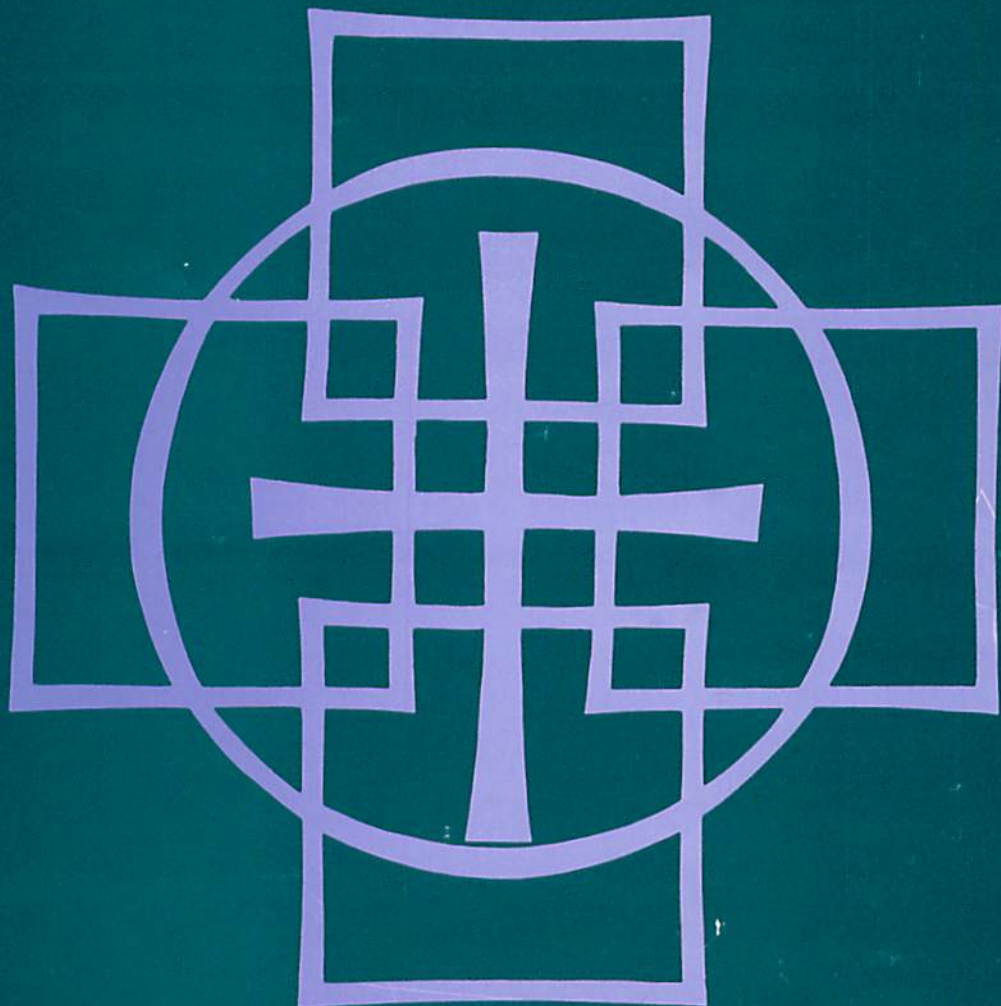


**THE
MESSENGER**

**AUGUST
1988**

Official Publication of
the General Convention of
Swedenborgian Churches



Convention '88

The 1988 annual convention has come and gone more quietly than most of us suspected it would. Though there was little official fanfare celebrating the tricentennial of Swedenborg's birth, nobody much noticed because we have all had so many occasions in which to do that already! A major disappointment was the postponement of the Rev. Kenneth Turley's exciting oratorio entitled "Revelation." A most ambitious musical composition that has been a work-in-process for over two years, it was decided for a variety of reasons that it would be better to wait a little longer for a full production. Instead, we were treated to enchanting excerpts on both the opening worship service Wednesday evening and in the closing Sunday morning worship service, which was also the ordination service. The promise of the oratorio was clearly evident, and we will simply have to exercise a little more patience before experiencing it in its entirety.

With the main centerpiece of the Tricentennial-year convention thus removed, we enjoyed a very familiar feeling convention—which is to say that a good time was had all around. Attendance was one of the strongest of the century, running at over three hundred. The number of young people attending convention was amazing, spanning all ages through high school. In addition, a good number of first-time participants added fullness and freshness to the annual summer ritual we simply call "Convention."

A highlight for me was the excellence of the major speeches this year. Our president, the Rev. Randall Laakko, really outdid himself. Working from outline and without an audio recording, I unfortunately cannot bring it to you in these pages. Sometimes, you just have to be there!

Patricia Basu's commencement address is published in this issue, and I sincerely hope that its infectious spirit is transmitted via its printed form. At the Friday evening graduation ceremony,

it brought down the house. And on Sunday morning, the Rev. David Rienstra offered a splendid sermon—also published in this issue.

On the business side, it was another peaceful year. Mostly, we heard encouraging reports on developing projects. The Rev. Ernest Martin had several promotional materials ready that show the exciting progress at Temenos, Convention's new retreat and conference center outside of Philadelphia. A handsome four-color brochure, a 20-minute slide show, and a large photo-display all demonstrated that something great is afoot in that project.

The Rev. Paul Bunnell, president of Urbana University, spoke for the third year in a row to our convention. He brought more encouraging news of hope and vision, and he urged us to maintain our support of this beloved institution founded by General Convention last century. Urbana will be the site of Convention '89 for the second time this decade.

From the National Council of Churches in Christ, Dr. Kenyon Burke spoke movingly to us regarding the work of the Division of Church and Society. He praised our presence in and our steady support of the work of the NCC, but he also exhorted us to surpass our previous commitments in ministering to the poor and "marginalized" citizens of our society.

Some of the most important business was conducted in meetings of the General Council and of the Cabinet. This is a crucial time in the history of our church as we continue to settle into the new governing structure of the denomination. With a somewhat quiet tone and a great deal of hard work happening behind the scenes, the Swedenborgian Church looks ahead to another year of serving the Lord.



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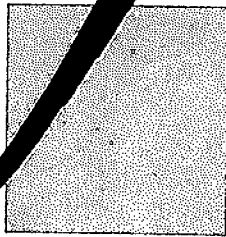
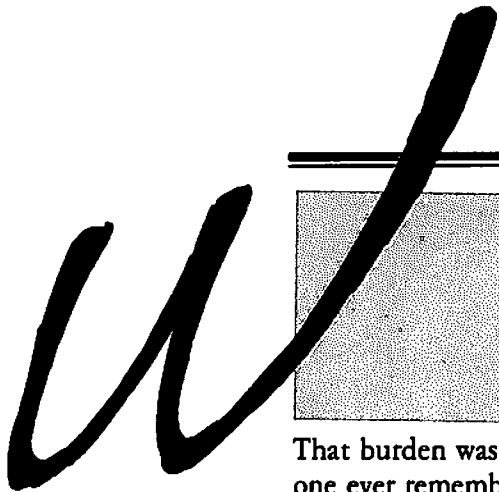
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On Crystals, Rainbows and SSR Graduates

SSR Commencement Address

Patricia Basu



When I was invited to be the speaker at this graduation, I was initially overwhelmed by the honor and extremely happy at the thought of being here again in this special place with these special people. Then reality set in as I realized I would actually have to think of something reasonably profound and appropriate to say.

That burden was lifted when I was struck by the insight that no one ever remembers what a graduation speaker says anyway. I've given two such speeches and even I can't remember anymore what I said.

Well, after church one Sunday, I mentioned that insight to Rev. Gard Perry, who seriously assured me he *did* remember a couple of graduation speakers. I want to take this opportunity to say thank you, Gard, for those comforting words.

In addition to that unnerving thought, I had another possibility to consider. Recently, there was a great commotion at the graduation held in Ann Arbor at the U. of Michigan when students were reported to have "jeered, booed and drunk beer" all through the 45-minute address delivered by the speaker. The editor of the student paper justified his classmates' behavior by declaring, "People who attended told me they had a right to be rude because the speaker was boring."

I finally concluded that if I couldn't be memorable or entertaining, I could at least be brief. What follows is therefore a brief meditation on crystals, light and community.

A graduation is a transition of the first magnitude. Transitions are always awkward at best, painful at worst. Change, even happily anticipated change, brings stress. Having been through six graduations of my own, I'm qualified to comment on this particular kind of transition.

What happens, psychologically, when you move from the intense, and in many ways, highly limiting environment of graduate school and seminary into what we laughingly call "the real world"? As I began to think back over my own transition from graduate school (first time around) to professional teaching, I recalled vividly a feeling which is probably going to hit each of you as you begin interacting professionally with new people in new situations. And I will try to describe it here.

At one point in a physics course, during a lecture on the properties of light, I finally found the image which expressed my recurring feelings of discomfort and occasional desire to quit school and get on with "real life." I recall telling a friend later that I feared I was becoming opaque. All light was being absorbed and none was escaping. After twenty-plus years of formal education, I can see how apt that image was and I recall clearly how uncomfortable it feels to be opaque. And, in contrast, how exhilarating it is to feel oneself becoming translucent.

My first year of teaching was a revelation—in more ways than one, as any of you teachers here can verify from your own experience. I recall one day, at the beginning of the semester, walking into my undergraduate seminar in world religions without notes or even an outline, and talking with unusual animation for three hours. My students were impressed, not to mention bewildered by the sheer number of Sanskrit terms I had scrawled on the board. When I thought about it later, I realized that I was no longer opaque, but had become suddenly and explosively translucent. The scholarly light which had been absorbed through several years of intense, narrowly limited study was escaping into the out-

What happens, psychologically, when you move from the intense, and in many ways, highly limiting environment of graduate school and seminary into what we laughingly call "the real world"?

side world. It was that experience of translucency that I remember with pleasure, even after so many years.

What happens after long periods of opacity is familiar, I think, to all of us who have ever had to withdraw for some time into a demanding program of study. Although we are full of book knowledge, we often appear as dark and detached people, not fully interacting with others, pre-occupied, absent-minded, distant. Anyone who doesn't know what I'm talking about should stop by here sometime during comprehensive exams. Talk about opaque. They're doing well if they can remember their names and social security numbers, they're so busy trying to retain every scrap of information until the time comes to spill it all out on paper.

There is a wonderful Hasidic story which speaks of this particular danger of the scholarly life. In the Sayings of the Fathers, it was written "Be not bad with yourself," usually interpreted to mean, "Do not think that you cannot be redeemed." But Rabbi Baruch interpreted the saying as follows: "Each person is called to bring something in the world to its completion. Each one is needed by the world. But there are people who always sit and learn, shut in their rooms, and who do not go out of the ghouse to talk with other people; for this reason, they are called bad people. For if they talked to others, they would bring something of that which was appointed for them to completion. This is what it means, 'Be not bad with yourself.' What is meant is that you spend your time sitting alone with yourself and do not go out among the people; be not bad through loneliness."

That sentiment is reminiscent of a line from an old Judy Collins song: "When you're not feeling holy, your loneliness says that you've sinned."

Just as there are intellectually opaque people, so there are spiritually opaque people. I've been thinking about light, in this spiritual sense, since Deborah gave me this beautiful amethyst as a going-away present and noted some of its qualities. Then she made a comment which struck me as unusual at the time. She wrote, "You and this crystal have much in common."

Never having been compared to a stone before, I began musing over the connection and experienced a very Swedenborgian insight—that the crystal is a physical manifestation of a spiritual state toward which we are all evolving.

While not relinquishing our own unique characters, we can become translucent enough to allow the divine light to enter the world through us. And as God's will is done through us, that light may be delicately colored, may be diffused into rainbows, may be focused with intensity. As crystals make the light present to us in a variety of ways and colors, so God's grace is made present in the world through each of us, in all our varying colors, cuts, densities and imperfections.

I believe God is not known so much through revelation as

154 Everybody has
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through relation. At one point in my recent life. I found myself overwhelmed by a series of misfortunes, the cumulative effect of which destroyed my former life. I lost my home, my career, my savings, my father, and my peace of mind. As I wallowed in my despair, I became more cut off from others and I continually asked my self the universal question, "Why me? How come other people have success, wealth, beautiful homes, and so forth. What did I do wrong?" It was only this year, after reformulating that question and changing the focus that I learned a simple and obvious truth. Everybody has scars. I believe it was Niebuhr who said, "Life is out to kill you and it hasn't failed yet."

When I stopped turning inward and began listening to the stories of other people, I found no one who had escaped serious emotional or physical pain. I found people who had lived through the suicide of a family member. Others who had grown up in abusive environments or had lost a child to illness, accident, even murder. And I found something else, an answer to my question.

Again, returning to the crystal, the scars reveal facets and increase our consciousness of the light. A diamond in the rough, for instance, would hardly be recognized as a precious stone by most of us. But when it is repeatedly and masterfully cut, it makes us conscious of the rainbows latent in the light. It draws our attention and becomes valuable precisely because it is no longer whole and untouched.

When we try to hide our scars and refuse to tell our stories (because of shame, fear of exposing our feelings, or simply not wanting to burden others) we make it more difficult for the other person to tell us his or her story, and the opportunity for light to enter the world is lost.

I discovered that those scars I thought made me unable to cope and unable to offer much to anyone else, in fact made me more useful, more valuable. Other people who were going through difficult times could talk to me without fear of being misunderstood, pitied or patronized. I could see how other people who acknowledged their own problems had helped me, most of all by making me realize I was not alone. The cuts, the scars, are there by God's will. They will become facets only when we allow the light to shine in and through us.

The crystal is roughly cut and uneven in color, but the light makes it beautiful. So we too take comfort in the fact that we don't need to be flawless, perfectly cut 2 carat diamonds for the light to work its wonders through us. However rough, broken or discolored we may be, the light is uniformly and eternally perfect and can still shine through and transform.

We do not become translucent in isolation from each other. The only way that light is going to shine through us is if we are in the world, interacting, making community. Otherwise, we are like crystals hidden in a drawer. Like the scholar, hidden in his books,



Dr. Patricia Basu

"bad" through loneliness, lack of communion, not letting the divine light shine through to add our colors to the world.

We don't want to get in the way of the light either. To my mind, the sad cases of those two recently scandalized televangelists are examples of what can happen if you begin to think you are the *source* of the light, rather than the filter. They stepped between the light and the people, absorbing little and filtering less. The shadows such people cast in the world are broad and long.

After these many years of studying, memorizing, synthesizing, working for understanding, it's time for Deborah, Skuli, Judy and Jackie to go out and make rainbows, or I should say, let the light make rainbows through them.

Swedenborgians, I've found, are very good at community building. I now believe the small size of this church is its greatest strength and not a sign of weakness of doctrine or failure to persuade the world of your viewpoint. Because the church is so small, there's no room for solitary mystics and hermit monks. Everybody has to be involved in community-building, and it's almost impossible for anyone to be in isolation, even if he wants to be. In fact, I have a joke for you, based on my 2 years of experience with this church. (This one's for you, George.) How many Swedenborgians does it take to change a light bulb? Two. One to screw in the bulb, and the other to give him a hug when he's done.

There's a Buddhist story which is told to illustrate the difference between the two ideals of arhat, or solitary monk, and bodhisattva, savior being, in that tradition, but its point is relevant to this crystal meditation too. Once upon a time, two men walking in a forest came upon a high wall. Curious about what was on the other side, the men climbed up a nearby tree and were able to peek over the top. What

they saw took their breath away. The most beautiful garden, lush with fruit trees and flowers of many colors and wonderful scents. Animals roamed in peace. In short, it was like the Garden of Eden, absolute perfection. One of the men declared, "I'm staying here forever. I'm never going back to that awful world out there," and he immediately climbed over the wall. The other man, climbing back down the tree, said, "I must go back to the village and bring everyone here so we can be happy together forever."

The first man is like the solitary scholar, or the hermit saints or cloistered mystics of centuries ago. They were opaque too—full of light, perhaps, but so far out of communion with their fellow humans, they did little to open others to the divine light and wisdom. The second man in the story is the one who works to bring the world into the light, and the light into the world.

The cross, although it has come to symbolize the Christian tradition, is a beautiful (because of its simplicity) symbol for all people of faith. The vertical line is our striving upward, for relation with the Higher Self, ultimate reality. The horizontal line is our reaching out to each other, person to person. In the center, where the two lines meet, is our salvation. Community and transcendence, relation and revelation, bring us to the center.

I must conclude with a blessing for the four of you, and a story (of course) which I hope you do remember.

Once upon a time, man was walking through the forest when he heard a snarl behind him. He looked back and saw a tiger coming at him. He began to run, but ahead on the path he could see a lion moving toward him. Luckily, he spotted a nearby clearing with an abandoned well and quickly began lowering himself down the rope, when he heard a loud hissing noise

below him. The bottom of the well was alive with poisonous snakes. As the man looked up, the lion and tiger, teeth showing, were glaring back at him.

On a ledge just beyond his reach, a little mouse started gnawing on the rope which held the man suspended between two equally horrifying alternatives. Hanging from the ledge was a beehive and some of the honey began dripping down the side of the well. Without thinking, the man reached out his tongue and began licking the drops of honey.

My wish for you—Skuli, Judy, Deborah and Jackie—is that whatever may happen to you in life, and no matter in what dark hole you may find yourself, may you never lose the capacity to savor the honey.

God will bless you with many happy experiences and with some tragedies too. Even in the bad times, stay open to the light and stay in community. Some blessings hurt like hell. And some crystals sparkle more than others. Just remember, You are never alone. ■

Dr. Patricia Basu, formerly librarian at the Swedenborg School of Religion, has a doctorate in Comparative religion from Columbia University. Today she is librarian at the Sacred Heart Seminary, Detroit, and is active in the Swedenborgian Church serving the greater Detroit area, the Church of the Holy City.



The Rev. Deborah Winter after her ordination service on Sunday morning. Along with her husband, the Rev. Skuli Thorballson, she will be taking over the program at the Swedenborg House in Deland, Florida.

Skuli Thorballson offers a light moment in his graduation speech. Along with his wife, the Rev. Deborah Winter, he will be taking over the program at the Swedenborg House in Deland, Florida.

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The main hall of the Swedenborg School of Religion was mobbed after the graduation ceremony.

Ethelwyn Worden, Director of the Central Office, sings during the graduation service on a rainy Friday evening, held in a tent in the backyard of the seminary.

A special thanks to Nancy Hawley, who took most of the photographs for this year's annual convention issue of *The Messenger*.



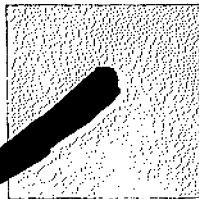
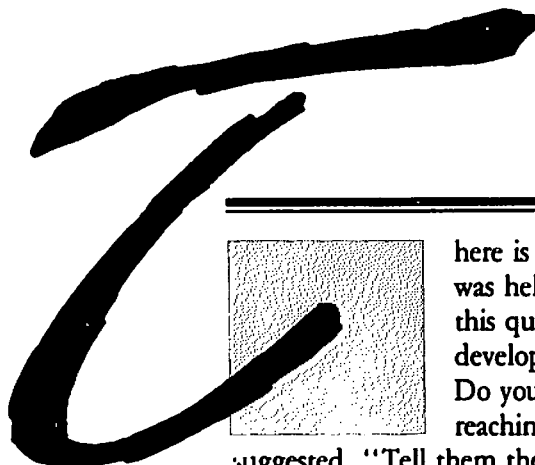
Judith Dennis at her graduation ceremony. She has received a call to be the new minister at the Church of the New Jerusalem, Urbana, Ohio.

Convention Sermon:
Living the Vision

Zechariah 8:1-9;16; Revelation 11:15-19; 12:1-6; 21:1-6

David L. Rienstra

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here is a little story about a board meeting that was held in hell. The chairman of the board put this question to his senior advisors: We need to develop new strategy for causing havoc upon earth. Do you have any suggestions for a new means of reaching human beings for our side? One advisor suggested, "Tell them there is no heaven." Another said, "Tell them there is no hell." But the prize winning suggestion was judged to be much more effective.

"Tell them there is no hurry."

We are perhaps amused by such stories, because there is a ring of truth to them. We all have heard these three suggestions expressed at one time or another. There are those who do not believe that there is a heaven or a hell. That is sad, because if it were true, then there would be no valid reason for believing in God—that is, a God who teaches that He is a God of the living, and a God who is the resurrection and the life and those who believe in Him will never die. There would be no reason to believe in a God whom we learn loves and cares and continually reaches out to us waiting for us to grasp onto Him.

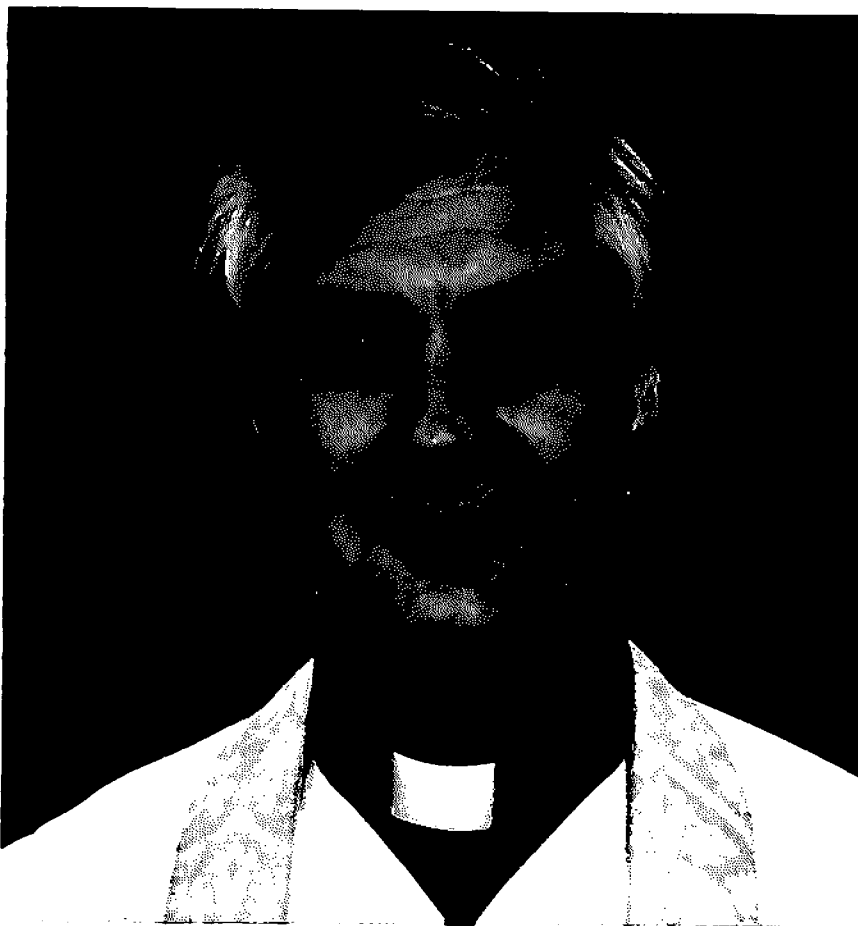
Obviously, I think most people do believe in a God, and because they do, they have some kind of a belief about a heaven

and a hell. Thus the prize winning suggestion that there is no hurry does become the most effective means of blocking the way to living the vision that our church is so privileged to have

We celebrate this year the 300th anniversary of Emanuel Swedenborg's birth, celebrating his vision of the New Age of the Lord's church and our opportunity to live that vision, living our religion as it is presented in the Word of the Lord, and in the revelations given to Swedenborg, and as our understandings are broadened to see the depths of their meaning.

As receivers of this vision, we carry the responsibility to protect, to share, to cooperate with the Lord in bringing this vision to the world. There is no better way to do this than in living the vision. You see, I believe that once we have been touched by this vision, it may become a responsibility, but it is more. It is a privilege, it is a blessing, it is an opportunity to enhance the spiritual well-being of ourselves and of all with whom we come in contact. But there is a problem: On the whole, religion—or at least the pursuit of it—is not high on the list of priorities of many, many people. It is not that people are bad, or evil, or don't believe in God, or in a better way of life. It seems to be that there are just so many other things that take up people's time. Careers, raising families, recreation, all without a doubt are often placed higher on a list of priorities than study of the Word or worship. I

think also that it is only as we get older that spiritual concerns begin to become higher on the priority list. This seems to support the suggestion that there is no hurry, because I do believe as it is taught in the Word and in our own teachings that as long as we live in this world there is always the opportunity for reform, an opportunity to make changes in our lives for the better. But what about the thousands of people who do not live in this world to their thirties, or forties, or sixties, or eighties? I am not here to make judgments, for there is so much more involved in the judgments of our spiritual character, and that the Lord alone has control of, but I do think that it is something to which we must give serious consideration.



Rev. David Rienstra

160 There is no
 place in the
 Gospels where
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 anybody,
 "Go home,
 think it over,
 and get back
 to me tomorrow."

Other than not making it to middle age or older, there is another danger, and that is as C.S. Lewis put it, "There are a good many things which would not be worth bothering about if I were going to live only seventy years, but which I had better take seriously if I am going to live forever." There is built into life an important urgency when it comes to things that really matter. In the invitation to worship in our Book of Worship it begins: "In all of us there is a sense of what ought to be, which will not let us rest until we give ourselves and our all to its demands. It bids us rise above our lower nature, to seek the worth and meaning of life in our endless spiritual possibilities. It stirs our concern for all mankind and a better world. Whence that yearning, if not from a God whose love dwells in the inmost recesses of our souls and draws us to Himself, fashioning us in His image and likeness." (B.O.W. p.vii)

Such it is with our relationship with Jesus Christ. There is no place in the Gospels where Jesus told anybody, "Go home, think it over, and get back to me tomorrow." Jesus simply says, "Come, follow Me." There is a brief account where a man requests to go home and look after his father and after he is dead, he would then follow Jesus. Jesus rebuked him. All of his close disciples dropped what they were doing and followed after the Lord. Emanuel Swedenborg, the instrument in the Lord's hand that provides the enlightenment for our church today, could have been as famous a person as any one in the annals of history. In his fifty-seventh year he gave up worldly fame to follow the call of the Lord.

There is a reason for urgency that has to do with our nature. We are creatures of habit. The older we get the more difficult it is to change. The road to hell really *is* paved with good intentions. We may plan to do something about our spiritual life someday; we may plan on living the vision, someday.

But if we do not act on those plans now, there is a good chance we never will. That is our nature.

In the cartoon "Peanuts," the team statistician brings Charlie Brown, the manager, his report. "I've compiled the statistics on our baseball team for last season," Linus says. "In twelve games we almost scored a run and in nine games the other team almost didn't score before the first out. In right field, Lucy almost caught three balls and once almost made the right play. We led the league," he concludes, "in almost, Charlie Brown."

We know that almost is not good enough, and yet we also know if we keep putting off committing our lives more fully to Him, chances are, we never will; that is our nature. There are some things that do not become earth shattering if we delay in doing, but there are some things that can create havoc in our lives by putting them off. It is not a matter of arriving in the spiritual world and saying, "Gee, I wish I would have done things differently," because in that there is still opportunity, as it still shows desire. You see, the real danger is that too often, by putting off the active pursuit of spiritual concerns, the desire within us deadens, and when that desire is completely extinguished we are left with nothing but our own self importance, which then is a life totally alienated from heaven. We cannot afford to *Almost* live the vision.

I like to read and hear about the lives of people. I think most of us will agree that reading or hearing what people have done with their lives is most interesting. Of course in the biographies that we read, we do not get every detail. Many things about a person's life do not get into print. Also we might think that biographies are written only about famous people, but each and every one of us compiles a biography about our own life. Unlike the biographies where details are left out, our own biography contains

every thought, feeling, and action. It is what the Scriptures call our book of life. These are perhaps the most interesting biographies of all.

The books of *Daniel* and *Revelation* teach of the Book of Life. This is of course the book that the Lord alone has the power to open, and to reveal to us the mysteries and wonderful visions of life. Parallel to this is our own, which the Lord also opens to each of us, and its opening

The real danger is that too often, by putting off the active pursuit of spiritual concerns, the desire within us deadens.

is our "last judgment." Let me quickly add: Judgment is not something we should fear. In a very real sense, our whole life in this world is a continuous judgment. We individually experience blessings and torments. We are continually fighting to put off the garments of the merely natural and worldly minded person to put on the garments of the spiritual mind. Each and every time we make a choice for something good, we have rejected an evil, and the Lord uses that to enhance our spiritual character, to lead us in Living the Vision.

It ought to be plain that the really important things in life cannot be put off: showing our affection for loved ones before it is too late, ridding ourselves of a destructive habit before it is too late, committing our lives to Jesus Christ, our Lord and our God, before it is too late. If we put off heeding his call, there is a danger that we never will; that is our nature. If we put off considering our spiritual life, our working for

the church, our living the vision, there is always the danger that we never will find the time. But then what?

Each and every person past, present, and future was and is created for the purpose of a heaven from the human race, and what a grand purpose that is, what a grand vision that is. Zechariah speaks of that vision as the Lord dwelling in Jerusalem, which we understand as understand as the Holy City within us as well as around us, and that it will be a city of truth. People will live to great age, and the streets will be full of boys and girls. Doesn't that give you a vision of peace and harmony? A vision worth living and working for? Then in *Revelation* John speaks of a vision when all the kingdoms of the world will again be ruled by the Lord, the First and the Last of our lives. The Holy City descending into the hearts and minds of all people, what a glorious vision to follow after, to live! In the *Daily Guidepost* it tells of a person who visited the Isle of Patmos, and came across a leaflet that said: "Dear visitor, your coming to this holy place is not a chance event in your life. God, who directs all things for man's spiritual benefit, has guided you here for you to listen, deep within yourself, to the secret echo of the words that were spoken to St. John."

I do not believe that it is an accident that you are here now either. We have been afforded a marvelous opportunity to live a vision of heaven here and now. But as I understand it, heaven to be heaven necessarily requires an awareness, an ability to understand the qualities that make a heaven and those that do not, and then the freedom to choose between those qualities. Jesus taught that the kingdom of heaven is within you, and that means that the potential for heaven is in every human being from creation. But it needs opportunity to grow, and this is done through living, and learning, loving and sharing, interaction with others and making choices. It is

in living this wonderful vision that our character is formed, and it is important. It is great to think that we can ignore the issues of life and that somehow everything is going to turn out all right in the end, but we know that is not the case.

What is hell's most effective tool? To tell us there is no heaven? To tell us there is no hell? No, to tell us there is no hurry.

In closing, I would like to leave you with a benediction for living our vision, from the Gloucester Cathedral: 161

Go on your way in peace.
Be of good courage.
Hold fast that which is good.
Render to no person
evil for evil.
Strengthen the fainthearted.
Support the weak.
Help and cheer the sick.
Honor all people.
Love and serve the Lord.
May the blessings
of God
be upon you and
remain with you forever.

AMEN

THE REV. DAVID L. RIENSTRA is
pastor of the Church of the Open
Word, St. Louis, Missouri.



Contemplation



Carole Rienstra (l), formerly of Fryeburg, Maine and currently of St. Louis, and Rev. Rachel Lawrence, formerly of St. Louis and currently of Fryeburg, share ideas.



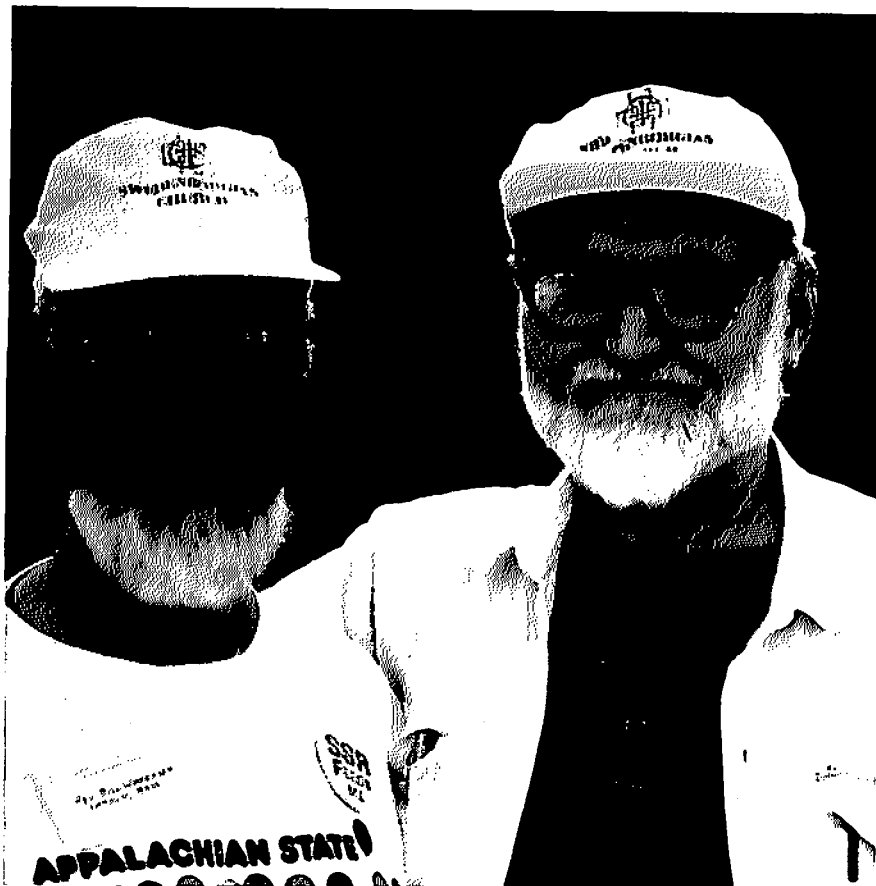
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The Rev. Llewellyn Fraser, of Guyana, presents a Bible in Filipino to Julio Ragasa, a Filipino active in the New York Society. Woman in the Guyana church asked Mr. Fraser to give the Bible "to the first Filipino" he met at convention.

Dorthea Harvey discusses Stone House wares with Paul Martin Grumman, minister and director of the Stone House Book Room and Spiritual Growth Center.





Would you buy a used sermon from these men? The Rev. Drs. William Woofenden (l) of the Swedenborg School of Religion and Ivan Franklin of the San Diego Society.

Rev. Randall Laakko of Wilmington, Delaware (l) and Gus Ebel of the Washington D.C. Society before a business session.



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New General Council member, Howard Torpey, and Nan Paget, both of the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church, catch a moment together.



The Rev. Steven Ellis of the Boston Society and Mary Townes of Kenilworth, Illinois find a quiet moment for conversation.



Pat Dennis (l) and Verda Winter, mothers of ordinands Judith Dennis and Deborah Winter, enjoyed an unforgettable convention.

Dr. Kenyon Burke, representing the National Council of Churches from the division of Church and Society, gave a warm and inspiring talk on the floor of convention.



The Rev. Steve Pults, minister of the Detroit Society and Director of Youth Ministries, addresses the convention on behalf of the New Church Youth League.

With a minimum of controversy, the business sessions flowed smoothly.

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Fifty years ago, Betsy Young and David Johnson were part of a group leaving a "Time Capsule" to the Youth League of the Swedenborgian Church fifty years hence. Here Katie Rienstra (at the microphone), current president of the NCYL, reads the letter from the time capsule, as Betsy and David pursue an enclosed photograph. Among the documents were a listing of officers, a League Constitution, League 50 year pins, and a photograph of the 1938 Convention. The current League has resolved to leave their own time capsule for posterity.



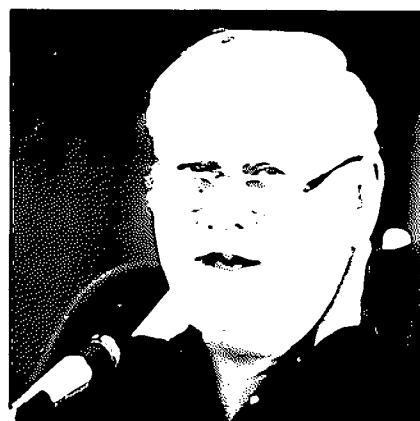
With a large convention turnout this year, the business sessions were pleasantly full.





Betsy Young, of Wayfarers Chapel in California and active member of the Board of Managers of the Swedenborg School of Religion for many years, speaks hopefully of the future of the seminary.

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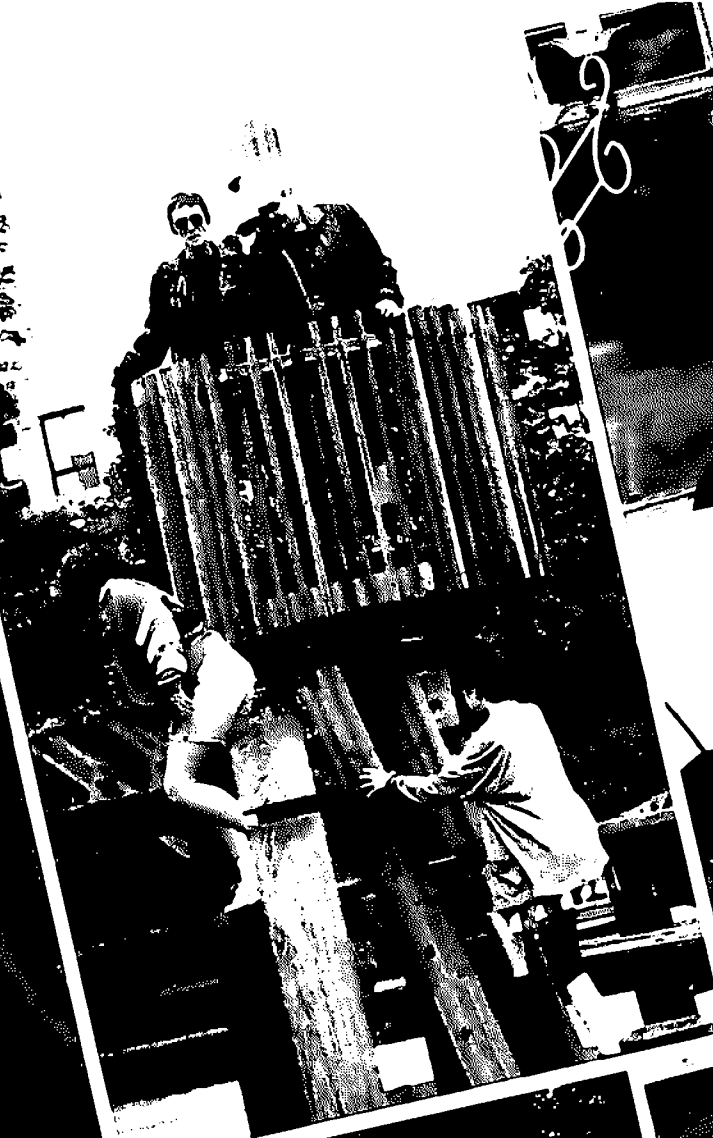
Eugene Taylor, Associate in Psychiatry at the Harvard Medical School and frequent contributor to Swedenborgian scholarship, presented a taped-for-TV lecture at the Cambridge Swedenborgian Church on Tuesday evening on "Psychopathology and Transcendence."

The Treasurer of Convention, John Perry of Maine, presents the financial picture of the church.

The Rev. Ken Turley leads a hymn-sing.

A Surging Vitality in the Youth League Spices Convention





Report Of General Council

170 Pre-convention meeting Wed., June 29.

The Central Office has three new employees: Mrs. Muriel Liddy, secretary to Muff Worden; Andrea Peterson, typesetter; Anna Baranchuk, bookkeeper. The Central Office plans to initiate desk top publishing at an early date after research proved that outside agencies' costs were prohibitive. The typesetter is well qualified for all aspects of the change from computergraphic machine to desk top computer.

The Treasurer, John Perry, reported good progress this year in that the Support Units abided by the limits of budgets even though their work did not begin until after Convention.

One good source of income came from Urbana University with payment of almost all of last year's interest on its loans from Convention. There were also major contributions from four other sources. Nevertheless, the Treasurer had a few problems in coming up with cash to pay the deficits.

President Laakko reported that the Cabinet had done a tremendous job and integrated well with General Council. Convention is working on a five year plan of growth similar to that designed by Swedenborg School of Religion's Fund Raising Committee.

It was voted that the St. Louis Society will pay \$10,000 to Convention for outstanding loans. This will

come from a sale of a portion of its land being sold for \$60,000.

Due to a serious problem of disappearing funds in one of Convention's churches, the Treasurer and General Council strongly recommends that every Convention church and association have professional audits of books yearly, or at least every three years. These audits will be required in cases where societies appeal to Convention for supporting funds. In the case referred to, the Portland, Oregon Society lost funds in the \$100,000 range with little hope of recovery. Convention lost approximately \$9,000 through the same misappropriation of funds.

General Council voted to establish a self-insured program to ensure disability income to ministers with catastrophic long term illnesses. This would not require special funding.

General Council voted to assist the Massachusetts Association with financial obligations caused by a legal suit now in court process.

The Financial and Physical Resources Support Unit has recommended that the Cabinet and General Council work towards a balanced budget. The Proposed Budget for 88/89 was tabled until the post-convention meeting of the General Council.

Post-convention meeting, Sat., July 2.

General Council reviewed the latest revised bylaws of *Temenos* and made the following suggestions: that the first bylaw be titled *Name and Ownership*; that at least one member of the Board of Managers co-sign contractual agreements; to add: that the Board of Managers shall be responsible for preparing and submitting an annual Treasurer's Report to the Treasurer of the General Convention within thirty (30) days of the end of Convention's fiscal year.

There was prolonged discussion concerning a proposed new plan of ministry which had the approval of the Council of Ministers and Pastoral Ministries Support Unit. The Cabinet specified a priority for this project. Funding of project was referred back to the Cabinet.

General Council voted to approve the purchase of desk top publishing equipment. This decision was made during the intense review of the Proposed Budget for 88/89.

Treasurer John Perry announced the receipt of a \$10,000 Certificate of Deposit from Mrs. Lavinia Seibert of Kansas. There were no restrictions on use of the money. The certificate will mature in October.

The Council voted to contribute \$1,000 to the Swedenborg Foundation for the costs of a reception at the Tarrytown symposium to be held in August.

Other items of business which came before the Council were the establishing of a charitable gifts annuity which the President arranged, with legal counsel, with the Reverend and Mrs. Leon LeVan of Florida; a comparison of uses of two travel agencies; discussion of Augmentation Fund requirements and policies. It was recommended that the latter be turned over to the Research Committee for proper working, but that Council adopts same in principle.

The mid-winter meeting of General Council will be held January 19-22, 1989 in Florida. ■

General Convention Elections 1988

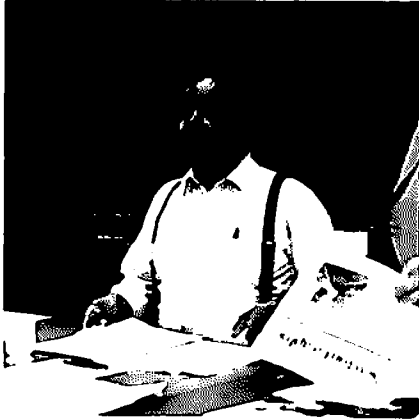
			173 Entitled to vote
		Term	Votes
Vice President:	Frederick G. Perry, Jr., NH	1 yr.	137
	Write in: Betsy Young		3
	Write in: Mary Crenshaw		3
Recording Secretary:	Dorothy deB. Young, MA	1 yr.	150
Treasurer:	John C. Perry, ME	1 yr.	149
Communication S.U.	Lorene Lederer, CA	3 yrs.	138
Education S.U.	Martha Richardson, ME	3 yrs.	149
Financial and Physical Resources S.U.	Keith Mull, KS	3 yrs.	146
Growth and Outreach S.U.	Christine Laitner, MI	3 yrs.	145
Information Management S.U.	Steve Koke, CA	3 yrs.	143
Pastoral Ministries S.U.	Patricia Zacharias, Ontario	3 yrs.	148
General Council:	3 Persons, 3 year term		
	Minister:		
	Rev. Dr. Robert E. Bossdorf, MA	(N)	50
	Rev. Dr. Dorothea W. Harvey, MA	(F)	103
	Layperson:		
	Howard Torpey, CA	(N)	138
	Frances McIntosh, Ontario	(N)	144
Committee on Admission to the Ministry:	One Minister:		
	Rev. David L. Rienstra, MO	1 yr.	148
	One Layperson:		
	Elizabeth Johnson, WA	1 yr.	148
	Write in: Rev. Stephen Pults, MI		2
Nominating Committee:	1 Person, 5 year term		
	Muriel Bennett, KS	(N)	101
	Norman Bestor, OH	(N)	49
Trustees-Swedenborg School of Religion:	2 for 3 year term		
	Mary Crenshaw, MI	(N)	110
	Margaret Kraus, KS	(N)	92
	Perry Martin, PA	(F)	38
	Rev. Dr. Horand Gutfeldt, CA	(F)	38

(N) indicates Nominating Committee, (F) indicates nominated from the floor

Council of Ministers Meeting Summary

Rachel Rivers Lawrence, Secretary

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Harry Johnson, a personnel officer with Polaroid Corp. leads a discussion on racism with the Council of Ministers.

Paul Zacharias, our Chair, opened our 1988 sessions with a thoughtful and moving address. He told us that we are currently living in one of the great quantum leaps of history. Everything is changing so rapidly that we are perhaps more threatened as an institution than at any other time in our history. Only those organizations that speak to real issues will be able to navigate the rapids of change.

He shared with us his perception that his most serious concern is that we do not own up to and acknowledge our "shadows," to use a Jungian term. A church that cannot face its darker side will not be able to claim the power necessary for really making a positive impact on the world.

He also suggested that we have not really discovered the value and power inherent in our smallness. In such an intimate context, we can more easily achieve the honesty and support needed in confronting our own dark side as a church. A strong leadership is needed for this, and we have much to be done in training our leadership.

Our laity could be very useful in this, but we also need to provide effective training for them. How can we help people and churches actualize the truths of the New Church? He shared many more insights, but these are perhaps the most salient points.

The chair concluded with the belief that it is a marvelous time to be

alive. We can contribute a great deal if "we can get our act together." It will all depend on our leadership abilities. Let us strive for the cutting edge!

Much of our time this year was spent in hearing reports from the various committees and special projects overseen by ministers of the Council, including areas such as worship, publications, social action and involvement, job openings, pension and financial concerns, peer supervision and professional development concerns, the Youth League, the Children and Family ministry, Temenos and Urbana University, and the Ministers and Spouses Institute.

We considered and voted approval for the ordination of Skuli Thorhallsson, Deborah Winter, and Judith Dennis. In addition, we voted approval for probationary lay leadership training for Sharon Billings of the Brookings, Oregon church.

For a special program, we spent an entire morning and afternoon dealing with the issue of subtle forms of racism in our society, in our church, and in our hearts. A special guest moderating the discussions was Harry Johnson, who presented a graduation talk at last year's Swedenborg School of Religion graduation ceremony.

In an important move, the Council decided that our annual three days of meetings were far too taken up with perfunctory reports and business items that do not need to be considered by the entire body of clergy. The vast majority strongly feels that we need to reconsider our goals for our meetings. It was therefore voted to completely revamp our meetings next year and concentrate much more fully professional and spiritual concerns, while compressing our usual business into one day and a morning. ■

Cabinet Report 1988

During the year the Cabinet has met four times. (It had been anticipated by the Prototype Cabinet, and the Ad Hoc Committee before them, that there might need to be four to six meetings each year during the first two years of operation under the new structure.)

The first meeting in October of 1987 was basically to get organized and to lay out the first major task: working up a budget recommendation for the mid-winter meeting of General Council. This was a joint meeting of the Support Units with the Cabinet meeting at separate times. It was felt to be a very positive design bringing the Support Units and the Cabinet together. It gave opportunity for those Support Units which share things in common to be together. There was the hope expressed that this joint meeting of all Support Units could be done on a periodic but regular basis. We also spent time reviewing the "home" placements for the ongoing programs and ministries which had been made by the Prototype Cabinet.

The next meeting in December was focused on the preparation of the budget recommendation based on the program projections of the Support Units. A good beginning was made, but it became necessary to call another meeting of the Cabinet immediately prior to the meeting of General Council in order to finalize a recommended budget. The Cabinet was able to bring a budget recommendation together by that mid-winter meeting. Having now been through the budget development process one

time, we are hoping that it will come together more quickly this coming year.

During this process it became evident that there was a weakness in the performance of the Support Units in giving adequate review and stated rationale for the budget requests. Further work will need to be done in the prioritizing process of the Support Units according to the objectives and strategies of the bylaws.

The Cabinet had scheduled a meeting in March; however it was cancelled because it seemed unnecessary to hold it. A request came to me from one of the members that it would be good to have had that meeting and that perhaps in the future any meeting that is set on a reasonable interval should be held. The feeling was expressed that even though there may not seem to be pressing issues there would undoubtedly be concerns to be considered.

The final meeting of the year, held in mid-May, was focused on the Cooperative Fund Drive. Under the leadership of Dr. Alice Skinner the Cabinet worked on a five-year plan for convention and the prioritizing of the programs, ideas and future efforts of the church. The Cabinet attempted to develop a case statement that will be used to present the budgetary needs of the church to our membership. Alice has written a first draft which is being revised.

Besides addressing the tasks of each meeting outlined above, the membership gave updated reports of the work of the Support Units and a statement of how the process was working within the Support Units as seen by the respective chairpersons. I would say that generally the feeling among the Cabinet members is positive as to the processes of the Support Units and Cabinet. To many people the creation of the Cabinet is seen as a very good step in bringing about greater coordination and understanding of the many

facets and programs of the denomination. There has been and will continue to be much to be gained from the joint meeting of the management team leaders of the church. Also a joint meeting of the General Council and the Cabinet appears to be a valuable addition to the functioning of both bodies. That joint meeting in January of 1988 was very useful in enhancing understanding and finalizing the budget.

I have enjoyed working with the Cabinet. I too see it as a valuable addition to our life as a church. I believe that the members of the Cabinet and the Support Units are to be commended for their time and effort in behalf of the church. They have done an excellent job in getting the new organization under way. I look forward to the ongoing work of the Support Units and the Cabinet. ■

Gretchen Tafel engaged in one of her favorite activities: arranging flowers.



Most of us were housed in the charming dormitories of Lasell Junior College, such as this one.

Dorothy Farnham (r) of Deland, Florida and Muriel Bennett of Pawnee Rock, Kansas sport with the Rev. David Johnson as they sign him in as a delegate from the Seattle Society.

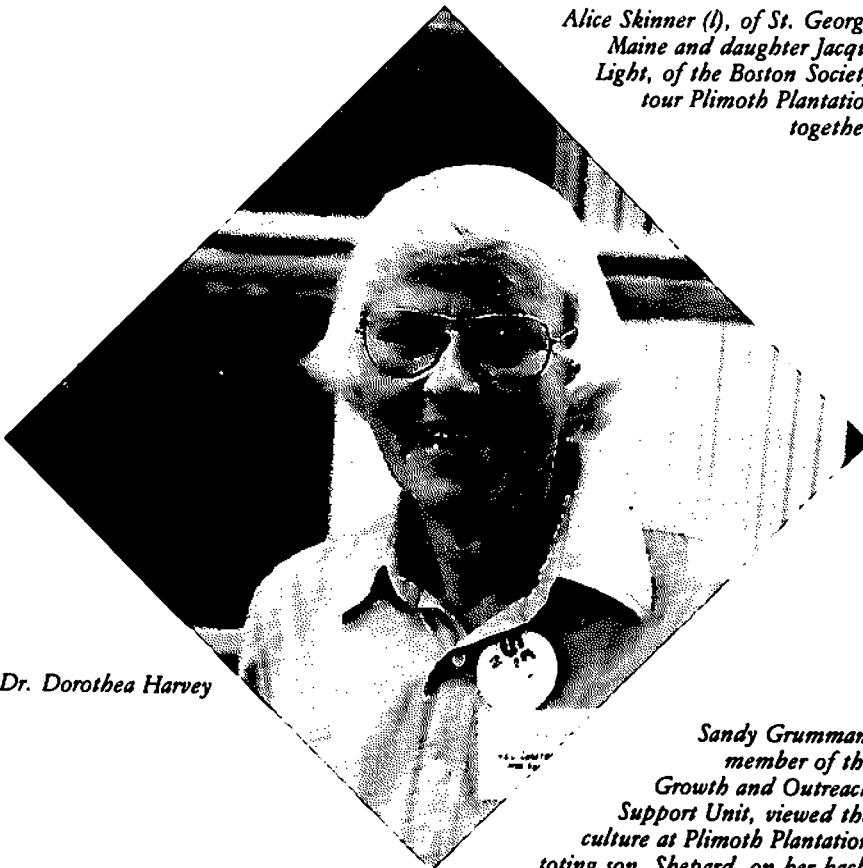
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Alice Skinner (l), of St. George, Maine and daughter Jacqui Light, of the Boston Society, tour Plimoth Plantation together.



Dr. Dorothea Harvey



Sandy Grumman, member of the Growth and Outreach Support Unit, viewed the culture at Plimoth Plantation toting son, Shepard, on her back.





Jane Perry (l), Ken Turley and Laurie Turley rehearse portions of the new oratorio, "Revelation."

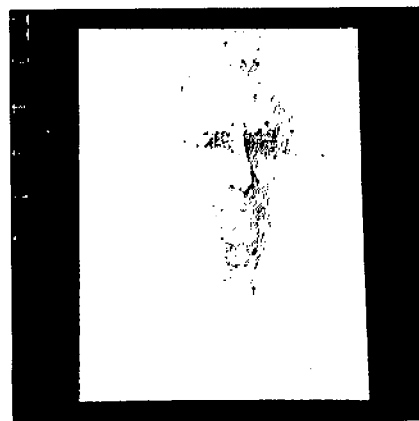


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A moment of repose: Paula Kraus of Kansas put in many hours at the registration desk.



Marcia Smith, representing the Swedenborg Foundation, discusses spiritual issues with Quint Billings or Brookings, Oregon.



A new charcoal sketch of Swedenborg by Genevieve Hasler of England, was shown at convention. A limited edition of prints are available for \$35.00. For more information, write: William Woofenden, 48 Highland St., Sharon, Massachusetts, 02067.



Jeff Winters from Williamston, Michigan Pat Sommer (l) from Urbana and Pam Shuttleworth, from Urbana enjoying themselves after a worship celebration.

**Personal Expression and
Group Involvement:
The Children's Program.**

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Highlights on the Workshop on American Indians

Donna J. Sloan

178 On Sunday, May 22, 1988, the Boston Church of the New Jerusalem held a workshop on American Indians. The featured speaker, Dr. Josie White Eagle of Cambridge, MA is a full-blood Winnebago Indian and was born in Wisconsin. She holds a doctorate in education from the Harvard School of Education and is presently involved in post-doctoral studies at M.I.T., where she is compiling a dictionary of the Winnebago tribal language. Dr. White Eagle is very committed to retaining the traditions, customs and lifestyles of the Winnebago and other Indian tribes, and has worked with various Indian school systems throughout the country to achieve this end.

Dr. White Eagle addressed the problems of Indians in the U.S. who live on reservations in poverty, with limited resources, little education and few opportunities to change their present situation. However, she claims that many Indians are living in a wide variety of American settings. Many have so completely adopted the American lifestyles and culture and have become so assimilated as to be barely distinguishable from other Americans.

Although Indians are often depicted in a collective sense, Dr. White Eagle points out that more than three-hundred fifty tribes of Indians presently live in the United States, with approximately sixteen tribes living in Boston. The various tribes have distinctly different customs, styles of living, modes of

dress and different languages which do not allow them to communicate readily with each other.

Because Indian languages are primarily spoken rather than written, in compiling a dictionary it has been necessary for Dr. White Eagle to create the written equivalent of the Indian language. The orthography has entailed using Latin letters to create an Indian alphabet, formulating grammatical rules, creating diacritical characters and phonetic sound patterns and determining syntactical structure. To illustrate how this was accomplished, Dr. White Eagle told a story in the Winnebago tribal language, then discussed and demonstrated how the words are written, translated, and pronounced.

Compiling the dictionary has required four years of study, research and writing, and Dr. White Eagle will complete it sometime this year. We are looking forward to obtaining a copy for our church library. The attendance and enthusiasm generated by our workshop on American Indians was very encouraging, and we look forward to having others in the future. ■

*The Rev. Donna Sloan is
Minister to Minorities at the Boston
Church of the New Jerusalem.*

NOTES FROM CENTRALOFFICE

One of the things I didn't get to do on the floor of Convention was to thank the members of the local committee and of my Convention Week Staff! I'd like to do so here. The Rev. Donna Keane and Rafael Guiu, who ably co-chaired the local committee 1988; Leone Richardson Dyer, who took a vacation week to help on the desk, as she did up through 1985; Louise Woofenden, who handled and arranged for the exhibits; Larry Young, who arranged for buses and vans before he had surgery; Lucile Flagg and Ruth White aided by Charlotte Lord and Pat Dennis, who took care of set-ups for worship especially the final Sunday's ordination and communion; Jacqui Light, who helped with publicity; Muriel Liddy, who took care of the flower arrangements, corsages and helium for balloons, and made arrangements for receptions as well; Rev. Ted Klein, who set up the children's program; Laurie Turley, who set up the Toddlers' program and found the baby sitters too, then worked out their schedules! Susan Wood, Dave Bowman, and Gay Beth Bingham, who served as Care Bears for the League; Steve Koke and Andrea Peterson, who covered Convention with the Central Office video camera and still photography; Nancy Little Hawley, who served as photographer for the *Messenger*; Lon Elmer and Jane Perry, who handled the audio-visual set-ups for mini-courses, etc.; Susan Weiss and Martha Richardson, who set up the mini-courses; Dave Lederman, who coordinated the transportation both on and off campus; the several drivers—Roger Young, Dave Bowman, John Titus, Lon Elmer; and Karen Klein, Jeff Winston and Kevin Baxter, who helped at the Registration Desk along with the regular Crew.

It takes many people to see that a convention goes smoothly, and this year's crew were all wonderful, and worked exceptionally well with

each other as well.

I'd also like to say "thanks" to Dave Lederman, Tina Burke, Paula Kraus, Muriel Liddy, Kathy Taffel, Andrea Peterson, Roger Young, Jim O'Donnell, Lee and Dan Dyer, Steve Koke, Ray Guiu, and Randy Laakko, who helped with the cleanup and transfer back to Central Office, and with getting the rental vehicles and other equipment back. This end of things is so important too, and their help is much appreciated!

Lost and Found

We still have a lacy-patterned knit light blue pullover found after the dance at the Boone (1986) Convention, and a fancy large seahorse pendant from Tacoma last year. This year a silver/moonstone ring was found after a minicourse in the audio room; A white knit, patterned ladies' cardigan was left in one van after the Tuesday Blairhaven trip. A ladies' black sweater with gold buttons, and a ladies' grey, ribbed knit jacket/sweater were found on the stage and in the auditorium, while a tan ladies' jacket with lots of pockets and ribbed collar and cuffs was also found. If any of these sounds like something of yours, please phone the Central Office with as clear a description of your missing item as you can muster, and we'll send the item along to the owner.

You'll be glad to know that this year John Bennett picked up the bottom to his camera case, which had been left in Boone and held in the "treasured" Lost and Found in Central Office. We knew it was his, but forgot to mail it-but you should have heard his camera case top breathe a sigh of relief as it became clear it would be "all together" again, at long last! The Central Office phone number is: (617)969-4240. ■

Guyana Minister is New MP

The Rev. Llewellyn Fraser, the just-retired Swedenborgian pastor of the New Jerusalem Church in Georgetown, Guyana, was elected to Parliament in February this year.

At age 66, the well-known and vigorous minister sees his new post as the culmination of a long career in advocacy for workers and for the lower classes. He especially is seeking to improve housing conditions for Guyana's poor.

The Rev. Fraser tells the following story to illustrate his social philosophy and his view of himself: There's a train travelling along, and after some time it breaks down. The conductor calls out to the passengers. "Sit down," he yells to the first class passengers; the second class passengers are told to start walking; and the third class passengers are told to get out and push the train. "I'd like to think that I am one of those third class persons." ■

Recognition of our Contributors

The Communications Support Unit wishes to thank heartily those who have sent in a contribution to *The Messenger* during the past three months. The fiscal health of your church's magazine is certainly enhanced by your support: Isbell Behrer, Fairview, N.C.; Gus Bischof, Lititz, Penn.; Allene Brumbach, Littlerock, Calif.; Isabel Carpenter, Naranja, Fla.; John Dodd, Great Bend, Kan.; Dorothy Doane, Littlerock, Calif.; Claire Gabrielle, Versailles, France; Howard and Elizabeth Herskovitz, Washington, D.C.; John McLevige, Rockford, Ill.; Barbara Rand, Fruitland, Idaho; Margaret Schneider, St. Paul, Minn.; Timothy J. Scheuer, Paris, France; Hampton and Elora Schoch, Roxboro, N.C.; A.P. Wiebe, Campbell River, B.C.; Kathleen White, St. Thomas, Ontario. ■

Swedenborg Series at Tarrytown

Advance registrations for the Tricentennial Conference at Tarrytown have exceeded expectations, and the publicity has just gone out to universities. We expect a full attendance, with many lifelong Swedenborgians and many who will be hearing about Swedenborg for the first time.

To serve both "classes," the Foundation has scheduled two series of presentations, each dealing with matters of theology, Scripture, history, biography, and ethics. There will be a "Swedenborg 100" series for newcomers, with presentations by Neville Jarvis of Australia, Prescott Rogers and Douglas Taylor of the General Church, and Convention's Jim Lawrence and Alice Skinner. Concurrently, there will be a "Swedenborg 200" series that will presume some familiarity with our theology. This will include presentations by Don Rose of the General Church, Dr. Eric Sharpe of Australia, Convention's George Dole and Dorothea Harvey, and, we hope, Lars Berqvist of Sweden. Time has been provided after each presentation for interested individuals to continue conversation with the speaker.

We presume that readers of *The Messenger* will be most interested in the 200 series. Each of the speakers brings a fresh approach to familiar material and a deep conviction of its value for our present age. Our intent is to provide experiences of discovery and a fresh supply of energy for the sharing of our message. ■



180 **Women with Wings:
Ministers' Spouses
Institute**

Laurie Turley

e gathered in a circle, shaping songs. Our gifts, those assets and qualities of each of our beings, which we offered to share with the group, were written on small pieces of paper and placed lovingly into the ring. Twenty or so pieces of paper, themselves forming a circle, were to become over the next two and a half days a mandala of our time spent together, a sacred circle of loving and learning. As the time progressed, we would bring offerings to lay within the circle: rocks, flowers, letters and photographs, shared stories from our personal lives. Each carried its own significance for the enrichment of our experience.

There is a special unity among the women who gather each year for the pre-convention ministers' spouses workshop. Of all women in the world, we alone share with one another the status of being wives of Swedenborgian ministers. Our members are very few on this earth. Together, we understand things about each other that no one else, no matter how dear a friend, could completely identify with. Shared identities bring people together. Shared experiences keep them together.

We learned at this workshop just how very strong and capable we are, both as individuals and as a group of women united, as we sang and danced, shared our dreams and our failings, listened and spoke, laughed and cried. We learned to trust one another and ourselves, to laugh with joy and good humor at our breakthroughs. to replace the guilt of unachieved "shoulds" with the power of choice freely given and accepted.

Jane Leifer, the leader of our workshop, has a broad and eclectic training, including certification in Psychosynthesis. She brought with her three key essential elements for our work and growth: a deep understanding of our need for spiritual growth, a sense of humor and fun-loving nature, and a practical, down-to-earth "let's get off our conches and do something" attitude.

Jane guided us skillfully and seemingly effortlessly from our first exercise. . . ("Remember when you first knew, really *knew* God was real?") to sharing and identifying our dreams and desires, to actualizing them in a willful, tangible statement of intention. "It's easy to get all excited and feel great during a workshop and then get back to the world of daily living and lose sight of our goals."

"Developing the will," Jane told us, "and learning to make positive statements and then follow through on them, is the tangible result of our work here that we can take with us to give the world. We can use this learning to help bring others closer to heaven, rather than just enjoying this time and keeping it to ourselves."

Jane's purpose in life, she told us, is to do this very thing: to help people come closer to God and thenceforth be able to share this with others. "We have a tremendous responsibility to become well, healthy, fulfilled human beings," she said. This isn't a selfish goal, when one considers that the happiest individuals are the ones best able to bring happiness to others. "As women, you are the heart of the church." We got the significance of this statement as we realized that the process of achieving peace and fulfillment can be a joyful one, especially when undertaken in an atmosphere of acceptance and support. We recognized together that the gifts we are responsible for bringing with us into the world.

Unity, compassion, forgiveness, strength, humor, song, and action—these are some of the gifts we gave to one another. We felt ourselves at the heart of the church as we sang to the ministers, our beloveds and friends, during one of their difficult business sessions. ("We will never forget you. . .") We felt ourselves at the heart of the church as we gathered stones to take to the medicine wheel, and sang there the Native American song, "The Earth is our Mother." We felt at the heart of the church as we linked arms and stood, shoulder to shoulder, before the convention of Swedenborgians at the opening service on Wednesday night, sharing our love of song and hearing others sing back to us and with us. And we felt at the hearts of each other as we danced together, prayed together, and sang some more in our sessions alone with Jane.

There were times when we felt so alive, so close to heaven, that energy seemed to bounce around the circle, in us, out of us and through us, lifting us up to the point that we weren't always sure what to do with it. On one such occasion, Jane, with her consistent good sense of timing and wise insight, the qualities that make her such a capable leader ("the best we've ever had," said many veteran spouses), told us it was time to learn our exercise, she said, is good for grounding, for coming back to earth, for taking spiritual ideas and transforming them into action. She called us together into the circle, arms around each other. We waited, expectantly, ready for yet another wonderful new spiritual experience. And then she began to sing, "You put your right foot in, you put your right foot out, you put your right foot in and you shake it all about. You do the Hokey-Pokey and you turn yourself around. That's what it's all about!" ■

Laurie Turley is a musician and mother of a two year old daughter, Emily Rose, and she is very active in ministry with her husband, the Rev. Ken Turley, at the Elmwood Massachusetts Swedenborgian Church.

"There's a river 181
of birds
in
migration. . .
A nation of
women
with wings."
Author unknown

182 He carried
Swedenborg's
books along
the wild
trails, and left
them here
and there for
his hosts to
read. They
say he would
tear a book in
half and leave
half with
Smith and
half with
Taylor—and
then switch
them later.

John Chapman's Tree

Anne Crompton

"A sower went forth to sow this seed. . ."

One March morning in the 1790s, young John Chapman launched his canoe down the Allegheny River. He noticed ice cakes floating by faster than the canoe so he hauled the canoe out onto an ice cake, curled down inside the canoe and took a nap. John knew how to cut corners, but he woke up one hundred miles farther downriver than he had intended. In like manner, John Chapman's life drifted on the tide of pioneer expansion until it became legendary.

Young John went into the apple business. Settlers were pouring into Ohio and Indiana, and the first thing they looked for, once cabins and gardens were established, was a couple of hundred apple trees. They needed apples to eat and to dry, to make cider, sauce, butter, applejack, and the vinegar in which they pickled their garden produce. And Johnny Appleseed was there, nursing along young orchards beside the new trails. John gathered his seeds at Pennsylvanian cider mills and took them into the wilderness by

horse, canoe, shank's mare. Alone, he traveled hundreds of miles each year, cleared orchards and raised seedlings, tough native trees of no particular breed, which he sold or gave to incoming settlers. John bought and leased land and he made money.

At some unknown point in his youth John encountered the writings of Swedenborg, and took them to his heart. This seed fell on fertile ground!

No one knows how that ground was prepared, but we can make a guess. John was born in 1774 in Leominster, Massachusetts. His father went off to the Revolutionary War. His mother died in 1776. Returning, his father married again and raised ten more children in a two-room cabin. John grew up the second oldest of twelve, cared for by a harassed stepmother. Perhaps some unsatisfied part of John never really grew up. Emotionally unattached, he may have found in Swedenborg's visions of Heaven and correspondent

earth a focus for love and a passion for usefulness.

Along with his appleseeds, John took to planting Swedenborgian teachings. When he spent the night in a settler's cabin he would expound these teachings. He carried Swedenborg's books along the wild trails, and left them here and there for his hosts to read. They say he would tear a book in half and leave half with Smith and half with Taylor—and then switch them later. He was competing with every type of Christian missionary. The frontier was as crammed with sects as Johnny's childhood home with children. For the most part, as a contemporary said, "The people . . . paid little attention to the . . . doctrine. It was not orthodox, and Johnny was ragged."¹

Not that the settlers minded rags much, but Johnny's outfit took the cake. An itinerant preacher once declaimed "Where is there a man who, like the primitive Christians, is traveling to Heaven barefooted and clad in coarse raiment?" John silenced him with a cheerful "Here he is!" John went barefoot most of the time. His raiment consisted of castaway pants, a coffee-sack shirt, and something on his head; maybe a tin pot, maybe a pasteboard hat he made himself, or an old army hat. But, said contemporaries, he was always clean; no easy feat for an itinerant seedsman. Swedenborg had written that man is angelic if he loves God and the neighbor, "no matter how he appears in the external form."² Johnny took advantage of this teaching!

His hardihood amazed the hardy settlers. He liked to pierce his bare feet with thorns, probably to amuse children and to show off. He slept happily under makeshift shelters among serpents, bears, and wolves, and went about the woods unarmed. John counted wild animals among his neighbors. After all, they had spiritual correspondences and uses. They say he freed a trapped wolf and romped with bear cubs. They say he did not swat mosquitoes, regretted killing a rattlesnake that bit him, spent hard-

earned money feeding other men's old horses. They say, too, that he went barefoot because he kept giving his shoes away to his human neighbors. Once he bought a great pile of dishes, explaining that he could go without washing dishes for a week! In fact, he gave the dishes to a large, needy family.

Unlike your average pioneer, instead of stirring up a posse when Delawares stole a string of his ponies, John quietly tracked and found the Indians and discussed the matter. The upshot was that John kept his scalp and the Delawares kept the ponies.

Some Indians judged John crazy; some thought him a medicine man. He visited them as he did the settlers, accepted their hospitality, shared his snuff, tried to make peace between them and the settlers.

John's life was a rough wilderness trail leading determinedly Heavenward, but meeting and crossing many other trails. His friends included wildlife, Indians, pioneers, and highly cultivated Swedenborgians. (How, when and where he met these is a mystery. Town life reminded him of Hell, and his legend offers no tales of urban adventure.) His concerns bridged four earthly worlds, and Heaven too.

One March day in 1845 John Chapman set out to tend a distant orchard, and fell ill. He spent the night at a friend's cabin, lingered, and "a day or two after taking sick he passed to the spirit land."³ The doctor who tended him remarked that he had never seen a man meet death so peaceably. But Heaven was "no strange place" to John, for as John Eliot said, he had "been there a thousand times before."⁴

*And if they inquire
whence came such trees . . .
The answer still comes as
they travel on:
These trees were planted
by Appleseed John.*

Lydia Maria Child

Most midwestern apple trees can probably trace their descent through John Chapman's calloused

fingers. And in his life, his travels and legend, John planted one more grand tree, a new, tough, native tree of life, under whose branches we today find spiritual fruit. Tolerance is one ripe round apple on John's tree, and reverence for life is another. Smaller fruit are humor, good-nature, hardihood. We may feel that such a vigorous, far-shading tree has stood in the world forever; but this particular, very American tree was planted by Appleseed John. ■

Notes:

- ¹ *Johnny Appleseed-Man & Myth*, p.135.
- ² *Swedenborg-Striking Quotations from Swedenborg's Works*-R.W. Kenyon, p.23.
- ³ *Johnny Appleseed-Man & Myth*, p.234.
- ⁴ *The Life of the Rev. John Eliot, The first Missionary to the Indians in North America*: Cotton Mather.

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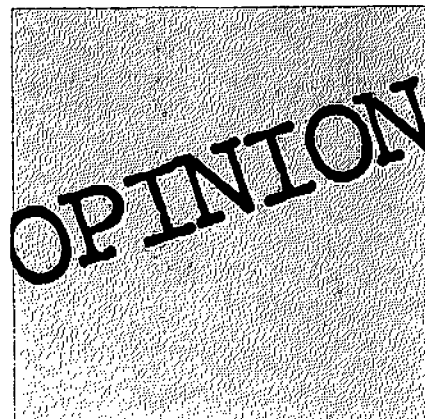
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Also Note:

Johnny Appleseed and the Frontier Within: An award-winning film starring Joseph Davies and featuring Lillian Gish, available in 16mm and video formats from The Swedenborg Foundation, 139 East 23rd Street, New York, NY 10010.



Scriptural Disputation

Dear Editor,

I read with interest Mr. Bruce Rose's letter in the June issue of the *Messenger Express*. I find that I disagree with Mr. Rose's interpretation of Leviticus 20:13, 15, 16. "Man shall not lie with mankind as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed abomination. . . . *and if a man lie with a beast, he shall surely be put to death. . . . If a woman approach unto any beast and lie down thereto, thou shall kill the woman and the beast. . . .*"

I believe that to understand Lev. 20: 13, 15, 16, we first have to look carefully at Lev. 20:1-2. "And the Lord spake unto Moses saying, Again, thou shalt say to the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn in Israel, that giveth any of his seed unto Molech; he shall surely be put to death: the people of the land shall stone with stones."

Who was Molech? He was a Canaanite fertility god. These scriptures refer to Israel's monotheism, not to their sexuality. These scriptures condemn certain sexual acts used in rituals dedicated to a god other than Yahweh. Nowhere is a homosexual orientation condemned.

Homosexuality is not an act, but a sexual orientation.

If we must look literally at these scriptures, then homosexual acts not being dedicated to Molech are not condemned.

To Jesus, people were more important than the law, and circumstances surely played a part in his interpretation of the law. This can be seen in Matthew 12:2-3, "But when the Pharisees saw it,

they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the Sabbath Day. But he said unto them, have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungered, and they that were with him." It can also be seen in Mark 2:27, "And he said unto them, the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." Maybe the best example of this would be John 8:15, "Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man."

I agree with Mr. Rose that homosexuality is not God's mistake, but can we be sure it is not His blessed creation? Let me end with the Lord's words to Peter found in Acts 10:15, "What God hath cleaned, call not unclean."

Rev. Carl Yenetchi
Urbana, Ohio

New Age in Perspective

Dear Editor,

"New Age" ideas and practices are moving into modern life (*The Messenger*, February 1988), but they have also raised concerns in my mind about some dangerous conflicts in our attitudes toward life and religion. New age culture began to gather momentum in the sixties and then became a dominant movement, a fairly self-contained counter-culture in the early seventies. It seems to have begun as a revival of old spiritual ideas—western mysticism and myths most of us never knew were still around—and it quickly established a broad communication with Eastern religions and mystical practices. Christianity was, and I think still is, rarely represented in it.

In California's Sierra foothills where I live, many New Age people came up from the cities to establish communal circles and to develop healing techniques and arts that were not approved of in the cities or by standard medicine. I think that the legacy of this movement will be a renewed faith in the power of the mind to heal the body, and in the riches of a more natural approach to

life and to relationships. It also encourages more awareness of the spiritual forces in everyday living.

But these things are being bought at a high price. As I mentioned, Eastern religions, rather than Christianity, provide the theology of New Age culture; there is also great estrangement from the sciences and from conventional medicine. One devotee of the new culture, when I told him about recent discoveries in astronomy, said of science generally, "I don't believe in that stuff." It's an attitude that is reinforced in many ways. A number of spiritual healers have earned my respect for their powers; I've benefited from them on several occasions. But again there is no feeling of urgency that one must also learn conventional medicine and diagnostic techniques. Both scientists and doctors are suspected of being self-motivated, overly political, and grossly materialistic. The result is too much credulity about any spiritual claim that comes down the road, a disdain for analytic thinking, and sometimes dangerous misdiagnoses of medical problems.

After associating with quite a few New Age people for several years, I had to conclude that the New Age can't be built on their culture alone. It will take both the new and the old to do it. The split between the two societies is going to be deadly to both if one becomes wildly spiritual and creative without controls, and the other becomes wooden, dogmatic, and questions everything visionary.

I think that what we will have to see eventually is that the person who seems to be our dark opposite is not really out there. The scientist and the MD—two handy symbols of conservative thinking—are really in us. The visionary who puts them behind him is only putting down his inner scientist and doctor and thus denying his own analytic and material side and a special kind of grounded wisdom contained in it. The skeptic who sees the New Age as simply a collection of mistakes

and airy thinking is putting down his visionary side and denying himself much of his capacity to move into a better future. Once we see more of our opposites in ourselves and try to relate creatively to them there, we will be more able to build a New Age that will work.

Steve Koke
Grass Valley, California

Searching for Book

Dear Editor,

We are in need of another copy of the *Dictionary of Correspondences*. Ours is falling to pieces due to excessive use. This is not Alice Sechrist's *Dictionary of Bible Imagery* currently in print from the Swedenborg Foundation—we have a good copy of that. The old *Dictionary of Correspondences* does not carry a by-line and would be hard-bound. If anyone has a copy that they would be willing to sell, please write to us.

Rev. Harold Taylor
302-323 Michigan St.
Victoria, B.C. V8V 1R6

A Spiritual Foundation

Dear Editor,

Where in the Word or in Swedenborg's writings does it state directly or indirectly that taxes per se are un-Christian? This question is my reply to Ian Woofenden's comments (see June *Messenger*) on my tax plan suggestions to remedy one specific wrong in our nation. Unless Mr. Woofenden or any other New Church layperson or minister can provide me with such a text, I must conclude that his letter has no real foundation in the teachings of our faith and heritage.

George Kessler
Maywood, N.J.

New Mexico Hospitality

Dear Editor,

I have lived in Carlsbad, New Mexico since 1949. To the best of my knowledge, there are no Swedenborgians near here, except members of my immediate family. In the last six years, I have been to three annual conventions of the General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches, and to one retreat in Kansas.

I wish to make it known that I would be happy to have any Swedenborgians travelling through this area stop by and visit. I am living in a mobile home, but can provide bed and breakfast for two, possibly for four people. Carlsbad is a bit off the beaten path, but Carlsbad Caverns and the Living Desert State Park are nearby scenic spots offering great inspiration.

Roberta Mack McCollum
1303 E. Orchard Lane, #12
Carlsbad, New Mexico 88220
(505) 885-2609

Baptisms

Boersma—Amber Dawn Boersma was baptized into the Christian faith on May 8, 1988, at the Riverside, California Swedenborgian Church, the Rev. Dr. Ivan D. Franklin officiating.

Davis—Brittany LeeAnn Davis was baptized into the Christian faith on May 8, 1988 at the Riverside, California Swedenborgian Church, the Rev. Dr. Ivan D. Franklin officiating.

McIntosh—Jeffrey James McIntosh, infant son of David and Brenda McIntosh, was baptized into the Christian faith on March 6, 1988 at the Church of the Good Shepherd, Kitchener, Ontario, the Rev. Eric Allison officiating.

Marston—Brandon Scott Marston was baptized into the Christian faith on May 8, 1988 at the Riverside, California Swedenborgian Church, the Rev. Dr. Ivan D. Franklin officiating.

Schneider—Christyn Amanda Schneider, infant daughter of Philip and Amanda Schneider, was baptized into the Christian faith on May 29, 1988 at the Church of the Good Shepherd, Kitchener, Ontario, the Rev. Eric Allison officiating.

Stamhuis—Daniel Wayne Stamhuis was baptized into the Christian faith at the Church of the Holy City, Edmonton, Alberta on April 17, 1988, the Rev. Henry Korsten officiating.

Waters—Ashley Loana Waters and Amanda Gayle Waters, twin daughters of Clarence and Dawna Waters of Saskatoon, Sask., were baptized into the Christian faith on June 19, 1988 at the Rosthern New Church, the Rev. David L. Sonmor officiating.

Whyte—Cody Trevor Whyte was baptized into the Christian faith at the Church of the Holy City, Edmonton, Alberta, on April 10, 1988, the Rev. Henry Korsten officiating.

Marriages

Conlin-Osborne—Marion Conlin and Bruce Osborne were united in Christian marriage on May 7, 1988 at the Church of the Holy City, Edmonton, Alberta, the Rev. Henry Korsten officiating.

Ganzert-Keaton—Karin Kay (McCormick) Ganzert and Stephen Kennedy Keaton were united in Christian marriage on June 11, 1988 in Carlsbad, California, the Rev. Dr. Ivan D. Franklin officiating.

Jones-Brown—Linda D. Jones and Roger L. Brown were united in Christian marriage on June 25, 1988 at the Church of the New Jerusalem, Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. James F. Lawrence officiating.

Maher-Martin—Kathleen Maher and Benjamin Martin were united in marriage at the Martin summer home in Bridgton, Maine, on July 9, 1988, the Rev. Ernest O. Martin, the groom's father, officiating.

Mather-Norgaard—Jenny Mather and Erik Norgaard were united in Christian marriage on May 7, 1988 at the Church of the Holy City, Edmonton, Alberta, the Rev. Henry Korsten officiating.

Sawchuk-Hunter—Audrey Sawchuk and Stuart Hunter were united in Christian marriage on April 16, 1988 at the Church of the Holy City, Edmonton, Alberta, the Rev. Henry Korsten officiating.

Confirmations

Benoit—Kelly Benoit, daughter of Sharon Lemee Swan, and granddaughter of Albert and Janet Lemee, was confirmed into the life of the General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches on April 19th, 1987, Easter Sunday, at the Bridgewater Massachusetts Swedenborgian Church, the Rev. Marlene Laughlin officiating.

Burris—Robin Lynn Burris and Jeffrey Lynn Burris were confirmed into the Christian faith and into the life of the General Convention of

Swedenborgian Churches on June 5, 1988, at the Riverside, California Swedenborgian Church, the Rev. Ivan D. Franklin officiating.

Kazler—Adolph Kazler was confirmed into the life of the General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches on June 5, 1988 at the Swedenborg House in Deland, Florida, the Rev. Ernest Frederick officiating.

Kurtz—Nan D. Kurtz was confirmed into the life of the General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches on May 1, 1988 at the Church of the New Jerusalem, Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. Paul Zacharias officiating.

Miller—Byron Dean (Elisha) Miller was confirmed into the Christian faith and into the life of the General Convention on April 3, 1988, at the Riverside, California Swedenborgian Church, the Rev. Dr. Ivan D. Franklin officiating.

Phinney—Dawn Phinney, daughter of Merrilee Flood and Richard Phinney, was confirmed into the life of the General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches on April 19th, 1987, Easter Sunday, at the Bridgewater, Massachusetts Swedenborgian Church, the Rev. Marlene Laughlin officiating.

Thomas—Jean Thomas was confirmed into the life of the General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches on May 1, 1988 at the Swedenborg House in Deland, Florida, the Rev. Ernest Frederick officiating.

Wagner—Tami Wagner and Robby Wagner were confirmed into the Christian faith and into the life of the General Convention on June 5, 1988, at the Riverside, California Swedenborgian Church, the Rev. Dr. Ivan D. Franklin officiating.

Deaths

Carroll—Augusta Carroll, longtime member of the Bridgewater, Massachusetts Swedenborgian Church, entered the spiritual world on October 31, 1987. A memorial service is to be held in August, 1988 during the family reunion.

Conant—Page Conant, longtime member of the Bridgewater, Massachusetts Swedenborgian Church, entered the spiritual world on November 15, 1987. Mr. Conant was active for many years as a member of the Board of Directors of the Swedenborg School of Religion and gave of himself tirelessly in many ways in supporting that institution. A memorial service was held on November 19, 1987 at the New Jerusalem Church, Bridgewater, the Revs. Marlene Laughlin and William Woofenden officiating.

Dibb—Wallace Newell Dibb, 87, longtime member of the San Diego Society, entered the spiritual world on April 21, 1988. A memorial service was held on April 25th at the Greenwood Mortuary in San Diego, Eldon Smith officiating in conjunction with the Masonic Lodge.

Dullea—Alice L. Dullea, lifelong member of the Brockton, Massachusetts Swedenborgian Church, entered the spiritual world on April 12, 1988. A memorial service was held in Brockton with the Rev. Wilfred G. Rice officiating.

Friesen—Anna Friesen, a member of the Rosthern New Church Society since 1918, entered the spiritual world on June 6, 1988. She was a noted author, having published many articles in the Winnipeg Free Press and the Saskatoon Star Phoenix. She co-authored a book with her son, Victor, entitled *The Mulberry Tree* describing her pioneer childhood and growing up in the Rosthern District. It was published in 1985. A memorial service was held on June 9, 1988 the Rev. David Sonmor officiating.

Houghton—Frank Houghton, lifelong member of the Bridgewater, Massachusetts Swedenborgian Church, entered the spiritual world on March 9, 1988. His memorial service is to be held in the summer of 1988.

Lasso—Grace A. Lasso, 82, life-long member of the Church of the Good Shepherd, Kitchener, Ontario, passed into the spiritual world on May 5, 1988. A memorial service was

held at the church on May 7, 1988, the Rev. Eric Allison officiating.

McKellar—Edna McKellar, 82, life-long member of the Church of the Good Shepherd, Kitchener, Ontario, passed into the spiritual world on January 25, 1988. A memorial service was held at the church on January 28, 1988, the Rev. Eric Allison officiating.

Miller—Gordon W. Miller, longtime member of the New Jerusalem Church in Bridgewater, Massachusetts and former member of the Board of Directors of the Swedenborg School of Religion, entered the spiritual world on December 27, 1987. A private service was held in Bridgewater on December 31st.

Schaeffer—Albert Schaeffer, longtime member and worker of the Church of the Good Shepherd, Kitchener, Ontario, entered the spiritual world on April 4, 1988. A memorial service was held on April 6th, the Rev. Eric Allison officiating.

Schneider—Howard Schneider, lifelong member of the Church of the Good Shepherd, Kitchener, Ontario, entered the spiritual world on March 27, 1988. Mr. Schneider had served as president of the Kitchener church and had contributed his talents and labors to the church in many different ways over the years. A memorial service was held on April 9, 1988, the Revs. Eric Allison and Paul Zacharias officiating.

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Urban Security

George F. Dole

"It had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates. . . . And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there." Revelation 21:12, 25

The question is an obvious one: what's the use of a great high wall if you're going to leave all the gates open all the time? It is a question that has no easy answer on the literal level, but that should not surprise us. Hohn's description of the Holy City is hardly suited for earthly realization. Gold is not a practical material for surfacing urban streets, pearls do not make good gates, and precious stones are not cost-effective for large-scale building.

If, however, we take the description as it is intended—as evocative of the peace and blessedness the Lord has in mind for us—then it makes compelling sense, and that is the theme I want to explore here. In its simplest form, it is this: genuine security and total openness are inseparable.

There is truth to this even on the national scale. The most secure border our country enjoys is our border with Canada, which is almost the most open. It is more open by far than the ports of Florida and the Gulf, despite the fact that those borders are formed by miles of ocean. It is more open than the ports of the Atlantic and Pacific coasts, where the borders are thousands of miles wide.

The reason is simple. Canada and the United States have a relationship that is predominantly constructive. They agree on both the location and the meaning of the border.

We have a lamentable tendency to think strictly in military terms when we hear the phrase "national security," overlooking the fact that we will never be secure as long as we are feared or envied or hated. Military force is one factor in security, and will be as long as others desire our downfall; but it is one factor only. I find it profoundly depressing when our military defines "peace" as "permanent pre-hostility," apparently assuming that hostility is a fundamental and ineradicable human characteristic.

The vision of our church denies this. Peace, as a whole and seamless fabric of loving relationships, is the only truly human state. The Lord, the Prince of Peace, is the only true human. We are human to the

Peace, as a whole and seamless fabric of loving relationships, is the only truly loving state. The Lord, the Prince of Peace, is the only true human.

extent that the Lord's image and likeness are realized in us.

The Holy City is a particular way of describing that image and likeness. On one level, it applies to the New Church as the spiritual state of a community; but as a single individual is the church in least form, it also applies to each one of us.

On this level, I think we are all aware that a sense of security goes hand-in-hand with openness, and that insecurity and defensiveness also go hand-in-hand. If we are unsure of ourselves, if we feel that our walls are weak, then we close and guard our gates. It may not make much sense, but it's all we can do. It takes a long time to build a wall, to build a clear understanding and acceptance of ourselves, so meanwhile we concentrate on the obvious weak spots and try to conceal them.

Hopefully, we work on the wall in the meantime, But that work is not the obvious task of actual construction. As with the house, it must be built by the Lord; and our part is to provide the materials. By self-examination, change of heart, and change of life, we unearth the stones. The Lord removes them to the circumference where they belong, where their use is good. Self-love is a necessary part of our being, evil only when it rules.

Of course, we don't always restrict ourselves to our part of the task. We try to build our own walls. They may be effective for a while, but in the long run they prove inadequate. "And all the Chaldean army . . . broke down the walls of Jerusalem round about." People see though our defensiveness to our insecurity

THE MESSENGER EXPRESS

September 1988

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Con artists manipulate their victims by appealing to the very self-concern that their victims are trying to deny or conceal, whether it is wanting to get rich quick or wanting to be thought kind and generous.

The Old Testament passage, II Kings 24:18-25:10, which vividly tells of the sacking of Jerusalem at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, describes one of life's most painful passages: the total collapse of our pretensions to goodness. It has to happen. We accept the Lord's help only as we admit that we need it. The Lord spent so much time with "sinners" because nothing excludes Him as effectively as pretensions to righteousness.

So in the larger sweep of the biblical story, the fall of Jerusalem in II Kings is the demolition that makes way for new construction. Now the Lord can be the architect and builder. And in the Lord's design, the walls function only to define, not to exclude.

Let me offer an example. If I were asked to go over this sermon and identify which elements are mine and which are borrowed from the Bible, from Swedenborg, from parents, teachers, friends, books, and the like, it would be an impossible task. Yet at the same time, I know that this is in some sense "my" sermon, that no one else would or could construct it in exactly this way. What is "mine"—what is within the walls—is not the right of ownership, but the responsibility of use.

The gates of heavenly character are to be wide open at all times. We are to listen to others in order to learn. We are not to shut out any message the Lord is trying to send us.

The walls of heavenly character are to be great and high. We are to hold ourselves completely accountable for our choices. We are not to blame others, or "circumstances," for our own decisions.

Then and only then will we be at peace, because we will have no enemies. We may still meet hostility or fear or anger or envy, but we will no longer feed it with our own. And whether it fades or not, it will not threaten anything we possess, because the most covetous person on earth will not be eager for our responsibility, and we have no right of ownership.

The Rev. Dr. George F. Dole is a regular lecturer at the annual summer sessions at the Fryeburg New Church Assembly, a Swedenborgian family camp on the Saco River near Fryeburg, Maine. This sermon was given at the Fryeburg New Church on August 7, 1988. ■

Good-bye to a Messenger Colleague

During my nearly-five-year tenure as your editor, I have been assisted in invaluable ways by several people. But one person stands out above all others. With the completion of the August convention issue, an unmistakable era in *The Messenger* came to a close. Paul Maring, who has been the invisible man behind the scenes creating issue after issue of beautiful and often grabbing layout designs, retired. He has recently become the sole owner of his St. Louis advertising firm, The Maring Group, and so his already-squeezed time is even more in demand. Therefore, he took the opportunity of my resignation from *The Messenger* to bring his commitment to the magazine to a close.

What began as a friendly offer to advise me regarding design improvements for *The Messenger* back in the fall of 1984 led to his entanglement with the magazine's design and layout for the next few years! I have known few working relationships as stimulating and smooth as our teamwork month after month. For nearly two years in St. Louis, we were able to have frequent in-person meetings, usually in his office at what was then called Neiman, Maring and Kanefield, one of the city's leading advertising firms. Sometimes we were able to collaborate after the worship service at church, where Paul has been an active member for nineteen years.

When I moved to San Francisco, we had to subsist on phone calls, but by that time our patterns were well enough established that we didn't find the distance to be much of a hindrance. In fact, the magazine's appearance kept getting better and better—a development attributable only to Paul's dedication to high standards.

Luckily for us, Paul is not signing off completely from COMSU's various projects. He has agreed to remain on board for some of the upcoming projects of the Communications Support Unit.

We wish him well in his new goals with The Maring Group, and we especially render our sincere gratitude for the tremendous effort he gave *The Messenger* for the past three and a half years. ■

Jim Lawrence

THE MESSENGER EXPRESS

September 1988
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Rev. James F. Lawrence, Editor
Ethelwyn Worden, Advisor
Andrea Peterson, Design
and Typesetting

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**Martin Scorsese's
The Last Temptation of Christ
Bill Etue**

Usually standing in line for a movie ticket is as dull an experience as waiting for your floor in an elevator, but not this day. This day is the premier of Martin Scorsese's new movie *The Last Temptation of Christ*. The movie line this day, (August 12), is being protected by helmeted Washington D.C. police, in a show of force usually used only for Washington's political demonstrations. There are in fact two groups of demonstrators. The first group is objecting to the movie, and the second group which carries anticensorship signs, is objecting to the first. Similar demonstrations are occurring at some of the other eight cities around the country where the movie is making its debut.

The anti-movie demonstrators are better organized; they distribute a high-gloss color brochure which quotes newspapers and periodicals from only a few days earlier. Many carry large signs saying "blasphemy," some preach with bullhorns while still others push along a bloody, life-sized Christ-mannequin on wheels, complete with crown of thorns.

Inside the theatre the contents of purses are checked, and no one is allowed to sit in the front rows, which are chained off. Uniformed D.C. police guard the screen. A Jewish friend, who has joined my wife and me for the movie, comments about the irony of the large ceiling painting overhead of cherubs holding reels of film.

The film begins with Willem Dafoe (Jesus) doing carpentry work for the Romans. He is making crosses for crucifixions. Judas arrives and tells Jesus how much he and every other Jew despise him for being the only one to accept such work. From this strange beginning until the ending scene of the crucifixion, two and a half hours later, I find myself asking the same few questions over and over: Is this scenario likely?—Is it possible?—Is it blasphemous?

I'd rate most scenes as unlikely, but also possible. So very many moments in the life of Jesus and of the Apostles are unrecorded. Surely if Christ were both human and divine, he had to experience some of the shortcomings of being human. Didn't he lose his temper with the moneychangers in the temple? Didn't he curse the fig tree? As for the film being blasphemous, I would say it was not; although it certainly was a film about contempt for God, or in this case contempt by Jesus for the Father. (The Trinity questions further complicate the issue.) But telling a story about contempt is not contemptuous in itself.

"Blasphemy" has become the buzzword *de rigueur* of the film's harshest critics, and its common usage has become a surrogate for the more legitimate term "offensive." It is easy to see where many would be offended by one scene or another. There is nudity, sex and violence (though no more than in films like *Ben Hur* or *Spartacus*) and to be sure many will find it offensive to see a Jesus with those annoying human traits of indecisiveness, confusion, and vacillation, let alone the "S" word—sexuality. Offensive fiction it may well be—blasphemous it is not.

It is an interesting tale, well told, but it is the type of film that will seldom be evaluated strictly on its merits. Instead of being rated with three popcorns or four, it will be rated by how sincere its director is about personally seeking God, or how stable the original author was in his spiritual quest. The frenzy whipped up by the film is certainly out of proportion to its content. More than one in the departing crowd was heard to murmur, "What's the big deal?"

Our traditional coffee-and-dessert discussion after the film helped me clarify one reason that so many hate the film so much. You may have had the experience of meeting in person some radio personality that you've listened to for years. When you see the face that goes with the voice you're shocked.

This can't be the guy! You just know he doesn't look anything like this! Each of us has an image of Jesus and his life that fills in the gaps left by the Gospels. For some of us that image is more fixed than others. Those who feel hurt the most by this film have those fixed images. The film is a threat, a personal threat to themselves, hardly a threat to the almighty God.

Sympathy is due to those who feel injured by this film. Many are sincere in their anguish and frustration. But it is a pain born out of a theological immaturity. It is the pain that a child feels when spoken to harshly. If Kazantzakis and Scorsese are to be believed, they have had a lion's share of anguish in their own search for paths to truth and understanding of the Lord.

There is also a flip side to the personal effects this film will have on people. It is a provoking story full of what-ifs and just-supposes. Many will leave this film and find Grandma's dusty Bible in the attic and read it extensively; perhaps for the first time.

I have two nominations for "favorite dialog" in this film. The first occurs when Judas, looking at their followers, complains, "You see these people, the poor, the blind, the crippled—we're going to need better men than this." To which Jesus replies, "God will give them to us, and with them we will build a New Jerusalem."

The second also has Judas complaining to Jesus about the fact that Jesus cannot seem to determine if God wants Him to be vengeful against the Romans or forgiving to them. Jesus replies, "God only talks to me a little at a time, and He only tells me what I need to know." ■

*Bill Etue is a member of the
National Swedenborgian Church
in Washington D.C.*

Why I Chose to Devote my Life to the Cause of the New Church

Paul B. Zacharias

In my case, it was a rather easy and obvious decision to make. My father was the New Church missionary minister in Western Canada for many years—from about 1919 to the late 50's. Most of that time was spent in Herbert, Saskatchewan, where he served all the groups in that province (visiting groups in Rosthern, Meadow Lake, Saskatoon and elsewhere,) and also, he would make a trip by train out to B.C. at least once, and sometimes twice a year—there visiting groups in the Fraser Valley and Vancouver area, etc.

In any event, I grew up in Herbert and was active in the life of the New Church there. It was quite an active church at that time, with a large Sunday School and some youth activities, and many of my fondest childhood memories are centered in and around the church life. I would attend church services twice every Sunday, one in German and one in English and I really didn't understand much at either service. But I did absorb a great deal of positive spiritual influences at those times. Just looking around and seeing the faces of the worshippers made a lasting impression upon me.

And so I grew up, very much surrounded by religious influences. We read the Bible and church teachings nightly before going to bed; we always said grace before meals; we attended church services without argument; and there was quite a bit of discussion of religious topics in the home. But never once, as far as I can recall, did my father urge, or even suggest, that I enter the ministry. In many ways my parents were quite remarkable, in that they gave us a great deal of freedom; they imposed very few restrictions upon us; they let us do our own thing, in an era when this was not fashionable. And so, in my

late teens, I was still uncertain as to how I should invest my life. I tried a number of things—worked on a milk ranch near Prince George, B.C.; in a print shop in Vancouver; etc., but none of these activities really satisfied me. And all of those years I read a great deal—I always have been an avid reader. I read a lot of philosophy and of Far Eastern religions, but I always came back to Swedenborg. Nothing else came close to what he had to offer. And so when I was 22 or 23 I decided to go to the Theological School in Cambridge for the Lay Ministry, and while there Franklin Blackmer urged me to continue on for the full ministry—a decision which I have never regretted. ■

The Rev. Paul Zacharias, recently retired from active parish ministry, is currently serving as the Chair of the Council of Ministers.

Should Only Women Be Allowed as Members of the Church?

Brian Kingslake

People often ask me whether I would approve of having women in the ministry. I say, "Of course not! Nor would I approve of having men in the ministry, if this means that any man would make a satisfactory minister simply because of his maleness. I know several very masculine men who would be entirely unsuitable for the sacred office; and I know several women who would fill the position admirably. A minister must perform many functions: conduct services, preach sermons, teach the doctrines, counsel the members, lead by truth to the good of life, and so on—not least of which is to set an example of holy living! A man or woman could perform these functions equally well, or equally badly. Gender is irrelevant; it is the personality and competence of the man or woman that is important.

Someone explained to me: "The minister must be male, because he represents the Lord, who is male." If this is so, then by the same

reasoning the members of the congregation must be female, to represent the Bride, the Lamb's wife. To have a man, or even a boy, in the congregation would be "against the doctrines of the Church." The Church is our Spiritual Mother (female). How can a man represent a Mother?

Such an argument is, of course, nonsense (a *reductio ad absurdum*), but it would seem to be as valid as the assumption that a minister must be male to represent God—who in fact created human beings *male and female* "in his own image and likeness" (*Genesis* 1:27). It shows what a tangle you can get into, if you take a spiritual concept and try to follow it through literally. Just as you cannot argue from the group to the individual, or from the individual to the group. Each application must be considered on its merits. ■

The Rev. Brian Kingslake is a retired minister living in Bath, England. He was ordained by the General Conference of Swedenborgian Churches, headquartered in London, which does not ordain women into the Christian ministry.

Mite Box Presents SSR Archives With Over \$1,200

Thanks to the diligent Mite Box Savings of the ladies in our Women's Alliance across the country, over \$900 dollars was collected for the Mite Box Project for 1988, which was to save the endangered books at the Swedenborg School of Religion Library. During a Convention session a large Mite Box was passed and \$300 more was collected. This money will help preserve many of the books and periodicals that are in danger. Last year it was learned that the paper used after the Civil War contained a substance that when exposed to air eventually dries up and crinkles away. Thanks to research and this money we can do something to record the valuable information they contain. ■

Swedenborg Featured in *Time-Life* Book

In a volume entitled *Psychic Powers* in the famed Time-Life series of topical books, the following account of Swedenborg's vision of the Stockholm fire was deemed compelling enough by the editors to introduce the book. The book was released last spring.

A Fire that Raged in a Mind's Eye

On the evening of July 19, 1759, a pleasant party was just beginning at the home of a prominent citizen of Göteborg, Sweden. Suddenly, unaccountably, the most eminent of the sixteen guests—the famed scientist and mystic Emanuel Swedenborg—left and walked outside without explanation. When he returned a short time later, he was pale and shaken. A fire was raging, he said. It had already destroyed a friend's house and now threatened his own.

The guests exchanged startled glances. As they all knew, Swedenborg did not live in Göteborg, but in Stockholm. And Stockholm was almost three hundred miles away.

The party proceeded, but Swedenborg left the house several more times and returned to report the blaze was still spreading. Finally, at 8:00 P.M., he announced that it had been extinguished—only three houses from his own.

By the next morning, a Sunday, Swedenborg's vision was the talk of Göteborg. Had there really been a fire? Or was the seventy-one-year old's imagination running amok? An apparent answer came the following night when an express messenger arrived from Stockholm with news of a great fire. Three days after the vision, a second messenger brought more details. They matched Swedenborg's account of the blaze and confirmed that it had halted only three doors from his own and had ended, just as he said, at 8:00 P.M.

Swedenborg was a respected engineer, inventor, and author whose intellect encompassed sciences ranging from psychology to zoology. When he was in his late fifties, however, he received what he regarded as a visitation from God. Thereafter, he turned his full attention to theology, metaphysics, and the exploration of his psychic powers, which seemed abundant.

To many parapsychologists, Swedenborg's reported vision of the Stockholm fire is an example of clairvoyance: the ability to see psychically what the eye cannot perceive. ■

New Researcher's Manual Published

Hot off the press as this magazine goes to press is the Rev. Dr. William R. Woofenden's new *Swedenborg Researcher's Manual*. Published by the Swedenborg Scientific Association, this is a beautiful hardbound volume that offers a sound organization of Swedenborg's scientific and theological writings, doctoral dissertations on various aspects of Swedenborgian concepts, the most significant of the collateral works (including basic reference works), plus a glossary of Swedenborgian terms and a list of key Swedenborgian concepts. ■ 193

Swedenborg on Colors

For those with a special love for colors or with a particular interest in the meanings of various colors from a Swedenborgian perspective, a 12-page full color booklet (8½ x 11) is now available. Conceived and put together by the Rev. Clifford Curry of the General Conference, this booklet, *Beyond the Rainbow*, offers a brief overview of the subject with illustrations that together provide a useful framework for understanding the mysterious and beautiful realm of color. It is available for \$6 postpaid from: New Church House, 34 John Dalton Street, Manchester, England M2 6LE. ■





Women's Weekend

Almont New Church Assembly

8:00 p.m. November 11th—3 p.m.
November 13th, 1988

This weekend will be a special opportunity for women to come together and use the unique resources offered by the Swedenborgian Church in developing individual self-worth, life goals and personal identity. The sessions will help us to re-discover our image of womanhood, and through presentations, meditation, worship and sharing we will be led into new areas of growth.

Come and join us in a week-end for and about women. The beauty and joy of being a woman is ours to cherish.

Cost: \$10.00 (U.S.) registration fee plus \$50.00 (U.S.) per person includes linens, room and board, Friday evening reception.

Leaders: Rev. Judith Dennis, minister of the Urbana, Ohio Swedenborgian Church.

Rev. Dorothea Harvey, former Professor of Religion and Chaplain at Urbana University.

To register send name, address, registration fee, and special dietary and housing needs, by October 31, to:

Women's Weekend
Almont New Church Assembly
1513 Cameron Road
Almont, MI 48003



Guest Editors Coming Up!

In order for COMSU's new outreach ministry, J. Appleseed & Co., to start up on schedule, we have arranged to have guest editors for the fall and winter magazine issues of *The Messenger* (October and December.) Since I am the director of this fledgling project, I needed to be free of the majority of *The Messenger's* demands to launch J. Appleseed with sufficient time for planning and execution.

The team of Ethelwyn Worden and Steve Koke will conceive and produce the October issue and the Rev. Dr. Robert Kirven, a former editor of *The Messenger*, will take a nostalgic turn at the wheel for the Christmas issue. I will edit the newsletter *Messenger Express* issue for November.

COMSU will select the new editor by October 1st. The new permanent editor of *The Messenger* will be announced in the November *Messenger Express*. ■

New Address for *Lifeline* Editor

Lifeline, a monthly magazine published by the General Conference of Swedenborgian Churches, headquartered in England, is edited by Harry Heap. His new address is: 20, Cox's Close, Stapleford, Cambridge, England CB2 5SP ■

Jim Lawrence

Baptism

Pringle—Emanuel Salvatore Jason Pringle, son of Donna and Antonio Pringle, was baptised on June 12, 1988 at the New Church (Swedenborgian), New York, NY, the Rev. Robert McCluskey officiating.

Marriage

Mackenzie-Switaj—Kevin Mackenzie and Susan Switaj were united in marriage at Windham, Maine on June 25, 1988, the Rev. Robert McCluskey officiating. Susan is the granddaughter of Peggy Regamey and the late Rev. Antony Regamey.

Deaths

Clark—Sheldon D. Clark, 75, passed into the spiritual world on May 25, 1988 in Sandy Spring, Maryland. His wife, Lucy, is a homeopathic physician with Swedenborgian roots. Mr. Clark was the brother of Nancy Perry and brother-in-law of Fred Perry, the vice president of Convention. He was an active member of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). An attorney and political activist, he was known especially for his work in promoting peace.

Douglass—Iza H. Douglass, 99, longtime member of the Church of the New Jerusalem, Fryeburg, Maine, passed into the spiritual world on July 23, 1988 in Fryeburg. Mrs. Douglass was the grandmother of Lewis Walker and grandmother-in-law of Beverly Walker, Chairperson of the Trustees of the Fryeburg church. Until her passing, she was the oldest resident of Fryeburg and represented the oldest generation of a five-generation family. A memorial service was held on July 27, 1988 at the Pine Grove Cemetery in Fryeburg, the Rev. James F. Lawrence officiating. ■

OPINION

Opinion

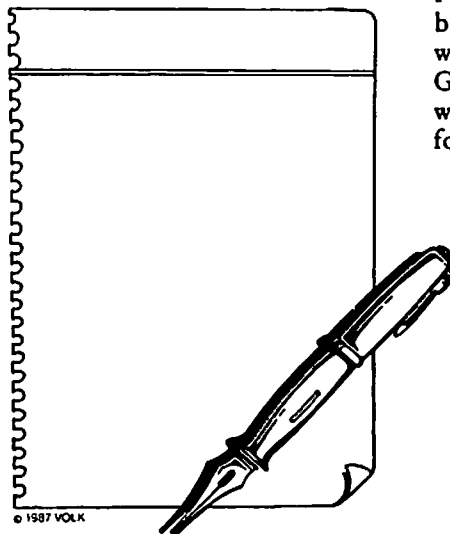
True New Church in Minds and Hearts

Dear Editor,

I read Brian Kingslake's article on *The Ecclesia* with great pleasure. He is talking about the real New Church, the Nova Ecclesia, that comes down from God out of heaven. All are "called out" from the former Church and into this New Church. In the posthumously published little work *Invitation to the New Church* one of the points in the "Syllabus" reads: "Invitation to the New Church, that men should go and meet the Lord," and this point is then strengthened by a reference to Rev. 21, 22, and 1.

New Church organizations should have no other purpose than to testify concerning this Church of the Lord and to lead into its faith and life. The New Jerusalem seeks to have an abode in the hearts and minds of men and women. It is a heavenly city, and its laws are the Heavenly Doctrines. ■

Rev. Erik Sandstrom, Sr.
General Church
Huntingdon Valley, Penn.



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Only God is Ultimate

Dear Editor,

With regard to the letter in the Opinion section of the May, 1988 *The Messenger Express* entitled "Free Will and Homosexuality": I must admit that I am distressed to read this kind of argument, which, it seems to me is a thinly disguised claim for the inerrancy of the Bible (a doctrine which has caused more pain and misery over the centuries than perhaps any other) in a magazine which is the official publication of a church which heralds the "New Age." The unfortunate fact is that there is *no absolute known cause* for differences in sexuality; yet it is out of our fear of that which is different that we strike out at anyone who is "not like us." On this score we have not progressed much further than the writers of the Bible who presumably were reacting in the same way. There is an illuminating article in the May, 1988 issue of *Psychology Today* entitled "Doctor of Sexology," concerning the complexity of factors which go into the formation of sexuality. It is worth reading—that is, if one's mind isn't "made up" and doesn't want to be confused by "the facts." I find that Christians, of whatever brand, often lapse into the error of worshipping the Bible, not the living God about whom the Bible was written. I hope that we will not follow in that mistaken order. ■

Rev. Dr. Robert Bossdorf
S.S.R., Newton, Mass.

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NOTES Notes notes_____

Notes from the Central Office_____

Ethelwyn Worden, director

As this is written, just before press time, the day after Labor Day, it is sunny, cool and wonderful in the Boston area (after a very wet Sunday), and the aroma of freshly-mown grass is wafting up from below where Dick Byrne is carving patterns with the riding mower.

To bring you up to date on the Central Office staff, please take note that Muriel Liddy is secretary, Andrea (Anne) Peterson is the new typesetter, and Anna Baranchuk the new bookkeeper. Muriel joined us at the beginning of March, and the other two ladies were "on board" in time for many of you to meet them at Convention. Lu Freedman continues to join us one or two days a week and, among other things, keeps our mailing lists current.

Speaking of mailing lists, we appreciate the efforts of many of you to help us keep abreast of address and phone number changes, and heartily encourage you to keep up the good work. One would think our lists are fairly stable, but instead our office receives between 5 and 15 address changes a week! And when *the Messenger* is returned to us with an address change, we

have to pay 30 cents besides—so we would appreciate being informed of changes BEFORE the next *Messenger* comes out!

The Science and Spirituality Symposium sponsored by the Swedenborg Foundation, at Tarrytown, NY, was a great success—more about it in the next issue; speakers included Renee Weber, Larry Dossey, John Hitchcock, Wickham Skinner standing in for Sir John Carew Eccles, Robert McDermott, Frances Vaughan and Raymond Moody. Audio cassettes of each talk, including its follow-up panel discussion (by the other speakers) and the open discussion, will be available from the Swedenborg Foundation, 139 E. 23rd Street, New York, NY 10010—cost yet to be determined. The proceedings will be published this fall and available at \$12.50 a set from the Foundation. The talks will also appear in the Spring issue of *Chrysalis*.

We look forward to a year of good communication between members, churches and the Central Office—for which purpose we include our phone number: (617) 969-4240. Let us hear from you!