

THE WELFARE OF THE SOUL

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF SWEDENBORG'S SPIRITUAL PSYCHOLOGY

by
Dr Philip W Groves
(1920-1999)

Transcript of a lecture entitled
"Spiritual Aspects of Swedenborg's Psychology"
delivered at
Roseville, Sydney, Australia
on 30th January, 1987

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Originally printed and published by The Swedenborg Lending Library and Enquiry Centre, North Ryde,
which is now:

Swedenborg Centre
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Email: Books Orders orders@swedenborg.com.au
Information info@swedenborg.com.au
Web Site: www.swedenborg.com.au

ISBN No. 0 949463 07 8 (January 1988).

Note: in 1997 this lecture was incorporated as a chapter in a set of lectures sold as a book entitled
SWEDENBORG'S MIGHTY CONTRIBUTION TO THE WELFARE OF THE SOUL (ISBN 0 949463 16 7) available
from the Swedenborg Centre above.

A downloadable Adobe PDF edition of the original booklet can be found online at
<https://triampress.files.wordpress.com/2013/03/the-welfare-of-the-soul.pdf>

FOREWORD

Dr Philip W Groves was highly educated in a broad range of subjects. Psychology, in its many dimensions had been a subject of fascination and study for him most of his life, and he had a doctorate in Psychology along with further PhDs in Biochemistry and Divinity. He also held a Degree in Public Health and Hygiene and a Diploma of Naturopathy, and was a qualified and practicing Naturopath and Psychotherapist. His interests also extended to industrial chemistry and the natural sciences, especially marine biology, and through this knowledge and understanding of the workings of nature he developed a keen perception of the relationship and interdependence of the spiritual and natural dimensions of human life. In addition, he demonstrated an extensive knowledge in comparative religion and in Egyptology, having studied with the world's foremost Egyptologist Dr Raymond O. Faulkner.

Dr Groves offered private group courses on spiritual psychology with a strong emphasis on the resource material found in the theological writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, the eighteenth century scientist, philosopher and theologian, and he gave regular lectures at *Nature Care School of Remedial Therapies* in the areas of psychotherapy and the coherent patterns to be found in the inner structure of nature. The foundation of his teaching, whatever the topic, was always to encourage a sense of the abundance of life, the creative expression of each of our many potentials, and the development of a deeper knowledge and understanding of the world in which we live. These goals were explored by the practical application and real methodology founded in Esoteric Christianity, Sufism, and the works of Gurdjieff and Swedenborg, as well as science, history, botany and psychology.

On Friday, 30th January, 1987, Dr Groves gave a public address entitled "Spiritual Aspects of Swedenborg's Psychology" at The New Church, Roseville Sydney, Australia to mark the 299th Anniversary of the birth of Emanuel Swedenborg (born 29th January, 1688). This publication is based on that address to allow a much wider audience to share Dr Groves' presentation on the value and use of what is found in the theological writings of Swedenborg (referred to in the text as "Swedenborg's writings" and the "Writings.")

Those who study Swedenborg's writing will find an abundance of material that will help them to alter subjective attitudes, expand their vision of spiritual possibilities, deepen their faith, arouse their spirit of charity, and encourage them to seek what is good, true, loving and beautiful.

Dr Groves demonstrated at all times, in his life and his teaching, a great love of the world and of Spiritual Work, his books are a testament to his lifelong pursuit of these ideals.

THE WELFARE OF THE SOUL

The study of Spiritual Psychology is an interesting and challenging pursuit which can have far-reaching consequences in our lives. Indeed, the whole course of personal life may be altered when new concepts and methods are introduced into the psyche. The opening up of the mind to high spiritual possibilities is a big undertaking, and the interested individual should learn to proceed with vigilance and reason. It is important to distinguish between what is true and false in the field of Spiritual Psychology, and to strive to make use of teachings and procedures that promote what is good, true, useful and harmonious. As we shall see later, there are various psycho-spiritual systems which promise much but provide little real help, and even deflect the enthusiastic student away from the path of growth and regeneration. There is an important way in which Spiritual Psychology differs from most contemporary schools of Clinical Psychology. It is the aim of the psychotherapist to help the patient to move out of the anguish and confusion of neurosis, and return to a state of 'normalcy'. Therapy may involve an analytical exploration of the unconscious with the hope of uncovering and resolving conflicts, anxieties, hostilities and other maladaptive states. Facing up to and accepting these buried problems is thought to give relief from psychological difficulties. Alternatively, there may be a restructuring of behaviour patterns so that the patient may enjoy a happier relationship with the world. All too often this psychological restoration is an adaptation to the current standards of contemporary society, where the patient becomes like other people; it is to become normal or average, and that means to be mediocre.

Psychotherapy focuses upon the patient; it is often a first-aid process which patches up the person, makes him feel better, and helps him to relate to other people. The Spiritual Psychology which runs through the whole of Swedenborg's writings is very different from all this. It is not a person-centred system, but a God-centred system. Every person and everything circulates round the central reality, the Lord God. By means of sound Spiritual Psychology the individual is brought into a conscious affectionate relationship with the Lord, and learns to see the Lord as his source and support. From this there should be no going back to the old habits and attitudes of self-centred existence.

Instead of the former somnambulistic modes of thought, feeling and behaviour, there is now available a new set of God-generated concepts and truths on which to build invigorating creative drives that will take the individual through many levels of experience, discovery, realisation and insight. This is something which most forms of clinical psychology fail to do. While modern psychology does help disturbed persons to achieve a return to normal life, there is no follow through for the sake of helping these people to awaken and develop the hidden, inner dimensions of their being - even though they may hunger and thirst for better things.

There are many practicing psychologists who never admit spiritual principles into their work, and even declare that concepts like 'soul,' 'God' or 'consciousness' are fallacies. In a reductionist manner they interpret all mental phenomena in terms of brain cell activity, the action of neurotransmitters and the play of hormones. They refuse to concede the possibility that there may be greater realities which excitingly invite sensitive individuals to open themselves up to finer influences, and to establish new relationships with the spirit of the

universe. This professional attitude is unfortunate because it discourages many people from growing into a larger life. It is likely that every living individual feels the need for a relationship with something which is stable, fulfilling, comforting and uplifting. Because of this need, some persons try to find immediate satisfaction in alcohol, drugs, sex and aberrant behaviour. Others become involved with strange cults and weird practices.

These, of course, are groping attempts to fill the inner sense of void, and to procure a feeling of security. Millions of people do not know the way to integration and stability, and pass through life in an incomplete state. Those who have access to the Writings of Swedenborg, and are thereby enabled to look into the depths of the Word of God, also have available to them a practical Spiritual Psychology which can help them to undergo a major internal transformation or rebirth.

Among the various ideas presented by Swedenborg we find a number of parallels in modern systems of thought. While still a medical student, Carl Jung made a study of the *Arcana Celestia* and read the major part of this massive work. He was undoubtedly influenced by this contact with the Writings because in his later works we encounter many references to regeneration, contrition and repentance. Jung's book on *Psychology and Alchemy* is filled with spiritual concepts, arcane truths and esoteric principles that are similar to Swedenborg's ideas. Jung's profound study of symbols, and his notion of archetypes as formative patterns in the mind which help to shape the outer life, is very close to the representations and correspondences that are so prominent in Swedenborg's theological works. One of Jung's students, Dr Maurice Nicoll, a very able psychiatrist, became dissatisfied with the limitations of psychology and psychiatry, and set out on it search for the meaning of life.

He studied ancient philosophy and oriental religion, and then formed a long association with P.D. Ouspensky and G. Gurdjieff, two prominent exponents of esoteric psychology. During this period Nicoll encountered the *Arcana Celestia* and was deeply affected by its contents. He wrote a number of books on psychological topics, including *The Mark* and *Living Time* which contain Swedenborg material, and his outstanding work is *The New Man* - a study of Christ's parables and miracles from the viewpoint of correspondences and psychological symbols. *The New Man* is delightful to read and certainly enhances one's appreciation of Swedenborg.

There are fringe areas of Psychology which present ideas and methods that have little in common with reformation and rebirth. Indeed, the fringe field is very big and may be described as a type of psycho spiritual technology. It has become quite strong and exists in many parts of the world as a multimillion dollar 'industry.' It partly depends on the fact that all people have within themselves a homing instinct which seeks to lead them back to the Creative Source of Life; they feel the stirring of this instinct but do not know the direction in which to move. Hence they come to rely upon the fringe systems as a means of being guided towards spiritual development. Strange pursuits such as past-lives therapy to release the soul for spiritual advancement, aura balancing, Camelot power or the effort to develop the siddhis, are widely available.

Siddhi is a Sanskrit word which refers to mystic powers such as fulfilling all desires without opposition, assuming any shape or form, creating or annihilating things at will, and the exercise of total control over all material objects. Courses are offered for instruction in these

topics, and all over the world people flock to them in great numbers with the hope that their lives will be miraculously changed. Quite often these courses are weekend workshops or seminars lasting for a few weeks. What people fail to realise is that it has taken half a lifetime to reach the disorganized state in which they find themselves, and it is simply not possible to correct and overcome this state in a few easy lessons. External aims and external methods cannot change internal disorder. The emotional excitement of pursuing a new and exotic interest can never be a substitute for honest and sincere self-examination and the effort to establish conjunction with the Lord God. Humans are strange in their willingness to spend time and money on the search for miraculous and supernormal phenomena, and yet avoid the direct task of putting their own being in order.

In many instances, people pursue the occult, the supernatural and the psychic because they have a hidden wish to be the possessors of secret powers and rare knowledge that will give them a sense of being superior to their fellow men and women. There are some who even seek to employ thaumaturgic techniques to influence and control other people. Here, indeed, we see the proprium working at full blast in the effort to prove that "I" am better than the rest of mankind. Stupid and even sinister motives often stand behind the pursuit of these unusual teachings. There is false security in the search for power through fragmentary systems of thought.

To work on oneself, in the light of sound spiritual doctrine, so as to achieve correction of defects and reorientation towards heavenly goals, is highly desirable. It takes time and ongoing effort to achieve this aim, and patience is required. Patience is very interesting, and is much more than a state of calmly enduring discomfort or suffering. It is an increased dimension of the mind which provides room for the emergence and action of Divinely aroused affections and truths and by means of these affections and truths one is able to struggle against old mechanical thoughts, attitudes and negative habits. With additional 'space' in the mind, one is able to more fully explore and resist what is seen to be false and to enjoy and be strengthened by the good and the true given from Above. While patience does extend through time in an outer sense, it's great potency lies in the fact that as an inner dimension of the mind it opens up a path to eternity. Patience is not mere passive toleration of difficulties but an active response to the knowledge of how to live in harmony with the Divine laws of Creation.

Those who are impatient and seek immediate miraculous results for their efforts never grow this greater psycho spiritual dimension in their being. Ordinary people, who drift through life, without giving a thought to the nature and wonder of existence, dwell within a very small subjective world of their own making. Since they hardly ever sense or observe the flow of life through themselves, they barely know that they are alive. They simply exist, and their existence consists largely of responses to the stimuli and pressures provided by their surroundings. For many such people, the words of language are merely terms of reference to things, events and states, and it is rare for them to ponder and seek out deeper meanings which stand behind speech. Indeed, in ordinary life most of us employ many words without really attending to their signification. When we hear such terms as 'reality,' 'spirit,' 'soul,' 'Divine' and 'Lord' we nod our heads in agreement as though we fully understand what they imply. Here, we ought to challenge ourselves and ask what we truly comprehend about these

key-words. Just what does 'divinity' signify in a fuller sense; what are the inner and outer reaches of 'reality,' and how tangible and vivid is one's experience of the 'soul?' All too often we fail to discern the metaphorical, symbolic properties of words, and so miss the deeper things that stand behind them. We humans are the prisoners of words, especially when we adhere to their surface meanings and connotations. We also overlook the fact that the structure of a word is very different from the subjective thought or state that caused it to be uttered. A person who is ill or has suffered a shock struggles hard to find suitable words so that he may describe his sensations and feelings to his physician. There are times when words are quite inadequate for the communication of a moving internal experience. A small, but useful, transformation can be initiated, into our lives by making ourselves become more conscious of the words we employ in speech.

By paying attention to each word we use, sensing its quality and appreciating its outer and inner meaning, we begin to communicate more effectively and with greater economy of speech. We say less, but in the words that are spoken there is a wealth of meaning and feeling.

Swedenborg declared that on one occasion when he was praying and saying the *Lord's Prayer*, he began to concentrate upon the meaning of every word; an inner part of his being was opened to a great influx of meaning and he felt himself to be elevated into a spiritual state. To a lesser degree, something like this happens to us when we give conscious attention to the words of prayer.

Conscious prayer sets up reverberations in our inner self in such a way that we telepathically communicate with the Divine. Telepathy is an inner function or process. Telepathy is derived from the Greek roots *tele* - far off and *pathy* - feeling. It is not so much a transfer of thoughts as it is a transfer of feeling states, of affections. If prayer arises from deep, reverent affections then these inward states of love are made known to the Lord God. We cannot help but telepathically broadcast our most secret states, and therefore we ought to work on ourselves with diligence to purify our inner being and stop telling the world what fools we are. To care for the welfare of the soul is the finest form of Spiritual Psychology. Since psyche means 'soul' then Psychology is properly the science of the soul, and for us this is more meaningful than the scholarly view that Psychology is the study of mental phenomena or behaviour. As living souls we require a Spiritual Psychology that is real and true, and that will help us on our way towards conjunction with the Lord. An effective Spiritual Psychology may help us to become more truly alive and conscious throughout our being, but we often have trouble with consciousness.

Under the ordinary conditions of life we take it for granted that we possess or enjoy consciousness. However, careful examination of daily life compels us to confess that we are not always as conscious as we believe. We perform many complex activities like driving a car, manipulating an instrument, or walking along a road without being fully aware of what we are doing. A remarkable automaticity enables us to do many things without our concentrated awareness. We assume that when we awaken in the morning we are conscious. This is a false assumption. Merely opening the eyes does not flood us with consciousness, because consciousness requires attention, a sharpened state of alertness, vigilance and keenness of perception. If we are truly conscious we would not have an 'unconscious' mind, because

everything in us would be internally illuminated, seen and known. Our lack of a steady state of consciousness is illustrated by a certain minister of religion who prayed before the altar of his church each morning. He suffered from a mild form of diabetes and, in his prayers, repeatedly asked God to remove this ailment. Gradually the prayer became automatic and continued this way for a considerable length of time. One morning, during prayer, he noticed himself ask the Lord to cure his diabetes. The man stood up in a stunned state because he realized that his diabetes had cleared up two years previously! That minister was ashamed to discover the non-conscious, mechanical nature of his prayer.

However, the case of the minister is not unique: we all 'sleep' within ourselves a great deal of the time and become forgetful of our most essential being-duties. From its word-roots consciousness means 'knowing together,' which is seeing and knowing everything in oneself. Do we know all of our negative states? Are we aware of evil impulses lurking in the shadowy places of the mind? Do we sense the presence of the Divine? With the full illumination of consciousness we could experience these things, but in our usual state we do not have this inner light. Ordinarily we are quite unaware of what our kidneys are doing at any given moment, and do not know what actions the liver is performing. Putting it bluntly, in the absence of consciousness, we do not know ourselves at all. Even with our speech we do not exorcise consciousness, and there are times when we hear things that come out of our mouths and we think, "What on earth made me say that?" The psychological study of speech, thought and behaviour has shown that large regions of our mental life lie outside our small patch of awareness. This shadowy region is the unconscious, and it has attracted the attention of many investigators including Freud, Jung and Ken Wilbur. It seems that we have more unconsciousness in us than consciousness. In ancient spiritual teachings people who were lacking in consciousness were said to be in a state of 'sleep.' In the *Apocalypse Explained*, paragraph 1006, Swedenborg is quite specific about this.

He wrote that when man is enlightened from the Lord, he is awake or conscious, but when enlightened from himself, he is asleep or without consciousness. All this is very clear, yet we often fail to respond to the impact of the truth concerning ourselves. Now let us consider this point: in order to maintain the immense universe the Lord God exercises total consciousness to keep everything under His survey. Total consciousness or omniscience enables the Divine to know everything taking place on all levels, in all worlds, in all forms of existence and in all finite minds. Unless total knowledge, consciousness and loving presence were there, the universe would fall into disorder. But the universe is order and is like the expression of an immense divine idea. Everything that exists is consciously planned and executed, and all things are harmonized by the persistent, gentle operations of Divine Love. Divine consciousness governs the operations of reality, but sleeping man hardly knows what is happening inside and around him.

In our embodied state each of us is a miniature cosmos. Many times in the writings, Swedenborg points out, that man is a microcosm. Just as the Lord God is conscious of the whole of His creation, the megacosmos, so we humans should be responsibly conscious of our little universe, the microcosm. Here, indeed, is a tremendous challenge to ourselves to strive to be conscious of our life and thereby achieve a deeper, richer and more meaningful insight and state of self-understanding. Our duty is to work upon ourselves in co-operation

with the Lord for the generation of a conscious soul - a fully developed spirit that can be of genuine cosmic use to God. The question is how do we go about this process of development? Those who study Swedenborg's Writings will find an abundance of material that will help them to alter subjective attitudes, expand their vision of spiritual possibilities, deepen their faith, arouse their spirit of charity, and encourage them to seek what is good, true, loving and beautiful. In addition, there are simple steps to be taken that can lead to an increase of our awareness.

Following the example of Swedenborg, who employed breathing techniques during his search for the soul, we can make use of our respiratory process in a pleasant and profitable manner. This has nothing to do with the breathing techniques of Yoga where one inhales through one nostril to so many pulse beats, holds the breath for another period of pulse beats, and then exhales out of the other nostril. The method suggested here is much gentler. It simply consists of making ourselves notice the act of breathing. In daily life we rarely experience any awareness of our respiratory activities. Only when we climb stairs, walk up a steep hill, run to catch a bus or carry home a load of shopping from the supermarket do we become aware of deepened or laboured breathing.

Normally, breathing is such a gentle process that we remain unaware of it. When we remind ourselves to observe and study our respiration several times a day, we start making interesting discoveries about ourselves. Gradually we begin to appreciate this quiet, beautiful flow of air into and out of the lungs, and learn to notice the subtle change-over from in-breathing to out-breathing and vice-versa. We further notice how inflowing air fills the lungs and causes them to embrace the heart. We should think of the correspondences of the heart and lungs and feel these correspondences at work. Repeatedly noticing the breathing process leads to internal psychological changes, and many people report that their thoughts are clearer and the emotions are calmer. Learning to be conscious of breathing is a valuable step towards becoming conscious of our whole being. It is worth following up this work on breathing by searching through the Word for all references to this process.

The use of a Bible concordance is helpful in tracking down these resources. The Lord God breathed the breath of life into man, the Lord breathed on His disciples, and the breath of Shaddai which gives understanding are but a few of the many correspondential utterances in the Word which concern this most important process.

Learning to be active in connection with our inner lives is vital, and we ought to compel ourselves to do as well as think. Swedenborg pointed out that we should not be like people who stand passively with arms hanging down and waiting for God to do everything for them. We were created to be active and effective. We possess a marvellously arranged muscular system for movement, and a complex nervous system to integrate and harmonize our activities. There are internal organs which generate energy to be applied in a multitude of ways. We need to be fully awake, eager, dynamic and capable of useful activity as well as being able to think rationally and feel the good of life. But if forgetfulness and 'sleep' creep into our lives, there is a terrible falling away from the abundance of creation. The 'sleep' that affects non-vigilant people is far more widespread than we imagine. 'Sleep' is to be immersed in one's own affairs and to ignore or reject everything which proceeds from the Lord. To be 'asleep' spiritually is to be unconscious of the creative loving nature of life, to be unaware of

the high potentials sown in us from Above, and to be blind to the harmonious reciprocal relationships which can be developed between ourselves and everything around us. Wars are declared and waged by people in a state of inner 'sleep.' Soldiers in a state of 'sleep' march behind the bugle and drum to perform what they feel is their duty. 'Sleeping' people join peace movements and sometimes become violent in their protests against war. Other people conduct business transactions, carry out research work, write books and act out political roles in a state of 'sleep.'

Mankind is in a terrible predicament because there is so little wakefulness, such a paucity of consciousness of eternal values, abiding truths and spiritual responsibilities. If this seems to be a tough analyses of human beings just recall what the Lord said to people who gathered round Him. He called them hypocrites and fools. He said that they were children of the devil and that their hearts were hardened. He declared they were dead and likened them to sepulchres filled with bones. Why were such harsh things said? It was because the Lord sought to stir, shock and awaken people out of their useless state of 'sleep' and begin to live the more abundant life He had provided for them. We, too, in this present age need to be shaken into the consciousness of what life is all about, and begin to involve ourselves in the divine cosmic process of generating conscious, loving souls. Those who have the Word, and the Writings which unfold some of the inner dynamics of the Word, have a flying start on the way to spiritual cleansing and perfecting. They have access to the knowledge and practical know-how of the activation and regeneration of the total contents of their lives.

We are reminded of Ezekiel's vision of the valley of bones and how, under the power of prophecy or Divine instruction, the bones joined together, were covered with skin and received the breath of life. It is a dramatic picture of the reconstitution of human beings who were not only 'asleep,' but spiritually 'dead.' Moreover, it is not an image that was to be applied to a handful of Gentiles, but is a universal and timeless representation of the human situation. All of us can be so affected by these stimulating and challenging teachings that we can make real efforts to become conscious of the truths, goods, uses and potentialities which can flow into our lives. Each one of us has a unique way of receiving these things and the light of illumination from the Lord God, and that is the beauty of individuality. Despite our differences, it is the one love, life, wisdom and power which enters every individual and provides each with a sense of significance and value. The effort to awaken from the 'sleep' state has many practical advantages which can place us in a better position of self-control.

From time to time we do various things in a quite automatic way and may give vent to negative emotions. Later, when we look back in retrospect, we experience remorse for our blind and unchecked manifestations.

With increased consciousness the time element can be shortened so that we see the quality of negative states at the instant of their arising within us, and not some time after they have become manifest. Immediate perception of negative arising means they can be instantly checked and with the development of this ability a person reaches a turning point in his or her life. When we can repeatedly and consistently block the automatic arising of evil impulses and thoughts, because we have the consciousness which enables us to perceive these things, then a change enters the psyche and a new state of calmness and peace becomes evident.

The thoroughgoing Spiritual Psychology which is presented in the Writings enables us to come to grips with, and resolve, and problem of 'self.' The feeling of 'self' is a subjective experience which all of us have, and it is very difficult to precisely describe it in the ordinary language of daily life. By sheer habit we refer to this 'self' by means of the personal pronoun, 'I.' 'I,' for each one of us, represents our identity, who and what we are, and indeed, our whole being. We employ 'I' as a part of speech for the convenience of "self-reference". 'I' seems to be a compact smearing of our whole life. When 'I' is dropped from speech the personal element in communication apparently disappears. A young man who is currently overseas writes letters to me in which he tries to avoid the use of the personal pronoun. These dull letters are filled with such phrases as: "A cafe was entered and a pleasant meal was enjoyed;" "An awkward fall produced a pain in the right arm;" and "An informative lecture was attended and notes were taken." While this man's efforts were valiant and sincere, it is not the way to overcome the tyranny of the proprium. Fresh insights and a big change in self-attitude are called for in the restructuring of our lives, and it is important to see what stands behind the term 'I.' Consider, first of all, the term 'atom.' The concept has been around for a long time and has been represented by means of various models, diagrams and mathematical equations. Chemists and physicists have presented much evidence to confirm the material existence of 'atoms'.

In recent years the Field Ion Microscope has provided visual demonstration of the presence and arrangement of atoms in a number of metals. Behind the word 'atom' stands a highly organized, objective and substantial structure. However, a similar objective structure does not stand behind the word 'I'. The term is not rooted in a substantial reality, and is a false image we have of ourselves. Thorough self-examination in the light of consciousness shows that at deeper psychological levels the sense of 'I' is dispersed into a restless world of changing feelings, diverse impulses, a variety of moods, and a complex mixture of memories, thoughts, and sensations. The apparent identity and stability of our natural external life, where 'I' reigns supreme and sits on the shifting sands of restless psychological states. We have difficulty in locating our sense of 'I'. Some people feel it in the chest, others in the head, and a few declare it is outside themselves. Trying to track down the exact nature of 'I'-ness is like pursuing a will-o'-the-wisp light over marshy ground, yet in daily life we treat it as being a firm and enduring part of our existence. The only real 'I' that exists in the universe is the divine I AM THAT I AM (*Exodus 3:14*). Only the Lord has the right to say 'I.' Whatever sense of 'I'-ness we have in ourselves is borrowed from the Divine and then claimed as our own property. It is a false issue to assume that we have a substantial something in us we call 'I.' Careful study shows that our 'I' is not stable, but is changing all the time. The 'I' that feels happy is not the 'I' that feels miserable; the 'I' which declares "I love you" is certainly not the 'I' that says, "I hate you," and the 'I' which is angry is very different from the 'I' that shows pity. There is not one 'I' in our makeup but a legion of them, and each one seeks to rule our being. They are some of the components of the evil and false proprium. In the Spiritual Psychology presented by Swedenborg it is urged that we struggle against the evil proprium and dissociate ourselves from it so that a higher proprium can be generated in us by God.

How can we do this? By sheer force of habit we humans identify ourselves with every passing state in the psyche. When a state of psychological depression occurs, we connect ourselves with it by declaring, "I am depressed." Later in the day we notice hunger pangs in the stomach

and say, "I am hungry." This process goes on without end and we find ourselves entangled in the automatic flow of thoughts and feelings. Unfortunately, each time we identify with a mood or emotion we become the prisoner of those states and lose power to them. This occurs without our noticing it because we lack the consciousness to see what is taking place. If we care to pay attention to our lives we can exercise a vigilance which will stop us from putting 'I' into internal states and will thereby dissolve useless identifications. Let us suppose that for some reason a state of unhappiness arises.

Ordinarily, we identify with it and say, "I as unhappy". We then suffer the unhappiness for some time and are dominated by it. This circumstance can be prevented in the following way. We must look at the unhappiness and see that it is a state of mind. As soon as we observe it we must declare, "Here is a state of unhappiness. It will pass. But while it is here I shall not step into it and be overwhelmed by its negative energies. I shall simply observe the unhappiness and remain aloof from it. To practise this process regularly increases our consciousness and releases us from the adverse effects of negative states. It can also be applied to pain, general discomfort and other sensations. There are some Yogis who live above the snow line in the Himalayas. Photographs show that they are quite naked yet without any protective clothing they walk over snow covered slopes and live at a great height.

Perhaps they have learned to avoid internal entanglement with the feeling of being cold, and even find comfort in the warmth generated by spiritually-directed affections. To be liberated from putting the sense of 'I' into transient feelings is to enter into a new state of internal freedom. We are no longer bound by the mechanical bonds of the proprium in this particular manner. While we are still not free from the proprium, we are less affected by its self-concern, its demands and its habits. Identification is the process of allowing ourselves to become connected and unified with inferior and troublemaking psychological states. When we strive not, to permit identification to occur, in the manner described above, we generate in ourselves more psychological states for the reception of regenerative influences and energies from the Lord. We also develop the capacity to see ourselves more clearly and honestly, and being able to recognise what we are paves the way towards repentance and rebirth.

Swedenborg wrote at some length about repentance in his book *The True Christian Religion*. The Chapter on *Repentance* is a very powerful aspect of applied Spiritual Psychology. Indeed, a great deal of the science of practical Spiritual Psychology is contained in that remarkable work. If we really read that book with consciousness and understanding, apply the teachings to ourselves, and live the truths and goods indicated as fully as possible then we have almost everything we need to bring about transformation of our lives. The section dealing with Repentance is highly significant, and Swedenborg points out that the regeneration and renewal of life cannot take place until repentance has really been lived through. We have to actually see our sins and false beliefs, honestly condemn ourselves on account of these sins and falsities, and then make sterling efforts to put them away forever. Behind the principle of repentance there are other related processes which are worth taking into account. In the Greek text of the *New Testament* the word which is translated into English as 'repent' is metanoia. Greek-English lexicons tell us that metanoia means "a change of mode of thought

and feeling; repentance." From this we learn that for repentance to take place it is necessary to change the way we think and feel.

This is a helpful idea, but it does not go far enough. An examination of the word-roots of metanoia helps us to grasp something deeper and more practical. Metanoia is resolved into meta - after or beyond, and nous - mind; hence metanoia in a deeper sense suggests going beyond the mind. If we understand the mind to be our ordinary, everyday mentation, then it is the external or natural mind we are talking about. This is the mind that is glued to the senses, often mechanical and automatic in its operations and habitually asleep. If we are to be transformed we must learn to go beyond this mind and find an inner process which is more rational, wiser and sensitive to the finer things of good and truth. Now we can make the effort to lift ourselves above the ordinary states that accompany daily existence by trying to sense the delight of life itself as it flows through our being. Swedenborg made it clear on many occasions that we humans are created to be recipients of life. If we believe this then we must consciously know it, feel it and be energized by it.

Such an effort introduces us into new states of thought, feeling and perception, and enables us to begin to understand what we formerly accepted in a passive manner. Metanoia or repentance enables us to transcend the more superficial and error-prone sense-based mind, and discover the vivifying and illuminating qualities of the influx of life which proceeds from the Lord.

Transformation or change of being is one of the remarkable aspects of creation. As living organisms we are not mere automata which simply exist like inflexible machines and then die. We are bundles of possibilities which the Creator has lovingly sown into our essence so that we can experience the joy of discovering new talents, skills and capacities, and thereby grow and change in all manner of exciting and useful ways. The universe is so abundantly filled with truths that not a day should pass without our enjoyment of fresh insights and the thrill of new discoveries. Everything around us is a kind of hieroglyph whose outer form declares its nature and function, and whose internal essence displays the array of laws, principles, truths and goods which brought it into being. By looking towards and affectionately appreciating the inwardness of the things and people around us, we can change into sensitive and alert beings who inwardly gaze in wonder at the panorama of creation. How little is our appreciation of the enormous creative labour the Lord exercised in bringing forth this stupendous universe in which we dwell? To deeply contemplate this fact can change many things in us. Before the might of God we are trivial and helpless. Yet there are some people who are so smitten with egotism and vanity that they try to sweep aside all ideas of a Reality greater than themselves, and audaciously assume that their theories and equations completely 'explain' how everything came to exist.

These nullities, who take such pride in their mental cleverness, are totally unable to create a flea or even a grain of dust. There are others who accept the idea of God as Creator of the universe, and assume that because God is omnipotent He will fulfil every whim, wish and demand of any person. Their attitude seems to be: "If God has put me here then He can look after my needs." Swedenborg is very firm about this erroneous attitude and insists that we must personally struggle to make our way through life, to resist evil and to aspire to grow towards the Lord. We must do it as though from ourselves, yet inwardly recognize that it the

affirming power, the love and the wisdom of the Lord which makes the struggle possible. Positive action can lead to change, and a very desirable change is to be able to leave this world as a more enriched and developed soul than we entered it. The whole universe is in a state of dynamic activity so that all things can exercise their functions and uses, and we should also participate in this universal activity in order to bring our services and uses into satisfying and meaningful application.

By observing arrogance, laziness, ignorance and even silliness in others we can learn to try and avoid those very things in ourselves, because they are impediments to a full and useful life. And by observing the endless activity of stellar radiation, atomic vibrations, tidal movements, and the sequence of day and night, and so on, we can learn to engage ourselves in the whole cosmic process of world-building and soul-making with spontaneity, happiness and enthusiasm. The world is filled with correspondences and is like a vast three-dimensional Bible. We can learn to read these correspondences and introduce into ourselves a deeper sense of connectedness with spiritual resources. Our very bodies are veritable maps and blue-prints of the inner life and indicate the manner in which the inward Divine operation sustains life, preserves integrity and engenders new modes of transformation. Flow-charts of bio-chemical transformations outwardly proclaim the flux of spiritual energies which activate billions of cellular processes; these not only maintain the organic body, but provide energy-fields through which outer and inner things come into correspondential relationship. The histological arrangement and packing of cells, fibres and fluids, as seen under the microscope, suggest to us the orderly arrangement of living truths and vibrant goods which go to make up the body of the spirit. The intricate details of the world can reflect into our consciousness an endless continuum of revealing and uplifting spiritual truths, if we care to look.

Not infrequently we overlook the significance of things because they are commonplace and seemingly trivial. Dreams are a case in point. Dreaming is a very common process and every person dreams every night, whether aware of the process or not. Over the last 20 years scientists have become very interested in dreaming as a psychophysiological phenomenon, and have made some fascinating discoveries. Electrodes attached to the scalp are connected with an electroencephalograph which amplifies the electrical activity of cerebral cortex cells and translates it into squiggles on a long sheet of graph paper. This enables the brain waves to be recorded and studied. States of wakefulness, relaxation, drowsiness, deep sleep and dreaming are accompanied by characteristic patterns of brain waves. It is easy to tell when a person is dreaming because the brain waves change and the eyes display rapid movement. Studies carried out with thousands of subjects show that dreaming is a necessary function of life. Every night when we are asleep there is a period of about 90 minutes of deep dreamless sleep which is followed by approximately 30 minutes of dreaming. Then follows another period of deep sleep and a successive state of dreaming. Several distinct phases of dreaming occur to all of us each night. Because experimenters can tell when a subject is beginning to dream, they found that by awakening a person briefly at the start of each dream cycle it was possible to prevent dreaming from taking place. When this dream deprivation was continued for several days, subjects displayed nervous and physiological symptoms and signs. There were irregularities in the frequency and force of the heart-beat; appetite was disturbed; weight loss occurred in some cases, and nervous symptoms were common. These

disturbances cleared up when the subjects were allowed to dream without interruption. The cycle of deep sleep and dreaming is just as important to us as the cycle of heart-beat and the cycle of breathing. Since the physiology of dreaming is an inbuilt characteristic of life, what can be said about the contents of dreams?

Those of us who have read Swedenborg's Journal of Dreams will realize that dreams were very useful to him. They provided valuable insights into the processes and problems in his psyche when he was undergoing his transformation. It was necessary for Swedenborg to examine his dreams, recognize their symbolic nature, and reach conclusions about the processes at work in his mind. The Word contains various illuminating dreams which form part of the ongoing Divine communication. Throughout the ages saintly people in all religions have described and recorded dreams which provided them with inspiration and instruction. Many Sufi teachers will make important decisions only after they have had three successive dreams about the matter under consideration. A great deal of modern psychotherapy makes extensive use of dreams as a means of uncovering inner difficulties, and Freud declared that "Dreams are the royal road to the unconscious mind." Psychologists recognize that dreams have a hidden psychological content, and by uncovering this material and consciously working through it the mental health of the dreamer can be improved. Swedenborg uncovered psychological, spiritual and Divine components in his dreams and was able to employ them usefully in acquiring clearer self-understanding and a broader vision of reality.

Now dreams can be helpful to us if we take notice of them and seek to understand their nature. By recording dreams in a note-book over a period of time, it will be found that some dreams will amplify, extend and develop the themes of earlier dreams. Other dreams may have a stimulating effect and promote feelings of encouragement and optimism. Still others may contain self-corrective meanings. Most important of all, dreams are expressed in the language of correspondences and they have an internal content which ought to be unravelled, brought forth and applied to life. Through dreams the Divine can gently enter a person's life and indicate new pathways of thought and action, or show how certain unresolved psychological difficulties can be handled and transformed. The Lord seeks to reach every individual in as many ways as possible, and it is the duty of the individual to exercise sensitivity to the influx and then behave accordingly. Whether in the symbolism of vision and dream or through gentle indications during prayer, meditation or inner stillness, the Divine wills us to receive and enjoy the more abundant life. It is ours to experience if we are willing and able to accept it.

We shall now briefly consider two dreams drawn from psychological literature in order to indicate some of their correspondences but without going into the details of interpretation. A certain man was passing through an emotional crisis in which he was reappraising his personal status. After experiencing a number of dreams he reported the following. He was walking over bare ground and noticed a round object some distance away. Upon approaching it he was disgusted to find that it was a human skull, and prepared himself to kick it out of the way. Just before he kicked at it, the skull suddenly changed into a beautiful woman's head. Whilst he stared at the head it changed into a magnificent red sphere which radiated light from itself. Here is a series of progressive transformations from lifeless skull (which the dreamer rejects by wanting to kick it) to a living head and then to a magnificent red sphere

which beams forth light. The interested reader who has knowledge of correspondences will find some illuminating signification in this dream.

The next dream was reported by a man who was a confirmed materialist who had survived an attempt at suicide, and was undergoing psychotherapy. By his own admission he had never received any form of religious instruction in his life, and had never read the Bible. He dreamt he was at a party given in honour of the presence of Adam and Eve. It transpired that they had never died. Upon looking at them he notices their huge size; they were both tall and majestic and had a quite unearthly appearance. He fixed his attention upon Adam and saw a mass of mossy, vegetable fibres draped over the face. He dearly wished to gaze upon Adam's face, so he approached him and lifted away the vegetation. The face he looked at filled him with fear. There was something terrible and animal-like in what he saw, but at the same time there was an infinite kindness in the face. The dreamer was so affected by this experience that he began an earnest search for the meaning of life. It was the emotional impact of the archetypal correspondences of Adam and Eve which caused these men to ponder upon the nature of human origins, the strangeness of human history, and his own involvement in the river of life. Some dreams are precognitive, or forward-looking, and contain hints about events that may occur in the near future.

Many years ago Professor J. B. Dunne was fascinated by a series of dreams which accurately portrayed events before they happened. Dunne was not involved in these events and his dreams were virtually eye-witness reports ahead of time. In one dream he saw the Flying Scotsman train crash over the bridge at the Firth of Forth and cause many people to die. Soon afterwards the event took place just as his dream had shown. In another dream he saw a volcanic island explode and cause massive loss of life and extensive damage to property. A little later this actually took place when the volcanic island of Martinique blew up and killed thousands of people. Professor Dunne experienced several other prophetic dreams which he included in his fascinating book, *An Experiment with Time*.

Psychological literature contains many reports of precognitive dreams; they are of widespread occurrence in the community and are reported by people in all walks of life - housewives, soldiers, factory workers, nurses and professionals. Most people ignore these prophetic dreams, but the writer personally knows two men who heeded their prophetic dreams, changed their travel plans and saved their lives.

When we stop taking life for granted and try to stir ourselves out of mere awareness, we are able to enjoy a more conscious understanding of our situation on this planet. With an increased power of perception we begin to see just how much sacred information is transmitted to us by the Lord, for the sake of our enlightenment and growth. This flow of instruction is always present, yet we do not notice it because we automatically pay attention to external, routine matters and forget that we have an inner life which must be tended and kept active. We ought to be interested in very many things ranging from dreams to astronomy, biochemistry to Egyptian hieroglyphs, archaeology to space travel and electron microscopy to states of conjugal love. Everything is meaningful in that it is a reflector of Divine truths and goods, and when we discover the correspondences in the objects and events in the world we are able to participate in the creative dynamics of life in a most uplifting and salubrious manner. By means of correspondences we can pass from outer forms

to internal states, energies and processes, and we can directly experience these states and gain much from their positive influence. Life is far more than the entertainment of nice thoughts: it is active involvement with stupendous energies whereby the Lord God sustains and activates all organisms and the whole of existence.

Swedenborg did not employ the writing of Paul to any great extent but one of Paul's statements is worth considering in the light of what has been said, and that is: "We are workers together with God." God labours mightily to create a universe in which life can become manifest, and we must labour consciously to become the recipients and communicators of spiritual life from God. Life is a joint enterprise in which God acts and man reacts in reciprocal harmony. The spiritual world can be infilled only by means of the co-operation, willingness and sincere aspiration of mankind. The universe is the cosmic instrument employed by the Lord God in bringing forth souls. On this account the universe is enormously significant and highly interesting. Souls are of special significance to the Lord and are required by Him for the detailed extension of the creative process into spiritual and celestial worlds. It is not enough to just be a soul: the soul has to become useful to God and must therefore strive to develop its potentials as fully as possible. Each one of us is important to the Creator, and we would not be here in the absence of this God-man relationship. Because we are endowed with curiosity, we seek to penetrate the mystery of existence and discover why we are here in the world. Healthy curiosity can serve to promote our inner growth. Swedenborg was a man with insatiable curiosity and a driving will to understand everything about life. We, too, need some of this drive in order to cease being biological machines. We are intended to be living, acting, productive, contributing souls. This calls for a life of conscious participation in the Divinely engendered cosmic process, and an eagerness to live with insight and meaning. A larger life of spiritual awakening is not a sombre affair, but is personal, affectionate and heart-warming. The sense of the holy is an internal state of delight because the soul is flooded with the light of Divine Wisdom and the heat of Divine Love. This can be a daily experience for us if we make efforts to reshape the dimensions of the psyche and reorientate our whole being towards the Lord. Part of the urge and aim of creation is to bring us to this wonderful experience.

EMANUEL SWEDENBORG

"His pioneering and creative intelligence his restless, germinal, well-nigh universal mind that took all of earth's secrets - and, at length, heaven's – for its province."

So wrote the Editor of the Boston (U.S.A.) "Sun" newspaper about Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) at the time of the 250th anniversary celebrations in 1938 of Swedenborg's birth.

In terms of intellectual stature and original, creative thinking, Swedenborg has been compared to Leonardo de Vinci. Yet, for the most part, the world remains in ignorance of the significant contribution made by this Swedish genius in so many fields of human endeavour,

and of the veritable mine of enlightenment to be found in his theological writings which give the blueprint for individual spiritual development and growth. These writings are known to have influenced the earliest anti-slavery movements and many of the great thinkers and religious leaders during the past 200 years. These same writings largely inspired the establishment of infant education in Germany and England in the late 1700s and early 1800s. Their impact has spread far and wide like the ripples in a pond but the source is largely forgotten. Today, though, as the world enters a new era with a growing thirst for an understanding of the purpose of life and the working of the human psyche, there is a re-awakening of interest in, and appreciation of, the immensely valuable insights to be gained from the contents of Swedenborg's works. His name is becoming increasingly known.

Emanuel Swedenborg, born in Stockholm, Sweden, in the year 1688, was the son of Jesper Svedberg, a bishop of that country. Endowed with a remarkable mind, he grew up to be one of Sweden's most illustrious men of science. In an era when, compared with now, scientists were few and limited, Swedenborg investigated in all directions of the physical universe. He made many remarkable discoveries and anticipated much of our modern science. He wrote some thirty-three scientific works embracing such widely differing subjects as metallurgy, mineralogy, physiology, mathematics, cosmology, and the structure and function of the brain. During this period of outstanding mental activity he worked in an important government position of a Royal Assessor of Mines, and contributed significantly to the revitalisation of the mines industry of Sweden. Swedenborg travelled extensively throughout Europe, taking notes everywhere on the latest scientific marvels, meeting the leading scholars of the day, always searching, wondering, probing the mysteries of life.

In all this, his desire was to locate and understand the working of the soul. Having reached the limits of human knowledge to postulate the existence of the soul, and for all the deductions he brought forward, rational as these were, he gradually realised that he was not going to achieve his objective. At the age of 50, Swedenborg relinquished government work and his scientific and anatomical research. Whilst continuing a normal, active life of a man in his position, being a member of the Upper House of the Swedish Parliament, he began a detailed study of the Bible following a series of spiritual experiences. It may sound extraordinary, but Swedenborg claimed that for the last 27 years of his life, from 1745 to his death in London in 1772, his spiritual faculties had been opened enabling him to become a citizen of two worlds at the same time - this natural plane of which we are all conscious and the spiritual dimension of consciousness into which we fully enter when the physical body ceases to function. A scientist and philosopher, as he had been, trying to demonstrate the existence of the things of the spirit, Swedenborg was brought to see the answers he searched for and principles he tried to discover would need to be revealed - from above and from within.

The profoundest questions about the existence of God, the creation of the world, our spiritual dimension, and the Divine government of the natural and spiritual world, are all discussed in one or other of the approximately thirty volumes which comprise Swedenborg's theological writings. He saw these things written by himself as a God-given response capable of satisfying the questioning and the probing of men and women in full possession of their rational and critical faculties.