



From Things Seen and Heard in the World: New Perspectives on Swedenborg



BY JAMES
LAWRENCE

An e w day is dawn-
ing in under-
standing as-
pects of Swe-
denborg's life
that holds
great promise

for broadening Swedenborg's reach in contemporary scholarship. Ironically, it comes from a better understanding of what Swedenborg saw and heard in this world, and the title I've given this article is a play on the well-known subtitle of Swedenborg's best seller, *Heaven and Its Wonders and Hell: From Things Seen and Heard*. Swedenborg and Swedenborgians have historically emphasized what Swedenborg saw and heard in other-worldly states, not in this world.

My participation in historical research has led me to a conviction that there is still much we do not know about his worldly experiences, and once wheat is separated from chaff, the new developments in Swedenborg studies are going to comprise an excellent instrument for the advancement of the New Church.

New provocative story lines have

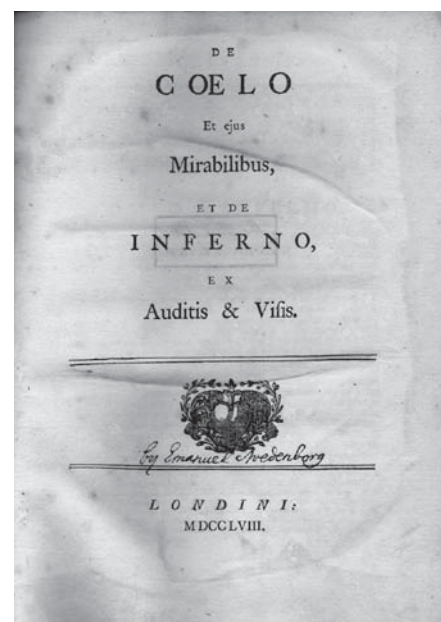
been cropping up about Swedenborg's worldly life: that he was a political spy; that he was an operative in the international Jacobite movement involving the governments of Sweden and France against the House of Hanover; that he was paid so handsomely for his work by the King of France, Louis XV, that essentially this piece of his resume financed the publication of "the writings"; that he was an initiated Freemason who performed initiations himself in his own London lodgings; and that he practiced tantric-kabbalism which proved to be the means for his yogi-like ease-of-transport in the spiritual realms. Some of the authors writing in these veins include Marsha Keith Schuchard, Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, Lars

The major biographies of Swedenborg by non-confessional authors without exception present his intellectual and spiritual formation as involving a much greater complexity.

there has been considerable resistance to the veracity of, and evidence for, these story lines by writers committed to one of the Swedenborgian branches, and one might say that the matter is becoming a bit of a donnybrook.

Dealing with these and other issues in detail is far beyond the scope of a brief article such as this, but I would

like to offer an overview perspective on the major works on Swedenborg's biography. In general, biographies of Swe-



First edition of *Heaven and Hell*

denborg written by confessional Swedenborgians tend to offer a portrayal of Swedenborg's journey as primarily one of a natural philosopher who, though a believer in God and perhaps an occasional participant in church life, was not intellectually engaged with church life, did not have an orthodox theology, but was seeking nevertheless for answers to big questions via the natural philosophy disciplines, which rendered him prepared in a special intellectual way as an ideal candidate for the kind of prophet the Lord needed

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Book Review: A Stroke of Insight • A Call for Civil Discourse
NCC Governing Board Meeting Report • Receiving Guidance to Alberta

The Editor's Desk



Serendipity

While laying out this issue of *The Messenger*, I decided to run an image of the title page of *Heaven and Hell* alongside Jim Lawrence's article on page 137. I searched Google Images and found one, but I was unhappy with its quality. Two days later, Kevin Baxter showed me three books that someone had just donated to Swedenborg Chapel in Cambridge. The donor was a descendent of Samuel Worcester who was clearing out some old stuff and was kind enough to offer them to the church rather than sell them. What were the books? First editions of *Heaven and Hell*, *The New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrines*, and *Apocalypse Revealed*. I now had an original copy of the title page to scan. As a bonus, "by Emanuel Swedenborg" was written under the title in old ink. I had my good image to scan.

The copy of *Heaven and Hell* has a fascinating provenance. On the inside

cover is written. "Presented by the Author to the Royal Society of London." The next inscription says, "Purchased of John Handy, New Church College, Devonshire St., Islington, London. Received, Salem, Mass., Aug. 25, 1845. [signed] Saml H. Worcester." (See images of these inscriptions on page 149.) It is always a wonderful thing to touch history; it is a wonderful thing to touch the book given to the London Society in 1758 or so by the hand of Emanuel Swedenborg, the pages worn by the hand of Samuel Worcester.

While some may call my receipt of this book just when I needed it divine providence, I call it serendipity—one of the small pleasures in life.

Inside and Outside

Divine providence is a concept embraced through belief. As Swedenborgians we welcome a deep exploration of that concept in both spiritual and intellectual terms. We have many writings by Swedenborg, and some of us read even more in an intellectual quest to inform and better understand our beliefs. As Swedenborgians we place high value on the intellect and rationality. Swedenborg, after all, points us

to good *and truth*, love *and understanding*. Sometimes we struggle with reconciliation of beliefs and intellectual understanding surrounding Swedenborg's sources.

Jim Lawrence, in the cover article in this issue, introduces us to the terms *emic* and *etic*, meaning two ways to look at a culture, from the inside or from the outside. He explores the idea of donning the hat of an outsider (non-believer) to gain a different (and useful) perspective on Emanuel Swedenborg and his writings. Approaching Swedenborg with the question of his sources apart from divine revelation leads the seeker to a fuller understanding of the man and his writings, and offers the reader a deeper understanding of his or her spiritual and religious life.

—Herb Ziegler

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Correction

Unni de Presno's name was misspelled on page 119 of the September 2009 *Messenger*.

Church Calendar

November 6–7: General Council fall meeting • Framingham, Massachusetts

December 27–30: SCYL Winter Retreat • Almont New Church Retreat Center, Allenton, Michigan

June 23–27, 2010: Annual Convention • St. Paul, Minnesota

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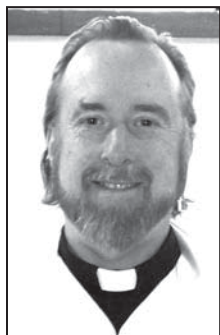
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What We Don't Know about Heaven

BY DAVID J. FEKETE



One of Swedenborg's extraordinary claims is that he had visions of the afterlife. And what is extraordinary to me, is that he was able to de-

scribe these visions with the precision of the scientist that he was. This claim is not all that extraordinary though. There is a visionary tradition in the history of Christianity, in fact it is even Biblical. The New Testament records accounts where people heard voices from heaven and saw heaven opened. Paul had a vision of Christ which left him blind for three days, and his companions heard the voice of Jesus. Peter, as well, had a vision of heaven. The Apostle John recorded his visions in the book of Revelation. There is a visionary tradition among the indigenous peoples of North America, in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam. Some reports of near-death experiences include visions of the next life.

From Swedenborg's writings, we think we have a fair idea of what the afterlife is like. Swedenborg talks about the spiritual bodies angels have—and all angels come from the human race; he talks about communities in the next life, and about functions and occupations we have in the next life. But then there are all those times when Swedenborg says that what he experiences is ineffable. That is, his experiences are beyond anything words can express.

The very language of angels—good people who have crossed over—is beyond human speech. We all come into this angelic language, according to Swedenborg, and it is so natural that

we don't know that it transcends all language from this world. To convince newly arrived spirits just how superior their language is, Swedenborg conducts an experiment. He asks the spirits to go to their society, think of an idea and try to tell it to Swedenborg, who is still in the natural world. Swedenborg then tells us what happened:

They entered, thought of a subject, retained it, and came out; and when they tried to give expression to it, they could not; for they could find no idea of natural thought adequate to any idea of purely spiritual thought, and thus words to express it. (*True Christianity* 280 [5]).

... one reason for the transcendence of spiritual language is that the experiences in the next life are beyond what we can experience here.

The spirits are convinced then about how superior spiritual thought and language is to natural thought and language. As Swedenborg says,

Spiritual ideas are supernatural, inexpressible, ineffable, and incomprehensible to a natural man; and they said that being so supereminent, spiritual ideas or thoughts in comparison with natural are ideas of ideas and thoughts of thoughts, and therefore by them the qualities of qualities and the affections of affections are expressed; ... and from this it is evident that spiritual wisdom is the wisdom of wisdom, and is therefore inexpressible to any wise man in the natural world (*True Christianity* 280 [5]).

So we don't have the first idea of what angels think and talk about. It is so filled with wisdom that the best of

our natural thought isn't able to understand a single angelic idea.

That passage implies that one reason for the transcendence of spiritual language is that the experiences in the next life are beyond what we can experience here. I was intrigued by the statement that in angelic speech the "affections of affections" are expressed. All our delights come from our loves. When we are enjoying what we love, we are in our delights. And the heavenly delights of loving God and the neighbor far exceed any other joy we can know. We feel joy here when we do good to others. And we feel a peace and joy when we think about God. But the happiest we can ever be in this world is nothing compared to heavenly joy and happiness. We feel only faintly the joy that awaits us in heaven. This is one of those heavenly promises that is pleasant to contemplate. Swedenborg writes,

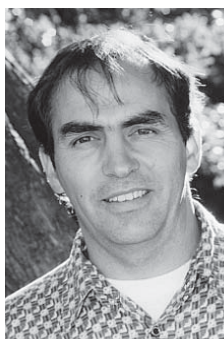
... a man who is in love to God and in love toward the neighbor, as long as he lives in the body does not feel the manifest enjoyment from these loves and from the good affections which are from them, but only a blessedness that is hardly perceptible, because it is stored up in his interiors, and veiled by the exteriors which are of the body, and defiled by the cares of the world. After death, however, the states are entirely changed; ... the obscure enjoyment and almost imperceptible blessedness which had been with those who are in love to God and in love to the neighbor, is then turned into the love of heaven, which is in every way perceptible and sensible; for that blessedness, which was stored up and lay hid in their interiors when they lived in the world, is then revealed and brought forth into manifest

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The Glorification of Christ and $E=mc^2$

BY STEVE SANCHEZ

This article began from an idea I had in a paper for the Swedenborgian House of Studies (SHS), and grew from a meeting Dean Jim Lawrence invited me to with Ian Thompson in the SHS offices. Ian Thompson is a physics professor visiting from England with whom Jim had been corresponding. The meeting promised to be exciting because Ian Thompson is not only a physicist but also a student of Swedenborg, and he had written some great papers on correspondences between physics and Swedenborgian ideas. I found Ian to be an English gentleman who is very gracious and to the point. He looks and talks a little bit like Sean Connery.



The focus of this article is to explore the correspondence between the process of the glorification of the Lord, and Einstein's theory of particle acceleration, which states that as matter approaches the speed of light its mass increases, (and approaches infinity). This was demonstrated in the Berkeley cyclotron. The main purpose of this article is to facilitate a deeper understanding of the process of the glorification as described by Swedenborg. First I will briefly describe the process of the glorification.

Swedenborg tells us that the Lord was tempted and assaulted by evil throughout his whole life. Through the process of overcoming these temptations Christ purified his human and accomplished the glorification. Christ was susceptible to evil because he had a human body. Hereditary evil is passed on from generation to generation through the body and the soul.

Swedenborg writes that the evil that comes from the father is more interior, because of the soul; and the evil that comes from the mother is more exterior, because from the body. Therefore, because Christ's soul was divine, or Jehovah himself, he had no interior evil, which cannot be permanently removed, but he did have the external level of hereditary evil from the body. The result was that he "entered the fish bowl" so to speak. That is, he made himself accessible to all humanity and at the same time to all evil. He needed to be vulnerable to temptation by evil so that he could subjugate all evil.

Day by day, step-by-step, throughout his whole life he overcame all temptations. Evil forces tempted him with power, fame, greed, wealth, and com-

I would suggest that m (mass) corresponds to the body of Jesus, and v (velocity) corresponds to the accelerating love and wisdom of Jesus; c (the speed of light) corresponds to the infinite potential (of God) in Christ's soul.

fort. They tempted him to rage, vengeance, lust, pride, and self-love. They unrelentingly tried to persuade him to think a single sinful thought by incredible magical arts. Christ stood up to and defeated them continually; it took the power and might of his divine soul to do what no human could do.

Christ's greatest temptation had to do with his pure love for humanity, which we will discuss later. Here it is important to note that evil attacks according to one's innermost love. Each time Christ overcame temptation he took another step in purifying his human body of hereditary evil. Each time

he removed hereditary evil, the quality of his love rose to a higher level.

Now let's expand on the implications of these basic parameters. The temptations the Lord underwent and the ever-increasing love he opened to set up an ever-increasing (exponential) equation. Swedenborg says that it is a law of the hells that they seek to destroy a person by attacking their innermost love. At the same time, every time a temptation is overcome, one's state of love increases. In the case of Christ, his soul possessed infinite potential because his father was God. Swedenborg writes, "Because this love (of Christ toward humanity) was not human but divine and temptation is great in proportion as the love is great, it is evident how grievous were his combats, and how great the ferocity on the part of the hells. That these things were so I know of a certainty." This sets up an exponentially increasing formula because the more Christ overcame temptations and purified his human, the higher his quality of love became, which in turn led the hells to attack with increased force at the higher level, and when he overcame that temptation, his quality of love increased again, and so on to the point of infinity. I say infinity because God is the very soul of Christ and he therefore possesses infinite potential in his soul.

Having described Swedenborg's conception of the glorification process, we can now compare it to Einstein's theory of particle acceleration, which states the following: the closer a particle approaches the speed of light, the greater its mass becomes, and this increase continues exponentially to the horizon of infinity. Max Born writing on this subject says,

A glance at formula 78 for the
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What We Don't Know

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sensation, because they are then in the spirit and that was the enjoyment of their spirit (*Heaven and Hell* 401).

What strikes me about this passage is how good it feels to live in mutu-

al love with one another here in this world. There are times when we seem to be lifted up into heaven here on earth. And yet even these feelings are but a "blessedness that is hardly perceptible" compared to heavenly joy. Even though human language is inadequate to express what spiritual reality is

like, Swedenborg tries to give us some idea of just how great heavenly joy is. And the source of heavenly joy comes from God himself, who wants to save everyone and make everyone as happy as he can.

Heaven in itself is such that it is full of enjoyments, so that viewed in itself it is nothing but what is blessed and delightful, since the Divine good proceeding from the Divine love of the Lord makes heaven in general and in particular with everyone there, and the Divine love is to will the salvation of all and the happiness of all from inmosts and in fullness. Hence whether you say heaven or heavenly joy, it is the same thing (HH 397).

And everyone in heaven wants to share their happiness with everyone else. Heaven is immense and so heavenly joy is equally immense. Once again, Swedenborg tells us that sharing joy comes first from God, who wishes to give everyone all that he has.

How great the enjoyment of heaven is, may be evident only from this, that it is an enjoyment to all in heaven to communicate their enjoyments and blessings to others; and because all are such in the heavens, it is manifest how immense is the enjoyment of heaven; for, as was shown above, in the heavens there is a communication of all with each, and of each with all. Such communication flows forth from the two loves of heaven, which, as was said, are love to the Lord and love toward the neighbor. These loves are communicative of their enjoyments. That love to the Lord is such, is because His love is the love of communication of all that He has with all, for He wills the happiness of all. Similar love is in every one of those who love the Lord, because He is in them (*Heaven and Hell* 399).

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mass tells us that the values of the relativistic mass m become greater as the velocity v of the moving body approaches the velocity of light. For $v=c$ the mass becomes infinitely great.

From this it follows that it is impossible to make a body move with a velocity greater than that of light by applying forces: Its inertial resistance grows to an infinite extent and prevents the velocity of light from being reached (*Einstein's Theory of Relativity*, 277).

When I talked to Ian Thompson in Professor Lawrence's office about this, he agreed that there may be a close correspondence between the formula of the glorification and Einstein's formula, but expressed as Max Born does that I would have to deal with the physical law that mass cannot reach the speed of light because of inertial resistance.

Lets examine that consideration. In this formula I would suggest that m (mass) corresponds to the body of Jesus, and v (velocity) corresponds to the accelerating love and wisdom of Jesus; c (the speed of light) corresponds to the infinite potential (of God) in Christ's soul. The inertial resistance corresponds to the barrier between the natural world and the spiritual world. Max Born's statement about the infinite resistance of inertia preventing the speed of light being reached, (and also Ian's concern with this), is not surprising because this is natural law. In a way their concern about this impossibility helps us to appreciate the mi-

raculous nature of the resurrection, because the exact correspondence we are talking about here is that between mass becoming infinite and Jesus taking his human body into the spiritual world (which is to say he made it divine and infinite). Humans for the most part are rooted in the natural world by their body and not cognizant of the spiritual world; humans cannot cross the barrier between the natural and spiritual world, except in death. The two worlds are separate and distinct, as our experience here on earth abundantly confirms. Only on special and rare occasions do people catch a glimpse of something indicating another world.

Swedenborg writes that some humans while on earth can approach awareness of heavenly wisdom, but only by continuous degrees; they cannot pass into this awareness by discreet degrees. Continuous degrees progress only within a level gradually, while discreet degrees progress from one level to another, such as from the natural to the spiritual, and the spiritual to the celestial. Because we humans are rooted in the natural level, it is difficult for us to conceive what it means that Christ raised his whole body into heaven and made it divine. To get a better picture of this let's look at what the Bible and Swedenborg say about this.

Swedenborg writes that Christ was the only one to raise his corporeal body into the spiritual world and the only one who ever will.

He rose again on the third day with his whole body; which does
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New Perspectives

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to comprehend and communicate the great reformations that Christianity needed. Those reformations came to him in his otherworldly states as a seer and a prophet. In this group we could put the major nineteenth-century biographies by Wilkinson, White, and Worcester, as well as the mid-twentieth century works by Cyriel Sigstedt and Alfred Acton.

The major biographies of Swedenborg by non-confessional authors without exception present his intellectual and spiritual formation as involving a much greater complexity. Martin Lamm's 1915 pivotal work, two major biographies appearing in the same year, 1948, by Signe Toksvig and Ernst Benz, Inge Jonsson's intellectual biography of Swedenborg in 1971, and the recent *Swedenborg's Secret* by Lars Bergquist in 1999 all regard Swedenborg as having developed much of his theosophical perspective before his famed intro-mission into the spiritual world.

Lamm, Benz, and Jonsson were world-class scholars, and it is fair to say that their expertise gave them a basis for noticing subtle ways in which the history of thought comes into play in Swedenborg's writings, both his philosophical works and his theosophical works. In the hands of these authors, Swedenborg is regarded as being shaped in his specific thought forms and concepts in significant ways before his intromission into the spiritual world, such that there is a less dramatic change of worldview discerned between Swedenborg the philosopher and Swedenborg the theosopher.

In general, this observation of a fundamental difference between the approaches to Swedenborg's biography by confessional Swedenborgians and those without that relationship is constantly assessed in religious studies. Social sciences often refer to *emic*

and *etic* approaches to research. These terms come from social science methodology, originally from an anthropological study of languages in cultures. *Emic* refers to a description of behavior or a belief in terms meaningful (consciously or unconsciously) to the actor within a culture; *etic* refers to the description of a behavior or belief by an observer in terms that can be applied to other cultures, an understanding afforded by comparative study from an outsider. In religious studies, and especially in historical research and writing, "emics" are often regarded by "etics" as intrinsically tainted due to a priori emotional commitments to the out-

Was his grand theosophy primarily or even exclusively derived from things seen and heard in heaven? Or in very fundamental ways, did Swedenborg derive and construct his religious system from things seen and heard in this world?

come and conclusions of the story under investigation. "Emics" likewise often regard "etics" as having their own a priori biases which close their eyes to possible outcomes or conclusions.

This is a part of the tussle in current scholarly discourse on Swedenborg's biography. How his obvious change from philosophy to theosophy transpired, accompanied by his calm and consistent claims as to his spiritual travels, has to be interpreted, and a lot would seem to be at stake in this question. To take Swedenborg at his word, which is essentially what the emics do, presents such a dramatically unique story in the history of humankind that it commands some kind of response. If Swedenborg's own story is interpreted in such a way that it loses much of its authority, then that new story line

can begin to undermine commitments among the faithful.

In the parlance of historical studies, we are dealing with the subject of Swedenborg's sources. Was his grand theosophy primarily or even exclusively derived from things seen and heard in heaven? Or in very fundamental ways, did Swedenborg derive and construct his religious system from things seen and heard in this world?

For me, the question of Swedenborg's sources doesn't directly affect how I feel about the validity of his calling visions or about the nature of his spiritual second-sight, as it is sometimes called. My journey with engaging Swedenborg's life has me in a place where I'm an etically-informed emic. I feel that's a good place to be—that etically-astute emics will engender a new phase of understanding Swedenborg's life that can command a whole new era of interest and inquiry.

The fairly new academic field of Western esoteric traditions is crossing a threshold of success in recognition, which makes sense as it takes in its scope much of the center of religious thought in the West from the Renaissance forward. But before Frances Yates's work in the 1960s and 1970s, in which she began to draw some boundaries around these spheres of discourse, historians had not seen the contours of this conversation before (due partly to the ever-present safety-motivated secrecy and initiatic styles of operation in these traditions). Antoine Faivre of the Sorbonne really fleshed out some methodological frameworks, and now many others have come on board, most notably Wouter Hanegraaff of the University of Amsterdam, who wrote the introductory article for the first volume of *Secrets of Heaven* for the New Century Edition just released. Schuchard and Nicholas-Clarke also work in this field. Western Esotericism

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has rapidly emerged as a whole academic field that constructs a somewhat cohesive conversation over the past half-millennium in which Swedenborg pops up quite a lot.

For simplicity's sake I'm going to stick with Faivre's construction of the conversation, which tends to identify a conversation beginning with the discovery of the *Hermetica* manuscripts in the Italian Renaissance and ends up incorporating Jewish kabbalah, along

with a passion for decoding the Book of Nature just as the Book of Scripture can be decoded in kabbalist fashion (and kabbalah it-

self was a riff on a longstanding Christian and Sufic allegorical tradition). Nearly the whole of this conversation took place with figures now regarded as influential but almost all of whom operated outside the gaze of orthodoxy and outside the confines of the clergy on either side of the Reformation. Swedenborg crops up in this conversation in many ways, and the taxonomy of the ideas in the so-called Western Esoteric Traditions finds a very strong echo in Swedenborg's theosophy. The adjective *hermetic* describes a figure using terminology and specific forms of thought within this long conversation from the late fifteenth century to present day movements and continuations, most obviously associated with aspects of what once was called New Age religious currents. The adjective *hermetic* is probably more important for situating Swedenborg than pietist or Neoplatonic—two major specific styles of theology long associated with Swedenborg.

My reading is that the New Christianity presented in the writings is wholly integral with the history of Western

religious thought. Swedenborg's specialized vocabulary, which I once regarded as highly original, can be found throughout the history of Christian and Jewish wrestling and especially in hermetic discourse. The concepts of influx, of correspondences, of the human as macrocosm and microcosm, of Jesus's move to divinity occurring through a dynamic process on earth, of regeneration as an organic process in contradistinction to the vicarious atonement, of metaphysical complementarity of masculine and feminine characterizing the whole creation as a fundamental dynamic unit, of four preceding great epochs with a new

one dawning, of even using the phrase New Church (capitalized), of reading the Book of Scripture via three inner spiritual levels in addition to the literal, of the spiritual sense not being able to be discerned until the Second Coming,

of reading the Book of Nature as a map of divine order, among other "distinctive" features of Swedenborg's theosophy are all present in the conversation in this world before he published the writings. This litany comprises foundations of the New Christianity, and all these concepts and even specific vocabulary are found in channels of discourse with which I would expect Swedenborg to have been familiar.

There are several important factors to note straight away: all of these concepts are given a new shape in some way by Swedenborg; and there is no single source other than Swedenborg that encompasses all of these concepts. Perhaps most importantly, Swedenborg does not follow closely any one source or previous writer. He builds his own aeroplane of theosophy. Or, if you like, in the light of heaven he was able—using all the ideas, thoughts, learning, speculations, concepts, and insights he had encountered throughout his life—to locate conceptual frameworks and

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Taking seriously what Swedenborg saw and heard in the world will be critical for building a new interest for engaging Swedenborg's life, . . .

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The Rev. Dr. David Fekete

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In Exodus 34:6-7, God says to Moses, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin." This is not the God many expect to find in the Old Testament. Many think that the Old Testament God is angry, violent, and jealous. But there is much beauty and power in the Old Testament that many readers miss because finding its beauty sometimes requires guidance. The Old Testament is a compilation of texts representing 2,000 years of additions. As the people of Israel developed over time, their interpretation of holiness and of God evolved. This course is a guide for progressive readers to the history of the Old Testament and the development of its theology.

Rev. Dr. David Fekete is pastor of the Edmonton New Church Society in Alberta, Canada. He holds an M.T.S. from Harvard University in Religion and Culture and a Ph.D. from the University of Virginia in Religion and Literature. His research interests are in spirituality and love, in all its varied forms.

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Christ and $E=mc^2$

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not take place with any man, for man rises again only as to the spirit, but not as to the body. That man might know and no one should doubt that the Lord rose again with his whole body . . . He showed himself in his human body to the disciples, saying to them, when they believed they saw a spirit: Behold, My hands and My feet, that it is I myself; handle me and see, for spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see me have. And when he said this, he showed them his hands and feet, (Luke 24: 39, 40) (*Secrets of Heaven* 5078).

The Bible is careful to show that the Lord's state is in transition. When Christ first appears to Mary after the resurrection and she mistakes him for a gardener, he says to her, "Do not touch me, for I have not yet risen to My Father." Afterward he invites the disciples to touch his body. As in the above quote to prove to the disciples further that he rose with his whole body, he told Thomas to thrust his hand into his side (John 20: 27–28). For the same purpose, in front of the disciples, he ate fish and honeycomb proving it had natural qualities (Luke 24: 41–43). He also "appeared to them while the door was shut" (John 20:19, 26); in other words, he walked through walls indicating his body had divine qualities. It is also significant that after he had been with the disciples for some time, suddenly "he became invisible." (Luke 24: 31) The Bible is laying out the attributes of the divine human so that all generations can know that he resurrected his human body.

No human could ever do this, because it would take the infinite potential of God to penetrate the barrier between the physical and spiritual world; or put another way, to break the law that physical matter cannot enter the spiritual world. In Einstein's formula

this is what corresponds to the infinite inertia of mass. The process it took then, perhaps, is according to the formula I just described. The resurrection is Christ coming into perfect union with God, which according to our formula is $v=c$. In physics when the velocity of mass equals the speed of light then theoretically mass becomes infinite, but of course this is impossible, because in a purely natural way, this would mean an infinite mass would occupy all space and thereby destroy everything. (Science fiction writers have an alternative idea about this; they speculate that when a mass [a space ship] reaches the speed of light, it enters another dimension.) In the glorification, when Christ's love reached the point of $v=c$, his whole self re-united with the infinite, that is with the One

The form of his "infinite mass" corresponds well to Swedenborg's metaphysical idea of the grand man.

God. (Christ did not come to destroy but to fulfill.) His love for mankind became so intense and internal even while in his body that his extension and presence became universal. He became the innermost of everything, and thereby re-established divine order from pure love. The Lord now had immediate internal access to everything and everyone, from the purely corporeal to the purely divine. Because of this, love and wisdom were, are, and ever will be exponentially more available to humans.

The form of his "infinite mass" corresponds well to Swedenborg's metaphysical idea of the grand man. Swedenborg writes that the Lord became the grand man, or the universal human. This means that the grand man is infinite in his extension and presence and the whole of creation is in his "shape." He is outside of space and time—occupying all space and time, similar to the

way Einstein's formula predicts, except that it is fulfilled in a spiritual way. The shape and relationship of the whole universe is in the form of the grand man, which is a manifestation of the divine-human, the Lord, Jesus Christ. As Swedenborg says, to begin to grasp this we cannot think in a natural way but must think in a spiritual way.

After the resurrection, the nature of God and his relationship toward mankind changed. Before incarnating, as Jehovah, he acted mediately through angels toward man and the natural/physical level. He used angels to appear as his human divine. Afterward he contained and exercised all power from himself, as his own human divine. This means that the divine now had extension into the natural level by direct influx, and because of this inclusion of the natural level, "the whole" now burned exponentially brighter. Humans cannot receive love from Jehovah, the very divine, directly, because it would instantly destroy them; for the Lord said, "No man can see me and live." Love must come from a body to be given and received, and this is what Christ provided for all humanity.

Comparing the glorification to Einstein's theory can also lead to another understanding, and that is by the way the Lord resolved the tension between his internal and external state. Gard Perry has pioneered the insights I am about to share in far greater detail than I express here. His work has to do with the correspondences between the Genesis and Exodus stories in the Old Testament and the spiritual development of the Lord's life and mind. It is wonderful to say (as Swedenborg says) that the story of the Lord's life is contained in the Old Testament stories in the inner sense. Many people know this, but Gard Perry has studied the details of these correspondences that chronicle the development of the Lord's mind, body, and soul. He

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also studies this subject in the light of modern psychological developments.

Gard's study points out that Jesus's first great awakening to the infinite potential of his soul corresponds to the promise made to Abraham by Jehovah that all of humanity would become his progeny like the "dust of the earth." This

is an expression that the Lord's love and wisdom for humanity, and governorship over humanity would be infinite in content and height. At the same time the Lord began to see the depth of humanity's suffering. He saw the rampant nature of evil of his time, the great suffering, cruelty, and hate of humanity. Humanity was in an external state of worship, and he would have to deal with this difficult circumstance. He knew his mission was to save humanity but at this point he did not know how. His greatest anxiety and temptation was the uncertainty over how and whether he could save humanity from the terrible schemes of the evil forces.

I will not go into all the detail of Gard's work that reveals a great deal more on how this was done, but it is important to say that it was both an internal work and a work done in the community around Jesus. By continually developing his celestial life, the Lord entered a state that had never existed before in the universe, and he therefore "drew" all reality with him and redefined it. This is because the innermost is first cause, and he became the innermost of all humanity. This is how I believe he broke the law between the physical and the spiritual and made his human divine, because the very innermost is by nature utterly universal and utterly specific. When the Lord became the innermost divine, he became both of these. Swedenborg says

By continually developing his celestial life, the Lord entered a state that had never existed before in the universe, . . .

the Lord is intrinsic to everything, the indivisible source of all life, and that there is nothing so large or minute that there is not another form within it.

This is why he is called the "all of everything," and why providence guides the largest to the minutest events of humanity.

At the same time, while on the earth, the Lord was working in a community teaching people how to be in internal worship, and not in external worship, in which the whole society was steeped. These activities on earth developed the new seed (remains and proprium)

from which the New Church would develop.

I believe this conception of how the Lord worked through the innermost gives our limited human perception a glimpse of how the Lord "broke the barrier between the terrestrial world and the spiritual world" and made his human body divine. The inertia of mass in this formula includes a correspondence to the condition of the human body being permeated by hereditary evil. A contemplation of our very limited human ability to overcome this inertia, should give us all a great appreciation for what the Lord did for us, and our complete inability to do it. ☩

Steve Sanchez is studying for an M.Div. at the Swedenborgian House of Studies.

What We Don't Know

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We think of heaven as being a place of deep peace. There are moments in this world when we feel tranquil and at peace—perhaps at sunrise, or in a quiet natural setting. I remember skiing up in Jasper with Carol. We stopped and looked down at the beautiful valley, and Carol said to me, "Listen—it's totally quiet."

There was no road noise, no clamor from traffic, no sirens. There was just the forest, the valley, and each other. That was one of those moments of peace that we feel here on earth. But even moments such as these fall short of the kind of peace that awaits us in heaven. I spoke with a man who had actually died for several minutes before being resuscitated. He had an experience of the afterlife. He told me that there is a peace and tranquility beyond anything we feel in this world. Swedenborg says the same.

Man also, as long as he lives in the body, cannot receive the peace

God feels joy that we are happy, and he feels joy in being conjoined with everybody in heaven.

of heaven, thus cannot perceive it, because his perception is in what is natural. In order to perceive it, he ought to be able as to thought to be elevated and withdrawn from the body and kept in the spirit, and then be with angels. Because I have in this way perceived the peace of heaven, I am able to describe it, yet not by words as it is in itself, because human words are

inadequate, but only as it is in comparison with that rest of mind which those enjoy

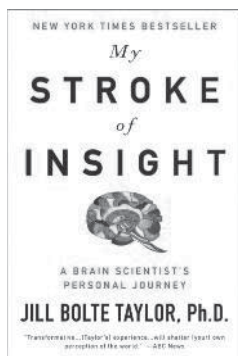
who are content in God (*Heaven and Hell* 248).

And once again, this peace flows from God himself. God is the source of all heavenly peace and joy. And what amazes me, is that God himself feels joy in being united with us all in heaven. God feels joy that we are happy, and he feels joy in being conjoined with everybody in heaven. This Divine joy is shared with everyone in heaven and our joy in God and God's joy in us

continues on page 149

Book Review

A Stroke of Insight from a Stricken Scientist



REVIEWED
BY PAUL
ZACHARIAS

*My Stroke Of
Insight*
by Dr. Jill Taylor,
Viking Press:
2008.

*Following
Eric Allison's
stroke in 2008,*

Paul Zacharias and many other friends and family members began exploring ways to understand strokes and assist Eric along his healing path. Eric's wife, Lisa Allison, and many of his parishioners read and recommended this book.

This is easily one of the most fascinating and inspiring books I have ever read, and as you will see, the title is a nice play on words. Dr. Taylor, at 37, was serving on the staff of the Harvard Medical School performing research and teaching young professionals about the human brain. She had spent her entire adult life studying how the brain functions. Then on Dec. 10, 1996, she suffered a massive, rare type of stroke in the left side of her brain. Within four hours she couldn't walk, talk, read, write, or recall any of her past life. But during those first fateful hours, the small portion of the scientific left side of her brain that was still functioning kicked in and later on she was able to look back to analyze and describe exactly what was going on. It's an amazing story.

This remarkable book is a chronological documentation of the physical, psychological, and spiritual journey that followed this traumatic event, a total of eight years. The daily, weekly, and monthly painstaking progress during the first year is graphically spelled out.

But first she lays the foundation by giving us a fairly technical description, with numerous illustrations, of exactly how the human brain functions, with special attention given to the contributions of the right and left hemispheres. Normally they work together beautifully as a team. In her case, the left side of her brain almost totally collapsed. It took years for this part of her brain to be rebuilt, and this process required enormous will power and patience on her part, endless and varied therapies, a very supportive and understanding mother, loving friends, and a fierce determination to survive. As a trained scientist, she was able to observe, be aware of, and record her thoughts and feelings throughout this entire journey, and it makes for quite a story.

The most interesting part of the book is when she writes about the differences and the contributions of the right and left brains. During the first few months after the stroke she was living almost completely out of her right brain, and she writes:

Although many of us may think of our ourselves as thinking creatures that feel, biologically we are feeling creatures that think. To the right mind no time exists other than the present moment. . . . the moment of now is timeless and abundant . . . our right mind plays intuitively outside the box . . . it is spontaneous, carefree and imaginative . . . it allows our artistic juices to flow free without inhibition or judgment . . . the present moment is a time when everything and everyone are connected as one . . . it perceives the big picture, how everything is related and how we all join together to make up the whole . . . our right hemisphere sees in pictures and perceives the big pic-

ture. During those early weeks she felt that she was "fluid" and had no awareness of her physical body . . . the boundaries of my earthly body dissolved and I melted into the universe.

On the other hand, the left side of the brain thinks in terms of time whereby our moments are divided into the past, present, and future. It thrives on details and evermore details. It analyzes, questions, weaves facts and events into stories, seeks to understand everything, passes judgments, plans for the future, and worries about the past—It never stops thinking!

Of course both sides of the brain are essentially important for healthy living, but Taylor feels that most of us tend to give too much weight to the left brain, and she learned from personal experience what it is like to live more from the right side of the brain.

In the absence of my left hemisphere's analytical judgment, I was completely entranced by the feelings of tranquility, safety, blessedness, euphoria, and inner peace. My stroke of insight is that at the core of my right hemisphere consciousness is a commitment to express peace, joy, love, and compassion to the world. My right brain proclaims, "I am a part of it all. We are brothers and sisters on this planet. We are here to make this planet a more peaceful and kinder place."

Finally Taylor describes how she consciously discarded much of the negative garbage from her former life, bad stuff that she didn't need any more, and replaced it with positive, helpful graces that she had experienced in the healing process—an amazing regeneration story.

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Dangers of "Christian Zionism" Cited in NCC Brochure

A new brochure, "Why We Should Be Concerned About Christian Zionism," by the Interfaith Relations Commission of the National Council of Churches (in English and Spanish) is now available as an educational tool for communities, congregations and other groups who want to share these warnings with their members.

Christian Zionism, while ostensibly a Christian movement in support of Israel, actually has the opposite effect. This brochure shows Christian Zionism to be a misguided ideology that considers the State of Israel divinely ordained with the role of ushering in the end of history, where unconverted Jews

and Christians of "questionable status" will be judged by God's wrath. In fact, the brochure points out, many evangelical Christians and Israelis reject the notion.

"The danger of this ideology is that it is a manipulation of Christian scripture and teaching," said Dr. Antonios Kireopoulos, NCC Senior Program Director for Interfaith Relations. "Unfortunately it has influence in American churches, to the point where many well-meaning Christians are swayed to support particularly destructive directions in U.S. foreign policy with regard to the Middle East."

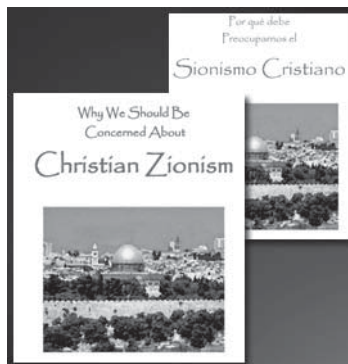
In its narrowest form, Christian Zionism advocates preserving control of historic Palestine, including Gaza and the West Bank, for the Jewish people

alone, rejecting any peace settlement based on a two-state solution.

An effect of the Christian Zionist ideology is that Christians in the Middle East and Muslims are viciously stereotyped. Many scholars have concluded that the Christian Zionist ideology has no roots in the traditional teachings of the church. The NCC has historically and consistently

supported the security needs and rights of both Israelis and Palestinians.

The brochure was introduced during recent meetings of the NCC Governing Board. The brochures can be downloaded at www.nccusa.org/news/081202christianzionismbrochure.html and reproduced. ☩



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My stroke of insight would be: Deep internal peace is accessible to anyone at any time. Peace is only a thought away, and all we have to do to access it is silence the voice of our dominating left mind. Feeling deep inner peace and sharing is always a choice for us. My right brain realizes that the essence of my being is eternal life.

Swedenborg would have loved *My Stroke of Insight*.

On the last page the author lists forty guidelines to keep in mind when we are with people who have had a serious stroke—very practical, down-to-earth helpful tips.

Today, Dr. Jill Taylor continues to teach, write and lecture, and is deeply grateful for each passing day. ☩



The Reverend Paul Zacharias is former pastor of the Kitchener, Ontario Church of the Good Shepherd.

NCC Calls for Civil Discourse

Alarmed by the intensity of angry and sometimes violent language coming out of public meetings on health care and other issues, the National Council of Churches Governing Board called for "civility in public discourse" in an open letter during its meetings in September.

Citing God's call in Isaiah 1:18 to "reason together," the NCC letter affirms the value of "vigorous, principled debate" but insists that the arguments "be tempered with a profound sense of the dignity and worth of each person."

Media reports have shown angry demonstrations outside halls where President Obama has spoken. Demonstrators have carried posters portraying the President as Adolf Hitler or as a monkey.

"This clash of views demeans the dialogue and ultimately risks subverting the democratic process itself," the Governing Board said in a statement that passed without dissent. "Individuals cannot express their best hopes and acknowledge their deepest fears within a climate of intimidation and character assassination, and all too often this climate is the product of racism and xenophobia."

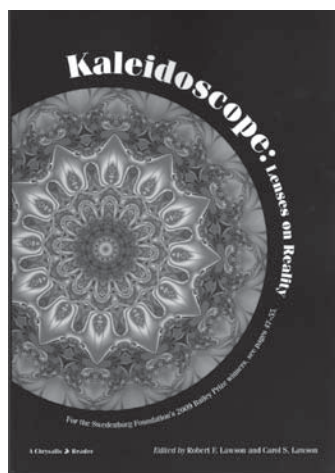
The message calls on churches, political leaders and persons of good will to reflect "on the ways we might restore dignity and civility to the national discourse."

Throughout its history, the ecumenical movement "has provided a com-

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Kaleidoscope: Lenses on Reality

Latest Chrysalis Reader Released



The Swedenborg Foundation and Chrysalis Books announced the publication of *Kaleidoscope: Lenses on Reality*, a collection of original short stories, poems, and essays enhanced by artwork, which focuses on perception, both physical and spiritual.

Writers from all walks of life share their poetry, short fiction, and essays on how life's twists and turns affect how we see ourselves, each other, and the world. Travel through landscapes of prophets and visionaries, from small-town America to the heights of the Himalayas, from attics full of treasures to the depths of the human heart. Every turn of the lens offers a new view of the world.

The theme of this edition is introduced by Robert Lawson. In an editor's note he says,

Swedenborg said that we are on earth for a purpose—to exercise our free will to grow into our unique angelhood. Truth is what enables us to see what is good in others; and he would undoubtedly complete the equation by saying that truth and good combined are the whole lens—the binoculars that bring into focus our spir-

itual wisdom and wholeness, giving depth to our spiritual field. In a series of paired pieces, the stories, essays, and poetry of *Kaleidoscope: Lenses on Reality* explore this phenomenon of individualized perception.

Mr. Lawson cites Swedenborg's explanation of the way people see into the spiritual world.

People today have no idea what perception is. It is an inner feeling for whether a thing is true and good . . . The sensation is so clear for angels that it gives them awareness and recognition of what is good, of what comes from the Divine and what comes from themselves. In addition, perception enables them to detect the character of anyone they meet simply from the person's manner of approach

or from a single one of his or her ideas. (*Secrets of Heaven*, paragraph 104)

Kaleidoscope is the sixteenth edition of the *Chrysalis Reader* series published by Swedenborg Foundation Publishers and Chrysalis Books. Carol S. Lawson and Robert F. Lawson, editors of the *Chrysalis Reader*, present a new spiritual theme in each annual publication. Rich illustrations, original stories, poems, and essays offer an insightful, literary perspective on the place of Swedenborgian thought within a diversity of spiritual traditions.

Flannery O'Connor famously told us "Everything that rises must converge." To truly realize the meaning of that phrase, take—and read—this issue.

—Dr. Craig Challender, Professor of English, Longwood University

To purchase *Kaleidoscope*, contact the Swedenborg Foundation at www.swedenborg.com or 800.355.3222. ☩

25 Years of Chrysalis

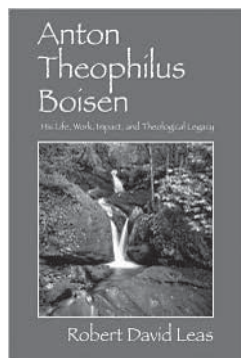
The *Chrysalis Reader* was first published by the Swedenborg Foundation in 1985 as a journal called *Chrysalis*. Subscribers received three issues per year. In 1994, *Chrysalis* evolved into an annual book series entitled the *Chrysalis Reader*. Longtime readers eagerly anticipate the annual issue, and new readers are delighted and moved by the excellence of fiction, poetry, essays, and art.



A *Chrysalis* editorial brainstorming meeting on themes at Fryeburg New Church Assembly in 1989. L to R: George Dole, Alice Skinner, Robin Larsen, Jim Lawrence, Carolyn Judson, Steve Larsen, Marion Kirven, Leon Rhodes, Kate Davis (?), Sylvia Shaw, and Carol Lawrence.

Boisen Biography Published

Outskirts Press has announced the publication of *Anton Theophilus Boisen: His Life, Work, Impact, and Theological Legacy*, by Robert Leas. This biography provides a particular life illustration of a person, though suffering from a serious mental disorder, can still make significant contributions. Robert Leas shows the many aspects of a pioneer in the establishment of Clinical Pastoral Education as an integral part of the education and training of theological students and clergypersons of all faiths. [See “Boisen,



Mysticism, Swedenborg, and Exceptional Mental and Spiritual States on page 4 of the January 2009 Messenger”]

“Anton Boisen contributed to a reshaping of both Christian ministry and theological education in the 20th century that continues today. Robert Leas gives us a wonderful account of his sometimes troubling journey and the rise of Clinical Pastoral Education.”

—Dr. William McKinney,
President, Pacific School of Religion

The author, Robert Leas is a Presbyterian minister who spent much of his career as a CPE supervisor. He also serves on the SHS Board of Trustees.

The book is available at <http://search.barnesandnoble.com/Anton-Theophilus-Boisen/Robert-David-Leas/e/9780929670041>. ☩

What We Don't Know

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becomes a loving circle.

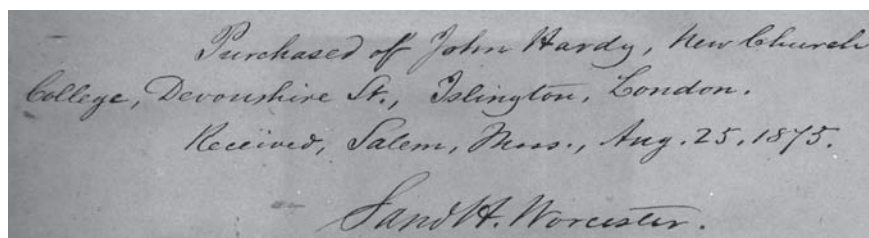
The Divine of peace in heaven is from the Lord, existing from His conjunction with the angels of heaven . . . From this it may be manifest, that peace in the heavens is the Divine inmost affecting with blessedness every good they have, and giving all the joy of heaven; and that in its essence the Divine joy of the Lord's Divine love, from His conjunction with heaven and with every one there. This joy perceived by the Lord in angels, and by angels from the Lord, is peace. From this by derivation angels have all that is blessed, enjoyable, and happy, or that which is called heavenly joy (*Heaven and Hell* 286).

These passages are a reminder about just how little we can really know about heaven here on earth. Visionaries from all traditions can point to heavenly realities. But they can only point. The actual experience is beyond what we can know here on earth. We cannot know the wisdom in heaven, we cannot know the joy in heaven, and we cannot know the peace of heaven. I think that spiritually inclined people find a more joyful life in this world than those who are consumed with worldly things. I think that spiritually inclined people find deeper experiences of peace. But our best days here are but “a blessedness that is hardly perceptible” compared to what awaits us in heaven. Meanwhile, let us try to do a good turn to our neighbors, and to try to make this one day happier for the lives we touch. And let us be mindful and give thanks to God, who gives us every good thing we know. And we can live in the peace and joy of this life, and hope for good things to come. ☩

The Reverend Dr. David Fekete is pastor of the Edmonton, Alberta Church of the Holy City.



Inscription on the inside cover of a first edition of Swedenborg's *Heaven and Hell*.



NCC Governing Board Meeting Report

BY: DAVID J. FEKETE

As Convention's ecumenical officer, I attended the last Governing Board meeting of the The National Council of Churches in Christ of the USA (NCCCUSA), which met in New York City on September 21–22. The NCCCUSA is an august gathering of national representatives from 34 denominations across the country. There are arch-bishops, Catholic sisters, the Lutheran representative to the UN, and heads of communion from the member bodies. It lends considerable credibility to have our denomination represented in this organization, and having an ecumenical officer is something our church has been lacking for a number of years.

We discussed many issues, including a report from members of the NCCCUSA who had visited various churches. They found a common concern facing all the churches regarding society's increasing secularization. Even on Sundays, the churches they visited expressed encroachment from secularization, and a diminished role of the church in people's lives. Another concern the churches reported was divisions within the church community stemming from political issues. Politicization tended to divide church communions across denominational lines.

We also explored the nature of our common religious heritage. Two points came out in this regard. One was the problem of fragmentation. The 34 member denominations of the NCCCUSA have considerable difficulty finding a common voice. Some denominations have severed ties over issues like abortion. Representatives at my table recalled with nostalgia the unified voice the NCCCUSA presented 30 years ago. Related to the problem of fragmentation, the question was raised as to what sources we could

draw on for our theological reflections. There was a feeling that the Bible had not been used as much as it could be, but even in the use of the Bible, issues arose. Problems of Biblical interpretation that the whole organization could agree on came up.

Committees presented reports for approval from the NCCCUSA. There were reports on immigration reform, the health care debate, peace between Israel and Palestine, rebuilding the Gulf Coast, and nuclear arms reduc-

tion, among others.

I felt a sense of respect and collegiality at the Governing Board of the National Council of Churches in Christ of the USA, despite the many different member communions. I look forward to continuing to represent The Swedenborgian Church in the United States and Canada in this important organization. ☩

The Reverend David J. Fekete is the General Convention's ecumenical officer in the NCCUSA.

Guidance to Alberta

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God, "Dear God, please make it clear in your servant's mind why you have called me to go before I get there."

After three days of many long prayers, God did make it clear, but not with an answer. Instead, God inspired me to remember my favorite book by Swedenborg, *Divine Providence*, and the message was,

Many people in this world attribute everything to themselves and to their own prudence, and anything they cannot claim in this way they attribute to chance or coincidence. They do not realize that human prudence is nothing and that "chance" and "coincidence" are empty words (70:1).

Again, God guided me to free my mind from my self-created trap and misery: I have to know it all and be able to see the result prior to the event.

All things in heaven and on earth are done in accordance with divine providence. We as human do not need to know everything, nor do we realistically do everything. In Swedenborg's world, there is no luck or coincidence—the operation of divine providence covers it all. And divine providence has one ultimate goal in its end:

leading and guiding us to the heavenly state of being. Everything that happens to us is a kind of training to enable, encourage and inspire us to grow spiritually to the end that we may experience God's love for real. Our ultimate goal as Swedenborgians is neither to build an everlasting and prosperous church kingdom on earth nor to convert all humans to be Swedenborgians, but rather to cooperate with divine providence in expanding the reality of heavenly presence amongst humans and to be living witnesses to the power of the spiritual transformation.

The very first step in this amazing task is to grow each one of us spiritually by acquiring truth from studying and understanding the Word. This I take as my primary duty as a minister. My parishioners live all over Western Canada, but I am willing to serve by whatever means available in supporting, guiding, and inspiring spiritual growth. ☩

The Rev. Junchol Lee has recently begun pastoral duties for Calgary, Alberta and Western Canada.

Reprinted from the October 2009 issue of Conference Magazine, the newsletter of the Western Canada Conference, where it was addressed to the members of that conference.

Passages

Confirmations

The Swedenborgian Church of San Francisco welcomed three new members on October 4th, 2009: **Annie Nesbit, Carla Hall Belmonte, and Heather Woods.**

Deaths

Betty Alice Osborne, long-time member of the Calgary New Church Soci-

ety passed away peacefully August 20, 2009, at age 85. She is survived by four children and three step children. Betty was pre-deceased by her husband, Eric, in 2003.

Althea Ruben Pechenik, a dedicated member of the Cambridge (Massachusetts) Society since 1996, formerly of Rockville Centre, New York, died April 13, 2009, at the age of 89. For many years she ran an antique jewelry shop in Baldwin, New York. She moved to Cambridge in 1996 and worked at

the Cambridge Public Library until a few years before her death. She loved to travel and visited more than fifteen countries over 30 years. She was fearless, adventurous, and generous, and made friends wherever she went. Married for almost 50 years to the late Benjamin, Althea is survived by her son Jan, her grandson Oliver, and her brother Elliott. Althea attended Sunday services faithfully and always brought a cheerful smile to coffee hour. She made many friends who miss her greatly. ☛

New Perspectives

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vocabulary to help him describe what he was seeing and understanding.

There is no doubt in my mind that Swedenborg believed a profoundly full and rational picture of the whole had yet been understood. Fragments were lying around, but no working machine. Swedenborg clearly was not a member of any movement, but rather a dogged seeker of truth with his own sense of how to move forward in that journey. He was not a card-carrying kabbalist, Freemason, tantric-yogi, Behemist, Hermetist, Rosicrucian, or even Lutheran. But that doesn't mean he didn't know a great deal about what was in those cupboards, that he did not know many people who were, and that he did not read broadly in mostly heterodox channels of religious thought. And it doesn't mean that in his "inter-text" he wasn't shaped by the history of discourse via language, concepts, and thought-forms, some of which were commonly around in various forms—which he retooled, often dramatically, upon his heavenly workbench.

It is more in keeping with everything that we do know of Swedenborg that he investigated questions in which he was interested in the most penetrat-

ing fashion, and that in addition to his capacity to produce his thoughts at his desk, he also characteristically sought out conversation and interactions. He was a man who would go anywhere to do research and to further his projects. [See "Swedenborg the Traveller" on page 38 of the March 2009 issue of *The Messenger* for more on this.] To me it would be more surprising if he had not explored leading edge movements of religious philosophy, if he had held himself aloof from an engagement. That he would be drawn to spend the majority of his time outside of Sweden in the most freewheeling spiritual and philosophical culture of that time—London—fits with the knowledgeable and fearless Swedenborg whom I see in all the other spheres of his biography.

Taking seriously what Swedenborg saw and heard in the world will be critical for building a new interest for engaging Swedenborg's life, one that will reveal, in aggregate with the things seen and heard in heaven, an immensely rich story that one simply cannot exhaust. Historians interpret history through several methodologies, and a prominent one is biography. Any life, not just of the rich and famous, embodies cultural history in complex ways, but certain major biographies when done perceptively revise in a major way how

we understand the large themes of history. I believe Swedenborg's biography has this potential. Swedenborg's great work as a religious revelator may not have to be seen as either worldly-informed or angelically-guided. It might be profoundly both, and that might be the most important story of all. ☛

This article is a condensation of the annual meeting address of the Swedenborg Foundation given at Bryn Athyn College last May.

The Reverend Dr. James Lawrence is Dean of the Swedenborgian House of Studies at Pacific School of Religion of the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California. In addition to Swedenborgian Studies, he also teaches in the field of the history of Christianity.

Civil Discourse

continued from page 147

mon venue for persons to express and debate differing viewpoints in an atmosphere of mutual respect." The message said. "Let us make clear to ourselves and others those marks of civility that represent the best of our faiths and that can serve as foundational to rigorous, honest public discourse for the common good." ☛

About the Swedenborgian Church

Emanuel Swedenborg was born January 29, 1688 in Stockholm, Sweden. Although he never intended a church denomination to be founded or named after him, a society was formed in London fifteen years after his death.

American groups eventually founded the General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches. As a result of Swedenborg's spiritual questionings and insights, we as a church exist to encourage that same spirit of inquiry and personal growth, to respect differences in views, and to accept others who may have different traditions.

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

Reflection

Receiving Guidance to Alberta

BY JUNCHOL LEE

The Lee family sends greetings to you all, and heartfelt thanks to all those who have kept us in their prayers for the safe journey from Cleveland, Ohio, USA, to Calgary, Alberta, Canada, and those who sent warm welcoming.

The journey was a long one (3100 km), but a safe one. Our good Lord certainly listens to prayers of faithful ones!

In the beginning, I faced a big challenge because I own two cars, and my pregnant wife (Heejoung Moon) was not going to do the four consecutive days of long distance driving (780 km per day; 10 hours of driving per day). My thanks to Heejoung's brother, Yeonguk, for volunteering to drive one car all the way here. There is more. Our good Lord sent another young man, Yeonguk's friend (Matthew), to join our long journey as an additional driver. I cannot even imagine how hard the journey might have been had I driven ten hours per day for

four consecutive days. Our family can only thank and praise our good Lord!

A long time ago, the Chinese sage Confucius said, "Traveling 10,000 li (which is about 4000 km) is the same as reading 10,000 books." I did not have that exact experience, but travel-

ing 3,100 km enabled me to undertake a deep reflection on the meaning of my life.

As I entered a self-reflective state, a question arose in my mind as a challenge, and occupied my mind throughout the journey: "Why are you doing this, and why now?" This was a deeply personal question, and critical to my current situation. I am a

Korean by origin. I have lived the past sixteen years in the United States and just earned Permanent US Residency a few years ago. In addition, I am married and have a son born in the US and another to be born soon. I tried, but I was not able to find any other answer than, "God told me to do so." So I prayed to

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