



2016 SCYL Winter Retreat

In keeping in tune with our annual convention theme, “The Year of the Word: The Power of Holy Scriptures,” the theme for the 2016 Swedenborgian Church Youth League (SCYL) Winter Retreat at Almont New Church Retreat Center was “Divine Writings.” Rev. Cathy Lauber, Rev. Renée Machiniak, Rev. Jenn Tafel, and I led sessions looking at the major sacred scriptures and faiths of the world.

It was fascinating to learn how much our teens already knew about this topic. They clearly have been reading and listening astutely to many sources of religious information. Their open-minded contemplations and inclusive and affirming hearts gave me much hope for this generation.

At this winter retreat we also held our moving, annual Exodus to Independence ceremony where we said goodbye to four of our eighteen-year-old teens aging out of SCYL and welcomed them into the young adult Transitions group.

With a total of twenty-two teens, this was a fantastic retreat, so I asked our 2017 SCYL officers each to write a short piece about this winter retreat. Here is what they had to say.

—Kurt Fekete, youth director

Learning about different religious texts is not something in which I really had interest exploring at this retreat. But afterwards, I had a newfound spark of interest for the texts of other religions—a curiosity about how they correlate to the ones of my own religious affiliations. I was excited by this new curiosity because it was unexpected and different!

But this also had me thinking about what it is about modern society that could connect with the religious texts we know. Putting two and two together, I realized that social media, in its own weird way, is a sort of text much like the religious texts we learned about at retreat. The texts were full of lessons, full of imagery and discussions and mistakes—and isn’t social media much the same?

Social media is full of commentary



Twenty-two teens gathered for the Almont Winter Retreat

about our personal lives, and through every screen shot, every press of the share button, we are spreading these ideas and lessons and mistakes to our friends and family and loved ones. Those share buttons are a form of modern oral tradition.

The Bible, the Torah, the Gita, and

other religious texts were passed orally until written down. Stories we tell on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and any other social media are told and experienced before they are put onto social media. So, in a way, scripture is a lot like screen shots and

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Save the Dates! Annual Convention 2017

July 5–7: Ministers Meet

**July 8: Bryn Athyn Tours (Optional),
In Company with Angels Reception**

**July 9–11: Business Sessions, Worship
Services, Ordination, Mini Courses**

**July 12: Departure, Optional Tour
of Delaware Valley**

The Editor's Desk



Reconciling Church and State

In America, in Canada, and in the Western world in general, we subscribe to the separation of church and state. We view theocracies as undemocratic or culturally underdeveloped, and dangerous to boot—dangerous to their citizens and dangerous to other nations. We read, hear, see, and sometimes experience the devastating effect of religious states run amok.

But what does separation of church and state mean? In most European countries, mainstream Christian denominations are defined and financially supported by the state, but the governments do not legislate or operate by the dictates of a religion. Declaration of religious affiliation is re-

quired if you want to get married or do anything else in a church, but not required to be a citizen or get married outside the church. In America, we forbid “the establishment of religion” by the government.

How do we reconcile our religious lives and our political lives? How do we reconcile belief in Christian doctrine and allegiance to our national identity? After all, through both we find guidance for our lives; through both we pursue goals that are central to our being; through both we seek identity and community. It is incumbent upon us as Christians to act with compassion and charity, and we have a responsibility as citizens to act according to our Constitution and national values. It can be difficult to keep those values separate and yet rely on each to inform the other. Of course, interpretation of the Bible, religious doctrine, and notions of patriotism and the role of government vary widely.

So what should we do in the current political atmosphere of chaos and discord? I believe that we must examine ourselves and redouble our effort to live Christian values of compassion and charity and, as Swedenborgians, to love the neighbor and be of use.

—Herb Ziegler

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Save the Date Gathering Leaves 2017

**Crieff Hills Retreat and Centre
Puslinch, Ontario**

www.crieffhills.com

September 21–24, 2017

We are looking for women interested in helping to plan Gathering Leaves 2017.

Email Catherine@lauberonline.com
for more information.

the Messenger

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Church Calendar

- **June 6–9, 2017:** Swedenborg and the Arts Conference, Bryn Athyn, PA (<http://tinyurl.com/j4dbkkm>)
- **July 5–12:** Swedenborgian Church Annual Convention, West Chester, PA (COM begins July 5, Outing Day July 8, convention begins July 9)
- **September 21–24:** Gathering Leaves Swedenborgian women's retreat, Puslinch, Ontario

Letter from the President



*2016–17: The Year of the Word:
The Power of the Holy Scriptures*

Dear Friends,

I am concerned about what is happening around us. My heart goes out to all of us as this wedge of divisiveness cuts deeper and deeper. I feel the deep sadness that civil strife and discord brings to our nation and our world.

I see families no longer speaking as they take sides in this political nightmare. I listen to friends lament that others have cut off communication with them. I feel the pain of truth and good separated.

There is so much we cannot control right now but we can control how we treat one another.

Rev. Rich Tafel, our denomination's representative to the National Council of Churches and minister of the Washington DC Church, shared his sermon from last Sunday. It says beautifully what I want to say. The text follows.



I am here to answer the question, what does Scripture teach us that can help us play a role during this crisis? Jesus' teaching gives us a roadmap for Christians during these turbulent times. He says in the Beatitudes, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."

We live in a time when people are choosing sides and declaring war on the other side.

We know that when peacemakers fail, war-mongers win.

If there were Beatitudes that reflected the current political culture here in DC, they might sound like this:

Blessed are those who win, for theirs is the kingdom.

Blessed are those who get their way, for they will be happy.

Blessed are they who speak over others, for they will gain sound bites.

Blessed are those who know they are right, for they don't need to hear.

Blessed are the snarky, for they will gain Twitter followers.

Blessed are the attack dogs, for they will get the book deals.

Blessed are people who rave about your brilliance, for you shall be called a thought leader.

These might be the governing attitudes in American political life today, but they run counter to the teachings in the Gospel of Jesus. Jesus turns our way of living upside down, saying

Blessed are the poor in spirit means those having an understanding that the more you know, the less you know. (The more you evolve spiritually, the more aware of your faults.)

Blessed are those who mourn means that those who care for the world suffer. The sadness of the world makes you want to cry.

Blessed are the meek means speaking last if at all—wait and let others say what's needed. It means no longer needing to win the debate. It more often means facilitating the debate.

Blessed are those who hunger for righteousness means seeking to make this a better world, not in your spare time but with your life. It means being curious, calm, and purposeful.

Blessed are the merciful means operating from a position of mercy knowing but by the grace of God go I. It recognizes that God's love has no borders. Merciful people have done their own inventory and forgive because they themselves need forgiveness.

Blessed are the pure in heart means operating from a place of authenticity, compassion, and truth. It is seeing God in everyone, including those you want to hate.

Blessed are those who are persecuted means not conforming to your tribe. It means standing alone at times. Bridge builders know that bridges get walked on. Gandhi, King, Rabin, Bonhoeffer,

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Divinely Human! SPLATz Discover Heaven in the Form of a Universal Human

BY KURT FEKETE

I love numbers. The rational ones and the irrational ones. Math is cool too. Algebra, trigonometry, and calculus are great. But I particularly love how numbers in the Bible have spiritual meaning. They have these beautiful correspondences brilliantly revealed by Emanuel Swedenborg. I often find that numbers strangely pop up with extraordinary connectedness and relevancy. I do not believe that this is just coincidence or random occurrence.

So, as eleven wonderful youths age 10–12 gathered at Manna House in LaPorte, Indiana, on January 13–16 for a SPLATz (Super Powered Lovable Almost Teens) retreat, I pondered, “Why eleven?” It seemed to me that twelve, being a much holier and spiritually positive number would be a more appropriate number of youths to attend this retreat. I mean, twelve, as one of the earliest known groupings, is such a significant number in our lives as well as in the Bible that it even has a second name—a dozen.

However, this was not a youth retreat on numerology; we were gathered here to discuss and learn about the amazing human body and to learn about how Swedenborg described heaven in the form of one great divine human being (see

Heaven and Hell 59). Still, after our introductions and our icebreaker game, I found myself glancing at the door, half expecting the twelfth (late) youth to excitedly spring into the room. This



The SPLATz retreat group (minus Victor)

didn't happen, and at eleven we stubbornly remained.

Then, as I began our opening Friday evening session on the scientific facts about the human body, quite as-

toundingly, I heard myself declaring, “There are eleven major organ systems in the human body!” “Ah.” I thought, “My numerical connection has revealed itself. Now I can settle into another SPLATz youth retreat, studying the incredible human body.”

We spent much of Saturday discussing the major organ systems while creating a life-sized Universal Human body depicting some of the largest and most significant organs and systems, like the circulatory,

respiratory, and digestive tract.

Young adult volunteer Bekka Lange courageously coordinated this project. First she traced the outline of a SPLAT (Oliver) on a long roll of paper. Next, she read a list of body parts to the others, and they selected the organs they wanted to create. Each tween selected two organs and carefully and creatively crafted and decorated paper parts. (Many thought that the organs looked better sparkling with glitter.) As we learned about the function of the various organs, we considered what tasks the angels that reside in those organs might enjoy doing (using as a primary reference the delightful *Correspondences of the Bible: The Human Body* by John Worcester).

We spent a considerable amount of time talking about the circulatory system.

The heart is the community of celestial angels tasked with taking the goodness of new spirits and delivering them to the communities most in need of their use and service. I explained how in heaven, the circulatory system is all about spreading love and the respiratory system is concerned



The Universal Human starting to take shape.

with passing on wisdom. Saturday evening, Bekka painstakingly glued all of the organs onto the human outline in



Annabelle and Boston watch as Bekka outlines Oliver as the Universal Human

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Exciting Roster of Mini-Courses for the Annual Convention Announced

The 200th Anniversary Annual Convention of the Swedenborgian Church will feature an exciting roster of distinguished presenters offering a variety of engaging mini-courses planned and organized by the Education Support Unit (EDSU), under the leadership of Karen Feil.

- *Dr. Sonia Werner*: Developing Skills in Conflict Resolution
- *Monica McCarthy*: Making Church Useful for All

- *Dr. Rebecca Esterson*: Swedenborg's Context: Science and the Bible in the Eighteenth Century
- *Rev. Robert E. McCluskey*: The Five Ages of Humanity: Applying Swedenborgian Theology to Personal Psychology and Growth.
- *Rev. Julie Conaron*: The Word
- *Rev. Dr. David Fekete*: Another Great Swedenborgian: Robert Frost and Swedenborg
- *Rev. Dr. George Dole*: Rethinking

Our Theology

- *Roslyn Taylor*: Introduction to *Logopraxis*
- *Morgan Beard*: Social Media: What Is It Good for (and not Good For)?
- *Rev. Carla Friedrich*: The Seven Tiffany Angel Stained Glass Windows

Look for detailed descriptions in the March *Messenger* of the mini-courses and backgrounds of the presenters at the 2017 Annual Convention ☸

SPLATz Discover Heaven

Continued from page 20

their proper place. She also added some outer detail such as hair.

Sunday morning we presented the children's talk at the LaPorte New Church worship service. We showed the congregation our paper "Heavenly Human" and shared a little about how heaven is in the form of and functions like a human body. During our Sunday school session, the tweens placed ink fingerprints on the human body in the heavenly communities where they thought they might like to live. Those with great leadership skills went straight for the brain community. Excellent communicators thought the nervous system or tongue might be a nice place to live. Those possessing the gift of exceptional kindness and love placed their fingerprint in the heart or in a major artery. Kids with a love of science and academia decided to reside in the lungs or trachea. When everyone had found a representative organ community to live in, we decorated the fingerprints and turned them into miniature angels.

Sunday afternoon we did activities exploring the five senses. The SPLATz took a hearing test, a color blindness survey, an exercise demonstrating the particulars of touch with warm, cold and room temperature water, and consumed delicious hot cocoa to delight the senses of smell and taste. We learned the correspondence of each sense and how angels see, hear, smell, taste and touch.

We closed our spiritual sessions Sunday evening with a trip through the di-

lovingly and warmly receive those new spirits, immediately taking up those who are exceptionally sweet and good, through the stomach, in which we enter the world of spirits, where the interiors of most new spirits are opened up while their exteriors are broken down and removed, all the way through the intestines to the rectum, where there is no love of good and where spirits enjoy vile pleasures and offenses. Traversing the digestive system helped us better understand how to tenderize the tough, rougher side of ourselves and gave us insights into what areas we might try to nurture into sweeter, healthier, and more satisfying choices.

A special thank you to Rev. Jennifer Tafel, Heather Oelker, and Bekka Lange for helping staff this retreat. Their talent and care for the children of our church is invaluable. Unlocking the

mysteries of the human body and how the bodily systems relate to angels and heavenly communities left us feeling spiritually nourished and energized to build a better self and better world. ☸

Kurt Fekete is youth director of the Swedenborgian Church.



Hot cocoa and ice cream sandwiches!

gestive tract! We discovered that the way food enters the human body and is transformed into energy is a magnificent illustration of how new souls are birthed into the spiritual world and taken up into a heavenly community. From the first contact of the lips that

SCYL Elects 2017 Officers and Chaplain

KURT FEKETE

The 2017 Swedenborgian Church Youth League (SCYL) officer and chaplain elections took place at the Almont Winter Retreat this past December. The results are

- *President:* Riley Tishma
- *East Coast and Service Officer:* Freya Montesanto
- *Midwest and Fundraising & Finance Officer:* Joey Kalinowski
- *Canada and Public Relations Officer:* Peyton Proudlove
- *West Coast and Activities Officer:* Liv Hackett
- *Editor, Clear Blue Sky (CBS) and Communication Officer:* Lauren Dopke
- *League Chaplain:* Rev. Jennifer Tafel

There are some big officer changes here in 2017 as we welcome in our new teen league administration. Three of our 2016 Officers, Bekka Lange, Tony Kalinowski, and Bryce Baker will age out of the SCYL and cannot serve an-



Riley Tishma, our thoughtful 2017 SCYL president

SCYL president. This is Riley's fourth year as an officer and her first year as president. Riley has been very active in the SCYL at annual conventions, retreats, and Almont summer camp. She is intelligent, bold, and kind. She is also a gifted writer. I very much look forward to working with her this year.

Joey Kalinowski follows in his brother Tony's footsteps as our newly-elected Midwest and finance officer. This is Joey's first year as an SCYL officer. I enjoy his thoughtful deliberations and taciturn humor.

Liv Hackett is also new to the SCYL officer team. Liv is our West Coast and activities officer, and she enjoys softball, attending retreats, and Almont summer camp. Liv is a strong, vibrant leader, and she will be a great addition to the group.

Lauren Dopke is another new face to our group of officers. Lauren is our *Clear Blue Sky* editor and she is very knowledgeable and outspoken. These will

be positive skills for our new editor to bring to our social media presence.

We are so happy that Peyton Proudlove is with us to serve as our new Canadian officer. Peyton is from Alberta and enjoys attending Paulhaven Summer Camp. We welcome her wonderful spirit and strong opinions to our officer team and hope that she can help strengthen the bridge between Paulhaven and other Canadian teens with

the rest of the SCYL teens down here in the States.

We welcome Rev. Jennifer Tafel to her first year as league chaplain and say goodbye to Rev. Kit Billings, who served one year as SCYL chaplain. Kit always has so much information to share, and he loves working with the teens. I am sure that he will continue to be involved with the teens in LaPorte as well as our SCYL teen group. Jenn has been active in youth work for



2017 League chaplain Rev. Jennifer Tafel leads session with Lauren, Riley, and Emily

as long as I can remember. She generously gives so much of her time and energy to the youth of our church. She is always willing to do whatever is needed at retreats and annual conventions, and the teens enjoy her excellent sessions and worship services. It is wonderful to have her serve as our chaplain for this year.

Please join me in congratulating our 2017 SCYL officers and our new league chaplain. We have a gifted and energetic team of teens leading the League this year. They really care for our church and for their teen community. I welcome their dedication to the SCYL and their efforts to help it continue to grow in love, charity, and togetherness. I am blessed to be working with this team of talented individuals and I hope that you get a chance to get to know them all better. ☪

Kurt Fekete is the youth director of the Swedenborgian Church.



SCYL officers: Peyton, Lauren, Riley, Joey, Liv, Freya

other term. We pray for their success in the coming year as they transition to adulthood and move on to our young adult Transitions group.

Freya Montesanto returns for another year of service as our East Coast and service officer. We love Freya's peaceful, quiet demeanor as well as her amazing attention to detail and her artistic talent.

Riley Tishma moves in as the new

SCYL Winter Retreat"

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share buttons on social media that modern teens are able to experience and share, making their own forms of history, scripture, and tradition—absolutely amazing.

—Riley

I really enjoyed my first winter retreat this year. A big reason I enjoyed it is that I got to see all of my friends, and I made some new ones as well. Another reason I enjoyed the retreat was the



Ivy, Lauren and Jake

lessons on sacred scriptures. One scripture I really liked was the *Tao Te Ching* that Rev. Jenn talked about. This experience makes me want to come to all of the retreats from now on.

—Lauren

This winter retreat was one of my favorites. It was interesting to learn about other religions from a standpoint that wasn't judgmental of them, as I experience at my school (since I go to a Catholic school). Although seeing Tony, Bekka, and Deckard at their Exodus ceremony was definitely bit-



Riley, Liv, Tony and Gillian



Scout

really brings into perspective how much I have changed in the past year. The burning of the Yule log was and is something that means a lot to me, and it's a tradition that I always look forward to. I'm already counting down the days until Memorial Day retreat weekend!

—Liv

My favorite thing we did at this retreat was bowling. I never really liked bowling because I was not very good at it, but after the first game I just became good. I got a 129—that's the best I've ever done! Once I started doing well, I didn't want to stop. Now I think I actually like bowling.

—Joey

Winter Retreat Reflections from the President

Winter retreat for 2016 was different but not in a bad way. This was a chance for a lot of new people to come in, and as someone who was the apparent next-in-line to be the oldest (after all, the 18- and 19-year-olds received their exodus and were sent out into the world once the retreat was over), I felt a shocking, startling wave of change and a lot of realization. I will not be a part of this group of people forever, and every year the group changes—new additions, people having their exodus and leaving, and those who cannot join us at all for personal

tersweet, I still was glad that they were able to come and experience their last teen retreat. Going to winter retreats, more than any other church event,



Bryce, Liv, Tony & Seth at the Eleanor Grace Bridge

reasons. Still, winter retreat is always something that brings us together, despite age and despite all other things.

But that, by no stretch of the imagination, means that I cannot continue to be part of this group by extension. Though I may be too old to be a part of this group once I have my own exodus, I will not leave—not entirely, any-



Paige, Bryce and Luke

way. I will continue to be a part of this group because there are so many people that I have grown close to and cannot be apart from. The SCYL retreats are the best place for teens to be close to people and make new friends but, in addition, they allow for a wonderful, tightly-knit community of people to knit a tight bond and rely on each other. And I think that's the most beautiful thing.

—Riley

Swedenborg's Road To "As If"

BY GEORGE DOLE

The first two sentences of *The Doctrine of Life* bear close reading.

Everyone who has any religion knows and acknowledges that people who lead a good life are saved and people who lead an evil life are damned. That is, they know and acknowledge that if we lead a good life we think good things not only about God but also about our neighbor, which is not the case if we lead an evil life.

How do we live a good life? We do not do it on our own. We do not regenerate ourselves. That is the message of the second chapter of *The Doctrine of Life*. Then the third chapter tells us that the key to doing genuine good is to turn our back on evils "as sins," that is, because the Lord forbids them, and we need to do so "as if we were doing it on our own, but we need to know and believe that it comes from the Lord" (§22). This seems to trigger a kind of inverse imputation—we give the Lord at least some credit for what really feels like our own righteousness.

This presents us with a paradox, a paradox that is presented very bluntly in *Divine Providence* 191: "Our own prudence is nothing. It only seems to be something, as it should. Divine providence is all-inclusive, because it extends to the smallest details." Swedenborg never resolves it; and if we are honest with ourselves, we must admit that neither do we. By and large, we simply ignore it.

Swedenborg did not ignore it. In the next chapter of *The Doctrine of Life* he wrote,

Two things are required, though. First, we need to turn our backs on evil deeds because they are sins—that is, because they are hellish and



diabolical and contrary to the Lord and to divine laws. Second, we need to turn our backs on evil deeds because they are sins *as if we were doing it on our own and believe that it comes from the Lord*. (§22, emphasis mine)

The phrase *sicut a se*, "as if of oneself," occurs over 150 times in the published theological works, which surely suggests that it is important. We should not ignore it. It was hard won.

For the past few years, I've been looking into the first work Swedenborg wrote after he received his commission to disclose the deeper meaning of the Word. In size, it is in the same league as *Secrets of Heaven*, and it was writ-

The phrase *sicut a se*, "as if of oneself," occurs over one hundred and fifty times in the published theological works, which surely suggests that it is important. We should not ignore it.

ten while he was fully occupied with his highly demanding "day job" on the College of Mines. He never published it. It was finally published in Latin by J. F. I. Tafel under the title *Adversaria*, or "Notes," between 1842 and 1854, and in eight volumes of English translation by Alfred Acton between 1926 and 1951 under the title *The Word of the Old Testament Explained*.

There is very little evidence that anyone has taken the time to read it. It does start with a serial presentation of the Word, beginning with Genesis and Exodus, and presumably on this basis there seems to have been a vague assumption that that is kind of first draft of *Secrets of Heaven*. Why read the first

draft when we have the final copy? In her classic biography, Cyriel Sigstedt does recognize that Swedenborg went though some doubts, but minimizes their importance with the remark that "Some of the expressions—and to some extent even the ideas—of his previous works were taken from orthodox theology and embody the dogmas of the Lutheran Church in which he had been raised" (p. 217). That, dear friends, is the understatement to end all understatements.

Let me give you some samples. In commenting on the creation story, Swedenborg wrote, "The creation was done and accomplished by means of speech, or of the Word. The creation itself is credited to God the Parent, but the speech or the Word to the second Person of Divinity, his only-begotten Son, . . . while the efficient cause is the Holy Spirit" (§4). Commenting on Genesis 29:21, he notes that "God could have saved the world by an infinite number of means, but this was the only one: that the Messiah himself should take upon himself all forms of guilt and become the righteousness that is imputed by him to believers" (§ 585). As the story progresses, we find that the devil is a fallen angel (Volume II, §136, at Genesis 37), that the time will come for "a gathering of all in heaven and on earth, when God Messiah will come to judge the whole world" (Volume II, §503 at Genesis 40:19), and that when this happens, "all men will then rise from their graves simultaneously and in a moment" (2/1405, see also 2/1502). We find that "by faith alone we fix our minds on God Messiah, and at the same time on what God Messiah suffered. This insight is what makes it possible for us to reach him and acknowledge him, and so to reach Jeho-

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Swedenborg's Road to "As If"

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vah the Father through him . . . then God Messiah imputes his righteousness to [us]" (Volume II, §527, at Genesis 40–41). This is precisely the theology we find rejected in the later, published theological works.

In his introduction, Acton argues strenuously that Swedenborg is just using this kind of language because it is the only one his readers will understand, that Swedenborg himself never believed these "falses"; but when you find him saying these things time after time after time, on page after page after page, never suggesting that they should not be taken literally, the question becomes irresistible: why does Swedenborg insist on saying things he doesn't believe, without even hinting that they aren't really true?

No, I believe that what we are seeing is the emotional impact of Swedenborg's encounter with a whole new world, a spiritual world of total authenticity in which mutual love and understanding are everywhere not only present but obvious. It is, in so many ways, a stunningly beautiful world, and I believe that Swedenborg's encounters with genuine angels awakened first of all his own childhood feelings, including his lovely, trusting, childhood faith. Acton is quite right in pointing out Swedenborg's statement "I knew nothing of that learned faith" (which teaches the doctrine of the Atonement), but a childhood faith is *not* a "learned" one. The childlike mind is not literalist or pedantic. It has no trouble believing in a trinity of persons *and* believing that God is one. It can, after all, believe that one chubby Santa Claus in one night goes down millions of chimneys with a bag of presents that is always full. The child believes this not because it makes logical sense, but because it makes emotional sense—because it is beautiful.

The doctrine of remains is one of our favorites. The word *reliquiae* occurs 435 times in the published theological works. Of these, 416 are in *Secrets of Heaven*, starting with 143 in the first (Latin) volume and tapering off as the work progresses, with only eight occurrences in the final volume. In all the rest of the published theological works, the word occurs only nineteen times. And none refers to the "remains" that we all have within us from our infancy and childhood.¹ This reinforces my belief that, as he started writing *The Word Explained*, Swedenborg was, so to speak, singing "Jesus loves me"; and that as he began to write *Secrets of Heaven*, he was still in the "afterglow" of that revelatory experience,

The childlike mind is not literalist or pedantic. It has no trouble believing in a trinity of persons *and* believing that God is one.

which naturally faded as the years kept bringing other vivid and powerful experiences.

My Latin is not good enough to pick up emotional overtones, but there are obvious signs of excitement in the early pages of *The Word Explained*. For years, I was uncomfortable with Joseph Proud's lines, "We wander now no more where darkening errors lead, but truth by light divine explore, and wonder while we read." It sounded arrogant. Eventually, though, it dawned on me that this was written when the new theology was *really* new. The wonder was *real* wonder. This is the thrill of discovery, and that, I believe, is what we find in the early pages of *The Word Explained*. We keep finding expressions like "obviously" (§119), "most

clearly" (§197), "so clearly that . . ." (§264), "so obvious that . . ." (§267), "obviously" (§289), "clearly enough" (§291), "obviously" (§297). "beyond all doubt" (§378), "for sure" (§732), "so clear" (§2/128).

But the tone changes after a while. More and more, we find expressions like "so I think" (§§2/639, 2/1804) and "unless I am mistaken" (§2/989), and more explicitly "I do not yet know" (§§2/1853, 927, 1170, 1203, 2231) or some variant of "it is thus far obscure to me" (§§2/2142, 2206), to select just a few. His adult mind is making itself known. His faith is not as far above his reason as he had thought.

I would call particular attention to an indented paragraph (§2/411, while explaining Genesis 39:3–4). It is an extraordinary collection of "ifs."

As touching the remaining points, these, as being clear indeed in themselves, but as yet obscure,² may be left for another time, *God Messiah granting*; and, *if it then be permitted*, those things may be set forth in order which, *by the divine mercy of God Messiah*, have happened from the first time to the last—*if so it be permitted*; and *this in the way which is then pleasing to God Messiah*; namely, as concerns temptations and the things which follow after them in order; but in a general way, *if this be well pleasing*. From these can then be drawn those things in the words of the present text and in those that follow which can be more distinctly expounded (emphases mine).

The density of conditional phraseology is striking—"if, if, if." There is a picture of a mind having seen something that looked quite clear at first but that is proving elusive on closer examination, a sense that something may or may not be pleasing to God Messiah, and a genuine uncertainty concerning

1 Of the nineteen, thirteen are in biblical quotations, two refer to the physical "remains" of saints revered by the Catholic church, two refer to "remains" of fading churches, one is from the Augustana Confession, and one refers simply to the physical remains of the dead.

2 Acton inserts, "[to me]".

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Swedenborg's Road to "As If"

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God Messiah's future permission.

Eventually, the difficulty comes out into the open. §2/961 sounds an alarm:

As touching the reception of God Messiah's mercy and grace by faith, it is a question of the deepest investigation whether there is anything in us that enables us to accept this faith, or to apply ourselves to that acceptance; or whether in these matters we bear ourselves as something dead; . . .

Since it could not yet be clear to me how evil can then be imputed to us, and also our not accepting the faith offered us by mercy, these being questions of the deepest investigation, I have not dared to reason in such matters (*non ausim in his ratiocinari*).

To put it more simply, if we are incapable of doing right, how can we be held responsible for doing wrong? This would give us a spreadsheet on which we must record all our liabilities but cannot record assets. Swedenborg is trying to hold his reason captive to faith, but reason is straining at its leash, and the thought of letting it loose is, with good reason, frightening. If there is one biblical verse that was central to Lutheranism, it was Romans 3:26: "For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from the works prescribed by the law." This is unquestionable. Any serious threat to it can only come from Satan.

The whole matter comes to a head when Swedenborg comes to the point in the Joseph narrative where the years of famine have driven the Egyptians to sell their cattle, their land, and even themselves to the Pharaoh in order to buy grain. Swedenborg writes,

"These words may be applied to every natural man specifically," and "In man, in place of *cattle*, . . . are all those internal faculties whereby men become cattle and animals of servitude"

(§2/1062): after which there is a startling change.

2/1063. The cognitions themselves are signified by *silver*. These are of no use without application to things spiritual. They are the first things to be taken away, so that the cognitions which have hitherto been made, thus serve no use, being without application to things heavenly. (If I am deprived of these, as now appears, then the cognitions hitherto granted me by the divine mercy of God Jesus Christ are of no use; thus up to now the labor has been in vain, this being a consequence).

To put it more simply, if we are incapable of doing right, how can we be held responsible for doing wrong?

Suddenly, "every natural man specifically" is as specific as it can be. It is Swedenborg himself.

He continues,

2/1064. *Cattle* and the like, together with *horses*, also signify interior cognitions, like horses; here, they signify the pleasures and cupidities of the world. (These also are taken away from me, so that I dare nothing, I know nothing, as to whither I shall go.)

There's that word, "dare," again.

2/1065. The *land* is the intellect belonging to the mind. This is taken away at the same time, so that I understand almost nothing; for so do evil spirits obscure me, and the things which I may be able to write are given me piecemeal.³

2.1066. This is my state today, exactly as was presignified to the man of Egypt. What further

³ The manuscript reads *frustratim*, a word otherwise unattested. Acton, followed by Chadwick, emends to *frustatim*, "in pieces," which in view of the sudden shifts of focus in these pages makes good sense. I cannot help wondering, though, whether Swedenborg may not be echoing the adverb *frustra*, "to no purpose, in vain," given the "of no use" (*nullius usus*) and "in vain" (*incassum*) of §2/1063.

these words mean, I know not. I await thy salvation, God Messiah! (§2/1063–66)

At this point, a bold line is drawn across the page, and the remainder is left blank. He has hit a brick wall.

Those closing words, "I await thy salvation, God Messiah," clearly refer to Genesis 49:18, where the plea "I wait for your salvation, O Lord" (NRSV) comes as a surprising first-person interjection in Jacob's third-person blessings of his sons.⁴ It follows immediately the description of Dan as "a snake by the roadside, a viper along the path, that bites the horse's heels, so that he falls backwards."

In his commentary on this verse, Swedenborg understands the serpent and asp to represent *scientia*—roughly, secular erudition (§2/1273); the horse to represent the human intellect (§2/1274); the rider as the actual individual (*ipse homo*, §2/1275); the path to represent the object of erudition and human reasoning (*ratiocinatio*, §2/1276) and Dan to represent "those who, by reasoning, . . . wish to scrutinize and search out things superior, such as things spiritual and celestial . . . and this from their own daring (*ex proprio ausu*)," with the result that the reasoner "falls backward and lapses into continual errors, this being what is properly meant by falling backward" (§2/1279).

He continues,

2/1281. Since this is so dangerous, therefore, of the divine mercy of God Messiah, it has been granted me to dare⁵ to do this, not from my own daring, but from the inspiration of God Messiah . . . Still, I should confess that whenever I have desired to consult the understanding in those things which are

⁴ In Latin, the reference is unmistakable: *Salutem tuam exspecto, Deus Messias!* (Swedenborg) and *Salutem tuam exspecto, JEHOVAH!* (Schmidt).

⁵ *ausim*, which Acton translates as "venture," though he translates *ausu* as "daring" in 2/1279.

Swedenborg's Road to "As If"

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celestial,⁶ I seemed to myself to fall backward, and on such innumerable occasions, that unless, by the divine mercy of God Messiah, I had been at once returned to the way, I would quickly have fallen backward.

This, he now sees, is what has been happening in the recent stages of his exegesis—a repeated, frightening falling toward secular skepticism, and repeated rescues. I have long been fond of the passage in *Secrets of Heaven* 7298:2 concerning the value of doubt. "[N]o one," Swedenborg wrote,

should be instantly persuaded of the truth . . . truth inculcated in this way . . . has no stretch and no give. In the other life, this kind of truth is portrayed as hard, impervious to the good that would make it adaptable. This is why, as soon as something true is presented by open experience to good spirits in the other life, something opposite is presented soon thereafter, which creates a doubt. So they are enabled to think and ponder whether it is true, and together reason and thereby lead the truth into their minds rationally. This gives their spiritual sight an outreach in regard to this matter, even to the opposite.

It is only since my immersion in *The Word Explained* that I have been able to see the strong autobiographical dimension of this description.

Shortly after his Delft vision in 1744, Swedenborg had written in his *Journal of Dreams*, "At last it was granted to me by the grace of the Spirit to receive faith without reasoning, a real assurance of it. . . . Faith then appeared

to me far above the reach of reason . . . we must make our understanding captive to the obedience of faith" (April 18, 1744). That could well represent an adult's effort to preserve a childlike faith.

Now, though, he finds himself called by God Messiah to follow this most dangerous path, "to search out things spiritual and celestial by means of natural sciences," not because he is confident of his own intellectual prowess but because he believes that God Messiah will be guiding his use of it, inspiring him along the way.

He knows what he needs to do. He has recognized that

. . . at this day, when men think themselves to live in such great light as to things intellectual, they are yet in such dense shade that nothing can be denser. Hence, as soon as they consult any philosophy they fall into the worship of nature and are turned backward; and order itself is so perverted that there is no faith. Thus [the state] is almost irremediable, unless all their philosophy is first shaken out of their minds. Faith, therefore, must be opposed to that state of mind [which believes] that there is no faith, for knowledge must come first. It must be known what is to be believed, for without the knowledge of these things, faith is not possible; it would then be believing without understanding and reason, and this is not human.

I want to pause just a moment and note that Swedenborg did not resign from his "day job" on the College of Mines until June 1747. At that point, he had been offered the post of councillor, effectively, the presiding officer of the College. He had arrived. In the words of biographer Ernst Benz, his scientific publications "had brought him European fame. The learned periodicals of all lands discussed his new books; the academies opened their doors to him; and he had come closer to his goal of being received within the

Olympus of European learning than he had ever hoped" (Benz, p. 102).

He does get back to work, obviously. He does not wait until he has everything figured out. There is a long road ahead of him, and after another, less severe crisis in the middle of Leviticus, the story is going to have a happy ending when it gets to Isaiah. I feel that I know where he is headed, and need to find out how he gets there. At this point, as he moves through Exodus, I find him staking out some solid ground—nothing earthshaking, nothing objectionable to either an open-minded theologian or to a scientist, and beginning to realize that what he has tended to see as almost instantaneous conversion is actually a step-by-step process. I'm currently trying to trace his path from there, but I don't want to leave you in suspense, so I'll skip the journey and take you straight to Leviticus, and then to Isaiah.

Leviticus 25:24 reads, "Throughout the land that you hold, you shall provide for the redemption of the land."

This prompted the following series of cryptic "one-liners":⁷

2/6305. So the land must be redeemed, that is, what is meant by the land, namely the slaves (see verse 55).

2/6306. Because we are wanderers, that is, cast out of the kingdom, so we need to be redeemed.

2/6307. If we were native inhabitants of heaven and had not been cast out, we would not need to be redeemed.

2/6308. The "possession" is heaven, but it is not a possession of anyone as personal property. That is why it says, the land is God Messiah's, and we are wanderers and aliens, and need to be adopted.

2/6309. It is only the fruit, because it is not personal property.

2/6310. It follows most clear-

⁶ *coelestia*, which Acton translates as "heavenly," despite having translated it as "celestial" in 2/1279. "heavenly." By choosing to use different words to translate what in Latin are the same words, Acton slightly obscures the clarity with which Swedenborg is identifying himself with the *ipse homo*, the actual individual, represented by Dan.

⁷ Which Acton—sadly, to my mind—compresses into a single paragraph.

Swedenborg's Road to "As If"

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ly from this that no mortal can sell heaven, for it does not belong to anyone but God Messiah.

No problem so far—this is perfectly good Lutheran doctrine.

2/6311. The produce or the fruit, though, is what comes from heaven—that is, from the possession, and therefore from the Possessor, God Messiah.

2/6312. [The fruits] are then faith, charity, and the works of charity.

2/6313. Anyone can sell this as produce, for we do seem to be able to distribute this, that is, to teach it.

Now we're on dangerous ground. This seems to be saying that our works *are* in some way our own.

2/6314. "The poor" are said to be those who either sell these things or go into slavery; so the possession too, or the land, which is the same as the person, can go into slavery. Slavery is working and meriting a salary under the banner of God Messiah.

But even what we do "under the banner of God Messiah" is slavery if we think we merit a salary for doing it.

2/6315. Redemption has to do with the produce, not the possession.

2/6315. The produce is charity and the works of charity: we are redeemed and saved depending on these.

So his childhood faith was dead wrong and dead right at the same time. Our salvation depends on our works, but our works do not earn us heaven.

2/6316. These matters are most obscure to me so far, and there is no way I can understand them. So I lay them aside, for I have never been so distressed, so perplexedly distressed.

The fact that this was a landmark event is underscored by the fact that it is one of the very few that is dated. It happened on July 22, 1746—over a year after his call, which had happened

a year after his Delft vision. It is not his faith that is now being challenged, though, but his reason. This does not bring him to a screeching halt, convinced of the worthlessness of all that he has done. This is something he can lay aside for the time being.

It is, of course, one of the central issues in the history of Christian doctrine, the tension between law and grace. Luther had seen the Catholic church as erring on the side of law, with a bookkeeping system of red ink sins and black ink penances (and the church as the Auditor). He had tried to switch the emphasis to simple trust in the grace offered by Jesus Christ, but that "trust" had been represented as "faith," and faith had gradually become equated with orthodox belief rather than with childlike trust in Jesus.

Again, Swedenborg kept at it. It seems that the third turning point, the resolution, came a little over a year later; and as we might expect, it came in the course of his further study of the Bible. At some point, he started an index of Genesis. He soon abandoned this, and used the same pages for an index of Isaiah. While there is no direct indication of why he discontinued it, at the top of the first page of that index there is a most intriguing sentence: "A change of state in me, into the celestial kingdom, in an image. 1747, Aug 7, Old Style."

What might that experience have been like? In *Secrets of Heaven* 2343:2, Swedenborg noted that it was easy to lose track of the continuity of meaning when focusing on the individual words,

... but when everything is focused on in a single image, or grasped with a single perceptive insight, as happens with people who are *absorbed in the deeper meaning and are at the same time in heavenly* [equals celestial] *light from the Lord* (emphasis mine), such individuals are offered

in these words a view of the whole process of reformation and regeneration for those who are becoming people of the church . . .

This view of the whole process, I believe, was the "image" that he saw on his admission to "the celestial [equals heavenly] kingdom."

This introduces what I take to be the conclusion of "the missing chapter," which is signaled right next door to the statement about his change of state. At the top of the basically blank page facing that first page of the index he wrote, "How our regeneration is expressed in the outer, inner, still more inward, and inmost sense of the Word of God Messiah, and how it is believed by people who are outer, inner, still more inward, and inmost, so how outer things are lifted up step by step to the inmost. See *adjuvare* (which means "to help"), Isaiah 43:17" (44:2 in modern Bibles).

It of course sends us to the entry for *adjuvare* in the index that immediately follows, and since *adjuvare* begins with the letter "a," there are not too many pages to turn. Bear in mind, though, that the index was not written in alphabetical order. He would have started with chapter 1, verse 1, and proceeded verse by verse, and it would have taken quite a while to get to chapter 43.

We can take the shortcut, though, and when we do, this is what we find. The verse in question reads as follows: "Thus says the Lord who made you, who formed you from the womb and will help you." Swedenborg's comment:

Adjuvare ("to help"), for providing assistance so that we may be reformed. In its outer sense, it is for people to whom it seems as if their own efforts contribute to their reformation; in a deeper sense, for people who demand something of themselves for their regeneration; in

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Letter to General Council from the Social Concerns Committee Re: Current Social Justice Issues

The Swedenborgian Church takes note of the recent political upheavals and divisions within our country, and seeks to offer a word of clarity and support to its members and the larger society. Along with many others now voicing their opposition to recent changes, we too are deeply concerned by the tone, direction, and likely impact of the policies now coming from the government of the United States. We note as well that certain policies will have an impact on nations throughout the world.

We appreciate the limits placed upon religion in the United States by the First Amendment, as well as the freedom it grants to the church to influence society at large. And as students of history, we understand the re-

sponsibility imposed by that freedom, the temptation to remain silent, and our duty to respond to all those who cry out for justice. By rising above the fray of the partisan politics of personalities and parties, we are free to address issues of social justice (the undeniable intersection of politics and religion), and empowered to assert our prophetic role in this time of national crisis and uncertainty.

We call on the elected government representatives of the United States of America to hold the new administration accountable to the spirit of freedom and democracy in general, and to the Constitution and existing law in particular.

We call on our members to exercise the spirit of charitable discernment as

they consider and share their different understandings of these events.

In light of our own biases, prejudices, and limited sight, we acknowledge our need to listen to those on all sides of any issue, and always with an ear for the Spirit, which guides us to listen with patience, compassion, and an open curiosity to understand each other. At the same time, we acknowledge that even as our understanding is partial, our commitment to the Prince of Peace is absolute.

We recognize this *Kairos* moment as an important opportunity for our churches to explore issues of social justice from a theological perspective, to bring the Word and our church's teachings to bear on the very real and pressing issues that confront us. We also commend to our members two documents coming from the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA: "Before the Oath is Taken" (1/6/17) <http://tinyurl.com/h83cc2y>, and "Fool's Errand" (1/29/17) <http://tinyurl.com/hjade77>.

Confident that God moves in and through history, let us be quick to turn to that force for good which transcends all of our individual notions of good and evil. Let us renew our commitment to the divine will, the Lord's unceasing efforts to bring *all* of creation to wholeness, salvation, *peace*.

In this time of radical change, may our prayers for justice and peace be a first response, and not a last resort.

"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another." John 13:34

—Revs. Nadine Cotton, Catherine Lauber, and Robert McCluskey
(Social Concerns Committee)

Swedenborg's Road to "As If"

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a still deeper sense, for people who know in theory that they are capable of nothing but still think they are somehow involved, and in the inmost (or deepest) sense for people who claim no credit whatever for themselves.

This sounds very much like the enlightenment that comes when one is absorbed in the deeper meaning and is at the same time in heavenly light from the Lord.

The "as if" paradox has been set in the context of a process. We necessarily start with the belief that our salvation is all up to us because we pretty much fill our own horizon, so to speak. Even so, if we lead good lives, we are enabled more and more to "think good things not only about God but also about our neighbor." Swedenborg lived this by re-

peatedly getting back to work at the job he had been commissioned to do; and surely his entry into the celestial kingdom was his introduction to the state of the angels of that heaven, who "feel the inflow of divine love and wisdom from the Lord, and since they feel it and in their wisdom realize that these constitute their life they say that their life comes from the Lord and not from themselves" (*Divine Providence* 158).

This does not resolve the paradox, though it intensifies it. In the words of *Divine Providence* (§42), "The more closely we are united to the Lord, the more clearly we seem to have our own identity, and yet the more obvious it is to us that we belong to the Lord"—and obviously, this feels heavenly. The "happy ending" is the beginning of a new life. ☪

Rev. Dr. George Dole is a retired minister and an adjunct professor at the Center for Swedenborgian Studies.

Call for Presenters for Opening Weekend Program at FNCA

The Fryeburg New Church Assembly (FNCA) is seeking proposals from ministers and laypersons for this year's Opening Weekend Program, July 29–30, 2017. It consists of spiritually-inspiring educational/experiential workshops for our adult and teen campers in three 1.5–2 hour sessions, two on Saturday and one on Sunday. Attendance averages around a dozen. All manner of presentation styles and topics are welcome as long as there is a spiritual connection.

Presenters receive eight adult camper days at the Assembly in exchange for leading this program. These can be used solely by the presenter or shared. (<http://fryeburg.org/openingprogram>.)



Since the program's inception in 2010, we have enjoyed,

- “Ego and its Purpose in our Spiritual Lives” with Rev. Susannah Currie
- “The New Church Descending” with Rev. Alison Longstaff
- “Spiritual Practices that Open Us to Divine Influx” with Rev. Jane Siebert
- “Logopraxis Workshop” with Ros Taylor
- “Spiritually Integrated Self-Care” with Rev. Dr. Gard Perry
- “Spiritual Tools to Explore Scripture” with Rev. Susannah Currie
- “Discovering Elijah” with Rev. Anna Woofenden

Please send proposals ASAP to the FNCA religious program coordinator, Rev. Susannah Currie, revscurrie@gmail.com. ☪

Edmonton Celebrates Pastor Dave's 10th

The Edmonton Church of the Holy City and the Paulhaven Camp community in Alberta celebrated Pastor Dave's tenth anniversary as its pastor on September 11, 2016, with a family picnic at the church and enjoyed some faith, friends (old and new), and, of course, food! While it wasn't really picnic weather, we made the best of it, and our BBQ-ers persevered.



Seems like yesterday this new pastor started coming to camp. He seemed not too sure of our Paulhaven family, and we seemed not too sure of him that first year. But he keeps coming back, so we couldn't have been that bad!

P. Davey, as we affectionately call him, has become a huge part of our Paulhaven family and the church family, and we are very thankful for him! ☪

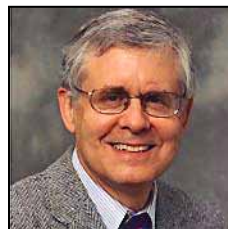
Haller to Be UU's Annual Swedenborg Scholar

Urbana University (UU) is pleased to announce that Dr. John S. Haller, Jr. will serve as its annual Swedenborg Scholar in Residence. Dr. Haller will give a public lecture titled, “America's Reform Tradition: Swedenborg, New Church, and the Doctrine of Uses” on March 20, 2017, at 7 PM, on campus, in the Swedenborg Memorial Library. Everyone is welcome to attend this free event. The campus is located at 579 College Way, Urbana, Ohio.

Dr. Haller says his talk “essentially asks the question, how could this prodigy, whose eminence as a mystic and investigator in the sciences, become associated with so many different belief systems—from Transcendentalism, Fourierism, and Christian Socialism, to homeopathy, osteopathy, the social gospel, new age healing, psychology, pragmatism, Zen Buddhism, and spiritualism? How and why did his writings resonate with so many Christians and non-Christians alike, unburdening them of ancient rituals and dogma?”

Dr. Haller is the author of more than twenty books including *Swedenborg, Mesmer and the Mind/Body Connection: The Roots of Complementary Medicine* (2010); and *Voices: Sketches of a Swedenborgian World View* (2016).

Dr. Haller received his degrees from Georgetown University, John Carroll University, and the University of Maryland. He served as a professor of history and medical humanities and was editor of *Caduceus: A Humanities Journal for Medicine and the Health Sciences*. Dr. Haller's teaching portfolio included courses in Amer-



ican intellectual history, Darwin and the Darwinian world, leadership and moral responsibility, and the history of medicine.

The Swedenborgian Church of North America funds the annual Swedenborg Scholar in Residence at Urbana University.

For more information about the Swedenborg Scholar in Residence program, please contact Julie McDaniel, librarian at 937.772.9316 or email Julie.mcdaniel@urbana.edu. ☪

Passages

Marriages

Mitch and Candace Sawatzky married on September 17, 2017, at Paulhaven Camp in Alberta. Mitch is the son of Darlene Sawatzky, life-long member of the New Church, and Candace's mother was Anne Braun, also a life-long member. ☪

Foundation Video Shown on "The Dr. Oz Show"

"**You Are the Lungs**," a popular YouTube video from the Swedenborg Foundation about the way that individuals form a greater whole in heaven, was featured on the February 3 episode of "The Dr. Oz Show."

Dr. Mehmet Oz introduced "You Are the Lungs" as a video with a positive message from a church in his wife's hometown (Dr. Oz's wife, Lisa, is from the Swedenborgian community of Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania).

The video is a segment of the Foundation-produced *Off The Left Eye YouTube channel*. ☪

Letter from the President

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and Sadat weren't killed by other nationals, but by their own people. In America, anyone who steps out of a partisan march on either side faces attacks from their own tribe.

Blessed are those who are reviled and denounced for my sake means that when we follow Jesus, we will be demonized and misrepresented. To follow Jesus, we must be willing to be misunderstood, even by our own tribe.

"Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you"

Exploring History in Philadelphia Options for Your Pre- or Post-Convention Days

While in the Philadelphia area for the 2017 Annual Convention, take advantage of the deep history of the city and surrounding area. Many city sites and tours mentioned here are discounted with the inclusive Philadelphia Pass (<http://www.philadelphiapass.com/>)

Hop-on, Hop-off Tours: Many historical sights are concentrated in a small area of Philadelphia. There are several companies that offer hop-on, hop-off buses; with a daily pass you can ride the buses to your heart's content. In addition, there are trolley and horse-drawn carriages throughout the downtown area. For information, visit <http://tinyurl.com/gunz2q4>.

New Sweden: Parts of northern Delaware and both sides of the Delaware River in the Philadelphia area were settled as New Sweden in 1638. Swedenborg and his father visited New Sweden in the early 1700s, after it had become part of the British colonies. With a car, you can visit many New Sweden sites. A museum without walls, the New Sweden Center encompasses exhibits throughout the Delaware Valley

(Matthew 5:12).

Jesus' teaching is as radical and challenging today as when he first preached it.

Let us each seek in our own way to be peacemakers. Let us each seek the challenge to follow Jesus as peacemakers remembering, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall inherit the kingdom of heaven."



Thank you, Rich, for speaking the truth so eloquently.

—Rev. Jane Siebert

(<http://www.colonialnewseden.org>). The Swedish Museum in Philadelphia has two galleries devoted to the history of the New Sweden Colony.

Walking Tours

For a variety of walking tours (guided and self-guided), including the historic Old City, go to <http://tinyurl.com/jxfn3ed>.

The Constitutional Walking Tour: The Constitutional's self-guided tour follows the Founding Fathers' footsteps through America's most historic square mile—America's birthplace. For more information, visit the website: <http://tinyurl.com/zjv2jjb>.

Independence National Park: Walk and learn through Independence National Park and Independence Hall, where the Declaration of Independence was signed. For more information, visit <http://tinyurl.com/j76sepk>.

Cultural Gems

The Barnes Foundation Museum holds one of the world's finest collections of Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, and early modern paintings.

The Philadelphia Museum of Art ranks among the most important art museums in the United States.

The (former) Swedenborgian Church of the New Jerusalem, erected in 1881 to designs by Theophilus Parsons Chandler, closed in the mid 1980s when the congregation diminished. In 1989, it was repurposed as office space (exterior viewing only).

Also in the works is a bus tour of Brandywine Valley attractions on Wednesday, July 12, that will end at the Philadelphia airport in the early afternoon. It will be possible to caravan with the bus by car. ☪

About the Swedenborgian Church

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

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

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

The Alliance of New Church Women at Convention 2017

For more than 110 years the National Alliance of New Church Women has served as a connection for members of the women's organizations in our churches and for isolated women of the General Convention (Swedenborgian Church).

Meeting formally as a body during annual conventions since 1904, the Alliance has focused on raising funds for, and giving service to, many causes of the General Convention, such as Sunday schools; church camps; needs of the National Church in Washington DC; scholarships and living quarter needs at Urbana University; and mission work, both foreign and domestic.

Another important focus of the National Alliance of New Church Women has been to support the spiritual growth of church women through the creation of year-long Bible-study programs and the annual presentation of papers and talks on doctrine-oriented subjects. The annual conventions have allowed the voices of women to be heard beginning in times when these voices did not carry any authority. As time has gone on, the



presentations have continued to focus on the connections of doctrine and life.

The two main pillars of the National Alliance of New Church Women continue to be

growing spiritually and being of service. These central tenets are rooted in the strength of community and connection.

On Monday, July 10, 2017, the morning gathering of the General Convention will be opened with a brief worship service led by members of the National Alliance, followed by a short presentation highlighting the history of women and the Alliance as part of the life of the General Convention.

The women of General Convention, whose history in the denomination includes being identified as disorderly, domestic (thus unable to deal with organizational or business matters), and lacking the wisdom to serve as delegates to annual conventions, are looking forward to welcoming you at 8:30 AM on that Monday morning to this short service and presentation.

Please come and join us in our disorderliness! ☩