



Re-Examining Our Darlings: Assessing Swedenborg’s Comments on Race

Engaging Swedenborg in the cultural dialogue on race is enormously challenging. It is also absolutely necessary.

BY JOHN CONNOLLY

The beautiful truth of the divine humanity became distorted, disassociated, dissected beyond recognition; and God himself was lost in deadly dialectics. (From Light in My Darkness by Helen Keller)

While race is certainly not a major focus of Emanuel Swedenborg’s writings, his most controversial passages about the subject, particularly those concerning Africans, remain a point of disharmony for many of those who seek to reconcile the man with the message. The timeliness of revisiting these words is painfully obvious; but in my struggle with how best to approach interpreting them in a way that is convincing enough to shed some light on their spiritual wisdom, it did not take long to recognize the problem inherent in a white man holding forth on the inner experiences of black people—let alone on the inner experiences of anyone other than this particular white man (that goes for both Swedenborg and myself).

Nevertheless, it seems a moral imperative that those within the Swedenborgian community should make every effort to address how one might deal with Swedenborg’s potentially

disturbing remarks and take a stand in the ongoing conversation on race. So to be clear, my primary objective here is to join that conversation—to participate in an ever-renewed scrutiny of Swedenborg’s words so that we might get a firmer grasp on what they could mean for us today and on how those meanings could make our place here on earth more of a spiritual oasis than a desert of suffering.

Recognizing the Unrecognized Contradiction

In discussing my objective with one of my colleagues, he very wisely suggested that I avoid having my piece be “infected with [the] paradox” that is built into the condemnation of “othering,” a process in which a group of people treats another group of people as intrinsically different than themselves. Historically committed by the oppressor in his act of oppression, “othering” happens when one’s gaze passes

through a lens whose aperture disallows the admittance of much light.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Indian scholar, literary theorist, and feminist critic speaks to this idea in her statement that “the unrecognized contradiction within a position that valorizes the concrete experience of the oppressed, while being so uncritical about

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The Editor's Desk



God, Nature, and Giant Redwoods

My casual observation is that nature is inexorably ensconced in all religions. At the extremes, gods and goddesses are either literally nature or nature is of no consequence because physical reality does not exist. Most religions deny those extremes, placing nature in a context with spiritual existence.

I am left speechless by statements from some fundamentalist, evangelical, and extremely conservative religious leaders and denominations that it is incumbent on us to exploit nature to the fullest for the benefit of the exploiters because the Bible commands us to do so. They cite biblical passages to support this stance, beginning with,

And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth (Genesis 1:28).

Rev. Allison Raises Funds

Rev. Eric Allison, member and former pastor of the Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound raised over \$600 in the eighth annual Walk, Run & Roll fundraiser for the brain Injury Community in the Puget Sound Area. He has been an indefatigable supporter for many years. 

Everything rests on the meaning of *subdue*. The first meaning in Merriam-Webster is “to conquer and bring into subjection,” but it can also mean “to bring under control, especially by an exertion of the will, to bring (land) under cultivation, to reduce the intensity or degree of : tone down.”

Furthermore, God asks us, commands us, in numerous ways in both the Old and New Testaments to respect, honor, and care for all that God has created. (See “What the Bible Says about the Environment” [<https://tinyurl.com/yamwuj8>] for a fuller discussion.

In any case, no matter where you stand on humankind’s relationship to nature, I urge you, if you are able to come to the Annual Convention and take the outing to Henry Cowell State Forest (page 59), to do so. I lived in

Santa Cruz some years ago and often visited Cowell as my refuge for spiritual reflection. The oldest Redwood there is a little over 2000 years old, and I stood at its base looking to its top in awe, meditating on its birth and youth around the time that Jesus walked the earth. Furthermore, there are “Redwood cathedrals” there, a circle of redwoods where once an ancient mother of those trees stood. Like the soaring walls, buttresses, windows, and towers of European cathedrals, these Redwoods and the space they create provide an environment conducive to contemplation of the Divine.

—Herb Ziegler

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Church Calendar

- **May 12:** General Council Spring Teleconference meeting
- **May 25–28,** Swedenborgian Retreat, St. Dorothy’s Rest, Camp Meeker, CA
- **July 1–5:** Swedenborgian Church Annual Convention, San Jose, CA
- **August 4–19:** FNCA Family Summer Camp, Fryeburg, ME

the Messenger

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Letter from the President



**2017–18—*The Year of the New Jerusalem:
The emergence of a new world***

Dear Friends,

Why I want to run for another term: Although I have only served for twenty-one months as president of the Swedenborgian Church, our bylaws state that the election of the president takes place at the convention preceding the convention when the president takes office. In running for a second term, that means I am to decide now about the next four years.

I have said yes to being nominated for another term. There is so much more I want to do. We are making progress on many initiatives, but they all take time—more time than I had anticipated—and this is okay. We have this long history of why we do things the way we do. In trying to wrap my head around all the rules and committees and financial restraints, I have seen areas where we might improve efficiencies, where we are no longer following the process that was written decades ago, and where we need to breathe new energy into existing governance. This has led to the proposed changes in the Constitution and Bylaws as put forth by the General Council in the March *Messenger*.

The structure outlined in the 80s has seen many volunteers work hard to outline initiatives, put together programs, and provide connection with our ministries and General Convention. Times have changed, and our needs have changed. The Cabinet was no longer meeting and functioning as had been laid out. Some support units had narrowed their focus and some were no longer meeting. The

decision was to create a new structure to take what was working in the five support units and create three standing committees. We still desperately need willing volunteers. The goal was not to decrease the opportunity for volunteers to serve the denomination but rather to honor these volunteers with resources and clear objectives that help to meet the needs of our ministries today.

The next step is coming together to create agreement on the “best practices” for our churches and ministries.

First, a bit of history. The Swedenborgian Church operates under a congregational polity that is a form of church governance based on the local congregation. Each local congregation is independent, governed by its own members, and attempts to be self-supporting. Within our structure there are state or regional associations to support the member churches, camps, and ministries. Associations also select their delegates with voting privileges to the annual convention. The General Convention of the New Jerusalem, commonly known as The Swedenborgian Church, was incorporated and approved in 1861.

Our Constitution states “The Purpose”:

The Swedenborgian Church exists to help people be open to the Lord’s presence and leading, especially by fostering personal and ordained ministries which facilitate the spiritual well-being of people, and which have in common a working for the Lord in bringing in the New Age, the descent of the Holy City, New Jerusalem.

Congregational governance allows our churches autonomy and independence to make decisions that the members agree on. This type of polity fits well with the Swedenborgian spirit of independence and free will. We choose our own minister and leaders, and set our own bylaws. However, congregationalism can also lead to feelings of church isolation, as if the central leadership of General Convention doesn’t care what happens within the churches. It can lead to decisions of a few strong

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Nominations for Elected Positions in the Swedenborgian Church

The Nominating Committee nominates at least one candidate for each open position, with the exception of the Nominating Committee position, where at least two candidates must be nominated. Elective offices and nominees to date are listed on the chart at right.

If you are interested in being nominated for any position (particularly an open position), contact the chair of the Nominating Committee, Linda Tafel, (manager@swedenborg.org).

A substitute list of nominees will be proposed to take effect if the changes to the structure of the Swedenborgian Church proposed by General Council are approved by the delegates to the Annual Convention.

In addition to the two candidates to be elected to the Board of Trustees of the Center for Swedenborgian Studies (CSS) by its representative class (members of the General Convention), two candidates nominated by the CSS Board are to be elected as at-large-class trustees at the CSS Annual Meeting, which will convene at 7:30 PM on July 2, during the Annual Convention in San Jose, California.

Candidate Statements

President: Rev. Jane Siebert

See “Letter from the President,” page 47.

Vice-President: Tom Neuenfeldt

I am honored to be nominated for another term as vice-president of our denomination. It is a role with responsibilities that I take seriously, and I respect deeply the leaders who served before me.

I have served on General Council

Position to be Filled	Term (Yrs)	Candidate
President	3	Rev. Jane Siebert*
Vice-President	1	Tom Neuenfeldt*
Recording Secretary	1	Karen Conger*
Treasurer	1	Jennifer Lindsay*
General Council layperson (2 to be elected)	3	Stan Conger* Rob Lawson*
General Council Minister	3	Open
Communications Support Unit (COMSU)	3	Open
Education Support Unit (EDSU)	3	Open
Financial and Physical Resources Support Unit (FPRSU)	3	Lisa Solwald*
Information Management Support Unit (IMSU)	3	Val Brugler*
Support Unit for Ministries (MINSU)	3	Open
Committee on Admission to the Ministry: Layperson (CAM)	3	Open
Board of Trustees of CSS, representative class (2 to be elected)	3	Junchol Lee Open
Board of Trustees of CSS, at-large class (2 to be elected)	3	Open
Nominating Committee (2 to be nominated)	5	Open Open

* Incumbent

for four years, and I was a trustee of our seminary, The Center for Swedenborgian Studies at the Graduate Theological Union (CSS), for eight years—the last two as chair.

President Rev. Jane Siebert and I have a strong working relationship and share a high level of trust. She was chair of CSS for six of the years that I served on the Board of Trustees. For two of those years, I was vice-chair.

For over thirty years, I was a “servant leader” as a school administrator in the Michigan public school system.



It is rewarding to share the benefits of that experience and temperament with the Church.

My wife, BJ, and I lead a very nice retirement life in East Tawas, Michigan. We enjoy the time that we are able to spend with our children and grandchildren; we love to travel with them and by ourselves. We are deeply involved with Almont Summer School all year long—BJ as treasurer, and I as the fix-it man.

I look forward to seeing all of you at Annual Convention this summer.

Recording Secretary: Karen Conger

Greetings! It's once again an honor to accept the nomination for the office

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Nominees

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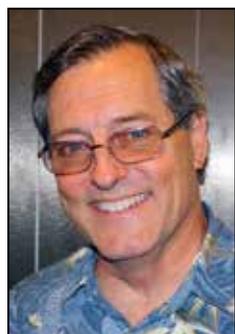
of recording secretary of the General Convention, a position to which I was first elected in 2015. I am a lifelong



third-generation Swedenborgian who was raised in the Church of the Holy City in Washington, D.C. I have been a member of the Urbana Society and the Los Angeles Society and am currently a member-at-large of the Pacific Coast Association (PCA). I have served on the Ministries Support Unit for several years, the Nominating Committee more than once, and I was the Secretary of the PCA for several years; I held elected positions on the Board of Directors of the Los Angeles Society and the Wayfarers Chapel. I continue to very much enjoy working as secretary, and hope to continue in the position. Thank you for your consideration.

**General Council (layperson):
Stan Conger**

Stan Conger is a current member of General Council. He served as a police lieutenant with the Santa Monica Police Department, retiring after twenty-nine years of service in 2001. After retirement he became a reporter for the *Inyo Register*, a small-town newspaper in Bishop, California. He left the newspaper as a full time reporter, but continues writing freelance for the *Register*. He is active in Playhouse 395, a community theatre in Inyo



County, having performed in eleven musical productions, and he serves on the board of directors for that organization. He also served as treasurer for Playhouse 395 from 2011 through 2018. He resides in Bishop and is married to Karen Nielsen Conger.

**CSS Board of Trustees:
Rev. Junchol Lee**

I am deeply interested and would be honored to serve, if I am elected, on the Board of Trustees of the Center for Swedenborgian Studies (CSS).

I am the last of two ministers (with Rev. Young Min Kim) to be educated at SSR (Swedenborg School of Religion), a former incarnation of the denomination's seminary and educational institution, which allows me a unique perspective on issues that come before the CSS board. I can bring a balanced reflection of the old (SSR) and new (CSS) systems of religious education and training.

It is my perception that our seminary is still searching for the right purpose and institutional form with and through which it could serve our denomination as a whole and the world. I am confident that our seminary could become a religious and scholarly center that educates, inspires and illuminates all people who are seeking a broader and inclusive understanding of God, spirituality, and life.

In addition, I have served the General Convention in a variety of capacities since 2000, the year of my ordination. I have serviced as SCYL youth chaplain for eight years, a member of Executive Committee of the Council of Ministers for six years, a member of the Ministry Support Unit for five years, and a member of the Committee



of Admission into Ministry for seven years. I am serving as a member of the General Council at present.

At the same time, I have been serving as a pastor to Swedenborgian churches for the past nearly eighteen years: the Cleveland Swedenborgian Church for nine years, the Western Canada Conference and the Calgary New Church for two years, and the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church since 2011.

From these experiences, I can say that I do understand the General Convention quite well and do have a hope for its future, especially in its education and demonstration of its unique theological understanding to its members, friends, and people in the world in general through CSS.

IMSU: Val Brugler

I have enjoyed serving on and would like to continue to participate in the Information Management Support Unit (IMSU).

I have designed several church websites and, since 2013, I have been the technical support person for SwedenborgianCommunity.org. For the past two years, as chair of IMSU, I have been honored to be involved in the Digital Presence Working Group.

Our goal has been to redesign the denomination's website, swedenborg.org, to make it more current, usable, useful, and interactive. I hope that the site that we have dreamed, planned, and produced will be of better service to our members and be a welcoming and friendly face to the general public. I would like to continue on IMSU so that the site can be completed and monitored through analytics and data from user feedback to know where it is succeeding and pinpoint where changes will need to be made. ☩



Cultural Immersion in Sweden: Swedenborg and His Concepts—Caves and Mines

BY JEFFREY ADAMS

The January immersion seminar at the Center for Swedenborgian Studies (CSS) of the Graduate Theological Union (GTU), involved a trip to Sweden. "Cultural Immersion in Sweden: Swedenborg and His Contexts" was taken by a group of CSS and GTU students who are studying Emanuel Swedenborg for a week of contextual learning at various sites in Sweden.



The group included students Rachel Madjerac, Cory Bradford-Watts, Colin Amato, and Jeffrey Adams, Swedenborgian Church president Rev. Jane Siebert, and Professor Devin Zuber. They sought to locate Swedenborg within the artistic, religious, scientific, and Scandinavian cultural contexts that shaped his singular output as scientist and mystic, poet and anatomist, geographer and seer. They also traced the impact of Swedenborg's thought on subsequent artistic and cultural figures in Sweden, including the poet and dramatist August Strindberg and the Sufi painter Ivan Agueli.

Excerpts from some of the student blogs about their experiences and reflections, written while they were in Sweden appeared in the March 2018 Messenger. Here is another.

Caves and mines lead us into the depths of the earth. They do so quite distinctively. Despite both being holes in the ground, entering one compared to the other brings unique experiences. Sweden's mine in Falun makes this obvious. Like Swedenborg's archives, it too is accepted by UNESCO as historically relevant. It is over a thousand years old, after all.

Growing up in Eastern Pennsylvania, caves are a standard field trip in elementary school. Mines, too, abound, but they are not tourist destinations. In contrast to the local caves, there are no billboards directing anyone to the local mine. In Eastern Pennsylvania, many mines remain financially viable.

As recent as 2014, over eight million tons of anthracite coal were mined in Pennsylvania. Their day will come. Only seventeen active mines remain in Sweden. Falun's closed in 1992.

A thousand years is a long time to create a mine, but Mother Nature works for ages to

create her cave's subterranean wonders. Entrances are not so much discovered, as revealed. They are invitations.

One enters caves with a sense of anticipation. It is a privilege to witness the results within a cave's depths. The mind cannot help but follow. As our

form leaves the surface of the earth, our essence rises to the surface of our thoughts. There is a distinctive shift. The deeper our body, the deeper our spirit seems to feel. Endured long enough, the experience becomes otherworldly, even revelatory. Day-to-day short-term concerns fall away as the mood of the cave wraps like a blanket around our shoulders. If the echo of a droplet into still, underground water ripples across the air, our hearts follow. The cave is dark, but we begin to see many things more clearly.

It is no coincidence that the earliest artwork in the world is found in a cave. Nor is it likely that by chance they are so unfathomably far within them. Researchers are baffled by so purposeful, and dangerous, a journey to leave this mysterious artwork.

However, it is easier to mouth

ancient principles of the mind, say the Hermetic principle, "As above, so below," than to internalize them. Could it be restated, "As without, so within?" The artists of 40,000 years ago may not have been exploring the cave so much as drawn into it. The transformed environment of a physical cave may have facilitated a correlating transformation within the self. Does their paleo-art record a shift? Was a new awareness recorded? Was it inspired by a miraculous change in perspective, from an objective-unity with the All to a subjective-unity with all that is? Was it this that led them to reach out, touch the

cave's walls, and preserve the moment, not of an isolated sense of I, but that, of an "I am" of the "I Am?"

Our true self is buried under a mountain of false attitudes, opinions, and beliefs, the most warped of which is that nothing is happening.

Did the exploration of caves then, like now, provide a sense of harmony, a oneness with what it is? Did its metaphorical surroundings provide depths of awareness? Swedenborg explains that the earliest people worshipped on the top of mountains for the sense of elevation it brings. Did caves do something similar?

Do the writings of seers like Swedenborg not demonstrate how much activity there is in our mind? Each moment, forces of unimaginable power flow over, then through, not only the physical earth, but the internal earth of our mind. We are habitually unaware as unconscious forces imperceptibly erode our stubborn rocklike self-centeredness. It seems impenetrable, but that is likely because we begin by believing that is the very sense of self

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Caves and Mines

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responsible for our regeneration. Not really. It is not so much what we are doing as what is being done to us.

Our true self is buried under a mountain of false attitudes, opinions, and beliefs, the most warped of which is that nothing is happening. In the first half of life we climb these conceptual heights hoping to see beyond their limiting horizon. We have misread the map, however, for upon reaching the summit, we realize the true path was not up, but within. Just as the treasures inside caves are created by the persistent flow of water, so, too, with the treasures of consciousness. The psychological water is not spiritual truth *per se*; that would simply be another fact on the mountain under which we are already buried. More so, spiritual truth is an awareness, a perspective, a new sense of self, demonstrating that this mountain's weight is not necessary—that it is crushing our heart. Once made aware, our hard hearts feel it is impossible to break down what was built up over ages. Then again, did the stone our fingers glide across in caves not think the same?

Mines, on the other hand, host different states of mind. They do not take one deep. There is a sense of battle, a test of wills. Instead of a sense of wonder, they reek of a far cruder purpose. Nature is not sharing, humanity is taking. The goal is to change moments in the future, not be present in the moment. Humanity is forcing its way into a world not its own, where depths are measured in daily prices per ounce, not millennia and ages. The length of Falun's corridor brought calculations of human suffering, not the timelessness of a cave.

Miners perceive this dynamic. They couch it in various metaphors. Mines have totem animals. Thus, the endless oxen figurines in the gift shop. This is

not only ceremonial but quite practical. The miners put their lives “on the line” of their oxen. The thick ropes carrying buckets down into and up out of its 440 meter depths were made of ox hides. Four hundred per rope provided a bounteous surplus of meat. What to do? What to do? Oh! Yes, let's make sausage!

The miners did not enter by the endless staircase we descended. Time was of the essence. Eight men descended per bucket. One foot in, the other hovering. The daredevils could not be bothered and slid face first into the abyss.

The Falun mine also has a Lady. As nobility are inclined to do, she provided rules. There are only three, but she tested the miners like a lengthy Sunday service: 1) No cursing, 2) No Spitting, and 3) Knock three times upon entering. With *snus* (snuff, or moist powdered tobacco) a part of Sweden's national heritage, this was no easy feat. Keep the Lady happy at all costs. Cave-ins are her wrath.

Falun may have been a copper mine in actuality, but figuratively, it was a gold mine. Two-thirds of Europe's copper came from her depths. When the King offered Swedenborg the position as assessor of mines, the Swedish economy and funding of his endless wars were on the line. It was a turbulent age. National pride was at stake. Falun was not simply a financial venture. It was Sweden's soul. In a sense, Swedenborg was its priest. How strange that a man's spirit, which would soar to such heights, began under the earth amongst fires and sulphur. Swedenborg was far more at home in his garden.

For those reading Swedenborg's revelatory works as guides to enlightenment, his many volumes on mineralogy, geology, and smelting seem mundane and dismissible. So, too, his many inventions worked on with his mentor Christopher Polhem. As Rev. Dr. Jonathan Rose once noted when reflecting

Syria

Syria Oh Syria

Our World Has Failed You
Your Leader—Mad
Our Leaders—Confused
Action or Non Action,
Wanting to Act—
Not Knowing How
Clearly Prayer cannot solve—
Yet We will Pray for Peace
For Your Innocents slaughtered.
We will Remember

—Christine Campbell

Rev. Christine Campbell is minister
of the Swedenborgian Church at
Temenos, in Pennsylvania.

on one invention, “How quaint to create a system of pulleys whereby as one bucket descended another rose, until it is realized that in this manner the GDP of Sweden was doubled!”

It is easy to imagine Swedenborg descending on the bucket singing his favorite Lutheran hymns, not out of nervousness or to entertain but, more likely, to ward off the devil and any variety of troublesome spirits. Despite the Enlightenment, Swedenborg's culture was still immersed in a Christianity and folklore filled with a variety of mythological figures. The *Huldra* (forest women) were especially known to entice men into cave systems from which they never found their way out. Was the Lady of the Mine of similar ilk? Was the descent not also like that into hell, the very lair of the devil?

Little did Swedenborg know as he sang his way into and out of Falun's fiery furnace that decades later he would do the same, but now, not in the physical but the spiritual world—not in the body but the spirit, and not metaphorically but for real. ☩

Jeffrey Adams is a student at Pacific School of Religion and the Center for Swedenborgian studies, studying for a Master in Theological Studies degree.

Ode to Stephen Hawking: Swedenborg's Science of Spirit

BY JIM LAWRENCE

Stephen Hawking died last month. The celebrated theoretical physicist and cos-

smologist who long ago became entirely paralyzed by and died from Lou Gehrig's Disease, attained a status of cultural fascination with a scientist that approached that of Einstein. The subject of the 2014 film nominated for best picture "The Theory of Everything," Hawking's runaway 1988 best-seller *A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes*, has sold more than ten million copies and has been translated into thirty-five languages.

But whereas Einstein never let go of his sense of a purposeful cosmos, Hawking, who was still holding out a small possibility for purpose in *Brief History of Time*, abandons the prospect in his final major book, *The Grand Design* (2010). There is no purpose; before the Big Bang there was nothing; after we die, it's lights out.

Encountering mind-sets like that of Hawking was a kind of crisis pivot point for Swedenborg when he was 46 years old. In Leipzig to see his *Principia* through the press, he became profoundly disturbed at the lack of belief in a purposeful creation and continuing life beyond the physical among the intelligentsia there. He decided that a meaningless worldview arose from a lack of knowledge about the soul's immortality and about the divine force behind the natural world. He decided to work on that and produced right away two small books the next year. *On the Infinite and Final Cause of Creation* treats philosophically how the infinite creates finite frameworks for life

In a theosophy as old as time, Swedenborg sees the human soul as a place of collision of values that become the action site in a growth process.

conscious immortality.

There have been at least a score of ground-breaking scientists on the order of Hawking, but most science historians would agree that the two most important paradigm-shift thinkers have been Isaac Newton and Albert Einstein.

In that same *Principia* being published in Leipzig, Swedenborg constructed an atomic theory of matter 200 years before Einstein by describing and diagramming atoms within atoms, such that the smaller or more fundamental particles have higher energies and move internally in increasingly rapid vortical patterns the smaller they are. The appearance of solidity is provided by the speed at which these tiny parts move, and due to the spiral form of the motion there is a polarity that explains the magnetization of solids. But solidity is largely an appearance: it is all an energy system. This model is remarkably similar to what science has subsequently been discovering. The modern atom with its rapidly circulating electrons appears to be solid in the same way he suggested. And modern physics has also realized that the smaller and smaller constituents of atoms have higher and higher energies—quarks for example possess energy in vastly greater strength than normal atomic or nuclear processes. That's Einstein.

As for Newton, Swedenborg studied him in college and tried to visit him on his first trip to England, but the

production. *On the Interaction between the Soul and Body* analyzes the soul-body relationship and argues for con-

Cambridge don was out of town. It was Newton's own *Principia* published the year before Swedenborg was born that proposed an invisible force called gravity. There really was something like the apple falling from a tree story, according to Newton's most recent biography, by Peter Ackroyd. Newton applied his second law of motion to a falling apple and concluded there was only one explanation why the apple would accelerate in space: some force was being applied to it. Already convinced he had proven motion only occurs through force, in a flash he realized that there is an unseen force—which he came to call gravity—acting generally in space. He surmised this unseen force had to have some extension in space in which it was operating, and it was known that things fall from the highest points on earth.

Next came Newton's paradigm shift insight: if the force of gravity reaches to the top of the highest places on earth, might it not reach beyond earth to the Moon? If so, that could explain the orbit of the Moon around the earth. The Moon's movement could be a consequence of this unseen gravitational force that had accelerated to the point of stability in its orbit around the earth. He was right in a very fundamental way: there is an unseen force acting upon everything in the solar system. Newton's paradigm shift is that he was the first one to argue the entire cosmos operates in an orderly causality system.

Swedenborg worked with Newton's theory to make his own famous "first" in the history of astronomy. Swedenborg memorably deduced the earliest version of the nebular hypothesis theory about the formation of our solar system. That is, the planets in our solar

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Stephen Hawking

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system are flung-off chunks of the solar mass that ultimately got captured in their great escape by gravity. The gravitational pull from the sun led finally to a stable relationship of orbits around the sun. Thus, our solar system all started as part of the sun, and Swedenborg was the first one who figured that out.

In any event, Swedenborg was so sure that material reductionists were not only wrong but tragically wrong that he altered his own life trajectory. Those two little books in 1735 started a thirty-eight year journey shaping an understanding not only of physical nature but also an order of reality senior to the physical in which lie true causes. And so he worked on a spiritual philosophy until his death in 1772.

To be seriously playful or playfully serious, as a theologian and practitioner of Swedenborgian spirituality, I'd like to propose three Swedenborgian Laws of Spiritual Motion.

I) A Spiritual Gravity Acts Upon our Soul without Ceasing

Spiritual gravity is a process happening inside us all the time, because we are unceasingly involved in forces of attraction. The center of our being is constantly withstanding a multitude of forces in the form of attractions and desires that exert a pull upon our will non-stop.

In a theosophy as old as time, Swedenborg sees the human soul as a place of collision of values that become the action site in a growth process. Put more directly, he believes in good and evil, in heaven and hell, as forces that are every bit as real and as lawful as math and physics. The amount of unseen force would blow our mind if we could actually "see" it somehow as an illustration in action. But the fact is, we are feeling it, and we are so used to

feeling it that for many people it is not something to be noticed. It is just life.

There's good spiritual gravity, and there's bad spiritual gravity, or upward spiritual force and downward spiritual force—or, to put it in the more common way, angels and demons tug at us all the day long. As spiritual isometrics, we build muscle or lose muscle strength due to how engaged we are willing to be with working against those forces that would suck us into lower-minded and lower-hearted actions, speech, and thought.

The Ten Commandments are essentially illustrations of positive and negative attractions. Envy, covetousness, adultery, murder, stealing: these are all broad categories of negative states of desiring, negative attractions. A tremendous emphasis is placed in Swedenborgian spiritual physics on squarely dealing with temptation toward negative attractions. Temptation is an old-fashioned word somewhat out of vogue, but its reality and essence is an ever-present feature of the human condition.

Spiritual gravitational forces are exerted upon the essence of our being, of our consciousness, constantly. We don't have to produce all the force to succeed in the midst of these forces. All the power to do so will come from God, yet there is an absolutely crucial role of solidarity with our loves and attractions that connects or disconnects us with divine power. A Swedenborgian maxim is, "Pray as if it is all up to God, and work as if it is all up to you."

II) Second Swedenborgian Law of Spiritual Motion: Perception Modifies Gravitational Force

Swedenborg laid tremendous emphasis on the power of the mind to alter our spiritual reality for the better. A great deal of Swedenborgian theology can be summarized in a bumper-sticker that says, "Truth Leads." We are designed to be able to see farther than we

can actualize through our wills, because our wills remain conflicted. We all can envision much higher spiritual integration than we are currently able to pull off, and that's by design: our spiritual sight is always out ahead of our capability and shines the light onto the Promised Land.

There are so many ways that this works for us. Cognitive restructuring is a psychotherapeutic school of counseling that works on changing belief structures in order to change life experiences. In cognitive restructuring, we deconstruct fundamentally false ways of thinking and replace them with belief structures that empower effective living. For example, it is easy for us to develop flawed assumptions and conclusions about life from our early life experiences that we never confront and transform, such as feeling we are unlovely and unlovable. Very common, and really no one is likely to be completely free from this sort of fear along the way. In cognitive restructuring, we systematically and with intelligent intentionality shape a functional positive self-esteem that dramatically changes one's energy for life and ability to see creative ways of expressing one's loves and talents in effective ways in our personal and social worlds.

Other examples abound from the schools of positive thinking or, as Robert Schuller liked to call it, possibility thinking. A great example is running the four-minute mile. In addition to Hawking, another celebrated Englishman died last month: Roger Bannister, who ran in the first four-minute mile race back in the year of my birth, 1954. One of the most iconic sports milestones, runners had been stalking it for many years. But a funny thing happened after Bannister broke the record. Suddenly, within months, a couple of other runners broke the four-minute barrier, and soon lots of runners were hopping over that barrier.

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Swedenborg on Race

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the historical role of the intellectual, is maintained by a verbal slippage.”¹ Applied to this situation, by attempting to condemn “othering” without attempting to condemn my complicity in its nature and practice, I tacitly legitimize “othering.”

But that unrecognized contradiction runs deeper than language itself, because it operates from a place of “external thinking,” which is that mode of thinking from where we cannot see with “any light of the understand-

ing,” as Swedenborg will claim below. The contradiction weaves its way undetected, in a manner not unlike that of our pulse or our breath, in turn

The contradiction weaves its way undetected, in a manner not unlike that of our pulse or our breath, in turn poisoning us more pervasively than we would at most times suspect.

poisoning us more pervasively than we would at most times suspect.

So how do I stabilize myself for such a dialogue as this, just short of not saying anything at all? Should I simply bar myself from speaking about things that are taboo, thereby stifling the imaginative sense and making myself absent from participation in the communal growth of understanding? If a white man can only talk about white men, then there will always be an insurmountable communication gap that gives sanctuary to the shared delusion of white men. According to Mark Lilla, professor of humanities at Columbia University, “what people in a given victim group sometimes seem to be saying is: ‘You must understand my experience, and you can’t understand my experience.’”² As a white man, I certainly cannot

presume to know the inner life of a black person, since the only thing I am fairly certain of is that knowing myself is an elusive process that requires a lifetime of self-observation.

There is much within us that even our nearest friends cannot know—more than we dare or care or are able to bare to them—more of feeling, more of power, more of character. How little we know ourselves! We need limitations and temptations to open our inner selves, dispel our ignorance, tear off our disguises, throw down old idols, and destroy false standards. Only by such rude awakenings can we be led to a place

where we are less cramped, less hindered by the ever-insistent external world. Only then do we discover a new capacity and appreciation of

goodness and beauty and truth (*Light in My Darkness*, 116–17).

Lilla’s assessment of the situation demonstrates just another strain of the paradox, which suggests that our way toward deparadoxization must come from a deeper well.³ So let humility be our feeling; let critique be our power; and let open-mindedness be our character. From a place of humility, let’s begin by stabilizing our footing with critique.

Criticizing Rather than Sanitizing

As supporters of Swedenborg’s ideas, while we might be hesitant to criticize them, we become more open to doing so when we notice how his controversial words undermine our very attempts at saving them: the unrecognized contradiction. So in an effort to extricate ourselves from the paradox,

rather than attempt to sanitize Swedenborg’s controversial words, we should criticize them.

Quite possibly the most notorious of Swedenborg’s remarks on race are the ones that equate darkness with impurity. Here he describes what had been told to him by black spirits about both blackness and whiteness as they relate to the nature of one’s body and soul:

There are some gentiles from those regions where the people are black who bring with them from life in the world the desire to be treated harshly, for they believe that nobody can enter heaven except through punishment and affliction, and that only after that will they receive more gladsome things which they call paradise-like. . . . They said that when they are being treated harshly they are black but that afterwards they cast away their blackness and take on a whiteness, for they know that their souls are white even though their bodies are black. (*Arcana Coelestia* §2603)

Describing the souls of black people as white and expressing the sense of self-loathing that they feel due to the blackness of their skin makes absolute the inherent purity of whiteness. This sense of self-loathing is made all the more unequivocal in *Last Judgment* (*Posthumous*) §114⁴:

Among the blackest Africans are some who like to be punished and to be treated harshly in order to enter heaven, saying afterward that *they detest their blackness* because they know that their souls are white and

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1 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Harvard University Press, 1999), 256.

2 Frank Bruni, “I’m a White Man; Hear Me Out,” *The New York Times*, August 12, 2017.

3 “Now we must understand. We must love to understand” (René Daumal, *Letters on the Search for Awakening 1930–1944* [Dolmen Meadow Editions, 2010], vii).

4 Note that, as indicated by the very title of this work, Swedenborg did not publish *Last Judgment* (*Posthumous*); he did, however, publish a work entitled *The Last Judgment*. While this decision may cast some doubt as to his confidence in the former, his reference in *Arcana Coelestia*, which was published during his lifetime, to this idea that black people “desire to be white” sets precedence and attests to its endurance in his understanding. Note, too, that devotional communities have not made great distinctions between Swedenborg’s published and unpublished works as to their validity. For additional examples of remarks concerning this “desire to be white,” see *Spiritual Experiences* §§432, 454.

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only their bodies black (emphasis mine).

In spite of this bluntly negative characterization of black people offered by those spirits of whom Swedenborg spoke, his own description of sub-Saharan Africans as being more interiorly oriented and more capable of receiving truths is suggestive of his underlying approach to the spiritual that is at the core of his words:

Africans are more receptive of the doctrine of heaven than others on this earth, because they willingly accept the doctrine concerning the Lord. . . . They have a capacity to accept truths of faith, and especially the goods it teaches, because they are of a celestial disposition. (*Last Judgment (Posthumous)* §117)

The African people are more capable of enlightenment than all other peoples on this earth, because they are of such a character as to think interiorly and thus to accept truths and acknowledge them. Others . . . think only externally, receiving truths in their memory, but not seeing them interiorly in any light of the understanding—a light which they also do not acknowledge in matters of faith. (*Last Judgment (Posthumous)* §118)

While these passages ostensibly describe positive spiritual characteristics possessed by people of sub-Saharan African descent,⁵ there is no question that they “other” these people. As we can see in these two cases, Swedenborg’s romanticizing of sub-Saharan Africans can work against even his words’ best

intentions, as some ethnic groups will very likely find such language to be discriminatory or even repulsive. These passages certainly suffer from the reductive categorical flavor that comes with making essentializing general-

While these passages ostensibly describe positive spiritual characteristics possessed by people of sub-Saharan African descent, there is no question that they “other” these people.

izations about a group of people, and some might argue that Swedenborg’s language both here and above was a product of his sociohistorical location and so should be taken with a grain of salt, but what are we to make of these two passages when considering them in light of the following?

But as for inward qualities, regarding the life of faith and the like, they are not to be judged. Only the Lord knows them. A thousand can appear alike outwardly, in fact speak alike, and yet be wholly unlike as to those qualities. The motives of everyone as to those qualities can never be known. To judge about them on the basis of deeds, is to be deceived. . . . From much experience it has become known to me that people whom the world had judged as evil as to their inward qualities, are among the blessed, and conversely, people whom they had judged well, are among the unhappy. (*Spiritual Experiences* §4426)

If only the Lord can know our inward qualities, then Swedenborg’s statements about African people being “more capable of enlightenment than all other peoples” must have been awakened in him by the Lord. But whether the Lord was truly involved in these messages or not, while Swedenborg’s remarks offer fruitful insights into the reception of truth and spiritual understanding—as we will see in the next

section—we must be vigilant against the use of language that puts people in categories such as race, ethnicity, and nationality, especially when those categories are reductive and serve to diminish those people’s very humanity. So with divine inspiration in one hand and human fallibility in the other, we are presented with “moral difficulties that are unresolvable within the strict framework of [Swedenborg’s] presentation” (to quote, yet again, my faithful colleague). How do we address this fresh quandary?

Filtering in the Spiritual Nutrients

While there may not be any clear solutions to these moral difficulties, we can get that firmer grasp on what Swedenborg’s words, even those that come across as pejorative, could mean for us today by approaching them from a source of surer footing, by thinking on these things from a more interior place that allows for the true open-mindedness that comes with incontrovertible truth. Swedenborg guides us to this place in his very same words.

In *Last Judgment (Posthumous)* §118, for example, Swedenborg makes a very crucial observation concerning the distinction between a person’s external and internal selves. Certain spiritual traditions whose focus is on self-transformation rely on the relationship between becoming and being, between knowledge and understanding. Knowledge, which is fundamental to one’s natural self, comes from this “external thinking,” whereby truths received are mere associations, related to the gathering of worldly information and so the details of memory and therefore not made a permanent part of one’s being. Such is our natural, everyday state of subjectivity, one in which our own finite light shines upon our thinking, and we are prone to falling victim to such unconscious behavior as unrecognized contradiction.

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⁵ There are many passages in Swedenborg’s published works that corroborate these remarks as well as some whose wordings make all the more difficult their redeemability. For examples of such similar remarks that were published during his lifetime, see *Arcana Coelestia* §2604; *Heaven and Hell* §326; *The Last Judgment (Continuation)* §§73, 75; and *True Christianity* §§835, 837, 838, 839. For examples of those that were published posthumously, see *Spiritual Experiences* §§518 and *Apocalypse Explained* §§808, 1118.

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Understanding, on the other hand, is characteristic of one's spiritual self and comes from "interior thinking," whereby truths are acknowledged as coming in from outside one's personal constellation of thoughts and feelings. The resonance of understanding comes from the sustained efforts required to transmute these truths into lived experience and engaged practice so that they may become intimately woven into the fabric of one's being. Such objectivity is a spiritual gift from "above," illuminated by the light of the Infinite; and it is this core of "human" being that is the most real part of ourselves, making us who we truly are, allowing us to confront our fears and persevere, and ultimately making possible real and lasting change.

So the real spiritual lesson that we should glean from Swedenborg's observations in this passage is that we would all, regardless of our skin color, benefit from opening up and making ourselves available, by virtue of a type of self-imposed surrendering, to that "internal thinking" that is higher than ourselves; and as a result, we would be more inclined to make greater daily efforts at empathizing with each and every person with whom we encounter on our earthly journey. Strangely enough, by making it more about our selves, our inner selves, we make it less about ourselves, our outer selves. And that's a paradox I can live with. For what would this world look like if all of its inhabitants were motivated solely by the needs of others, operating outwardly from their inner selves? Would it look something like heaven?

The reason the Lord's divine nature in heaven is love is that love is what is receptive of every heavenly quality—that is, of peace,



John Connolly is the editor at the Swedenborg Foundation.

Interview: Off the Left Eye

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pleasant surprise of all being how interested people are in Swedenborg's ideas! Honestly, if you had told me ten years ago that we'd eventually be getting hundreds of thousands of views a month on Swedenborgian videos, I wouldn't have believed you.

It's also been encouraging and gratifying to see how deeply our audience's interest in Swedenborg's concepts runs. People are constantly asking thoughtful questions, applying the topics to their own lives, and exploring Swedenborg's books for themselves.

I've also been surprised by the success of our long-form content. We started out making short clips, thinking that would be the limit of the internet's attention span. As it turns out, our long videos, which are regularly around an hour long, are what really propelled us to the success we're having now. It seems to be an indicator that people are really looking for something they can have a deep engagement with.

Feil: *What goes into your talk show, and how does response to it differ from that of the stand-alone videos?*

Childs: Our weekly show has been our most-watched product, and it differs from the stand-alone videos in several ways. The first is length. The stand-alone videos ran generally from one to fifteen minutes, but the show generally goes from forty-five minutes to over an hour. It is a structured, topic-by-topic

intelligence, wisdom, and happiness. Love is receptive of everything that is in harmony with it. It longs for such things, it seeks them out, it absorbs them spontaneously because it has the constant purpose of uniting itself with them and being enriched by them. (*Heaven and Hell* §18) 

look into all facets of Swedenborg's worldview, and includes reading sections directly from his works, sometimes at length.

We also use every media tool at our disposal—animations, diagrams, overlays, interviews, even skits to make the concepts interesting, accessible, and clear, and to demonstrate how they fit into the rest of what we know about the world.

Feil: *Describe the team that creates the OtLE offerings and responds to viewers.*

Our team is subdivided into several key groups. We're small enough that certain people play a role in more than one group, but the functions are distinct and complement each other. Our production team uses technology and artistic talent to bring ideas to life on the screen. They're proficient in several art and graphics software applications and handle everything from filming to editing to creating motion graphics. They also handle the less glamorous side of media production—file management, tech support, equipment management, and so on.

Our content team searches Swedenborg's works to get a comprehensive sense of what he said about a particular topic, and then searches for complementary concepts within science and culture. We take these concepts and package them into a narrative, refine it, and finally film it in conjunction with the production team.

Our monitoring team screens questions for our Monday programs, and responds to comments and inquiries that viewers post on YouTube.

Feil: *What do you like most about directing OtLE? How has your background prepared you for this challenge?*

Childs: My favorite things about directing *Off the Left Eye* is the opportunity to find new ways to show the beauty of Swedenborg's ideas, to work with a talented team, and to use the technological tools now available.

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My background has prepared me in several ways. My degree in Communications gave me familiarity with media tools and how to express ideas. My previous positions, including one in a tech-focused Swedenborgian church, helped me refine my skill set. But the primary thing that prepared me for my current role is my lifelong interest in Swedenborg's material and the value it has had for me. We're told that Providence doesn't allow anything bad to happen unless good can come out of it, and I find that the difficult things I've been through consistently brought me back to the message in Swedenborg's writings. That message has been inspiration, guidance, comfort, and medicine for me, with a power and consistency that nothing else gets close to. It's the hope that I can share that with others that propels me forward.

Feil: *Any thoughts on what's next for Swedenborg and the digital world? If money were no object, what would you like to see?*

Childs: It seems like every advance we make, every success we have in getting the word out, just gets me more excited for the potential of what could be. Every avenue that leads people to Swedenborg could be its own program: a program that focuses on Swedenborg's ethical philosophy for those looking for a code to live by; a program focusing in Swedenborg's Biblical interpretation for those who love the text but are looking for more from it; a program that takes a Swedenborgian lens to current events, and on and on.

There's a need for a systematic entry point for new people, a "Swedenborg 101" system that leads people until they can stand on their own feet in the material.

The biggest potential is in face-to-face contact. People who find this material are eager to meet other

Stephen Hawking

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Were runners all of a sudden going through an axial leap in physical ability? No, they were breaking a belief barrier. Runners perceived that it could be done, and it altered their actual energies for it. We are so designed that changes in our mind can produce significant changes in the force fields of our abilities and capacities. Or, to put it in some playful Swedenborgianese: Perception modifies gravitational force in our spiritual lives.

III. Third Swedenborgian Law of Spiritual Motion: In Spiritual Motion Greater Mass Produces Lesser Weight

A final nugget about spiritual gravity is that the more we receive of God's life into our being, the more spiritual

Swedenborgians, and many of them have never talked to one in person! There's a growing call from our audience to find ways to get together, and I think a network of meet-ups, conferences, and retreats could really take this fellowship to the next level. So, as you can see, it feels like we're just getting started—and hopefully what we're doing five years from now will make what we're doing now look like no big deal! ☸

You can view the *Off the Left Eye* videos on YouTube and will find inspiration there on a wide range of spiritual topics. In addition to his keynote, on Monday, July 2, Curtis will present a mini-course entitled "Swedenborg as Spiritual Duct Tape: A look into the diverse and potent ways Swedenborg's ideas affect people online."

Rev. Karen Feil is pastor at the Swedenborg Library in Chicago; she is a director on the board of the Swedenborg Foundation where she is the treasurer.



mass we have. Newton's Second Law of Motion says that Force equals Mass times Acceleration. Swedenborgian spiritual physics declares a correspondential law that says the greater our spiritual mass becomes in relation to the infinite mass of God's holy center, the more powerful the attraction—or force of gravity. Ironically, the greater the mass of the right kind in relation to the Divine, the lighter we become. The weight of it all becomes lighter as we progress. It becomes less and less as if we are picking it up, and more and more as if we are being lifted up. That's due to the booster rockets kicking in for acceleration as we regenerate.

The reason is that the force pulling us back is loosening. Becoming inwardly conjoined in love for others and for God in specific moments and situations is increasingly shifting into an energy system that increasingly feels like a kind of current. We are still pedaling the cycle but it is as if a motor has become installed in the gear shaft. This is what the Jesus meant when he said, "Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me . . . for My yoke is easy and My burden light" (Matthew 11:28–30). The more we accrue a spiritual mass of love the lighter we seem, and the swifter we flow in Divine Providence.

So, let us give thanks for the work of great scientists such as Isaac Newton, Emanuel Swedenborg, Albert Einstein, and Stephen Hawking. Let us appreciate the great gifts of Professor Hawking. In his own way, he marveled at the cosmos and pondered it deeply. I wonder what is he be-

holding now. ☸
Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence is dean of the Center for Swedenborgian Studies of the Graduate Theological Union and teaches Spirituality and Biblical Exegesis there.



The Evolution of a Very Good Idea

BY MERRILEE PHINNEY

"Everything in Heaven, in the world, and in the human body, both great and small, was created from use, in use, and for use" (Apocalypse Explained \$1194).

Hugging the corner walls of the dining room of the Main Building at Fryeburg New Church Assembly (FNCA) are three tables, and during the two-week camp session each August, these tables are covered with all sorts of interesting things. Referred to as the Sales Table, these tables have been part of FNCA for the past eighty-three years and remain a useful fundraiser for boosting the camp treasury.

The first known record of the Sales Table is in 1934, and it is mentioned often in the minutes of the FNCA's Women's Auxiliary (whose minutes run continuously 1935–1975) since that was the Auxiliary's primary function. Up until about thirty years ago, local teens were hired from the community as babysitters during morning lectures, and in the past, money to pay for this service was gained through sales of items on the Sales Table. Although now the babysitting job is offered as a staff position, the Sales Table is still a very active and important part of Camp, with all the proceeds now going into the camp treasury.

From the beginning, campers were encouraged to bring an item or two . . . or more . . . to donate to the Sales Table. Artisans (agreeing to donate a percentage of their sales) have appreciated the opportunity to display their talents and have added pottery, paintings, knit items, tatted earrings, puppets,



Auctioneer "Officer" Alex Dyer

FNCA Registration is OPEN!

**Fryeburg New Church Assembly
Family Camp Session:
August 4–19**

**Opening Weekend Program:
"Conflict Resolution Skills Learned
from Psychologists and Angels"
led by Dr. Soni Werner**

**Lecture Themes:
Week One: "Altruism and Kindness"
Week Two: "Spiritual Journeys
in the Bible"**

**Rev. Everett K. Bray
Visiting Lecturer:
Dr. Soni Werner**

**For more information, visit
<<http://fryeburg.org/>>.**

**To register, you can go directly to
<<http://fryeburg.org/register>>**

and much more. There have been camp T-shirts, postcards, and bumper stickers too! For many years, Tina and Willis Wood (Woodscidermill.com) have filled the corner of one of the tables with their fantastic Vermont Pure Maple Syrup. The supply disappears fast! There are always white elephant items, some of questionable value or use, but more often, items are special attic treasures ready to find a new home. Gloria Guiu Costello (a camper her entire life) remembers as a child always wanting what was on the Sales Table. Today, kids are still drawn to the Sales Table hoping there will be something there for them to beg their parents or grandparents to purchase for them. The assortment of items has rotated over time, some of great worth,

others not so much, but the sales varying from a few cents to several dollars, always spark interest and are an essential camp fundraiser.

The Sales Table Auction became part of camp life in 1952, and since the late 1980s when it became an annual event, it has become a highlight of FNCA's two weeks! Many campers have served as auctioneer over these years, adding their own personalities to this event. This past summer's auctioneer, Jason Greenwood (also our camp director) added large numbers on paddles so the audience could actually feel the real auction experience. The 2017 auction, also live-streamed to Facebook for the first time, raised the most money ever! At the end of the auction, marking the official close of each year's Sales Table, any treasures remaining are donated to the Fryeburg New Church for their annual yard sale. There is a use for everything!

Campers and friends of the Assembly are encouraged to think about the value and use of the Sales Table: an idea that started eighty-three years ago and is still flourishing. Although some sale items (especially well-worn white elephant items) are of questionable use, in the end they perform a use by being on the Sales Table with hopes of helping finance FNCA, even if only in a small way. When the idea was first presented by camp women so many years ago, the use was to fill a need, to finance lecture-time childcare, and for many years that is where the earnings were funneled. Although the goal has evolved and the mission changed, the need continues, along with an increased anticipation for the end of second week and the AUCTION. Every year, some things that are "for the Sales Table" are not actually put on the Sales Table but hidden as a surprise for the

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Passages

Confirmations

Stephanie Comptois and **Jeanine Keller** were confirmed by Rev. René Michiniak in the Royal Oak Church of the Holy City (Michigan) on Easter morning, April 1, 2018. ☩

A Very Good Idea

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big event. There have been New England Patriots game tickets, restaurant gift certificates, custom made furniture, custom wood products, and the traditional honor of claiming for one year a very special pair of hand-made “Carmen Miranda” fruit compote earrings, warmly and carefully tended from year to year.

I enjoy my own purchases from the Sales Table. Over my desk is a beautiful watercolor by Louise Woofenden painted in 1988. I purchased it from the sales table years ago, had it professionally framed, and look at it every-day. In my bedroom hangs artwork by Lois McCurdy, created in 2007 and purchased from the Sales Table a few years back. At the 2017 camp auction, I had the winning bid for a black and white drawing of “Pines Along the Saco River” by Carolyn Judson. Over the years I have acquired many other special items from the Sales Table and from the annual auction. One of my most treasured items sits next to my home computer area: a large glass bottle full of ‘camp air’ captured from outside the Main Building by Ross Woofenden just before the auction in 2016. I was thrilled to have the winning bid!

Fryeburg New Church Assembly is



Nina Sasser models the “Carmen Miranda” earrings

Convention Activities for All Exploration, and Fun Too!

Program for Kids

This year at the Convention, we are excited to announce that there will be a children’s program for ages five to twelve. (Teens will take part in the SCYL activities.) The theme will be “Survival,” and two wonderful young adult sisters, Holly and Charlie Bauer, will be running the program. They will use games, art, team initiatives, group discussions, and other fun-filled activities specially suited to this age group to teach physical, emotional, and spiritual survival techniques.



The steam train through the redwoods

a very special place, but more than a place it is an experience and a sum of many parts. The Sales Table is one of those parts and a useful one! We Swedenborgians like to talk and think about uses. Helping to support the Sales Table, either contributing items for it or buying from it, is being useful in a special way. Perhaps you have something to donate, some unique, interesting, or useful item that could

fill a need or use for someone attending camp. Think Sales Table! All donations are appreciated! ☩

Merrilee Phinney has been attending FNCA since 1960. She is a lifelong member of the Bridgewater New Jerusalem Church, where she serves as treasurer and caretaker. For the past several years she has enjoyed being in charge of the summer camp Sales Table.



The Convention Outing

This year the Convention “outing” will be to the beautiful redwoods of Henry Cowell State Park near Santa Cruz (<https://tinyurl.com/y8btdxqc>). On Wednesday afternoon, July 4, we will travel by bus through the scenic hills of the southern Bay Area. Once there, a private ride on an open air steam train through the redwoods has been arranged for us. There are also hiking trails and the “Garden of Eden” swimming hole to be explored. This is a Convention not to miss! More information and registration at <http://tinyurl.com/Swedenborg2018>. ☩

Letter from the President

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leaders that others disagree with and then just leave the church rather than cause problems. Church assets may be improperly dispersed, and then outside takeover is a peril.

For these reasons, we are searching for guidelines for best practices for use of the churches:

- Strategies that can be offered for direction before and if there is conflict
- Commonalities for what works best in our disparate, independent Swedenborgian churches
- Guidelines for General Council to follow for helping churches in their decision-making.

If you have not received the Best Practices Questionnaire in your email, please contact CSS: fmcrossan@gtu.edu. It will help me lead in the upcoming term, if elected, as your president.

—Rev. Jane Siebert

About the Swedenborgian Church

Emanuel Swedenborg was born January 29, 1688, in Stockholm, Sweden. Although he never intended a church denomination to be founded or named after him, a society was formed in London fifteen years after his death. American groups eventually founded the General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches.

As a result of Swedenborg's spiritual questioning and insights, we as a church exist to encourage that same spirit of inquiry and personal growth, to respect differences in views, and to accept others who may have different traditions.

In his theological writings, Swedenborg shared a view of God as infinitely loving and at the very center of our beings, a view of life as a spiritual birthing as we participate in our own creation, and a view of scripture as a story of inner life stages as we learn and grow. Swedenborg said, "All religion relates to life, and the life of religion is to do good." He also felt that the sincerest form of worship is a useful life.

Off the Left Eye: An Interview with Curtis Childs, Annual Convention Keynote Speaker

INTERVIEW BY KAREN FEIL

Curtis Childs, director of the Swedenborg Foundation's Off the Left Eye (OtLE) channel, will be the keynote speaker at the 2018 Annual Convention of the Swedenborgian Church in San Jose where he will also present a mini-course on OtLE's effects on the wider world. I asked Curtis to share some background information about this initiative which became part of the Foundation's programs in 2013.

Feil: How did the OtLE initiative by the Foundation come about? How many years has the Foundation program been functioning, and how large is the staff now?

Childs: *Off the Left Eye* was born out of the desire to inject Swedenborg's message into the massive and vibrant conversation surrounding religion, spirituality, and everything in between on YouTube. There seemed to be a hunger in this online discussion for a rational, spiritual, practical, and ethical worldview, and I thought Swedenborg would be an answer to a lot of the questions asked.

I started the OtLE YouTube channel



back in 2011, and maintained it as an independent project for a span of time before bringing it to the Swedenborg Founda-

tion as part of its new online initiatives program in 2013. Since that time, the channel's popularity has grown exponentially, and we now have a dedicated staff of seven people, three full-time and four part-time. We also work very closely with the rest of the Swedenborg Foundation's employees including the New Century Edition team, and our project wouldn't be possible without the support of all parts of the Swedenborg Foundation.

Feil: How large is the catalog of OtLE videos? What have you learned that surprised you, in terms of viewing statistics and feedback? What topics have the most enduring appeal?

Childs: We currently have 437 videos on the channel. Many things have surprised me on this journey—the most

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194th Session of the General Convention of the New Jerusalem

Council of Ministers: Thursday, June 28 - Saturday, June

30; Opening and Keynote: July 1; Outing Day: July 4;

Convention events run July 1 through July 5

Convention 2018 will be held in San Jose, CA on the campus of San Jose State University (SJSU). To learn more about SJSU, visit www.sjsu.edu. (This is not a SJSU-affiliated event.) **To learn more about the 2018 Convention and view a list of Frequently Asked Questions**, please visit <http://tinyurl.com/Swedenborg2018>, email manager@swedenborg.org or call the Central Office at (617) 969-4240.

Logging: See next page for more details. Rooms will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis, and may fill up before the end of the registration period. Rooms include one standard linen and towel pack.

Roommates (doubles only): If you have a specific roommate in mind, please fill in their name in the designated space. If not, please fill in the matching section. You will be paired with someone of the same gender.

Childcare: Please contact the Central Office for details and forms.

Children 12 and Under: No registration fee and their room and board is 1/2 adult rate. Scholarships available to pay 1/2 of airfare Contact Central Office for details.

Youth League Program: The Youth League program runs from Sunday, July 1 through Thursday, July 5 and is supervised by Kurt Fekete. If you want your teen to attend without a parent, please contact the Central Office.

Internet: Free guest wireless access is available.

Parking: Cost of \$10 per day/\$21 per week for parking permit in the 7th Street Lot (South Parking Garage). Cost of \$11 per day/\$50 per week for parking permit in the Campus Village Parking Garage. Please check the box below so we know how many cars will be parking on campus. See the FAQ for more parking information.

Reservations and Payment Deadline: No new room, meal, or outing reservations will be available after May 24 at 5PM EST. Any room and board reservations not fully paid by this date will be subject to a \$50 late fee. Event registrations will be accepted for as long as space permits.

Cancellations: Fully refundable prior to May 24 at 5PM ET and must be done by calling the Central Office between 9AM-5PM ET, M-F.

Arrivals and Departures: Check-in on arrival day for on-campus guests is between 10AM-5PM. Check-out on July 5 is before 11AM. See FAQ for details on arrivals/departures outside of these windows.

Mobility: Attendees will need to bring or rent their own mobility aids. Please see the FAQ for more details.

Communications: Please provide a valid email address below if you have one. We provide as much information as possible via email. Add manager@swedenborg.org to your contact list to ensure that you receive all of our email updates.

Ground Transportation: Please see the FAQ for more details.

July 4 Outing: There will be a July 4 outing to the Redwoods area, which is included in the room and board and meal packages below. Details to follow.

Name		
Name		
<input type="checkbox"/> Please check this box if you will be parking on campus		
Street		Apt. #
City	State/Province	Zip
Home Church/Organization	Preferred Email	Day Phone
Names, ages, and genders of any minors accompanying you		
Special Dietary Needs and/or Mobility Issues (Not everything can be accommodated)		
Specific Roommate Request (For double rooms)		

Roommate Matching

We will do our best to match you with an appropriate roommate if you will be in a double room and have not indicated a roommate above.

Please indicate your gender: Male Female

I am (check all that apply):

<input type="checkbox"/> An early riser	<input type="checkbox"/> A night owl
<input type="checkbox"/> A heavy sleeper	<input type="checkbox"/> A light sleeper
<input type="checkbox"/> Fragrance sensitive	<input type="checkbox"/> Fragrance-free
<input type="checkbox"/> A CPAP machine user	<input type="checkbox"/> A snorer

Anything else we should know when matching you?

Travel Information

To travel from the Norman Y. Mineta San Jose International Airport we suggest a taxi cab or a Uber/Lyft ride as it is a short distance from the airport to the campus. Uber/Lyft apps can be easily downloaded on any smartphone and connected to a credit card.

Convention Name Tag

Please list below your name and title you would like listed on your convention Name Tag:

Room and Board Packages: *Note:* All rooms will be double occupancy. There are only 110 beds available in suites (4 bedrooms, 2 baths, kitchenette and lounge area). If not all are reserved we will try to honor those requesting singles, which would be a double room with one person paying the single rate, on a first requested and reserved single basis. We cannot guarantee singles. (See FAQ for prices if available) For overnight stays or meals that don't fit the listed packages, or for children's rates (or to apply for child or youth scholarships), contact the Central Office. Dinner on July 4 and will not be in the dining hall. We will provide more details soon.

REGULAR CONVENTION Package A:

Sun. July 1 - Thurs. July 5 (four nights):

\$354 per person/double room. 4 nights lodging, 4 dinners, 3 lunches, 4 breakfasts, 1 linen pkg. and July 4 outing.

GENERAL COUNCIL LAY MEMBERS Package B:

Sat. June 30 - Thurs. July 5 (five nights):

\$444 per person/double room. 5 nights lodging, 5 dinners, 4 lunches, 5 breakfasts, 1 linen pkg. and July 4 outing.

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS AND LICENSED PASTORS Package C:

Thurs. June 28 - Thurs. July 5 (seven nights):

\$627 per person/double room. 7 nights lodging, 7 dinners, 6 lunches, 7 breakfasts, 1 linen pkg. and July 4 outing.

Please check this box if requesting single room, if available.

Meal Only Packages: For those **staying off-campus** who want to buy meals. Meals are not offered unless registered and pre-paid.

REGULAR CONVENTION Package X: Sun. July 1 - Thurs.

July 5, meals only: \$125 per person, includes 4 dinners, 3 lunches, 4 breakfasts and July 4 outing.

GENERAL COUNCIL LAY MEMBERS Package Y: Sat. June 30

- Thurs. July 5, meals only: \$160 per person, includes 5 dinners, 4 lunches, 5 breakfasts and July 4 outing.

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEMBERS AND LICENSED

PASTORS Package Z: Thurs. June 28 - July 5, meals only: \$230 per person, includes 7 dinners, 6 lunches, 7 breakfasts and July 4 outing.

OUTING PACKAGE R: July 4 outing to Redwoods, including train ride through Redwoods, \$50 per person. For those not staying or eating on campus.

Registration	Cost	# People	Total
Adult	\$120		
Youth League	\$60		
Child (0-12)	Free		
*Family maximum	\$240		
One Day Registration	\$50		
Local Volunteer	\$60		

*Family maximum price applies to immediate family members (i.e., parents/guardians and minor children) only.

Room & Board	Package	#People	Total
Room & Board or Meal Only Package (see package descriptions for rates)			
\$50 Late Fee (for package paid after May 24 at 5PM ET)			

Please check this box if you would like to donate for child and youth scholarships to attend convention, and indicate amount: \$

General Convention Subsidies	#People	Total Discount
Council of Ministers and Licensed Pastors: Package A or C (double room), or Package X or Z		
General Council Lay Members: Package B (double room), or Package Y		
Swedenborgian Youth League Officers: Package A (double room) or Package X		
Children 0-12: One half of adult rate for any package		
Other (please specify):		

Grand Total (from Registration, Room & Board, and donations, less Subsidies)	
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Payment Information

All prices are in US currency. If you pay with a Canadian check, please add US\$5 for handling. Please be advised that all prices are listed in US funds and must be converted for payment in other currencies. All room and board reservations not paid in full by 5PM EST on May 24 will be subject to a \$50 late fee. See "Cancellations" section of FAQ for refund policy.

Payment Method

1. **Credit card by mail (DO NOT email credit card information) - Fill out the following:**

Visa MasterCard Amex Discover
 Card Number: _____ Exp. Date: _____
 Cardholder's Name: _____
 CCV/Security Code: _____ Billing Zip Code: _____
 Signature: _____

2. Credit card by phone - call (617) 969-4240, Monday through Friday, 9AM-5PM EST
3. Credit card or bank payment via PayPal - We will email an invoice
4. Check: Send checks payable to The Swedenborgian Church to: 50 Quincy St., Cambridge, MA 02138