

**THE
MESSENGER**

AUGUST 1987

Official Publication of
the General Convention of
Swedenborgian Churches

**A TIME
TO LOOK
FORWARD**



CONVENTION '87

In looking at convention issues over the past many years, it is clear that the editors feel a certain obligation to paint a rosy picture of convention happenings. Can you recall such headlines as "Convention Only So-So This Year," or, "A Good Year To Have Stayed Home?" It simply wouldn't do.

Luckily, I do not need my "public relations" hat to write this editorial, for convention '87 was a great convention. No rip-roaring parties, no emotional services with everybody swaying arm-in-arm singing "We Are The World," no great group catharses characterized the strength of this year's gathering. It was, rather, more of a quiet well-being gently pervading the overall tapestry of our church life that had many of us going away renewed, refreshed and feeling grateful to be a part of the Swedenborgian Church.

Several pieces of the quilt either contributed to this sense of well-being as a church or reflected it. Let me share a few of these with you. Our youth program, for one, emanated love and well-being. The number of young children at convention has been steadily climbing, and the quality of the leadership this year was touted by virtually all the parents. After an all-time high of Leaguers (high-schoolers) attending the mid-winter retreat in Almont, Michigan this year, the presence and spirit of representatives from this bunch added immensely to the positive tone of convention.

The unofficial count of attendees for the entire convention was 316—the second highest attendance in forty years. We had forty-seven sitting in on the Council of Ministers, we could barely fit in the room; several of the older ministers commented on the improved spirit of openness and solidarity now enjoyed among the ministers. As should bode well for a future-looking church, over one half of the active ministers have been ordained within the last ten years.

Perhaps as a correspondential gesture, we were treated to a wondrous vista on Saturday night. As our boat approached Blake Island for an evening at an Indian lodge and restaurant, a rainbow began to gradually manifest in the southern sky after a light shower. But this was not just your ordinary rainbow. As dozens of us gazed off the port-side of the craft, the rainbow pressed its sides down so that it made a crescent from ground to ground. Then a second rainbow followed suit above it. And most moving for me, the inside rainbow gained an intensity of color such as I have never seen. We stood mostly in silence, enraptured. We had to be cattle-prodded off the boat by Lon Elmer after docking, and we slowly trundled on to our salmon dinner feeling very blessed indeed.

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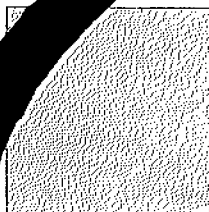
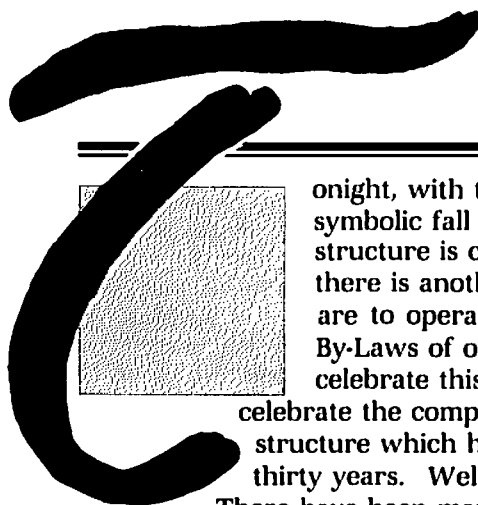
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President's Address

A New Structure for the Adventure Ahead

Randall E. Laakko

We are poised, as an organization and as a people, to take the next step into our ever-changing existence.



tonight, with the opening of Convention and the symbolic fall of the gavel, our organizational structure is changing. From this point on, until there is another change in that structure, we are to operate under the new Constitution and By-Laws of our Convention. We really ought to celebrate this beginning. We also ought to

celebrate the completion of the former structure—a structure which has served the church well for over thirty years. Well done good and faithful servant!

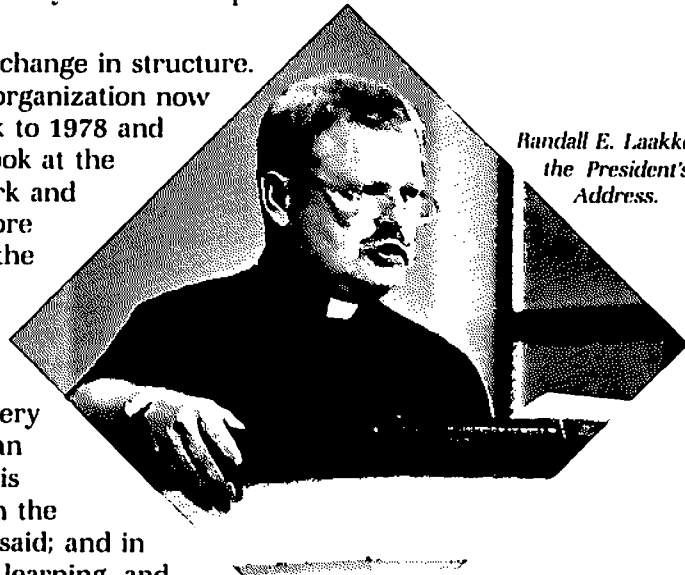
There have been many major transitions and changes in the church during that period. Those of you who have lived through the period will be able to recount them, as you saw them, as you witnessed them, and as you personally experienced them.

Some have said that we have come a long way in that 30 year period. It may be that the paper structure had something to do with that progression. It is certainly the case that the people—you and many others—have been the instruments through which much of this change has happened. You are to be congratulated. As that chapter of the life in the church closes, we now stand at the threshold of a new era. We are poised, as an organization and as a people, to take the next step into our ever-changing existence. The step we are about to take is purposeful and decisive. We have our bearings and know the direction we are going as an organization. We know the goal and destination.

The goal is stated in the defined purpose for which the church exists in the new Constitution: "The General Convention exists to help people to be open to the Lord's presence and leading, especially by fostering personal and ordained ministries which facilitate the spiritual well-being of people, and which have in common a working for the Lord in bringing in the New Age, the descent of the Holy City, New Jerusalem." We exist to help people to be open to the Lord's presence and leading. Our destination is the Holy City, New Jerusalem; the direction is fostering and promoting—enabling, if you will—the spiritual well-being of people. The method is whatever it takes, which may be personal and ordained ministries, as well as every other way we can be open to that presence.

I believe the church is ready for this change in structure. We have been at the task of revising the organization now for several years. Some have dated it back to 1978 and the creation of a committee that was to look at the organization. Gradually, through their work and process, it seemed as though more and more needed to be changed in the structure of the church to make it more responsive, more accountable, more accessible to all the people. No longer are we going to be directed from the top down. Rather the spirit and entity of God that is found in every person, in every society and association can have a flow upwards. There can be what is sometimes called a grassroots movement in the church. "You are my disciples," our Lord said; and in discipleship there is commitment, there is learning, and there is companionship.

Careful work has gone into the planning and execution of the structure to this date. With great care we have tried to make the process open and available to communication, making known to all people the reasons and nature for the changes that have been suggested. This plan has in no way been sprung upon us, the church; nor has it been railroaded through. In fact some have said, "Let's get the train out of the station and moving!" Trial runs have been made with the prototype cabinet. Revisions have been suggested throughout the process. Some have been incorporated, when they seemed worthy of the goals and purposes of our organization. Care was taken to make the church accessible to us, accessible to the presence and power of God in our individual lives.



*Randall E. Laakko gives
the President's
Address.*

This plan has in no way been railroaded through. In fact, some have said, "Let's get the train out of the station and moving!"

At all stages of development effort has been made for an effective and efficient organization, that all the flow of God, the energy, the force can move through us. It is important to note that the easy part has been done: drawing the plan. (I might get serious argument on this from the Ad Hoc Committee!) It has not been easy in that process. Would all members of the Ad Hoc Committee who are with us tonight please stand for a moment? I want the people to see who you are. There are others whom I would like to note in the process—Mac McCormick, are you here? If so raise your hand. (He's not here.) Mac has been a member of that committee for the period since its entire beginning. Cal Turley, a beloved colleague, was involved in the process from its inception. I would suspect he is still here, working. But the hard work, and the Ad Hoc Committee knows that it begins now, is in putting it to use. George Dole has written that if, in fact, we do not feel an upsurge of energy and power coming out of us as individuals and societies, then we are in serious trouble.

Now, we all need to be careful with our expectations. It does not mean that every idea we have, every dream we conceive, every vision that comes to us is going to be utilized. Our resources are not that broad. We have criteria established to determine whether or not a given dream is coming to us at the right time.

If you submit a dream, and it is not used, please do not make little of yourself or your dream. It may simply mean it is too big for us at the moment, or it is not seen as the right time, or we are not ready, whatever the case may be, but it is not you. You are to be valued; your dreams are to be cherished; your presence in the church is needed. The task is ours to utilize the plans in a way that

brings the design into operation. I fully expect there will be further refinement and other innovations made as we gain experience with the new organizational structure. We are going this year on a shakedown cruise, and in the years to come as well. Enough of the structure.

Mandatory Connectedness: God's Call

Those of you who are accustomed to preaching and public speaking know and I'm sure all of us can appreciate, what it feels like to have part of your inspirational address based on a video that was going to be seen. [Due to technical considerations, the video was not shown.] Let's see what happens . . . Our theology supports a theory coming alive in the world today that the entire earth is a living whole organism. (D.L.W. 55) "Everything in the Universe is a recipient of divine love and wisdom . . ." In fact, our theology would want to expand the concept even beyond the world to include the very universe in which we now exist as a world, even though that is so far beyond our normal consciousness or moment-to-moment experience and awareness. Then too, many of us may ask if this is in any way relevant to our lives today. I ask you to excuse me or at least tolerate me tonight, for I do experience and see its relevancy to our very existence and our continuance. The unity of everything is the underlying reality of the oneness we as individuals comprise. While we are individuals, separate consciousnesses, at the same time we are also amazingly inter-connected and inter-related. The thesis that there is a global, a universal living organism is awakening upon the world. We are moving towards an awakened awareness of our unity, our oneness with each other. There is a power let loose and growing

upon the earth and it has to do with a spiritual rebirth and re-awakening. As Swedenborgians we can easily support that proposition, for we speak and know of the New Jerusalem that is in the process of descending into the world of all people.

I believe in the omnipresence of the Lord, the omnipotence of the Lord, and the omniscience of the Lord. This developing spiritual state is now in process, and it occurs in the hearts and minds of people through-out the world. Because the Lord is omnipresent, it is universally based; it is our common ground of being; it is the descent of God's love and wisdom in the form of human community and relatedness that we so sorely need in our world today. Scott Peck, in a very recently published book, and in an article in *New Age* magazine, speaks of the greatest problem that we as a world face: the prospect, the possibility—we hope to God not the inevitability—of nuclear holocaust.

We can bring to mind immediate and more personal problems in our lives and in the lives of those who have touched us so that we know, or that we will know, that they are touched by the terrible condition and disease of AIDS. But we are one: "Ask not for whom the bell tolls—it tolls for thee;" "If you did it to the least of these my brethren you did it to me." "Have I been so long with you Philip and still you have not known me?" "If you love me, the Father and I will come to you and dwell in you and you in me."

There is a universal ground of being; it is the Lord God. We are here, and we continue to exist, because we are filled by it—every atom and molecule of our being and the universe is sustained by it. "Absolutely everything," wrote Swedenborg, "comes from the first reality, and the design is so established

that the first reality is present in the derived forms indirectly and directly, just as much in the most remote part of the design, therefore, as in its first part. That actual divine-true is only substance, its derivatives are simply successive secondary forms. This also enables us to see that the divine does flow directly into absolutely everything." A.C. 7004.2 Mind you, it is happening everywhere, that

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descent. God is everywhere present in Love and Truth. How it progresses is affected by the quality of the recipient. Those who are motivated to know the truth and who desire to make it applicable to their lives receive the descending Holy City with grace. When I punched this out on the computer, I wanted to go on and talk about the ones that don't receive it. Then, I said, "What for!?! It's enough to know what makes it be received." That's all we need to know about.

Our theme for this convention is "In God's Image." When the convention planning committee selected that theme, we struggled for a good part of a day to come up with something that felt alive and appealing. We were cognizant of the church's movement into the new structure. We were anticipating a convention that began following the glow and energy of a major conference on spiritual healing.

We imagined wholeness. An openness that was the manifestation of the holiness that exists in our midst. That is the source of healing, but like the video, that conference did not happen. But you know what? You don't have to have that glow preceding you to be open to it. It can happen right now, the video be gone, the conference be gone, whatever. God isn't dependent on that—Thank God!

The church is indeed the recipient of the wholeness/holiness from the Lord God, Jesus Christ. The life we feel, in fact, is not our own energy—it flows through us—through us—through us, whether we know it or not. But we also have to have that sense that we have our freedom that the Lord will let us turn away, go long distances and waits for us to come home, "My child whom I thought was dead is alive again - he/she was lost but is found." Come home. Go on your way, be free, become who you are, but come home. Make your exploration, do your rebellion, refuse the goodness that is there, but come home. And he went in and he celebrated, for the son who was dead was found to be alive.

We are images of the design of God. We are receptacles of that presence. There is holiness within you and in our midst. It's not enough for it to be just in us, it has to be among us; and it is. That presence is the energy that heals and causes us to be whole. It is right here, right now. Let us be open to it; experience it; feel and know it. "And God saw everything that he had made and behold it was very good!"

Let's Go Get Them!! Amen. ■

172 **An Interview
with Laura
Cameron Fraser**

James F. Lawrence



ensationalistic media accounts of a woman Episcopal priest in Seattle leaving the Episcopal Church amid controversy over her use of "channeled materials"—that is, writings or oral transmissions coming from disembodied spirits—in one of her classes dotted the news-scape of America during much of the spring. The story

of the Rev. Laura Cameron Fraser continues to arouse interest, and so it was with some anticipation that I awaited the opportunity to interview her upon learning that she had agreed to lead the Ministers' Spouses Institute at our annual convention in Tacoma. Before interviewing Mrs. Fraser at the conclusion of the three-day workshop, I canvassed several of the spouses who attended. Quite a number said it was the best Institute they had ever attended, and there was considerable interest in arranging for Mrs. Fraser to lead the Institute again next year in Boston—an unprecedented request.

On February 3, 1977, Laura Cameron Fraser was ordained to the priesthood in a history-making service at Epiphany Parish in Seattle, thereby becoming the first female priest in the Northwest. She holds a doctorate in theology from the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California. In 1980, the Rev. Laura Fraser became the second rector of St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal

Church in Issaquah, Washington, where she remained until her resignation as of August 31, 1986. She resigned her position there due to division in her church over her use of channeled material in a class taught in her home exploring contemporary spirituality. She left her duties without recanting, because —after all the public hoopla—it was her perception that she could no longer function there as a symbol of unity, so it was her choice not to stay and fight.

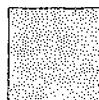
It should be noted that Mrs. Fraser was not facing heresy charges because she advocated channeled materials, but because she refused to say publicly that one particular channeled source was heretical. This was an audio cassette tape named "A Man Called Jesus," which contains utterances by an earthly man, Hossca Harrison of Boulder, Colorado, who claims that a disembodied spirit ("Jonah—teacher of righteousness in the Dead Sea Scrolls") speaks through him. The tape declares a great many facts regarding our Lord's earthly life that are not recorded in the canonical gospels in the New Testament. Mrs. Fraser's position is that she doesn't know for a fact whether they are true statements or not. Therefore, she cannot claim with certainty that they are heretical statements. This refusal to recant totally this particular tape led to the confrontation with her superiors that preceded her resignation from the priesthood in the Episcopal Church.

Laura Cameron Fraser may be reached at her new venture, the Foundation for Inner Enlightenment and Spiritual Freedom, P. O. Box 7110, Seattle, WA 98107, Tel. (206) 784-3392.



Laura Cameron Fraser.

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Could you tell the story briefly how you became interested in using channeled materials as spiritual growth materials?

I was persuaded by a friend of mine, who is a priest and with whom I went to seminary, to go to a channel for a reading. I was considerably resistant to that at first, as I believe most people would be. But over a period of time he broke down my resistance. He had had quite a remarkable experience with it himself. He and I were teaching a class together, and he just kept at it with me, and finally I began to pray for guidance about the matter. What I received was that there was no reason why I should not do this. So I went—sort of in the spirit of exploration—for a reading. I can say now, looking back on it, that it has changed my life.

Was part of your reservation connected at all with the biblical injunction not to go to diviners and necromancers and people who communicate with unseen beings?

No, not specifically. I just have walked a path quite apart from any kind of psychic phenomena and have avoided all that quite thoroughly. I had just kept my own spiritual quest "pure" and had not sought after that. So that is a policy that I have followed pretty consistently. That's where my doubt came from. I didn't want to expose myself to anything of a questionable nature.

In what ways do you find any of the channeled materials helpful to people?

That is a very good question. In several ways. First of all, the teachers who are channeling have brought to my attention some very important truths that I haven't learned through other ways. I'm finding a very important awakening in myself going on. There are many things that I seem to have known at one time in my soul's existence that I am not consciously aware of now, and this is all returning to me. I'm undergoing what one of the teachers called "an awakening." I said to him, "I feel as though I'm being reborn." And he said, "You are undergoing illumination." That does appear to be what is happening. My spiritual life has changed radically, as I have become more and more aware of the divine being within myself, and as I have become able to trust that and honor it and allow it to express itself.

My teaching and preaching in my church became immensely more alive and more authentic. The teacher whom I was first induced to go to and listen to persuaded me that my ministry could only come alive if I began to preach from my heart instead of from my head and from the words of other people. I began to focus on the truth that my heart knew and to allow that to flow out from the center of my being.

I found that hard to do at first, but once I did it I vowed never again to preach from any printed word. So, I went into the aisle to preach without anything in my hands. I felt that whatever I didn't have in my heart wasn't going to be effective for people anyway. It's radically changed my ministry style.

How was that received by your congregation?

There was an instant change in the level of life that was transpiring there; it increased radically. I had experienced a lot of silence on the

part of my parishioners to my sermons, even though I had worked very hard on them and had anguished over them. In some ways they were good sermons, but I wasn't seeing them result in the transformation of people. But the very first time that I preached from my heart, people began saying, "That really made a difference" and "I really heard that." When I went home that very first Sunday after doing that, I said, "So that is what you had to do to get me to preach from my real being." Attendance increased; the level of life in the church increased. It began to be a very exciting place to be.

I would think that there must have been a great many people from your congregation, then, who came to your support. Did that not make a difference with the higher-ups in the diocese?

Yes, it was the case that there was a very strong measure of support. When I called a parish meeting to share with them that I might be faced with charges of heresy, which I thought should come from me rather than from some other source, there were approximately 125 people who came to the meeting. And of those there were perhaps fifteen who were in opposition to what I was saying, while the remainder were there as a very direct measure of support. So it was only a minority in the parish who wanted to side with the traditional stand that was being taken. But the bishop saw the people as being in need of saving and enlightenment and help. He saw them as being in need of straightening-out, so it didn't matter to him that there was support.

There's a similarity with the writings of Swedenborg and the Anglican Church with what has transpired with your work here in the Puget Sound area with the Episcopal Church. Swedenborg's writings came from a source beyond him, he said, and the people who became excited and moved by his writings were

largely from the Anglican Church, including a couple from the clergy. Eventually, there was enough friction around the question of whether the Anglican Church was an appropriate place to pursue extensive use and learning from the writings that a separation movement arose. Over the intervening 200 years, I have noticed that the Episcopal Church has often been the most open of the mainline churches to mystical experiences. That makes me wonder whether there is not a much more broad support across the country for your plight. Do you discern any potential clarion call for exploring such materials as possibly the work of God?

My bishop is really not representative. He's not alone, but he's not representative. It is true that historically the Episcopal and Anglican churches have been more open, and one of the reasons why I found my way into the denomination is that there was room for a thinking person. The action of the bishop, however, has had a very repressive effect on the clergy in this area. There was almost total silence that greeted the news that I had laid down my orders. Of course, there was no way that they could know the way in which I was forced to do that. It appeared from the news that it was simply a voluntary decision that I had made, which in itself would have made them uncomfortable. In the main, the action of the bishop resulted in a lot of fear in a diocese that is not exactly forward-looking on the whole anyway. There are dioceses where this simply would not have occurred, and in fact where this action would have been considered laughable and totally insupportable.

Can you describe something of the work of the Foundation for Inner Enlightenment and Spiritual Freedom?

It is a non-denominational educational foundation. It offers classes in spirituality, and it

attempts to bridge traditional understandings and new-old understandings. I put it that way because there's really nothing here in what is called "new age" that hasn't been here for ages. I see the foundation as founding a school for spirituality. I see in the very near future a school for children. I think parents who want their children to be grounded in spirituality, but who aren't interested in denominations are at something of a loss as to how to educate their children, because their only alternative is public education, which is basically quite pagan. We want to offer a school which will teach children the universal precepts of spirituality that humanity has learned over time. The foundation also offers counseling and celebration and worship of a non-denominational kind on Sunday mornings.

How would you characterize Emanuel Swedenborg as a revelator?

I read Swedenborg's things after being invited by the Swedenborgian Church to lead the clergy spouses group this year. I had heard of Swedenborg before, but had not studied him. When I did study the materials, I recognized him instantly as an illumined person. I think his history is quite remarkable in that he was totally alone. Obviously not alone in the spiritual sense, but as far as others who might have taught him or provided a conduit of learning to him, it was not there. And yet he found his way into a perfect understanding of what I call the "perennial philosophy." I find that about two hundred years before the New Age appeared, Swedenborg appeared with a full-blown understanding of these matters. ■

Planned Giving: Benefiting Others As Well As Your Loved Ones

Jerome A. Poole

Planned giving is neither an exotic art nor a process that belongs only to people with high incomes and sizeable estates. Planned giving can be done by anyone who desires to assist and support a specific charity or institution. It's a process participated in by individuals who recognize that significant efforts are not maintained with pocket change, but rather with income from assets transferred from personal situations to endowments of chosen charitable institutions.

The personal visions of individuals dedicated to the teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg created what has become the Swedenborgian Church. These people gave their time, talent and treasure to establish and nourish our church's early existence. Many of these same people and others supported the birth of our theological school. Members of the Boards of the Swedenborg School of Religion believe that extraordinary promises lie ahead for our church and recognize the financial pressures that will inevitably accompany them. The Swedenborg School of Religion is committed to "getting in shape" in order to better carry out its mission and see that promises and visions of today are realized tomorrow.

To confront the financial pressures of continuing to develop and maintain an effective theological school, the combined Boards of The Swedenborg School of Religion have launched a campaign to increase the school's endowment. A program of Planned

Giving will be a major part of the campaign.

Your will, the instrument used to ultimately distribute your estate, can also make thoughtful gifts. It may even name one or more charities in case those individuals you name in your will do not survive you.

Portions of your living estate can be transferred to your Church, the Swedenborg School of Religion, or another charity of your choice and still provide you the income you received prior to your gift. Such a transfer will provide a current tax deduction which can shelter your income in the year of your gift. 175

Gifts of life insurance policies, old or new, appreciated securities and real estate are all useful in providing significant support to an institution building its endowment. This kind of gifting can be effected easily and with proper planning also assure income to the donor and provide an inheritance for loved ones.

All planned giving needs to be carefully thought out and properly arranged within your State and the Federal tax laws; this requirement of total planning, however, should not deter giving but rather provide the assurance that what you desire to happen will happen. It has been said that Planned Giving can be a bit like having your cake and eating it too.

Let's join together to create and uncover new areas of financial support for our Church and our Theological School. ■

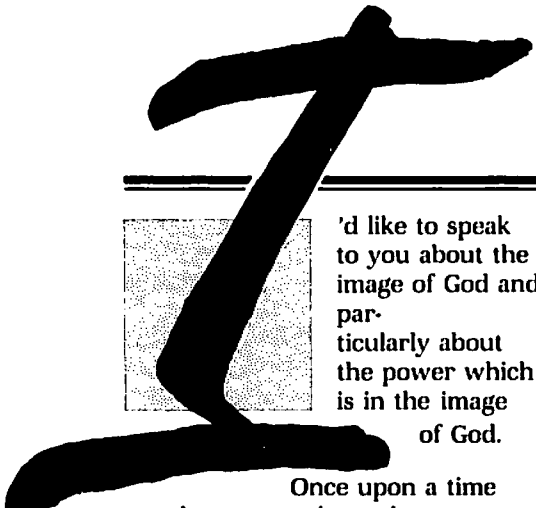
The Rev. Jerry Poole is an investment and financial counselor with the Curry-Poole Group of Wilmington, Delaware. He is active in Convention via his leadership on key committees, as well as his energetic support of the Church of the Holy City in Wilmington.

Convention Sermon

The Power of the Image of God

Genesis 1:26-31; John 10:31-38

Rev. Jay E. Lee



I'd like to speak to you about the image of God and particularly about the power which is in the image of God.

Once upon a time there was a boy who was troubled, much troubled by his two big ears. He was self-conscious about that and he tended to withdraw from his peers because they would ridicule him by saying, "Look at the taxi-cab with both doors open!" There came along a great plastic surgeon named Maxwell Maltz, who fixed the ears, downsized them, and the boy recovered his self-confidence. Many were corrected like that, which enabled them to function normally and confidently, achieving that which they could.

However, there were exceptions, like the Duchess who had an enormous hump in her

nose. She was, of course, troubled and she wished that there was something that could be done about it, and this plastic surgeon fixed her nose very nicely, giving her a classic nose. And she recovered her very beautiful figure with the beauty of her face. But she was still troubled. Why? Something inside her didn't get fixed. Within she felt something about herself that didn't get corrected.

This morning I have good news, which you already know. Because there is in each one of us a beautiful image, which is patterned after the best model that there is: our creator, God the Lord. The text I shared with you says: God said, "Let's make human beings according to my own image." No lesser a model, but the best there is. He created male and female . . . that is you and me.

Now, our church elaborates on this by saying that there are two irreducible, fundamental essential ingredients in the very being of our God: namely, Divine Love and

Divine Wisdom. Therefore, when He created you and me, we too inherited these two beautiful essential elements, love on the one hand and wisdom on the other. And our church further says that in proportion to our making use of these two ingredients, to that degree we become like God, doing all the beautiful things.

When we say something is created by its creator, we do say a couple of things. One, the created reflects something about the nature of the creator. The other day I took another look at the blue-print of the Wayfarers Chapel. And that blue-print, my colleague told me, was prepared by the son of the architect, Lloyd Wright. The son's name is Eric Wright. And then I could see in the blue-print what had been going on in the mind of architect Lloyd Wright . . . all the angles—30 degrees, 60 degrees, triangles, diamonds. By looking at the Chapel, we can see something about Lloyd Wright. By looking at a piece of glass or the corner of

something, we can see the man who created that Chapel. In the same way, by looking at you and looking at me, looking at one another, we can see something about the great creator, our God. So, in you and in me, there is some kind of blueprint, which will take you and me to the fulfillment of the image of God.

Also when we say something is created by its creator, we say that the value of that which is created is according to the greatness of the creator.

I read a local Tuesday morning newspaper. It told me about this great auction that had taken place the night before. A famous painting called "The Bridge at Trinquetaille" had been auctioned off in London at the meager amount of \$20.2 million. The auction began at \$8 million, and bidders had to add the increments of \$800,000. That means that I could not show up and say, "Eight million and four dollars and 99 cents." Previous to that, I recalled another painting by the same man, Vincent Van Gogh, "Sunflowers." Do you remember seeing reprints of it? The original of which was sold at \$39.9 million. A Japanese insurance company bought it.

When you go to a music shop, you can get one little violin for \$200 or \$500. But, there is one you can't buy, can't touch, unless you have about \$800,000. That's the Stradivarius. Why? Because of the creator who made that violin.

Here are about some 300 people, each of whom is worth more than anything sold at any price. We are priceless. Why? Because the greatest artist there is, God, made us. That raises your value. Can you think of any man that is willing to die for the Sunflowers painting? But there is this human being for whom there is somebody that is willing to die. That's the value. So much about the meaning of the image of God. When we say, "We are created according to the image of God," we

mean that we are patterned after the greatest model there is and that that fact reflects the creator Himself and says how valuable we are.

Now I take you to Part Two of my thought: namely, the power that is in this image of God. Why would I believe there is this power in the image of God?

Number One, there is this creative power in the image of God. Because you and I are made after the great Creator God, we too, to that extent, do have the creative power. You and I can create all the good things in this life. Not because we are great by ourselves, but because we are patterned after this great creative energy, our Lord God. Our church says that we are left alone to do things as if from ourselves, a great principle. Yes, we are left alone to display these creative energies in any way that would be useful to us, and to one another, and to others.

On our way to Seattle the other night, our bus was passing by the great company of Boeing. It reminded me of my earlier visit to that plant. I was here some 20 years ago, for my student field training at Bellevue. I took a moment and followed a group of people. At that time the Boeing Company was developing the 747 Jumbo Jet. I was privileged to step into the mockup that they had prepared for showing to the public and I could sense the spaciousness of the inside and that unmistakable hump. That's what the human person can do, because in him or her is the image of God.

The other day I saw a little baby and took a close look at the bottle the baby was drinking from. The nipple had a straw-like thing that reached the bottom of the bottle. Boy, why didn't I think of that? But somebody did. So, this baby doesn't have to struggle to lift it

all the way up. That's creative power.

The Wayfarers Chapel, this chapel, the piano, microphones, computers, satellites, . . . yesterday we were celebrating the birth of this great country, the Fourth of July. People can get together and create a great nation, too. From this bottle to Boeing 747, to the Empire State Building to the great nation, yes, we can create because God created us, equipping us with a creative image and power.

What an audacious thought! Yes, it is audacious, isn't it? When we look around and look at ourselves, sometimes we feel the world is telling us that we don't amount to too much. And you look at yourself and you often feel, "Poor little you." There are constant put-downs, discouragements, hopelessness, difficult illnesses, and so on. . . All these seem to be trying to tell us that we don't amount to too much, but let's not believe them.

Jesus was accused and a group of people tried to stone him to death. And Jesus asked them, "Why? I've done many good works. For which of them are you trying to kill me?" They said, "It's not because of the good works that you do, but you, being a mere man, are trying to make yourself God." To them it was an utter nonsense! Audacious! They were puzzled by it, they couldn't understand it. But today the Lord is saying to us again, "You are gods when you allow yourselves to be the receptacle of the Word of God." There is a terrific transformation in you and me, and you take on something of a higher plane of existence. So, let not anyone tell you you don't amount to too much.

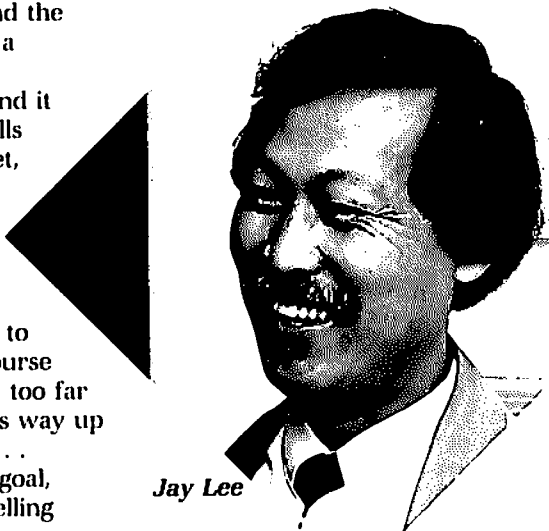
Number Two, I see this great power in the image of God by looking at the unerring sense of direction all we human persons

have when we are left alone to develop and grow freely.

I have learned a great lesson from what engineers and scientists have to say about the human person. The human person can be described as a goal-oriented, goal-searching, goal-reaching being. Intrinsically and inherently the human person has to have a sense of direction; and he or she does when that person is free of hangups—psychological difficulties and the spiritual blockages. here is a missile, equipped to send a signal towards the target and it gets the signal back that tells the missile where the target, the goal, is. If the goal moves, the missile corrects its own course . . . Whoops, I'm too far to the right, let's go to the left. Whoops, I am too far to the left, let's correct my course to the right. Whoops, I am too far up, I am too far down, this way up and down, left and right. . . . Finally the missile hits the goal, the target. Engineers are telling us that the missile is merely imitating its creator. Who? You and me. It imitates the human mind, that's all. The human mind is that smart, goal-oriented.

That means you and I can set some goals in our personal lives, in our professional lives, in our family lives; and we can reach them. That's the power which is in the image of God. I might be speaking as a proud

father, but I earned some lessons here. There is some truth in this old saying, "The Lord gave you children, so that you can learn something from them." I do. Some weeks back my son, who had just finished the Fifth Grade, received the Board of Trustees Award at his



school. His mother told me about this (I hadn't known): last fall he said to his mother, "I'd like to get the Board of Trustees Award." All throughout the academic year, he did his homework and he did some special projects on airplanes, group projects, and individual projects. The graduation day came, he received the Board of Trustees Award. Is he that exceptional? I don't think so. I'd like to believe so, but I think that, from all the facts I know so far about the human being, that is not that exceptional.

We can all have something ahead. We can see it here now, even if it is not here now. As the writer of Hebrews says in the eleventh chapter, "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for." Why do we hope for something? Do we hope for something we

have? No, we hope for something because it is not here yet! "And the conviction of things not seen." We are actually seeing it. We have to see it to get it. Lloyd Wright didn't have the Chapel all built, when he "saw" the Chapel. He had seen the Chapel without actually having the Chapel there. That's the eyes of faith, and that's the wonders which the image of God can do for you and me. We can see a nation before it is in existence and create it. This unerring sense of direction, that's one of the powers of the image of God.

Now, Number Three, all this points towards one other kind of power I see. There may be many, I hope you can think of many powers. But let me just talk about the third kind of power in the image of God that I can see. Namely, created according to the image of God, you and I can together create a great church, a great church. In other words, you and I have this opportunity to take seriously the Great Commission: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, and baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." We can take it seriously, we can decide, yes, we want to take it seriously. Or we can decide not to take it seriously. Or we can add some fancy interpretations to that and brush it aside. It is up to us.

Here I am standing before you today to share the feeling that we can take that seriously and that we can accomplish something. We all recall that opening night of this Convention when we gathered like this in this great hall with the great organ, singing some hymns: "Onward Christian Soldiers," "Blessed be the Tie that Binds," "Amazing Grace," . . . You would go on singing all night! You know what? It doesn't have to happen only

once a year. We can refuse to let it happen only once a year. We can let it happen in our local churches. Some might say, "Oh, we have only three members!" "Oh, we have only 13 members!" "We don't have any ministers." You know, there was a time when there was no Christian faith. And then came one man, and he gathered two fishermen, and then he got one over there, so he had three. Finally he managed to have 12. And then it got down to 11. But here we have 300, there are 30 some ordained ministers and great workers and servants of the Lord. Yes, we can do something. We can build something there!

I'd like to, by way of closing my thought, read something to you. Great psychologist Carl Rogers, who influenced American psychology and thereby world psychology a great deal, wrote a book, as you know, titled *On Becoming A Person*. In that book I got one idea that spoke to me, namely, the goal for any human person is to become a fully functioning individual.

You can add any religious, spiritual meaning to it. I do. There is a goal. All human persons can get there. And he says this about the human person, and that means you and me. This movement, meaning that movement towards becoming a fully functioning individual person, is "the process of movement in a direction which the human organism selects when it is inwardly free to move in any direction, and the general qualities of this selected direction appear to have a certain universality." Is that true? When we are rid of spiritual stumbling blocks, mental blocks, psychological hangups, fears, anxieties, guilt . . . when all these are put aside, there is something in me which

the psychologist calls "organism,"—it is the equipment, it is the blue-print, it is the image of God—that will propel the individual person unerringly towards the glorious fulfillment of the image of God.

And that means we can build a great church. Let's think big! "Make no small plan, for it does not stir anyone's blood." I am not the original author of that statement. It is attributed to one of our forefathers, Burnham of the Chicago Plan fame. Let us not make a small plan.

Today the Lord is saying to you and to me as He did to Joshua, when Joshua was filled with fears, filled with the thought and the anxiety of leading his rebellious, uproarious people to the promised land. The Lord said to Joshua, "Joshua, be strong and be of good courage. I will be with you as I was with Moses. Every place where your foot steps, that will be yours and your people's." The Lord is saying to us, "Be strong and be of good courage. I will be with you as I was with your forefathers and foremothers as they took you in faith across Philadelphia, over the Appalachian Mountains, to the Mid-West, across the great rivers, over the Rockies, and to the Pacific. I will be with you. Be strong and be of good courage!"

Let us pray. Father, thank you, Lord, for once again letting us hear Your voice and see ourselves for what we can be. Not because we are great on our own, but because You put that great image of Yourself in us, with it these tremendous powers to fulfill that glorious image of You in and through what we can do. And continue to love us, this group of Your family, believers, that we can be transformed to be fit to carry Your message and that all can hear Your message once again in clear sound and fulfill the

image of God in them. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. ■

Rev. Lee, the Convention preacher, is currently serving our church at the Wayfarers Chapel. He completed his education and professional training at Swedenborg School of Religion. Simultaneously he finished studies at Harvard Divinity School and received the Master of Divinity degree. Prior to coming to the Wayfarers Chapel, he served our churches in the Mid-West and Philadelphia. This is a transcript of the message he delivered during the Convention Sunday service at the University of Puget Sound on July 5, 1987. If you wish to inquire about the tape-recording of this message, please contact Rev. Lee (213) 832-9620 or the Wayfarers Chapel (213) 377-1650.

Council of Ministers Meetings

Robert H. Kirven

- 180 The Council of Ministers met in ten sessions, totaling some thirty-five hours, during the first part of Convention Week in Tacoma. The meetings were occupied with the customary range of business items, periods devoted to presentation and discussion of professional and theological issues, and two joint sessions of ministers and spouses together.

Council of Ministers business included reports of the council's various committees—such as Worship, Spiritual Growth and Healing, Nominating, and Executive Committees—and reports of Convention committees and offices that regularly report to the council—such as the President of Convention, the editors of *The Messenger* and *Our Daily Bread*, representatives to the National Council of Churches, Swedenborg School of Religion, and Committee on Admission to the Ministry.

SSR and CAM, both concerned with students in preparation for ordination, had nine students to report on. Three students have completed their first year at SSR and are now enrolled in summer programs of Clinical Pastoral Education (which prevented their being at Convention). Two of them have been certified by CAM as Candidates for Ordination, and the council read biographical statements from each of them to begin getting acquainted with its future colleagues. Six more student candidates were present at the council sessions, getting acquainted with the ministers, with the business of the council, and Con-

vention. Third-year students, anticipating ordination next year, presented first drafts of their "Vision of Ministry," and answered questions about these as they were discussed by the council.

More detailed discussion was devoted to the final draft of the "Vision of Ministry" presented by Stephen Pults, and the "Plan of Ministry" by Donna Sloan (the documents differed due to technicalities concerning the fact that Steve was applying for ordination on the basis of a call from the Detroit Society, and Donna on the basis of her Plan of Ministry, which therefore had to be approved by the council). After dialog with the candidates over these two papers, and some discussion in executive sessions afterwards, the council voted to recommend to Convention that both of them be ordained at this session of Convention. As is customary, the vote on ordination was by secret ballot.

Another matter concerning ordination also resulted in a favorable recommendation to the convention. Efforts over several years in Europe to fill a vacancy in the church in Lausanne, Switzerland, had resulted in a request from the Rev. Dr. Friedemann Horn of Zurich (Convention's Ordaining Minister in Europe), that Monsieur Jean Vidil be ordained for ministerial service in the French-speaking European field. After extended discussion—especially because a by-law provision for certain waivers had to be invoked—the council recommended the ordination of M. Vidil.

A matter of principle received extended consideration: it was the principle of *inclusiveness*, as it affects decisions on admissions to Convention's ordained ministry. It was agreed that this was a good time to discuss the issue, because it is a principle not involved with any specific issue before the council at the moment. At times when it was a part of an issue—when we were discussing the ordination of women, for instance, or debated the question of ordaining Paul

Giunta, who had announced his homosexual preference—the matched principles of inclusiveness and integrity became so emotionally charged that clear analysis was difficult. This time, the matter was discussed more dispassionately, but not yet conclusively. A committee was asked to do further work on it before next year's session.

Elections, based on the report of the Nominating Committee plus nominations from the floor, resulted in the following new officers:

Chair:

Paul Zacharias

Secretary:

Gardiner Perry

Executive Committee (3 yrs):

Carl Yenetchi

Executive Committee (2 yrs):

Ernest O. Martin

CAM member:

Richard Baxter

Convention Preacher, 1989:

David Johnson

Theological Discussions:

several theological issues were brought up, not for decisions, but for learning and sharing, for deepening each minister's theological position, and for strengthening the unity of the council. "The Problem of Aids" was presented in a thoughtful and fact-filled paper by Susan Turley-Moore, theological reflections by Ted LeVan, and a moving video on the subject. Some recent theological literature was reviewed and discussed in a session on "Questioning the Divinity of Jesus." Paul Zacharias and George Dole made presentations and led the discussion. The problem of evil, a perennial topic for theological discussion, and the subject of some of the best theological writing in print, came up in a discussion of "Evil Beyond God's Control?" which was posed in complementary presentations by Robert McCluskey and Steve Ellis.

Dick Baxter, Ron Brugler, and Horand Gutfeldt brought

information and reflection on the subject of "Evangelism from the Swedenborgian Point of View," a subject which was again treated in an opening meeting on Saturday morning, when Eric Allison spoke on "Church Growth," reporting on his experiences with the Fuller Institute. Erni Martin and Dick Tafel led a discussion on new visions of ministry in the context of the Swedenborgian

church's theology and traditions. In a joint meeting for ministers and spouses, Fritz and Vivienne Hull, of the Chinook Learning Center outside Seattle, described the program at their center in a presentation on "What's New in the New Age?"

Another session for ministers and spouses was devoted to less theoretical topics—namely pension fund issues, ministerial finances and

financial planning, and issues of clerical income taxes.

Devotions at the beginning and end of each day on council sessions were led by Ivan Franklin, Galen Unruh, Hank Korsten, and Eric Zacharias. ■



General Convention Statistics as of December 31, 1986

ASSOCIATIONS	SOCIETIES		MINISTERS	MEMBERS		TOTAL	DELEGATES
	Active	Inactive	Ordained	Active	Inactive		(No. of)
Canada	1	0	2	133	43	176	15
Connecticut	1	0	0	11	0	11	3
Illinois	6	0	3	118	35	153	13
Kansas	3	0	2	163	32	195	18
Maine	2	0	2	154	104	258	17
Massachusetts	6	1	12	231	96	327	25
Michigan	2	0	2	84	8	92	10
Middle Atlantic	3	0	4	140	59	199	16
New York	1	0	1	40	42	82	6
Ohio	4	0	3	84	0	84	10
Pacific Coast	8	0	9	255	27	282	27
Southeast	1	1	2	81	31	112	10
Western Canada Conference	7	0	7	227	0	227	24
	45	2	49	1721	477	2198	194
SOCIETIES							
Gulfport	1	0	0	20	0	20	4
Georgetown, Guyana	1	0	1	58	19	77	7
	47	2	50	1799	496	2295	205

Report from General Council

Recording Secretary
Dorothy deB. Young

182 At its pre-convention meeting, July 1, 1987, the General Council accomplished a significant amount of business and worked until midnight while doing so.

1. Since Convention books had been closed and audited, the originally approved \$8,000.00 for purchasing property in Guyana could not be carried over in the budget. Therefore, General Council acted upon an approval of the site by President Laakko during his recent visit to Guyana. It was voted that \$8,000.00 (U.S. dollars) be given to the Church of the New Jerusalem in Georgetown, Guyana, South America for the purchase of a building adjacent to the church. The building will be used for much needed space for youth programs and other essential church uses.

2. The Reverend Ernest O. Martin, Director of Temenos at Broad Run in West Chester, PA reported on the progress of new construction at the Center. In addition to the 52 acres and buildings now owned by Convention, General Council is in the process of purchasing an additional abutting 3.7 acres with frontage on Route #162 on which stands a modern house and small outbuildings. The primary purpose of this acquisition is to allow direct access from the main road to the planned conference center buildings. The purchase price of \$185,000 includes necessary maintenance equipment and a variety of tools. September 22nd is the settlement date.

The new house where the

Director will live and where some programs will materialize, is almost completed.

3. The worship, retreat and conference center building is being designed by Eric Wright, son of Lloyd Wright who designed the Wayfarers Chapel and grandson of Frank Lloyd Wright. Mr. Eric Wright plans to incorporate the lovely Tiffany windows from the Cincinnati church in this facility. A fund drive for the benefit of this building will be initiated by the Temenos Board of Managers in the Fall with the approval of General Council.

4. A name change for General Convention (for informal use) has been presented by a presidential appointed committee. The proposed name is "Swedenborgian Church of the Americas." General Council invites additional suggestions from Convention members. Please send your selection to Communication Support Unit. The new name will be acted upon at convention '88 to be held in the Boston area.

5. Convention in 1988 will be held at Lasell Junior College in Newton, close to the Swedenborg School of Religion. Dates: June 25—July 3.

6. General Council approved the purchase of a building ¼ mile from Wayfarers Chapel at Palos Verdes, California. This will be used for a gift shop, offices, counseling services and wedding consultations. Income from leased units is \$29,000.00 yearly. The Board of Managers of Wayfarers Chapel met with General Council to answer questions on this project. Photographs were displayed.

7. Treasurer John Perry explained that the present budget deficit developed due to a loss of income from bonds which matured and the purchase of new bonds yielding lower income. Also, there was a singular initial outlay in computerizing all business operations. Another consideration is that General Purpose Funds are at half the level of last

year.

8. The Council of Ministers designed a salary and benefits guide for employing bodies of General Convention to use in determining compensation for Convention ministers' services. A similar guide for Canada is being developed. General Council strongly recommends to church employers the adoption of the Guidelines in Salary and Benefits for Convention ministers.

9. The Reverend and Mrs. Richard H. Tafel, Jr. will represent General Convention in England at the celebration of the 200th birthday of the first worshiping New Church in England and the world.

10. General Council approved a housing agreement on the residential and other uses of the Temenos Director's House by the present Director, the Reverend Ernest O. Martin. The agreement was approved and signed by all the members of the Board of Directors of Temenos.

11. A new format will be introduced next year for 5 issues of *The Messenger* (similar to Swedenborg Foundation *Logos*). Six issues will remain as the prestigious magazine with which we have become familiar under the editorship of the Reverend James Lawrence of San Francisco. ■

How To Use Convention's New Structure

From now on, there will be fewer elected officers, with less individual authority, in better communication with each other. The reduction in numbers stems from an effort to cut administrative costs; the reduction in authority stems from Convention's adoption of a purpose, objectives, and strategies; and the better communication stems from the formation of a Cabinet. The structure is designed to be first and foremost supportive of local initiatives, so whether or not these changes are for the better will depend as much on local societies and groups as on the elected personnel. If there is a dearth of local initiatives, we will be in trouble.

We have tried to make the system, as "user-friendly" as possible. If you would like Convention's assistance in initiating a program, or in solving a problem, write directly to the President of Convention. There is no special "application form" for this; just be as clear about your request as you can. The President will refer your request to an appropriate Support Group, whose task is to assign a consultant or consultants to work with you to develop a formal proposal.

Proposals may come from groups or individuals, ministers or lay persons. It is the responsibility of the consultant to ensure that the process is not used divisively, i.e., to bypass orderly procedures at the local or regional level.

The primary role of the consultant is to help with the detailed planning, particularly on such matters as objectives, personnel, schedules, budget, and evaluation criteria and procedures. This involves looking at the initial request in the light of Convention's objectives and strategies, with the goal of ensuring that it furthers our purpose as directly and effectively as possible.

Once the formal proposal is

completed, it will be submitted to the Support Unit which has the responsibility of deciding whether or not to commit Convention resources to it. You know in advance the criteria by which your proposal will be evaluated. They are the purpose, objectives, and strategies which Convention has adopted, and which Convention can and should refine in coming years.

If the proposal is approved and put into effect, it is reviewed by the evaluation criteria and procedures which have been built into the formal proposal. This is designed to get the greatest possible value from every venture by learning what has worked and what has not, and by making that learning accessible to each other.

If you do not have specific ideas about what more you might be doing, we have a way of getting started. We have prepared a survey form which is designed to give you a fresh look at your present activities and resources. It does not pretend to judge their worth, simply to sort them out in a clear and organized fashion. It provides the data which you can then evaluate, hopefully by comparison again with Convention's objectives and strategies, to identify those areas in which you yourselves want to take new initiatives.

In closing, we would stress two major points.

1. You Don't Need to Understand the System in Order to Use it.

All you need to know is that the President of Convention is currently

The Rev. Randall E. Laakko
1025 Dettling Road
Wilmington, DE 19805

2. The System Won't Work Right from the Top Down.

It is not designed to do "central planning," but to stimulate and to respond constructively to local initiatives. ■



The University of Puget Sound sits just over a mile from the water.



Stephen Pults is congratulated after the ordination worship service Sunday morning by Betsy Young, of Palos Verdes, California. The ordinand heads for Detroit to begin his ministry.



Donna Sloan, who will be undertaking ministry in the Boston area, is radiant following her ordination.



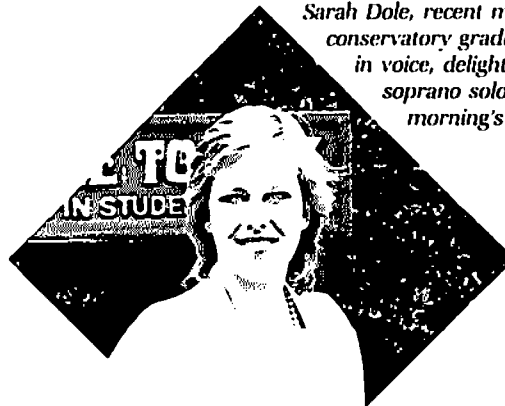
The choir, under the able direction of Muff Worden and with an absolute minimum of practice during a busy convention, gave its gift to the worship services.



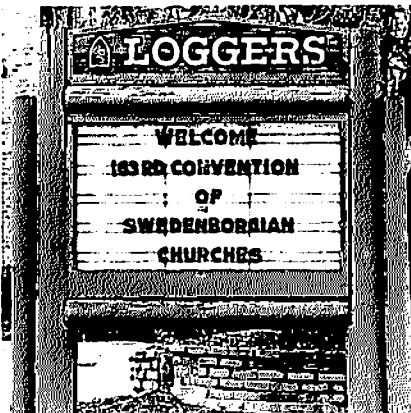
Sarah Dole (l), Suzy Karlson (c), and Muff Worden (r) managed to coordinate continuous coverage of the desk for four solid days.

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Paul Zacharias, of Kitchener, Ontario, led an engaging discussion on "Questioning the Divinity of Jesus Christ" during this session of the Council of Ministers. Horand Gutfeldt (l) mulls it over.



Sarah Dole, recent music conservatory graduate with a major in voice, delighted convention with a soprano solo during Sunday morning's worship service.



The whole campus knew we were there!

Johnny Moses, of the Swinomish tribe of the Northwest, is here teaching an Indian dance to the children, which they later performed before the entire convention in Kilworth Chapel.



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Johnny Moses telling Indian legends to a group of children.



As president of the Swedenborgian Church, Randy Laakko of Wilmington, Delaware presided skillfully over the business sessions.



The first shall be last? Registration desk is swamped much of the time.



Harry Johnson, of Boston, gave one of the two commencement addresses at the Swedenborg School of Religion graduation ceremony. The Rev. David P. Johnson (l) was the other speaker. The Rev. Jerome Poole (r), chair of the former Board of Directors of the seminary, shared the dais.

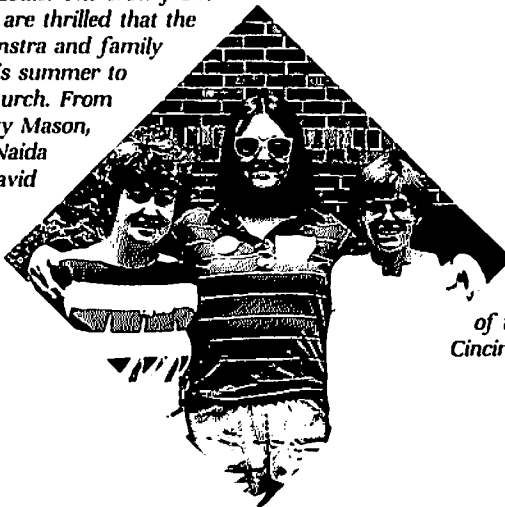


A Galilean fisherman? Horand Gutfeldt enjoys the boat ride.

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The Spirit of St. Louis: The crew from the Gateway City are thrilled that the Rev. David L. Rienstra and family will be coming this summer to shepherd their church. From left to right: Marty Mason, Brenda Stewart, Naida Bradshaw, and David Hollweyer.



The Gang of Three: Linda Tafel (l), Susan Wood (c), and Vicki Hackett (r) of the Kemper Road Center in Cincinnati pal around.



The trees on the campus, such as this Giant Sequoia across from our dining hall, inspired unceasing comments during convention.

Ken Turley with new daughter Emily Rose demonstrating the stress effects of parenthood.

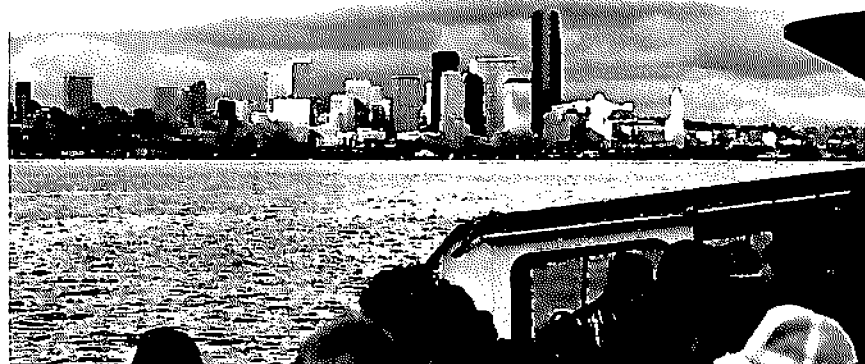


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Convention-goers boarding the boat taking us to Blake Island for the Salmon dinner and Indian dancing. The name of the boat is what we had.



That's what friends are for: Roger Young of Boston helps a wounded baby crow. The large birds were excellent alarm clocks each morning on campus.



En route to Blake Island, we toured a bit of the coastline of Puget Sound. The Seattle downtown is shown in the background. Returning four hours later, we were treated to twenty minutes of a breathtaking fireworks display against a nighttime view of the same cityscape.

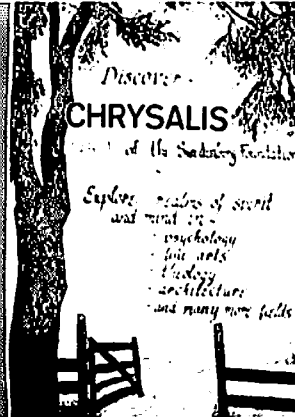


Where's the first tee? Golf carts, reminiscent of convention '83 in Wilmington, Ohio, were a favorite feature by many of this year's logistics. Make a note of that, '88 Planning Committees!



Marian and Bob Kirven made the trip across the country to convention in "their second home."

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Rafael Guiu (l) and Julio Ragasa were representing the Swedenborg Library and Bookstore in Boston and the Swedenborg Foundation in New York, respectively. Ray's brother, Jose Melis, spent much of his time supervising the beautiful displays of books and other materials.

Hampton and Elora Schoch of Roxboro, North Carolina enjoy ideal weather after an inspiring worship service.

Dick Baxter of the National Swedenborgian Church in Washington D. C. graciously and admirably filled in at the organ for all practices and services.



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The Leaguers were the first ones to hit the dance floor.



Complementing arts and crafts, the children had a large field for games of all kinds.



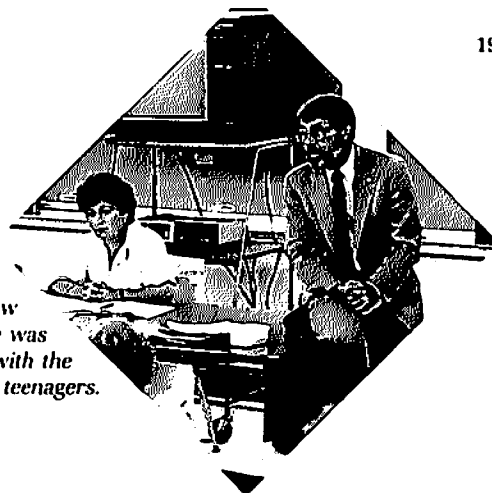
Meetings of various sorts, both official and unofficial, happen all week long during convention. Here, the Board of Directors of the seminary grab a half hour together.



Elizabeth Munger of LaPorte, Indiana and Eric Allison, former minister of the LaPorte church, swap tales.



Business sessions add to the sense of being in a community united by spiritual bonds.



Heather and Don Halibisky give a mini-course on "Beyond War: A New Way of Thinking." This course was particularly popular with the teenagers.



Go in peace: Convention '87 is officially over. Worshipers file out of Kilworth Memorial Chapel following the Sunday morning worship and ordination service.

General Convention Election Results

Total Ballots Cast: 150

Term
(in years) Number
of votes

Officers

Vice-President	Frederick G. Perry, Jr.	1	146
Recording Secretary	Dorothy deB. Young	1	144
Treasurer	John C. Perry	1	147

General Council

Hampton Schoch	2	144
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Pastoral Ministries Support Unit:

Patricia Zacharias	1	147
Rev. Richard Baxter	2	147
Rev. Richard H. Tafel, Jr.	3	145

Financial & Physical Resources Support Unit:

Keith W. Mull	1	146
Rev. Harvey A. Tafel	2	146
August A. Ebel	3	147

Communications Support Unit:

Karen Laakko Feil	1	142
Gretchen Worden	2	138
Carol Lawson	3	138

Education Support Unit:

Martha Richardson	1	144
Nina Tafel	2	128
Betsy Young	3	145

Information Management Support Unit:

Steve Koke	1	141
Bill Etue	2	143
Rev. Dr. R. H. Kirven	3	148

Committee on Admission to Ministry:

Rev. David L. Rienstra	1	144
Elizabeth Johnson	1	144

Growth & Outreach Support Unit:

Lisa Reddekopp	1	77
(Sue Weiss)		(71)
Sandy Grumman	2	79
(Doris W. Tafel)		(71)
Rev. Eric Allison	3	116
(Rev. Ron Brugler)		(30)

Nominating Committee:

Annella Smith	5	80
(Susan Wood)		(66)

Swedenborg School of Religion:

Alice B. Skinner	3	88
Jonathan L. Tafel	3	113
Linda L. Tafel	3	90
(Rev. Robert McCluskey)		(79)
(Rev. Horand Gutfeldt)		(44)

Tellers: Rev. Dr. William R.
Woofenden, chief; Rev. Donna
Keane, Julio Ragasa, Rhett
Billings, Skuli Thorhallson,
Susan Wood, Peter Toot.

A New Quality of Spirit

Dick Tafel

I want to share with you my feelings of excitement about our church and to thank you for your support and confidence in me as your [Council of Ministers] chairman. As I look back over the last five years, I see a new sense of commitment and a wave of enthusiasm—a newness, not just in organizational structure, but in a sense of purpose, of timing, and of responsibility.

Our church has come a long way, and this council has been an integral part of that journey in search of relevance. Just look at the changes in externals of this gathering over the past twenty years! From sitting in pews in full clerical garb and calling each other Mr. Jones and Mr. Smith, to our sitting face to face in an informal atmosphere speaks of a similar transformation of the internals of this body's spiritual quality.

Our theme this year, "In God's Image," reflects our awareness and call to minister to all with whom we come into contact. In the last few years, we have wrestled with the issue of inclusiveness and its many implications. I have seen in this process a new honesty emerging—a willingness to share openly and non-defensively what we have felt about the various issues facing our churches and our ministries.

Let me give three examples of this new quality of interaction among our clergy. For one thing, we do not indulge in the old "clergy discount": you know, when you tell another minister how many

people are involved in your program you add 15% in case of error, and when somebody else tells you how many people are involved in her or his program you subtract 15% for bragging. We are more honest with each other about the realities of our ministries. We now have peer supervision, where we share in an intensive setting what our challenges are in our particular programs. We are in touch by phone with each other a great deal more than in the old days. In so many ways, we are demonstrating a great collegiality as a body of ministerial professionals.

A second area showing a new spirit is the tremendous variety in our visions of ministry. From new and creative surges in some of our parish programs, to chaplain ministry, to retreat ministry, to teaching ministry, to outreach and traveling ministry, to wedding and marriage ministry, to media ministry, to youth ministry, and the many creative combinations of the above, our council is showing a new vitality. To paraphrase Swedenborg: the greater the variety, the more sound is the whole.

A third area suggesting an enhanced spiritual quality in the council is the level of support we are giving each other. One of the dynamics of marriage love is that partners who truly want the best for each other and who truly rejoice in the successes of each other are the ones who find themselves in a deepening conjugal

relationship. We are exchanging ideas, volunteering our time and talents, and including each other in our plans more than ever before.

Now, I do not mean that everything is "peachy-keen." One look at our denomination's budget shows a serious deficit; one look at our decline in membership over the past twenty years indicates some problems. All is not well in the earthly New Jerusalem.

However, I do mean we have made a good start. And if we are serious about facilitating the spiritual wellbeing of people—as our purpose for existing now states—we have a firm foundation for moving forward. Two of our members, Horand Gutfeldt and Eric Allison, as well as graduating student Donna Sloan, have recently participated in the Fuller Institute workshops on church growth. We are looking outwards with new interest, new energy, new enthusiasm. As we see ourselves more and more "in God's image," we really become instruments in the Lord's hands for bringing about a renewal of spirit.

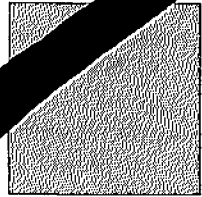
In closing, I again want to thank you for your support, cooperation and patience these past five years. I pledge to my successor my support and cooperation to continue the work that has begun. ■

The Rev. Richard H. Tafel, Jr. is the Editor of Our Daily Bread and minister at the Kemper Road Center for Religious Development in Cincinnati.

Sociology and Swedenborg

Othmar Tobisch

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ociology, as a subject, did not exist in Swedenborg's day. It was commonly discussed as a matter of ethics

in philosophy or theology. Consequently, we do not find a systematic presentation of the subject in the published writings of Swedenborg. One little work, fragmentary and posthumous, approaches the subject sketchily, under the title *De Charitate*. But strewn throughout the theological works, we find much social thought, albeit in the course of discussing other subjects, like Christian ethics or heavenly societies. To present a selection of his thoughts in this field is my endeavor in this study.

The Aim of Labor

To choose between God and mammon is the perennial Christian challenge. The problem of wealth, both individually and corporately owned, is the outstanding social problem. The lust for possessions constantly plagues humanity. If he has wealth he is not necessarily happy, nor is he happy if he has not. No one can escape the problem. Both on earth and in heaven, people will have wealth in greater and lesser degree. Swedenborg draws on his immense knowledge of life in the spiritual realm to give us some ideas of the right use of wealth. The burning questions—does the Divine order in heaven permit individual possessions, or should a Christian rid himself of all goods in conformity with the Lord's advice to the rich young ruler?—is answered in favor of the former. "Man may acquire riches and accumulate wealth as much as possible, provided it is not done with cunning and evil art . . ." ¹ And no distinction is made between poor and rich in respect to admission into a heavenly society. ²

Worldly riches are permissible if they are loved for the use they perform to the community. "So far as the riches have spiritual good in them, that is, if they have for their purpose the good of the neighbor, the public good, and the good of the Church,—so far they are good." When rich people "divest themselves of worldly things they expose themselves to contempt . . . and consequently make themselves useless for performing services and discharging offices." ³ Swedenborg was thinking about the many state offices which, in his day, could only be performed by people of private means. Still, in the heavenly societies, positions of government were rewarded with the possession of grand palaces, sumptuous clothes, rich banquets. ⁴ Wealth is not a hindrance to a good life; in fact it enhances the opportunities to do good. However, he utters a warning that thinking inordinately about worldly things draws a person away from heaven. ⁵

In the earliest time there was no love for riches, only a regard for the necessities of life. Now, we have the ability and opportunity to amass incredible riches and power. The use of them will determine our moral and spiritual rise or fall. Prosperity is necessary for the well-being of a nation. The productive capacity of a nation, representing its wealth, including, of course, agricultural production and commerce, must be used for the public good even by those who produce and amass. The idea of a social order based on Christian ethics is incipient in this thought.

How does an individual fit into such a social order? He fits into it by performing his useful part according to his capacities and aptitudes. There is a genuine happiness in the use of his employment that each person should have. In the doing of this use, contributing to the public good in his daily occupation, a person finds mental tranquility and inner satisfaction. The love of use makes for peace of mind, and also places us in the social order where we can be useful to the utmost of our capacities. Labor at its best is therefore a delight. It cannot be such in slavery, but only in freedom.

Labor relations presented no difficulties in Swedenborg's day. He does not think in terms of unions, contracts, the Taft-Hartley law. He thinks in terms of Christian ethics. All laborers are acting as true Christians, in the light of Christian ethics and in social justice, if they perform their work honestly, justly and faithfully. This is irrespective of wages, bonuses, sick benefits, pensions and other social rewards of which there was no thought in his day. A worker who is not intent on his work is not a Christian. Idleness Swedenborg calls the devil's couch. The upright laborer not only is worthy of his hire, but must return due results. He is industrious, sober, honest and content with his lot. He does his work for the neighbor, as for

himself, because in doing so, he is loving his neighbor as himself.⁶ Whether a business person, an army captain, a king, a laborer, a sailor, "... everyone, in whatever position of responsibility he is, is obliged to serve. Even a king is obliged to serve the Lord. And in so far as anyone serves faithfully, he is loved by and led by the Lord. In the measure that one looks to the Lord and shuns evils as sins, he serves freely and not under compulsion."⁷

Marital Standards

Modern sociology is much concerned with the establishment of new marriage morals. In Swedenborg's works can be found the most rational Christian concepts of marriage. The origin of marriage, he says, is the union of infinite Love and Wisdom in the Lord God. Marriage ties are to be seen everywhere in the universe. The human species has the fullest opportunity to embody this universal marriage, not only in its sexual life, but also in the deeper ties arising from a union of minds and of purposes and of goals of life in husband and wife.

In one work, *De Amore Conjugiali* (translated variously "Conjugal Love," "Marriage Love," "Marital Love"), Swedenborg discusses the positive and negative aspects of this fundamental human relationship. Human traits and personality aspects which make for a happy and eternal union, as well as those which make marriage a hell of frigidities, separations and divorces, are carefully discussed. The ethical and sociological content of his book portrays the internal, spiritual and everlasting foundations of human marriage. It depicts the universal nature of marriage, its cosmic presence in all created things. The far goal of marriage is the integration of two personalities into one life from which arise the profound and never fading delights of a heavenly marriage. To Swedenborg, love truly marital is the indispensable

Swedenborg 195
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requisite to any kind of heavenly life or entrance into the kingdom of heaven. All virtues of a righteous life are wrapped up in this love.

True marriage love is a kind of first cause of all other loves. Its presence guarantees the presence of other Christian loves, for the neighbor, for the common good, for the church, for the law. It is the acme of regeneration. It is the passport to a heavenly society.

196 **Social Issues Then and Now**

Current social problems, like liquor control, occupied Swedenborg as representative of the nobility in the House of Lords. He drafted a liquor control bill for the Swedish Diet which was ultimately adopted and became perhaps the basis of today's exemplary liquor control system in Sweden. (Not a tee-totaler, Swedenborg preferred to limit himself to one glass.)

Public education as a sociological factor was not a current problem in his day. We recollect, however, that Swedenborg wrote the first textbook of algebra in the Swedish tongue. He considered the universities in particular as the nurseries of true Christian religion, and worked and studied in the laboratories of many in Europe till his fifty-second year.

Class and caste, in whatever manner they existed in his day, were considered of Divine order and did not come under the critical

scrutiny as they do today. The medieval thought of a natural moral law was still dominant, and any demand of a "lower class," as exemplified, for instance, by the peasant war in Germany, was considered treason and rebellion.

Racialism was hardly an issue then. However, it must have startled the proud European Christian of Swedenborg's time to read in the *Arcana*, "Gentiles who have led a moral life and been

more than those in Africa. I love a Gentile better than a Christian if he lives well according to his religion; if he worships God from the heart saying: 'I will not do this evil because it is against God.' I do not love him, however, according to his doctrine but according to his life."⁹

He believed that the Gentiles, rather than those in the European orbit, would be the carriers of the new Church of the Lord, having in mind the historical example of early

Swedenborg was a theological innovator when he—unlike Dante—described the "punishment of hell" as an inescapable consequence or result of one's own evil doing.

obedient and have lived in mutual charity, and have received something like a conscience according to their religiosity, are accepted in the other life and are instructed by the angels with solicitous care in the goods and truths of faith."⁸

Most Christians at that time believed that those outside the Christian church would perish in hell fire and damnation. This very doctrine inspired the large missionary movements in the nineteenth century to save the pagan races from perdition. Swedenborg's outlook was broader and wiser. He exclaimed, "I can love all in the universe according to their religion, not those in my country more than those in other kingdoms, nor those in Europe

Christianity, which left its Jewish matrix and expanded rapidly among the Roman and Greek masses. He considered the Africans especially capable of easily understanding the new presentation of the Gospel.

Swedenborg had been extremely patriotic in his youth; numerous poems testify to this. Broadened by travels on the continent and long sojourns in England, he became a citizen of the world of his day. We do find in his writings an appeal to true patriotism, not of the jingoistic kind, but of due respect for order, government, the protection of values, both physical and moral.

Living in an age when monarchies were still in their glory, he remarked drily, while traveling in Holland in 1736 and observing the rich commerce that flowed into this little country: "The principal cause of Dutch prosperity seems to me to have been that it is a republic, wherein the Lord delights more than in monarchical

countries; as appears also from Rome." ¹⁰

Ideologies

There was, of course, no doctrine of socialism in his day, and capitalism was either feudal or bourgeois. Neither totalitarianism, fascism nor communism bothered him, though of course the spiritual seeds of them all were there. The soil for such seeds was prepared by Louis XIV's defiant statement, "L'etat, c'est moi," and in the despotisms of Ivan the Terrible and Catherine of Russia.

Swedenborg had to tackle the problem of war and peace. A conflict was brewing between Sweden and Russia. In *Documents* No. 172 we read the memorial prepared by him and submitted to the House of Nobles in 1734, strongly advising, for every kind of reason, that Sweden desist from preparing war. He counseled it to stay neutral, to develop its resources and industrial capacities and become economically independent. This policy was ignored with fatal results. Sweden lost all its Baltic provinces and became impoverished. Swedenborg believed in strong preparedness, not so much by military means, but through economic prosperity. It was still the age of pacts and power combinations. No League of Nations, nor United Nations, nor Court of International Justice had yet been conceived.

Crime and punishment followed the medieval ideas of an eye for an eye, or of the *lex talionis*, and Swedenborg was a theological innovator when he—unlike Dante—described the "punishment of hell" as an inescapable consequence or result of one's own evil doing. In fact, it became apparent that the Lord God did not punish at all, but sought to save all and that continuously. The unfulfilled desires, the frustrations, the fears of evil-doers were their punishment.

Conclusion

The sociological thought of the

Christian Church must ultimately concern itself with its own existence, and with the Kingdom of God on earth among the societies of the world. In our time, serious efforts for an ecumenical movement, joining many denominations into a working unit, have resulted in the World Council of Churches. I may be wrong, but it seems to me that Swedenborg was the first Christian to foresee a new world Christianity, one that

***Wealth is not a
hindrance to a good
life; in fact
it enhances
opportunities
for to do good.***

preserved the existing denominations, or added new ones for that matter. This world Christianity is based on a formula he announced in a publication in Amsterdam in 1770—"Nunc licet: now it is allowed to enter intellectually into the mysteries of faith." In a great convocation in the same city in 1948 the assembled representatives of many churches announced that they would unite on the basis of the acknowledgement of the Lord Jesus Christ as God.

The development of this new Christianity is still in its beginning. Yet nothing less than the acknowledgment of the Lord Jesus Christ as God and the pursuit of the Gospel in the spirit of "Nunc

licet" can ultimately bring it to fruition.

As a powerful sociological force it should occupy its rightful place in the creative processes to shape earth's humanity into a body of redeemed people. Swedenborg gives us this vision of a *homo maximus* in the spiritual realm. Such a *homo maximus* is also possible on earth. In fact, such a humanity is desperately struggling to come into existence. ■

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A slightly edited version of the above article first appeared in the summer of 1950 in The New Christianity, a quarterly journal featuring New Church writers. The Rev. Othmar Tobisch was pastor of the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church from 1929-1970.

Notes

- ¹ *Heaven and Hell*, Swedenborg, no. 358.
- ² *Ibid.*, no 357.
- ³ *Arcana Celestia*, Swedenborg, nos. 3951-2.
- ⁴ *Heaven and Hell*, no. 361.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 621e.
- ⁶ *Charity*, Swedenborg, nos. 168, 171-2.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, no 172.
- ⁸ *Arcana Celestia*, no. 259e.
- ⁹ *Charity*, no. 89.
- ¹⁰ *Documents Concerning Swedenborg*, Rudolph Tafel, no. 206.

NCC Governing Board Unanimously Endorses Boycott of California Table Grapes

198 A new boycott of California table grapes, called for by the United Farmworkers of America, was endorsed today by the National Council of Churches Governing Board. There were no dissenting votes.

The Board voted to "maintain the boycott endorsement until grape growers voluntarily stop using life-threatening pesticides on grapes—Parathion,

have met numerous farmworkers who believe their children were born deformed or still-born from the use and spreading of pesticides, and who attribute high cancer rates to pesticide use."

Consumers of California table grapes also are being exposed to these carcinogenic chemicals, Cober said.

The resolution calls on the NCC to "send a communication to its constituency urging them to endorse the boycott in their stated meetings" and "to inform local congregations of our endorsement of the grape boycott," urging congregations to highlight the dangers of pesticides to farm workers and consumers of grapes and to support the boycott.

Cober agreed that "boycotts aren't to be entered into lightly," noting the success that the NCC had in mediating a dispute between the Farm Labor Organizing Committee and the Campbell Soup Company. This situation is different in that it involves cancer-causing chemicals, and in that present state laws are not being enforced and attempts to date to negotiate with growers have failed, he said.

In debate, Harold Taylor of Egg Harbor, N.J., Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Society of Friends, asked whether pressure might be put on the growers more gradually; for example, by voting to endorse the boycott at the Board's November meeting if substantial progress was not made during this growing season.

Jill Martinez of Stockton, Calif., Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), stressed the "urgency" of taking immediate action. "California ecumenical agencies and farmworkers have been working for a very long time on this through negotiation, and it's just not working. This is a strategic moment." ■

Statement of the Church's Expectations from Urbana University

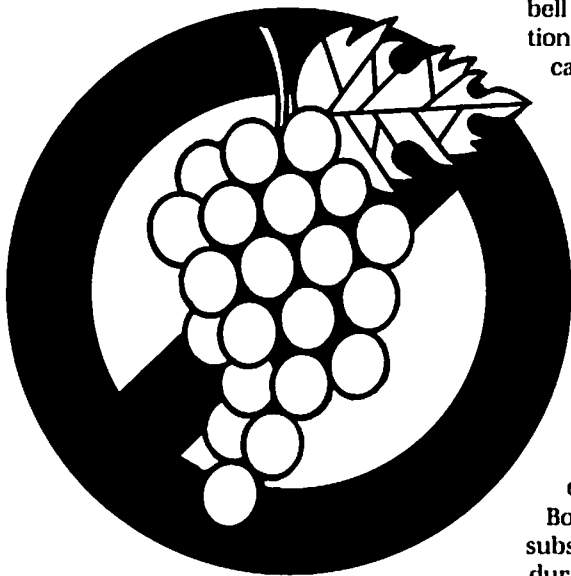
*Recording Secretary
Dorothy deB. Young*

The following statement has been adopted by the General Council of the General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches (the Church) to clarify its expectations of the relationship between Urbana University (The University) and the Church. It must be appreciated that the Church is congregational in structure so that this statement represents only the position of a majority of the governing board and is not binding on any individual in his/her relationship with the University. Individuals may differ vigorously with the position set forth in this statement.

The Church does not desire to have imposed any mandatory course requirements respecting Swedenborgian theology, nor does it think such mandatory requirement be wise. The Church does ask that Swedenborgian theology be available as an elective course or part of an elective course.

The Church is pleased that the University has emphasized education of disadvantaged people struggling to help themselves. As an expression of its Doctrine of Uses, the Church wants to help the University accomplish its goals in this area.

In financial matters, the Church expects to be treated equally with other creditors. Until such time as the debt owed the Church by the University is substantially reduced, the Church will use its influence toward maintaining the Church Class in



Phosdrin, Captan, Methyl Bromide and Dinoseb—guarantee that farm workers will have fair and free elections, and that contracts will be negotiated in good faith."

"This is a dramatically serious issue," said the Rev. William Cober of the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A., Valley Forge, Pa., introducing the resolution. "We

the majority of the Trustees of the University. After the loans are repaid, the Church will re-evaluate its position on the matter of the Trustee classes.

The Church affirms that it does not consider the University a "Church Related College" in the sense of Ohio statutes. It does not assent to the establishment of such a relationship between the University and the Church. At the same time, in consideration of the origin and history of the University, such a relationship with another church denomination does not seem appropriate. The Church hopes to continue an informal connection with the University.

The Church believes that the philosophy underlying the Swedenborgian theology provides an excellent resource for defining and refining the education philosophy of the University. Especially important are statements on the worth of an individual, freedom of individual choice and individual responsibility. The Church expects that the faculty and administration will continue to use it as one of their resources. ■

A New Messenger: Responding to Needs

James F. Lawrence

Those of you with at least one eyelid half-raised will notice—yes, again!—that *The Messenger* has undergone another beautification process. Even more, the *Messenger* that you are now holding in your hands has more pages than that to which you are accustomed. I hope that you appreciate the fruits of a great deal of work and will concur, after considering the several factors involved, with the new publishing program from the Communications Support Unit.

Beginning with this issue, *The Messenger* will be a two-publication family: *Messenger Magazine* and *Messenger Express*. In August, October, December, February, April and June, you will receive an enhanced magazine, such as the one you are holding. In the alternate months of September, November, January, March and May, you will receive a much scaled-down, but attractive and informational newsletter. July will continue to be a vacation month.

Evolving to the two-publication family grew from an effort to respond to several factors. In the recent past, "dressing up" our one communications organ to ourselves and to the world has been deemed a high priority by both your editor and the department who employs him. This, however, necessarily results in an increase in time, energy and money. All three of these commodities have been stretched to the limit.

By going to this new publications strategy, the "magazine" issues will be bigger and better than in the past, because we will be producing six of them, instead of eleven. The greater number of pages also better justifies the color covers. (Give this issue a good shake in the hand and see if the number of pages doesn't feel much more congruent and compatible with the weight of the covers.) The newsletter will require considerably less time, energy and money in the alternate months, but will keep the bloodlines of communication flowing throughout Convention.

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It is important to stress to church members that *The Messenger* is not just an in-house publication. It goes to major seminary libraries, religious editors, heads of denominations and others. We are all awash in reading material in our society, and if our only denominational publication is on the same level as what a large local congregation of certain denominations produces, then we should make the decision to forego evangelization and public relations through the printed media.

But that is not our decision. We will be producing six up-graded *Messenger* magazines to send to the world, as well as to your mailbox, and in the alternate months, excepting July, *The Messenger Express* will serve the vital and timely in-house communication needs of the church. We ask that you live with this new arrangement for several months, and then let us know what you think. ■

200 Image of God: Thoughts on Gender

Donna Keane

There is little doubt for anyone who reads the New Testament or any exposition of the new Testament, that God incarnated Self as a male, in the Son, Jesus Christ. It may also be said that God truly had only two choices at that point in time and space, in the Jerusalem and Israel of that day. Either male or female, and because of the nature of the society, God became male in gender. Some people have suggested this was because the patriarchy which was in power at that time would only have listened to a man, that the training and education necessary for God's journey as a human was only open to a man then. However, how much different Jesus proved himself to be from the other men around him. How much more mystical, more intuitive, more provocative and womanish in his storytelling than the intelligentsia of his day.

For us as women today, we may struggle with the seemingly unalterable choice which God made to incarnate as a man. And we may feel confused at the lack of place which many women find in the traditional roles within the church and society. Some of us may feel very comfortable in ourselves, delighted with the shape and form of our lives and loves. Some of us may feel restless, wishing we may do "something different," "something out of the normal range of our worlds."

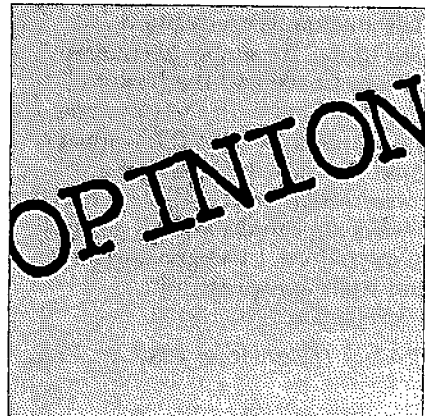
The truth, of course, is that I do not have a satisfactory answer as to why God embodied Self as Jesus Christ rather than a woman, and I struggle with all that this has meant in the Christian tradition through the ages. I sometimes have fun imagining what the church would have become if God had chosen to embody Self as a woman, to experience humanity from the vantage point of the feminine form. It is an amusing pastime, and I recommend it to you on a rainy day with a cup of coffee. However, the reality of the Gospels is that God speaks of Jesus as the "beloved Son, in whom I am well

pleased." Does that mean that I, as daughter, am not so beloved? It has sometimes felt that way. But today I am recognizing some universality of the human condition, as we are all "created" beings versus the infinite uncreate of God.

There are differences between men and women, and thank God for them. But the impression that women are inferior because God chose the male form rather than the female form is a tragic conclusion often arrived at by scholars and Biblical literalists. Swedenborg expressed the union in each human of both fundamental aspects of God: wisdom and love. It is no accident that he identifies divine Love first and then divine Wisdom. Love has historically been considered the feminine province and wisdom the province of the masculine. This is far too easy a distinction; it is fraught with logical potholes. I firmly believe we all resemble God and are created in the image and likeness of God when we strive for the absolute *balance* between love and wisdom in ourselves. If we love too much without enough wisdom, we are not in the image of God. If we are too wise without enough love, we are not in the likeness of God. We must strive for both in balance in our lives.

It is from our love that we seek for wisdom, and it is from wisdom that men seek for love. I believe this is Swedenborg's teaching of God's image in us. Certainly in our "both/and" mentality, neither love nor wisdom can be considered the greater achievement, if the other is diminished in the process. We are called to be women who are wise, and I pray that we may work to this end. ■

The Reverend Donna Keane, formerly pastor to the Newtonville, Massachusetts Swedenborgian Church, is training as a pastoral psychotherapist. This talk was presented at the annual Women's Alliance meeting in Tacoma.



Dear Editor,

It is gratifying to see careful attention being given to Robsahm's testimony relative to Swedenborg's call ("Understanding Swedenborg's Initial Vision," February, 1987) I believe that if the late Rev. A.G. Regamey's study of this subject had been heeded some of the best known biographies of Swedenborg would have treated the subject of Swedenborg's call differently. Mr. Regamey saw the weaknesses in the Robsahm document and published his observations in French in *Le Messenger de la Nouvelle Eglise* in April of 1937. I translated this into English in 1966, and it appeared in *New Church Magazine* in July of that year.

Donald L. Rose
Editor, *New Church Life*
Bryn Athyn, Penn.

Dear Editor,

Having just enjoyed the April *Messenger* I would like to express my thanks. At the same time if you can spare the space, I would appreciate it if you could insert a sort of "correction" regarding the International Association for Near Death Studies. Dr. Ring indicated IANDS is "now defunct," but the organization, in spite of its own near-death experience, is undergoing a reorganization for which we have high hopes.

The INADS organization—which has connections in more than forty foreign countries and more than fifteen local chapters—is reorganizing around a new executive committee in the Delaware Valley area. Programs about the full effect of NDEs continue to attract good attendance, to get prominence on radio and TV and in the printed media. If any

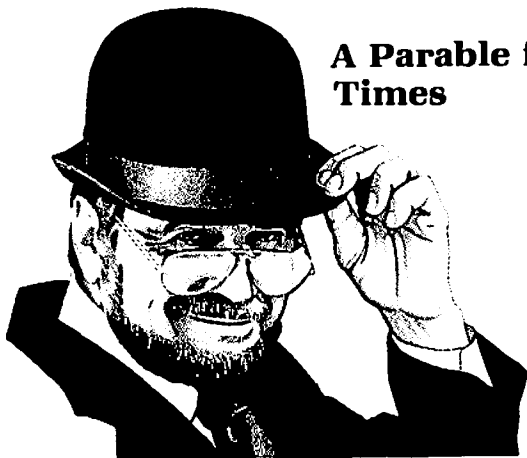
readers of the *Messenger* would like to know what is going on, I would be most happy to report to them.

Leon S. Rhodes
Interim Vice President, IANDS
Box 23
2960 King Road
Bryn Athyn, PA 19009

Dear Editor,

A correction is needed for the story appearing in the May *Messenger* regarding the LaPorte Church historical documents recently recovered. On page 130, column 2, first paragraph, the second sentence should read: "Mrs. Bowyer told Mrs. Munger in June 1986 that the original records of the LaPorte Society had been given by Fanny Scott Rumely, along with other papers of her brother, Emmet Scott, to the Lilly Library at Indiana University." It is also important to add the note that the Lilly Library first produced a microfilm roll of the church records, and copies of this were purchased for the LaPorte church and for the library at the Swedenborg School of Religion. To make records easier to read, the Lilly Library had a paper-flo copy produced and presented that as a gift to the LaPorte Society.

Elizabeth Munger
LaPorte New Church Historian
Michigan City, Indiana



A Parable for Our Times

202 The story goes that just as the first hymn started, a man wearing a brown hat was ushered into a front pew. One of the sidesmen suggested kindly that he take the hat off. "No," the man said, "I prefer to keep it on."

There was some consternation at the back of the church. The senior sidesman asked the man to take his hat off, but he too was rebuffed. The rector's warden was

enlisted to make an appeal, only to have the man under the hat reply, "I have every right to keep my hat on and intend to do so." The warden asked the president of the women's guild to help. Alas, she too failed.

After the service, the minister approached the man in a kindly way saying, "It has been a great pleasure having you with us this morning. You will be welcome

to join our congregation and worship with us regularly. However it is the custom in the Anglican Church for men to remove their hats and to keep them off during the service. I hope that you might conform to this practice in the future."

The man under the hat replied, "Thank you, very much. It is good of you to invite me to join the congregation. In fact, I have been coming regularly for three years, but today is the first time that anyone paid any attention to me. By simply keeping my hat on, I have had the pleasure of talking with the sidesmen, the warden, head of the women's guild and now I am having a conversation with you, who have always appeared too busy to speak to me before. I feel good about it and wish to express my appreciation."

Readers Digest, June 1987

COMMENCEMENTS

Baptisms

Priest—Curtis C. Priest, son of Charles and Cindy (Charles) Priest, was baptized into the Christian faith on June 14, 1987 at the Church of the New Jerusalem, Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. David L. Rienstra officiating.

Sirna—Justin Alfred Osgood Sirna, son of Anthony and Paula (Osgood) Sirna, was baptized into the Christian faith on May 17, 1987, at the Church of the New Jerusalem, Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. David L. Rienstra officiating.

Wiens—Jacob Robert Wiens, born Jan. 16, 1987, was baptized into the Christian faith on Mothers' Day, May 10, 1987, at the home of the parents, Robert

and Laurel Wiens, in Summerland, B.C., the Rev. Erwin D. Reddekopp officiating.

Confirmations

Benoit and Phinney—Kelly Benoit and Dawn Phinney were confirmed into the life of the General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches on Easter Sunday, April 19, 1987, at the Bridgewater, Massachusetts New Jerusalem Church, the Rev. Marlene Laughlin officiating.

Blosser and Simpson—Linda Blosser and Emily Simpson were confirmed into the life of the General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches on Easter Sunday, April 19, 1987, at the Church of the New Jerusalem, Urbana, Ohio, the Rev. Dr. Dorothea Harvey, officiating.

Houghton—Harold Houghton was confirmed into the life of the General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches on June 7, 1987 at the Hillside Garden Church of El Cerrito, California, the Rev. Rachel Martin officiating.

Reddekopp—Lisa Elizabeth Reddekopp was confirmed into the life of the General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches on Palm Sunday, April 12, 1987, at the Church of the Holy City, Royal Oak, Michigan, the Rev. Erwin D. Reddekopp, her grandfather, officiating.

Waldo and Williams—Pat and Steve Waldo and Dr. Charles Williams were confirmed into the faith and life of the New Church on April 17, 1987, at the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church, the Rev. Edwin G. Capon officiating. At the same service Steve Rennels, Nancy Fenske, Jerry Peterson, and Jim and Diane Perkins were con-

firmed as Associate Members of the San Francisco parish.

Marriage

Gallagher and Sanphy—Jill Gallagher and Ronald Sanphy were united in Christian marriage on Saturday, June 20, 1987, at the Church of the New Jerusalem in Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. David L. Rienstra officiating.

Deaths

Bates—Dorothy Bates, 83, member of the Boston Society of the New Jerusalem since 1923, entered the spiritual world on April 20, 1987, following a lengthy illness. Burial was at the Wyoming Cemetery in Melrose, Massachusetts. She was the sister of Eleanor B. Donahue, Christine Blackmer and Velma Ramirez.

Diamond—Bertha A. Diamond, 89, member of the Swedenborgian Church all her life, and recently member of the West Palm Beach group, entered the spiritual world on March 19, 1987. A memorial service was held in Lake Worth, Florida on March 23, 1987, the Rev. Ernest G. Frederick officiating.

Johnson—Constance V. Johnson, longtime member of the Brockton, Massachusetts Society of the New Jerusalem, entered the spiritual world on March 27, 1987, in Warwick, R.I. The Rev. Dr. Robert H. Kirven officiated at a service in Warwick. A memorial service was held on May 17, 1987 at the Elmwood New Church, the Rev. Dr. William R. Woofenden officiating. She was the wife of Harvey Johnson.

Loewen—Mary Anna (Marie) Loewen, lifelong member of the New Church, entered the spiritual world on May 17, 1987, in Calgary, Alberta. A memorial service was held on May 22, 1987 at the Garden Chapel,

Calgary, the Rev. David L. Sonmor officiating. She was the sister of the Revs. Henry and Erwin Reddekopp.

Masilo—The Rev. Stanley Masilo, 53, entered the spiritual world on May 24, 1987 in the Transvaal, South Africa. Mr. Masilo was one of the district ministers under the supervision of the General Superintendent for the Swedenborgian Church in South Africa, the Rev. Obed Mooki. Mr. Stanley had charge of a large circuit in the East Rand and was an assistant tutor in the Mooki Memorial College. A memorial service was held on May 30, 1987, which was attended by well over 2,000 people.

Moore—Helena Moore, member of the New Jerusalem Church of

Pawnee Rock, Kansas, entered the spiritual world on April 19, 1987 in Great Bend. A memorial service was held on April 22, 1987 in Pawnee Rock, the Rev. Eric J. Zacharias officiating.

Siebert—Evelyn Vera Siebert, member of the New Jerusalem Church of Pretty Prairie, Kansas, entered the spiritual world on April 28, 1987 in Pretty Prairie. A memorial service was held on May 1, 1987, in Pretty Prairie, the Rev. Eric Zacharias officiating.

Skinner—Anna Mae Skinner, 74, member of the Riverside, California Swedenborgian Church, entered the spiritual world on June 9, in Riverside. A memorial service was held on June 12, 1987 in Riverside by the Rev. Dr. Ivan Franklin.

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