



Issue Theme ~ *"Is God in Control?"* (Part 2)

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The theme for last issue was *"Is God In Control?"* and as it was not possible to include some valuable contributions received, this subject has been spread over two issues.

There are many ways to approach the question. My message at Easter was to compare God's creation to those of man, his buildings and his earthly creations. God has us as untrained apprentices to carry out his plan. He endows us with Life and consciousness and leaves us to it. If God is in control, this 'Conscious Life' must have some ingredient beyond just a 'flame to the wick' that encourages mankind to strive towards perfection, to raise consciousness to a higher level called 'abundance'. What is this "Life"?

Jesus said "I came that ye might have life, and that ye might have it more abundantly". This suggests to me that what Christ has to give will enable men and women to find meaning and appreciation of life far beyond a life that is simply the initial 'flame' at conception.

So there are two questions to be considered: 'Life' and its tributary, 'abundance'.

Life is the essential thing in which all manifestation of energy, power, form, colour and idea is formed. When life is at an end so are these attributes.

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

We would do well to remind ourselves that with all our advanced science, we cannot 'make' life, not even a hair. By working with 'life' we can encourage healing of tissues, muscles, even our psychological malaise and we can modify what has been given to us by birth with transplants and genetic alteration, but we can do nothing to create energy, form and so on. The Creator has endowed us with all that we need to live abundantly, "not to lose anything of this gift of life, but to raise it up again at the last day" (John 6:39).

* * * *Continued on page 2* * * *

September 2006 Issue ~ Theme: *"Male and Female He Made Them"*

To use the old adage - *Your Newsletter Needs You!* At least, it needs from YOU contributions which in some way relate to this fascinating theme. These ideas might help:

- *the 'he' and 'she' in me*
- *the ways my partner complements me*
- *why marriage is a special relationship*
- *continuing the process through children*

However, you do not have to stick to the theme. If you want to write something which fits in with the general thrust of the Newsletter, let's have that. But please send items to the under-signed at the Registered Office, either by letter or electronically, before 1st September 2006.

Neville Jarvis. Newsletter Co-ordinator



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE (Contd.)

We can have a better life if we work with what has been given to us but Jesus is talking about more than abundance from a fit body that runs faster or lives longer. If we are stimulated enough, we can climb Everest, but this is scaling the heights of the natural world. Modern man, by and large, is preoccupied with gaining control over the elements and more insidious still, to scale the heights of excessive wealth. But personal ambition towards accolades and materialistic goals is, I'm sure, not what Jesus meant when he talks about abundance. All of Christ's teaching spoke of another level of abundance, being born again of the 'spirit' (John 3:5). How can we begin to know what we don't know, feel what we have never felt before? Abundance lies in this realm of spirit. How does one gain entry? Jesus sums it up in his succinct entreaty: 'To love the Lord and the neighbour'. What is going to spur us into seeking beyond the level of the wick to the flame?

The hiss of a snake can start the stampede of a herd of animals; the signs of AIDS or Bird flu can cause a stampede of hysteria in people. Terrorism, where humankind runs amok, tends to galvanise a community which in essence is retreating from selfish motives towards consideration of the neighbour. A near death experience or a fatal illness most often moves one to a higher level of love for God. The common factor seems to be that when our mortality is at risk, we seek that which is beyond life and that is God and the neighbour. "While you do not serve man, how can you serve God?" "If you do not love man, whom you have seen, how can you love God, whom you have not seen?"

Is it possible to live abundantly without having to experience one or more of the threats mentioned above? Probably not! Man stands on the seashore in contemplation of what treasures lie beyond. Through his ability to use imagination and rationalise, he discovers the compass and crosses the seas. Likewise he has gazed at the moon for countless ages until he learns to harness the power to escape gravity.

We need the stimulus and challenge to make changes to our life. To bridge the apparent gap between ourselves and God, we need the will to close the gap, and a compass. The stimulus does not have to be life threatening but I think if the lives of all the saints were known, it would be evident that at some stage in their lives, the Divine Creator had built in a mechanism of stimulation towards change.

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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.



The desired change is to live a life of more abundance.

Agape,

John Brogan, President



What do we mean by the question ~ "Is God in Control?"

by **Trevor Moffat**

Questions like this come from the most unexpected directions, and often from people I least expect to ask serious questions. This came to me late one afternoon as a result of a telephone call. "Did you know that uncle is in hospital?" "No!" was my immediate response, "but give me more details." Once I had the information of the hospital and ward number, a quick call from me made the link and here I was communicating with a long lost uncle and cousin. The uncle claimed to be somewhat of an atheist.

Well, he had a list of questions. A list which he could only utter between gasps for the oxygen which he had constantly on stream. He was dying! Not in the distant unknown, immeasurable future, but within days. In fact five days after that first phone call from a cousin, this relative passed into the spiritual realm where all his questions would be answered.

In the midst of those few blurred days was the question, "Is God in control, and where is he now?" Surely in these circumstances there is no room for a "round about" explanation, nor doctrinal class type of answer which might clearly and rationally open the mind to insightful enlightenment.

Surely the reality of being present and representing God and making oneself available, draws attention to where God is. He is in the hearts and minds of people. He is in control when people look to him with their whole being - heart, soul, mind, and strength. Of course the Lord God is there above the heavens, but that image is an abstract concept especially if I as an individual do not accept him into my life, and refuse to respond to his directions, instructions, or influence.

*"... we are not life, but an organ recipient of life from God, and that love in union with wisdom is **life**; also, that God is love itself and wisdom itself... Therefore it follows that so far as we love wisdom, or so far as we have wisdom within love, so far we are an image of God, that is, a receptacle of life from God; and on the contrary that so far we are in the opposite love and thence in insanity, so far we do not receive life from God but from hell, which life is called death."*

Swedenborg: *Interaction of the Soul & Body* 13

Everyone worships

It is a fact of life that all people worship something whether they claim to be a believer or an atheist. For instance, the person whose life is dominated by an addiction such as drugs will "hang out" and literally worship their next hit. It will in this way become their god-like, for nothing else matters in that person's life.

A person addicted to gambling will believe, against the odds and evidence, that the next roll of the dice or coin will be the winner he's been expecting. This individual will believe this to the point where the potential win becomes god-like in all its 'promises'. All this in apparently healthy people!

Is God in control?

So then, can we honestly answer that God is in control, that He is watching over everything! I believe we certainly can!

The certainty of belief itself comes from the experience and acceptance of personal history. Yes, we can read the books, study the Scriptures, and reflect upon doctrine, but in the end it comes from the human perspective, down to one's personal acceptance of what is within oneself. At least what is within needs to reflect what flows in from the Divine.

There is no way the Divine (God) will impose himself upon people. He will maintain a balance between the extremes of life, but never force a person to act against their freewill. Individuals may, however, given the opportunity, act contrary to order. For instance, Swedenborg in his work *Divine Providence* (paragraph 180) puts it this way:

"If we saw divine providence clearly, we would interfere with the orderly sequence of its processes and distort and destroy it. If these matters are to get through clearly to rational comprehension and to materialistic people, I need to illustrate them with examples in the following sequence.

- (a) *Outward things are so closely connected to inward things that they act as a single entity in everything they do.*
- (b) *We cooperate with the Lord only in some outward matters. If we did so in inner ones at the same time, we would corrupt and destroy the whole orderly sequence of divine providence."*



Because God is in control!

Sure, God is in control and because he is, we are free. He allows us to learn from our mistakes. How miserable could we become if God didn't give us freewill and sustain the balance within an orderly system.

Because we're free, we are not likely to become addicted to either God or religion. This is so unlike addiction where we might be blinded to alternatives, or any other human ailment which demands our total undivided attention.

Consider what Swedenborg wrote about the opposite approach to God.

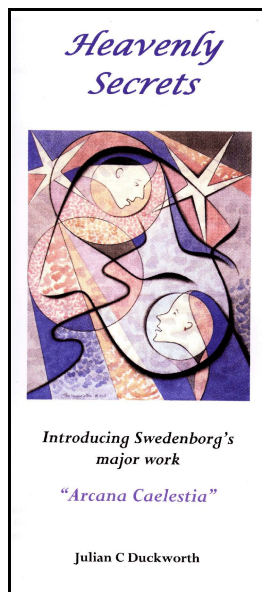
“As regards the aim to bring others under one's own control, I have also been allowed to know what that aim is like among the evil belonging to hell. The nature of their effort and aim to bring under their control those who accept what is good and true defies description. For they employ every kind of malice, every kind of guile and deceit, every kind of trickery, and every kind of cruelty, the extent and nature of which are such that if merely a part were mentioned scarcely anyone in the world could believe it, so full of guile and artfulness are the methods they use, and so unspeakable too. In short those methods are such that no one at all, not even any angel, only the Lord, can stand up to them. The reason why such an endeavour and aim is present in them is that the whole delight of their life, thus their very life, consists in the doing of evil, on account of which nothing else occupies their minds, and consequently nothing else is intended by them. They cannot do anything good at all because it repels them; or if they do do anything good, it is for selfish reasons, thus only for themselves”.

Arcana Caelestia paragraph 6666²

To believe or not to believe, that is the question!

I know which attitude and approach I'd prefer as the basis for my life, so I choose to see the Divine presence in every experience and willingly accept him into my life. I know God could take me over if he wished and I'm thrilled that he permits me to experience the highs and lows “as if of myself”. After all, it is up to me to make the effort to respond to his call. Ultimately He is in control!

Trevor Moffat *B.A. has a Degree in Psychology and Counselling. He is convenor of the Swedenborg Association Group in Perth where he also ministers to the New Church (Swedenborgian) congregation.*



Announcing . . .

a New Publication of the Swedenborg Association of Australia

Heavenly Secrets is an envelope-size 24 pages booklet containing very helpful information to introduce Swedenborg's major work - *Arcana Caelestia*. It will prove useful to those unfamiliar with it and those who have begun dipping into its pages.

The publishing history of *Arcana Caelestia*, its structure in presenting the inner meaning in Genesis and Exodus, the valuable inter-chapter material, Swedenborg's general spiritual approach, plus two specific examples from its text, are all succinctly included. The Swedenborg Association Committee considers that the booklet fills a vital need in bringing Swedenborg's opus magnum to the attention of the wider public. It is most appreciative of Julian Duckworth having suggested the project and in writing its contents.

Members will shortly receive one. Further copies can be obtained, a small donation of \$2 each would be gratefully accepted to help defray costs.

Advance Notice:



2006 Annual General Meeting

Friday 11th August at the Registered Office
1 Avon Road, North Ryde

We are delighted to advise that **Kevin Attwater**, Committee member and past President now living on the Tamborine Mountains, will be present to give the talk:

Swedenborg Helps Us to be Whole

Official proceedings will follow. All necessary Reports and Papers, including voting slips and proxy forms, will be sent to members in early August. The Committee hopes for good interest in the meeting either by physical attendance or by communication of support.



ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

My goodness! Half the year has passed already!

As I write, the sun is smiling through the clouds after a number of days of welcome rain. Even in that short time, I had 'forgotten' how delightful the light and warmth of the sun really is - reminding me of the Divine's Love and Wisdom shining in, and warming, my life.

A big welcome to our two New Members:
Pauline Bowen (VIC) & Owen Crane (SA)

I also wish to mention the passing of Frank Allen (Bill) Hall in March, aged 89. Both Bill and his late wife, Isabel, were enthusiasts of the establishment of the Swedenborg Association (in 1992). They maintained a keen interest in the Association's welfare over the years, seeing the valuable role it carried in providing a 'home' for those, whatever their personal background, who were interested in Swedenborg and particularly in his spiritual writings. A personal acknowledgement and thank you from me, of Bill and Isabel's contribution, as the Association has provided that 'spiritual home' for me; a base from which I can explore, discover and return, knowing that I shall always be welcomed.

Business Items:

The annual free item - our splendid *Perpetual Calendar* - will be distributed to all members with their copies of this Newsletter. Whilst some members may have received this item several years ago, it was considered timely to make it available again. The purpose, of course, is for it to be handed on to someone who could benefit from having it.

There is also the 24page booklet, *Heavenly Secrets*, introducing Swedenborg's *Arcana Caelestia* which is at the printers. It should be available in good time for a copy to be distributed to every SAA member with this Newsletter. This publication is superb in every way - and may I draw your attention to the exquisite front cover; with heartfelt thanks to Mary Duckworth for sharing her late husband Dennis' artistic gift with us.

Plus, we introduce a series of six leaflets on the contents of other major spiritual works by Swedenborg. They are complete and being printed in-house. Each member will receive a set shortly, with the option to freely obtain further supplies to hand on should they wish.

Again, thanks to all those who have put so much love and effort into these excellent publications.

Finally, the AGM is on the evening of Friday 11th August, at the registered office in North Ryde. Kevin Attwater, committee member and a past President, will be speaking on "Swedenborg Helps Us to be Whole". Not only will it be an interesting and useful presentation, it will also be delightful to see Kevin again, down from Queensland.

... and now, enjoy the June Candela. Until next issue!

Your Secretary, *Louise*



GROUP'S NEWS

Brisbane:

Seven people in attendance doesn't sound a great number but the deep interest of those present, and appreciation for insights brought out about Human Nature made the meeting on May 24th thoroughly worthwhile. Even amongst the small number attending we still have those who travel by car upwards of an hour each way to be present, such is their keenness. The title of my talk, *10 + 1 Theories of Human Nature* was suggested by a book, recently purchased, "Ten Theories of Human Nature" by Leslie Stevenson and David L Haberman (Oxford University Press, 2004). These were all summarised and copies of the summary given out. It was impossible to do more than highlight a few. Information overload can too easily set in! And in any case it was important to move into an exploration of what we find in Swedenborg's writings on the subject. *Are we wholly good? Or are we wholly evil? What of heredity as against environment? Nurture versus nature?* We touched on all these questions. Whilst Swedenborg wrote of our "natural" minds very darkly (the repository of inclinations to evils of all kinds), my appeal to those present was to look at a bigger picture. We humans are neither good or evil, but have the capacity via choices we make to become either. A chart, setting this teaching out diagrammatically, helped and one person was delighted to be told he could take it home with him.

Ian Arnold





Melbourne:

Our speaker for the first meeting of the year in February was myself, the presentation entitled *A Swedenborg Smorgasbord*. The talk covered life after death and how the fear of death can affect bereaved or ill people. Also, the difference between religion and spirituality was covered and I showed where they can also meet in people's lives. The talk was well received although numbers were a little smaller than usual with 4 new visitors. Questions and discussion after the meeting was good.

In March our speaker was **Martin Pennington** whose subject was *Parables*. Selecting the parable of 'The Labourers in the Vineyard' and a passage from the Old Testament, Martin demonstrated how the Bible could provide insights into our own psychological and spiritual development. He went on to explain that the whole Bible was a means of understanding our own continuing and developing relationship with God and our own ego. We had 3 visitors. There was lively questioning afterwards and good discussion over coffee.

Julian Duckworth gave us a talk entitled *The Richness of Icons* in April. He used a very traditional icon to show how, by reflecting on a picture or design, we can gain insights which will help us in our spiritual journey. He indicated the Christian Cross was also an icon. Many religions and philosophies use icons as a vehicle for reflection and contemplation. To ensure participation by all present Julian provided examples of different designs and asked people to offer their thoughts on what they meant to them. It was a very interesting and stimulating evening and enjoyed by all. There was a good attendance.

In May our speaker was **Edward Sinclair** from the Melbourne Theosophical Society and his topic was *The Universality of Yoga*. Edward explained the various levels of Yoga and how each built on the previous one to gradually gain a deeper understanding and conjunction with the 'life force'. In some respects it could be seen that there were similarities with prayer and meditation but the purpose of Yoga was to try and separate the 'clutter in the mind' that prevents people from delving deeper to the one life force. The talk was very much appreciated by the good number present. As usual the fellowship afterwards provided an opportunity to speak with the presenter and also engage in the topic informally.

Chris Skinner



North Ryde, Sydney:

In March a *Question and Answer* session was organized. Each question was presented on an overhead projector slide with **Ruth Duckworth** facilitating the meeting. It was a very fruitful sharing of ideas by the people who came and felt that we should hold a similar event in the future. We plan to issue both an edited audio-tape of the session and a transcript summarising comments on each of the 14 questions submitted.

In April, author and media presenter, **Nevill Drury**, gave a very interesting and comprehensive outline of spiritual movements that have contributed to what is now called *The New Age*. Nevill has been deeply involved in this area for a long time and was able to indicate the contributions of various people such as Swedenborg, Madame Blavatsky, Gurdjieff, plus many others in more modern times, in advancing the spiritual progress of many people. He highlighted the special part played by Swedenborg during the talk. We were delighted to welcome 44 to the evening, including a nice number of new faces. The talk is available on DVD for anyone wishing to borrow it. Also, copies of Nevill Drury's book 'The New Age' can be obtained from the Swedenborg Centre (contact details on page 2).

In May, **David Moffat** gave a very practical talk titled *Entertaining Angels*. He led us to reflect on the nature of angels and how we can encourage them to influence us more strongly. We can come under stronger angelic qualities by reflecting on their qualities such as love, caring, humility and so on and endeavouring to include them in our lives. The 28 people who came enjoyed his presentation. It's a wonderful method of utilising Swedenborg's insights in ways that help our lives simply and effectively. Much of the material has been placed on the internet and is highly recommended:

www.newchurch.org.au/canberra/entertain.html

Michael Chester

Any Questions on Spiritual Topics

The Question & Answer Session held by the North Ryde Group in March 2006 covered a wide range of very interesting issues.

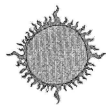
The evening was audio-taped and an edited version produced. We consider the comments to be very valuable and informative and would wish to have a hard-copy for wider distribution. We are seeking the assistance of someone to undertake what would be an arduous and consuming task, but hopefully a labour of love.

If this project appeals to you, please contact our Executive Manager (contact details on page 2).



Correspondence Column ~ Part 2

GOD IS!



How do you experience the SUN and the MOON of your inner world?



During daytime our sky is dominated by the sun (when it is not blanketed by cloud), and our night sky by the moon. They are the most powerful visible symbols above us, and, not surprisingly therefore, have often been worshipped in the past, in pre-scientific days.

I am always struck by the fact that they appear to the eyes to be the same size, even though we now know that because one, the sun, is so much farther away, it is far, far larger. However, in the world of appearances (how things appear to the eyes), the moon is like the sun which has temporarily lost or withdrawn both its heat radiance and the power of its light to lighten the whole sky.

Just as we go through cycles of day and night in our outer life, so we find that in a corresponding way, we go through spiritual cycles of light and dark, spiritual awareness and brightness, and spiritual obscurity and ignorance. Those of us who feel we are on a spiritual path or quest, soon discover that periods of greater enlightenment are always followed by periods of feeling 'in the dark', though clear introspection reveals that we never really go back to "square one" again, and that in fact the darker phases of our life are a necessary preparation for a higher and brighter phase of enlightenment to come.

What, then, are the "sun and the moon" in our spiritual sky?

The sun is the source of the heat and light of our world. To see the 'sun' and feel its warmth is to sense the Source of your growing awareness of being loved; that Source deep within you - from which your soul and your body have emerged, and that causes you to walk in light, warmth and strength - that is, in daylight.

The 'moon' is the 'sun' without its heat and powerful light. It cannot turn night into day, yet it does give sufficient light to see to make your way through the darkness. 'Night-time' is generally rather cold and distressing; times when things seem to go wrong and one's knowledge of truth seems useless to put them right. But the shining moon reminds us that the 'sun' is still really there, even though for a little while we cannot feel its heat and all-embracing light. Such is our faith in Love, that even when it seems withdrawn we still believe in it, walk in the meaning of it, and trust in its certain re-appearance again at the beginning of what will be the next wonderful new dawn in our spiritual life.

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

*I know not who is God.
I know not what is God.
But I know of a surety 'God is.'
And for this I am eternally grateful.*

Before coming to God I knew only one thing for certain - "I think therefore I am."

Since coming to God I now know three things -

- ? "I think therefore I am"
- ♥ "I love the Lord Jesus"
- ☪ "God is Love"

With the knowledge of these three things I can make my way safely and serenely on the path of this earthly journey. However with the advent of quantum physics/mechanics, the first assumption is called into doubt.

It is said we must have a right concept of God to be in communication with heaven. By whose criteria is a concept right or wrong?

How could I, who will readily admit I know not who or what is God, say, "Your concept is incorrect?" Ask 100 people "What is God?" and you could conceivably get 100 different answers. Which answer would be more valid than another when none have knowledge of "What is God"? We all have beliefs of "What is God" but beliefs are not knowledge and should not be presented as such.

Many conceive of God as human and this is a reasonable assumption for we have knowledge of humanity. Can we conceive of God as something of which we have no knowledge? Doesn't make sense to me to do so but perhaps I am in error as I have been many times before and shall doubtless be many times again.

Were we elephants, surely it would be correct to assume God to be an elephant also, but of a higher order. I feel God is whatever you assume God to be at the time. Your ideas will change from time to time as all things change.

Some wise man once said "My certainties of today are not necessarily those of tomorrow". How true. As long as the belief we hold of God guides us in the footsteps and teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ, what does it matter "what or who is God"; all that matters is that "God is."

Ken Cross, NSW 2006



THE TRINITY - THE VICARIOUS ATONEMENT

These two associated doctrines, as traditionally presented by the Christian Church, have been stumbling blocks for many individuals over the centuries trying to reconcile them with the concept of One God who is Love Itself without any desire for retribution. During the 1980's, when 'The Swedenborg Programme' went to air on Sydney radio each week, these issues were addressed by its presenter, Rev. **Ian Arnold**, now the convenor of the Swedenborg Group in Brisbane where he also ministers to a congregation. Selected extracts from those talks are presented below. The full transcripts are available on request (see page two for contact details).

The Divine Trinity

In a booklet he wrote some years ago, a minister of one of the best-known Churches recalled a conversation he had had with a Moslem student from Pakistan, and a regular attender at his Church. The conversation turned to prayer. As it happened, the time for University examinations was approaching, and the Minister suggested how helpful it was to pray at such time. "That's right, Reverend" the Moslem student said, "I pray for my examinations, too, and it's only then I wish I were a Christian." In answer to the question, "Why?", the student replied, "Well, you see, I would then have three gods to pray to".

The Christian Church's official position on [the Divine Trinity] has its origin at the Council of Nicea, called together in the year 325AD. To combat the heresy of 'Arianism', a formula was agreed upon. God is three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. At the same time, and however difficult it is to understand this, they are one . . . Each has a separate identity. Each has a different function.

Not everyone, however, is content that it should rest there. It is a contradiction to assert the existence of three Gods and yet to insist they are one. Common sense tells us it can't be so . . .

One of those who did question [this doctrine] was the now largely-forgotten Spaniard Michael Servetus who, in 1553, was tried for heresy for his views and put to death in Geneva at the instigation of John Calvin. Twenty-two years earlier, in 1531, Michael Servetus had published a book under the title, *Errors in respect of the Divine Trinity*. He had searched the Scriptures and discovered not one word about three persons in one essence, and had come to the conclusion that the doctrine of three co-equal Persons in the Godhead, each of whom is God, was both unscriptural and unbelievable. "Infinitely great has been the injury brought upon the Christian Church by the dogma of Tritheism" he wrote. "Innumerable heresies and monstrous notions have sprung from it, and within the Church it has given birth to the most marvellous doctrines and thousands of inexplicable, hair splitting, and unreasonable problems."

Two hundred years later, and reminiscent of certain of the things Michael Servetus had argued, Emanuel Swedenborg wrote of the Divine Trinity as being not a trinity of three co-equal persons, each of whom is God, in the Godhead, but as being a trinity of essentials in the one God. And he pointed to the

analogy which exists with every individual. Although consisting of three essentials, yet we are one person. Those three essentials are our soul, our body, and our proceeding or outflowing life. We are one person, in whom is a trinity of three essentials. God is one Person in whom, similarly, is a Divine trinity of essentials - not 'Persons' . . . 'the Father' is the Divine soul and life. . . 'the Son' is the body and human nature assumed in the world. And 'the Holy Spirit' is the proceeding life and influence from this one God.

It should be noted that nowhere in the Old Testament is there mention of any other than one God, generally known and referred to there by the name "Jehovah". In fact, the point is made emphatically in Isaiah 43:11 . . . and 45:21: "There is no other God besides me, a just God and a Saviour, there is none besides me".

What is important, also, is that it is just as emphatically stated that the one God, Jehovah, would himself descend into the world to bring about redemption, and not, as is commonly supposed, that he would send another [refer Isaiah 25:9 and John 8:59]. "Christian churches to-day" wrote Swedenborg, "believe that God the Creator of the universe fathered a Son from eternity, who came down and took upon himself human form to redeem and save mankind. . . [it can be] shown from the Word that it was Jehovah God himself who came down and became man and also was the Redeemer." (*True Christian Religion* 82)

There is one God and this one God, out of love and concern that we should continue to have all possibilities of salvation, himself descended into the world. He chose to do this as the only effective means open to him of over-coming the power of evil from hell which had become such that it was threatening to destroy the human race. By assuming, or "putting on", fallen human nature by conception and birth of the virgin Mary, he would, as he intended, come face to face with the allurements and inclinations to selfishness and evil which were besetting people everywhere. Not only would he come face to face with them but he would endeavour to resist and overcome them. And he did this. From earliest childhood to the last moments of his life on earth, Jesus was in constant combat with the forces of evil. As the result of his victories over these forces he brought a new strength into the human situation which everyone could thereafter call upon to help them through their struggles and temptations.



But, you will say, Jesus spoke of the Father as someone separate from himself . . . How do you account for this? God was inmosty within Jesus from the beginning. But there was much from Mary which covered over the Divine which was there. As Jesus, however, "put off" what he had derived from Mary, so he made room for the Divine Life to descend into his life and consciousness more and more. It was a gradual process. For much of the time they seemed to be two . . . when the process was complete, they were one.

Even during his ministry . . . there are other places where, clearly, they are spoken of as one. The best known of these is in John 14: 8 - 11 . . .

"In Christ" the Apostle Paul wrote, "dwells all the fulness of the Godhead in bodily form." (Colossians 2:9). And this says it all. There is one God in one Person, and he is the risen and glorified Lord Jesus Christ. He is the God we can visualise and love and worship and work with. He is our Creator. He came on earth to be our Redeemer. And his influence is all the time at work on behalf of our regeneration and everlasting well-being.

The Vicarious Atonement

In a Christian Christmas message published in a suburban newspaper some years ago, a minister of the Church asked the question, "Why did God intervene in human history?" And part of his answer reads as follows - "There was none other good enough to pay the price of sin. He only could unlock the gates of Heaven and let us in. As our representative, Christ died in our room and in our stead . . .".

. . . in the teachings given through Emanuel Swedenborg, challenged it is. "Who, that has any enlightened reason", he wrote, "does not see in such an idea inconsistencies which are contrary to the very Divine Essence? As for example that God, who is Love Itself and Mercy Itself, could, out of anger and consequent vengefulness, damn people and devote them to hell? Also, that he should be willing to be moved to compassion by the damnation being laid on his Son, and by the sight of his suffering upon the cross, and of his blood? . . ." (*Doctrine of Faith* 45).

We have an idea which has come down to us from Old Testament times that God is capable of anger and vengeance; that he will not, or cannot forgive freely;

that he must be placated in some way after sin has been committed . . . it is necessary to appease the just anger, or "wrath", of God, or to satisfy his honour, or righteousness, in some way.

[It was] out of love and mercy towards the human race, then threatened with destruction by the forces of evil from hell, he [God] himself descended into the world. He did not send another. There are not two Gods . . .

Throughout his life in this world Jesus was constantly assaulted by evils from hell, but he rejected all that they wanted him to do. All the fallen inclinations he had derived from Mary he overcame and put away from him . . . Risen and glorified . . . Jesus could say to the disciples "All power has been given to me in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18).

God himself came into the world . . . to overcome the power of evil from hell. His purpose was to restore free-will which was then on the point of being lost. And by successfully doing this, he re-opened the possibilities of our salvation. The responsibility, therefore, still rests with us. The ball, as some would say, is in our court. It's up to us to take advantage of the opportunity and possibility which he restored.

It is not, please note, that God wipes away our sins or pretends they aren't there. And in saying that He freely and unhesitatingly forgives, it doesn't mean that we are forgiven, as it were, "full stop" . . . no questions asked and no further action required of us. Sins, although forgiven, are only ever removed from our lives through sincere self-examination and repentance . . . There is no doubt that our sins do separate us from God. But no one else can bring about a reconciliation. It's up to us.

"Justice is a Divine attribute, but not vindictive justice, and still less is it in one for the sake of another. If it is not justice, neither is it according to Divine order for one to be saved for the sake of another by another. Nor can God be reconciled by any other means than by the repentance of individuals themselves". (Swedenborg: *Apocalypse Explained* paragraph 805:3). If we would be reconciled to God it will be by means of our own heartfelt self-examination and repentance and not through the substitution, or the reconciling work of another.

I have discussed . . . God the Three-in-one, I must now also discuss the Divine Trinity, a subject familiar to Christian people, yet actually one they know nothing about. For this is the only way of acquiring a correct idea of God . . . From this hangs the whole body of theology, like a chain from its anchor-point. If you are prepared to believe me, the idea everyone has of God determines their place in the heavens. It is like the touchstone used to test gold and silver, that is to say, it tests the nature of the good and truth a person has. For a they cannot have any good which leads to salvation except from God, nor any truth which does not get its quality from the good deep within it.

Swedenborg: *True Christian Religion*. From paragraph 163



A Member's Journey

How Swedenborg Found Me ~ Murray Keller, NSW 2006

Before I begin to outline my story, I can only say that the effect of serendipity, coincidence, correspondence and fate have had a major influence on my spiritual journey. Not in my wildest dreams would I, or could I, have imagined how dramatic and influential Emanuel Swedenborg's writings would have on my life. In total ignorance of knowing who he is and what he wrote about, I literally stumbled across him through a most curious journey. The greatest reward to my mind has been the total unexpected pleasure, reward and joy that his writings have inspired my thought processes across philosophy, religion and life. Without a doubt my whole sense of reality both worldly and spiritually has been impacted by his writings. I can only thank God, our Lord Jesus Christ in the most humble way for leading me to this man, the writings and the New Church over the last two to three years.

Several years ago I found myself abandoned, socially outcast from family, friends and everything that was familiar to me. This time in my life was a massive upheaval of a very personal and emotional nature. Simultaneously, as I sought to re-establish some semblance of normal life, in the solitude of a very simple existence, reading new material was a feature of my life. Almost like a personal quest to find answers to some very perplexing questions that resided in my mind about strange events that had happened during a period of personal crisis, I was led to some great writers. What amazed me is that I had an innate desire to find someone who could answer questions in a Christian philosophy that also related to my psychological experiences. The reason I sought this need came from a most unexpected and dramatic flight across America and the Pacific three years ago whereby I experienced visions of a living Christ.

What this did was to disturb my mental equilibrium dramatically such that life changing events unfolded in almost a dream-like fashion. As a consequence of the dramatic events that unfolded, significant personal changes occurred which at the time were very bewildering and confusing. For various reasons, the conventional world of counselling, psychiatry and mental health did not provide the security, safety and support necessary for a healthy recovery. It was during this time of isolation from the familiar world of all that I had known that I began my search for answers.

One Saturday morning I awoke with the 'idea' that it would be good to visit a second hand bookshop in Crows Nest. As I had never been to this store I had no idea what to expect. In the back of my mind I thought about buying John Bunyan's 'Pilgrim's Progress', a dictionary and possibly a book on Milton's poetry. I'm not sure why these ideas were so. However, as fate would have it and as I had time to myself, I browsed among the thousands of books. My spirit body led me to the philosophy section and then to the very top corner of the bookshelf, up a six foot ladder. In hindsight this was strange as it was the most inaccessible part of this shop. This was the first step to meeting Swedenborg. What caught my eye was a book by August Strindberg 'Zones of the Spirit'. This was a book of essays on life and thoughts by this Swedish playwright. I must confess I did not know anything about him at this time, only the book felt right. Thus, by pure instinct I purchased the book along with those others mentioned and went home to enjoy some good reading. What intrigued me in the essays by Strindberg was the mention of his master, Swedenborg, on many occasions. My curiosity was aroused. Who was Swedenborg? What did he have to offer? When did he live? Why was he so influential in Strindberg's life?

The following day I felt compelled to get some answers. Thus on the Sunday I went to the Stanton Library at North Sydney to see if there was any reference material on Swedenborg. To my surprise there were two books which I immediately borrowed and what I read simply amazed me. Here was a most humble man in essence, with profound insights, good works and a worthwhile life, who, although living 250 years ago, was enlightened in a dramatic way. The more I read, the more intrigued and impressed I was of his life and writings. Slowly but surely I felt that my questions and answers of a deeply personal nature made sense to me and could comfortably fit with the philosophy of someone else although a long time departed.

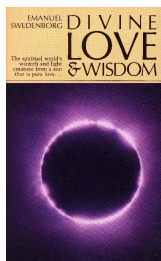
Because the two loan books had been donated by the Swedenborg Centre at North Ryde, there was a contact number on the inside. Although feeling a little apprehensive and nervous about embarking on a new tangent of spiritual life, I made contact with the Centre and started to purchase other books of Swedenborg's writings like 'Divine Love and Wisdom', 'Divine Providence', 'True Christian Religion', 'New Jerusalem', etc. To my amazement, the ideas, thoughts, concepts, sat very comfortably with my own philosophical and personal views on life. Truly, the revelation of his writings opened my own spiritual journey, from a period of great crisis to today. I am truly thankful for having been led by the Lord to Swedenborg, the Swedenborg Centre and the New Church. In so many ways the love, wisdom and goodness that flows from the writings had a profound healing impact on my mind, body and soul. Today I feel that life is more beautiful, brighter, more complete and more sacred than ever before, and that God's love is ever present in ways we never expect or anticipate.



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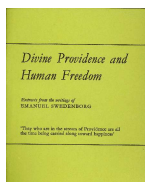
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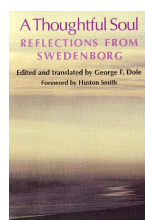
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WHAT'S HAPPENING



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) 9432 0322; email: cskinner9@optusnet.com.au);
- Perth (Trevor Moffat on (08) 9470 9775; email: trevorm@ic-net.com.au;)
- Sydney region (Michael Chester on (02) 9913 2421; email: mchester@accsoft.com.au);

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

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

- Brisbane:** New Church Hall, 21 Agars Street, Rosalie at 1 pm. Bi-monthly.
2006 26th July ~ *Possessions and Obsessions: exploring what Swedenborg wrote about the impact malign spirit have on us.* Speaker: Ian Arnold
- Melbourne:** New Church Hall, 426 High Street Road, Mount Waverley. Usually last Friday of month - 8 pm
2006 30th June ~ *The Relationship between Body, Mind, Heart and Soul in Stress and Healing and the Love of God.* Speaker: Nicholas De Castella
 28th July ~ *Swedenborg's View of Other Religions.* Speaker: Ian Arnold
- Perth:** Petros Lifeskills Bookshop, 281 Albany Highway, Victoria Park. Usually last Friday of month
2006 Programme to be determined
- Sydney:** Swedenborg Centre, 1 Avon Road, North Ryde. Usually 4th Friday of month - 7.45pm
2006 23rd June ~ *Homoeopathy: The Healing Power of Illness.* Speaker: John Maitland
 11th August ~ AGM with Kevin Attwater speaking on: *Swedenborg Helps Us to be Whole.*
 1st September ~ *Celebration of Spring Art Exhibition.* NB - **Penny Star** will be the Speaker

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