

# Candela



Newsletter of the Swedenborg Association of Australia Inc.

SEPTEMBER 2004

ISSUE 37

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

**I**t's amazing how things stick in your mind. I was about ten when I read the following little poem. It was printed in a large floppy magazine with romantic sailing ships on the cover- a painting of two square riggers, close hauled, on different tacks. It was called *The Fisherman's Prayer*:



*One ship sails east, another sails west,*

*With the self same  
wind that blows,*



*Tis the set of the sail and not the wind,*

*That determines the way she goes.*

I think I find some magic in yachts, how they speed or slow depending on the set of the sail not so much the direction of the wind. A yacht going downwind can only go as fast as the wind, if that. A yacht however, on a tack into the breeze or a square run with the wind abeam, can travel maybe twice the speed of the wind that drives it. Life is a bit like that. If we sail through life taking no chances but going with the stream and living cautiously we do not get as much from our life as one lived somewhat in the thick of it. It's not a matter of going against the stream but using the natural forces to better effect. The stream flows faster in the middle than near the shore and that means letting go.

I remember the picture I had in my mind of one of the boats sailing east around the world while the other went westwards, each disappearing over opposite horizons. I imagined them meeting again on the opposite side of the globe having taken a different course, but with same driving force. If we apply the analogy to our life, we choose our path and others will choose theirs and we have the same driving Divine force. The way we set our sail will determine how well we travel on our path. I sense

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

in the community today a wider acceptance of other religions realising they all worship the same Unity.

I sense that this realisation has firmed since the recent events throughout the world where Fundamentalism has shown a cruel face. My inner being swells with emotion when I hear of ecumenical meetings or East and West coming together in mutual acknowledgement of each other's right to a doctrine. Swedenborg said "the ancient Asian church differed mightily from the churches of this day, for it made charity, not doctrine, an essential matter" (Arcana Caelestia 4680<sup>2</sup>). This puts the whole question of fundamentalism into perspective. The words of 1 Corinthians 13.13 are powerful:

*"And now abideth faith, hope, charity,  
these three; but the greatest of these is  
charity".*

Agape,

John Brogan

## Annual General Meeting

14 members and friends assembled at the North Ryde Centre on the evening of Friday 13<sup>th</sup> August both to hear an inspiring talk given by Garry Smith and to join in the short annual business meeting of the Association. It was a delight to welcome Kevin Attwater, Gold Coast, to the evening by means of a telephone link.

Garry Smith began by leading us through Swedenborg's journey in life to the point of his spiritual awakening and the penning of *The Word Explained*. Swedenborg did not publish this. It remained in the vaults of Uppsala University until the 1840's when it was discovered but thought to be simply notes Swedenborg had written - hence its other title of *Adversaria*. This was a most interesting presentation with Garry enhancing his engaging style through slides. A full report of this talk will appear in the next issue of *Candela*.

A quick cuppa and onto business. President John Brogan led us comfortably through the agenda. He highlighted two items from his annual report ~ the momentous changes in the corporate structure which will mean substantial cost savings and the very encouraging 40%+ increase in membership, now standing at 142. The Treasurer's report showed that we just "stood our ground" for the year but savings in cost provide a healthier scenario in future. The meeting agreed to leave subscription rates at current levels.

John Brogan and Kirk Holst were re-elected President and Treasurer respectively. Louise Brogan rejoins the Committee after a few year break. No one put up their hand for the secretaryship so the incoming Committee will have to work on that.

Neville Jarvis

## SWEDENBORG ASSOCIATION of Australia Inc.

### 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 Committee Members:

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

For Secretarial matters,  
refer to the Registered Office.

### Executive Manager:

Neville Jarvis

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Membership of the Swedenborg Association of Australia Inc. is open to anyone who wishes to pursue an interest in Swedenborg, the man, his science and his spiritual teachings. For details on how to join, please refer to page 12.

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## "My Magic Angel" by Merlene Marina Stratton (SAA member)

*My magic angel talks to me,  
in the quiet of the night,  
She talks to me through Teddy,  
when my eyes are shut real tight,  
She wraps my Teddy's arms about,  
he hugs with all his might,  
She never would allow me,  
to wake with a fright.*

*My magic angel talks to me,  
in the quiet of the night,  
She stays just here beside me,  
it is a glorious sight,  
She sings a pretty lullaby  
and cradles me with love,  
She wills the music come to me,  
on the wings of a dove.*

*My magic angel talks to me,  
in the quiet of the night,  
She offers bliss sealed with a kiss,  
when things are not quite right,  
She comforts me when I am sad,  
and whispers in my ear,  
She says the nicest words to me,  
that I could ever hear.*

*My magic angel talks to me,  
in the quiet of the night,  
She spreads a cloud of gossamer,  
to protect me in my plight,  
She instills my head with mysteries,  
of a different kind,  
She makes my dreams all come true,  
in the quiet of my mind.*

## Spirituality from a Swedenborg Perspective ~ a series of talks by Paul Eldar



In late July/early August, Paul visited Sydney to present this series involving 5 sessions at the North Ryde Swedenborg Centre. Titles were: Swedenborg and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century; Swedenborg: an overview; Swedenborg: The Restorer of Christianity (see **Groups Report - North Ryde on page 6**); God, Man and Spiritual Growth seminar and Swedenborg: A Prophet for our time. This is quite a remarkable series. The Swedenborg Centre has it recorded in audio format for anyone wishing to listen. Also, all but the 2<sup>nd</sup> session are on video. Simply contact us (see Registered Office for details).



# The Negative or Criticising Spirit

by John Billings

Criticism is something we have all experienced in one form or another, to one degree or another. We all have this in common. And it has probably happened more often, sad to say, than experiences of being loved. Isn't that your experience? If you were to count up the number of times you have experienced criticism on the one hand, and genuine love on the other, which do you think would be the greater number? Why do you suppose that is?

And how many of us have had just a wonderful time being criticized? If you're anything like me, it's your second favourite thing after being told you have an incurable disease! The reality is that not many of us cherish the experience of being criticized, even though often enough, the criticism might contain some truth. The truth value involved in the act of being criticized often escapes us ~ or may not make much difference to us even if we manage to hear it.

Being criticized, in short, can be a very difficult experience for any one of us ~ which is why none of us likes it, in spite of the fact that, as the book of Proverbs points out, it could be very helpful if we could somehow get to a place where we can listen to its message, and then take it to heart.

This might be a lot easier if we were criticized in the right way, or in the right spirit. Unfortunately, though, that's a rather rare event in my experience. It usually goes much differently. Criticism is most often done in anger ~ designed to hurt us, not to instruct us or make us a better person. And it is usually some kind of payback or retribution from an earlier dispute or squabble. Control may also be an issue.

Isn't this much more like your experience with criticism?

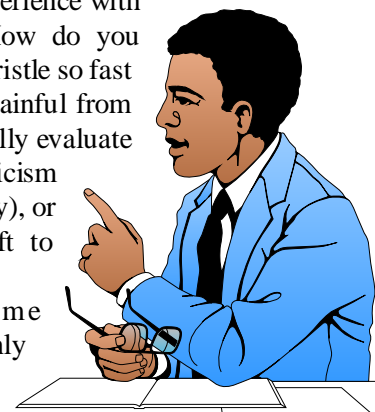
Wouldn't it be nice if it were done right?

What is *right* criticism? I believe criticism is best when we actually feel and believe that the person addressing us first *loves* us, and both the content and the manner of expression of the criticism expresses that. It is critically important for all of us that the reality of the other person's love for us doesn't get lost or drowned out in the act of criticizing us.

How many have had such an experience lately? Such criticism is a rare event, indeed, in this world of delivered criticisms! That may be the way it is in heaven, but that sure isn't the way it is here on earth. Most of the time it is very, very different from that, isn't it? Why is that, do you suppose? What's going on here?

What is your experience with being criticized? How do you react to it? Do you bristle so fast that it becomes too painful from that point on to actually evaluate the content of the criticism (assuming there is any), or to have any will left to take it seriously?

Clearly, some criticism is meant only to hurt us because someone is angry and hurt ~ and that's all there is to it.



But criticism can be awful even if it is *not* meant only to hurt us. What is it about criticism that makes it so instantaneously painful and biting, as it so often can be, whether someone is doing it to our face or behind our back? (Incidentally, I don't buy the idea that if we're going to criticize someone, it should always be to their face.) I think there is another much more important issue that must first be decided, and that is really what makes it all so difficult to hear and receive in the first place.

This brings me to the simple and central issue of this whole message: the *spiritual* dimension involved in being too critical.

Probably most people do not think of being critical, or being a critical type of person, as a degree and form of being possessed. I think that's exactly what it is!

From a spiritual perspective, modern-day co-dependency (what used to be called "neurosis"), and the other forms of personal and family dysfunctions, are just a lesser degree of what the Bible refers to as "being possessed." All psychological problems have their spiritual causes and dynamics as well!

Now, I realize that it is a very startling thing to say that being a critical type of person is a degree and form of being possessed. But bear with me. I am speaking from personal experience! Most of my life I have been a very critical person; and I am still facing, with the Lord's help, the consequences of having been that way with family and friends. I can still sometimes get caught up in it if I'm extra tired or in some kind of pain. It was only after my own spirituality kicked in that I became much less critical in my own feelings and behaviour. It was my spirituality that made all the difference. Coming to know the Lord had the overall effect of softening me, and especially of softening that part of my personality.



Yes, in my own experience, and from my own point of view, I was caught in hell. And just exactly what is possession if not being somehow caught in hell? That's what it is! And I think, at base, that this is what being too critical is all about ~ that if we really look at it, the idea of being partially possessed is probably the most helpful and truthful way to look at this particular problem.

We are not children anymore. We are not at the whim and mercy of our parents. We are free adults, even if we don't feel that way. And when we peel away the mask of the critical person, what we will find, from the point of view of the spiritual dynamics involved, is a kind of possession taking place. Why? Because there really is no legitimate reason *not* to be encouraging or supportive to another human being on an ongoing, continual basis.

Once again, I know what I am saying: I am speaking autobiographically. And when I do get caught up in it, there is no legitimate or rational basis for this kind of a spirit dropping in and hanging around, or even being there in the first place. Ninety percent of my own critical or criticizing behaviour could have been prevented had my own spirituality been intact and functioning.

What I am also saying is that it doesn't matter how any of us got there. All the so-called "legitimate" psychological reasons for being consistently critical ~ such as that we were a victim most of our childhood or adult life, or that our life is extra hard now in the present ~ none of this satisfactorily or fully accounts for what I am describing as the "critical spirit": the person who is predisposed inwardly or behaves outwardly in a critical, criticizing manner on a more or less consistent, ongoing basis.

I think the deeper truth is that we are dealing more with someone caught in hell than with merely wrong learning or with any other kind of explanation, psychological or otherwise. I believe that we should not criticize except from an inward place of actually experiencing *love* for the other person ~ in other words, because we care for them, are actually *feeling* that, and then are letting that caring guide our tongue.

We need to understand that words can hurt. Words can kill. Words can be the agents of despair and death ~ or conveyers of care and concern, life, encouragement, and love.

At some point, some of us may simply need to arbitrarily call a halt to our own overtly critical behaviour ~ something I have done on more than one occasion because, in the light of the Lord's love and spirit, *that behaviour is clearly and simply wrong!*

The deeper truth is that we need to call a halt before we get stuck in a place that has a stronger lure than we might like to recognize or think about. Hell is about

*liking* hurt and destruction. *Liking it!* And that is exactly what often happens on the inside of the criticizing person.

This may be an uncomfortable idea, and may seem harmful to our self-esteem. But any self-esteem that asks us to turn away from what may actually be happening is quicksand wanting us to think it is rock ~ and should itself be turned away from!

This does not mean there is never a place for criticism. Far from it! Clearly there *is* a place for it. What it does mean is that we should all be very clear as to where we are moving from within ourselves before we offer it. At base, criticism is really a function of competence: we need to know what we're talking about!

And how do we get to know what we're talking about? How do we become competent to criticize? It's all summed up in one simple phrase:

You can't really understand people  
until you first come to love them.

You can't become competent to criticize someone until you come to love them first! That is a prerequisite. Love is a condition of understanding.

There is something about loving the other person that makes us more deeply knowing and wise. And what's really interesting to me is that when we get to that place, there's much less starch in our sails to even *begin* to criticize! Look at the angels. They are so good and so warm that they will even defend or make light of the evils that they see in us much more clearly than we do. Do you see the dramatic difference in attitude and outcome that loving the other person makes?

The ninth commandment is about "not bearing false witness." That commandment in its internal meaning goes way beyond merely refraining from malicious and intentional lying. It also requires honesty with ourselves and with others. We must not only not lie and bear false witness; we must also seek to recognize and support the good in one another, and not misjudge or exaggerate each other's problems or evils. This will put us in the best position to make criticism a creative and constructive experience whenever it is truly called for.

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**John Billings** ministers to a Swedenborgian congregation in Cincinnati, Ohio. This paper was first published in *Our Daily Bread* in February 2004.

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## ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

### New Members

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

Terence O'Malley TAS  
 Brian West, VIC  
 Graeme Wilson, VIC

### Business Items

The Committee meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2004 saw the finalisation of the Swedenborg Association of Australia Ltd. following its deregistration. All Committee members gave a sigh of relief that the process had been successfully accomplished! It meant that all focus could now be on the real and purposeful work for which the Association exists. A number of issues relating to the holding of Group meetings which the Committee had been considering for sometime were finalised. Providing allowances for some small wider advertising of these meetings was one decision. Another was the establishment of a policy for inviting Guest Speakers at these meetings. Public liability insurance issues have been exercising the minds of Committee members. Whilst we continue to carry this insurance (despite the cost involved), guidelines were agreed on in an attempt to reduce the possibility of any claimable incident at our meetings to an absolute minimum.

Two exciting and worthwhile publishing projects are in the pipeline. First, Julian Duckworth is preparing a Reader's Guide to Swedenborg's *Arcana Coelestia*. It will be approximately the same size as the Association's booklet *Presenting Swedenborg: A Roadmap* and something most useful for those starting out on their journey through this monumental work. The second is a series of shortish brochures introducing particular works of Swedenborg for the newer reader. It is hoped that both projects will be finalised during the next 12 months.

After considerable debate, it was agreed to supply each member this year with a complimentary copy of the small work *Emanuel Swedenborg: Herald of a New Era* to firstly read and then to distribute in whatever way is considered useful to make others aware of Swedenborg. It was published by the Swedenborg Centre in 1989 and contains the papers presented at the 1988 Swedenborg Tricentenary Symposium held at Macquarie University, North Ryde. It has been distributed along with the papers for this years Annual Meeting.

The Committee also met on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2004 to particularly finalise matters in relation to the Annual General Meeting (see separate Report on page 2). It also discussed possibilities for maintaining better contact with members living away from Centres where meetings are

held. Members will be advised about these in due course. An *Information and Procedures Manual*, containing details on the history and structure of the Association together with relevant tasks which accompany holding an official position in the Association and on the Committee, was finally ratified after much consideration and amending. Any member can read it by writing to the Hon. Secretary at the registered office. It will be particularly useful for those taking on a specific role in the running of the organisation.

The next Committee meeting will be held at North Ryde on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> October 2004 commencing at 6pm. The meeting is open to any member wishing to attend. Alternatively, members can ask for issues to be placed on the Agenda for discussion. Please forward any that you might have to the Hon. Secretary a fortnight before the meeting date.

**Neville Jarvis** (Executive Manager)



## GROUP'S NEWS

### Brisbane:

Paul Eldar continues to give the talks at the monthly, mid-week, meetings here in Brisbane and there is a real appreciation amongst those who attend for his succinct, easy to follow style, his deep scholarship and the obvious amount of thought and time he puts into his preparation of them. In June Paul spoke on the subject, "*Swedenborg and the New Church*", identifying exactly what this New Church is that Swedenborg wrote about and foreshadowed; how much more universal it is than is in some places seen to be; and, intriguingly, that it is to be **relational** rather than **propositional**.

Paul's July talk was "*The Functional Trinity*", a subject which interested Association members John and Ruth Blom sufficiently to have them make the journey down by public transport from their Sunshine Coast home to hear it. They were not disappointed. What a mystery the Christian teaching on the Divine Trinity has been! As the title of his talk suggested it would be, Paul's emphasis was on the Trinity as a trinity of functions, it never being originally intended to be taken to mean a trinity of three co-equal "Persons" in the Godhead.

Attendance at meetings averages around 12. We've welcomed visitors to probably every meeting so far. At the same time we realise that a mid-week day time meeting is difficult for some and difficult, too, for others to maintain a consistent attendance.

**Ian Arnold**



## Melbourne:

Since the last Candela we have held two meetings. In June our speaker was **Julian Duckworth** who spoke on *Correspondences within the Bible*. Julian provided examples of how the Bible contains more than meets the eye and we should look beyond the mere words. Towards the end of the evening Julian enlisted the input of those present to take two different cards, one containing a text from the Bible, and express how the content spoke to them. Most people were very happy to participate and gained from the experience and it put the concept of God speaking not just through words but through our feelings and spiritual state into perspective. From comments made afterwards everyone enjoyed the evening although numbers were a little lower than at previous meetings partly due to the colder evenings in a Melbourne winter.

Our July meeting was devoted to the topic *Angels in our Midst*. **Chris Skinner**, the convenor, provided an introduction to the evening providing an overview of Swedenborg's material on the links between the spiritual and natural worlds, the way angels provide all sorts of support both at the time death, as guardian angels and support in all sorts of ways. This was followed by a reflective talk by **Helen Dane** on her personal journey and the way angels played a part in her life. She had recently been introduced to Swedenborg's books which confirms many of her personal experiences. Helen also uses her artistic talents to produce work with material to produce angel pictures which help people to focus on the place of angelic messengers in their life and provide support to them. Helen's sincerity and personal reflections and samples of her work were very much appreciated by 24 people who attended.

We have an ever increasing number of people who enjoy our meetings who have different interests and the topics often determine the numbers attending each meeting and the need to provide a good variety in the program.

**Chris Skinner**



## North Ryde, Sydney:

In June, John Brogan presented a talk titled **Chaos, Meaning and God**. He covered a very broad area and tried to give it some perspective via history. He looked at our troubled times (Chaos) symbolized by suicide attacks and the war on terrorism and the spread of fundamentalism. John went back in time to briefly cover major changes in human history including the birth of agriculture and the gradual dominance of men over women. The latter was illustrated by the early Mother Goddesses being swept from prominence and the reducing of women's rights over time. He also covered the rise of science and the rapid growth and development of technology.

The past helps us make some sense of our present times (Meaning). John used the symbol of the Ark in this process. *'In the Ark we will put those things of which we are sure and which are, as it were, nonnegotiable. Our Ark will house our truths.'* He stressed the need for

people, organized institutions and governments to be accountable. We all need to review what we do and face the truth. Struggles and sufferings sometimes force us to review the past and make changes so that growth can continue. John suggests we have moved further from the Divine Creator. *'Mankind has become more self-centred and less God-centred. This is a very dangerous state for a nation and a poor example for the people.'*

In concluding he listed some wonderful activities people are involved in to try to make the world a better place such as Greenpeace, Save the Whale, Trade sanctions to encourage and persuade changes in sport, tourism, trade and defence (Colonial powers have virtually disappeared), encourage renewable resources for energy and materials. John always puts a lot of work into his talks and the 21 people attending were very appreciative of his efforts.

In the following month Paul Eldar gave a wonderful talk **Swedenborg: The Restorer of Christianity**. (This was part of a series of talks ~see page 2). He used the analogy of someone restoring an art work to its pristine condition after dirt and grime had accumulated over the years. Likewise Swedenborg became a worthy servant who was given the task of passing on truths about Spiritual Life, the inner meanings of the Bible and the inner life of Christ that restored the original beauty of Christianity.

Paul covered Swedenborg's teaching of Jesus Christ being God having three functions - Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier. He stressed Swedenborg's radical idea of individuals being churches where there is a personal connection with the Divine in freedom. His talk covered aspects of the history of the organized Christian institutions in accounting for some of the additions that became part of Christian doctrine. For example he looked at the period of Scholasticism which used ideas from Aristotle to explain Christ's Divine and Human nature. He developed the theme that the edifice of Christianity is largely based on pagan Greek philosophy.

A truer understanding of the Christian Way was granted to Swedenborg through many experiences which he confirmed by referencing many passages in the Bible. We have a better understanding of the Godhead, the Trinity, Creation, the nature of Jesus Christ - the Divine-Human, with Swedenborg's writings. In reference to the church, Paul presented very simply Swedenborg's doctrine that if a person goes through repentance, reformation and regeneration - that person becomes the church.

Paul has a very good grasp of Swedenborg's writings and the history of Christianity. He explains very clearly how Swedenborg can be rightly described as the restorer of Christianity. Nineteen people attended this very insightful talk. There were many questions and earnest discussion afterwards.

**Michael Chester**

*Please note: All the talks referred to under Groups News are available for borrowing or purchase either in audio or video formats, or in some cases, both.*




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***The Story of My Life***  
 ~ *Piecing together Swedenborg's personal Endeavours and Struggles*  
 (continued from the December 2003/March and June 2004 Issues)

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

**Part 4**

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



**At Age 83 ~ Reception of the Writings**

*For the last 26 years, I have had daily confirmation of the sacred duty I have been given to perform as the instrument by which the Lord's truth about His kingdom and His purposes for mankind could be brought into this world to give people a new freedom in pursuing spiritual goals. I have gone about my task as carefully and diligently as possible, following to the letter what the Lord has asked of me. I have been very fortunate in having the necessary wealth to print and distribute the works which the Lord has instructed me to publish.*

*Yet, with a few exceptions, many of the books remain unsold and even unread by acquaintances to whom I have given them. I have sent copies to all the Bishops of Europe and I know from having now met some of them in the spiritual world, they did not regard the books as worthy, and remarkably they persuaded as many as they could not to read them. Newspapers in Germany and London have reviewed and ridiculed particular editions. Charles Wesley in England is openly preaching against the doctrines which the Lord has given to the world through my mind and pen.*

*Lately, Bishop Filenius has confiscated all copies of **Conjugal Love** which have been brought to Sweden, and then instituted proceedings of heresy against several of those good men who have accepted the veracity of the contents of the books I have written. Now, Rev Thomas Hartley, a recent correspondent from England, who tells me he is an ardent reader of what I have published, mentions that despite many endeavours of some of his colleagues and himself to spread a knowledge in his country of the truths the Lord has revealed to me, it has borne little fruit. I thought the English would be more open minded.*

*I do accept my role as playing a part in the Lord's work and serving His greater purposes. I further accept that under divine providence, I am not permitted to know what the earthly outcomes might be, but I am sure the Lord understands these feelings of disappointment that I sometimes have that all my labours show little evidence yet of making any impact in this world. And I am now becoming weaker as everyday passes and will not likely see next spring.*

The feelings of disappointment expressed above are pure speculation yet we can ask ~ are they reasonable? Swedenborg was sure of his role but does that preclude natural feelings on worldly assessments impinging? Would Swedenborg have reached a sufficiently developed state of regeneration that such concerns would have no impact on his thinking and feeling process? ***What do you think?***

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This concludes the series. There are other areas we could look at in terms of life's challenges and difficulties which presented themselves to Swedenborg at various levels ~ i.e. confrontations with his father about the level of allowance he was given during his early tours; whether to declare his authorship of the early spiritual works; several altercations with his wider family members; annoyance that his proposed lunar method for measuring the longitude in his 20's had not been given more credence. These are all fruitful areas for consideration.

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***Questions on Living***

1. ***The greatest joy . . . ?***

(answer on page 12)

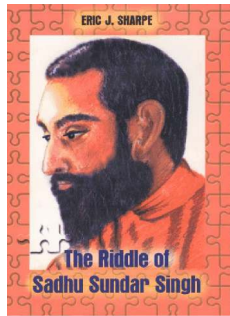
2. ***The most destructive habit . . . ?*** (answer on page 12)



## The Riddle of Sadhu Sundar Singh

by **Eric J. Sharpe** (1933-2000)  
244 pages ~ hardback.  
Published in 2004 by **Intercultural Publications**. Available online on the following website:

[www.mergingcurrents.com](http://www.mergingcurrents.com)



These days, in the West, other than among special interest groups and in religious academic circles, the name of Sadhu Sundar Singh means little or nothing to people. Even amongst Christians, and as Professor Sharpe points out, “*Outside the circle of those associated with the Church founded in Swedenborg’s name and on his principles, it may well be that he is today little known, especially in India.*” (Page 141).

It was not so eighty and more years ago. In the 1920’s Sadhu Sundar Singh was an international Christian celebrity. Western Christians enthusiastically embraced him and in his own country, “*all the hopes and expectations of the Protestant Christian mission (came to be) heaped upon him.*” (P 175). Re-visiting literature about him (of which there exists a vast quantity) Professor Sharpe writes, “One senses the expectations, the sense of breathless wonder and gratitude at hopes fulfilled, and the sheer admiration aroused by the Sadhu’s presence.” (P 13 & 14). Here was a remarkable man who left a remarkable impression on people. “*No Indian has exercised an influence even remotely comparable to that of Sundar Singh.*” (P 178)

For all that, opinion about Sadhu Sundar Singh, especially in the mid to late 1920’s became divided. He had his admirers and his detractors. For one thing facts about him didn’t stack up. Stories about him were suspected of not being literally true. Sadhu Sundar Singh at times contradicted himself. What is known, early on, to have exasperated people was his “*unwillingness to align himself, either religiously or politically, with any of the power-blocks of the immediate post-war period.*” (P 122). Subsequently hostile literature was written about him by detractors who had their own agendas.

In any case, Sadhu Sundar Singh was an enigma. Western Christians thought they understood him and wanted to claim him, but his Christianity was unique, of another kind, and born of a very different context. He eschewed denominationalism and left after less than a year at an Anglican theological Seminary. Even more importantly, and whilst less well-known about him at the time because he told even those closest to him little about it, Sundar Singh was an ecstatic and a visionary. He was, “*one might almost say, a citizen of two worlds*”. (P 28)

Sadhu Sundar Singh was born in September 1889 and disappeared, supposed dead, at the age of 39, in 1929. His conversion to Christianity took place in December 1903 (or possibly 1904) (see P 32). It followed

his burning of part of the Bible and at a moment when “*he would seem to have been expecting a visit from some Hindu avatara to reassure him that he had nothing to fear from the Christians’ God for desecrating His holy book.*” (P 31). He was just 14 years old at the time and instead of the Hindu avatara visiting him (P 32), “*...a bright radiance entered my room and flooded it. In that radiance the Messiah’s beloved and luminous face was visible, and showing me the wounded hands, where scars were clearly visible, he said, ‘why do you persecute me? Behold, for your sake I gave my life on the cross, so that you and the world might win salvation.’ As soon as I heard these words, they sank into my heart like an electric current, and my heart was filled with joy, and my entire life transformed forever.*”

In Professor Sharpe’s words, and from what became known of him, Sundar Singh was simply and patently Christian, using words and images and appealing to values which friends of missions could immediately appreciate and accept. He was not only Christian; he was Christlike according to the image of Christ favoured by the Franciscan 1920s...He was “spiritual” in a materialistic world.”

Clearly, Sadhu Sundar Singh’s experiences of the other world, mentioned above, were ongoing and very real to him. “*From the hints and fragments communicated to those with whom he associated, it would seem that his visionary world was an active and dynamic one, full of conversations, instructions and living personalities, and not merely filled with a sense of passive enjoyment.*” (P 28). And it is these experiences, above anything else, which explain his interest in, and admiration for, Emanuel Swedenborg.

By 1920 Sadhu Sundar Singh knew something of Swedenborg, listing him among a number of classical mystics he said he had read. (P 144). There is, according to Professor Sharpe, no suggestion that the finer points of Swedenborgian teaching appealed to him though one teaching, it is believed, held great appeal and that is Swedenborg’s “*firm denial of the doctrine of eternal punishment for the unbaptised.*” (P 143).

In April 1922 Sundar Singh visited Sweden and Uppsala where, in the Cathedral, of the three things there that fascinated him one was “*the tomb of Emanuel Swedenborg, for Swedenborg, like him, was a visionary*” (P 108). Yet again, however, we encounter another facet of the riddle of Sundar Singh, for when it comes to his interest in, and admiration for, Swedenborg there was uncertainty in people’s minds whether his own claimed experiences of the spiritual world were genuine or whether they bubbled up out of his having read and absorbed Swedenborg’s descriptions of his own. Swedenborgians are known to have been in touch with Sundar Singh at least as early as 1922 also keen, one suspects, to claim him as one of their own and possibly for renown and validation purposes.

Professor Sharpe’s book is the culmination of his interest in Sundar Singh over something approaching



forty years. It is possible that during the latter part of his life he (Eric Sharpe) was the world's leading expert on Sundar Singh. He has written a sympathetic yet (as is noted on the fly leaf) "critical" biography which I found absorbingly interesting. What impressed me, possibly most of all, is the way he brings the post World War 1 world of the 1920s back to life and separates out all the expectations, bewilderment, hopes and agendas which people foisted on Singh and which swirled around him.

"*The riddle of Sadhu Sundar Singh*" Professor Sharpe writes, "is whether the Christian West, however much it admitted and patronized him, ever knew what manner of man, and what manner of Christian, he really was. In my judgement, the Christian West in the 1920s did not." (Page 177). Sundar Singh was, almost certainly, the victim of a romanticism entertained by Christians in the West; of the hopes of Christians, also in the West, that India's was a Christian future; and of a yearning, yet again with Christians of the West, for a new, different and altogether more spiritual expression of Christianity from that which existed in Europe (and elsewhere) but which had failed to prevent the awfulness of Christian country fighting Christian country, as in World War 1.


It is reasonably evident, too, from what Professor Sharpe writes, that Sundar Singh was never really understood in the West, as a person or as a Christian. Their embracing of him, and enthusiasm for him, was too coloured by their own needs and agendas.

During his 1922 visit to Uppsala Sundar Singh was described as a charlatan. Others accused him of being a liar. One fascinating Chapter in this book carried the heading, "Apostle or Imposter".

I believe that Professor Sharpe has clearly established the case that he was none of these things, charlatan, liar or imposter. What emerges is the picture of a man who was both Christlike and deeply and quietly committed to a Christlike life whose faith cannot be justly captured and evaluated by western minds and analysis but needs to be felt and appreciated in the altogether different and immensely rich Indian context and for whom there was reality in experiences both subjective and objective, of this natural world and of the spiritual world into which and out of which he seems to have glided so easily.

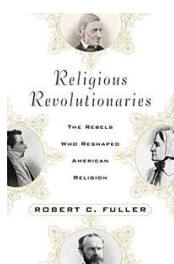
**Ian A. Arnold** is a member of the *Australian Association for the Study of Religion*, convenor of the Swedenborg Association Group in Brisbane and Principal of the Australian New Church (Swedenborgian) College. He also minister to a Swedenborgian congregation in Brisbane.

*This book may also be borrowed from the Swedenborg Centre at no cost (except postage). See page 2 for contact details.*

*If you see somebody without a smile .....  .....give them one of yours!*

3. **The deadliest weapon . . . ?** (answer on page 12)

4. **The most prized possession . . . ?** (answer on page 12)



**RELIGIOUS REVOLUTIONARIES: The Rebels Who Reshaped American Religion** by **Robert C. Fuller** (Palgrave/Macmillan, 240 pp)

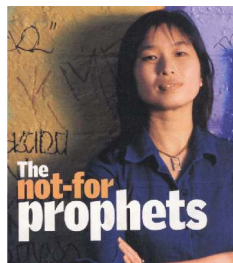
In an earlier book, *Spiritual But Not Religious*, Robert Fuller, a religious-studies professor at Bradley University in Illinois, described how growing numbers of Americans have found church religion irrelevant to their needs but continue to consider themselves intensely spiritual. Religion, in Fuller's usage, involves creeds and rituals publicly expressed in religious institutions, while spirituality involves a more privately expressed faith and a more individualized search for transcendent meaning. In this book Fuller examines 10 American religious revolutionaries who rejected the orthodoxy of their day and opened up new ways of being religious, providing a general history of religion in America.

Early chapters include Thomas Jefferson, mesmerist Phineas Quimby, spiritualist Andrew Jackson Davis, transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson and William James, all known to have been heavily influenced by the 18th-century Swedish mystic Emanuel Swedenborg. Fuller says of the latter two that they espoused a type of metaphysical religion which saw spiritual revelations "coming from encounters with one's inner self and with nature, not with churches or inherited ideologies." There is much included on revolutionary individuals in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In his concluding chapter, Fuller points out that while the number of "spiritual seekers" continues to grow, so does the membership of some of the US's more conservative evangelical denominations. He notes that the most important phenomenon in contemporary American religion is that the two ends of the religious spectrum are moving further and further apart.



## ..... The New Age .....



I was so pleased to read an article in *The Bulletin* this week (27/7/04) dealing with the “Not-for-Profit” mentality and behaviour pervading Australian society, and it reminded me that despite the current preference of the media to remind us of all manner of destruction and negativity, there is in fact a great deal of positive work being done throughout the world; sincere charitable acts by unnamed individuals and by small businesses and corporations alike. There are real changes being made by huge numbers of people world-wide to the dire situation of the environment, to poverty, to violence of all sorts, to health care and education. More than at any other recorded time we are witnessing the power of the ordinary person to contribute to the welfare of the planet, despite the fact that another group is acting to harm it.

The *Bulletin* article describes how numerous young professionals in Australia’s big cities are giving their time to be part of organisations that contribute to the well-being of others less fortunate, the so-called ‘third sector’, and they give of their time and expertise, not just financial support. They are no doubt part of a growing number of people in Developed countries who seek to find meaning and make credible their existence, and also they are doubtless people who can listen to the goodness within them, which is the potential for us all. Another wonderful publication which confirms this is the recent book by **David Suzuki** titled “*Good News for a Change*” where he details and explores cases of community and global assistance on all levels by all levels, and marvels at the world press’s reluctance to give ‘air-play’ to such a positive force. It is a curious thing, how much we like to dwell on the negative. A dear friend recently exclaimed that she would like to teach a new kind of history in universities - not one that outlined all the terrible acts done by mankind, but all the wonderful, heroic, self-sacrificing and loving acts.

Emanuel Swedenborg talks about this kind of thing in several ways, and I personally find it very reassuring. In the *True Christian Religion*, paragraph 763, he writes:

*“Can anyone fail to see that truth gets its quality from the existence of falsity; and likewise good gets its quality from the existence of evil...How could we have meaning without contrast, and contrast except by reference to opposites?”*

Further he explains that we all have the potential for both good and evil, and in the ‘neutral’ state have two each of good and evil spirits with us. If we choose to put our heart and energy into positive endeavours as much as we are able, we attract more positive influences around us, and would hopefully help build a much more positive world. In *Arcana Caelestia*, Swedenborg talks extensively on Noah’s Ark and the process it represents. He explains that for the individual, or the ‘age’, a time of transformation naturally attracts considerable conflict. To quote from *Arcana Caelestia*, paragraph 605:

*“But, as is wont to be the case, before that new church could arise it was necessary that the man of the church should suffer many temptations, which are described by the lifting up of the ark, its fluctuation, and its delay upon the waters of the flood.”*

Swedenborg describes the need to separate the negative from the positive qualities so that the positive qualities may be developed and expanded upon, unhindered by the negative ones, and in order for this separation to take place a very great turbulence is required, since the negative and the positive in each of us may be tightly woven together.

I believe the Age we are now entering will be wonderful eventually, and the conflict we see about us is the inevitable action of the Divine separating the negative from the positive, in order that the glorious New Age may come into being, and that our part is to believe in Him, in His Good, and seek to find goodness in this world and build upon it with all our strength.

**Liz Coggins**, Swedenborg Association member and publisher of Triam Press.

## True Peace

Almost everyone believes that peace consists in being kept safe from enemies and in serenity at home and among one’s friends. That kind of peace however is not the true kind, for there is another kind of peace which is far higher and is called heavenly peace. No one can be given this peace unless they are in heaven where the Lord is All in all. For heavenly peace enters when the desires that come from self-centred love and worldly love are removed because these are the things that take peace away.

**Swedenborg: *Arcana Caelestia* 5662**



## Time for a Rethink

The form human spirit has to adopt in order to gain entry into this material world is such that, when we first open our eyes to recognise where we are, our first thought is to survive! The little animal that is our body immediately knows it is in a battleground where it must fight, and continue fighting, just to remain alive!

Make no mistake about it, for as long as we remain part of this world we continue to be in that battle...but the fight we are in is not just between the human body we occupy and the ever-present threat of its death, but a second 'layer': that between our body and something less easily defined within us which tries to influence how far we are each prepared to go to protect ourselves against perceived threats to our well-being. This inner conflict marks human life down as unique, yet is - in the final analysis - the measure of our success in that battle into which we are pitchforked at birth.

Over the millennia that have elapsed since human life first made its appearance here, a great deal of progress has been achieved: there is now a far better, and wider, realisation that, regardless of colour, creed or surrounding conditions, we all share the same kind of aspirations and desires, we all seek love and companionship and at least the great majority want peace and a reasonable degree of prosperity for those we care about. Given such understanding, why is it that the diversity of religious belief (so much a part of our overall make-up and with all sharing the common belief in a deity of love and compassion), remains just as much the basis for hate and bloodshed as it has always done through the ages?

And given that progress why, at this time of dreadful bloodshed in the name of religion and when communication is so easy and widespread, are those same religious faiths

doing nothing more positive than to offer purposeless platitudes instead of joining together to at least exhort believers to respect the foundations of their faiths?

For so long as religion remains as hapless as it now appears, so will its influence for the betterment of mankind continue to diminish!

A unique feature of human life is our self-consciousness and by that I refer to our recognition of ourselves as the composite entity mentioned earlier, and made up of an animal body plus something else less easily identified, that influences our thought processes. It is this, somewhat nebulous part of our make-up that makes possible the single most dominating 'gift' which separates each human life from all else around it on this earth.

Subjective thought - the ability to 'imagine' scenarios we have never experienced, to build worlds of thought in which events and circumstances can be viewed and extrapolated in ways that permit our minds to devise

ways and means of circumventing potential threats - that has been the single, incredible and unique feature in human make-up which has brought us to the point at which we stand today. It is the fulcrum upon which each of us chooses to maintain balance between animalism and spirituality ~ teeter!

From the time human beings first made their appearance on this earth, that 'gift' has been at work within each of us: it was just as responsible for early man seeing gods within the mighty natural forces with which mankind had to contend as it is to-day in our individual - even collective - reaction to day-to-day events in which we have a say. Just how we exercise the huge personal responsibility which comes hand-in-hand with the gift, is up to us.

As I see it, too many of us - including even those who profess to have faith in a God of love and compassion - choose to believe it is enough to exhort the god in which they believe to intervene, rather than to accept the responsibilities that come with birth, which are surely to make decisions that have as their intention the common basis ...the good of all mankind! That the great religious faiths around the world are again failing to join together in denying those faiths as justification for bloodshed and terror further diminishes their right to influence world thinking.

However, even more fundamental than that is the misunderstanding which can be found at the root of attitudes to deity in whatever form described together with what should be expected of such deity. Given the history of mankind and the role religious belief has played in the world's pain and bloodshed down through the ages, surely the time has come to recognise and admit that something is fundamentally wrong in faiths that suppose their gods will, somehow, save us from effects of our own actions if only those gods are asked in the right way to intervene. When the purpose of life here is to give each of us the opportunity to experience and learn how to make choices which advance us along the path of spiritual understanding...be our decisions wise or unwise...we can hardly expect our god to step in to shield us from what we decide!

So long as religious beliefs continue to suggest we can avoid consequences by prayer and exhortations - even sacrifices - to a god, those who so believe will continue to suffer from their own individual and collective ill-advised choices. In a world where mass destruction is very much the reality, there is no longer room for self-deception: we must learn to accept that we are here for one common purpose...and however we choose to identify our respective god, in reality there has only ever been one...and that deity intends we all play by the same rules!

*From Swedenborg Association member **Peter Bartlett** of Port Macquarie, NSW.*

# WHAT'S HAPPENING

For Group activities, contact your nearest Group Convenor

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



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

- Brisbane:** New Church Hall, 21 Agars Street, Rosalie. 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesdays commencing at 1 pm
- 2004**
- 22<sup>nd</sup> September ~ *Swedenborg's Influence* by **Paul Eldar**
  - 27<sup>th</sup> October ~ *Other Worlds* by **Paul Eldar**
  - 24<sup>th</sup> November ~ Speaker: **Paul Eldar**. Subject to be announced
- Melbourne:** The New Church Hall, 426 High Street Road, Mount Waverley. Last Fridays commencing 8pm except November which will be on the last Saturday involving a number of talks given by **Paul Eldar**, Brisbane
- 2004**
- 24<sup>th</sup> September ~ *Chaos, Meaning and God* by **John Brogan**
  - 29<sup>th</sup> October ~ *Spiritual Healing* by **Sylvia Eriksson**
  - 27<sup>th</sup> November ~ **See above**
- Sydney:** Swedenborg Centre, 1 Avon Road, North Ryde commencing at 7.45pm.
- 2004**
- 10<sup>th</sup> September ~ *Practical Introduction to Dru Yoga* ~ **Anne-Marie Markham & Michael Chester**
  - 22<sup>nd</sup> October ~ *Carl Jung* by **David Russell**
  - 26<sup>th</sup> November ~ *The Natural Expression of Spiritual Inspiration* by **Joe Vandermeer**



*Notice in a cemetery: Persons are prohibited from picking flowers from any but their own graves*

Answers to the questions about "**Living**" - 1. Giving; 2. Worry; 3. The Tongue; 4. Integrity. *Did you agree?*

## Why a Swedenborg Association?

To promote Emanuel Swedenborg, the man and his message, throughout Australia by personal contact, meetings, etc.

Having active Groups for those with common interests.

Providing information on topical subjects by drawing on Swedenborg's contributions.

Ensuring Swedenborg's writings are kept before the community's awareness.

## Why Join?

*To share with others what has been of help to you in your quest for truth.*

*Pursuing areas of interest in Swedenborg through access to material and events.*

*A Free Newsletter every 3 months*

*20% discount on books, etc. other than sets of 3 or more books when a reduced discount applies*

*Free Swedenborgian-based book, tape, etc. each year enabling you to introduce others.*

## Membership Application Form (for use of New Memberships only)

I wish to apply for membership of the SWEDENBORG ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA Inc. and agree to be bound by the Rules of Association (copy available on request).

Name (Capitals Please) Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms/Dr/Rev/ \_\_\_\_\_  
Given Name      Family Name **n.b. only one person per application**

Address (Capitals Please) \_\_\_\_\_

Tel. No. (    ) \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_ Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date    /    / 200

Subscription:     \$30 (One year regular)     \$75 (Three year regular)  
                           \$20 (One year Concession - Students and Pensioners holding a Social Security Card)

Payment Method:     Cheque     Money Order     Bankcard     Mastercard     Visa

\_\_\_\_\_ Expiry Date /

*(Please note: An additional 5% service charge will be added for payments by credit card)*

**I am willing to have my name and telephone number provided to other members in my locality Yes / No (please circle)**