



Issue Theme ~ *"Living for the Sake of Others"*

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Living for the sake of others is a definition of heaven. Living for the sake of self at the cost of others is a definition of hell. Emanuel Swedenborg tells us that the Divine maintains our state of freedom to choose with equal opportunity between the two. We make this choice anew many times per day. If we try to become conscious of the process of our choosing we'll notice a certain friction arises in us, a kind of struggle between benefits.

While travelling on the train for instance, we may feel an impulse to give up our seat to someone needing it. That shows a desire to look after another's need and is a heavenly gesture. But we may not want to give up the cosiness of our seat. That reflects our interest in self and ignores the cost to the other person. It is therefore an opposing impulse. Which of the two impulses we choose time after time helps shape the quality of our inward spiritual life.



One way we can make a real difference to other people's lives is by studying the way we respond to stimuli and events. As long as our responses remain mechanical we are likely to project many negative aspects onto other people and blame outer causes for our feelings. We may see ourselves as victims of the action of others and grieve or vent our anger over their bad choices and power over us. But it is possible to respond in a more positive way. By challenging our own responses, realising the power of even the smallest of our choices and taking ownership of them.

A nice example of the power of good choices comes from psychiatrist Viktor Frankl, author of *Man's Search for Meaning*. He experienced first-hand the horrors of the holocaust yet chose to respond not with anger to the circumstances he experienced, but by reminding himself of small yet significant positive thoughts and realities to help him reach beyond the atrocities occurring around him and so to survive them.

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

I say he "chose" because such an unlikely approach compared to the more instinctive one arose from his will to find an alternative. It would have been much easier for him to slip into a hateful response to the inhumane situations he encountered.

To examine our reactions and beliefs, we need to foster an enquiring mind, ask questions about ourselves. How honest we are with ourselves determines how much we can benefit. Taking an honest look at our responses and views can be a confronting and sometimes painful experience, although it is precisely the friction of that confrontation which becomes the sandpaper which turns us from rough material into smoother more useful beings. Silk and velvet won't achieve that. Self-soothing may serve us at times, but challenging our habitual feelings, actions, ideas and self-talk is more likely to produce growth.

The resulting knowledge about ourselves can lead to a change in our reactions which makes us more useful to others and the world because we become less demanding of them. In the beginning practice simply noticing your reactions without criticism. Start by examining straightforward situations. Does a red traffic light bother me? Do I grip the steering wheel tightly?

*** continued next page ***



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE (contd)

Living for the sake of others does not imply becoming a Mother Teresa or Mahatma Gandhi. Some people express their greatest gift to others by working in quiet solitude, such as Michelangelo, Isaac Newton or Albert Einstein. Living for the sake of others can also be achieved by working to prevent unhelpful impulses in us from affecting others (blaming, controlling, reacting, etc) while at the same time finding ways to respect, accept and appreciate others and other ways. It helps to ask ourselves why we are motivated to do something. Is it for ego's sake? Do I seek fame, wish to be seen a hero, desire praise, flattery, etc? Or am I doing something because I unconditionally love doing it and see the activity as something not only for me, but also for others and the world? Do I love doing something because it expresses something good? Or because I delight in seeing that all good comes from the Divine and wish to express this? Inwardly we become what we love and deep inside us all is something unique which is good and useful and which we can really come to love and which we are uniquely suited to express. To express that fully we need to work at clearing the negativities that get in the way of that dominant use. Ask for help with this. Then, as mythologist professor Joseph Campbell said, "Just follow your bliss."

And don't forget to enjoy the excellent help which comes when we invite Higher Life to assist us in this excellent endeavour!

Happy exploring!

Joe Vandermeer

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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.

Forthcoming Issues

December 2008

Theme: *Going Within*

"Be still and know that I am God"

Meditation, Prayer, finding our own space to retreat from worldly concerns - all to restore inner peace by getting into touch with our spiritual centre.

Please reflect on this topic and make a contribution for the benefit of everyone who reads this newsletter. The Newsletter Co-ordinator will gratefully receive submissions you wish to make, either your own or something you have seen that strikes a chord with you. However, contributions don't have to be on the theme; anything which is spiritually-based will be welcomed. The deadline for the issue is 2nd December. Please direct material by mail or email to the registered office (page 2).

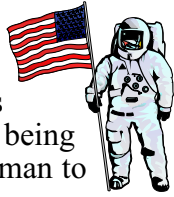
And why not start thinking now about the first issue of 2009 - March - which will have as its theme:

Fast-forwarding on Eternity (Death and the Spiritual World)



Living Anonymously by Ian Arnold

Most Sunday mornings and over breakfast my wife and I tune into 612 ABC radio and listen to *Australia All Over* with Ian McNamara ('Macca' as his many callers refer to him and the name to which he warmly responds). On Sunday, June 20th 'Macca' referred, in passing, to it being the 39th anniversary that very day of Neil Armstrong being the first man to walk on the moon. It got me thinking. Here is a name that is now embedded in history and will never be forgotten. In 100, 200 or more years to come, it will be what children are being taught, that Armstrong was the first man to walk on the moon.



Those people, in fact, are few and far between who will be (or whose names will be) so remembered. Earlier this year Sir Edmund Hillary passed on, the New Zealander who (with Sherpa guide Tenzing Norgay) conquered Mt Everest. He is another one. But for the vast majority of us it is otherwise. We live out our lives quietly, most locally and anonymously.

It is not to say that we wouldn't like it to be otherwise! (Or, some of us would like it to be otherwise). Recently, I re-read Sarah Murgatroyd's book *The Dig Tree*, about the ill-fated Burke and Wills expedition and noted the stated hopes of the explorer Burke - that his name and exploits be remembered down the ages. He has been, of course, but for all that, the triumphs he hoped for and set his heart on are not necessarily written against his name.

As teenagers and young people, feats of greatness or heroism tend to attract us; to make a name, to be remembered, to win some accolade, even to be hero worshipped. But does it matter?

In truth, it doesn't. We live anonymously, yes, but by no means insignificantly. And this is where what is wonderful really starts.

The spiritual teachings found in Swedenborg's writings stress that every person everywhere is unique. There is no one exactly like us, never has been and never will be. We came into being in response to a need in the great complex of uses that, combined, the human race - in heaven and on earth - is intended to be ("The Universal Human"). For each of us life has a unique purpose. As the Lord would have it be, we are each an unmatched piece of a massive jigsaw puzzle. No other piece fits exactly where we do.

Some of you may know it as an actual quote in Swedenborg's spiritual writings that *human beings are created to be a form of use*. It's a wonderful thought, and teaching. We were created to be of use in a way no other person can be. And, when it comes to it, this is what really matters. It's immaterial that we don't hit the headlines or that we leave this world our names never having been lit up in neon lights. What matters is that we enter into and fulfil the use the Lord created us to be to the very best of our ability.

To avoid misunderstanding and confusion we need to be clear that this use is not so much about talents or about doing things as it is about being the best person we can be. The use is already there, stamped on our innermost being; and the challenge for us is to make possible its best possible expression through us. We do this by removing and subduing our own ego, which Swedenborg terms 'proprium', and self-interest through the practice of self-examination and repentance. This enables the Lord's life to flow more strongly into that use and bring it to life, and into its fullest expression, through us.

I question, too, whether it is a matter of trying to identify that use because it is beyond what is easily quantifiable and assessable. **It is us being ourselves in the best possible and most disinterested way.** If that's what we strive to be the use happens, is, and can't but be.

Our ego states are horrified at the suggestion that what is really of value and most important of all, about us, is this use we were created to be - and can be. What about 'me' and 'my needs' and 'my happiness' and 'my fulfilment' and 'my agenda' and what 'I want to be' they cause us to cry out? For sure, it is not a matter of dismissing these, but they are secondary and, indeed, actually contingent on us being that use - or, allowing the Lord to bring to life and be that use through us.

"*Being the best we can be*" - hold on to this! Being the best we can be with other people, around other people, alongside of other people. Both inviting and allowing the Lord, who is love Itself and wisdom Itself, the best possible opportunity to work through us. If we are recognised for it, so be it. If we are not recognised for it, so be it. It's not important. Living our lives anonymously, as the vast majority of us do, is not important.



“Angels”, we read, “find all their happiness in use, from use and in keeping with use”, (Swedenborg: *Heaven and Hell*: from paragraph 403). They recoil at any focus on themselves, personally. They are content and happy to live anonymously.

For sure, we are not angels, but we need to be aspiring to become angelic. Personally, I am blown away by the thought, and I hope you are, that the Lord has so fashioned us, even from our very conception, to give unique expression to his life and influence; to be this one-off vehicle of usefulness. It’s all his doing. The good we do is his alone. His is the kingdom, the power and the glory. Alongside of this, and of ourselves, we are nothing. And as more and more we see this to be, and take it to heart, we begin to be something.

Ian Arnold, a member of the Swedenborg Association, ministers to a New Church (Swedenborgian) congregation in Brisbane in partial retirement. The above article was extracted from that Society’s Newsletter with permission.

I have a dream

Martin Luther King & Swedenborg



It has recently come to light that Rev. Dr. King (1929 - 1968) was well aware of some teachings in Swedenborg’s writings. His extensive Library was acquired last year by Morehouse College, Atlanta, Georgia and is currently being catalogued by a team of curators. Access to the collection is not possible at this time. However, a few books and papers were on show under glass just after Morehouse College purchased the Library including one titled *Emerson: A Modern Anthology* (New York, 1958). On the fly page, Martin Luther King had handwritten:

“Swedenborg enables us to understand why we were created, why we are alive and what happens to us after our bodies die. Swedenborg enables us to have the best possible understanding of God’s message as it exists in those Bible Books which constitute God’s Word.” MLK

When the full collection becomes available, perhaps more links to Swedenborg will be found!

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

It is with much delight that we welcome into membership:

David Berrick (NT), Kelly-Lea Harding (NSW) and Noel Marchiandi (QLD)

The Committee hopes that you will gain much from your involvement with the Swedenborg Association.

We had an absolutely wonderful AGM on 1st August. Business matters had to be dealt with like hearing and commenting on reports from the President and Treasurer (which all members will have received). We voted to keep subscriptions at the current level for the next twelve months. All officers and committee members were elected except for Neville Jarvis who decided to step down from the Committee due to the six-year term rule. But he will continue to be heavily involved in Association affairs as Executive Manager, Public Officer and continuing to coordinate this newsletter.

There are now three vacancies on the Committee and I would like to invite anyone - in Sydney or further afield - who could be interested in participating at the Committee level to contact me for information and to discuss possibilities - email walterhue@hotmail.com/phone 0416276227. All those involved in the Association’s administration and activities were warmly thanked for their untiring efforts.

This part of the evening was preceded by a really in-depth and erudite talk on some of the principles of Swedenborgian thinking from David Millar. He reminded us that we can use Swedenborg’s writings not just to inform some lofty spiritual vision, but to inform our everyday life and the day-to-day actions we choose to take. A fuller report on this talk will be included in the December 2008 issue on the Newsletter but a recording was taken and the DVD is available for borrowing or purchase from the Swedenborg Centre (see page 2 for details)

I am reminded of this when I think of our committee meetings, in which there is always genuine warmth of fellowship, and a genuine respect for all members and their ideas. Please remember that our quarterly meetings are always open to members, and people are always welcome to attend.

Our last Committee meeting was cancelled due to the fact that several members (myself included) were unable to attend for various, pressing, reasons. Our next meeting is scheduled for 12th November - I will be absent once more, this time working in Vietnam, but another Committee member will be stepping in to take on my duties.



Now that Spring is with us it is a wonderful time to re-assess our spiritual commitments, and see if it isn't time to allow a little more freshness and spontaneity into our lives. Spring brings with it a freshness of light that reminds us of the glorious light of God, and reminds us to once more align ourselves with prayerful and truly transcendent ways of living.

May the Spring bring you all new and wonderful ways to be of service to each other!

Best Wishes,

Walter Mason Hon. Secretary

GROUP'S NEWS

Melbourne:

The speaker at our June meeting was **Chris Skinner** who spoke on the topic of *Universal Spiritual Principles* using the major quotations presented on the discs that are displayed at the Swedenborg Centre in Sydney and which were mounted at the stand during the Festival of Mind, Body Spirit and manned by Melbourne members. It was shown how these principles apply to all spiritual traditions.

In July, our speaker was **Julian Duckworth** who spoke on the topic of *Across the Universe*. Julian supported his talk by a PowerPoint presentation showing photos of the universe so that people could use these to focus on the theme. His talk looked at God in creation and the way God works in the universe and in our lives.

Our speaker in August was **Seline Cardaman-Cairns** who spoke on the *Beliefs, Rituals and History of Paganism*. She emphasised that Paganism does not have major dogmas as such and much is left to individuals but from her perspective considered that the beliefs are of no effect unless they are put into practice in life and the essence is love. It was interesting to gain an understanding of what Paganism is and is not and how some of the Pagan festivals, which were explained, have been adapted to Christianity. Some of the principles could be seen to be similar to Swedenborgian principles especially the link between nature and spirituality.

Chris Skinner

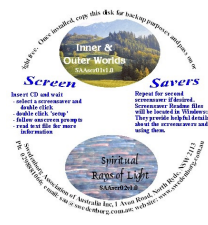


North Ryde, Sydney:

A wonderful talk titled *Energetics of Healing* was presented by **Martine Negro** in June. 'Energetics of Healing' refers to the dynamic processes and

interactions between the various levels of our complex being - physical, psychological, emotional, spiritual - that are involved in healing (as well as in disease) and appreciating how these internal processes manifest through these levels. Her listeners got to appreciate the different levels operating within people. The talk condensed over 20 years of clinical practice and explored various aspects of the healing process: from what interferes with it and how we can speed it up to minimize suffering and optimize personal growth. It was a wonderful blend of information, case studies, and insights gathered over many years of experience and very engaging with lots of audience participation. This is a very useful DVD to see if health is of special interest to you.

Michael Chester



Swedenborg-based Screensavers

Inner & Outer Worlds and Spiritual Rays of Light

As a service to members of the Swedenborg Association, and to make some key concepts found in Swedenborg's spiritual writings more generally accessible to a wider audience, two computer screensavers have been prepared. Everything has been done in-house and the CD containing them is now ready for distribution. Each member will receive their copy with this Newsletter. Others interested in obtaining one can apply to the Swedenborg Centre (see page 2) which will provide copies for \$2 each which covers postage costs.

The CD is not copy-protected nor is there any copyright attached to the product. We urge that recipients, following installation onto their computer, take a copy for backup purposes and pass on the original to someone who might be glad to also include the screensavers on their computer. Our hope is that this will create a chain-reaction.

Likewise, if a computer is not used or there is a preference not to install such programs, we ask that the CD be simply passed on to anyone interested in spiritual thinking.

We trust that this new product will bring much pondering and enjoyment for those who view it.



Correspondences Column ~ Part 11

... reflecting on

THE HOLY CITY

~ looking within

- to the Centre ...



Last time, we looked at the outer aspects of the symbolic Holy City that John sees in vision as recorded in the *Book of Revelation* (Chapter 21). Let us look now within the City - to its Living Centre as a representation of the dwelling place of the Divine at the core of the human soul.

As John gazed through the transparent walls his attention was directed to the three symbolic forms right at the centre of the Holy City - a Throne, a River and a Tree - all linked and inter-related.

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. Revelation 22:1-2

Even at the natural level this passage presents a powerful picture of beauty and creativity: the wonderful tree of life fed by the waters of the crystal clear river and, above all, the source from which it flows!

Creation and the fruit of creation (the world) are linked by the never ceasing flow of Life. So, too, the Divine Dynamo of our own Centre. As the Living Energy of God flows outwards and downwards from within the soul, the Tree of Life is nourished and grows to bring forth perpetually new fruit and its leaves of healing. Whenever the River is able to flow, spiritual life is refreshed and renewed. (For a striking development of this symbol of the River of Life, please read Ezekiel 47:6-12).

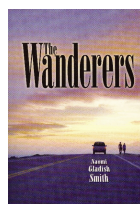
But, when we allow the ego, or 'proprium' as Swedenborg terms it, to usurp the throne of God and so rule our lives, just as natural rivers can become polluted or choked with weeds, dammed up or dried up, so can our spiritual life stagnate and cease to flow. Isn't it so when we let our life energy run for too long into worldly affairs or superficial diversions, searching selfishly for something new to distract or delight us?

When we pause to recall and recognise the true Source from which all life flows, when we turn to the Lord to govern, guide and feed us, then we permit the pure River of Life to flow through us again. The Tree of Life grows and flourishes once more within, bearing fruits to feed and sustain us through all the seasons of the heart and cycles of growth encountered on our life journey.

Once we know that the River of Life is really there inside - and from whence it flows - we can experience its transforming, renewing power as we allow ourselves to become channels of the Lord's life and love.

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

NEW PUBLICATIONS (see Order Form - page 11)



The Wanderers

Naomi Gladish Smith

255 pages, paperback

Swedenborg Foundation

\$35.00

Written in the style of her previous novel, *The Arrivals*, the author weaves a story of a handful of human travellers going through the stages of transition after passing on based on the teachings in Swedenborg's teachings. The reader is taken on a journey filled with adventure and insight, a heart-warming contribution to our ideas about the connections between our lives, the world and enlightening spiritual dimensions not so far away.

the arms of morpheus essays on swedenborg and mysticism

156 pages, paperback

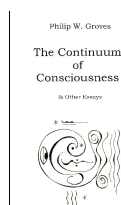
The Swedenborg Society

\$30.00



the arms of morpheus

A collection of essays, drawn from a variety of perspectives and sources, which clearly demonstrate that Swedenborg should be placed more definitively within the mystical tradition, drawing parallels with other mystics and esoteric movements - Boehme, Steiner, Madame Guyon, the Kabbalah, Paracelsus, Ibn 'Arabi..



The Continuum of Consciousness & Other Essays

Philip W. Groves

220 pages, paperback

Triam Press

\$35.00

This book is written as a sequenced course in spiritual development, where the reader is introduced to the principles of Work upon the self, and guided through their application in daily life as a path to spiritual transformation. The material draws from the methodology of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky, also incorporating the understanding of the spirituality of Emanuel Swedenborg.



Loving Others - What does it actually involve?

by **Wayne Kasmar**

In *Further Along the Road Less Travelled*, the follow-up to his phenomenally successful book *The Road Less Travelled*, Scott Peck describes the remarkable result of an exercise, being part of a study conducted during the time he was a psychiatrist in the American army. The military was interested in what makes successful people tick. So it gathered together twelve men and women in their late thirties and early forties from different branches of the services who, when it came to living their lives, seemed to have a golden touch.

This impressive dozen had all been singled out for promotion ahead of their contemporaries, but at the same time still managed to be popular with their colleagues. They hadn't had to sacrifice success in their personal relationships in order to attain it in their careers, nor vice versa. The enviable story continued in their familiar lives - they seemed happy and content and their children were well adjusted and did nicely at school.

As part of the study conducted to discover what made these people different, each was given a piece of paper and asked to write the three most important things in their life, in order of priority. They were to do the task individually, and had no chance to consult with one another on the matter at hand.

Since it seemed a simple assignment for such bright people, the researchers were amazed that it took well over forty minutes before any of them finished. The last few to complete it took more than an hour.

This intriguing and puzzling behaviour was overshadowed however, when the researchers realised what they had on their answer sheets. While the second and third items on the list ranged across the spectrum, amazingly all twelve had written the same answer for number one.

Now, what might we imagine was the unanimous answer - 'God'? 'My spouse'? 'My partner'? 'My family'? 'Love'? 'Others'? 'My dog'? Or could it have been something rewarding in nature, like 'My career', or 'my hobby', or 'my sport'? Well, it was none of these. The answer that each and every one of them gave was 'Myself'.

Surprised? Shocked, even? It's not really the kind of answer that we would expect, is it? We don't imagine that the most psychologically happy and well-adjusted of people would write something that would sound so . . . so . . . well, selfish!

So what do we make of this? What's going on here? There would seem to be something happening under our radar? Well, other studies into positive psychology have revealed that unusually healthy and well-adjusted families. The type I suspect in which Peck's enviable dozen grew up have different practices and beliefs than other families. In the Robyn Skynner/John Cleese book *Life and How to Survive it*, we are told that in such families "there's a belief that people's basic needs and drives are not evil. No human feeling needs to be the cause of shame. Therefore, the children experience no need to hide things, to confuse, distort or otherwise cloud what they experience: sexuality, anger, envy - they're all regarded as a natural [and normal] part of human experience" (page 26 - 27).

This seems to represent a practical acceptance of what Swedenborg gives us as the deeper, more timeless meaning of the words of the very first verse of the Bible: "In the beginning (or as the original Hebrew is more accurately translated: "In beginning") God created the heavens and the earth". This is telling us that the Divine creates us human beings with both a higher, heavenly level, and a lower, natural one. One would have us inclined to be selfless and generous, the other selfish and conceited.

Despite this making it quite clear that both these natures are part of our fundamental makeup, in our culture we have a deep-seated belief that we can eradicate our lower nature. For reasons too numerous and involved to go into here, we have a distinct fear and hatred of our less noble, yet more basic, levels of existence. Consequently we modern Westerners commonly have a naive notion that a saint is someone who has no personal flaws when, in reality, he is someone who is only too aware of his failings.

So it can be recognised that the great majority of us are alienated from the basic parts of ourselves. We spend a lot of time and energy denying that we even have a lower nature, and readily reject it should it break out onto the surface. This means that in life we function in ways that carefully avoid allowing the lower nature to have expression. We are functioning on half the number of cylinders. But the effect is something rather less than half the performance because a person is a kind of synergy. The different halves are designed to benefit each other in their functioning.



The wholistic effect of a person's personality is therefore compromised when one part is not permitted to play its intended part in life. On the other hand, people from psychologically healthy families are typically able to function in spontaneous, highly creative ways because they have the full battery of their personal makeup at their disposal. Given all this, I think it is little wonder that Peck's enviable dozen were so positive about nominating their own selves as the single most important thing in their lives.

The great majority of us, on the other hand, seem to be pretty ambivalent about ourselves. And some poor individuals don't really appreciate themselves at all. In this sense, most of us get by in our personal and work lives functioning at something less than optimum levels. But what about the ultimate reason for our existing. We are alive so we can come to experience the same sort of happiness and fulfilment in life that God experiences, and we achieve this when we live our lives as he lives his - by loving others.

Swedenborg tells us the best advice on how we are to go about loving others is found in the Word of God. Here we find God's advice when he came right down to the earthly level in the person of Jesus Christ. He put it most succinctly in what we commonly call '*The Golden Rule*':

"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you"

Notice that this statement actually acknowledges a person's self-interested side "... as you would have them do unto you". It doesn't say, "Do unto others as you think they would have you do unto them". If it said this we wouldn't have to examine our more selfish inclinations. And most of us would prefer not to have to do that. We tend, therefore, to mishear it along the lines of the second statement. We can rationalise such an approach by saying that it's even better than what Christ says. It's being loving across the board. Surely that's preferable than being loving in only restricted ways, as he is suggesting.

But the problem is he isn't just suggesting it. He is being quite specific in telling us what we need to do. We have to consciously work out how our self-interested desires would have other people treat us, and then we are to treat people in exactly that same manner. Only by doing this will we come to truly experience the happiness and fulfilment in life for which are created.

By trying to live the Golden Rule as though it says "do unto others as you think they would have you do unto them" we will fail to integrate our lower nature with our higher nature. We won't ever

become whole. And we'll never find ourselves being the most important thing in our lives.

There is no doubt that it is very challenging to have to overcome our psychological barriers as here we are being called to do. It may help to realise that new ways of seeing things can prove invaluable in helping us rise to the task. In the last, but one, edition of *Candela*, I wrote an article in which our whole traditional way of understanding God, as Creator, was called into question. We modern Westerners have developed some strange ways of seeing the subject. But Swedenborg indicates a new age is at hand. I think that we can now better appreciate that God has a far more intimate relationship with his creation, especially us, than we are used to believing. We have been so inclined to think of ourselves as insignificant specks of cosmic dust in the vastness of the Universe, when in reality we are actually the centre of God's ongoing creative work. If we are to think of him as a passionate artistic creator of our existence, and not the remote objective 'Cosmic Science Experimenter' of our traditional thinking, we can't help but see how important we are in the grand scheme of things.

I think many developments over the millennia have brought us now to what is actually a very low point spiritually. But I also think it's possible to see that under divine providence things have been aligned so that the path has now been made clear, allowing us to go forward in a way that's never been possible before. If that should happen, everyone will have the opportunity to live the kind of golden life that Scott Peck described his enviable dozen as having. It won't be the lot of just the lucky few.

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

Your Help Needed!

Over the past 50 years, the Swedenborg Centre has donated books and DVDs to public, college, university and other libraries which have an interest in spirituality and religion. The most recent was the despatch of *Our Soul's Awakening* and *Spiritual Unity of East & West* to some 680 libraries around Australia.

Whether or not you use the facilities which libraries provide, we would be grateful if you could call at your local library and check if they hold any Swedenborg-related material and advise the Swedenborg Centre accordingly. Other authors include Trobridge, Keller, Rhodes, Kingslake, Groves and Dresser-Mack.



Usefulness

Without useful activity, love and wisdom are merely abstract ideas of thought. After staying a while in the mind, they pass away like the wind. But in useful activity the two are brought together and become one, and then they are called real.

Swedenborg: *Marriage Love* paragraph 183³

Sofia Gubaidulina is a contemporary Russian composer who spent many uncomfortable years as an artist pinned under the thumb of repression in the former Soviet Union. An officially blacklisted composer whose works were banned from performance due to overtly spiritual content, Gubaidulina's music was, and remains, the vessel by which she conveys faith. The quiet, shy composer, now in her seventies, made her first trip to the United States some years ago for the American premiere of her symphony *Alleluia*, written in 1990. Although God-glorifying compositions have been out of vogue in Western classical music since the days of Bach and Haydn, Ms. Gubaidulina said in an interview, "I can't think of any way to explain the existence of art other than as a means to express something greater than ourselves. I do not reach a single musical decision except with the goal of making a connection to God. If I separated the religious goal from the musical one, music would no longer carry meaning for me."

How many of us feel this way about the tasks in our own lives? I encourage us all to aspire to achieve a new and higher summit in our spiritual regard for our work, our jobs, our small tasks. There is no more adequate basis for developing faith, since the majority of the hours we spend on earth engage us in work and in tasks. Such is survival in the natural plane, and Swedenborg explains that this is no unfortunate accident, but rather God's completely intentional design for this spiritual gymnasium called Planet Earth. When we turn to Swedenborg's writings, we find that, indeed, work and useful activity have everything to do with love, truth, and communion--communion with God and communion with others. That is why and how work can become sacramental.

As Swedenborg goes on to write in the quote given above: "Love cannot rest until it is doing something; for love is the very activity of life. Neither can wisdom exist and subsist until it is doing something from love and with love; and doing is use. Therefore, use is doing good from love by means of wisdom. Useful activity is goodness itself." The popular modern writer Wilson Van Dusen has called becoming useful the most powerful method for personal spiritual development in Swedenborg's spiritual philosophy. Usefulness as a spiritual method is so grounded, so tangible, so concrete in its effects. And when we successfully merge into that higher divine energy through the beauty of usefulness, there is a soul-satisfaction that is particularly peaceful and joyful. The simplicity of this spiritual mindset permits us to find the track any time. We can carry it out in the midst of our most ordinary duties and labours. Even cleaning the windshield of the car, once one gains such a spiritual regard, can bring about a genuine mystical experience.

The key lays in uniting with the purpose, and letting the affection for the intended good guide us in developing the wisdom for it. Suppose we wanted to reach someone about the uses of parenting in the raising of children. We wouldn't start with instructions about consolidated shopping expeditions, cooperative chauffeuring, and creative laundering. We would need to fast-forward and fully experience the awesome miracle of a new, spiritually healthy person actively contributing to life in God's universe. We would have to imagine a loving soul who is emotionally mature and responsible, who is fun, creative, full of life and goodness.



Only then, once we are full of the purpose, can we begin to approach parenting with wisdom - because being successfully useful is deeply connected to the good end. Then love and affection for that good and excellent result guides us in developing the tools of the work. If parents imagine their child as an adult who will live by the Golden Rule, then, for instance, the tool of rebuking with love becomes an instrument that they develop a high skill in using.

This is true of all usefulness. Understanding what it is to enjoy a relaxed meal with friends guides the person who waits tables to develop ways of bringing off that task so that this objective is achieved. Use cannot be separated from love or wisdom.



Vivekananda, who more than anyone else brought the philosophy of the East to the West, exhorts Americans in his classic text, *Karma-Yoga*, to discover our freedom in our work, because there can be no love without freedom. And without love, there can be no blessedness or peace in our work. Too many of us feel trapped by our responsibilities; we too often see our responsibilities as obstacles to happiness. Too many individuals work only to get their pension, to get enough piled up so that they can then obtain their freedom. But a career and a life so spent is one that misses a million opportunities for profound joy.

Freedom is more nearly an inner attitude than an outer condition. The French philosopher Charles Peguy made a study of the incredible devotion of the cathedral builders during the Middle Ages in Europe. He writes, "They got up in the morning before six, and they sang at the idea that they were going off to work. At eleven o'clock they sang on going off to eat their soup. They had a vision for their work, and work became for them joy itself and the deep root of their being." Peguy pines in his essay for the ancient days when the Guilds helped individuals to foster an exalted ideal for their work. "In my childhood," he writes, "I saw chairs being caned in exactly the same spirit, with the same hand and heart as those people who fashioned our cathedrals. Those chair-makers had an absolute honour. A chair rung had to be well made. That was an understood thing. That was the *first* thing. It wasn't that the chair rung had to be well made for the salary or on account of the boss. It had to be well made itself, in itself, for itself, so that it might fulfil its purpose. That was the same principle of cathedrals."

We began by considering the work of a modern classical composer. Let us close by hearing the story of another composer who lived ten generations ago. In 1772, the Town Council of the city of Leipzig was looking for a new organist to serve at St. Thomas, the impressive parish cathedral. They were deeply disappointed when their first choice turned them down after a lengthy consideration. Then they made an offer to their second choice, but alas, he turned them down also. They decided, as one member of the council subsequently wrote, that "since the best person could not be obtained, a mediocre one would have to be accepted." The third choice they hired - the mediocre candidate - was named Johann Sebastian Bach.

Bach went on to become the greatest church composer in history, bar none. Though sometimes irascible and difficult, his greatest hallmark was his passion for his work as a means for people to come into a spiritual experience with God.

Two characteristics in Bach's approach to his work stand out. The first is that Bach kept his spiritual priorities straight. He strove mightily and with remarkable perseverance to exalt the God that he believed moved within all things. The second characteristic of Bach's approach to his work was his conviction that if his music didn't enliven real people, he was doing a bad job as a musical messenger of God. To that end, one of his great achievements was the creative way he involved average citizens in the musical life of the town. He forged a new idiom for that segment of Christendom by developing chorales in which the congregation sung responses at specific points. The worship life in Leipzig blossomed as music began to move through the people in a whole new way, and give lift to their spirits. Perhaps Bach's talent did not have as much sheer genius as that of the organists who had turned down the position, but he had a vision for his work that would benefit humanity by effectively conjoining us with the immanent and transcendent God. I don't believe it matters a whit to God whether we toil in epoch-making arts or in soup-making kitchens. Wherever the sun shines through, it is truly the sun--the same warmth, the same light. Let us give thanks today for the privilege of life, and for the labours of life that build us up to be something greater than we can now conceive. Let our works be sacraments: everyday expressions of our embrace of life.

Extracted from an article by **Dr. James Lawrence**, Dean of the Swedenborgian House of Studies at the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California.

The Rossetti Family read/listened to Swedenborg's Teachings. Did Evelyn Waugh investigate them?

Rossetti (Dante Gabriel) was born in 1828 at No. 38 Charlotte Street, Fitzroy Square, London. His father Professor Gabriele Rossetti would sit long into the night, a vast snuff box at his elbow, black shade over his eyes, deep in forgotten scholarship of Gnostics and astrologers. A Catholic who had never recovered his faith from the raw free-thinking of his youth, he had developed a religion of his own from his readings of Swedenborg and the sacred books of the Brahmins which, however much it may have consoled him in his exile and old age, left his children very little but a mild and muddled awe with which to confront a very difficult world.

From "Rossetti" by Evelyn Waugh.

Spotted by Stella Green, Sydney

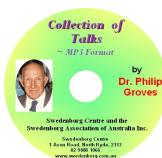


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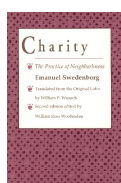
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It would be good to establish Groups in other areas. If you can help, please contact Michael Chester.

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

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

Melbourne: New Church Hall, 426 High Street Road, Mount Waverley. Last Fridays commencing 8pm.

26th September ~ *Steiner and Swedenborg* Speaker: **Geoff Forster**

31st October ~ *Panel of Speakers on Spiritual Issues* - Sikh, Buddhist, Hindu, Christian

28th November ~ To be announced

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

17th October ~ *The Chemistry of Love & Wisdom* Speaker: **Joe Vandermeer**

Please Note change of date

The enjoyments that good gives and the pleasure that truth provides, which constitute the blessedness known in heaven, do not consist in having nothing to do but in being active.

Swedenborg: *Secrets of Heaven* paragraph 6410

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