
THE MESSENGER

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Life Is A Gift

James Lawrence

During her first term in office, British prime minister Margaret Thatcher went to Brighton for government meetings. She checked into her hotel and was going about her business when a bomb exploded that was meant to end her life. She lived, but four of her closest friends died. She was devastated by the tragedy, but in a way that came to be one of her hallmarks, the prime minister carried on and did what needed to be done. She strove as hard as she could to keep her mind focused on her tasks, but, of course, her mind and her heart could not keep from returning again and again to her friends. And then Sunday came and she went to church. It was a familiar situation to her, she writes, having been in church hundreds of times. That particular morning, however, there seemed to be a special light shining from the candles. Their flickering illumination soothed her and slowly moved her to a poignant feeling of the presence of God. Then suddenly the sun broke forth and streamed through stained-glass windows, and she began to weep.

The emotion that welled up and overflowed was complex. She was weeping for death and she was weeping for the evil that too often successfully stalks the human heart. But she was also experiencing in a mystical way the power and the beauty of life. For at last it hit her: this was a day that she was not meant to see. Some disturbed force had tried to take this very day, this very moment of aliveness from her, and they nearly succeeded. This day was a gift. And then she realized that every day is a miraculous gift. And the ongoing life that her friends were undoubtedly then entering, was also a gift from the same divine source, whose Beingness may escape our usual notice or contemplation, and whose Presence surely transcends our customary comprehension for most of the moments of our days, but whose existence sometimes is undeniably real, and this was one of those. Her *life* was a gift, and tears streamed down Margaret Thatcher's cheeks.

Life is a gift. Far too much of the time, we take it for



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granted, or we get bogged down in concerns and frustrations. Our life, to us, is simply what has always been. It usually doesn't seem amazing, because amazing is an interpretation of something out of the ordinary. And our living so much of the time seems consistently ordinary. It's just here, that's all. Most people's attitude is not so much that we have it to live but that we have to live it. And one day seems very much like the day that's gone before it. Life is just a given.

Expanding our Capacity for Joy

But then there are times when something happens, something awesome or threatening, some mystical insight or some tragedy when we suddenly glimpse tremendous purpose and reason and suddenly *we know* that our life is much more precious than we have been aware in our daily rounds. I believe everyone of us has had experiences akin to Margaret Thatcher's. Haven't you? I know I have—many times. In fact, I was moved to tears of awe and gratitude watching the movie, *Forrest Gump*. And it wasn't because for once the popcorn was just right. It had rather to do with giving my inner self over to the soaring power of simple goodness, the surpassing beauty of a pure heart, and how that matters so much more than any big score in the business world or any great conquest in any competition of any kind. A pure heart is the most spectacular achievement that God can bring about in this plane of life.

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Light in My Darkness

Many Swedenborgian friends I have talked with over the past several years have mentioned Helen Keller's *My Religion* as the book that first led them to the discovery of Swedenborg. The book was published by Doubleday in 1927, when Keller was forty-seven years old. It sold very well and has been in print ever since. Though it proved powerful and enlightening to many people, discerning readers were aware that it deserved more competent editorial help than it had received. I read it in 1987. I discovered not only Keller's lyrical writing for the first time, but was deeply moved and inspired by the passionate descriptions of this deaf and blind person's inner life opening to the joy and love that was confirmed by the writings of Swedenborg. "Swedenborg teaches us that love makes us free," she writes, "and I can bear witness to its power of lifting us out of the isolation to which we seem condemned. When the idea of an active, all-controlling love lays hold of us, we become masters, creators of good, helpers of our kind. It is as if the dark had sent forth a star to draw us to heaven. We discover in ourselves many undeveloped resources of will and thought. Checked, hampered, failing again and again, we rise above the barriers that bound and confine us; our lives put on serenity and order."

I had heard of Helen Keller and her humanitarian works as I was growing up, but my only real acquaintance with her up to that time had been through the play and subsequent film, *The Miracle Worker*. I was therefore interested to learn some months ago that *My Religion* was to be published under the new title *Light in My Darkness*. The new edition is revised and edited by Ray Silverman, a minister of the Lord's New Church in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, who first noticed the lack of organization in his initial reading of the book fifteen years ago. His observation was confirmed when he read over Keller's letters in which she expressed her frustration and concern that the editorial help she had hoped for was not forthcoming.

Regarding the editorial changes, Silverman writes in his Preface, "Helen Keller is a prose poet, writing in bursts of radiant light. Many of the passages that appeared in *My Religion* were written at various times in Keller's life—some as early as 1903—and passed into the manuscript as Keller composed it in the late 1920s. In some cases, this technique led to severe fragmentation of the text. To resolve this difficulty, in this edition passages that were only loosely strung together have been rearranged and placed in more coherent patterns. The eight unwieldy sections of the first edition have been reordered into twelve distinct chapters with subheadings to clarify their contents. Furthermore, materials not present in the first edition have been added to elucidate and expand the original text. These include paragraphs from Keller's first essay on Swedenborg, 'How I Would Help the World' (1911), passages from letters to Rev. Paul Sperry (1911, 1926, 1927), excerpts from her address 'A Vision of Service' (1928), and selections from her speech to the New Church of Scotland (1932) . . . Other revisions include modernization of several words and phrases, substitution of inclusive language where appropriate, correction of spelling, typographical errors, punctuation . . . emendation of a few historical inaccuracies . . . a few passages that distracted from the main message have been delicately pruned . . . these revisions are negligible next to all that has been retained."

Silverman has worked on the project for many years to achieve the organization and shaping that Keller originally sought in vain from her editorial assistants. The result, in this reader's opinion, is as satisfying as seeing the facets of a superb diamond further revealed and enhanced in the hands of a good gem cutter.

Light in My Darkness is the second title published under the Swedenborg Foundation's new trade imprint *Chrysalis Books*. If you're thinking of Easter gifts for friends and family, I can't think of a better choice. The book can be ordered by calling the Foundation's toll-free number, 1-800-355-3222.

—Patte LeVan

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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.

Swedenborg in Russia

To the Editor:

It was pleasing to see on the front page of the February issue a photograph of Dr. V. Maliavin standing next to Dr. Horand Gutfeldt. I want to point out that his first name is *Vladimir* rather than *Vasily*.

This brilliant man is doing much to make the Swedenborg message known in the world. In a fax to the Rev. Kurt Nemitz in January of this year he spoke of the opportunity "to teach the Doctrine of the New Church under the auspices of Moscow University." (Last year Dr. Andrei Vashestov taught a course on Swedenborg in the Department of Philosophy there!)

Dr. Maliavin's photograph appeared a couple of years ago in *Logos*, the
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Life Is A Gift *(from front page)*

I tend to forget too quickly such potent noetic experiences of the soul and believe that most of us do, too, because they are too powerful for us to stay with and still get the clothes washed, the garbage bagged, and the kids straightened out. But it doesn't have to be this way. Letting life's necessities and trials pull us down from a joyful connection with the miraculous source of life is not how the angels do it, and it is something that we must grow beyond, also, if we are to claim our heavenly birthright. That's the main point when Jesus visits Mary's and Martha's home [Luke 10:38-42]. Swedenborg suggests to us that the sisters are placed in the gospels to contrast two inner states of love for God—Martha, with her frantic worldly consciousness, full of busy good-deed-doing and fretting and obsessing; and Mary, with her pure spiritual connection to the goodness of the Lord. In that higher consciousness, she absorbed and remained in the spiritual glow of a powerful divine presence. Jesus' essential message to Martha is one for us all. It isn't that we aren't to be about useful things with our lives. It isn't Martha's good-deed-doing that Jesus rebuked; it was her consciousness. Mary had the better way. Swedenborg tells us that we must learn to trust. We must learn to trust that the powerfully good and beautiful inner states of bliss can be ours. We must trust that we are *designed* to live in constant joy. We can stand it! We really can. But the journey to such a wise peace and strength can be a big challenge for a lot of us.

Do We Fear Success?

One of the most powerful ideas to emerge this century comes out of the psychoanalytic tradition. It is what Otto Rank called "the fear of success"—the deep-seated undertow in so many of us that undermines us every time we begin to get a little too happy. Currently in San Francisco a leading modern-day exponent of this theory, psychiatrist and professor Joseph Weiss is gaining an international reputation for his work in developing a therapy based on suppressing our deep-seated inhibitions to happiness and letting our deeper, more natural love of life's joys to emerge and predominate.

Weiss believes that we grow up imbibing a specific psycho-spiritual atmosphere created by those whose presence was virtually all-powerful—our parents especially, though others can exert a strong influence on this below-consciousness fundamental sense of life's possibilities. He believes that we adjust our inner happiness rheostats to this atmosphere, and the setting often gets locked in. If we have some successes or begin to live our lives in a healthier way, many of us must grapple with a fierce undertow that pulls us back from transcending our pre-set parameters.

Swedenborg describes often a similar spiritual dynamic that he calls "hereditary tendencies." Strangely, we can feel more safety in our primordial health-and-happiness zone than we do in transcending it. The foremost reason is that many of us will experience *profound guilt*, if we seek to surpass our parents or primary loved ones in happiness. It feels like betrayal, like a leaving behind. And so for security and comfort, we set our ceilings and floors in a way that keeps us feeling psychically safe. But this "psycho-spiritual happiness setting" is definitely below our consciousness. It takes effort to get a sense of it, and it takes courage to challenge it. It also is often in place by age three.

A family I have known all my life has provided me with a powerful witness to the potential intensity of this dynamic. The mother was in and out of mental hospitals for several years due to an acute case of what was then called the manic-depressive condition. The father was an anxiety-ridden man much older than she. He never found a place to settle in life. He ended up being married at least four times, and he drifted from job to job and from geographic region to geographic region all of his life. When their youngest child was four, the mother took her own life, and the father, feeling too old to raise all his children, arranged for this youngest boy's adoption into the family that I know very well. That four-year-old boy is now forty years old. Though placed into a stable household with very different dynamics from his family of origin, it has been uncanny to watch the son replicate the precise psycho-spiritual zones of his natural parents. He today has the same basic

psychiatric condition as his mother and the same unsettled life pattern as his father. I have seen opportunity after opportunity present itself to him, and yet there seems to be some powerful invisible undertow that draws him back to a painful place that yet provides a powerful sense of safety.

We Must Believe to Grow

Swedenborg offers us a lot of hope and a good perspective on the challenge of our hereditary tendencies and the strong undertow effects of our family of origin. The strength of the psychological boundaries provides a necessary context for our early life. We all must begin somewhere, and the boundaries must be firm so as to allow our fragile psyches to take shape and form. We are where we are, and it is possible to be both much more at peace or much more wretched. A vital key to spiritual regeneration is finding sufficient courage and commitment to transcend personal boundaries.

I think it is when we challenge our boundaries that we are most likely to feel ecstasy, see purpose, and understand that life is a gift. The trust that Swedenborg suggests is necessary implicitly involves belief. We must believe that we are not limited to our present capacity for joy. We must believe that God's purpose for us is much greater than we presently conceive, and that everyday we have a new opportunity to break free from powerful inner assumptions that are inhibiting our spiritual liberation.

Swedenborg writes in the *Arcana*: "There is only one life, and it comes from the Lord alone. Angels, spirits, and mortals are only recipients of life. This has been made known to me from so much experience that there is not the slightest doubt left. . . . Our experience of the Lord's life comes from his love toward the whole human race, from the fact that he wants to give himself and what is his to each individual, and that he actually does so to the extent that we can accept it." (*Arcana Coelestia*, n.3742)

Life is an incredible gift: let us believe it! □

The Rev. Dr. James F. Lawrence is co-minister of the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church and manager of J. Appleseed & Co., a small-press publisher of books and pamphlets promoting contemporary expressions of Swedenborgian spirituality.

Reprinted sermon enclosure from the San Francisco church's September 1994 newsletter.

Death Mauritian Style

Eric Allison

We Swedenborgians fancy ourselves as experts on the afterlife. After all, we are well versed in the most detailed description ever written of life beyond the grave. But it seems that the “D” word, i.e. the actual physical process of dying, is something which still holds discomfort and uncertainty for most of us. Despite our firm belief that the body is an earthly loan, I suspect that the majority of us are uncomfortable with touching a body and would find it spooky to look back at the vacant stare of a corpse. I doubt that there is a correct way to deal with death. So, I write this article more to raise questions than give answers.

In North America at least one generation has grown up in an atmosphere where life tries to imitate the format of TV. We attempt to make everything as clean and predictable as possible. Happy endings are expected, and we are told to shun anything that has to do with discomfort, pain, bodily odors, and the debilitating effects of old age. When one steps into an elevator it is not likely that the smell of body odor will greet our nostrils, but rather the antiseptic scents of aluminum chlorohydrate or perfume. Athletic fields are made of artificial turf. Christmas “trees” are manufactured in a variety of colors to match the decor of any home and fireplaces burn synthetic logs. Animals’ flesh is cut neatly and packaged in styrofoam and cellophane. It is lined up in orderly rows and called steaks, chops, tenderloin or burgers. Most people who buy it would never dream of watching the slaughter and butchering of that which they regularly eat. Millions of us like life best when it is shiny and as bright as a new shopping mall. Even Death is something which we try to make other than it really is.

Thirty-two years before, Daniel was carried home from the same hospital by his father. Now he carried the small lifeless body of his father for the last night he would spend in his own home.

What follows are two stories about death in Mauritius. As you read this try to imagine yourself there and be aware of your reactions.



Daniel is a thirty-two-year-old policeman. He and his wife Marie Noel had been attending our church in Curepipe. His father had a stroke and a heart attack. Later that day Cathy and I stopped by to visit Daniel at his home. We learned that his father had died at 3:00 p.m. and that Daniel was at the hospital. It was 4:00 p.m. We went to his parents’ home and tried to comfort his mother. Already the house was filling with people and rented metal chairs were being carried in to accommodate the anticipated crowd.

Suddenly, I was told that Daniel was calling for me. I stepped out on the porch and saw Daniel, dressed in his police uniform, running toward the house carrying the body of his father wrapped in several layers of cloth strips. He had brought his father’s body home in a taxi. Thirty-two years before, Daniel was carried home from the same hospital by his father. Now he carried the small lifeless body of his father for the last night he would spend in his own home. Daniel was struggling but refused my help. He carried his father

into the house past the people in the small and very tidy sitting room to another room where he was placed on a mattress on the floor. Daniel and Marie Noel quickly unwrapped the body. Anyone could watch the preparations through the open door. Daniel opened his father’s mouth and put in his false teeth. Then, he tied a cord of cloth under his father’s chin and around the top of his head so that his mouth would stay closed. Daniel and Marie Noel took off his pajamas and started to wash the naked body. Life was over and the tropical climate demanded that an unembalmed body be buried the next day. This night would be a night of wailing and tears. Everything would happen rapidly and no undertakers were involved. Death in Mauritius is a very personal and very real event that is tended to by the family.

I looked on somewhat bewildered by the task at hand. I could see Cathy in the next room, shaken and dumb with disbelief at the unfolding procedure. Moments before the arrival of the body we had talked with Daniel’s mother in the comfort of her sitting room. We tried to say the right things and give her strength, but for us death was still an event in the hospital or at the funeral home. When the body was unceremoniously carried in the front door, death was suddenly what it actually is. No canned music was playing with a well-dressed dead person made up in a fancy casket. No, the body was lying on the floor while friends and family peered in to watch the preparation process. They were not leering at the dead nor was it morbid curiosity that drew the mourners to the doorway. All these people had been through the same process before. Their eyes did not gaze upon the naked little dead man, but they looked at Daniel in sympathy. They

felt his sorrow. They knew his grief. They knew death in its simple and stark reality.

I spoke to Daniel, asking what I could do as he continued preparations. He said that they would need to get the coffin. I told him that I had to leave for a class at my home that was due to begin at 6:00 p.m. I was sorry but I had no way of phoning the others to cancel it. I offered him the use of my car. He thanked me but said that he did not know how to drive. I said, "Then it's probably not a good idea to loan you the car." We laughed. I told him that I would call later and left the room as he and Marie Noel continued with the preparations of the body. The Christian funeral and burial would be the next day.

Even though the law states that a body cannot be buried until ten hours after death, the Muslims sometimes bury a person within three hours. Bodies in Mauritius are not embalmed. The ten-hour waiting period is to make sure the person is dead. We heard a few true stories of people in Mauritius who were found to be alive as they were being prepared for burial.

During the morning of the next day when Jimmy was being buried, I visited a church member, Odette Toolsy, in a more modern private hospital. She had been the organist of the Curepipe church for many years and was well-known throughout the island for her musical talent. She was not well. I did not know that when they spoke of taking her home that day, this meant that she was probably going to die soon. She did indeed die at home that day of a heart attack at 4:00 p.m. By 6:00 p.m. she was lying in state in her living room with the family assembled and neighbors and friends pouring into the house to pay their respects. At 7:00 p.m. her death, and the time and place of the funeral, was announced on the radio.

The next day at 3:00 p.m., the funeral was held at the Curepipe New Church. Her funeral service began when the closed wooden coffin was placed upon sawhorses at the

front of the sanctuary. The church was completely full. People stood in the center aisle, on the veranda of the church and even spilled into the parking lot and stood in the pouring tropical rain. The service started only five minutes late and lasted one hour. Five songs were sung by the congregation and special music was played as a tribute to her talent and love of music.

When the service concluded, the coffin was loaded into a small black funeral van with a flashing yellow light on top. Many people followed the procession in their cars to the graveyard.

The rain stopped as we entered the cemetery and the most magnificent double rainbow I have ever seen lit up the sky. The cemetery was not mowed and it was difficult to walk on the rough, wet surface to the grave site. The crowd had to wait for about ten minutes until the gravediggers would arrive to lower the casket into the ground. As we waited people chatted amiably. My friend Guy Pierre pointed to what he said was a skull lying on top of the pile of dirt beside the grave. "No," I said, "it must be a coconut." Another person remarked that it was amazing to see that the skull of Odette's mother still had hair on it after all this time. The *coconut* was indeed the skull of Odette's mother. In Mauritius a grave can be reused after five years. Both her father and her mother had been buried in the same grave where the body of our dear friend Odette would then be interred. Those who stood around the grave could see what would happen to Odette's body, and to all our bodies eventually.

The gravediggers arrived, clad in dirty clothes, carrying a thick hemp rope which they slid under the coffin, then lowered it into the ground as everyone looked on. Once it was in the grave, they rocked the coffin back and forth until they pulled their ropes free from the weight of it. Then they stood nearby. After I offered a prayer and blessing, one by one the mourners followed the example of Odette's husband Clive, by gently throwing three handfuls of

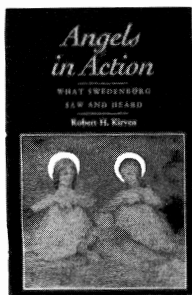
dirt onto the coffin. The gravediggers then became grave fillers as they quickly shoveled the earth, along with the skull of her mother and many of the larger bones of both parents, onto her coffin.

When the grave was full, the people quickly arranged pieces of cut stone into a rectangular-shaped barrier in front of the tombstone and then carefully placed the many funeral flowers into the soft soil all around the grave. For the moment the grave was alive and radiant with flowers.

Cathy and I felt very deeply the loss of our friend. We also felt as though we had really seen death from a new and more realistic perspective. Our church has always focused on remembering that the body is not the real person. This is true. It is also true that we can be denying the depth of our grief when we regard the body as if it were a piece of trash to be discarded. There is something to be said for seeing and touching the body and realizing that it is just that, a body. The fact is, we become pretty attached to the body of our mate or those close to us and there is no shame in missing their physical presence in this world. I believe that our desire to simply have the body disposed of with no muss or fuss is a way of avoiding the healthy intensity of our raw emotional response. What struck us both was just how real death is when people see it as it actually is and that the closure, the saying of goodbye to the loved one, seems so very healthy and honest. It is not a trip to the mall. It's death.

For six years I had an apartment on the third floor of a funeral home in Waterloo, Ontario. I met a lady at the funeral home who had lost her husband many years before. She said that it was reassuring for her to touch his cold body because she could feel that life was no longer present. She said that all those years of feeling his body full of warmth and life underlined for her the truth that his spirit was gone.

Many New Church funerals never show the body or even the casket. When someone dies in North America
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Angels in Action: What Swedenborg Saw and Heard

by Robert H. Kirven

Chrysalis Books, Swedenborg Foundation,
West Chester, Pennsylvania: 1994,
112 pages, paperback, \$8.95.

Reviewed by Ernest Martin

Browsing through a large bookstore at Christmas time, I turned to a clerk and asked, "Do you have any books on angels?" The clerk pointed immediately to a shelf behind me where there were twenty or more books.

The collection at the bookstore was indeed impressive, almost as good as the shelves at our Stone House Book Room in Redmond, Washington. One noticeable difference was that the Stone House stocked forty copies of *Angels in Action*, the best book on angels in print today!

One of the most amazing phenomena of the last decade, indeed, of the last five years, has been the great outpouring of books, articles, movies, and television programs on angels. Both *Time* and *Newsweek* had Christmas week cover stories on angels in 1993.

How do we account for the current fascination with angels? One obvious economic fact is that a lot of money can be made publishing books, producing movies, and selling trinkets about angels. I'm convinced, however, that the great interest in angels today comes from a hunger to find meaning in life that goes beyond all the things of the physical, material world. We are told in the Scriptures that we can gain the whole world and lose our own souls. Our interest in angels points to our hunger for the transcen-

dent, for that which is above and beyond and within.

We are living in an exciting new era, sometimes called the New Age or the Age of Aquarius. We are gradually realizing that science and technology cannot save the world or bring us eternal happiness. In 1968, sociologist Peter Berger published a book called *A Rumor of Angels* in which he observed that today transcendence has been "reduced to a rumor . . . but we can set out to explore these rumors—and perhaps to follow them to their source."

Surprisingly, the rediscovery of the supernatural is not taking place in the religious world. It is left to organizations like Common Boundary, a Washington-based association of psychologists, ministers, and social workers who gathered for a weekend in a large Washington hotel to explore the sacred in everyday life. The Institute of Noetic Sciences, founded by the astronaut Edgar Mitchell, sponsored a three-day conference in Chicago last July in which over 1,700 people, many of them scientists, explored the theme of the survival of human consciousness after death.

When the evangelist Billy Graham set out to prepare a sermon on angels in the early 1970s, he found practically nothing in his library. (Evidently he had never acquired a copy of Swedenborg's *Heaven and Hell*). In 1975 he published *Angels: God's Secret Agents*. A new edition has recently been issued and over two million copies have been sold.

With Billy Graham's best seller available in all the bookstores, and shelves full of other angel books on prominent display, what prompted the Swedenborg Foundation to ask Robert Kirven to write a new book on angels? One off-the-cuff response was that it was *because* of the Billy Graham book that a new book was needed. The Foundation also pointed out that a number of the angel books included Swedenborg's *Heaven and Hell* in their bibliographies, and there was an obvious need for a book directly dealing with Swedenborg's teaching.

Graham's position, like that of most evangelical churchpersons, is that angels were created by God before

human beings came into existence. In other words, they were and are a separate class of created beings. Graham writes: "Angels indeed are among the invisible things made by God, for all things were created by him, and for him." Martin Luther had written: "An angel is a spiritual creature without a body created by God for the service of Christendom and the church."

Kirven, on the other hand, declares: "Probably Swedenborg's most important teaching about angels is that they are not special creations apart from human life. Angels and other spirits once were human beings living the life that all of us know on this earth or another in the universe. Those whom we are most likely to encounter lived on this earth recently—within our lifetime—and within the culture we are most familiar with. Most, if not all, biblical occurrences of the word 'angel' describe a messenger from God, and it is tradition, not biblical authority, that describes them as special creations."

Swedenborg asserts that we ourselves really are spirits, even while we live in our bodies. It is not clear how Graham and other evangelicals view the status of human beings after death. Many Christian leaders stress the last judgment when the graves will be opened and the righteous dead will rise and inherit new bodies. For the present, the dead are in some state of limbo.

Graham's book on angels is based almost entirely on the Bible, along with personal experiences as illustrations. He pays little attention to the writings of Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, Raymond Moody, Kenneth Ring, and other researchers of near-death experience. He makes no acknowledgment of Swedenborg's declaration that "I have seen, I have heard, I have felt . . ." Graham reports people who experience the presence of a deceased love one, and he explains it as a case of an angel "appearing" as the loved one. The loved one is not really there.

The genius of Kirven's book is that he combines in a compelling way the theological insights of Swedenborg, Swedenborg's own mystical experiences in the last twenty-seven years of

his life, and transcendental experiences of our contemporaries. Kirven's approach is very practical. His first chapter deals with "What Angels Do," and he describes how angels help people die, help infants, help people find the way, and help people celebrate. In later sections he speaks of the function of guardian angels, and love and marriage among the angels. He closes his book with a section headed "What we can do." Here he tells how we can help people, how we can keep in touch, and how we can help the angels.

Swedenborg spoke of the end or goal of creation as a heaven from the human race. To put it in terms of individuals, each one of us is created to grow into angelhood, beginning the process on the earthly plane of life and continuing to eternity in the realm of the spirit.

George Dole reminds us that our *spiritual journey* is made up of an infinite number of decisions and choices that we make day by day. In his book, *Sorting Things Out*, he says: "It may take a lifetime to sort things out, but a lifetime is precisely what we have to work with. We do not become angels overnight, but a little at a time, in pieces we can handle."

For insight into the sorting-out process, and the ways we can open ourselves to the presence and guidance and support of the angels, order your copy of *Angels in Action* today. No member of the Swedenborgian Church or movement should be without it. It is a book for your church library, personal library, and coffee table. And more importantly, read it!

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The Swedenborg Foundation reports over 1,500 copies sold in the first few months, including orders from a large number of libraries throughout the country. A new printing is already being planned. Ask your church, library, or bookstore to order copies. For immediate action, order from the Swedenborg Foundation, using the toll-free number: 1-800-355-3222.

The Rev. Ernest Martin is the director of Temenos Retreat and Conference Center in West Chester, Pennsylvania. He is a lifelong student of mysticism and angels, and has conducted several workshops and lectures on the subject at Temenos and the Swedenborg Foundation.

An Angel for Amy

Ann Westermann

My friend Diane, a charge nurse at a busy emergency room, called me one Wednesday night in great distress. Sobbing, she said, "It's Amy, my baby. She stopped by today and I saw this hideous black growth on the back of her shoulder. I had noticed a pink spot earlier and had asked her if her purse was too heavy. I should have kept an eye on it. I feel so awful. If only I had caught it earlier. This looks bad. I am terrified at the implications; this could well be a melanoma that has taken off."

After she calmed down somewhat, she told me how much she had enjoyed having and caring for their two children. "I took such good care of them. How I watched myself while I was pregnant—I wanted perfect babies! Now this, at 18, when she is almost grown."

Diane got an appointment for Amy with a dermatologist the following day. Describing the encounter later, she said, "It was horrible. He took one look at it and said it was not for him to handle. She needed a plastic surgeon. All my own fears were exacerbated by his obvious concern about the growth on Amy's back."

On Friday Amy was seen by a plastic surgeon. "This was even worse," Diane reported. "He stared at the black blob incredulously and scheduled her for immediate surgery on Monday. I get the feeling that everyone else thinks it's very bad too. I can't stand the thought of losing her. I just can't!" Her anguish was palpable.

On Sunday evening Diane called to say, "Ann, something remarkable happened today! I had a long shift in the ER. The worst cases of skin lesions and post-op complications showed up. All of them reinforcing my fears of what could happen to Amy. By dinner break I couldn't handle it any longer. Instead of going to eat, I went to the chapel to fall apart. It's the only place in the hospital where you can cry in peace.

"As I sat there sobbing, I noticed a man coming in. To my annoyance he sat right behind me. I was too out of control to modify my crying for his sake. After a while he got up and stood right in front of me where I couldn't ignore him. As I looked up, I don't know if it was sunlight coming through the skylight, but there was a radiance about him. He said, 'Don't be afraid! She will be all right!'

"There was such compassion in his gesture—as if the finest human qualities were personified in him. It was awesome. My fears dissolved. I felt a calm peace coming over me, and hope returning.

"When I came home, I examined Amy's shoulder. Ann, the thing has shrunk! It is much smaller than it was this morning; it looks as if it were extruding itself. I could probably lift it off with a pair of tweezers. Something has happened!

"I strongly believe that the man in the chapel had something to do with it. Was it a man, or was it an Angel for Amy?"

•

When Amy went in for surgery the following day, the surgeon acknowledged that the growth had diminished considerably in size. What remained was surgically removed. Four pathologists who examined it agreed that it was NOT a malignant melanoma.

• • •

Incidentally, this episode occurred while Bob Kirven was visiting us in St. Louis to talk about his book, *Angels in Action*.

Ann Graber Westermann is a member of the St. Louis Swedenborgian Church of the Open Word. She is an ordained ecumenical minister and a diplomate of the Institute of Logotherapy.

Report of the Nominating Committee of the Swedenborgian Church

- Vice-President:** Phyllis Bosley (California, Pacific Coast Association)—1 year term
- Recording Secretary:** Betty Yenetchi (California, Pacific Coast Association)—1 year term
- Treasurer:** John Perry (Maine, Maine Association)—1-year term
- General Council:** 3-year term
Lawrence Conant (Massachusetts, Mass. Association)
John Titus (Ohio, Ohio Association)
Rev. David Rienstra (Missouri, Illinois Association) for second term
Perry Martin (Pennsylvania, Mid-Atlantic Association) for second term
- Communications Support Unit (COMSU):** 3-year term
Dr. John Hitchcock (Massachusetts, Mass. Association)
- Education Support Unit (EDSU):** 3-year term
Lorraine Sando (Washington, Pacific Coast Association) for second term.
- Financial & Physical Resources Support Unit (FPRSU):** 3-year term
Rev. Richard Tafel (Florida, Southeast Association)
- Growth and Outreach Support Unit (GOSU):** 3-year term
Rev. Carl Yenetchi (California, Pacific Coast Association)
Betsy Coffman (Ohio, Ohio Association)
- Information Management Support Unit (IMSU):** 3-year term
Steve Ledingham (Arizona, Ohio Association)
- Pastoral Ministries Support Unit (PMSU):** 3-year term
Rev. Paul Martin (Washington, Pacific Coast Association) for second term
- Nominating Committee:** Rev. Robert McCluskey (New York, New York Association)
Barbara Penabaker (Michigan, Michigan Association)
- Swedenborg School of Religion Board of Trustees:** 3-year term
Karen Feil (California, Pacific Coast Association) for second term
Dr. Bob Reber, Dean of Auburn Seminary in New York City
- Committee On Admission To The Ministry (CAM):**
Rev. Steve Pults (Washington, Pacific Coast Association)
Marilyn Turley (Washington, Pacific Coast Association)

Nominating Committee:

Skuli Thorhallsson, Chair, S.E. '95
Sharon Reddekapp Slough, WC '96
Duane Beougher, IL '97
Karen Nielsen Conger, PCA '98
Sharon Billings, Ohio '99

Role of the Nominating Committee

As chair it has come to my attention that there is some misunderstanding about the role of the Nominating Committee. The Nominating Committee works according to the bylaws of the Swedenborgian Church and Robert's Rules of Order. Its sole role is to ensure that there is a balanced slate of candidates for the annual election at every annual convention. One qualified and willing person is nominated for each open position. There are two candidates for the Nominating Committee who are not from any association currently represented. This ensures a balanced representation on the Committee.

A balanced slate is made according to gender, associations, clergy and laity. Anyone can make a recommendation, and persons interested in serving in any elected position need to contact the Nominating Committee directly by phone or mail. The chair also gets recommendations from all committees, support units, the president of the denomination, and the chair of the Council of Ministers. The Nominating Committee then makes its choices according to its mandate. Being nominated does not guarantee being elected. If you wish to serve but were not nominated, simply have yourself nominated from the floor of Convention. If you are qualified, you have just as much of a chance being elected as anyone else. The call for nominees is not closed until the call for nominations is made on the floor of Convention. It is the work of Convention to choose the best persons to serve in elected positions and not the Nominating Committee.

Having second terms allows for continuity. Having term limits allows new people to serve. This year seven people were nominated who have never served on a national committee or support unit.

*Rev. Skuli Thorhallsson, Chair
Nominating Committee
Swedenborgian Church*

Advance Convention '95 Registration

San Francisco State University
1600 Holloway Ave. at 19th Ave.
San Francisco, California

July 2 - 9, 1995

(Convention Sessions: July 5 - July 9, 1995)

Theme: "DOING JUSTICE WITH MERCY—WHERE HEAVEN BEGINS"

<p>Please complete in full - one application per family</p>	<p>Last Name _____ First Name _____ Last Name _____ First Name _____ Address _____ City, State, Province _____ Zip _____ Phone _____ Accompanied by _____ Children: 1. Name _____ Age _____ 2. Name _____ Age _____ 3. Name _____ Age _____</p>
<p><i>SCYL Members between the ages of 13 and 18 please complete.</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> My parents will attend convention. They are _____ <input type="checkbox"/> My guardian at Convention (if no parent is present) will be _____</p>
<p>Arrivals and departures <i>Shuttle service is available to/from San Francisco Airport which will take you directly to San Francisco State University's Convention Center. More information will be included in registration packet.</i></p>	<p>I/We will arrive on the S.F. State campus on: Date: _____ Time: _____ My/Our first meal on campus will be: Date _____ Breakfast <input type="checkbox"/> Lunch <input type="checkbox"/> Dinner <input type="checkbox"/> My/Our last meal on campus will be: Date _____ Breakfast <input type="checkbox"/> Lunch <input type="checkbox"/> Dinner <input type="checkbox"/> (Last meal served will be lunch on Sunday, July 9)</p>
<p>Special Needs: <i>(There are elevators in the living quarters. The Convention Center is fully handicapped-accessible).</i></p>	<p>I am not able to climb stairs or walk very far. _____ I have these medical requirements _____ I am <input type="checkbox"/> diabetic <input type="checkbox"/> a heart patient Other health problem _____ Other physical/dietary/special needs: _____</p>
<p>Children: <i>The children's program will begin on Thursday morning, July 6 and end at lunch on Saturday so that children can accompany their parents on outings. There will be a children's program on Saturday evening so adults can attend the banquet at the Bohemian Club.</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> My child/children will be participating in the Children's Program for ages 4 to 12 beginning on: _____ Names: _____ Ages: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> I will need child care for age 3 and under beginning: _____ Names: _____ Ages: _____ Special needs: _____ Have your children attended pre-school? _____</p>

<p>Rates for 1995 Convention Room & Board</p> <p><i>Please note that we are able to offer three types of accommodations for your needs. All rates include 3 meals daily. Apartment suites with kitchenette are convenient for families with children.</i></p>	<p>Hotel, Double \$80 per day per person Hotel, Twin \$80 per day per person Apartment* \$52 per day per person Dormitory \$38 per day per person</p> <p>*Apartments contain two double bedrooms, bathroom, kitchenette and sitting room and are suitable for families, 2 congenial couples, etc. All prices in U.S. dollars. Some financial assistance is available for teens and children. Please ask for more information if you would like to apply.</p>
<p>Accommodations</p>	<p>I/We would like a hotel room <input type="checkbox"/> Double bed <input type="checkbox"/> Twin beds I plan to share the room with _____ I/We would like an apartment. I/We would like to share the apartment with _____ I/We would like a dormitory room. I would like to share the room with _____ I/We would like a room near _____</p>
<p>Registration Fees</p>	<p>Children under 3: NO CHARGE Children 3-12: \$20 US, \$28 CD if mailed before 4/30/95. After 4/30/95: \$25 US, \$35 CD. Teen League (SCYL) participant (13-18): \$35 US, \$49 CD if mailed before 4/30/95; after 4/30/95, \$40 US, \$55 CD. Other Teens and Adults: \$60 US, \$93 CD if mailed before 4/30/95. After that, \$70 US, \$97 CD. Registration is per person and covers some special costs and events. No refunds after June 1. Please mail this form with your check, made out to The Swedenborgian Church to: Central Office The Swedenborgian Church 48 Sargent Street Newton, MA 02158-2399</p>
<p>Delayed Departures</p>	<p><i>San Francisco State University will allow a limited number of convention attendees to remain after Convention if arrangements are made in advance. Please let us know if you wish to take advantage of this opportunity.</i></p>
<p>Financial Assistance</p>	<p><i>For children and young people, please contact the Central Office 48 Sargent St., Newton, MA 02158</i></p>

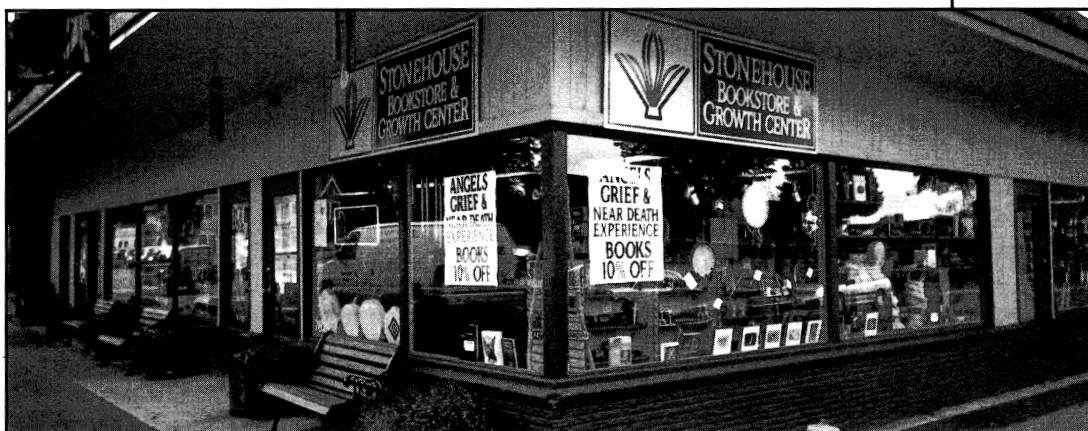
Stone House Bookstore and Spiritual Growth Center

I came to the Northwest in 1982 as an employee of the Swedenborgian Church's Board of Missions to start a new growth center. At that time our local congregation did not have a building and had been meeting in members' homes for worship and study. We opened the Stone House in 1985 in an old stone house in Redmond, Washington, originally to provide meeting space for classes that would be offered for Swedenborgians and the general public, with only a small room devoted to books for sale. The large room was reserved for classes, worship services, and a Swedenborgian library. The Swedenborg Spiritual Growth Center, an independent nonprofit organization was formed, and initial funding was supplied by the Swedenborgian Church, the Pacific Coast Association, the Swedenborg Foundation, and various individuals.

The Stone House grew by listening to the needs of the growing number of people who came in. We stocked books at customers' requests; we scheduled new classes as people asked for them and/or teachers appeared; we viewed ourselves as a community resource center, there to serve people's spiritual needs. People are looking for books and classes relating to spiritual growth, and not many organizations are offering them. We grew as fast as we were ready to grow. Only our own limitations (business skills, time, energy, and financial resources) held us back. People always have needs, but we are not always available to serve them.

A critical question for some is what makes a center like the Stone House "Swedenborgian." The Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound has an office and holds Sunday services at the Stone House and, as a bookstore, we stock most of Swedenborg's theological works, but the issue is deeper. I believe that it is important to have the director be a Swedenborgian minister. I conduct many weddings and memorial services and, along with the entire staff, engage in informal counseling with customers many times a day, since the

center naturally attracts spiritual seekers and those in transition or crisis. As director, I am also responsible for selecting the inventory and scheduling the classes. Some of the books and classes are directly Swedenborgian. I have taught a series of classes at the Stone House on: Life After Death (3 times); The Bible (3 times); Swedenborg Study (4 times); Divine Love and Wisdom; Universal Human; Uses; and an introduction to Swedenborg (4 times). Rev. Steve



Stone House Bookstore (Photo courtesy of Logos)

Article adapted with permission from 1994 Winter Logos, newsletter of the Swedenborg Foundation.

Pults is currently teaching some Swedenborgian classes at the Stone House.

Other books and classes at the Stone House are related to or compatible with Swedenborgian ideas: books on Christianity, creation-centered spirituality, life after death, angels, near-death experiences, and spiritual development. I have also taught many classes and led spiritual growth groups where I frequently compared and contrasted Swedenborgian concepts with other spiritual ideas.

Some of the books and classes at the Stone House, however, may be perceived as unrelated or even contradictory to Swedenborgian thought. This is especially true if one interprets the essence of Swedenborgian teachings to be a theological belief system which is then intrinsically in conflict with other religious belief systems.

In selecting books and classes to offer, theological uniformity has not been the primary consideration. If it were, Christians would have us exclude all but clearly Christian materials and

(Continued on page 62)

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newsletter of the Swedenborg Foundation, holding a copy of the foundation Journal, *Chrysalis*. He is well acquainted with Dr. George Dole, who is a founding member of the Solovyov Society. A meeting of this society will take place in Moscow on June 24th of this year. Solovyov, mentioned by Dr. Gutfeldt, was a reader of Swedenborg.

Dr. Gutfeldt mentions "a small passionate group full of devotion to truth, permeated with openness, great universality and depth." Who would have expected all this a few years ago? More Swedenborg books are being sold now in the former USSR than anywhere else in the world.

To quote Dr. Gutfeldt, "May this country now find the way to freedom and to God, ushered in by the contributions of the Swedish visionary, whose eyes the Lord opened to see a new destination for mankind."

Don Rose
Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania

Temenos Questions

To the Editor,

In the January and February *Messengers*, articles by Carol Lawson and Perry Martin spoke eloquently and convincingly to the Temenos project, strongly urging all members to support the current building proposal.

Looking back over my lifelong involvement with the Swedenborgian Church, this is perhaps the most difficult, agonizing and potentially divisive issue that has arisen in my experience. A great deal of wisdom and charity will need to be exercised in this matter.

On the one hand, I heartily agree with almost everything that Carol and Perry have expressed. I believe we all want to be part of a Swedenborgian Church that "will be helping the thousands of people seeking spiritual growth, renewal and transformation." And we want to be a church that "offers programs designed to help participants realize their creative expression of the spiritual life." Yes, this is why we exist as a religious body. But it seems to me that all of

our churches and centers, in varying degrees and in different ways, are providing spiritual nourishment and support sincere seekers. Isn't there room for a variety of religious approaches and forms? Some people prefer workshops and retreat centers. Others (and I would suggest this includes a majority of our members), feel more at home in a traditional weekly worship setting. Some of us need and appreciate both approaches.

This is why I find it difficult to accept the underlying assumption in these articles that our membership decline can be reversed *only* by Temenos-type projects; and that this kind of outreach should be given top priority. Are these assumptions borne out by the facts? We need to look at all of the facts openly and honestly.

I'm certain that all of us are 100% in favor of authentic spiritual growth in all its expressions and forms. This is why God placed us on this earth—to grow in His image and likeness. How do we best achieve this desired objective? Ideally, if we were a large, prosperous denomination we could support several Temenoses in North America, as well as plant new churches throughout the country. But the reality is that our personnel and financial resources are limited, and our fiscal stability is being heavily impacted by this one project. Thus the nagging, bottom-line question that persists in my mind is: Can our small organization fund and sustain this multi-million dollar project over the next decade, and beyond?

My reading of the denomination's budget tells me very clearly: If we adopt and complete the total Temenos project, within a few short years we will face a truly major financial crisis. According to the information I have, which is in the *Journal* and the last budget, I don't see how we can underwrite the proposed Temenos project, and, at the same time, continue to maintain our programs at their current level. The money is just not there.

Theoretically we could fund the *Temenos* program for the next ten or twenty years, but if we do so, every other denominational activity will have to be drastically curtailed. *The Messenger*, summer camps, outreach

endeavors, Support Unit programs, meetings, and every other national function would be dramatically reduced. We would be a very different kind of church.

This summer in San Francisco our General Council will take a critically important vote to determine the future direction of Temenos. Undoubtedly this issue will arise in some form on the floor of Convention. In all these deliberations we are called upon to look clearly, objectively and compassionately at the overall, long-range picture of our church. Let's get *all* the facts and figures out on the table so that everyone understands exactly what the issues and implications are. Questions come to mind, such as:

- What is the total cost of Temenos so far, including loss of revenue from funds invested in the project to date?
- Would it be possible to plan for a more modest Temenos project?
- Since its inception, how many staying members have come into the Swedenborgian Church through Temenos?
- In 1994, how many Swedenborgian workshops and programs (other than Sunday services) were offered at Temenos? How many were held? How many people attended, and what was the ratio of Swedenborgians and non-Swedenborgians attending?
- What is the projected financial impact of completing the project on the denomination's overall program, short-term and long-term? In brief, what do we have to give up?

I have a letter from the director of Five Oaks, a United Church retreat center near here which is used 52 weeks a year. He tells me that his center is heavily subsidized by the United Church, as are all of their centers in Canada. If Temenos goes ahead as planned, is it possible to determine approximately how much financial aid will be necessary each year? Undoubtedly you will have other issues and concerns to add to the list.

The important thing is that we have all the relevant information clearly before us when the decision is made, so that we can vote in an intelligent and constructive manner. In this way,

whatever the outcome, the best interests of the whole church will have been served.

*Paul Zacharias
Kitchener, Ontario*

Response to Temenos Questions

Paul Zacharias cries out for acceptance of a variety of religious approaches and forms within our church. Amen. I have never said or suggested that there is only one right way. In a congregational form of government like ours there will always be different ideas as to how we should function as a church. The purpose of the Opinion column in *The Messenger* is to invite the expression of differences. As Swedenborg reminded us, there is more than one gate into the City.

Paul is concerned about "divisiveness" within the church. When do differences of viewpoint become divisive? It appears to be when money is involved. Divisiveness also occurs, I believe, when attacks are made on other positions through sweeping generalizations and assumptions without reference to established facts and figures. Paul asks for information.

Facts:

- The General Council has made no future commitments for capital expenditures at Temenos.
- Council has said that any new buildings will depend on the success of funds drives.
- Council employed an outside consultant to determine whether Temenos could become self-supporting. A 31-page report of the consultant concluded that the center could be self-supporting if a new building with 16 beds were constructed. On the basis of this report, Council authorized a \$600,000 funds drive to build the retreat house.
- Approximately \$250,000 has already been pledged without any appeal to the church membership. Proposals are now being drafted for foundation support.
- The denomination spent a total of \$3,301 for Temenos in the year 1994. No support has been approved for 1995.
- The Philadelphia church has committed over \$700,000 for site

development at Temenos. General Convention has not been asked for a dime.

- Any expenditures for fund-raising have come from monies contributed, and not from denomination funds.

Paul theorizes over the disastrous impact of Convention support of Temenos for the next ten or twenty years. What is the basis for this anxiety? I am convinced that Temenos can be completely self-supporting within three years of the completion of the new building. Among the basis for this conviction are the prospects of an active wedding ministry, and the continued financial support of the Philadelphia church, together with the fact that the eight years of our operation has been a steady increase in operating income. Operating income covered 85% of operating expenses in 1994. In 1994 rental of facilities to outside groups brought in over \$40,000, twice the income for 1993. A new building will more than double that, for we turn groups away every week because of lack of space.

One of the great appeals of Temenos, to me, is the integration of the retreat center with an established church society. It is not a case of either/or, but both/and. We can support and encourage each other, to the glory of God.

*Ernest O. Martin
West Chester, Pennsylvania*

Response to Capon/Lawson Exchange

To the Editor:

Enjoying the February *Messenger*, I was moved to respond to the exchange of messages between Edwin Capon and Carol Lawson on the subject of "the decline in our denomination's membership." Undoubtedly, all those who love the doctrines given through Swedenborg not only hope that they will flourish and fill this troubled world, but are perplexed that the publishing and distribution of these volumes for over two centuries has not moved them into the "best seller" list.

We wonder that our church memberships have not flourished far beyond those strange denominations

with so little real and rational doctrines and that the world seems somehow to reject or ignore the wonderful teachings that we love.

In your exchange of letters the issue fixed on the values of certain programs and features which were created with the hopes that many more people would thereby come to know about Swedenborg and his ideas. These "spiritual growth centers" invite newcomers to "come and see" what wonderful truths make it possible to *enter with understanding into the mysteries of faith.* Their indifference, however, should not be interpreted to mean that such centers as Almont, Blairhaven, the Stone House, Fryeburg and DeLand have been failures.

Though we cannot see how and why it happens, there are still those who look into these pages and see wonderful brightness that completely changes their lives. All of us know of miraculous enlightenments—comparable to the Rev. John Clowes' visions so long ago—which make all our efforts and our hopes worthwhile.

*Leon S. Rhodes
Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania*

Response to Response

To the Editor:

In his response to "the exchange of messages between Edwin Capon and Carol Lawson," Leon Rhodes seems to have missed my point. Mrs. Lawson's article stressed the issue of declining membership. My response was to that issue. I was not suggesting that places like "Almont, Blairhaven, Stone House, Fryeburg, and DeLand" were failures or that they did not acquaint many people with our teachings. I was merely pointing out that our local churches had been more productive of new members and that it would not be wise to neglect our parish churches in the distribution of our resources.

*Edwin G. Capon, President
Newton, Massachusetts*

Swedenborg on Talk Shows

To the Editor:

Just to add to Edwin Capon's and Carol Lawson's discussions of what

(Continued on page 62)

Opinion

(from page 61)

moves a denomination forward (January and February), we should also very seriously consider injecting our ideas into the media.

A problem that local churches face is that "Swedenborg" "Swedenborgian," on the sign outside, seems strange. It excites no recognition in the average person, and it vaguely suggests a probably Swedish ethnic church which, of course, would not be for everybody. The answer to this is to provide a niche in our culture for the general recognition of one more honorable name. We can do it by providing places of general vision, by helping our local churches do their job, *and* by entering into popular interests with well-shaped commentary through magazine articles, radio talk shows, local television talk shows, etc.

For example, in the United States we have a longstanding obsession with problems in relationships between men and women. The discussions that literally support many women's (and a few men's) magazines very often could use a hand up to a higher level of thinking. Swedenborg's *Marital Love* is a perfect source of ideas that can broaden and deepen those discussions. Just one perceptive article in a national magazine, with an appropriate reference to Swedenborg, could be a breakthrough for a number of people across the country. Multiply that by a sustained media effort, and the results could be dramatic.

It's cheap, too.

Steve Koke
Rough and Ready, California

Thoughts about *The Messenger* from Kansas . . .

To the Editor:

I read your names . . . Lawson, Capon, Gutfeldt, Lawrence, Allison, Woofenden, Martin . . . with awe.

Steeped in the traditions of our church, I look to you as church leaders, representing the values and beliefs of our church.

I wait each month for your guiding words and thoughts in *The Messenger*.

But I am growing weary . . . I'm

tired of hearing about the church's dwindling numbers. I'm confused about the bickering over Temenos, Stone House, Wayfarers Chapel.

What are we saying if the measure and focus of our outreach or "mission" project is to "bring in new members to the Church"? Swedenborg's focus wasn't "members." GOD's measure isn't "members."

If we believe what we study, how

can we doubt that GOD has a plan to sustain the Church of The New Jerusalem?

Let IT be what IT is.

Let people find IT . . .

if they're searching.

Live IT . . . so others want IT.

IT is not a place.

IT is not measurable by numbers.

Jane Hauserman Siebert
Pretty Prairie, Kansas

TEMENOS PROGRAM CALENDAR

Spring 1995

For further information, call 610 / 696-8145.
or write to: Rev. Erni Martin, Director
Temenos Conference and Retreat Center
685 Broad Run Rd., Westchester, PA 19382.

A Day Apart:
A Time for Quietness
April 10, May 5, June 5

A Time Apart:
**For Clergy and Professionals
Who Work With People**
April 30 to May 1

**Deepening Our Spiritual
Journey**
April 5

Writing From Within the Self
March 17 to 19

Uniting Sex, Self and Spirit
April 1

Women's Group
April 5, 12, 19, 26,
May 3, 10, 24, 31

**Astrology, Spirituality and the
Inner Journey**
April 8

**Healing Power of Breath
and Breathwork Processing**
April 22 to 23

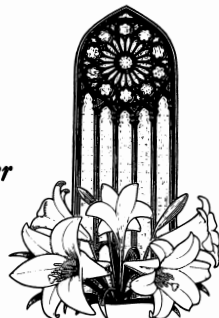
**Transforming the Family:
Seeing the Past with New Eyes**
April 28 to 29

Ritual for Healing Grief
April 30

May Festival
Dances of Universal Peace
May 7

**Women Who Run With the
Wolves**
Coming Home to Self
May 20

**Creative Process as
Spiritual Pathway**
**Finding Images from the
Healing Source**
June 3



Stone House Bookstore (continued from page 59)

Swedenborgians would exclude most of that. Instead, the primary consideration has been whether the books and classes help people grow spiritually. Are they useful? Do they facilitate regeneration? Even with such standards, we also depend upon recommendations from our clientele and then try to use our best judgment. Requests have led us to specialize in alternative health and healing, recovery issues, men's and women's spirituality and relationships. We trust that people have the God-given ability to know what is good and true for themselves and what they need for their own growth and regeneration. In this way, we encourage the process of learning and growing, trusting that the process will lead to a higher, more complete understanding and, perhaps more importantly, to a more joyful, fulfilling, and loving life.

The Stone House has moved twice and currently occupies a spacious facility with two classrooms and six offices. Sales grew slowly from \$5,000 in 1986 to \$70,000 in 1993, then exploded to \$225,000 in 1994. The number of classes offered has increased from an initial 5 per month to about 50 per month. More than 3000 people are currently on our mailing list and an additional 200 sign up every month. Our experience has demonstrated that there is a large and growing population responding to organizations committed to facilitating people's spiritual needs from a broadbased Swedenborgian perspective. □

Death Mauritian Style

(Continued from page 53)

sometimes there are no "calling hours." The body is "disposed of." We often call the services "memorials" instead of funerals. I have heard the viewing of the body referred to as primitive, barbaric and ghoulish. It certainly can be, but I don't think that is the usual intent. It is hard to accept the death of someone. For many people seeing and touching the body helps the family to sink in.

In 1981 I performed the funeral of Dale Glanders in LaPorte, Indiana. I shall always remember the people filing by the casket at the close of the service for one last look. Several of the grandchildren of their own accord climbed up to the body to kiss him and say "goodbye, Grandpa." It seemed odd to me at the time but now I'm glad those mourners had one last look at his earthly form so they were not denied their final farewell.

Perhaps our attempt to ignore the body's importance is a denial of how uncomfortable we are with the death of the body. Could it be that letting go of something as dear to us as a loved one's body is so traumatic that we have tried to pretend it is of no value? It may be that another part of our repugnance for looking at or touching a cold corpse is that it reminds us of our own physical mortality which we are not yet ready to face. Yes, the spirit is the real person, but I think it is healthy and normal to look death straight in the face and say goodbye to the shell which has represented it. □

The Rev. Eric Allison is Pastoral Ministries church growth consultant. "Death Mauritian Style" is one of a series of reflective articles Eric has written during his travels in various parts of the world. Eric resides in Kitchener, Ontario, and was minister in Mauritius from September of 1992 to September of 1993.

Passages

Baptisms

Graber, Hilbert—Debbie Graber (mother) and children Travis Terry, Lindsay Nicole and Taylor Leigh Graber; and Bradley Wood Hilbert and his infant son Adam Bradley Hilbert, were baptized into the Christian faith December 25, 1994, at the Swedenborgian Church in Pretty Prairie, Kansas, the Rev. Eric Zacharias officiating.

Confirmations

Colligan, Hendry, McGaa, Pikulik—Kip Colligan, Tiffany Hendry, Kibbe McGaa, and Mary Kay Pikulik were confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church June 19, 1994, at the New York Swedenborgian Church, the Rev. Robert McCluskey officiating.

Goldsmith, Hertz, Lowry—Lynne Goldsmith, Karen Hertz, and Mary Lowry were confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church January 29, 1995, at the Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound in Redmond, Washington, the Rev. Steve Pults officiating.

Marriage

McGaa and Conti—Kibbe Jean McGaa and Russell Paul Conti were united in marriage October 1, 1994, at the Virginia Street Swedenborgian Church in St. Paul, Minnesota, the Rev. Robert McCluskey officiating.

Deaths

Swanton—Henry A. Swanton, lifelong member of the Swedenborgian Church, first in Washington where he grew up, and later in San Diego, entered the spiritual world January 18, 1995. He leaves his wife, Ethel, two children, four grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. Henry served on the Board of Managers of Wayfarers Chapel, Board of Directors of the Pacific Coast Association, and was on the Board of Trustees of the local church, serving as president, treasurer or board member throughout the years. A resurrection service was conducted at the San Diego church January 27, with lay leader Eldon Smith officiating.

Eugene Carlson, vice president of the Lennox Township Swedenborgian Church in Norway, Iowa, writes the sad news that his only brother, Don Carlson, 70, and his only daughter, Teresa L. Gadberry-Smith, 23, entered the spiritual world within a week of each other, Don on January 30 and Teresa on February 6, 1995. Teresa died of a stroke, leaving a husband and two-year-old daughter. Services for Dan were held at Spirit Lake February 3, with burial at Estherville, and for Teresa in DeSoto February 10, with burial at Richwoods, Missouri. Cards and letters welcome; Eugene may be reached at 918 Perry, Knoxville, Iowa 50138.

Church Family News:

The Rev. Eric Zacharias writes that his wife Betty, who had a bad fall down basement stairs January 21 that broke both her arms, is recovering well. He says, "Soon after the accident the flow of cards and letters from friends throughout the church began. Betty and I thank all of you for your words of support, concern and your prayers for a full recovery. All of this has done much to lighten the burden of the frustrating limitations of virtually useless arms. (I have learned, too, that one can learn to function in a role heretofore undreamed of when circumstances demand it). The healing process is now well underway. And surely the love within our church family that binds us is the greatest gift of all." Cards to Betty may be sent to Rt. 1, Pretty Prairie, KS 67570. [At this writing, Betty hopes to have the casts removed by March 15].

Important Church Calendar Dates

- March 23-26 EdSU/GOSU/PMSU Joint Meeting—Temenos
- April 1-2 Augmentation Fund Committee—Central Office, Newton
- April 2-4 CAM—SSR, Newton, MA
- April 23-24 Retirement Committee—Central Office, Newton
- April 27-28 Wayfarers Chapel Spring Board Meeting
- May 5-6 SSR Board—Temenos
- May 7 Mass Association Annual Meeting—Blairhaven
- May 18 COMSU—Temenos
- May 19-20 Temenos Board—Temenos
- July 2-9 1995 Convention—San Francisco



ARTWORK WANTED!

The submissions are flowing in for the "Family Graces and Bedtime Prayers" project . . . Sincerest thanks to all who have contributed so far.

. . . We now need **original artwork** to make this book appealing to the eyes as well as the ears! . . . All ages are welcomed and **encouraged** to contribute!

Please share your images of the blessings of mealtime gratitude and evening reflection. Be creative!

Please contribute your signed, original artwork by 5/1/95 to:
Susanne Lorraine, 387 Gorham Road, Scarborough, ME 04074 (Thanks!)

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.

Book Review

The Father, A Life of Henry James Sr.

By Alfred Habegger

Illustrated, 573 pp. New York:
Farrar, Straus & Giroux. \$30.

Reviewed by Louise Woofenden

Masterful is not too strong a word to describe this new biography of Henry James Sr. Alfred Habegger, a member of the English faculty at the University of Kansas, spent years researching every aspect of James' life, unearthing a large amount of hitherto undiscovered material. The size of the book might seem a deterrent to some, but Habegger's penetrating insights, engaging style and knack for suspense draw the reader's interest on, through substance and trivia, in the story of this brilliant, inconsistent, vituperative, self-aggrandizing, maddening man. A plus for New Church readers is that for the first time James' connection with Swedenborg's doctrines is dealt with in depth. We probably already have the idea that these doctrines filtered through from Henry Sr. to his famous sons, William, the psychologist, and Henry, the novelist. But Habegger carefully addresses the complexities of the elder James' Swedenborgian connection and his relationships with New Church leaders. We groan at the way in which James distorted the teachings, we laugh and cry at his blunders and misfortunes. It is not Habegger's style to labor or to gloss over the troubled and troubling nature of his subject. He is superbly fair, letting the man speak for himself. The author spent a significant amount of time in the SSR library, addressing many thoughtful questions to staff and faculty. *The Father* is a must for serious readers. Buy a copy, and request that your library get one, too.

Louise Woofenden is a writer and former archivist for the Swedenborg School of Religion library.

**The Swedenborgian Church
of North America
The Messenger
48 Sargent Street
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Announcement and Invitation

The Social Concerns Education Committee is planning to present a mini-course and set up an information center at the 1995 Convention. The focus for the mini-course and information center will be local social action by individuals and groups. I invite you to participate by sending brief descriptions of local social action activities that have been done or are being done or activities you think are needed and could be done. Examples can be drawn from your own experiences, efforts within your church group, efforts by other groups, or other sources.

Many kinds of examples could be included, such as:

- Describe work in your local community with a shelter for the homeless.
- A training program to improve employment skills.
- A shelter for domestic violence victims or a domestic violence prevention program.
- Addressing differences in such areas as race, gender, sexual orientation, and class.
- Efforts to improve the quality of housing or caring for the natural environment.

Please offer any examples you think might be helpful, and send them to: *Social Concerns Education Committee, c/o Rev. Dr. Ted Klein, 48 Sargent Street, Newton, MA 02158.*

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