



Candela

Newsletter of the Swedenborg Association of Australia Ltd.

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November 1998

Issue 17

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Three of our inaugural Board members retired in accordance with the Articles of our Association. We thank Kevin Attwater, Ruth Duckworth and Jack Benson for their dedicated and enthusiastic work since our beginnings just six years ago.

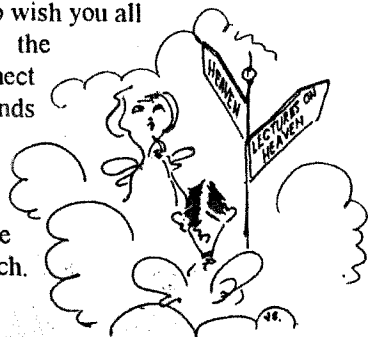
In founding the Association, it was felt that if the writings and insights of Emanuel Swedenborg were brought before a wider public, many of today's questions would be answered.

In earlier times civilisations had creation myths which bound the people back to the Source. There is an inherent need to understand our beginnings. We see it in genealogy where we follow our ancestors back in time on the family tree until the trail fades. Where families are suddenly cut off at birth and children are orphaned, there is a natural tendency to rediscover the parent.

Today, to return to the Source, we need guidance. This guidance can come from the church or from a "teacher". The monthly talks put on by our Association by individuals can give a varied approach to this search and I encourage members and their friends to avail themselves of these opportunities.

Swedenborg's writings are not easy to read at first. A common experience however is that what was at first quite a chore becomes very soon a delight. I see one of the aims of the Association is to provide a path through Swedenborg's writings for this journey back to the Source.

I take this opportunity to wish you all the compliments of the Season, a time to reconnect with family and friends and a time to ponder the greatest gift of all, the coming of Jesus to live amongst us and give us direction in our search.



John Brogan

Reflection

We are already living in quite remarkable times, but as we approach the new millennium it is evident that what lies ahead will prove even more so. So far as is known, human existence on earth has never before possessed the technological knowledge or ability to discover so much about ourselves and the world in which we live, as we have to-day.

Whether all this knowledge and ability has brought us any closer to fulfilling the purpose for which God created us, or for that matter even understanding just what that purpose is, is very much another matter!

Mankind appears to have always held a belief in some kind of Supreme Power that should be held in awe and wonderment - even worshipped in one form or another; from earliest times when primitive man believed forces of nature were gods down through the ages to the regimented but abstract faiths of to-day, it has been generally accepted that we are answerable to some such power for the manner in which we live our lives.

Unhappily, support and belief in such faiths has proved to ebb and flow like the tides and created an impression that human behaviour is failing to keep pace with the greater understanding expected to come with knowledge. There are many of the Christian faith who would believe the old established churches have not always provided the kind of example they should, and have spent too much time and resource preserving their own influence, rather as though religion is a competitive game.

It is certainly difficult not to observe the current movement in other directions, particularly amongst younger generations, towards "new" churches that offer what are seen as more positive answers to questions of faith - answers that rely less upon ancient dogma or symbolic obscurity.

In a way it is a pity Emmanuel Swedenborg is not writing of his experiences in our times, since he would unquestionably have advocated the much more pragmatic and (if the metaphors may be excused) "down-to-earth" approach to understanding life, death and God.

Whilst the language of Swedenborg's writings is that of his time, the message it contains is no less valid for that, and it is important to emphasise, is being substantiated by discoveries only now made possible by technological advances.

Recent publicity has drawn attention to two of many developments that could not have been carried out without computers: two discoveries that serve to not only underline new dimensions being added to investigative science, but would also seem to support important aspects of spirituality described by Swedenborg.

The first of these is attributed to a well known and respected mathematician (and confirmed by a number of equally well known scholars and other appropriately qualified experts in their fields) that by applying "skip-coding" techniques to the text of the original Hebrew Bible, a whole host of what were then future world history making events became identified! Given Swedenborg's insistence upon the Bible being "The Word of God" the framework around which human existence is constructed a discovery of the nature claimed would seem to demand much more attention from theologians than has, so far, become evident.

The second discovery is very different but in it's own way just as significant: it is a further example of the immensely widened scope brought about by modern technology. Also the work of a mathematician, Professor Benoit Mandelbrot, it involves both fractile geometry and the use of the most advanced magnification processes, and is directed to proving the hitherto conceptual theory of infinity.

Every single thing in this material world, animate and inanimate, has a beginning and an end as part of the continuous, ceaseless cycle of metamorphosis; many religious faiths, including Christianity, are founded upon the belief in infinite spiritual life. Indeed, the concept of Deity can be said to depend upon it, and it is for that reason Mandelbrot's discovery is described as "The Thumbprint of God".

Explained simply, he expressed the equation for infinity as a geometric form which, when continuously magnified has been shown to reproduce itself within itself for ever!

Those who have further investigated Mandelbrot's work confirm that the "set" he has produced may be magnified a thousand, a million, a trillion times etc. but continues to reveal more and more of it's own images!

To many, all this might appear as no more than a mildly intriguing diversion having no practical application outside the restricted world of mathematics, but in the context of mankind's urgent need to better understand and accept spiritual reasons for change such developments ought to be seen for what they really are, and be directed to stimulating and encouraging awareness of life's true meaning. An awareness no longer impeded by man-induced mystery!

Is it likely, or possible that increasing interest in new forms of religious thought that is attracting young people today could lead to a more open approach to debate about God, and a more receptive attitude to reality of spirit as a personal feature in our lives?

Well, the writer of this paper hopes and believes it is... and that perhaps the support we see them expending to protection of the environment justifies such confidence.

For those who seek to understand their own spirituality, help and guidance are always close at hand, but all too often they are impeded by unsuspected inhibitions of our own making. We should not expect spiritual enlightenment to come suddenly to us like a revelation - although that can happen - for the voices of God's messengers are soft and will only be heard when listened for. To quote from the words of just such a messenger:-

"I shatter the glass of illusions and disillusion - and delusions where they exist. Upon my hand I wear a velvet glove, my touch is soft, a gentle kiss like a change of wind. See my reflection as in the glass of a mirror: look! and see yourself peering back at me."

Can more thought provoking words be imagined? ...and is there not, within them, reason to be optimistic with the knowledge that such guidance is ever near?

*Peter Bartlett, Port Macquarie.
Entry in the 1997 Swedenborg Literary Award*

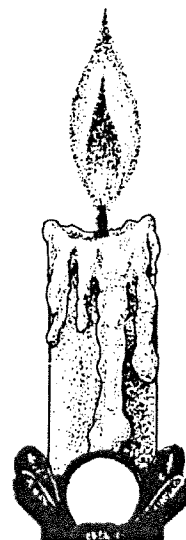
Quotation to Contemplate

..... Louise Brogan

"Yet the Divine Trinity ought to shine like a lantern in the minds of the people who make up the church, since God in His Trinity and in the oneness of the Trinity is the ultimate of all holiness in heaven and the church. To make one God out of the soul, another out of the body and a third out of the activity is no different from making three separate parts out of those three essentials of a single person, and this is dismembering and killing him.

This Trinity did not exist before the creation of the world, but it was provided and made after the creation of the world, when God became incarnate, and then was in the Lord God, the Redeemer and Saviour, Jesus Christ."

from "The True Christian Religion" 169 and 170



SECRETARY'S REPORT

Current Board members:

President	-	John Brogan
Secretary	-	Michael Chester
Treasurer	-	Louise Brogan
Directors	-	Julian Duckworth
	-	Alexis Jarvis
	-	Wayne Kasmar
		Chris Skinner

Ways to contact Board members to pass on feedback or ask questions relating to the SAA:

1. Phone them

Michael Chester	(02) 9498 9703 (W).
John & Louise Brogan	(02) 9974 4647 (W).
Alexis Jarvis	(02) 9845 7281 (W).
Julian Duckworth	(02) 9416 7032 (W).
Wayne Kasmar	(02) 9905 3563 (H).
Chris Skinner	(03) 9435 8599 (H).

2. Email them

Michael Chester:	mchester@accsoft.com.au
Alexis Jarvis:	jarvisoz@ozemail.com.au
Chris Skinner:	skinner@eisa.net.au
John & Louise Brogan:	brogans@bigpond.com
Julian Duckworth:	magenta@backmeup.net.au

or

3. Write to the Board Member c/o The Swedenborg Centre.

Dates for 1999 Board meetings:

The next 4 Board meetings in 1999 will be held on
Tuesday
19th January
20th April
20th July
19th October.

That is, the 3rd Tuesday of the above months. Members are welcomed to attend these meetings at the Swedenborg Centre starting at 7.30pm.

Group News:

The *North Ryde* Committee continues organizing monthly meetings with a guest speaker on the fourth Friday evening of the month. About 20 people attended Julian Duckworth's talk titled 'Picking up the scent' in July. It looked at why we are attracted to some people and not others and the invisible sphere we give out and pick up. A small group of people participated in the 'Affirmations' workshop facilitated by Julian and Ruth Duckworth on Saturday the 22nd August. The workshop aimed at assisting people move away from negative doubts, weakening fears and into a new positive feeling about themselves and life.

Many people made favourable comments on the Celebration of Spring held on Saturday 5th September. Julian helped us to appreciate the inner meaning of Spring. Colleen deWinton delighted the audience with her story of a caterpillar being transformed into a butterfly. Trude Aspelung had the audience singing along with her and added to the joy of the evening. Chris McClelland recounted the story of Persephone in his talk titled 'Spring: the mythology of spiritual renewal'. The Zephyr choir conducted by Roy Simmonds sang *Vilja* by Franz Lehar (from the *Merry Widow*) & *The Lord bless you and keep you* (a benediction) by John Rutter. The magic of the night was captured on video and is available at the

Swedenborg Centre. Please ring (02) 9888 1066 if you would like to borrow it. It was a very happy and enjoyable evening.

An evening of Poetry and Art (related to the Celebration of Spring) was held on Friday the 25th of September. This was a very pleasant evening where the artists shared some of the background to their works.

On Friday 23rd October about 30 people attended John Brogan's talk 'Returning to the Source .. Architecturally'. On display was a dodecahedron to illustrate the beauties of geometry and a model of the pyramids at Giza to illustrate this particular wonder from Ancient Egypt. His talk shed light on how the Ancient Egyptians were involved in an epic view of life which gave meaning to their existence. John's popular talk was videoed so that those who were unable to be there can still gain from his work. It is available at the Swedenborg Centre.

On Friday 27th November there will be an informal evening where those who come are invited to bring along a favourite quote from Swedenborg's writings, or other inspirational passage which can be shared with everyone else. Hoping many in the Sydney area can make it for the last gathering in 1998 where there will be a special supper with a Christmas flavour.

The outline of the 1999 programme is being worked out. Julian Duckworth will be giving a Swedenborg birthday lecture on Friday 29th January 1999. Details of forthcoming activities/meetings are listed on the back page. Any suggestions for the 1999 North Ryde programme can be passed onto Michael Chester by calling (02) 9498 9703 (W) or (02) 9913 2421 (H). Suggestions to be given by Saturday 19th December 1998.

The *Melbourne Group* also continues to meet monthly (usually every fourth Friday) to hear and discuss a talk from a guest speaker or their Convenor Chris Skinner.

SAA Internet Web site:

John Byrnes is looking after the SAA Web Site at <http://www2.dynamite.com.au/saa/>

Email addresses of some members:

John Byrnes:	jbyrnes@pcug.org.au
Neville Jarvis	sllandec@swedenborg.com.au
Kevin Attwater:	attwaterk@bigpond.com.au

We would like to keep our membership database up-to-date with email addresses. If you have an email address please send Michael (mchester@accsoft.com.au) a greeting so that your email address can be recorded. Thanks!

Concluding quotation and message from the Secretary ~

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6-7.

May Christmas be a very special time in your life as we invite an innocent child into our lives. May he help us let go of the outer self and enjoy the blessings that come from the inner life.

Michael Chester

Questions and Answers

"Questions & Answers", a regular *Candela* column, is an open forum in which readers can participate by contributing questions, comments and answers. Questions may cover any philosophical or theological topic. Anyone wishing to make a response in writing is invited to do so and depending on space constraints these will also be printed in "Questions & Answers".

Contributions (which may or may not relate to Swedenborg or his ideas) can be sent to "Questions & Answers" C/- Wayne Kasmer, 61 Surfers Parade, Harbord, NSW 2096.

Continuing our look at the series of questions provided by Waldis Jirgens and printed in Issue 15 of *Candela*, Waldis' third question reads:

"Swedenborg assumes that animals do not have souls, nor even thought (Divine Providence 74ff). Every dog-owner can confirm that their dogs dream. Primate behaviour includes grieving over dead friends and mates. Most of us will remember the chimp, who "talked" to her keeper via a computer. The spiritualist literature has examples of animal apparition. It doesn't look good for Swedenborg's theory, does it?"

To properly understand Swedenborg's explanation of the difference between man and the animals we need to understand the nature of God and the relationship he has with his creation. In other words, we need to understand some very basic things about life and its meaning.

Firstly, Swedenborg talks about every person having a ruling love. Each person has a particular love which is nothing less than their very life. They have subsidiary loves, but in reality these eventually serve this central love. Now, like others, God himself has a ruling love. The love that constitutes His whole life is nothing other than love towards others. So far as He is concerned, nothing else really matters.

The second thing we need to look at is the subject of free will. Swedenborg explains that God chooses never to interfere with our free will in regard to choosing either good and truth on the one hand, or evil and falsity on the other. Swedenborg stresses this most strongly, and when we consider the demands of God's ruling love we will begin to see why this is.

As God experiences it, only creatures of free will seem to Him to be distinctly separate from Himself. If a creature were instantaneously to do whatever God desired, then it would not seem to Him to be a separate, other being. Rather it would be merely an extension of Him. It would be no different to His little finger. No sooner would He desire that the creature act in a certain way and it would automatically do it.

This analogy allows us to understand something of the mind and heart of God. We hardly appreciate our little fingers, let alone really love them, despite the great service they do us. If a thing is fundamentally a part of us we tend to take it for granted. We can never really have a love affair with it. Once something is separated from us, however, things change dramatically. Should we be so unfortunate to have our little finger chopped off, then our loving feelings for the severed member can be quite strong indeed.

The fact that God's ruling love is love towards others means that He will never impose His will upon them. If He did, they would cease to be separate from Him. Their identity would become lost in His. Because He is really interested only in the happiness and welfare of others, He is therefore never going to do anything which lessens the sense of 'otherness' that they have for Him.

So a creature, if it is to seem to God to be separate from and other than Him, needs to be able to choose freely between a life of good and truth or a life of evil and falsity. This creature, therefore, needs to be able to consider its own thoughts and feelings - God given things that are part of its natural being. Basically this means it needs to have thoughts and feelings about its thoughts and feelings. With this capability it can then judge whether or not it is in its best interests to follow them in the way it lives its life. This constitutes the spiritual dimension of life and man alone is the only creature that has it.

Animals on the other hand have no thoughts and feelings about their thoughts and feelings. They have only the natural thoughts and feelings which are part of their created being. They are like computers. They can act according only to their programming. They cannot go against their instincts because they have no faculty for pondering their own inner life.

Because they have no capacity to scrutinize and judge their own motivations, they have no free will, and this being the case God has no real interest in them except so far as they prove useful to His purposes in making man happy.

In the passage of "Divine Wisdom" (74) to which Waldis draws our attention, Swedenborg describes the internal self-awareness that makes man unique and so very important to God. He also makes it clear that it is of a higher nature. So much so in fact that he speaks of it as though it is the only true thought - something which is higher and nobler than the natural thoughts that are common to all creatures.

But we certainly are not strangers ourselves to thinking of thought in this way. We talk of someone who is kind and considerate as being "thoughtful". This is a human characteristic that really doesn't apply to animals. And so Swedenborg makes the statement that has caught Waldis' eye:

"Animals do not have thought, but instead an internal sight which makes one with their external sight by correspondence".

Animals have mental activity which is really no more than a stimulus-response process. Even the higher animals function in this way and are without a spiritual dimension.

God provides us with animals for our happiness. That is the reason they exist. They contribute to human happiness in ways both outward and inward. Outwardly they work for us and provide us with companionship and recreation. Inwardly they picture our emotions, feelings and desires. They mirror for us perfectly all the qualities, both wonderful and frightening that make up these living things. And by this means we are given by God an invaluable understanding of our inner life which helps us in our decision in whether or not we are going to live according to heavenly principles.

Wayne Kasmer

Introduction

A one-day SAA workshop on "Affirmations" took place in August. This article gives the essence of the workshop and some of the content. What's particularly striking is the amount of direct reference in Swedenborg's writings to the whole area of positive affirmation. The idea itself is a fairly contemporary one, with articles and books by people like Louise Hay and others bringing it to the fore as a valuable tool for changing one's life, attitudes and relationships.

About Affirmations

An affirmation is a short statement which, through repetition, becomes implanted in the subconscious mind and influences you to bring about a change in your life. This idea is not new; it's been used for centuries. The technique is not magical or mysterious but is simply a way of instructing the deeper level of the mind to produce new and different messages. To understand affirmations, you need to know how your subconscious works.

Some of the ways in which you can use affirmations is to write them down and stick them around your room, say them several times a day, sing them, shout them, sleep on them. It's the frequency of using them that seems to be a key factor. Begin the day with them; say them over coffee or lunch, but perhaps the best time is just before you go to sleep, as you then hand the message over to your subconscious for several hours.

Making a start

Establish the specific area you want to deal with. Some areas are self-esteem, love and relationships, creativity, work, prosperity, health, and spiritual development. It will help to have a cross-section of several areas to create a proper balance. If you are after prosperity, this could leave you in poor health with relationships suffering - an imbalance.

Establish your achievable goal and the various steps involved in attaining it. Both of these should be carefully formulated in words. You should also have a plan of action in mind.

Helpful points

Always use the present tense, "I now have all that I need." Avoid using the future, as the results will always be waiting to happen. Your subconscious hears what you say, not what you think you mean. Use the most positive terms you can, avoid negative statements. For example, don't say "I don't want to smoke" but "I have pure clean fresh air." Your subconscious selects key words and ideas such as I - want - smoke (unhelpful) or I - have - fresh - air." Our subconscious is non-critical and will generally believe what it receives. Keep affirmations short and specific. Repeat them as much as you can. Be involved in the words and feel them. You do not have to believe the affirmation to make it work - belief will come as you see the change. But you do need to feel positive about making the affirmation. Your affirmation must feel right for you, in its wording and direction. It also helps to visualize your goal, and to see yourself as already having

obtained the outcome. Again, the subconscious works with what it gets.

The Spiritual Connection

Affirmations have the ability to point out what is fundamentally true about our existence. They cut through the impressions we have, and through life's appearances and bring us back to the core, to the truth, to God and the Divine. This is perhaps their greatest use to us, as reminders, even jolts - a kind of spiritual shock therapy.

Here are 3 misinterpretations about life - due to us calling an appearance the reality - which can often dominate our mind:

God is outside of me
I am bad, wrong
Other people see my badness

We need to turn these false notions right round and strongly affirm the opposite truth:

God is the perfection within me
I have goodness within me from God
Other people love God's goodness they see in me

And so on. We have to shape the affirmation carefully with the precise words we want to say. What we are really doing is centering on the Divine and allowing the Divine in life to be expressed and declared.

The Swedenborg Connection

Swedenborg frequently mentions the 'affirmative principle' (heaven) in contrast to the 'negative principle' (hell). But in a broader sense, Swedenborg is always saying that as we acknowledge the reality of the Divine, of heaven, of what is higher and truer in life, what is good and useful etc., so we come to receive the effect and benefit of this open acknowledgement. We become the pivot into which the quality we choose can come. In a word, we are choice-makers.

Here are a number of short Swedenborg statements on affirmations ~

Evil spirits inspire what is negative; good spirits and angels dispel this and hold the person in hope, and at last confirm what is affirmative.

Negativity leads to insanity; affirmation about the Lord leads to peace.

To affirm when in doubt allows the Lord to bend a person towards good.

Children are kept in affirmative feelings by the Lord. Affirmation brings a person from obscurity into light. "Swearing by God" in the Bible means affirmation.

Affirmation leads a person from outward life to inner life and to the beginning of regeneration.

Affirmation must have affection in it to take effect.

In temptation, only affirmation of holiness and goodness has any effect, and only those who can affirm these are tempted. A "handmaid" in the Bible stands for affirmation which serves regeneration.

Spiritual struggles lead to stronger affirmation.

Those who affirm leave what they don't yet understand to one side.

The Lord confirms the truth that a person speaks as from himself by an affirmation in his heart that doesn't come openly into his thought.

When a person sees the Word as the Word, and the Lord as the Lord, even though he only dimly sees this, still very many affirmative ideas are introduced by the Lord.

Some Affirmations based on central teachings in Swedenborg

Here are some of Swedenborg's main teachings turned into short affirmations. You can, of course, start to create your own. Turning a teaching into an affirmation allows us to identify with an idea. That becomes a very powerful and valuable tool for us.

- I am infinitely loved by God
- I am eternally led by God
- God is completely present in me
- God is creating heaven in me
- God is among all people everywhere
- I am continually provided for by God
- God's life flows through me endlessly
- I am now opening my whole life to God
- I am following all light I see

- God is in every pure wish and action
- Every part of creation is my own mirror
- My life continually flows in from God
- I am created to receive love and wisdom
- I now choose only heavenly qualities
- I am deeply happy in serving God
- I am a unique and special creation of God
- I will live in heaven for ever
- I treasure every moment in my life
- I write truth every day in my book of life
- I am continually saved when I turn towards God
- I turn towards goodness and truth
- I am now alive in the world of the spirit
- I have angels and spirits with me now
- I am in perfect balance: I am free to choose
- I seek what is true and love what is good
- I love and respect every creation of God
- I feel joy in everything in life
- I willingly take part in the work of life
- God continually creates me anew
- I live fully in this present moment
- I have strength and courage to be who I am
- I trust God and know all is well
- Life is an eternal adventure.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

For Group activities, contact your nearest Group Convenor

- Sydney region (Michael Chester on 9498 9703);
- Melbourne (Chris Skinner on 9435 8599);
- Perth - new Convenor is required for this Group.

It would be good to see additional viable Groups established in new areas. If you can help contact Michael Chester.

FORTHCOMING SAA PUBLIC MEETINGS

NORTH RYDE GROUP: Friday, 29th January - Swedenborg Birthday Meeting: Speaker - Julian Duckworth
The program for 1999 is being arranged and will be available in January. Topics will include Calligraphy, benefits gained from Swedenborg's Writings, sacred architecture.

MELBOURNE GROUP: First meeting for 1999 - Friday, 26th February - program to be announced.

OBJECTS OF THE SWEDENBORG ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

a non-profit autonomous company:

- Promoting Emanuel Swedenborg as a scientist, philosopher and religious visionary, by means of his inspired writings, through meetings, lectures, and other functions
- Making available information on topical subjects drawing on Swedenborg's own contribution to stimulate interest and discussion
- Establishing, operating and supporting branches around Australia
- Providing material for the purpose of maintaining local libraries

Everyone wishing to subscribe to these objects can take up membership. There is a once off joining fee of \$10.00 and an annual subscription of \$25.00 (concession rate of \$15.00).

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- + A 20% discount at Australian Swedenborg book distribution centres.
- + Joining together as a group with other members living in close proximity.
- + A Swedenborgian based book, tape or video is sent to each financial member each year.

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