

THE MESSENGER

Official Organ of the Swedenborgian Church

OCTOBER 1969

There are some who believe that to live the spiritual life is difficult, that they must renounce the world, discard riches and honors, and spend their life in prayers and in reading the Word and pious books.

In fact, those who live in this manner acquire a sorrowful life that is not receptive of heavenly joy.

To receive the life of heaven, a man must live in the world and engage in its business and employments, and by means of a moral and civil life there receive the spiritual life.

Emmanuel Swedenborg, Heaven and Hell, 528

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Seven of the eight Martins attended convention in Claremont last summer and enjoyed every minute of it. Following the convention we spent four and one-half days touring Arizona, visiting the Grand Canyon, the Petrified Forest, the Meteorite Crater, Indian dwellings, the Painted Desert, etc. We flew back to Boston from Phoenix and then spent three weeks at our summer home in Bridgton, Maine. I was able to attend to post-convention business at my "summer red house," an attractive study overlooking Long Lake.

I was invited to speak about Convention at the Fryeburg New Church Assembly in August, and also preached at the Congregational Church in Bridgton, Maine. Edwin Capon and his family visited with us in Bridgton for two weeks, and in Raymond, Maine, (the summer home of Mary and Stewart Poole), we had a brief visit with Bob and Betsy Young. Sitting in Maine we were able to review the highlights of the California convention with our hosts.

On September 11 and 12 Richard Tafel and I attended meetings of the General Board of the National Council of Churches. Highlights of this meeting are recorded in this issue of *The Messenger*. From December 1-4 representatives of our church will attend the triennial assembly of the NCC in Detroit.

Following are tentative dates for trips and meetings in October and November:

October 4 — Massachusetts Association meeting in Newtonville

October — 14 Connecticut Association meeting

October 17 — 19 Ohio Association meeting in Cincinnati

October 28 — Board of Trustees of Urbana College

October 20 — Board of Education meets in Urbana

October 31 — November 1 — Meet with faculty of the Swedenborg School of Religion and the Chairman of the Council of Ministers to discuss research and planning

November 3 — Augmentation Fund Committee meeting in Wilmington, Delaware

November 7-8 — Board of Missions meeting in Newton

November 14-15 — Wayfarers' Chapel, Board of Managers followed by visits to San Francisco, Portland and Vancouver

November 20-23 — Visit to Colorado Springs

Ernest Martin

Vol. 189 No. 10

October 1969

Whole No. 4925

Published monthly, except for the one double issue in July-August, at the office of the Editor, c/o Swedenborg School of Religion, 48 Sargent St., (P.O. Box E) Newton, Mass. 02158.

Second class postage paid at Boston, Mass.

The Messenger is the official organ of the Swedenborgian Church, founded 1817, incorporated as the General Convention of the New Jerusalem in the United States of America.

Printed at Thomas Todd Company, 14 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass. 02108. Incorporated publisher: the Swedenborg Press, Box 143, Madison Square Station, New York, N. Y. 10010.

Subscription free to members of the Swedenborgian Church; non-members, \$3.00 a year; foreign postage, 25 cents extra. Gift subscriptions, if from a member, \$1.50. Single copies, 25 cents. Address subscriptions, checks, changes of address to the Publisher, Box 143, Madison Square Station, New York, N. Y. 10010.

Contributions toward the cost of publishing should be sent to:

The Treasurer, Swedenborgian Church

Chester T. Cook, Box 215, Deer Isle, Maine 04627

Officers of Convention: Rev. Ernest O. Martin, President, 48 Sargent St., Box 66, Newton, Mass. 02158; Stewart E. Poole, Vice-President, 2024 DuPont Building, Wilmington, Del. 19898; Chester T. Cook, Treasurer, Pressey Village Road, P. O. Box 215, Deer Isle, Maine; Mrs. Ethel Rice, Recording Secretary, 31 Poole St., Brockton, Mass. 02401.

Department of Publication: Rev. Richard H. Tafel, Sr., Chairman, Dr. Robert H. Kirven, Miss Cecile Werben, Rev. Paul Zacharias, Mrs. Jan Seibert, Mrs. Leonore Spiers, Mrs. Corinne Tafel, Rafael Guiu, Ernest Martin, Tomas Spiers.

Robert H. Kirven, Editor

Address all editorial correspondence and manuscripts to the Editor, *The Messenger*, P. O. Box E, Newton, Mass. 02158. The opinions of contributors do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editor or the Department of Publication, or represent the position of the church.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir: Re: A Letter to Adults

A "Letter to Adults" appeared in the September *Messenger*. The Editor has suggested that I might want to comment on this letter, as others will.

As the only adult present throughout *both* the February planning conference (for the House Party) and the May House Party, and as the person responsible for seeing that both took place, what I am about to say seems essential as background information if we are to "tell it like it is." I would like to make 3 points.

1. Ten League delegates attended a conference in February in New York to plan the House Party and discuss related matters—the first conference ever held for this purpose. The New York Association was host.

All 10 were loud and clear in expressing their strong wish for a "fun" house party, free of anything that resembled Sunday School or church programs. They felt the special value of a house party was *social*—the opportunity to meet and know each other.

With some reluctance they accepted the recommendation of adult leaders to incorporate one serious discussion in the week-end's schedule—a two hour period on Saturday morning. Was the desire to "learn" very evident?

2. The description of one discussion group presented in the letter is deliberately misleading, I feel. Though I was not present, surely in two hours some kind of helpful exchange must have taken place in this group.

And what of the other two groups? In the one I led a number of distinctly New Church ideas came again and again into the conversation. These ideas were not labeled Swedenborgian by the young—or anyone—but they were revealed as the basis for much of their thinking. Probably few could have organized the ideas, or their knowledge of them, but I heard it woven through their talk and I heard it, too, in all that they did *not* say.

I reported this to the writer of the letter but my comments were not used.

3. It is deplorable, I feel that the "letter" was presented as late as the final hour of the houseparty. It was a poor moment to launch broad, generalized criticism. No follow-up was possible; none of the "communication" they seek could take place.

Additional facts, partly due to haste, must also be made clear.

a. The "letter" did not go through an orderly process of being presented to the entire group of leaguers in a final form.

b. It was *not* voted upon by the 51 young people present in *any* form.

c. There was at no time a full and orderly discussion of the "letter" by the entire group, or any large part of the group.

d. The "drafting committee" was hastily formed after the original writer of the letter had presented his ideas. It did not include representation from the leagues of *Elmwood*, *Philadelphia*, and *Fryeburg*, the three largest groups present.

These facts I have presented are important not because they might have bearing on the New York Houseparty but for larger reasons.

I think young people are saying that they want fair play, honesty and understanding—from others. Are they willing to guide their own actions according to this same standard?

The methods used in putting the letter together, and in presenting it, seem to overlook the need for fair play and understanding.

It doesn't seem honest to present a criticism as if it came from an entire group, or a majority thereof, when in fact it did not. It doesn't seem honest or fair to omit reference to the concrete plans made by the league delegates prior to the house party. It doesn't seem honest or understanding to distort in three paragraphs the content of a two-hour discussion; also, to take no responsibility for the success or failure of that discussion.

All these are things which I have said and written to those who took a leading role in presenting the

letter, so my saying it here will come as no surprise.

While I feel that some of the recommendations and suggestions are valid and sincere, though not unique in the New Church or particularly startling, let's remember that honest effort from the younger generation is also needed to change and improve the situation.

After the house party Cathy Thomas wrote a letter to Wendy Geis which Cathy has given me permission to quote. Here are a few sentences:

"Half of the kids sitting there, I'm sure, didn't give a darn about what was going to be said, and how they are being reached by Swedenborgianism—and I think we kids are as much at fault as the adults. If we were really and truly sincerely interested in reading and relating Swedenborg—we *could* do it. But we have to take the initial step.

". . . The meaning of life, as I see it, isn't something one can be taught, because it's something different for every individual. Some of the kids, I think, just want to be spoon fed a cut-and-dried statement of what is right and what is wrong and what is 'Swedenborgianly' and what is not. I'm sorry, but it's not that easy."

Cathy

Indeed it is not!

Marion B. Priestnal

Dear Sir:

I know that in many denominations there is a conflict between those who wish to cling to a traditional Christian formal worship on Sunday, and those who would discard it in favor of some aspect of the Social Gospel. It is not that I am against some experimentation in worship, for any worship from the heart and directed to the Lord from persons in charity, is acceptable to Him. Some kinds of variation in worship should be very useful in youth groups, in a Fellowship hour on Sunday evening or a week day, in the Alliance, and elsewhere.

The Sunday morning worship has been thought of as the highlight of Convention. After the Sunday service this year, I felt that I had been deprived of the highlight, that fitting close to the Convention meeting. It is a source of great joy to be able to join with others in those beautiful responses harmonized by fine New Church musicians. And whose fault is it if our young people have not learned the rudiments of New Church worship? Who failed to teach them the materials of worship in their early years in Sunday School? If they had been learned then, they would have been associated with the remains of childhood, and loved. Our New Church worship is largely from the Word, as Swedenborg said it should be. It has been a source of strength for generations. It carries the worshipper through successive states of adoration, humility, instruction, and commitment, which are the four states experienced by Isaiah in Is. 6:1-8.

Failure to close the Communion service with passages from the Word, such as found on page 168 of the Book of Worship, seemed to me a serious omission. The song, "We are your bread now," with guitar accompaniment, was not in itself bad, but use of well chosen passages from the Word could raise the worshipper to a higher plane. It seemed I did not get full benefit from it this time. Certain portions of the Word were given us for use in Worship; let us make more use of it.

Alice Van Boven

Dear Sir:

The Editor graciously invites readers of "A Letter to Adults" in the September issue of the *Messenger* to respond to it.

I do so with great pleasure for—believe it or not—I have been waiting for some time for a sign from our Church Youth to request teaching of "Swedenborg" in modern terms. Bless you young folk!

1. I would like to do nothing better than teach "Swedenborg" in modern terms to Sunday School and Youth. The only problem with that is, that we have neither Sunday School nor League in our San Francisco Church, the young people having "evaporated" thru attrition and graduation to "life" itself.

2. I suggest that the League Chaplains set up a reading list of "modern-term-treatments" of some aspects of Swedenborg's teachings, as for example the recent very readable book by the Rev. Alan Grange of England: *Psychology as Servant of Religion*, published by the Missionary Society of the New Church, 20 Bloomsbury Way, London, W.C. 1; or my own pamphlet, *The Genius of Swedenborg*, published by the S. F. Society of New Jerusalem, as an introduction.

3. Very recently I had a conversation with my son, who is professor of geology at the Univ. of Calif. in Santa Cruz, (a new venture in College Education) and he urged me earnestly to write a modern-term summary of "Marital Love," as vital to modern youth. This I plan to do for him in a year or so, God willing.

4. I wholeheartedly agree that Convention should give financial priority to Summer Camp and Winter Retreat programs. My association with Split Mt. Camp from 1930-1945 affirms my faith in these gatherings.

5. Finally, I would say that I have tried "discussion-sermons" with congregations in Berkeley (many years ago), as well as in San Francisco more recently, and though fore-warned, audience participation was nearly nil. Perhaps this requires a special type of service, like week-day evenings, or house-service, or Church vesper, or such. I would do that at the drop of a hat or a glove.

Wonderful letter, ye young ones!

In great appreciation,

Othmar Tobisch

Dear Sir:

Through the researches of Rev. Harry W. Barnitz, of Yonkers, N. Y., we have learned for the first time of the certainty that the German philosopher, Frederick Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844-1900) was familiar with Swedenborg's teachings. In his work "My Sister and I," written toward the end of his life, p. 46, he writes: "But in all this dissolving world I can grasp at the Swedenborgian life-belt as Strindberg does. . ." In correspondence with the poet, William Butler Yeats, well-known to have been influenced by Swedenborg, Nietzsche, again refers to the Prophet of the North.

Dear Sir:

First, let me say that what I enjoy most at Convention is the singing of hymns together. There is something uplifting in the union of many voices, when hymns are sung with verve, that draws us all into fellowship.

Now look at the "Call to Worship" and then read what the Lord *really* said in Exodus XX, verses 2 & 3. He specifically did *not* say "You are mine." We only become truly His after a long life of overcoming temptation. Then the leader puts into the mouth of the Lord other things that He did not say. Granted that God created Luther, Calvin, Mao, Hitler et al, as well as the other types of individuals mentioned, but I seriously question that the God they worship is the same God that I as a New Churchman worship. No two people, not even identical twins brought up in the same family and Church have exactly the same idea of God. Each worships the Lord as he understands Him. I certainly do not worship or "serve" the God of Calvin or Luther. If I did, I would attend the Churches bearing their names. Mao's God is Communism and communism denies God. I neither worship nor serve communism. I worship the One God, the Lord, the Savior Jesus Christ. Therefore I remained silent throughout this part as I felt that I would be compounding a lie to repeat the printed words which evidently took the place of our statement of faith.

I am quite puzzled by the "Ecumenical Prayer." It is hard to believe that it was adopted by the Council of Ministers! What could be more ecumenical than the Lord's Prayer as found in Matthew VI, verses 9 through 13? I see no reason for changing "thy" to "your." In the English language the form "your" is the same for both singular and plural, so using the word "thy" specifically directs the thought to God alone. Why substitute "to-day" for "this day?" In the Word "day" signifies a period of time, as, "a thousand years are as but a day," while in our common speech "to-day" specifies a certain 24 hours within a time and space concept. By praying to give us "this day" our daily bread we can envision a whole span of time, whether passed in joy or sorrow, but needing spiritual sustenance to live through. If, instead of saying, "Forgive us our debts," we say, "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us," we are then making ourselves and others as gods, and that

would be a sin, since the first meaning of “sin” is transgression against God. If you don’t like or understand the phrase “lead us not into temptation,” you may adopt a translation which some scholars say is more correct and say, “lead us (when) in temptation.”

I do not object to readings from Swedenborg if they are made subordinate to the Bible, but I do object to readings from “modern prophets” at this point in the service, seemingly putting them on a par with the Word of God. We base our doctrines on Swedenborg’s interpretation of the Bible, not on what “modern prophets” may propose. If a minister wishes to quote other writings in his sermons for emphasis, contrast or comparison, well and good. I believe it is necessary to keep abreast of modern thought, accepting what we can and discarding the dross.

The Rev. Randall Laakko gave us some good thoughts in his talk, but when he asked us to join hands and do this and that, I was taken back to my kindergarten days. Teacher: “Now let’s all join hands and make a BIG, *big* circle.” I don’t go to Church to play games. I go to worship the Lord and that is a very personal affair between Him and me. I express my love for my neighbor in my daily life—work, play and attitudes.

This brings up a point which grieves me. Nowhere was the Lord Jesus Christ mentioned except with a brief passing nod at the end of the communion verses, “we are Christ’s the Lord.” I can’t remember whether or not his name was used in the benediction as by that time I was so perturbed that I couldn’t get away fast enough. Nowhere either, was any praise given to God, or thanks or glory. Are the words, “holy,” “glory,” “we thank Thee,” “we praise Thee” dirty words? Or, for that matter, is Jesus Christ a dirty word since His name wasn’t mentioned. Maybe we don’t worship Him any more.

Now we come to the communion service. The ministers who participated were served first and after they had eaten the salted niblets and drunk the wine they served the congregation. No one knew when to partake of the elements. I could not sense any real communion, either with the ministers or among the congregation as happens when all act together. According to Luke XXII, 19, when the Lord gave the bread and wine to His disciples at the Last Supper, He said, “this do in

remembrance of me.” Did He say, “strum a guitar in remembrance of me?” In *The New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine*, no. 210, we read: “The Holy Supper was instituted by the Lord, that by it there may be conjunction of the Church with heaven, thus with the Lord; therefore it is the most holy thing of worship.” If any feel that our communion service should be changed, why can’t it be made more holy if possible? Singing the verses given, some of them in hippie-style language, set to a repetitious tune and the monotonous accompaniment of a guitar only cheapened this most holy act of worship. I didn’t feel that I had had any communion with God; there was a barrier between us. Read over the words that were sung and compare their superficiality with the depth of meaning contained in our Book of Worship, pages 158-9.

I have heard that this communion service of our 1969 Convention may be used during the 1970 New Church World Assembly in London. I earnestly pray the Lord Jesus Christ that it be NOT used. It is a desecration. I hope that others will protest as I am doing. It would give all gathered there an entirely false impression. They would question our sincerity as New Churchmen. If it is continued or repeated here at home our young people will get a distorted idea of the Holy Supper. Why can’t we teach them the full meaning of the bread and wine, the good of love and the truth of faith and how conjunction with the Lord is effected by partaking of the elements.

Instead of down-grading our worship isn’t it incumbent upon us as individuals and as a Church to raise our standards and counter the modern trend toward revolt against religion and a denial of God. We have the means. Why disregard them? Why not express our beliefs more fully when we gather for worship instead of going through a pseudo-religious ritual. The service at Convention was apparently directed to youth and the modern idea, but it did not compliment the intelligence of our Leaguers. To me the whole affair was not worship of the One God, the Lord, the Savior Jesus Christ. It was just a “happening” with a religious flavor.

Margaret S. Sampson



SALVATION AND LIFE

June 9–16 Dr. Robert Kirven and the Rev. William Woofenden attended the 4th National Faith and Order Colloquium. The following Sunday Mr. Woofenden spoke of the experience and his reactions to it in a sermon.

“It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.” —*Lamentations* 3:26

This past week I had the unusual and rewarding experience of attending the sessions of the Fourth National Faith and Order Colloquium sponsored by the National Council of Churches and held on the campus of Concordia Theological Seminary here in St. Louis.

The stated purpose of the colloquium was: “To prepare a statement of findings on the Christian meaning of salvation and its relationship to man’s life as a basis for deriving ecumenical strategies in mission and evangelism.” It was, frankly, with some misgivings that I first read this stated purpose, and I’m not sure even now that I fully understand what it means.

I had been provided in advance with two major scholarly papers, prepared by professors of theology, on various aspects of the meaning of salvation, together with several shorter commentaries or critiques of these papers by men from non-theological disciplines. A full day was given to panel and general discussion of each of the papers. Not only were the authors and their professional commentators represented, but also several seminary students who appeared as spokesmen reporting the reactions of seminars which had been conducted on the content of these same major papers. And while it was all highly stimulating, it somehow smacked of a two-day *tour de force*.

The third and fourth day were devoted to trying to develop a final report on the subject of salvation, starting out with a preliminary statement drawn up by a committee. Reading this document brought me to the edge of despair. It was so shot through with theological cant and jargon that I had little hope that any understandable communication could ever issue forth from the meeting. Being a guest, it was with some misgivings that I asked the privilege of the floor to express my disappointment at the use of such phrases as “Christ-event,” “communal realms,” “cosmic dimension,” “evangelical

proclamation,” and “Christian presence,” to name a few.

I was, however, considerably encouraged by the number of other members of the colloquium who backed up much of my protest. But even then, I was not prepared for the truly radical job of re-writing that the Findings Committee was to do that night. The new document, presented to the assemblage the following morning, shortly—and, I might add, astonishingly—won the general endorsement of the entire colloquium. While a good deal of detailed editing followed, this did not alter the force of the fact that a highly diverse group of Christian theologians, from backgrounds as radically different as Southern Baptist, Russian Orthodox, Methodist, Lutheran, Society of Friends, Roman Catholic, and many more, went on record as being essentially in agreement on several truly vital points concerning the Christian doctrine of salvation. The document also candidly noted a number of areas in which important differences of opinion existed; but this, to my mind, does not detract from the significance of the degree of agreement that was discovered and noted.

During the discussion as to whether the document could be endorsed in principle by the entire colloquium, I was moved to state that I was so deeply impressed by the restated section titled “Shared Convictions” that I intended to incorporate it into my next Sunday sermon. I fully intend to do just that, after a few more preliminary remarks.

The importance assigned to the doctrine of salvation in our own church may be properly assessed by some statements in *True Christian Religion*, the great summary account of New Church theology. In the introduction to the book we read [n. 2], “The faith of the new heaven and the new church, in its general form, is this: The Lord from eternity who is Jehovah, came into the world in order to subdue the hells and glorify his human nature. Without him no one could have been saved; and all are saved who believe in him.”

Further on in this same work, in a chapter on the Holy Spirit, we read [n. 142]: “The divine energy and activity, signified by the Holy Spirit, consists in general in reformation and regeneration; and, according to these, in renewal, quickening, sanctification, and justification; and, according to these in purification from evils, remission of sins, and finally salvation.” Under this heading the paragraph then continues, “These are the graces in their

order which the Lord imparts to those who believe in him, and who adapt and prepare themselves to receive him and become his dwelling-place; and this is done by means of divine truth, and among Christians by means of the Word. . .” The section then concludes:

“The Lord’s coming, the redemption which he wrought, and the passion of the cross, were all for the sake of man’s salvation (Matthew xviii:11; Luke xix:10); and as man’s salvation was, and ever will be, the end, it follows that the above-named activities are mediate ends, and salvation the final end.”

Salvation, then, is the ultimate goal to be sought. And, Swedenborg pioneered in pointing out that salvation is intended not just for the believing Christian, but for *all* men. Two brief quotations (selected from many similar ones) should illustrate: [A. 3263] “As regards the Lord’s spiritual church, be it known that it exists throughout the universal world; for it is not confined to those who have the Word and thence know the Lord and some truths of faith . . .” And, [A. 3380] “Through the good and truth which are from the Lord, all are saved who live in mutual charity, whether they are within the church or without it.”

Before turning to the statement of *Shared Convictions* contained in the report of the colloquium, it might be of interest to note that the question of whether or not there is salvation outside the church remains one of the unresolved questions.

[What follows is a portion of the report of the National Faith and Order Colloquium, held at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo., June 8-12, 1969]

II. Shared Convictions:

Men in our day cry for help. Some men cry aloud; some in their groping or despair are inarticulate. Sometimes men are most concerned over their immediate and tangible needs or dangers, sometimes over their pervasive and ultimate needs or dangers. Some men, when they cry to be delivered, would say they want to be “saved” from their dangers or needs; others dislike to use that term. Millions of men seek, and some apparently find their satisfaction, happiness, or fulfillment quite outside the Christian community or Christian faith.

Christians see their task in terms of the good news of *salvation* for men, because they follow a Lord who came “to seek and to save.” Our colloquium has concentrated on the theme, “Salvation and Life,” in order to reexamine what Christian discipleship means in the present-day task of Christians and of the Christian church. We must therefore say something, in a preliminary way, of what we agree we understand by salvation, before we can state (in III) our present findings on the problems of sharing the good news of salvation with the world today.

1. God, who made the world, loves all men and cares about all men. His will is true life for all men.

2. In Jesus of Nazareth, God, who is always in action to express his love and care for men, came personally into human life and shared our human struggle. In fulfillment of God’s love for man Jesus died and rose again, and through the Holy Spirit he now lives among us, continuing to help us share in his mission.

3. Not only is salvation revealed decisively in Jesus Christ; it is a decisive change accomplished by Christ. Since he died and rose for all men, there is a sense in which he achieved a change in the relation of all men to God; the whole world is reconciled to God and redeemed from evil. Men who truly place their trust in Christ and give their lively allegiance to him experience a radical change in their lives. They obtain a truly new life; in some real sense they share in the life of the resurrected Christ. In Christ they are no longer lost but found; they know to whom they belong: this is the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

For ages upon ages, in various ways, men have cried for help. Jesus Christ came exactly to serve the poor and disinherited, the imprisoned, the blind, the broken-hearted, the oppressed. Christ’s disciples today bear responsibility to serve all men in their needs, their misery, their loss. Christians are responsible to discern the specific forms which poverty, imprisonment, blindness, broken-heartedness and oppression take in today’s world, and to serve these suffering people in the name of Jesus Christ. Moreover, men are not only victims of circumstances. They are also people who have strayed from God and rebelled against him, men who need his forgiveness and reconciliation. The mandate of this Faith and Order Colloquium, therefore, comes both from the cries of men in urgent need and from the urgent call of our Lord Jesus Christ to follow him.

4. This divine gift of salvation or new life, which men could not earn by themselves but which has been given them by God's inexpressible love, is a gift not to privilege but to a life-long task: a sharing in Christ's task of serving the world. It is not a possession over which we dispose; it is a trust for which we are held accountable. This present salvation gives a new breadth and new urgency to our life-task, but also a new power and support to meet the responsibility to love men as Christ loves them. It gives us release from selfishness, joy in living and serving and sharing our new life, hope in our struggles, and patience and forbearance in our sufferings. It is never a finished thing in this life; not only do we make mistakes, but we constantly need forgiveness and restoration for our sinful failures to live according to our faith; however, we have Christ with us to guide and chasten us and enable us to grow. Salvation looks forward to a consummation beyond all our striving and our imagining.

5. Salvation or new life in Christ is never a private or solitary experience. We receive new life by being adopted into the family of God, or incorporated into "the body of Christ." Man is not truly man, except as he is man-in-community. The church is the new community in Christ. This fellowship of believers cannot be perfectly identified with the institutional church in the world, but neither can it be separated from it as if the true church were merely some invisible ideal. It was to a real community of believers that Christ entrusted his mission to the world and gave his promise to be with the faithful community. Like the individual believer, the church bears the good news of Christ's saving and serving love to the world, inviting men to be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. Like the individual believer, the church now has the living God and his promise, but it also needs to grow by God's grace. Moreover, the fellowship whose task it is to call all human society to account is itself called to account by God: judgment begins with the household of God. God's judgment continually calls the church to repentant action. Not only in the matter of understanding itself and its task, but also and more urgently in the matter of decision and action, wisdom and courage, the church constantly needs to grow.

6. Through Christ we learn in a new way that Christians are members of one world-wide human family, in which they have a distinctive mission. Though they are not to be "conformed to the world," they are to show forth in the world what

God's intention is for the whole human community. The Christian is truly a man-in-community not by simply belonging to the church, but rather by living out his faith with his fellow-Christians as new men in the world. The church should seek urgently to understand her mission under the cross as that of a saving and healing community. She should respond to every human crisis by acting with compassion, wisdom and courage.

7. Christians should be open to God's truth wherever it is found, and open to all men as brothers, respecting and loving them even where they disagree with their beliefs and the values they cherish. We are now realizing that we have understood God's loving will too narrowly. Through Jesus Christ we are learning not only that we have often acted lovelessly, but that we have tended to view God's love more restrictively than Jesus did. We are therefore trying to discern the true nature and scope of God's will toward all men, and the ways to put this love into practice. This is the task of our colloquium.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The document produced by the colloquium is of considerable theological interest because it bears the endorsement of theologians from such vitally different traditions. Copies will be distributed to Convention's Council of Ministers.

HURRICANE NEWS

America's most disastrous hurricane in this century struck the coastal area of Gulfport and Biloxi, Miss., August 17th, where there are numerous Swedenborgians and an active church, searing on through Virginia, particularly, bringing the death toll to perhaps near 500 persons and thousands of animals, pulverizing whole towns and military installations.

Latest word as we go to press is that there was little damage to the Gulfport church and no injuries to its members, though in Biloxi the home of the Mathieus' became a flood victim, the tides cresting as high as 35 feet wiping out twenty miles of a highway beach area.

Also in Mobile, Ala., and Belle Chase, near New Orleans, latest reports state our people are safe, working hard to assist their less fortunate neighbors.

Leslie Marshall

NCC GENERAL BOARD MEETS

The General Board of the National Council of Churches met September 12th in Indianapolis. At the meeting, the Board:

RESPONDED to the Black Manifesto by calling for member communions to raise \$500,000 in "new money" for the National Committee of Black Churchmen and for the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization;

CALLED FOR a plan to be presented to the General Assembly next December whereby the churches will set up a corporation to handle "tens of millions of dollars" for the economic advancement of minority groups;

REJECTED attempts to attach strings to money raised for minorities;

AFFIRMED self-determination and black control as methods to be used by blacks, supported financially by whites, in seeking economic development;

ADOPTED the recommendations of its Executive Committee that the NCC make minority economic development its first program;

URGED the Federal Government to become involved in the human crisis with massive assistance ;

AUTHORIZED its "committee of sixteen," which originally made these proposals, to continue discussions with minority groups;

HEARD a report by its general secretary calling the financial situation of the NCC "the most critical it has ever faced;"

ACCEPTED a document called "Goals for Mission in the Seventies" for further consideration by the General Assembly in December as a basis for church mission planning in the next decade;

CALLED FOR changes in proposed tax reform legislation as it applies to foundations which, the board said, would "inhibit contributions to constructive non-profit undertakings;"

URGED the government to take immediate steps to provide all poor people with an adequate diet at a cost to them of not more than 25% of their in-



come, while it pursues long range solutions to the problem of hunger in America;

COMMENDED efforts by the government to reform the welfare system but urged it to raise its initial contribution of \$1600 per year per family and urged states to supplement the basic federal contribution;

HEARD Dr. Mary Calderone, executive director of Sex Information and Education Council, U. S. describe that agency's aims, and ask for investigation of false charges made in many communities about sex education in schools and about SIECUS;

CALLED FOR a conference on population awareness, to be held next June;

AGREED TO promote a film on the life of Martin Luther King, Jr., made by SCLC, through the NCC;

DECIDED it would hear independent grape grower Mr. Keene Larson on unionization of grape pickers at its November 30 session; and

COMMENDED the NCC Department of Social Justice for its efforts to improve relationships between police and minority groups and asked it to develop policy guidelines for consideration at a later meeting;

PUT ON RECORD its concern for the churches and people of Czechoslovakia and for the Soviet reversal of "humanization, democratization and liberalization" there.

The board will meet for its last session in the current triennium on November 29, the day before the NCC General Assembly convenes there to elect new officers for the church federation's next three-year program period. The assembly will meet in Cobo Hall, Detroit, November 30-December 4.

AMERICAN NEW CHURCH SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

by Harold Larsen, Retiring President

During the past year the officers and committees of the Sunday School Association have worked efficiently and faithfully in the following activities:

1. We have had meetings during the year at Fryeburg and also at the Swedenborg School of Religion.
2. We have met jointly with the Board of Education and cooperated in several projects.
3. We have stressed that the work of the Association can best be done by the personal initiative and help of Association presidents, association and society Education committee chairmen and the ministers, S.S. superintendents, and teachers at the grass-roots level. These should work together with parents in our most important duty of training our young people for heavenly life on this natural plane, and during this period of today's unrest.
4. Our lesson Committee, headed by Mildred Marshall, has faithfully, efficiently, and with great labor distributed the lessons. Some lessons were in short supply and had to be reprinted to fill out the series. It has been proposed and is presently being undertaken to review each cycle before reprinting. We may have some sets collated and bound for easier distribution.
5. Our Treasurer, Mrs. Elizabeth Wilson, has been very efficient and diligent an officer. Having an auditor friend, recently retired, she enlisted his help in reorganizing the Association accounts so that they may be quickly analyzed and evaluated.
6. Our Vice-President, Rev. Franklin Blackmer, has recently retired to live in Maine and is in a position to help us even more with his special skill in stock and production activities. He is working especially on a Visual Aid Handbook—a joint venture with the Board of Education. Mrs. Marian Kirven, Librarian at the Swedenborg School of Religion, will serve as distributor of materials.
7. Mrs. Margaret Briggs is presently active, with Mrs. Carolyn Blackmer of the Board of Education, in a teacher development and training program by

area group education. The Seminar held this year at Convention was for persons with advanced preparation. The people who attended that Seminar are now available to guide other interested groups in Learning about Learning.

8. Our Sunday School Visitor was edited under the experienced direction of Rev. Leslie Marshall and a staff of assistant departmental editors. We are especially grateful to the N. Y. Association and the Gray Fund for their most welcome interest and financial support. A survey indicated that the paper might serve a better use for parents and teachers. This will be considered before publication will be resumed.

9. Our Extension Committee headed by Mrs. Naomi Walton has kept contact with isolated children and asks that the names and addresses of any such New Church families with children be sent to her.

10. At the 1969 Annual Meeting it was voted to meet again in 1971. Officers elected for two years were announced in the July-August *Messenger*.

P O E M

I went down-town today for the first time since my return from California. The experience was in sharp contrast to the Utopian-like society we had created for ourselves at Harvey Mudd during LEI and Convention. The following phrases took shape in my mind when I was coming home from town:

I saw
soulless bodies
breathing stagnant air
walking dirty streets
sharing nothing yet everything
in the realm of human misery

plastic people
with expressionless faces
with mouths that mumbled
sounds of silences conversations
forever.

Nobody cared
nobody dared
rattle the chains
of nothingness

Cathy Thomas

Meditation from a Retreat

HOW DO I BECOME MY BEST SELF?

On July 13 and 14 members of the Los Angeles Church held a 27-hour retreat under the guidance of Dr. Gary White of San Diego. Participants opened the meeting by speaking on the subject, "How do I become my best Self?" and the following was one of the talks.

Well, who am I, really? To begin with I am a figment of my mother's imagination and the gleam in my father's eye. I am the product of my inheritance and environment. And I think you are too. Maybe that's what's the trouble.

The things that surround me like a moat around a castle, that prevent me from being a person, are sometimes called barriers. They are my pride, my tiny but enormous ego, my fears, my angers, my prejudices, my preconceived notions, yes even my hopes and dreams and loves.

Who am I? I am nobody and I am somebody. "I am nobody," says myself to me. "I never amounted to anything, really. And I probably never will. I don't know how to be an important person, to count for something."

"I am somebody!" says my other self. "I know I am, something tells me. One day I'll get the hang of it."

Now, how do I become my self self?

If I really knew how to become my best self, I wouldn't be here today. But let me venture a guess. Let's go back to "Who am I?" May I be biblical? The Bible says, "I am, because thou art."

The *I* in *me* isn't really me, it belongs to someone else. Maybe that's why I don't know it very well. Maybe the *I* in *me* is tied up to the *I* in *you*, and that my *me* and your *you* are strung on the same string with something we'll discover some day. Let me quote from a talk given at Harvard College by Lewis Hite, a Swedenborgian. "If we affirm, that God is Love, we merely repeat Christian tradition; but if we assert that Love is God, we announce the fundamental thesis of a new revelation; a thesis

which gives a new significance to the word Love and transforms the theological doctrine that God is Ultimate Reality, to a philosophical statement, that Ultimate Reality is Love."

If I am to become my best self, I must find this Ultimate Reality called Love. I must get all tied up with you and with it.

But I don't know how to go about it. I am bashful about it. Frankly I'm afraid of it. It's too big a thing to be careless about. It's bigger than we are. Maybe it'll burst like a bubble and be nothing at all. I'm afraid. Can you help me?

Alice Spear

Report on the 1969 Sales Table

FRYEBURG NEW CHURCH ASSEMBLY

The Women's Auxiliary of the Fryeburg Assembly is very grateful to its many friends who made donations to the Sales Table this session. They were much more saleable than last year and brought in three times the amount made last year—\$215.00 to be exact.

We are using the money to help with Assembly expenses such as a new sink and mixer for the kitchen, highchairs for the babies, \$50. toward the Dole Wing mortgage, bed linen, curtains, etc.

Now we are suggesting donations for next session, such as toys for children, kits for making things, pens, flashlights, belts, costume jewelry, cosmetics, china and art supplies to be used in the art classes.

As usual they may be sent to Fryeburg New Church Assembly, c/o Mrs. Horace W. Briggs, PO Box 321, Fryeburg, Maine 04037. Or better still, bring them to camp yourself and stay a while. You'll be glad you did.

Women's Auxiliary

BOOK REVIEW

Barnitz, Harry W. *EXISTENTIALISM AND THE NEW CHRISTIANITY: TOWARD A UNIVERSAL SYNTHESIS. A Comparative Study of Existentialism and Swedenborgianism*, New York, Philosophical Library 1969.

New Churchmen can have the treat of seeing their religion expressed in a new way by this book, just out. It is by the Pastor of a New Church Society in Yonkers, New York. He might be called the Student who compiled this volume rather than its author, because of the numerous quotations from Existential writers with many lights and shades of meaning. Very few, I should think, could have read as carefully and widely as these quotations shows he has done. Kierkegaard, Buber, Tillich, Barth, Niebuhr, Sartre, Berdyaef, and Maritain are among those he quotes.

Existentialism itself seems to be an effort to find truth outside of any dogma or tradition, ancient or modern. It tries to analyze what exists, and how people think and feel. The quotations, very interesting in themselves, illustrate how various Existentialist writers see the many phases of important Truths. The way the New Christianity interprets these same truths is always briefly but carefully put in without fanfare or trumpets, so that the New Church has the last word.

The many felicitous expressions of important thoughts the author has collected from so many and such different Existential sources show him an artist in research. His results are classified, labeled and as it were put into show-cases for intelligent examination.

This book, by no means a small volume, is not an examination of ancient thought on the problems of existence, but a collection of what has been written since 1770. Quite a few of the thoughts quotes are attributed to the "influence of Swedenborg," though they have emerged in a form quite different from the way Swedenborg stated them.

The author's comments on the quotations show how the New Christianity regards these questions. These authentically Swedenborgian remarks are often put into Existential language. Both the quotations and the explanations require the reader to

perceive the truth in what he reads. The similarity of thought in spite of difference in expression is often surprising. The radical difference from what has been generally accepted as Christianity is obvious, but it is also obvious that Swedenborgianism has anticipated the best ideas of Existentialism, and combines them into a coherent system that extends them far beyond where their best writers have so far gone.

Cornelia Hinkley Hotson

From Miami Church Bulletin

FIRE AT THE MIAMI CHURCH

There was a fire at the church on June 28th. Towards evening on that day a neighbor noticed smoke coming from the building and called the fire department. Quick action by the firemen restricted the structural damage to the church office and one Sunday School room, and thus saved the church. However, everything in these two rooms was a complete loss, including furniture, office equipment and current records.

Throughout the rest of the building smoke and water damage is prevalent and will necessitate the complete repainting of all the rooms and the sanctuary. Fortunately the church has insurance which covers both the building and the contents so that everything can be replaced with the exception of personal property.

Thus the greatest loss through the fire comes to our pastor who lost his library of hundreds of books including the Encyclopedia Britannica, the Shaff-Herzog Religious Encyclopedia, the Interpreter's Bible and many other lexicons, dictionaries and reference books. Although in the church office, being personal property, these books were not covered by insurance.

No one was in the church at the time of the fire as the Rev. Frederick was in Georgia attending meetings and visiting the isolated. The work of cleaning up has already started and will continue through the summer.

Herb Young and some other members have started a fund to help cover a part of our pastor's losses. Contributions can be mailed to Herb Young, c/o the Miami Church.

PROBLEMS WITHIN PROBLEMS

In the play, *Murder in the Cathedral*, T. S. Eliot puts in Becket's mouth the words, "The last temptation is the greatest treason—to do the right thing for the wrong reason." If this is so, then this treason is wide spread. Some few of us discover self-seeking within ourselves even when we are at our supposed best.

Our social system itself takes cognizance of the "wrong reasons." It offers all sorts of rewards for good behavior and all sorts of punishments for bad behavior in an effort to coerce our self-seeking into socially acceptable acts. *Laissez-faire* capitalism is based on the premise that "enlightened self-interest" can be trusted to work for the good of the whole. We hear on every side appeals to our self-esteem, our fears, our love of indulgence. We are shamed into charitable giving, coaxed into buying, bullied into obeying the "No Parking" signs. We may each day do dozens of "right things" for "wrong reasons."

This overstates the case, to be sure. There are appeals to nobler motives. There are things we do from a regard for others, without any significant measure of self-regard. But the dark side of the picture is all too recognizable.

This underlies one of the stormy issues of our times. Some of the younger members of our society see these coercive appeals to self-interest and rebel, wanting a society in which no artificial rewards and punishments will operate. Most of the older members of our society, on the other hand, fear such freedom.

It is a curious situation. In a way, all parties agree that a great deal is wrong. Many people who defend the state of the nation or the state of the world when they are put on the defensive are in their hearts as distressed as those with whom they argue. Given warmth and sympathy, they will often say in their own way many of the things they resist hearing from others in other ways.

But the fact that they do not favor scrapping the whole system and starting afresh is not just an incidental oddity. It is an indication that they have a different view of the source and nature of the problems.

We are victims of our own game. We have placed our values in external matters, praising technology, democracy, free enterprise, and high standards of living. We have taken psychology's view that inner personal problems are caused by environmental pressures. And we have raised a generation that honestly believes what never wholly convinced us—that if we change our environment enough, we will be healed, that if we could get rid of what one man calls "this rotten, insane, stinking, racist system," man would show himself to be good and kind.

Many people would resist such a negative judgment on the system. But if we grant the premises we have so often taken for granted, there is a truly potent logic against any other judgment. If the environment does create man's inner evils, then the system itself is the creator of the selfishness that is manifest in political corruption, crime, shoddy workmanship, corporate hucksterism, epidemic shoplifting, pornography, bigotry—in short, for the whole range of social ills that fill our news media. The appeals to self-interest are the causes of self-interest.

Now we see those who labored against the social evils of their own time—and with considerable success—bewildered at the reaction that is taking place. And unless the deeper nature of the problems is recognized, we or our children will see the same thing happen again on a larger scale. We will see racial equality largely achieved, let us say, and those who worked so hard for it bewildered at some new rebellion, finding their own life's labor regarded as worthless, finding themselves regarded as part of the old, oppressive order.

There are problems within problems; and it is vitally necessary to realize that the inner ones are the causes of the outer ones. True, social ills do have their effect on people, but the social ills are simply the means by which man's inhumanity is communicated to man. They are the transmitters of evil, not the causes of it.

So until the causes themselves are attacked, we are on a treadmill. We remedy one abuse, and find that new abuses appear. No system can be designed that will satisfy or neutralize human selfishness. Until people find their own happiness in the happiness of others, there will be oppression and inequality.

The church is by no means exempt from responsibility for the ferment we are in; nor is the church free from the problems themselves. Jeremiah saw this in his own time—that in a nation of robbers, the house of the Lord became a den of robbers.

In our own time, the church has not succeeded in presenting or exemplifying a realistic view of man and his relationship to God. Sometimes it has fallen prey to its own brand of materialism, defending a moral code in the letter rather than living it in the spirit. At other times it has presented an incredibly bland and inoffensive view of life. Too often, the church has accepted material standards of success for its own internal affairs.

The image of the successful church reflects this all too clearly. The successful church is growing in membership. Its budget is balanced, its committees are at work and report on time. Attendance is good, there are plenty of midweek activities, there is an active youth group. And the minister is nice. If he is intelligent, orthodox, or a good administrator, this helps; but he must surely be nice.

Personality conflicts are to be avoided at all costs. The church should be large enough so that no member will ever have to face one he dislikes. If controversial issues arise, the best solution is the one that offends the fewest members.

This is a caricature, to be sure, but we can see bits of ourselves in it. There is in each of us a desire to keep things running well so that everyone will be happy—just as though happiness were caused by “things running well.”

Here our private lives touch our public lives with power. We transmit many messages to others—to young people in the church, for example. The most influential of these messages are those we are not conscious of sending nor they of receiving. These build the unquestioned assumptions which will affect every future effort to make things better. Some of them spring from our unacknowledged virtues, some from our inner problems—all of them issue from our very private lives. Each of us is a house of the Lord, and there are robbers within each of us.

So neither you nor I can start out to cleanse the corporate church or the social order except as each of us is actively engaged in cleansing himself.

Church is the one place above all where we cannot afford to do or say “the right thing for the wrong reason.” Not that we should therefore do the wrong thing, or do nothing—there is a better alternative. Paradoxically, perhaps, this better way is to worry less about our motives and pay more attention to this “right thing” and to those whom it may affect. For at the core of each “wrong reason” is a concern for oneself at the cost of others. The feeling that we have the center of the stage can be countered only through some genuine seeing of the other characters in the scene.

Then, wonderfully often, a still better thing to do takes place. Given the sense that the Lord is Lord of us all, that we and others are His, we discover that our self-concern had been corrupting what we thought was the right thing. We discover that by taking hold of the outside of the problem, we have been freed to cleanse the inside. And under the Lord’s providence, others may receive from us an interior message that is at one with the exterior—good will within good deed—and some little act of ours may go into the making of a truly better church and a truly better world.

George F. Dole

From The Plains Banner (Kansas Assoc.)

THOUGHTS ON FREEDOM

We recently came across this two-sentence commentary in Swedenborg’s True Christian Religion: “Wars that have as an end the defence of the country and the church are not contrary to charity. The end in view declares whether it is charity or not.”

Perhaps it is because the end in view is under so much questioning that we are subject to the tremendous turmoil of our times. People no longer fall in line with everything that is proposed. They do question. When that happens there is bound to be division of opinion. It has been said in the past that there were only three focusing areas of human thought. (1) people (2) things and (3) ideas. . . . and that most of our speech centered around small talk about people, some of it around things (our possessions), and very little of it around ideas. That in our day is reversed. The world today is a place of almost unlimited exploration of ideas. The “unthinking thinker” of today can be the unwitting tool of the purveyor of false principles.

Galen Unruh

THE MESSENGER

OCTOBER 1969

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PRESIDENT'S CORNER	162
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR	163
SALVATION AND LIFE	
<i>by the Rev. William Woofenden</i>	167
HURRICANE NEWS	
<i>by the Rev. Leslie Marshall</i>	169
NCC GENERAL BOARD MEETS	170
AMERICAN NEW CHURCH SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION	
<i>by Harold Larsen</i>	171
POEM	
<i>by Cathy Thomas</i>	171
HOW DO I BECOME MY BEST SELF	
<i>by Alice Spear</i>	172
FRYEBURG NEW CHURCH ASSEMBLY	172
BOOK REVIEW: Barnitz, Harry W., <i>Existentialism and the</i>	
<i>New Christianity</i>	173
PROBLEMS WITHIN PROBLEMS	
<i>by Dr. George Dole</i>	174
THOUGHTS ON FREEDOM	
<i>by Rev. Galen Unruh</i>	175

THE MESSENGER
48 Sargent St., Box E
Newton, Mass. 02158

Second Class
Postage
PAID
at Boston, Mass.