



Issue Theme ~ *"Fast-forwarding on Eternity"*

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings good friends! May you be in the company of superior spirits on receiving this latest issue of *Candela*. The theme this time involves eternity, death and the spiritual world, very meaty topics to explore indeed (why limit ourselves to the mundane?), never mind assessing how they're related. I do hope you forgive me that I'm going to be indulgent in penning an article rather than sticking to a brief introduction. We often have much space for your contribution, no matter how great or small you may feel it to be – I encourage you to send it in for publication or as feedback. A poem, a letter, email, article, a comment on your experience.

We recently saw fires devastate parts of Victoria and heard of the communities so severely impacted. Each of us no doubt grieved in our own way and was affected on hearing the unfolding stories of tragic loss of innocent people and property. Our thoughts, feelings and deeds continue to reach out to those closely involved as they rebuild their lives.

Tragedy can certainly thrust the reality of physical death into our awareness. Sadness, grief, separation and other uncomfortable feelings associated with circumstances involving death may prevent us dwelling too long on the subject. We naturally yearn to turn our thoughts to more "positive" subjects. "Morbidity" was the response of some as I did a quick survey about the theme of this issue. However, nothing is as inevitable as death and taxes, to paraphrase Benjamin

Franklin (some of us perhaps fear tax even more than death).

Interestingly, research shows when fear of



death is used as a deterrent, i.e. in justification for using capital punishment, it doesn't appear to be all too effective. The murder rate in Texas remains above average despite that state using the death penalty.

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

A common first desire on pondering death is to know what our own death will be like. What lies on the other side? When and how will this event meet us? We could check our star charts, ask psychics or seek out accounts of near-death experiences. We may look into archaeological records to find how past cultures have dealt with it, or consult sacred scriptures and religious experts. Whatever our approach, our view of our own death is likely to consciously and unconsciously shape many more of our thoughts and feelings than we suspect. If we're in denial (which is usually grounded in fear) about the reality of our death, we'll use much mental and emotional energy trying to keep a lid on associated thoughts while many situations confront us with it in subtle overt ways (like the bushfires did). A few decades ago, the Swiss psychiatrist and author Dr Elisabeth Kübler-Ross observed some common aspects of the way whose death seemed inevitable dealt with it. She described the most commonly observed states as:

- ▶ Denial: *I feel fine, this isn't happening*
- ▶ Anger: *I hate the world, it's not fair*
- ▶ Bargaining: *If I can live to my next birthday I'll attend mass*
- ▶ Depression: *Why bother, what's the point?*
- ▶ Acceptance: *It'll be okay, I'll prepare for it*



Letters

This segment is being introduced to *Candela* to give readers - yourselves - a direct voice and input into your newsletter. You can:

- ▶ comment on something in a previous issue - appreciation, offering another view, open up the topic further, etc.
- ▶ ask a question which other readers can grapple with and provide their answers
- ▶ suggest things which the Swedenborg Association can tackle to be more relevant to members and the wider community
- ▶ say something about an SAA meeting attended

Contributions should be kept as succinct as possible (a target maximum should be 750 words).

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

Included in this segment last issue was an email from Queensland SAA member, Ken Cross.

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

Ken

We still await your thoughts on what Ken raises.

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Please Note: The views expressed in this Newsletter are those of each contributor and do not necessarily reflect any particular position of the Swedenborg Association of Australia or its Committee.

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

For details on how to join, please refer to page 12.

Next Issue

June 2009

Theme: *Coincidences - Mystical Links?*

We all experience events or circumstances occurring in our lives without apparent causal connection. On reflection over time, have you seen patterns emerging with them and perhaps connections created at a higher level of life? When our life seemingly coincides with another in an unexpected way, is there a message in it for us - God's timing at work?

We are looking for contributions relating such happenings whether or not you are able to interpret them. If you can see the links or patterns so far as your own life is concerned, so much the better. Also, items on how you view coincidences in the wider context of spiritual life would also be valued.

Please reflect on this topic and make a contribution for the benefit of everyone who reads this newsletter. The Newsletter Co-ordinator will gratefully receive submissions you wish to make, either your own or something you have seen that strikes a chord with you. However, contributions don't have to be on the theme; anything which is spiritually-based will be welcomed. **The deadline for the issue is 28th May.**



The Next World

Same as or different to this one?

by **Wayne Kasmar**

In the last 40 years or so we've seen a remarkable shift in ideas about what this life is supposed to be all about. Previously, when traditional Christian teachings held sway in Western societies, we thought it was a preliminary period in on-going life during which we are tested as to whether after death we are fit to live forever in heaven, or alternatively, to be damned to the other place - hell. Even though nowadays most people find that to be a primitive and unsophisticated notion, they often still imagine that some kind of afterlife is the most probable fate that eventually awaits us. Just exactly what it will be like, though, is another matter.

A general lack of certainty amongst people probably has a lot to do with the fact that contemplating the relationship between this world and the next can be rather unfruitful. Questioning whether the two worlds are actually alike or very different can seem to get us nowhere. If they should be alike, then what would be the purpose for having this preliminary life at all? It's hard to see why God couldn't just simply put people directly into the eternal abode for which they are destined.

If, on the other hand, the two worlds are very different, again we find ourselves asking what is the point. Surely there needs to be some reference between the two, something that relates them in some way. Otherwise it would make no real sense.

Swedenborg manages to provide us with a believable and satisfying solution to the problem. He explains that the hereafter is, at the same time, both very like and very unlike this life that we're currently living. He rejects notions such as us floating around on clouds, having been fitted out with wings, and endlessly playing heavenly music on the harp. He assures us that the world we will be living in is much more familiar and down to earth than that. But he tells us the landscape and buildings and even the bodies that we'll inhabit will have a rather magical ability to change and transform in accord with our inner spiritual states. Those whose inner states are beautiful take on beautiful forms and their surroundings are also correspondingly beautiful. Those whose inner states are ugly, likewise, have all the external aspects of their lives reflecting what is inside of them. It's not something that a person has to consciously choose

in order for it to happen. It occurs automatically, and in fact there is no way of stopping it, or avoiding it.

Not that anybody there really wants to stop it or avoid it. It's a need that all life has to ultimately have an outer expression of what is inner. For this reason, when we begin the next life it's a relief to finally be able to outwardly come into what we truly are deep down, even for those who are hellish in their deep-most loves. Our lives in this world are encumbered by a grossness which prevents us fully realising our true nature outwardly. The physical material that makes up the natural manifestation of our world is the outer-most level of all creation, and is the densest, most lifeless matter that exists. It acts like an anchor on our physical and mental quickness and vitality. Compared to those in the hereafter, we become tired and confused easily, and we readily forget our deep spiritual nature, buried as it is under the dense natural level of our being.

So why is such a life and such a world necessary? What's preventing God putting people directly into an eternal life after all? Being omniscient, he would certainly know exactly where they will end up anyway. Wouldn't it save a lot of trouble for all concerned if he just eliminated this preliminary stage?

Such questions actually betray a fundamental lack of understanding of God and the supreme importance of human free will. God wants us to choose for ourselves, free of any kind of compulsion, the type of person we are to become. Swedenborg tells us that God is a person, and that all persons have a ruling love. And he makes it clear that the only thing that really interests God is the happiness and well-being of others. But the last thing he is going to do is force us to accept it. Were he to do that, then we would become like His little finger, and that's the last thing he wants.

Let me try to explain. If you want your little finger to do something, it has no choice. Because it is part of you, it has to obey you. In this sense it's not other than you. And in the same way, we would not be other than God, or other from God, or other to God, were we forced to do His will. And since all He's interested in is others, then he would have no interest in us, if we, to Him, seem to be no different to His little finger - just part of Him. So human free will has absolute primacy in all things.



Far from some traditional notions of God as being formidable and overbearing, He affords us every consideration and arranges everything so that we are completely free to choose either His way of life - one of generosity and selflessness, or on the other hand, the one that is ruled by selfishness and self-centredness. To this end we start life with the selfishness and self-centredness to the fore, and are guaranteed all the help that is necessary to change these to heavenly love, if we so desire. Thus God avoids putting any subtle pressure on us by starting us off with heavenly inclinations dominant, and then telling us we're supposedly free to change to being predominantly selfish and self-centred if we so wish. That's hardly a position of freedom, impossible as it is to escape the feeling of being condemned should we choose to exercise that "freedom" in deliberately and consciously rejecting God's way of life. He arranges it so it's all the other way around, holding out to us His offer of a better life without any pressure.

But also we need to be free of pressure from others apart, from God. Swedenborg tells us that God ensures that coming to us from inward regions are a balanced set of urges pushing each of the two options that are before us. The influences from angels and evil spirits that we feel deeply within us cancel each other out in their strengths so our free will can be preserved.

So we've seen how our free will is important at the celestial level, that is, how it relates to God. And it's clearly important on the spiritual level with the effect our spiritual associates, both heavenly and hellish, are having on us. But on the natural level there are many more aspects to the matter.

Firstly, the Divinely ordered requirement that we begin life with selfishness and self-centredness to the fore, essentially makes it necessary that we have a dense exterior level which is not automatically responsive to, and indicative of, our inner state. For if we are quite awful on the inside and that had to be manifested outwardly, then we all probably wouldn't be able to stand each other. We probably couldn't even stand ourselves. So it's a necessity for our own healthy self-regard (another requirement for exercising free will), and a properly functioning society, that our exterior being has a nature quite independent of our internal state.

Secondly, we need to be free from any undue pressure from those around us regarding our choice about our ruling love. Because our internal states are not automatically externalised, we are free to choose in the privacy of our hearts what we really want. If our internal state was openly on display, you would have the added concern of always being pre-occupied with what other people are thinking

about you. And they, being the social creatures they are, could not help trying to persuade you to be like them, and to adopt their particular response to the question. In such a situation of pressure, our free will is likely to be heavily compromised.

And finally there is the consideration that our free will is especially important in this life. Here and now, before dying, we have the designated place and time for us to choose our individual ruling love. Once a person is in the hereafter there is no level in him available that can be appealed to, and worked with, when it comes to anything that's foreign to the love that rules his internal state. Here in this world though, regeneration, the process that Swedenborg explains is necessary to convert the evil and selfish loves to heavenly ones, can occur because our outer part at least can be made consistent with heavenly loves. Once God's life, in this way, gains a foothold in our life, no matter how superficial, and we demonstrate freely a commitment to maintaining it, God is prepared to work a miracle in transforming our deep-seated evil and selfish loves to something truly heavenly in nature.

Wayne Kasmar (Sydney, NSW) is a founding member of the Swedenborg Association of Australia and currently a Committee member. He has been an avid reader of Swedenborg's spiritual writings for over 30 years.

GROUP'S NEWS

News about meetings held during February 2009 will be included in the June 2009 issue. However, DVDs of the two sessions held in Sydney ~ a talk by Associate Professor Anders Hallengren (Sweden) titled *Towards an Interpretation of Reality: Laws of Life and the Language of Nature* and the evening *Reflections through glass* with Laura Riddell ~ are available for free borrowing or purchase from the Swedenborg Centre, North Ryde. A transcript of Anders Hallengren's talk is available from the Swedenborg Centre or it can be viewed on our website - www.swedenborg.com.au/information.htm



The length of our life and how we will live it is foreseen by the Lord; as a result, we are led from our earliest years with regard to our life to eternity.

Swedenborg: *Spiritual Diary* paragraph 5002



ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

It is with much delight that we welcome Donald Chipley (NSW) as a member.

The Committee has been spending a great deal of time and thought on how the Association might best be of service, both to members and to the wider public. All of us come with such a depth and breadth of experience and insight that many new and fresh ideas are certain to emerge, as well as a clearer vision of our purpose as an Association dedicated to the propagation of the ideas and theology of Swedenborg. It is rare that volunteer committees are prepared to do this kind of mentally and emotionally taxing work, and to be willing to engage on such a deep level, and it speaks volumes for the empowering and inspiring philosophy of Swedenborg that everyone is happy to do it and looks forward to the outcomes. In my observation the members of the Swedenborg Association of Australia are rich in wisdom, open-mindedness and a genuine and deeply-felt spirituality that is both enabling and radically transformative. Our shared commitment to the notions of Free Will and Use serve as a fine basis for the propagation of a spirituality we feel is perfectly suited to 21st century sensibilities.

Naturally, like all spiritually-based organisations of whatever stripe, we face some of the standard challenges, including the limitations of traditional 'religious' language and the difficulties of knowing the wisest way to use our limited energy and resources. But with so many of us committed to a genuinely profound prayer life and a careful and constant study of both scripture and Swedenborg's spiritual writings such problems can eventually be resolved with wisdom and care.

We are aware that the Association serves the needs of a diverse and disparate group of people, and that all of us have had different motivations for seeking a deeper knowledge of Swedenborgian philosophy. If we as a committee can continue to keep that diversity in mind we can be assured that the Association has a bright and steady future.

So please let us know what you think the Association should be doing, and any ideas you might have for better serving our membership and the general public.

Blessings,

Walter Mason Hon. Secretary

Victorian Bush Fires



Readers of Candela will be saddened to hear that Swedenborg Association member, Patrick Morahan, lost his Kinglake home and virtually all his belongings in the recent Victorian bushfires. Thankfully, Patrick himself is unhurt, being awoken from an afternoon nap by a neighbour. Along with his dog, Evy, he left the area just minutes before the fire storm hit. As well as offering its sympathy to Patrick as a result of this tragedy, the Committee is helping in a positive way towards rebuilding his Swedenborg library.

We have not heard of any other members or friends of the Swedenborg Association being directly affected by the devastating Victorian bushfires or Queensland floods. If you have, please do let the Secretary know at the registered office (page2). Prayerful thoughts are extended to all those caught up in these tragic events.



Sudden Light

The divine is hard to understand
till danger rears its head
to wake the sleeping inner man
and tip him out of bed.

The divine is not in glib belief,
the spin the churches push,
but all around in soft relief
in river, town and bush.

The divine is in our living love,
discrete and all aware.
The world will tell us "Push and shove";
the divine says "Come and share."

The divine is in the sudden light
that springs from deepest gloom,
just like Creation. Let there be sight
to see the divine, not doom.

James Baillie, Victoria



Correspondences Column ~ Part 13

... reflecting on

Mists



For many parts of the world, even in Australia, Autumn is the 'season of mists'. Recalling times we have found ourselves in a mist helps us to ponder on the mists of our spirit as mirrored in the clouding over of our vision by the masses of water vapour that periodically cover the landscape.

Picture yourself treading your way carefully through mist, along a path or road that is normally familiar to you. Occasionally some object, such as a post or a wall, looms up out of the mist - out of the unknown as it were, strangely mysterious or slightly threatening, yet on clear days you had never noticed it. Ordinary sounds too, e.g. footsteps, take on a new haunting quality and soon you are not at all sure where you are, whether you are on the right road.

Strange, isn't it, that this eerie phenomenon which is obscuring your normal vision, does in fact cause you to notice things which you had not noticed there before, nor would do in all probability if the visibility remained clear. There is so much we do not 'see' or, rather, take notice of, because we are taking our environment for granted.

Progression towards heavenly things in the other life is from a kind of mist into the light.

Swedenborg: *Arcana Caelestia* 4598²

I find this situation is strikingly true in relation to familiar biblical stories and psalms. Read them in the old familiar way expecting nothing new and you see and hear just the same old things as you did before. But now look a little harder at the passage. Ask yourself, 'Do I really understand what it is saying to me?', and notice how your 'vision' or understanding suddenly clouds over, while at the same time you notice strange little incidents, or odd experiences, that throw up further questionings (clouds) in your mind. In fact, it is true to say that the Bible does not yield up its wonderful secrets too easily - particularly to those who think they 'know' it and are fond of trotting out the same old clichés as to its message. But let the Lord's strangely beautiful 'mist' enter your mind and experience a new excitement and anticipation of discovery within what had become commonplace.

It is not only in scriptures such as the Bible that this spiritual delight can be enjoyed. Giving yourself time to meditate on anything created will have the same effect - a flower, a table, a painting and, above all, oneself - all these are containers of hidden mysteries that are gateways to the higher eternal life.

Such mist is not to be missed for anything! But it requires patience and, for the best results, the company of others doing likewise. And once we have had the experience, with the Bible in particular, we come to appreciate why the Truth is always veiled over by God, sometimes lightly, sometimes heavily. But only those who open the door to this type of experience understand the reason.

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



A Dove at the Window

**Living Dreams and
Spiritual Experiences**

Edited by Vera P. Glenn

211 pages, paperback

Divided into seven sections with helpful editorial notes and related quotations from Swedenborg's spiritual writings, this book consists of sixty short contributions, one being:

"It's True"

On Wednesday my father was very restless and fearful. He was on morphine for all the pain, but it didn't effect his lucidity. He was sharply conscious of all that was going on around him. On Thursday he was more tranquil; it was as if he'd accepted that he was dying and found peace. Earlier when I'd been reading the newspaper to him, he stopped me after one article and told me that I could throw it away now. When I asked him if he'd like me to read from the Lord's Word, he said yes. So we took turns reading the Psalms to him.

At one point I noticed that my father was focusing on something, but not on us; what he saw was in front and a little above him. The expression on his face was one of wonder. He then looked at me and said, "It's true."

I asked him, "Are you seeing something? Is it beautiful?"

He nodded yes.

"Are you seeing angels? Are there angels here?"

He answered, "Everywhere."

I reflected that they were here to help all of us, and said aloud, "So the things that we have been taught are true?"

He replied, "Sure."

In speaking later of the experience to another woman in the retirement home, she told me just before her sister died, ravaged by disease and weak as she was, she sat straight up in bed and said, "Oh, the colours - how beautiful they are!"

Mary Beth (page 139, *The Miracle of Death*)

*** SEE PAGE 11 ON HOW TO OBTAIN YOUR COPY ***



The Big Book of Angels: Angelic Encounters, Expert Answers, Listening to & working with your Guardian Angel



370 pages, paperback with illustrations
Published by Beliefnet Rodal Books in 2002
ISBN 1 57954 654 4

A collection of articles by various authors in 3 parts:

- 1 *Angel Awakenings: The Birth of Angels in History & Religion (Christian & Other)*
- 2 *Angels Among Us: Most People Believe*
- 3 *Angel Communication: Famous Encounters with Angels & Ways to bring them into your life.*

Emanuel Swedenborg is referred to at several points through the book with Part 3 including the article:

Emanuel Swedenborg

A sober scientist's detailed vision of God and the angels influenced thinkers like Emerson and Blake
by Johanna Skilling

Two-thirds of the way through his long life, Emanuel Swedenborg experienced a change of heart and of soul. Born in Stockholm in the winter of 1688, Swedenborg lived a life of privilege. His father, a prominent Lutheran Bishop, had ties that later allowed young Emanuel to develop a close association with Charles XII, King of Sweden. For over thirty years, from the time he was 27 until he was 58, Swedenborg was Special Assessor to the Royal College of Mines, a sober and scientific pursuit.

But while he might have stayed in this respected position until he retired, in 1746 Swedenborg suddenly resigned. "My sole object in tendering my resignation," he wrote, "was that I might have more leisure to devote to the new office to which the Lord had called me."

Three years earlier Swedenborg had been in Amsterdam on an October morning when "such dizziness...overcame me that I felt close to death." He felt a roaring wind pick him up; a hand clutched his, and he saw Christ.

"He showed me the face of my spirit," he wrote toward the end of his life, "and thus led me into the world of the spirits and allowed me to see heaven and its wonders, and at the same time to see hell as well, and also to speak with angels and spirits, and this has gone on continually for twenty-seven years."

Swedenborg's connection with the spiritual world gave him the gift of clairvoyance. One night, he was at a party in the town of Göteborg when he "saw" a raging fire burning in Stockholm, almost three hundred miles away. The next day, he was able to confirm that his vision of the fire had indeed been true. (Not all of Swedenborg's predictions turned out to be accurate, including his

assertion that a race of people live on the moon, who speak through their stomachs, making a sound like belching.)

Swedenborg came to define his entire life as one lived among the angels. And yet he also continued to find acceptance among his peers.

"I am a Fellow and Member, by invitation, of the Royal Academy of Sciences in Stockholm," Swedenborg wrote, "but I have never sought admission into any literary society in any other place, because I am in an angelic society, where such things as relate to heaven and the soul are the only subjects of discourse, while in literary societies the world and the body form the only subjects of discussion . . .

"Moreover, all the bishops of my native country, who are ten in number, and also that sixteen senators and the rest of those highest in office, entertain feelings of affection for me; from their affection they honor me, and I live with them on terms of familiarity, as a friend among friends; the reason of which is that they know I am in company with angels. Even the King and the Queen, and three princes, their sons, show me great favour...

"But all I have thus far related I consider of comparatively little importance, for it is far exceeded by the circumstance that I have been called to a holy office by the Lord Himself, who most mercifully appeared before me, His servant, in the year 1743, when He opened my sight into the spiritual world and enabled me to converse with spirits and angels, in which state I have continued up to the present day.

"From that time I began to print and publish the various arcana that were seen by me or revealed to me, concerning heaven and hell, the state of man after death, the true worship of God, the spiritual sense of the Word, besides other most important matters conducive to salvation and wisdom. The only reason of my journeys abroad has been the desire of making myself useful and of making known the arcana that were entrusted to me. Moreover, I have as much of this world's wealth as I need, and I neither seek nor wish for more."

Swedenborg believed that God can only be revealed through man's humanity, and that both men and women are totally free to create their own lives. They can choose lives devoted to doing good and loving God, or lives of selfishness and evil. However, by doing so, they are choosing either heaven or hell after death, and the choice is final.

Swedenborg's view of heaven is of a rather earthly place populated by angels, who are former humans complete with bodies, clothing, and homes. They even marry and have occupations. However, they have no sense of time, only of states of faith, love, and intelligence. There they progress to higher states of consciousness. All people, not just Christians, are accepted into heaven, where the angels instruct them in the ways of the Lord. Interestingly for a lifelong bachelor, Swedenborg had an idealized vision of marriage in heaven. Married love, he believed, bonds two minds into one, and each couple becomes one angel.

Swedenborg's vision of hell is equally fascinating -much like the evil Gotham City in a Batman movie, with bestial lairs, filthy streets, tumbledown homes, and brothels. The residents of hell continue their evil, selfish ways, burning



in a fire of their own hatred. There is no devil in charge. For all these revelations Swedenborg gave credit to his angelic visitors. "I have seen a thousand times that angels are human forms, or men, for I have conversed with them as man to man, sometimes with one alone, sometimes with many in company." Like the scientist he was, Swedenborg recorded his visions down to the last detail in numerous books, included the most famous, *Heaven and Hell*.

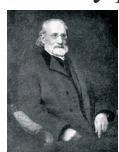
Swedenborg's vision influenced millions. His spiritual writing exerted tremendous influence on writers and artists, including Emerson, Goethe, Dostoevsky, and William Blake. His thinking also had an impact on religious leaders like Joseph Smith, founder of the Mormon Church. Not long after his death, a group of Swedenborg's devoted followers founded the New Jerusalem Church, and later, The Swedenborg Society, which still exists today. The author of over 50 works, Swedenborg's books have been translated into thirty languages.

The book as a whole presents many helpful experiences of angelic encounters and useful thoughts and beliefs, although perhaps not all compatible with teachings in Swedenborg's spiritual writings. Copies are available for purchase on the web. The Swedenborg Centre does not stock this publication but will obtain copies to meet specific orders. Costs will vary depending on what is available.

Swedenborg and Spiritualism

by **Walter Mason**

The idea of Spiritualism seems quaintly Victorian now, the very word summoning up images of stuffy parlours and séances and table tipping. But the Spiritualist movement was at one time one of the most exciting and radical agents of social change, and helped to usher in the "New Age" of spiritual openness and willingness to consider new ideas about the meaning of life and the nature of self. Spiritualism still continues as a small but energetic religious movement, with churches operating all over Australia. Of the many thinkers who influenced the formation of Spiritualist ideas and Spiritualistic phenomena, none was as important as Swedenborg. Indeed, it was through reading the writings of Swedenborg that the early Spiritualists were first inspired to reconsider the nature of the afterlife, and where and how we will spend eternity after our worldly passing.



Andrew Jackson Davis, the 'Poughkeepsie Seer', was the father of the Spiritualist movement. Heavily influenced by the writings of Swedenborg which were newly available in English in the 1840s (*The Reluctant Spiritualist*, Nancy Rubin Stuart), Davis formulated his own eclectic philosophy of life after death. His books became enormously popular in nineteenth century America and gave currency to some of Swedenborg's basic ideas. At first sweeping through Quaker and Unitarian circles, Jackson's ideas eventually inspired people to begin a spiritual movement of their own. The first Spiritualist church was formed by a group of radical Quakers who had collected around the Fox sisters, who were visionary mediums operating in rural New York State. Interestingly, many of these first Spiritualists were also dedicated feminists, and it

was also at the house of the Fox sisters that the first meeting occurred between Madame Blavatsky and Henry Steele Olcott, who went on to establish the Theosophical Society.

It would seem that Swedenborg's conviction of the easy and constant interaction between the physical and spiritual worlds was what motivated the early Spiritualists to begin to pursue methods in which this interaction could be made more evident in this world (*Other Powers*, Barbara Goldsmith).

Almost inevitably, such methods quickly became associated with scandal and trickery, and there seems no doubt that many who were attracted to the Spiritualist movement were little more than charlatans who saw an opportunity to make a little easy money and establish a name. Much of the modern attitude toward Spiritualism is coloured by this cynical attitude, informed by accounts of fraudulent mediums producing ectoplasm and levitating in darkened drawing rooms. But it is important to recognise that at the heart of Spiritualism lay a genuine desire to know about the afterlife and the proximity of heavenly realms. It is no accident that many of the great writers and thinkers of that era, people of the calibre of Arthur Conan Doyle (www.fst.org/spirit2.htm), were deeply inspired by the ideas they read about in Swedenborg's writings, such ideas leading them to explore the burgeoning Spiritualist movement.

The 1st chapter of Conan Doyle's *History of Spiritualism* is on Swedenborg. For an interesting exploration between the stances taken on spiritism by Conan Doyle and the Swedenborgians, the 50 page booklet, *Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Swedenborgians - Long over-due conflict resolution* by Brian M. Talbot is a useful place to start. See page 11.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE (contd)

Not everyone goes through these "stages" (as she called them) nor necessarily go through them in any certain order, nor visit each only once. And while not all researchers agree with her stage-based analysis, there is evidence for much truth in her observations. It does reveal that most people are typically not keen to deal with their own death even when it seems imminent, let alone when we feel healthy and it seems a long way off (although there has been a huge growth recently in the popularity of Psychic Hotlines).

Familiarity with death through personal experience or people close to us can relieve some of the anxiety and negativity associated with it and can often trigger our search. Hope is an important ingredient of relief when dealing with death. Paradoxical as it sounds, hope can come from seeing death in a more positive framework. So where can we find such a framework of understanding? Where can we find reliable knowledge about the realities of death?

Unlike our modern culture, some traditions have extensively explored death as a part of their life, like the Bardot Todol (*Tibetan Book of the Dead*) or the Egyptian coffin and pyramid texts (*Egyptian Book of the Dead*). Our own sacred scriptures might provide some understanding, relief and hope. But without reliable guidance to explore and understand the scriptures, confusion and misunderstandings easily arise. So what is a reliable authority on what lies beyond with reference to the whole picture, not just what we seek to soothe our fears? This is where I find Emanuel Swedenborg's documentation priceless. Using the gift of spiritual sight granted him from the Divine, plus a lifetime of extensive scientific training, Swedenborg carefully and consistently documented over a period of nearly three decades what he was permitted to see, hear, and experience in the world beyond this physical. Whether to believe his account or not we are free to determine for ourselves. Swedenborg clearly asserts that our faith in something should not be based on persuasion but on insight and understanding with freedom being the essential ingredient in establishing that belief. The commonly understood definition of faith as 'believing something that is not understood' is rejected by Swedenborg as this is blind faith without the support of the understanding, an adoption of hearsay through persuasion from others, whether experts or misunderstood from scriptures, therefore not spiritual faith. He instead defines real faith as "the inner acknowledgment or perception of truth" (*The Doctrine of Faith*, published 1763).

Swedenborg tells of a world which is real and exists now around us. He could talk with angels and had his sight opened to see into the spiritual world, just as well as he could see into the natural world. The world beyond the physical is described as follows:

"A person . . . lives on as a person after death, just as they had lived before in the world. They can see, hear and speak, as they did before in the world. They wear clothes and ornaments just as they did before in the world. They feel hunger and thirst, eat and drink, just as they did before in the world. They enjoy the delights of marriage, just as they did before in the world. They go to sleep and wake up, just as they did before in the world. That world has lands and lakes, mountains and hills, plains and valleys, springs and rivers, parks and woodland. There are also palaces and houses there, towns and villages, as in the natural world. There is writing there and books, official positions and businesses, precious stones, gold and silver. In short every single thing on earth is to be found there, but in the heavens they are infinitely more perfect. The only difference is that everything in the spiritual world is of spiritual origin, and so is spiritual, because it originates from the sun there, which is undiluted love. Everything in the natural world is of natural origin, and so is natural and material, because it originates from the sun there, which is undiluted fire. In short, a person after death is a complete person, in fact, more complete than they were before in the world. For before in the world they had a body made of matter, but in the spiritual world they have a spiritual body."

Conjugal Love para.182

One tradition speaks of 'dying before we die' (attributed to Prophet Muhammad and used by the Sufi teacher and poet Jalaludin Rumi, 1207-1273). By this is not meant committing physical suicide of any kind. So what is it in us that must die? Swedenborg states that there are two kinds of deaths, a physical death and a spiritual death. Our physical death is inevitable and he explains it as simply a continuation of life (see above, *Conjugal Love* para.182). I've heard it said that physical death is as simple as changing your clothes. Without our spiritual sight being opened like that of Swedenborg, physical death seems an impermeable barrier with no certainty or clarity of what lies beyond. It feels like being in a dark room with walls of glass that seem impenetrable. Yet if the light were switched on, those glass walls become invisible and it becomes clear the rest of the room looks as familiar as the part we were already in. . . . natural death, by which we are taken out of this world . . . is nothing but resurrection, because when



our body dies we rise again in our spirit, and so death is simply a continuation of our life; for through death we pass from a life in the natural world into a life in the spiritual world, with the difference only that the life in the natural world is a more external and imperfect life, and the life in the spiritual world is a more internal and perfect life; and yet the two are alike in appearance . . .

Apocalypse Explained para 899^{4,5}

If physical death is an easy transitional event, a spiritual death is a more serious matter and to be avoided. What then is meant by dying before we die and what must die? That which is false in us must die so what is true can be born. The great work ahead of us is to fight our self-centred nature to avoid crystallisation of our worst feature (our ruling negative love) so that we will not die a spiritual death. The essence of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* is to use this time as a rehearsal for reaching our highest potential states in order to make them more accessible upon physical death. In the Anglo Saxon poem of the heroic warrior Beowulf, when confronted by a Frisian warrior who seeks to kill him, Beowulf says: "You . . . can't kill me . . . Because I died many, many years ago . . ." That is one example where in literature a hero's life and qualities are used to pass on a method of living. Swedenborg describes the nature of spiritual death (second death) as:

When evil spirits . . . who have not yet . . . become fixed in their ruling love, enter any angelic society, . . . they are direfully tormented, and not only turn away but even throw themselves down into the depths where no light from heaven enters . . . This turning away and removal from the Lord is what is called spiritual death . . .

Apocalypse Explained para. 78

We've explored some thoughts on death, but what about eternity?

That can be appreciated more fully when it is realised we are encouraged to reach for a state rather than reach a point in time: Our challenge becomes to watch and work on our states, through our pursuits of goals over time. Our aims are so often time-driven. Paying off the mortgage in 20 years, catching the bus in 45 minutes, meeting that deadline (no pun intended!) in an hour, retiring in 32 years, saving up for holidays in 4 months, etc. But consider what time and eternity signify spiritually. According to Swedenborg:

. . . eternity, . . . all times in the Word signify not times but states of life . . .

Apocalypse Explained para. 23

. . . angels have no notion of time . . . Eternity

means to the angels infinite state, not infinite time . . . eternity must be thought of, not from time but from state . . .

Heaven and Hell para. 167

The death to be feared and avoided is that of our spirit rather than that of our body. The death to bring about consciously and deliberately is that of our detachment from our negative, egotistical states. One easy to remember starting exercise is to try applying the triple filter of speech:

1. *Is what I say true?*
2. *Is it necessary to say that?*
3. *Is it kind to say that?*

Our natural death is put in perspective in this very sobering prayer and poem. It helps address those who have passed into the Spiritual World already but also helps prepare us put our physical death into perspective. Perhaps then we can get on with the real job of knowing what we must help to die and what in us we must help keep alive. The poem is by Henry Scott Holland (*source <http://friendsofquanyin.blogspot.com/>)

*Death is nothing at all.
I have only slipped away into the next room.
I am I and you are you.
Whatever we were to each other,
that we still are.*

*Call me by my old familiar name.
Speak to me in the easy way
which you always used.
Put no difference in your tone.
Wear no forced air of solemnity or sorrow.*

*Laugh as we always laughed
at the little jokes we enjoyed together.
Play, smile, think of me, pray for me.
Let my name be ever the household word
that it always was.
Let it be spoken without affect,
without the trace of a shadow on it.*

*Life means all that it ever meant.
It is the same that it ever was.
There is absolutely unbroken continuity.
Why should I be out of mind
because I am out of sight?*

*I am waiting for you,
for an interval,
somewhere very near,
just around the corner.*

ALL IS WELL

Joe Vandermeer

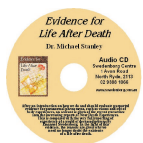


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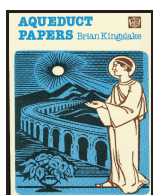
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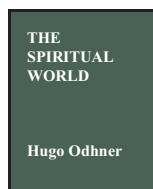
Consisting of three talks by Rev. Dr. Michael Stanley (UK) ~ *Evidence for Life After Death*, *Laws of the Spiritual World* and *Effect of the Other World on this World* ~ this set of three disks provide a very useful survey of how we can evaluate the results of near-death experiences and the insights which Swedenborg's teachings bring to understanding the spiritual dimension and ongoing life there.



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- Brisbane (Ian Arnold on (07) 33690054)
- Gold Coast (Kevin Attwater on (07) 55452401 and Jack Benson on (07) 55454115);
- Melbourne (Chris Skinner on (03) 94320322; email: cskinner9@optusnet.com.au);
- Perth (Trevor Moffat on (08) 96416147; email: trevormoffat@bordnet.com.au);
- Sydney region (Michael Chester on (02) 99440497; email: mchester@accsoft.com.au);



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

Details of programmes will be advised by leaflet as soon as they are known. Our website is updated when new information comes available - www.swedenborg.com.au

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

Melbourne: New Church Hall, 426 High Street Road, Mount Waverley. Last Fridays commencing 8pm.
27th March, 24th April and 30th May ~ Subjects and Speakers to be advised

Sydney: Swedenborg Centre, 1 Avon Road, North Ryde commencing 7.45pm.

27th March ~ *How do we feel God?* Speaker: **Julian Duckworth**

24th April ~ *Navigating Our Spiritual Development* (Part 2) Speaker: **David Millar**

23rd May ~ *The Differences between Religion and Spirituality* Speaker: **Chris Skinner**

The Swedenborg Centre will be participating in the forthcoming Festivals for Mind, Body Spirit in Sydney (30th April to 3rd May - Stand F29), in Melbourne (5th June to 8th June - Stand F26) and in Brisbane (26th June to 28th June - Stand C28). If attending, do call at the stand and say hello. There may even be material on display which you will not have seen before.

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