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# The Messenger

December 1992



*Wishing You a Joyous Christmas*



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## The Messenger

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## Moving Toward the Light

### The Light

*Guest Editorial by Gard Perry*

*"... darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples;" (Isaiah 60:2)*

Isaiah speaks to what I see outside: decreasing light as the earth spins toward its rendezvous with the longest night. The process is easy to plot. From where I stand in our kitchen, looking west at the Moat Mountain range, I can see that the sun sets over a point that marches farther south day after day. The amount of available light is rapidly diminishing.

Dorothea Harvey reminded those of us gathered at a worship leaders workshop at the Swedenborg School of Religion last winter that the Lord's birth is celebrated in December because of the real connection that exists between outer and inner processes. I made the following note: "We are speaking about the connection between our spirit lives and the processes of nature. That is the way the Lord communicates; the Lord speaks to us not directly with words, but to our loves, and brings insight to our experience."

That concept shines within our theology:

*There are two lights from which we receive light, the light of the world and the light of heaven. The light of the world comes from the sun; the light of heaven comes from the Lord. The world's light is for the natural or outer person, and therefore matters to that person . . . In contrast, heaven's light is for the spiritual or inner person.*

*Between these lights—or between things in heaven's light and things in the world's light—there is a responsiveness when the outer or natural person is acting as one with the inner or spiritual person, that is, when the former is serving the latter. Then the things that happen in the world's light are portrayals of the kinds of things that happen in heaven's light.<sup>1</sup>*

As I write the earth collides with an enveloping darkness. Inwardly I am aware that my ignorance seems to grow as well. This season mirrors that.

I light candles against that night. It is not a protest, but an act of quiet hope. The people of the Fryeburg New Church share an act of hope, too; they have their Christmas pageant after sunset of the winter's longest night. The climactic scene is at the manger with the lights out; except one—a single candle stays lit. The Lord is always born at night. It's as if when our own light and world's light goes out, the Lord's light can at last be seen and start to grow.

Isaiah reported as much. The phrase in chapter 60 that begins "darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples" continues, "but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you." There is a command that we also hear: "Arise, shine; for your light has come, . . ."

<sup>1</sup>Arcana Coelestia 3223, from *View from Within*, Dole, p. 89.

The Rev. Dr. Gardiner F. Perry is pastor of the Fryeburg New Church, Fryeburg, Maine.

# Mote and Beam

George Dole

Isaiah 2:1-5  
Matthew 7:1-14

*And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the house of the god of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.*

Isaiah 2:21

The image Isaiah presents here is one which I profoundly hope we cherish for our own church. In past generations, it was certainly so. There was a conviction that "the New Church" was the crown of the churches, and that in time it would be recognized as such. It would be established in the top of the mountains, and all nations would turn to it to learn the Lord's ways.

Certainly one cannot read our theology without sooner or later encountering this vision of the New Church. Swedenborg is consistent and unequivocal about it. The previous dispensation has ended, destroyed by our placing our own institutional and personal interests ahead of "the weightier matters of the law"—"judgment, mercy, and faith" in the words of Matthew, or "judgment and the love of God" in the words of Luke. In theological terms, this is the separation of charity from faith, and can only result in the death of the church.

We do not hear much these days about the vision of the coming triumph of the New Church. It was apparently easier to believe in it when things were going well for us than it is now, when things are not going so well. Toward the close of the nineteenth century, the dominant mood in our whole country was that progress was an irresistible force. Good and thoughtful people believed that they might see all social problems solved within their own lifetimes. After all, with the discovery of electricity, a source of power had been found that was so cheap that it was accessible even to the poor. They would soon have comforts they had never dreamed of, and the underlying causes of crime

would have been removed.

This same spirit in our church organizations was nurtured by the fact that we were in our own way prestigious, and were growing. We could point with pride to eminent members—to a Clarence Barron in New York, to a Jonathan Young Scammon in Chicago, to the Carter family in Boston, or the Cutlers in St. Paul. We could look at the new congregations gathering, and the old ones building larger buildings.

But, if we look back now with honest eyes, we cannot help but see how much of this apparent prosperity was founded on illusion. The national faith in irresistible progress did not recognize the extent to which our apparent prosperity rested on the abuse of child and immigrant labor and the plundering of our natural resources. More seriously, this national faith was quite blind to the depth and strength of human selfishness. Clearly, from what has happened since, anyone who thinks that getting cures greed is living in a fool's paradise.

Our own church was permeated by this faith, and added to it a further element. We operated on the unchallenged assumption that we were "the New Church" described in our theology. That was what we had set out to be in the forming of a separate organization, that was what we called ourselves, and that was what we thought we were.

I do not want to take much time to refute this assumption, because it doesn't need much. I would simply state that you can search the writings as long as you like without finding any clear references to "the New Church" as an ecclesiastical organization. What you will find, especially

in Swedenborg's treatment of the vision of the Holy City New Jerusalem are trenchant descriptions of the New Church as a total quality of life: the Word will be translucent from its spiritual sense, everything in it will flow from the good of love, everything in it will appear in the light, and there will be nothing external that is separate from its appropriate internal. Its members will not be in the love of self or in the pride of their own intelligence.

Whatever this is a description of, it is not a description of our church organization as it is now or as it ever has been. It is, I would urge, a description of the state which the human race must eventually reach if it is to survive. In that sense, there is something irresistible about it. When we are, so to speak, in our right minds, when our minds are not clouded by our pervasive self-concern, it is irresistibly clear that no lasting human society can be founded on greed or pride or the desire for preeminent power. Wherever these operate, they set up situations where the more we have, the less there is for others—where our satisfaction brings privation to others.

Actually, the New Church described in our theology is essentially heaven on earth. Heaven in this context is not a reward for having done well in this life, but a way of living together. The central characteristic of this way of living together is that the joy of each is shared by all, and that the joy of all comes to focus in each individual. In a sense, each individual is at the center of the care and the concern of the whole. No one

(Continued on page 164)



(from page 163)

*To love  
another  
person  
is to  
discipline  
oneself to  
pay real attention  
to that person.  
It is to  
bend  
one's being  
to understand  
who  
that other is,  
what  
that other needs  
and what  
that other  
has to  
offer.*

can be contented while any single person is in distress, so any distress instantly brings all the resources of the spiritual world to bear on it.

On a far smaller scale, we have some idea of what this is like. When one of our own members is ill or in need, our concerns come to focus on that individual. If this intense and focused care were the constant and dominant state of our church, and especially if it extended beyond our own limited membership to our communities, our nation, and our world, then we might begin to talk about our being in some measure "the New Church."

Further, if this were the case, there would be a quality about this church that would be immensely attractive. There would be a sense of deep mutual affection and understanding that I can only describe as "winsome," as tending to win hearts and minds over to itself. To anyone longing for the coming of the Lord's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven, the appeal might well be irresistible.

The Sermon on the Mount advises us to take the plank out of our own eyes before we try to take the speck of sawdust out of someone else's. There are plenty of planks to be seen these days. Crime and addiction and domestic violence are so clearly wrong, so clearly productive of nothing but pain and misery, that it seems hardly worth talking about them. Anyone with half a grain of sense can condemn them as ways of life.

Underlying the Lord's words, though, is a rather formidable awareness. Let me put it this way. Whatever may be our view of domestic violence, say, it appeals to the person who commits it. We, then, do not know what to do for that person until we identify what appeals to us, what feels good to us, and find ways to get beyond that powerfully persuasive feeling of rightness.

Think for a moment of some of the disagreements that have come up in church affairs. Both sides really believe in what they are saying, and often both cannot be right. Perhaps more often than we would like to admit *neither* is right, but that is beside the point. The point is that we have our little blindnesses—little only in the sense that they do not

seem to have huge consequences. We have the attitudes and practices that are dear to us, that are rooted in us through long years of living. When things go wrong, these matters seem to expand and fill our horizons. We can't step back and look at the whole situation, we can't appreciate what other people are trying to tell us, or how they are feeling. We can't really tell whether our concern is as important as it seems—whether we have hold of something that is really vital, or whether we have just had our personal feelings threatened.

I find our theology telling us in many ways that we are intended to live in community, and that our little communities are intended to live as members of larger communities. Our faith is not one of simply purifying ourselves, it is one of "charity," to use the traditional Swedenborgian name. I find our theology telling us in many ways that a fair-minded society can be made only of fair-minded individuals. The dream of a mechanism by which self-interest is supposedly transmuted into economic justice is as illusory as the alchemist's dream of a substance that would transmute lead into gold.

I find our Lord telling us that we must come to grips with our own inadequacies. If we follow his example, this will involve times of withdrawal and introspection, but most of the work will be done in our relationships with each other. The first letter of John puts it very concisely and simply—"Beloved, let us love each other, for love is of God" and everyone who loves is born of God, and knows God. But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love."

The risk is that we, in our lazy fashion, allow this to degenerate into a sloppy sentimentalism, and equate "love" with "feeling good." No, to love another person is to discipline oneself to pay real attention to that person. It is to bend one's being to understand who that other is, what that other needs and what that other has to offer. To love another is to learn to be honest with oneself about oneself, to know when to say "Do not trust me in this respect, for I know I cannot trust myself."

(Continued on page 166)

Archival Gold

# Our Swedenborgian Heritage

(Third in a series)

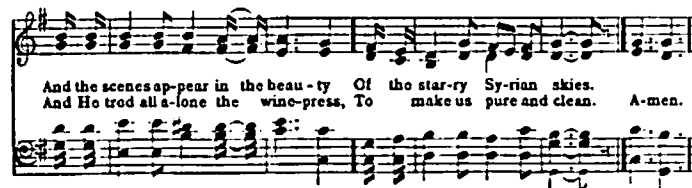
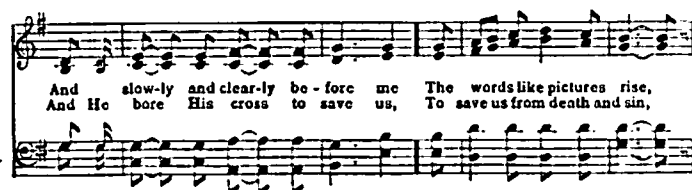
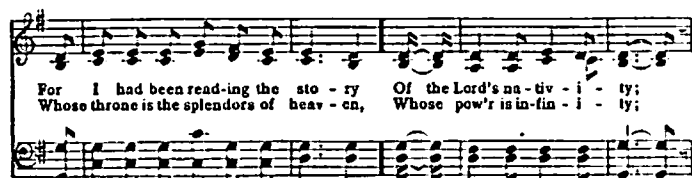
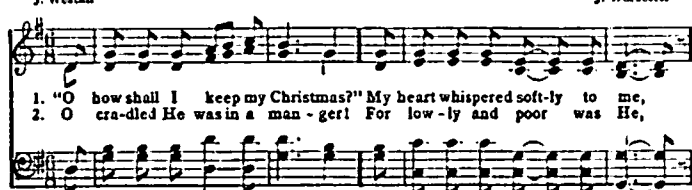
Louise Woofenden

## ADVENT AND NATIVITY

J. Westall

WESTALL

J. Worcester



3 In glory the hosts of the angels  
Came singing His song of praise,  
And filling the heav'ns with their music  
In those wonderful old days:  
Singing "Glory to God in the highest!"  
And "Peace upon Earth," and then  
The mighty chorus of voices  
Pealed forth "Good will to men."

4 "O how shall I keep my Christmas?"  
As they keep it in heav'n above;  
O keep it with peace and thanksgiving,  
And kindest deeds of love;  
And share with the poor and needy  
The joys which the Lord gives thee;  
And thy heart shall keep with the angels  
The Lord's Nativity.

### How shall I keep my Christmas?

This Christmas song, written by two Swedenborgian ministers, is beloved to many older members. It is "our very own" carol, still requested at Christmas gatherings.

What even the older members of the church might not know is that it wasn't always considered proper in the New Church to celebrate Christmas at all!

Our church was not the only one with a dilemma. No one is sure of the exact date of Christ's birth. According to tradition, December 25 was chosen to coincide with pagan festivals of the winter solstice, or "rebirth of the sun." "Christ's Mass" was initiated to make Christianity more palatable to pagans and to lure them away from their own unacceptable festivities.

But the gaiety and revelry of

Christmas, as combined with pagan customs such as the Northern European Yule festival and the Roman Saturnalia were not thought proper by many Christians. The Puritans in England frowned on frivolity, and the celebration of Christmas was banned by Oliver Cromwell's government as evidences of anti-religious, anti-Royalist sentiment. Penalties were imposed on those who celebrated Christmas or stayed home from work on Christmas Day.

The Puritans who came to New England brought this bias with them. Christmas, in fact, did not become a legal holiday in New England until 1856. In other parts of the country it had been observed by immigrants from other parts of the Old World, with various ethnic traditions, religious and secular.

It isn't surprising, then, that in 1846 a committee was appointed by the General Convention to "take into consideration the propriety of observing the day called Christmas."

Here follow some excerpts from the committee's report, from the *Convention Journal* of 1847:

*The Lord left no command to His disciples to commemorate the day of His advent. This fact is important, and should lead us to place the observance of the day upon entirely different grounds from the observance of the Sabbath or the ordinances of the Church. It is not to be regarded as an imperative duty, neither is it to be reckoned among the divinely appointed means of man's salvation. Although it is the prerogative of this Convention to recommend things which are not commanded in the Word, but which may be expedient and useful to do, still the Convention has no right, and claims no right, to require of its members a strict compliance with such recommendation.*

*There are some reasons which induce your committee to think that the special observance by the New Church of the day in question would be attended with profitable results. In the first place, the event which it is intended to commemorate is the most important and interesting which the human mind is capable of*  
(Continued on page 166)

## Archival Gold

(Continued from page 165)

*conceiving. We have no religious festivals in the New Church at present. There is no time except the Sabbath when any considerable number are drawn together either for the purpose of worship or for the interchange of social, friendly feelings. Would it not be well if there were some such day?*

The report then draws attention to the fact that some communities in the country celebrated Christmas and some did not. It points out that it would be difficult for New Church people to go against the practice of their own community without seeming peculiar. If the denomination mandated either position, some people "would be in the unpleasant situation of either going counter to the recommendation of Convention, or of being compelled to do that which they are not inclined to do, and which, if left in freedom, they would not do." Since the doctrines tell us to respect our government and its laws, it would be appropriate to celebrate cheerfully civil holidays, unless the practice were to go against principle or moral obligation.

The committee acknowledged that this was an imperfect and incomplete report, and invited response from the societies.

Presumably there was discussion and response. At any rate in the 1848 *Journal* we find another report. It states first that there is no difference of opinion among New Church people on the wisdom of celebrating the Lord's advent. The question becomes, rather, on what day is it to be celebrated?

The arguments on behalf of December 25 are summed up:

1. *On December 25, rather than on the Sabbath, there would be a greater freedom.*
2. *It may be the occasion for promoting peace, harmony and union among brethren—an occasion for softening prejudices, soothing wounds, allaying irritations, healing breaches, and calling forth and strengthening religious and social affections.*

The opinion of the Committee was

that those who held the first position had a wrong idea of the Sabbath. There was nothing wrong with festivity on the Sabbath—it was not to be a day "to afflict the soul, bow down the head as a bulrush and spread sackcloth and ashes."

As to the second, the report asserted that all these benefits could be accomplished more effectively on the Sabbath than on another specially appointed day.

Therefore it summed up:

1. *We regard the Sabbath as the proper day upon which to celebrate the event because it is a day set apart by the Lord Himself as a "day of instruction in Divine things and meditation on salvation and eternal life." (True Christian Religion 301) (There follow other quotes from the writings and from the Word.)*
2. *The Lord is more fully present with us on that day than on other days. (More quotes.)*
3. *On the Sabbath we should be more likely to celebrate from the Lord, and not from self. When we do it of the Lord, there is true worship in it; but in proportion as we do it of ourselves, there is self-merit, self-glorification, and self worship in it.*

How the actual practice of observing Christmas on December 25 evolved in the Swedenborgian Church is difficult to discover, especially since *The Messenger* did not begin until later, but we may imagine many a lively correspondence and conversation on the subject, and many different ways of celebrating the Lord's birth.

*Louise Woofenden is the archivist in the library of the Swedenborg School of Religion in Newton, Massachusetts.*

## Mote and Beam

(Continued from page 164)

Suppose for a moment that this were not just something we occasionally rise to, but were our normal style of interaction. The visitor would come into our midst, and we would not say, "Here is a prospective member." We would say instead, "The Lord has brought about this meeting, and we don't know why. We need to find out. Maybe our church would be good for this individual, and vice versa, and maybe not." With an absolute horror of pushiness or intrusiveness, we would try to understand the other and be understood by the other. This would be our best way of obeying the Lord's laws about how we should treat each other.

We cannot wait until we are pure to begin the effort, because we will not become pure except by trying to live well together. The inner and the outer efforts will go hand in hand. If we do walk in his ways, many will come, and the mountain of the Lord's house, the heavenly way of life, will be supreme.

*The Rev. Dr. George Dole is a professor at the Swedenborg School of Religion. The above sermon was given at the Bridgewater, Massachusetts Swedenborgian Church September 27, 1992.*

## ATTENTION!

Are you an isolated member of the Swedenborgian Church? Would you like to contact other isolated members?

If so—join the Women's Alliance Round Robin program. Fall into a robin nest by sending your name, address and bio material you would like to share to:

Mrs. Martha King  
403 N. Clara Ave.  
DeLand, FL 32720

Martha King—aka—Mother Robin

P.S. Men may join, too.

# Charity: A Personal View / Review

Victor Carl Friesen

## THE CHARITABLE ACT BEGINS AT HOME . . . TO LOVE THE GOOD WITHIN US AND SO ENERGIZE OUR LIVES.

**Introduction:** During the 1991-1992 season, the Bible study group of the Rosthern (Saskatchewan) New Jerusalem Church again met every third Wednesday under the direction of the Rev. David Sonmor. One of the topics considered was Emanuel Swedenborg's *Charity or Practice of Neighborliness* (New York: Swedenborg Foundation, 1982). The book prompted much good discussion, which led to this report by one of the group's members. Other societies may find *Charity* to be a worthwhile focus for discussion too.

First: To be charitable, we begin by deliberately avoiding evil as a sin. We gain strength by such avoidance (and by not giving in and being evil). "Physician, heal thyself" (Luke 4:23) should be our ongoing motto. Swedenborg says in his book, *Charity*: "Those who do good and do not avoid evil as sins, do not do any Christian good" (p. 39). He uses the following image elsewhere in the book: "A bad tree cannot yield good fruit" (p. 67), echoing the Lord's statement, "Make the tree good, and its fruit will be good." (Matthew 12:33).

The charitable act begins at home and with our very own self. We need to be charitable to ourselves, to love the good within us and so energize our lives, in order to be charitable to others. Loving ourselves in this manner is not a selfish act but rather a necessary affirmation of self worth.

In being charitable to our neighbor, we are "neighborly" to what is good in the other person, not to what is bad in him. Otherwise, we would be condoning what is bad. We warm to what is good in him—it points to what we are striving to develop in ourselves—and bring that goodness out. That neighbor may be an individual, a group, or a nation.

The goodness to be accentuated is the magnetic chain\* that links us to our neighbor (more so than any "communion" of sin—there is no honor among thieves) and makes us one with our fellowman. It links us because it really comes from a single source—our creator, God.

Charity, then, like all forms of goodness, comes from the Lord, not ourselves. We become God's vessel by permitting ourselves, or disciplining ourselves, to receive God's love: we have taken note of our sins and repented of them. We become not only a vessel but a conduit of that love: that is, it flows through us so that our neighbor receives it too, and thus we are charitable.

There are all kinds of charity besides the obvious ones. If we are already doing our regular job well, and in a helpful way, then we are in charity. If we see the fitness of a civil law and obey it sincerely, thereby practicing civil good manners, we are in charity. The important thing is that it be active. Again, Swedenborg says: "Unless an affection of truth from good issues in act, it dies" (p. 78).

And charity is not a single act, but a whole attitude that shapes all our acts and does so constantly. It is an expression of our everyday life and, in effect, our *true* worship—to know that good comes from God and then to live according to His will. Swedenborg concludes: "There is neither church nor religion with those in whom faith is separated from charity, and doctrine from life" (p. 120).

\*Cf. Hawthorne's short story, "Ethan Brand."

Victor Carl Friesen is the grandson of one of the original settlers who founded the Rosthern community and who was a charter member of the Swedenborgian church there, the first church built in Rosthern. He is a former teacher, now a full-time writer and author of three books, including *The Spirit of the Huckleberry* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1984), a critical study of the naturalist-philosopher, Henry Thoreau.

## Books Needed

Pavel Heger, our third-year Czech student at the Swedenborg School of Religion, has written requesting donations of books. He states, "If some of you no longer need the following books, I would very much appreciate having them for my study and my next ministry."

Rev. W. Bruce:

- Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew*
- Commentary on the Gospel According to Mark*
- Commentary on the Gospel According to Luke*
- Commentary on the Gospel According to John*
- Commentary on the Revelation*

Rev. John Clowes:

- Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew*
- Commentary on the Gospel According to Mark*
- Commentary on the Gospel According to Luke*
- Commentary on the Gospel According to John*
- Miracles of Jesus Christ*
- Parables of Jesus Christ Explained*

Robert S. Fisher and Louis G. Hoeck:

- Any *Commentary* (on the *Gospel According to John*, *According to Matthew*, on the *Book of Psalms*)

Rev. Edward C. Mitchell:

- Parables of the New Testament*
- Parables of the Old Testament*

Rev. William F. Pendleton:

- The Science of Exposition*

A.H. Searle:

- General Index to Swedenborg's Scripture Quotations*

Rev. George H. Dole:

- The Life and Teaching of Jesus*

Please send to: Pavel Heger, c/o Swedenborg School of Religion, 48 Sargent St., Newton, MA 02158. The student phone number is (617) 964-9339.





# Holly Legends

*Patricia Hahn*

Holly, December's flower, is the symbol of love, among other things. Its shiny green leaves and bright red berries have been used as a decoration representing good will and rejoicing in homes and churches throughout the ages. It once was called holy tree. The word holly comes from this earlier appellation. There are many legends about this evergreen bush. One is that holly was the burning bush Moses came upon in the wilderness.

The Druids, the learned class among the Celts, revered holly which they believed stayed green so the world would remain beautiful when other trees had lost their leaves, because it was a special favorite of the sun. Sometimes they wore sprigs of holly in their hair during religious rituals.

The holly plant was supposed to be sacred to Saturn, the god honored at the Roman Saturnalia festival, as well. The Romans gave one another holly wreaths, carried holly in processions, and decorated pictures of Saturn with it. They even used it as a charm to ward off lightning and evil spells and believed its blossoms could repel poison.

Gift-giving during the time we now celebrate Christmas began during the Roman Saturnalia, when the rich gave to the poor, and they, in return, gave whatever they could, often garlands of holly.

According to one legend, while fleeing King Herod's soldiers, Mary tried desperately to hide the Baby Jesus under a leafless holly bush. As she prayed, the bush grew leaves to

hide the Child and thorns to offer Him protection. The soldiers passed by, not noticing Him.

For several centuries after Christ, most of the Romans continued to worship their gods. In December, Christians decked their homes with Saturnalia holly while celebrating Christmas to avoid the awful punishment that could befall those caught worshipping Christ.

The early Christian Church forbade the use of holly, particularly during that pagan celebration, but the Romans largely ignored the ban. In spite of it, the British hung sprigs of holly about their homes as hiding places for Christmas elves and fairies. As the Christians grew in number, holly, once sacred to a pagan god, became a symbol of Christmas.

In Germany, in 575, Bishop Martin of Bracae had forbidden *all* evergreens at Christmastime as a dangerous heathen custom. It was several hundred years before they were seen in churches again. Nevertheless, there in Germany, a rumor started about the holly, which was called christdorn, or Christ's crown of thorns. The berries were said to have been white until they were stained by Christ's blood during His crucifixion. By the seventeenth century, holly had once again become a part of the Christmas celebration.

British farmers put sprigs of holly on beehives, believing that on the first Christmas, the bees hummed to honor the Baby Jesus.

Holly had become a favorite ornamental tree in England. Because the plant had come to stand for

peace and joy, people often settled arguments under a holly tree. The English thought, much as the earlier Romans had, that it would frighten off witches and protect against thunder and lightning. So it was planted near homes, often in hedges. A sprig of holly on the bedpost was said to bring happy dreams. A tonic made from the holly leaves supposedly could cure a cough.

Holly, which grew wild along the Atlantic coast, brightened many homes as the most popular Christmas decoration in colonial America. The Indians loved holly which was worn as a badge of honor. Braves drank tea made from holly leaves to give them courage in battle. Indian maidens often decorated their hair with holly berries.

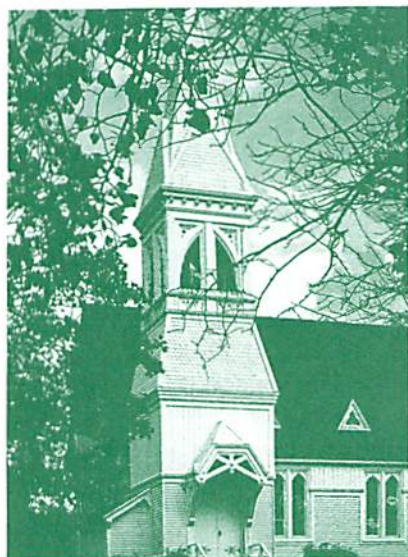
A Virginia farmer named George Washington liked the holly tree so much that he planted and experimented with many types, searching for the most beautiful.

Many Americans planted wild holly in their yards and gardens. English holly was brought to the Pacific Northwest for planting, as the climate there is similar to England's.

Because it remains green all winter, holly, whose berries ironically are poisonous if eaten, is also considered a symbol of hope and immortality, and is associated with the promise of everlasting life.

*Patricia Hahn, a native of Indiana now living in Beverly Hills, Michigan, is a freelance writer specializing in historical subjects. Her articles have appeared in Mature American, Capper's, Madison County Monthly, Heritage Quest, Ancestry, Northwest Trailtracer, and AntiqueWeek.*





*Yarmouthport Church, built in 1870.*

# HONOR THY FATHER AND THY MOTHER

*William Mayhew Frost*

On September 13, 1992, at 11:00 A.M. at the Yarmouthport, Massachusetts New Church, I achieved in my seventy-first year one of the most important desires of my life—I received the Rite of Confirmation of Faith in the Swedenborgian Church. Although I had been baptized by a Swedenborgian minister in my third year and grew up in a home that had regular Sunday New Church services led by my father, my life led me away from the opportunity to join and be confirmed in the New Church. I belonged to the Baptist Church, but never felt that it was my home. Since retiring I have had the opportunity to pursue extensive reading of Emanuel Swedenborg which rekindled the feelings of my youth and led me to seek confirmation in the faith.

Perhaps the most influential person in my pursuit of this objective was Rev. Clayton S. Priestnal who I was privileged to meet and get to know during a visit to Yarmouthport. My grandfather, Rev. William Homes Mayhew, had served as minister of the Yarmouthport church for over forty years, and I was there with my wife Sally, researching the history of my ancestry. Rev. and Mrs. Priestnal graciously received my wife and me, showing us the church and the parsonage in which my mother had been born and grew up. My mother was later married to Royal Harwood Frost, my father, in the church next door. Her father and my grandfather, the Rev. Albinus Finney Frost, officiated. Mr. Frost also served the Sweden-

borgian church for thirty-three years. With this background it was only natural that I should seek to be confirmed at Yarmouthport.

Rev. Priestnal, despite advancing years and poor health, graciously consented to conduct the confirmation service. Several members came to share with us this inspirational experience followed by a reception in the parsonage. It is difficult to convey the emotional impact, but Rev. Priestnal's presence and service was without a doubt one of the most moving experiences of my life. Adding to the feeling was the knowledge that he had shared with me, that it was probably the last official ministerial service he would perform because of his poor health. I felt doubly honored.

Having established a personal relationship with him during the past five years through correspondence, his guidance in suggested readings, and periodic visits to Yarmouthport, I was saddened that his active career as a spiritual leader must come to an end. In my opinion, he is a "Divine," a word often used in the past to refer to revered spiritual leaders of the New Church. It is my hope that today's leaders of the Swedenborgian Church appreciate how fortunate we are to have men of his caliber and Rev. Paul Zacharias, who, though retired, still writes occasionally for *The Messenger* and is one of my favorites. I am certain there are many others that I have not had the privilege to know or read. While we have many new and excellent young ministers, who we need and must fully support such as the Revs. James and Rachel Lawrence, Gardiner Perry, Steve Pults and George Dole, to name only a few, we should continue to honor and respect the counsel of the older spiritual leaders who have given

their lives to help us learn the true meaning of the Word and Emanuel Swedenborg's writings.

In *True Christian Religion* we are taught that the inner meaning of the commandment to "honor thy Father and thy Mother" is to love the Lord and His Church. In my opinion that includes honoring our spiritual leaders—old and young—who seek to lead us in the paths of righteousness. As a lifelong, but newly confirmed, member of the New Church, I wanted to share this thought with other church members.

*William Mayhew Frost resides in Port Austin, Michigan*

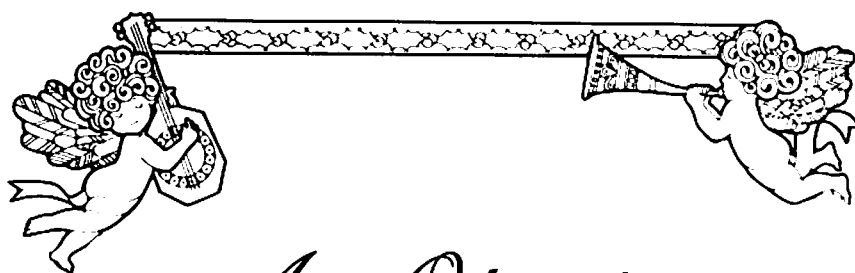
## *Christmas Greetings from Ivan Franklin*

Dear *Messenger* Readers and Fellow Swedenborgians,

It is almost one year since my return to Bohemia (soon to be called "Czech Republic"). The life here proved to be unexpectedly interesting and gratifying. Most of all I enjoy my daughters (Iva and Nina) with their families (four grandchildren), also my sister and some nieces. Many friends are 'making my day' and I agree with my brother Peter in Santa Barbara, California, that in view of economic problems in the US it has been a wise decision to stay in Europe for the time being . . . I am devoting myself to my old loves: teaching, lecturing, reading, writing, composing . . . spending time in creative solitude . . . I intend to stay in Prague until the end of this year, then hopefully I'll be living in the home of my firstborn daughter Iva in Brno, Moravia. I'll let you know when this happens.

Love, Ivan

*The Rev. Dr. Ivan Franklin is a former minister of the San Diego Swedenborgian Church and had more recently been living in Santa Barbara with his brother, Peter, until his move to Prague.*



## *An Opening for Angels*

An opening for angels,  
Ten o'clock or two?  
so many things to think about,  
so many things to do.  
"The world is too much with us"  
something inside me shouts.

Translucent wings a-flutter  
In pearlescent glow.  
Patiently they hover  
In the space between becoming,  
A channel for the Flow.

And when I feel harried  
and don't know what to do,  
Patiently they hover, waiting,  
For ten o'clock or two.

William Getman  
Margherita Faulkner

### Fryeburg Lecture Series Available

The all-new 1992 Fryeburg New Church Assembly Lecture Series is again available on audio cassette tapes at \$2.00 per cassette (two lectures), with many provocative titles to choose from.

*So We Live Forever*—Rev. Dr. George Dole

*Facing the Unexpected*—Rev. Edwin Capon

*The Present State of Russian Spirituality*—Rev. Dr. George Dole  
*What Do Angels Think About?*—

Rev. Dr. William Woofenden  
*Heavenly Communities Here and Hereafter*—Rev. Dr. Ted Klein  
*What Stays with Us after Death*—

Rev. Dr. Ted Klein  
*Are Angels Like People?*—Lee S. Woofenden

*The States We Pass Through after Death*—Rev. Dr. William Woofenden

*Just How Real Are the Hells?*—Rev. Dr. George Dole

*Old Testament Roots of the Kingdom of God*—Rev. Dr. Gard Perry

*The Kingdom: An Overview*—Rev. Dr. Dorothea Harvey

*The Ten Virgins*—Rev. Dr. William Woofenden

*The Kingdom in the Gospels*—Rev. Dr. Dorothea Harvey

*Heavenly Governments*—Rev. Dr. George Dole

*Kingship Pro and Con*—Lee S. Woofenden

*The Kingdom in the Gospels: The New Covenant Community*—

Rev. Dr. Gard Perry  
*Church and State, Priest and King*—

Rev. Dr. George Dole  
*Wheat and Tares*—Rev. Dr. William Woofenden

*Not of This World*—Rev. Dr. George Dole

To order all ten tapes, please send \$22.00 (postage included) to: Fryeburg New Church, 4 Oxford St., Fryeburg, ME 04037. Individual tapes may be ordered with postage pro-rated, 50¢ minimum.



# No Peace Without Innocence

(A CHRISTMAS MINISERMON)

Ivan Franklin

I am reading in my Latin Bible these words from Isaiah 65, verse 25:

*"...lupus et agnus pascentur  
simul et leo et bos comedent paleas  
et serpenti pulvis panis  
eius, non nocebunt neque occident  
in omni monte sancto meo ..."*

The word NOCEBUNT explains the whole beauty of this divine idyll. From it comes the English and French word *innocence*. First of all—Do Not Harm, *noli nocere*. As a physician I had to have these words constantly before my professional eyes. As a neuropsychiatrist I had to remember that a word is also a weapon, a scalpel, a medicine ... to give names to human beings, to cities, streets, lands ... is very im-

portant to our existence.

How tragic it is now when a word uttered in the wrong place might bring you instant death: e.g., in Bosnia and Hercegovina to say that you are Yugoslavian means to be shot on the spot. People there are now removing all words beginning with the syllable 'YU'. So 'yuha' (soup) is replaced by 'supa' etc. The same fate could be brought about by the words 'communist', 'fascist', 'pacifist', 'capitalist' if used in certain 'hot' places. One gentleman in the Pacific Coast Association became furious when I confessed to be a Republican. One time I was afraid to say that I am Russian. A similar sentiment might be provoked if I said in front of some fundamentalist that I am Swedenborgian. The adherence

to a party and to a denomination is my choice, so to be hated or loved is permissible. But if somebody hates and harms you because you are an Indian, a Russian, Black, Yellow, a human, a German, a woman ... then what is he/she doing? Spitting in the face of your Creator. What a terrible sin.

The angels on the fields of Bethlehem sounded in vain for such people.

The noise of bombs and guns in Yugoslavia and other bloody places does not allow us to hear that Christmas song.

People in Balkans want peace. But there is no peace without *innocence*. Stop being allergic to the syllable 'yu'. Rather say to each other:

'I Love you!'



## Opinion

*In this section of the Messenger we are pleased to present the varied views of our readers. Letters published here do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Editor, the Communications Support Unit or the General Council of the Swedenborgian Church. Published letters may be edited for brevity and clarity.*

*When you see an opinion with which you disagree please send your own views to the Editor so that The Messenger can be a forum for individual viewpoints. We welcome letters on all pertinent topics.*

### Why are the Evangelical Churches Growing?

Dear Editor,

Recently I listened to a fascinating lecture in our local library by Dr. Rob Sawatsky, president of Conrad Grebel College (the site of our 1978 convention sessions). *Messenger* readers might be interested in the notes I jotted down during his presentation.

Sawatsky's subject was "Why are the Evangelical Churches Growing?" (Conservative, Evangelical and Fundamentalist Churches have distinguishing features, but for the sake of discussion let's think of them as one category which would include the Southern Baptists, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Pentecostal Churches, Nazarenes, etc.). E equals Evangelical; M equals Mainline.

- In the United States, about 40-45 percent of Christians belong to E churches. In Canada the figure is 7 percent.

- Based on external criteria, E churches are doing much better, in every area, than M churches. Building more churches, large growing Sunday schools. Most young people staying in the church. Financial support very strong. They *keep* a much higher percentage of their members. Relatively few M people join E churches.

- Why are E churches growing? Four main reasons:

- (1) The Message, first and foremost. They answer basic life questions: Who am I? What's it all about? Where am I going? These are not just ideas, they are beliefs with implicit demands. These beliefs are to be lived out. A complete, total commitment is involved. And commitment produces dis-

cipline, which results in attending services, giving generously and sharing the message with others. "We have the "Truth" mentality is assumed in everything the E churches do. The E members believe 100% in their message. It is right for them and for the whole world. Little interest in social issues. Changed people will change the world. Whereas a more liberal, tolerant and accepting view usually leads to lukewarmness and weakness.

- (2) E churches provide and offer a very strong mutual support system. Like a large, extended family, in the best sense of the word.
- (3) They provide entertainment. Often the services are like a glitzy spectacle. Use modern music to advantage. Feelings and emotions are expressed and accepted. In many ways M churches are far more traditional.
- (4) They provide programs for all ages and needs. Many people want easy, simplistic answers, which E churches are happy to give.

Sawatsky claims any church can grow. What is required is *genuine commitment to growth*, then program accordingly. You must have a strong, powerful conviction that what you have to offer is something special and different, something that meets the real needs and wants of people. There *must be* an intentional desire to grow. Nothing else will succeed.

All E seminaries offer many courses in church growth; most M seminaries provide little training in this area.

What about the future? The M churches will continue to decline in the foreseeable future, as will the Roman Catholic Church. E churches will continue to grow, but at a slower rate. Few M churches in Canada seem to be concerned about this decline in numbers and influence, whereas M churches in America are deeply troubled about the situation and taking steps to stem the tide. In recent years the Presbyterian Church USA has spent

millions of dollars in self-examination and studies, and is now arriving at one major conclusion: the need to return to basics . . . get back to one's roots . . . reclaim the real, vital mission of the Church . . . a spiritual revival is necessary. What is God asking of us in today's world? Can we recover our mystical, spiritual traditions?

Paul Zacharias  
Kitchener, Ontario, Canada

### To Our Readers

It has been brought to our attention by some readers that the announcement of former denomination president Richard H. Tafel's resignation in the September *Messenger* seemed shrouded in ambiguity in view of other articles and reports in that issue which referred to difficulties and the need to heal.

The editor and the Communications Support Unit realized the scanty information provided might prove baffling; however, we were asked, for legal reasons, to hold back until a letter from the General Council went out to the local societies. This was done on August 4, at which time the September *Messenger* was already printed.

At the annual June 1992 convention in St. Louis, the Rev. Richard H. Tafel resigned from the office of Presidency of the Swedenborgian Church following an earlier public confession to an extramarital affair with a member of the church. Mr. Tafel sustained a censure from both the Council of Ministers and the delegates of the Swedenborgian Church.

Trusting that the difficulties all of us face are for the purpose of growth and healing, let us pray that we continue to respond to this and other challenges in ways that promote our healing, both as individuals and as a church family.

— Editor



## INTERNATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

"The Renewal of Russian Spiritual Life" was the title of a conference held at Dartmouth College in July 1992. The Rev. Dr. George Dole of the Swedenborg School of Religion was among those contributing to the well-received conference.

There is great interest in Russia in publishing A.N. Aksakov's translation of *Heaven and Hell*. Prof. Dobrokhotoov of the University of Moscow has suggested publishing a series of volumes of Swedenborg's writings, beginning with *Heaven and Hell*, which he wants to issue in an edition of 10,000 copies through his publishing company, Arbor Mundi.

An energetic and determined Swedenborgian in Iceland, Mr. Sveinn Olafsson, has translated *Heaven and Hell* from English and two thousand copies are being published. Mr. Olafsson and two associates have formed the Swedenborg Memorial Publishing Company. Helen Keller's *My Religion* is in the works.

In March, Rev. Dr. Horand K. Gutfeldt, of Berkeley, California, visited Riga, Latvia, to meet with Mr. Gunars Jansons, a young professor of Philosophy at the University of Riga. Mr. Jansons is meeting with others in Latvia "to explore together issues of life in the light of Swedenborg." Dr. Gutfeldt grew up in Riga, and was visiting there for the first time in 53 years.

### *El Cielo Y El Infierno*

The handsome soft cover Spanish translation of *Heaven and Hell* is now available, translated by Christian Wildner and published by Kier S. A. in Buenos Aires. The work includes a preface by the translator citing Jorge Luis Borges, and an introduction by Helen Keller.

The timely arrival of this Spanish version was sent to Mickey Gore, a prisoner in Texas, who after a near-death experience, became a devoted reader of Swedenborg. He is presently holding classes for groups of prisoners eager to learn about the works of Swedenborg. Many prisoners in the Texas system speak only Spanish.

—Excerpted from Swedenborg Publishers International (SPI), September 1992.



## Merry Christmas

BOOKS FOR YOUR CHILDREN

New this year is a book for Juniors, **RAINBOW COLORS IN THE WORD**.

Children who like to know 'Why?' will enjoy this introduction to color. Colors are part of their natural world. Colors are found in their Bibles. Colors relate to their feelings. Here is a basic correspondence of colors with pictures and puzzles and a thoroughly readable text. Adults will find it entertaining and informative.

A book your eight, nine or ten year old will enjoy and savor.

A wonderful series of 'color lessons' for your Sunday School classes.

**RAINBOW COLORS IN THE WORD** is written and illustrated by Louise Woofenden.

26 pages, paperbound, ISBN 0-917426-08-0

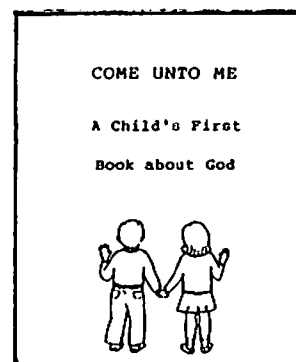
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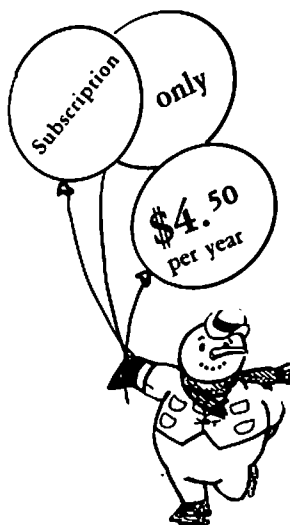
**COME UNTO ME** is a book for little children, those who like sharing a book with mother or grandpa. It introduces, one page at a time, simple Swedenborgian philosophy about God, Heaven, the Lord's prayer, work and love. A little book to read to your little boy or girl, or use as a classroom supplement. There are twelve topics, each with a picture to color.

It is written by Joyce Fekete (your Aunt Joyce of Five Smooth Stones). Introduced at Convention 1991, it is in its second printing.

24 pages, paperbound ..... \$2.50



## Correction



**FIVE SMOOTH STONES** is a bi-monthly paper for children, ages five to eleven. Stories, Bible lessons, puzzles, handwork, pictures, to color and letters to share with Aunt Joyce.

This is a children's paper that will enrich family time. It will bring Swedenborgian teachings into your home if you are isolated members. Teachers will find it useful in their classes.

Single subscriptions are \$4.50 per year  
Special rates for Sunday Schools.



**FIVE SMOOTH STONES**, **RAINBOW COLORS IN THE WORD** and **COME UNTO ME** are publications of the American New Church Sunday School Association. They are available from Five Smooth Stones, 115 Graham Street, Saginaw, Michigan 48602.

(\$1.00 postage and handling)



# And the Word Became Flesh

*The Child was born long since and far away  
And all that's left for us, here, now, is words.  
Now, I've seen words I'm proud to know: words strong  
Enough to become deeds, and be preserved  
By lesser words in histories; words that  
Became bright joy, cold fear; enslaved, set free.  
But to become warm flesh, with breath and blood,  
Requires some kind of words no letters spell.*

*And there's more wonder yet. That very Word,  
Who has all power there is to do all things,  
Became mere flesh as weak and poor as mine,  
In such a little place, for such short time.  
Why, it grieves me to see the little words  
My spirit dreams lose the infinity  
Of truths they somehow might have told, and lie  
So feebly meant upon a foolish page.*

*Then what of God, whose word is worlds, and light,  
And all accomplishments of worth and truth,  
And yet became just that one, there, that time,  
In hope we all would hear, and understand.  
He must have loved us very much to, risk  
Omnipotence in such a gentle word.  
But since he did, my flesh is no more weak  
Than his; and words of Christmas are alive!*

Robert H. Kirven



## President's Update

Following his participation in the mid-October executive sessions and board meetings of the Council of Ministers, Committee on Admission to the Ministry (CAM) and the Swedenborg School of Religion, President Capon was guest preacher at the Bridgewater, Massachusetts church October 18. (He reports that this was especially meaningful to him as he was ordained in that church 40 years ago). He then moved on to Kitchener, Ontario for the first week in November to attend the Pastoral Ministries Support Unit (PMSU) meeting.

## FLASH!

Five members of the Massachusetts Association's Search Committee for convention sites have visited and voiced unanimous approval of Gordon College in Wenham, Massachusetts as the facility of choice for Convention in 1993. The campus is surrounded by woods, with a pond, and the facilities are recently built. President Edwin Capon noted that the chapel which convention attendees will be using is still in the process of being completed, and the dining room is the nicest he has seen in 25 years of convention sites. The cost will be the same or less than last year. Gordon College is located near Gloucester and Marblehead, an area that boasts lovely beaches. It is just 25 miles from Boston's Logan Airport, and shuttle vans are being provided. Attendees are invited to stay over in the dorms following convention and do some sight-seeing.

What will be a ten-person convention planning committee is still in the formation stage. Details and updates will be appearing in the early spring issues of *The Messenger*.

## Correction

In the October *Messenger* under death notices, it was stated that Lois Miller of the San Diego Swedenborgian Church was the daughter of the Rev. Harold and Alice Gustafson. It should have read, "the Rev. Donald Gustafson." The Rev. Harold Gustafson was her uncle.

## Commencements

### Baptism

**Glanders**—Colleen Ann Glanders was baptized into the Christian faith and confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church September 20, 1992, at the LaPorte New Church in LaPorte, Indiana, the Rev. Eric Hoffman officiating.

### Confirmations

**Frost**—William M. Frost was confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church September 13, 1992, at the Yarmouthport church in Massachusetts, the Rev. Clayton S. Priestnal officiating.

**Gallagher**—Michael Patrick Gallagher was confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church September 20, 1992, at the LaPorte New Church in LaPorte, Indiana, the Rev. Eric Hoffman officiating.

### Marriages

**Cole and Mosher**—Lori-Ann Cole and William C. Mosher were united in marriage September 20, 1992, at the Church of the New Jerusalem, Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. Dr. Gardiner Perry officiating.

**Dale and Lasso**—Linda Dale and Kurt Lasso were united in marriage September 25, 1992, at the Church of the Good Shepherd, Kitchener, Ontario, the Rev. Ronald Brugler officiating.

**MacDonald and Yarborough**—Tracy L. MacDonald and Peter J. Yarborough were united in marriage September 19, 1992, at the Church of the New Jerusalem, Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. Dr. Gardiner Perry officiating.

### Deaths

**Brenneman**—Donald Brenneman, member of the Church of the Good Shepherd, Kitchener, Ontario, entered the spiritual world September 22, 1992. A memorial service was conducted September 25, the Rev. Ronald Brugler officiating. Donald is survived by his wife, their children, and sister Corinne Tafel.

**Sampson**—Arlyn Charlotte Sampson, Edmonton, Alberta, entered the spiritual world April 21, 1992, after a long battle with cancer. A memorial service was conducted April 25, 1992, in the Edmonton Church of the Holy City, the Rev. Henry Korsten officiating.

### Church Family News

As of this mid-October writing, Hank Korsten is in the hospital following intestinal surgery for diverticulitis. There was some concern about pneumonia due to the difficulty in clearing his lungs, but he is doing well and will be sent home when his lungs are clear. More good news—his wife Maria reports that this ordeal motivated Hank to quit smoking! They would welcome cards and letters sent to their house:

Rev. Henry Korsten  
14131 73rd Street  
Edmonton, AB, Canada T5C 0V6

Florence Smallwood, widow of Thornton Smallwood, suffered a serious stroke over the summer. She is now at home in Nebraska where her sister is staying with her. She would enjoy hearing from old friends:

Mrs. Florence Smallwood  
718 2nd Street  
Friend, NE 68359

## Book Review

## A Biography for Seekers

The Swedenborg Foundation announces the publication of *A Scientist Explores Spirit*, a new compact biography of Emanuel Swedenborg by Robert H. Kirven and George F. Dole. Conceived to fill a need for an accessible introduction to Swedenborg's life and key concepts, this slim volume more than fulfills its purpose, providing in its 100 pages new insights into Swedenborg's philosophical development, placed against the vivid background of 18th-century Europe.

Dr. Gustaf Arrhenius, oceanographer, calls *Scientists Explore Spirit* "an admirable presentation of the key concepts of Swedenborg's philosophy," noting that "despite its compact form, the historical account brings out illuminating details that are new, while relations to contemporary political, scientific, and philosophical developments are presented with professional skill and insight."

Readers of Swedenborg as well as those who are new to his ideas, will find this book an excellent resource. In addition to the section on key theological concepts, Drs. Dole and Kirven, both well-known Swedenborgian scholars, have included a valuable chronology and detailed bibliography. As Dr. John Hitchcock,

physicist and author of *Atoms, Snowflakes and God*, remarks "the wealth of detail in so small a volume well shows the quantity and quality of research which went into the biography."

Both scientists and theologians have expressed their delight at the dramatic sense of story which the authors have created by tracing the development of Swedenborg's philosophy from within his historical and social context. Dr. Hitchcock says, "It is refreshing to see Swedenborg's life approached in this manner." Dr. Wilson Van Dusen, clinical psychologist, comments: "It has been known for some while that we need a new biography of Emanuel Swedenborg that goes beyond the linking of biographical fact . . . A major addition is this dramatic unfolding of his writings in response to heaven and the pressures of society."

As Dr. Van Dusen so aptly states, "Swedenborg is like a whole Himalayan Range of the mind. This biography, as from a mountain, presents the whole vista of wisdom. It is a biography for seekers."

*A Scientist Explores Spirit* (100 pages, paperback) is published by The Swedenborg Foundation. To order, send \$9.95 plus \$3.50 postage and handling to Swedenborg Foundation, Inc., 139 East 23rd Street, New York, NY 10010 or call 1-800-366-7310 to place an order with your credit card.

*Emanuel Swedenborg was born January 29, 1688, in Stockholm, Sweden. Although he never intended a church denomination to be founded or named after him, a society was formed in London 15 years after his death. This 1787 organization eventually spawned the present Swedenborgian Church.*

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

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

**The Swedenborgian Church  
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