



## Issue Theme ~ ***"GOING WITHIN"***

### **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

Once during troubled times, Kerry Packer admitted feeling there was a big black hole inside him - an honest reflection and apt metaphor, considering a black hole is so dense a collapsed stellar object that its gravity even manages to trap light passing nearby. We can surely relate to the feeling of lack, the gnawing sense of need and the associated discomfort which he was expressing.

Pain can lead to self-medication of the discomfort through some soothing activity, whether it be shopping, eating, drinking, drug-taking, gambling, sexual gratification, or burying ourselves in the entertainment worlds of TV, magazines, movies or internet.

This may provide some temporary relief. Unfortunately we presume that because a little helps a little, more should help a lot. Our favourite diversion eventually turns into coping strategy, or something we identify with: "I consume, therefore I am." We may even lose control and become addicted. Economists, businesses and marketing spin-doctors amplify the message "more is better," leading us to believe our inevitable return to misery is solvable only by an increased dose of our favourite soothing activity.

While soothing behaviours may successfully distract from the underlying feeling for a fleeting while, their long term side-effects may actually add to the underlying malaise. Research reveals our measure of happiness during a typical consumption experience does not peak the moment we have what we want. Rather, satisfaction peaks just prior to getting it. The anticipation fantasy is more stimulating than the having. No sooner do we own what we sought than our satisfaction level already begins to decline.

The problem is we erroneously think the happiness is in the having not the wanting, so we seek to possess more, leaping from one acquisition to the next to seek satisfaction and excitement.

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*Two copies of this Newsletter are being sent to members as usual, the second for giving away.*

The black hole never fills. We go from want to want, accumulating goods or experiences while clocking up more debt. Ownership comes with the negative elements of maintenance and credit payments.



Simulated view of a  
Black Hole

If our "black hole" is a lousy sense of self-worth, we might imagine owning what the Joneses have (or better), feeling that would bring us a satisfactory standing in their eyes. We may fantasise winning the lottery to finance such a future dream. If a sense of loneliness is our "black hole", we may try purchasing our popularity with carefully orchestrated acts of largesse to impress those whose good opinion of us we want to obtain to get a feeling of self-approval. If it is insecurity that plagues us, we may feel like amassing property to stave off the insecurity. But despite successes, any amount of ownership is unlikely to feel like it's enough. Just ask Donald Trump or John D. Rockefeller. When asked, "What is enough?" Rockefeller replied "Just a little bit more." (this affliction is called 'affluenza').

*\* \* \* continued next page \* \* \**



## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE** (contd)

The effect of thwarted long-term satisfactions simply adds stress to the initial feelings. Why not try to medicate that too, you may say?

The real answer lies in the Dalai Lama's advice: "When there's too much stress or too much worry, look inward!"

How to become free from this endless cycle of satisfaction seeking? The constant anticipation leads us to look forward to the future, beyond the passing present moment which takes away from our Self.

The secret is finding the present moment, being in it, and seeing what goes on inside us. "Know Thyself." It is important to see beyond the wishes, wants and fantasies and acts of gratification. The key is becoming still and pondering the delights of what is with us now, instead of casting our attention to what is coming later. Then we can begin to see the workings of our realities of our inner Self. "Be still and know that I Am."

I love yoga as a means to focus attention on the here and now, to sense the body and my breath. It brings my active mind out of its grasshopper mode. After a while I feel calm, restored and whole. Cravings grow quiet and more distant. Inner peace returns.

Recently I even heard of a successful diet technique based largely on the practice of eating foods more consciously, chewing and savouring each mouthful. Scoffing was strictly forbidden. This leads to higher satisfaction levels with less food and better nutritional uptake. The dieting workshop even commenced with the eating of a chocolate bar, demonstrating the effectiveness of doing something with a greater level of inner awareness with full attention focussed on the activity of the moment.

More frequently practising being in the moment can serve as antidote for coping in today's busy noisy world. Many things around us can have the effect of drawing our attention away from our awareness of our current feelings and states, drawing us away from the sensing of self and out of the moment.

Try doing meditation, yoga, prayer or some other practice for stilling the mind, calming the emotions, connecting with the body (eg breath) or getting in touch with your inner needs. Prayer is a great help especially if we realise it will not change God but can change us.

Our discovery of what lies under the surface of our outer existence is not all bliss. What we find may initially be painful to admit and face. During his initial spiritual awakening, Emanuel Swedenborg suffered a shock upon seeing what lay below the surface of his outer behaviour. He faced an enormous sense of pride of his cleverness and abilities. ☺

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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 Swedenborg Association of Australia or its Committee.

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, please refer to page 12.

His answer was to go within, taking more careful note of his inner world. He became aware of his dreams and pondered their significance. He studied the world with renewed insight of the spiritual language of outer things and read the scriptures with new enthusiasm, looking for inner instruction and guidance. His insight was guided in response to his initiative and love for it and the diligence of his effort. He became more compassionate and softer, more discerning in his interactions with others. He spent long periods exploring his inner being and the world which supported it and left us his valuable accounts in writing. Above all he submitted himself fully to guidance from higher life.

Enjoy your inner exploring!

*Joe Vandermeer*



# The Meditating Swedenborgian

by **Walter Mason**

**M**editation has a place in all the great spiritual traditions, and the incredible spiritual power of meditative practices is always a threat to church hierarchies. Much of religious history has been about controlling lay people and refusing to validate the mystical experiences that come to them while engaged in quiet reflective prayer or meditation. The Swedenborgian custom, however, has traditionally validated the individual approach to mystical life. Swedenborg himself was exposed to extraordinary spiritual revelations through a self-induced hypnagogic state that I think was akin to states of consciousness reached by experienced meditators or people given to a pure devotional reflection. I would suggest that the Swedenborgian tradition is one based in meditation and its results, and writers such as Wilson Van Dusen have also expounded the efficacy - if not the necessity - of contemplation and meditation in everyone's spiritual life.

Through meditation we can begin to acknowledge the true presence of God in our lives and to experience a way of being akin to the angelic states. Swedenborg's emphasis on the importance of finding our true uses also reminds us that meditation can come in many forms. The Hindu tradition speaks of karma yoga, in which one's manual labours can be conducted in such a way that they are both a meditation on the great gifts we are each given and an offering to God. While we are being truly useful we are dedicating our minds and our bodies to the glory of God, and a useful act is one of meditation in motion. Too often the Western notions of meditation are those exceedingly exotic ones of hours of enduring a cross-legged position on the floor, eyes closed and incense burning. In fact, Zen monasteries, those great power-houses of meditation, devote much of the daily schedule of their inhabitants to work and simple labour. In fact, the motto of most such institutions is "one day without work is a day without food." It is essential that we bring the spirit of meditation - the spirit of quietness - into our most mundane daily actions. If we can only connect with God in the quietness of a church or meditation room then our spiritual life is a fragile thing indeed.



Those who come to Monday night meditation at the Swedenborg Centre (North Ryde) know that we always have a period of walking meditation, in which we bring the meditative mind to the action of walking, thereby equipping ourselves to recognise in activity the potential for transcendent prayerful awareness. And personally, my favourite parts of a meditation session is when a plane goes zooming overhead, or a fire engine comes screaming down the road, or two people decide to start singing or shouting right outside the door. These things are all what Vietnamese Zen master **Thich Nhat Hanh** calls 'bells of mindfulness' - rather than disturbing us, these things remind us of our connection to all reality, and to all creation. Rather than pulling us out of our meditation, they are drawing the world in to our efforts at careful attention and cultivation of peace of mind. For when we meditate, we are not doing it for ourselves - we are doing it for all those who experience suffering, loss and dissatisfaction in their lives. Our time of quietness is a small blessing that rings throughout the world - how could we not want to share that moment with all living beings?

**Walter** is Secretary of the Swedenborg Association of Australia. He has been a practising Buddhist for more than 16 years and is a teacher of meditation.

*We pray all the time when we are living a life of usefulness, although not with the mouth but with the heart; for what is in agreement with our inmost love is continually in our thinking even when we are unconscious of it.*

**Swedenborg:** *Apocalypse Explained* 325<sup>12</sup>



## Seeing the Muse - an "Aha!" experience

by **Graeme Wilson** (SAA member in Victoria)

### **T**he scene:

*Wilson Hall, University of Melbourne,  
waiting to receive a  
Graduate Diploma in Theology.*

I saw from the program that many of the diploma students had elected to receive their awards *in absentia*, but knowing that the occasion was likely to be my 'last hurrah', I was glad I decided to attend in person, to receive my certificate from the President of the Melbourne College of Divinity and soak up the atmosphere of the colourful occasion. As usual we were early, and I was seated in the (appropriately named!) hall, appropriately gowned and wearing the mustard coloured hood of my previous degree, recalling a similar occasion fifty years earlier when I was launched on my career as a professional engineer. That phase is behind me now, and my studies are leading me in a different direction.

For the half hour preceding the ceremony we were treated to a recital of organ music, some of it from the pen of the incomparable J. S. Bach and appropriate for such a grand occasion. I noted the trumpet pipes were well in tune. There seemed to be no acknowledgement of the organist, but eventually I discovered her name tucked away in the program.

In my advancing years with deteriorating hearing, my interests are more literary than musical, and my attention was inescapably drawn to the large mural overlooking the dais where chairs were awaiting the arrival of the academic dignitaries. I noted the three high backed chairs in the centre, one decorated with the University crest and incorporating an 'angel' that had become somewhat controversial. *What role does an angel play in a secular institution like the University of Melbourne?*, I wondered. And that evening, as a reward for my contemplations, I received my answer.

I completed my undergraduate engineering studies in 1955, when the present Wilson Hall was under construction - the original building was destroyed by fire - and as might be expected we students were encouraged to take an interest in its engineering and architectural elements. So I was party to some stories, one of which concerned the

mural, which an ageing engineering cynic described as 'a chicken with its entrails hanging out'. We all see with different eyes, and to my mind it is a clear portrayal of 'mankind' emerging from the tangles of prejudice and ignorance, and striving towards some worthy, if unidentified, goal.

I was contemplating rather than meditating, and I began to think about the principal figure which was clearly male. Where was the feminine element? And then I saw it, the angel beside, near the top. There was my muse! I began to probe my long term memory. 'Aha!' - the artist did not include the angel in his first submission, but the University authorities had insisted. So the secular University of Melbourne and the religious Melbourne College of Divinity may not be at loggerheads after all. It just depends on your viewpoint. Anyone is perfectly entitled to regard it as a still born chicken, but I prefer a more upbeat interpretation.



## *Is God Tardy?* by **David Johnson**

**R**ichard Cecil (1748-1810), one of England's leading spiritual thinkers, said:

*The life of a Christian is a life of paradoxes. He must lay hold on God; he must follow hard after him; he must determine not to let him go. And yet he must learn to let God alone. Quietness before God is one of the most difficult of all Christian graces.*

It seems to be as true of our generation as any other - perhaps the feeling is even *more* intense today - that "God is incomprehensibly tardy." We would like to shove him along to get the jobs done that we feel need doing. One of our basic human conflicts lies in the fact that we see so much to be done and feel so limited in ability, time, and energy to get it done. We would live, it seems, an entire lifetime in a moment - and so, of course, make life meaningless.

We can see so much to be done: so many wrongs to right, so much good to replace evil, so many problems to solve in order to relieve all kinds of suffering. We can see it all. Why cannot infinite God? How can he be so tardy? It is incomprehensible!





Hence, in our prayers we try to call his attention to the areas he has neglected. We try to prod God on to greater speed and action. In more gracious terms, we say, "Come on, God, let's get the show on the road!"

Just look at the mess the world is in - politically and economically - with escalating religious conflict. What's going to happen to us? Perhaps we pray along the lines of the Psalmist - "Bring peace, O God. How long will you hear our pleadings and turn aside from us?" "Wake up, God, before it is too late! Do your wonderful miracles for us!" We watch suffering and evil, and appeal again - "O Lord, how long?" (Psalm 94:3).

Swedenborg's spiritual writings explain that we do our best as though of ourselves, while in more meditative times we realise that our desire to be useful, constructive beings - our very life itself - is a gift from God. This is another way of saying that *we* are the voice, the hands, and the feet of God in the tasks that confront humanity. We are the love and wisdom of God made manifest insofar as we make use of these qualities that flow into our beings from God.

In effect, then, our prayers and pleas to God for action are really directed at ourselves! Perhaps a better way go about it is to pray that we may become so receptive of God's gifts, so open and understanding of mind, that we can be much more effective as his instruments, his voice, his hands, his feet, his heart!

So the first question seems to be: *Who is tardy?* God or we? Maybe we are just too slow in listening, too slow in responding, too timid in acting on our convictions about what God's will is. Are we, too, like the children in the marketplace? "We piped for you and you would not dance. We wept and wailed, and you would not mourn." (Matthew 11:17) We've told God the story, and he just doesn't seem to act. In reality, however, are *we* the tardy ones, slow to respond, tardy about getting to the task in front of us, procrastinating about getting better acquainted with our responsibilities in life?

A second question is: Why does God have to act *now*?

Have you ever been *glad* when something didn't work out as you hoped it would? Have you ever realized that the way things worked out for another person was better for that person than what you wanted or prayed for?

How is our faith? Is it big enough to put our shoulders to the wheel of life and believe that though it often turns hard, and our efforts seem in

vain, in time it will lead us into ways of satisfaction and a sense of achievement? God does sometimes seem incomprehensibly tardy. We call to him, plead with him, prod him, and yes, even occasionally become dissatisfied with him. It is then that we must heed the Psalmist: "Be still, and know that I am God." (Psalm 46:10)

Have you ever in haste and hurry - perhaps even in a panic - forgotten something very important? Or wished in an emergency that you could remember a telephone number or a name or address? It is the most amazing thing to quiet yourself and wait, and discover that very shortly the needed information comes into consciousness. Or sometimes if you struggle too hard over it, give up, and start toward the source of information, it will come to you before you have a chance to look it up or inquire.

This is what is meant by reaching for God, yet waiting for him. This is what is meant by following hard after God, yet leaving him alone.

Is God tardy? Only time and our own faith can answer this question for us.

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**David Johnson** is a retired Swedenborgian minister in USA who was also an active pastoral counsellor for many years in Bellevue, Washington

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## **ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS**

With Walter Mason, our Secretary, on extended leave from his employment and continuing studies to work in Vietnam, the main focus on the section in this issue is a summary of the deliberations at the last quarterly Committee meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> November. Before doing so, the item raised in the last issue advising three Committee vacancies remains unresolved. Each member, wherever located, is again asked to give serious consideration to becoming a voice on the Committee. If you are moved to do so, simply write to Walter Mason at the Registered Office (see page 2 for address)

It was with much delight that the Committee welcomed Ronald Sylvester (QLD) into membership, with the hope that all his expectations will be met from involvement with the Swedenborg Association over the years ahead.



## ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS (Contd)

Traditionally, Committee meetings have followed a set pattern with business items brought forward from earlier meetings and historical reports taking precedence. On this occasion it was radically different with the first hour or more being given over to members openly talking about those areas which they considered important and vital to their participation in the Swedenborg Association and its uses. This included core strengths, approaches for sharing, matters to be highlighted when dealing with others, 'audience landscape', plus perceived strengths and weaknesses/challenges. A considerable amount of helpful thoughts and initial possibilities were recorded for further consideration by each member. Importantly, it was agreed that the deliberations would be analysed, assessed, categorised and prioritised at subsequent meetings over the next twelve months - importantly at the beginning of the meetings to ensure progress, not under any other business!

With the festive season fast approaching, on behalf of the committee of the Swedenborg Association of Australia, I wish you a most joyous, safe and blessed Christmas and New Year.

Best Wishes,

*Neville Jarvis*

Executive Manager



## GROUP'S NEWS

### Melbourne:

Our speaker in September was **Geoff Forster** and he stepped into the breach at the last minute as the planned speaker could not attend. Geoff gave an overview of the teachings and writings of *Steiner and Swedenborg* and pointed out their similarities and differences. The talk was well received by those present.

The October meeting took the form of a **Panel of Speakers** considering the topic of *How Creation reflects God's Love and how we respond*. They represented the Hindu, Sikh and Islamic traditions together with an Aboriginal speaker. It again provided a very interesting evening and showed the universality of the embedded truth in all spiritual paths.

Our final meeting for the year on 28th November was used to watch a presentation titled *Myths, Symbols, Parables* by Dr Phillip Groves recorded in Sydney some years ago. The opportunity was taken to have a break in the middle for supper where those present shared food they had brought. The evening was very enjoyable - the content of the talk by Dr Groves and the social intercourse.

**Chris Skinner**

### North Ryde, Sydney:

A talk titled *The Chemistry of Love and Wisdom* was presented by **Joe Vandermeer** in October. He covered a broad area of the natural world to show there is an underlying order to what is out there and some of these things can reveal aspects of our inner world via correspondences. The focus of order in the external world was the periodic table of elements which is an important part of chemistry. Joe shows a delight in talking about our current understanding of the elements that are the components of physical matter, the history of discovering their individual chemical properties and how various scientists such as Mendeleev placed them in groups showing similarities. I appreciated his image of a spiral to describe that certain properties of the elements occur periodically and his analogy of this pattern to an octave in music. I am drawn to investigate this idea further. He provided some wonderful images to help us feel wonder for the things in the world. And he also interspersed his presentation with funny cartoons and amusing videos bringing a light-heartedness to the talk. Another strong focus of his presentation was the wonder of seeing and how this is an orderly process of handling light which enters the eye and an inner process which makes sense of the data that travels through the optic nerves. This talk arises from Joe's journey to not make the mistake of only looking outwardly and not seeing parallels within (correspondingly).

One of the things I like about attending these meetings is that we see what delights particular presenters and we can engage in further discussions afterwards. And if they are members of the SAA and we have a similar interest then we can continue the dialogue at other times as well. So I look forward to discussing some of these matters with Joe at a later time.

**Michael Chester**

### Swedenborg writes

*in Divine Love & Wisdom 404<sup>8</sup>*

*When we are engaged in a desire for understanding and come thereby into a grasp of what is true, then we are engaged in the thinking of our spirit. This is meditation.*

*Prayer does not consist in prayers and in external devotion but in a life of usefulness to the Divine and others*

*Apocalypse Explained 325<sup>3</sup>*



## Navigating Our Spiritual Development:

### Swedenborg's Writings as Compass & Map

~ a talk given to the 2008 AGM in Sydney by  
Rev David Millar of Adelaide.

Below are the Reflections of SAA President, Joe Vandermeer to this talk carried over from the last issue.

We are fascinated by what will happen to us when we die, but David reminded us that Emanuel Swedenborg's spiritual writings (particularly *Heaven and Hell*) need not be looked upon solely to answer what might be expected after death. Instead, David showed how the writing can present us with help to promote our spiritual awakening and growth here and now. If we begin to act now on what we learn from Swedenborg's excellent documentation of the spiritual world, we can improve the quality of our experience in this world and the next and enter it far more consciously and effectively.

Key to this presentation was the observation that Swedenborg not only fastidiously documented the spirit worlds as he was shown them, but also left subtly scattered signs of the personal changes and stages of regeneration he himself experienced at the time he was exploring the next world.

David presented a map for personal growth and development constructed from the things Swedenborg described about heaven and hell and its principles of operation. Central to these principles is the grand theme that the whole of creation actively tends, and bends toward building an ever-growing community of useful beings who freely participate in its operation. Individuals each joyfully contribute their skills, talents and efforts for the mutual benefit of all. So the map had 'uses' at its centre and destiny.

Around this central heavenly theme lies our journey of growth, our gradual awakening to the spiritual realities and laws that govern our inner lives. Our journey begins with our contact with spiritual ideas, most importantly ideas which disrupt and challenge our old image and notion of self.

The first state of the journey is that of struggling with external concerns. Our external movements, facial expressions, etc initially hide our true will. We mask our private thoughts and desires from public view in our daily interactions. We might worry about what others think of us or even become anxious about making it to heaven. Our personality and ego dominate, but our awareness of our own condition is growing. We struggle with the outer, with the blindness of our thoughts and understanding and the mechanicalness of our actions.

The second state of growth is our moving into more internal concerns. When external things are quietened or stripped away, we can focus more clearly on the quality of our will and intentions. These are the

more hardy to shift and we must intensify the struggle and seek more help. We may begin to see that our heavenly and hellish decisions are steered by the qualities of our internal feelings, beliefs and intentions, choices made with our will which in turn express whatever we love. We see our helplessness reflected in the struggle of challenging how to change what we love.

If, on that journey, we then develop an openness to higher knowledge it can assist us in the form of instruction, synchronistic experience, intuition, dreams etc. which help us to distance ourselves from unhealthy forms of love. There is an active turning away. We grow to love new things. We begin to actively seek freedom from the tyranny of our unhelpful, selfish and unconscious feelings, choices and actions. Simultaneously we are helped to discover uses for which we are uniquely suited and in which we begin to take greater delight in expressing.

David's talk was an excellent presentation, in which he managed to show the personal relevance and practical method of some key points in Swedenborg's spiritual writings, thus making them more accessible to me and others present.

Thanks David!

## Letters

This segment is being introduced to *Candela* to give readers - yourselves - a direct voice and input into your newsletter. You can comment on something published in a previous issue - appreciation, offering another view, open up the topic further, etc. All we ask is that you endeavour to keep your contribution as succinct as possible (a target maximum should be 750 words).

Or, why not ask a question which other readers can grapple with and provide their answers.

So write to us at *Candela*, Swedenborg Centre, 1 Avon Road, North Ryde, NSW 2113 or email at [saa@swedenborg.com.au](mailto:saa@swedenborg.com.au)

**Your contributions are awaited.**

And to begin the section, we have the following email for you to think about and respond to. It comes from Queensland SAA member, Ken Cross.

**In Swedenborg's science of correspondences, does the thing a 'correspondence' corresponds to have a fixed value or are values interchangeable depending on the person?  
If they have a fixed value, is there a catalogue listing?**

Ken





## Correspondences Column ~ Part 12

### ... reflecting on THE HOLY CITY

~ when will it  
come ...



In the first article in this series on *The Holy City*, I gave the answer to the question *Where the City is to be found?* as **within** oneself - in the deep, inner part of the soul, close to God. Now, in this concluding article, it is time to ask *when* will the City descend? When is this prophesied Age of the New Jerusalem to commence? The answer given to John in Revelation is, 'SOON'! (Revelation 22:6,7,10,12,20).

Swedenborg often reminds us how our experiences of space and time are simply 'appearances' - how things appear to our natural and bodily senses - not how they are in reality in eternity. At the corresponding spiritual level - the inner level at which our spiritual senses are aware - 'height', or 'heaven above', as we have seen, is the 'area' of the deeper states of our life - nearer to the Divine Source.

Similarly, 'soon' means close to breaking into awareness of an eternal reality.

We all know the experience of waiting for something, and then when it comes or happens, feeling as if it has always been with us - a happy event, a sad event, a new relationship, or a new state of life: "I can't believe we've only just met, I feel as if I've always known you!" Eternity is always present within the deeper part of spirit. When you enter it by touching on that deeper level, you experience the eternity of some particular aspect of it. The 'soon-ness' of the revelation of the descending City, like the 'at hand-ness of the Kingdom of God', is its closeness to our awareness of it.

Whether or not it breaks into our consciousness now, much later, or never, is up to us - how willing we are to discover the "beam in our eye" that blocks our spiritual vision, and remove it. (Matt. 7:5).

The gates of the City stand open; the eternal Throne, the River and the Tree of Life with healing leaves and heavenly fruit, await us; the invitation to us is loud and clear. "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb" (Rev.21:9).

*Eternity is manifested continually by means of time to those who dwell within time.*

**Swedenborg Secrets of Heaven 1382**

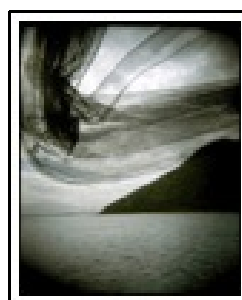
All that is eternal is here and now inside, and always will be, for the things of time are only the changing faces of eternity - the eternal reality of God and his dwelling within us. (Rev. 21:3).

We can learn how to choose and enter now that Dwelling Place of God which is our true eternal Home.

"The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come . . . Yes, I am coming soon. Amen, come, Lord Jesus.'  
(Rev.22:17,20)

*Written by Rev. Dr. Michael Stanley for the  
newsletter of the Swedenborg Movement (UK)*

## NEW PUBLICATIONS



### Audio Talks of Philip W. Groves

Triam Press, publisher of material by Philip Groves, has recently issued 4 Sets of Talks by Dr. Groves professionally remastered onto audio CD. Many readers will be aware that Dr Groves work was directed toward the inner development of a person.

This series of Talks are particularly focussed on the process of transformation and examples of this process are drawn from plant and human biology, chemistry, physics, sacred scriptures of the world and myths – in order to enliven the universal nature of transformation within each of us. The spiritual writings of Swedenborg and works of G. I. Gurdjieff are referred to constantly.

**Each Set retails for \$30.00.** Postage \$2  
(SAA membership discounts apply).

There are two talks in each set.

**Set 1 The Struggle for Consciousness  
& On Being Positive**

**Set 2 The Mythical Nature of Life  
& Influences**

**Set 3 The Vision of New Worlds  
& Regeneration**

**Set 4 Exploring the Sense of Being  
& Healing of the Self**

Contact the Swedenborg Centre, 1 Avon Road, North Ryde, NSW 2113 (phone 02 9888 1066) for more details or to place your order.





## *The Holy Land : It's essential importance*

**I**n the late 1880's, a Mr. Charles H. Allen, then secretary of the British Anti-Slavery Society and an ardent Swedenborgian, supplied the London *Standard* with some extracts of correspondence he had with Major-General Charles George Gordon (1833 - 1885), Queen Victoria's favourite General. Writing from Mauritius on 17th October, 1881, General Gordon thought he had "found the forbidden fruit in the coco de mer at Seychelles". Mr. Allen wrote in reply giving General Gordon a slight sketch of what Swedenborg states as to the spiritual meaning contained in the literal sense of Scripture. General Gordon replied to this exposition in the following words, written at Jerusalem on 9th April, 1883, regarding Palestine and its representation:-

"I also had come to the same conclusion as Swedenborg about this land, the tabernacle, etc. - that they are *plans worked out in us*. All this I thought before and still more out here: it is in fact the only interest the Holy Land has to me, for in reality it never was a very important nation or country, and it is only because *we have it in ourselves* that it is interesting - not only interesting, but instructive. The kings who built walls or portions of walls were kings who succeeded wicked kings, or had repented - the building of walls meaning the bringing into control irregular portions or suburbs of city, that is, of self, after some outbreak or tumult. In fact I could talk for hours with you on these subjects, and in reality I think it was spiritually given me to see the line of the walls before I could see it on ground."

(*The New Age* - 1893)



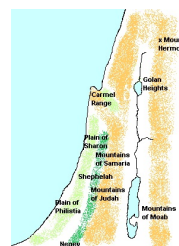
125 years later, Ian Arnold, SAA member and minister in partial retirement to a New Church (Swedenborgian) congregation in Brisbane, reflected on The Holy Land, its locations and sacred places, in the following way:

### *Pilgrimage to Bethlehem*

Whilst it has been more difficult and more hazardous in recent years to do this, hundreds if not thousands of people each year make a point of journeying to Bethlehem to observe Christmas there. Most Christmas Days, or Boxing Days, news broadcasts that I can remember have made mention of the people who have gathered there. "Pilgrimage" is perhaps too strong a word, at least for some, but clearly many find it meaningful to be there at that time of year. A Church has long been built over the spot where Jesus is said to have been born and packed Services are held in it.

People have asked me whether I would like to visit, or make a pilgrimage to, Bethlehem or, more generally, to the Holy Land. I wonder what you feel? I have never been there and would, in fact, be ambivalent if the opportunity arose to go. Some who go speak glowingly of the experience and others are disappointed. Not surprisingly none of those places are as they once would have been. Jerusalem is not the place it was in Biblical times, nor is Bethlehem, nor Nazareth or Capernaum or Cana or any of the other towns, villages, and locations we are familiar with from the Bible. Centuries of history have intervened since then.

And yet, though I haven't visited Bethlehem and probably never will, I can visit it in other ways, as indeed you can as well. At one level, as is obvious, we can visit it in our imagination, as most of us do.



Countless Christmas cards depict it and a picture image of it can't but come to mind as we hear or read the Christmas stories, more so from Luke's Gospel, but also from Matthew's.

Here, though, is another and - I suggest - a more rewarding way of visiting Bethlehem.

All those towns, villages, rivers and locations we read about in the Word hold up something to us about ourselves. Just think about it. There were places of frenzied activity (such as Jerusalem) and places of peace and tranquillity. There were places of fruitfulness and other places which were desert. There were mountains and valleys; also places of life and places of death. And what this does is reflect back to us what is true of ourselves. Within ourselves there are places of frenzied activity and places of peace and tranquillity. There are places of fruitfulness and other places which are desert. Within us, too, there are mountains and valleys; places of life and places of death.



Bethlehem, where of course the Lord was born into this world, is known to have been small and tucked away. It wasn't big time. Since centuries past the spotlight had shifted to what was bigger and in its way, brassier, the city of Jerusalem. What we also know is that Bethlehem had come to be overlooked as a possible place for the birth of the Messiah. (Matthew 2:2)

Somewhere in us there is a place that is small and tucked away; that is easily overlooked; a place - or "state" - that is not even considered a possibility for something as life changing as the Lord's birth in us to take place. It is our Bethlehem.

This is for sure, that the Lord is always with each and everyone of us, deeply within. But He seeks to break through into the lower and more outer levels of our thoughts and feelings. This is what His being born in us is all about. But such a break through, or breaking in, of His love and light only happens in Bethlehem - our Bethlehem. And here is the lovely, but also challenging teaching given to us in Swedenborg's spiritual writings about it; about this "place" in our lives; this "state" in us; which Bethlehem is.

The key passage is in **Apocalypse Explained, paragraph 449<sup>3</sup>** where, in discussing the meaning of Bethlehem it talks of *an eagerness for good and being filled with longing for truth*.

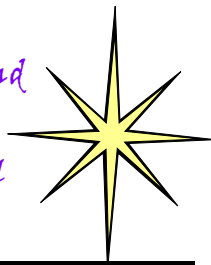
Bethlehem, as we noted, wasn't centre stage, and none of us is going to claim that an eagerness for good and being filled with a longing for truth is wholly centre stage with us. But it doesn't have to be. It might be small, tucked away, overlooked, life on the whole rushing by it. But this is the "state" in which the Lord breaks through, or makes his Advent, into those more external levels of our lives and where, spiritually, life begins to be turned around.

With thoughts of Christmas beginning, now, to come to mind we could all do with making a pilgrimage to Bethlehem, to check it out. We can all do with re-invigorating this state, which Bethlehem is, asking the Lord to renew our eagerness for good and to fill us with a longing for truth; also to help us remove whatever it may be that blunts and dulls such eagerness and longing with us.

*"But you, Bethlehem-Ephrathah, though you be little among the thousands of Judah yet out of you shall come forth to me the one to be ruler in Israel."* Micah 5:2



*We wish our readers a Christmastide full of Joy, Wonder and Peace. May 2009 be filled with a renewed sense of using the truth we have discovered in ways to further personal spirituality and be a beacon of light for those around us.*



### Next Issue

**March 2009**

**Theme: *Fast-forwarding on Eternity***  
(Death and the Spiritual World)

*Now this is a huge topic to get your teeth into. There are a good number of avenues to pursue - your own 'projected' anticipation of life in the next world; the nuts and bolts of the spiritual cosmos; even relating a "passing over" experience of a loved one with its effects then and now. And if you would like to review a book, we will be pleased send you one gratis.*

Please reflect on this subject and make a contribution for the benefit of everyone who reads this newsletter. The Newsletter Co-ordinator will gratefully receive submissions you wish to make, either your own or something you have seen that strikes a chord with you. However, contributions don't have to be on the theme; anything which is spiritually-based will be welcomed. The deadline for the issue is 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2009.

Please direct material by mail or email to *Candela* at the registered office (page 2).



## Discounted Items for the Quarter

As a reader of **Candela**, if you order the following titles in the January to March 2009 Quarter, you will receive approx. 25% off the retail price - while stocks last.

(see the discounted price and postage on the form below)

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### **Journal of Dreams** by E. Swedenborg (194 pages, paper)

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*And for the Holiday Break.....*



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## WHAT'S HAPPENING?

For Group activities, contact your nearest Group Convenor

- Brisbane (Ian Arnold on (07) 3369 0054)
- Gold Coast (Kevin Attwater on (07) 5545 2401 and Jack Benson on (07) 5545 4115);
- Melbourne (Chris Skinner on (03) 9432 0322; email: cskinner9@optusnet.com.au);
- Perth (Trevor Moffat on (08) 9641 6147; email: trevormoffat@bordnet.com.au;)
- Sydney region (Michael Chester on (02) 9944 0497; email: mchester@accsoft.com.au);



It would be good to establish Groups in other areas. If you can help, please contact Michael Chester.

**Brisbane:** New Church Hall, 21 Agars Street, Rosalie.

**Melbourne:** New Church Hall, 426 High Street Road, Mount Waverley. Last Fridays commencing 8pm.

**Sydney:** Swedenborg Centre, 1 Avon Road, North Ryde.

**Perth:** Petros Lifeskills Bookshop, 281 Albany Highway, Victoria Park.

Now that activities for this year are complete, planning is now underway to provide an exciting and varied program for 2009. Details will be advised to those living in closer proximity to the venues as soon as they are known. Our website is updated when new information comes available - [www.swedenborg.com.au](http://www.swedenborg.com.au)

*Knowing Others is wisdom; knowing yourself is enlightenment. ~ Lao Tzu*

*Follow effective action with quiet reflection. From quiet reflection will come even more effective action. ~ Peter F. Drucker*

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