

DECEMBER 2024 NEWSLETTER II

Dear All

At the end of each year we tend to reminisce about the time behind us and maybe start visions and plans for the forthcoming year ahead of us.

I keep thinking about my own past as well as remote history. In my work I am “stuck” with the Middle Ages, my favourite historical epoch, while my thoughts never cease to linger around the events and people from my life.

The culmination of this was marking my 75th birthday in Belgrade with a group of people I knew from my childhood, youth and recent years even. As in a good Georgian or Welsh tradition, some 20 of us gathered with professional musicians and sang our hearts out on an evening that all participants later described as magical and “dangerously close to perfection”. As we all know, when you get old there is not much point in talking, one should rather sing and be grateful for the gift of enduring presence in this world: “With all its drudgery and broken dreams, this is still a wonderful world”...

Just over 30 years ago I was introduced to the Swedenborg Centre in Sydney. It gathered a number of remarkable people, all eager to expand their own horizons and learn about different traditions. It is uncanny how few people know about Swedenborg, one of the greatest of man, a seer recognised by many people of repute. This man who foresaw the date and time of his own death is worth checking. The current

president of the Swedenborg Association, Joe Vandermeer is the best example of the nucleus of people around this association, always keen to know and embrace something new for him, always respectful to any spiritual, theological or artistic tradition, whether they align with Swedenborgian thought/concept or not.

When I mused about the question of Time in one of my recent newsletters, we both remembered Dr Philip Groves , Gurdjieff and naturally, Swedenborg, and Joe kindly came up with a summary I want to share with you today.

I hope that in 2025 I will be able to share further thoughts of what I mentioned earlier: What did Christ look like and why do we depict Him the way we do?

My work on the subject as well as other projects has begun and we may have new visuals to share.

Meanwhile, my best wishes for all of you, health above all.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



December 2024

Swedenborg bio

Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) was a Swedish scientist, philosopher, statesman and theologian who, after a distinguished career in various scientific fields, experienced a spiritual awakening in his mid-fifties. This led him to devote the rest of his life to studying the Bible and writing on spiritual matters. His works show a deep integration between his knowledge of science and

the spiritual, and the writings have a remarkable coherence across three decades of publications, in which he provides the most detailed description of spiritual life that has been given anywhere, far more detailed and descriptive than any other writer in all of history. His most significant work, "Arcana Coelestia", is a comprehensive exegesis of Genesis and Exodus,

revealing their inner spiritual meaning. Other key works include "Heaven and Hell", a detailed account of the afterlife, and "True Christian Religion", which encapsulates his theological teachings. Swedenborg's main teaching is that there is one God in one person, Jesus Christ, and that the Bible has a deeper spiritual meaning, which points to the importance of living a life of love and charity and rejecting the idea of faith alone. His writings form the basis of the New Christian Church, which continues to study and follow his teachings today.

Interest in Swedenborg

Many famous people who were influenced left tributes, some of which were Prime Minister Alfred Deakin, Abraham Lincoln, French King Louis XV, Carl Jung, Helen Keller, William James, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Jorge Luis Borges, Andrew Carnegie, Franklin D. Roosevelt; Daisetsu Teitaro Suzuki, Henry Corbin, Samuel Taylor Coleridge; Alfred Deakin; Arthur Conan Doyle; Ralph Waldo Emerson; Johann Wolfgang von Goethe; Henry James, Sr.; Carl Jung; Helen Keller; Czeslaw Milosz; Norman Vincent Peale, August Stindberg, artist William Blake, painter George Inness, Hilma af Klint, Bram Stoker (Dracula author), George MacDonald, Pre-Raphaelite artist Dante Gabriel Rossetti, glass artist Louis Comfort Tiffany, American architect Daniel Burnham. Swedenborg's books were on the First Fleet to Australia thanks to a donation by William Cookworthy who was a friend of Captain Cook.

Swedenborg: time in the spiritual world

Swedenborg, in "Heaven and Hell" (paragraph 168) shares a conversation with an angelic person who - despite having once lived like us in this physical realm - was by that time no longer aware of the concept of time as we know it. The angel did not understand the earthly concept of the sun's movement creating years and days, or the division of time into seasons, months, weeks, and

hours. Apparently, spiritual thought does not involve time and space, unlike the natural thought which occupies us while in this worldly life. Every idea in natural thought has elements of time and space attached to it, but spiritual ideas do not. This is because the spiritual world is not bound by space and time like the natural world, even though it appears to have both. The existence of natural time is tied to our physical world and its natural phenomena as a framework for our earthly experiences and thoughts, while in the spiritual realm - so Swedenborg tells us - states of love and wisdom are more important so that the concept of natural time is replaced by a state-based perception.

(Joe's musing on it: it's intriguing to think about the horizontal plane of existence IN time, while growing spiritually during this existence is to grow along the vertical plane of the quality of BEING, given an ideal response to the potentials provided for us from eternity. That growth is a lifting up along the plane to eternity, we are drawn up from eternity, by eternity, into eternity, our true intended destiny. Language seems quite inadequate to express it fully.)

Swedenborg: St George and Dragon Symbolism

Following your excellent exhibition on the theme of St George, I decided to also look up what Swedenborg had to say about dragons and horses, and found the material below, providing another point of view, and his view is particularly commenting on the symbolism of the New Testament book of Revelation, he is not commenting on St George. Every aspect which comes to light about the St George story for me deepens its meaning (as you rightly said), which is what makes that theme so rich and wonderful. Here is what I found based on Swedenborg's works where he comments on the symbolism of dragons and coloured horses in the book of Revelation:

Swedenborg describes dragons as symbolic representations of people who are deeply

entrenched in the belief that faith alone justifies them, rejecting the importance of good works. These individuals are depicted as dragons with long tails covered in spikes, symbolizing the falsities they hold onto. The dragons are seen as those who distort truths, pervert Divine teachings, and are driven by self-love and worldly desires. They are described as being filled with hatred, rage, and a desire for vengeance against those who do not share their beliefs.

In Swedenborg's writings, dragons are also associated with the idea of spiritual combat and the struggle between faith and charity. They are depicted engaging in violent and destructive behaviors, symbolizing the harmful effects of a faith divorced from love and good deeds. The dragons are shown as being consumed by fire from heaven, representing the consequences of their actions and beliefs.

Overall, Swedenborg uses the symbol of dragons to illustrate the dangers of a faith that is devoid of genuine love, charity, and good works. The image of dragons serves as a cautionary tale about the negative impact of distorted beliefs and the importance of aligning faith with a life of kindness, compassion, and righteousness.

About the spiritual meaning of horses, according to Emanuel Swedenborg's writings, particularly in his book "Arcana Coelestia" and "Worlds in Space," horses symbolize the understanding part of the mind. When angels or spirits discuss matters related to the understanding, horses appear in the spiritual world. The size, shape, color, and stance of these horses depend on the ideas and thoughts that the angels or spirits have concerning understanding. Horses are seen as representatives of the intellect and doctrine, and they carry different adornments based on the intellectual concepts they represent.

In the spiritual world, horses are often seen along with chariots, and both symbolize things of the intellect and doctrine. For example, when spirits from other planets are prepared to become angels, chariots and horses shining as if on fire are seen, signifying their enlightenment and preparation for entering heaven. The appearance



St George and the Dragon 4, 2023, an icon 40x30cm

of horses and chariots in the spiritual realm reflects the intellectual and rational intelligence of individuals.

Furthermore, in the Book of Revelation, the white horse symbolizes the understanding of the Word. The spiritual significance of horses is deeply rooted in representing the intellectual faculties, understanding of truth, and rational intelligence. Swedenborg emphasizes that horses in a spiritual sense consistently symbolize understanding and intellectual thought throughout various instances in the Bible and prophetic writings.

Swedenborg says about the colours of the horses in the book of Revelation, that the colours of the horses symbolize different aspects of understanding the Word.

- *White Horse*: The white horse symbolizes an understanding of truth from the Word. White is associated with truths in the spiritual sense. This represents a clear comprehension of the Word's teachings and truths.

- *Fiery Red Horse*: The fiery red horse signifies an understanding of the Word where goodness has



St George and the Dragon 3, 2023, an icon 40x30cm,
Private collection Switzerland

been extinguished. This colour represents a lack of spiritual vitality and goodness in one's understanding of the Word.

- *Black Horse*: The black horse represents an understanding of the Word where truth has been extinguished. This colour symbolizes a lack of

truth and clarity in comprehending the Word's teachings.

- *Pale Horse*: The pale horse symbolizes an understanding of the Word that has been destroyed both in terms of goodness and truth. Paleness signifies a lack of vitality and life in one's understanding of the Word.

These colours are used to illustrate the different states of understanding the Word, ranging from a clear comprehension of truth to a complete lack of vitality and truth in one's understanding.

Joe's interest in Swedenborg

As a truth seeker and educator, Joe Vandermeer has been directing the Swedenborg Centre in Roseville for nearly a decade, inviting in-person and online exploration of life's inner aspects. He also helped to establish the Australian Fairy Tale Society to delve into the deeper meanings of fairy tales and mythology based on the insights which Swedenborg offers on the inner meaning of scriptures, ancient mythologies, dreams and the significance of forms and processes in nature. Joe enjoyed a four-decade career in information technology, but is now dedicated to the spiritual quest, and if he has spare time dabbles in enjoying and producing art or music.