



#### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

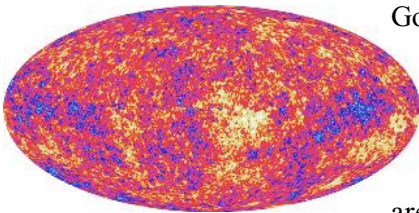
**I**t would be truer to call this the President's musings. "Love thy neighbour as thyself". Did it ever occur to you that the whole worthiness of your life depends on the way in which you love yourself? It is manifestly impossible to love your neighbour nobly unless you love yourself nobly. You can not respect humanity unless you respect yourself. It would be meaningless. You can not love your spouse unless within your heart is a secret beauty that enchants you. I suspect you can not love your child unless there is in your soul some mirror that reflects his/her innocence and charm.

No one can hope to find his or her salvation without being deeply concerned with the salvation of others, for human beings are complete in relationship and not as islands standing alone. We are meant to engage life and embrace it, be immersed in it to the fullest extent possible for us. "Happy are you who do it".

You can not even love God, in any helpful way, unless there is some divinity which you recognise within yourself, called "a jealous love" by Dostoevsky.

Psychology tells us, that when we say: "I'm as good as you" we clearly are not. The dunce may say this to the dux but you will never hear the more clever say "I'm as good as you" to the duller person. The plain girl says it to the beauty queen, the staff member to the boss, the student to the teacher, the weak country to the stronger, but never the other way around. We are all different and to say we are as good as someone else is denying our uniqueness.

Taken to the extreme, we can imagine some even saying they are as good as God. I believe that is what is said when we think the "Big Bang" is all there is to this creation. If we ponder this, we are really talking about a tremendous ego, something within us that tries to bring the greater down to the level of the lesser (or conversely raise the lesser to the level of the higher).



#### MAIN CONTENTS

|  |    |
|--|----|
| In Love                                    | 2  |
| Not Living Life Too Safely                 | 3  |
| Administration Matters                     | 4  |
| Group's News                               | 5  |
| The Story of My Life                       | 7  |
| The Crystal City                           | 8  |
| A Member's Journey                         | 9  |
| 19 <sup>th</sup> June ~ A Date to Remember | 10 |
| Books for the Quarter                      | 11 |
| What's Happening?                          | 12 |

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

A love of the neighbour is an appreciation and love of God through our fellow man or neighbour. The Kingdom of Heaven does not belong to us; we belong to the kingdom. We are members of a great fellowship and we each have a unique part to play in it.

One can recognise this love-connectedness via music. That is, a musician who has been touched by the Divine during the creation of his music can share that love through the music. It is, in a sense, not the composer who relates directly with the listener but the divine spark within the music itself that relates.

Conversely, one, on hearing the music, may not be touched by it until much later, consciously or unconsciously. The spark is still there and resides somewhere within us.

The best part of my love which I bear to those I love the most, is the consciousness that I am capable of a great love, that in me is a high and noble something that responds to love, as a harp responds to the musicians touch.

What amazes, awes, and almost frightens me, is not the evil but the good of which I am capable.

Agape,

**John Brogan**

## ***In Love***

***Nothing real happens without love  
because love is the only reality.  
Fear and hate are based on fictions  
from the figments of duality.  
Love annihilates separation  
because separation is not true:  
all is one in love.***

***Nothing good happens without love  
because love is the only good.  
Bad and evil are based on fictions  
from the dark side of duality.  
Love annihilates darkness  
because darkness is not true:  
all is light in love.***

***We cannot live without love  
because love is the giver of life.  
Death and grief are based on fictions  
from the blind side of duality.  
Love annihilates death  
because death is not true:  
all is alive in love.***

**James Haydon Baille**

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Kevin Attwater  
Julian Duckworth  
Neville Jarvis (Newsletter)  
Wayne Kasmar  
Christopher Skinner

### **Executive Manager:**

Neville Jarvis

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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.

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## **Quotable Quote**

"The more I know about the life and works of Swedenborg, the more I admire this great man and his teaching! I share a similar fate with him. I also produced my first scientific results in engineering, and then moved towards exploration of The Individual and The Universal. It's amazing that in 1720 Swedenborg didn't hesitate to reject the Newtonian concept of irreducibility of the particles of matter by stating firmly that "everything material is essentially organized motion". This is exactly what I teach today in my course on Science of Complexity; the material is nothing but the embodiment of whirling dynamic patterns, that is, of motion! In the same way as Swedenborg immersed himself more and more in the study of soul, my research also moves into the depths of The Individual to reveal the umbilical cord connecting us all with one another and with the timeless Source and Centre of the Existential Wholeness. And it does not matter that I do not call this Source and Centre in the same terms as did Swedenborg; he and I are speaking of, and researching into, one and the same spiritual enigma! "

**Dr Vladimir Dimitrov, University of Western Sydney**



## Not Living Life Too Safely

by Julian Duckworth

I once knew a man who told me - with some kind of personal pride - that he had broken twenty one bones during his lifetime, mostly through doing things that involved dangers and risks, like climbing trees and falling out of them as a boy, and later, working with some very physical equipment. I, on the other hand, have never broken a single bone - though I may have cracked a rib once - because my own lifestyle just isn't in the same league. Even on the soccer pitch at school, I would carefully go in the opposite direction to where the ball was heading at any given time and so risked no physical contact either with the ball or a player, but risked the ire of the teacher in charge of us.

Some of us are skilled at avoiding trouble and not exposing ourselves to risks. We play a safe game with life, and we duck when there's trouble. When I first came across the philosophy of the *Enneagram* about twelve years ago, I was intrigued to learn that one interpretation of the nine points is to do with various kinds of avoidance in life. Some people avoid any kind of pain, others avoid any kind of responsibility, and others avoid things like intimacy and feelings. And if I'm remembering correctly, part of the Enneagram model is designed to help the person learn to face up to whatever it is they may be avoiding - consciously or otherwise - through the healing power of the Lord at the centre of life. Jesus, remember, simply did not avoid anything and He knew that the truth He acknowledged would eventually lead Him into confrontation and finally a cruel death. He knew this all along and yet He did not live His life too safely.

A person who is aiming to follow a spiritual path in their life will need to expose himself or herself to certain risks that other people may very well never encounter. These of course are not usually physical risks but personal ones. Not that long ago, in the period between the time when nearly everyone went to church and today's wide acceptance of spirituality as an OK thing, you might well have faced derision from people if you told them that you had certain deeply-held beliefs. So, as is often the case, you learned to keep quiet and never let on. It's safer.

When the reports of near-death experiences began to emerge in the mid-1970's, many people who had experienced remarkably similar events all spoke of the way in which the process of 'dying' had altered their view of living and removed the fear of dying, but so many of them also said that they had never shared their experience with others because they felt people just wouldn't understand.

Spiritual people risk all kinds of things. They might, for example, feel the need to take a stand on a certain issue or debate, and defend their point of view. They may, in doing their best to live up to what they believe is the ideal, risk falling short of a self-imposed high standard and risk the feelings of just being too human and not being good enough. Paul, in Romans, anguishes on this dichotomy: "*For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.*" (7.15) A spiritual person also risks the hardship and challenge of facing up to and obeying everything that his particular belief demands - the hard-asks as well as the easy-rides. Some people construct a convenient personal belief system out of a bit of this and a bit of that and call it their philosophy of life, but they leave out the bits that will demand taking responsibility or making a change to their life. And a spiritual person perhaps risks becoming too inwardly preoccupied, dwelling on the meanings and mysteries of life rather than engaging with the cutting edge of relationships and the demands of time and energy. A lady once commented to me about meditation - something in which she herself was deeply involved - and remarked that too much meditation is rather a selfish preoccupation and that for every period of meditation there should be a period of service somewhere out there in the world, for others. And I have always appreciated the words of Edmund Burke, that:

*"evil triumphs when good men do nothing."*



Jesus often commended those who both “*hear and do My commandments.*” Sometimes we interpret such words as the need to be busy doing a lot of good in life. But I think the word ‘do’ can equally well be translated ‘be’ which gives a rather different idea. The real risk in not living life too safely is in being yourself and being true to yourself and being true to being the kind of person that the Lord has made you to be. Only as we accept the truth of that, and experiment with it sensibly, and dare to be what we might feel is unacceptable, only then will we ever be able to grow. And take heart, if you keep your eyes wide open to things going on around you, most people are not watching you closely anyway, and if you were to ask them they would want someone like you to be true to yourself and not miss out on life by living it too safely.

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**Julian Duckworth** *is on the Committee of the Swedenborg Association of Australia, and regularly gives talks at Association meetings. He trained as a Music Teacher in the UK and currently ministers to a New Church (Swedenborgian) congregation in Sydney.*



### **Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945)**

Readers may have watched the recently screened ABC Television *Compass* programme on this Protestant theologian, one of the modern world’s most influential.

Many mainstream Christians see Bonhoeffer as a defining model for Christian social action to end oppression and racism, despite Bonhoeffer himself being hanged by the Nazis in the final days of WWII for his role in a plot to kill Hitler.

Of particular interest to our Association is that Dietrich Bonhoeffer is a descendent of a Swedenborgian family. His paternal grandmother, whom he knew, was Julie Bonhoeffer (1842 - 1936). She was the daughter of Christian Friedrich August Tafel (1798 - 1856) and the niece of Johann Friedrich Immanuel Tafel who converted to Swedenborgianism in 1813. Many of the Tafel descendants have been deeply involved in the Swedenborg movement and remain so today. Translating Swedenborg’s writings and collecting his manuscripts have formed a valuable part of their contribution.

Whether Dietrich Bonhoeffer was ever aware of the writings of Swedenborg remains unknown.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS**

### **New Members**

We are very pleased to warmly welcome the following new Members to the Association:

Ken Bellchambers, NSW  
Ken Cross, NSW  
David Moffat, ACT  
John Prasolik, NSW  
Joan Suter, NSW  
Michael Tobin, NSW  
June Webster, NSW  
Kevin Williamson, NSW  
Lydia Young, NSW

### **Business Items**

The quarterly Committee meeting due to be held in April had to be cancelled. So a number of items which came from the earlier meeting in January 2004 have been in abeyance. The next meeting is 17<sup>th</sup> June at which it is expected steps will be taken to move them forward.

The deregistration of our former organisation - Swedenborg Association of Australia Ltd. is in process. The first Annual Meeting of the new Swedenborg Association of Australia Inc. is likely to take place within two months of the end of the financial year - 30<sup>th</sup> June 2004. In the same way as previous AGM’s, it will be receiving and adopting annual reports, appointing office bearers and the Committee, and taking decisions about subscription rates. Members will be advised of the meeting details in due course. All positions are always declared vacant and the Committee would be only too delighted to hear from anyone interested in serving on the Committee or taking on one of the office-bearing roles (President, Secretary, Treasurer). Simply contact the President, John Brogan, by phone on 02 9974 4647, by letter via the Swedenborg Centre (see page 2) or via email on [brogans@bigpond.com](mailto:brogans@bigpond.com). **Please do give this some really serious thought;** input from a wide base at this level of the Association is vital. There is no requirement to be Sydney based. Two Committee members are currently from interstate and become directly involved in meetings via inexpensive telephone link-ups or the Internet. So “remoteness” from the Sydney area is no excuse!

Several readers responded to the appeal in the last issue to submit items for publication and it is a delight to have several included in this issue. Others have been carried over to the next issue, partly due to space available. **Please do keep them coming.**

**Neville Jarvis** (Executive Manager)





## GROUP'S NEWS

### Brisbane:

Monthly meetings in Brisbane, normally held on the 4th Wednesdays, continue to attract around 12 people each time. At most meetings we welcome 1 or 2 visitors. In May, 3 Filipino students, studying for ordained ministry in the Swedenborgian Church and in Brisbane for intensive face to face work, joined us. Paul's talk at that meeting was *"The image and likeness of God"*.

At all our meetings **Paul Eldar** has been the speaker. Paul is untiring in his support and always fresh and creative in his approach. His presentations are warmly appreciated and cassette copies of the talks are usually on sale at the next month's meetings.

There was fascinating follow up to the talk in April *"God is creation but . . . creation is not God"* when, in the discussion afterwards, the saying was quoted, *"The road to hell is paved with good intentions"*. Have you thought about it? One member of the group looked it up, discovered that, originally, there was no prefatory *"the road to..."*. As for its ancestry St. Bernard of Clairvaux is quoted as having said, or written, *"Hell is full of good intentions or desires."* It's anyone's guess who added, *"the road to..."*. At all our meetings there are questions and good discussion afterwards. People who come say how much they get out of the meetings.

Ian Arnold



### Melbourne:

In March, we were pleased to have a further visit from **James Edgar** as our speaker which also included a contribution from his wife **Malak** who is a very well qualified Egyptian Cultural Anthologist. The generic title of his talk again was *Man, Myth and Mystery, Wisdom of the Ages*. James again focussed on the general theme of how myths and legends have conveyed wisdom down the ages but on this occasion he focussed on some of the more well known myths that come through in films like **Lord of the Rings** and other films and books. With Malak providing some wonderful insights of her own and linking films and books known to people present the talk illustrated very well how almost without thinking we have essential truth coming to us in ways that we may not have thought about. As usual we had a very good attendance of around 35 for the talk including a number of new attendees and questions and comment was vibrant.

Our speaker in April was the Convenor, **Chris Skinner** and the title of his talk was *'Practical Spirituality'*. The material for the talk was centred around Swedenborg's work *The Divine Love and The Divine Wisdom* which was previously titled *Doctrine of Uses*. It was demonstrated in the talk how the essential elements or qualities of God being love, wisdom and

power should be mirrored in our own life. That love and wisdom should motivate us to put it into use. The focus of the talk was on giving numerous examples of how we put these concept into practice in our everyday life and in doing so we are expressing the love of God. Due to other commitments by many of our regular attendees our numbers were small but we had 22 people present including 5 new attendees and questions were lively and the evening enjoyed by everyone.

May saw for the first time having a panel of speakers. The theme given to each speaker was their idea of God or inner being and how this was put into practice. We had speakers from different religions or traditions - a **Buddhist Monk**, a **Hindu Nun**, and a **Moslem Theologian**. Each provided insights into their faith or philosophy and how this played out in the lives of the members of their tradition. The purpose of the meeting was to show the essential Swedenborgian concept that there is one central idea of God and it comes through in different ways but is essentially the same. The talks emphasised this principle and everyone present felt moved to agree with that. The convenor led a short reflection on the unity that was felt in the room, the need to respect and honour each tradition, and that all paths lead to God. We had a very good attendance of just over 40 including the three speakers. Questions were numerous but were kept mainly to the central theme. It was obvious that attendees were keen to delve a little deeper into each tradition but time did not permit and it may be possible to organise another forum next year in our program.

It has been very pleasing to have quite a number of new people attend meetings in the last few months and this is due in part to our small amount of advertising and also to friends inviting friends.

Chris Skinner



### North Ryde, Sydney:

How do you determine the success of a meeting? Several criteria come into play but perhaps none more important than the level of discussion generated from a talk. **Roy Simmond's** discourse *"Jacob's Ladder"* on 26<sup>th</sup> March, wide-ranging and erudite, was a case in point. For just 30 minutes, through his infectious style of presentation, Roy held his small audience of 15 spellbound. He began by emphasising the value of reading The Word at its literal level and of shaping our lives to those teachings we find. Then he introduced us to Jacob's dream with the ladder symbolising the opening of an access to higher life. The words spoken by God in the dream are all about creation and eternity. Roy showed how the modern theory of creation (from the "Big Bang") can be integrated with the Genesis account. He then applied progressive geometry using straight and



angular lines and circles to build up a ladder of dimensions in terms of our mind and understanding until reaching Eternity. Hence, when Jacob awakes from his dream, he thinks: “*Surely the Lord is in this place and I did not know it*”. Then the questions and comments flowed for over an hour on many aspects, all of which Roy handled adeptly and the chairman had to work hard to bring the formal part of the evening to a closure. A very stimulating evening. This talk is also available on video for borrowing.

**Neville Jarvis**

**Julian Duckworth** presented *Swedenborg's Christ* on April 30<sup>th</sup>. It was a very special talk. One does not choose this topic lightly as the person needs to have an in-depth understanding of Swedenborg's writings as well as spiritual maturity to give an adequate coverage. So the 17 people who attended received something very special. From my perspective I had heard various strands of what Julian talked about over the past 10 years. However, it was not woven together so cohesively as it was on this particular night. The big picture of Swedenborg's Christ was presented so that the listeners could appreciate the role of Christ coming into the world, and what it did to enable us to be free in our choices. There were some new aspects that I was not aware of and will require further reflection on my part, and this is one of the joys of attending such a talk. “*The angels never tire to all eternity in contemplating the advent of the Lord into the world.*” For those who wish to deepen their appreciation of Christ via the insights that came to Swedenborg and recorded in his writings, I recommend borrowing the video of this talk which also has Julian's comprehensive notes. The following passage from Julian's notes comes at the beginning of his talk and reminds us of what is special about Christianity:

Swedenborg's Writings focus on the Lord Jesus Christ who is God, and on all the Divine activity. He takes it as read that Jesus Christ is God, and argues vehemently against Jesus being the Son of God – a separate person – offering himself vicariously (in place of us) as a willing sacrifice for human sin to reconcile God to man and man to God through His death (trad. Christian theology). Instead, he presents the idea that God took on human existence and became part of his own creation.

In the following month **Dr Vladimir Dimitrov** gave an inspiring talk on *Sublime Learning*. Sublime Learning is the art of going beyond knowledge to the receiving of wisdom. Vladimir used three symbols as a focus for his talk. He used the three-leaf ‘clover’ image to look at the interactions between the individual self, society and the Universal. He stressed only the individual can be transformed and society changes through their influences. He pointed out that our education system passes on knowledge and skills but largely neglects our being. It is through acknowledging our inner self and

being in touch with the universal that wisdom can be received. He used the infinity symbol to look at the importance of the relationship between the self and the Universal. He guided us in a simple breathing exercise which can be used to develop this connection. With the third symbol - the circle - he looked at wholism, and the individual feeling part of the Universal. 27 people warmly received Vladimir's uplifting message. Here are a couple of quotes from one of his articles on Sublime Learning. *We learn to acquire knowledge, but this knowledge does not make us wise.* Sublime learning relates to the most essential, the highest kind of knowing, as it aims at realization of the primary existential purpose of each of us: *to open and fulfil the inner urge we are endowed with, to nourish it from within and let it blossom into all that one truly is - a unique embodiment of the infinite creative power of nature.* This talk is also available on video for borrowing and is highly recommended.

**Michael Chester**

## Meeting Recordings

**As a service to the members and friends of the Swedenborg Association, and providing a store of material which can be drawn from at any time, many of the Association meetings these days are recorded. Depending on location, they are either available for borrowing or purchase for the cost of the tape.**

**For talks given in *Brisbane*, audio tapes are available to buy for just \$5 each including postage.**

**In *Melbourne*, they are either recorded on audio tape or by video (as is the case for the three talks referred to in this issue)**

**Video recordings are available for talks and functions in *Sydney* over a number of years now.**

***Listings of the talks* are maintained and you can obtain these free of charge from the Swedenborg Centre (see page 2) or by enquiry to the various State Convenors - see page 12. Requests to obtain recordings should be made to the Convenors.**



## *The Story of My Life*

### *~ Piecing together Swedenborg's personal Endeavours and Struggles*

(continued from the December 2003/March 2004 Issues)

**This series of articles results from a talk given by Neville Jarvis, Executive Manager of the Swedenborg Association of Australia, at its 2003 Annual General Meeting.**

#### **Part 3**

For context purposes, it is useful here to reiterate what I said in Part 1 of this series. In taking a look at what Swedenborg might have brought to mind about particular happenings during his 84 years, it is not to provide answers but to raise questions, to place ourselves directly in his shoes for a while. **The selections offered are presented as if Swedenborg himself was speaking to you.** To some degree therefore, their factual accuracy is open to question but much of what is said can be supported from documents and anecdotal material as referred to at the beginning of this series.



### **At Age 55 ~ Feelings of Insanity**

*From childhood, I have experienced periods when I have regularly recalled my dreams and then prolonged times when I have not. From talking with others, I know this is quite normal. Until about 8 years ago, the dreams I could recall at the time usually had some connection with what I had been working on or the company I have been keeping. But then quite a change in their nature took place. They became much more vivid and I felt they were quite super-natural - lots of them involved things like flashes of light which did make me feel somewhat anxious and frightened. I began recording each one and it became clear to me they happened at times when making break through while finalising the analysis of my anatomical studies. They gradually grew in intensity and more bizarre. I was conscious that my life-time strivings in science to find the connecting link between life here and God's higher kingdom was not succeeding and I was often in a state of wondering whether my life had been of any real use. Trance-like states were occurring too, when I was neither asleep nor awake. I was sometimes beset by storms with thunder and wind, monsters and animals I did not recognise. Also, individual people appeared with male and female characteristics combined. At the time, dreams such as being amongst heaps of rags full of rats, and of soldiers marching continuously past my window, made me wonder whether a form of madness was starting to take hold of me.*

*Some days, anxiety stopped me writing. These were times when life became a real struggle and I started finding myself in states of depression.*

*Then earlier this year, the dreams intensified and I found I was also having some very disturbing experiences even during the day. I really felt I was going insane and I did confide in a few very close acquaintances. One time I dreamed I was standing behind a machine that was set in motion by a wheel. The spokes entangled me more and more and I just couldn't escape. I woke up in a sweat. Another time, I became conscious of descending a great staircase which ended in a ladder, below which there was a hole leading down to a great abyss. I started falling down quite quickly; down and down I headed but then a hand from someone standing on the other side of the abyss caught me and I suddenly awoke in a fearful state. By then, the thought had occurred to me that maybe the dreams and other experiences might have an underlying purpose and I did find that by working with the imagery, I could interpret them as telling me something about the sort of person I was like inwardly and what I needed to do to deal with any negative aspects.*

*But for what purpose? Will this long episode ever end to bring normality back into my life?*

How might we have felt in experiencing weird dreams and happenings over a long period of time? Would we question our sanity? We need to remember nothing was known of dream interpretation in Swedenborg's day ~ no dream therapists or counsellors to go and talk to ~ and succumbing to such states of being would have almost certainly led to the lunatic asylum. ***What do you think?***

### **At Age 60 ~ Stutter**

*Being a scientist with a very analytical mind, it was always my wish and endeavour to accurately and precisely present my thoughts, ideas and conclusions.*

*I have found no difficulty in using the quill but I have had a real problem all my life when it has come to expressing myself verbally because of my stutter.*



*It didn't matter during my childhood but was something about which I became very self-conscious from my late teenage years. It very nearly spoilt my graduation day at Upsala University when I was 21. Like my peers, I wore a very dignified gown. In turn, we had to read our dissertations in front of the faculty staff, a good number of notable dignitaries, our family and friends. When my turn came, I remember mounting the platform, not particularly nervous but just feeling very proud to at last be reading my thesis entitled "Selected Sentences from Publius Syrus Mimus and L. Annaeus Seneca". But as I began reading, my stutter became quite severe. Thankfully, I had the presence of mind to slow down my reading of the paper and I got through the remainder of it without too much difficulty.*

*It was well received but afterwards, a number of people came to me to kindly express their concerns about my stutter, suggesting ways to overcome it which did not appeal to me. This was all a great embarrassment.*

*From that time on, whenever I have had to talk in public, or in the parliament, or giving my opinions at a dinner party, I have needed to always remember to speak slowly and deliberately to suppress the stutter. I can then hold the floor. If I get excited when talking about something, I still quickly start stuttering and see the perplexed expressions on people's faces. It does annoy me but I have reconciled myself to the way in which people respond to my condition.*

Here is a very gifted man, given a sensitive and immeasurably important role to fulfil by the Lord and he had to cope with a stutter which affects less than 1% of adults. Very difficult condition to deal with. Regrettably sometimes viewed differently from hearing, sight or other physical disabilities but absolutely no reason to do so. *What do you think?*

*For continuation*

## *"The Crystal City"*



*There is a crystal city, beyond the stars above,  
Its one that's filled with people, with the symbol of a dove,  
There's nothing to compare it, with anything down here,  
The happiness that they share, is of a higher sphere.*

*There is a crystal city, beyond the ships at sea,  
Its beauty and its grandeur, is not for us to see,  
There's joy and laughter, all in all, will wear a happy smile,  
The sun shines brightly all night long, and stays out all the while.*



*There is a crystal city, beyond the mountain range,  
Its people form a way of life, that could never change,  
There's books and music, arts and craft, the list goes on and on,  
The learning is uplifting, with ne'er a thing go wrong.*

*There is a crystal city, beyond the sky so clear,  
Its such a lovely city, if only it were near,  
There's very special people, sent from heaven above,  
The angels in their glory come to us with love.*



Merlene Marina Stratton





## A Member's Journey

The "Journey" included below is not by one of our members. In fact, he is not even Australian but a member of Information Swedenborg Inc. in Canada. It appeared the May 2004 issue of their Newsletter and is of particular relevance through one major step in his pathway - Sadhu Sundar Singh - who is the subject of a book about to be issued authored by the late Professor Eric Sharpe, Religious Studies, Sydney University.

(Reprinted with permission)

"I would like to tell my spiritual journey. I'd like to say at the outset that I firmly believe the Lord knows each heart very well and what each person needs and that He provides for each soul as the person is ready to receive truth.

I was born into a Baptist family and at the age of 22, I still attended the Baptist church and had never heard the name Swedenborg. My church was evangelical and fundamentalist. The Bible was God's word and to be taken literally. I was born again, baptized, took communion, loved God, loved church, loved God's people and wanted to tell everyone about Jesus because otherwise they would go to hell. I believed the Baptist teachings, such as only those who are born again go to heaven, the trinity, the atonement.

I studied the Bible and read books, many, many books.....some of which had a great effect on me. .... I came across "Sadhu Sundar Singh" by Cyril Davey, originally published by [the Baptist] Moody Press in Chicago. This book told of Indian Sikh, Sundar's search for God. He wrote a book, called Visions of the Spiritual World. In this book were stories of unsaved, but good people going to heaven and stories of angels teaching people who had died. I wrestled with these things, talked to friends and ministers and was told Sundar was wrong; it was heresy.

I continued to read and search..... Then in 1987, I read in a biography of Sundar that he was quite interested in Swedenborg, had all his books and had actually spoken to Swedenborg many times in Heaven in visions. .... After further research and help from Louise Woofenden in Newton, Mass. I received a copy of a letter in Sundar's handwriting, dated 1927, thanking the [Newton Swedenborgian Church] society for the gift of 30 volumes of Swedenborg's writings. Sundar said this is a "great treasure and I will read it prayerfully."

It took a while, but with an "endorsement" from Sundar Singh, I came to see the Writings of Swedenborg were a "great treasure." As you can imagine this is a great departure from the teachings of the Baptist church.

Where am I now, in the year 2004? I've heard that using endorsements, such as that of Helen Keller, to tell people about the Writings of Swedenborg doesn't work—I believe that the Lord saw in my heart that I was ready to receive these truths but the only way for my type of mind to come around, was by endorsement. The Baptists endorsed Moody, Moody endorsed Sadhu Sundar Singh, Sundar endorsed Swedenborg."

Greg Cresswell



Sadhu Sundar Singh (1889-1929)

## The Riddle of Sadhu Sundar Singh

by **Eric J. Sharpe** (1933-2000).

204 pages. Published in 2004 by Intercultural Publications (240 pages).

Available online for \$17.95 on the following website:

[www.mergingcurrents.com/book.php?BookSKU=3563](http://www.mergingcurrents.com/book.php?BookSKU=3563)

Professor Sharpe brings his vast background in interreligious studies, intercultural studies and mission studies to this critical biography of Sadhu Sundar Singh (1889-1929), who remains one of the most influential figures in the Indian Christian world. In the early decades of the twentieth century he became an international symbol for what is now called "contextual" or

"inculturated" expressions of Christian faith outside the Western world. Rather than a biography, the book examines who the real Sundar Singh was behind the symbol and the myths and the faith of those he touched. And the connection with Emanuel Swedenborg? Chapter 7 deals with that in depth.

A fuller review of this valuable new publication will hopefully appear in the next issue.



## 19<sup>th</sup> June - A Date to Remember!

Does this date have any significance for you?

Maybe it connects with an anniversary, a birthday, a special happening in the past? It is very close to the summer solstice in the northern hemisphere, and to the shortest daylight here in the southern.

If you had been Emanuel Swedenborg living in 1770, it would have been a most memorable day indeed for you. We can be sure of this because, apart from his private diary entries, letters he wrote and references to historical events such as the issue of Papal Bulls, 19<sup>th</sup> June 1770 is one of very few specific dates referred to by Swedenborg in his spiritual writings. It comes towards the conclusion of his last major work *True Christian Religion* (TCR), in the chapter entitled “*The Ending of the Age*”, which provides a significant clue.

Many today accept that we live in a new age, often referred to as the Aquarian Age, although there are numerous differing interpretations as to its nature, style and commencement. Some see it as the liberation from daily humdrum caused by the industrial and more recently, the technological revolutions. For others it all has to do with the integration of Eastern beliefs and practices into our Judeo-Christian structure opening up new avenues for personal growth and spiritual values - very much a post mid-20<sup>th</sup> century phenomenon. The focus on nature/environmental issues with the establishment in the 1970's of communes based on liberal mores of behaviour is yet another expression. Certainly society has undergone many changes in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the pace of that change increasing dramatically overtime.

In writing this chapter in TCR some 230 years ago, Swedenborg was not only looking at the state of his own and earlier times but looking forward to what was to come. He begins by reviewing previous ages. (Note: he uses the term ‘church’ to indicate a focus on the general spiritual connectedness between people and their Creator at a particular time; he is not referring to man-made ecclesiastical organisations). Each spiritual era, he states, commences with a period when men and women live the truth to which they have access out of love towards their Creator and for the eternal welfare of others. There is no loss of respect for another even if a different understanding of truth is held. This respect dissipates only when self-love begins to predominate desires, thinking and actions. Truth is twisted to support selfish ends and over time becomes lost leaving mankind in spiritual darkness. An era is then in its last stages; a new one must be established for the eternal welfare of all people.

Epochs of human change are not unique to Swedenborg's writings ~ golden, silver, copper and iron ages are part of ancient tradition and other spiritual

pathways have their own terms. Swedenborg was a Christian, and the Bible had been his frame of reference throughout his life. Hence he draws on it with equivalent ages:

- ◆ “the Most Ancient” until the flood;
- ◆ “the Ancient” until the events on Mount Sinai;
- ◆ “the Israelite” until the birth of Christ; and
- ◆ “the Christian”.

He uses his scientific training to analyse the rise and fall of these eras and to find their common factors. He relates the processes to the cycles of birth to death, morning to night and other examples from nature.

*So what of “the Christian” era?* The Bible itself looks to a time of a final last judgment and a second coming of Christ - another epoch which would have to involve a period of spiritual darkness for people. References in the Gospels and the Book of Revelation to ‘the events and signs’ of this occurrence have been the source of much debate over the centuries. A literal interpretation ~ physical upheavals, a 1,000 year period and an appearance of Christ in the clouds ~ has dominated Christian thinking. Yet, what is so often overlooked is that the Old Testament predictions of events to surround the coming of the Messiah were never literally fulfilled. In many places, Swedenborg shows how they describe the negative, dark, states men and women would eventually find themselves in ~ spiritual slavery. Only the coming of the Messiah/God could restate the truth and re-establish the direct connectedness between people and their Creator.

At Swedenborg's time, Europe had been through the dark ages and there was much confusion and persecution over religious beliefs. Lives were held in complete control through fear, institutional authority or lack of education. From his mystical experiences, it was shown to Swedenborg that again spiritual darkness had descended over people's minds and a renewed understanding of truth was required to allow freedom of thought in spiritual matters - a second coming not in person but in Christ consciousness. In great humility, he claims he was provided with a revelation of truth to convey to the world in a rational, written, form through his scientific training. If we wish to exercise our spiritual freedom, we now have this material to work both on our inner and outer lives. We can begin to judge our individual motivation, and invite the Lord into our lives directly as a personal second coming.

This revelation of truth by use of the press was but the end of a process which had a divine origin and also an effect in the spiritual world. A final unveiling of a restored presentation of truth in this most external part of creation enabled those in the spiritual world to rededicate their lives to their creator. Whilst space/time as we know it does not exist there, 19<sup>th</sup> June 1770 is the date Swedenborg gives for this event which would have occurred with much rejoicing (TCR para 790).



Most people would expect there to be a considerable amount of evidence to be forthcoming to support Swedenborg's "claims". In some degree, Swedenborg anticipated this by saying that the events, being spiritual in source and nature, would not change the state of the world ~ at least initially for we know the last 200 years have actually seen enormous leaps in all areas of human endeavour. The real change Swedenborg predicted was in the freedom of thought about matters of faith (*The Last Judgment* paras 73 & 74).

Slowly but surely positive effects of it, referred to earlier, are being seen although the fierce desire by religious/spiritual bodies to try to continue to "hold" their numbers in whatever way they can still lingers.

*Believe it or not, but what will you think about on the 19<sup>th</sup> June now* (always remembering, though, that Swedenborg had to express spiritual concepts and events in earthly terms) ?

Neville Jarvis



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# WHAT'S HAPPENING

For Group activities, contact your nearest Group Convenor

- Brisbane (Ian Arnold on (07) 3369 0054; email: iaarnold@ozemail.com.au)
- Gold Coast (Kevin Attwater on (07) 5545 2401 and Jack Benson on (07) 5545 4115);
- Melbourne (Chris Skinner on (03) 9435 8599; email: cskinner9@optusnet.com.au);
- Sydney region (Michael Chester on (02) 9913 2421; email: mchester@accsoft.com.au);

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



**Brisbane:** New Church Hall, 21 Agars Street, Rosalie. 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesdays commencing at 1 pm (July 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday) 2004  
June 23<sup>rd</sup> ~ *Swedenborg and the New Church* with **Paul Eldar**  
July 21<sup>st</sup> ~ *The Functional Trinity* with **Paul Eldar**  
August 25<sup>th</sup> ~ *The Writings of Swedenborg* with **Paul Eldar**

**Melbourne:** The New Church Hall, 426 High Street Road, Mount Waverley. Last Fridays commencing 8pm 2004  
25<sup>th</sup> June ~ *Spirituality and the Imagery of the Bible* with **Julian Duckworth**  
30<sup>th</sup> July ~ Subject and Speaker to be announced  
27<sup>th</sup> August ~ Subject and Speaker to be announced

**Sydney:** Swedenborg Centre, 1 Avon Road, North Ryde commencing at 7.45pm. 2004  
25<sup>th</sup> June ~ *Chaos, Meaning and God* with **John Brogan**  
30<sup>th</sup> July ~ *Swedenborg: The Restorer of Christianity* with **Paul Eldar**

***Spirituality from the Swedenborgian Perspective*** - This is the name of a series of talks to be given over 6 days and evenings by **Paul Eldar** (from Brisbane) at the Swedenborg Centre, North Ryde, in July 2004. The subjects are *Swedenborg and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*; *Swedenborg ~ and Overview*; *God, Man and Spiritual Growth*; *Swedenborg: A Prophet for our Time*, as well as the talk on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> July above. These will be quite widely advertised and it is to be hoped that they will encourage new interest. Audio recording will be made of the talks.

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