

Candela



Newsletter of the Swedenborg Association of Australia Inc
Organisational Details are provided on the next page

MARCH 2010

ISSUE 59

Issue Theme ~ Everything has meaning

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hello and welcome to this unique new issue of Candela.

Certain ideas have become staple foods of my thinking-diet and they echo in my head like the steady bass beat of a song. It becomes a challenge to avoid serving them up too often and instead keep my greetings to you new and interesting. Remember that TV ad with the kids at dinner time chanting 'not beans again!' Well, let's see if we can find some fresh meaning to meet that challenge. Trouble is that if, like me, you believe that all meaning already exists before it comes to us from above (or if you prefer, from within) then we have a sense of newness and discovery because the picture as a whole is obscured from our awareness. We're simply peeling off one small layer after another from that colossal onion of meaning. We seem to have an innate drive to find the meaning of things, a hunger and desire to know and understand.

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

One typical question that consistently plagues us is 'What is the meaning of life?' The scientific disciplines seem to be almost entirely based on an attempt to answer such a question.

Even psychology and philosophy seem to have arisen primarily as the output of our yearning to know and understand as we attempt to define and describe what we have found. So how have we fared with that question?

* * * continued on page 2 * * *

Next Issue – June 2010

Theme : Look Back in Wonder ~ a look at Divine Providence

Thank you to everyone who wrote for this issue.

We are allowed to see divine providence from behind but not face to face, and when we are in a spiritual state, not in a materialistic state. Everyone who accepts inflow from heaven and recognizes divine providence (and especially people who have become spiritual by virtue of their reformation), on seeing events in their amazing kind of sequence, virtually sees providence from a deep recognition and confesses it. Divine Providence 187

Next issue it would be great if quite a few people could write a short paragraph on how they can look back and see Providence having worked in their life. The deadline is the 25th May
Email to rduckworth@optusnet.com.au or by post to the registered office



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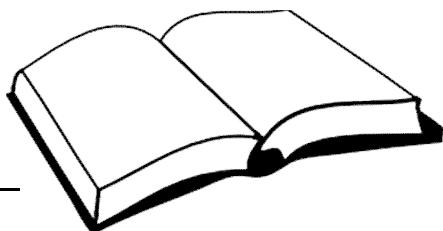
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Please Note: The views expressed in this Newsletter are those of each contributor and do not necessarily reflect any particular position of the Swedenborg Association of Australia or its Committee.

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, refer to page 12.

Every single thing in nature has a correspondence with spiritual things. The same is true of every single part of the human body. But today it is not known what correspondence is. However, in the most ancient times the knowledge of correspondences was the queen of sciences, and so universally known that the most ancient people wrote all their tablets and books by means of correspondences. The myths of the earliest peoples were the same, as were the hieroglyphs of the Egyptians. The Book of Job, which was a book of the ancient church, is full of correspondences. De Verbo 7



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE (cont)

In my view there are at least two ways in which we express our desire to know life's meaning. These ways may seem very similar but are actually vastly different, perhaps even opposites. The way it is expressed above, 'What is the meaning of life?' seems to be the way the search is posed in the realm of science. It set in motion a search for objective, quantitative, repeatable facts.

The second and less frequently heard form of the searching for life's meaning is to put oneself in the middle of the question, 'What is the meaning of my life?' While both questions search for meaning they do so from vastly different standpoints.

With the objective external approach I am not necessarily the subject of the search (although it's still me doing the searching). I'm more inclined to look outside and around myself as if I'm not there, like a fly on the wall of the experiment. Also, I can take the rather passive approach and sit on my couch night after night watching the Discovery Channel, reading Scientific American or New Scientist, monitoring the progress of studies by other people, dedicated scientists and experts thinkers, probing with their expensive toolkits like the orbiting Hubble telescope, some very powerful super-computers, plus the mighty cyclotron particle smasher (with its 10km diameter). But the collective answer from that scientific community seems in general to keep postponing the answer, while telling us we're getting ever nearer the big conclusion. They require a consensus among peers for a definitive answer (proof) on that question. Scientific certainty and consensus costs much time to establish (if it is at all ever possible) within the scientific peer committee, while only a skerrick of doubt throws the whole answer back into doubt no matter how much work and time it took to establish. Meanwhile, people's lives come and go while they wait and watch more Discovery Channel.

On the other hand, armed with the more personal statement 'What is the meaning of my life?' puts us squarely at the centre of our enquiries. We can get to work immediately, using our own life experience as the laboratory, admitting any event that reaches our horizon, inner and outer. We may observe synchronistic events (meaningful coincidences), or admit dreams into our study and explore their symbolic meaning, or interact creatively and explore artistically those themes and thoughts we love most deeply in our most private moments. cont...



We can experiment with new approaches, joys and uses. None of our search needs prove anything to anyone else. It becomes our experiment of our journey of our individual life. It can lead us into a deeper understanding and appreciation of our meaning for ourselves and not for our peers to validate. Much meaning can be gained by taking any one simple thing, hobby, or profession and learning its every aspect from every angle. Being present with what we are doing in the moment, fully, with our thinking, feeling and action all focused on the thing we are engaged in at this present moment in time.

Thus it becomes not only an active exploration of our meaning as we open ourselves up so that meaning can flow into us and inspire us, it also becomes at the same time a meditative experience. The experiments can be to watch not just the outer universe but our inner universe, observing our own actions, reactions and interactions. In this we come to realise that wise Greek aphorism to know thyself.

And finally, a cautionary tale. As we look for meaning, we're bound to ponder the causality of things we observe. As we ponder our inner world, we should also watch and come to know how our fantasy is involved and to ask ourselves, 'is what I am observing real or is it my fantasy wanting it to be this way?' It's easy to read causality into things without using our God-given rational function to check its validity. What is fantasy, what is fact?



I'll leave you with the great challenge of exploring meaning actively for yourself using you as the central focal point of study and reflection. I am recycling a previously used statement (it's a favourite of mine) when I share a Sufi teacher's warning. He said that when future generations reflect on the shortcomings of our present age, they will undoubtedly conclude that we possessed the greatest tools and methods for conducting any kind of scientific exploration, but that we failed to turn these in on ourselves. Let's make sure this warning will not apply to us by

endeavouring to use all we know and do to improve our inner knowledge, our usefulness and spiritual prosperity. In this sense, focussing on our inner growth is actually a very powerful form of community service. Wishing you and your community a very meaningful Easter!

Joe Vandermeer

Ron Sylvester

It is with a feeling of sadness that we record the passing into the spiritual world of Ron Sylvester - a member of the Association since late 2008. Ron was only in his mid-60s but had coped with seriously debilitating medical conditions over a number of years. He died peacefully alone, fiercely 'guarded' by his ageing dog. Living in a remote community in SE Queensland for many years, Ron became acquainted with Swedenborg's teachings in his latter years when reading material on life after death. He quickly concluded these teachings were something really worthwhile investigating extensively and he acquired the full set of Swedenborg's spiritual works using part of his Government Stimulus Package to do so. He became a local 'missionary' for these teachings by talking with neighbours and friends, and lending out books to encourage further reading, which has borne fruit. Ron also pursued unusual methods of distributing Swedenborg Centre introductory leaflets in the area such as leaving them at the local Laundromat and roadhouse for residents and visitors to read and take away. His planned reading of all Swedenborg's spiritual works has been curtailed in this world but he will now be experiencing the spiritual side of life first-hand.

The Lord's kingdom is a kingdom of useful purpose, and the entire universe is created in such a way that wherever there is a use it can be clothed in the kind of form that enables it to fulfil the Lord's purpose in creating it. This principle operates first in heaven and then in the created world, even down to the physical substances of nature itself.

Heaven and Hell 112



Swedenborg Centre News

Introducing Michael Chester and Elizabeth Kemmis.

By Michael Chester

As you were informed in the December 2009 Candela, Neville retired at the end of the year and Michael Chester is the new director of the Swedenborg Centre. I've settled in well and am very happy to announce the appointment of Elizabeth Kemmis as the new Office



Assistant. She carries out the role left vacant when Alexis Jarvis retired at the end of 2009. Elizabeth began work on Wednesday 20th January and will generally be working on Wednesdays and Thursdays.

She began her association with the Swedenborg Movement when she attended a New Church Sunday service led by Julian Duckworth in 1997 at Roseville, Sydney. She felt very much at home with what she heard and experienced. She has attended some of Julian's classes and recently attended the 2010 New Church Camp with her husband Graham.

Both Graham and Elizabeth are keen sailors and enjoy traveling. They competed in the 2009 Tasar World championships and won to become the Grand Masters champions. (The Tasar is a 4.5 m high performance sailing dinghy, designed to be sailed and raced by a man and a woman.)

She looks forward to deepening her understanding and appreciation of Swedenborg as she becomes more experienced in her new role. She is currently enjoying reading 'Christian Instruction for Young People' by Rev Dr Jonathon Bayley. She has a number of skills and qualities that she brings to this position. She is a trained teacher who taught Chemistry and Mathematics to HSC level until she retired at the end of 2006. She enjoys interacting with people and is looking forward to talking to enquirers and meeting the people who visit the Centre. We look forward to the new energy and unique input of Elizabeth and wish her well in her new role.

Neville mentioned a few things about me when introducing the new Director. I've been asked to provide a few more details.

When I was introduced to Swedenborg in 1990 I was working in the Information Technology industry as an analyst/computer programmer. Before that, I taught Religion, Mathematics



and Science in Sydney and Melbourne for 5 years to Year 7 - 9 students. After teaching I became a computer programmer working in the industry for around 17 years. In 2007 I and my partner Julie Beynon graduated as Dru Yoga teachers and now have our Yoga business – Heart Centre Yoga.

Dr. Philip Groves introduced me to Emanuel Swedenborg when attending his Psychotherapy Course. One of the lectures was on Wilson van Dusen and he needed to introduce the students to Emanuel Swedenborg in outlining van Dusen's work and achievements. The first book I read was Heaven and Hell. I would go to Balmoral Beach on a Sunday morning and enjoy reading it. I sensed the cohesiveness of his insights and saw it as a sign of the truth behind his writings. In 1993 I attended the Sydney Mind Body Spirit Festival and met Neville and Jack Benson at the Swedenborg stall. After having a very enjoyable meeting with them I attended The Spiritual Philosophy of Emanuel Swedenborg Introductory Course taught by Julian Duckworth. Having learnt that Julian was the minister at The New Church in Roseville I started attending some of the Sunday services and his Bible Study classes. One of the great gifts of Swedenborg was to reveal the inner meaning of the Bible and I have pursued this area with great interest. My regular attendance to Julian's classes and services attests to the very high regard I have for him as a spiritual teacher and guide to Swedenborg's Writings.

I also attended meetings in 1992 that led to the formation of the Swedenborg Association of Australia and have been a member from the start. I have appreciated the Writings since reading Heaven and Hell and wished to give back in some way. So I served 6 years as Secretary of the SAA, and helped organise with others, many of the Spring Celebrations. I have had a major role in organising the North Ryde meetings for many years and also video recording the talks for those who couldn't attend. I have also been providing the North Ryde report for the Candela over the years.



Through personal study and attending the many events at the Swedenborg Centre I have grown in my understanding of Swedenborg's teachings and look forward to my new role as Director. With my orientation period with Neville at the Centre I was able to appreciate much more his experience in promoting Swedenborg's teachings and his familiarity with the Writings. This enabled him to meet the needs and enquiries of the many people whom he made contact with. I was also able to see examples of the friendships forged over the years and the gratitude people have for his assistance. He has been part of a team of people making the Swedenborg Centre a great resource to Australians and I hope that

readers will tap into this richness by their enquiries, utilising the materials on offer, seeking advice on what could be most helpful and helping it to grow by their contributions. I thank Neville for his help and continuing assistance, and the Swedenborg Movement will continue to benefit from his experience and wisdom through his participation on the SAA Board.

Anyone knowing Elizabeth and me would see that spiritual matters are very important to us. So I encourage members and seekers to take full advantage of the services which the Centre provides and Elizabeth and I look forward to getting to know you better.

*Any of us who are unaware that the Word has a spiritual meaning, like a soul within its body, have nothing else to judge the Word by except its literal meaning. Yet the literal meaning is like a case that contains the precious objects of the spiritual. When we are unaware of the spiritual meaning, we cannot judge the divine holiness of the Word any more than we could judge a precious stone on the basis of the ore that envelops it, which sometimes looks very ordinary. **True Christian Religion 192***

SWEDENBORG'S SYSTEM OF CORRESPONDENCES

By Julian Duckworth

One of Swedenborg's great contributions to spirituality is on correspondences or the relationship between inner and outer worlds. Of course, Swedenborg did not create this; it has always been known from ancient times, but he systematised it scientifically and brought it back into awareness. He came to see that everything in creation expresses a spiritual reality; in fact, things exist physically because they are the result of divine life flowing into creation, creating representations. These correspondences are there in nature, in dream images, in myths and ancient stories, and in scriptures or sacred texts. Swedenborg's main focus with correspondences was on the Bible, in opening up its deeper meanings through seeing how things correspond.



An easy example would be the Bible's frequent reference to mountains – on which, for example, Moses received the ten commandments and Jesus Christ gave a sermon. So, a mountain generally corresponds to a higher state or realisation about life. The reason it corresponds like this is because a mountain is higher ground, and when you climb a mountain you get a better view.

These correlations are not 'set pieces' like an equation or code, although there is a general meaning underlying them. With mountains, that is about what is higher, but a mountain can carry many more meanings over and above that. It can represent the work involved in changing from living a self-centred life to a more compassionate one; it can represent times of being apart from the busyness of life

to be in a quieter place; it can depict the majesty of God, and so on. It can also carry an opposite meaning, as all correspondences can, where the 'mountain' of our sense of depending on ourselves obscures the view of sun and sky.

We begin to see that the form, shape, qualities and perhaps most of all, the use of something shows its spiritual meanings. This makes correspondences living and accessible to us, becoming tools by which we can unlock more of the truths about our existence.

Over the page is a chart of several basic correspondences, in which an object is given, then its general meaning, and then some of its properties suggesting why it has this general meaning. This may be useful to you in opening up this fascinating and creative area of meaning and you can take it further.

Julian Duckworth is a Board member of the SAA and the minister of the New Church in Roseville.



EXAMPLES OF SPIRITUAL SYMBOLS

SKY	the spiritual level of life	above, expansive, shines down
GROUND	life and its main activity	where living things are found
UNDERGROUND	our subconscious level	below, invisible, base, can rise up
HEAT	love, emotion (good or bad)	warmth, animation, passion, fiery
COLD	factual knowledge	lack of warmth, lack of growth
LIGHT	awareness, enlightenment	reveals space, place, what is
DARKNESS	confusion, falsity (ego)	lack of vision and of position, blackness
HIGH	greater awareness, understanding	fuller view, relative position seen
LOW	lesser awareness, plane of life	limited view, local position seen
LEFT	mystic mystical, unknown, esoteric	fewer left-handed, cross over to 'right brain'
RIGHT	power, known, manifest	greater right-handed, cross over to 'left-brain'
WATER	received truth	clear, flows, refreshes, finds own level
ROCK	established truth	firm, hard, strong, old
MOUNTAIN	higher truth in our mind	raised, grandeur, points upwards
STONE	specific truth gained from experience	single, rounded, useable
FIRE	strong emotion	hot, burns, moves, spreads, non-physical
JEWEL	a deep core truth for us	rare, formed from combustion, shines
METAL	a bright truth that can be used	strong, shines, used to make things
RAIN	refreshing truth	from above, moistens, falls widely
SEA	our memory and what it contains	gathered, deep, has life in it, stirs up
RIVER	flow of life, spiritual growth	flows, descends, deepens, broadens
SOIL	our potential, the groundwork of life	rich, supports life, workable
SUN	the Divine, the source of life	heat, light, above, rises and sets, circular
MOON	faith, mystic, esoteric	reflects sunlight, shines at night, changes
STARS	clusters of truths in our mind	pinpoints, shines, shows direction
SEED	potential for future spiritual life	has life, dormant, abundant, germinates
PLANT	living truth rooted in experience	develops, branches, reproduces
FLOWER	delight in a spiritual life	scent, colour, beauty, precedes fruit
FRUIT	spiritual use and purpose	result of annual growth, edible, seeds
LEAVES	living truths that bring health	green, feeds plant, full canopy
TREE	main perceptions in our mind	majestic, ancient, spreads, deeply rooted
GRASS	covering of basic truths in our life	low-lying, covers ground, fodder, grains
WOOD	good produced from spiritual life	living, beautiful, useful, maturing with time
GOLD	truth which comes from love	warm in colour, non-tarnishing, precious
SILVER	truth which comes from wisdom	shines, cold in colour, delicate, tarnishes
DIAMOND	the most precious of all truths	very hard, fire-formed, gleams, rare
PEARL	truth formed from life-experience	formed from grit in oyster shell, lustrous
ANIMALS	living emotions moving in us	active, free-ranging, great diversity
BIRDS	living thoughts flying in our mind	flight, fast, ascending, descending, alert
FISH	known ideas in our lower mind	in the depths, cold-blooded, open eyes
INSECT	everyday thought and activity	industrious, numerous, small
SNAKE	ego-life, sense of self	poisonous, low-lying, hidden, strikes
LION	power and majesty of higher life	strong, roaring, regal, can appear gentle
HORSE	spiritual understanding	fast, noble, can bear its rider well
EAGLE	higher perception surveying life	strong, large, sharp eyesight, talons
HAND	thought and will turned into action	extremity, many movements, does things
FOOT	purposeful intention in actual life	forward movement, direction, support
HEART	centre of emotion and yearning	pump, vital organ, feeds whole body
LUNGS	acquiring insight to assist emotion	respiration, oxygenates blood for health
HAIR	the ultimate (outermost) in life	covers body, grows, adorns, living
MOUTH	spiritual reception and expression	receives, tastes, chews, speaks, utters
DIGESTION	inner process of making one's own	digests, distributes, eliminates waste
EYE	spiritual sight and understanding	vision, recognition, comprehension



HOUSE	the mind, with its inbuilt ideas	construction, dwelling, many rooms
BRICK	life, as we choose to make it	clay, square, fired, convenient in design
DOOR	progress, access, new state	opening into, entrance, shuts, locks
SWORD	truth that penetrates and divides	pointed, sharp, two-edged, weapon
CLOTHES	what we choose to make ours	covering, protection, suiting us, showy
FOOD	spiritual nourishment for life	enjoyable, essential, varied, consumed
DRINK	spiritual refreshment for life	quenches thirst, essential, cooling, tasty
BOAT	one's own personal belief-system	floats, safety, carries, steered
ROAD	one's own spiritual life-path	direction, continuous, leads on towards
BOOK	personal memory, self-revelation	written in, closed or open, turning pages
STAFF	faith that supports and sustains	rest on, trust to, enables, gripped
WAND	empowering truth that points out	outstretched arm, touches, transforms
COIN	valuable truth for use in life	exchange, has value, buys necessities
CUP	what life gives, total of experience	container, drink from it, full or empty
<hr/>		
KING	the ruling principle in our life	rules wisely for kingdom, has full power
PRINCE	a new emerging principle	heir, king's son, youth, handsome
PRINCESS	a new emerging emotion	bride, king's daughter, beautiful, sought
WAR	meaningful spiritual conflicts	armies, victory, defeat, slaughter
ARMOUR	truths that protect during conflict	strong, heavy, enclosing, impenetrable
BOW	our mind's intention and conviction	taut, accurate, shoots, long distance
ARROW	individual truths that penetrate	pointed, kills, collected together in quiver
HARP	a principle which restores our mind	vibration, plucked, many strings, harmony
OIL	the activity of love in our life	softens, enriches, enables, anointing
WINE	the activity of truth in our life	fermented, invigorates, rich taste



The meaning behind things by Kathryn Baker Curry

Many people seek the spiritual meaning behind things in their life because it helps them live in a more consciously spiritual way. Sore shoulders may mean a feeling of having too much responsibility on your shoulders. The presence of a kookaburra on their clothesline may be a reminder to bring joy and laughter into their life. The noticing of toadstools may remind them of the cycles of life from dormant to ripe to the eventual decay of things. When I work as a medium I use metaphysical images, feelings and thoughts to build up information appropriate to the reading. A simple example is the peace rose, presented to me by an older male in spirit and accompanied by feelings of love. His widow found that rich with meaning especially as he had been a great gardener with a passion for roses.

In meditation and dream work, the message has potentially several interpretations. The meaning may take years to understand. My early meditations included one where I was floating above a golden field of wheat, the sky was perfect and it reminded me of the scenery

When you were born you cried, and the world rejoiced. Live your life so that when you die, the world cries and you rejoice.

Cherokee saying

in "The Wizard of Oz". My initial thoughts and feelings were very positive. Years later I feel it was symbolic of a wheat intolerance that was keeping me from being grounded. I could only understand it with time and experience.

What works for me may not work for you. Meanings can often be culturally different. Carl Jung kept a soul garden that had rocks, flowers and talismans that reflected his soulfulness back to him. The journey for spiritual meaning occupies many people's lives! The little talismans we keep, the photos of loved ones, these take our minds and hearts down paths that remind us of loving and of being loved. These small things can be the most important things, things filled with love, often struggles as well and learning, but mostly love.

"Two prisoners whose cells adjoin communicate with each other by knocking on the wall. The wall is the thing which separates them but is also their means of communication. It is the same with us and God. Every separation is a link."
(Simone Weil)



ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

As I write this report I am also preparing a talk I will be delivering at the Sydney Swedenborg Centre at the end of February on the spiritual life of Vietnam and the Vietnamese people. It makes me smile to think of the amazing connections and changes in the world, and I can't help but reflect on how exciting Swedenborg himself would have found these multi-cultural connections the embrace of the new and the different. I also reflect on what an extraordinarily engaged organisation we are involved in that allows itself such a broad scope while still retaining a solid and over-arching interest in, and engagement with, the spiritual writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, a man who died nearly 240 years ago.

It is wonderful that we have been able to sustain such a consistent membership when so many other small groups struggle to survive. Perhaps that is the beauty of always having been reasonably small in number – those that become involved tend to have a long-lasting interest which sees their support of the Association last a lifetime – and beyond, as we have witnessed in the wonderful bequests left to us.

As always, we remain committed to keeping abreast with changes in technology, and new ways of spreading Swedenborg's unique vision in the modern world. The rise of Social Media has been tremendous in the last couple of years, and we are seeing to it that Swedenborg has a presence on Facebook, Youtube and in the blogosphere.

We would like to welcome the following new members to the SAA:

Darren Brunne (QLD)	Russell Eyles (QLD)
Shane Farrell (NSW)	Josette Salter (NSW)
Monica Ulrich (VIC)	Guy Patching (NSW)

We look forward to an exciting 2010, filled with wonderful new opportunities to serve each other and our communities. In Australia, promotion of any kind of spiritual community is always difficult – maybe our weather is just too good? But I remain convinced that the best way to promote our spiritual ideas is to live them, and to help and inspire others to be the best and most loving people they can possibly be.

With Blessings,

Walter Mason

Secretary

Melbourne Group News

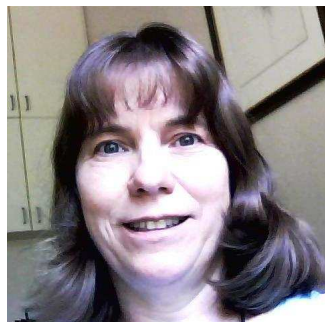
Our final meeting for the year at the end of November took the form of viewing a DVD of Dr Phillip Groves when he spoke at the Swedenborg Centre on Ancient Hieroglyphics. This topic was very much enjoyed by those present. It was not possible to show the whole DVD due to time but a number wanted to obtain their own copy to finish viewing it at home.

The first meeting in 2010 at the end of February saw a presentation by the Convenor Chris Skinner on the subject of Biblical Symbolism. The talk traced Revelation through the ages and how God presents spiritual truth to all people. It was demonstrated how these essential truths for our spiritual growth are contained within the stories of the Bible in symbolic or correspondential language known to ancient peoples.

Our speaker at the end of March will be Neville Jarvis and his topic will be 'Inner and Outer Worlds.'

C J Skinner

My name is Ruth Duckworth and I am the new



editor of Candela. I was a founder member of the S.A.A. I live in Sydney with my husband Julian.

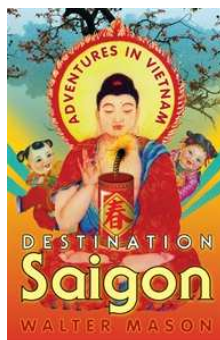
I was brought up with the teachings of Swedenborg as my father is a minister in the New Church.

I have studied Swedenborg quite a lot over the years and at present I am doing a course with the Australian New Church College and reading Arcana Coelestia Vol.1.

I just want to let you all know that our Secretary **Walter Mason** has just had his first book published, by Allen & Unwin. It is making quite a splash and you may have heard Walter being interviewed on the radio. It is called

"Destination Saigon: Adventures in Vietnam."

Walter has travelled to Vietnam many times and come to love the country in a deeply personal way. He is a great story teller and had me laughing out loud at some of his adventures. But he also engages very much with the spiritual side of people and because he relates to them so well, being a fluent speaker of Vietnamese, it is a wonderful read.





Is there really a Reason for Everything?

by Wayne Kasmar

Even amongst religious believers there is today a strong tendency to see our lives as being insignificant in the big scheme of things. Modern science has demonstrated the vastness of the universe, and by comparison our planet amounts to no more than a speck of cosmic dust. People who believe in God often think that if He has made such a vast universe then His mind must be similarly vast and unknowable. It's easy to start to think He would not be giving any thought to us and that He is probably far too busy running the universe.

The ease with which the modern mind has accepted these sorts of ideas may well have astounded Swedenborg; for he championed the importance of the human race in the eyes of God. For him, only the human race could constitute the focus of God's whole being. Swedenborg made it clear that, like us, God is a person, and that all persons have a ruling love which in effect is the person's very life. Swedenborg says that God's ruling love is love towards others; to bless other people with happiness and fulfillment in life is God's whole motivation.

So in this way God is not interested in anything apart from us human beings, and it is our free will that sets us apart from everything else He creates. We are the only part of creation that God experiences as having a will independent of His own. All other things are controlled by the laws of nature or their instincts. It is our independent will that as far as God is concerned, makes us seem to be other than Him. His nature is to be completely unselfish and un-self-centered, so He has no intrinsic interest in those things in creation that don't have a will independent of Him, because to Him they feel as though they are part of Him. Yet He does love them to the extent that they allow Him to bless the lives of the people he is creating.

So everything in creation actually revolves around us human beings. Yet, our modern impression is that it is quite the opposite. We need a truer understanding of who and what God is, and how He actually goes about the act of creating. My own personal understanding of all this was helped immeasurably by reading an insight provided by C.S. Lewis, the atheist-turned-Christian writer. In "Mere Christianity", he writes of God's relationship with his creation by using the illustration of an author writing a story.

The author writes, "She darns the socks." Having written these words he puts down his pen and ponders for some time before picking up the pen and continuing with, "The next moment there is a knock at the door."

In the time of the story no time elapsed between the events. But the author is not in the time of the story. He is outside of it. He could have had as much time to ponder as he wished between writing the two statements.

This original illustration from Lewis really got me thinking. It was fascinating to me that the author had a whole existence separate from the world of his story. After he put his pen down he could have gone to the other side of the world and not picked up his pen for a year or more. And this freedom from his creation made me see that if God is likewise writing us into existence as characters in stories He has 'all the time in the world' to write each of our complete individual stories, one at a time, all one hundred billion of them. He can go back and forth in time, as authors often do in writing their stories. After He finishes writing the complete earthly story of one person he could then go back in time and independently write the story of another. This He could do ad infinitum. But in each person's story He is free to devote as much time as He needs to create all the detail He wants into it, and judging by the infinite number of experiences we have in our lives, that amounts to a lot of detail.

It is likely Lewis considered his analogy just a useful way to demonstrate how it is that God is outside the time frame of His creation. But if he was aware of Swedenborg's own statement on God's relationship to creation (and there is some suggestion Lewis knew of Swedenborg's writings) he might have thought more deeply about it. Swedenborg maintained that God creates all things moment to moment. This means that were God to withdraw his creative power from any particular thing for even an instant then that thing would immediately cease to exist.

It is an altogether different idea from our conventional view of creation shared by people with all kinds of views. That is that God brought everything into existence in a single act of creation at a past point in time and endowed it with an ability to continue existing in and of itself without any further creative energy from God.

But surely it is the idea of God as author which best fits Swedenborg's idea of an on-going



creation, rather than an objective scientist observing the experiment of life. Swedenborg's Creator, just like an author, is intimately and personally involved with everything that happens in His creation, not just the things in it but the events that occur whether big or small.

This Cosmic Author Theory of Creation (as I have come to call it) has been often suggested as a model of the existence we find ourselves in. But the objection against it has always been the apparent lack of room that it permits for the existence of human free will. This doesn't though allow for the power of creative imagination. Skilled writers often report that their stories and characters take on a life of their own. This suggests the Cosmic Author with his infinitely powerful imagination experiences us as being altogether real, free will and all.

And if God is in fact an artistic-Creator rather than a scientist-Creator, then He will be subjective in his approach. By necessity an author is selective in what he chooses to describe in his story. He doesn't tell the reader everything that happens in the imaginative world that he is describing. He mentions only those things which are relevant to the story and that help him advance it. In the same way God creates only those things and events in his imaginary world which relate to the things He is particularly interested in and are relevant to his subject.

Since it is us human beings that are really the only things God is fundamentally interested in, then it makes no sense that He should consciously maintain in existence - in the way that Swedenborg describes - those other things of creation continuously unless they are within the sphere of human personal experience. In other words He doesn't have to create, nor does He have any desire to create other things at those times when no human being has an experiential connection to them.

So the truth of the matter is quite the opposite to the notion that God is pre-occupied with running the universe. A vast lifeless expanse by itself is of no interest to Him, and until a human being ventures into it, or perhaps trains a telescope onto it, it simply doesn't exist for Him. The fact is He is too fascinated with the minutiae of our lives to bother with Cosmic Science Experiments. Swedenborg tells us that every little event on our lives is so packed with meaning and significance that we can barely begin to appreciate it.

And so we can readily see there is a meaning for everything, but only when we understand 'everything' to mean those things that God selectively creates in the present moment, and

they always revolve around us – the part of creation He loves supremely.

Buddhist Parallels in the Doctrine of Correspondences

D. T. Suzuki, probably still the best-known exponent of Zen Buddhism in the West, was throughout his life fascinated by the spiritual writings of Swedenborg, and translated some of his works into Japanese. Suzuki was struck, as many since have been, by the extraordinary parallels between Swedenborg's ideas and the teachings of Buddhism. The great Swedenborgian writer Wilson Van Dusen, himself a practitioner of Zen meditation, was also drawn to these similarities. In a brilliant essay (freely available on-line), 'The Same Supreme Doctrine in Swedenborg, Hinduism and Buddhism', Van Dusen comes to some radical – and radically refreshing – conclusions about the shared spiritual dimensions of all religions. I find myself returning again and again to this short essay, because it so clearly and cleverly enunciates the universality of deep spiritual awareness, and the supreme importance of a personal spiritual experience.



David Loy, in an essay exploring the connections between Buddhism and Swedenborg, describes a piece written in 1927 by D. T. Suzuki in which he finds a specific parallel between the Doctrine of Correspondences and the idea prevalent in Esoteric Buddhism that all material phenomena are a manifestation of the Buddha's Dharma-Body. Shingon Buddhism, the Japanese sect that draws on the complicated tantric forms of Buddhism that are more familiar to us in their Tibetan versions, espouses a refined and difficult-to-understand theological vision that is heavily reliant on deeply symbolic ritual and the use of mantra, mudra and mandala. These 'spiritual technologies' are explicit reflections of the very form of the Vairocana Buddha, and recognising these metaphysical structures speeds one's journey toward enlightenment.

Though there is no evidence that Swedenborg was familiar with the teachings or forms of Buddhism, there is a reference in *Apocalypse Revealed* (11) which Anders Hallengren believes refers to the Tantric Buddhist practitioners of Mongolia who Swedenborg encountered in the spiritual world. It seems an intriguing possibility.

Walter Mason



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