

Candela



Newsletter of the Swedenborg Association of Australia Inc.

Organisational Details are provided on the next page

June 2021

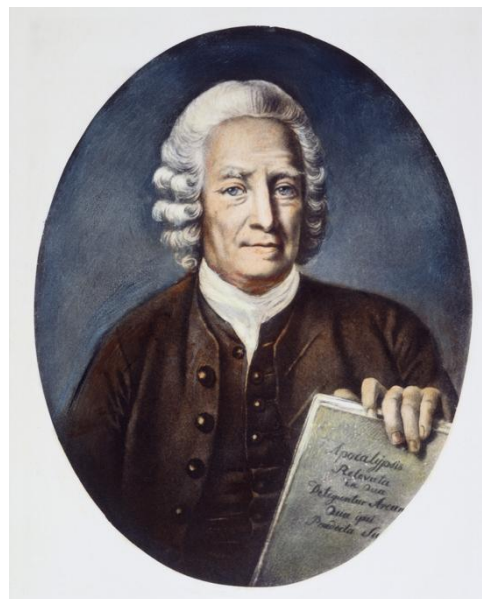
ISSUE 104

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

We hope you enjoy this new issue of the Candela, the journal of the Swedenborg Association of Australia. If you turn the pages, you'll see, among other features, that things are happening and being produced so that the name of Swedenborg and his very significant spiritual contribution are being put out there for people to find and discover its wonder and help.

Here, briefly, are just three things which are currently being produced by the Association. A whole range of recorded talks given over a span of about twenty-five years, covering all kinds of things, nearly all of them being from a Swedenborg angle, are being gradually turned into mp3 format and made available. The latest one is a general coverage of Swedenborg's understanding of the person of Jesus Christ in his divinity and his humanity. A short summary of this is in this issue.

Another is the first one of at least a proposed set of twelve topics turned into short (around seven minutes) snappy audio-visual introductions to Swedenborg's focuses. ***continued on page 2***



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

Next Issue –September 2021

Our next issue will be in September, so if you would like to write something please get it to me by, **15th August 2021**

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

Ruth



SWEDENBORG ASSOCIATION of Australia Inc

ARBN 109 811 985

Registered Office:

Swedenborg Centre

4 Shirley Road, Roseville NSW 2069

Tel: 02 9416 2812

Email: saa@swedenborg.com.au

Website: www.swedenborg.com.au

National Committee Members:

Julian Duckworth (President)

Wayne Kasmar (Secretary)

Michael Chester (Treasurer)

Ruth Duckworth (Newsletter)

Howard Thompson

Debra Thompson

Joe Vandermeer (Public Officer)

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

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

** * continued from page 1 * **

The first – and perhaps the easiest one to do this approach with – is on Correspondences, now all ready, on YouTube (<https://youtu.be/yGu9KpLBs-s>) for watching and hearing in the time it takes to down a cup of tea. The others are following in the next few months. The next one will be around the topic of Life after Death. The series has been given the helpful title, “Notes from Swedenborg”.

The last of the three is a celebration, that of the 250th anniversary this year we’re in, of the publication of Swedenborg’s last theological book, True Christian Religion, in July 1771, which completed the whole output of Swedenborg’s spiritual writings. True Christian Religion covers the essential Christian church’s teachings but from the angle of their spiritual meaning and personal meaning for us. A range of interesting connections with this important book is given in this current Candela.

When you look at the enormous (and that’s an understatement!) amount of material that has been produced based on a Swedenborg angle on things – books, booklets, charts, leaflets, novels, movies, articles, paintings, CDs and DVDs and now much up there on YouTube and other great online outlets, you might well wonder why we need to keep up producing MORE?

The reason, I guess, is not so much about new subjects and new findings in Swedenborg, although these kind of things can happen at times; the real reason is the culture of each successive period. The timeless eternal truths that Swedenborg presents are just that, but the times in which people live and do things is always changing. The way we talk and interact is incredibly different from my childhood, far more informal, much less intellectual. So, to reach people in such a culture means we need to use the language and outlooks of today without dumbing down the essence of Swedenborg and the rich spirituality of his books. And that’s a real challenge.

It’s interesting to ponder about the amount of spiritual interest there is in any period. Way back, nearly everyone went to church but were they actually religious? Now, it looks like being the other way round, only handfuls of people go to church but a whole stack of people are looking at meaning, truth, symbol, personal states, relationships, dignity, humanity, justice and the future. The world has changed; its purposes haven’t ... and Swedenborg is very relevant to it all.

All the best from Julian

Welcome to our new members

Laura Favale (Sydney)

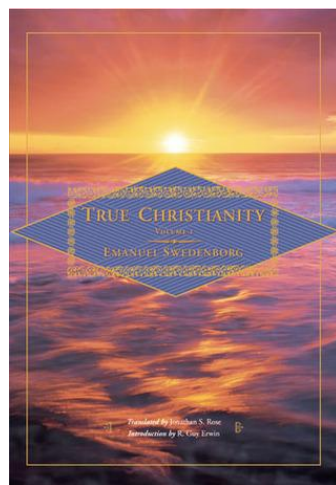
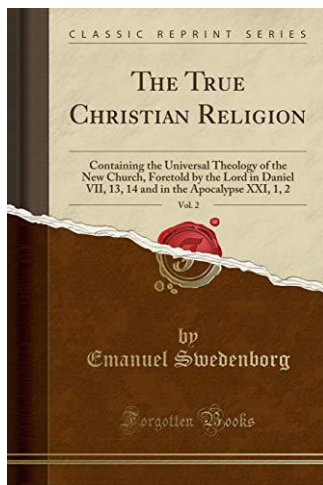
Sruthi Degaonkar (Melbourne)

We hope that you enjoy being a member, receiving emails and can join in some of our on-line activities.



Commemorating the 250th Anniversary of *True Christian Religion/True Christianity* (first published June 1771)

True Christian Religion (retitled ***True Christianity*** with the New Century Edition translation) and its small addition, the ***Coronis***, published in 1771, is the final work of Swedenborg's long career exploring the spiritual side of life during which he wrote some 30 volumes of theological writings.



It is a detailed treatment of traditional Christian doctrine but examined in a new way that is radically different and captivating (see how it affected John Clowes below to get a taste of its amazing content). His purpose was to provide a cohesive teaching for a Christianity which demonstrates rationally, God incarnating in the person of Jesus Christ. The book deals with the nature of God, and the unfolding of the spiritual meaning of the Bible, and the path and work of our regeneration among other things.

For a fuller description of the contents of the book, an introductory brochure can be found at <https://static.swedenborg.com.au/pdf/brochures/BookIntroTrueChristianity.pdf>

Here are two interesting stories related to this influential book plus a brief introduction to the book by Helen Keller to help us appreciate how special it is.

oooOOOooo

When Swedenborg was 82 he wrote his last major work which is *True Christian Religion*. There is an interesting story about this. He passed the bulky manuscript to a friend of his, who held it in trust for quite a while. And on one occasion this friend, a medical doctor, he was out visiting a patient, and his house caught on fire. And the fireman rushed in and looked around and saw all of these books and medicines and so on and saw a pile of papers with string tied around it. He threw it out of the window. That was the only thing that was saved. That was the manuscript of the *True Christian Religion*. Quite fascinating.



So, he was 82 when he turned out this major work. And then he went over to London and he wrote a little addition to it. A sort of appendix. And that was called *Coronis*.

Dr Philip W Groves

oooOOOooo

John Clowes (1743–1831), an Anglican pastor in Manchester, never met Swedenborg and was not aware of *True Christianity* when it was first published. He first heard of the book from an acquaintance in the spring of 1773. Clowes purchased a copy, but was initially put off by the size of the volume, and concluded from a glance at the structure and nature of its argument that a reading would require more sustained attention than he was willing to give it.

However, one evening in October 1773, before leaving to visit a friend for an extended period, Clowes chanced to open *True Christianity* once more. He happened to notice the term *Divinum Humanum*, which he read as meaning



"Divine Humanity." He thought little of it at the time, but several days later, at his friend's house, he awoke to have an hour-long spiritual experience of peace, joy, and divine glory that he associated with the divine humanity of Jesus Christ. All that day he could not stop thinking about this experience. The following morning it was repeated, but even more profoundly. Then a sudden, persistent, and overwhelming desire came over him to return home and read *True Christianity*. He made apologies to his friend and rushed back to Manchester, as he puts it, "rather with the impetuosity of a lover, than with the sedateness of a man, who had no other object of pursuit but to consult the pages of an unknown and heretofore slighted book". Clowes eagerly read the volume, and reports in

it seemed as if a continually increasing blaze of new and recreating light was poured forth on the delighted understanding, opening it to the contemplation of the most sublime mysteries of wisdom, and convincing it of the being of a God, of the existence of an eternal world, of the interior sanctities of the Holy Scriptures, of the true nature of creation, redemption, and regeneration, in a manner and degree, and with a force of satisfactory evidence, in which those interesting subjects had never been viewed before. The mind, therefore, was no longer perplexed about the proper object of its worship, because it was enlightened to see clearly, as by the light of a meridian sun, that Jesus Christ, in His Divine Humanity, is that object, He being the Creator from eternity, the Redeemer in time, and the Regenerator to eternity...

(Clowes 1834, 35-36)

his memoirs that as he did so....

True Christianity has played a significant role in establishing

Swedenborgianism around the world, and has remained over the centuries one of Swedenborg's most read and best-loved works.

Translator's Preface to *True Christianity*



Since I was sixteen years old, I have been a strong believer in the doctrines given to the world by Emanuel Swedenborg. It was his mission to teach men to listen to the inward voice rather than to opinions and disputations. After many years of reverent study of the Bible, I gratefully wonder if I am not more indebted to Swedenborg for the faith that turns my darkness to light than I have yet realized. I acknowledge my profound indebtedness to Emanuel Swedenborg for a richer interpretation of the Bible, a deeper understanding of the meaning of Christianity, and a precious sense of the Divine Presence in the world.

The theological teachings of Swedenborg are in many long volumes. The summation, the universal theology, is found in *The True Christian Religion*. His central doctrine is simple. It consists of three main ideas:

- God as Divine Love,
- God as Divine Wisdom,
- and God as Power for use.

These ideas come as waves from an ocean which floods every bay and harbour of life with new potency of will, of faith, and of effort. To our conception of God, the Word, and the Hereafter, which we have received on trust from ages of unproved faith, Swedenborg gives a new actuality, which is as startling, as thrilling as the angel-sung tidings of the Lord's birth. He brings fresh testimony to support our hope that



the veil shall be drawn from unseeing eyes, that the dull ear shall be quickened, and dumb lips gladdened with speech.

Dr. Helen Keller's Introduction to *The True Christian Religion*

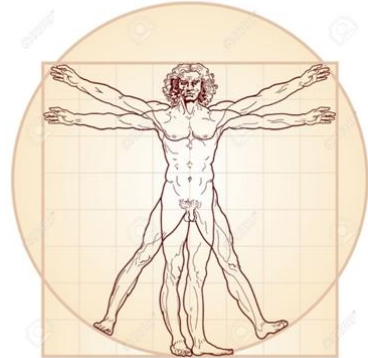
During the month of June there will be a number of posts on the SAA Facebook page —

<https://www.facebook.com/Swedenborg-Association-of-Australia-104862382911851/>

— highlighting significant passages from the book. Here is one example.

"Since man was created a form of Divine order, God is in him, but so far as a man lives according to Divine order God is fully in him. If however he does not live according to Divine order, God is still in him but in the highest regions of the soul. But so far as a man lives contrary to order, he closes the lower regions of his mind or spirit and prevents God from coming down and filling those lower regions with his presence. Thus God is in him but he is not in God."

Swedenborg, *True Christian Religion* 70

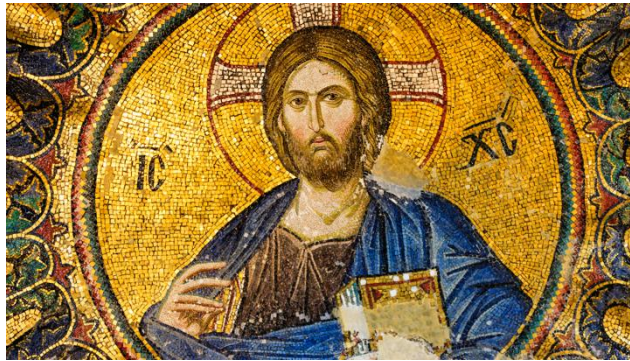


Swedenborg's Christ

By Julian Duckworth

This is a summary of a talk I gave several years ago, which is currently being turned into an mp3 version.

Christianity is based on the belief that God came into this world, into time and space, as a person, in Jesus Christ. The first centuries of Christianity were



spent trying to sort out who, how and why God did this. A little later Jesus became seen as the son of God, sacrificing himself to heal the rift between an angry God and sinful bad human beings. Believe in Jesus and his spilt blood and you and God are reconciled, okay again. Heaven for you! Swedenborg didn't go along with this mainstream belief. He says so, quite violently. He says that God himself became human, a man. And since God is *infinite*, that doesn't mean heaven was

left Godless! Swedenborg says that God took on a human form which means a body, a conscious mind, a freedom, a temptability and a full humanity, but unlike us, God as Jesus had a completely divine soul.

That fact raises Jesus to cosmic size. And this is the thing for us to really try and grab hold of. God didn't come to end up crucified, swapping himself for us, so that we can get to heaven. And yet of course, Jesus *was* crucified but he also came back to life again. God came to overcome the power of evil, and all evil is from hell, and God took hell on and resisted it and fought its grip so that it could not keep its power. Basically, what God as Jesus did was to guarantee our spiritual freedom and to keep hell at bay. We do the choosing; neither good nor evil can ever be forced on us.



So then, how did Jesus (God) do this? To become a human being, God (remember God is *infinite* and can be everywhere all at once) took on layers of being from heaven to earth until the layer of mankind was taken on. So, God was born a man, like us, like any baby born. As he grew, he started having flashes of self-awareness, dim but felt, of who he was. When he heard the Bible, he sensed it was about him, and this inner sensing developed. But – and this is very important – Jesus mostly had experiences of himself as an ordinary boy.

When he was around thirty (and the gap of about eighteen years is unknown whatever people might imagine) Jesus, an adult, began to work. There it is in the gospel stories. Swedenborg emphasises that Jesus went through two kinds of consciousness: one where he had no sense of being divine, pretty much like us perhaps, except that Jesus held true to his religious belief and to God as his Father. That never broke. The other consciousness was his sense of being divine with the one purpose of saving the human race. In this state, he must have felt the enormity of it all.



Salvador Dalí – Jesus Is Tempted By Satan

Hell, knowing what was at stake, attacked Jesus' heart and mind more than we can guess. His humanity laid him open to huge temptations, each one of which

had to be dealt with and countered by himself as a man. Divine assertion couldn't win temptations, only human steadfast choices. Multiply anything you may have ever wrestled with by one to the power of a thousand and you're still not there.

This was the job, the life going on in Jesus fighting against evil, against anything thrown at him, no matter how convoluted or subtle. And part of any temptation is a kind of attraction, a 'What if I did?' which Jesus must have felt, even though we don't hear of it, apart from the wilderness temptations.

So, when Jesus was killed, his life, through resisting, was perfect. It's this which restored him to life, because his own humanity was now permeated through and through with divinity. A complete victory.

As far as we are concerned, the life Jesus lived in himself and around out there brings us our spiritual freedom to choose good or evil, over and over again. Maybe right now, something is plaguing you... and you have to make your own decision based on what matters to you. Your ability to think and handle it traces back directly to what God as Jesus took on and did. And most of us are completely unaware of that. But that's okay with God.

The recognition that God exists and that there is one God flows universally from God into human souls. There is an inflow from God into us. This comes into our souls because the soul is the inmost and highest part of us. The inflow from God reaches that part first and then comes down into the things below and enlivens them, depending on our openness to what flows in. Of course, truths that will become part of our faith do indeed flow in through our hearing and are implanted in our mind, which is below the soul; but all these truths do is prepare us to accept what flows in from God through our soul. The quality of that preparation determines the quality of our acceptance and of the transformation of our earthly faith into spiritual faith.

True Christianity 8



Death Cafe

By Ruth Duckworth and Beth Anderson

As I was raised by Swedenborgian parents I have always believed in an afterlife, a belief that has only grown strongly as I have lived my life.

When I was 21, I worked as a physiotherapist in the Birmingham Children's Hospital, U.K. I was assigned the children with cystic fibrosis, so had to work with quite a few families who were facing the death of a child. Now days, very sick young people can be given transplants of their diseased heart and lungs and often live a lot longer but back then they often died in their teens. So, I became interested in death and dying and how we as a society cope with it all. There was a registrar working for my Australian Professor and he really impressed me with the way he made the families face up to the fact that their child was dying. And I felt that they coped with the whole process a lot more honestly when they did come to terms with it.

Also, I saw children dying, one boy about 13 years old was so accepting of his limited abilities and deteriorating health, he reminded me of a very old man. His parents managed to keep him at home at the end, and I am sure he died surrounded by love and with great peace. By contrast, another girl of 16 was so exhausted and ready to die, but her father was unable to cope. She died about 2 a.m. on morning and he managed to resuscitate her, but then let her die a few hours later. He said that he realised then that the awful struggle to keep breathing was over for her and he was at peace with it.

Three years ago, when we moved to Port Macquarie I went to a talk at the Library on Death and Dying and there was

a Death Doula speaking. They are people who act as midwives to people who are moving towards being reborn into the next world. They support the person and their family and speak up for their wants and needs. As a result of the talk the doula started a few reading groups. We have read some of the excellent books out there on how to help people who are dying and what to do in preparation.

My reading group decided to join the Death Café movement. Death Cafes have been around for almost ten years, when Jon Underwood first ran one in the UK in 2011. Since then, it's become a global movement. According to DeathCafe.com, there are 283 such places listed in Australia, and 6521 around the world.

We meet in various cafes that have a nice atmosphere and a large table available. An hour is allocated for the chats and we have a wonderful skeletal hand shaped egg timer to keep us on time, however, if the group has no reason to rush away it may continue until lunch or thereabouts. Numbers who attend vary depending on location and comprises of men and women of various ages which are small enough to be personal and allows for intimacy and connection.

Some people who come are simply curious about death, others are anticipating the death of someone close to them, or their own. Then there are those who are grieving. Death is an everyday part of life, that is what Death Cafe is about. It is not about any special, sacred, holy thing. The ability to talk about something that's 'taboo' and not talked about in the open is a relief for many and takes the fear away on so many levels. One of the most important aspects of





coming along to a Death Café is that there is no judgement on anyone and what they may say. And we especially consider it important to be respectful of one another's beliefs no matter what the conversation comprises of or topics brought up.

And it is not all deep, dark and depressing, Death Cafés can be fun and nothing is off limits, we can be talking about Sky Burials (a quite gruesome Tibetan practice with their dead) one minute and then someone comes up with a joke or how much fun they will have making their own coffin.

Let's lessen the fear and educate ourselves on a very important part of our life, our death, over a cuppa.

From deathcafe.com

At a Death Cafe people, often strangers, gather to eat cake, drink tea and discuss death.

Our objective is 'to increase awareness of death with a view to helping people make the most of their (finite) lives'.

A Death Cafe is a group directed discussion of death with no agenda, objectives or themes. It is a discussion group rather than a grief support or counselling session.

Our Death Cafes are always offered:

- On a not for profit basis
- In an accessible, respectful and confidential space
- With no intention of leading people to any conclusion, product or course of action
- Alongside refreshing drinks and nourishing food – and cake!

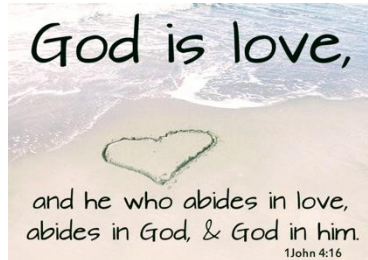
A Curious Incident

By Joe Vandermeer

Last August, I experienced a curious incident. While strolling casually along the beachfront in Manly, I noticed a plaque on a building which said "Nature in all its diversity grants us a glimpse into the heart of God the Father, which is

nothing but love. Trust in this love and you will never be disappointed."

When I was later approaching the spot of that same plaque from an opposite direction, at a time when there was hardly anybody around, a middle-aged man as he was walking past the plaque yelled



something at the top of his voice and then lurched and stumbled, as if he had been struck by lightning. He collapsed right there on the pavement, face down, his body convulsing violently. I immediately phoned an ambulance, and turned around for a few seconds to assess for them our exact location. When I turned back to the man on the ground, another man and a woman were suddenly sitting by his side, like two angels having come down from heaven. Unlike the usual bystanders, who often panic and show great agitation, these two were as calm as a Buddhist monk and were sitting down to attend to the man.

When the convulsing man eventually came to, he said his name was Nicholas. One of the angels said, "that's a nice name, that's my name too, and this is my wife Jo." So, it was a case of - Joe meets Nicholas, then another Jo and Nicholas arrive to help. What's more miraculous is that helper Nicholas is a doctor. And what's more miraculous is that we eventually recognised each other - I've known Dr Nicholas since 1973 because we went to school together. All this happened right under that plaque. The fallen man had epilepsy, and not long ago I came across a write-up on the internet called "Finding God in a seizure: the link between temporal lobe epilepsy and mysticism." Perhaps the whole thing was a sign (well, a plaque, at least). See <https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/archived/encounter/the-link-between-temporal-lobe-epilepsy-and-mysticism/5956982>



Is human divinity credible?

By Stephen Russell-Lacy

The Lord as within and beyond us

Swedenborg wrote within a Christian framework, but I believe his idea of *the Lord*, as an image of transcendence, is meaningful to Christians and non-Christians alike. For example, central to the message is the warmth of love and light of wisdom: a healing power of illumination and warmth from beyond us. We can become deeply aware of these as enlivening our heart and enlightening our mind.

Swedenborg's *Lord* has heart, head and hands: unlike us however, this is a heart of selfless compassion, a head of perfect wisdom and hands of infinite power. Consequently, he wrote that each of us can only be a limited mirror image of this boundless creative force.

Apparent paradox

Likewise, many religious people believe the Divine is both within them and from beyond them. It seems like a paradox if the Divine were to be both experienced present inside each of us yet at the same time inflowing into us from a transcendent origin. A similar paradox has actually been accepted over the centuries in the teaching of the Hindu Upanishad Scriptures. They say that my true or *higher Self (atman)* is identical with the *Creator of all forms (Brahman)*. The danger here is of taking this to mean that deep within oneself, essentially 'I am God'. But Swedenborg is careful to point out that our internal part does not belong to us – it is the Lord's alone. We can receive the divine without being identified with it.

Attitude to the Lord

It is perhaps worth mentioning that unless we could recognise what is divinely good present within our inner being, we couldn't know of any universal goodness beyond our finite comprehension.

According to Swedenborg the Infinite itself stands above all the heavens and above our inmost: it can only be

manifested by means of the Divine Human, which exists solely with the Lord: and communication of the Infinite with finite beings is not possible at all from any other source.

According to another of his teachings, we need to acknowledge this transpersonal source of our good intentions while at the same time acting as if they were part of ourselves.

"The Divine love consists in this, that it wishes what is its own to be man's, and this could not be unless man felt and perceived what is from the Lord to be as if it were his own." (Apocalypse Explained 1138:5 E. Swedenborg)

Need for an idea or image of transcendence to relate to

I would suggest that to better attune to the power of love and wisdom, we need a clear idea or image to relate to. For how could we have a relationship with a disembodied spirit?

Likewise, Swedenborgian Paul Vickers, in his book *Living with God*, has suggested that when one is trying to communicate in prayer, there needs to be some idea about the Divine. As a result, many begin with a picture of what they have learnt as a child. This is an image associated with a sense of love and the wisdom that goes with it. This Vickers sees as a human characteristic. Little wonder that religious people should think of *God* as a person because love and wisdom are ideally human. At the same time, the thought of a spirit of love seems opposite to something natural. This seems to be a contradiction.

However, Vickers points out that a useful guide is the way we think about earthly loved ones. Many loving husbands cannot tell you the colour of their wife's eyes or any other detail to provide a useful picture from which one can recognise her. Yet they are uniquely aware of that wife's presence in the affection they know and



the character of her life. Similarly, a child will describe a parent in terms of the things they do together and the love and care that is shown but cannot necessarily give a detailed visual description. So, Vickers is saying that the thought of the divine within us is of the same kind. Awareness of this presence and our dependence on it is similar to the trust of children in their parents to care for them.

The historical Christ

The Jesus of the Gospel is the basis of Swedenborg's idea of *Divine Human*. The term he uses is *the Lord*. Most scholars agree that Jesus Christ existed historically saying he was a Galilean, Jewish religious teacher who gave his message by word of mouth: and was crucified for probably political and religious reasons.

His miracles, whether factual or merely symbolic, are viewed as showing healing power. And he has been seen by many religious people as revealing divine transcendence.

According to the biblical account, the historical Jesus showed loving kindness to those his society had condemned – tax collectors, prostitutes and criminals. He healed the sick, went out of his way to teach those who wished to learn, and was a good friend to his followers.

It is easier to bring to mind someone when we think of his character. The New Testament portrays Jesus as a very good person, having wisdom, humility, selflessness, and wanting to help all. These are humane qualities. Like us, at times he endured difficulty. In his case, it was surviving emotionally in the desert, and even torture on the cross. Just as we can lose hope, so Christ went through a time of lost hope which sorely tested what Christians see as his *Divine* spirit.

The Lord and the inmost part of Jesus

In referring to him as the Son of God, Christians see Jesus as the embodiment of the divine. However you may be wondering what's so special about

Christ? Is the divine not also present with us?

According to Swedenborg, yes, we can have transcendent goodness within us. But unlike Christ, it does not originate in us. In other words, we are only imperfect vessels that can receive divine life from its universal source. In contrast he says the essence of the Lord is the infinite origin of all that is good. So, Swedenborg saw the inmost of Jesus Christ as love and light itself.

According to the Gospel record, what Jesus said reveals the light of the world which shines in the darkness and enlightens all who open their eyes. The Lord's "face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light." (Matt 17:2)

Those who accept this view see in his life a picture of human loving wisdom that has existed from eternity. "The Word made flesh."

"When we see Jesus, we see God; yet Jesus was human as we are, so picturing his face can tell us something of what it is for a human to have his/her life fully aligned with the Divine." (Rev Nicki Caines, Anglican clergyman)

The eternal human aspect of the Divine

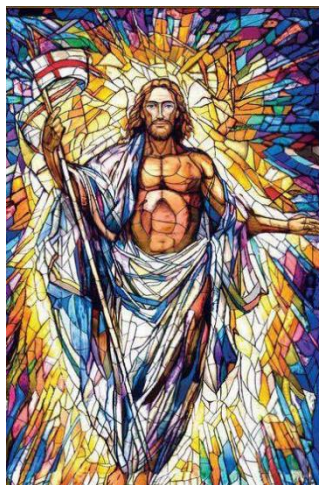
Swedenborg's idea is that the Divine Itself has always been human: not from the physical body, but from the humane qualities of love and wisdom the Divine possesses in an infinite degree.

He is saying we are created in the image of divine humanity.

"God is supremely human; and every person is therefore human in the measure of his reception of love and wisdom." (E.Swedenborg *Divine Love and Wisdom* 289)

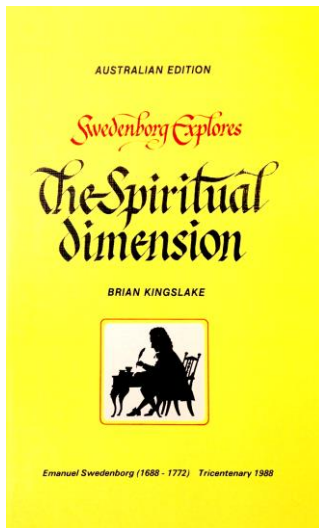
Communicating with the Lord person to person

Going through a personal crisis, most of us feel a need for emotional support. Don't we like to have a friendly face to give us encouragement? Ideally this would be ****continued on the last page****



Quarterly Book Discounts

Candela readers who order the following titles during the next quarter will receive the discounts listed below, **while stocks last**. Complete the Order Form below and send to the Swedenborg Centre or phone on 02 9416 2812 and mention this page.

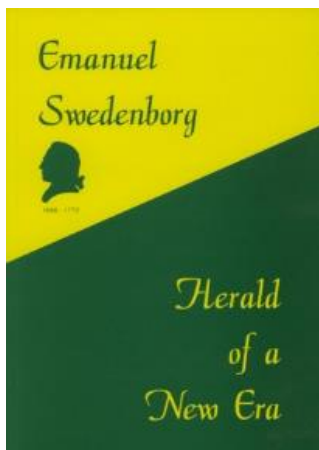


Swedenborg Explores the Spiritual Dimension

by **Brian Kingslake**

167 pages, paperback **now \$5 plus postage**

Having travelled as far as Lapland and Zululand, Brian Kingslake became a superb storyteller and shows here his ability to translate and present with his own interpretation some of the vast material contained in Swedenborg's writings into an easy to understand format. E.g. the "heart kingdom" and the "head kingdom" as a summary of the two kingdoms (*celestial* and *spiritual*) described by Swedenborg. This book is worth a look, especially at this extreme discount.



Emanuel Swedenborg, Herald of a New Era by **Prof Eric Sharpe, Dr Philip Groves, Rev John Sutton, Rev Ian Arnold, Rev Eric Sandstrom, Prof Stephen Prickett, Rev Trevor Moffat**

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someone who is always on tap. No matter how much they might want to help us, they may not be available at just the time we need them. They may be busy rather than be immediately available to us.

Many people of deep faith see such a friend in a compassionate face of God. The idea of the humanity of the Divine is a great source of comfort and strength to them. In their darkest hours many of them are sustained by their belief that they are loved by the source of all that is good who has their timeless interests at heart.

As the Christian mystic Julian of Norwich wrote '[All shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well.](#)'

In the private conversation of prayer, people of faith find a better understanding of themselves and of life. Who doesn't require food for the spirit such as encouragement, acceptance, confidence, hope, or even a personal challenge. Sometimes we can get preoccupied with worry over what feels as something tremendously important. Yet what we want may not be what we need. A wise friend can remind us what is really important.

Humility of heart

People often appreciate they need to make an effort to change. I think this is good. But for me this means not relying solely on my own efforts alone. I feel I can only hope to conquer the lower forces of my mind by co-operating with divine power. Through a humility of heart we can perhaps learn to turn to the Lord for lifting

our spirits. We might do this, rather than relying on the illusion of self-sufficiency.

As I see it, if we struggle with our troubles in *the Lord's* power, then a state of hope can replace our state of despair. For example if lonely, finding strength and courage to move towards finding friends and community: in addition if life lacks meaning, finding a sense of purpose: also when one feels guilty, sensing a spirit of forgiveness and acceptance.

If we want acceptance and comfort, we might find it helps to ask help from the human aspect of the Divine, person to person. On the face of it, this humble attitude may seem childish. However, the Bible teaches that belief and trust in the Lord comes to no one except through the lens of childlike innocence. This is the attitude needed for prayer.



["Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."](#) (Matt 18:3)