

**THE  
MESSENGER  
EXPRESS**

September  
1987

*Official Publication of the  
General Convention of  
Swedenborgian Churches*

## Choose the Stars

*Jill Kingslake*

There is an old jingle,  
"Two men looked out from prison bars;  
One saw mud, and the other saw stars."

Which of them saw the world as it really was? Both of them had a correct, though partial, vision. For there undoubtedly was mud; and there were undoubtedly stars. We have to admit that we live constantly in an environment that is both evil and good; but neither the evil nor the good is ours until we accept or appropriate it. The strangely sad fact is that our unregenerate nature responds avidly to the evil. What kind of article does your eye fall on first in a newspaper? The tragedies, murders, disaster? The fact that these are "news" more than the thousands of quiet acts of goodness and joy proves how prone we are to see the mud rather than the stars. "Did you hear what happened in . . . ?" will always attract attention and is almost certain to be an account of some horrific incident; and the fact that we have such a tendency to become absorbed in such things accounts for much of our sickness, physical as well as mental.

Does this mean that by stopping our ears and pretending that such evils do not exist we shall be healthy and whole? By no means! Acknowledge the mud—it is useful for growing things—but choose the stars! Choose carefully and deliberately what you desire to associate yourself with. You will soon find that you need help from outside of yourself to do this; you are, in fact, thrown back upon God. Many people are helped, in this choice between good and evil, by an awareness of guardian angels: we are taught that the Lord holds us in equilibrium between good spirits and evil spirits, and that we are free to choose to appeal to either. When we call upon our good angels to help us, we are strengthened and healed.

Some find that a direct approach to the Lord is more realistic for them: they may feel that they can "see" the Lord Jesus Christ more clearly than an unknown angelic presence, because we can learn so much about Jesus in the Gospels. But, in either case, "What gets your attention, ultimately gets you."

This is not self-hypnosis. It is an awareness that the real person we are does not have to be formed automatically by our circumstances in life. We sign our own death sentence when

### CONTENTS

#### Articles

- 205 Choose the Stars  
*Jill Kingslake*
- 206 A Real Encounter  
*Eric Allison*
- 207 New Old Organ in Urbana  
*Barbara Mackey & Carl Yenetchi*
- 208 The Acid Test  
*Patricia Lyons Basu*
- 209 Post-Scripts Convention '87  
*Lon Elmer*
- 210 A New Messenger  
*James Lawrence*

#### Departments

- 208 Opinion
- 209 Eclectica
- 211 Commencements

we say: "I am an arthritic alcoholic, polio-case," or even, "I am quick-tempered, sensitive, reserved"—words that sound milder and more excusable, but may merely be cover-ups for a dangerous state, spiritually. And because we are all one, we harm ourselves just as much when we say of others: *He* is a hypocrite, hippie, communist," or whatever spells condemnation to us. I am a child of God, and my brother is too. Look within the house of outward flesh and see the spirit which is continuously being created perfect by God, the only Creator of life. If the house I live in is shabby, I do not have a shabby character, although there is a danger that I may acquire one unless I do what I can to improve my house. If I accept the shabbiness and constantly bewail and resent it, I too may become shabby. But as soon as we turn to God, the only Source of all Good, and enter into a state of consciousness of his GOOD, we are "healed." Horatio Dresser, in his little book *Spiritual Healing*, says: "Divine goodness cannot flow into what is negative. The change from the negative to the affirmative is the first step in personal reformation. It then becomes possible for the Divine Life to operate unimpeded . . . With reception, freedom begins. External changes follow changes in attitude, affection, will . . . When a person turns toward God in a state of *affirmative receptivity* making no self-claims, the inner life is brought into correspondence, adjustment and harmony." ◀

*Jill Kingslake resides in Bath, England. This piece first appeared in Lifeline, the monthly magazine for the General Conference of Swedenborgian Churches based in England.*

## A Real Encounter

*Eric Allison*

It was with hesitation that I decided to write this article for the *Messenger*. I hesitated because I did not want to subject myself or those involved to the scepticism which is inevitable when something is shared in a public forum. However, I also know that the faith of many non-sceptics is strengthened by reading of such experiences. After talking again with several of those who were there, I feel certain that the following account is an accurate description of what happened.

It was May 1985 at Williams' cottage on the Severn River in Northern Ontario. Fourteen of us from the Church of the Good Shepherd had come there for a weekend retreat. As Saturday was drawing to a close, it would be more than trite to describe our day as being a "nice day." The "something special" that happens when people gather in the name of the Lord happened. We felt the presence of the Lord in the warmth and openness of deepened friendships, but that was just the beginning.

After dinner I led a group exercise called "The Healing of Memories." Normally it is something that is done with only one other person. Put simply, it consists of going back to a painful memory. The person does not just remember the event; they are really to go back to the feelings they had, to see the faces that

were there, to smell the smells, and hear the sounds; to, in effect relive the experience. The difference being that once the person is back to this condition (that they would rather forget) the Lord appears right there with them to give them the support they needed, or to speak for them, or defend them in some way. The facilitator is with the person only to ask open questions such as "What is the Lord doing now? What is the Lord saying now?" etc., and asks them to report what is happening.

This is more than a therapeutic technique. I believe it is a way of praying. This was used at S.N.A.P. programs many times with very healing results. We were often amazed by what we heard people say. Often the words they reported the Lord saying were so uncharacteristic of themselves that we KNEW it must be the Lord helping them to heal a painful memory.

This, then, was the method I was using that night, but it was with a group and I really had my doubts that it could work. Nevertheless, I tried to adapt the procedure and went ahead. As I led the group I felt mostly that what I was doing was not being appreciated and that they were somewhere far away wishing I would hurry up and get this over with I was wrong. When I asked the group to report they

### THE MESSENGER EXPRESS

September 1987  
Vol. 207, No. 8  
Whole Number 5118

Rev. James F. Lawrence, Editor  
Ethelwyn Worden, Advisor  
Christina La Conte, Design

Editorial Address:  
THE MESSENGER  
2107 Lyon Street, San Francisco, CA 94115

Published monthly, except for July, by the Swedenborgian Church (founded 1817, incorporated 1861 as the General Convention of the New Jerusalem in the United States of America).

Business & Subscription Address:  
Central Office  
48 Sargent Street, Newton, MA 02158

The opinions of the contributors do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editor or the Department of Communication, or represent the position of the church.  
Subscription free to members of the Swedenborgian Church; non-members, \$8.00 a year; foreign \$15.00 a year; gift subscription from a member, \$5.00; single copies \$1.00.  
**Deadline for material: Six weeks before 1st day of the month of issue.**

---

had experienced, what they told me was extraordinary.

Cathy began, "When you said go back to some other time, I didn't do that. I just stayed right here. I had my eyes closed, but I was right here. I asked the Lord to come into the room and be with us and just when I started to put my attention toward imagining him coming into the room, I heard his voice say, 'Cathy, I'm already here.' I looked, and there he was standing in the doorway. He wore a long robe, just as you have seen in pictures. Then, he began to walk around the room, touching people." Karen interrupted asking, "What did he do when he got to me?" "I think what he did was to stand behind your chair then he leaned over the top and put his arms around you," Cathy said. Karen began to weep, saying, "That's what I felt."

We were all stunned. Others asked Cathy, "Can you remember what he did when he got to me?" She reported what she remembered. What she told them she saw the Lord do was what they had experienced! Some of the group members did not ask Cathy and only sat in silence. Later, some came to me and explained what had happened to them. All members of the group did not feel as though the Lord had literally walked up to them and touched them. But everyone except me experienced a special kind of warmth. All of us knew that we had, indeed, been blessed by the Lord's presence.

Retrospectively, it seems apparent that I did not have the nurturing experience that others did, because I was too preoccupied with myself. I was worried about leading the exercise correctly, etc. I blocked out the Lord's presence. Most certainly the Lord was there. Of course, one could say, "Well, the Lord is always there," and that is true enough. Maybe that is just the point. As the Lord said to Cathy, "I'm already here." The Lord is with us all the time, and yet we block him even when he is tapping us on the shoulder. I did not experience what many in the group felt that evening, but to see what happened to them still touches me. ◀

---

## New Old Organ in Urbana

*Barbara Mackey and Carl Yenetchi*

When you enter the Urbana University Chapel, home of the Urbana Society, you will see an imposing tracker organ on your left in the back of the church. It looks as though it might have been there since the church was constructed in 1870, but if you look closely at a small brass plate on the left of the case you will see that it was rededicated on May 3, 1987.

The organ was a gift to Urbana University from the Pittsburgh Society of the New Jerusalem. In fact, it was the first pipe organ given to any church by Andrew Carnegie, in 1873. The organ was built by John Roberts of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and rebuilt and installed in the Urbana Church by Harry J. Ebert of Pittsburgh, who also served as the organist for the Pittsburgh Society for many years.

Pittsburgh Society church records contain a brief reference on June 22, 1873 of a gift of \$2000 "from a friend of the Society"<sup>1</sup> for an organ. On September 14, 1873 Andrew Carnegie was identified as the donor! The new organ was installed in 1874 and it was said to "almost split the rafters."<sup>2</sup> Unlike so many myths which have grown up around old organs, this story is easily confirmed from an old photograph of the interior of the church taken around 1900. The Carnegie organ sits in the rear of the church gallery. The ceiling over the organ had indeed been raised and is clearly visible in the picture. The organ served in that building from 1874 to 1906 and was reinstalled in a new brick church in 1906 which was its home until 1986.<sup>3</sup> Since November 1987, the organ has been used in formal worship services and celebrations of the Urbana Society as well as special events such as an Alumni Weekend Concert and the Baccalaureate service for the University. A series of organ concerts is planned in the future.

Andrew Carnegie wrote in 1902 that giving organs to churches came early in his career. His gift to the members of the Swedenborgian Church in Allegheny, where his father had attended, came after he declined to contribute to the building of a new church. Carnegie's knowledge of music was not profound, although he had a great love of Scottish folk songs. In his youth he heard an organ in a country home and vowed that if he became wealthy, he would have one for himself. Carnegie believed that organ music was an important part of worship, and he also recognized the important role of the organ in the musical education of the public.

Participating in the rededication service and recital were Dr. Paul Bunnell, president of Urbana University; Rev. Dr. Dorothea Harvey, pastor of the Urbana Society; Harry Ebert, organ builder, and James Zehner representing the Pittsburgh Society. Trudy Faber, associate professor of music at Wittenberg University, performed the rededication recital.

A cassette tape of Mrs. Faber's recital and Dr. Harvey's sermon for May 3 is available. The concert program includes works by Bach, Pachelbel, Eberlin, Brahms, Mendelssohn and others. The cost of the tape is \$6.50 including postage (make checks payable to the Urbana Society) and is available from Dr. Barbara Mackey, 727 South High Street, Urbana, Ohio 43078. ◀

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Excerpts from the Minutes of the First New Jerusalem Society of Pittsburgh and Its Vicinity by Gilbert T. Heddaeus.

<sup>2</sup> "First Carnegie Pipe Organ" by Robert Sutherland Lord in the *Bicentennial Tracker*, the Organ Historical Society, 1976.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

*Barbara Mackey is president of the Urbana Society and plays the Carnegie organ regularly for worship services. Carl Yenetchi is Chaplain at Urbana University.*

---

---

---

## The Acid Test

Patricia Lyons Basu

No, it's not a new scheme for adding fiber to your diet, just a dramatic way to impress upon you the fact that paper is highly acidic. And as everyone knows, acid burns. At this moment, your copy of *The Messenger* is self-destructing in your hands. You won't notice it unless you clip an article or an obituary and try to save it for a few years. But at the Swedenborg School of Religion library, we are painfully aware of the effects of the acid in books, periodicals and archival documents which are burning to dust on our shelves.

The problem of deteriorating books has reached crisis proportions. The Library of Congress estimates that 25% of their massive collection is so brittle that it is in unusable condition. A study of public libraries in the 1970s concluded that 97% of the non-fiction books published in the first half of this century won't last until the beginning of the next. A published book on acidic paper will have a useful life of only 30-50 years, in contrast to a book printed on alkaline paper, which has a life of 500 to 1000 years.

But what about those Gutenberg Bibles and other rare books 5 or more centuries old, to say nothing of those surviving scrolls from ancient Egypt? The acid paper problem did not develop until the 19th century when manufacturers began using wood pulp combined with acid bleach in the making of the paper. The chemical combination produced very white paper, but the sulphuric acid continues to react. As a result, paper becomes brittle, darkens in color and breaks from the bindings.

As early as 1829, at least one person, John Murray, an Englishman, realized that paper was not what it used to be. He performed some tests on his Oxford Bible published in 1816

and reported: "To the tongue it presents a highly aluminous and astringent taste; and on a heated metallic disc, evolves volatile acid matter, exhibiting white vapors. . . ." Luckily, the SSR librarian does not have to lick her way through the Swedenborgian collection to test for acidity. The invention of the pH pencil has made life considerably easier.

Ironically, works representing years of scholarly research are being printed on self-destructing paper, whereas the paper used to wrap tobacco in the manufacture of cigarettes is acid-free.

The only way to rescue the intellectual content of our archives is to transfer that content to another medium immediately. Some of the material will be microfilmed; some will be photocopied onto pH neutral paper and stored in a temperature and humidity controlled environment. We will begin our preservation project

by rescuing old copies of *The Messenger* because it is

the most used of the New Church periodicals and contains news of Church members in addition to articles on Swedenborgian thought.

If you would like to preserve the history of the Church and your family's contribution to Swedenborgian life in this country, you can help. Any size donation will be welcome and will help us to preserve the past as a resource for future generations.

In my research in the area of library preservation, I am constantly reminded of the alleged final words of the Buddha, 2500 years ago: "All composite things are subject to decay. Work out your own salvation with diligence." It's a great motto for librarians who are working today with limited budgets to salvage not thousands, but millions of items, especially from the 19th century. Unfortunately, nirvana is not attainable in one incarnation—or in one librarian's tenure. Salvation is a long process, but at least we have begun.

If you would like more information on the preservation crisis or would like to make a donation to the SSR Library Preservation Fund, please contact me at the SSR Library, 48 Sargent St., Newton, MA 02158. ◀

*Dr. Patricia Lyons Basu is Librarian and Lecturer in the History of Religions at the Swedenborg School of Religion.*

---

---

## OPINION

### Greetings from Obed Mooki

Dear Editor,

We are grateful for your lovely production of *The Messenger*. It is so very well done! Please keep up the good work. As for the covers—Oh! they're fantastic!! We have just returned from our Annual Conference. They send their love and admiration.

We do not have much peace yet. We will need your continued prayers.

**Obed Mooki**  
Orlando, South Africa

---

---

## PostScripts—Convention '87

Lon Elmer

Beads of drizzle running down my windshield blurred the ferry as it approached the dock. I'm on my way to pick up Post-Conventioneers over on Vashon Island. Earlier, I'd sat alone in the UPS dining hall reflecting on a year's worth of preparations, and the short—all too short—time we were all together.

A sea-gull calls out from a piling. Depending on the weather and how one is feeling, a sea-gull's call can be excited, cheerful, mournful, or laconic. His singular squawk sounded sad. I was feeling kind of empty, feeling the letdown which follows a period of good, high-energy activity. I was missing you all and your comforting warm buzz which greeted me whenever I entered the dining hall.

I thought about breakfast this morning, and how—when I was alone in the room—I could still feel your presence; your smiles, your shouts, your half-whispered confidences, your plans, your hopes, your love. Maybe it was my need to be with you that kept you in my heart. Maybe it was my unfulfilled goal to share a meal with each of you. Maybe it was my need to keep from thinking: "Well, that's over. Now what?" Whatever it was, my reverie is over. Reality is here in the form of loading the ferry. Time to get on with my life.

Someone said to me, "Boston is going to have their work cut out for them to match this year's convention." Maybe. The truth is, this convention was not meant as a challenge. But, on another level it is.

We did not plan the convention with the idea of one-upping anyone. We merely utilized the resources (people, cultural activities, natural features) of our environment. We gave ourselves over to the project, following the Doctrine of Uses, and ended up creating a setting which was bigger and better than anyone anticipated. This, in turn, gave all

of us the opportunity and physical/mental/spiritual space in which to expand.

I know I expanded. Not just in the waist, but also in my understanding of appreciation for Swedenborg's teachings, especially as they apply to the incredible change taking place both inside General Convention and outside in the world-at-large.

These are exciting times. For some, thought, the times are scary. Perhaps we would do well to remember that fear lives in small places, in the darkened corners of our minds. Fear, when brought to the well-lit center of our consciousness, dissipates when we let it.

If there is any challenge being put forward, it is to continue planning and thinking big—just as Rev. Jay Lee spoke of on Sunday—utilizing *all* of our human, cultural, environmental, and financial resources to the max. The bigger the dream, the more satisfying the realization. The bigger the space—both inside and outside—the more room we have as individuals and as a group in which to expand, to grow, to enjoy ourselves and our Swedenborgian perspective. And, isn't that what we really want?

I'm looking forward to being with you all in Boston for Convention '88. I'm also anticipating meeting folks attending convention for the first time, to share in their excitement over finding a church home in which they can grow.

Thank you all for allowing us to share our part of the country with you. Thank you all for giving us this opportunity to serve. ◀

---

---

## ECLECTICA

### Swedenborgian Church Joins Court Brief Opposing Creationist Science

From its inception, the Swedenborgian Church has stressed a complementary relationship between science and religion. In addition, it strongly supports the principle of separation of church and state to ensure the values of religious freedom and pluralism. With this as a foundation, the Swedenborgian Church joined the National Council of Churches in a court brief to strike down the Balanced Treatment Act of Louisiana, which required the balanced treatment of evolutionary science and creationist science in public schools.

It is the view of this brief that the Balanced Treatment Act lacked a secular purpose, that it was, in effect, advancing religion through public school curricula, that it prefers one religious point of view over others, and that it had a detrimental effect on religion by trivializing and secularizing important religious beliefs. The Supreme Court struck down the Balanced Treatment Act on June 19, 1987—New Church Day.

### 200th Anniversary of First New Church Worship Service

The first worship service of the Swedenborgian sect was held at the home of Thomas Wright, 6 Poultry Road, on July 31, 1787. Seven persons received the sacrament of the Holy Supper, and five persons were baptized into the newly formed faith. In November of that year, a small chapel in Great East Cheap bore the motto: "Now it is allowable"—a quote from Swedenborg's writings that has now become legendary. The Rev. Richard H. Tafel and his wife Linda represented the General Convention at the 200th Anniversary service in England.

## New Home for Near-Death Studies

210

The International Association of Near-Death Studies is undergoing a reorganization and has changed its address. The non-profit and volunteer organization exists primarily to investigate near-death experiences, to provide support for near-death experiencers and to promote thoughtful and professional study of the near-death phenomena. This new newsletter, *Revitalized Signs*, is edited by a Swedenborgian, Leon Rhodes, of Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania. Correspondence pertaining to research should be addressed to IANDS, Dept. of Psychiatry, University of Connecticut Health Center, Farmington, CT 06032. For the newsletter or other organization matters, write to: IANDS, Box 23, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009. This is an area in which Swedenborgians should be leading.

## Poster Contest for Tricentennial

Leon Rhodes, who coordinates "Information Swedenborg" in preparation for the 1988 series of events and activities celebrating the 300th anniversary of Swedenborg's birth, is sponsoring a poster contest to further this effort. Prizes are being offered for those chosen, and the winners will be produced for a wide distribution.

- The posters should be eye-catching
- Design should be for 1 or 2 colors
- Line Drawings are preferred (no half-tones)
- Supply drawings in black on white
- Standard sizes no larger than 11" x 17"
- Include a blank space for added message

Message and wording ideas are needed also. Send all correspondence to: Information Swedenborg, Box 23, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009. ◀

## A New Messenger: Responding to Needs

*You are holding in your hands the first issue of The Messenger Express, which will appear in the months of September, November, January, March and May. In August, October, December, February, April and June, you will receive an enhanced magazine, such as the last convention issue (August '87). July will continue to be a vacation month.*

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

*By going to this new publications strategy, the "magazine" issues will be bigger and better than in the past, because we will be producing six of them, instead of eleven. The greater number of pages also better justifies the colored covers. The newsletter will require considerably less time, energy and money in the alternate months, but will keep the bloodlines of communications flowing throughout Convention. There will be at least as many total pages printed annually under the new arrangement as in the past.*

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

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

Save these dates!  
**CONVENTION 1988**  
June 29—July 3  
**Pre-Convention Meetings**  
June 25—29  
at  
**Lasell Junior College**  
**Newton, Massachusetts**

## COMMENCEMENTS

### Baptism

**Urgese**—Zachary Osgood Urgese, son of John and Debra (Osgood) Urgese, was baptized into the Christian faith on August 2, 1987, at the Church of the New Jerusalem, Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. David L. Rienstra officiating.

### Confirmations

**Bell and Bell**—Jill D. Bell and Reuben P. Bell, Jr. were confirmed into the life of the General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches on August 9, 1987 at the Church of the New Jerusalem, Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. David L. Rienstra officiating.

**Dolley, Dolley, and Richardson**—Shawn Dolley, Shelley Dolley, and Dana Richardson were confirmed into the life of the General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches on July 26, 1987 at the Church of the New Jerusalem, Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. David L. Rienstra officiating.

### Deaths

**Clarke**—Alice L. Clarke, longtime member of the Brockton, Massachusetts New Jerusalem Church, entered the spiritual world on June 20, 1987 at Goddard Memorial Hospital. A memorial service was held on June 23, 1987, Charles Clarke officiating.

### New Addresses

**Eldon and Annella Smith**  
4144 Campus Avenue  
San Diego, CA 92103  
(Eldon is Probationary Lay Leader of the San Diego Society.)

**Rev. Susan Turley-Moore**  
2414 Ponderosa Road  
Rescue, California 95672

## Special Fund Available For WOMEN'S ALLIANCE MEMBERS

For The Convention 1988  
Swedenborg Tricentennial Celebration  
To Be Held In Newton, Massachusetts

Room, board and registration may be available upon request for those who have not been able to attend recent conventions because of the expense. This fund is made available by **THE MITE BOX, 1987.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Church Affiliation \_\_\_\_\_ or isolated \_\_\_\_\_

Brief explanation of need \_\_\_\_\_

When did you last attend a convention \_\_\_\_\_

How many times have you attended \_\_\_\_\_

Are you a member of Alliance \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to: Polly Baxter, President  
4720 Bel Pre Road  
Rockville, MD 20853

**Deadline: January 15, 1988**

*(Gifts given on a First Come Basis)*

## The St. Paul Society Is Seeking A New Church Minister

*If you are interested please write to:*

Josephine Cowern, Secretary  
1457 St. Paul Ave. #9  
St. Paul, MN 55116

NONPROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
NEWTONVILLE, MA  
PERMIT NO. 53397

General Convention of the New Jerusalem  
*The Messenger*  
48 Sargent Street  
Newton, MA 02158

---

## CENTRAL OFFICE MEMO

*Ethelwyn Worden*

Convention's Central Office looks forward to the first meetings of the new Cabinet and Support Units this Fall, and to working with those groups, the executive committee and others to get Convention's new structure running smoothly after its beginning in July at the Tacoma convention.

We would like to remind our readers, meanwhile, that the Office maintains the Convention Master Calendar as well as the master mailing lists, and that we hope to receive additions and corrections to both lists as quickly as churches can supply them. This will help us help you to avoid overlap problems of meetings and problems of *Messengers* going astray, among other things.

To keep you apprised of how things are shaping up for Fall, we include the calendar through the beginning of November.

### CONVENTION CALENDAR—Fall 1987

#### September

- 14 Swedenborg Foundation Board Meeting  
SSR Registration, Faculty meetings
- 18-20 SSR Fall Retreat, Ipswich Mass.  
Middle Atlantic Assoc. Retreat, Cape May, NJ

#### October

- 1 - 4 Investment Committee, Support Units and Cabinet meetings at SSR
- 4 - 7 Committee on Admission to the Ministry, at SSR
- 2 - 4 Ohio Assoc. Meeting
- 16-18 Pacific Coast Assoc. Meeting, Orange, CA  
SSR Managers & Directors, at SSR
- 19 Swedenborg Foundation Board Meeting
- 22-24 Urbana Board of Trustees Meeting, Urbana University
- 25 Massachusetts Assoc. Meeting

#### November

- 4 - 6 National Council of Churches Governing Board Meeting,  
Jacksonville, Fla.
- 9 Swedenborg Foundation Board Meeting



*If all religion relates to life, then time must be a pivotal spiritual subject, because more people seem to be struggling with the lack of it than ever before.*

*Jeremy Rifkin, the increasingly prominent ethicist, has a new book out called Time Wars. His basic point is that time isn't a thing, but a concept. Furthermore, our understanding about time as a concept is undergoing radical change. How we conceptualize time mirrors the cultural structures of the day. For instance, in the middle ages the seasons set the tempo for life, for in this pre-industrial world, agriculture was the dominating reality. Strangely, it was the Benedictine monks who revived the Roman concept of the "hour" to order the day at the monastery, and it was they who invented the clock. Social historian Lewis Mumford cites the clock as the most potent invention that reorganized agricultural society into an industrial age. Clocks dissociate time from events, conveying the impression that time is fixed, objective, and independent. Quite plainly, our sense of time has changed sharply during the last 500 years. With it our understanding of the universe has undergone a revolution. Isaac Newton and Adam Smith both described the universe as a vast clockwork mechanism.*

*We are today rapidly moving into a new paradigm, and though it contains great promise, its lopsidedness has placed us in peril. We now live in an information universe, with the key image being the computer. That this paradigm has now largely supplanted the old paradigm in the minds of most modern and urban Americans is not much in dispute.*

*Computers impact profoundly our sense of reality. Their electronic pulse-beat, the nanosecond, measures one billionth of a second—far less than what we can consciously experience. A vast percentage of us are stressing out,*

*burning out, freaking out, as we try to pace ourselves in a reality where time is organized at a speed beyond the realm of consciousness. The tool that was designed to allow us to catch up has itself tremendously accelerated the flow of activity in society.*

*Part of the solution lies in a much more spiritual understanding of time. Swedenborg supports Einstein's relativity theories, seeing time as something that relates to human consciousness. Time is a relative dimension allowing our finite minds to segment our experiences, to chop them up. While there is a sense of sequential experiences in the spiritual world, says Swedenborg, time is in effect non-existent. There is not time ultimately: there is only NOW.*

*In scripture, all references to time, when interpreted symbolically, indicate the quality of the spiritual state in question, reflecting how life is experienced in the spiritual world. That is, angels sense only progression of spiritual condition, not of time. Time is merely a dimension of the physical realm enabling us to break-up reality into digestible bites.*

*The important matter, then, is to achieve a quality of experience, not a quantity of experience necessarily. But it is precisely the quantitative mode that is being promulgated so vigorously in our modern information age. I have no easy answers for the vise-grip of time pressures most Americans are facing, but I do believe that far too much of our time and energy ends up on the altar of trivialities. Discovering and committing to those essential matters in our lives should help considerably in creating a more useful understanding of the role time plays in our lives.*

