
Candela



Newsletter of the Swedenborg Association of Australia Ltd.

JUNE 2003

ISSUE 32

10th ANNIVERSARY PUBLICATION

***Your help is
still
needed!***

All members received two copies of this publication recently and the SAA Board hopes that you enjoyed reading the material included and are proud to be part of the organisation which produced it.

It has been a pleasure to receive some very positive feedback from members and friends who have also received a copy. A number of individuals have asked for further supplies, which are freely available, to distribute in various ways. Some just want copies to pass onto close friends and acquaintances. Two people living in blocks of units have asked for a stock for placing in the entrance hallway for others in the units to take if interested. Still others have told us they are making contact with associations of which they are members endeavouring to have the publication accepted in a future mailing.

The possibilities are endless if we put our thinking caps on. Have you really thought through possible distribution opportunities - leaving a copy on a train/bus seat or in your doctors/dentists waiting room? As this issue of *Candela* goes to press, copies of the publication are on their way to public and other libraries right around Australia. However, a personal approach to the local Librarian may mean a copy does end up on the magazine rack (or even part of the library's permanent collection); the copies we send just might be disposed of as more unwanted mail!

So please do think about it and ring the Swedenborg Centre for a supply - or return the form which came with your copy.

Every endeavour, however small, will help!

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MEMBERSHIP

As Secretary of the Swedenborg Association, I am very happy to report that most Members have renewed their 2003 membership. It is encouraging to the Board that the work carried out by the Association is so strongly supported and endorsed by the membership body, and it is our hope that Members view their membership as an expression of their acceptance of the principles and values upon which the Association is founded.

The Board also acknowledges that the membership body of the Association is a scattered one, with Members living at different locales both nationally and internationally. Some Members have mentioned a sense of 'isolation', a feeling of 'being alone', and a yearning to connect with others of 'like mind'. Scheduled activities conducted by branches - principally Melbourne and North Ryde, Sydney at present - are designed to address these needs, however due to distance or a lack of mobility, a good number of Members are still unable to participate.

I would like to remind readers, or in case you were unaware, most, if not all of the scheduled activities at the Swedenborg Centre, North Ryde are videotaped by Michael Chester and may be freely borrowed from the Centre. The Board is also taking steps to ensure that members living in remote areas wishing to have communication with others in their area are given every opportunity to do so (please see my report on page 7 for further details)

Michele Knight



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The seven Wonders of the World include some of man's greatest building achievements. We stand in awe of the Pyramids - we can only guess at the enormity of the Colossus of Rhodes. Einstein has added the eighth Wonder of the World - Compounding.

Compounding is a remarkable process. Take the following riddle. *"If a lily doubled its size every day and it took 10 days to go from a tiny speck to filling up the entire lagoon, how long would it take to go from occupying one quarter of the lagoon to filling it up?"* Only two days! If it doubles every day it will take one day to go from quarter full to half full and one more day to go from half full to full.

If we take another example with which we deal every day. Say one has \$10,000 invested at 7%p.a. and each year you leave the profit in the investment. After ten years our \$10,000 has grown to \$20,000 and its been done *for us not by us*.

Our inner life can be like that. Each year that goes by we can become wiser and wiser. Wisdom is built on the previous wisdom we possessed, to infinity. We become wiser only to the extent that we have affection for what we are doing. If we don't like what we're doing we don't take it in, let alone become wiser by the experience.

Divine Providence is like compounding. The world around us is beautiful and the more so the closer and more interiorly we examine it. In every created thing there is something from Divine Love and Divine Wisdom. These are not just words. Each of us experiences the beauty of Life even if we don't put a name to it. We plant a seed and nurture it. We water it and watch it grow with first a sprout, then tiny branches followed by leaves and flowers or fruit. From the flower or fruit a seed drops to the ground and the cycle starts again. Perpetual motion and regeneration.

The cycle is Wisdom itself and the regeneration is Love itself. Nothing is removed which is not replenished. The animal kingdom is the same. There is *predator* and *prey* and each is replenished according to the Law of Balance. The prey diminish and therefore the predator decreases. The prey increase and so the predator can increase.

Man undergoes a cycle as well. Man was created whole; united in all that is good and all that is wise. This marriage was severed after creation, what we call the *Fall*, and it is the purpose of Divine Providence to complete the cycle which is to restore what is good

and true in man. What is so beautiful is that the Lord must continually endeavour to restore man to wholeness so man will be of use in the spiritual world - that is, if man will only invite the process to continue. The Lord is prepared to reinvest Love and Wisdom continually and this is where compounding is seen in action. Stop and think about it. The Lord does not "spend a penny" of the investment but keeps adding to it for man's benefit. As the lily filled the lagoon so will Love and Wisdom fill man at a compounding rate.

Divine Providence is truly one of the great Wonders of the World.

Agape,

John Brogan

SWEDENBORG ASSOCIATION

Swedenborg Association of Australia Ltd.
ACN 056 529 769

Registered Office:

Swedenborg Centre
1 Avon Road, North Ryde NSW 2113
Tel: 02 9888 1066 Fax: 02 9888 1166
Email: saa@swedenborg.com.au
Website: www.swedenborg.co.au

National Board Members:

John Brogan (President)
Michele Knight (Secretary)
Kirk Holst (Treasurer)
Kevin Attwater
Julian Duckworth
Neville Jarvis (Newsletter)
Wayne Kasmar
Christopher Skinner

Executive Manager:

Neville Jarvis

Membership of the Swedenborg Association of Australia Ltd. is open to anyone interested in pursuing an interest in Swedenborg, the man, his science and his spiritual teachings. For details on how to join, please refer to page 10.



Choice and Wellbeing by David Millar

From freedom...[man] feels...and perceives...life...to be his own. Freedom is the power to think, will, speak, and do from one's self, as if of oneself...Therefore freedom was given to man together with his life...[If it were] taken away or lessened...man [would feel]...that he does not live, but that another lives in him...The delight of all things of his life would be taken away or lessened...[and he would] become a slave.

Swedenborg: *Apocalypse Explained* #1138

The ability to make choices is so critical to our sense of well being. The exercising of our freedom to choose is to exercise our will which is to give expression to our love or essential self. It is through the exercising of this freedom that we gain a sense of being an independent entity that has control over what happens in our lives. The critical nature of this ability to make choices, to make decisions, was recently driven home to me in an interview on TV with a person who suffered a climbing accident. This along with looking at a few key words taken from the account of Jesus' life in the gospels, highlights the centrality that freedom of choice has to our sense of well being.

The following is my recollection of that interview. The interview was with a British mountain climber who described a situation where, while climbing on an ice face he fell some 15 or so feet. This occurred at 20,000 feet and the result was that he severely broke his leg. He was too high for a helicopter rescue and they had no way of contacting anyone. He only had his climbing partner to help him – who did his best but unfortunately his partner had no choice after lowering the injured man into a crevasse by mistake, and having no way of pulling him up decided after a couple of hours to cut him loose. The injured climber fell into the crevasse and miraculously survived the fall. His partner, thinking there was no way he could have survived, climbed to safety. The climber in the crevasse then found that avalanches that had fallen into the crevasse at one end had formed a ramp. It was between 20 and 70 below zero depending on the wind chill factor, he had no food and no water other than snow which he ate, he had frost bite in his hands but he managed to pull himself up the ramp and out of the crevasse. He then went about setting himself targets which he gave himself 20mins to achieve spoke of the elation he felt when he managed to make the landmark he had set in 18 minutes and the despair when it took him 22 minutes. Doing this he managed

to pull himself down the mountain across the boulders and rocks of the lower slopes eventually arriving at base camp. He had pulled himself over six miles and it had taken him five days to do it.

He said that many interviewers ask him what he thought of his partner's actions of cutting him loose to plummet to his death. He said that while hanging in the crevasse still attached to his partner, he knew that he and most probably his partner were as good as dead. He said his partner's decision to cut the rope immediately gave them both choices, and he felt that it was being given the opportunity to make these choices that ultimately saved both their lives. It mentions in the gospels that when Jesus taught, His hearers were taken aback in amazement as He taught as one having authority and not as the scribes who were the Jewish teachers of religious law at that time (see Mark 1:22). Jesus often had run-ins with the religious authorities of His day as His teaching and life communicated a set of values that challenged the accepted values of those in positions of religious power and authority. One of the key differences between the power and authority that Jesus exercised over that of the religious leaders lies in its origin. The power of the religious authorities was derived from the Jewish social structures of the time whereas the power that Jesus exercised had its source in divine love itself.

The religious social structures of Jesus' time had been usurped by self interest, and served a few people in exercising power and control over many to advance their own self centred agendas. One tool in the quiver of these unscrupulous elements was that of the Word of God or Holy Scriptures. In the hands of self interest teachings were construed that kept control of the minds of the masses and appeals made to the Scriptures in support of them. The use of the Scriptures in this way meant that support for a body of religious traditions that maintained power and control over others were presented to the people as having divine authority. The underlying sense carried by many would have been that to challenge these traditions was to challenge God himself. Those then who drew their authority from this structure effectively set themselves up as the arbiters of the divine will and thereby dictated what was acceptable religious practice and stood in judgement over what was deemed unacceptable. This meant that those under their sphere of control were bound within a religious structure that had as its principal purpose the maintenance of power and control of a few over all others.

What a contrast Jesus must have been. Divine love's interest is solely in advancing the salvation of souls from their imprisonment in self interest. What Jesus was interested in was the spiritual well being of



all people and His teaching reflected this. Where the scribes sought to hold onto power through encouraging fear and guilt Jesus seeks to empower all people to make choices that lead to their salvation. The amazement described in the responses to His teaching graphically illustrates this point. The New Testament was originally written in Greek and it is the Greek word translated “amazed” that takes us into what was actually going on. The word is “ekplesso” and literally means “to strike one out of self-possession”. The idea is to be delivered such a psychological shock that the mental jolt removes a person from self absorption. When truth positions itself alongside ideas that were thought to be true but are actually false then such a psycho-spiritual shock is delivered. This is what some esoteric teachings call third force. In the case of the mountaineer the application of the knife to the rope that bound him to his partner illustrates the nature of this critical element in the process of transformation or regeneration.

The second word which is well worth looking at is the word “authority” as in “He taught with authority...”. Where the shock of “ekplesso” is delivered in a person’s thought structures then there is a loosening of the hold of those structures previously thought to be true but are actually false. This weakening along with the presentation of true ideas immediately brings a person into a position of having new choices open to them. Our climber on hitting the bottom of the crevasse no doubt was in shock – in the interview he mentioned the shock of seeing the frayed end of a rope rather than his partner crashing into the crevasse after him. He now could make choices that were not open to him when he hung suspended in mid air. The Greek word translated “authority” is “exousia” and means, the “power to choose”.

Truth from the Lord when received into the human mind empowers people to make choices that lead to their deliverance from self-absorption, which is hell’s activity in a person. The ability to choose involves two faculties, the exercise of which is central to our sense of being an autonomous independent human being. These faculties are the will and the understanding. The understanding is created for the reception of truth, specifically truths from the Word. If these are received with a view to living a good and useful life they form a higher plane of thought from which a person is able to judge those things that flow into their lower levels of mind. It is the ability to judge in this way – to discern good from evil and truth from falsity that gives us the power to choose what we will mentally entertain that constitutes our true humanity.

A choice always involves a sense of assessing or weighing a number of options and selecting one over the others. This ability is so important to our sense of well being because it carries within it that sense that we have some level of control over the direction of our lives. Perhaps this is why, in a consumer society,

where we are presented with an abundance of choices in the market place, we can head down to the local mall when feeling a little down and through purchasing something are able to have our sense of well being restored. We have even coined the term “retail therapy” to describe the relief such actions can bring. The power to choose even at a superficial level gives us a sense of controlling outcomes which ultimately contributes albeit superficially to our sense of well being and security in a fast paced, fast changing world. But choices at the natural level of life can only offer a cheap imitation of a true sense of well being for despite the abundance of choices open to us at this level of life, if our ability to make decisions never rises above the natural level of life then we will remain self-absorbed and enslaved by hellish influences.

Natural freedom is mans heredity. In it he loves only himself and the world...Rational freedom is from the love of good repute for the sake of standing or gain. The delight of this love is to seem outwardly a moral person...Spiritual freedom is from love of eternal life. Into this love and its enjoyment, only he comes who regards evils as sins and therefore doesn't will them and looks to the Lord.

Swedenborg: *Divine Providence* 73

When our sense of being able to choose is closed down we will often find ourselves ‘hanging in the air’ and feeling powerless. This often occurs when we have become caught up in the things of our lower mind and have forgotten about divine truths and principles which serve to set us free. A true sense of well being comes from exerting our God-given power to choose in spiritual matters. Healing comes from having our ability to choose restored, of being empowered through understanding the Lord’s Word in new ways through the light of those spiritual principles or truths the Lord has given us in the teachings of His servant Emanuel Swedenborg.

David Millar ministers to the New Church (Swedenborgian) congregation in Adelaide. A New Zealander, he was working in Information Technology in the Mental Health field until training for the ministry and moving to Australia with his wife, Mandy, and son, Stephen.. It was 10 years ago that David found a set of Swedenborg’s “Arcana Coelestia” in the Auckland University Library. It made such an impact that he asked Mandy to start photocopying it! Eventually they tracked down the Swedenborg Bookroom in Auckland. The rest is history.



GROUP'S NEWS

Melbourne:

James Edgar, who has spoken to us on previous occasions, led our March meeting with an extension of his previous topic of *Ancient wisdom through the ages*. Whilst not directly related to Swedenborg, the content was very acceptable and traced a similar theme to that found in Swedenborg's works. We were pleased to have 18 present at this meeting and everyone enjoyed the content. I received very good feedback and as usual there were plenty of questions. It was also pleasing to have three new attendees who all enjoyed the evening.

The April meeting was addressed by **Donna Golding**, a Psychologist who has a counselling practice. She gave us some insights into four case studies on how a lack of love or compassion in people's lives has affected them emotionally and in other areas. Again the talk was well received but the comment I had from some of our members was that not enough detail was provided from her on how she worked through the problem with those involved in the case studies and how they were helped. However, the talk did clearly identify how a lack of compassion and that sense of being loved can have an impact on people's lives. In introducing the evening, I was able to briefly outline the main thrust of *Divine Love and Wisdom*. We were again pleased to have another four new attendees, one of whom was visiting from Canberra with one of our regular members. The total attending was 17 and some of the new people from previous meetings returned.

Our speaker at the meeting in May was **Judy Jacka**, a well known Counsellor and Spiritual Healer in Melbourne who runs workshops and seminars. Her topic was *Natural Therapies and Spiritual Healing* providing an overview of the link between therapies and healing. She also provided some background on her theosophist beliefs and the Alice Bayley tradition. The talk was enjoyed by everyone, especially the spiritual healing information, and we also gained a better understanding of the part natural therapies play in the therapy. We were pleased to have 19 present at the meeting including two who had not been to our meetings before.

In recent months it is quite noticeable that the topic determines who attends. Whilst we have a core group of about ten who attend every meeting, others come at various times. I would assess that in the past three meetings we would have had at least 25 different people although our average attendance is much less than this. It is pleasing that new people are coming to our meetings. There is a wide range of interests amongst those attending and the challenge as always is to vary the program to cater for these needs.

Chris Skinner

North Ryde, Sydney:

Dr. Vladimir Dimitrov presented *Complexity and*

Spirituality on Friday 28th March. Complexity is embracing wholeness, totality. The English word is derived from the late Latin word *complexus* (= totality) which is related to *completere* (= to embrace).

Vladimir began by looking at the question - What do you learn from studying Complexity? He listed five things:-

1. Everything changes. Through dynamic interactions something evolves.
2. All the energies are connected. There is nothing really separated in this universe.
3. Self-fulfilment: the essence of Life. Because we live in the wholeness, does the wholeness live in us? Yes. Not only do we live in the wholeness, but the wholeness manifests through us. So the challenge is to give this wholeness the possibility of expressing itself through us.
4. Harmony. When you realize there are self-organizing forces it is best to live in harmony with them.
5. Love: the law of Life. Everything that exists is in an inter-connected web of relationship. This web exists to open creative potentials within towards wholesome existence. Why is this a law of life? Without this attitude towards one another, life is endangered.

He listed three practical outcomes of studying Complexity. One being that it encourages us to identify with the whole of existential dynamics. He then provided glimpses of what is covered under the title of Complexity if one was to pursue studies in this field. One of the quotes provided in this part of the presentation is:

It is impossible to 'fix' or 'improve' one's urge for self-fulfilment. Any external intervention aimed at modifying one's self-organizing ability tends to produce alien (to one's nature) effects with unpredictable consequences.

Dr. Vladimir Dimitrov gave a very warm and absorbing presentation of things close to his heart. All present enjoyed the evening very much as Vladimir was speaking about existence and physical phenomena from a spiritual perspective, integrating science and religion.

There were lots of questions and interesting discussions at the end of the talk and during supper. Around 22 people attended this well appreciated talk.

A video of the evening can be borrowed by calling the Swedenborg Centre.

GROUP'S NEWS (contd)

North Ryde, Sydney: (contd)

Michael Chester introduced *Christian Meditation* on Friday 9th May. He began by looking at the question 'What is meditation?'. This was followed by viewing a



TV program showing the growing popularity of Christian Meditation, with Fr Laurence Freeman describing in detail how it is carried out. The program also showed various people mentioning the benefits they gained by the practice.

Afterwards, we focussed on the benefits of meditation. We began by hearing the big change this practice had on Donna Mulhearn's life.

Christian meditation - or contemplative prayer - has led to my deepest, most intimate connections with God. It clears my head, helps me discover my true self and allows me just to "be still" and know that God is God.

This was followed by listening to a number of selections from the Meditation Chapter in *The Country of Spirit* by **Wilson Van Dusen**. One such passage was *Meditation is one of the avenues to regeneration, although this may not be immediately apparent. In the first place it gives voice to the inner, it teaches of influx first hand and thereby helps undo proprium. By opening the internal it opens the way to spiritual perception. Many places in the writings (Swedenborg's spiritual writings) indicate that awareness of the internal or higher is the key to spiritual development.*

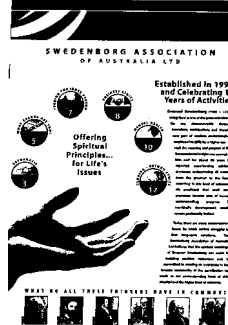
The final part was a 20 minute session of Christian Meditation. The 10 people attending the evening were very appreciative of what was presented.

It was decided to continue practising Christian Meditation prior to our monthly meetings for the rest of the year. They start at 7.00pm and conclude before 7.30pm. About 9 people meditated on Friday 30th May and found it a very special experience. The next one will be on Friday 27th June at 7.00pm.

On Friday 30th May **Jan Goldsmith** facilitated an experiential evening on *Self-Healing*. Jan has a passion about health and helping people to heal themselves, which made the evening very special. She believes there is a wisdom behind the functioning of our outer 'coat' - the body - that we need to work with to promote health. She introduced us to the electro-magnetic energy system around the body and provided a simple technique to sense it. She also provided other simple techniques to balance the energy flow in the body. Then she guided us in some breathing exercises. We notice the difference in our breathing before and after opening the airway, with various movements of the tongue. Her latest studies relates to Magneto-biology where magnets are used to promote the body to heal itself. This work is based on findings by a naturopath over a 24 year period and is a synthesis of many healing modalities. As part of the evening we were provided with some magnetised water. This water is said to improve the absorption of nutrients in the body and the release of toxins. She has seen remarkable results of Magneto-biology with the improved health of her mother and her husband and herself and her clients. There were lots of questions afterwards and during supper, highlighting the interest that she aroused. Sixteen people attended the evening.

Michael Chester

10th ANNIVERSARY PUBLICATION



With any publication, however much effort is put in to proof-reading and checking references, inevitably a few things slip through the net! Thankfully, man can never be perfect; that is an attribute for the Creator alone.

There is unlikely to be a follow-up issue to this publication for some years so corrections cannot be held for that. So we would like to point

out in *Candela* three matters which have been drawn to our attention.

In the short biography on page 2, a typographical error meant that the age at which Swedenborg relinquished government work and his scientific and anatomical research is misquoted as 50, not the intended 55. Swedenborg writes in 1769 that from the time the Lord opened his sight into the spiritual world in 1743 enabling him to converse with spirits and angels, he began to print and publish the various arcana that were seen by him - his focus changed. He was still a member of the Board of Mines until 1747 (when he resigned) but most of that time was on leave of absence. Also between 1743 and 1745, he finalised *The Animal Kingdom* manuscript for publication but no new research. He also wrote and published a philosophical treatise *The Love and Worship of God*. It is actually difficult to be too specific about time frames, and we do not need to be too pedantic.

There is conjecture over the origin of the German word "Kindergarten" (page 14). A Doctoral thesis by Swedenborgian scholar Dr. Horand Gutfeldt, now deceased, states that "... it was (Jean Frederic) Oberlin (a reader of Swedenborg) who devised the first Kindergarten in 1770 - not Froebel as is generally accepted." Oberlin's kindergarten antedated Froebel's first school by 46 years and the Froebel system by 70 years. Yet, Oberlin was not a translator of Swedenborg, 'simply' a reader.

The reference to Lois Wilson being the co-founder of **Alcoholics Anonymous** is definitely incorrect. She was co-founder of **Al-Anon**, the support and information organisation for families and friends of alcoholics.



SECRETARY'S REPORT

New Members

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

Mark Bell, NT	Alan Mann, NSW
David Duerden, TAS	Patrick Morahan, VIC
Maeve Larkin, VIC	Julie Murphy, NSW
Mr. J D Lawler, QLD	John Vincze, SA

Sadly I have to report the passing into the spiritual world of Miriam De Forest (NSW), a member who has been in touch with the Swedenborg Movement for sometime. Our condolences go to her husband, Gerard, and the family. Her membership is being continued by her husband as a memorial to her deep interest in Swedenborg's insights and the help gained.

Swedenborg Quotation from the Secretary -

"The human form of every man after death is the more beautiful, the more interiorly he had loved Divine truths and lived according to them. The interiors of everyone are opened and formed according to his love and life; and therefore the more interior the affection, the more it is conformable to heaven, and the more beautiful is the face."

Heaven and Hell paragraph 459

Welcome again to *Candela*, our second edition for the calendar year. While the Association has been busily engaged in its regular administrative functions and scheduled activities, a number of other requirements have also very much kept us 'on our toes'; a combination of matters for consideration raised from the Board Meeting in May, and upcoming administrative duties and activities.

On the front page, I made mention of some members expressing a feeling of 'being alone' and yearning to connect with others of 'like mind'. That does not mean everyone, of course; some are quite happy to receive and digest information in progressing along their own individual pathway.

I would also like to mention that a Report of Financial Members (listing Member's names and suburb localities) is enclosed with the yearly AGM Minutes, which are sent out to every financial Member. If you would like to get in touch with a fellow Member, just telephone the Swedenborg Centre and we will take it from there.

The Board is particularly keen to know if we are addressing the intellectual needs and interests of our Members, and so I invite you to make a note of your interests on the enclosed form, and to return it to the Association, in confidence.

Preliminary preparations are currently underway to form a committee to organise the Association's annual

Celebration of Spring event, to be held on Saturday 6th September. The theme this year will be *Images of Spring*, with the prize including a \$50 SAA Book Voucher, plus \$200. As was the case last year, voting will be 'people's choice'. We would like to invite you, if you are in a position to be able to, to volunteer your time and effort in assisting us on the committee to organise this very special event. If you are able to, please contact Michael Chester on 9913 2421 as soon as possible.

You would also have recently received a copy of a special publication celebrating the 10th Anniversary of the SAA. An enormous amount of time and effort has gone into the preparation and co-ordination of this very fine publication, which while acknowledging the history of the Association in Australia is also our entrée into the wider community, with mailings planned for wide distribution. If you would like additional copies for giving away, please contact either myself or Neville Jarvis at the Swedenborg Centre and we will forward them on to you.

Our next Board Meeting is scheduled for July 22nd 2003. I reiterate again that Board Meetings are open to all Members and should you wish to attend please do contact me to confirm details and to receive an Agenda.

Michele Knight



Oh No, Not Another Fridge Magnet!

After much discussion and then an exhaustive selection procedure, the SAA Board and the Swedenborg Centre have produced supplies of a plastic magnetic sign - for use on a fridge, as a mat for a mug, sticking on the side of a car, etc. etc. It is a burgundy colour with a quotation from Swedenborg's spiritual writing's in white.

Two magnets will be sent to each member - one for stimulating interest personally by the member and one for giving away to introduce someone else to Swedenborgian thought. The magnets will also be available for \$1 each (the approximate cost) for members and contacts to buy for further giving or making up sets in the home, the workplace, etc. The approximate size of the magnet is 90mm (2½ inches) square and it will be quite thick and inflexible. The quote is :

*thought from the eye closes the understanding
but thought from the understanding opens
the eye*

Divine Love and Wisdom, paragraph 46

Wanted: A 750 word article giving expression to this quote in today's world. Send/email/fax your contribution to the Secretary.



A Member's Journey

Re: Special 10th Anniversary Publication forwarded to me recently.

Thank you for the privilege to acknowledge as a member but also as a committed Swedenborgian, of more than 10 years involvement through your Society. Congratulations.

Six miscarriages, the last being a 'touch and go' as to whether I would pull through, and a string of shocks in my mid-adult years, have shown me what it really means to be blessed with a strong faith in God. Without it, I am sure that I would not have been able to cope in these times of real difficulty. I simply thank God for what he has done for me.

I was born into the Baptist faith and regularly went to Church and Sunday School. Early on, I sensed that I had an 'open line' with God, something which has stayed with me through the rest of my life. A period in a small country town in North Queensland separated me from my Baptist roots but I was determined to ensure that my three young daughters received a good religious education, just as I had. The local Anglican Church was very welcoming to us and so started a connection with that denomination which still exists today. With my daughters involved with Church activities, I decided to make a commitment as well by becoming confirmed - a big step for me. Yet this sense of a direct connection with God in my everyday life kept me open to the possibility of new understandings about Him and His creation. Quietly I searched for the right truth which would satisfy me.

My husband's work meant another move for us down, down to Northern Victoria and with the children off my hands, I was able to look for some useful and enjoyable work. This came in the form of the position as Librarian for the town's small branch library. One day in the mid 1980's a Swedenborg book (probably *Swedenborg Explores the Spiritual Dimension*) arrived on my desk being a donation from the Swedenborg movement in Sydney. Never having heard of Swedenborg before and a title about the spiritual world, my interest was immediately aroused. What I read all made complete sense and started me on a journey to read much more about this man and his experiences. I contacted the Centre in Sydney and more books came by way of donation. What a feast!

Life has changed yet again following my husband's retirement. Our daughters are all married and we now have grandchildren. They moved to other places and we too have found a home which makes it easier to see our children and grandchildren. I continue to be active in the Anglican Church but I really see myself as a Swedenborgian finding the principles of Swedenborg's teachings by far more beneficial to my beliefs than mainstream religions. The literature I have received over the past 10 years from the Association has not only helped me personally but also in my profession as a Civil Celebrant with weddings, name givings and most recently as a Funeral Celebrant. Swedenborg-related material has helped me in compiling service material. At a recent funeral at which I officiated, many were most complimentary with the format and one commented on how spiritual the content was! It is always nice to get feedback but that comment meant I was getting the message across. I cannot emphasise strongly enough how special Swedenborg's teachings are to me.

I live in a very religious town where there are 13 different Churches, where the crime rate is minimal as is vandalism. In fact, Centerlink considers it to be the most honest town in the whole area. I hope that in some small way my continuing work will bring a spiritual dimension into the lives of a few more people there.

Merlene Stratton

Advance Notice:

The Annual General Meeting of the Swedenborg Association of Australia will be held on the evening of Friday 15th August at the Registered Office in North Ryde following a shorter than normal talk (refer page 10 for details). All necessary Reports and Papers, including voting slips and proxy forms, will be sent to members in early August. The Directors hope for good interest in the meeting either by physical attendance or by communication of support.



Maurice Nicoll & Swedenborg

Gordon Jacobs

One of the most interesting twentieth-century figures to derive many of his ideas from Swedenborg was Dr Maurice Nicoll.



Born in 1884, he was the son of Sir William Robertson Nicoll, who was noted for his literary work as one-time editor of *The British Weekly* and founder of *The Bookman* in 1891 and *The Woman at Home* in 1893. In his youth, Maurice met many famous men at the gatherings at his father's house, including Lloyd George, Asquith, Sir James Barrie and the young Winston Churchill. Dr. Nicoll, who served in World War One, was a pioneer in psychological medicine and practised at Harley Street, becoming famous for his treatment of shell-shock experienced by many in the first World War. A pupil of Jung, he was described in Ralph Woods' *The World of Dreams* as "noted for his forcefully clear expositions of Jungian psychology as he is for originality as an exponent of psychoanalysis". He became an authority on the teaching of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky and for some years conducted groups for the study of their ideas. He wrote several books on psychology, his principal work being a series of commentaries on the teachings of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky. Others included *Dream Psychology*, *Living Time*, *The Mark* and *The New Man*.

Of special interest to us is the fact that he presented and enlarged on so many of the teachings of Swedenborg. He wrote at some length on the importance of recognising the underlying spiritual sense to be found in much of the Bible. In *The New Man*, he wrote that "everything said in the Gospels, whether represented in the form of parable, miracle or discourse, has a psychological meaning, apart from the literal sense of the words" (p. 5) and "There is not a sentence, not a single word in the Gospels, that has not meaning totally beyond the literal meaning", and gives many examples of interpretation. This does not mean that he confines his understanding of a spiritual sense to the Gospels only. In his book *The Mark*, he refers to "Swedenborg, in his tremendous interpretation of the opening books of the Old Testament", and both books (*The New Man* and *The Mark*) contain expositions of the spiritual meaning of various passages of scripture, both Old and New Testaments.

Incidentally, there are very few direct references to Swedenborg in his books, although he rates Swedenborg's writings so highly. So high, in fact, that from a biography *Maurice Nicoll: A Portrait* (Vincent Stuart, 1961 and Globe Press, 1987) by his personal secretary, Beryl Pogson, we learn that when he moved in 1939, all of his indispensable books were packed, including "every version of the Bible and all the volumes of Swedenborg". Further, she states that during the few months prior to his death in 1953, "His own private reading was Swedenborg and the

Gospels".

Maurice Nicoll's books have been widely read, especially *The New Man*, as this has been republished many times. J.B.Priestley drew attention to his writings in *Man and Time* (Aldus Books, 1964). He wrote: "The elaborate system of thought, behaviour, and psychological development, taught by Gurdjieff and his chief disciple, Ouspensky, was often called by them and their pupils *The Work*... It is, in fact, a kind of esoteric Christianity, and readers interested in this aspect should look at Maurice Nicoll's *The New Man* and *The Mark* in which he re-interprets the Gospels" (p.264).

Finally, in view of Maurice Nicoll's inspiration from Swedenborg, it is interesting to read that the reviewer of *The New Man* in *Time and Tide* wrote: "I put on record that of all the books that I have read on the mind and teaching of Jesus, I have read none more valuable than this".

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For September, see next page.

