

THE MESSENGER

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A Day in the Life of the University Chaplain: The Door

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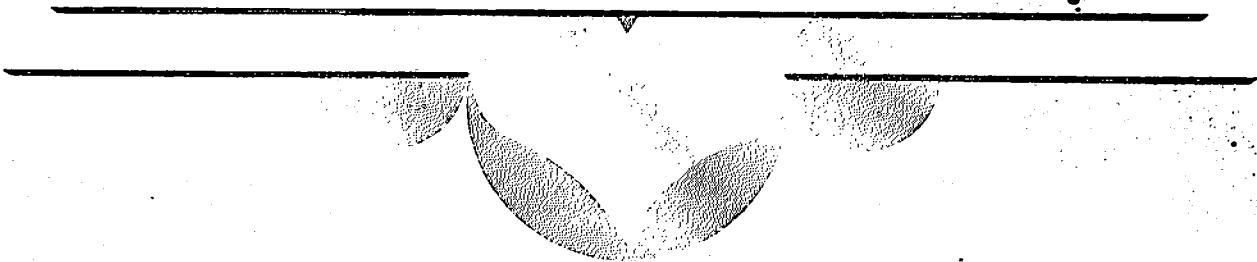
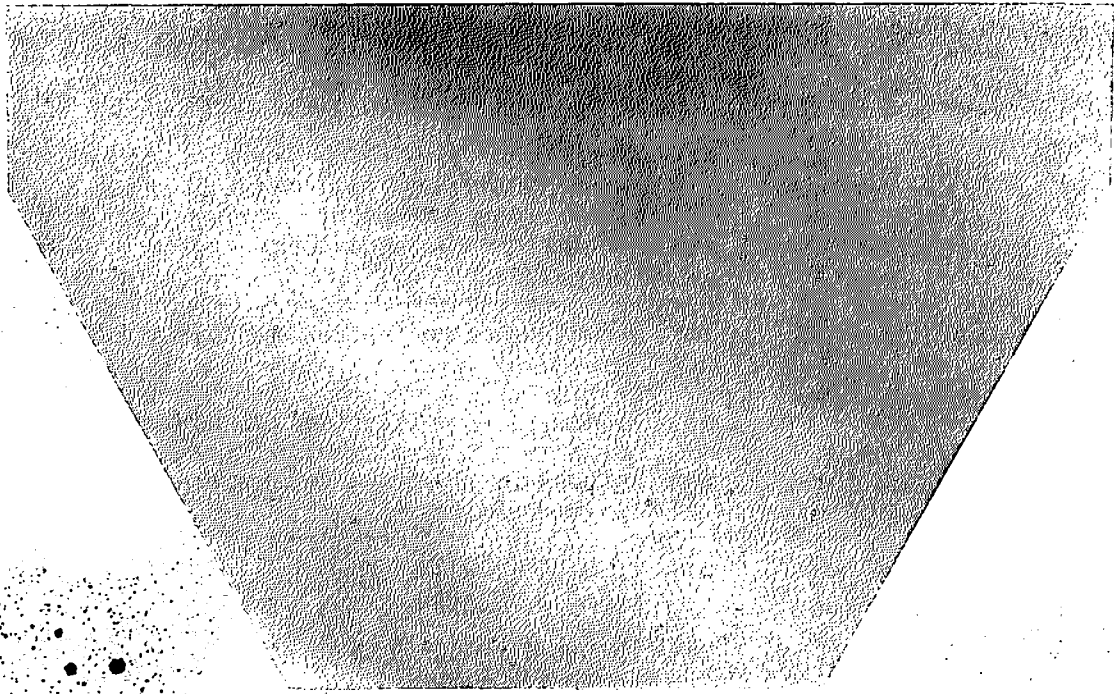
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The Door

217

Carl E. Yenetchi

I was standing outside of Eaton Hall, on the campus of Urbana University, on a warm Wednesday afternoon in early April. I was waiting for the few regular members of my weekly Bible Class to arrive when I saw Don Ramsey drive up and park in the small lot in front of the building. I had met Don at several University functions. Don was a few

218 ***I felt that
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months younger than myself, which is to say that he is in his mid thirties. He had an attractive woman with him whom I had not seen on campus before. They got out of the car and walked over to me, and Don introduced his sister, Ella Cox. Don asked if they could talk to me about "Swedenborg stuff." I invited them into the Swedenborg Center (a small room that doubles as my office at the university). Ella seemed disturbed about something. As we walked to the center, she began to tell me about her fiance's death and the strange occurrences that had followed it.

Her fiance Dan had an aneurysm burst in his brain while driving five months previously to her coming to see me. After several days of being in a coma, he died. Ella had of course taken this hard, but shortly after her fiance's death, she began to experience a number of odd occurrences. A stereo in her home would come on by itself, objects would change places on shelves, and a set of shelves securely fastened to the wall fell.

As my Bible Class was arriving, I was not able to talk further with them at that point, and we agreed to meet again at my apartment on Saturday.

During the next two days, I reread the pamphlet "E.S. and E.S.P." by Gwynne Dresser Mack, and tried to remember the various things I had learned while attending some services with spiritualists. Also, I delved into *Potts' Concordance* and Swedenborg's writing to try to get a handle on what, exactly, I was dealing with.

During this whole time I never felt any sense of danger or anxiety. I felt protected and knew that with the Lord's help, order could be restored to the situation and Ella would be able to return to normal.

Saturday, Don and Ella arrived and reported that they had had a great deal of difficulty getting to my home: they had gotten stuck in traffic and taken wrong turns on roads they knew well. But finally they made it. They immediately requested to postpone their meeting a few minutes while they went to McDonald's for lunch. I agreed and put some coffee on while I waited. When they returned, I asked Ella to tell me again about her experience, which she did willingly, showing me a diary she had been keeping since her fiance's death. In detail, she related how her fiance had died unexpectedly.

The psychic phenomena she experienced were of two types. The first type was a strong feeling of the presence of her fiance on several occasions, the sort of feeling which many feel following the loss of a loved one. The second type was with the moving objects and appliances turning themselves on and off.

I felt that somehow a "door" had opened between this world and the next and that *it was somehow disorderly*. I was concerned that Ella and her fiance were trapped at the point of his death, unable to move on and get on with the business of life.

I wanted to make sure that the three of us were together on what we were doing. I explained to Don and Ella my feelings that what was happening here was disorderly and that I wanted to work toward closing the door (the nature of the door was not clear to me then, but it was to become dramatically clear before we finished). I also explained that I had seen similar phenomena before in a spiritualist church and that it wasn't really that unusual. I suggested that the phenomena themselves were not what we should be concentrating on, but that this was the time for Ella to



Carl Yenetchi

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say goodbye to her fiancé and to move on. Ella readily agreed to this and seemed visibly relieved to be working toward resolution.

In order to bring us together and call upon all the protection that was available, I offered the sacrament of Communion which Don and Ella gratefully received.

It's not really clear to me why I decided that Ella was to be the medium for this service, but I asked her to sit in a chair and visualize her fiancé and to make contact with him. Ella accepted this as the most natural of requests. Don was seated next to me and was acting as the prayer battery; that is, he was praying for our success and safety in our endeavor, (a common practice in Spiritualist Churches). After several attempts, Ella reported that she had not been able to visualize her fiancé or make any kind of contact. Don immediately reported that he had felt his presence very strongly.

I had Don and Ella exchange places. Don was not able to get any clear images, but was sure he was in contact. It was at this point that I followed a practice that has served me well in the past, when things were not going well: I poured a fresh cup of coffee and lit a cigarette.

When we resumed, Ella again was in the chair and made contact almost immediately, speaking freely with her fiancé about people from the office and relatives and various other things. I had the impression of listening to someone

talking on the phone, hearing only one side of the conversation and feeling a bit like an eavesdropper.

It was then that I became very aware of the door: I could see it! It was oval in shape and seemed to surround Ella from the waist up. I was fascinated by it, and I could see Ella's fiancé through it, but I could not hear him. (After we had finished, Ella showed me a picture of her fiancé and it was the person I had seen through the "door.") I became aware that there were other spirits hanging around the edges of the door just out of sight; I felt them more than saw them. At the same time I experienced a panic attack and then knew that we should pull back for a while. I reached over and gently shook Ella's leg, not wishing to reach through the "door," and she came out of her vision. I was aware then also that I could no longer see the door.

I poured more coffee and lit another cigarette and composed myself a bit. We talked for a while. I explained to Ella and Don why I had interrupted the session at that point. Neither Don nor Ella seemed overly concerned about my report—though Don said he found the whole thing fascinating.

During this break, I explained to Don and Ella what Swedenborg had written about the process in the world of spirit and how Dan needed to get on with his life and that maybe we should explain this to him. I wasn't really clear on what he thought was happening. I asked Ella to please report on what her fiancé was saying.

When we resumed Ella made contact immediately and explained to her fiancé that he had things to do in his life and that he needed to get on with them. She asked him

about several of the experiences she had been having, and they chatted freely, and spoke of their love. Ella was doing a good job in keeping us informed about what Dan was saying. After thirty minutes, I again ended the session. I am not really clear as to why I interrupted at that point. I poured myself the last of the coffee.

Ella then told Don and me that she was seeing a dark cloud hanging over the three of us. I asked if

Don was seated next to me and was acting as the prayer battery; that is, he was praying for our success and safety in our endeavor.

we were still all working together or whether our goals were moving in separate directions. When I restated that I was working to close the "door," both Ella and Don agreed that that was the purpose. Don said that he was becoming more fascinated with what was happening than with our stated purpose. The cloud disappeared when Don said this, Ella said. After finishing my coffee and a couple of cigarettes, I felt ready to go on and, with the Lord's help, we would try to close the door.

Ella again made contact and said her goodbyes to her fiancé. She also sent goodbyes from Don. Ella said that her fiancé kept asking if this was what she wanted; though in tears, she reported that this was

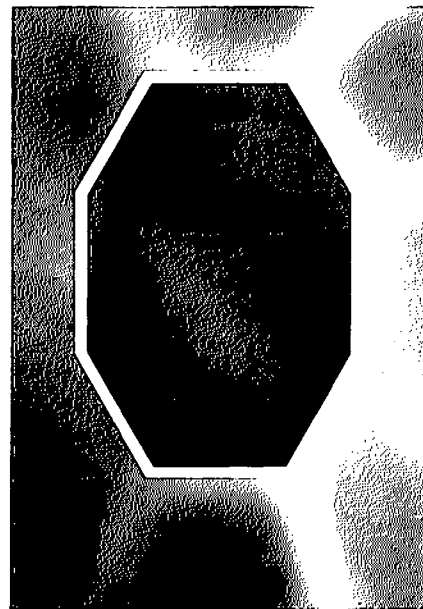
what she wanted. Suddenly, I was aware that the door had closed. I *heard* it shut! I had seen it shut and heard it. I turned to Don, "Did you hear it?", I asked. He said, "No." I turned back to Ella. "Did you hear it?" I asked, and she nodded.

I then took Ella by the hand and lifted her from the chair and gave her a hug. Don joined us in a group hug; I felt relieved that all had gone well. Ella said that she felt as if a weight had been lifted from her shoulder; we sat and talked for a while.

I wasn't really sure what had happened in my living room that afternoon. Later it became clear to me that Ella and her fiancé had said goodbye and had given each other permission to get on with living, now in two different worlds.

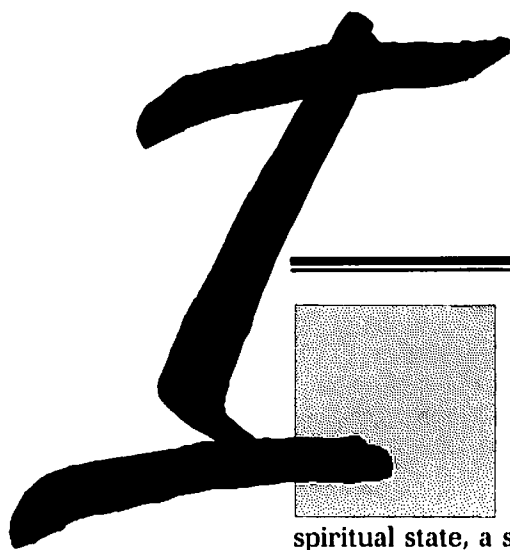
Don and I have become good friends, and I have kept track of Ella through him. She is doing well. Life goes on, but since that afternoon, how life goes on is clearer to me. We are not alone; love survives the grave, and sometimes the greatest act of love is letting go. ■

The Rev. Carl Yenetchi is the chaplain for faculty and students at the Swedenborgian affiliated Urbana University in Urbana, Ohio.



Toward New Church Worship

George Dole



used a very similar title for a lecture in 1985, and since I want to cover some rather different ground, I should like to review some of the main points of that lecture. I drew largely on Swedenborg's interpretation of the Holy City as symbolic of the New Church, which emerges quite clearly not as an earthly organization but as a spiritual state, a state which is essentially one of worship. I spoke of the need of recognizing the Lord's presence within us as well as beyond us, quoting Blake's words, "I will not rest from the great task, to open the immortal eyes of man inward, into the bosom of God." I objected to the passivity of the congregation in our present first order of worship, and suggested that we need means of fostering a sense of mutual understanding and affection among all

participants if worship is to realize its New-church potentials. There was a fair amount of both Biblical and doctrinal citation to support this stance.

This morning, I would have you bear in mind some such images of worship as we proceed. Genuine collective worship must, I believe, involve opening ourselves to each other as well as to the Lord: love to the Lord and love to the neighbor cannot be separated. There must be a sense that the Lord is not represented solely by the open Word on the altar, but also by each participant: "I in them, and they in me, that they may be made perfect in one."

Some years ago, Bob Kirven was giving a course on mysticism at Andover Newton Theological School, and he asked me to take one session to deal with Biblical material on this subject. My initial reaction was that the Bible does not have much to say about mysticism, except to condemn witches and diviners and necromancers and the like; but then I realized that this reaction rested in a very narrow and pejorative definition of mysticism. If mysticism involves what we might call "practicing the presence of God," then the Bible has a great deal to say about it.

Biblical Encounter With God

I looked then at a number of instances in the Bible where the Lord appeared to people, and was intrigued to discover that they shared a common pattern, a pattern which closely resembles that of our traditional first order of worship. The appearances of God, or theophanies, which I found were the following: to Moses at the burning bush, to Isaiah and to Ezekiel when they were called to be prophets, to Peter, James, and John at the Transfiguration, and to John on Patmos when he was called to write the book of Revelation.

In each instance, there is a statement of the setting. There is an appearance, usually including an attention-getter and a turning. There is a response of humility, a comforting or absolution, and finally a commission. Let us then look at these theophanies in sequence. You will note as we go along that there are distinct differences in emphasis and in tone from one to the next.

The story of Moses at the burning bush is found in the third chapter of Exodus. It begins by stating that Moses was keeping his father-in-law Jethro's flocks, and that in their search for pasturage they had come to Mount Sinai. This is the setting.

The attention-getter is the burning bush itself, which impels Moses to turn aside to see how a bush can be on fire without burning up. Then comes the voice (in this instance not the appearance) of the Lord warning Moses not to come closer to this holy ground: "and Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God." This is clearly the response of humility.

The comfort is more oblique than in later instances, but still distinct. The Lord says that he has seen Israel's affliction and has come to bring deliverance. He then commissions Moses to confront Pharaoh and to lead his people out of Egypt.

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Isaiah's call is found in the sixth chapter of the book that bears his name. It begins by stating a locus in time, "In the year that King Uzziah died," which requires a very brief comment. Uzziah is characterized in II Kings 15 as a basically good king who was punished for not eliminating the high places by being a lifelong leper. He ruled quite successfully for fifty-two years, easily for the longest reign to date. His death marked the end of an era: perhaps the closest equivalent in modern times is the death of Queen Victoria in England. So while the statement of the setting is very brief, it would carry a great deal of meaning to the contemporary hearer.

There seems to be no separate attention-getter in this instance, simply the statement that Isaiah saw "the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple," indicating incidentally that the locus of the event in space probably was the temple. Isaiah's response to this is despair, resting in an awareness of his own unclean lips and those of his people.

The absolution comes in the form of a seraph with a coal from the altar. The uncleanness of Isaiah's lips is cauterized; his iniquity is taken away and his sin purged. Then by question and answer the commission is given. Once Isaiah says, "Here am I; send me," the Lord tells him to go to His people with a most unwelcome message.

The next instance occupies the first two chapters of Ezekiel. The setting is quite explicit. It happened in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as Ezekiel was among the captives by the river Chebar. Just to make sure, the year is also

identified as the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity.

Ezekiel's attention is apparently seized by the opening of the heavens. The text then states that he looked and saw a great, fiery whirlwind coming out of the north, within which he soon saw his vision, which takes most of the rest of the first chapter to describe. Most of the description is of a throne surrounded by creatures, but on the throne "was the likeness

tabernacles, does not seem like the response of humility, but Mark adds, "For he did not know what to say; for they were very much afraid." The response to this is the bright cloud and the voice identifying Jesus as the beloved son; and the commission is two-fold—to hear him, and to tell no one of this event until after the resurrection.

The first chapter of Revelation contains the last instance. John identifies both place and time—the

It is very significant that by the time the commission comes in the Biblical instances, the witness is no longer the suppliant. Whether we speak of Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel, the disciples, or John, they have not asked for assurance, they have received it.

of the appearance of a man."

Ezekiel's response is to fall upon his face, and the first words he hears command him to stand on his feet. Then the spirit enters him, and he is able to stand and receive his commission, which is to preach the Lord's words "to a rebellious nation."

For the Transfiguration, we have three accounts, in Matthew 17, Mark 9, and Luke 9. There are slight differences which are worth noting. They agree that the setting is a mountain (Matthew and Mark referring to it as a "high mountain") and that only the three closest disciples were with Jesus. The attention-getter is the transfiguration itself, the radiance (which Luke states happened as Jesus was praying) and the appearance of Moses and Elijah.

Peter's response, the suggestion that they build three

isles of Patmos by reason of exile, and the Lord's day. The attention-getter is a voice like a trumpet behind him. He turns, and sees the figure in the midst of the lampstands, and his response is to fall at the feet of the figure "as dead." The absolution comes when the Lord lays His hand on John and tells him not to be afraid; and the commission is to write the things which he is about to witness.

To recap before proceeding then, in each instance we find first a statement of the setting. Then there is an appearance of the Lord, which may include something that catches the attention, and a turning of the witness. The response to this appearance is consistently one of humility or fear, and the response to this response is equally consistently one of comfort or absolution. Finally, in every case the witness is called upon to do something as a result of the experience.

Experimenting with Worship

Most of this is in our present service in that order, but in quite different proportions. We do not provide for recognizing the setting. We begin with the statement of the presence of the Lord, the equivalent of the appearance, and follow this with a prayer of confession and a prayer of absolution, which are equivalent to the response of humility and the comforting. From then on we are primarily involved in instruction—the reading of the Word—and in commission—the sermon. That is, within the first three minutes or so of the service, we are supposed to acknowledge the Lord's presence vividly enough that we realize the depth of our need. We are supposed to acknowledge that need, and the Biblical models indicate that this is quite personal. We are supposed to become aware that the Lord accepts us, need and all. Then we are ready to learn what it is that the Lord wants us to do.

I very much doubt that this can happen once a week on schedule. I have little doubt that we could do better than we now do, that we could consistently come closer. To that end, I would make the following suggestions.

The first is that we explore means of beginning or preceding our service by an acknowledgment of where we are. In the relatively formal Sunday morning service, this might be accomplished by beginning with a kind of guided meditation, in which the participants are led to think back over the events of the past week and to take note of the concerns that are uppermost in their minds as the service begins. Music can be an invaluable aid to such reflection.

The second is that we expand the statement that "The Lord is in His holy temple." This would be an appropriate place for a revised

Adoramus, a statement about the nature of the Lord we worship, a statement of as much beauty and power as we can achieve. To the extent that the language of correspondences comes alive to us, this could be one of the Biblical descriptions such as that in the first chapter of Revelation; but my primary concern would be that it communicate, that it evoke a response. There is music of sufficient beauty and power to facilitate this, and there are hymns with the power to evoke a sense of majesty.

A little more time and thought need to be given to that response. Our present prayer of confession ("Have mercy upon me, O God . . ."), taken from Psalm 51, is largely a plea for mercy in general terms, with a focus on transgression and sin. I think we need to go beyond this in two ways; and my third suggestion is that we provide some time and some guidance for individual reflection, and that we build in an explicit acknowledgment that the best we have and are is the Lord's and not ours. Again, music is invaluable in guiding the mood of reflection.

My fourth suggestion follows from this. It is that the response to this not be a prayer for mercy, as it is at present, but a vivid statement of the Lord's understanding of us and love for us. It is very significant that by the time the commission comes in the Biblical instances, the witness is no longer the suppliant. Whether we speak of Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel, the disciples, or John, they have not asked for assurances, they have received it.

As to the commission, I believe that at this time the Scripture readings and sermons in our church do generally show a very appropriate attention to life issues. They are not abstract lectures on theological points, but efforts to provide guidance in the business of living. Hymns on the theme of



George Dole

commitment, personal service, and following the Lord are appropriate.

I have one more suggestion of a general nature. This is that if we are going to use Biblical imagery in our worship, we unify that imagery. Currently, for example, we begin with the potentially powerful image of the Lord being in His holy temple. There is one more passing reference to the temple in the liturgy. The participant is left totally at sea, in a way. Is that opening sentence meant literally, that this church building is the Lord's temple, and that the Lord is present in it? If so, surely that is a significant enough assertion to warrant further attention. Or are we taking this correspondentially, as I believe the founders of our church intended, to mean that the Lord is present with us all in His divine humanity? This again is a profoundly significant statement, but what chance does this worshipper have of grasping its meaning?

No, if we are going to use such imagery, we should select and develop. We should give the image a chance to work, and help the participant enter into it. One way of doing this would be to take the Biblical theophanies and build our liturgies from them. The easiest one to use in this way is John's opening vision in the book of Revelation. The description of the Lord offers endless opportunities to confront the beauty of the Lord.

But the fact that each of the theophanies has its own distinctive tone would also be an asset. The Old Testament ones, for example, tend to be more directly challenging, designed to prepare us to face difficulties. The New Testament ones are more reassuring, more likely to lift us out of discouragement.

Personal Preparation for Worship

I would close, though, on a different note. Whatever the design of the service, we will get out of it no more than we put in. I doubt that there is a minister in Convention who would not be utterly delighted to hear that church members were taking time before the service to take stock of their life situations, to pay attention to their "setting." I doubt that there

Whatever the design of the service, we will get out of it no more than we put in.

is any church member whose worship life would not be deepened by this discipline.

Further, I am sure it would be helpful if, on coming into church, we looked at the people there and reminded ourselves that the Lord is very fully present in each one, that each one is precious in the Lord's sight. I doubt that we would say this out loud to each other, but if we were to do it regularly, it would surely subtly inform our dealings with each other. In fact, the ease or difficulty we found in doing this from Sunday to Sunday would provide us with a clue to our own "setting." On those mornings when we could only say, "I know theoretically that the Lord is present in that individual, but I sure can't see it," we could be quite

sure that the angel in us is having trouble getting through. I would rather see affectionate conversation in church before worship, and more "guided silence" after the service begins.

Changes such as these last are, programmatically, relatively easy to make, while experience indicates that there is a good deal of reluctance in most congregations to make substantial changes in the first order of worship. The one time when this reluctance is not a major factor is in services for special occasions. Whether it is Christmas, Easter, Maundy Thursday, or a Communion Sunday, we are prepared for something different. So there are occasions when we could start from the ground up—look afresh at the purpose of the service, at the nature and needs of the participants, and do the best we can to nurture an awareness of the Lord's presence and will.

Nor is this simply a matter for the minister to take care of. I suspect that most, if not all, the ministers of Convention would be delighted to discover that church members wanted something like this to happen. I am sure that if such members actually participated in the design and planning, their understanding of the intent of the service would almost automatically increase their involvement in it and their benefit from it. ■

The Rev. Dr. George F. Dole delivered these thoughts as a lecture in August, 1986 at the Fryeburg New Church Assembly, a Swedenborgian family camp in Western Maine. Dr. Dole teaches Bible, theology and languages at the Swedenborg School of Religion in Boston.

Perfect Love Casts Out All Fear: Coping with AIDS

Susan Turley-Moore

This past July in Miami I attended the 13th International Conference for the United Fellowship of Metropolitan Christian Churches (UFMCC or MCC), founded by the Rev. Elder Troy Perry. The atmosphere during the gathering was one of warm hospitality and religious commitment as they practiced living their theme, "Perfect Love Casts Out All Fear."

Worship services were plentiful beginning with early morning communion followed by a full liturgical service with inspiring sermons and stunning musical performances. Every evening closed with a foot stompin', hands clappin', praising the Lord worship celebration, including exceptional sermons and a host of original songs performed by the composers.

All throughout the Conference were baptisms, communions, charismatic healing services that sprang out of a context of personal transformations. Truly, God's presence was stirring, while admirations and praises to Jesus Christ were expressed freely and fully.

There were many wonderful events each day that demonstrated the intellectual competence and professional excellence in ministry among this group of devout believers. Perhaps the most moving event was the memorial service held in honor of those who died of AIDS. Brought to the forefront was the impact of constant losses that gays and lesbians are coping with and anticipating. The strain on the denomination continues to take its toll. But demonstrated in MCC is the truism that enduring faith bonds the disciple closer to God. Indeed, members of MCC know and rely on the healing power of God's loving and total acceptance, "just as they are."

Another magic moment was when Dignity, the Gay and Lesbian Catholic organization (12 Priests have died of AIDS) joined MCC for

worship and fellowship. The spirit was one of unity in Jesus Christ and enthusiastic optimism about future cooperation in ministry.

For those of you who have read, *The Church and The Homosexual*, you will be thrilled to know that we were blessed with the opportunity to hear Father John McNeil share his life story, his painstaking decision not to accept the removal of his name from the Order of Jesus because of his sexual orientation, and his passionate call of witness to churches who fail to heed Christ's teaching of compassionate hospitality to the homosexual community.

There were so many outstanding presentations that I encourage the acquisition of cassette recordings, from MCC central office, of these superb world leaders in Christian thought (see info at end of article).

Provided during the Conference were various workshops on such topics as Third World Ministries, Healing Racism, Church Growth, Clergy Spouse Concerns, Liberation Theology, to name but a few. However, for the purpose of this article I present the following information on the workshops I attended.

Gay and Lesbian Issues in Family Law

Tom Doyal, lay person of MCC and Texas lawyer, began his workshop by stating that there are no assumptions in law for gays, specifically when it comes to

divorce, property rights, custody and the like. He recommended the book; *A Legal Guide for Lesbian and Gay Couples* published by Self-Help Law Press, CA. He talked about the importance for couples to write out marriage contracts, including such things as property sharing, wills, inheritance arrangements. He addressed the disparities in work life such as income differences, values placed on careers and responsibility as primary caretaker for children. He advocated obtaining General Power of Attorney for all financial matters. A rule of thumb: Always choose a lawyer you can be totally open with.

Mr. Doyal talked in depth about the all-too-common circumstance of one partner becoming ill and being hospitalized, and their family taking all rights away from the patient's spouse. Therefore, he highly recommended that couples obtain Special Power of Attorney for medical treatment to ensure legal rights for the spouse to direct consultation with physicians, visitation rights, and input into treatment decisions.

Doyal also talked about the insurance problems, especially since the AIDS epidemic. For example, men are being excluded from coverage because of the cost of health care for PWA's. Companies are avoiding insuring clients by requiring HTLV testing prior to giving coverage. At this time there exists no same-gender couples or family coverage; individual coverage is astronomical in cost. In the future it will be difficult to find, if at all. Consequently, medical care for people with AIDS becomes virtually accessible only for white, wealthy, males.

AIDS Ministry in Minority Communities

This workshop was led by the Rev. Carl Bean, Executive Director and Founder of the Minority AIDS Project, L.A., Chairperson of the National Minority AIDS Council, representing the Black Community with the Surgeon General's Workshop on AIDS, LA City/Council AIDS Task Force and LA Black Commission on AIDS. Bean is the Pastor and Founder of the Unity Fellowship of Christ Church, a Christian outreach to Black gays and lesbians in LA.

He addressed the urgent need for education in the Black and Hispanic communities. He reported that virtually nothing has been done from Washington in response to the crisis among minority groups and AIDS. He cited these statistics:

- 60% of all children with AIDS are Black
- 52% of women with AIDS are Black
- 25% are Latino women
- Infants: In Harlem Hospital children's wards, all of the infants stricken with AIDS are of color.
- In Miami, thirty-nine babies have AIDS; of these thirty-three are Black and three are Latino.

Results of testing for AIDS in the armed services: a four to one ratio among men; for every one white man there were four Black men diagnosed HTLV-positive.

When addressing this group of primarily white people who wish to help minorities with AIDS, he instructed that the first thing to accept is that people of color need to hear the facts from people of their own race. The primary purposes of white intervention is to enable people within the Black and Hispanic communities to set up self-help programs. He also went into great detail about the cultural differences that white people need to be sensitive to. For example, when considering the problems of AIDS among Black communities, one must remember that there are multi-layered problems confronting Blacks such as poverty, drug abuse,

teenage pregnancy and high school drop-outs, gang warfare, incarceration, prostitution, unemployment. The fact is that Blacks are struggling with sheer survival needs and there exists a resistance to hear about yet another problem, especially one of such magnitude as the AIDS crisis.

In the Latino population one of the significant factors making it difficult to get the information to them is their conservative religious background. There is a reluctance to talk about sex, and when addressing the issues of AIDS, one must break through this cultural barrier of denial and moralizing.

When talking about ways to get the information to the Black communities he reminded us of the fact that there is a large illiterate population. Thus the most effective way of reaching Black youth is through Rap music and brochures simply stating the health facts.

Although he did not talk about the American Indian populations, it is widely known that there exists a significant gay population as well as a history of alcohol and drug abuse. I am unaware of AIDS services for American Indians; it is imperative that we be cognizant of the need.

Mr. Bean concluded his talk reminding us that whatever involvement we choose, to always go with the love of Christ in our heart and with Jesus' message of reconciliation, especially when ministering to families of PWAs.

AIDS Ministry in the Local Church

This workshop was run by Gary McClelland, MD, who discussed the necessary steps to take when a church group decides to develop an AIDS ministry. The first step, McClelland said, was to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Secondly, through prayer and dialog everyone must become educated about AIDS, including talking about their attitudes, fears and hopes. Thirdly, the group

should find the services offered to PWAs in their area to avoid duplication and locate opportunities for volunteerism. Next, the group needs to set goals and objectives that are realistic for their situation. In this they need to seek team organization, staff training and develop community liaison and resources. Also one must consider public relations, fund raising and activism as part of their ministry to PWAs. Included in this ministry are such services as grief counselors, nurses, housekeepers, training workshops for care givers, baby-sitters; especially, utilize the skills and talents of PWAs!

Plenary Session

Participants:

Gary McClelland, M.D., Director, AIDS, Metropolitan Community Church, LA. *The AIDS Epidemic*

Ann McFarren, Executive Director, AIDS Action Council. *AIDS and Public Policy*

Rev. Carl Bean, Executive Director AIDS Action Council. *AIDS in Minority Communities*

Paul Kawata, Executive Director, National AIDS Network

This panel presentation had invaluable information concerning a variety of aspects on the AIDS epidemic. Tapes of the panel can be acquired from MCC (see info below). I will share brief information given by Mr. Paul Kawata, who runs 300 community based services for PWAs. Once again, he stressed the need for services to minority groups who have been disproportionately affected by AIDS. He talked of the need to give back the power to PWAs, enabling them to have input into decisions impacting their lives. He also discussed the President's AIDS Commission and remarked that if you are afraid to become involved because of the word "politics," then think of your involvement as education; often they are one and the same. He concluded his remarks with a compassionate plea for everyone to become involved by

first becoming informed, as the AIDS crisis has not yet hit its most devastating point, and we must be prepared for the magnitude of deaths yet to come.

Conclusion

Today in this time of violence, greed and vanity, the church faces no greater challenge than that of the AIDS crisis, including ministering to those who react to PWAs out of fear and hatred.

In scripture we are all called to free the oppressed, share our bread with the needy, shelter the homeless-poor and welcome the stranger, for as Christ said, ". . . insofar as you did this to one of the least of these my sisters and brothers, you did it unto me."

Therefore, as caring Christians, we must be prepared to respond with compassion and wisdom to the AIDS crisis, for this deadly and tragic killer has affected everyone's life. As Surgeon General Koop warned in his October report: "AIDS is increasingly striking heterosexual men and women as well as homosexuals."

In confronting AIDS we must face other issues as well, such as; illness and death, homophobia and sex, sin and prejudice, helplessness and responsibility. In the midst of despondency and despair we must be life-affirming advocates of God's redemptive grace, celebrants of hope and renewal. We must stay informed, seek guidance from scripture and interpretations from theologies. Denying Christ calling us to involvement by taking a stance of defensive judgmentalism from an illusion of "safe distance" only signs membership into the group that Vice President George Bush pointed to during his remarks at a major gathering of evangelical Protestants when he stated:

There are those who would seek to impose their will and dictate their interpretation of morality on the rest of society. There are those who would forget the need for tolerance.

Yet, we must go farther than tolerance and preach; there are those who need to lay down their stones, remove the plank from their eyes and see Christ's beloved child in the face of our neighbor in need.

People with AIDS have much to teach, not only about consciously living with death but about relying on a loving God. It is our privilege to be allowed to offer our ministries unto what some have called "the lepers of today." As Dr. Campolo, noted Baptist scholar, said during his address to a Chicago 229 conference on careers and the workplace:

For what are AIDS victims if they are not the new leper? I've heard evangelicals say it's a curse of God. God gives diseases for that sin. Well, if God gives diseases to everybody who sinned, we'd all be in the hospital.²

He charged that;

If you don't care about the lepers of today's society, then you're not a Christian. Jesus Christ came to do more than make us pious. He came to make us care about the things he cares about . . . to make one's heart broken by the things that broke the heart of Jesus Christ.³

Truly, this brokenness, this hurting love of Jesus Christ is where hope abides. Truly, it is in the resurrection of Jesus Christ that is born the promise of healing. Yet, Jesus Christ compels all of us to provide comfort and compassion for those who are suffering, to be for them God's Fountain of Living Waters.

During our Convention session held on the beautiful University of

Puget Sound, graced by the spectacular Mt. Rainier, we, in our proud heritage of applying our doctrines to life, unanimously passed an AIDS Resolution calling upon all Swedenborgian centers to respond to the AIDS crisis intelligently and with compassion. Let us heed this call of 'love in action' and fulfill our commitment to Jesus Christ's teaching of servitude.

There are innumerable ways to provide services for people with AIDS, their family and friends. Indeed, we too can and must rely on God's love as we accept the responsibility to:

1. Provide educational programs on AIDS in our churches.
2. Demonstrate by our personal examples Christian responses of compassion and charity to PWAs, their family and friends.
3. Support *openly* our friends in the church who volunteer in local AIDS projects.
4. Ensure that our centers of worship are places of prayer, refuge, and hope for PWAs and their loved ones.
5. Become ecumenically involved with AIDS ministry.
6. Sponsor a Weekend AIDS Prayer Vigil in your church.

Below is a list of educational materials produced by UFMCC. Try also contacting the MCC in your area and the local ecumenical church councils. I would like to offer myself as a resource person for anyone who is interested in more information and support as you begin developing AIDS ministry.

May the Wisdom of our Redeemer and Sustainer guide your every step and may you discover new knowledge of the Divine in your ministries to our sisters and brothers in Jesus Christ. ■

NOTES

¹, ², ³ *Journey*, The Christian News Magazine of the UMFCC, 1987

AIDS Ministry Resources

Office of Ministry Resources, UFMCC, Box 820
West Hartford, CT. 06107
(203) 521-5411

AIDS: Two-Part Sermon Series

is the outline for two sermons given by Rev. Jennie Boyd Bull at MCC Baltimore in 1983. Cost is \$1. US.

Do Not Fear, Only Believe: A Christian Response to AIDS,

a six week study series produced by UFMCC Commission on Faith, Fellowship, and Order (FFO) in 1986. The six sessions included: "Moving Beyond Our Fear: Moving Beyond Our Homophobias," "Does God Cause Suffering?" "Is Sin Punished With Disease?" "Grieving as Healing," and "What Is Our Response?" Cost: \$5.00 US.

From Brokenness to Wholeness: A Service of Healing In Response To AIDS

is a copy of an ecumenical worship service that was held in Hartford, Connecticut in March 1986. Cost is \$3.00 US.

Is AIDS God's Judgment?

is a 12-page statement produced by FFO in 1985. Cost is \$3.00 US.

Pray As If Your Life Depended On It

is a cassette tape of a sermon on prayer and AIDS preached at MCC Hartford, Sept. 1986 by Rev. Jeffrey Pulling (past student of Rev. Calvin E. Turley). The sermon explores the questions: Why pray to the God who allowed this horrible disease to afflict us? Why pray to God? Why pray? Cost: \$6.00 US.

Ministry Resources In Response To Aids

is a continually updated resource list of materials from UFMCC sources and from other denominations and organizations. Cost: \$2.00 US.

AIDS Vigil of Prayer Packet

produced by Rev. David Farrell, MCC San Diego, P.O. Box 33229, San Diego, CA. 92103-0440 includes all you need to

know about sponsoring an AIDS Vigil of Prayer, video on the 1986 vigil of prayer weekend in San Diego, sermon materials, advertisement ideas, information about past vigils. The AIDS Vigil of Prayer is an international, interdenominational event not to be missed! Donation requested or write to Rev. Susan Turley-Moore who will send you the tape on loan. (without the packet) Postage costs only.

AIDS Workshops

held at the 1987 UFMCC Conference in Miami are all on cassette tape: *AIDS Ministry in Minority Communities*, Rev. Carl Bean, *A Christian Approach to Death with AIDS*, Philip C. Richardson, *AIDS Ministry in the Local Church*, Gary McClelland, MD., *Ecumenical AIDS Ministry*, Rev. Janet Pierce, *AIDS Update: Panel Presentations*. Cost: \$5.00 US per cassette. To obtain these 1987 Conference cassettes write to:

Rev. Ro Halford
UFMCC
5300 Santa Monica Blvd. Suite 304
Los Angeles, CA 90029

The Rev. Susan Turley-Moore is a Swedenborgian minister-at-large and a pastoral psychotherapist, residing in California.

Everyone Wed at Wayfarers Chapel Is Famous

When the Wayfarers Chapel staff were asked to recall their experiences in marrying famous couples, all were reluctant to do this, saying adamantly, "Everyone who marries here is famous." However, editor determination prevailed and below are some reminiscences involving well-known personalities.

Former minister Ken Knox recalls the evening a bride, whose name was Dorothy Warren, booked a wedding date with him. A few days later Rev. Knox received a call from a reporter asking when the daughter of Earl Warren, then Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, was to be married.

Later Mrs. Warren called, concerned about the background of the Chapel. "Being of Scandinavian background and, I believe, Lutheran, she was quite happy when she learned the Chapel was a memorial to Emanuel Swedenborg, that his background had been Lutheran and that the marriage service was traditional," Rev. Knox says.

It was Rev. Knox who married Jayne Mansfield and Mickey Hargitay. "I seldom attended the cinema," he says, "so I did not really know who she was." When Bob Hope signed the register at the wedding, says Rev. Knox, he quipped, "I'll take a room and a bath."

After the wedding the couple returned each year on their anniversary for a reaffirmation service.

"They always came alone. Jayne wore her wedding dress and Mickey his tuxedo; and they always

brought their copy of the marriage service for me to sign. I baptized their first child and visited them on several occasions at their home on Sunset Blvd."

Rev. Knox also officiated at an intimate candlelight service where Robert Taylor gave the bride away.

Wedding director Lorraine Mann recalls the time Debbie Reynolds' hairdresser was married at the Chapel. "Debbie acted as a



The Revs. Harvey Tafel (L) and Jaikoo Lee of the Wayfarers Chapel

surrogate mother," says Mann, "helping during the rehearsal."

Business manager Barbara Norris says when a young Korean named Myung Whun Chung made wedding reservations and inquired if he could have live music the staff thought nothing of it.

"We did not realize he was the assistant conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, until half of the orchestra arrived to sit out on the front lawn and play during the wedding," she says.

Rev. Harvey Tafel remembers the wedding where he was the minister and Ray Fullerton was the wedding director. "When it came time for the wedding to start, standby music went on unexplicably," Rev. Tafel says. About 10 minutes later the wedding processional started.

After the wedding Fullerton explained to Rev. Tafel that President and Mrs. Nixon were cousins of the bride. Mrs. Nixon had driven up at the very last

minute and the delay was while Secret Service agents checked the surroundings.

Rev. Tafel says the only way he could tell Dennis Harrah, all-pro guard for the Los Angeles Rams, was nervous on his wedding day was because he didn't blink an eye when two minutes before the wedding Rev. Tafel jokingly said to him, "Denny, I have just talked to Coach Robinson and you have been traded."

Recently retired wedding director Denny Anderson recalls how she had become rather adept at staying out of wedding photographs. However, at the wedding of one Japanese couple who spoke no English, Anderson says it got harder and harder to avoid the photographers.

Finally, one girl with a limited amount of English laboriously explained that they wanted Anderson in the picture. When Anderson again declined, the young woman said patiently, "We want you in picture. In Japan you are famous."

Some of the Famous Married at the Chapel

John Austin, *Tennis Player*

Peter Brown, *Actor*

Gary Burghoff, *Actor (M.A.S.H.)*

Vikki Carr, *Singer*

Myung Whun Chung, *Asst.*

Director, L.A. Philharmonic

Michael Cole, *Actor*
("The Mod Squad")

Anna Fisher, *Astronaut*

Benson Ford, *Corporation Executive*

Dennis Harrah, *L.A. Rams*
All-Pro Guard

Maurice Jarre, *Composer*

Ronald McDonald, *Clown*

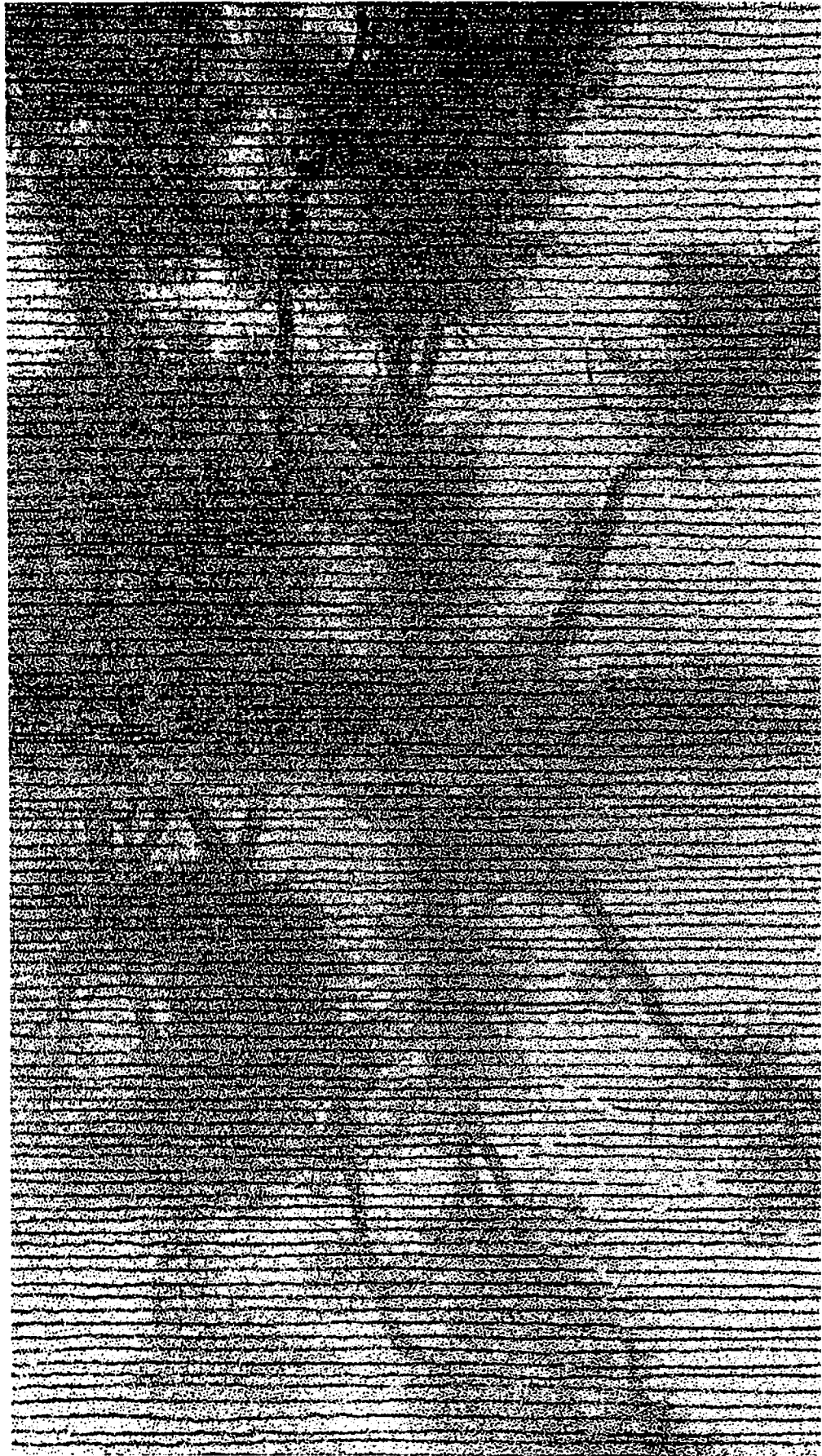
Jayne Mansfield, *Actress*

Vince Neil, *Singer with*
"The Motley Crue"

Shawnie Wallace, *Actress*

■

***It is a
healing
thought:
heaven and
earth
commu-
nicate with
each other
through
corres-
pondences.
Beauty of
the natural
world
evokes
beauty of
an eternal
one.***



Meditations on the Swallow's Flight

Margherita Faulkner

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Because we are such creatures as we are, we are drawn to borderlands of earth and heaven, drawn to shadings (degrees), paradoxes, moods that evoke seeming opposites. These borderlands constitute the heartland of imaginative literature.

And some have been more sensitive to the richness of human nature than others have been. Some have had more insight into the essential unanimity of heaven and earth. Philosophers and poets, in their inmosts, have been among these.

And what is to be the purpose of still another paper on imagery as it is related to liberal (symbolic) religion? The purpose is muted, but venerable: in every hour of our contemporary lives we are given assurance of an eternal energy that loves and, if we let it, sanctifies us.

It is a healing thought: heaven and earth communicate with each other through correspondences. Beauty of the natural world evokes beauty of an eternal one. It cannot be otherwise for "The Infinite is in finite things as its receptacles."¹ It has always been the challenge of imaginative literature to reconcile and mediate the seeming differences between nature and spirit. Reconciliation and mediation not only heal us, they bring vitality, extra energy for awareness and its offspring: joy.

But if we are to incorporate within us the benefits of imaginative writings, we need to have the right order in our minds. Coleridge wrote of primary and secondary

imagination. The primary holds within it the living power of all human perception. The second is an echo of that, differing only in degree and mode.²

I moved

*On in low and languid mood:
for I had found*

*That outward forms, the
loftiest, still receive
Their finer influence from the
life within;—*

*Fair cyphers else: fair, but of
import vague
or unconcerning.*³

There is comfort and healing in such lines. Everything at home, at work, in school derives its "finer influence" from that within. Nothing is cut off from us; nothing is only mechanistic or mindless. There is constant and subtle communication with divine love and divine wisdom. Old brain-teasers no longer cause restlessness: subject/object dichotomies; temporal/eternal relationships; things contingent contesting those ordained.⁴

Even Emily in her love of nature knew that creatures and seasons are "ordained."

Bees are black with gilt

Surcingle—

Buccaneers of Buzz.

Ride abroad with ostentation

And subsist on Fuzz.

Fuzz ordained—not Fuzz

contingent—

Marrows of the Hill.

Jugs—a Universe's fracture

Could not jar or spill.

Emily Dickinson

**Truth
evoked, not
preached,
has
become the
most
fitting
approach
to God.**

Nature is ordained by God; it is not a network of contingents. And all its bees and jugs and lanterns bring us into the presence of divine love if we attune ourselves to their spiritual correspondences. All serious writing brings us into contact with that which forever transcends our physical nature.

Swedenborg also made use of lanterns and bees, for he knew that the merely abstract could never win our hearts to God.

*For a mere knowledge of
abstractions is like an airy
something which flies away;
but when abstractions are
applied to such things as are in
the world, they become like
what is seen with the eyes on
earth, and remains in the
memory.*⁵

We are such creatures as love very specialized and individualized things. And these are not shadows of another more real world, nor are they merely the capricious revelation of subjective minds. "The Infinite is in finite things as in its receptacles." The Infinite is in the clods and pebbles of Blake; it is in his symmetrical tiger and in the beadles, orphans, chimney sweeps of late 18th century London. "All we need do," wrote Blake, "is to cleanse the doors of perception."⁶ This recalls Swedenborg's "subjugation of the hells, establishment of order." When innocence and order are illumined for us, we choose them. We feel how good they are and how well-suited we are for them.

*Look on the rising sun: there
God does live
And gives His light, and gives
His heat away;
And flowers and trees and
beasts and men receive
Comfort in morning, joy in
the noonday.*

*And these black bodies and
this sun-burnt face
Is but a cloud, and like a
shady grove.*

*"For when our souls have
learned the heat to bear
The cloud will vanish; we
shall hear his voice,
Saying: 'Come out from the
grove, my love and care,
And round my golden tent
like lambs rejoice'."*

Blake: "Little Black Boy"

When we learn to live in the presence of God, the cloud of "world" vanishes—world in its temporal and material sense. Partly, it is a matter of accustoming ourselves to the light and heat of God's love for us. We learn, as we get older, to keep our eyes on the rising sun, to receive "comfort in the morning," "joy in noonday."

Poets and philosophers, we have said, are especially adept at mediation between world in its temporal materialistic sense and heaven in its eternal and supra-natural sense. Such poets and philosophers become like peace-makers. Through their symbols they "only wish to gaze on some reality, some beauty that neither desires nor hates." (Yeats: *The Symbolism of Poetry*). Symbols are the property of humanity in general. Because of their nature there can be no antagonism nor envy over them. Because they are visible expressions of the invisible, "transparent lamps about a spiritual flame," (Yeats) every person has the same rights of ownership. The technical analysis of symbols brings no healing or peace, however. The healing comes when we avail ourselves of the access to the spiritual world through our imaginative powers.

Our imaginations have become, in contemporary literature, Yeats' "holy city of Byzantium." Truth evoked, not preached, has become the most fitting approach to God. We are ambiguous (amphibian) creatures; our potentials for comprehending paradox and symbolic images is our birthright. Our finest literature addresses our birthright. We remember the proper order: without the higher harmony of spiritual meaning all our arts are simply the works of

dilletantes. And humankind, without a prior love for God, is in its old age, "a paltry thing."⁷

*An aged man is but a paltry thing
A tattered coat upon a stick,
unless
Soul clap its hands and sing,
and louder sing
For every tatter in its mortal dress.*

Yeats: "Sailing to Byzantium"

Every poet, then, who writes of the inter-relationship between spirit and natural world, is a mystic poet. For it seems true, as Evelyn Underhill pointed out in her book, *Mysticism*, that these poets possess a "greater than ordinary sense of the simultaneity between the world of the spirit and the world of nature."⁸ Swedenborg developed this aesthetic principle in his theory of correspondences. A world in which there were no communication between heaven and earth would not be a world worthy of God, would not be consistent with His love for us. And because of this love for us He planted within our being a restlessness, a longing for His goodness and truth. And the longing we have all experienced for serious and superior music, writing, painting is but an indication of our deeper longing for God. In a sense we cannot help ourselves from imaging; in a sense we have all meditated on the swallow's flight to find in it what we can of God's intention and gifts to us:

*I meditate upon a swallow's flight,
Upon an aged woman and
her house,
A sycamore and lime tree lost
in night
Although that western cloud
is luminous,
Great works constructed
there in nature's spite
For scholars and for poets
after us,
Thoughts long knitted into a
single thought,
A dance-like glory that those
walls begot.⁹*

Yeats: "Coole Park"

And so, we have seen, images are the common property of humanity; they are individualized expressions for universal longing: our longing for peace, goodness, truth, eternity. We have each our own "rose tree" to tend and keep alive. And whether it is, for us, Christ or simply another day of our existence, this is not the significant consideration. The tending of something beyond ourselves, something we long for and address our best

***The tending of
something beyond
ourselves, something
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and address our best
selves to, this is the
significance of all
imaginative
thinking.***

selves to, this is the significance of all imaginative thinking.

*Green comes out and spreads
on every side
and shakes the blossom from
the bud
to be the garden's pride.
But where can we draw
water, said Pearse to
Connolly,
When all the wells are
parched away?
O plain as plain can be.
There's nothing but our
own
red blood can make a right
Rose Tree.*

Yeats: "The Rose Tree"¹⁰

This is thoroughly modern: we are responsible for our own state of green, in a sense our own redemption. And, certainly, it is thoroughly Swedenborgian.

Understanding that images are from the common stock of humanity we conclude that nothing is too mean or insignificant to serve as transport between spirit and

nature. I need a commitment to larger meanings; I must have, for this, some skill in practice; I need, also, to discover what has already been accomplished imagination-wise. I am, in a sense, a bee. The honey that I gather is in proportion to my commitment to the good and the true as they are re-presented, symbolically.

Often I read the German poet, Rainer Maria Rilke. While preparing this article I came across these lines from his collected letters:

*We pilfer distractedly the
honey of the visible to collect it
in the big golden hive of the
invisible."¹¹*

Honey, the visible, the invisible: a trinity. And, like all trinities, it has meaning for me only to the extent to which I give it my heart, my strength, and my trust.

NOTES

¹Emanuel Swedenborg, *True Christian Religion: Volume One* (New York: Swedenborg Foundation, 1981), nn. 33 and 34.

²Walter Jackson Bate, ed. *Criticism: The Major Texts* (New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Atlanta: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc. 1952), p. 387.

³Ernest Bernbaum, ed., *Anthology of Romanticism* (New York: The Ronald Press Co.) p. 168.

⁴Thomas H. Johnson, ed., *Final Harvest: Emily Dickinson's Poems* (Boston, Toronto: Little Brown and Company 1961), p. 285.

⁵Emanuel Swedenborg, *Angelic Wisdom: Concerning the Divine Love and the Divine Wisdom* (New York: Swedenborg Foundation, 1976) n. 189.

⁶Bernbaum, *Anthology*, p. 114.

⁷Yeats, *Oxford Book of Modern Verse*, p. 88.

⁸Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness* (New York, Scarborough, Ontario: New American Library, 1974), p. 239.

⁹Yeats, *Oxford Book of Modern Verse*, p. 89.

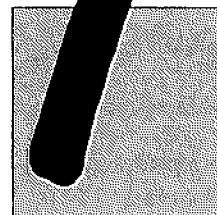
¹⁰*ibid.*, p. 84.

¹¹Jane Bannard Greene and M. D. Herter Norton, translators, *The Letters of Rainer Maria Rilke, 1910-1926* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc. 1969), p. 374. ■

Margherita Faulkner resides in West Lafayette, Indiana.

When Will Our Church WAKE UP?

Horand K. Gutfeldt



How much longer will we limp along with smaller and smaller steps in the wrong direction? How many more societies will have to die, and how many more beloved central church buildings have to be abandoned, like recently in Philadelphia and Los Angeles? Who is not deeply concerned seeing the same few faces again and again, and even these fading away? Is this reality not all the more painful on the background of the visions in our hearts of a coming New Jerusalem with its streets of gold and foundation of jewels?

Can we avoid the suspicion that something must be misdirected from the very basis of our approach, perhaps deeply hidden? Who is not longing for a radical new insight and turn that may open the gates for a new spirit, recognizing where we have been in error!

The core of the problem appears to me, after much search and prayer, to be this: a vain attempt to put new wine into old bottles, to sew piece upon piece of new cloth¹ on an old garment! Old concepts of outdated organizations have been taken over in good faith with only superficial changes. We have plagiarized venerable forms of worship from age-old institutions of the past, which are now increasingly struggling right and left in vain to keep up with the times. There is no hiding that most of the mainline churches are becoming empty!

Could it be that some of our teachings show us new directions?

Very few have recognized the fact that worship is NOT the main focus there, but REGENERATION! Becoming a new person, being born anew in a spiritual and very real way by a profound transformation (in affections and rationality), to discover an entirely new self, freeing the full inborn potential from the prison of a lower ego² (proprium), becoming centered in love and truth is the almost unbelievable promise laid before us. This is the supreme moral priority of our heritage, or the conjunction with God, as this was clearly pointed out by the Lord.³ How did we overlook the fact that worship is secondary and any reliance upon external observances is severely warned against?⁴

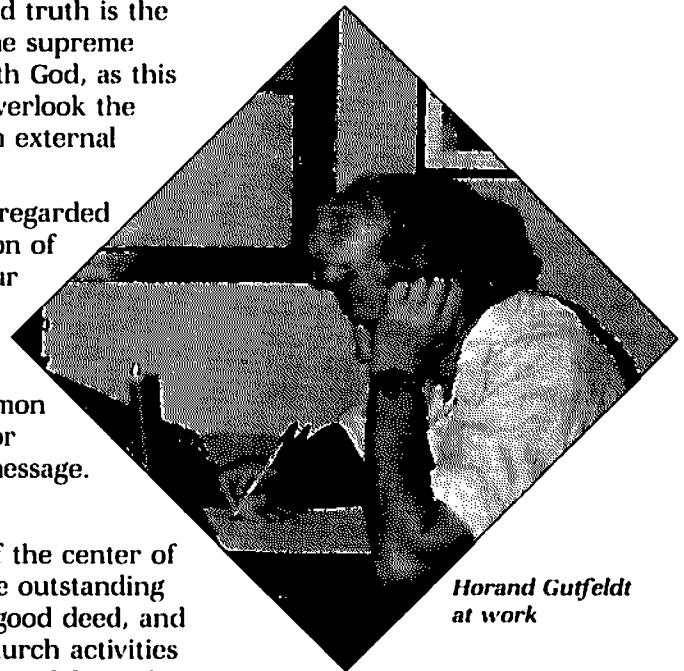
Yet, in church practice everywhere, worship is regarded as the central activity without any question. Repetition of words in "services" have slipped into the center of our attention on Sundays and threaten to contribute to an illusion of security. Were not the original Holy Words destined to lead us toward change, to an improved life, like the center of the Gospels, the Sermon on the Mount? Never was the repetition of liturgies or sermons the purpose and final object of the Divine message.

Did we confuse the means with the end?

In the entire thrust of our teachings, renewal of the center of our soul, in which we cooperate with the Lord, is the outstanding concern⁵ Without regeneration there is not a single good deed, and no worship of any value. All prayers are futile, all church activities even in danger of hypocrisy, if we do not cry to the Lord from the depth of our hearts to make us new. In the modern age we are overloaded with impressions from the media in television and publications, so that traditional church services lose increasingly the impact of the past. Who can fail to see examples of consequences in individuals who have attended church every Sunday—and yet show glaring immaturities in such offices? Was it not power struggles among the "pillars of the church" that often gave a stab of the dagger towards death of a remnant group?

Our church has to become a church of regeneration, or it will be nothing! What counts today in our culture, is personal experience, expansion of consciousness (much of the drug culture and following of gurus has to do with this).

The shift that we need in the activities of the church means a tremendous change of emphasis in everything that is intertwined with Western concepts of the institution, and no endless tampering with constitutions and bylaws can lead us ahead.



*Horand Gutfeldt
at work*

But what is Regeneration?

It is a problem of language that many similar and related processes are called with different words, while the terms of the early translators have become unclear and vague to us. What Swedenborg implies is a complete reversal of our attitudes, priorities and feelings, a change of our habits and motives, of our interests and motivations.⁶ This is certainly a slow evolution, yet it often contains decisive steps and dramatic insights and shifts. Here is a challenge to our scholars and to everyone who is sincere in wanting to bring religion and life together. True repentance means the beginning of a new life,⁷ and the more advanced stage is to be increasingly led by love in individual and creative ways, acquiring a mature, enlightened and joyful disposition.⁸ Very few are aware that also a very different morality from any prevailing trends is implied in our heritage, offering in some cases more stringent, in other cases more lenient precepts in the literal and spiritual levels of meaning in the Commandments, especially in the field of sexuality.⁹

It appears almost paradox to be called upon to make all efforts towards what is right, and yet to become increasingly conscious that it is the Lord who brings everything about, while all appeals to willpower are futile! What we need are pioneers in consciously exploring the dark continent of our deepest souls; at the present most of us use only a tiny fraction of the true potential of our brains and

minds. Many unconscious dimensions of prevailing erroneous assumptions and attitudes block the way, which we have assimilated, taken for granted and made our own. Progress brings entirely new freedom and the opening to much greater fulfillment and joy. There are specific stages and sequences that are fascinating to explore, as our perception of ourselves and the world begins to change. All happiness in life is built upon the foundation of some love, and the greater and more developed our individual complex of love becomes, the greater grows our capacity for usefulness and imperishable bliss in this world and beyond. To understand ourselves and others in a growing way is the hallmark of spiritual growth. Not that anyone could ever say, "I am perfected"—that would be worse than death! But we can acknowledge that there are areas of progress, even to degrees that were hardly ever dreamt of before, and this can give us strength to work with ourselves in discovering the energies that lead to a New Age.

This means a fair amount of introspection, of using techniques which dedicated searchers of all ages have evolved, like certain forms of meditation and group work that support each other. Certain ancient Eastern approaches are far ahead of the West in some respects due to a deeper reason: In Western Christianity, the forms of worship and church activity depended upon a view of God as a remote, far-away majesty somewhere beyond. The *transcendence* was emphasized in many ways, and the reception of God in the church was taken to be fairly passive. The eastern approach is different: The presence of the divine is seen within the person, in his/her deepest self, stressing the *immanence* of God's spirit. The Yoga

techniques are designed to bring this out as a rise of the "Kundalini snake through the Chakras."¹⁰

A new awareness of the divine within and beyond is outlined in our teachings, and has found some reflection in philosophy as "Panentheism."¹¹ However it is little realized that this is not only for a philosophical view, but has profound practical implications for experiencing and working with ourselves, as some of the mystics have discovered. A workable path is outlined before us, developing the divine gifts of love and truth in us, to which our human endowments and powers are made to correspond as receptors.

These channels of influx can be opened to a much greater degree, and undoubtedly there are a great many who are involved in this process already (and many outside of our church). A special reward can come where this is strengthened by mutual help and improved new levels of communication. It takes much trust and support to develop this, of acceptance and frankness, based upon love. A genuine atmosphere of love is felt real, even irresistible, by people who are open and come in contact with it. Who says that heavenly—celestial states cannot be realized on earth? Where else can it begin but in a church in the truest sense?¹² Our church has hardly begun, and at times one would wish that the old patterns may collapse more rapidly, so the True New Church may come into being.

The imagery of the Bible is worthless, unless it becomes correctly imbedded in life, especially as a powerful tool to penetrate in prayer and meditation. It reveals its mystery only to those who learn to identify deeply with these scenes and the implied directives which then become way signs of transformation and power to melt and mold any reluctant heart. We need not to do the old approaches better, but to find new ways to make these energies free in us. There is much in our present age that

shows that our time is hungry for new experiences of transformation, often with a specific recourse to the divine.

Modern Age Parallels

Certain aspects of the practical power of the basic principles of a spiritual transformation are being experienced in over 7000 centers around the world in the Alcoholics Anonymous movement. It is there formalized in twelve steps very similar to the stages of regeneration. Also, in a secular realm, what is called "emotional maturity" or "Self realization" in psychology and psychiatry points in the direction announced by Swedenborg, thus most modern therapy. Yoga and certain Buddhist practices imply similar features.¹³ The impact of many of the secret symbols of Free-masonry is explainable through correspondences, as well as the initiations of ancient and modern mysteries that contain very familiar elements. Transformation is sought in Marriage Enrichment and Marriage Encounter movements across the world. A national bestseller *The Road Less Travelled* by Scott Peck (who is familiar with Swedenborg) deals with the topic, as does Werner Erhard's *Mastery of Transformation* seminar, and some aspects of Neuro-linguistic programming. Our world is ready for spiritual growth and open to it, wherever it is a true experience, and people make tremendous efforts and sacrifices to obtain it. Why are we lagging behind, why is our treasure, our greatest asset, buried in the ground?

It can never be preaching alone that will make our church great, even if we had preachers everywhere with tongues of gold. What is needed is to become enabled to share witness from experience by all our members: how our teachings have led us to a new life of harmony and fulfillment of our lives. It is also completely futile to push doctrines by themselves, as we have experienced everywhere. But if they are discovered as guides to adventures of

the spirit, leading to new worlds of love within ourselves and our surrounding, they will be ripped out of our hands.

How Can This Be Made Practical for Us?

Convention is fortunate to already have a number of people who have experience and expertise in certain processes in the direction indicated in this article, especially some of our women. However, it will take a special effort of funds to encourage further study to bring a wider range of potential contribution from each one into a greater framework. A task force or pioneer group might be put together, containing people who are open and interested in this field with a good background in our teachings, and others having experience in psychology, especially in counseling, and maybe also in specific areas of education. An investigation of previously less noticed pointers from Swedenborg has to be combined with experience in a number of applications and areas of training.

For instance, can we collect and evaluate carefully designed series of individual or guided meditations that are especially geared towards transformation (going beyond the spiritual exercises of Ignatius of Loyola)? How does experience in counseling go together with observations of various stages in moral development, and ultimately with the stages described of the course of regeneration in our teachings?¹⁴ Some or perhaps most of such studies need to be prepared in advance by each participant, then ideas and observations could be shared in personal contact, perhaps in a small group only, giving the opportunity to ask questions of a

confidential character, and opening the road to pray and meditate together, giving appropriate feedback to further development. We are only beginning to have experience with such a particular kind of communication, which puts great demand upon humility, confidentiality and mutual trust. This also demands a readiness to work with oneself as a guinea-pig, observing subtle emotional and motivational changes, most of which escape evaluation. It is likely that one such conference, perhaps convening after the annual convention, would not be enough, but will have to be repeated with modified assignments.

Some results to be expected:

1. A collection of individual and group experiences in every area of approach with follow-up to evaluate the results.
2. Leadership for courses, training lay people and ministers to work further.
3. Development of one or more workbooks that would incorporate the experiences gained already, especially in view of a combination of individual and group work, adapted to our present culture and specific sections of experience and interest. Certain beginnings are available from us and from others. Some of this may look entirely different from anything related to traditional church activities.
4. A course at the Swedenborg School of Religion might be put together acquainting students with the findings and possibly establishing a work and research group

there. Here, especially, a combination of a thorough exploration of theory and practice might be the goal, involving courses in Swedenborgian ethics and regeneration.

240 6. Such a program in many areas and levels could develop a new kind of communication in small groups, where experiences can be shared under competent pastoral leadership, as this is already done in a few societies to a moderate extent. It means an openness to a certain kind of vulnerability, but it has rewards that make it more than worthwhile.

Where do we find the freedom to pray together asking for guidance to bring the help of the Lord towards change on all levels? Unless we can develop organizational forms that do not serve expediency or unrealistic super-democratic principles of a balance of power, many efforts will be wasted. We have to invest energy, time and money in all movements that support research, sharing and understanding of internal struggles with their victories and defeats, all in an atmosphere of freedom and mutual acceptance. We need more than individual counseling, but an exchange of sharing, listening and feedback, sensitized to spiritual adventure.

Outlook and Vision

May our church be blessed through men and women, young and old, who have made true progress into the unknown, lifting up their hearts into the transforming light, and finding the Living and Human God in their hearts. May there be some who can describe their experiences in journals and diaries, what it feels like to feel

the new Self emerging. Where is the voice of those who have drunk from the Water of Life, breaking all barriers of past limitations to a new consciousness, and having the living proof of the word, "Behold, I make all things new!"

Will our church wake up, or have we lost the power and courage to go new and unexplored ways? When will we be found worthy to receive courage from on High to throw out old priorities and to find the genuine internal worship from a jubilant heart—oh, when will our church be filled with the spirit of understanding love, striding towards a new Age? ■

NOTES

¹ Mark 2:21,22.

² *True Christian Religion*, Ch.X, ¶572 titled: Unless a man is born again, and, as it were, created anew, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. (heaven)

³ John 3:3. Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, unless a man is born again (or born from above), he cannot see the kingdom of God." (NIV)

⁴ Among many passages, AC 1175 stands out: "... external worship without ... internal (love and charity) is no worship." One may think also of the passage in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 6:7,8, TLB. "Do not recite the same prayer over and over, as the heathen do, who think that their prayers are answered by repeating them again ...")

⁵ The purely statistical relation to the quotes related to worship vs. regeneration is 13:17, if counted by pages in *Potts' Concordance*. In all the teachings, there is everywhere a logical subordination of worship as expression under regeneration as the essential transformation of all feelings and motives.

⁶ A new Self, called a new proprium (ego) is referred to and explained in many ways; a somewhat detailed explanation is in AC 141, AC 1937.

⁷ Guilt as the main motivation is rejected in

DP 320f. Instilling guilt is described as a function of the evil spirits, AC 751 (2) "Evil spirits ... accuse and condemn ..." Since sexuality is one the most frequent sources of guilt, and there is much hypocrisy in this field, the distinction between "adultery" and "fornication" is extremely important, C.L. 444-454.

⁸ TCR 571: "There are 2 states that man must enter and pass through ... the second state is formed of the goods of charity (love) ... the will flowing into the understanding ... the good of love comes to act the first part ..."

⁹ There are several treatments of the internal and external meanings of the Decalogue, each one from a slightly different viewpoint, so that they supplement each other. The most explicit is in AE 932-1028, yet incomplete (also published separately under the title "Religion and Life" by the Swedenborg Society, London in 1961). A shorter, yet very comprehensive treatment is in TCR, Ch. V. Nos. 283-331; a treatment on a high level of abstraction is in AC 8860-8912; a short summary in the *Doctrine of Life*, Nos. 62-91. There are also a number of collateral treatments, by Noble and others. Sewall "The New Ethics," etc.

¹⁰ Cf. Lee Sanella, M.D. "Kundalini" incl., cross-cultural aspects and case histories, an excellent treatment; 2nd. ed. 1977, H.S. Dakin Co. San Francisco.

¹¹ First coined by the German philosopher K.C. Krause, who was familiar with Swedenborg, and of wide influence in Spain and South America. (Encycl. of Philos. 1967, Vol. IV, p.363.)

¹² Cf. Rev. E. K. Bray *Where Heaven Begins*, Swedenborg Publ. Assoc. Brooklyn 1955. Especially Ch. IV "Heaven begins" and IX "Fellowship of Understanding."

¹³ Cf. Mircea Eliade *Yoga, Immortality and Freedom*, Princeton Univ. Press 1969 p. 155 "Acts" and "Sacrifices," also Ch. V. "Yoga techniques in Buddhism."

¹⁴ Cf. the research of Prof. Lawrence Kohlberg at Harvard on Moral Development, many publications.

Horand Gutfeldt, a Swedenborgian minister living in Berkeley, California, is a specialist in Egyptology.



Photo by Eric Allison

Fast drivers can see no farther than slow drivers, but they must look farther down the road to time their reactions safely. Similarly, people with great projects afoot habitually look further and more clearly into the future than people who are mired in day-to-day concerns.

These former control the future because by necessity they project themselves into it. They do not easily grow sad or old; they are seldom intimidated by the alarms and confusions of the present because they have something greater of their own, some sense of their large and coherent motions in time.

Robert Grudin
Time and the Art of Living

The Life Cycle of a Congregation

Martin F. Saarinen

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Several years ago I had a kind of "tower experience" in reading "Organizational Passages—Diagnosing and Treating Life Cycle Problems of Organizations" by Ichak Adizes in the Summer, 1979, issue of *Organizational Dynamics*. Adizes used the analogy of stages in human development to explain the rise and fall of organizations. There is much fertile ground to be plowed in transplanting these notions in the soil of the church organization, particularly the local congregation.

The life cycle of a congregation has little, if anything, to do with chronological time. A calendar cannot be used to predict the onset of a particular stage in the life cycle. It has to do with the relationship and balance of the following "gene structures" common to congregational life.

EPAI: The Gene Structures of the Congregation

(Note these in the last column of the chart.)

Energy

The "E" factor, named for its energizing function, predominates early in the development of the congregation, beginning with the glint in the eye of the Mission Board chairperson or the quickened pulse of an entrepreneurial preacher reading the populational statistics and other pertinent demographic data of a particular locality. It includes such things as vision and hope, excitement and enthusiasm, and a sense of potency and potentiality. The congregation with a high "E" factor is like

the "New Humanity," a community in the Spirit. Its mode of spirituality is charismatic, i.e., strongly influenced by the charisma of a leader or, perhaps, the charismatic movement.

Program

"P" stands for those specific programs and services undertaken by the congregation in response to the needs of its own membership, or its environment, or the ministry mandates of the broader church

The life cycle of a congregation has little, if anything, to do with chronological time.

which it supports. The congregation with a highly developed "P" factor corresponds to the "Body of Christ" image. It is oriented towards actions like giving food to hungry people, clothing the naked, providing "the cold cup of water" to the thirsty. "P" is located in external and may, incidentally, cause excitement within the congregation.

Administration

The "A" factor, developed in the rational domain of the corporate organism, spells out the conscious intentionality of the congregation in the form of mission statements, goals, objectives, budgets, and planning. It determines how the human and material resources of the congregation can be used most efficiently and effectively in the offering of programs and services which it deems important in actualizing the vision and fulfilling its mission. The congregation with a strong "A" is analogous to the "people of God" image with the sense of community

and connectedness. The "A" factor serves the functions of coordination (harmonizing the relationship of activities) and integration (relating activities to common purposes). Boundary setting, an important aspect of its work, is often expressed in questions of what is achievable.

Inclusion

"I" is for inclusion and relates to both individuals and groups within and outside the congregation. A high "I" congregation tends to image itself as a "Fellowship of Saints." Its members tend to be compassionate and open. Their spirituality is characterized by warmth and emotionalism. Theirs is an intimate God, whose presence is immanent in their relational patterns, norms, policies, and precedents which open and close doors to people in the congregation and the congregation in relation to its environment.

These four factors—Energy, Program, Administration, and Inclusion—can be considered the gene structures of the congregation. Notice how they combine differently in the accompanying chart. ■

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DESCRIPTION OF STAGES IN LIFE CYCLE

	Culture Type	Major Characteristics	Major Strengths	Major Weaknesses	Dangers	Developmental Intervention	Structure*
BIRTH	Star culture	Integrated around vision & charisma of founder	High levels of energy & enthusiasm	Insufficient membership base to support ministries	Spurious enthusiasm. Unresponsiveness	Broaden & maintain personal contacts	Epai
INFANCY	Process culture	Quality of relationships correlate with levels of energy & enthusiasm	Open & unrestricted inclusiveness, contagious enthusiasm	Undeveloped programs, conditional inclusiveness	Disillusionment. Erosion of membership & potential	Generate sense of community & mission, develop specific ministries	Epai
ADOLESCENCE	Busy bee culture	High energy level focused on development of programs & services	Program development, adaptiveness, doingness	Unrealistic idealism, leader burnout, program proliferation	Conflict over purposes & mission, founder's dilemma	Broaden member assimilation & participation in leadership; develop integrated approach to variety of ministries	EPai
PRIME	Wisdom Culture	Interaction between inner/outer, intentionality/inclusion, programmatic/visionary	Creative conflict. Pastoral & corporate responsibility	Lack of solutions. Vulnerability	Dominance of one or another polarity. Loss of sense of nearness	Develop conflict utilization skills among members, maintain flow between intra- & extra-dependency	EPai
MATURITY	Status quo culture	Well established fellowship structures, administrative procedures, staff, programs & support	Stability, sense of self-worth, continuity	Energetic but unenthusiastic	Unresponsiveness to opportunities & changed conditions	Analyze congregation's history & current context. Restate its mission	ePAI
ARISTOCRACY	Plantation culture	Good ol' boys' club. Busy but unenergetic	Efficiency. Strong fellowship among outsiders	Guardedness. Status consciousness. Exclusiveness.	Dwindling base of support. Loss of mission	Restore sense of God's presence in congregation's history & generate awareness of congregation's vocation	epAI
BUREAUCRACY	Dillusioned Macho culture	Golden Age no longer Maintaining one's turf personally & corporately	Strong sense of boundaries	Rigidity. Muteness. Defensiveness. Hostility. Suspicion	Unregenerateness. Ultimacy of institutional structure Personalizing systematic problems	Generate a new identity. Empower the the powerless.	epAi
DEATH	Artifact culture	Complete disintegration	Absorption into another ecclesial entity	Despair. Anomie. Complete loss of memory, identity, hope	No new life beyond. Ultimate power given to death	Construct a completely new ecclesial fellowship	

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*Capital letters in last column indicate greater shares of energy, program, administration, and inclusion.

244 The Pursuit Of Unhappiness

Robin Clements

If your family is like ours, you have recently heard the Declaration of Independence. In our family, it is a tradition that the oldest person present at dinner on the Fourth of July read this stirring declaration, and so, last night, we once more heard George III denounced in the most ringing terms. Thomas Jefferson certainly knew how to cut a King down to size.

But even if you have not recently read the Declaration, you probably remember some version of its second and most famous sentence.

We hold these truths to be self evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness.

To the signers, as to us today, these last three phrases seem to sum up the things that earthly government ought to allow its citizens: the right to Life, of course; the right to liberty, which the colonists felt so keenly they had been denied; and the right to pursue happiness—not to attain it, for no government can promise that, but just to chase it in whatever reasonable way one may wish.

If we were to judge the government that emerged from the events of 1776 on these grounds I think we would find that it has done a generally good job. With some exceptions, the American Government *has* granted us the right to live as we best can. Certainly compared to most other governments, ours has been a pretty good one.

One would assume, therefore, that most Americans would pursue happiness. Some do. But strangely, I do not think this is usually the case;

in fact, I would say that more often the exact opposite is the case. To put it badly, most of us pursue Unhappiness, nearly from the moment we wake until we finally fall asleep. This is not true of everyone, and for those blessed few who have achieved genuine serenity, this sermon is unnecessary. You may stop listening here if, through spiritual battles won, you have reached a state of true inward peace. I am lucky enough to know several people of whom this is true, and my life is enriched just by being near them.

I am sorry to say, however, that most of us have not found our peaceful center. We have a lot of behaviors that are actively bad for us—bad diet, bad attitude, bad karma. Temptation consists in succumbing to things we know to be bad for us, and we are all tempted, and most of us succumb. In doing so, we pursue unhappiness.

I once heard a man say that you could stop at any point in any day and, in silence and inner honesty, probably find at least one shockingly bad thought that had crossed your mind in the last hour. I remember the statement vividly because I pooh-poohed it, and changed the subject. He later beat me twice at chess, and while walking home I realized that in my fantasy his apartment had suddenly caught fire and he was watching his precious chess set burn up! I put the fire out as fast as I could, but it was a bad one—for me.

The deepest pain is in the mind, and through things like burning down our friends' apartments we feed our pride at the expense of our souls; we wound ourselves over and over, and usually we don't know it. Ever been tailgated on the freeway? What's your response? There is a great

range possible, of course, all the way from realizing that the person behind is in a great hurry and cheerfully pulling over, to keeping him boxed behind you and enjoying watching his rage mount. And which response contributes to our own happiness?

As I try to take the largest look at this subject, I see that the greatest amount of self-inflicted pain is probably the result of what Swedenborg would call uncharita-

Charity consists in doing what is right in every work and our duty in every office. If a judge administers justice for the sake of justice, he exercises charity; if he punishes the guilty and absolves the innocent, he exercises charity. . . . The priest who teaches truth and leads to good, for the sake of truth and good, exercises charity. But he who does such

comparisons and malice.

Take comparisons. Years ago I was asked to intervene in a Fourth Grade class that had gotten to be such a spiteful group of boys and girls that the teacher was nearly beside herself. Overt unkindness was becoming the norm, in that crude and artless way that only children would dare use. I spent a while talking with the students individually to see if I could get at the root, thinking I could find a perpetrator or two, cow them into submission and restore peace. Instead of an agent, however, I found a symptom. Nearly every student, whether naturally sweet-tempered or the naturally contentious, made statements comparing two students, and one of them was usually the speaker. "Yes, I did tell her her mission report wasn't good. I know she didn't even start to work until last weekend." . . . "Why shouldn't we (boys) get to play on the Upper Field? When they (the girls) are up there all they do is walk around and talk." . . . "I didn't invite her to my birthday because I don't like her. I don't like her because she is always telling us how rich she is. You can ask anyone: it's not just my opinion."

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I once heard a man say that you could stop at any point in any day and, in silence and inner honesty, probably find at least one shockingly bad thought that had crossed your mind in the last hour.

ble behaviors. "Charity," for Swedenborg, is a very important word, for it is the active aspect of Love for the Lord, and love for the neighbor. It is love in action, internal made external. "The first part of charity consists in looking to the Lord, and shunning evils because they are sins," Swedenborg writes, going on to say that even good deeds done by those who are inwardly un-charitable are of no use. "Good does not destroy evil if a man does not think about the evils in himself, and actually repent of them" (*Doctrine of Charity*, n. 7-10).

Furthermore, for Swedenborg, charity is far more than an ethereal attitude. It is every act we do once we are in the right relationship with the Lord, and there is a heavy emphasis on "act" in Swedenborg's universe.

things for the sake of self and the world does not exercise charity, because he does not love his neighbor but himself. (H.D., p. 101)

You wouldn't think this was an easy-to-miss path. It would seem that most people would recognize its innate sense: work on your relationship with the Lord every day, purge your thoughts of the uncharitable, "shun evils," as Swedenborg would say, and let the rest take care of itself. But most of us miss the path not monthly, but hourly, as my friend proved. Why?

The answer, as I suggested, is that we are pursuing unhappiness. We have those strong egos that flog us along the way to misery, suggesting revenges,

After half an hour if this I began to realize that these children were almost deliberately making the situation worse and worse. I say "almost," because I don't think Fourth Graders are that self-conscious, but the effect was very real. I can't say I solved it with a wave of the wand, but I did have a long talk with them as a group, and I told them that if they wanted to make themselves unhappy, they had found the best route. The more I thought about it, the more I realized this is not a Fourth Grade disease. We all do it, and it is a

never-failing method for unhappiness. Consider:

In a reverie, you find yourself comparing your troubles with the easy burden of a friend. Yours are great: a hereditary health problem, a constant struggle to make ends meet, no close friends, a high-stress job, and so forth and so forth. His are few: good health, a good income, time to develop warm friendships, a job with little real anxiety, and so forth, and so forth.

The more I thought about it, the more I realized this is not a Fourth Grade disease. We all do it, and it is a never-failing method for unhappiness.

But wait. Are you pursuing happiness? No, every item added to the list is making you unhappier, provoking and justifying your unhappiness.

Now try it the other way. In a reverie, you compare your state of life with that of a friend. You are in good health because you eat carefully and exercise well; you make a good income because you have a responsible job which you do well; and so forth and so forth. He has bad health which is little wonder considering what he eats; he earns little, but he doesn't work very hard; he has few friends because of his unpleasant personality, and so forth and so forth. But wait. Are you pursuing happiness? Not at all: you are trying to cover your own obvious unhappiness at his expense, and the real effect is to increase your already troublesome ego.

Nor does our pursuit of unhappiness stop with comparisons. At every moment we are given a chance to shun evils and to bring ourselves into charity, and all too often we fail: we are tempted

and we fail, and the result is malice, or anger, or jealousy, or some other form of evil wish. When we find ourselves in these states, like a man having a bad dream we ought to wake ourselves up; look up to heaven, and pray for the neighborly love that will sweep away this inner bile, remembering that God is always at our right hand to help us.

Striving for charity is, in fact, a life-and-death struggle. Swedenborg makes it clear that all the small struggles add up to the great choice which finally determines our character, and thus our fate. He writes,

All spirits are distinguished in the other life by this: Those who desire evil against others are infernal or diabolical spirits; but they who wish good to others are good and angelic spirits. A man may know which he is among, whether among the infernal spirits or the angelic. If he intends evil to his neighbor, thinks nothing but evil of him and also actually does evil when he can, and finds delight in it, he is among the infernals; . . . but if he intends good to his neighbor, and thinks nothing but good of him and actually does good when he can, he is among the angelic, and becomes an angel too in the other life. This is the criterion. Let everyone examine himself by it.

(AC, p. 1680)

On this Independence Day weekend, therefore, let us combine our American heritage with our Swedenborgian one, remembering not only that the nation was founded to allow us to pursue happiness, but also that the Lord provides us with the means of finding it. ■

Dr. Robin Clements, Ph.D., is currently the president of The San Francisco Swedenborgian Church. This sermon was delivered on July 5th, 1987.

The Blessed and the Blessed

Marlene Laughlin

We often hear people say or we say ourselves, he is really blessed. Maybe the statement is he is really blessed with athletic ability, she is blessed with intelligence. Maybe we say that he is gifted. Or maybe we talk of someone's life or even a whole family's life. They have led a charmed life; things just always turn out good for them. When we say things like that, that someone is blessed, it is about some quality that we admire or would like to have ourselves. It is a good thing, it is a blessing.

We don't often say things like, "It is a blessing for the family that Stan got sick and the family lost their home." Maybe we know that because of the lost job, the children in the family who were drifting around and not doing well were able to work together in helping at home and outside the home to earn money and forge a deep and lasting family tie that just wasn't there before. It had given the children a direction and purpose in life. We don't hear ourselves say something like, "How lucky I am to have suffered so much pain dealing with my boss. There was no one else who would understand. I felt so alone that I had to turn to God. That pain was truly a blessing

to me."

Now and then if it is obvious that a person was suffering from an incurable ailment we might say, it was a blessing that he is gone. He was ready to go. Sometimes we can see that death, pain and very difficult times can be blessings. Or is it that we are just trying to rationalize? We want to believe that our God is a caring, loving God, but sometimes things happen in our lives and in the lives of other people that just don't seem to fit the image that we have or want to have of our God. "If God is love and wisdom, why can't I be happy and live in the state of delight that Swedenborg spoke of so often?"

Let us look to the gospel of Matthew to see if we can come to any answers about this problem. Matthew's gospel opens with the story of Jesus' birth, and is then followed by the story of his baptism. Next, we learn of Jesus being deeply tempted, tormented by the devil. It is only after that temptation, that time of trial, that Jesus begins his ministry. In the subsequent fifth chapter the Sermon on the Mount, opening with the beatitudes, is the first of the teaching which is left to us.

Let us look at the series of events again. Birth, baptism, temptation, and then answering the call of God. I suggest to you that in this series of events, in this order lies the understanding answering the question of God's relationship to blessings and difficulty. These words of scripture say to us what is said in the secular language, "no pain, no gain." To come toward God is painful because it is something that happens to change us inside. When we are born we come into a set of circumstances:

home life, our parents, siblings, and our culture, small town, city, the country we live in and language we use. Each person's circumstances are unique, and they mold us inside and out. Then comes baptism. In our church baptism is usually a sacrament for infants. Swedenborg tells us that when a child is baptised angels are sent to be with and aid that child. It is thus a good choice made *for* us, but not *by* us. It is only when we choose to be confirmed that we make the kind of open choice Jesus made when he was baptised in his adult life. The choice we make is to proclaim to the world we are a part of, "I wish to become a member of a Christian church. I think that at this time I am ready to make a symbolic external statement of how I feel about the importance of God in my life."

Although both of these are important, let us look back at the series of things we are discussing relative to Jesus' life. After the baptism of Jesus came the time of temptation. Like our early family life, this is a particular situation that must be dealt with inside as well as outside. Temptation is a time of molding. It was for Jesus, and it is for us. It is in this time that we question God most severely. Remember Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane asking that the cup be taken from him. It was not. Later in the time of pain on the cross, Jesus said, "Father why have you forsaken me." Why am I left alone when I need you most? Do we not also ask these things of God in time of temptation and pain? Yet these are the very times that we often choose to make the important decision of coming to God for strength and help, or we choose to curse God and move from God in

hatred, anger, and rage.

These times of temptation are the times when we can become born again in the spirit. I have seen this happen over and over again when people join Alcoholics Anonymous. They come in great pain, often having lost the love and respect of their family and friends. Maybe they lost their jobs, health, and home. They are angry, vulnerable and depressed, but after a period of time they surrender to God's will, trying to understand the events of their lives from another perspective. They use their pain for growth; they use their newly found relationship with God to face what they must face and begin life again. Trying to do God's will as they can best discern it, they begin their ministry. They answer the call of God in the way they can best understand. I see people in the hospital do the same thing. Even those people who will not be able to live their life at all close to how they had done before they entered the hospital or how other people live their lives. Yet for them the period of temptation has given them a special quality of gentleness, of empathy, of closeness to God that they did not previously have. This is not true of all people in pain, suffering, or sorrow. It is a time of choice. That is what temptation is about: choices. It is the way that you react to your world that determines whether or not the time of temptation becomes for you a blessing or a curse. These times happen! What will you do? ■

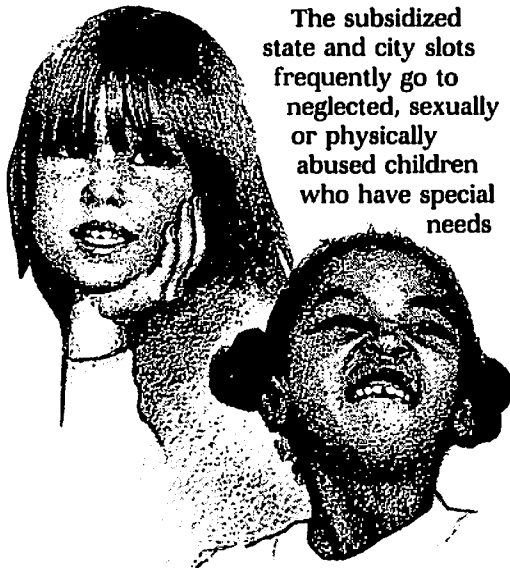
The Rev. Marlene Laughlin has just completed her first year of ministry at the New Jerusalem Church, Bridgewater, Mass.

Church and Day Care: Happy Union in Portland Maine

Cheryl Boykin

248 During the last two Conventions I have been frequently asked about the Day Care Program at the Portland, Maine New Church. This seems like a good medium for sharing that information, as well as for letting you know the important outreach work the Swedenborgian Church offers this community. We are a non-profit Day Care Center licensed by the state and have been in existence for fourteen years. Our financial support comes from grants given by the state, city, and county, and from fundraising and private sources. We average about 20 children on the enrollment at a time. We have four teachers (full and part-time), a foster grandparent, summer youth students, parent volunteers, and a part-time bookkeeper. The mainstreaming method works well for us. This means we have children ranging in backgrounds from one parent to two parent families, high income to low income, etc.

The subsidized state and city slots frequently go to neglected, sexually or physically abused children who have special needs



and require monitoring for safety reasons. With input from Child Protective, a Division of Human Services, and state provided therapists and guardians, we outline a recovery and safety program for these children. In less traumatic subsidized slots we provide care for children from high risk families, or from single parent families of low income in which the parent (usually the mother) has returned to school or is the only working provider and cannot possibly afford to pay the actual cost of child care. Our philosophy in working with all children is to provide socialization skills, creative and developmental opportunities, and a nurturing environment to heighten specific individual goals and a healthy self-esteem.

We have found being based in the Swedenborgian Church to be our most complementary location to date. There is a flowing interchange of ideas, with both groups providing support on a variety of levels (physical, emotional, strategic, etc.). It is easier for me to see the benefits the church has provided for us: such as tapping into the Child Day Care Project of the National Council of Churches and their Ecumenical Child Care Newsletter; or providing a practical economic situation that fits with our limited budget; or the Rev. Robert McCluskey helping to build the playground sandbox; or church representation and support on the Day Care Board. It is our reward to find a church that values useful service as a form of worship. From this practical beginning, the different needs of many are being served. ■

Cheryl Boykin, director of the Day Care Program housed in the Portland, ME Swedenborgian Church, is a practicing artist and a member of the Portland Church. She assisted with the Children's Program at the Tacoma Convention.

Conservation Guidelines

Patricia Lyons Basu

After sorting various documents relating to the history of the local Swedenborgian Society, the minister carefully staples and paper clips together related items. Two torn pages are repaired with scotch tape. He then places each stack, sorted by year, into a file folder and piles the folders into cardboard boxes, which are removed to the basement for storage until they can be sent to the Swedenborg School of Religion archives.

What's wrong with this picture?

Pratically everything.

The minister, with the best of intentions, has just mutilated a stack of original documents which contain valuable genealogical references and the only reliable records of his Society's history.

Acid, rust, and possibly water and insects are the means of destruction. It is no exaggeration to state that more damage has been done to property by paper clips and scotch tape in the hands of well-meaning secretaries than by spray paint in the hands of graffiti artists. The only difference is that the resultant damage in the latter case is obvious and immediate; in the former, it may take years before somebody notices the destruction and finds the time and money to do something about it.

In the September *Messenger Express*, I outlined the conservation crisis as it exists in libraries and explained why we need to begin now to rescue 19th century New Church periodicals before they

disintegrate on the shelves. But not only libraries need to be aware of sound preservation practices. Anyone who wants to preserve family records or who handles original papers which will eventually become part of our archives or who is involved in a local historical society needs to know how to handle, repair and store documents and other items to prevent, or at least delay, deterioration.

The following guidelines are especially directed at ministers and others involved in caring for church documents which will ultimately come to the SSR library.

1. Paper clips and staples rust, leaving brown marks on the paper. Use only stainless steel.

2. Scotch tape also leaves brown marks on paper and should never be used to repair important documents which are expected to last a long time.

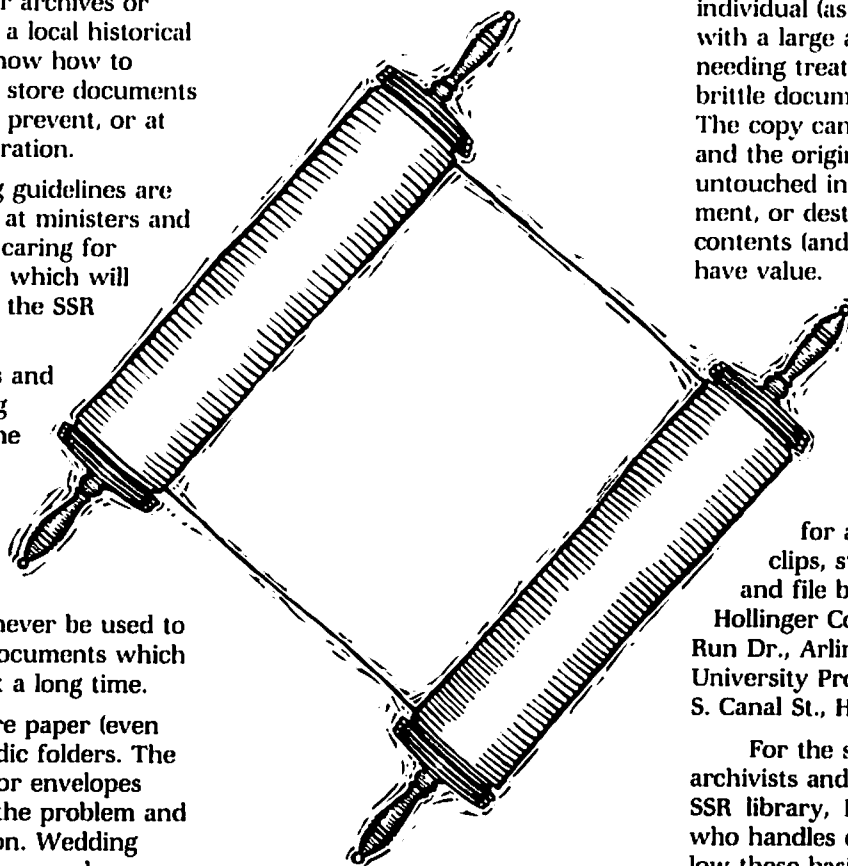
3. Do not store paper (even acidic paper) in acidic folders. The acid in the folders or envelopes merely aggravates the problem and hastens deterioration. Wedding gowns and other treasured non-paper items can also suffer damage from acid. Store, wrapped in alkaline tissue paper, in non-acidic boxes.

4. Never store important items in corrugated boxes, which emit substantial quantities of peroxides and lignin by-products. In other words, they will, over a long period, contribute to the destruction of papers stored in them.

5. Never store documents or books in basements where they may be damaged by water or insects.

6. Wooden shelves, although more attractive than gray metal, should never be used for the storage of archival material. Oak, especially, has a high formic acid content. Never use unfinished wooden bookcases or crates. If you

already have wooden bookcases, be sure they are sealed with 2 or 3 coats of polyurethane varnish, then "cured" or allowed to dry out for several weeks. Or, you can line



the shelves with heavy polyester to provide a barrier between the wood and the books or documents. For the same reason, avoid wooden filing cabinets with raw wood interiors.

7. Never file newspaper clippings inside books. Newsprint is highly acidic.

Of course, those of you who have collections of fiction, cook books, dictionaries and other items which are not being saved for posterity, need not worry about rusted paper clips or oak book shelves. But if you have important records of your family's history, or a cherished family Bible, be careful how you store such items or they will be brittle beyond use in 3 or 4 decades.

A simple test for brittleness is to bend back a corner of a page. If it breaks on the second fold, the paper is in an advanced stage of brittleness and should not be handled. The best way for an individual (as opposed to a library with a large amount of material needing treatment) to rescue a brittle document is to photocopy it. The copy can be used for reference and the original can be preserved untouched in a non-acidic environment, or destroyed if only the contents (and not the item itself) have value.

Photocopying is especially recommended for newspaper clippings which age very rapidly.

Two good sources for archival quality paper clips, staples, tape, folders and file boxes are: The Hollinger Corp., 3810 S. Four Mile Run Dr., Arlington, VA 22206; and University Products, PO Box 101, S. Canal St., Holyoke, Ma 01041.

For the sake of future archivists and researchers in the SSR library, I am urging everyone who handles church records to follow these basic preservation guidelines. Contact me if you have questions or need more information.

Dr. Basu is the librarian at the Swedenborg School of Religion.

A Layman's Thoughts On Peace

George Kessler

At the outset let's set the record straight about the author. He is an ordinary individual interested in whatever concerns man. Although he was born in the same city as Albert Einstein, his background is very much like that of Dr. Albert Schweitzer. Having spent his childhood in Alsace, he inherited its spirit, which the Statue of Liberty symbolizes. A lifelong truth seeker without a college education, he is an elemental and independent thinker, a non-respecter of persons, who speaks only for himself. As such, however, he may be speaking for all humanity. His name is not important, but hopefully the reader will find the thought cogent.

What does one see in looking at the world today? Is it not non-thinking, hypocrisy and confusion stemming from the rule of the love of self and the world? Every faction seeks power or advantage only for itself. Few are the individuals or groups striving for the common good. Those that do are often branded traitors to their country and its panoply of false gods. A discredited vice-president characterized a plurality of citizens as semi-slaves with the words 'silent majority' and unfortunately in that he spoke the truth. In recent history there has been outstanding material but no concomitant spiritual progress. Mankind as a whole, since the world has shrunk, is at the verge of suffering the fate of every previous civilization. When men stand for nothing, they will suffer everything. Any newspaper will confirm that fact.

The question at hand is peace. Is peace possible despite the pessimistic picture the present presents? The answer is an unqualified yes. They are wrong who hold the belief that there will always be wars. That very assumption is a major stumbling block on the road to peace. It projects man as something lower than a beast, incapable of growth. It denies or minimizes the importance of Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Schweitzer and a host of other peace workers

as well as the achievement of prolonged peace in various parts of the world in the past and today. Its most deleterious effect is the inhibiting of the average citizen from entering the struggle for peace, the hope of which can never be fully extinguished. Peace is the natural goal of man and it will be achieved.

Man has supposedly fought a war to end all wars but did not accomplish peace. Armed conflict,

They are wrong who hold the belief that there will always be wars. That very assumption is a major stumbling block on the road to peace.

regardless of idealistic slogans, is an expression of hate, which never produces a genuine 'peace' treaty or initiates an era of brotherhood. Peace awaits man's willingness to devote as much of himself to its cause as he has to hostilities in the past.

Why does peace seem so distant at present? Humanity is at the stage of the juvenile, who considers himself wiser than his parents and insists on having his own way. His religious thinkers proclaim God dead, when in reality man is dead to God. His scientists and economic systems pollute his environment. His academia, media, medicine and politics pollute his thoughts and himself. He does not reflect that a tree blossoms and bears fruit as it did a million years ago and will a million years in the future. He prides himself on landing on the moon, when he should feel a sense of shame for having taken so long to accomplish it. He did not, after all, create even the least of the laws in building the space craft or the mission. When

was E not equal to MC? A student of humanity might even see the feat as a step toward man's annihilation.

Man is placing his hope for peace in the United Nations as a world government, which in effect would raise it into godhood. That is a false hope. Government is not a magic wand. If the individual is becoming a mere cipher in today's democracies, he will be even less under a super government. Absolute power corrupts absolutely. An international state will only lead to slavery of the *Brave New World* or 1984 variety, not peace.

Is peace possible? Yes, definitely. If that were not so, there would have been no Johnny Appleseed, no St. Francis of Assisi, no Dr. Albert Schweitzer, no Mahatma Gandhi. No one, in other words, could enjoy peace of the soul. A tranquil border between the United States and Canada would also be an impossibility.

If peace is more than an impossible dream, the laws upon which it is based are discernible. "There is no way to peace; peace is the way," is unfortunately an inadequate glittering generality. It touches on the means and ends but omits the primary factor of cause.

What is the bedrock upon which peace, whether personal, national, international or spiritual, is built? It is God, Who is Life, Love, Truth, Justice and Order. Itself in immensity and from eternity to eternity. The individual blessed with peace of mind acknowledges consciously or unconsciously the Creator, accepts the world as it is and lives according to the basic laws of love and truth. World peace can have no other foundation.

Man, the egotistical stripling, is not yet wise enough to search above and beyond himself. He either denies or doubts the existence of a Divinity, Who is above all creeds and denominations. He follows in the footsteps of his forefathers, whose every civilization succumbed to immorality, and is now facing extinction. The external

Good, however will lead him in spite of himself toward peace.

What does peace demand of man? That he shoulder every responsibility that life entails. Man was not made a puppet to be manipulated but the unique creature with free will able to select his destiny. It is his task to test and retest his premises and beliefs so that he will not consider myths to be truths and truths to be myths. There is but One Lord of the uni-

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verse and His laws are immutable, no matter what the degree of perceptive power in the individual. The sun rises in the east and shines on the faithful and the infidel alike. "Give me liberty or give me death," said Patrick Henry; but the man, who does not exercise his God-given freedom, is spiritually dead already in life.

A modern poet wrote that free men set themselves free. It is only they, the truly free, who have the strength of love and truth and will bear the burden of transforming their nations into free societies and foster genuine peace.

They will assume the responsibility not only for government of the free, by the free and for the free in fact as well as in form, but also for an economic system based on the same principles. There is no true democracy where the government has more power than is necessary for the common welfare, or any other agency than the people controls their economic fate. The free know themselves to be accountable for their education, their

mental and physical health. They make it their duty to fulfill their various roles such as citizen, employer, employee, parent, friend, and neighbor within the laws of life. It is only such a people who can bring the light of peace to the world.

When will the age of peace begin? Since the foundation of peace is the acknowledgment of God, an acceptance of the world and an adherence to the interdependent laws of truth and love, that age will arise when there is a large enough "peace corps," true revolutionaries who will wage it with the same zeal the American forefathers fought for the ideal of freedom. Since God is love, sooner or later there will be peace on earth. The only question is: will it be before or after a rain of atomic bombs?

*It's up to man to choose;
God does not force his views.*

The foregoing paragraphs are but a digest of the author's thoughts on peace, on which he has meditated from time to time for over sixty years. He hopes he has not omitted any salient points and regrets he has not yet developed a fluid prose. He has never been satisfied with the slogan, "the greatest good for the greatest number"; he offers, in conclusion, what he believes will be the watchwords of the coming age of peace: *one for all and all for one.* ■

*George Kessler resides in Maywood,
New Jersey.*

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