

THE MESSENGER

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Adventures in Paradise and Tolerance

Eric Allison

"The single most important thing I learned from a year of travel is that paradise is a place of tolerance, and this is a place we can all create."

Even though Cathy and I saw things of great beauty nearly every day while traveling around the world for 14 months, we still wanted to come back to North America. After being home for only a few minutes, the phone rang. It was a computerized phone call with a mechanical voice, asking me to invest money. I couldn't even hang up on it. I looked in the mail and was surprised to find my name on the front page of the *Financial Post*. Upon closer inspection, I discovered that the paper had my name spelled wrong and was not really a paper but "junk mail." I turned to Cathy and said, "Welcome home."

So now we have returned from paradise and have been making adjustments. *When you think of paradise what do you think of?* Do you think of a snowy day? Do you picture palm trees, a white sandy beach and clear blue and turquoise water?

Mauritius has white sandy beaches along a clear blue sea filled with beautiful coral and an abundance of brightly colored fish. What I have learned about this image of paradise is that no one can find fulfillment by just lying around on the beach all day, no matter how pretty the beach is. You have to walk into the village



Group attending the Swedenborgian church in Port Louis, Mauritius, May 23, 1993. The Rev. Eric Allison, front row; his wife Cathy Gregory-Allison is in last row on right.

and meet the people, develop friendships, and do things that give you a sense of worth and purpose and belonging. We want and we need values to live by and we want to do something which makes us feel as if we have made a contribution to the whole. A common problem that arises is that we insist that our values are right about all the little things that don't really matter. We become intolerant about other ways to do things and then there is trouble in paradise.

Until recently, I had not realized just how important diversity is and that it is essential that differences be encouraged. Paradise is a condition that does not try to make everything the same, but enjoys and is enhanced by the differences that are discovered.

The dictionary tells us that

"Paradise is any place or state of happiness." Utopia means literally "not a place." In other words, paradise is really not, nor is Utopia, a place to which our travel agent can send us, but is a spiritual condition that the Lord can help us create for ourselves. I have been in fabulously beautiful places and could not see

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The Corazon Experience

As a young married living in L.A. in the late fifties, I had gone with my then husband and another couple for a weekend vacation trip to the Rosarito Beach Hotel in Ensenada, Mexico: Black wrought iron gates, flowering vines and sterile cactus gardens, expensive food and drinks, rooms cold and overbearing, heavy with ornate Mexican decor. And just outside the hotel grounds, the barren hillsides pockmarked by the miserable shacks of the very poor. The bleak truth of a place where these extremes so blatantly coexisted was more than I could absorb or deal with, and I was unable to shrug off its dampening effect.

And we couldn't afford the hotel. They were charging as much for a shrimp cocktail as we were prepared to pay for a full meal. A Mexican trio came over and began to serenade us with loud cheer and smiling persistence, even though we did little to encourage them. When my husband finally handed them a dollar and tried to wave them off, he was informed it was a dollar a song. We made feeble jokes about their clever strategy of making customers pay to get rid of them. We were young, ignorant and broke; we had saved up to have an exotic weekend free of our childcare responsibilities, relax on the beach, swim, have fun. We had come to the wrong place. The others didn't seem to feel as depressed as I did, but we were each of us aware on different levels that this was not going to be fun, and we didn't belong here. We weren't callous enough, or rich enough. We left before breakfast the next morning and hurried back to the safety of an environment we understood a little better, or at least were used to. I was determined never to return to Mexico.

In early December of 1993, my husband Ted and I drove through the pre-dawn darkness to the First Congregational Church in Ramona. We were to meet members there at 5:00 a.m., go to a border town to buy Mexican car insurance and link up with the "Corazon" people, then drive into Tijuana where we would participate in building a house in one day for a poor Mexican family. We'd been attending the church for only a few weeks when we heard that the membership had committed to do this for the second time. We saw a video of 50 or 60 people putting up a house for another family last February, so we knew it wasn't wishful thinking. How could untrained people put up a house in one day? More from a sense of curiosity and adventure than altruism, I said, "Let's sign up for this!"

We completed the insurance transaction and caravanned over the border just after daybreak. It had been over 30 years since I'd seen Tijuana, but I felt the same jolt of culture shock. We had been advised to take our own food, water, and asked to bring donations of clothing, blankets, etc. I didn't have time before our departure to make detailed inquiries; intuition was telling me to just go, take the camera, and figure it out as we went along. Ted included a string of Christmas lights in our donation box. The shacks I'd seen thirty years before flashed into my mind. "They probably don't have electricity," I said. He replied, "Well, in case they do, these will be nice to have."

There was, as it turned out, no electricity, no plumbing, no available outhouse. The building site was on top of a hill on the Tijuana garbage dump, attained by driving up the steepest, worst, rutted dirt road I have ever been on. I was horrified. "We don't have to go through with this," I said. "We can back out and just go home. I think we've bitten off more than we can chew here, we're too old for this, the *car's* too old for this." In moments of tension I scramble to take back control, forgetting that the Lord is working His end of the deal and things may not be as bad as they look.

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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 agree or 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.

Importance of Ecumenical Involvement To the Editor:

I was pleased to read the account of the 1993 Parliament of the World's Religions in the December *Messenger*. It makes me feel good that the person who gave the impetus for the 1893 Parliament was Charles Bonney, a Swedenborgian with the openness to world religions and the commitment to "use" in this world, that brought about the parliament.

Another important ecumenical involvement of our church, I believe, has been our membership since 1966 in the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. From the beginning when David Johnson, John King, and Richard Tafel, Sr. called on the Chair of the Membership Committee, and Ernest Martin and Robert Kirven then met at length with a sub-committee of the Faith and Order

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Paradise (from page 17)

the beauty because I was in a bad mood. A mood I had chosen. With all its beautiful beaches and wonderful people, Mauritius isn't any more a paradise than a January day in Kitchener. The point is that we can find things to complain about, or to appreciate and give thanks for, no matter where we are. (Even though I would prefer to be in Mauritius in January!)

The single most important thing I learned from a year of travel is that paradise is a place of tolerance, and this is a place we can all create. I am still not a very tolerant person, but now I know how important it is.

Those of us in the western world are members of a very elite group of people. Ninety percent of the world's population lives in third-world countries. People on welfare in Canada or the U.S.A. live better than most of the rest of the world. At least fifty percent of the people in the world live in makeshift structures without water or electricity. They will blow down in a strong wind. But, these same people can be as much, or perhaps even more, a part of paradise than we are. When you don't have many material goods your focus turns toward the simple things of life. Things like family, friends, thoughtfulness, faith, charity and communion with God. Think for a moment. What is the focus of your life? Because we live on the world's wealthiest continent, we tend to think that our way of life is *The Way*. There ARE other ways of doing things than the way we do them in North America.

Growing up in America, I was taught that America is the greatest country in the world. When I was young, I believed that other countries may have some interesting customs and beautiful scenery, but America is the best. Whatever faults could be found in our culture or way of doing things didn't really matter because overall we are so much better than everyone else. I assumed that most good ideas came from America and the rest of the world



Mauritius man carrying the "cavadee." Cavadee is a festival celebrated by Tamils annually. Devotees, after a period of fasting, assemble on river banks on the Day of "Thai Poosam" and from there, with needles and skewers thrust through their tongue, cheeks and other parts of the body, they walk to the temples carrying the "cavadee" on their shoulders.

would be a much better place if they all became like us. As crime continues to rise and we are beset by myriad problems, I suggest that perhaps we could improve our way of life.

By western measures we have one of the highest standards of living in the world. The "standard of living" is based on things like average income, the square footage of your home, and how many bathrooms and cars are at your command. The drive-by shootings, drug abuse, bank robberies, level of stress, heart attacks, divorces, abuse, suits against neighbors, and the underlying spirit of the people are never factored into a standard of living. Just because a country doesn't have a McDonalds or a K-Mart doesn't mean that it is any less civilized. In Mauritius we never worried about our car being stolen and rarely locked it. We never worried about a drive-by shooting or being robbed, and we walked the streets at night. We never worried

about people cheating us. We never saw a commercial on TV where lawyers offer their services for accident claims. In fact TV didn't have many commercials at all. We didn't get any junk mail and we didn't get any junk phone calls.

When we first moved to Mauritius I was shocked to learn that TV satellite dishes were banned. "Political oppression," I thought. When I asked about it I was told that the government didn't think it was a good idea to let people have unlimited access to American TV. "Great idea!" I said to myself. Later on our trip in Fiji we learned that American TV had recently come into the country. The result was that within months the behavior of the children watching TV had changed for the worse. They had lived their whole lives in relative happiness without the benefit of cop shows and other violent programs or situation comedies portraying rich, mouthy kids.

In Mauritius we saw Muslims, Hindus, Tamils, Buddhists and Christians treating us and each other with genuine respect. People were friendly, helpful, polite and generous, and wanted nothing in return. Repairs done on the car, computer, or a variety of other things were often done for free. The purpose of business to most people was not only to make a living but to serve people. These attitudes are in my opinion also part of a "standard of living" and they are the result of a kind of tolerance which we need to cultivate.

After we were home for only a few days we found ourselves on the main highway between Toronto and Kitchener. Four lanes of bumper to bumper traffic spread out before us. The traffic moved along at a good speed but there was not room for passing or maneuvering. After a while we passed a man in the slow lane who was causing the congestion. We laughed when we looked over at this driver and jokingly said, "Look at this guy causing all this slow traffic. How dare he have the nerve to go the speed limit." We wondered

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how many others had cursed him as they drove by.

Shortly after returning home I committed a sin. One of the sins of the North American culture. I wasn't paying attention at the supermarket and stepped into the "eight items or less" lane with ten items. I heard the people behind me, exhaling sighs of frustration and disbelief. How dare I do such a thing? It cost them another fifteen or twenty seconds of their day waiting in line. In Mauritius people might even talk with others in line and pass the time of day. Being in a hurry and being on time is a rather foreign concept to most of them.

When we came back to North America, I was asked to preach about our Mauritius experience and I was told that I had 15 minutes to speak about our one-year adventure. This hit me with a jolt. "That's crazy," I thought. Then I remembered all the times I had told people that sermons saved no souls after fifteen minutes.

Here, starting and stopping on time is important. In Mauritius, being on time is important to some people but not to most. It is important that you usually show up. As a rule many people come to church fifteen, twenty, thirty or even forty minutes late. If the service goes over-time I doubt that anyone would notice. I'm certain no one would complain. They are tolerant and gracious. We are so obsessed with time that you would think it was the first commandment. But, as Mauritians pointed out to me "nowhere in the Bible do you even find a reference to being on time. If it was important God would have said something about it." Tolerance! How many times have you been angry with someone because they were a few minutes late?

In our effort to make our lives more efficient we have become less tolerant and we have lost something. It seems so silly to walk into a bank when you're the only customer and

have to walk through a rope maze to get to the counter. Are we rats?

Over fifty percent of the population of Mauritius is composed of a variety of Hindus. About twenty-five percent are Christians and about twenty percent are Muslims. There is a small percentage of Buddhists. The government is mostly Hindu so Christianity plays second fiddle in the religious department. All fourteen of the religious festivals are celebrated by everyone and those are not just days off from work. They are religious observances. Mauritius had twenty-four religious holidays but now the government only recognizes fourteen even though

*Paradise is a condition of growth,
acceptance, warmth, and love
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most people take off work for the "optional" observances regardless of government recognition. We would never allow this because working to maintain our "standard of living" is too important.

One example was the Hindu festival of lights called Divali. It marks the return of a deity who was victorious over evil, and it requires that every Hindu give a gift to someone. Traditionally cakes are given. It was magic to see thousands of oil lamps illuminating the lawns and streets in the villages. We were with some church friends when a Hindu friend came to offer one of them a Divali cake. Our friend gratefully received it as part of the tradition and because it was a genuine act of love.

We saw the metal skewers pierced through the cheeks, tongues and other parts of the body with no bleeding or pain to Tamil pilgrims who had just completed a ten-day fast. This was the beginning of the Tamil procession during *Cavadee*.

Standing along the streets with other non-Tamils we watched their solemn procession and felt the strength and depth of their convictions. It says something about tolerance to pain to do such a thing and it says something about the tolerance of others to approve of this religious expression when it seems so different. We were moved by it. Those in the Cavadee procession appeared to have religious commitment so much deeper than the average church-goer on Christmas or Easter. People of all faiths held appreciation for the faiths of others no matter how strange the customs.

Can you imagine a national holiday here that you don't know if it will be tomorrow or the next day unless you are able to see the moon? Well, the end of the Muslim Ramadan is declared after thirty days of fasting if the moon is visible. If it is cloudy and the moon can't be seen, the fasting continues for another day. We were watching TV and across the screen came the news that the moon had been seen and the festival Eid El Fitr would be celebrated the next day. I accepted the invitation of a Muslim neighbor to sacrifice a cow in honor of the sacrifice of Essau. For the first time in my life I watched a cow slaughtered and with my own hands skinned the animal while it was still warm. All this was done as a religious ritual and I felt honored to be allowed to join this ritual. For the first time in a long time meat was not just something wrapped in cellophane at the meat counter. Most of us eat meat but we have little tolerance for hearing a description of the process involved in getting it to our plate, let alone actually killing and preparing the animal.

Shortly after coming home, I was visiting my family in the U.S.A. and we went out to dinner. I asked the waitress if the *baa-sil* in the pesto sauce was fresh. She looked at me incredulously and said, "Oh, we say *bā-sil*." "Oh, excuse me," I said.

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Swedenborg Between The Lines

Steve Koke

Things are often not what they seem. We know that the spiritual world is a place of symbolic drama, a portrayal of what is “inside” of us. Yet it remains quite a trick to read Swedenborg’s experiences of the spiritual world, and even his theologically important instructions from heaven, and not be very literal with them. The literal habit dies hard. Yet these events, taken in their native language, are very rich in advanced teachings and human drama. More lies between the lines than in them.

Consider what happened when literal thinking in Swedenborg’s time met the afterlife. The spiritual world looks disarmingly like this one until a few odd details sneak up on you. A man couldn’t recognize that he was a spirit until Swedenborg pointed out that the man was standing in the air over his head (*Arcana Coelestia*, n. 447). Now our first impression would probably be that Swedenborg had pointed out something impossible to the physical body—a good debating point to a man who was incredibly unaware.

That should have some truth to it. But a more symbolic reading would have him actually pointing to fantasies and unrealistic thinking that had kept the man floating above a basic truth. For in the realm of spirit, to point to his position in midair is to *point out* his active fantasies. It is a more descriptive act. Without objective testimony, we won’t notice our fantasy thinking and its airy consequences, even if they are hilariously obvious to others.

The event reminds us that we can become aware of our spiritual nature by removing preconceptions, for the facts we need are all there. So, as we put it even down here, this man didn’t have “both feet on the ground.” He then flew off in terror while undoubtedly coming down to

earth and more grounded thinking (the spiritual world is filled with puns).

In *Conjugal Love*, n. 229, we have a classic example of a passage that triggers what remains of the literal habit. Swedenborg tells us how marriages are provided in the heavens after death. He had heard the angels say that a man and a woman are born for each other, are secretly educated for each other through their early years, and when they reach marriageable age finally meet as if by chance, recognize each other immediately as mates, and betroth each other. Is this, then, what really happens when we meet the right person? A lot of us have thought so. But the passage has been puzzling to commentators, for it leaves them wondering why such couples should marry only after death.

The seemingly innocuous statement that this is how the angels explain it is the real key to the paragraph. Since it is from angelic and not earthly discourse, the story of the young couple is a parable or image of how love and its corresponding wisdom, formed in the dark womb that constitutes life on earth, are born into full life and consciousness in the heavens; after further education and development, they are finally able to recognize their true relationship to each other, whether they are

that make heaven what it is. It is on the basis of this inner work in growing and getting oneself together that marriages can be formed in the heavens (see AC 3767[2], 9007).

Most of the time reading literally doesn’t make a critical difference, since Swedenborg will make his main point anyway. And some instructive idea will often result from a literal reading. But when dealing with commands by the Lord or an authoritative voice from heaven, we may need to shift gears as a matter of course, since such things have a strong formal impact on theology (see AC 9086[2]). Furthermore, Swedenborg sometimes appears *not* to have followed his instructions literally.

For example, Carl Robsahm, a close friend of Swedenborg, tells us that when Swedenborg received his commission from the Lord in 1745, Swedenborg was told “to declare to men the spiritual contents of Scripture” (Cyriel O. Sigstedt, *The Swedenborg Epic*, p. 198). On its most literal surface, this statement would have Swedenborg do only exegetical writing. That is, his work would concentrate on Scripture, a specific book, and he would basically just decode it.

Taking his commission inwardly presents delicate problems, but it should give us something pretty close to the following:

*In the Most Ancient Church,
the Word was inscribed on the heart.*

inside an individual or find each other in a woman and a man (see also *Heaven and Hell* 269[3]).

The paragraph is not about people but qualities, and angels do not think of persons but the qualities

To begin with, whatever “Scripture” and “men” (humanity) *represent* would be the subject of his labor. “Scripture” would not be just a book outside but the Divine Intel-

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Paradise

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"Is the *bā-sil* fresh?" Tolerance. We have a lot to learn. Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden were told that there was only one thing they could not do. Imagine only one restriction. Right there in the first chapter of the Bible we are told that God is a God of the greatest tolerance. We all pull the flowers of paradise out by the roots every time we try to control life and fit it into nice little packages familiar to us. We have such a strong need for control and uniformity that we make our world smaller and smaller and smaller just so we will feel in control. When we do this we can make a world so small that we are unhappy because it is too small to allow in anyone else.

Paradise is a condition of growth, acceptance, warmth, and love that exalts and embraces the value of differences. Paradise is not a place, it is an inner condition we create. The warmth of God's love filling our hearts will make any cold winter day seem like a miracle of beauty and every culture and faith an opportunity for learning.

The Word tells us that the holy city has twelve gates that will never be shut. But the holy city is not a place. It is utopia. It is paradise. It is a way of living that can be shared by people of every faith and race and language and economic status. Paradise is more than tolerance. It is embracing the differences between us to discover how we are all part of God's plan to bring us together.

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Between the Lines

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ligence as it may be found in the higher reaches of the soul where the Lord secretly maintains every human being. In fact, in the Most Ancient Church, the Word was inscribed on the heart (AC 2896), its most suitable state. Only later was it written down. What lay behind its more material form was the Lord's effort to remain a voice in our affairs as we became more closed off inside. In fact, Swedenborg's accounts of violence done to the Word make the clearest sense if what one does violence to is not a book but the Word within.

Consequently, with a living *Presence*, not quite so much a literary *object*, in mind, Swedenborg would have understood that his task was to bring the Lord down into the conscious personality, thus "unveiling" Divine Wisdom to the thoughts and feelings ("men") of the religious natural mind—the mind that is normally in tune only with the literal sense of the Word. As *John* puts it, "The Word was God, and . . . became flesh and dwelt among us" (1:1,14).

John describes the Advent; but the gospel's statement parallels the inner logic of Swedenborg's commission with astonishing closeness. It also recalls the *Nunc licet* pronouncement that Swedenborg saw inscribed on a temple in heaven: *Now it is allowable to enter intellectually into the mysteries of faith*. The words "mysteries of faith" also point to a higher or more deeply internal mind far above the working personality which is often neglected, left unconscious, or just unavailable to ordinary thought.

To enter such a region intellectually would produce a new consciousness, a marriage of that larger mind with the more practical terms of the working mind. Swedenborg was evidently given an ancient message in different contemporary guises—the Infinite must be revealed *within* the Finite.

As a result, he found himself with

a very broad field in which to work. Applying correspondences to the book outside would not be everything; after a point the book would have to be a platform for a varied assault on the barriers between the higher and lower minds inside, bringing philosophical and spiritual observations to bear on the reader. The reader would at least have to understand that he must let the unveiling take place within *himself* and not be endlessly distracted by Swedenborg's literary magic on the book outside.

How soon did Swedenborg see his commission so inwardly? Perhaps not right away. He began by concentrating enormously on Scripture, compiling indexes and re-reading it in Hebrew, in apparent compliance with a literal understanding of his commission. But he undoubtedly knew how to interpret his commission by at least 1748, when the *Arcana Coelestia* was underway. The *Arcana* is based on these distinctions between inner and outer discourse, and it is organized in an omnibus format so that it can contain philosophy and theology as well as exegesis.

Much later when he was in his eighties, telling Carl Robsahm of his experience, he clearly still embraced the 1745 commission statement and did not try to amend it; yet its literal terms did not cover the large variety of things he actually did. It appears that we can reconcile his commission with his actual work only if he took it inwardly.

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On Marriage, by Othmar Tobisch

In the old idea, the bridegroom and the bride as they walk down the aisle after the closing benediction are as married as they will ever be. They have then acquired a capital of love that will have to do for the rest of their lives. Blessed, in such a case, are the wise investors, but woe to the generous and the improvident!

If the marriage contract is marriage, then the experience that follows comes as a baffling challenge. Where is the perfection that was conferred by Church or by State? What is the reason for this daily routine together? Why the rub of different characters? And how can quarrels take place, when they are no longer two, but one? Too often there follows the pathetic conclusion of bride and groom that they have made a failure of it. They have chosen wrongly. Frequently such conclusions actually break the marriage tie, and real marriage is made impossible, when right along the trouble has lain in the unmarried state of one or the other, which should have been curbed or brought into the marriage relationship. How inevitable, then, the disastrous opinion which some hold that marriage is a fiction, that only the unmarried believe in such a thing as marital happiness and that its success is a by-product of success in social, business or personal life. Too often we think of marriage as a static relationship, and there begins the trouble. It is the idea that by living next to each other man and wife out of twain become one. Let them know that never yet have parallel lines been known to meet.

In the New Church outlook, marriage is the inmost part of life, to be achieved through the married state. The wedding is not a conclusion, but a pledge for the future, in which a man and woman have promised before the Lord that with His help they will always be true.

What then, of the marriage service? Are not the man and woman husband and wife? Of course they are; that is, they have entered on the road where they two, and only they two, can walk. Once they have entered it, they have thereby promised to keep each other in love and faithfulness through the journey; but the journey is *ahead* of them. We may picture it as a journey along a road with a precious jewel at the end. The jewel is actually to be had all along the road—to be had more and more as the couple goes on.

But it is not to be had for nothing. The

road of married life is a toll road. How else could it be? We are accustomed in this world to the idea that we must pay for quality. The jewel of marriage love is not to be bought cheap. It is to be paid for in the currency in which all spiritual possessions are to be paid for: renunciation of self-sufficiency and self-centeredness—here, naturally, the renunciation of those forms of self-sufficiency and self-centeredness that are most clearly opposed to love for one marriage partner. The money is that of many of our comfortable celibate conclusions, our pet ideas, our bits of superiority and scorn, our judgments of value, ways of seeing things. It is living money, and it is painful to part with it.

The need to spend one's selfishness till there is not enough left of it to endanger the marriage relationship comes to several climaxes, where the need is most sharply felt. It is right that it should be so. It is in the journey. The man and woman must choose whether they will save their life or lose it. To put it more graphically, there comes a time in married life when the bridegroom sees his bride for the first time as an independent individual, who has grown separately from him for years and years and developed certain tastes and ambitions for life, and he tacitly asks, "Who are you, anyway?" and "What shall I do with you?" The same thing happens to the bride. They have mutually asked, "What shall we do with each other? What of our long cherished life ambitions?" They will, in most cases, perceive a difference between them that may baffle, or even distress them. If they have learned to know each other during their betrothal and have talked over life plans and have come to a general agreement, they probably have the same ambitions. If they have the same religion—and it is to be hoped that they do—they give their ambition the same value in relation to the neighbor and the Lord. Yet at their first cold glance, they discover that they seek for the goal in strangely different ways. They discover that the sexes were created into the spiritual world, that they involve differences in the distribution of heart and intellect. With man, the heart is at the core of his nature; with the woman, the core is intellectual. The other, the complementary power, is on the outside: with the man, the rough intellect; with the woman, the emotional nature.

"Who, then, are you?" asks the

woman. The man answers, "I am a being to whom my will and my energy are very dear. My ambitions are my life. On the surface, you may find me hard sometimes. Scratch the surface and you will find me ever ready to like and dislike, you will find me emotional. I fall very easily for popular melodies, and sport contests and heroes of all kinds. With all my business, I love to dream dreams. Don't try to hold me too much to schedule. And let me make mistakes. But who are you?"

"I am seemingly a character of whims and fancies and emotions. But there is a method in my madness. My powers to plan and to order the things of this life are very dear to me. I love to understand. I love to grasp intellectually what you are after. I love to see into complex situations and to unravel character. I have emotions aplenty. They are the front that I offer to the world. Perhaps they are a sensitive plate to me that allows me to study unsuspecting manhood. For within me I love to study, to understand, and to organize. No, offhand I don't think much of your idea of having a lion farm in Africa."

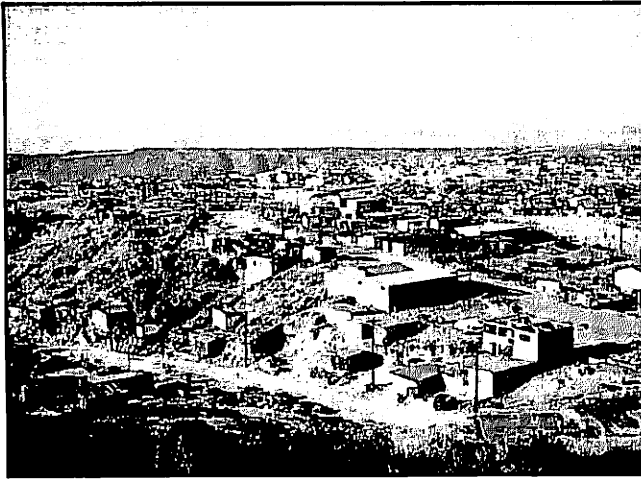
There is a falsehood abroad that marriage is a monotonous business. To meet the same person three hundred and sixty-five mornings a year over the breakfast table, to love her and cherish her, and to think the world of her seems an utter impossibility. But once we realize that two differently constituted spirits meet and choose each other for life, to become one spirit, it is obvious that marriage is a great and delicate adventure. It is very difficult, yet it is written into the charter of the Universe. Men and women must seek to achieve this feat. They must set all their hearts, all their thought, and all their strength to reach marriage love at the cost of their other likes and dislikes.

Marriage is a purpose in itself to which other purposes in life must be bent, that out of two hearts, two minds, two energies, there may be one.

* * *

Othmar Tobisch was for 41 years pastor of the Lyon Street Church in San Francisco. The altar of that beautiful church was the scene of many weddings at which he officiated.

*Louise Woofenden, Sharon, Mass.
Mrs. Woofenden is the former archivist for the
Swedenborg School of Religion in Newton,
Massachusetts.*



View of Tijuana dump area from building site, looking west to the Pacific Ocean, Baja Peninsula.

The Corazon Experience

(Continued from page 18)

"We can't back out," Ted replied. "There are a dozen cars behind us, six ahead of us, and no place to turn around. We'll be fine, we'll just take it as it comes."

We were directed to a parking spot. They were already unloading the building materials as I walked up the last small slope to the site. Folks on the other side of the road were laying down tarps to spread out the donations for the community distribution. To the naked eye, the scene appeared chaotic with something like a hundred people milling about, but the underlying orderliness of good organization became apparent as the truck got unloaded, digging for the foundation posts commenced, sections of wall were lined up against the barbed wire fence to be painted, supplies were handed out, other tasks assigned. Ted is disabled, but he managed to make his way up to the site so that we could begin to paint one of the wall sections. Children were helping with tasks according to their age and ability, under the direction of parents and crew directors.

After a while I struck up a conversation with an older man who spoke of making regular trips down there every Saturday to help out, and how it had changed his life. I said this was a first for us, we knew nothing about what we were doing, who the family was that we were building the house for, how they were selected, and didn't even realize until this morning that Corazon was not a place, it was the organization behind all this. The man introduced me to Rosa, who was one of a network of Mexican women they work with in the neighborhoods who help select the families most in need. She didn't speak English, but the man interpreted. The family they were building the house for that day was a woman with three children who had been living here for years. They pointed to a shack a few feet from

The Tijuana dump is elevated and a collective state of mind

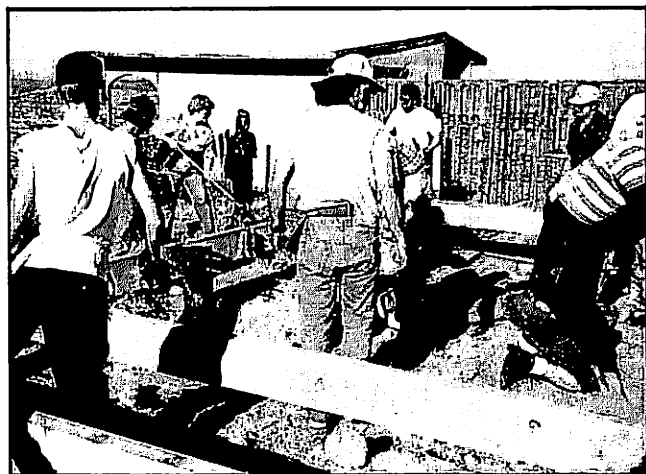
where we were standing. I had glanced at the enclosure when I first arrived and assumed it was some kind of old storage shed. The woman for whom the house was being built stood at the opening to her old dwelling with her youngest child in her arms, the other two squatting at her feet. She seemed somewhat stunned as she watched her new home taking shape. I was told she had been deeded the property as a gift from her employer, a reward for her many years of faithful service as a cleaning woman.

Several people were playing with the children, and taking turns holding the baby. I smiled at the mother; she smiled back but, of course, she spoke no English either. I wanted to know more about Corazon; the man said I should talk to John Torrence, the lead coordinator, who would be free to talk to us a bit later.

The sun was hot, the air dusty; low-growing brown scrub brush covered the area as far as I could see, but almost no trees or greenery, no flowers. Across the road, families had brought bags and were sorting through the donated clothing, food, household items and toys. A man was passing out candy to the children. Most of them played quietly with whatever they had or were given to play with, the older ones helped the adults gather things or looked after younger children. A tiny little girl had seated herself by the back wheel of our old Dodge and was happily pounding the edge of the fender with a rock. I grinned at her, she



Mother of family is given the possession of their new home.



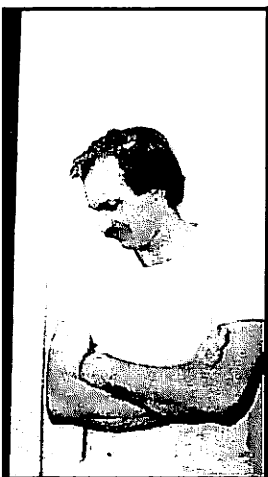
Laying the foundation.

paradise and, yes, it is a place
that we have created together.

beamed back at me. She hadn't the strength to do any real harm, and the sound of stone on metal seemed to please her. A boy of about nine led his little sister to another part of the area. She was crying loudly. I saw in his face a look a patient resignation, bordering on soul-weary, not an expression that is fun to see on the face of a child. Ted had given me a colored pen to give to one of the children; we hadn't thought to bring candy. I offered the pen to the boy. He took it, looked at it and flashed a smile, then shyly returned it. "It's for you," I said, handing it back to him. "Gracias," he said.

The house, a 12' x 20' uninsulated structure (complete with outhouse in the back sporting the traditional half-moon design on the door), was finished by three p.m. It included a tile-topped table for food preparation, four windows, a lockable door, and a loft for the children to sleep in. Someone had hung a new Christmas wreath on the door and there were curtains at the windows. The key was presented to the woman in a short ceremony with prayers, blessings and good wishes.

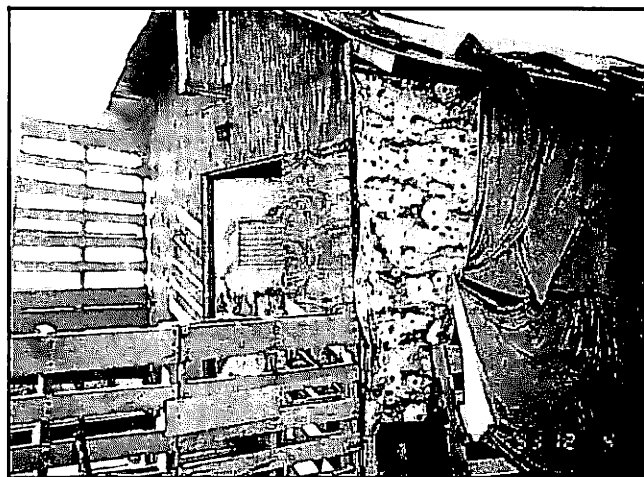
She raised her hand with the key in it, and smiled. She said something in Spanish. We applauded, she struggled for composure, then she was wiping away tears. There seems to be one still moment when we are all frozen in



officially taking



Securing the roof rafters.



Former dwelling place of selected family.

this tableau, everyone unified on a single indrawn breath, 50 some human beings ringed around the entrance of a sparkling new green and yellow house, sharing tears of joy with a woman who doesn't speak our language, under a bright Mediterranean sun. The Tijuana dump is elevated to paradise and, yes, it is a place *and* a collective state of mind that we have created together. Then we disperse; it is time to go back to our "real" lives.

* * *

Even before I talked with John Torrence, I had sensed a vital, vibrant quality in the energy and commitment of everyone involved in this undertaking that seemed to indicate they were dealing from strength; they understood how and why they were doing what they were doing. Talking with John Torrence confirmed this, a few minutes of hearing his down-to-earth, enthusiastic description of Corazon's evolution, goals, and accomplishments would inspire the hardest cynic to join in and make a difference, because John wasn't talking about "giving to the poor," he was articulating an empowering philosophy of "people-building" that had been tempered over the years by making mistakes and learning from them. "We made every mistake in the book," he said. How *do* you make a difference in people's lives, who may have come from several generations of poverty and hopelessness, when they don't believe that there's any other kind of life possible for them? Corazon has a committee of Mexicans and Americans who search through the hills for the "poorest of the poor," a family who cannot possibly build a new house for themselves, but would prosper if able to live under better circumstances. Often they begin with the smallest, simplest ways to help people in a neighborhood build self-confidence and pride and see that they can help themselves and help *each other*. A mother is taught how to brush her teeth, and her children's teeth. She is given a supply of new toothbrushes and makes a commitment to teach the other

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The Corazon Experience

(continued from page 25)

children in the community how to brush their teeth.

A house built in a day makes a dramatic difference in a family's life. Others see what can be done, and hope is born. Every time a house is built for one family, the neighbors are invited to share in the donated goods the volunteers bring. It can become a time of community strengthening and building.

I later learned that the Congregational Church had been working with another church on this project. The other church had backed out, leaving them \$1500 short of the amount needed to make the trip and build the house. The minister and congregation managed to raise \$500, but were still shy \$1,000 just a few days before the scheduled departure. Told they might have to cancel, John Torrence advised them to keep the commitment and remember that God was in charge. The next day John was working at another site when a man came up and told him that he was so impressed with the work of Corazon, he would like to write them a check for \$1000.

To date, Corazon, an all-volunteer, nonprofit, nondenominational corporation formed in 1978 to serve the poor, has built approximately 140 houses, two clinics, two community kitchens and a chapel. They have worked in at least twenty colonies of Tijuana, as well as Rosarito and Ensenada.

A few months ago I remarked in these pages that we are seldom in a place at a given time for the reasons we think we are.

Ted and I had been up since three that morning; it was dark again by the time we reached our home in Julian. But I wasn't tired or depressed; I was exhilarated. I realized I had healed a memory, the hands-on experience had replaced fear with love.

Corazon, I learned, is the Spanish word for heart.

—Patte LeVan

NCC Report

Working for Peace, Striving for Unity

Robert McCluskey

Your delegates spent a busy and productive three days in beautiful downtown Baltimore, Maryland, at the General Board sessions of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., Nov. 10-12. The following report can only touch on the many issues addressed, and more details are available to anyone interested.

Counseling Committee Formed

At the close of last year's General Board sessions, the Swedenborgian Church joined with the United Church of Christ and the United Methodist Church in dissenting from the action taken in regard to the application for observer status by the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches. In the year that followed, efforts were made to continue to dialogue on this issue, especially as it impacted the life and well being of the NCC. As a result of these conversations, a "Counseling Committee" was initiated in October to oversee and coordinate the many different positions within the Council on this issue. The committee consists of representatives from the dissenting churches, those that opposed the application for observer status, and NCC staff.

As a member of the Counseling Committee, I was invited to participate in the opening worship service on Wednesday morning, along with the General Secretary, the Rev. Dr. Joan Campbell, and three others who represented different viewpoints. The theme of the service was Reconciliation and Unity, in which the pain and brokenness that the Council experienced at last year's session could be lifted up for healing. Following the service, delegates gathered at tables to raise up their

particular concerns in prayer.

One important, though secondary, result of the Committee's work was that delegates to the Baltimore meetings were urged to sit "ecumenically" whenever they could; that is to say, instead of always sitting with our own delegation, we were encouraged to join with delegates from other communions, so that new ideas could be exchanged and relationships broadened.

In its report later that morning, the Committee urged the Council to avoid a merely legislative approach to complex issues, and to be open instead to the "spirit of discernment"; it emphasized the need of the Council to be a safe space for others, in which real disagreements can be voiced and dealt with without fear or suspicion, and the gifts of dialogue and hospitality may be more readily encountered.

Resolutions

In a number of Resolutions, the General Board urged the U.S. government to create a policy of dialogue and detente with Cuba; called for suspension of the sanctions and cessation of other economic actions aimed at isolating South Africa; voiced its concern for those involved in the Azerbaijan/Karabagh conflict; adopted a statement on Solidarity and Missionary Cooperation with the Armenian Apostolic Church in Armenia in light of the 1988 earthquake, a large influx of refugees from the neighboring conflicts, and continued reactions to the demise of the Soviet Union.

Pledge of Support

The Board also pledged its support for the following issues and events:

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(Continued from page 26)

sovereignty and self-determination of Indigenous Hawaiians, the Kanaka Maoli; the Reunification of Korea; the Vienna Declaration of Human Rights; the United Nations, with attention given to the upcoming 50th anniversary in 1996; and the Children's Sabbath, calling on member churches to set aside one Sunday in late October each year, to lift a united voice of concern for children who face the violence of abuse, neglect, illness, lack of education and other crises.

Violence in Society and Media

In a report on Violence in Society, a concerted effort is being made to help the churches focus their resources and energies to address the increase of violence in society more effectively, especially through the work of the Urban Strategy, introduced at last year's meeting by the Prophetic Justice Unit. In connection with this issue, the Rev. James Forbes, of the Riverside Church in New York City, delivered a stirring, "high-flying" sermon to highlight the work of the newly created Racial Justice Fund, calling on us to move beyond racism by affirming our origins in a positive way.

The Board adopted two policy statements: "Violence in Electronic Media and Film," addressing the epidemic of gratuitous violence that pervades television and films. Solutions proposed eschew confrontational tactics, calling on both producers and consumers alike, including the churches, to acknowledge their responsibility in this issue. The policy rejects government censorship and reaffirms the NCC's adherence to the principles of an open forum of ideas and the guarantees of the First Amendment to free speech, press and religion. At the same time, it objects to what it sees as "the misuse of the First Amendment, by commercial interests, as a cover for a quest for profit."

Global Communication for Justice

"Global Communication for Justice" addressed the increasing complexity and ubiquity of communication technology, along with the potential for abuse that such changes bring, including centralization of control, and politicizing of communication by multi-national corporations or large governments. Also noted were the opportunities for education, information exchange, promotion of health, etc. that global communications offer, and the churches' responsibility in helping to realize them.

The Board also heard first readings of two policy statements which will be voted on next year: "Human Rights: The Fulfillment of Life in the Social Order"; and "An Invitation to Evangelism: Jesus Christ and God's Reign," a revisiting of the call to evangelism in light of contemporary issues of religious pluralism, inter-faith unity, and multi-cultural forms of life.

Study on Ecclesiology

Of special importance to the Swedenborgian church was the report of the NCC's Study on Ecclesiology, which focuses on the question of membership of the Council: what effect does membership in the Council have on the individual churches, and the Council itself? The report noted current problems in the ecumenical movement, including: complacent cooperation, simple withdrawal, indifference to responsibilities, ecclesial self interest, and a reluctance to be "self-challenging." Delegates were reminded that our ecumenical efforts must always focus, not on the survival of the NCC, but on the renewal of the church of Jesus Christ. Finally, we were asked to review a questionnaire for eventual distribution to all member churches. For more information, check future *Messenger* articles, or speak to your local minister.

Special Events

On November 11, the Rev. Dr. Dorothea Harvey and Nancy Hawley attended a presentation of the National Religious Partnership for the Environment, with special guest speaker Carl Sagan. Across town, at the Franklin Presbyterian Church, I attended an ecumenical service of worship, celebrating the contributions of lesbian and gay Christians. The service was led by the Rev. Darlene Garner, a member of the Board of Elders of the UFMCC; the Rev. Paul Sherry, head of the United Church of Christ, delivered the sermon.

Other events worth noting: the Rev. Gordon Sommers of the Moravian Church, and Bishop Melvin Talbert, of the United Methodist Church, were installed as Council President and President elect, respectively; we heard a moving "mid-decade reflection" on the Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women (1988-1998); Richard Celeste, former Governor of Ohio, spoke in support of the Clinton health plan, emphasizing our responsibility to become informed, to discuss the issue with others, and to make a positive contribution in this area, and to resist the urge to simply criticize or dismiss ideas in a merely negative way.

The Rev. Robert McCluskey is pastor to the New York Swedenborgian Church and serves as our representative on the NCC. He can be contacted at: 112 E. 35th St., New York, NY 10016. Phone: 212-685-8967.



During the last year or so I have noticed several opinions and comments in *The Messenger* making allegations to the effect that our church has virtually no social conscience. I think it is true that we could all do more than we do and this most certainly should be a goal toward which we as individuals, as local congregations and as a denomination aspire. However, in my opinion these claims that we lack social conscience are unfounded.

I recently had the privilege of reading through the *Common Assessment Forms* and seeing just how many things our congregations do to help their communities. At a glance I noticed that at least eleven churches contributed to food banks. I was surprised to discover that so many of our churches are doing so many things that I cannot describe them in just one article. As far as I know every church is doing something to help the less fortunate. Through several subsequent articles you will be informed of how individual congregations are indeed following the commandment of the Lord to feed and clothe those in need.

The belief that we do very little or nothing for the poor and the needy simply "ain't so." Some congregations do a lot more than others and a few do very little, but it is clear that most of our churches act upon the belief that helping the neighbor is a Christian responsibility. This belief is one which our churches appear to be taking more seriously with each passing year. Here are listed some of the activities of just three of our churches.

The Kemper Road congregation regularly assists an inner city United Church of Christ in the preparation of food for two hundred people. The Kemper Road Church pays part of the cost of the food. They help prepare it, including peeling thirty pounds of potatoes, and then serve the meal.

It Ain't So

Eric Allison

Every November they adopt a family and given them Thanksgiving dinner. This same family is also given Christmas dinner and Christmas presents. In December they assist another church in purchasing and passing out food boxes for Christmas. The program includes carrying the boxes to the apartments of those people who need them. Each family receives socks, underwear, a new toy, and food. In 1993 one hundred and forty food boxes were passed out.

In 1994 the Kemper Road congregation is committed to doing something for the needy, the lonely, and the local ecology. They will continue with their current programs. They will add quarterly visits to a retirement home and work with the fall and spring crews at planting, mulching and cleaning up a nearby park.

In San Francisco Rachel Rivers and Jim Lawrence perform twenty to thirty memorial services in the sanctuary of the church for people who have died from AIDS. Many other churches will not do these services so

the victims of this tragic disease have turned to our church as a place of understanding.*

Members of the congregation periodically buy, cook, and serve a meal to the homeless at a nearby homeless shelter. They also have an ongoing collection of canned food and clothes for the needy.

The church gives money to Star Cross Monastery that cares for babies with AIDS that have no family. Regular contributions are given to Raphael House, a shelter for homeless families and the Salvation Army is also a recipient of monetary assistance from our San Francisco congregation.

As a regular service to the community baptisms are done for nonmembers free of charge.

The Wilmington, Delaware congregation offers the use of its church free of charge for twice-weekly meetings of Adult Children of Alcoholics. As a service to the community, regular video presentations of John Bradshaw, Pia Melody and others are offered free of charge.

Once each month members of the congregation purchase the food and prepare and serve it at the Emanuel Dining Room. Also on the second Friday of December each year the congregation hosts a fund-raising dinner at the church. The proceeds from this dinner go to fund the Emanuel Dining Room. In 1993 two thousand dollars was raised.

Each December the congregation participated in the "Adopt a Family" program of the Delaware Social Services. The congregation helps this economically disadvantaged family by purchasing needed clothes for them. They also give the family toys, gifts, and food certificates.

Most years the church gives Christmas presents to a resident of the state hospital and adopts an additional family in an attempt to help one more family have a Merry Christmas.

(Continued on page 29)

It Ain't So

(Continued from page 28)

All of our congregations are small. Sometimes only a few people do more than some larger congregations do. In my travels I have learned that our people do not brag about what they do. Perhaps that is why we know so little about the acts of love and charity which so many have been doing for years. One thing that has often impressed me is the individual acts of kindness which are done by the people with whom I have stayed. For example, I was staying with someone who prepared and then delivered a meal each day to an elderly neighbor. No one in the congregation even knew of this daily deed.

It is not always the publicly visible gifts to the most current cause that are acts of social conscience. Christian charity is simply giving where there is a need. I have no doubt that every day across North America, Swedenborgians are helping others with acts of kindness that are never tallied in a public column under social conscience. However, they are just as valuable in the spiritual realm as a large check given toward the top hard luck story on the nightly news. Keep up the God work.

**In San Francisco Rev. Sue Turley-Moore has a full-time ministry to victims of AIDS which will be described in another article in The Messenger.*

The Rev. Eric Allison is the Pastoral Ministries Support Unit's church growth consultant. He lives in Kitchener, Ontario.

Opinion

(Continued from page 18)

Commission of the Council, our ministers have been talking with representatives of other denominations. Swedenborgians have served on the Membership Committee, the Faith and Order Commission, the Prophetic Justice Unit, and the Governing Board of the Council, getting our thinking

known to the leadership of other churches, communicating as respected members with the denominational world around us.

Ernest Martin, Robert Kirven, and I agree on benefits that come from this interaction. We are making ourselves known. We are also learning about the religious climate of the country and about other churches. As we are aware of current thinking, we can speak to others in ways that are relevant and understandable. And as we experience the interaction and are asked about our theology, we can see the significance of our church's position in new ways in the light of the concerns raised. We believe we have an important contribution to make in the area of Faith and Order. We are also showing others that we are committed to the ecumenical movement, that we want to be in connection with others, supporting a collegial relationship among the different religious communions.

Another benefit that I see, is that we are aware of how other Christian denominations view their faith as moving them to action in the world. We are all committed to acknowledging "Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior." This commitment has led to the Council's support for an interfaith agency to help alleviate world hunger. It has led to a Minority Bail Bond Fund to help give members of minorities equal justice in the courts to be free on bail, to work or to conduct their defense. It has led to a fund for Racial Justice to support work to resolve violence in our cities. It has led to an interfaith task force to work on issues of environmental justice. It has led to projects working on ways to alleviate violence against women and children. These projects and others are too big for any of us to deal with singly, but with the intelligent planning and support of the Council, things can happen.

I feel good that my church has its membership in the Council.

*Rev. Dr. Dorothea Harvey
Gloucester, Mass.*

From Korea, with Love

[Editor's Note: The following letter was written to the Rev. Edwin G. Capon, President of the Swedenborgian Church (November 30, 1993)].

Dear Sir:

I read your President's address of June 24, 1993 at Gordon College in *The Messenger* with much affectionate heart. Recalling our good memories in the past, let me write a few words.

During the time of reading it I had "walked with you" and with your sincere efforts for the betterment of the New Church, the financial difficulties in running the denomination, and especially with your unchanging, permanent attitude to the internal truths from the Lord. I had just held my hands tightly and prayed the Lord to overcome these our trials.

As you know well the world economy has been sluggish for a long time and even your nation has been faced with deficits, though they are recovering recently. The denomination could support herself without any difficulties if you would do only for yourselves, but for a long time you helped and granted many things to all other nations and supported many other new churches all over the world, Korea and our churches also one of them. If I think of your favors I have no words except many thanks to you and to all our brothers and sisters in love, truth, and uses of the Lord.

I firmly believe that the Lord is living, that we are related in the truths, and that if we do our best as a grain of seed the Lord will provide us and lead us to the land flowing milk and honey. All of us expire within one hundred years, but the truths and our New Church will go forever and ever. Hearing my opinion three churches of Kwagju, Seoul, Taejon (where Expo '93 was held) and Women's Assistant Club of Seoul were joined to be available to your performance of duty as president. All of us gladly enclose \$1,200, though it is very small amount of money.

May the Lord bless you and the Church.

*Rev. En Bo Chung
Kwangju, Korea*

February Thoughts

On Love

A colleague remarked recently that she was "learning to live in light of the truth," and that to the degree she made progress in that, she was at peace with herself. Then, reflecting on the fact that she was working on difficult issues in her marriage, she said, "And I'm learning that love is more than a feeling."

I believe the acknowledgment that love is not a feeling is an element of the truth in light of which my colleague is striving to live. In fact, she added that she had been re-reading *The Road Less Traveled*, by M. Scott Peck; he defines love (for another) as the intent to foster the spiritual growth of the other.

The theology upon which our church is founded supports this concept of love. The desire to foster the spiritual well-being of another is a good definition for "charity." Charity is the love of what is good and true in the other. That is, it is a love for what is of the Lord in the person, and the desire for that to shine forth in the life of the person.

This intent does not come from ourselves, but comes to us from the Lord. His desire is for each of us to grow in our spirituality, and then to pass it on. I like the definition that our theology gives to the Lord's love for us. "The essence of the Lord's love consists of three things, namely to love others outside himself, to desire to be one with them, and to render them blessed." (*True Christian Religion* 43)

The Lord's love for us is, of course, far more than a feeling. It is a force which operates to bring us into an intimate bond with him, ourselves, and each other.

Out loving the Lord is also more than a feeling. It is the willingness to do the work of "shunning evils," which I believe includes a process of becoming aware of our shortcomings,

and becoming ready for the Lord to remove them. It's not easy and won't feel good at first, but it will be worth every bit of effort that you and I put into it, for our capacity to love will surely grow.

*The Rev. Dr. Gardiner Perry, Fryeburg, Maine
Church of the New Jerusalem Bulletin, February, 1993.*



The Priceless Pearl

*Give everything you have to Love
Whatever it may take.*

*If in the end it breaks your heart,
Give thanks your heart can break!*

For only Love is worth your while

And only Love is sure

In the eventual Ultimate

The thing that will endure.

—Merry Browne



On Washington and Lincoln

The anniversaries of two of our greatest presidents led me on this chain of thoughts from their lives to the life of each of us and the life of our church.

George Washington, our first and foremost president, instigated the hostilities of the French and Indian war with an embarrassing fiasco. He began by attacking a French surveying party and killing several civilians. Then he retreated to an indefensible meadow and, after losing a number of his own men, surrendered under one of history's most humiliating set of terms. Later in this same war, Colonel Washington accompanied Braddock and three thousand men marching on Pittsburgh to remove the French. After exhausting

themselves carving a road through the wilderness, they arrived eight miles from the fort only to be ambushed and severely defeated by fewer than a thousand Indians.

This man then proceeded to become Commander in Chief of all the forces during the Revolutionary War. Washington had lost nearly every battle he fought, yet in the end, won the war.

Abraham Lincoln was the greatest loser of all time. His failures read like a lament: failed at business twice; defeated for various public offices, six times; lost his sweetheart to death and suffered a nervous breakdown. After gaining and losing both House and Senate seats as well as running for vice-president, Lincoln was elected our President at 51 during the most stressful time in our nation's history.

In the lives of these two great men there is a common aspect: unswerving commitment to their ideals and the perseverance to continue in the face of much hardship, trial and disappointment. Their lives were filled with defeat. Filled with mistakes. Yet because of their willingness to continue when others would not, they became leaders. They had enemies (both within and without) and much opposition, and disappointment, but still they were committed.

As a church struggling to grow, and as individuals struggling to grow into unique persons within our own community, we can look to their lives for inspiration. Perhaps we can gain a larger perspective as we seek to evaluate and understand our own lives and the obstacles and setbacks we encounter on the way.

Remember, Abe thought his Gettysburg Address was a complete failure until he read the paper the next day!

*The Rev. Kenneth Turley, Portland, Maine Sweden-
borgian Church Newsletter, February 1993.*

Quotes of the Month

When . . . you have succeeded in dehumanizing the Negro; when you have put him down and made it impossible for him to be but as the beasts of the field; when you have extinguished his soul in this world and placed him where the ray of hope is blown out as in the darkness of the damned, are you quite sure that the demon you have roused will not turn and rend you? What constitutes the bulwark of our own liberty and independence? It is not our frowning battlements, our bristling sea coasts, our army and our navy. These are not our reliance against tyranny. All of those may be turned against us without making us weaker for the struggle. Our reliance is in the love of liberty which God has planted in us. Our defense is the spirit which prized liberty as the heritage of all men, in all lands everywhere. Destroy this spirit and you have planted the seeds of despotism at your own doors. Familiarize yourself with the chains of bondage and you prepare your own limbs to wear them. Accustomed to trample on the rights of others, you have lost the genius of your own independence and become the fit subjects of the first cunning tyrant who rises among you.

—Abraham Lincoln
Speech, Edwardsville, Illinois
(September 11, 1858)



Observe good faith and justice toward all nations. Cultivate peace and harmony with all. . . . The nation which indulges toward another an habitual hatred or an habitual fondness is in some degree a slave. It is a slave to its animosity or to its affection, either of which is sufficient to lead it astray from its duty and its interest.

—George Washington
Farewell Address
(September 17, 1796)

Passages

Death

Tafel—Doris W. Tafel, long-time member of the Philadelphia Swedenborgian Church, entered the spiritual world November 8, 1993. A memorial service was conducted December 12, 1993, the Rev. Richard H. Tafel, Jr., and the Rev. Paul Shumate, Ebenezer United Methodist Church, officiating. In addition to her long service to the local church as secretary, assistant treasurer, and in the Ladies Aid, Doris was active in the Middle Atlantic Association; was a past president of the Women's Alliance; served on the Board of Missions; and was active in Church Women United, first as treasurer and then president of the Greater Philadelphia unit, and only recently completed her term as treasurer of the Pennsylvania State Unit of Church Women United.



It was a simple question from a teacher of mostly poor, black children, the last question to actor Sidney Poitier during his tribute at the Virginia Festival of American Film in Charlottesville.

The answer brought Poitier back to his boyhood, and the audience to its feet when he finished answering.

"Where does that dignity come from?" asked the teacher, who did not identify herself.

Poitier, 65, said it didn't come from this country.

"I grew up in the Caribbean and had a chance to develop a sense of self before the onslaught," Poitier said, referring to the racial prejudice he encountered when coming to America in 1944 as a 16-year-old.

His parents were farmers where blacks were in the majority.

"I had the circumstances to develop a feeling of self without having to deal with racism that early," he said. "I felt good about myself, so I was able to survive without too much damage."

If he had been raised in this country, where people of his age and race were constantly told by society that they were inferior, "I don't know if I would have had the strength to succeed."

The work necessary to "undo" the wounds of racism is enormous, said Poitier, who won an Academy Award for "Lilies of the Field."

—Reprinted from the South Bend (Indiana) Tribune, November 1, 1992.



The people are called "one," when all have as their end in view the common good of society, the common good of the church, and the Lord's kingdom. For in that case the end includes within itself the Lord, from whom all people are one. The Lord cannot possibly be present with someone whose end in view is his own good.

—Emanuel Swedenborg
Arcana Coelestia, 1316

Opinion (from page 29)

The Future of Technology

To the Editor:

I enjoyed Steve Koke's *The Future of Technology* (November 1993 *Messenger*), especially his observations on spiritual world abilities reflected in technological inventions on earth. A fine connection between inner values and outward technology.

Another astonishing thought: the good tidings of the Lord's Advent on our earth is spread by us earth-spirits to angels and spirits from other planets, who accept the news with rejoicing! (cf *Earths in the Universe* 121) They could even now be imparting this news to the inhabitants of planets we don't even know exist. Other planets still have continual revelations. Christmas could be celebrated "out there among the stars." Perhaps this overshadows our own feeble technology. Are the Wise Men chuckling?

Rev. Erik E. Sandstrom, Instructor,
Academy New Church College
Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania

YOU CAN Make a Difference

Did you know that the total budget for the American New Church Sunday School Association is only \$2,500? For years the Sunday School Association has done its best to operate on a tiny budget. Officers and members have often paid many of the expenses out of their own pockets.

The denomination's resources are stretched to the limit and so we appeal to you, the individual, to help build a foundation for the future by helping our Sunday Schools now. Giving money is one tangible way that makes a difference. It is easy for most of us to give a small amount without making a sacrifice.

Your gift will help fund such resources as the *Sunday School Journal*, *Five Smooth Stones*, *Rainbow Colors in the Word*, *Come Unto Me*, *The Magic Key*, *The Bible House*, and *Lambs for Baptism*. These resources and other valuable work done by the Sunday School Association need your support.

Please send your contributions to Treasurer Jonathan Mitchell, Swedenborg School of Religion, 48 Sargent St., Newton, Massachusetts 02158. It will make a difference.

Swedenborg Studies Seminar

The New Church College in Manchester, England, has announced that it will hold its second Summer Seminar of Swedenborg Studies August 22nd to 26th, 1994. The overall theme is: *God in man and man in God—Swedenborg's teaching on the Divine Human*.

As in 1992, the college is looking forward to speakers being present both from within Great Britain and abroad.

For more information, please contact:
The New Church College
25 Radcliffe New Road
Radcliffe, Manchester M26 1LE England

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 General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches.

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.

Important Church Calendar Dates in 1994

Jan. 13-16	General Council, Newton, MA	March 16-18	Committee on Admission to the Ministry SSR
Jan. 14-15	COMSU at Temenos	April 15-17	PMSU/GOSU at Almont
Feb. 14-15	SSR Workshop for Ministers	April 28-30	Wayfarers Board
Feb. 12-15	EDSU in Seattle	May 20-21	Temenos Board of Managers
Feb. 18-20	Urbana Board of Trustees	May 20-21	Illinois Association
Feb. 18-20	Temenos Board of Managers	June 3-4	Urbana Board of Trustees
March 3-6	SSR Board in Seattle	July 6-10	Annual Convention, Washington, DC
March 13-15	Council of Ministers Executive Committee SSR		

**The Swedenborgian Church
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