

# Candela



Newsletter of the Swedenborg Association of Australia Inc.

Organisational Details are provided on the next page

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### SEPTEMBER 2023

### ISSUE 113

The other day a thought just dropped into my head, the words being "It's all to do with mercy". I immediately related to this thought and felt it was a great reminder. So, I stayed with it and gave it some long-thinking.

Recently, I've found myself - for various reasons - coming to prefer the word 'kind' to the word 'love'. Love, of course, is the great source-word and is there at the heart of every heavenly intention, all divine will and activity, and every true principle. But it's almost too big to get hold of, if you follow me. Being kind is very explicit; it has a sense of movement in it, of strong wish and feeling, and it's there in the world of human interaction, our own world.

### Next Issue – December 2023

Our next edition will be the December and Christmas one, which I hope inspires you to put pen to paper! Please send any articles to me by November 18<sup>th</sup>.

Email to [ruth@duckworth.me](mailto:ruth@duckworth.me) or post to the registered office.

*Ruth*



Being kind has a clear object, of kindness towards another person or others. It's actually Biblical. "Be kind!" (Ephesians 4:32)

So, back to 'mercy'. I think mercy is a branch on the tree of kindness. It traces back to medieval times where, in battle, one could plead mercy and at times be granted it, or where a destitute person or family was at the mercy of others for food and even survival.

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Please note: the views expressed in this Newsletter are those of each contributor and do not necessarily reflect any particular position of the S.A.A. or its committee.



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This aspect is still there in our modern use of it (which I think is growing less all the time) in the idea of forgiving, accepting people with their faults, and being kind in spite of all the reasons we can come up with for not being kind.

This meaning of mercy got taken up by religion and became an established teaching, the 'misericordia' (the mercy of the heart) of showing pity, compassion and kindness to those who cannot return or 'requite' this action. Notice how close in spelling mercy is to misericordia, almost an abbreviation. Notice the use of 'cordia' which refers to our heart. Notice how close the longer word is to such words as misery and miser. Lastly, notice that French people say 'thank you' with 'Merci!'

All of that traces back to the mercy of God, felt and given towards each and all of us in our 'pitiable condition' or whatever way we can describe human failings and humans failing. As an aside, this is the meaning of 'grace' which is the Divine

offering to us which is underserved on our part. This raises an important idea about our shortcomings which we apparently all have to some degree. Nobody's perfect! But why aren't we perfect? Instead of flagellating ourselves with riddled guilt, let's sensibly realise that we currently live in a world where a lot of the time we are left guessing.

We can't directly look into another person's heart. We have physical bodies which can allure and cover up a ploy. These same bodies can suddenly stop functioning. The beautiful world of nature looks like it's all there is. And so on. So, we easily get things wrong and unintentionally fall short. We stand in great need of being pitied, understood and forgiven, not just with kindness but with mercy.



I don't believe that mercy is a simple "there there...it's alright" but involves seeing, knowing and extending an acceptance of all our plights. I also think it involves trying to help someone accept themselves in their incompleteness, and even more, learn methods to reduce their plight and manage its effects. This is certainly the way God tries to help us deal with ourselves, with a starting invitation to turn to him to feel, find, learn and use new ways.

With all this in mind, here are some Biblical passages where this mercy is mentioned, just for us to see and appreciate...



"He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you but to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God."

"Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

"Mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed."

"Be merciful, even as your father in heaven is merciful"

"But go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice. For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.'"

"Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love."

## Julian



A presentation by **Dr. Philip W Groves** at *The Synthesis of Science and Spirituality Symposium* on Saturday 31st July 1993 has been added to the **SwedenborgAustralia** YouTube channel. The topic is *The Spiritual Dimensions of Biology*. You can connect via <https://youtu.be/VpT7DCpPaZw>

The talk presents the spiritual view of Life; how from the One Source of Life, there is a sharing of energies that results in the physical manifestation of organisms on the

planetary level. Various examples from nature such as Earthworms, Bees, Flowers illustrate this amazing phenomenon. The fine structure of the processes maintaining bodily life also illustrate the spiritual dimensions of life.

Here's an excerpt from the talk.

Today too many people say "We were taught in biology at school that it's all fortuitous, an accidental arising and there's no purpose and we're just here by accident. So eat, drink, be merry and live fully because tomorrow we die." You know, the philosophy of the gladiators. Well, we're not like that. We have long-term aims, we sense intuitively within ourselves there are depths, there are values, there are qualities worth struggling for, which we must unfold. Through consciousness we need an inside view of reality. Amongst the many seers and visionaries and mystics throughout the ages like Plotinus of ancient Alexandria, like Ibn Arabi, Ibn Arabi the Sufi, Jalaluddin Rumi, Milarepa, Jacob Boehme, Swedenborg. People like this, they have different degrees of internal perception. Of all of them, Swedenborg had the greatest and the clearest perception. Something absolutely extraordinary was given to him. But he had the inside view of reality.

We encourage you to check it out. A transcript accompanies the video.



Nature has been created simply for clothing the spiritual and for presenting it in a corresponding form in the ultimate of order.  
*Swedenborg, Heaven and Hell, 102*





## Getting Wright, Spiritually

By Howard A. Thompson

Though not exclusive to Christianity, repentance is a central theme in the Christian faith. As Christians, we are called to turn away from sin and return to God. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for "repent" is "shub," which means "to turn back" or "to return." In the New Testament, the Greek word for "repent" is "metanoēō," which means "to change one's mind" or "to think differently." Both words convey the idea of a change in thinking, a rethinking of one's previous ways, and a turning towards God.

When we reflect on the concept of repentance, it is important to remember the words of Psalm 51:10, "Create in me a new heart, O Lord, and renew within me a right spirit." This verse is a reminder that true repentance involves a change of heart and a renewal of the spirit. It is not just about saying sorry for our actions, but it is also about making a conscious effort to change and improve ourselves.

One way to approach repentance is to rethink our beliefs and assumptions. Sometimes, we hold onto ideas that are not in line with our faith, are based on misconceptions or simply have not evolved from our early (childish) understanding of the Word. This evolution in our thinking and understanding is wonderfully expressed in this passage from 1 Corinthians 6;

"When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child. But when I grew up, I put away childish

things. Now we see things imperfectly, like puzzling reflections in a mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity." It is important to re-examine our beliefs and be open to new perspectives. This can lead to a deeper understanding of our faith and a stronger relationship with God.

One way that I realised the Lord has led me to "rethink" was triggered by a presentation given by Martin Pennington during our January Virtual Retreat. Martin was discussing John 14, specifically the passage, "In my Father's house are many mansions." For many years, I had heard this passage and pictured a grand, opulent mansion in heaven. During Martin's presentation, however, I realised that the use of the word "mansions" in this context does not

make sense. How can God's house be filled with mansions? It may capture the attention of those who see themselves going to heaven because they have "been good" and deserve a "mansion." It may also capture the attention of those like the disciples who desired to sit on thrones on either side of the Lord. The proper understanding

of this passage has nothing to do with mansion or houses, but dwelling places. In other words, it is about the nature of God and the fact that there is more than enough room for all of God's children in heaven. This simple rethinking of a commonly misunderstood passage had a profound impact on me.





As I meditated on this idea of rethinking, I was reminded of my own experience with purchasing a home. When my wife and I bought our first house, much of our thinking was around how much house we could afford. I'm certain there were other considerations but the question of how much we could afford seemed to dominate the conversations with the realtors and mortgage brokers we consulted.

Today, at nearly 60 years old I am more focused on how much house we need, what aspects of a house, would be useful. What truly makes a house, a home. Today I am more focused on having a home that is "Spiritually Wright."

This shift in thinking reminded me of the American architect, Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959). Wright is known for his iconic designs, including the Fallingwater house and the Guggenheim Museum and Temple Beth Shalom. Over the years I have developed a particular affection for his series of "Usonian

Homes;" typically small, single-story dwellings without a garage or much storage. They are often L-shaped to fit around a garden terrace on unusual and inexpensive sites. They are characterised by native materials; flat roofs and large cantilevered overhangs for passive solar heating and natural cooling; natural lighting with clerestory windows; and radiant-floor heating. A strong visual connection between the interior and exterior spaces is an important characteristic of all Usonian homes.

What I find most interesting about Wright's designs is his approach to space. He believed that the room within

is the most important aspect of a building. The space within becomes the reality of the building, in much the same way that our inner (spiritual) life should shine through and manifest as our outer (natural) life. This spiritual approach to architecture is reflected in his commentary on the idea of form follows function. Wright notes that "this idea that 'Form follows function' - has been misunderstood. Form and function should be one, joined in a spiritual union."

Wright was heavily influenced by Japanese architecture, particularly its subtlety, harmony, and the manner in which it merges indoor and outdoor spaces. Traditional Japanese houses, with their sliding doors and emphasis on transitional spaces, left a lasting impression on him, one that clearly resonated with his own sense of spirituality. One distinguishing characteristic of Wright designs, particularly his series of Usonian Homes was the "compression and release technique" whereby the entrance to a Wright house is often into a confining (compressed) space with lower ceiling and closer walls leading to the rest of the house. Not only does this feature represent a "transitional space," it also gives the visitor a sense of release when emerging into the living space of the house, often leading a person to feel that the home is much larger than it is.

Though Wright does not specifically make the connection, I can see a connection with the Lord's words in Matthew; "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. (Matthew 7:13, 14)





I see the confining or compressed entryway in Wright's design as the "narrow gate" – it's the path less taken, a little more challenging, calling one to be more introspective. Upon entering the larger space, there's a sense of enlightenment and freedom, akin to the "way which leads to life" as described in the Gospel.

Though raised in a family of Unitarians Wright's beliefs cannot be easily classified as belonging to any particular religious tradition. It is clear, however, that he had a deep and complex spirituality that informed his work as an architect.



One last thought on the importance of our dwelling place and its connection to our spiritual dwelling place. Many of my Jewish friends will have a "mezuzah"



affixed to the door posts (door jambs) of their homes. These small boxes contain a piece of parchment on which specific verses from the Torah (Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and 11:13-21) are handwritten. These verses include "Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is one." Traditionally, when passing through the door, one touches the mezuzah and then kisses the fingers that touched it, as a sign of respect and a reminder of the commandments. The mezuzah serves as a daily affirmation of a Jewish household's faith and commitment to God's commandments. Now, imagine if your entire house, as Frank Lloyd Wright envisioned it, was an expression of your spirituality.

In many ways, Wright's approach to architecture mirrors the concept of repentance and rethinking. It is about re-examining our assumptions and beliefs and approaching our dwelling place from spiritual principles.

"How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord." (Psalm 84:1)

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## Swedenborg Centre Reflections

Joe Vandermeer

On **Wednesday mornings at 10am** we have been studying Swedenborg's amazing work ***Divine Providence***, in which he reveals - among other things - the following realities and encounters. See the website [swedenborg.com.au](http://swedenborg.com.au) for a Zoom link to the Swedenborg Reading sessions or for any other events. For this sake of brevity for this Candela I have summarised and paraphrased some highlights (mainly using paragraphs 292-320).

Our intelligence seems to be our own, to really belong to us, whether we pursue good or evil. Almost everyone believes that we think and intend of ourselves and therefore also that we talk and act autonomously. How could we believe anything else when the appearance is so convincing, this apparent intending and thinking from our selves does not seem to differ from really being able to think, intend, speak, and act autonomously. Yet really doing so from ourselves is impossible.

The organs of our outer or physical senses are attuned to material objects, and likewise the organic substances of our inner senses or our minds are receptive of spiritual objects. This is our actual state. So what then is our "self"? Our "self" is not some kind of receiver. This "self" is the QUALITY of its RECEPTIVITY. It is not some aspect of life that is actually ours. When we





say "the self," everyone understands it to be a being that lives on its own and so thinks and intends on its own. Yet it follows from what has just been said that there is no such self in us and that there cannot be.

Everything we think and intend - and therefore everything we say and do - flows in from the only source of life, the Lord. Yet that one source of life is not the cause of us thinking things that are evil and false. Our spiritual rational mind is our truly human mind. Our mind or spirit is not sensing things on its own, but sensing them from the Lord. Any other notion is based on appearances, and if they are accepted as true are based on illusions.

Everything we accept into our volition (our will) becomes part of us. But things we have accepted in thought but not yet in volition are separated and sent away. It is not the Lord who lets evil living into our will and from there into our thought, but it is we ourselves who choose to do that (which the Lord permits).

The Lord enables a person to know and think that they are caught up in hell and evil. The Lord also enables them to think how they can escape from hell so as to be no longer driven by hell in their thinking but to enter into heaven and think from the Lord. The Lord also gives a person the freedom to choose. If we were not given such autonomy and freedom we could not be human.

It is a fundamental human (and therefore angelic) characteristic to base our thoughts on the truth; and the truth is that **we do not think on our own but that the Lord enables us to think, to all appearances autonomously.**

If we accept the truth that everything good and true comes from the Lord and everything evil and false comes from hell, then we would not claim the goodness as our own and make it self-serving or claim the evil as our own and make ourselves guilty of it. However impossible it seems, it is important to

believe, think and accept the truth that everything good and true comes from the Lord and everything evil and false from hell. This truth is regarded as impossible only for those who do not acknowledge the Lord's divine nature and who do not acknowledge that evils are sins.

The way the Lord leads us away from evil (which is not done by ourselves) is this:

- the Lord's wisdom reveals the truth to us, and that truth points out and indicates things to our intelligence so that we can see what is true;
- once we see what is true we obtain a desire for it;
- this desire leads our volition to do these things.

Nothing really comes into us and becomes part of us except what is welcomed by our volition.

The Lord provides that no matter where our thinking is coming from it seems to be happening within us and to be ours. Otherwise, we would not live like humans. We could not be led out of hell and led into heaven - that is, reformed. All our reformation is accomplished by means of truth. In the absence of truth, our will stays dedicated to evils which we justify by false reasons.

Justification can take the form of 'intellectual justification,' in which we find reasons to back up whatever false theology we had already accepted, but at the same time we still live a life of good. The second and worse form is to not only intellectually justify a false theology but to also live according to it (Swedenborg calls the latter 'volitional justification' because living according to it involves our will). Our state changes as a result of our justifications and the convictions in which they result.

People justify things from their own cleverness. If a person admits only to their own prudence (not admitting the presence of the Lord's wisdom and providence) that person will convince themselves that the way things seem is the way they really are.



They accept as truth the appearance that their own prudence is everything, and they regard divine providence as nothing or some generality. To the extent that they justify themselves with illusions, they become materialists to the point that eventually they believe only what they can apprehend with one of their physical senses. They rely primarily on sight because it especially interacts with our thinking. They close off the inner levels of their minds and put a kind of ceiling in the way. From then on, they think underneath this ceiling, as though nothing above it existed. The ancients called sense-centred people like this "serpents of the tree of knowledge." As they become fixed in their opinions, people like this close the deeper levels of their minds all the way to the nose (the nose means our sense of what is true, and that sense is lacking). In heaven's light they seem to have no noses, and strange as it may seem, even though they are so shrewd, they are still more sense-centred and superficial than anyone else. It is because the ancients called sense-centred people "serpents," and people like this are more deft, shrewd, and clever at debating than others. But our ability to justify whatever we please is not defined as intelligence because to do so is only cleverness (which any of us may have).

To be able to confirm whatever one pleases is not the sign of an intelligent person, but to be able to see that the truth is true and that the false is false, and to confirm it, that is intelligence. A demonstration of this principle can also be read in Swedenborg's experience described in his work *Conjugial Love* (233) in which he visits a spiritual community of such shrewd debaters where one was asked to confirm any proposition as being true and then also its opposite, for example "show that black is white". The debater did this so dexterously and skillfully that the learned around them admired and applauded, while bystanders exclaimed that he was so very wise. When the debater was asked how the two conclusions could both be true, he became indignant, saying that

each argument is true because "nothing is true but what a person makes true." (Today, might we just call that approach 'clever marketing'...)

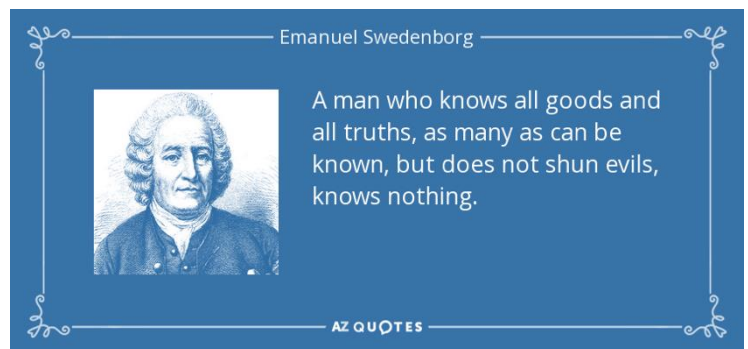
## Oh, how wise!

By Joe Vandermeer

It is becoming obvious to me from some of the discussions which regularly take place at the Swedenborg Centre that clear definitions and distinctions are very beneficial for helping us grow in understanding, acceptance and appreciation of reality.

Swedenborg followers have sometimes been characterised by a few outsiders as the "goods and truths church," since Swedenborg refers to those two central themes and terms frequently. But do we really and clearly understand what such things actually mean?

Swedenborg seems to have been used by the Lord as a way to reveal plain English (actually plain Latin) definitions and distinctions of reality.



Traditional philosophy deals with ultimate ends, purposes and causes, including a first cause. Studying nature using the wisdom discovered through science we can deduce a lot. But despite the sheer volume of deduced and inferred knowledge achieved through these disciplines, that approach has its limits. If we were only here for the purpose of being human (i.e., being a clever reasoning animal) then such knowledge would indeed





be enough. On the other hand, if we have the possibility of becoming children of God (angels) and were then to cease being human, we would not need philosophy anymore beyond that point. But we are created to become angelic citizens in the family of the Lord God while never losing our faculties and nature which are part of being human - indeed we become perfected and fulfilled in them. Therefore, we need both philosophical and natural wisdom, but most importantly we cannot then do without the supreme and superior wisdom which is revealed to us by God, because a study of nature or philosophical reasoning will not teach us how we can become children of God. Those two modes of study will not show us the plain English meaning of Holy Scriptures (as the history of bible exploration demonstrates). It will not show us the ultimate goal of all creation, i.e., the end purpose of all functions of created things which is the participation of perfected human beings in the citizenship of heaven.



"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." Mark 12:30

God gives us the ability to participate in the divine life (as we are meant to). To achieve this end, God created us with powers, of which the two principle SPIRITUAL powers are reason (with which to discern) and volition (with which to will or choose a path of action). He likes to see us use them and use them correctly, and whatever else he intended for a us, he never intended to eliminate the need or the value of those powers. The perfect use of these faculties or powers is that we recognise (receive) the Lord through them. By receiving the Lord we are living his life as ours, living the life of the Lord which he is offering us. Our understanding is designed for the purpose of receiving and recognising divine wisdom.

Our will is for designed for the purpose of receiving, recognising and exercising divine love. Our true conscience is designed for the purpose of feeling the rightness (good) of our conduct in relation to how the Lord would act in a situation. Our sense of beauty is to feel pleasure from the good that God is, the delight of recognising the Lord's good, order, use, truth and use in something. Etc.



Swedenborg is not unique in knowing that it is important to make clear distinctions. The Catholics had it long ago, as demonstrated by St Thomas Aquinas, who himself echoed various wise Christians and Muslims of former times (he was greatly influenced by the commentaries by Ibn Rusdh - Averroes - and Ibn Sina - Avicenna), and was well versed in the works of the early Greeks such as Plato and Aristotle, all of whom in turn insisted on clarifying ideas or concepts, terms or words, and language or reasoned arguments.

For example, 'truth' was said of old to be the agreement of the mind (thought, knowledge, understanding) with the thing known. This means that 'truth' is present when thought conforms to reality (things as they actually are, not just as they appear or manifest). Truth is the mind seeing reality clearly, when our idea conforms to the nature of a thing thought about, to its essence, to what that thing is based on and does. When we see the real nature of a thing we see its use, its purpose. And its purpose may be multiple. Everything has both a natural use, yet at



the same time is also a sign. Signs convey something known outside of a person to the mind of the knower. Things are figures representative of various moral virtues and spiritual truths known as correspondences. Every person, animal, bird and fish corresponds to some quality, therefore each represents some aspect of a virtue or truth, and as a group taken together represents the whole virtue or truth in a general, extended form (what the Egyptians called hieroglyphs). See Conjugal Love 76.

Other ways the perennial wisdom traditions state the meaning of truth is that it is agreement between what is known and what is, or assent to what is and denial of what is not. Likewise good was defined as that which satisfies what all things desire, the desirable, or that which is sought by a being's or nature's appetite. But good is also defined as that which is suitable to a being or nature, that which is valued and valuable. Good as an end (goal) is that which perfects a thing. So, the power or function given to something which perfects it is also good. Good as means is that which is useful, which bring benefit, which perfects.

What about beauty then? St Thomas Aquinas defines beauty as "that which gives pleasure upon being seen". In other words, that which delights the mind perceiving and contemplating it. Frithjof Schuon says that God reveals himself through truth and beauty. The Lord has sewn (sown?) into us faculties that enable us to recognise his nature and qualities. Faculties such as already discussed: reason and will. When we exercise our God-given will, it is free to turn towards that what is good and useful, so that it can be perceived, known, appreciated, loved and pursued. When we perceive something as beautiful we are in a way using (borrowing) God's given faculty to see that which is like or of God (is God's expression), and it

makes us feel pleasure. When we reason wisely, we are RECOGNISING (rather than inventing) that which is wise. And that which is either good or true finds its ultimate ownership solely in the Lord. This recognition of the Lord is demonstrated in a passage by Swedenborg in Conjugal Love 233 (which is repeated in True Christian Religion 334 - and indexes in the same work paragraph 852), namely his experience of the "Confirmers" (also translated as the "Provers" or "Providers of Arguments" and "Proof-mongers". Those in that spiritual community demonstrate an amazing ability to argue rather convincingly to the bystanders any point of



view (argument) you could ask them to demonstrate. But we know from philosophy that reasoning can be flawless in its execution while being completely wrong in its foundational

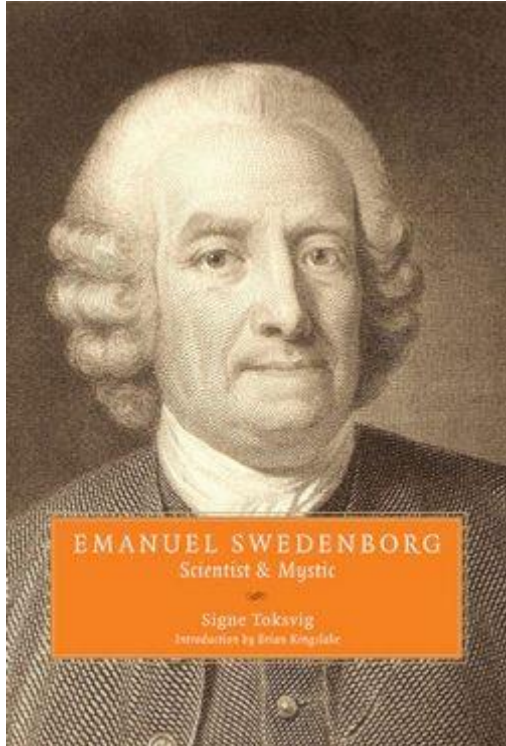
premises (starting assumptions), and therefore the outcomes will be entirely false. The angels present told Swedenborg that people like this do not possess even a speck of understanding. Everything above their rational faculty is closed off; only what is below it is opened up. The nature of this lower area is that it can provide arguments to support whatever it wants, but cannot see any real truth for what it is. Being able to provide arguments to support whatever you want is not intelligence but is mere cleverness. Actual intelligence (as God uses it, and as we can if we turn to his wisdom) is being able to see (RECOGNISE) that what is true IS INDEED true and what is false is false and to provide arguments to support that. This also extends to the ability to see (RECOGNISE) that what is good IS actually real good.

That again is a useful distinction, namely that what masquerades as wisdom and intelligence can actually be mere cleverness which is ultimately foolish. So you can see that clear distinctions can be important.



## Book Offer for This Quarter

Below is this quarter's book offer. **Candela** readers who order the following titles during the next quarter will receive the discount below, **while stocks last**. Complete the Order Form below and send to the Swedenborg Centre or phone on 02 9416 2812 and mention this page.



### **Emanuel Swedenborg, Scientist & Mystic** by **Signe Toksvig** (389 pages, paperback).

Classic Swedenborg biography (first published 1948). Sharp, witty, personal insight into the life of the Swedish scientist and theologian. Danish author Toksvig uses meticulous research to paint a vivid picture of Swedenborg's life and of the people and places that surrounded him. Most biographies of Swedenborg focus on his theological period, but Toksvig also examines his childhood and early scientific training, providing details found in few other places. She discusses the spiritual crisis that launched Swedenborg's visionary writings, devoting several chapters to put his experience in the context of psychology and parapsychology before systematically examining his theology in the context of his life. A foreword by Rev Brian Kingslake was added to the 1983 edition. This work remains a fascinating, informative look at Swedenborg's world. Although now out of print, you can still as Candela reader obtain your own

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## WHAT'S HAPPENING?

To become a member of the Swedenborg Association of Australia, check the website at [www.swedenborg.com.au](http://www.swedenborg.com.au) and click "Contact" in the top menu, which has details on benefits of **membership** and an application form listing current membership rates.

Also check the website at [www.swedenborg.com.au](http://www.swedenborg.com.au) for details of **group events** which are held online, but you can also be physically at various locations around Australia. Follow the "about → contact" menu items on the website for a list of locations and contact info of your nearest group convenor, and see the "events" menu item for Zoom links so you can join online events.

Our new website is continually being updated with new study material and latest news and information.

## VESSELS by Julian Duckworth

We are using vessels - things that contain something else in them - from morning to night. That welcome first cuppa probably uses four containers in being made. Children go off with heavy backpacks, in which there's a lunchbox in which there's a sandwich, and you start to get the picture.

Vessels also take something in them somewhere else. Boats are vessels, and so are arteries and veins... blood vessels.

Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is within you." So, inside us there is a whole other world which is within us because we are alive. Swedenborg says that this is not just there but it is always coming - flowing - into us from the divine source, and we are receiving it every moment. As a child, I saw an advert on a bridge of a huge jug endlessly pouring milk down into a Cadbury's chocolate bar. It was one of my first big spiritual wows. Another was listening to my teacher reading *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* to the class, transporting me to inner other worlds.

We receive everything we are. Everything we receive is a gift of God. This has to be the one starting point for our spiritual accuracy and our spiritual health. The moment we say "I've got..." we are starting to get it wrong, even though it feels like we do have a lot.

If we are indeed receiving everything, and especially the light and life of God, this makes us a conduit or a nexus

through which we transmit things into the world and the lives of others around us. Now, this explains so well why Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is within you." Things come in, and things go out, through us.

But they don't go out from us in exactly the same condition they came in. We are not just a box! The divine wonder is that you and I add to, colour, shape etc. the way this inflow becomes an outflowing. This is probably why we exist in the first place, to be a...processor. We like the idea of us being unique, unlike anyone else, and we are, but not in a superiority, but humbly. If I make use of love, I express in my own way. But it is still God's love, not my love.

One way we experience this gets seen in the way we associate things with a particular person. Something like us folding sheets always makes us think of a lady who made each corner perfect. Something like the idea of 'hope' always brings someone to mind who told us how important it is. They didn't know the effect they would have; they just received it and gave it away, but added themselves to the whole of it.

In translating languages, people often say that something gets lost in translation, which it does. But in spiritual transferring - from God into us and from us out to others - something gets added. Being a vessel is the place to be.