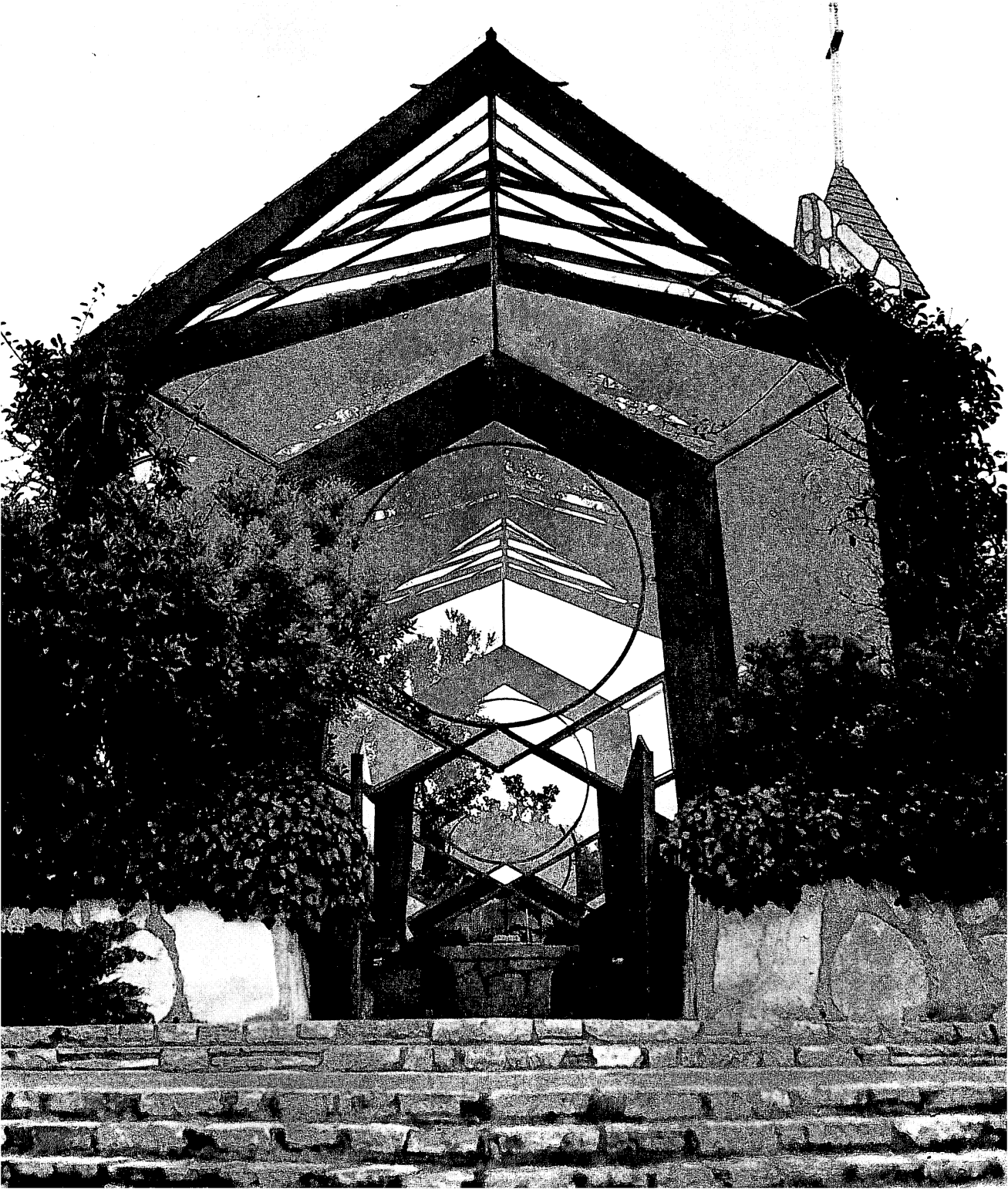


THE MESSENGER

Official Organ of the Swedenborgian Church

FEBRUARY 1969



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

This issue contains two articles on the subject of transplanting human organs (page 21). While they may not be directly opposed to each other, they take clearly differing stands, and both are interesting. I have nothing to add that would decide between the two viewpoints, or lead to their resolution; but I think the wide-spread interest in this issue would be well served by some further inquiry into the exact nature of the problem.

The question of whether or not to transplant a heart, or a kidney, or the cornea of an eye, is not a question for theologians—lay or professional. It is not even a question for physicians and surgeons, generally speaking, but only for that minute corps of specialists whose knowledge and practice are so sharply focused that they are competently aware of the physical risks and opportunities involved. In the terms of my "Letter" in December, the decision whether or not to transplant in any given case is in the realm of *therefore*, and theological issues lie in the realm of *whereas*.

What are some of the *whereas*'s—the basic decisions about the world and our life in it—that a surgeon assumes in making a decision about transplanting? These are issues which directly confront the churchman considering the problem, and issues on which the church might speak helpfully to the medical professions.

One such question involves the value of physical life. Is it to be maintained at all costs, regardless of the pain, uselessness, and frustration inflicted in the process? The question does not arise in medical considerations, where all life is automatically equated with physical life; but do churchmen, particularly Swedenborgians, have further contributions to make to the issue?

A second question involves the inherent selectivity of the process. Whatever decision or assumption is made about the value of physical life, it applies equally to the recipient and the donor of the transplanted organ. The introduction of the concept of "clinical death" as a point on the continuum rather surprisingly found to exist between full life and complete death, suggests the nature of the problem; because the arbitrary fixing of that point implies, ultimately, a selection between physical lives. The theological grounds of this need further definition.

A third question is found in the incompatible goals of preserving all physical life, on the one hand, and limiting population to insure the continuation of physical life, on the other. If the planet will sustain only so many bodies, should the old and the weak be given priority over the young and the strong? Should the advocates of organ transplants and the advocates of birth control be brought into confrontation and some kind of balance?

Cont'd. on page 23

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

At its meeting on January 17th, the General Council (governing board of the church between conventions) approved a budget of \$134,000 for the coming fiscal year (April 1, 1969 to March 31, 1970). During this period we can expect income from endowed funds to amount to approximately \$91,000. The balance to be raised from contributions from our members is \$43,000.

The challenge for a church of our size to raise this amount of money in a single year is great, even in a time of higher wages and salaries, but it is certainly not beyond our reach. When we raised the money for the memorial library at Urbana College, we demonstrated our ability to meet a formidable challenge.

The consequences of a failure to raise the money will obviously be a cut-back in our program. This would jeopardize many of the actions taken by Convention in recent years, including those just taken by the General Council and reported in this issue of *The Messenger*.

Among the commitments that we have made for the coming year are:

- 1) A pledge of \$15,000 toward the support of Urbana College.
- 2) The staffing and furnishing of a central office for Convention, including a full-time president and secretary.
- 3) Support of theological students and pre-seminary students.
- 4) Aid to churches which need help in supporting a full-time minister.
- 5) Production of *The Messenger*, *ANCL Journal*, *Our Daily Bread*, the *Hosanna*, *League Handbook* and other books and pamphlets.
- 6) An institute for ministers and their wives before the 1969 Convention.
- 7) Support of the 1970 international conference in London.

Cont'd. on page 23

GENERAL COUNCIL MEETS

Convention's General Council met January 17-18 at the Swedenborg School of Religion, Newton, Mass. All fifteen members were present for the two-day meeting, which covered a long agenda of business. The following items are of particular interest to readers of *The Messenger*.

IBM Composer for Central Office A new machine for professional-quality type composition was purchased for use in Convention's new Central Office. Composition work for *The Messenger* and the *Convention Journal* will be done on it, along with such other work as time and personnel will allow. Examples of its work can be seen in this and the two preceding issues of *The Messenger* (a machine had been rented for trial before this decision to purchase), in which the type is more evenly spaced and more easily readable than in earlier issues. The Composer will accommodate a wide variety of type size and faces, and will significantly expand the possible functions of the Central Office.

Department of Publication to Publish through Central Office In related action, the General Council established Convention's Department of Publication as the official publishing arm of Convention, the Department to use the facilities of the Central Office (terminating a similar appointment to the independent corporation of the New Church Board of Publication).

MESSENGER Editor to be Appointed Also with regard to publications, the Council referred to the Committee on Amendments, for action if necessary, its decision to accept the recommendation of the Department of Publication and the Editor of *The Messenger*, that the Editor be no longer elected by Convention, but appointed by the Department of Publication for a three-year term to coincide with the term of the President of Convention.

Scholarships The Council accepted the terms of a new Helen Keller Memorial Scholarship Fund, inaugurated by the Chicago Society, for the purpose of aiding third and fourth year college students preparing for the Swedenborgian ministry. The program is one which will require additional support from other sources, and further details will be published in a later *Messenger*.

Cont'd. on page 31

Convention 1969

SPECIAL EVENTS AT WAYFARERS' CHAPEL

Two decades ago, at the first Convention of Swedenborgian churches held in the West, members gathered for the laying of the cornerstone at the site of the Wayfarers' Chapel. Probably no one who was present at that ceremony envisioned how widely known the Chapel would be twenty years later. The visitors' book on almost any day is a record of the world-wide interest in the Chapel.

To give those attending the 1969 Convention at Claremont, California some realization of the growth and outreach of the Wayfarers' Chapel, special events are being scheduled at the Chapel at Portuguese Bend for Saturday afternoon and evening, August 2.

In addition to the steady flow of visitors to the Chapel, it has also become known for special services at Easter and Christmas, for special programs and exhibits, as well as a popular place for weddings and baptisms. To increase the Chapel's spiritual outreach to the community, presentation of the three-act play, *Family Portrait*, in the outdoor amphitheatre at the Chapel was inaugurated in the fall of 1966. It has been presented annually since then by a cast including members of the San Diego and Los Angeles societies and people from the

neighborhood of the Chapel. In 1969 there will be a special presentation of *Family Portrait* on Saturday evening, August 2, for everyone attending Convention.

Family Portrait was first produced on Broadway in 1939 with Judith Anderson playing the role of Mary. The story is about the family of Jesus and the simple country people who made up the community in which he lived. Jesus never appears. It is the impact of His life and teachings upon these people which provide the moving drama of *Family Portrait*.

Playing the role of Mary for the Wayfarers' Chapel presentation is Ethel (Mrs. Henry) Swanton, who first created her fine interpretation of Mary 15 years ago for a production of the play in San Diego. Also with a long association with *Family Portrait* is the director, Betsy (Mrs. Robert L.) Young. Others in the cast and production staff have had previous experience on the stage, but for some this has been their first appearance before an audience. For all, cast, production staff and audience, *Family Portrait* continues to be an unforgettable experience.

Thursday, Friday and Saturday morning at the 1969 Convention, members and families will be studying, working, and socializing together. Saturday afternoon and evening at the Wayfarers' Chapel will be a time for fellowship and the sharing of a spiritual experience leading up to our Convention Sunday morning worship service at Claremont.



The Wayfarers' Chapel, with its tower, gardens, and walk-way to library left of the picture—scene of special events in connection with the 1969 meetings of the General Convention in California.

HEART TRANSPLANT AND RELIGION

Following the recent transplanting of hearts, there was some speculation as to whether emotions or affections, or even the soul, resided in the old or the new heart.

A doctor stated that the heart is a pump. I agree with him.

A man is made of spiritual substance in the human form. This human form, made of spiritual substance, is the soul, or spirit. A spirit is a man, or, a soul is a man. The soul takes on a material body in the human form.

(There is a prevalent opinion that a man is in the human form only as to his material body, and that his spirit is some formless essence, located somewhere in his head or heart or glands.)

Here is the view to which I subscribe: The spirit is in the human form. It dwells in every part of the body, in the minutest microscopic cell and fibre. Instead of saying: Man is a material being and *has a spirit*, we should say: man *is a spiritual being* and *has* a material body; and when he dies, the man departs and leaves his material body behind him, never to use it again. It is the spirit that gives form to the body, casting it in its own image. So when man leaves his body, the substances which composed it are dissipated gradually.

But the man retains his distinct personality. He put off his body as though it were old clothes. He, this spiritual man, has a head, heart, hands, eyes, blood, lungs, mind, feelings, affections, senses, and is a complete man. The spiritual body is raised up into the spiritual world, its proper home, where it will dwell forever. The material body returns to the ground.

What is the meaning of death? It is the withdrawal of the man himself from the material body. He casts the body aside. He deserts it. The material body thus deserted is not changed. It has the same organization. Its nerves of sense and motion are perfect; it possesses as much life as it ever did—that is, none at all. For all that the body ever had was the ability to respond to the life of the spirit. The spiritual substance in which life resided has been separated from the material substances which will become earth, gases and metals.

The spiritual man, entering the spiritual world, has a body which appears the same as before. He enjoys every external and internal sense which he enjoyed in the world and to a more exquisite degree. He sees as before, he hears as before, when he is touched he feels as before; he also longs, desires, craves, thinks, reflects, loves, studies. He takes all his natural memory with him. All he has left behind is his material body.

I have condensed most of this article from *The Nature of Spirit, and of Man as a Spiritual Being* by Rev. Chauncey Giles, chapters II, III, and IV; and from *Heaven and its Wonders and Hell* by Emanuel Swedenborg, paragraph numbers 432, 453, and 461.

All this means that there could be no religious opposition to any human transplants from dead to living persons.

Velma Bates Ramirez

ON GRAFTS OF HUMAN ORGANS

Press reports of remarkable results achieved by surgical teams in transplanting the human heart are of special interest to students of Swedenborg's teaching on the correspondence between physical and spiritual organisms.

The surgical achievement is incontestably one of the highest order and the whole world will be following its eventual outcome with fascinated attention.

Meanwhile we recall two related citations from Swedenborg: "The conjunction of the spirit of man with his physical body is through the correspondence of his will and understanding with his heart and lungs, and their separation is by the absence of correspondence" (Divine Love and Wisdom, 390), and "The same may be further illustrated by the two essentials and universals by which human organisms exist and subsist, or . . . the heart and the lungs . . . Both operate in all and everything [of the body] because the heart corresponds to love and the lungs to wisdom" (True Christian Religion, 37).

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir:

We try to spread the Teachings of the Church of the New Jerusalem.

Classes I have led over the years have been interesting and most helpful, made up of friends and associates in the New Church. This past year a different class made up of folks who had never heard of Swedenborg. Certainly a new experience for me; and this is the way it happened.

Summer mornings, first three neighbors, then four and another made five, met under the shade of the trees to read together. First to read from the Bible, then an article or a poem someone liked; sometimes a sermon and one morning, one of the women (I'll call her Zelma) was reading from Emmet Fox and I interrupted to say, "That man has read Swedenborg." Of course the usual questions, "Who is Swedenborg?" followed. The next morning our get-together lasted three hours, every morning following we read Swedenborg, and the group grew in numbers. Zelma attended the Congregational Church. One Sunday morning she asked the minister if he would like to study Swedenborg. Out of that grew the weekly meeting of the class in the lounge of the Congregational Church. We were sixteen in number by that time, only one woman of about thirty years, was sure Swedenborg was demented and dropped out. She said, "Why should I spend time in this class? I have a Bible and I teach Sunday school." I was sorry to lose her for it took her mother also, because of transportation; the mother was interested. The minister attended every class; the questions he asked, in all sincerity, brought questions from others. If I wanted to be more sure of the answer, I asked to leave that particular question for the next meeting. The Episcopal minister attended when he could. Zelma became a consistent reader. Reading the Writings means as much or more to her than to some of us who have always had them. Another member of the class has been a member of the Roman Catholic Church all her life. She is very much interested in our studies, even comes to me with questions between classes, her eyesight is almost gone so Zelma and I read to her.

Yes, of course, there were a few criticisms; one

person even said we were spreading atheism. The most criticism came from members of the Methodist Church. People criticize before they take the trouble to find out anything about Emanuel Swedenborg.

Winter came; several went south; so now we are few. In May we will return to our earlier schedule, two friends from the Episcopal Church have already asked to come. This has been a wonderful experience especially for me; but even more so for those who have found joy in the Writings.

Mabel Parker

Dear Sir:

Some time ago I met a Jewish scientist, Prof. Friedrich Weinreb, a Dutch mathematician, son of an old chassidic family from Lemberg (Russia). Specialized in the field of statistics he had discovered that the assertion of the so-called oral Jewish tradition, held by an extremely small and despised group, to which his family belonged, the letter of the Bible contained an internal sense, based on a mathematical structure, is undeniably right. Since then he has withdrawn from his occupation, dedicating himself completely to the propagation of this re-discovery of an almost forgotten tradition, which may be as old as the Bible.

So far two books have been published (in Dutch and in German, an English translation is in preparation): "The Divine pattern of the World," and "The Scroll Esther." I can't describe their content here, but affirm you that the number of parallels to our writings are innumerable. Of course, there are differences also—especially as to the theological interpretation of the findings, but the whole is an unexpected proof for the legitimacy of Swedenborg's method of exegesis. As a result of my taking part in a course with Prof. Weinreb, I have published a booklet of 92 pages, which is an adaptation of a tape-record.

Recently the German Society for symbolical research organized a "symposium" with Weinreb, around 25 well-known theologians, philosophers and psychologists being present. On special advice

of W., I had been invited too. One of the results was that a number of scholars acknowledged the right of his exegetical method. In January the meeting will be repeated in a bigger circle, such outstanding experts of the OT-exegesis as Prof. von Rad being invited.

One of the biggest German publishers, Kosel, is going to publish the approximately 20 volumes Weinreb is planning. If his books will be accepted, it is to be hoped that ours will be too—at least by more people than it is the case today. Weinreb knows, of course, why I am so much interested in his ideas, admitting those parallels, which I mention to him from time to time.

It might well be that some of us, who—trusting perhaps too much in modern methods of Bible-interpretation—have lost their trust in Swedenborg's statements on the internal sense of the Word, will have to revise their concept, being aware finally that besides the "diachronical," the "synchronical" method of Bible-interpretation has its imperishable right (these the words of a well-known philosopher, with whom many participants of the symposium agreed.)

You'll hear of the matter through an article, which I am preparing for our magazine "Offene tore," and which, I think, should be translated into English later on.

Fred Horn

LETTER FROM EDITOR—cont'd. from p. 18

These are hard questions, with no self-evident answer that I know of in the Word, in Swedenborg, or in any other religious tradition. The Swedenborgian perspective, however, provides guidelines and suggests starting points for useful theological construction, in an area of the relation between religion and life—which is where we are called to work.

At one point, however, it seems to me that we should be most cautious in using our theological tradition: Swedenborg wrote extensively and explicitly about the correspondences of human organs with spiritual realities; but correspondence is a subtle and complex relationship which should not be confused with identity. AC3635, for example, makes a clear distinction between the physical heart and lungs, and their correspondences

in the *Maximus Homo*. The correspondence has more to do with the function of the physical heart than with the muscular pump itself, so replacement by transplant might not entail any correspondential difficulties at all.

The entire cluster of issues is knotty but highly provocative. Reader opinions will be welcomed.

QUASI-CORRECTION, PRO TEMPORE

Our report in December, that the California Association had changed its name to Pacific Coast Association, has been challenged. The Association Secretary points out that necessary formalities for the change have not been completed; so the report may not be wrong, but it's not right yet!

Robert H. Kirven

ROBERT YOUNG'S HOME BURNED

The home of the Rev. Robert Young, Wayfarers' Chapel minister, was three-quarters destroyed by a fire last December 17. The greatest damage was confined to the second floor, where the older boys' bedroom, a photographic darkroom, and Mr. Young's library and records were almost a total loss.

LETTER FROM PRES.—cont'd. from p.19

- 8) Support of missionaries in all parts of the world.
- 9) Contribution toward the staffing of our summer camps.
- 10) Participation in the programs of the National Council of Churches.

The above commitments are not equal in value or cost. You may be enthusiastic about some and lukewarm about others. When you make your contribution, you may wish to indicate your preference as to where the money should be spent.

If you have not already responded to the appeal that I made by letter in December, I sincerely hope that you will make a generous contribution now. Make out your check or money order to "The Swedenborgian Church" and send it to: Mr. Chester Cook, Treasurer, P. O. Box 215, Deer Isle, Maine 04627.

Ernest O. Martin
President

TWENTIETH CENTURY RELIGION

For now we see through a glass darkly

(I Cor. 13:12)

The history of man through the ages is a story of change on many fronts. For example physical conditions, hierarchical structures, cultures, morals and religion have all in general tended to be different from century to century. (Ancient Egypt is the outstanding exception, maintaining a 3,000 year resistance to changes in any of the above mentioned structures of civilization.) Since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution in England in the 18th century, the most striking change has been in man's material conditions. So great has been this revolution that no other period of two centuries in history can be compared in this respect; and in addition it has had its effect on every other aspect of life. However, the writer, among others, would regard the spiritual conditions of man to be the most important of all the aspects of life subject to change even though it is doubtful whether spiritual states can be inferred solely from recorded historical data. It is the self-expressed function of religious organizations to be the means by which the spiritual state of the world can be improved, so that in discussing man's inner life, it is natural to consider the doctrines propounded by the churches.

Weakness of Organized Religion Today. Now it is a striking fact that organized religion has declined to a very marked degree in our own century. England as a prime example, for so long a stronghold of Christianity, cannot with any fairness now be called Christian in the usual sense of the word. In fact the weakness of the churches is illustrated by our being able to call most of western civilization "the secular society." Is this due to the weakness of religious leaders, the apathy of the people, outdatedness of religion itself, or are people en-masse simply hell-bent? An atheist's answer would probably be along the following lines: "Religion is merely a primitive superstition, typical of the child-like simplicity of early man who longed for a father figure to lead and protect him. With the growing sophistication of man has come scientific knowledge which has shown up the ridiculous conceptions and unfounded basis inherent in religion. Most people just aren't that naive any more."

Unfortunately this viewpoint is not without some foundation in that there are still people and even whole sects who have only a primitive, superstitious and distorted idea of religion, and there are some denominations that still preach a variety of crude "irreligious" dogmas. Worse still, of course, it is highly possible that our "militant atheist" has sensed hypocritical attitudes in some of the Christians he has met. These defects, characteristic of only part of the church and of isolated adherents, can perhaps, to a minor extent, account for the decreasing number of Christians. But they are not the root cause since they are not associated with the fundamental Christian ideals or with the modern church as a whole.

In order to find the major causes for the decline of religious influence in this century, we must go back in history to a time when the great majority of people came within the sphere of the church. Since the 19th century was in many ways a transitional period for the church, (as will be explained below), England in the early 18th century before the Industrial Revolution had begun significantly to affect conditions, provides the most suitable recent period of a church-oriented society.

The 18th Century. In addition to marking the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, this century also saw the rise of the popular religious reform movements, and the beginning of major theological reforms. The Methodist movement led by John Wesley (1703-1791) was a reaction to and a break from the orthodox hierarchical structure of the Church of England, and it took the form of a more individualistic and emotional religion. Thus within the Methodist movement, and its later offshoots, the laity were to some extent freed from the external domination of the church. The theological reforms of Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1770) on the other hand, were criticisms of both the Catholic and Reformed Churches and were of a deeper nature than those of Wesley.¹

Altogether, it is not surprising that the religious background and culture underwent profound changes after this time.

Economic and Social Background. The Industrial Revolution was a technological upsurge brought about by man's inventiveness and the development of capitalism. This development of a free economy impoverished the craftsmen of the ancient guilds

by putting them under the control of powerful capitalists and impoverished the peasant by allowing the capitalists to invest money in land, thus driving up rents by their competition. It was indicative of the externality of religion at this time that the new capital-owning class agreed that on moral no less than on economic grounds it was vital to restrict wages. They attributed the distress of the poor not to economic circumstances but to "individual improvidence and vice." True enough, corruption and vice were well in evidence in this dark period of Western history and yet, though the Church no longer retained the all-embracing influence it had exercised in the Middle Ages, religion in the form of belief in God, the after life, and acceptance of moral codes, still flourished amongst the majority.

As in the Middle ages the appalling economic condition of most people showed no tendency to cause loss of religious beliefs. This is well illustrated by the widespread upsurge of the Methodist reform movement. Why did so many people retain their religious beliefs despite their poverty and increasing exploitation by church-going capitalists? Marx gave the fundamental answer in his well known aphorism, "Religion is the opiate of the masses." So rigid was the class structure at the time that those on the lowest level, who formed the majority of the population, had no prospect of bettering their condition and freeing themselves from the burden of hardship and poverty. Since people in such circumstances find it difficult to live without hope for a better future, the majority clung to the expectation of a life of bliss in heaven, obtainable if only they obeyed the commandments of the Church. The implication here is not that this was the only reason they had for believing in religion, but the hope of eternal reward was a factor that helped prevent their falling into unbelief-- a condition which would have left them without any real hope for the future. The importance of these social and economic factors as powerful influences on the history of ideas has been thoroughly brought out in the writings of Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Sigmund Freud (1856-1939).

Psychological Background. Whereas the idea of heaven offered men hope, its opposite, hell, aroused their fear. The concept of hell as it was constantly drummed into them by the preachers was one of the most barbaric conceptions ever invented. As is well known, hell was believed to be a

place where the damned burned in flames to eternity. That the church could offer this doctrine, alongside the doctrine that God is love, clearly illustrates the grotesque irrationality into which the Christian religion had sunk. The people were in the grip of fear, if not consciously then certainly unconsciously; they dared not disbelieve. Consequently the church was powerful enough to lay down a code of moral values to be obeyed as absolute commandments of God. Right and wrong were distinguished as clearly as white and black, without shadings of grey. Typical examples were the strict codes of behavior concerning sex, Sunday observance, drinking and gambling. Every denomination did not uphold exactly the same set of moral customs and prohibitions, but each believed its set to be absolute, just as each believed its set of doctrines to be the only true ones.

In summary then, the age can be characterized by three dominant psychological concepts: hope, fear and security -- hope of heaven, fear of hell, and security of moral values.

Nineteenth Century. This state of affairs did not last. As the 19th century opened, a movement was gathering momentum that was to smash the power and authority of organized religion. This movement was the growth of the scientific outlook and scientific method (not to be confused with the Industrial Revolution) both of which had their beginnings in the 16th century. The following assumptions may be said to characterize this new development:

1. God is not needed as a hypothesis to explain the nature of the physical world. (Laplace, 1749-1827).
2. The physical world itself is the source of knowledge about natural things. (F. Bacon 1561-1626). For example, famines, epidemics and other natural disasters might be avoided by man's search for their natural causes. They are not expressions of the will of God.
3. All beliefs are open to question and are to be subjected to the bar of science.
4. It is man's duty to improve the physical conditions of human life by the technological application of scientific principles.

A new clarity of vision dawned that enabled many

to discover the irrationality and falsity of a large portion of the church's teachings.

A growing number of intelligent men found the Christian concept of God as taught by both Catholic and Reformers to be contradictory² and inhuman, and the Christian institutions to be determined obstacles in the path of material progress, freedom, equality and justice. Consequently they could not believe in the God that was "revealed" by the churches and could only utterly reject all the pseudo-science involved in the theology of the times which, from the time of St. Augustin (354-430 AD), had prevented and discouraged the search for ways of bettering the material conditions of the oppressed masses. Western civilization was now entering the age of freedom of thought as the respectability and number of the so-called "freethinkers" increased. The power of the church to compel men to believe was being broken, a power which it may never have again. Man was coming of age in the sense that he was beginning to think for himself without leaning on authority. No longer would he submit his judgment of truth, or of right and wrong, to any external authority such as the Church or the literal words of the Bible. Truth and morality would now find their basis in the enlightened conscience of the sincere individual.

Let us now look at our own times and compare them with the days when Swedenborg exposed the crudities, falsities and pseudo-science of a church which, despite the Reformation, was in many ways little better than the Church of the Middle Ages.

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Economic and Social Background. The rigid class structures that had existed in Europe for so many centuries have at last broken down. Today it is possible by luck, ambition, or hard work to climb the social ladder. Even at the bottom there is material security in countries with a highly developed Welfare State such as England. There is now no need to wait for heaven to experience at least relative material security. In most European countries even the poorest citizens have a subsistence income, and can hope to win a lottery, or a free car in a competition. Hope has become "this-worldly" rather than "other-worldly." If we wish we can now afford to laugh at the idea of heaven after death.

Psychological Background. With the loss of the church's authority has gone the fear of hell. Whereas in the 18th century it was almost impossible not to believe in hell and to fear it, we are free today to believe in it or not; even if we do believe in it, we need not fear it. Most churches today have completely altered their concept of hell, either discarding it altogether or regarding it as a temporary state only, such that eventually all will be saved and live in heaven.

Prior to this, Swedenborg himself had put forward an even more rational and "religious" teaching on this subject, though this was almost completely unnoticed or disregarded in the 18th and 19th centuries. He taught that hell is a community (or collection of "societies") of those persons who after death have chosen freely to associate together, leading self-centered lives and indulging in whatever pleasures they like, to the extent that their neighbors permit them. Certain restraints however are imposed on individuals when their selfish desires cause too much distress to others. Thus God maintains those in hell in the least unhappy state that is possible for them as a social group.

As a result of one or other of these new concepts, the churches no longer accept a doctrine of hell that must act as a whip over people, coercing them to obey God. In addition many other irrational and primitive doctrines are now no longer acceptable to the churches. For example there are few denominations that still teach the idea that Jesus was a sacrifice for the sins of man to appease the Justice of God the Father, the doctrine of the resurrection of the physical body, or the idea of the Day of Judgment when God will judge all men, simultaneously committing some to Hell deep below the earth and some to Heaven high above the skies.³

The rigid moral codes of the 18th century have now faded, leaving society only relative standards such that there is no solid external foundation for the belief in any particular moral concept. Again, there are few today amongst Christians who will accept with certainty the ideas that God has absolutely forbidden premarital intercourse, non-church weddings, divorce, gambling, swearing or any other of the old prohibitions. Is it right to raise large families, engage in civil disobedience, accept mixed marriages or support capital punishment? Few now

turn to the Church for authoritative answers to these questions. Even though the young people of today demonstrate vehemently and passionately against the war in Vietnam, they can fall back on no firm authority but their own feelings and intuitions of right and wrong. The situation then is this. There are no sure grounds for believing in God, Salvation or the after-life, no sure standards of right or wrong, and no sure meaning or purpose to be found in human existence. Where is man to turn for authoritative answers? Can we have no other authority than our own weak and subjective intuition?

One of the most significant psychological factors in life today is insecurity. Not material insecurity, which is fast disappearing anyway, but the spiritual insecurity arising from the lack of an authoritarian church proclaiming an unshakeable moral foundation. This insecurity is present whenever a person has a conscientious and concerned desire to do what is right and good in a situation where he is uncertain of what actually is the right action. Examples of this kind of 20th century situation are the domestic problems arising from aged parents, the problem of whether to give unasked for help and advice to relatives or friends, and the questions of birth control, divorce, and tax evasion. In the 18th century, any problem in this category would either be answered authoritatively by the Church, or, if considered outside the realm of the specific religious moral code, would not be regarded as a problem at all; that is, one would do as one felt naturally inclined without fear or pain to one's conscience. In extreme cases this state of insecurity may be so great as to cause neuroticism—a psychological sickness new to mankind and typical really only of our own century. The great figure of Nietzsche (1844-1900), a forerunner of our times, was one of the first to become acutely aware of the enormity of the problem. By an act of will he created his own values of good and evil in a meaningless world empty of value. His extreme sensitivity to the resulting isolation he experienced undoubtedly contributed to his megalomania type of neuroticism and eventual insanity. On the other hand a less sensitive person may quickly suppress his insecurity under the cloak of religious apathy, a readily noticeable trait in many today. Instead of worrying about how to determine what is right and wrong, many simply shrug their shoulders saying: "Who knows? Does it really matter?" The more articulate person may say, "Since it is impos-

sible to determine right and wrong with certainty, absolute right and wrong or absolute good and evil can't very well be said to exist. Therefore there is no point in searching for them and worrying about them."

So in summary our own age is characterized by insecurity instead of security, freedom instead of fear, and despair instead of hope—all derived from a prevailing view of life as being meaningless and without purpose.

The Church of Tomorrow⁴ In the past, the Church has tended to equate Truth with a set of doctrinal or dogmatic statements covering generally such subjects as the nature of God, the sin of man, the way of Salvation and life after death. Thus it was thought that to believe the Truth was much the same as to give assent (sometimes merely intellectual assent) to a certain set of doctrines dealing with the kinds of matter enumerated above. Nowadays this situation is changing and I believe we shall find that the Church will no longer regard Truth to be something definable in words and statements. Doctrines are so definable, but doctrines do not lay bare Truth any more than one's description of a theatrical play or film conveys the personal experience of actually watching one. Truth is coming to be thought of more as an indefinable yet experienced part of life, that is, a religious affirmative response to the basic questions of meaning, purpose and value in life.

The church of tomorrow will be a community of concerned people, each of whom is struggling within himself to find meaning and standards in the light of teachings which are accepted as Divine Revelation because they are believed to reveal Truth and Good. Also the church will be a group of men who attempt to help others to abandon apathy and to unite in a search for a true basis for life; a society of people who see themselves to be spiritually equal to the concerned unbeliever and who have a true sympathy with the outsider because they know that his deepest problems are basically the same as theirs. The difference between those who search for truth outside of organized religion and those who search for it within the church is simply this: Those within the church have specific ideas and teachings on which to try to build a life, useful and meaningful. They are disposed to accept these teachings as pointers to

the Truth, signposts to the ultimate meaning of existence. In other words, those in the Church believe they know the *direction* in which they must look for truth, and the path of life they must look, for truth, and the path of life they must try to follow.

From the 18th century onward the Christian religion has had to fight its way free from many false doctrines which tended to corrupt men's minds and lives. In particular, we may recall that pernicious dogma of the Reformers that Salvation is achieved by faith alone, by a mere profession of belief. This dogma, first attacked in complete and systematic fashion by Swedenborg for its anti-religious, corrupting nature has now been either completely discarded, or else altered out of all recognition by a radical modification of the meaning of the word "faith", so that the doctrine of salvation by faith alone might just as well now be translated "faith and charity."

In other words, salvation now tends to be regarded as the consequence of a life based on trust in God's purposes and the performance of useful service from a desire to serve others. Today the Church does not have that kind of corrupting dogma to contend with, but is rather faced with the *lack of doctrine* together with apathy, both within and without its walls. The Church is tending now to seek Truth rather than to fight over doctrine; it is beginning to be realized that there is more true religion involved in the serious search for Truth than in the simple acceptance of doctrines which are professed to be the goal of the search. The quest for meaning and purpose in life is the modern religious quest; and it dare not end in the mere acceptance of creedal formulae or doctrinal statements. Those are only the signposts which, to the church's adherents, point away from meaninglessness and despair towards meaning and hope. We remember the words of Jesus, "He that believeth on me shall have everlasting life", and he said of himself: "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life." To the Christian today, the belief in the Divinity of Jesus is the supreme signpost pointing to Him as the Way.

The task of the church now and in the future is to arouse people from their apathy to search for meaning, to stimulate people to feel the fundamental problems and only then to offer men those doctrines which are able to point towards the solution. Least of all will the church worry about its weak-

ness as an organization or temporal power. The church's external weakness encourages a form of internal strength. Jesus was able to lead people in freedom because of his very lack of worldly power. Just so the church will lead people in freedom insofar as it refuses to apply the social or authoritative pressures which were characteristic two centuries ago. Whereas the Church's main task used to be to arouse the latent hopes and fears of the people and their expectation of reward, it is now to administer to their feeling of insecurity and despair and to encourage them in their quest for meaning and value. Apathy, not unbelief, is hell's weapon today, and this is certainly the most difficult the church has ever had to face.

In the present situation, I believe that a church is more likely to be spiritually healthy and alive if its members prevent or break down barriers between themselves and those outside by more openly joining in the common search for life's meaning. Certainly it has proved true that if a church raises barriers between Christians and non-Christians its members tend to assume that they are in possession of and understand the absolute Truth, and consequently to feel exalted above those who do not share their beliefs. I believe that the age is coming when it will be widely acknowledged that there is but one Church, though still many faiths and denominations, embracing all who are united in the search for the eternal meaning and purpose of existence.

Michael W. Stanley

NOTES:

¹A selection of introductory outlines to Wesley and Swedenborg and their reforms is the following: John Wesley and Modern Religion U. Lee; England: Before and After Wesley J. W. Bready

²For example of the doctrine of hell above.

³See, for example, *Honest to God* by J. Robinson

⁴The contents of this section overlap to some extent with the previous section in the sense that what I think of as church of the future I believe to be already partially in existence.

I walked back to New England
In the night.
(Flying really, but walking
Sounded right.)
Because reluctant heart pulled
Back in fright.

Those years are stranger-makers
(Hold my hand
Tight) and help me to
Understand,
Reveal my 'self' as tides re-
veal the sand.

Dear family and friends
Awaiting there,
Oh, would you see the starshine
In my hair?
Will I with newly opened
Eyes, see theirs'?

Talk of significant things
In small crowd,
Groping for hands in darkness
'Self' unbowed,
Is it revealing what I
Am, aloud?

Time's passage, no longer than
A whip's crack,
But content of time has pushed
Its confines back,
And the wealth I carry now
I did not pack.

I walk once more to life from
Whence I come,
Reluctant now to leave the
Fife and drum
Of joy, in a relevance that
Leaves me numb.

I came, a shadow-walker
Bearing flame,
Coals from the inner fire which
Had no name.
Its name is Love, and I am
Glad I came.

Elizabeth Frye

Then was the time of arising
Up out of the lugubrious
Muck of self-sorrow.
Then was the time of lying in the sun,
Drying the soils of other times
And places,
Of licking the bedraggled fur
To come at last gleaming, to
Scratch at the door of life, waiting.
Now the door is flung wide,
Soft voices cry out,
"Come in! Come in! Come in!"
Exquisite hesitation on this
Fragment of between-ness,
Once again tears — but different —
Now like a fall of water
Sweet from the heart of love.
Good-bye, old self, good-bye.
I will miss you sometimes, I guess,
But death comes every day,
Even on Kearney Street.

Elizabeth Frye

GRAFTS—cont'd. from p. 21

These affirmations, of course, have to be considered in the light of Swedenborg's use of the word 'correspondence,' which relates to the inter-relationship between planes of cause (spiritual) and effect (natural), and not in the sense of mere analogy—a bad word in most scientific circles, as it is among Swedenborgians when such correspondences are under discussion.

Whatever the outcome, the tendency of the human organism—both physical and spiritual—to reject the substitution of an alien graft is fully comprehensible to Swedenborgians, who can also appreciate that unless the respective organ is at the very least carefully selected and provided with a period of adjustment, it will be rejected, and in the absence of correspondence the spirit will surely abandon the body. We do not have space to elaborate on this fascinating theme, but hope that other Swedenborgian media will find it possible to offer a more scholarly development.

From Swedenborg Foundation Newsletter, Fall 1968.

Translated from Bulletin Mensuel of Nouvelle Eglise de Suisse Romande.

AMERICAN NEW CHURCH LEAGUE

SUMMARY OF ANCL

For the past few months the American New Church League has been concerned with Convention and the Church.

There has been a new, up-dated address list sent out. This is to circulate the League Journal all over the world. Also the Department of Publication has offered to publish the Journal every month to help defray the cost to the local league.

The Wilmington league has joined ANCL with Rev. Randy Laakko as adviser. The LaPorte and Edmonton leagues are reorganizing and we hope they will be able to join. The Los Angeles league has dissolved. The Bridgewater and Elmwood leagues have combined. The ANCL Executive Committee had a very interesting meeting with the Board of Education to discuss items about the Church and Convention.

Upcoming events for the league will be visits to California where the coordination of local and national levels will take place for the upcoming Convention.

THE TIMES THEY ARE A CHANGING

Last nite, while my TV was in the repair shop, I was listening to some of my records. Among them was one that stood out clearly in my mind. The name of it was *The Times they are a Changing* by Peter, Paul, and Mary. This was a very real song about the times of today and tomorrow.

We can readily apply this song to ourselves. In it they sing, *Don't stand in the doorway, don't block up the hall!* Don't stand in the way of change. Some people hinder change whereas they can use their talents to improve the change.

We can see changes in our church. Sometimes I see some people who don't participate. Are they afraid they will be bored by the same old thing? Are they afraid that the same old thing will change?

Some of the services in our Convention were changed. Some were for the better. Some were not. There was a changed feeling in this new type service. The younger and older people were participating in this new thing. They had feeling when they were doing this. I wish other people would do this. Preach with feeling.

Ernie Ekberg

A LONGER PERSPECTIVE

(Talk to the ANCL, Convention, 1968)

When I was your age--which is a long time ago as either of us reckon time-- I attended a Reading Circle of young people at the Boston New Church -- which our family attended regularly. I joined the Church when I was 18--which was the proper age then for that, and I was "Received into the Boston Society of the New Jerusalem."

At this Reading Circle, to which I belonged, we read *Swedenborg*. Heaven and Hell and Divine Providence are all that I am sure we read. No older people--or the minister--were allowed to attend. My mother did attend--always--because she never interfered or tried to tell us what to say. We had supper together first.

We were supposed to have read the section from *Swedenborg* first and then discuss it. But we had copies of the book in our hands right there, and I think it worked better when a little was read aloud at the time. The point is--we DID read and discuss for ourselves what the New Church has to give.

To read the Bible is all right--but *unless* you read the Bible with a New Church Mind--you will not get a New Church Message from it. Unless you know for yourself something from what *Swedenborg* wrote for the New Church--you will not get a New Church Message from the Bible.

It helps to know just where in the volumes written by *Swedenborg* to find the particular explanation you would like to have. But *Swedenborg* always took time to explain as he went along so that you never have to look far before finding something it is valuable to know.

Don't let anyone scare you into thinking you cannot read enough Swedenborg *for yourself* to know something of what the New Church can give you! I have *kept on* reading Swedenborg myself and I recommend it highly to you. Don't let anyone frighten you away from reading some yourself.

As some of you know I have kept writing things from what I have read because I want to share what I have found or tell others what I have found in a way they might find interesting.

The Shining East tells how I think life might begin after death for a young base-ball professional player. I still hope the further part of the story may be published which tells of three more young people who enter the spiritual world unexpectedly.

At one time I wrote out—for young people of the New Church—from Swedenborg—explanations of the puzzling early chapters of Genesis. I have also tried other stories. All these are my attempt to make it easy and pleasant for others to share what the New Church means to me—what I have found.

Unless what you find is so *good* you want to give it away to others—you have not really found it.

KNOWLEDGE—what you learn—is spiritual riches. You are to *trade* with it—not hide it in the ground.

The circumstances during which you find spiritual riches should be as pleasant as possible—hence—all sorts of good times with other young people *as you search*. **BUT ONLY** what you find for yourself that is so good you want to share it as well as keep it and use it yourself—is what is really satisfactory.

Good Luck in your search for New Church Truth. One bit of New Church Teaching is that *truth* is *always from the LORD*, no matter whether you read it or hear it taught or preached to you.

Cornelia Hinkley Hotson

A NEW PROPOSAL

I was watching a southern Baptist service on TV and the minister was delivering his sermon. He said that we do not understand the Trinity. I think

he was right in saying that. Now in order to stop the ignorance of us in our church, we need to do something constructive. Most of the young people agree they know hardly anything about the church. I think that the minister or lay leader should establish a workshop meeting after church once a month to tell about our church in everyday terms—the way young people can understand. I should like to see this put in use in one of our leagues. This way we could evaluate the need for this type of thing and either increase it to other leagues or discard it altogether.

This type idea was brought up before the Board of Education and the Executive Committee of ANCL at their combined meeting. Now, we would appreciate hearing the views of readers of *The Messenger*.

Ernie Ekberg

GENERAL COUNCIL—cont'd. from p. 19

It was also reported at the meeting that \$2,450 had been contributed during 1968 to the Pearl Pausch Memorial Scholarship Fund, established to aid Swedenborgian young people going to Urbana College.

Parliamentary Decisions The General Council directed the Nominating Committee to present nominations for Convention officers (President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer). as well as members of elected boards and committees, so that delegates may be better prepared to make sound choices in elections. Nominations from the floor will still be permitted, of course.

A committee was appointed to study further the various possibilities for direct representation of Convention's membership in the convention sessions.

The Council will bring before the 1969 Convention the question of whether or not to hold a convention in 1970, the year of the World Assembly in London.

1970 Planning Funds were appropriated to send the Rev. Othmar Tobisch, American Chairman of the 1970 World Assembly Committee, and the Rev. Richard H. Tafel, to London in March of this year to work on further planning for the assembly with representatives of the General Church and the General Conference.

THE MESSENGER

FEBRUARY 1969

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