

Swedenborg



- a Universal Spiritual Philosophy

In this multifaceted and complex world there are no easy answers to questions such as

- ▶ who am I really?
- ▶ what is the purpose of my life? and
- ▶ what underpins my various relationships?

let alone bigger ones concerning a Divine Being and the spiritual domain. All these issues are inter-connected and satisfying answers can only come when we pursue them in an integrated way. The key for the greater happiness of everyone lies in developing a deeper understanding of life, and living it through mutual usefulness and service. *Swedenborg's spiritual philosophy* offers a structure by which we can appreciate life in all its dimensions. It has universal application for everyone in whatever circumstances they find themselves or beliefs they hold.

This leaflet outlines the basic concepts presented by Emanuel Swedenborg.



DIVINE NATURE

The Divine Being is the unity of Love Itself and Wisdom Itself. In reality, these two aspects do not exist separately but we tend to understand them as distinct. Divine love, being the very substance of creation, is invisible; Divine wisdom, which gives form and direction to Divine love, is visible in what is created. United love and wisdom is not static but a source of power which continually creates and sustains what it has created. The closest example that we have in this world is the sun with its heat and light acting together to provide the requirements for sustaining natural life.

The Divine is outside the constraints of space and time, which exist only in the physical realm, and we need to recognise this when reflecting on the Divine nature.



OUR NATURE

We are spiritual beings born with a physical body in order to function in this world. As a unique soul formed at the time of conception, we each continuously receive the Divine life of love and wisdom enabling us to live as feeling and thinking people. We can reason and make choices about spiritual matters as if life was our own, making us the highest form in creation. The true person - the spirit - is immortal and on discarding the physical body we become fully conscious of the spiritual realm. The qualities of love and related intelligence - our ruling love or life's delight - that we have made our own in this world remain with us and become the basis of our spiritual development to eternity. We live our chosen love outwardly there, 'heavenly' as angels or 'hellish' as evil spirits



SPIRITUAL INFLOWING

Our inner minds are open to both positive and negative influences just as our conscious minds are directly affected by our external circumstances. These influences originate from men and women who have died and now live in the spiritual dimension - positive ones from angels in heavenly states and negative from spirits in hellish states. The Divine keeps them in balance to preserve our freedom.

The spiritual influences filter into consciousness as part of the thinking and feeling processes in our mind. We need to become aware of them, especially the subtle and persuasive hellish influences, and only take on board influences for good in our decision-making if we want to be in tune with the Divine aim, which is to achieve lasting spiritual growth.



FREEWILL

We are all creatures of our heredity and environment. The worldly life for most of us is determined by circumstances outside our own immediate control - the law, governments and social expectations all impinge. Nevertheless, our internal response to such circumstances is something over which we have total control. The Divine gifts us with the freedom to choose rationally on how we will act and respond in any given situation. This remains available to us at all times (unless our mental capacity becomes impaired when we are no longer spiritually responsible and our eternal welfare is protected by the Divine). All internal choices placed before us are character building allowing us to gradually develop our desired potential.



SPIRITUAL GROWTH

The purpose of our life in this world is to grow spiritually and achieve a transformation of our inner self; a lifetime of choices and change! We are born with inclinations towards selfishness - clearly displayed in early childhood behaviour - which if left to develop unchecked will eventually dominate our whole being and motivation. We can turn it around with Divine help. Temptations - the inner struggle of choosing between higher and lower motives - are very much part of the process, something we should expect when applying higher principles in our life. Nature is full of examples of beauty and perfection coming through struggle; it is the same spiritually. We may only just begin the process here, but in doing so we will engage in dynamic, expanding awareness and growth patterns to eternity.

The Divine regards nothing else in a person but the person's aim or purpose. Whatever the thoughts and deeds may be, varying in countless ways, they are all good provided the purpose is good. But if the end in view is bad, they are all bad . . . Our aim is our very life.

Emanuel Swedenborg
Secrets of Heaven, from paragraph 1317



PROVIDENCE

There are laws governing all aspects of our spiritual life which correspond to the consistent and coherent scientific laws applying in our natural world. These laws are the Divine providence in action, which has for its goal the eternal happiness of everyone. Our existence here provides the opportunity to become sensitive to the Divine aim and act in ways that are harmonious with the laws of providence. When we do live in accord with the Divine plan, as we understand it to be, we will be blessed over time. Even if we do act contrary to it, the Divine works untiringly to give us countless opportunities to return to the stream of providence. We always remain open to the possibility of misfortune here but that will not be detrimental to our eternal welfare if we respond positively to such adverse circumstances.



SPIRITUAL HEALTH

All health and disease have spiritual origins. Bodily ill health often appears to result solely from external reasons but nothing in this physical world exists which does not have a spiritual cause and connection. All types of disease are caused by states of evil and falsity either from our own spiritual states or from the general causes of evil inflowing into the world. We are in a state of spiritual health when our mind or spirit is in the love of what is good and true irrespective of our bodily condition. We are in spiritual ill health if we are caught up in fear, worry, hatred, greed, lust for power, revenge, and so on. Spiritual health and wellbeing involves personal growth and a genuine concern for the welfare of others bringing inner peace, humility and joy - spiritual riches indeed.



DIVINE MANIFESTATIONS

The Divine has always communicated with people both by revelation and through nature. We cannot know of, or acknowledge, the existence of a Divine Creator without direct revelation. Sacred scriptures, especially the Bible, give us this knowledge even if rather obscurely at times until we accept them in a framework related to our own inner world - truths contained symbolically within natural imagery and stories. This relationship between outer and inner worlds also applies to nature, the result of the continuous Divine creative process. The functioning and usefulness of each individual part reflects the love and wisdom of the Divine. We can gain insights about the Divine through an understanding of how the natural world operates.

EMANUEL SWEDENBORG

1688 - 1772



The world over, the writings of Swedenborg are read by those who are searching for, and value, new insights into mankind's spirituality. His teachings and visions are presented rationally and scientifically because he said that truth must always be understood in the clear light of reason, rejecting blind faith which forces the believer to profess what cannot be understood.

Summary of Swedenborg's life:

- ▶ born in Sweden in 1688, son of a Lutheran Bishop.
- ▶ university educated in mathematics and science.
- ▶ edited Sweden's earliest scientific journal.
- ▶ proposed the first modern nebular origin of our solar system, developed theories on the nature of energy compatible with those of Einstein and pioneered the study of magnetism.
- ▶ prolific inventor including a heavier-than-air aircraft with all the attributes necessary for flight, a submarine and a mercury pump.
- ▶ met leading European and British scientists of his day.
- ▶ joined the Swedish Board of Mines assisting in revitalising the mining industry with more inventions.
- ▶ in middle age, turned to anatomy in search of the human soul, making remarkable discoveries about the body's operation at the same time, such as the synchronous functions of the brain and the lungs.
- ▶ failed to discover the soul this way but aged 57 was granted a direct perception of the spiritual world.
- ▶ gave up scientific and philosophic work despite the considerable fame being gained throughout Europe.
- ▶ began recording and analysing own dreams many years before others took up the practice.
- ▶ observed spiritual laws and principles, describing them using a highly trained scientific intellect.
- ▶ began publishing the spiritual truths experienced.
- ▶ claimed this event as the birth of the New Age and the Second Coming of Christ by means of the spiritual truths that were being revealed to humankind.
- ▶ found freedom of thought and the press in England and Germany, travelling many times to those countries to publish and distribute his books.
- ▶ did not preach or gather any congregations, believing that truth would be accepted when people were ready.
- ▶ died in London aged 84.

Swedenborg's Influence

Over the past two centuries, many notable people have expressed their admiration of and appreciation for Swedenborg, his writings and insights found in them. Any listing would include names such as:

William Blake, Elizabeth & Robert Browning, Alfred Deakin, Arthur Conan Doyle, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Johann von Goethe, Carl Jung, Helen Keller, James Tyler Kent, Martin Luther King Jr., Norman Vincent Peale, Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Swedenborg Centre

A non profit organisation established in 1959 to promote an awareness and appreciation of the spiritual writings of Emanuel Swedenborg in Australia. Its principal activities have been donating Swedenborg's works and collateral publications to public and other libraries throughout Australia and generally advertising their availability in the media. This has resulted in many people from different backgrounds and walks of life 'discovering' the teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg and finding within them a source of wisdom to help answer their spiritual needs in this increasingly challenging and complex age.

For information on all services operated, contact our main office by post, telephone, facsimile or email. We also invite you to visit our website.



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More information on Swedenborg's teachings

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