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Moving Toward the Light

From the Editor

Lightening Up

In my eclectic reading on spiritual growth over the years, I have come across more than once the idea that allowing material clutter to accumulate, the storing of things that aren't used, hampers our spiritual growth. It impedes movement; there is no room for the new unless we shovel out the old and consciously make that room. It is said that the state of our material surroundings is a reflection on our state of mind.

There seems to be a growing number of people who are feeling as I have these past months; we are in the process of divesting, recycling, selling, giving away, dumping, emptying out, clearing space, freeing up, disposing of all that is unnecessary to who we really are or want to be.

A friend recently moved to a new, larger apartment and took very little with her. She chuckled at visitors' assumptions that she would, of course, buy more furniture. "I don't think so," she said. "I have all I need, and I like this feeling of light, space, airiness, it's very freeing."

During these months of clearing and cleaning, I discovered that I missed nothing I had parted with. The experience of emptying out is exhilarating. But we live in a time when most of us are inundated in *stuff*, and the recession lingers on, which means there are more people who want to sell than buy, more who want to give than receive. It poses a problem. A used-book store bought 20 of the first hundred books I moved out, but the next time I approached them they said no; we can't take in anymore until we get rid of some. The library was happy to get them. The library is one of the last grateful repositories of strange bedfellows between bookcovers. The sublime and the ridiculous nestle there in peaceful coexistence.

A long-time friend sent me a letter stating that she and her husband had finally achieved their dream to sell their house, dispose of most of their possessions and take off in a large van to wander the U.S. for a year. Enclosed were several mementos, including a 30-year-old newsletter from a women's club that we had both belonged to. A picture of me being installed as vice-president brought a brief moment of pleasurable nostalgia. Then I wondered, *what should I do with this?* Do my children want to see a picture of me in a 60s newsletter after I'm dead? Should I write an amusing recollection of that time and include it in the family memoirs? Good idea, but where should I file it *now*? Reluctantly, I drop it on the still-large pile of things to think about. I write a note to my friend, congratulating her (with envy) on freeing herself up and presumably leaving no material trace except a post office box in Texas.

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Journey East

Part III (Conclusion)

Raymond Wong

I counted the days, the hours; spent sleepless nights, and waited. Solitude and loneliness were not strangers to me. Back home in the Midwest, I'd had no one but my aunt; in Peking, I had lived in a world of my own. But never had I

covered. He did not reprimand me for what I had done or even talk about it. All he said was, "We all missed you, son."

"I missed you, too, Dad," I murmured, bursting into tears. No longer was I trying to act like a grown-

gave me. He did not close the door, but deep in my heart I understood his message. Later, I asked him if Mr. Lo knew he was here in Shanghai. He told me that he had already talked to Mr. Lo on the phone at the train station when he arrived and that Mr. Lo was going to call me personally later in the afternoon.

Father and I moved to a bigger room in the Y.M.C.A. It had twin beds and a private bathroom. Sometime in the afternoon, the clerk came up and told me I had a phone call. Father came down with me to the office.

"Hello," I answered the phone.

"Is that you, John?" It was Mr. Lo's voice.

"Yes, sir."

"Is your father with you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Can I speak to him?"

"Sure." I passed the phone to my father. For a while he just listened. Then, I heard him say, "That is very kind of you . . . Sure, we'll be ready. Thank you. Good-bye."

"Mr. Lo has invited us to a dinner party tomorrow evening. You know,

*My feet dragged as if
I were in a nightmare.*

felt so insecure and rootless, like a lone fallen leaf drifting in an immense ocean. Here in Shanghai, I longed for a familiar face; faces of those I had not felt close to surged in the waves of reminiscence—faces of my father, my half-sisters, and even my stepmother. They had not been part of me, but now, strangely, I missed them.

One morning several days later, I heard a knock on my door and a voice announcing, "You have a visitor." Immediately, I thought it was Mr. Lo. Quickly, I put on a jacket and hurried downstairs. The clerk on duty pointed at the reception room. When I pushed the door open, I saw a man sitting in a chair on the other side of the room—my father. I froze. For a moment, it was utter silence. Then Father beckoned me to come to him. Still stunned by the initial shock, I slowly moved in his direction across the large chamber. Not knowing what to expect, I was full of fear and my feet dragged as if I were in a nightmare. Before I reached him, he rose from his chair, quickened his steps toward me, and pulled me into his arms. No words could express the closeness I felt at that instant. This was my father, the father I did not know, the father who tried to reach me from across the ocean, the father I now redis-

covered. He did not reprimand me for what I had done or even talk about it. All he said was, "We all missed you, son."

"I received a telegram from Mr. Lo Ming-yo, telling me you were here. He asked me to call him, and I did. We had a long talk on the phone. He told me everything. He thinks a great deal of you," said Father.

"Did he ask you for permission to allow me to work in his studio?" I asked.

"Yes, he mentioned that. I have given it a lot of thought. I am sorry, son, if you think I don't love you; because I do. I will not stand in your way if you want to be in the movies.

*I felt then the closeness
of our bond and
the comfort of his love.*

But, at your age, education is more important than anything else. Mr. Lo said that, too. Go back to school and prepare yourself for whatever you want to be. You will not regret it. I will give Mr. Lo my permission if he wants you to be in a movie. He told me it won't be this year. So, come home, son. Believe me, both Mr. Lo and I are thinking only of what is best for you."

That was the advice my father

he really likes you," said Father after he hung up the phone.

We went out to a store then, and he bought me a shirt and a new tie. After that, he took me to see a movie, "David Copperfield." As I sat in the darkened theater, watching the moving scenes of the touching story on the screen, Father gently held my hand in his. I felt then the closeness of our bond and the com-

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Journey East

(Continued from page 35)

fort of his love. He might not have opened my way to stardom, but he opened my heart. No longer was he just a "sir," respected but distant; he was my Dad, my one and only Dad.

My dream of venturing into the movie land was still alive. On our way to the dinner party the following evening in a limousine sent by Mr. Lo, two voices echoed in my heart—"If you believe in something, keep your faith and work at it," and "Go back to school and prepare yourself for whatever you want to be."

I was still deep in thought when the limousine stopped in front of an elegant restaurant. A tall doorman wearing a green and gold-colored uniform opened the door for us. When we entered the lobby of the restaurant, the maitre d' in a black tuxedo quickly greeted us. "Mr. Lim?" he asked. He was expecting us. Father nodded. "Come this way, please," said the maitre d'. There were several large banquet rooms, all brightly lit and full of people. We followed the maitre d' through a long corridor lined with stone statues and live plants. The corridor was covered with a red carpet, and the white marble wall on each side was decorated with paintings.

My shyness and stage fright suddenly vanished

The room we were led to was at the end of the corridor. It was dimly lit by candlelight and was rather quiet. As soon as we entered, a bright spotlight was instantly turned on from the balcony and beamed upon our way; and the maitre d' announced in a dramatic voice, "Mr. Lim Hu-fan and his son John Lim!" Loud applause rang out from the guests who were already there waiting, and the room was suddenly brightened by an array of crystal chandeliers. I was astonished by the dazzling and totally unexpected display of sounds and lights greeting our arrival. There must have been more than a hundred guests, men in

formal attire and women in beautiful Chinese gowns. We were seated at the head table, one on each side of our host, Mr. Lo. Behind the head table was a stage where a violinist and a pianist were playing soft background music. The waiters all wore white jackets, black pants, and bow ties.

This was the first time Mr. Lo had met my father. He greeted him warmly and gave me a big hug. Before dinner started, Mr. Lo went up to the microphone on the stage and gave a short speech in Chinese. At the end, he turned to me and said, in English, "Come on up here, John." I looked at my father. He just smiled. Nervously, I went up to the stage.

"Do you understand what I have just said to our guests?" asked Mr. Lo through the mike, as if we were in a show. I was really embarrassed, because I understood only a few words. I shook my head. Everybody laughed, including my father.

"Don't feel bad; after all, you have only been in China three or four months. When I first went to America, I could not speak their language either," said Mr. Lo.

Strangely, at that moment my shyness and stage fright suddenly vanished. I felt an urge to communicate with the audience. Standing on my toes, I tried to speak into the microphone but could not quite reach it. Mr. Lo was a tall man. He lowered the mike for me.

"Ta jiang ying wen hen hao," *he speaks very good English*, I told the audience.

Again, laughs and clapping broke out.

"Xixie ni," Mr. Lo thanked me, looking amused by my little act. Then, in a more serious manner, he took over the mike and said in English, "Ladies and gentlemen, this is John, the boy from America I told you about. Now it is my pleasure to introduce to you his father, Mr. Lim Hu-fan."

The spotlight turned on my father. He stood up and acknowledged the applause.

"Mr. Lim graduated from University of Columbia in the United States, and he is the founder and manager of a large tannery in Tient-

sin. I am honored by his presence, and I envy him for having such a courageous and creative son. This little boy has ideas and is not afraid of going after them. He told me we should produce movies for children, Chinese children. I think it is an excellent idea. What strikes me is that it takes a lad all the way from America to bring us that idea. Why, of course, China is rich with fairy tales and we have millions of children who would love to see those stories on the screen. I plan to produce and distribute the first Chinese movie for kids before the end of next year. I would like to have John play a role in that picture. I have his father's permission. . ."

The spotlight turned on my father.

Mr. Lo's speech was interrupted by another wave of applause.

"For now, John will go back to Peking with his father to study and learn Mandarin," he continued.

"When we are ready to shoot the film, he will be ready too. At his young age, and with his desire and drive and talent, nothing is impossible. You have all just seen his performance. I am a native of Shanghai; my Mandarin is not too good either. In a couple of years, John will be teaching me both Mandarin and English. Right, John?"

The spotlight was now on me. Again, Mr. Lo lowered the mike for me.

"I don't think so, sir. You will always be my teacher," I responded. Words came out of me spontaneously.

"I hope you will have a pleasant trip and come back soon," Mr. Lo concluded his speech. After dinner, he took my father and me around to meet the guests. Many of them were famous movie stars. I had seen their pictures in the Chinese movie magazines.

The party ended, and we thanked our gracious host and said goodbye. A limousine took us back to the Y.M.C.A.

We left Shanghai two days later. Instead of going back to Peking,

Father took me on a long journey touring many cities, scenic resorts, and historical places. We visited the tomb of Dr. Sun Yat-sen, founder of the Republic of China, in Nanking, the capital. We cruised on the beautiful lake of Soochow and climbed the Great Wall in the northern plain. Father also took me to Tientsin to see his large tannery complex. Finally, at the end of the journey, we returned to Peking, and home.

Only a few weeks before, I had left this grand old mansion and had thought I would never see it again. Now I was back. The courtyard was lush with plants and flowers; the lawn was green and the sky was blue. Summer had arrived. When I saw my stepmother, she kissed me and said, "Glad to have you back." I kissed her too, for the first time. "I am sorry, Mom," I uttered. I was truly sorry.

Margaret and Carolyn surrounded me, hugged me, and asked me all kinds of questions. Even the little kitten seemed glad to see me; she jumped into my arms and purred as I stroked her furry back.

These were the happiest days of my life.

I went back to my Chinese school and studied hard. It was no longer a task that I was forced into. Now, I

genuinely wanted to learn Mandarin, to be able to speak it fluently, and to fulfill the expectation of my father and Mr. Lo. To my surprise, Dad allowed me to take piano lessons from the Russian teacher who was teaching Margaret and Carolyn. These were the happiest days of my life since I had come to China. I still missed my aunt; I wrote to her frequently. But unlike before when she was the only person in this world endearing to my heart, I now had two homes, one in the East, the other in the West.

EPILOGUE

My sojourn to China came to an abrupt end. Japan attacked China from the north in the late summer of 1937. Peking was in danger; Shanghai was bombed; China was at war. My father thought it was best for me to return to the United States.

"This is going to be a prolonged war; many cities will fall, many people will die," he told me. "We must leave before the enemy gets here. Your mother and sisters and I are going to the south where it is safer, at least temporarily. I want you to go back to America to continue your education. Come back if you want when the war is over. China will suffer heavy losses, but she will win in the end. Remember, we all love you. You are an Amer-

ican citizen, but you are also Chinese. Don't forget your roots."

My sojourn to China came to an abrupt end.

Father made arrangements with the American Consulate in Peking to put me on one of the chartered planes evacuating U.S. citizens from the doomed city to Shanghai, and from there on a ship to the United States. On a cloudy, dreary morning, Father took me to the airport. It was a sad moment when I bid farewell to Margaret, Carolyn, and my stepmother. They did not come to the airport. Before the plane departed, Dad hugged and kissed me. I waved at him with tears flowing down my cheeks as I boarded the plane.

That was the last time I saw him. My father died in 1961 in Beijing, formerly Peking.

Raymond Wong is a member of the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church. After many years as principal engineer for the Department of Public Works, he retired in 1992 and entered the Master's program in Creative Writing at San Francisco State University. Although "Journey East" is a true story of two crucial growing-up years in the life of the author, Mr. Wong has used fictional names for family members, including his own.

Opinion

Dear Patte,

The Messenger arrived Saturday, and the warmth of the message flooded my soggy California day. It melted right through the Indiana ice and came to cheer an otherwise bleak time. Thank you—not just for your words about the gate and the book—but for the opportunity to become acquainted with a philosophy (rather than dogma) that makes me smile with deep recognition. *Yes*, I kept saying.

Joseph Conrad said: "The Messenger cannot rest until the message has been delivered." Funny that I had those words pinned to the wall where I worked on the book.

Jan Steward, Los Angeles, California

Editorial (from page 34)

And yes, during the holidays I was recycling lovely things people had given us to other people who might enjoy them. One of these was a large, expensive crystal bowl that UPS managed to lose over Christmas. "It was a precious family heirloom," I sighed to the clerk, "but that's okay, just give me the insurance money." "Oh, no," he said, "we have a good chance of finding it. We put a tracer on it, but it's probably lost its brain, so to speak, and will eventually wind up in our warehouse in Atlanta, so if you can go to a department store and get a picture of something similar, we can probably find it."

"You're telling me there's a warehouse in Georgia that's full of things that have lost their paper brains? We're in big trouble," I said, "cosmically speaking. The Lord was right. It's easier to go through the eye of a needle."

"I'm sure we can locate it for you," he said with undiminished cheer.

"I'm sure you can," I replied.

The Lord knows that I am working very hard during this Lenten period, and beyond, to give up everything I can lay my hands on. But it was easier in Biblical days, wasn't it? The printing press hadn't been invented.

Archival Gold

Our Swedenborgian Heritage

(Sixth in a Series)

Louise Woofenden

Women write on spiritual subjects

A number of famous American women embraced the Swedenborgian religion. Amelita Galli-Curci, the noted singer; Lydia Marie Child, abolitionist and founder of the first American juvenile magazine; Mary Lathbury, hymn writer (*Break Thou the Bread of Life; Day is Dying in the West; Arise, All Souls, Arise!*), and of course, Helen Keller, were in the public eye. But there were many women, unnoticed by the world, who were active in public affairs and skillful with the pen.

Pick from the shelf at random a volume of *The Messenger*. It turns out to be 1897. Glance over the index. Ten women contributed over twenty articles, reviews and poems on New Church subjects. A number are studies in depth. Ellen Andrews contributed a comparison of Adler and Swedenborg on marriage. Lillian Beekman, who later left the church for a Roman Catholic convent, wrote *The Evolution of the Earth and the Birth of the First Man*. The names of Mary W. Early, Ella F. Mosby, Annie Muzzey and Eliza Noyes have gone into oblivion, but in their day they were listened to with respect. Mary G. Chandler Ware wrote *Climbing Up Some Other Way*, on the spiritual meaning of the parable of the sheepfold.

Mrs. Ware was an activist on behalf of women prisoners and neighborhood improvement. She is represented in the library of the Swedenborg School of Religion not only by magazine articles, but by three fairly substantial little books. *Death and Life* (1867) includes observations on mourning customs (Mrs. Ware frowned on excessive mourning for the New Church, believing it not only inconsistent with the teachings concerning eternal

life, but a practice which hampered the departing soul in its journey and in its relationship and helpfulness to those left behind). Other chapters in this book are on memory in the future life, spiritualism and other questions which had been in many minds. *Thoughts in my Garden* uses images from her large and well kept farm on the Nashua River in Lancaster, Massachusetts, to illustrate correspondences in a poetical and imaginative manner. Seeds, plants, weeds, fruit, sowing and reaping, animals and pests serve as symbols of human personality and behavior.

An earlier book by Mrs. Ware, *Elements of Character* (1854) is full of pithy similes and observations on human character. An acute perception of the ironies of behavior and trenchant suggestions for the application of Swedenborg's revelation of true spiritual life mark this book. The following piece is excerpted from the introductory chapter.

CHARACTER

by Mary G. Chandler Ware, 1854

The weakness and helplessness of humanity, in relation to the fortunes of this life, have been a favorite theme with philosophers and teachers ever since the world began; and every term expressive of all that is uncertain, insubstantial, and unstable has been exhausted in describing the feebleness of man's power to retain in possession the good things of this life, or even life itself. However firmly the hand of man may seem to grasp power, reputation, or wealth, however numerous may be the band of children or friends that surrounds him, he has no certainty that he may not die friendless and a pauper. In fact, the most brilliant success in life seems sometimes to be permitted only that

it may make the darkness of succeeding reverses the more profound.

Weak and helpless as we may be in the affairs of this life, there is one thing over which we have entire control, and this is character. For this and this alone, we are entirely responsible. If we have used our best endeavors to attain success in the pursuit of temporal objects, we are not responsible though we fail. But if we do not succeed in attaining true health and wealth and power of character, the responsibility is all our own; and the consequences of our failure are not bounded by the shores of time, but stretch onward through the limitless regions of eternity. It is not going too far to say that character is the only permanent possession we can have. It is in fact our spiritual body.

To build character requires a plan, no less than to build a house. A deep and broad foundation of sound opinions, believed in with the whole heart, can alone insure safety to the superstructure. Where such a foundation is not laid, the character will possess no architectural unity, will have no consistency. Its emotions will be swayed by the impulses of the moment instead of being governed by the principles of life. There is nothing reliable in such a character, for it perpetually contradicts itself. Its powers, instead of acting together like well-trained soldiers, will ever be jostling each other like a disorderly mob.

The zeal for special reforms in morality, whatever may be its utility or its necessity, may not be without an evil effect upon the training of character as a whole. The intense effort of reform in certain particular directions causes many to forget or to overlook altogether the fact that one virtue is not enough to make a moral being. It cannot be doubted

that the present surpasses all former ages in its eagerness to put down several of the most prominent vices to which man is subject; but it may be well to pause and examine whether a larger promise is not sometimes uttered by the zeal so actively at work than will probably be made good by its results.

Nothing can be worthy of the name of reform that does not acknowledge the laws of eternal truth and justice. The tendency of reform is often to separate itself from religion; for religion cannot work fast enough to satisfy its haste; cannot, at the end of each year, count the steps it has advanced. The reformer asks not always for general growth and advancement in character, but demands special evidences, startling results, tangible proofs.



*Character is the only
permanent possession
we can have. It is
—in fact—
our spiritual body.*



Persons who devote themselves to one special branch of reform are apt to lose the power of appreciating any virtue save that one which they have selected as their own, and which they seem to love, not so much because it *is* a virtue as because it is *their* virtue. They soon lose all moral perspective, and resemble him who holds some one object so closely before his eyes that he can see nothing else, and cannot see that correctly; while he insists that nothing else exists worthy of being seen.

Thus temperance is at times preached by people so intemperate in their zeal that they are unwilling to make public addresses on the Sabbath. We have the emancipation of Negroes sometimes preached by people fast bound in fetters of malignity and spiritual pride. We have the destruction of the ruling influence of

the clergy inculcated by those who are as dogmatic as Spanish Inquisitors. We are taught that the inspiration of the Scriptures is a mere figment by those who are firmly convinced that their own inspiration is perfect and unfailing. The result of all this is the development of characters as deformed as are the bodies of victims of hydrocephalus and goiter; while in painful contrast to such victims, these morally distorted patients bear their deformities in the most conspicuous manner, as if they were rare beauties. So pagan nations, when they embody their ideas of superhuman attributes, often construct figures having several heads or hands, or enormously enlarge some particular member of the frame, fancying that they express the ideas of wisdom or power more perfectly than they could by forming a figure whose parts should all present a symmetrical development.

It is not that reformers overestimate the evil of any of the vices against which they contend; for in the abstract this is impossible; but that they underestimate the evil of all other vices in relation to that one against which they arm themselves. The tree of evil has many branches, and the trimming away of one of them may only make the rest grow more vigorously. There can be no thorough progress in reform until the evil of the whole tree is perceived and acknowledged and the whole strength is turned to digging it up by the roots.

We are told that he who is guilty of breaking one commandment is guilty of all; because if we disregard any one commandment of the Lord habitually, persisting in the preference of our own will to his, it is evident we have no reverence for him, or that we act in conformity to his commandments in other points only because in them our will happens not to run counter to his. This is no obedience at all.

The one who devotes his life to some one object of reform enters upon an undertaking involving one of the most subtle temptations by which man is ever assailed. Spiritual pride will lie in wait for him every moment, telling him how clean he is compared with those against whose

vices he is contending; and unless he is very strong in Christian humility, he will go about the world with the spirit of the Pharisee's prayer ever in his heart, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men," "I am not intemperate, a slaveholder, a contemner of the rights of the weak. I am not, like many men, contented with fulfilling the common, everyday duties of life. They are too small for me. I seek to do great things; and to show my devotion to thee by going armed with all the power the law allows to put down vice by force, and drive it from the face of the earth."

True religious life consists in doing the will of God every moment of our lives. His will must bear upon us everywhere and at all times. Where the mind is absorbed in some one object of reform this constant devotion to duty is almost, if not quite, impossible. The mind becomes so warped in one direction that it almost loses the power of turning in any other. Hence we rarely hear the word *duty* from the lips of the reformer. He constantly descants upon rights or wrongs, while duties seem forgotten. Thus we hear perpetually of the rights or of the wrongs of man or of woman, of the citizen or of the criminal, and of the slave; but the duties of these classes seem to have passed out of sight. Now it is only when all shall fulfill their several duties that the rights of all can be respected; And if peace on earth and good will towards men are ever to reign, it must be when piety and charity go hand in hand, when the human race shall unite as one to fulfill its duties towards God and towards each other.

So long as we labor for ourselves, we shall be at best only special reformers, and cultivators of special virtues; but when we are ready to deny ourselves, and do the will of God, *all* sin will become abhorrent to us, and we shall grow in grace daily until we become perfected in that symmetrical form which is the image and likeness of God.

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

CHURCH NEWS:

From our friends in . . .

- **Boston:**

The Boston Interfaith Clergy Breakfast Group, headed by Rev. Steven Ellis, pastor of the Boston Swedenborgian Church, helped organize a special two-hour inter-religious service at the New Hope Baptist Church in which 16 clergy members of different faiths came together January 10, 1993, to renew their pledge to promote racial harmony and end violence. The *Boston Globe* quoted Mr. Ellis' statement, "It is our moral imperative to seek the reconciliation of all God's people, regardless of diversity." The service was the first of many similar ones planned in neighborhoods throughout Boston.

- **Kansas:**

Rev. Eric Zacharias, pastor of the Pretty Prairie Swedenborgian Church, began his 42nd year in the pulpit this year. Mr. Zacharias reported that their church in Montezuma has been sold to a German Mennonite congregation. Young people had left the community, and the older generation was no longer able to sustain services and maintain the physical needs of the structure. He says the church building was erected in the late 1940s and was the fulfillment of a dream of a faithful and dedicated group of people . . . "May the Lord bless all of our friends of the Montezuma church who have gone through this trying experience."

- **Michigan:**

Rev. Steve Pults and the Royal

Oak (Detroit) congregation are excited—after years of meeting at the Royal Oak Women's Club, they are due to move into their very own building soon.

- **Kitchener, Ontario:**

Rev. Ron Brugler reports that their Sunday School has grown over the past four years from eight to over 40 children at the close of 1992. They've converted a former rummage room to a classroom, are looking for more teachers and are elated to have these kinds of growing pains. The Kitchener church has also undergone extensive rewiring and repairs, including a new accoustical ceiling in the fellowship hall and parlor.

- **San Francisco:**

The San Francisco church is continuing to press ahead with their plans to remodel the parish house, with a new large children's room and a terraced porch off the main gathering room. According to Rev. Jim Lawrence, co-minister, the original reason for the architectural changes was the limited space for a children's program. With funding assistance from the Pacific Coast Association, they launched an outreach campaign to bolster their Sunday School program. Two target populations were the parents of children who have been baptized at the church in the past ten years and young families living in nearby zip codes. The effort resulted in an enrollment of 30 children in September, plus a group of toddlers and infants. Rev. Rachel Lawrence is Superintendent of the Sunday School.

- **Cambridge, Massachusetts:**

The Swedenborg Chapel in Cambridge, Massachusetts, continues to sponsor a Navajo Indian boy named Brandon through the SAVE THE CHILDREN program. Brandon is now eleven years old and in the fifth grade. The cost of sponsorship is just \$20 per month.

- **Prague**

And from Prague, Rev. Kathleen Easton-Gilhooly writes

that she is teaching English there. No, she didn't get married—she says she is just gradually reclaiming her family name. (See Commencements, Change of Address).

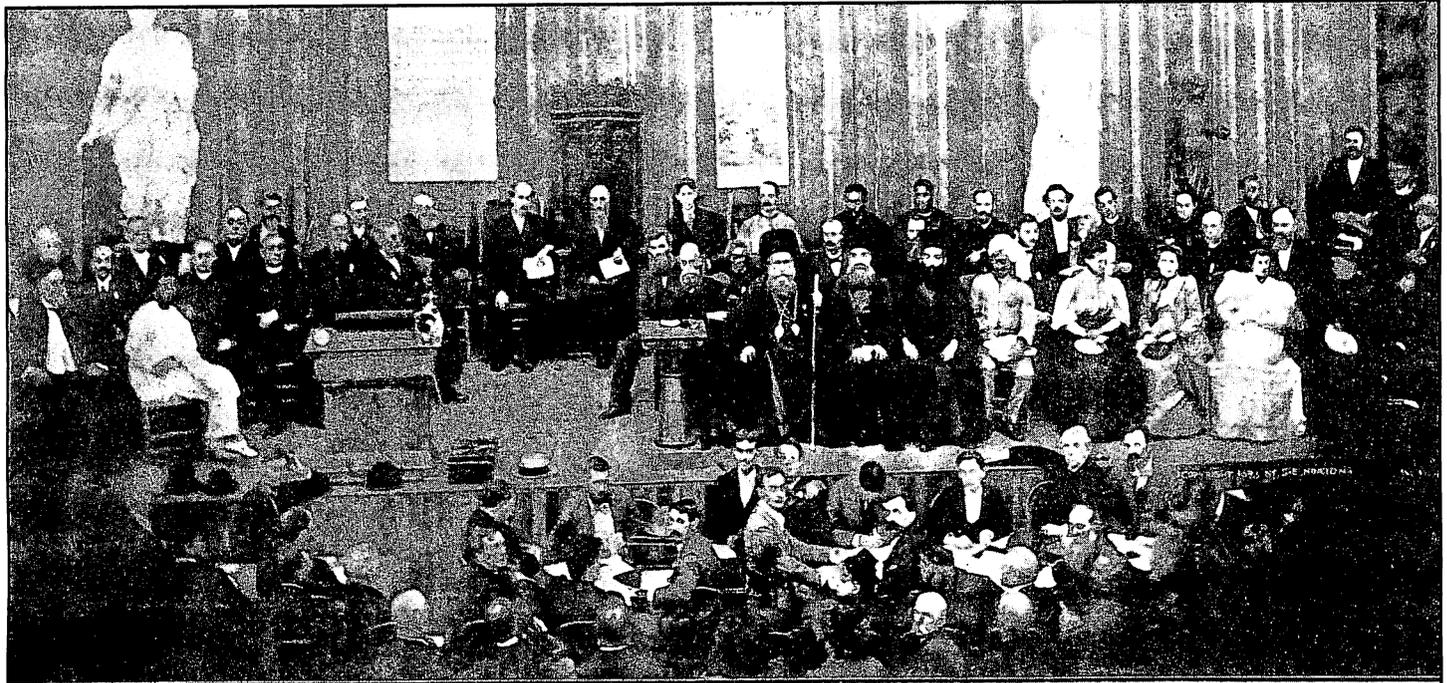
- **Portland, Maine:**

Rev. Ken Turley writes that "throughout 1992, Portland church put great efforts into facilitating both church and personal growth, and having hit a plateau, must work into the next phase. There are two areas that each one of us can look to. The first is our own capacity for love and wisdom. Where do we need growth within ourselves and in actually manifesting it outward through our relationships with the people around us? . . . The responsibility rests with each of us to do our own soul searching and acknowledge our need to grow . . . and to summon the motivation and the commitment to make it happen. This does not, however, happen in a vacuum. We depend on each other for inspiration, guidance and forgiveness. Spiritual growth is measured in relationship with other people, and that is why I believe spiritual growth and church growth are inseparable."

"The second area of need is our active involvement in some area of the church community . . . Your commitment to get involved . . . will contribute to the health of the church and draw you along the upward path of spiritual growth. And from works of love offered in the context of the 'real world' come the experiences that are the true teachers of wisdom."

The Portland church continues to provide a rich assortment of groups meeting throughout the week for spiritual support, community action and outreach, movement, singing, movie viewing, Yoga, women's and men's and a new "Human's Group" forming to explore the differences and similarities in the ways men and women communicate.

More church news in April.



THE PLATFORM OF THE PARLIAMENT ON THE MORNING OF SEPTEMBER 14.

The Platform of the Parliament on the morning of September 14, 1893. In the high-backed chair is the Honorable Charles C. Bonney, President of the General Committee on Religious Congresses of the World's Congress Auxiliary. To his immediate right, the Rev. John Henry Barrows, DD, Chair of the Committee and the editor of the two-edition review of the Parliament.

The 1993 Parliament of the World's Religions Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A.

Saturday, August 28 through Saturday, September 4, 1993

Word of the Parliament is reaching humanity's diverse cultural and religious communities!

A young man telephoned from his home in the Arkansas mountains where he and his wife are building an interfaith retreat and study center. They are thrilled that a celebrative, deliberative and spiritual event of this magnitude is occurring and is also so accessible. As if to mirror their thoughts, the president of a company in Bombay, India, a Jain, wrote a letter filled with optimism that this Parliament might truly reach the full potential of its promise.

It will be from such breadth of participation, from the exalted leaders of the world's religions such as the Dalai Lama, to the women and men who work daily in the world, that the Parliament's promise will find its way into the homes of the world's people. It will be from these homes that the challenge of the Parliament will find its true voice.

Significant Change in Parliament Registration Fees

- FULL registration is \$200 through May 31, 1993, and \$350 thereafter.
- FAMILY registration (for couples and/or parent(s) with children) \$350 through May 31, 1993, and \$500 thereafter.
- THREE & SINGLE DAY registration remains unchanged.

Any registrants who have already paid under the original fee structure will be sent a refund for the difference with the letter of acknowledgement. There will be a price increase for checks drawn on foreign banks due to expensive exchange fees.

**Bring your Spouse, Bring your Children, Bring your Friends!
See the January, 1993 *Messenger* for a Registration Form.**

Teilhard de Chardin

The Future of Humankind

Evelyn Byers

The fame of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, the French Jesuit paleontologist, rests on his theory that claims to unify cosmic evolution and Christianity. He is best known for *The Phenomenon of Man*¹, published the year of his death. This book is the quintessence of his thinking; here he attempts to reconcile Christian theology with a paleontologist's understanding of evolution. He develops a new explanation of human uniqueness. He posits an intimate and essentially parallel relationship between evolution as seen through the biologist's eyes, and cultural and psychic evolution as evidenced by increasing reasoning ability, psychological development, and behavioral changes, leading to a prediction of mankind's future.

It has been said that this book was never intended for publication and that Teilhard's friends did his memory a disservice by publishing it, since it was the instrument for loss of prestige both for science and the Catholic Church. I cannot agree. It was not those who published his work who did him a disservice, but those in his church who were instrumental in silencing him. By preventing publication of his theological writings in his lifetime they denied him one of the most valuable opportunities possible for a scientist and thinker of his stature: to dialog with colleagues—to be challenged—in order to develop and clarify his theories. Teilhard deserved to be heard, to be subjected to scrutiny, but he never had a chance to defend his theories.

Religion protested that he had no business expounding in the fields of astronomy, physics, and biology in

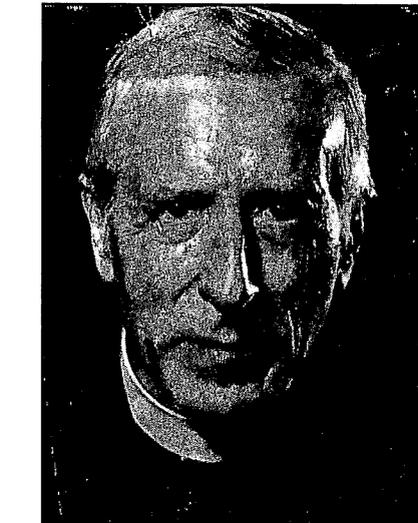


PHOTO CREDIT: PHILIPPE HALSMAN - HARPER & BROS., PUBLISHER

the name of religion; science had a problem with his exploring areas that were not experimentally verifiable. This was at a time when for a millenium science had been in the painful process of separating itself from God, nature, and the mystical, while continuing the search for the basic building block and the few inviolable rules that would answer all questions and explain life. Teilhard was painfully aware of the growing dichotomy, and viewed his philosophy of evolution as the obvious connection between the two worlds of spiritual development and human evolution.

Part of the misunderstanding and resistance to his ideas may stem from two factors: one, he is difficult to read (at least in English translation), and two, he had to invent a new vocabulary since there are no words extant to describe his concepts.

Teilhard fits easily into today's science/spirit changing paradigm. As both priest and scientist he was able to synthesize the worlds of spirit and mind with those of the material and physical. He envisioned the whole of reality as process—not static. No clockwork universe for Teilhard. He knew that for some practical purposes we need to isolate phenomena

in time, but in reality all is in process of becoming. His word "noogenesis" means gradual evolution of mind; "hominization" is the process by which humans are realizing their inherent possibilities, their greater potential for the future.

A point of division between Teilhard and his church may have come from his identifying the cosmic Christ of Christian revelation with his "Omega Point" which he identifies as the organizing power beyond matter which we call "God." He defends this conclusion in his apologetics, thereby ostensibly providing a proof and defense of the truth of Christianity.

Teilhard was not alone in maintaining that matter and mind (or spirit) were neither identical, nor separate. In his words, or at least as translated from the original French,

*Matter and consciousness are bound together, not in the sense that consciousness becomes directly measurable, but in the sense that it becomes organically and physically rooted in the same cosmic process with which physics is concerned.*²

Carl Gustav Jung, a contemporary of Teilhard, expressed much the same concept when he said,

*Since psyche and matter are contained in one and the same world, and ultimately rest in irrepresentable, transcendental factors, it is not only possible but fairly probable even that psyche and matter are two different aspects of one and the same thing.*³

Compare these concepts too, with the way physicists are now describing

the most basic "building blocks" of matter as behaving either as particles or as waves, depending on how the observer is oriented.

Today both science and religion are struggling with the dichotomous mind/body, matter/spirit mind-set so necessary for the god of science to maintain its dignity in a world of escalating change.

Teilhard asserts that even in the very smallest particles there is a "Within," a reflection of consciousness; the "Within" is in all reality in the universe. And this reflection of consciousness in all things reflects the "Great Within" or "Omega." Then he gets to the heart of the matter: Mankind may not be the end product! He says,

*Man is momentarily a climax in the universe. . . may be not also be the bud from which something more complicated and more centered than man himself is to emerge?*⁴

Quantum physics has begun to upset the direct cause-effect mind-set of fact-oriented science. And Teilhard's philosophy of evolution, so sadly repressed during his lifetime, fits nicely into the fast-approaching new paradigm in the theological and pragmatic structure of our Western culture. He made science and religion equally real and inseparable by following a different path from the quantum physicist.

From a unique and intricately reasoned view of the future of human nature, Teilhard explains what prophets and philosophers told and ancients knew: Evolution is anti-entropic, all is process, creation is one.

¹ Teilhard de Chardin, *New York, Harper & Brothers, 1959. 318 pp.*

² *The Vision of the Past (English/Translation 1966), 227.*

³ Anelia Jaffe in *The Life and Work of C. G. Jung. New York, Harper & Row, 1971, p. 44.*

⁴ *Vision of the Past, 227-229.*

Teilhard de Chardin Vocabulary

Apologetics: Originally, that branch of theology used to defend Christian religion against attack. For Teilhard, a dialectic approach demonstrating the probability and reasonableness of Christian faith.

Atomism: A tendency towards granulation—to appear, when analyzed as a collection of "grains."

***Cosmogogenesis:** The genesis of life, the human species, spirit, and the total Christ, the Pleroma.

Emergence: In evolution, the appearance of new and unpredictable properties. In phenomenology, a threshold; in metaphysics, a creation.

Law of Recurrence: The law by which at each successive stage of evolution, a new plurality (atomism) is formed, which allows a higher synthesis.

Metaphysics: Teilhard gives a more restricted meaning—a method of reconstructing deductively, that is to say, *a priori*, the system observed (by phenomenological inquiry), starting from certain general principles that are accepted as absolutes.

Noosphere: "The terrestrial sphere of thinking substance." It is the thinking envelope woven around the earth, above the biosphere and made up by the totality of mankind. Its density is constantly increasing through the rise in the human population, its inter-relations, and its spiritual quality.

Omega: The great "within" or reason for organizing power, which is beyond matter. Matter and spirit are not identical, but on a continuum. Matter evolves in stages to become more complex and more perfect in action. Finally there is spirit. The organizing power beyond matter is "Omega" or God.

Phenomenon: That part of being which makes itself manifest to our senses or consciousness. Not either underlying or supernatural evidence, but physical, biological, psychological and social facts, as they are presented to us.

Phenomenology: Method of bringing out meaning or reason (logos) of phenomena, "an attempt to see and make others see what happens to man, and what conclusions are forced upon us, when he is placed fairly and squarely within the framework of phenomenon and appearance." He seeks to describe the *whole* phenomenon.

Pleroma: The whole of creation in its union with Christ.

Complexity-Consciousness: As matter becomes more complex, it becomes more conscious, ultimately of itself.

Hominization: The process of becoming fully human; social unification.

*May be broken up within the passage of time, into *Moleculization* (atoms to large molecules), *Cephalization* (tendency of nervous system and sense organs to concentrate in the head), *Cerebration* (Brain becomes more elaborated and convoluted), *Hominization* (associated with upright position, to attain thinking man), and *Planetization* (ever-increasing mankind converges upon itself).

Works by Teilhard de Chardin

The Phenomenon of Man (1938-1940)* A scientific treatise describing evolution as development of physical characteristics simultaneously with consciousness.

The Vision of the Past (English translation 1966) Essays in philosophy of science dealing with problems raised by evolution and human development theories.

The Divine Milieu (1926-1927) Spiritual exploration and statement of Teilhard's own spiritual life.

The Future of Man (English translation 1964) Collection of essays about the path of evolution following man's achieving consciousness.

Man's Place in Nature (1949) More scientific exposition of Teilhard's phenomenology: biological evolution, appearance of man, development of human society.

The Appearance of Man (1965) A collection of scientific articles on this subject.

Human Energy (1969) Essays include comments on morality and on love (sexual, human, and religious).

Science and Christ (1968) Essays re relation of Christianity and the fact of religion to science and society, and to indicate in what direction Christianity must make a deeper impact if it is to be the religion of the future.

Hymn of the Universe (1965) Religious and lyrical writings, expressing awareness of God in all things, and Christ as focus of the world.

* *Publication dates, not time of writing.*

Evelyn Byers is a native Washingtonian (D.C.) and former writer-editor with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. She is currently stained glass artist, singer, and writer living in Rockville, Maryland, and pursuing studies at Montgomery College. She also reviews books in the areas of spirituality, theology, cosmology, psychology, Eastern thought, quantum theory, and anthropology.

NEVER TOO LATE TO FOLLOW OUR BLISS

Esther Capon

In the past, presidents of our denomination have been better known to the members than have their spouses. I have been giving this much thought and decided that I would like to contribute the following information about myself.

Professionally I am an attorney, presently licensed in the state of California. I practiced for five years before Edwin accepted a call to the St. Paul Church. Fortunately, Minnesota has reciprocity for attorneys who have been in practice for at least five years, through an application process.

I was not always an attorney. For many years I was a homemaker. I raised six children, three girls and three boys; part of that period as a single parent.

During the time I was raising my children I felt the need for an interest outside the household duties. I decided to return to college and finish my credits toward an undergraduate degree. When I began my studies at Boston University I attended evening classes, as I had four young children. During the six years that I pursued my undergraduate degree I had two more children. Fortunately one was born during Christmas vacation and the other during summer vacation so my studies were not interrupted. Upon graduation, I applied for a government fellowship and was accepted in the Masters program at Boston University College of Education on a full-time basis. It was during this time that without warning, I became a single parent when my former husband decided to lead a life separate from that of his wife and children.

After receiving my Masters degree, I was fortunate to find a position in the Leominster, Massachusetts school district as an elementary level teacher of the deaf (my major). I taught school for about eight years. It was during this time in my life that I

met and married Edwin Capon. Our first Christmas together united eight children around the family Christmas tree.

While Edwin was pastor of the San Francisco church and I was teaching in the Pittsburg, California school district, my last child graduated from high school. Two years before I had received an inheritance from my parents; now I realized it might be possible, if I could pass the necessary entrance exam requirements, to fulfill a lifetime ambition of becoming an attorney. My fascination with the law began as a child when my father, who had been an attorney for fifty years in Massachusetts, brought me to court. At this period in time, women were not encouraged to pursue male-dominated professions. My father, being of that generation, was also of that opinion. So, like a dutiful daughter, I abandoned the idea, but not the dream. When my son and last child at home was graduated from high school, I decided to follow my dream of becoming an attorney.

When the necessary preliminaries were completed, I applied to Golden Gate University School of Law and was accepted. It was really scary to find myself among the brightest young people. As an undergraduate I had been tops in my class, but I had been out of school for a long while and it was a struggle. There were many times I thought I must be mad to subject myself to this grind.

Edwin was busy with his duties as pastor of the San Francisco church. My days were filled with classes and studying. I found it fascinating. When I reached graduation time I realized I still had a larger and more difficult hurdle to go over, the California State Bar exam. This is the toughest exam in the United States. It is the only three-day exam with two special

sections testing performance skills.

I failed the exam the first time around, and I must admit my ego was destroyed. I decided that this was a practice run. Next time I would be better prepared. I passed on the second try and could honestly not believe that I had actually done it.

During law school I did an externship with a San Francisco Superior Court judge, Judge Ollie Marie-Victoire. When I called with the good news, she told me she would like to swear me in. I was delighted. On the day of the swearing in of all the admittees I first went to the judge's courtroom where she did the honors. The judge's bailiff, the court clerk and the court reporter were in attendance, as well as Edwin with a camcorder. I then proceeded on to the Masonic Hall where the group ceremonies were being held for both state and federal courts so that I would be entitled to practice before the federal court as well as the state court.

During the following years I was in general law practice, later family law, and in the last year-and-a-half, elder law. I accepted a position as staff attorney for a non-profit organization giving legal aid to the elderly, a very gratifying practice.

At this point in time, I am trying to organize our home and then undertake the task of filling out a cumbersome application for admittance to the Minnesota State Bar. I hope to find a similar position to the one I left in California, giving aid to those who are unable to access a traditional law firm because of either finances or circumstances.

It is my hope that all women today, no matter what their age, realize that it is never too late and we are never too old to pursue our dreams.

NCC Responds to Critical Issues

Robert McCluskey

Meeting in Cleveland, Ohio last November (11-13), the General Board of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, (NCC) addressed a number of important issues relating to church unity and mission. Delegates experienced issues that were filled with both promise and problems, frustration and renewal. In some ways, we are more committed and effective than we have been in years; in others, we are more deeply divided than ever.

The challenge of urban America, brought home by the April riots in Los Angeles, has been the focus of the Prophetic Justice Unit (PJU), which has focused its energies in developing an "Ecumenical Urban Strategy." Presented at the Mayor's Chambers in Cleveland City Hall under the title "The People Perish: A Call for a National Urban Mobilization," this proposal seeks to involve member churches in strategic responses to urban needs. The plan has three thrusts: 1) efforts to "impact the culture" through a volunteer corps of at least 5,000 of the "brightest and best" in church urban leadership; 2) efforts to empower local congregations to organize for the welfare of their neighborhoods and communities; and 3) strategies to make an impact upon the economic and political power bases of society.

This proposal provides an intentionally Christian approach to the crisis in our cities; it recognizes the basic connection between spiritual brokenness and social injustice; it calls on the churches to exercise their "Christian moral imagination" in addressing the divisions in our society, an imagination that seeks to root out the cause, and not just the symptoms, of our social dis-ease. To help carry out this ecumenical urban strategy, the General Board authorized the creation of an Urban Secretariat,

which would rely upon "loaned staff" from the participating communions, along with already existing NCC staff, to respond to urban need. The plan called for a commitment for \$100,000 by December 1, 1992, to enable the immediate organization and operation of the Secretariat.

The General Board also struggled with what has been described as "one of the more painful decisions in its 42-year history." For more than a decade, members of the United Federation of Metropolitan Community Churches (UFMCC) had attended NCC meetings as visitors. The UFMCC is a denomination of 264 congregations that serves approximately 50,000 people; the church has a special focus on ministry to gays and lesbians. Their application for membership, which had been strongly contested by more conservative members of the Council, had been tabled in 1983, and did not survive the restructuring process of 1990. They chose this year to apply for observer status, which would allow them to attend meetings, to speak when invited by the Chair, and to participate in NCC program units. They already participate in the Faith and Order working group and Ecumenical Networks.

Their application was referred to the Membership Committee, which reported that divisions with the Council and within individual communions were reflected in the committee itself. "For the well-being of the Council," the committee recommended "that the General Board take no action" on the application. Following an impassioned four-and-a-half-hour debate, delegates voted to accept the recommendation by a vote of 90 to 81 with three abstentions. The next day, the Swedenborgian Church, the United Church of Christ, and the United Methodist church formally dissented from the action. After the vote was taken,

Rev. Nancy Wilson spoke of the pain and frustration among the members of the UFMCC; following her words, other UFMCC delegates and friends spoke to the Board of their personal experiences of being gay and lesbian in the church. One after another, they spoke of their Christian convictions, their sense of isolation, and the inability of the churches to express hospitality.

I also had a chance to speak with Rev. Wilson, who recalled having been a student of Cal Turley when he worked as Field Education Instructor with the Boston Consortium of Theological Schools. Our delegation was also inspired by his support for the UFMCC, his work with homosexuals, and his efforts to develop a Swedenborgian theology of human sexuality. We were reminded, almost by contrast, of his vision of the church as a place unique in society, where all could be truly welcomed as children of God.

The Board also heard a fascinating address by Dr. Michael Kinnamon, Dean of Lexington Theological Seminary. His presentation marked the first stage in a proposed study on the ecclesiological meaning of membership in the NCC and raised some interesting points about NCC membership that seemed to apply to individual churches as well. Dr. Kinnamon began by tracing the history of councils to organizations of Christians dedicated to particular tasks, and noted that the NCC has its roots in such "service-oriented federations." But, he said, "when churches commit themselves to one another for common service, witness, worship and study, something new is happening—something that is beyond the isolating divisions of the past, though not yet the full, visible, communion that appears indistinctly before us."

He reminded us that coming to-

(Continued on page 46)

NCC Issues

(Continued from page 45)

gether as a group was not the cause of our unity, but the result or effect of our prior unity in God. He asked if our commitment was to each other, as individuals, or to the institution to which we belong? He asked what effect membership has had on the churches. (For instance, in what way have we, in the Swedenborgian denomination, been changed since we joined the Council?) He noted the need for "extremely frank speaking to each other," and the tendency of Councils (and churches) to allow the appearance of fellowship to pass for genuine unity.

In the past, he said, the plan was to define yourself as a church, and *then* seek unity. But this works against itself; both must occur simultaneously. Our sense of God's presence must extend beyond the church; we must begin to see the world itself as church, the proper realm of our involvement. Finally, he noted the problem of churches trying harder and harder to do the old things again or better, and that only a vision of the future can help us handle the present.

Violence in Media

The Council heard a first reading of a policy statement on violence in media. Although changes are needed, it presented a good case for public and private stewardship and monitoring of media, while avoiding censorship. The Council also agreed to spend a year in study and theological reflection on a resolution calling for sovereignty of native Hawaiian people. The proposal was presented by the Rev. Joe Agne of the Prophetic Justice Unit, and Mililani B. Trask, attorney and first elected governor of the Hawaii Nation. Ms. Trask described the plight of native Hawaiians, many of whom are still without land or rights promised by the U.S.

Other Issues

Other items addressed were: a report on a process set up by the South African Council of Churches and the Catholic Conference of Bishops to monitor events in South Africa, as it continues to struggle

against apartheid rule . . . A report on a joint development campaign of the NCC and World Council of Churches, and a review of ways in which churches fund their ecumenical efforts through the NCC . . . Finally, it was reported that the Working Group on Faith and Order was initiating "The Life of Faith" study, to look at human sexuality as a church-dividing issue. The Rev. Dr. Horand Gutfeldt, who presently serves on that Commission, has been appointed to this new study.

Other resolutions dealt with the following issues:

- The abolition of the death penalty, with a special concern for juvenile defendants.
- Support for Haiti and Haitian refugees.
- Opposition to the legalization of discrimination based on sexual orientation (in response to the recent Colorado measure which prohibits anti-discrimination protection for homosexuals).
- Civil and political rights in Myanmar (Burma).
- A call for an end to hostilities in

Bosnia/Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia.

As always, more detailed accounts of any of these issues, including the address by Dr. Kinnamon, are available by writing to: Rev. Robert McCluskey, 112 East 35th St., New York, NY 10016.

The Rev. McCluskey serves as our representative on the NCC.

Let Your Voice Be Heard

Rev. Robert McCluskey passes on a clarion call from the National Council of Churches urging our support of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, a bipartisan initiative to restore the protections for the free exercise of religion that the Supreme Court gutted in 1990 (*Smith v. Oregon*).

President Clinton supported this initiative during the campaign and should now be urged to include its passage in his strategy for his first 100 days in office. Congress also needs urging to take more active and vocal stands on this matter.

For more information, write to: Mark-Up, NCC Washington, 100 Maryland Avenue NE, Washington, DC 20002.

Can Swedenborgian Insights Be Communicated More Effectively?

Carol Lawson

The Publications Committee of the Swedenborg Foundation sponsored a two-day writers' workshop for New Church writers in mid-October in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania. About a dozen writers—from both General Convention and the General Church—paid their own ways to get there. They were hosted for the two nights by hospitable Bryn Athyn families.

The Foundation's goal in holding the workshop was to help New Church writers in communicating Swedenborgian insights more effectively. Many people today seek a new understanding of God and the meaning of life. These new seekers often use a language that

is not traditionally religious—a new vocabulary, new images, new symbols. If our writers want to reach this new audience we must learn how to do it.

The attendees at the workshop were assisted in approaching this problem by instructor Marlene Johnson of Better Communications, Inc., Boston, Massachusetts. She helped us to see that reader-centered writing and non-exclusive language were keys to the changes needed. She taught some sure-fire techniques to get us started in those directions. The attendees evaluated the course enthusiastically as, "very useful, but too short."

President's Report

(Continued from back page)

as president of SSR; these last two positions made me ex officio on several committees. I have now had six months' experience with Convention's new organization at a time when we have been asked to look at the possible merger of the Cabinet with General Council, though in fact what is proposed looks to me more like a substitution of the Cabinet for General Council. At this time I do not favor the proposal as outlined and am convinced we need more study. In fact, I think we should respond to the strategies outlined in Convention Standing Resolution #1, Objective 9, section B under Strategies as printed on page 184 of the current *Journal*. In doing so, I strongly urge that we consider the following suggestions:

- I question, as have others, whether FPRSU should be a support unit rather than a subcommittee of General Council.
- With the exception of IMSU, I believe the support units are too small. There is, I think, the need for a larger pool of ideas and a possible need for a unit to be more representative of the denomination as a whole. With only three members it is also possible that continuity may be difficult to maintain when there is a resignation as well as a retiring member in the same year.
- I have already seen the difficulty PMSU and GOSU have in delineating their respective turfs and in determining when a group should transfer from one to the other. I think a merger of these two units would not only solve the problem of numbers; it would also bring all growth efforts under one umbrella.
- As I have already indicated above, I do not favor the so-called merger of the Cabinet and General Council. As a matter of fact, I question the value of such a cabinet, which in fact is not a cabinet, since it is not appointed by the president (My dictionary defines cabinet as "group of advisors chosen by the head of a nation to help with the

Commencements

Marriage

Brant and Kenerson—Doreen G. Brant and Gregory W. Kenerson were united in marriage December 29, 1992, at the Church of the New Jerusalem, Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. Dr. Gardiner Perry officiating.

Deaths

Neilsen—Daniel Nielsen, age 88, entered the spiritual world December 28, 1992, in Frederick, Maryland. A second generation Swedenborgian, Dan was a member first of the Washington, D.C. church and subsequently a member of the Urbana church. He was treasurer of the Sunday School Association for many years and a member of the board of trustees of the national church, as well as serving on many other committees and boards within the denomination. Dan also served at the Wayfarers Chapel in a public relations capacity during the late 1960s.

A resurrection service was held at the Church of the Holy City, Washington, D.C., January 4, 1993, the Rev. Richard Baxter officiating, assisted by the Rev. Ernest Martin. Dan is survived by his beloved wife of 58 years, Anne; son Dan, daughters Marilyn and Karen, and seven grandchildren.

Rankin—Helen Rankin, 83, of Manito, Illinois, entered the spiritual world June 30, 1992. A satellite member of the Illinois Association, Miss Rankin had attended several annual conventions and had become acquainted with Mrs. Ethel Rice of San Diego, who advised us of her passing.

Change of Address

Kathleen Easton-Gilhooly
337 Libcicka
18100 Praha 8 - 'Cimice
Czech Republic

administration of the government"). It is my view that the duties now assigned to the Cabinet should be the responsibility of General Council and that the Chairs of each support unit should be ex officio members of the present General Council, but without vote. Each chair represents a special interest and should *not* have a vote.

- In the interest of saving the time of General Council, I would suggest either that FPRSU or a budget committee prepare a budget for General Council well in advance of the January Council meeting. Such a group should have some guidance in advance by a determination of priorities made by General Council previously. The present assignment of priority setting to the Cabinet makes little sense, since more than half the members of Cabinet represent special interests.

I think it is time for a thorough

review and study of our new organization as well as a careful study of our new Constitution, By-laws, and Standing Resolution #1 (see page 175). Are changes necessary? Are we, in fact, doing all we intended to do when we adopted Standing Resolution #1 in 1986?

FLASH!

Start making your plans to attend the 1993 Convention which will be held on the campus of Gordon College in Wenham, Massachusetts, about 45 minutes north of Boston. Hosted by the Massachusetts Association, this year's convention will feature excursions to Boston, a whale watch cruise from Gloucester, fabulous beaches nearby, a clambake on Saturday night and the opportunity to remain on campus after our convention is over for \$10 per person (no meals!), if you want to use Gordon College as a base for a more extended vacation. Save the dates June 23 through 27, 1993!

President's Report

Edwin Capon

I came to the convention in St. Louis last June with no idea that I might either be nominated or elected president. We had just sold our home in California and were preparing to take up residence in Minnesota that I might give three-quarter time service to the St. Paul church. As a result of my election I am now serving them on a half-time basis, though I have promised to be in St. Paul at least three Sundays a month, if at all possible. Accordingly I will certainly not make every meeting of every board, committee and support unit.

July and August we spent at our summer home in Maine. I made two trips to the Central Office, during one of which I was present at most of an EdSU meeting. I also made a trip to visit our treasurer, John Perry. In August I was given the opportunity to speak as president at the Fryeburg New Church Assembly. During this whole period our cottage served as my office; I had a telephone, a typewriter, and an answering machine, the latter supplied by Central Office.

During August I also visited two potential convention sites.

Since arriving in Minnesota the first week of September, I have made two trips to Central Office,

two trips to Temenos and one trip to Kitchener, taking in meetings of the Temenos Board, the Executive Committee of the Council of Ministers, CAM, Board of Trustees of SSR, FPRSU, PMSU, AFC, and the Convention Planning Committee. I have also been involved in five or six conference calls, and I participated in a brief meeting of the Placement Committee.

Regarding the Placement Committee, I regret that our shortage of ordained personnel continues. I believe we now have eight places seeking ministerial leadership and three possible retirements in the near future. The Placement Committee has been checking with ministers not presently serving and it seems unlikely that more than one or two can be considered available and there may be limits as to where they would be willing to go. I believe there will be no one ready for ordination this June.

The trips I have taken so far have given me the opportunity to visit three of our churches: Boston, Bridgewater and Washington, D.C. I gave the sermon at the latter two.

I have received an invitation to be the principal guest speaker at the annual meeting of the British Conference of the New Church in Glasgow in late July. Esther and I hope to go.

I have, of course, tried to keep up with the correspondence that comes to my office and maintain regular

communication with Central Office. I have found Martha Bauer to be very helpful and I believe we are fortunate to have her.

Prior to my moving to California in 1979, I had a good knowledge of the inner workings of our national body based on experience of two terms on General Council, two terms on the Augmentation Fund Committee, service on the Nominating Committee, 11 years as Chairperson of the Council of Ministers and 21 years

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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.

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