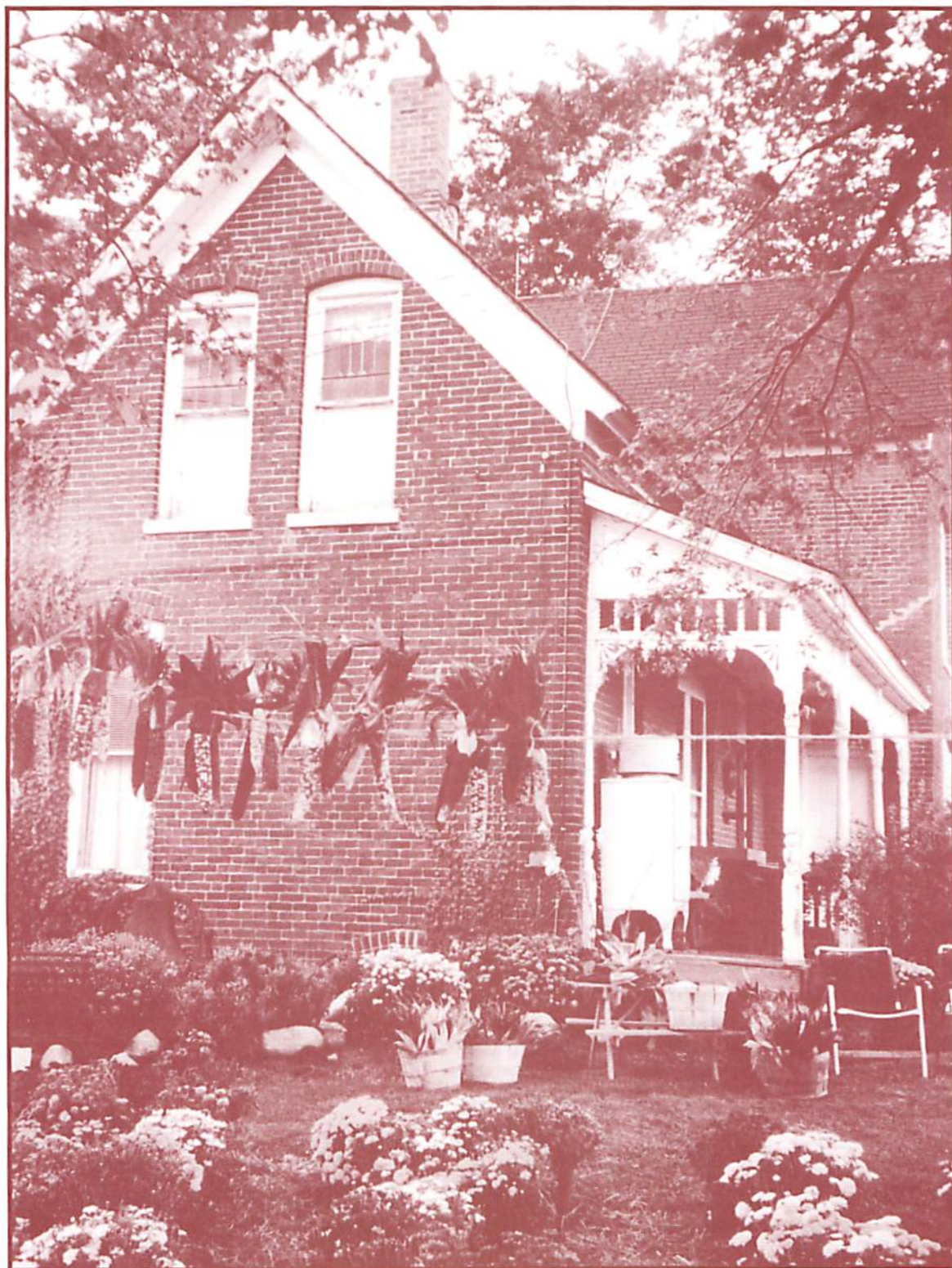


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# The Messenger

November 1992



*Autumn Bounty*



## Contents

- 151** Archival Gold: Our Swedenborgian Heritage  
*Louise Woofenden*
- 153** Merry Christmas Books for Your Children
- 153** Real Gratitude  
*Gardiner Perry*
- 154** Once Upon a Time . . .  
*Susanne Lorraine*
- 156** President's Update
- 157** PMSU Sponsors Training Workshop
- 158** Nominating Committee Seeks Candidates

## Departments

- 150** Moving Toward the Light  
*Guest Editorial by Ron Brugler*
- 155** Book Review: *The Last Judgment*  
*Reviewed by William Ross Woofenden*
- 156** Opinion
- 159** Film Review: *Defending "Defending your Life"*  
*Reviewed by Susanne Lorraine*
- 159** Commencements
- 160** Ask Swedenborg

*Our Cover: Autumn Bounty. Mums and corn, farmhouse in Valparaiso, Indiana. (Photo by Patte LeVan)*

## The Messenger

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## Moving Toward the Light

### On Gratitude

*Guest Editorial by Ron Brugler*

As I worked on this editorial on the theme of gratitude, I also became glad for the timing of the task. It has given me a chance to get a head start in preparing for our own Canadian Thanksgiving which we celebrate in October, a month ahead of our friends south of the border. So many of life's events are like that—they bring hidden benefits that are easy to overlook.

In a very real way, this experience is exactly what I want to focus on in this message, the idea of taking time to prepare for giving thanks. I have learned that in order to give thanks, to develop an attitude of gratitude, I must prepare. This preparation allows my thanks to have a wholeness, a sense of completeness that is just not possible when it is rushed. Thus, the time that I spend in preparing to give thanks is time well spent.

What would our inner attitude of thanks be if we devoted as much time and energy to it as we do to preparing for the big feast? Add up the time you spend in planning the menu, doing the shopping, cleaning house, in preparing the food. What would it mean if we took the same amount of time in deepening our awareness of what we are grateful to God for? I can tell you what it means. It enables us to move away from the traditional hastily made list of "things" such as health, family, food, and shelter, so that we can feel and identify the true gifts that lie hidden within them.

The year that I served our Urbana Church, we spent three weeks in preparing for Thanksgiving. As part of this process, I used one Sunday to have the people respond in writing to some questions. The next week we shared our responses, asked each other more questions, and really learned about the source of our gratitude. We then used this as the foundation of a true Thanksgiving service. The positive contribution this preparation made in our worship was invaluable.

Perhaps you would like to make use of it this year. Do this by taking time, an hour or so over two or three weeks, to think about the following questions and your responses. Write them out each time you think about them, and keep your responses! You'll be amazed at how your sense of gratitude deepens each time you engage in the process.

1. We usually view Thanksgiving as a time to thank God for blessings we have received during the past year. List some of the blessings for which you wish to offer thanks. Also list how these blessings have influenced your life in a positive way.

2. The fact that "All things happen for our spiritual benefit" is a basic teaching of our church. This is not always an easy teaching to live with. What "blessings" have you received that you are still struggling with in your life?

3. How might God help you to understand and use these for your spiritual benefit?

4. Our teachings offer another view of giving thanks, that of thankfulness for blessings yet to come. List a few blessings that you would like to receive in the near future.

5. As citizens of a natural world we are most conscious of material blessings. Turn your attention to your spiritual life, and list blessings you require for spiritual growth.

6. How might these blessings aid your spiritual growth in a positive way? In what ways will you use them?

7. After a period of quiet reflection, write a prayer to be shared with your family on Thanksgiving Day. Feel free to incorporate what you have identified in the above points. After your family shares these prayers, spend some time talking about what you have learned from each other. Then, enjoy a true celebration of thankfulness!

This process may seem simple, but it is very worthwhile. It has helped me to deepen my sense of gratitude, and has brought me in touch with many blessings that lie hidden within the events of my life. It has also strengthened my ability to trust that God will give me what I need. Try it, and may your Thanksgiving be better off for it!

*The Rev. Ron Brugler is minister of the Church of the Good Shepherd, the Swedenborgian Church in Kitchener, Ontario, Canada.*



## Archival Gold

## Our Swedenborgian Heritage

(second of a series)

Louise Woofenden

## Getting Established

In 1817 a certain Harvard student became interested in Swedenborg. He learned that a set of the Latin *Arcana* had been given to Harvard some twenty years before. The card catalog showed them to be in the collection, but the books could not be found. The student, Thomas Worcester, and the librarian searched the whole library. Then they entered a small room called the "museum." In Worcester's words:

*It was filled with rubbish, old curiosities, cast-off, superseded and obsolete philosophical apparatus, and so forth, all covered with dust. We could see no reason for hunting there, expect that we had hunted everywhere else, without finding what we wanted. There was a long table in the room. Upon it, and under it, were piles of useless articles; and beyond it were shelves against the wall, where various things were stored away. On the under shelf, as far out of sight as possible, I saw some books. I told the librarian, and he went round and worked his way until he got to them, and found the large books were volumes of the Arcana Coelestia. There were also several other works of Swedenborg, all of them covered with dust. I immediately got an order from President Kirkland, giving me authority to take the books and keep them in my room; and this I did for the rest of my college life.<sup>1</sup>*

Sampson Reed, Worcester's biographer, remarks:

*There appears to have been*

*nothing for which Mr. Worcester was more remarkable from the start, and during his whole life, than for his daily reading and study of Swedenborg, his thorough understanding of his teachings, and his exact and strict adherence to them. It seems to me to have been of Providence that the New Church in this place (Boston) was permitted to grow in its own way, and to develop its own life, and to do much in giving tone and character to the church in other parts of the country.<sup>2</sup>*

In 1818 the Boston Society was established, with twelve members, including Thomas Worcester. In 1821, having received his divinity degree from Harvard, he became pastor, serving until 1874.

Several aspects of his role as minister may be of interest.

At a time when most Christian churches held Sunday services (long ones) morning, afternoon and evening, Worcester had only a morning service. He believed the rest of the Sabbath should be more relaxed and varied, and he had afternoon church meetings, doctrinal discussions and socializing.

Noting Swedenborg's statement that dinners and suppers of charity are given only by those who are in mutual love grounded in a similar

faith (*True Christian Religion* 433), he made the desirability of social dinners almost a tenet of the church. There were no money-making church suppers or programs, but the homes of members, especially that of the pastor were open to all of the church family, and dinner parties were very frequent. Many members, by joining the esoteric sect had found themselves cut off from their former acquaintances, and these dinners helped form a new circle of friends. Such gatherings also made the inclusion of new members into the group easier and more intimate.

Sampson Reed implies that the Boston Society grew in its own way. This way, however, seems to have been Worcester's way, for a third unique conviction of his was that it was not his duty to bring people into the church, but rather to build up the church in the minds and hearts of the members he had. He preached the Word and the doctrines, bringing in practical considerations of conduct and thought to his listeners. (An example is the drastically condensed sermon on the next page.) As testimony to the validity of this theory the Convention Journal for 1866 lists for the Boston Society 572 adult members, 110 children in the Sabbath School, and an average attendance at services of 550.

Worcester was the first editor of the *New Jerusalem Magazine*, a publication of the Boston Society. Aside from his many contributions to this magazine, he published little else except sermons. His secular activities included teaching at the secondary school level, working for the anti-slavery cause, and serving as an overseer of Harvard College.

(Continued on page 152)

<sup>1</sup>Reed, Sampson, *A Biographical Sketch of Thomas Worcester, D.D.* Massachusetts New Church Union, 1880, P. 17. Of these years, Worcester said, "My principal enjoyment was in reading the 'Heavenly Doctrines' and in communicating a knowledge of them to my fellow students, and I attended to my college studies no more than I was obliged to." —ibid., p. 16

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 98



## Our Swedenborgian Heritage

(continued from page 151)

### Internal Worship

A sermon by the Rev. T. Worcester, D.D., 1866

*If, therefore, thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first become reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.*

—Matthew 5:23,24

A true life of charity consists in loving the Lord supremely, and our neighbor as ourselves, and in bringing these loves into words and works. To live thus is worship to the Lord; and every act of such a life is an act of worship.

External worship consists in prayers and other well-known acts of piety. When performed as expressions of a life of charity, they are useful and even indispensable. But they may express an outward show of goodness, when no love of good reigns within. Then man will make insincere acknowledgements for the Lord's blessings, and will ask for blessings which he is in no state to receive, and does not really desire to receive. He will pray for forgiveness of sins which he has no serious intention of shunning, and deliverance from evils which in heart he is deliberately indulging. All such acts of piety are hypocritical and profane.

"If thou bring thy gift to the altar and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee..."


This implies a state of alienation. When we have something against a brother, we regard him as having something against us. We think little of our opposition to him, but principally of his wrongs and opposition to us.

"...leave there thy gift before the altar ... first become reconciled to thy brother..."


What the text teaches is that it is more important to go and perform the works of charity by which reconciliation will be affected, than to perform any acts of external worship. In fact, we cannot receive any benefits from external worship until we are reconciled to our brother. If

we do not forgive, we cannot be forgiven; and we do not truly forgive while we do not acknowledge our wrongs against our neighbor and repent of them, nor while we impute trespass to him and make no effort to bring him into a state of charity.

In considering our duty toward brethren in cases of difficulty, we are accustomed to refer to Matthew 18:15, 16: "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained a brother." This duty of brethren is not only not generally done, but not generally understood.



*"We cannot receive any benefits from external worship until we are reconciled to our brother."*



You see that you are commanded to go to your brother alone and tell him his fault. But suppose you have no reason to say he has trespassed against you, but you hear that he thinks you have injured him, or trespassed against him. Most persons say, "If he has anything against me, it is his duty to come to me, and not my duty to go to him first." But suppose he does not come to you, is it right for you to wait for him to fulfill his duty? The duty of going to him to be reconciled applies not only to the cases in which you charge him with misconduct, but to those in which you learn that he charges you with misconduct.

The grand point is reconciliation, or a state of charity. This is what the Lord's laws regard, and to effect this object, your duty and your brother's duty is made as broad as possible.

Let us illustrate: You hear that your brother thinks you have said or done certain wrong things, and that he is grieved and offended. You do not notice every idle rumor, but in this case you believe there is some truth in what you have heard. It is

his duty to come to you, but it is your duty, as well as his, to remove everything that can produce alienation between you. So you go to him immediately, and state what you have heard. If you cannot go to him, you write a letter, or send some discreet and friendly messenger. You go as truly and fully as you can. You go for the purpose of being reconciled. You put away all selfish considerations. You say nothing to him about his neglect of duty, but simply and honestly relate what you have heard against you. Perhaps you will find that you were misinformed. You will be thankful to have the error corrected. If what you heard was incorrect, or if you had drawn wrong conclusions from it in respect to the feelings of your brother, then the whole difficulty is ended. He thanks you for your kindness in coming to him, and you love each other better than before. Such cases are not uncommon. They would be very common if people would obey the commandment in the text.

A brother may show you that you have done some wrong of which you were not aware. We are led by evil passions in some cases, which so blind us that we are not conscious of our wrongs. Then we need the eye of a brother to see, and the conscience of a brother to reprove our faults. Without that aid we should go on confirming ourselves in sin. We should receive such a brother kindly and thankfully. He tells us a fault and helps us correct it. Can anyone estimate the value of such a favor?

The Lord regards reconciliation as a matter of vital importance. We are to desire it sincerely, and put away from the mind and conduct all that opposes it. If we still are opposed by a brother, we are to remain in a state of kindness toward him and still desire to be reconciled. And if, while he opposes us, he points out any faults on our part, we are to be thankful and take heed to remove them.

Only then are we in a state to receive the Lord's blessings and come to the altar to offer our gifts.

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





# 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.

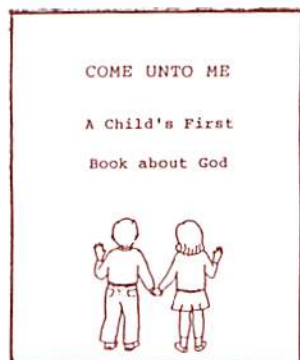
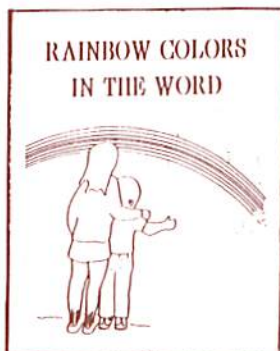
A book your eight, nine or ten year old will enjoy and savor.

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

..... \$2.50



**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

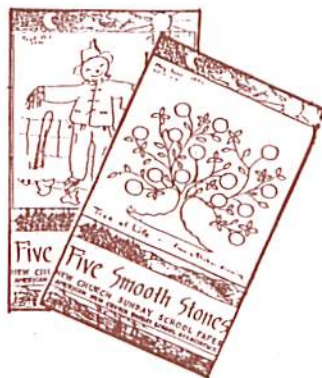
— and for Christmas  
All through the Year —



**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 \$14.50 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)

## REAL GRATITUDE

Gardiner Perry

One of the worship leaders in a past Thanksgiving Eve service, who was unaccustomed to public speaking, expressed his anxiety about participating. As I talked with him about his feelings, he said something that taught me more about gratitude. "If I feel foolish and look foolish to others, then I will be humbled. And that can help me and others know that the Lord is the center of our thankfulness, and not how well or how poorly I perform." I was grateful for his insight that helped me keep a proper perspective on the Thanksgiving Eve service.

More recently, I encountered a second example of gratitude. A person who is learning to walk with a prosthesis told me that his leg hurts. He then added that he was grateful for that pain. "Think of the paraplegic, who can't feel anything from the neck down!" (I was then reminded of the story of a group of people who were complaining because they didn't like their legs. One of them responded, "Mine are fine for me—they both reach the floor.") That's gratitude!

Here's a third example. I am dealing with a resentment, a feeling of anger coming back over and over again, that I cannot seem to get beyond for myself. I'm finally getting the message—"Of course I can't! That is the kind of thing only the Lord can do for me when I give up trying to do it on my own." Now I'm beginning to be grateful for my failure, because maybe I'll see more clearly how the Lord is acting in my life now.

Perhaps you can identify with one of these stories of gratitude. My prayer is that you and I may find a balance between knowing that we must take steps toward acceptance and forgiveness of ourselves and others, and acknowledging that only the Lord can do these things for us. Swedenborg describes this balance as acting "as if of ourselves," while acknowledging that it is the Lord acting in us. When we find that balance, then I'll bet we'll be feeling real gratitude.

*The Rev. Dr. Gardiner Perry is minister of the Fryeburg Swedenborgian Church in Fryeburg, Maine. Reprinted from the November 1991 Fryeburg Bulletin.*



# Once Upon a Time...

Susanne Lorraine

Once upon a time there was a woman who lived in a small white house with her husband, three children, one cat and five chickens. One night after the usual day's work, afterschool activities, errands, dinner, evening sibling squabbles, baths, and lengthy bedtime rituals, she stepped outside onto her back porch and looked up at the stars. These evening "star checks" were her link to the larger universe and usually a brief glance up to "check if the stars are still there" was all she could fit into her busy life. This night as she looked up at the clear black starry night, she felt unusually wide awake. The back of her neck shivered as the chill of the damp evening penetrated the skin newly uncovered by her short haircut. Many things had changed in recent days, awarenesses as well as circumstances and the processing of them was still in progress. Grabbing a raincoat to cover herself from the damp and cool of the evening, she stepped outside the door to take a few moments for herself.

With each step she took down the stairs she looked down and recounted a list of all the things going on in her life. Consciously attempting to set them down and walk away from them for a time, she marked them off with her footsteps. She took three firm steps for her relationships with each of her three children and their individual journeys. She took a sighing step for her marriage and the confines of time that made it seem at once so close and yet so far. She took two more steps, for her work in the world, one for her relationships to her clients and one for the financial concerns of the family. One step turned into two, three and more for the pressures of her friendships and her attempts to keep them current. What did others need from her? What did she need from others? One step for each of her volunteer involvements and one step for her

church and her desire to be a part of its growth. One step for the greater understanding of the process of growing up, the uncovering of the beginning of relationships with mother, father, sister and brother. What did they mean in her interactions now with her family of origin and her own children? And she took one last step for her most recent transition, her decision to go back to school and what it meant to shuffle that card into the deck.

After recounting these parts of herself and her life she found that she was many steps away from her house. She had walked into the large open field beside the house where she had a wide open view of the stars. "Why don't I come out this far more often?" She wondered. She glanced at the deep blue ornamental sweetpeas growing along the side of the field. She noticed the field seemed larger than usual and was lit up by the brightness of the stars in the sky, vast and far away.

◆

*She felt that she  
was being blessed  
with exactly what  
she had previously  
felt troubled  
about.*

◆

Her attention though was only on herself and she was filled with emotion. Part sadness for past pains, part tiredness from the late hours she worked, part overwhelmed that she was immersed in this life that showed no sign of slowing down. Why did growing up have to be painful? Why did it still affect her now? Was

she reenacting the past with her own children? Was her marriage a co-dependency? Was her work meaningful? Doubts assailed her from each area of her life. She shivered in the light raincoat. Shaken back to her surroundings, she noticed the beauty of the sweetpeas. Should she pick some or leave their beauty intact? Even this was a question, another doubt! In the quietness of indecision she started to notice that a few of the flowers were taller than the rest. As if asking to be picked, they stood above the many and her hand felt easily guided to trim off a handful of the brilliant blue budding stalks. Having gathered these small tokens of beauty, the woman slowly started walking back to the flooding light coming from her house—the center of her busy life. As she began to walk back, stepping out of the field, looking down at the bouquet of sweetpeas she held, she was drawn to look up. The fullness of the moon just appearing above the tall dark pines stopped her in mid-step. The last step she had taken had brought her to the small patio she had built out of broken marble slabs. She stood, in the moon's full light in a moment of quiet emptiness with her offering of blue flowers held reverently before her. She felt the large openness of the sky and darkness. She felt the clarity and acceptance of the full light of the moon. She felt the beauty and aliveness of the flowers in her hand and the solid marble under her feet.

What she later described in her journal as a blessing came through her being as though through a gentle hand laid upon her head. As if connected by an electrical current, all the elements were part of the moment and were perfect. The shining light of the full moon, her hurting heart, the flower offering and the dark of the night were all in place.

(Continued on page 155)



## Book Review

# The Last Judgment

*The Last Judgment*, a translation from the Latin of two works by Emanuel Swedenborg, *De Ultimo Judicio* and *Continuatio de Ultimo Judicio*, by John Chadwick. The Swedenborg Society, London, 1992.

*The Last Judgment* was the third of the five works published anonymously by Swedenborg in 1758. The *Continuation concerning the Last Judgment* was not published till five years later. Most English editions, however, from the first one by Robert Hindmarsh in 1788 to that of Doris Harley in 1961, have printed these two related treatises in the same volume as is also true of the present edition.

The other four volumes published in 1758, *Earths in the Universe*, *Heaven and Hell*, *The New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* and *The White Horse*, were largely drawn and edited from Swedenborg's first and largest theological work, *Arcana Coelestia*. The present volume was drawn from the posthumously published *Spiritual Diary*. Even though this work broke new ground theologically by its claim that the long-expected Last Judgment predicted in the Bible had already taken place in the spiritual world, it has in no sense rivaled in popularity the more generally appealing titles, *Earths in the Universe*, which describes several other planets and their former inhabitants whom Swedenborg said he was able to communicate with in the spiritual world, and *Heaven and*

*Hell*, Swedenborg's all-time best seller.

While the two latter works have been frequently printed, *The Last Judgment* has had relatively few English editions. The currently available version published by the Swedenborg Foundation, New York in the volume *Miscellaneous Theological Works*, was translated in 1913 by John Whitehead. The British have published a version by P.H. Johnson in 1951 and another by D. Harley in 1961.

The translator, John Chadwick, is one of the foremost Latinists of our day, being one of the editors of the Oxford *Latin Dictionary*. In his work for the church in addition to compiling and publishing a draft version of a complete Lexicon of Swedenborg's Latin between 1975 and 1990, he also translated Swedenborg's last summary theological work, *True Christian Religion*, which was published in 1988 by the Swedenborg Society as part of the international tricentennial celebration of Swedenborg's birth.

The new edition of *The Last Judgment* is available only in an attractive hardcover edition, bound in blue cloth. The dust jacket is eye-catching and features a plumbline

bisecting the front cover. I was curious enough about the symbolism intended by Roland Smith, the artist, that I telephoned him in the UK to ask about it. Roland disclosed the fact that he had started out with a sword, but said that this concept was vetoed by the publisher as smacking *too much* of judgment! So he settled for a plumbline. Not able to leave it alone, I later found a fascinating passage in *Arcana Coelestia* 5044 describing the meaning of Isaiah 34:11 in part as follows: "The desolation and laying waste of truth are signified by the measuring line of chaos and the plumbline of destruction."

Certainly this work should be read by all professed Swedenborgians. But at the same time it seems unlikely that it will ever be widely popular.

The translator has done his usual competent job of bringing this esoteric work to us in contemporary English. Not surprisingly, at times the syntax is more British than American but I found no instances of phrasology that would not be readily understood by any capable reader of English.

—William Ross Woofenden

## Once Upon a Time . . .

(Continued from page 154)

Inside her head and heart the blessing formed into words and thoughts and was received and understood. She felt that she was being blessed with exactly what she had previously felt troubled about. Into her heart flowed the realization that all the events of her life were the great blessings that had made her who she was. Her marriage, her children, her work, her aspirations, and her rela-

tionships with family, friends and church. She stood in wonder that all the feelings she had about her life had been lightened. Though nothing had changed inside the house, everything had changed inside her. The joy of that moment strengthened and renewed her spirit. She slowly looked about to see the night with new eyes. She bowed her head and whispered "Thank you, Lord!"

In the days that followed, she was reminded again of that evening. In the ocean's constant crashing waves,

in the wind dancing in the treetops, and in the quiet of dawn she looked for God in all the beauty around her and was never disappointed. She had truly taken to heart that God never stopped offering the blessing, it was only she who could not always stop long enough to feel and receive it.

Susanne Lorraine is a member of the Swedenborgian Church of Portland, Maine, and a first-year student at the Swedenborg School of Religion.



## President's Update

The Rev. Edwin Capon, newly elected president of the Swedenborgian Church, has been working throughout the summer on committee appointments and generally becoming current on church business at the denominational level. He has made two trips of several days' duration to Central Office, plus a visit with Convention Treasurer John Perry in late July. In August, he attended the Education Support Unit meeting at SSR and spoke at the Fryeburg New Church Assembly. Mr. Capon attended the Temenos Board of Managers meeting September 18, then went on to Washington, D.C. to visit Dick and Polly Baxter and preach at the Washington church September 20. It was with great pleasure that the Communications Support Unit welcomed his participation in their conference call September 24.

At this writing, our new president is making plans to attend meetings of the Council of Ministers Executive Committee, Committee on Admission to the Ministry (CAM) and the SSR Board of Trustees in October, plus the Cabinet meeting in mid-November, all taking place in Newton, Mass. (Reports of these meetings will appear in the January, 1993 *Messenger*, along with another presidential update.)

At the annual convention in June, General Council voted to instruct our president to complete the sale of national church property located in the Santa Cruz mountains of California within 90 days. An offer from that state's Open Space Commission had expired last February but the Commission was willing to reinstate it. President Capon arranged to have the purchase and sales agreement reviewed by a California attorney and after some changes it has been signed on behalf of the denomination. If the state of California can find the money, there will be a substantial addition to the Swedenborgian Church's endowment.

The Capons are living in a motel in Woodbury, Minnesota, awaiting the completion of a new home, unfortunately four weeks behind in

completion. Rev. Capon reports that he has undertaken the church presidency on a half-time basis and does not plan to travel extensively. "I came to St. Paul with the expectation of the members there that they would have a resident, active minister; they have agreed to a half-time ministry with a commitment from me to be in the pulpit at least three Sundays a month except in the case of a real emergency within the denomination," he stated. Rev. Capon can be reached by mail at the Virginia Street Church, 170 Virginia Street, St. Paul, MN 55102 or by phone or FAX at (612) 224-4553.

## 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.*

### An Open Letter to Brian Lemee:

There are several inaccuracies in your letter published in the September *Messenger*. The Bridgewater church is not under attack. Convention, more specifically the Augmentation Fund, has decreased financial support, but it was a result of a six year plan.

Under that plan, the Augmentation Fund provided funds for the minister to increase the amount of time spent at the church. The intention being to promote church growth. In spite of instituting a number of different activities over the years, growth did not occur. Therefore, that portion of financial support was discontinued. The Bridgewater church is reviewing various alternatives to promote our church growth, and when we find something we believe will work, we will ask for financial support.

The Massachusetts New Church Union has never refused us money. In fact, they have occasionally granted us additional funds especially related to ministerial support. We have had no indication that this sup-

port will not continue in the future.

There have never been any attempts by anybody to close down our church. In fact, the Pastoral Ministries Support Unit (PMSU) visited our church to encourage our growth as a society. The vote taken at the special meeting of our society on June 9th was to discuss our needs with our neighboring societies.

There was no heated debate and the resolution was not soundly defeated. The margin was by two votes. This vote decided to not have a broad dialogue with the neighboring churches. In fact, a motion accepted at the April meeting of the Bridgewater society instructed the moderator to have informal discussions with our neighbors. Our neighboring societies have many similar problems and hopefully we can learn from their experiences; therefore, these dialogues are important.

In summary, we have had many meetings as a church. These have involved many people both inside and outside our church. Although all of these have been public meetings announced in advance, you have decided not to attend any of these meetings. We encourage you to attend so that the facts can be clear in your mind.

*Lawrence D. Conant  
Moderator, Bridgewater Society*

## 1992 Journal Available

The 1992 *Journal* has been mailed and will be in the hands of the recipients even earlier than last year. Extra copies are available for sale from the Central Office for \$10 each, postage included.

Please send requests to:  
Central Office, The  
Swedenborgian Church, 48  
Sargent St., Newton, MA  
02158.





◀ PMSU Training Group—Back row: (from left) Dave Hollweger, Fred Hille, Eli Dale, Jim Erickson, Jonathan Mitchell, Sharon Slough. 2nd Row: Dave Webster, Phyllis Bosley. 3rd Row: Pat Zacharias, Nancy Piorkowski, Barb Boxwell, Barb Penabaker, Mary Crenshaw. 4th Row: Paul Zacharias, Dave McBride, Sue Frid, Brenda Hollweger.

BELOW— Fabulous fellowship—and meals!



## PMSU SPONSORS TRAINING WORKSHOP

Fifteen Swedenborgians from across North America met August 20 to 24 at our church center near Almont, Michigan for a training workshop sponsored by the Pastoral Ministries Support Unit. The two major themes addressed at the workshop were: improving church board effectiveness and Christian stewardship. In recent years PMSU members have become increasingly aware that these two areas need to be worked on in many of our local churches. Perhaps you, now reading this *Messenger*, may want to pause for a moment and fill in some details for yourself . . . reflecting on church meetings you have attended that have not been particularly helpful or forward-moving. And it is no secret that our average financial contributions, both on the local and national levels, are low. Information gleaned from 15 Common Assessment Forms reveals that last year the average contribution per member per week was between \$3.00 and \$4.00. Using figures on a statistical chart of church denominations' finances indicating average contributions in 38 Protes-

tant churches across North America, we come in 37th. We were nosed out for last place by the Lutheran Church in Canada.

Last fall PMSU came up with the idea of holding a workshop where committed lay men and women would come together for a brief but intensive training experience in these two areas. They would then bring the information back to their local churches, and would also go out in teams, on invitation, to share this material with churches not represented at the workshops. Good leadership was essential. Through our connections with the National Council of Churches we were most fortunate in obtaining the leadership services of Betty McQueen, Florida, and Ron Vallet, Indiana. Ron is executive secretary for the Ecumenical Center for Stewardship Studies and was ably assisted by his associate, Virginia Esch.

The workshop was an unqualified success. Participants included: Brenda and Dave Hollweger, St. Louis, Missouri; Sue Frid, Kitchener, Ontario; Jonathan Mitchell, Elmwood,

Massachusetts; Nancy Piorkowski, Wilmington, Delaware; Mary Crenshaw, Detroit, Michigan; Dave McBride, Vernon, B.C.; Barbara Penabaker, Detroit, Michigan; Sharon Slough, Airdrie, Alberta; Fred Hille, St. Paul, Minnesota; Jim Erickson, St. Paul, Minnesota; Barb Boxwell, Midland, Michigan; Eli Dale, Portland, Maine; Phyllis Bosley, San Francisco, California; and David Webster, Portland, Maine. Pat and Paul Zacharias were there on behalf of PMSU. Members were asked to evaluate the session. The following excerpts from some of these evaluations should give you a good idea of what happened at the workshop.

\* \* \*

"The workshop was exceptional. The first two days were spent learning about church management and developing mission statements; short-term and long-term planning; orientation for new people within the church and committees to bridge the gaps between the 'old' and 'new'; ideas to maintain church

(Continued on page 158)



## PMSU Workshop

(Continued from page 157)

tradition and cohesiveness; ways to enrich and enhance our church life and to revitalize our church spirit.

The last two days were spent learning about stewardship. We learned a new definition of stewardship, one that approaches stewardship in a holistic way: care-taking of the earth and all that is in it; care-taking of our country, of our community, of our church, and of ourselves. We learned about the Biblical approach to stewardship that encourages people to respect, appreciate, and take care of our resources for ourselves and future generations. We are to use our resources—our time, our talents, and our treasures—in faithful, hopeful and loving ways.”

“I was very much impressed by the energy and commitment of this group of people who came together out of concern for our church. And it was fun getting to know a (highly unique) group of individuals from across North America.

We were presented with an array of practical and detailed materials for making our local church boards run more effectively. I've gotten many ideas that I am eager to try in my own church and feel I could share with other churches.”

Excellent and startling at the same time. The information presented is of vital importance to the survival of our churches. Practical and realistic examples of not only what to do, but how to do it. Thanks, PMSU!”

“Rewarding is the first word that comes to mind. Valuable information and resources made available. Wonderful getting to know the other members in the group. I felt history was being written.”

“I'm really fired up about sharing the skills and guidance and ideas that we were given during our training workshop. With these navigational tools we can set the course to a desired and exciting destination. As we share these new gifts with each other, we'll expand our hearts and horizons. This learning wasn't just about how to be a better church

government; it's about how to be a better church family.”

“Thank you for inviting me to be part of this workshop . . . I made new friends who will be part of an information networking system. I've experienced spiritual growth these last few days and have a positive outlook as to the well-being of our Church as a whole. Thank you to PMSU for having the foresight to put on a workshop like this.”

“These four days have energized me. I was beginning to feel that there was little hope for growth in some of our churches. But now I see that what I have learned in these workshops can be transformed into many tools that apply to the entire life of the church—not only for stewardship and board management. It has also made me aware of all the resource material available if you know where to look.”

“The workshop presentations were excellent. Although I do not feel I am leaving totally prepared, I do feel that I have the tools to continue working to completion. All in all, this was a superb experience. I made new friends, found new ways of sharing devotions, ate wonderful food, and leave for home highly energized.”

Over the last 35 years I have attended a lot of Convention meetings, but seldom have I sensed the level of involvement and commitment that was so evident here. It bodes well for our future. Local ministers and congregational leaders have been written to, urging them to avail themselves of this new resource in our midst. General Council has generously provided funding for this project. It is our hope and expectation that over the next 18 to 24 months virtually all of our local churches will have been exposed to this vitally important material. And I hasten to add that we discussed much more than just bare techniques and principles. The daily morning and evening devotionals made us all keenly aware that we were doing the Lord's work. For many years stewardship has meant commitment of our time, talent and treasure in the Lord's service. This is still true, but

more recently we have begun to see that stewardship, in the broadest and best sense, really involves a totally new and different way of thinking about all of life. Swedenborg reminds us that all of creation, and every aspect of our individual lives, is being constantly re-created. Everything is a gift, new every moment. In an absolute sense, nothing belongs to us. “We are, because God is.” As we journey through life we use responsibly, we share generously, we make the most of each passing day, and we give thanks to God from whom all blessings flow. This promise from Ezekiel 36:26 shows us the way: “A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you.”

—Paul Zacharias,  
PMSU Executive Secretary

## Nominating Committee Seeks Candidates

The Nominating Committee of the Swedenborgian Church is seeking qualified, interested people to fill the following positions in our offices and Support Units:

- Vice President
- Recording Secretary
- Treasurer
- General Council (1 minister, 2 lay persons)
- Communications Support Unit
- Education Support Unit
- Financial Planning & Resource Support Unit
- Growth and Outreach Support Unit
- Information Management Support Unit
- Pastoral Ministries Support Unit
- Nominating Committee (2)
- Committee on Admission to the Ministry (1 minister, 1 lay person)
- Convention nominees for SSR Board of Trustees (2)

If you are interested in having your name considered for nomination or wish to suggest a potential candidate, please notify the chairperson of the Nominating Committee at the following address:

The Nominating Committee  
Attn: Muriel Bennett, Chair  
Box 336  
Pawnee Rock, KS 67567



## Film Review

### Defending "Defending your Life"

First let me say that I would feel that my struggles with the temptation to overindulge in food would be futile indeed if the goal of the afterlife is to secure a place in an endless all-you-can-eat buffet line! Yet this is a movie that seriously attempts to depict the "world of spirits," as Swedenborg would describe the "Judgment City" where we find ourselves in "Defending your Life." This movie brought to the public's eye many concepts that ring true to my understanding of Swedenborg's writings. The stages after death included "helpers" who made the transition easier, as was portrayed by the friendly bellman who helps you to your room for a much-needed nap, and "earthlike surroundings," from buses and hotels to billboards for golf and bowling! If I am going to feel at home there, I'll need Yoga classes and dancing thrown in too, but that's personal preference.

The movie enacts the journey of an advertising executive, hit by a bus, who dies and finds himself in Judgment City where he examines and defends nine days of his life with a defending and prosecuting attorney on either side to focus the judges on the fears or courage he exhibits in each day chosen for view.

The area of "judgment" seems to be what gives people the most trouble in the movie, but if you look at the movie as if it were a dream and all the characters are you, it's a little easier, for me anyway. The lawyers, pro and con, (the critical and appreciative parts of yourself), are attempting to prove through examining a small number of days in your life, whether or not you are ready to "move on." The subject of reincarnation isn't something I'm prepared to address so I prefer to look at it in terms of advancement to heaven or descent into hell. The examination process resembles the "peeling away of the externals" that Swedenborg describes we go through in the process of unveiling our ruling love.

The examination process that Albert Brooks goes through is fo-

## Commencements

### Marriage

**Kraus and Hilbert**—Paula Sue Kraus and Bradley Hilbert were united in marriage August 15, 1992, at the Pretty Prairie Swedenborgian Church in Pretty Prairie, Kansas, the Rev. Eric Zacharias officiating. Paula is the daughter of Vernon and Linda Kraus.

### Death

**Siebert**—Ozie Siebert, 96, long-time member of the Pawnee Rock, Kansas Swedenborgian Church, entered the spiritual world June 20, 1992, in Salina, Kansas. Ozie is survived by two children, Bill and Shirley, and four grandchildren.

### Church Family News

**Baxter**—The Rev. Dick Baxter sends news that the cancer treatments he has been receiving at N.I.H., were complicated by a staph infection and phlebitis, which caused additional distress. He has been able to continue with his church duties, however, and has—at this writing—returned to work. He and Polly send thanks to all those who have called and written and want you to know that they are always glad to hear from their friends. Their address and phone number are: 4720 Bel Pre Road, Rockville MD 20853. Phone (301) 460-1369.

**Glowe**—The Rev. Matthew Glowe had a serious heart attack August 14, 1992. After a week in intensive care and additional time in a ward, he was allowed to return home where he is recuperating slowly. Cards and letters may be sent to: The Rev. Dr. Matthew Glowe, Edgewood Estates, Apt. #1712, 60 Wherllams Lane, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R2G 2G7

**Zehner**—Tom Zehner, a former treasurer of the Sunday School Association, had surgery for an intestinal blockage last January. Though he is recovering well, he and his wife Hennie decided to move to a more secure environment in case of a medical emergency. Their new address is: Landmark Manor, Room 236, 4842 Route 8, Allison Park, PA 15101. Phone (412) 444-6842. They welcome cards, letters and calls from their friends.

cused by his lawyers on pro, his good intentions, and con, his fears. In his prosecution, he is forced to relive and look at the times in his life when, out of fear, he didn't act as he wanted, or intended, to act. This is described by the prosecutor as a "fog of fear that blocks joy, love and happiness." This fear manifests as fear of risk, fear of trust, and fear of the unknown. I acknowledge the "fog" but have difficulty seeing fear as the *only* evil impeding an individual's regeneration.

The conquering power of love is well-displayed in the relationship of Albert Brooks to Meryl Streep. The fear of love, and exposure of himself in his vulnerability in feeling love, becomes the key to the climax of the movie. However, if one dramatic

decision were all it took to "move on," we'd all be attempting to live our lives for that one "Hollywood moment" that they conveniently end the movie with. I am convinced that our lives are filled with powerfully important moments as we learn by trial and error, how to be our best selves. Conquering our fears, challenging ourselves to act authentically and strengthening ourselves to use love and wisdom in all our dealings will give us days aplenty to "examine" when it's our day in "Judgment City"!

—Susanne Lorraine

*"Defending your Life", starring Meryl Streep and Albert Brooks, has been available in video release since October 1991, in case you missed it the first time around.*



## Ask Swedenborg

by George Dole

**Q:** What is the best Bible translation for someone who wants to study the spiritual sense?

**A:** Swedenborg himself favored the most literal Latin translation available to him, that of Sebastian Schmidt (Schmadius), though he seems often to have quoted Scripture from memory with considerable but not perfect accuracy. Strange as it may seem, a literal translation is most useful to someone who knows the language of the original, since expressions that make perfectly good sense in one language may not translate literally into another. Swedenborg's Hebrew and Greek were evidently good enough for him to use Schmadius well.

There is a very useful survey of interpretive principles in William F. Pendleton's work, *The Science of Exposition*. This draws on the writings themselves to demonstrate that we cannot derive the spiritual meaning simply by going from one word to the next. There must be attention to the general sense of the passage in question (*Arcana Coelestia* 4707), and particularly to the context in "series" (*Arcana Coelestia* 1756, 2166, 2343). A full chapter is given to the importance of the "affection" (what we might call the emotional tone) of a passage (examples are cited from *Arcana Coelestia* 2077,

THE WIZARD OF ID



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2157, 2275, and 3839).

We are particularly fortunate at this time in history to have a number of English translations available, since none can convey *everything* in the original. To get the general sense or the context, such newer versions as the New International Version or today's English Version may be best—they allow one to read rapidly, and to get the tone of a whole section. For the more detailed study that may follow the relative literalism of the Revised Standard Version or the New King James Version is invaluable. At this level, it is also important to have a Teacher's Bible with reliable notes and cross-references.

Please send your questions to the editor or to the Rev. Dr. George Dole, Swedenborg School of Religion, 48 Sargent Street, Newton, MA 02158.

Dr. Dole regrets that the letter with this original question was misplaced, and though he remembered the question, he does not recall who sent it. If the reader cares to reveal his/her identity in a future issue, we would be happy to hear from you!

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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