In my experience, to become a more considerate kinder person, there is a higher power I can draw upon. It is a spiritual force that comes from beyond me but which I can allow, if I choose, to be present within me.

There are alcoholics who have led a changed life whilst engaging in the Twelve Step Programme used by members of Alcoholics Anonymous. If they can do it why not anyone? They did it by living the principles of the Programme which in summary are:

- Admitting that one cannot control one's alcoholism, addiction, or compulsion;
- Coming to believe in a higher power that can give strength;



- Examining past errors with the help of a sponsor (experienced member);
- Making amends for these errors;
- Learning to live a new life with a new code of behaviour;
- Helping others who suffer from the same alcoholism, addictions, or compulsions.

We can all turn around towards what in one's heart one knows is right. Facing in a new direction and away from the old ways.

Belief in the spirit of compassion is not enough

Some Christian theologians have maintained that we can only be lifted up and saved from our wrongdoing by religious faith rather than any personal effort we do to improve our character. In other words, what they mean is that the right belief alone rather than the way one tries to live one's life is what really matters for personal improvement. But are they not mistaken? Doesn't personal responsibility come if we are free to want what we wish?

The non-religious often assume self-realization is only achieved through science and reason. I would say that they make the mistake of assuming we humans can solve our own problems without any divine help. When we appreciate that we cannot make the changes we were aiming for in our own strength, then we can opt to ask for help from a higher power.

Engaging with the spirit of compassion

Many humanistic therapies and other secular activities quite rightly promote personal growth by emphasizing the individual's dignity and worth. Many people doing this good work appreciate that we need to engage with a universal spirit of compassion and wisdom although they may not use traditional religious language to express this attitude.

You may wish to reflect on any time when you have felt connected to something higher than yourself. Like a spirit that has filled you with concern for the world and its environment and people.



Touch by Michael Volpicelli

I wonder what words you would use to describe any higher power of love you have felt the presence of? I would suggest that all of us, whatever our state, need inspiring motivation and enlightened understanding if we are to progress

spiritually. We need the gift of a new character to replace the old one. In other words, we can't go it alone. People are sometimes unclear about what they believe, change their minds over time, combine, what we might regard as apparently incompatible beliefs, and prefer to avoid the language of beliefs altogether preferring to speak in terms of feelings and experience. For what it's worth to know, my own experience of life is I need divine help to escape my self-focus and find a caring attitude.



Stephen Russell-Lacy B.Sc.(Hons), Dip.Clin.Psych. is currently a tutor and course writer at the Swedenborg Open

Learning Centre in Manchester and gives talks at the Purley Chase Spiritual Conference Centre in Warwickshire. Both centres are in England.

He is also the main author for the Spiritual Questions & Answers website.

<https://www.spiritualquestions.org.uk/>



Adam, Eve and the Serpent

by New Christian Bible Study Staff

It's ironic that the Bible story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden is so often in the cross-hairs of the debate between science and faith; according to the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, the story itself is, in fact, about that very debate.

The Writings say that the "man" placed in the Garden of Eden represents a group of prehistoric people who lived in a state of love to the Lord and communion with heaven. They were pure and innocent, with wisdom coming to them as the fruit came from the trees of Eden. The Writings call this the Most Ancient Church, and it was as close as we've ever been to heaven on earth.



Cathedral of St. Michael and St. Gudula, Brussels

People of that time were aware, on an ongoing basis, that life flowed into them from the Lord, and was not their own. They were aware that their thoughts came from the Lord, and their affections; they not only knew, but also felt, that they did not exist from themselves. For many generations they embraced this blissfully, but eventually they began to feel a tug toward more of a sense of self. They didn't want to be "just" recipients of life; they wanted to be alive from themselves. This is represented in the idea that it was "not good that the man should be alone." And all the thoughts and affections of their exalted state – represented by naming the animals – did not satisfy that urge.

So, the Lord took the lowest, least-life-receiving part of those people – represented by the rib bone – and built it into a new aspect of humanity, represented by the woman. This change left people cut off from direct communion with heaven (they had to "leave father and mother"), but allowed them to feel life as their own (to "cleave unto their wives").

Initially, this was fine. The woman was made from a bone, which indicates evil, but was of flesh and blood, meaning that the evil was covered over by a love of good from the Lord. They were still innocent, were still in a state of love to the Lord, and could still receive wisdom from Him, all contained in the idea that they were naked, and not ashamed.

But then the serpent came on the scene – representing our physical senses and the power of reasoning from the evidence of the senses. This is the lowest and most external aspect of our minds, but a powerful and convincing one (and the one where we do science in the modern world). And the serpent questioned God, planting the seed: What if God had lied to them? What if the effect of the forbidden fruit was attaining all knowledge, knowing what God knew, defining right and wrong for themselves, actually being gods themselves?

The Tree of Knowledge – which was forbidden to Adam and Eve – represents using human logic and the evidence of the senses to explore God's existence and His nature. The Lord knew the people couldn't do this and maintain the humility and reverence necessary for the state of love they had lived in. But the question enticed them, playing on their sense of living of themselves. And finally they succumbed, acting from the sense of self and pulling their rational faculties – represented by the husband – into it as well.



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.

Adam, Eve and the Serpent continued.....

When they did – when they launched a rational, evidence-based investigation of the Lord, He responded by "opening their eyes" and letting them see that in and of themselves they were evil, and only through Him could they have life and love what is good. Seeing their evil, they grabbed what they could – fig leaves represent external ideas of how to be good



– and covered up as best they could.

So, what does this mean about "original sin"? Well, in a sense we are still spiritually hobbled because of the way our ancestors turned away from the Lord. But we're not individually eternally guilty for an offence none of us committed.

What does it mean about the literal accuracy of the story? The Writings clearly teach that it is not actual, literal history, that no two such people ever existed. In fact, the Writings say that the first eleven chapters of Genesis are remnants of a set of holy scriptures that came from

descendants of the Most Ancient Church and which predate Biblical times. These works draw fully from the correspondences between natural things and spiritual things, using the deeply symbolic language of that age. What they really offer, then, is the spiritual history of early humanity, not the natural history – and isn't the spiritual history more important anyway?

What does it mean about men and women? Well, "Adam" was not a man, and "Eve" was not a woman; both represented aspects of humanity, and they are essentially free of gender. So, the fact that the story has been used to suppress and demean women is a pernicious misreading.

Finally, what does it mean about science and faith? It means they are two separate things, because physical reality and spiritual reality are two separate things. The people were free to expand their minds by eating of all the other fruit; but they were to leave the idea of God alone. And that warning still stands: If we try to use science to either prove or disprove the existence of the Lord, we will get thrown out of the garden. ■●◆●■

SAA membership reminders go out in a few months, but if you were a past member and let it lapse and now wish to join again, simply do so by phoning us on (02) 9416 2812 with your request, or visit the website at swedenborg.com.au/contact and select "For current membership rates and a membership application form [click here](#)". Fill out the form, email it to saa@swedenborg.com.au or post it to the address on Candela page 2. Post your payment too, or phone it through, or (preferred) do a direct bank transfer with the bank details on the membership form. We look forward to having you on board again. ♥