

# Candela



Newsletter of the Swedenborg Association of Australia Inc.

Organisational Details are provided on the next page

**December 2019**

**ISSUE 98**

**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

Welcome to our final edition of Candela for 2019

To all of you that are experiencing the anguish of bushfires that are too close for comfort and to all those who have suffered as these frightening fires continue, we send our thoughts and prayers. To those brave souls who put their lives on the line to protect others from the flames, we express our heartfelt thanks and admiration.

For those of you that relate to the correspondences of those words, and I know that's most if not all of you reading this, we can reflect on the goodness of the firefighters, particularly the volunteers, who



put themselves in harm's way to protect others from the devastating impact of these hellish fires, for no other reason than the charity of what they can do to help others. We are very blessed that the best in so many people comes to the fore at such a time. *\*\* Continued on page 2 \*\**

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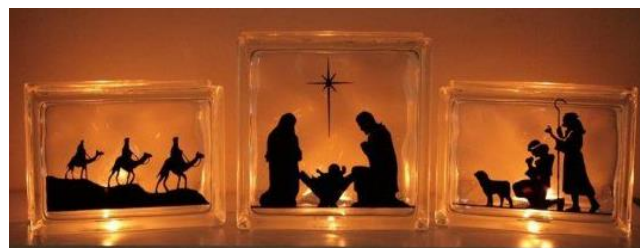
Very best wishes to you all, I hope that you have a very Happy Christmas with all your loved ones around you.

Our next issue of Candela is in March.

The deadline is **15th February 2020**  
Please send me any articles or questions you would like answered.

Email to [ruth@duckworth.me](mailto:ruth@duckworth.me) or post to the registered office.

*Ruth*



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



## SWEDENBORG ASSOCIATION of Australia Inc

ARBN 109 811 985

### Registered Office:

Swedenborg Centre

4 Shirley Road, Roseville NSW 2069

Tel: 02 9416 2812

Email: [saa@swedenborg.com.au](mailto:saa@swedenborg.com.au)

Website: [www.swedenborg.com.au](http://www.swedenborg.com.au)

### National Committee Members:

Jan Primrose (President)

Wayne Kasmar (Secretary)

Joe Vandermeer (Treasurer)

Julian Duckworth

Ruth Duckworth

Florence Royce

Howard Thompson

Debra Thompson

Newsletter: Ruth Duckworth

Public Officer: Joe Vandermeer

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

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

\* \* continued from page 1 \* \*

On a brighter note, your Committee has recently held several brain-storming sessions to identify more ways that we can support, inform, enlighten and engage people who are interested in Swedenborg's works. Suggestions flowed thick and fast with a new regular Saturday meeting starting up next month (see note on the back page). Other ideas included such things as seminars, film nights, reading groups, internet panel discussions, storytelling and weekends away, amongst a host of other concepts. If there's anything that you think you'd particularly like to do, send an email to [joe@swedenborg.com.au](mailto:joe@swedenborg.com.au) and let us know about your idea.

A couple of new booklets are also in the works with the SAA's very own author Julian Duckworth putting in lots of work to get these completed. We hope you enjoyed your annual member's gift of the book "Overcoming Divisiveness", a great Swedenborg Foundation publication with

useful insights to keep us all on track. You can keep up to date with all the latest news, talks and inspirational memes on the Swedenborg Association of Australia Facebook page and a SAA Youtube Channel has just been set up which we'll provide more information about shortly. Life isn't meant to be boring.

As we're less than a month away from wonderful Christmas and all that means to us, on behalf of the SAA Committee, we wish you a loving, happy and restful Christmas to you and your family and friends.

*kindest wishes*

*Jan*

## Welcome to the new members of the Swedenborg Association of Australia.

John Byrnes (NSW)

Florence Royce (NSW)

Barry Atkinson (VIC)

Dianne Heath (NSW)

## Christmas Reflections 2019 By Elizabeth Deutscher

*Lord, at Christmas you appear as a babe in Bethlehem. Baby Jesus is God's love-child. Lord, our spirits soar as we ponder your eternal Christmas message. We live this love in our hearts and minds.*

*My daughter, Ruth, was born on 7<sup>th</sup> September 1977. On Christmas eve we traveled from Victoria to the Blue Mountains, NSW. Ruth was baptized at Lawson Uniting Church by her grandfather, my Dad, Rev Gordon Riley on Christmas day 1977. It was a joyous occasion and a lovely family time shared. We experienced afresh the love, hope, joy and peace that Jesus brings at Christmas.*

*Lord, at Christmas baby Jesus brings peace to our hearts, minds and lives. We live reborn in our lives, our family, our community, our country and our world.*

*Lord, we live in you. We live through you. You live in us.*

*Lord, we celebrate you at Christmas.*

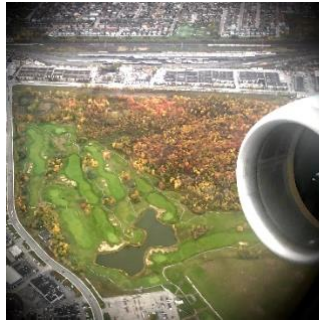
**Thank you, Lord! We praise you, Lord! Shalom**



## Around the world in 11 ways

By Joe Vandermeer

Well, I'm glad to be home after the 11 plane-rides which brought me back safe and sound. It's a funny irony: always moving forward in the same direction, yet you end up back where you started. I don't travel much overseas anymore these days, so I had almost forgotten what an enriching experience it can be to return home with wonderful new experiences to digest and be nourished by for a long time to come.



On take-off, all the frantic organizing activity of the last few days parachuted away. Flying is for me like taking a trip heaven-wards, ascending through billowing clouds, the busy life below receding from view and mind, a decluttered mind giving me the chance to ponder the big questions in life, and catch up on a long overdue backlog of movies, while being waited upon by friendly staff plying us repeatedly with more food and drink (not always of equally heavenly quality, yet good enough to satisfy the stomach).

First destination was a week in the UK, landing in Manchester amidst a forest of wind turbines gracing the rolling green hills. Drove to Ripon, in Yorkshire (I think of it as the UK's girdle on the map). Ripon has a cathedral and university. It is where my friend Katy Wild had moved from Australia several years ago, a long way from Queenscliff beach where she previously lived. I landed on her 79<sup>th</sup> birthday, and it was a happy reunion. We had a lovely day at the Purley Chase Retreat Centre where we met lots of nice people and were shown the newly painted colourful mural of the days of creation.



One day I visited London and checked out the "Michael Church" where a Swedenborgian congregation meets. Then to the Tate gallery which had a fabulous William

Blake exhibition. Alas, the commentary didn't seem to explain much of Blake's spiritual symbolism, nor did it mention the spiritual sources of ideas which influenced him so deeply. I felt sorry for the poor audio-guide receptionist who collected my audio-tour headphones while apologetically saying she was powerless to do anything about my well-intended feedback.

After this I met up with Stephen McNeilly, who is Executive Director at Swedenborg House, a bookshop and Event Centre wonderfully located in the heart of London a mere stone's throw from the British Museum (had they been any closer, the stones would have broken their windows; or perhaps the stones went in the opposite direction). But there is one stone that will never leave the British Museum. Its superstar, the Rosetta Stone. Before queueing up to see it with loads of other eager people, I first had to endure some serious meandering through miles of winding security chicanes and have our bags scrupulously checked. Standard security procedures, apparently, reminding me that this was no ordinary tourist attraction. Once inside, I couldn't see the stone for the hundreds of people who surrounded it with cameras flashing. So, I headed over to the museum shop to surround myself with hundreds of Rosetta Stones, enjoying a coffee in a Rosetta Stone mug. Literally everything in the shop bore its hieroglyph-strewn image, from neckties to handbags, handkerchiefs and mobile phone cases, cushions, stationary, socks, keyrings, water bottles, rucksacks, postcards, jigsaws, fridge magnets, tea towels, tee-shirts, cufflinks, ... Yet whenever I think of the



Rosetta Stone, I nowadays am reminded of Swedenborg. For me, he is THE 'Rosetta Stone', since his writings opened such solid doors to enable our understanding of the sacred language of spirit. When a Swedish university declined Swedenborg's offer to translate the Egyptian Hieroglyphs, it meant we had to wait for Napoleon's soldiers to find the stone in 1799 which provided the clue that unravelled the mysteries of the ancient





Egyptian language, their spiritual beliefs and culture.

Only a week later, I landed in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to check out the intentional community of Bryn Athyn (Welsh for "Hill of Unity"), a lush green spacious town with beautifully designed and maintained buildings and grounds, among them an international jewel of a monument, the Bryn Athyn (Swedenborgian) cathedral. This was built in the Gothic style in the early nineteen hundreds with generous funds from the wealthy Pitcairn family who had made their fortune mainly from the plate-glass industry, and who then devoted several generations to building the community, its colleges, and their own homes and extensive gardens. Everything in and on the cathedral is intentionally designed and crafted to perfection to reflect some particular teaching detail from Swedenborg's writings. They even painstakingly ensured that everything in and on the cathedral is totally unique, every key, every hinge, handle, window, door, even column. Everything is a one-off design, literally a feast of creativity to honour the perfection of heaven (which is perpetually being perfected by the infinite variety being added to it by each individual). The window designers rediscovered the recipe for making Gothic stained glass, which accounts for the rich colour in windows filled with instructive images. And there was a cute Lego scale model of the cathedral by Solomon Keal in the foyer.

On seeing several deer crossing the local roads, and with the warm and friendly town inhabitants (most of whom are related to each other), you could be forgiven for thinking you've arrived in heaven. On the drive from Philadelphia airport to Bryn Athyn, I had expected to experience a gradual transition from city to rural landscape, but I was barely clear

of the heavy traffic when suddenly there appeared the town, a green oasis providing relief from the barren city sights of concrete and cars.



My hosts, Steve and Margit Irwin were wonderful people, and it didn't take long before I was friends with many of the town's folks. Roslyn Taylor also made sure I was introduced around town, including meeting the industrious OffTheLeftEye team, and visiting the Swedenborg Foundation offices in West Chester. Several other Aussies happened to be in town that same week, including David Millar, with whom I drove to nearby Kempton for a few days to meet other welcoming people who joyfully took us in. There we stayed with Gray Glenn in her spacious country home that had a specialised nook and cranny for just about every activity. Here we participated in a few Logopraxis groups and lots of nourishing conversation.

And another week on, I was back on the planes again for my third destination of



Cuba, a musical island between two worlds. Cuba had been my initial catalyst for travelling. Earlier this year, when I visited The Loaded Dog folk music club in Annandale, I was pleased to catch up with my friend Christina Mimmocchi. Christina runs community choirs in Sydney and has many good musical connections in Sydney's singing world. One of these is Clarita Derwent with whom Christina used to sing. Nowadays, Clarita manages a travel company in Cuba and divides her time between Australia and Cuba. When Christina announced she was planning a singing tour of Cuba if she could get enough singers to join in the tour. Well, I didn't need much time to think about



going. And soon she received an overwhelming response of 24 willing participants from around Australia and the UK.

The intervening six months passed quickly, and before I knew it my plane had landed in humid Havana late in the night. Compared to the border guards I had encountered in the UK and USA, the Cuban border officials seemed remarkably relaxed despite the late hour, smiling and laughing among themselves as they went about their tasks. There was an absence of slick tourist shops at the airport and facilities were fairly basic. This turned out to be fairly representative of Cuba, it's standards, resources and style. I was soon to learn that Cuba is an almost 24 hour culture with people milling about the streets almost anywhere, almost any hour of day or night. The charm of Cuba is their friendliness. Never in my three week travels through that island did I ever feel threatened or unsafe. Music could be heard almost everywhere, anytime.



their breakfasts were always a feast, and often provided enough food to last until dinner.

In Cuba, good singers are paid a wage by the government to rehearse with a choir in their town from 9 to 5 every weekday. Consequently, the standard of musicianship among the choirs we met was unbelievably high. We, being a scratch choir of mostly amateurs and a few less singers, were no match, although the Cubans enjoyed our willingness to participate, our willingness to enjoy and share the musical experience. We certainly had a lot of singing fun. Part of Cuba's charm is that it is a culture with remnants from the late 1950s, such as the beautiful old cars left behind when the former corrupt regime and Mafia opulent influences were ousted (many ended up in Miami). Then there is a smattering of more recent Russian cars and products, with which they traded until the collapse of the Russian empire.



Our singers arrived over the next day and we were introduced to each other and to the "Cuban charm" (also a phrase used to describe keeping your cool when things don't go as planned – at this approach the Cubans are total experts). We began rehearsing our songs, and gradually travelled from city to city on a bus while our magnificent Cuban tour guide Alex taught us about Cuban history, politics, economy, customs, beliefs, geography, traditions, and language. Every meal except breakfast was an opportunity (almost an obligation) to drink rum. Despite a fairly basic standard of living among the Cubans it amazed me that when we ate at restaurants the most delicious variety of food were tabled, lobster, egg dishes, salads, beef dishes, fruits (banana, paw paw, oranges, grapefruit, mangos, coconut), etc, and always served with several varieties of rice. We stayed at private guesthouses, and



And then you see some Chinese and European products, but very few luxury items. Cubans have a commendable resourcefulness and calmness of spirit in solving problems and making things work with only few tools and materials. There is no advertising to speak of (and I saw almost no graffiti), so there isn't the pressure to feel unhappy over not having the latest of everything, or pressure to consume, or to look like the latest fashion models on billboards. The only billboards are those bearing faces of Cuba's heroes with their inspirational phrases. Most Cubans seem proud of their independence, of their culture, or their freedom from racism (about two thirds of the population were African slaves to work the sugar plantations at the time of the first revolution). Now they are all free with equal rights and opportunities. Healthcare and education are freely provided. Basic utilities and living requirements are heavily subsidised to make them affordable to all Cubans alike.

\*\*\*continued on page 12\*\*\*



## Appreciating Charles Dickens's 'A Christmas Carol' from a Swedenborgian perspective.

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One of my favourite stories is *A Christmas Carol* and Mary Lutze's essay 'Swedenborg's Enduring Influence: the resurfacing of Heaven and Hell in Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*' enhanced my appreciation of this Christmas Classic and its message of helping others. Here's a shortened version by Michael Chester of her insights, focusing on the story and illuminating passages from Swedenborg's *Heaven and Hell*.

*A Christmas Carol* follows Scrooge, a coldhearted miser, as he is haunted by the spirit of his old partner, Marley, and three other spirits on Christmas Eve. The spirits of Christmas Past, Christmas Present, and Christmas Yet-To-Come reveal elements of Scrooge's own life that molded him into the man he is and warn him of the eventual outcome should he refuse to change. The visitations occur within one night, and Scrooge's fate rests on his ability to admit his own shortcomings and accept the lessons in love and charity that the spirits give him.



Before his transformation, Scrooge's physical characteristics betray the hardness within him. He is described as a man who has been frozen by his own cold bitterness and lack of benevolence, and Scrooge maintains this coldness around him at every moment. Swedenborg similarly compares an absence of love in a person's life to coldness. This perception, that man "grows warm from the presence of love and cold from its absence," perfectly aligns with Scrooge's condition at the outset, when he demonstrates his heartlessness in such ways as suggesting that the poor "had better die, and decrease the

surplus population," rather than becoming an even greater strain on the pocketbooks of the working citizens in society.

The symbolism of coldness attributed to an absence of kindness is a familiar one, but both Dickens and Swedenborg take this symbol literally and describe beings as growing physically colder when they refuse to experience and share love. In *A Christmas Carol*, there is a physical manifestation of Scrooge's heartlessness: "The cold within him froze his old features . . . made his eyes red, his thin lips blue . . . A frosty rime was on his head, and on his eyebrows, and his wiry chin". After Scrooge's former business partner, Marley, appears in spirit before him weighed down by chains that circle his body and trails behind him, Scrooge enquires why this is so. Marley's eerie response, "I wear the chain I forged in life," is followed by an even more chilling series of questions: "Is its pattern strange to you? . . . Or would you know . . . the weight and length of the strong coil you bear yourself? It was full, as heavy and as long as this, seven Christmas Eves ago. You have laboured on it since? It is a ponderous chain!". The transgression, centered around greed, that consumed Marley in life cannot be ignored by him or those who witness him, for it is physically bound to him after death. Similarly, Swedenborg writes, "*In a word, to each evil spirit all his evils, villainies, robberies, artifices, and deceits are made clear, and are brought forth from his very memory, and his guilt is fully established; nor is there any possible room for denial, because all the circumstances are exhibited together*" (Swedenborg, *Heaven and Hell*, § 462 [8]). In Dickens's own interpretation, the exhibition of Marley's sins appears in the form of a weighty chain that is made entirely of "cash-boxes, keys, padlocks, ledgers, deeds, and heavy purses wrought in steel". Dickens's reference to a fetter that is forged through the actions and choices one makes in life and destined to be tied to that person after death seems to be a direct reference to other specific passages in *Heaven and Hell*, in which Swedenborg outlines the concept of "ruling loves," or objects—either physical or figurative—that most strongly occupy the attention of an individual (*Heaven and Hell* § 477).





*These ruling loves play a principal role in a person's life on earth and beyond the grave, for these loves are the foundation of a person's perceived purpose. Swedenborg writes, "Their spirits' love is like a bond or a rope tied around them, by which they may be led and from which they cannot loose themselves" (Ibid., § 479 [3]).*

In regards to the visitation of the spirit of Christmas past at the stroke of one in the morning, "light flashes up in the room upon the instant," and Scrooge comes face to face with his bygone Christmases. The most appropriate symbol for the Spirit of Christmas Past is light. Scrooge describes the spirit as having "a bright clear jet of light" springing from the top of its head that illuminates the spaces around it. This particular Spirit appears to Scrooge in order to show him visions of his past and to illuminate the errors Scrooge made in his past. Put more succinctly, the purpose of this Spirit is to reveal the truth.

The Spirit transports Scrooge to crucial moments of Christmases past, instances of Scrooge's past include when he enjoyed a festive dance with the perfect example of a generous businessman (Fezziwig) or when Scrooge chose the love of money over the love of his former fiancé. At these moments, Scrooge is struck with different emotions, including joy, despair, and fury. When Scrooge is forced to reckon with the blunders that he made in his past Scrooge becomes enraged, which reflects a very human reaction to the unpleasantness of harsh realities or truths. When the Spirit's "light is burning high and bright," and when the truth of his past becomes much too bright for Scrooge to bear, he takes the cap that the Spirit carries and attempts to extinguish the truth. However, Scrooge discovers the impossibility of quenching absolute truth, for even when Scrooge exerts every bit of his effort to force the cap to cover the whole of the Spirit, "he cannot hide the light, which streams from under it, in an unbroken flood upon the ground".



The comparison between light and truth is specifically emphasized throughout *Heaven and Hell*. Swedenborg makes a definite connection between light and truth when he states, "*Divine truth . . . is compared to light*" and "*the truth itself is likewise called light*" (*Heaven and Hell*; §§ 13, 130).

Although light often symbolizes truth because of the sense of illumination a person experiences after understanding the truth of a matter, the comparison usually stops at the analogy. However, both Swedenborg and Dickens supersede basic comparison by specifically depicting a physical manifestation of light in supernatural beings who symbolize absolute truth. Dickens repeatedly describes the "light that shines out of the Spirit of Christmas Past," and

Swedenborg explains, "*As Divine truth is light in the heavens, so all truths wherever they are, whether within an angel or outside of him, or whether within the heavens or outside of them, emit light*" (*Heaven and Hell*, § 132).

In the brief twenty pages that contain Scrooge's interaction with the spirit of Christmas Present, references to a *torch*, *fire*, and *blaze* are made thirty-three times, or an average of over one and a half times per page. In the succinct six pages describing the Christmas events for the Cratchit family, the references to fire number sixteen times. The multitude of references to heat and flame do not seem to be a coincidence, for at the very initiation of this visitation, Dickens makes sure to associate the spirit of Christmas Present with this fiery element.

After the stroke of two, Scrooge's attention is drawn to a "blaze of ruddy light," and he follows the light to its source: a Spirit sitting next to "a mighty blaze . . . roaring up the chimney," reclining on a throne formed of a plentiful feast, and holding aloft "a glowing torch, in a shape not unlike Plenty's horn". Whereas the Spirit of Christmas Past is personified by light, the Spirit of Christmas Present is personified by the heat of fire and the light that is produced from it. In the same way that light is related to truth in *Heaven and Hell*, heat is related to goodness: "*Divine good, which is compared to heat, is the good of love*" and "*the good of love corresponds to fire; therefore in the spiritual sense fire is love*" (*Heaven and Hell*, §§ 13, 118).



Swedenborg further creates this connection by stating, "*The heat of heaven constitutes the life of their will, because that heat is Divine good and Divine love therefrom. The veriest life of the angels is from heat, and from light only so far as heat is in it . . . and the good that is called good of love is heat*" (Heaven and Hell, § 136). Just as heat and fire are associated with goodness in Swedenborg's text, Dickens associates the "good Spirit" of Christmas Present with warmth, love, and goodness. Scrooge refers to the Spirit of Christmas Present as "the good Spirit . . . exhibiting his own kind, generous, hearty nature, and his sympathy with all poor men". Swedenborg and Dickens both create a physical manifestation of goodness through the reference to flame and heat. In *A Christmas Carol*, it is not just in the Spirit of Christmas Present's person that goodness and heat are manifested, but in his physical surroundings. He conveys Scrooge to multiple homes in which the aura of goodness is apparent, such as the home of the Cratchits and Scrooge's nephew Fred. In each of the places visited, families are gathered around a fire and a corporate feeling of warmth and gladness pervades, and the Spirit of Christmas Present blesses the inhabitants by sprinkling an unknown substance from his torch on them that only magnifies the goodness and joy they experience.

In addition to the thirty-three references to flames in the section featuring the Spirit of Christmas Present, Dickens fills nearly four whole pages with descriptions of food. Whether it be of the throne of "turkeys, geese, game, poultry, brawn, great joints of meat . . . mince-pies, plum-puddings, barrels of oysters . . . twelfth-cakes, and seething bowls of punch" that the Spirit of Christmas Present initially reclines on; the Cratchits' Christmas goose and flaming pudding; or the contents of Grocers' stalls, Dickens spends an inordinate amount of space vividly describing food in the third "stave" of this story. The images of plenty permeate this chapter, and the Spirit's torch is specifically



related to "Plenty's horn." A similar observation can be derived from the text of *Heaven and Hell*: Swedenborg writes that goodness and truth, and so warmth and light, are inseparably conjoined. The combination of heat and light is also directly connected to vitality: "*By the world's heat when conjoined with light, as in spring and summer, all things on the earth are quickened and grow*" (Heaven and Hell; § 136). The plenty surrounding the Spirit of Christmas Present recalls a bountiful harvest,

the product of quickening growth. In fact, his very person seems to be surrounded with growing life that can only be related to the season of spring: he is robed in a mantle of "deep green" (the color most associated with

life) and he is surrounded "with living green, that . . . looks a perfect grove". The Spirit of Christmas Present, in his palpable vitality, seems to be the perfect representation of the organic combination of goodness and light that is described by Emanuel Swedenborg in *Heaven and Hell*.

At the climax of the visitations, ending with the unnerving presence of the mute spirit of Christmas-Yet-To-Come, Scrooge sees what appears to be an unchangeable destiny in the vision of his name etched on a gravestone at the head of a neglected burial site. Scrooge implores this Spirit, "Are these the shadows of the things that will be, or are they shadows of the things that may be, only?" Although Scrooge begs for the chance to change his fate, that of being forgotten by the living and wandering eternally in chains, this miserable destiny seems final as the Spirit unfalteringly points at the grave.

However, Scrooge falls to his knees and cries, "I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach. Oh, tell me I may sponge away the writing on this stone!".





As he is begging for his life, the image of the phantom dissipates, and he finds himself back in his own room. His first act of charity is to buy the Cratchits an enormous goose for their Christmas meal, which he advances by increasing Bob Cratchit's salary. These acts of generosity and kindness proliferate to the point that Scrooge is described later as becoming "as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man, as the good old city knew, or any other good old city, town, or borough, in the good old world". Because Scrooge takes to heart the truth and goodness that the spirits of Christmas Past, Present, and Future reveal to him, he is able to avoid Marley's unfortunate fate. Scrooge's change in character, which certainly demonstrates Dickens's larger religious beliefs, perfectly synchronizes with Swedenborg's concluding thoughts on the pathway to Heaven:

*The life that leads to heaven is not a life withdrawn from the world, but a life in the world; and that a life of piety separated from a life of charity: which is possible only in the world, does not lead to heaven; but a life of charity does; and a life of charity consists in acting honestly and justly in every employment, in every business and in every work, form a heavenly motive. (Heaven and Hell; § 535 [3])*

Though Scrooge's redemption is deemed unbelievable and even absurd by those who were long witness to his previously coldhearted character—"Some people laughed to see the alteration in him"—Scrooge nevertheless continues in his newfound life of charity. In *A Christmas Carol*, Dickens focuses on the spiritual importance of kindness and charity. Swedenborg's focus was to live a life of goodness stemming from a heart intent on serving God and others, and based on Dickens's life and works, Dickens seemed to echo Swedenborg's larger philosophy of what it meant to be a Christian.

## Our Spiritual Heredity

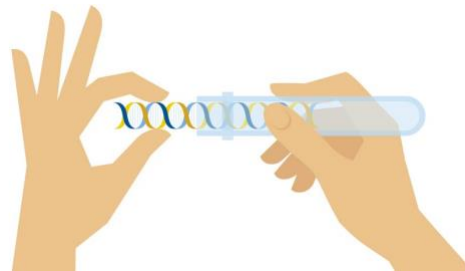
By Julian Duckworth

Ancestry and where we have originated from is very much in vogue. Our family are at it hammer and tongs, finding out that they are mostly Western European (I could have told them that for free!) with some Celtic, our children somewhat East European (it's a long story...); some 8% Scandinavian (go the Vikings!) and small titbits like 1% South American or with just one of them 2% Baltic (Lithuanian and Latvian). So far, nobody has thrown up being remotely Jewish (a real pity to me) and I can't get my head round the differences between siblings who surely should be hereditarily identical, but who am I to assert that? God knows what he is doing.

Well obviously, I can confidently assert that we have all come from our forebears and been begotten. There is a lot of begetting in the Bible and most of us quickly skip over all those names, but the point of its inclusion may well be to remind us that we are part of a bigger scenario than just ourselves (no bad thing!) and another point is probably to remind us that we receive things from those who have begotten us.

I can happily say that there are aspects of both my father and my mother in me which

I have come to see being fairly permanent, even set in concrete perhaps. This discovery has been reinforced at times by other people who see us in a way that we don't see ourselves and they have said, "Oh, you're so much like your father!" Then we can go a step further, because apparently our heredity, our physiognomy, our personality, can skip a generation or even two and we resemble something in our grand or great-grand parents. Or uncles or aunties.



Two things before we switch over to more spiritual things about our heredity. I remember hearing a radio question put by a listener to a geneticist. They said that they had two young daughters but had found out that in about 1840 one of the family (a direct ancestor) had turned out to be a complete charlatan or worse, so what was the possibility of this affecting either or both of their darling daughters? The geneticist quickly said not to worry because if you go back a few generations the mix is so diluted it has virtually no effect. I'd imagine that none of us would want to have the sins of all people running through our blood. Jesus did but that is another story.



Every time a little baby boy or girl is born, every relative – or so it seems to me – immediately says “Oh he’s got his father’s/mother’s nose/forehead/chin” or “Oh, she’s got her mother’s/father’s ears/hair type/freckles etc. Fair enough in a way and it is all very caring and loving but I feel that the very individual unique part of every born child gets somewhat sabotaged and lost sight of. Okay, it may come through a few months or years later, but I believe that when God creates, he makes brand new, not recycled.



So, let’s move on into our spiritual heredity. Swedenborg has plenty to say about this and I will really try and put some of it clearly. We know there is ‘nature’ and ‘nurture’; that argument has gone on for a long time. Spiritually – according to Swedenborg – our hereditary make-up which we receive runs deeper than our early childhood experiences which certainly do affect us but at a more surfacey level. And what we receive from around us can become part of our ‘remains’ (seeds, tools) for later regeneration. But heredity runs very deep.

This certainly does not mean that we are stuck in a rut or damned before we’ve reached adolescence. It means that we receive a pattern through hereditary hand-downs and this pattern has things about it which are always going to be around even to eternity, and things about it which are able to be modified but probably not eradicated, and let’s not forget that unique part about us which I see as being free of all this stuff and will become our operator in later choices we determine.

Christianity has the teaching of ‘original sin’ which is that our corrupt nature traces right back in a direct line to Adam and Eve’s wrong which affects everybody thereafter. Well, it may explain human faults and weaknesses in a simple way, but it seems pretty fatalistic. Swedenborg goes more for accumulated hereditary evils, building up generation after generation, which possibly sounds terrible to us, but Swedenborg is describing the development in terms of people choosing to do good or choosing to do bad. In other words, we affect the production line by making those personal affirmations (and doing them too!) to

act fairly, have love for God and for other people, shun evils and live good lives. And in doing that we input into the hereditary mix.

Or if we live just for ourselves, and we don’t bother at all about God or other people, and we’re critical and damaging when we can because that feels good to us, then equally we inject this into the hereditary mix. And Swedenborg says that this accumulates either way, for good and better, for bad and worse. So, looking at all that gives us an essential picture of our responsibility to manage what goes on in our life and in ourselves. It’s not just for us; it’s also for our kids and maybe it extends even wider than that, to other people generally, by example or by subtle influence.

There are two things which Swedenborg brings out in this area of heredity, which need to be shared. One is that we receive hereditary evils which are represented in the Bible by all the enemies of Israel which the Israelites had to overcome. BUT we – each of us – also receives hereditary good, from loving parents, from angels, from God, and this keeps us in spiritual balance and freedom and with the ability to choose when we are looking carefully at ourselves and what goes on in us. We must have both in us. God would not allow a single person to come into life predestined for eternal harrowing from their initial conception.

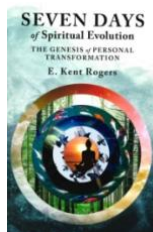
The other point is that while we have our hereditary evils for which, please note, we are not responsible for having, we have the ability to turn these into ‘actual’ evils by dwelling on them, liking them, desiring them, repeating them, dismissing anything else, and terribly, actually enjoying them. Then they become ours and our mind can hardly see anything else than them! Heaven forbid that we ever turn in that direction, but also watch out for feeling merit in not being a bad person. This is when we need to turn to God and get help.

We’ve moved around in this fascinating area of heredity and there is a lot more besides, like the whole thing of genetics (did we humans all come from one African woman and was she called Eve?) and there’s the after-death situation of what becomes of our make-up and choices in eternity? I think that really, with spiritual heredity, where it’s so easy to get confused and be left wondering, a good base is for us to always link it with the purpose of our life in this world which is to regenerate and be made new. Then I think we are on pretty safe ground.



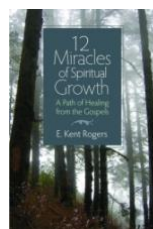
## Discounted Book Offers for the Quarter

As a reader of **Candela**, if you order the following titles during the next quarter, you will receive the discounts listed below (while stocks last). Complete the Order Form (you can copy it) and return it to the Swedenborg Centre or phone on 02 9416 2812 and mention this notice.



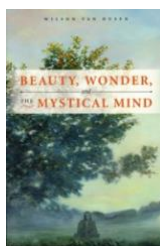
### **Seven Days of Spiritual Evolution** by E. Kent Rogers

215 pages, paperback 2018, RRP \$25, now **only \$20** (plus postage) for this quarter. This wonderful book is hot off the press, and takes a deeper look at the symbolism of the 'days' of creation in Genesis. Rogers relates it to aspects of our lives in ways we can all relate to, and he provides a practical approach for turning it into a practice for personal spirituality. This book contains a good opportunity for applying the practical wisdom of Swedenborg's writings to benefit your own spiritual life.



### **12 Miracles of Spiritual Growth** by E. Kent Rogers

210 pages, paperback, RRP \$20, now **only \$15** (plus postage) for this quarter. This is a repeat offer, since above we have made available the latest work by E. Kent Rogers, here is his earlier work which makes a great companion volume that looks at our spiritual growth as a process of healing based on the miracles from the New Testament. Rogers provides the insight that miracles are performed daily by a loving God who is keen to see us heal and grow into usefulness, love and happiness.



### **Beauty, Wonder and the Mystical Mind** by Wilson van Dusen

1999, 150 pages, paperback, RRP \$20, now **only \$12** (plus postage) for this quarter. Due to popular demand, we have just received more stock of this fabulous work by Wilson Van Dusen. Writing from lifelong personal experience in the spiritual dimension, he compares the mystical to the aesthetic, noting the similar ways in which art and epiphany move and elevate the experiencer. A good read and it includes much effective, practical advice.

Send orders to the Swedenborg Centre, 4 Shirley Rd, ROSEVILLE NSW 2069 or phone (02) 9416 2812, or email [orders@swedenborg.com.au](mailto:orders@swedenborg.com.au) and mention this Candela.

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<i>12 Miracles of Spiritual Growth</i>	\$15	\$5	<b>\$20</b>	
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## WHAT'S HAPPENING?

If you are not yet a member of the Swedenborg Association of Australia you might like to consider it. Feel free to contact the Centre for further **info on how you can become an SAA member** as a way to support this valuable work. Check the website at [www.swedenborg.com.au](http://www.swedenborg.com.au) (click "Members" in the top menu) which contains more details on benefits, membership rates and an application form.

Details of **group events** at various locations around Australia are advertised on the website at [www.swedenborg.com.au](http://www.swedenborg.com.au) home page (click "Events" in the top menu). Fliers for events (as a PDF document) can be found by clicking on the relevant event title. The Events and meetings web page also lists location and contact details of your nearest group convenor.

It would be good to establish Groups in other areas. If you can help, please phone Joe Vandermeer on (02) 9416 2812 or email him at [joe@swedenborg.com.au](mailto:joe@swedenborg.com.au);

Our website is continually being updated with special offers, new free study material and latest news and information.

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## Swedenborg in Cuba



After a wonderful national choral festival to end our tour, we flew back across the country to Havana and said our goodbyes. On my last day I met with Douglas Calvo Gaínza, who is translating many of Swedenborg's works into modern Spanish, as well as attempting to set up a Swedenborg Association similar to the one we have in Australia. Despite having very few finances and resources, Douglas is most energetic and enthusiastic, and took great delight in finding out about the SAA and its membership, activities and services. At a recent SAA committee meeting we decided to send a gesture of support with a \$300 gift to help support his efforts, matching what we have also done with the work of Steve David, who manages the NewChristianBibleStudy.org service and website, an excellent resource for people wanting to study and search Swedenborg's writings or the Word

in almost any language. [We would encourage you to contact us at the Swedenborg Centre if you also wish to make a personal donation to help either of these useful projects to help those who seek spiritual material with which they can improve their future lives and to help them gain further access to useful local and worldwide resources.](#) Each project is extremely grateful for all contributions offered, because Steve and Douglas both operate independently of any other organisation to maintain their independence and integrity. In this small way we help to create a world of shared heavenly uses. I wish you a most wonderful Christmas and end of year!

A new S.A.A. activity starts in the next couple of weeks at the Swedenborg Centre in Sydney. **'Swedenborg on Saturday'** will be a chance for members, and anybody else interested, to get together and discuss all things Swedenborgian.

Now is this something completely new? A Swedenborgian organisation putting on an event which is purely for people to get together to share their enthusiasm for Swedenborg, his writings and the effect they have on the world? It won't feature an advertised talk, nor is it a Swedenborg reading circle. It's just a group of people sitting around drinking good free coffee and eating biscuits in a positive atmosphere and discussing something great.

It's to be held the second Saturday each month starting

**December 14, from 10am to noon.**

(The second meeting will be on 8<sup>th</sup> February -NO JANUARY MEETING)

Hope to see you there. If you can't physically get there give Joe a call at the Centre to see if you can join in by Skype / Facetime or some other electronic method.

(Wayne Kasmar - Secretary)