

THE MESSENGER

Official Organ of the Swedenborgian Church

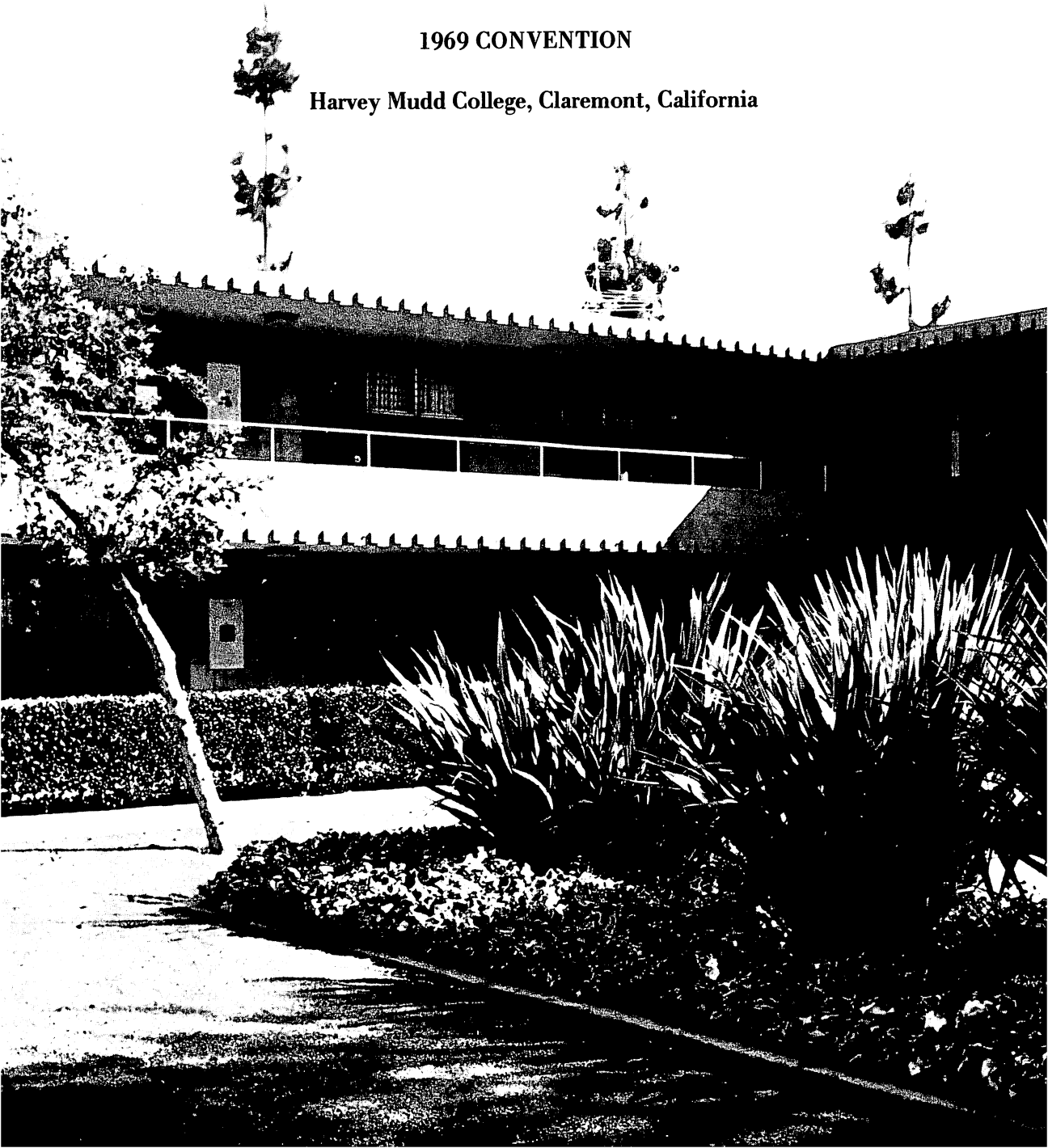
JANUARY 1969

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1969 CONVENTION

Harvey Mudd College, Claremont, California



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

This issue of *The Messenger*, appearing in the month of Swedenborg's birthday, is devoted in a specifically focused way to the relationship between his teachings, and our church that was founded on them.

The focus of attention lies in the "differentness" of the Swedenborgian Church: how is it different, why is it different, what does it teach that's so different, and—as an opening illustration of the significance of the issue—what does it mean to join this "different" church?

Beyond this much introduction, I think the issue speaks for itself.

Robert H. Kirven

PUBLICATION OF 1968 JOURNAL DELAYED

A number of circumstances have combined to delay the publication of the 1968 Journal. A new president and a new secretary have taken office. A central office is being established with new staff. A new printer has been engaged. So please be patient. The Journal will be published.

JOINING THE CHURCH

"I'm neither a Republican nor a Democrat. When it comes to politics I'm an Independent." This is spoken proudly and with an air of superiority, indicating that the speaker has no desire to become embroiled in "party politics."

How similar to the attitude of many people toward the church! "I get along well with people from all churches. I was brought up a Baptist, my children went to a Methodist Sunday School, we were married in the Wayfarer's Chapel (Swedenborgian), and one Christmas Eve my wife and I attended Mass in a Roman Catholic church." If questioned further, our friend might tell us that he has never joined any church himself. He moves often and seldom stays in a city for more than five years, hardly time to establish roots or join a church.

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GENERAL COUNCIL MEETS

Convention's General Council holds its midwinter meetings at the Swedenborg School of Religion, Newton, Mass., on January 17 and 18. A report of actions of current general interest will appear in the February issue of *The Messenger*.

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HOW IS THE CHURCH OF THE NEW JERUSALEM (SWEDENBORGIAN) DIFFERENT?

Every religion, like every individual, has a distinctive aspect. What is our distinctiveness as a church? In what ways do we differ from other Christian churches?

These questions have been asked of us time and time again. There is no way of avoiding them, no simple answer. Our problem is, where do we begin to answer the questioner. The New Church has so many doctrines peculiar to it that each one has relatedness to another. How do I present one idea without bringing in another?

At our last convention the laymen pleaded with the clergy to write some simple booklet to answer the questions not only for persons outside our denomination, but that would be of some aid to those within the church. "Help our young people to understand our church!"

I asked several laymen in the Boston area what they thought was distinctive about the New Church and here are several of their answers:

1. "The distinctiveness of the New Church lies in the teaching of the correspondences. Without them the internal sense of the Word would be lost."
2. "I came into the church because of the teachings about the Trinity. My mind for years was confused about the workings of three gods in heaven. The New Church has helped me to clear that up and I find that I can worship the Lord now with more understanding."
3. "A copy of *Heaven and Hell* was given to me by a friend when I lost my husband. The teachings about the spiritual world have given me great comfort."
4. "The New Church has so many teachings on all subjects. We have more truths and insights into our earthly problems that I wouldn't be happy in any other church."
5. "My first contact with the church came through Swedenborg, the scientist. My admiration for him helped me to accept his theological teachings."

6. "We believe in living our religion and not resting on a faith alone concept. Charity and faith together."

It is worth noting that each person responded that the distinctiveness of the church, for them, was a different thing. Everyone of us is likely to respond to the church according to the bent of our mind. One man may enter the church through one doctrine, and another through some other truth.

The distinctive quality of the New Church arises from a combination of *all its particular* teachings. It is the entirety of the view of the truth it gives. The stressing of one teaching to the exclusion of another distorts our distinctiveness.

Understanding the Word of God through the correspondence needs the love of the Lord and understanding of the Trinity. What good would the first two be if we failed to put these teachings into our practical living. No one teaching is the New Church. Perhaps an analogy might serve to illustrate this point. The tendency of our age is to specialize. If a heart specialist thinks that his profession is the most important and all others are subordinate he makes a serious mistake. It's true that at times he may be very valuable and essential but there will be times when a lung specialist needs to be consulted in a heart transplant. Their combined knowledge is essential for the health of the body.

All doctrines of the New Church are essential for the presentation of the Divine Body. When a church tries to elevate one doctrine above all others, error becomes unavoidable. That doctrine elevated may have come from a legitimate position but out of its inner connections with other truths it becomes ineffective. We need to strive to see the Church in its completeness.

When the editor of *The Messenger* asked me to write on this topic, I shuddered. This topic has been threshed through many times. Why rehash it again? Will I come up with anything new? Perhaps the usefulness of the question comes from the fact that it is an issue with many of our members. We do have difficulty explaining our distinctiveness. Could it be that we really don't know? When we are asked this question do we become threatened and find that we have no real firm conviction and lack a strong self-identification? When I say "this is why my church is distinctive," am I willing

WHY IS THE SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH DIFFERENT?

I have been asked to share some of my thoughts about the Swedenborgian Church. The suggested topic was "Why is the Swedenborgian Church different?" The "Swedenborgian Church", it seems to me, when viewed as an organized religious body is not really so different than other organized religious bodies. It is true that the ideas of Swedenborg differ from, for example, those of Luther or Calvin, but in this sense all churches differ from each other. I have chosen therefore in spite of the assignment to dwell primarily on certain similarities that characterize organized religion of the sacerdotal variety in general and the Swedenborgian Church in particular.

It is unfortunate, in my opinion, that the "New Jerusalem" mentioned in the Apocalypse is frequently identified with the Swedenborgian organization. Needless to say, I reject this identification and consider spurious any attempt to compare the "New Jerusalem" of spiritual language with any group in the current sociological sense of the term "group". Membership in any religious body may have multiple and diverse motives and the formally stated goals of a social group say nothing about the implicit goals of each of its members. If then membership in the Swedenborgian organization does not imply membership in the spiritual "New Jerusalem", we cannot identify the two as being the same. My comments, therefore, are directed toward the properties of the organized church rather than at those who within and without the church espouse the principles of love set forth so clearly in the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg.

Organized religion has frequently been compared to as obsessive-compulsive neurosis, since ritualistic activity is common to both. Obsessive-compulsive behavior in individuals is characterized by the presence of ritual, magical beliefs in the power of mere thought as a causal agent, and over-intellectualized communication aimed more at confusing issues than at clarifying them. Obsessive persons are frequently argumentative, perform many kinds of meaningless actions and reasons endlessly about everything without ever arriving at decisive conclusions about anything. Such persons generally find it extremely difficult to make meaningful decisions since they have to consider so many sides to every issue; they are locked in rigid patterns of living patterns which preclude emotional spon-

taneity. This kind of style serves to maintain the illusion that one has perfect control over everything, nothing can get out of hand, no improvements are possible and so forth. Afraid of their emotions, obsessive-compulsive people are usually quite isolated within themselves and do not readily interact with each other on other than superficial levels. Although such individuals readily reason about matters of depth, they do not interact on such levels but rather avoid involvement.

While I do not accept the thesis that all religious thought evolves out of man's need to control and mollify the hostile forces of the universe much of organized religious activity appears to be a species of the kind of magical thinking that characterizes the obsessive-compulsive pattern. Swedenborgianism is particularly attractive to the over-intellectual obsessive since the writings are so voluminous and often lacking in emotional substance. It is this feature of the church, which in my view accounts for the fact that so much reasoning about the letter of Swedenborg is encouraged while little is accomplished out of the spirit of his writings.

Rigidity and adherence to tradition has always been a harassment to progressive clergy and laity. In spite of so much dissatisfaction in the Swedenborgian Church, in spite of incontrovertible evidence that the church is dying, we still adhere to time-eroded forms and rituals and greet with suspicion and hostility original attempts to bring the human factor into our worship services. Although we hold numerous lengthy and expensive seminars on how to resuscitate the church, nothing ever seems to change significantly. Worship services follow the same rigid rules; sermons and hymns are a certain ancient type, personal interaction in the form of sharing anxieties and concerns are absent, and people are spoon-fed on comfortable tales that are secure because they are familiar and non-challenging. The very nature of the preacher-congregation relationship is a hoary survival of a bygone age wherein an holy authority spoke and the people listened. In this age when men want their say and the possession of a respectable self is no longer for the privileged few, the models of the authoritarian past are found wanting.

In addition, the church has traditionally been a kind of cultural conscience. Forever dwelling on the ideal and lofty, on the next world rather than the present one, it has neglected and villified the

significant issues of human life and has offered escapism rather than realistic problem-solving mechanisms. Such mechanisms can only evolve from intimate human interactions. In this respect the church's solutions have too often been the same as those of the obsessional who employs all sorts of techniques from the construction of grandiose philosophies to yogic meditation to relieve a basic though often unconscious sense of loneliness, isolation, and helplessness.

The more a church suppresses or ignores concern about basic human motives such as love, aggression, sex, and *genuine* religious experience, the more it will be abandoned, the more it can assimilate concern for and realistic interpretation of these aspects of human life, the more it will be in a position to assist people struggling along life's complex road. When you stop and think about it, when was the last time you witnessed a discussion among New Churchmen about their religious experience? I do not mean dry discussions about beliefs on doctrinal issues but actual emotional experience. We must dispense with the impersonal, ritualistic activity that parades under the rubric of religion and involve people in issues that are vital to their lives or concerned people will abandon the church.

We are talking here about the joy of loving. How delightful, for example, is the physical act of marriage love when it must be performed as a ritual with a never changing technique and minimal spontaneity? People will not tolerate the same food on the dinner table day after day, and housewives are swift to disguise the left-overs served for the third consecutive day. Yet we permit church services to remain rigid and sterile while we worship tradition rather than a God of creativity whose presence is manifested most clearly in the kaleidoscopic processes of human interaction. How curious a paradox confronts us! We see man worshipping a God of love in a loveless vacuum. It is small wonder that the trend is toward more beautiful and elegant buildings in which to worship; we hope to offset our emotional deadness by stimulating the senses alone.

The obsessive dilemma like most extreme psychological solutions grows out of the need to control our inner feelings and thoughts most of which reveal our true nature, our life loves as it were, and which manifest themselves sooner or later in direct or indirect ways. In the spiritual worlds, according

to Swedenborg, there is no deception, why should there be so much on earth?

Swedenborg has revealed to us a design for living. His writings are an essential factor in the human equation; it is one factor that other churches do not have and do not seem to want, but they are a marvelous and necessary ingredient for mature personal and religious development. As a source of insight into the nature of man, the theological works of Swedenborg are among the great gifts to mankind from a concerned creator, but if we choose to remain smug in the conviction that we have some sort of patent on the truth, the real truth which comes from the feeling of communality with others will vanish like the dew of the morning in the harsh sun light. The writings themselves are only potential sources of insight. To flower into uses, the statements in the writings must fall into fertile soil. That soil is made fertile by the sharing between people of the deepest joys and fears that characterize the human condition and give life genuine richness and meaning.

Thomas Keiser

ANCL NOMINATIONS

These are the nominations for officers drawn up by the Executive Committee in November.

A. Executive Member:

Leslie Hansen - Elmwood
Gail Mosher - Detroit
Nancy Harnden - Fryeburg

B. Treasurer:

Sharon Lemee - Elmwood
Karen Nielson - California
Ron Cuthbertson - Kitchener

C. Secretary:

Cyndy Turley - Washington
Kris Johnson - Elmwood
Gretchen Schneider - Kitchener

D. Vice - President:

Wendy Geiss - New York
Donnette Ela - Fryeburg
Gary Mosher - Detroit

E. President:

Betty Jean Johnson - Detroit

WHAT DOES THE NEW CHURCH TEACH?

Partly in response to questions from friends, and partly for other reasons that are harder to pinpoint, this question has been prominent in the minds of Swedenborgians for years. Sometimes it varies slightly in form, but not enough to lose its identity. "Why don't we have a pamphlet on What the New Church Teaches?" "A friend asked me about our church the other day, and I told him.....Was that alright?" Or, "I'm only a layman. I don't know anything about theology. What do I tell people?"

Ubiquitous as it is, among laymen and ministers alike, the question is asked a lot more often than it is answered. It is not because no one knows; even less because no one cares; rather, the question asks more than the reply can answer, and this discrepancy needs investigation.

When asked by Swedenborgians, the question seems to seek assurance and self-confidence, more than it seeks information. Why do articulate men and women, who understand enough about the teachings of the church to have joined it, confirming their faith in its doctrinal position -- people who have attended sermons and adult classes for years, and learned things being taught by the church -- have to ask, "What does the New Church teach?" Each of you who has asked the question will find the deepest reason why by searching your own experience and heart, rather than in any explanation. If you attempt such searching, you may appreciate more the particular way in which the question is treated in the following symposium, in which ministers with a variety of viewpoints give their individual answers to questions related to the problem.

First of all, why do our friends and acquaintances -- not Swedenborgians -- ask this question?

CLAYTON PRIESTNAL: "The nineteenth century English novelist, George Eliot, observed, Animals are such agreeable friends -- they ask no questions. Only human beings have this capacity because they alone in all creation possess rational faculties of the mind. A lack of knowledge brings forth questions. The reasons for wanting to fill the void are as varied as minds are one from another. A

grief-stricken heart yearns for reassurance that a loved one really has an immortal soul; the curious, or the dilettantes, want bits of information to look at and then to pigeon-hole in the memory as soon as the novelty wears off; the atheist is searching for something to deny, or poke fun at; and then there are those, although relatively few we fear, who are in quest of the best possible religious philosophy to help them over the hazardous and oftentimes obliterated pathways of this earthly life. And from outward appearances it is difficult to determine in what category an inquirer ought to be placed.

"Into the mind of every individual, regardless of his faith, education or ambition, there comes an influx which provides intimations of eternal verities. This gives rise to intuitive perceptions. This inner voice can never be completely silenced, although the raucous sounds of the world make it virtually inaudible much of the time. The subtle attraction and urging of truth continually agitate the mind of man. The New Churchman's opportunity is most favorable when a question comes in response to this voice within.

"An important footnote must be added to what has been said: to answer effectively any inquiry regarding the teachings of the New Church one should first endeavor to determine, insofar as possible, the motive behind the asking of the question.

"A question should be looked upon as a challenge and an opportunity."

When people do ask us what the Swedenborgian Church teaches, why do we work so hard to answer?

RANDALL LAAKKO: "We work hard to answer the question, because we feel a sense of responsibility to both the person who asks, as well as to the church. It is not a simple task to respond to the question for the system of belief is many faceted; there is no single aspect which can be easily isolated. We are not sure of which area to share; then, when we share too much we know the empty feeling of having lost the attention of the interested party. At such times the need for responsible relationship comes across hard and clear.

"We work hard because there is a lot to work with. We have a deep love for the teachings of the

church. After living with and by it the desire to share it is deep.

“Our love for the system can be a problem for us, however; if it becomes an attitude that we alone have the truth we may be prevented from really listening to the person asking. Our need to share can make us insensitive to the interest or need of the other. If we are to be responsible in relating to others, hard work is required of us to be open to the person asking. No matter how hard I work, the effort is most fruitful when I have really listened, and when out of my own experience I have been able to share that which has clearly spoken to my personal need. That is hard work.

“One of Eric Hofer’s observations comes to mind. He observed that the frenzied work of the inexperienced longshoreman who desired to make a good impression accomplished no more, maybe less, than the slow deliberate pace of the more experienced.”

Supposing we have listened, and heard a question of genuine interest, where do we begin? What are the three most important teachings of the Swedenborgian Church?

F. ROBERT TAFEL: “One teaching of our church which I believe is of utmost importance concerns Truth and the Bible. It is a beautiful concept that Truth, like love, is not absolute, but is infinite in variety. This idea stands in stark contrast both to the idea that there is one true faith, and to the viewpoint any group has when it attempts to make its understanding of truth obligatory. This concept should cause us Swedenborgians to be the most tolerant of religionists, especially in the field of biblical interpretation. After all, it is through the symbolism of the Bible (correspondences) that the whole panorama of human understanding and life is unified, and through which contact with our Creator is achieved. Since no single formulation of Truth can do this, Truth is adapted through symbolism to the infinity of human understanding.

“A second teaching which I feel is extremely important is that concerning God’s Providence and human action. There are those who justly criticize religious platitudes divorced from real involvement in the crucial social issues facing people in this world. Our teaching that God operates according

to discernible laws clearly indicates that while he permits some evils for the sake of human freedom, God never intended humans to sit idly in the background. It is obvious to me that God permits a lot of evil precisely so that humans can freely choose to do something about it, and become loving and wise individuals in the process.

“A final area to which our teachings speak with clarity and some uniqueness is that of the relationship of our life in this world to that of eternal life in a spiritual world. It is an important concept that our life to eternity conforms to the pattern we set by the way we live daily in this world. That our interests, desires, our loves actually constitute our life here and are the basis of our ongoing, continuous, eternal existence indicates how important it is that we develop our potential by being involved in life.”

DAVID GARRETT: “Why not spell out three teachings that are really original with Swedenborg (and therefore important): as, for example, that heaven and hell are non-spatial and non-temporal and yet are projected from the unconscious in such a way that they create an apparent spatial and temporal environment; or that maleness and femaleness have their roots in the psyche and that inside a man’s maleness is a feminine side and inside a woman’s femaleness is a masculine side; or how about Swedenborg’s notion that God created the world out of himself and that all creation reflects the nature of the Source? Out of the latter could come a stimulating discussion of the origin of evil. Swedenborg doesn’t say so, but one may easily infer from his cosmology that God is responsible for evil’s existence and that evil is some dark aspect of the Divine Psyche.”

Of course, my answer should be limited by the genuine interest and specific nature of the question; but supposing someone wants to know more? What are the twelve most important teachings of the Swedenborgian Church?

GEORGE DOLE: “(1) Each of us is now a resident of two worlds, one of which he can see, and one of which he normally cannot see. (2) The world we see is produced by the one we cannot see, as our visible behavior is produced by our invisible affections and thoughts. (3) Corresponding to matter and order in the visible world are love and

truth in the invisible world, and this correspondence holds even to the detailed varieties of each world. (4) Beyond the invisible or spiritual world is the Lord, Who is the source of both worlds. (5) He is infinite personal love inseparably united to infinite personal wisdom in the constant act of self-giving. (6) For us to be alive spiritually, we must be conjoined to the Lord. (7) This means receiving the Lord in ourselves, becoming loving and understanding beings, and is possible because the Lord maintains each of us as a free process interiorly. (8) The ideal process is described in the Word seen as to its spirit, which is resident in the letter as the soul is in the body or the spiritual world in the material. (9) In this process, the goal is to meet and overcome every temptation to exalt self-love over love of others, so that the Lord may confirm us in our highest love. (10) Marriage, as the most intimate joining of human beings, is our highest opportunity for true self-giving, for the giving of our whole span of life, and like all of life, is a process. (11) The incarnate Lord is the Word made flesh, the Divine voluntarily undergoing our process by constructing a situation in which the Divine love has direct impact on finite human nature. (12) With the death of the body, we lose consciousness of the material world and become conscious of the spiritual world, and live with those whose affections are like our own."

What might be a better question and answer?

DAVID GARRETT: "When we listen to the persons who come for individual or group counseling, students, the younger generation of ministers and a number of people who fit other categories, many of them are explicitly or implicitly seeking for a life-meaning and life-values. They want meaning and values that embrace life as it is, but more than that, transform life with meaning and value larger than themselves. There is a perceptible motion in them from the inner depths towards something suprapersonal; to be related to an overarching purpose; to respond to a stirring in the universe for wholeness.

"To talk, then, of communicating the teachings of the Swedenborgian Church is, it seems to me, irrelevant to what the modern searcher seeks. This is not to say that Swedenborg's experience and writings have no part in informing and inspiring the searcher on his journey. For some, they may. The searcher's primary goal, however, is to find himself in relation to the cosmos. It is not to become a devotee of a particular church, in this case, the Swedenborgian.

"Better questions for the Swedenborgian Church to ask itself and ask others might be: What is the purposiveness in the current state of confusion and desire for meaning? Can we join in common cause with seekers of whatever stripe or hue without predetermining the outcome of the search? In what ways does Swedenborg's experience contribute to contemporary man's search?

"The answers to these questions are obviously open-ended, rather than final statements, and invite a continuing journey. They are action-oriented as well as thinking and feeling-oriented. They relate the Swedenborgian to other searchers. They put Swedenborg into the mainstream of man's eternal struggle for consciousness. They place Swedenborg's work in a position where it will be tested against other sources of meaning and thus become an organic part of the ongoingness of the human race.

"It is time the Swedenborgian Church got out of the parochial bind of worrying over what it teaches, and over how to communicate the teaching, and jumped into life feet first along with a multitude of men and women who want to know what life is all about. Let's stop talking about the search (and congratulating ourselves on our search-stopping Swedenborgian answers), and do it."

* * *

One reason that so few people ever are satisfied with any statement of what the Swedenborgian Church teaches, is that what it really teaches is a way of life -- a way of life that finds expression in different ways for different people. For some, the essence of the teaching is a matter of comprehensive meaning, expressed in a system of inter-related doctrines. For some, it is focused in one great, illuminating insight, expressed in overwhelming emphasis on a single doctrine. For others, it is a matter of action, expressed in *doing* things. The sadness is that each of these misunderstands -- and to some extent mistrusts -- the others, disrupting the unity that might otherwise come from the diversity of kinds of love for the same way of life. One statement of what the New Church teaches that would overcome this disunity by conforming all the visions, perspectives and life-loves that make up the real New Church, never will be found. The unity we already have is great enough that we do not really need it anyway.

Edited by Robert H. Kirven

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir:

When I gave permission to transcribe and print my Boston Church address, I did not know of the great gap between a talk and the carefully penned written word. I ask for the reader's tolerance. If the reader finds the talk mildly delirious and disconnected, his impression checks with mine. Had I gone over the transcript, I would have changed at least every other line! What is missing is a liberal use of gestures, and an emotional give and take with the audience which may make a live talk clearer and more coherent than a transcript. Then there are little confusions such as a few errors in transcription (a tape is difficult to type); it was not indicated I started answering questions from the audience, etc.

So--to the reader--if I sound a bit mad and disconnected, it's partly these circumstances. In contrast my "Presence of Spirits in Madness" (Swedenborg Foundation) will be found quite coherent.

Wilson Van Dusen, Ph. D.

Dear Sir:

In the several years I have been reading The Messenger, I do not recall an article which has made a greater impress on my thinking than that of Dr. Wilson Van Dusen, entitled "Swedenborg's Theological Psychology."

It is refreshing and quite inspiring to read an eminent psychologist expressing his enthusiasm for Swedenborg in such terms as: "this theological system has a tremendous psychological richness." He does a superb job in showing that the terminology of modern psychology is completely compatible with the theological terms, as used by Swedenborg. Personally, I very much hope that Dr. Van Dusen will continue to "enjoy prowling around with him (Swedenborg) and studying things," and that he will again share with us his learned findings.

I know you will have been deluged with letters on this article. Therefore, I shall resist the temptation to comment further on the excellence of Dr. Van Dusen's contribution.

Sincerely,
Leslie H. Johnson

Dear Sir:

I am so excited and happy over Dr. Van Dusen's article! It is right on the button and most appealing and explanatory. Just what we have needed for a long time!

Sincerely,
Alfreda Gale

Dear Sir:

He's come at last -- the New Churchman who can translate Swedenborg into modern psychological terms. You can't imagine my happiness when I read Dr. Van Dusen's article in The Messenger. Where can we get a copy of his "The Presence of Spirits in Madness?" And I do hope you will publish more of his material.

Helen Bowman

EDITOR'S NOTE

Dr. Van Dusen's "The Presence of Spirits in Madness" is a pamphlet available from the Swedenborg Foundation, Inc., 139 E. 23rd Street, New York, New York, 10010, price \$.25.

Dear Sir:

I wonder if you would please send me two copies of The Messenger, November, 1968.

Our daughter gets the magazine, and we were so happy to read of Dr. Van Dusen's article; it was very good.

Sincerely,
Mrs. L. M. Morgan

Dear Sir:

You asked for comment on Dr. Van Dusen's article in November's Messenger.

Where can I begin? For me, it was manna from Heaven. I read--reread--read again--and am still studying it. Please, could we have more?

Enclosed please find bill for extra copies of same.

Yours very truly,
Mrs. D. Tait

Cont'd. on page 13

MIDDLE ATLANTIC RETREAT

For its preceding meetings, the group had sat in a large circle, either in the lovely gold and white drawing room or in the less formal recreation room. Sunday morning, however, it had chosen to sit on the steps of the terrace in the crisp autumn air. Instead of facing each other, each looked out over the rolling lawn to the sun-sparkled waters of Still Creek Pond, its broad expanse broken only by a few dark cedar trees, one flaunting a scarlet mantle of Virginia creeper.

"I guess I'm just plain happy," one voice broke the stillness. "I can only hope that each of you feels as happy as I do."

"This week-end marks the end of a vacation, for me," another said quietly. "I was reluctant to go back to work. But now I feel contented and ready to return."

"I'm still uncomfortable with the idea of loving one's self," spoke a third, his mind going back to an earlier discussion.

"But loving one's self needn't be the same as self-love," someone replied. Just substitute 'respect' for 'love'. The Lord made you in his image. The Lord is within you. And you love and respect the Lord, do you not?"

"I think," said still another, "I've been most surprised to learn that other people have doubts and fears, too. I guess I mean it's been especially helpful to realize that someone I thought was a completely self-confident person actually has doubts just as I do."

"I guess I've learned that we each try to put on the best face we can -- and maybe we don't realize how well we've succeeded until we find how much we've fooled someone else."

"And you," queried one member turning to another, "do you now feel that you have got from this retreat the help you were seeking? Yesterday you felt you weren't getting it."

"Yes, oh, yes. I can truly say I have. I think I know now that if I pray for guidance and feel that I haven't been answered, then I know I have free-

dom of choice and must make my own decision. But I have confidence that if I take the wrong direction the Lord will turn me back."

"Good! Because if you didn't feel you had been helped, if this retreat hadn't given you something, we would just all have to stay here until you did."

"Well, I can think of worse places to have to stay," a voice chimed in. Thus ended the first retreat held by the Middle Atlantic Association of the Swedenborg churches in America.

Leaving behind them the distractions of everyday living, twenty-three men and women, ranging in age from the Washington Society's newly married organist and his wife, to those in the sixty-ish bracket, had come together to think, to discuss, to meditate, and to pray -- and to become better acquainted with their inner selves and with each other.

The place was Drayton Manor near the town of Worton on Maryland's eastern shore. The retreat began at dinner on Friday (October 18th) and ended after lunch on Sunday. Dick Tafel, Randy Laakko, Brian Kingslake and his wife, Jill, prepared the program and led the discussions which centered on the theme "On Daring to Become a Whole Man."

Drayton Manor (a recently restored manor house on 47 acres of an original 2300 acre King George land grant) is owned by the Methodists. It offers quiet and beauty in a setting at once remote and yet within driving distance of many eastern urban centers. It is tastefully and comfortably furnished with private baths for almost all the rooms. Good meals are served with everyone seated at one time, like a family. Guests park their own cars, carry their own luggage. There are no unnecessary intrusions on the peace and privacy so necessary for a retreat.

For this occasion even the weather was cooperative. It rained one day so that people found it easy to spend their free period quietly in their rooms. The next day the sun shone and men and women strolled singly or in pairs over the lawns, along the private roadways, under the apple trees still heavy laden with a fragrant crop while a pair of dogs romped playfully wherever they could garner a friendly pat.

Cont'd. on page 11

Two years ago the senior class of the Detroit Church tried something new. Instead of the usual Sunday School routine, we tried studying our doctrines. We did this through the use of a correspondence course written by Reverend Brian Kingslake.

Reverend Kingslake wrote this course while in Africa. It was intended to be used by the natives so they could learn about the New Church. When he returned to America, he saw we needed them just as much as the Africans did.

The course is set up in a series of twenty-five lessons. Each lesson is on the average of three pages long. It is followed by a set of questions pertaining to the lesson. When you have completed the lesson, you send it to Reverend Kingslake with a Canadian dime or two six-cent stamps, and he sends you the next lesson.

The lessons cover all our major doctrines. They begin with Swedenborg's life and end with one about New Church organizations. In the middle, he covers marriage, Heaven and Hell, divine providence, the Holy Supper, and many more.

When the idea was first presented in Detroit, we thought it would be dull. We had forgotten what kind of man Reverend Kingslake was. The lessons like his sermons, are fresh and interesting.

Up to now his course has received very little attention. That is the purpose of this letter. I, representing the ANCL, feel our church is weak in the area of doctrine. Not until I tried this course did I realize exactly what kind of church we had.

This course is meant for those people who don't know what they should about this church. It is for those who can't understand the writings or won't read them for lack of time.

Reverend Kingslake said he could use a few more students. I hope he gets them. Please write to him at:

Reverend Brian Kingslake
The Crestwood, Apt. 321
3900 16th Street N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20011

Brian Keith

Whether you like the beach, the mountains, or the city, you can have your kind of vacation in California.

The 1969 Convention Planning Committee realizes that many people will be combining their vacations with attending Convention. To start off your vacation after Convention, a tour to Disneyland is planned.

Visitors of all ages to Disneyland find it fulfills its name, "Magic Kingdom." The all new Tomorrowland includes a "Carousel of Progress" and "Adventure Thru Inner Space." From the New York World's Fair is "Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln" and "America the Beautiful" in "Circle-Vision 360." There are many shops and a variety of dining facilities at modest prices.

Information on other points of interest will be available, and the Pacific Coast Association, which is hosting Convention, will do everything it can to help you have a happy vacation in the West.

Near Disneyland is the Movieland Wax Museum and Knott's Berry Farm, which has 50 attractions assembled from mining towns of the Old West.

In the Los Angeles area, you can tour movie and TV studios, such as Universal City, CBS, and NBC. Los Angeles is proud of its beautiful new County Art Museum and its New Music Center. Or perhaps you would like to take a boat ride around Los Angeles Harbor and shop and dine at Port-of-Call Village.

One of the outstanding features of the Los Angeles area is our own widely known Wayfarers' Chapel on Palos Verdes Peninsula. Special events are being planned at the Chapel as part of the Convention program.

MID. ATLANTIC—cont'd. from p. 10

Ultimately the time came for departure with the inevitable promises to "do this again -- and soon." The latest word is that tentative plans are in the making for a spring retreat.

Doris Bowers

NEW PLANS IN CINCINNATI

Excitement creates excitement -- this is the current story in the Swedenborgian Church in Cincinnati. A vision, a hope, a dream of tomorrow is becoming a reality today. A new building, a new program, and a new ministry.

Starting in September, the Reverend F. Robert Tafel will come to Cincinnati to join his cousin, the Reverend Richard H. Tafel, Jr. in a team ministry. While expanding the program of Kemper Road Community Church (Swedenborgian), they will be exploring a focused ministry of a regional Conference-Retreat center in the Cincinnati area.

The church committee and congregation, having wrestled with the question of the mission of the church, now have set as top priority ways (new and old) of serving our fellow man. The Conference-Retreat idea is just one concept. Training laymen in nearby Associations to be more effective Churchmen is another concept.

But at the heart of this new ministry concept is the realization on the part of the congregation and the team that the church must reach out of its building to meet and help people on the gutsy issues of everyday living; to become involved where life is and to show compassion and concern to the individual wherever he may be.

Tapping unused human resources to bring about a better person, a better community, a better church is the aim we all have. However, the present seems worse off than the past for the Swedenborgian Church. The reality factor must be faced and accepted: as a denomination, we have been losing members and closing churches for some time now. One answer to this is that what and how we have been doing in the past is not effective for the present.

With this assumption in mind, the Kemper Road Community Church (Swedenborgian) will be using the Swedenborgian perspective in some new expressions of service to their fellow men. The congregation accepts the fact that the team cannot give answers such as membership growth and financial growth. But are these the most important considerations? In the life of our church in 1969,

perhaps we should return to the concept of the early followers of Christ -- concern for the individual and his discovery of his worth as a child of God.

Richard H. Tafel, Jr.

First of a Series

WORKSHOP--RETREAT IN CINCINNATI

Eleven participants from five midwest Swedenborgian Churches took part in a workshop retreat at the Cincinnati Church, Nov. 29-Dec. 1. First in a projected series of workshops under the joint sponsorship of the Cincinnati Church and the Ohio Association, the retreat was an early outgrowth of ideas generated at Convention's Urbana Consultation on Research and Development last August. The program was planned and directed by the Rev. Richard H. Tafel, Jr., with staff assistance from Dr. Robert H. Kirven.



Focused on problems both unique and common to the individual churches represented, the program can best be described by quotations from the post-meeting reactions of the participants. "I wish to thank the group for the inspirational togetherness experienced." "It was especially significant to rub shoulders with the clergy--to share their insights, feelings and frustrations." "I feel that I can understand my church better now and can relate to my own church and its people better when I return home." "To know that the General Convention cares about the problems of its member churches is most important." "I need to be aware of a new church in a growing age. I must know that Christ has made his Second Coming. I must love my church and not merely perform a duty toward it." "The chance to interact, to learn, to expand, is wonderful." "I think the conference achieved its purpose in that it provoked new ways of looking at the church and the ways in which its mission of Christian service can be accomplished."

HOW DIFFERENT—cont'd. from p. 3

to accept that someone else might reject that distinctiveness? Defensiveness about our religion gives an indication that we are really not too sure of our beliefs. Defensiveness wants us to be right about our view and we have to prove our rightness to others. The harder we work to prove ourselves the more frustration we may encounter.

If we are really convinced about our faith we will have a sense of peace and we will tell the world of our convictions with calmness. We will be able to listen to the other religions and share experiences.

In our hearts we need to develop a "self-evidencing love." The value of such a love is that it is always looking to the scriptures, writings, and life experiences verifying the truths we learn within the Lord's New Church.

George McCurdy

LETTERS TO EDITOR—cont'd. from p. 9

Dear Sir:

You invited response to Dr. Van Dusen's article, *Swedenborg's Theological Psychology*. I would be curious to know whether in the 2nd column, 2nd paragraph on page 162, he would have quotes around the phrase "my liberal arts course," thus making the meaning more clearly consistent with the operation of the auto-symbolic process.

As to the style of the article, made from notes as was explained, I can only be reminded of the totally disarming quality of Michael Faraday's unforgettable Christmas Lectures to children (*The Chemical History of a Candle* and *A Course of Six Lectures on the Various Forms of Matter and Their Relations to Each Other*, edited by William Crookes). I make a point of this because such a form of presentation is so rarely encountered in print, yet reaches one so very directly -- and with such power.

The continuing marvel is that ultimate principles or the grand evolutionary scheme can be glimpsed in the simplest, closest experience -- as a child said to me once, out of a sudden thought, "a telescope and a microscope are the same thing; you look the same distance both ways."

To present Swedenborg's understanding in this light, with man himself the instrument who sees both ways -- out into the cosmos and into his own being, is to increase to an almost unbearable degree one's awe of genius, yet at the same time miraculously removes the barriers which make of the domain of genius forbidden ground; strange as this may seem.

Ella Baker

JOINING CHURCH—cont'd, from p. 2

Independence in politics and ecumenicity in religion are no substitutes for involvement in a political party or the active life of a church. We are in a poor position to criticize political candidates or the program of a church, if we have assumed no responsibility in the life and government of our community.

To join a church does not mean that we agree with all its teachings and policies, or that we feel close to all the members. It does mean that we have committed ourselves to working with a group of people in carrying out the mission of the church. When we join we are in a position to help determine what that mission will be.

I believe that our mission is to help people grow in the capacity to give themselves in love to the service of God and other persons. It means developing the potential that God sees within us, growing in love and understanding, self-awareness, and sensitivity to the needs of others. This is another way of describing spiritual growth or regeneration.

Our mission as a church is one we share with all Christian churches, but as Swedenborgians we possess some resources that are distinctive or unique. We approach our mission from a Swedenborgian perspective, making use of insights and teachings that are part of the heritage of our church. Other writers in this issue of *The Messenger* have discussed some of these insights and teachings.

By joining a church we become part of a fellowship. Elton Trueblood calls this fellowship "the company of the committed" or "the fellowship of the concerned." The members of a church are bound together by a common concern to learn God's purpose and to carry it forward.

When we join the church we become part of it, involved, concerned, and committed. We leave the sidelines, giving up the status of observers or sidewalk superintendents to become active participants in the life of the church. This involves a readiness to accept office, serve on boards and committees, take part in the planning of the church's mission, contributing financially. This doesn't mean we must do everything asked of us and attend every activity that takes place in the church building. It does mean that we have a responsibility to find meaningful ways in which we can contribute to the life and mission of the church. We must find our niche, where we can "do our thing."

Ernest O. Martin

STATISTICS

DEATHS

Miss Ella Grace Brown of West Palm Beach, Fla. was called to the higher life on September 21st at the age of 99. Resurrection service was conducted by Rev. E. Frederick on September 23rd.

Mrs. Marion Howard Quinn of the Boston Church passed away in July, 1968.

On November 1st Mrs. Clara M. Parks of Homewood, Illinois, passed into the higher life at the age of 87. She is survived by two sons, James W. and Robert S. Parks, and several grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Mr. Archibald Aitken, member of the Church of the Good Shepherd in Kitchener, Ontario, died on December 4th. Resurrection service was held on December 6th, the Rev. Paul B. Zacharias officiating.

MARRIAGES

On November 16th Mary E. Crenshaw and William Massey were united in marriage at the Church of the Holy City in Detroit. The Rev. Erwin D. Reddekopp officiated.

Lorne Biggar and Shirley Corbett were married by the Rev. Paul B. Zacharias at the Church of the Good Shepherd in Kitchener, Ontario on November 30th.

Michael Kroplin and Melinda Morrow were married in the San Francisco Church of the New Jerusalem on November 23rd.

The Rev. Galen Unruh united in marriage Larry Beale and Janice Fairchild on October 26th. The ceremony took place at the Pawnee Rock Church in Pawnee Rock, Kansas.

BIRTHS

Mr. and Mrs. Lynn Welch of Kansas are the parents of a new-born son, Kevin Albert who was born on November 12th.

CONFIRMATIONS

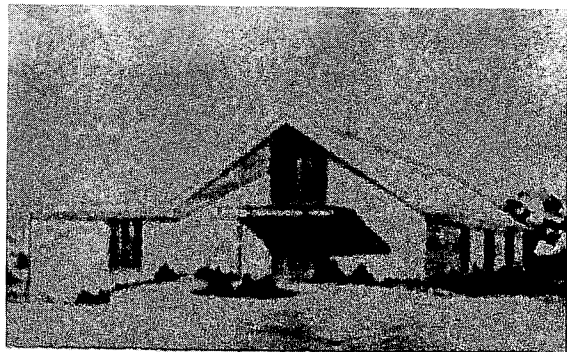
Miss Janet Ann Sprecker was received into New Church membership by the rite of Confirmation during a Worship service at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Edwin E. Klassen at Saskatoon, Sask., on October 18th with Rev. Henry Reddekopp officiating.

BAPTISMS

Jon Carl Sjostedt, son of Mr. and Mrs. Carl L. Sjostedt, was baptized by the Rev. George McCurdy of the Boston Church on October 6th.

The Rev. Othmar Tobish baptized the following infants: November 3rd, Matthew, son of Melvin and Patricia Phillips of South San Francisco, Cal. Carter Emile, son of Carter and Sharon Ann Baum of San Bruno, Cal. on November 10th. Frederick Paul Stark, son of Frederick and Marilyn Stark on November 10th.

CINCINNATI GROUND-BREAKING



Ground-breaking ceremonies were celebrated Dec. 1 at the site of the future Kemper Road Community Church (Swedenborgian), serving greater Cincinnati and – through plans now being developed – wider areas of Convention. The Rev. Richard Tafel, Jr., Pastor, turned over the first spadeful of earth for the new structure, seen above in architect's sketch.

PRINTING COMPLETED ON NEW HOSANNA!

Just before *The Messenger's* press time, a letter came from Zurich, Switzerland, of special interest to Sunday School teachers and students, and all others who use the *Hosanna* hymnal and worship book. Dr. Friedemann Horn, Swedenborgian minister who operates the Swedenborg Publishing House in Zurich, writes:

"Due to a number of special circumstances (first of all a sudden illness of the printer, then a machine defect) printing has been delayed quite a bit. Only today (Nov. 19, 1968) this part of the work has been finished. On the whole we are satisfied with the result. But now folding, collecting of the sheets, and binding have to be completed, and this is also a big job for us. I don't think we shall be through before the end of the year, and probably the professional binder will want another month.

"In German we have a splendid proverb for such cases: 'Gut Ding will Weile haben.' A good thing needs time. I hope you will be satisfied at the end."

From the appearance of the proofs, and the usually high standards of Swedenborg Verlag, an excellent finished product should be expected, and almost certainly now by shortly after the first of the year. The price per copy has been set at \$3.00 and orders may be placed with the Swedenborg Press, Box 143 Madison Square Station, New York, N. Y. 10010.

BOOK REVIEW

Swedenborg, Emanuel. *The Apocalypse Revealed*. New York, Swedenborg Foundation Inc., 1968.

This is a modernized translation -- slightly abridged -- of one of Swedenborg's major theological works in three color paperback format in a single volume of 1168 pages -- \$2.50. Heretofore the work was available only in two volumes in hard cover.

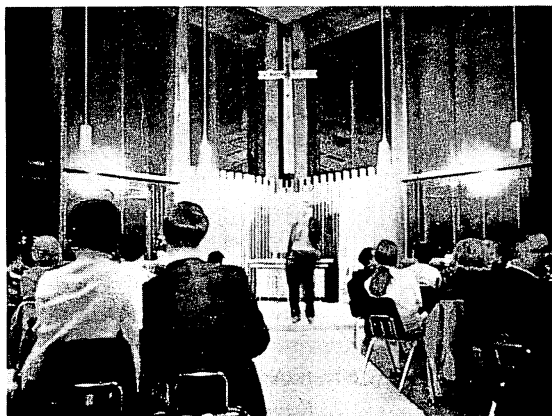
The Book of Revelation has always been an enigma for the Bible reader, and often a source of controversy. No part of Sacred Scripture has received so many and various interpretations. This may be accounted for by the nature of the book itself.

In Bellevue

SSR FACULTY ATTENDS

"CONVERSATION NIGHT"

Faculty members from the Swedenborg School of Religion's Newton Campus were in Bellevue for a meeting of the Full Faculty on October 11, the night when Dr. Hy Resnick of the University of Washington faculty was the featured attraction at a Conversation Night, held in the Bellevue chapel.



Seventy-one persons all enjoyed a dramatic and exciting presentation and demonstration of some of the ways in which human beings interact with one another, and ways in which such interactions can lead to more fruitful and significant communication.

The vision given to John was a manifestation of a world not seen by human eyes. Here, the author applied all his talents as a trained scientist and philosopher to a verse by verse exegesis of this controversial text. This interpretation by Swedenborg -- as a prediction of a New Christian Era of greatly broadened freedom of rational thought and action -- has been perhaps the most widely consulted by students of many faiths than any other of his theological works.

Described by the elder Henry James as "the most heavenly reading I know," this edition appears at a timely moment when focus of theological attention is shifting from the "Death of God" theme to Eschatology and the "Theology of Hope."

THE MESSENGER

JANUARY 1969

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