

The Messenger

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HELEN KELLER Centennial Issue

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Helen Keller 1880 — 1980

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The Coming World Religion

As we move into a new decade it seems appropriate to take a sweeping view of the religious scene in the world today. It's a mixed scene, as it has been for many centuries. Islam is on the upsurge in the Middle East and in Africa; the fanatic Muslim faction, in Iran and elsewhere, exerting serious pressure on the social and economic fabric of the world. In Northern Ireland the Catholics and Protestants are no nearer a solution to their age-old problems. The conservative element in many world religions is becoming more vocal, more powerful.

At the same time, one senses on all sides a great yearning for spiritual truth and wholeness. The religious spirit, the religious quest, is vitally alive today. Deep soul searching is the mark of our age. People want to go beyond the external forms to the inner, living reality. Many of the old values are being questioned. Hard questions are being asked by people both within and outside of organized religion. We do live in an age of transition; thus ferment and uncertainty is to be expected. But what is God's long-range plan for His world?

In A.C. 1799.4 Swedenborg wrote (and I paraphrase): Doctrinal views distinguish Christian churches; accordingly people call themselves Catholics, Lutherans, and so on. But this wouldn't have happened if they had made love for the Lord and charity to the neighbor the most important thing. Then people could "agree to disagree" in matters of doctrine, and every one would live, and let others live, according to his/her own conscience. Living according to the spirit, the light of the Lord, would be the only requirement. Then there would be one universal church, hostilities and misunderstandings would cease, and the Lord's Kingdom would be attained.

I dream about what this Universal Church will be like. And I think it will have at least the four following characteristics: 1) There will be a love and worship of One God—a Divine Personal Being of Perfect Love, Wisdom and Power—recognized as the Energy behind and

within all of creation. 2) The One World—One Family—concept will expand and become part of our daily experience. In our minds we can visualize the kind of world we want, where there is genuine peace and justice for all, where every person has the basic needs of body and spirit met. And if we picture this kind of a world we can build it. 3) The reality of the spiritual world; its impact on planet Earth; the ongoingness of personal life—these facts will be generally accepted, with people's lives being changed accordingly. 4) There are many pathways to God. The Holy City has twelve gates. We all walk along our own path at our own pace, and we can respect others walking along a different pathway.

The Coming World Religion will be much more than this, but I believe it will have at least these four qualities. And as you read the articles in this *Messenger* by and about Helen Keller, notice how often she so beautifully expressed these same sentiments. Despite living in a black, soundless world, she still caught radiant glimpses of the Kingdom of God coming and being established on this earth. This conviction, this promise, sustained her through time and into eternity.

We are grateful to Clayton Priestnal and Ernest Martin for their contributions in this special issue of the *Messenger*, and our thanks to Marion Kirven and Star Silverman for their valuable research in the S.S.R. Library. The front cover photograph and the picture on page 7 are reprinted courtesy of the American Institute for the Blind.

P.Z.

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*Insights Into The Workings
of Divine Providence*

IGNORANT COOPERATION

*by George Dole
Sharon, Mass.*

PART II

"It is a law of Divine Providence that man should as if from himself remove evils as sins in the external man; and thus not otherwise can the Lord remove evils in the internal man, and then at the same time in the external. (D.P. 100)."

The law has several corollaries. One is that we must distinguish people from their evils. What we may think of as "an evil person" is one of the Lord's children who is in the process of succumbing to the hells. If we attend solely to the evils, we may be able to force some attention in behavior. This may be necessary, and it may be all we can do, but it is largely the task of civil law.

The fullest cooperation with the Lord's purpose comes, though, when we discover the person who is succumbing, and stand with that person against the hells. It does not mean wearing rose-colored glasses, believing that everyone is *really* good, that all criminals are victims of circumstances. It does mean that there is an essentially good person alive within everyone in this world. That is "the good in the neighbor, which is to be loved," so that we cannot genuinely love a person until we discover it.

Discovery of this "good person" does not blind us to evils. If anything it heightens our resolve to see them clearly, and help the person separate them, put them in their place.

Another corollary of this law involves the "as if of self" principle. This one is rather sneaky, and I'm not prepared to take it very far. But we know there is a difference between giving someone encouragement and feeding someone's self-esteem, between helping someone accept responsibility and making someone feel guilty. These differences center in differences of what we might call "ego-identification," which is the point of issue in the "as if of self" principle.

A third corollary involves the distinction made between the inner and the outer persons.

People have some control over their outward behavior. They have no direct control over their basic preferences. I wonder how often we lay very unrealistic expectations on people, how often we treat them as though they could change the way they feel. How often have you heard someone say, "I know I shouldn't feel that way, but I do?" Who says you shouldn't? Perhaps the feeling is not good. That is not the point. The point is that the word "should" implies direct control, and we do not have that kind of control over our deeper feelings. Somebody, which probably includes me and you, is sending out some misleading messages. Separating the impossible from the possible is necessary if we are to give due credibility to the possible. "It is a law of Providence that man should not be compelled by external means to think and will, and thus to believe and love the things of religion, but should persuade and at times compel himself to do so." (D.P. 129).

This is so much the reverse side of the first law concerning freedom that it needs little comment. It does remind me of some hopes that the astronauts would find Swedenborg's descriptions of people on the moon to be true. This probably would have focused a great deal of attention to our church. I feel it is hard to think of a more compelling means or a more external one.

Self - persuasion and self - compulsion add a further touch. They are rationality and freedom. We can treat people as though they were in control of their decisions. We can recognize that deciding requires effort. Perhaps we need to lay less stress on disciplining to others and more stress on nurturing self-discipline. I recall my father saying that a minister's job was to make himself unnecessary. That is, his job was to help people grow to the point where his moral, finite support was no longer needed.

It is quite possible to "help" people in ways that increase their depending on the helper. We can give people the answers instead of helping them find them. They will appreciate this very

much—my kids would like it if I treated their homework that way. But if this is not the way to treat children, whose abilities are still quite limited, how do we justify it within the adult church? It is appalling to find oneself being quoted as an authority. Authorities are substitutes for the work of thinking. And conversely, it is delightful to discover that something one has said has started up some thought in someone else, that a mind has been turned on, put in gear.

It would be nice if we could isolate the image of the minister as “the person with the answer,” shoot it with a silver bullet, and bury it at the crossroads with a stake through its heart. An answer is like anything else in life—you get out of it no more than you put into it. Easy come, easy go.

Of course we can give answers. And deep down inside, we have some notion of their differing values. “Is Divine Providence universal?” “Yes.” If the question is prompted by idle curiosity, the answer does not mean much. If it is asked by the lady whose life has just been shattered, it means a great deal. She has put a great deal into the question. If she accepts our answer, it will be because it is her answer, not because it is ours.

“It is a law of Divine Providence that man should be led and taught by the Lord from heaven by means of the Word, and doctrine and preaching from the Word, and this to all appearance as if of himself.” (D.P. 154).

This one is different. How does it apply to Buddhists, for example? It is a universal law only if we take “the Word” to mean that revelation which is accessible to a given person. If we accept this broader meaning, then the law not only works, it is also a necessary law. For if there is to be such a thing as freedom to follow the Lord, there must be some source of knowledge as to where the Lord is going.

But if we make this adjustment, there are corollaries. It means that there is something in everyone’s life that is functioning as “the Word.” Perhaps we cannot assume even in the case of Christians that it is the Bible. It may be Freud, I don’t know. But it does seem that we need to do a lot of listening to other people to find out where they get their convictions. This one, I think, needs some special attention beyond the scope of this talk.

It’s nice to end up with a simple one. “It is a law of Divine Providence that man should not perceive and feel anything of the operation of Divine Providence, but still that he should know and acknowledge it.” (D.P. 175).

We don’t need to pretend to be able to explain why things are happening. Even more, we need not to pretend to this ability. We don’t know. We can guess; there’s no law against that. But we should not from some mistaken piety allow our guesses to masquerade as doctrine. For as long as it is all right to tell the truth, it will be all right to say, “I don’t know.”

How often do we feel we must back up our belief in Providence by offering an explanation of why something is happening? Let us look at one last example. It would seem necessary to our faith that no one be deprived of any spiritual benefit except by his own choice. This would mean that no one would die if by longer life on earth a favorable change in ruling love could be affected. So it would seem that everyone dies “at the best of time.”

I prefer to believe this, but I cannot point to a single death as proof. There are one or two that are suggestive, but that is not very many out of the millions and millions of deaths that have occurred, many of them apparently quite inopportune.

Belief in this case is clearly a matter of choice. No death can be proved to have been at the wrong time for the person involved, which is after all the point at issue. So if someone disagrees with me, we should talk about something else, preferably about what that belief means. If that person challenges me to explain some particular death, I cannot, and I only establish myself as a potential fool if I try. I don’t know. I just plain simply don’t know. But neither does anyone else on earth.

So there we have one principle and five laws of Divine Providence, with suggestions in each case of how we may cooperate with the Lord’s policies even though we “do not know” precisely what He is up to at any given moment.

If there is one point I would insist on, it is that He is always up to something. He did not dictate the Word and the writings and then retire to Southern California. He is alive and well and working among us. So to conclude with, here is a little fable.

Once there was an American who went to Europe. He bought a guide book—one that rated all the restaurants, and he rented a car. One evening he found himself in a small town. He checked the guide book, and not a single restaurant was mentioned. So he just took his chances and went into one that looked clean.

Well it happened that the cook was sick, and the cook’s uncle had taken over—one of the finest chefs in the country. So when the meal came, our tourist enjoyed it immensely. He couldn’t quite believe it, but he did.

Finally he got to a real four-star restaurant. Since he didn't know the language, he ordered by price. Now it happened that the most expensive things on the menu were all frozen dishes imported pre-cooked from far-off lands, and they had a tendency to show their

age, especially since they didn't sell very well to the regular customers.

Our tourist struggled his way through. "I guess," he thought, "I just don't like good food."

CAMBODIA— LAND OF HUNGER

Cambodia has been described as a once gentle, neutral and agriculturally lush nation. The course of world history in the last 10 years has brought upon the Cambodian people the ravages and terrors that humans can inflict upon each other. Infants dying of starvation are commonplace. Malnutrition reportedly affects 80% of the children. Observers returning from the area tell of seeing "very few children under the age of five years."

Jacques Beamont of the U.N. describes Cambodia as follows: "Nothing approaches the desolation . . . the disease, the starvation. It is all incomprehensible. I have not seen anything like it before . . . not anything."

Reports indicate that a population of 8 million in 1970 has been reduced to 4.7 million. Of those 4.7 million remaining, as many as 2 to 3 million face starvation. It is estimated that between Thanksgiving and Christmas 200,000 Cambodians will lie down in the countryside, or in ill-equipped shacks that pass for hospitals, or in squalid refugee camps, and quietly die.

Mahatma Gandhi once said, "To the hungry, God comes in the form of Bread."

Remember: When we talk about hunger, we are talking about people like you and me. Statistics don't starve. Babies do.

If you would like to help, send a contribution to:

(in U.S.A.)	(in Canada)
Church World Service	Operation Lifeline
Cambodia Appeal	Cambodia Refugees
Elkhart, Indiana 46515	8 York St.
	Toronto M5U 1R2

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NEW CHURCH CONGRESS

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Please note that the closing date for receiving bookings is January 31st, 1980. If you would like to meet and discuss ideas with people from throughout the New Church world and if you would like to learn about some of the latest thinking that is taking place in the Church, send your booking form and a fee of 172 US Dollars (70 Pounds Sterling) per person to:

1980 New Church Congress
Oaklands New Church Centre
Winleigh Road
Birmingham B20 2HN
England

CONVENTION CALENDAR

Jan. 7 - 9	Committee on Worship Newton, MA.
Jan. 17 - 19	Dept. of Publications Newton, MA.
Jan. 31 - Feb. 1, 2	General Council Waltham, MA.
Feb. 14 - 20	Ministers/Wives Retreat Orlando, Fla.
Feb. 24 - 29	5th Florida Conference DeLand, Fla.
Feb. 28, 29 - March 1	College Trustees Urbana, Ohio
March 14 - 16	Board of Education Almont, Mich.
April 14 - 16	Committee on Worship Newton, MA.
June 25 - 29	GENERAL CONVENTION WELLESLEY, MA.



Buenos Aires New Church Group. Standing: J. F. A. Habegger

BOARD OF MISSIONS REPORT: BUENOS AIRES

The story begins around 1933 when I answered a small ad in *The American Magazine*. The ad referred to Correspondence Courses offered by the New Church Theological School in Cambridge, Mass. At the time I was a young fellow, deeply religious, living and working on my father's farm in northern Argentina. When the lessons finally arrived, my command of the English language was not good enough to follow them, but my interest in reading Swedenborg's books had been awakened.

Many years later, then working in Buenos Aires, I came across Swedenborg's *Heaven and Hell* and *True Christian Religion* in Perkin's English Book Store. I bought both volumes immediately and read them over and over again and became more and more convinced of the great truths contained therein.

In 1948 or 1949 I met my first Swedenborgian in the person of Mr. Tomas H. Spiers, an officer of The First National City Bank of New York then stationed in Buenos Aires. We became close friends and it was then that the Swedenborgian work in Argentina really had its

beginning. We corresponded for many years, and then after we both retired from our respective business careers the time had arrived for a more concrete effort to promote Swedenborg's teachings in Spanish. In 1968 a small group of interested people which I had formed was recognized as an affiliate of the General Convention, with myself appointed as Lay Leader.

Spreading the New Church teachings in Spanish speaking countries is difficult because we lack Spanish editions of Swedenborg's writings. Fortunately the Swedenborg Foundation will soon print *Heaven and Hell* and Sig Synnestvedt's *The Essential Swedenborg* in Spanish which will be an invaluable help for us. We meet in one another's homes with an attendance of between four to ten members. The flame is alive and we are confident that against all difficulties the great truths revealed by Swedenborg will be accepted by more Spanish speaking people in the future. We are grateful for the assistance granted to us to fulfill this task, to which we are heartily committed.

J. F. A. Habegger

1880 HELEN KELLER 1980



Helen Keller's Message

*"Bring forth the blind people that have eyes,
and the deaf that have ears." (Isaiah xliii. 8)*

For those who have been stricken blind, the New Church carries a precious message of comfort. It offers them spiritual treasures which more than compensate for the loss of earth's day. The doctrines set forth by Emanuel Swedenborg bring them by a wondrous way to God's City of Light. I have walked through its sunlit ways of truth, I have drunk of its sweet waters of knowledge, and the eyes of my spirit have been opened, so that I know the joy of vision which conquers darkness and circles Heaven. No, the New Church does not open our eyes to the physical blue of the sky or the green of the valleys; but through its teachings I have received soul - sight. At will I turn from the dark and look upon a radiant spiritual world. My silent dark is glorious with visions of eternal day. Darkness covers me like a garment, it is true; but my heart is full of the sun. For a little way the road lies through the shadow of God's wings; but I know that He is near at hand, and I await with confident faith the rapturous moment when I shall see the light of His countenance. His ways are full of goodness, and He has appointed to each his place. In His hand my affliction bursts into flower like Aaron's rod. My blindness is part of the working out of His divine plan. My incompleteness He transmutes into a gift of hope to others. Therefore I accept blindness, not in dumb resignation, but with exultation.

Blind people who have spiritual vision are like the little bird perched on a slender twig that sways and bends beneath him; but he sings without fear because he knows he has wings. They have learned that happiness is not attained through outward circumstances — it dwells in the singing depths of the heart. Life is what we think it, and the measure of life is service. Resolve to do something worth doing — that is the resolution of a seeing soul.

Those who explore the dark with love as a torch and trust as a guide find it good. The blind people who have eyes know that they live in a spiritual world inconceivably more wonderful than the material world which is veiled from them. The landscapes they behold never fade. The flowers they look upon are immortal flowers which grow in God's garden. The only really blind are those who will not see the truth — those who shut their eyes to the spiritual vision. For them alone darkness is irrevocable.

To the man born blind our Lord said, "Go wash in the pool of Siloam." The young man obeyed and went his way. He returned with his eyes full of the sweet light of day. His neighbors marvelled at the miracle and said, "Is not this he that sat and begged?" A change far greater than that which those wondering people beheld in their once sightless friend is wrought in those who receive new sight from the purifying waters of spiritual truth and unselfish love. The darkness which oppressed their blind hearts dissolves in the dawn of divine light. They walk confidently in the City where the sun never goes down, and the silver rays of the moon are never withdrawn. They hear God's myriad voices speaking to them, sometimes in the song of a bird, sometimes in the cry of a human soul. They discover in themselves new capacities, new aspirations, and their thoughts go forth as the morning light to fructify the lives of their fellowmen. They shall be God's witnesses unto the preciousness of spiritual vision. Thus shall the Lord of Light bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears.

HELEN KELLER

HELEN KELLER'S RELIGION

Ernest O. Martin

Helen Keller was introduced to the teachings of Swedenborg at the age of thirteen by John Hitz, associate of Alexander Graham Bell. Mr. Hitz had served as the Swiss Consul-General in Washington, D.C. and then became the superintendent of the Volta Bureau, which collected and distributed information about the deaf. Not so well known in official Washington circles was that Mr. Hitz was also the superintendent of the Sunday School of the Swedenborgian Church and a devoted member of that church.

After their meeting in Washington, John Hitz often visited Helen, in Cambridge and later in Wrentham every summer. As an old man of eighty who looked much like Walt Whitman, he spent hours walking with Helen in the country. In his loose clothes, with his velvet cap, his pockets filled with needles and thread, safety-pins, thimbles, bandages, spectacles and books, he spelled his German into her hands, constantly talking Swedenborg, a copy of whose *Heaven and Hell*, in braille, he gave her.

Of those summers in Wrentham she wrote: "He loved to take me out walking early in the morning while the dew lay upon grass and tree and the air was joyous with birdsongs. We wandered through still woods, fragrant meadows, past the picturesque stone walls of Wrentham, and always he brought me closer to the beauty and the deep meaning of Nature. As he talked, the great world shone for me in the glory of immortality. He stimulated in me the love of Nature that is so precious a part of the music in my silence and the light in my darkness. It is sweet as I write to recall the flowers and the laughing brooks and the shining, balmy moments of stillness in which we had joy together. Each day I beheld through his eyes a new and charming landscape, 'wrapped in exquisite showers' of fancy and spiritual beauty. We would often pause that I might feel the swaying of the trees, the bending of the flowers, and the waving of the corn, and he would say, 'the wind that puts all this life into Nature is a marvellous symbol of the spirit of God.'"

For eight years John Hitz devoted a part of each day to copying in braille whatever he thought would give Helen pleasure—stories, biographies of great men, poetry, and studies of nature. When after reading *Heaven and Hell*, she expressed a desire to know more of

Swedenborg's writings, he laboriously compiled books of explanations and extracts to facilitate her reading. She wrote: "Many friends have done wonderful things for me, but nothing like Mr. Hitz's untiring efforts to share with me the inner sunshine and peace which filled his silent years."

In her book, *My Religion*, Helen Keller writes of the death of John Hitz. "I had been visiting my mother, and was on my way back to Wrentham. As usual, I stopped in Washington, and Mr. Hitz came to the train to meet me. He was full of joy and he embraced me, saying how impatiently he had awaited my coming. Then, as he was leading me from the train, he had a sudden attack of heart trouble, and passed away. Just before the end he took my hand, and I still feel his pressure when I think of that dark time. I could not have borne the loss of such an intimate and tender friend if I had thought he was indeed dead. But his noble philosophy and certainty of the life to come braced me with an unwavering faith that we should meet again in a world happier and more beautiful than anything of my dreaming. With me remains always the helpful memory of his rare personality."

Helen Keller spoke of John Hitz as her "spiritual godfather," one who meant more to her than any other person in her life except Teacher, Anne Sullivan Macy. As an expression of her love for Mr. Hitz, and of her deep appreciation for the religious faith that he shared with her, she resolved to write a book in memory of him. Although she had already promised Doubleday and Co. to write a book about her life, the Hitz book took priority. She was encouraged in her resolve by Paul Sperry, minister of the Swedenborgian Church in Washington, D.C.

The book was published in 1927 and titled *My Religion*. In honor of her achievement, Helen Keller was invited to speak at the annual convention of the Swedenborgian Church in Washington, D.C. Grateful church members presented her with a gift of money in support of her work among the handicapped people of the world.

My Religion has been an inspiration to millions of people throughout the world. It has been translated into many languages, transcribed into braille, recorded for talking books, and published in a large-print edition. The

book reveals Helen Keller as a mystic in the sense that she experienced a realm of dimension in life that went beyond that world revealed by her physical senses.

"I do not know if it is the 'mystic' sense I possess, but certainly it is perceptive. It is the faculty that brings distant objects within the cognizance of the blind so that even the stars seem to be at our very door. This sense relates me to the spiritual world. It surveys the limited experience I gain from an imperfect touch world, and presents it to my mind for spiritualization. This sense reveals the Divine to the human in me, it forms a bond between earth and the Great Beyond, between now and eternity, between God and man."

"To one who is deaf and blind, the spiritual world offers no difficulty. Nearly everything in the natural world is as vague, as remote from my senses as spiritual things seem to the minds of most people. I plunge my hands into my large braille volumes containing Swedenborg's teachings, and withdraw them full of the secrets of the spiritual world. The inner, or 'mystic' sense, if you like, gives me vision of the unseen. My mystic world is lovely with trees and clouds and stars and eddying streams I have never 'seen.' I am often conscious of beautiful flowers and birds and laughing children where to my seeing associates there is nothing. They sceptically declare that I see 'light that never was on sea or land.' But I know that their mystic sense is dormant, and that is why there are so many barren places in their lives."

Because of her deep faith in the ongoing-ness of life, Helen had no fear of death. Although she grieved when death brought separation from loved ones, she saw beyond death reunion and reconciliation.

"What is so sweet as to awake from a troubled dream and behold a beloved face smiling upon you? I love to believe that such shall be our awakening from earth to heaven. My faith never wavers that each dear friend I have 'lost' is a new link between this world and the happier land beyond the morn. My soul is for the moment bowed down with grief when I cease to feel the touch of their hands or hear a tender word from them; but the light of faith never fades from my sky, and I take heart again, glad they are free. I cannot understand why anyone should fear death. Life here is more cruel than death—life divides and estranges, while death, which at heart is life eternal, reunites and reconciles. I believe that when the eyes within my physical eyes shall open upon the world to come, I shall simply be consciously living in the country of my heart."

For Helen Keller life was an adventure. Rather than withdrawing into herself, she reached out to embrace life. In the midst of her strenuous activities, she was always strengthened by the sense of the presence of loved ones.

"Heaven, as Swedenborg portrays it, is not a mere collection of radiant ideas, but a practical, liveable world. It should never be forgotten that death is not the end of life, but only one of its most important experiences. In the great silence of my thoughts all those whom I have loved on earth, whether near or far, living or dead, live and have their own individuality, their own dear ways and charm. At any moment I can bring them around me to cheer my loneliness."

Her faith in a realm beyond death helped her to find meaning, purpose and direction to life here and now. She actually experienced the intermingling of the natural and spiritual world.

"The reason why Swedenborg keeps holding up the heaven life as a pattern is that it serves as an object lesson. The old thought tells us we are given earth to prepare for heaven, but there is truth in the other way round. We are given a knowledge of heaven to fit us better for earth. The Vision of Beauty must come into the workshop of Nazareth."

During her lifetime Helen Keller traveled throughout the world bringing courage and inspiration to millions of blind and deaf people and raising funds on their behalf. The world could understand and appreciate this life of service. More difficult to comprehend and experience for myself is the faith that motivated her life.

"As I wander through the dark, encountering difficulties, I am aware of encouraging voices that murmur from the spirit realm. I sense a holy passion pouring down from the springs of Infinity. I thrill to music that beats with the pulses of God. Bound to suns and planets by invisible cords, I feel the flame of eternity in my soul. Here, in the midst of the every-day air, I sense the rush of ethereal rains. I am conscious of the splendour that binds all things of earth to all things of heaven—immured by silence and darkness, I possess the light which shall give me vision a thousandfold when death sets me free."

Ernest O. Martin



MY RELIGION

A Review by Mary Botsford Charlton

Helen Keller's challenge to a world "troubled by the obsessing illusions of the senses," sets forth the articles of her religious faith in luminous English. The style in which she clothes her thoughts is limpid with sincerity, and soaring in its vivid beauty.

"To one who is deaf and blind," she says in this, her latest book, which she has entitled *My Religion*, "the spiritual world offers no difficulty. Nearly everything in the natural world is as vague, as remote from my senses as spiritual things seem to the minds of most people. I plunge my hand deep into my large Braille volumes containing Swedenborg's teachings and withdraw them full of the secrets of the spiritual world."

Learning What Words Meant

In *My Religion* Helen Keller dramatizes a transcendent event, which, as she says "added another precious gift of life." Her first benefaction was her acquisition of language at the age of seven years. Of this she says that, after many attempts to make clear to her the word "water," her teacher, Anne Sullivan Macy, poured some liquid into a cup and formed the letters w-a-t-e-r. "I persisted in confusing the words 'water' and 'cup.' Finally I became angry because Miss Sullivan kept repeating the words over and over again. In despair she led me out to the ivy covered pump house and made me hold the cup under the spout while she pumped. With her other hand she spelled 'w-a-t-e-r' emphatically.

"I stood still, my whole body's attention fixed on the motions of her fingers as the cool stream flowed over my hand. All at once there was a strange stir within me—a misty consciousness, a sense of something remembered. It was as if I had come back to life after being dead! I understood that what my teacher was doing with her fingers *meant* that something cold was rushing over my hand, and that it was possible for me to communicate with other people by these signs.

"It was a wonderful day, never to be forgotten! Thoughts that ran forward and backward came to me quickly . . . Nothingness was blotted out! Delicious sensations rippled through me and sweet, strange things that were



Helen Keller At The Age of Seven

locked up in my heart began to sing. That first revelation was worth all those years in dark, soundless imprisonment. The word, 'water' dropped into my mind like the sun in a frozen winter world. Before that supreme event there was nothing in me except the instinct to eat, drink and sleep. My days were a blank without past, present or future, without hope or anticipation, without interest or joy."

The Second Great Revelation

Then came the second great revelation.

"It was but a step for me from the wonders of nature to the wonders of spirit. When Swedenborg's message was revealed to me, it was as if light came where there had been no light before; the intangible world became a shining certainty . . . Swedenborg makes the future life not only conceivable, but desirable. His message to the living who meet the night of death with its attendant separation and sorrow, sweeps across the heart of humanity like some sweet breath from God's presence. We can now meet death as Nature does, in a blaze of glory, marching to the grave with a gay step, wearing our brightest thoughts and most brilliant anticipation, as Nature arrays herself in garments of gold, emerald and scarlet, as if defying death to rob her of immortality."

As a child, this discoverer of the way of living which she calls *My Religion*, asked many questions about God. When she was told that Nature had made the earth, sky and water and all living creatures, she says, "I soon sensed that Nature was no more concerned with me or

those I loved than with a twig or a fly, and this awoke in me something akin to resentment, 'That fine innuendo by which the soul makes its enormous claim.' It was Phillips Brooks, himself a student of Swedenborg's philosophy, who helped her to grasp the central truth that God is Love and that "His Love is the Light of all men."

On the day that she discovered—as she so beautifully expresses it—"that she had found in touch an eye," she cried exultantly: "It is good to be alive! . . . I held out two trembling hands in life, and in vain silence would impose dumbness upon me henceforth! The world to which I awoke was still mysterious; but there were hope and love and God in it, and nothing else mattered. Is it not possible," she adds, "that our entrance into heaven may be like this experience of mine?"

Notable Quotes

"We are not born again all of a sudden as people seem to think. It is a change which comes over us as we hope and aspire and persevere in the way of the Divine Commandments."

"Sick or well, blind or seeing, bond or free, we are here for a purpose, and however we are situated, we please God better with useful deeds than with many prayers, or pious resignation."

"Only when you trace the footsteps of your spirit to the *house of its delights* shall you behold your own form and face and read your fate in the Book of Life."

"I believe human experience teaches that if we cannot succeed in our present position we could not succeed in any other. Unless, like the lily, we can rise pure and strong above sordid surroundings, we would probably be moral weaklings in any situation. Unless we can help the world where we are, we could not help it if we were somewhere else."

"Nothing but letting the Divine Life have Its way through us will deliver the world."

A Letter to Paul Sperry

"This is just a hurried line to thank you for your kind note. I think the book is progressing pretty well, considering the interruptions. Letters come daily that must be answered. Then there are the occasional lectures which take time and vitality. As I told you before, I find the writing of a book a hard task. It is difficult for any blind person to handle a mass of



Photo by Edward S. Curtis

If you can enjoy the Sun and Flowers
and music where there is nothing except
darkness and silence you have proved
the Mystic Sense — Helen Keller.

material with skill because he cannot go over his manuscript often or quickly. I write several hours a day, and then have to go to South Orange, or Briarcliff or somewhere else to lecture. When I get back to my typewriter, I have lost the thread of my discourse. Having someone read to me what I have written would take too long; so I simply start in again, hit or miss. When more of the manuscript is ready, I shall want to send it to you, if you will be so kind as to read it and criticize it severely and, perhaps, rearrange it to improve the construction . . . I love doing the book. It gives a new prospect and horizon to my daily life. There is an exquisitely quieting and soothing power in the thoughts of Swedenborg for people of my temperament. I hope I shall be able in my book to radiate the spiritual illumination that came to me when I read with my own fingers *Heaven and Hell*. All the days of my life since have "proved the doctrine" and found it true. If people would only begin to read Swedenborg's books with at first a little patience, they would soon be reading them for pure joy. They would find much to be glad of in Heaven, and enough to show them that the soul is everywhere, and enough to prove that love and God are so closely allied, we cannot know much about one and miss the other. But I must stop now and try to put some of these ideas into the book."

Helen Keller's Religious Background

I did not say much about my religious background. My father and his family were Presbyterian. He was a deacon, and took a very active part in church affairs. My mother and her people were Episcopalians; but she never talked to me much about religion. She agreed with Darwin that the whole question of creation was too difficult for the human intellect. "It is absurd," she said "for finite beings to speculate on the Mind of the Infinite." When I told her of my deep interest in Swedenborg, and what he said about Heaven, and life, and little children growing up in beauty and joy, she said, "Let each one of us hope and believe what she can." My teacher, Mrs. Anne Sullivan Macy, who has been my constant companion since I was six years and a half old, was born of Catholic parents; but almost with her pinafore she discarded that faith. She recognizes the beauty and nobility of Swedenborg's message, and rejoices in the joy it brings me . . . I was about ten years old when a zealous aunt decided that it was time I should learn the Catechism. She did not agree with Miss Sullivan that I would not understand a word of it, and that I was not ready for religious instruction . . .

One day I asked my teacher why people could not see God, and I remember her answer, "This human body we live in is a veil which prevents us from seeing Him." She illustrated this with a screen. She made me stand on one side of it, and she stood on the other side. We were quite hidden from each other. She could not see me, and I could not touch her; yet by little signs I knew she was there, only separated from me by the "veil" of Japanese paper! Soon afterwards we went to Boston, and because I persisted in asking all kinds of questions about God and Jesus—"Why did they kill Him? Why does God make some people good and others bad? Why must we all die?"—Miss Sullivan took me to see Phillips Brooks. She felt that if anyone could answer my questions in a simple, beautiful way, he could. Her intuition did not fail her. The great man understood the heart of

a child. He took me on his knee, and told me in the simplest language how God loved me and every one of His children. He made God seem so real that I said, "O yes, I know Him. I had just forgotten His Name." Mr. Brooks told me the wonderful story of Jesus Christ, and my eyes filled with tears, and my heart beat with love for the gentle Nazarene who restored sight to the blind and speech to the mute, healed the sick, fed the hungry and turned sorrow into joy. Indeed, I felt that the Lord's arms were about the whole world, as Mr. Brooks' arms were clasping me, in pitying tenderness. After that visit my knowledge of the character and words of Christ grew day by day; I felt more and more His Life deepening down into mine, and I found more and more to be glad of in the world.

Two years later I met Mr. John Hitz and he told me about Swedenborg, and gave me one of his books to read. As I read it, I felt the Lord as close to me as when Mr. Brooks and I talked about Him. I have many times tried to recall the feelings that led me to take Swedenborg's interpretation of Christianity rather than my father's, but I can find no satisfactory answer. I was not conscious of any difference between what Mr. Brooks taught me and what I read in Swedenborg. It was with me as it was with Joseph Conrad, when an irresistible impulse urged him to go to sea. Like him, I took "a (so to speak) standing jump out of my associations" and traditions—and the rest is what I have grown to be. I do not know whether I adopted the faith or the faith adopted me. I can only say that the heart of the young girl sitting with a big book of raised letters on her lap in the southern sunshine was thrilled by a radiant Presence and an inexpressibly endearing Voice. I was not "religious," but happy, because I saw Him altogether lovely, after the shadows cast upon His Image by the harsh creeds of warring sects and religions.

—from the *Messenger*, Nov. 9, 1927



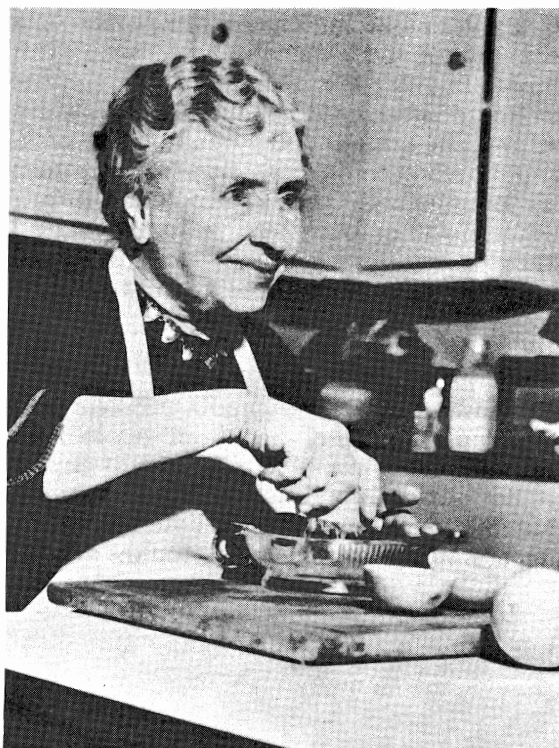
Of all the arts, sculpture meant the most to Helen.



Helen Keller graduated *cum laude* from Radcliffe College.



And she loved President Eisenhower's smile.



She took an active part in household duties.

HELEN KELLER

by Walter C. Rodman

Silence and darkness both forgot,
 Her prisoned soul to freedom rises
 And finds, what other souls could not,
 A world abounding in surprises.
 Each morning an adventure new
 In quest of undiscovered things;
 Incredibilities made true,
 Outreaching all imaginings.
 What wonder that her spirit's eyes
 Are keen to scan the World that waits
 Her second flight; to visualize
 The realm that lies beyond the gates?
 Her heart, aflame with gratitude
 For Earth's realities made known,
 Anticipates in joyous mood
 The Heaven one day to be her own!

In The Garden of The Lord

The Word of God came unto me,
 Sitting alone among the multitudes;
 And my blind eyes were touched with light,
 And there was laid upon my lips a flame of
 fire.
 I laugh and shout, for life is good,
 Though my feet are set in silent ways.
 In merry mood I leave the crowd
 To walk in my garden. Ever as I walk
 I gather fruits and flowers in my hands,
 And with joyful heart I bless the sun
 That kindles all the place with radiant life.
 I run with playful winds that blow the scent
 Of rose and jessamine in eddying whirls.
 At last I come where tall lilies grow,
 Lifting their faces like white saints to God.
 While the lilies pray, I kneel upon the ground;
 I have strayed into the holy temple of the Lord.

Helen Keller

HELEN KELLER SAID . . .

"I believe that we can live on earth according to the teachings of Jesus, and that the greatest happiness will come to the world when man obeys His commandment, 'Love ye one another.'"

"I believe that every question between man and man is a religious question, and that every social wrong is a moral wrong."

"I believe that we can live on earth according to fulfillment of God's will, and that when the will of God is done on earth as it is done in heaven, every man will love his fellow men, and act toward them as he desires they should act toward him. I believe that the welfare of each is bound up in the welfare of all."

"I believe that life is given us so we may grow in love, and I believe that God is in me as the sun is in the colour and fragrance of a flower—the Light in my darkness, the Voice in my silence."

"I believe that only in broken gleams has the Sun of Truth yet shone upon men. I believe that love will finally establish the Kingdom of God on earth, and the Cornerstones of that Kingdom will be Liberty, Truth, Brotherhood and Service."

"I believe that no good shall be lost, and that all man has willed or hoped or dreamed of good shall exist forever."

"I believe in the immortality of the soul because I have within me immortal longings. I believe that the state we enter after death is wrought of our own motives, thoughts, and deeds. I believe that in the life to come I shall have the senses I have not had here, and that my home there will be beautiful with colour, music, and speech of flowers and faces I love."

A UNIVERSAL RELIGION

She had received no pre - knowledge of God other than from this inner, spiritual source. She harbored no learned prejudice about Him, no indoctrination, no religious conditioning such as most children have by the time they are eight. She had heard no one insist that God belongs to this group or that, or that He must be reached by any one specific path. She was alone among the innocent, as few have been. Yet the questions she asked were our questions, "Who has seen God? Where was my soul before I was born? Where does my soul go when I die?"

One morning she brought a handful of violets to Miss Sullivan. The teacher spelled into her hand, "I love Helen."

"What is love?" Helen wanted to know.

"It is here," said Anne Sullivan, placing Helen's hand upon her heart.

"Is love the sweetness of flowers? Is love the warm sun shining?"

"Love," she was told, "is something like the clouds that were in the sky before the sun came out. You cannot touch the clouds, but you feel the rain and know how glad the flowers and the thirsty earth are to have it after a hot day. You cannot touch love either, but you feel the sweetness that it pours into everything."

This was the beginning of a relationship between God and Love. God, too, could not be touched, could not be fully explained. He could only be felt—as love is felt. He could only be experienced, as love is experienced mystically.

"True Christian religion," she says "is full of stimuli for faith in our God-given powers and self-activity . . . We should never surrender to misfortunes or circumstances or even to our faults hopelessly, passively—as if we were but carved images with our hands hanging down, waiting for God's grace to put us into motion. We should give no quarter to spiritual slavery. We should take the initiative, look into ourselves fearlessly, search out new ideas of

what to do, and ways to develop our will power. Then God will give us enough light and love for all our needs."

There is an aura and presence that one sees and feels in Helen Keller. Sensing it, George Bernard Shaw remarked, "Would that all Americans could see as well as you." Touched by it, sculptor Jo Davidson said, "We are all good when we are with you." Deeply aware of it, psychologist William James told her, "The sum of it is that you are a blessing." Dwight D. Eisenhower was moved to tears at his meeting with her, but he smiled for her so that she might "see" with her fingertips the man as she intuitively knew him to be.

There is an aura and it has caused people throughout the world to say, "She is a light and a hope."

An ardent reader of William James, Helen Keller was also influenced by his view that religion cannot be confined to any one institutionalized expression. William Blake gave her another insight into the universality and mysticism of faith when he spoke of his wish to "open the Eternal Worlds, to open the immortal eyes of man inwards into the Worlds of thought, into Eternity . . ."

Walt Whitman, her favorite poet, helped to shape her belief in the oneness of religion and people through his lines:

It seems to me there are other men in other
lands,
yearning and thoughtful;
And it seems to me if I could know those men,
I should
become attached to them, as I do to men in
my own lands;
Oh, I know we should be brethren and lovers,
I know I should be happy with them.
And that is how she felt, too.

—Marcus Bach in
The Circle of Faith

Handicaps Called Banks That Guided Course of Life-Ship To Sea

by *Helen Keller*

Since my seventeenth year I have tried to live according to the teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg. By "church" he did not mean an ecclesiastical organization, but a spiritual fellowship of thoughtful men and women who spend their lives for a service to mankind which outlasts them.

He called it a civilization that was to be born of a healing, universal understanding, service from all to each and each to all, regardless of dogma or ritual.

Swedenborg's religious works are in many long volumes, but their sum and substance are in three main ideas—God as Divine Love, God as Divine Wisdom, and God as Power for use. These ideas come as waves from an ocean which floods every bay and harbor of life with new potency of will, of faith, of effort.

By love I do not mean a vague aimless sentiment, but a desire for good united with wisdom and fulfilled in work and deed. Because God is infinite, He puts resources into each human being that outrun the possibilities of evil. He is always creating in us new forms of self-development, and channels through which, even if unaware, we may quicken new impulses towards civilization, art, or humanitarianism.

My confidence in the final triumph of idealism over materialism does not spring from closing my mental eyes to the suffering or the evil - doing of men, but rather from a steadfast belief that good will climb upward in human nature while the meanness and hatred drop into their native nothingness, and life goes on with unabated vigor to its new earth and heaven.

—*Guideposts*

"The two greatest personages of modern times were Napoleon Bonaparte and Helen Keller; Napoleon attempted to conquer the world with an army and failed; Helen Keller attempted to conquer the world with the power of mind—and succeeded."

Mark Twain

HELEN KELLER TO RETIRE

June 27, 1955, her seventy-fifth birthday, has been set by Helen Keller for retirement from her travelling post with the American Foundation for Overseas Blind, for which she circled the globe five times. Miss Keller stricken blind, deaf, and speechless in infancy, has devoted most of her life to a crusade to prevent such afflictions from striking others and to help the handicapped live useful lives.

"The motivation of my journey has always been the same," she said in an interview, before setting off on her last one in February, "to give hope and courage to physically handicapped peoples and to bring light to the people who believe one's usefulness ends when the calamity of blindness or deafness occurs." But now, she said, it is time to pause. "I have a great deal of writing in mind, some of it work that I have put off for years . . . Then too, I know I will not rest until I can tell the story of the journey I am about to take."

This was in February when Miss Keller was about to start out on her last trip abroad, a 40,000 mile mission to ten million blind and deaf persons in five Asian countries, India, Pakistan, Burma, the Phillipines, and Japan. Her companion, Miss Polly Thompson, was with her to describe everything with a manual "hand - tapping" code worked out many years ago. They have reached more than four - fifths of the world's sightless population, which live in this one area. They have visited institutions and talked to government officials and doctors, hoping to stimulate research, prevention, and treatment in all related fields.

Miss Keller's departure was marked by a dinner, February 1, in her honor at the Waldorf-Astoria, New York. Ambassadors from the five countries which she was to visit spoke at the dinner, as did Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt. The Swedenborg Foundation was represented at the dinner by Dr. John S. Peck and others. Messages were read from President Eisenhower, President Magsaysay of the Phillipines and Prime Minister Nehru of India.

— from the *Messenger*, June 25, 1955

A VISIT TO ARCAN RIDGE

by Clayton Priestnal

On the eve of Helen Keller's eightieth birthday a long-time friend, who was a member of the editorial board of the *New York Times*, wrote this of her: "No formal writing can fully convey Helen Keller's spiritual quality, her deep compassion and a saving grace . . . a keen sense of fun." Even though Miss Keller was released from her infirmities over a decade ago her personality and achievements were so unique and significant that the centenary of her birth will be widely commemorated throughout the world.

It was a memorable privilege for the present writer to have met Helen Keller and experience at first hand the radiance of her spirit and the angelic sphere she carried with her through a long and useful life. The Editor of the *Messenger* has invited me to recount my visits with this remarkable New Church woman.

Not long after I assumed the pastorate of the New York Society, I was invited to call on Miss Keller at her home "Arcan Ridge" in Westport, Connecticut, undoubtedly at her request, to administer the Holy Supper. The impressions received by several visits can perhaps be best communicated to the readers of the *Messenger* by the following exchange of letters:

June 1, 1960

Dear Miss Keller:

The New York Society is deeply appreciative of your generous contribution toward carrying on the uses of the Lord's New Church.

My visit with you was a memorable occasion for me. As a boy I read about a wonderful gentleman by the name of John Hitz who rose up early in the morning to transpose into Braille excerpts from Swedenborg to send to you. Little did I realize then that on one beautiful day in May I would sit down with you in person and share some of the spiritual insights found in the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg.

No exalted prelate has ever had a more inspiring background for the administering of the Holy Supper than I had on Friday last. With singing birds as choiristers, a white, glass-topped table as an altar, your beautiful sun-porch as a cathedral, windows opening onto verdant trees and flowering shrubs, and the glorious sun streaming in, we partook of

heavenly food. How easy it was to believe the truth of Swedenborg's statement that in the Holy Supper the Lord is "wholly present".

Trusting your forthcoming trip to Radcliffe will awaken many happy memories, and looking forward to another visit with you, I remain,

Very cordially yours,
Clayton Priestnal

In response, after she was told a Braille copy of *DIVINE PROVIDENCE* would be sent to her from the National Alliance of New Church Women, Helen Keller responded with these words:

October 24, 1960

Dear Mr. Priestnal:

I have read your letter with real pleasure and I thank you warmly for all the signs it showed of your thoughtful kindness. Truly it was a joy to me to hear the Communion service from which you read last May, and I shall be delighted to receive a Braille copy from you. There is no inspiration more precious to me than what comes to me from the New Church. Also, I shall be happy to have the new copy of *THE DIVINE PROVIDENCE*, and every time I touch that glorious work, I shall bless the women whose dear thought conveyed it to me.

It was a happy privilege to have you visit me, and I am grateful to you for speaking so tenderly of our meeting. I have never ceased to miss Mr. Hitz, whom I called "Pflegevater", and I long to communicate with fellow-believers who can inspire me to live more truly as I believe. I felt as though I was in Heaven as I sat with you at the Holy Supper with the sun pouring upon us and the trees and flowers bursting into their glory and the Lord "present with the whole of His redemption." I pray circumstances may permit us to join now and then in those beautiful experiences of the Spirit. Next month I shall go south to visit my family, but I shall return to Westport in February.

Mrs. Seide joins me in sending you affectionate greetings.

Sincerely your friend,
Helen Keller

EPILOGUE

As Helen Keller's declining health began to cause concern to those who administered her affairs, I was requested to keep the American Foundation for the Blind informed at all times where I could be reached. During one sunny morning in the Spring, her secretary and companion, Mrs. Seide, and I visited several churches in the Westport area to select one most suitable for a memorial service. We agreed upon a near-by church and made preliminary arrangements with the minister for its use. Some time afterwards a letter was received from the American Foundation for the Blind which read in part, "I have been instructed to advise you of a change in the plans which will be carried out at such time as Miss Helen Keller should pass away. Those persons who are most closely responsible for such

matters in cooperation with members of her family, have determined that it would not be advisable to have a funeral service in Westport, Connecticut, in view of the fact that arrangements have been made for a single service at the Episcopal Cathedral in Washington, D.C., where the urn containing her ashes will be permanently located."

There is little doubt that it was Helen Keller's expressed desire to have a resurrection service consonant with her religious outlook and faith in the nearness and reality of the afterlife. Evidently those in charge, perhaps her family, decided a service in the Washington Cathedral would be more in keeping with her international renown. But the time and place of obsequies are of little importance; what is important is that a dedicated New Church woman now sees and hears as she dwells among those of a kindred spirit.

MEMORIAL TRIBUTE —

HELEN ADAMS KELLER "The Country of My Heart"

by Clayton Priestnal

For over eighty-five years Helen Keller lived in a dark and soundless world. On June 1st, 1968, the loving hand of the Lord led her over the threshold of death into a realm of radiant light and heavenly harmonies. Although her eyes gave her no sight, her vision was unsurpassed in a blind and groping age; although her ears could not be attuned to the raucous noise of the world, she heard the inner voice of the Divine speaking to her of hope and life everlasting. There can be a measure of comfort for our grief in the knowledge that she has been released from her prison house, a mortal body devoid of eye and ear and subject to the erosion of the years.

Helen Keller's determination not to be overwhelmed by most grievous hardships has made her a renowned symbol of courage and an example of the human spirit triumphant. Her struggles, her accomplishments, her gracious and vibrant personality, have all been recounted in many volumes, in essays, and the public press. Miss Keller's faith however, the religious convictions which helped to mould her character are far less known, although she has expressed them fully and freely in her book entitled *My Religion*. On this occasion when we honor her memory as one of the truly eminent

personalities of the Twentieth Century, we could not please her more than by bringing to mind a few of the essential ingredients of her faith which made her a veritable angel in a world undergoing redemption.

At the age of thirteen there came into Helen Keller's life an elderly gentleman by the name of John Hitz. Mr. Hitz had been for many years the Consul General in Washington for Switzerland, and later head of the Volta Bureau, an organization endowed by Alexander Graham Bell for the purpose of collating and distributing information about deafness. He made a practice during the "quiet hours of the morning before breakfast", as he expressed it, of sending personal messages accompanied by passages of literature which he thought might be interesting and instructive to his young friend. He was a student of Emanuel Swedenborg, and regularly among the communications he dispatched by mail there would be a quotation from the writings of this eighteenth century theologian. Thus while still an adolescent Helen Keller became a devoted disciple of Swedenborg and remained so through her long and crowded life, even as she studied the great philosophers and theologians of every age. During the period of declining

health and diminished activity her fingers caressed often her Braille transcript of Swedenborg's *True Christian Religion*.

Shut off so completely as she was from the world around her, Helen Keller sensed intuitively the presence and reality of another world, a world of the spirit, which is unsuspected by most of us who are preoccupied with and subject to sense experience. This realm was not of the imagination, but a substantial world peopled by loving spirits who dwelt happily amid gardens, meadows, forests and mountain streams of surpassing beauty. With the aid of the writings of Swedenborg, Miss Keller's intuitive insights were crystallized into a rational concept of the afterlife.

Swedenborg has been called a mystic; Helen Keller has been called a mystic. She even described herself as possessing a touch of mysticism. But in neither case is the use of this adjective appropriate or accurate. Swedenborg's theology is so Scriptural and rational, its expositions so logical, and its aims so practical, that it is far removed from the occult, from the ineffable supernatural experience, such as "speaking with tongues." And Miss Keller was not a mystic in the real sense of the word. True, her thoughts were constantly on the borderlands of the vast invisible universe, but she was at the same time very much in the world and part of it. Furthermore, she was able to understand and interpret in beautifully phrased logic and meaning, the significance, of her vivid "intimations of immortality."

At least two foundation stones of Miss Keller's religious philosophy were hewn out of Swedenborg's teachings about the afterlife. The first was "hope". She began to see clearly that this world was not an end in itself, but a seminary of heaven, a proving ground for the life eternal. Her faith assured her that she would not be burdened forever by sightlessness and a total inability to hear and distinguish sounds. Helen Keller could now look upon her handicaps as a challenge, as a means of spiritual growth, as an education for a future life when she would be able to see, hear and speak without impediment. There was no bitterness in her towards divine providence, for she knew the Lord was good to all and He was not in any way accountable for the visitation of a dreadful affliction. This "hope" which shone forth so radiantly in her personality carried into the dark corners of despair where sat those who were also without sight.

The other foundation stone of her faith was this: love and use are synonymous. Over and over again her thoughts turned to this basic doctrine of Swedenborg, "The kingdom of heaven is a kingdom of uses." This truth became the driving force of Miss Keller's life. Love has no reality, no existence, no meaning, until it goes forth into the lives of others in the form of some essential service. The joy of the angels is derived entirely from their desire to help mankind and the efforts put forth as willing servants of all. She loved God with an intense, dedicated devotion. Her gratitude to Him for His bountiful blessings was made valid by her accepting life from Him and then channeling it so that it would flow into the lives of her fellowmen. In pursuit of this mission, year after year, in weakness and in strength, she travelled all over the world to bring a message of hope and love. Her love of humanity was made tangible indeed by the large sums of money she raised to endow organizations working for the blind and deaf and the unfortunate.

Helen Keller left this mortal life in the belief that her labors for others were actually just beginning. "The kingdom of heaven is a kingdom of uses." Those of us who believe as she did can think of her now, in the full power of her faculties of sense, looking about for fields of service. She believed in the immediate resurrection of the dead, an undelayed awakening into a full consciousness of the spiritual world, without an indeterminate lapse of time. It was not consonant with her faith in a God of love and wisdom to suppose that He would suspend the consciousness and activities of human beings and keep them in a meaningless state of dormancy or limbo. God's love never ceases. Why should the recipients of life from Him be made to receive it without being able to respond in some way? Helen Keller's religion may have appeared to be mystical to many, but it was rational and practical.

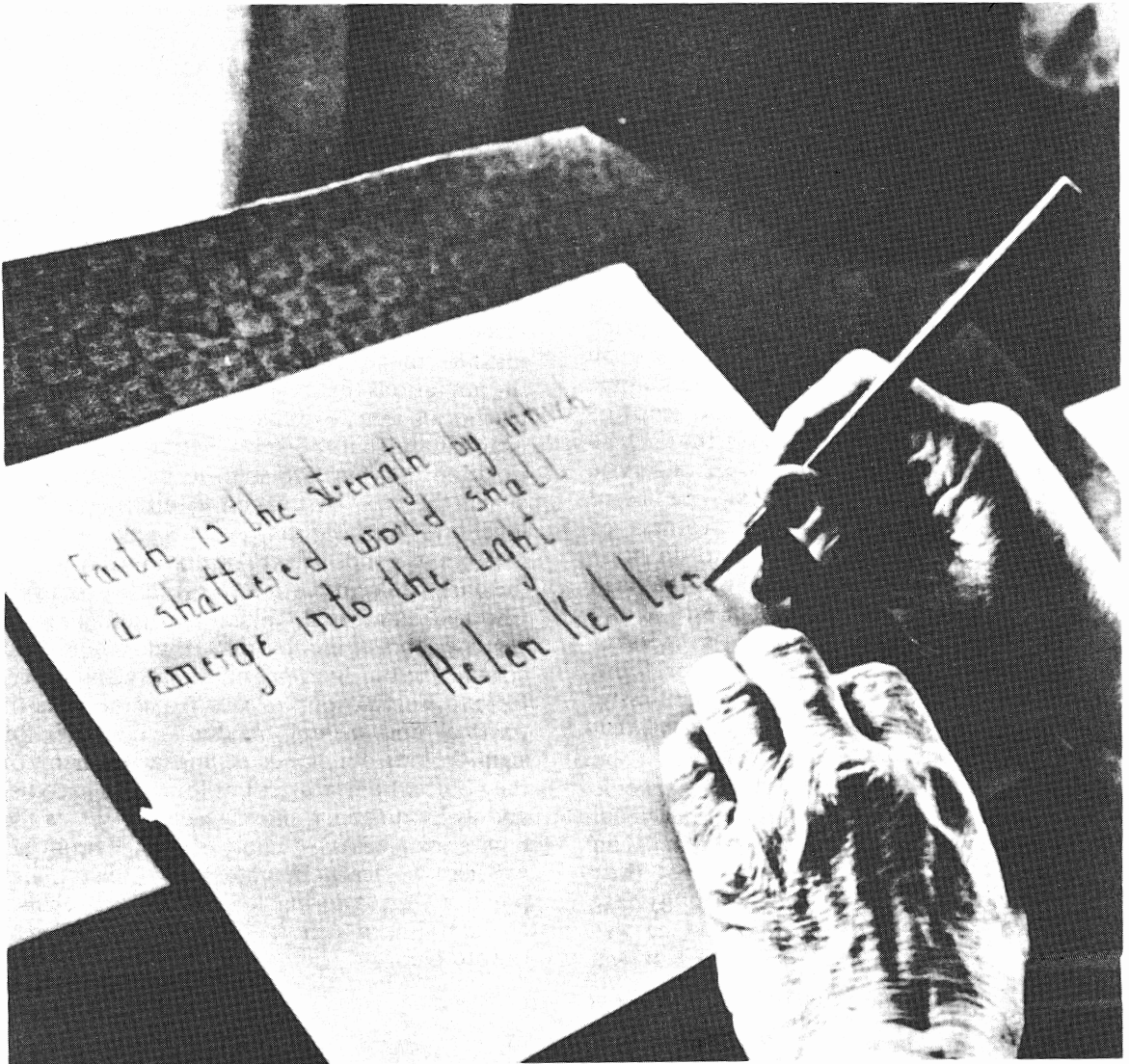
The extent of her belief in a well-rounded life beyond the grave was clearly illustrated during a visit she received from a New Churchman on an afternoon just before her eightieth birthday. The visitor was narrating to Miss Keller the highlights of a tennis match he had participated in during that morning. Then he said to her, "When we are both in the next world, I trust that you and I will play tennis together." She smiled broadly with delight at the idea and replied with bubbling humor, "Yes, and golf

too." Such was her anticipation regarding the life she has now entered. To some her answer may seem naive. There is reason to believe that one of the great disappointments of her life was that the particulars of her faith were not more contagious among those with whom she associated.

A smile wreathed her face as she passed away. Perhaps she saw an angel, an angel as real as the one seen by the two Marys at the sepulchre on Easter morning; or perhaps she heard celestial sounds as wonderfully harmonious as the heavenly choir which reached the ears of the shepherds on Christmas night long ago. If we think this beyond the range of possibility, it is because we see only

with our physical eyes, our sight has made us inwardly blind. What is very real to us, however, is the fact that a rare and beautiful character has passed beyond our touch and sight, but the purity of her life, the courage of her spirit, and the countless humanitarian deeds she performed, still linger in this world, casting a gracious spell over it like the benediction of a saint. Helen Keller's epitaph is her whole life written in great golden letters across the years, and she told us how she would like to be remembered:

"I believe that when the eyes within my physical eyes shall open upon the world to come, I shall simply be consciously living in the country of my heart."



*Introduction by Miss Helen Keller
to a book of Selections From The
Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg
published by the Rotch Trustees.*

These selections from Swedenborg's works are full of stimulating faith, of confidence in what the author declares he has seen, heard and touched. We who are blind are often glad that another's eyes find a road for us in a wide, perplexing darkness. How much more should we rejoice when a man of vision discovers a way to the radiant other lands of the spirit! To our conception of God, the Word, and the Hereafter which we have received on trust from ages of unproven faith, Swedenborg gives a new actuality, which is as startling, as thrilling as the angel-sung tidings of the Lord's birth. He brings fresh testimony to support our hope that the veil shall be drawn from unseeing eyes, that the dull ear shall be quickened and dumb lips gladdened with speech.

Here and now, our misfortune is irreparable. Our service to others is limited. Our thirsts for larger activity is unsatisfied. The greatest workers for the race, men of science, poets, artists, men with all their faculties, are at times shaken with a mighty cry of the soul, a longing more fully to embody the energy, the fire, the richness of fancy and of humane impulse which overburden them. What wonder, then, that we with our more limited senses and more humble powers should crave wider range and scope of usefulness? Swedenborg says that "the perfection of man is the love of use," or service to others. Our groping acts are mere stammering suggestions of the greatness of service which we intend. We will to do more than we can do, and it is what we will that is in very truth ourselves. The dearest of all consolations which Swedenborg's message brings to me is that in the next world our narrow field of work shall grow limitlessly, broad and luminous. There the higher self that we long to be shall find realization.

Swedenborg, the man, was as lofty and noble as his work. He was one of those intellectual giants who astonish the world not oftener than once in a century with the vastness of their *learning* and their multitudinous activity. He was philosopher and theologian, and he was versed in the science of his time. He was a

practical servant of the Swedish government, an inspector of mines, metallurgist and engineer. This great mystic, then, was not a recluse, but an active man of the world. His life was serene, strong, gracious, moving with great ease under an incredible burden of work that would have broken the mental power of any ordinary man. Emerson says of him: "A colossal soul, he lies vast abroad on his times, uncomprehended by them, and requires a long focal distance to be seen."

His theological teachings are in many long volumes, and the selections in this book are mere hints of them. Yet his central doctrine is simple. It consists of three main ideas: God as divine love, God as divine wisdom, and God as power for use. These ideas come as waves from an ocean which floods every bay and harbor of life with new potency of will, of faith, and of effort.

Love is the all-important doctrine. This love means not a vague, aimless emotion, but desire of good united with wisdom and fulfilled in right action. For a life in the dark this love is the surest guidance.

The difficulties which blindness throws across our path are grievous. We encounter a thousand restraints, and like all human beings we seem at times to be accidents and whims of fate. The thwarting of our deep-rooted instincts make us feel with special poignancy the limitations that beset mankind. Swedenborg teaches us that love makes us free, and I can bear witness to its power of lifting us out of the isolation to which we seem to be 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 thought. Checked, hampered, failing and failing again, we rise above the barriers that bound and confine us; our lives put on serenity and order. In love we find our release from the evils of physical and mental blindness. Our lack of sight forbids our hands to engage in many of the noblest human arts; but love is open to us, and as Swedenborg shows, love teaches us the highest of all arts—the art of living. From his writings we learn how to foster, direct and practice this restoring love, this constructive, fertile faith, which is the yearning of man toward God.

Helen Keller

WE GET LETTERS

A PLEA FOR SABBATICALS

How little we understand the broader implication of: "And on the seventh day he rested from all his work" . . . "and God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it."

As Christians (and Jews) we seem to apply this commandment in a very shallow way—if all we think of is the Holy day of our week. The day of rest means much more than just the Holy day rest.

As Swedenborgians we freely apply the correspondences—here day equates to a period of time in relation to other periods of time during Creation. Applied in our own lives it says to me we should make it basic to our plan for living—and basic in plans for working and for our employees if we are employers. The necessity or requirement is that we take a break from all our duties, large and small, every so often—particularly our larger responsibilities—to give time to recreate in different ways—whether we think we need it or not.

The Fourth Commandment tells us to hallow the sabbath—to respect it—to keep it holy—sacred, yet we let it slip by us. Personally, I'm not as concerned with Sunday activities—being "unholy" as with the larger aspect, for I see people around me at work, in my neighborhood, church and in Convention who need that break and yet for many varied reason are not taking it. It's almost impossible to make the decision alone.

Exodus 23:11 "And the seventh year thou shall let it rest"—"the fields and the vineyards that the poor (I translate that—deprived) of thy people may eat." A sabbatical time gives the deprived part of our lives time to live and flower.

As employers, do we, in Convention, give our ministers a break from responsibility so they can refresh and recreate the fountain from which we all benefit? Do we know that each one has some creative offerings to make—new inspirations, break-throughs to truth, writing, having new experiences to enrich future work in their jobs? There are many ways to do this without having to foot the bill for a whole year's expenses.

In mentioning this concern I learned that the subject had been brought up in General Council a couple of times and was tabled as "economically unfeasible"—that's what it sounded like, anyway. It seems to me that first we have to take a new look at the Fourth Commandment, decide whether we think it applies to periodic breaks from routine in our lives and then open sabbatical up for discussion of ways to provide it. Each person's circumstances, economic and personal ties, present a particular set of requirements—with a belief in the ideal, help *will* come from enough sources to make it possible—the more we live in the Stream of Providence, the "miracles" happen more and more.

Marge Ball
Ventura, Cal.

MINISTERS — PLEASE!

Dear Editor:

To date the ANCL has gotten a very poor response from the ministers to our plea in the July-August issue of *THE MESSENGER* (and also sent individually by mail to many) for names and current addresses of all leaguers (young people age 13—college) in their churches. It is imperative that we hear from every single minister—even if there are no leaguers, still drop me a card please. We are trying to reach every leaguer in the U.S. and Canada, and we can't do it without the help of adults in the Church. If you ministers are going to let us down, we'll have to try to get someone else to give us a hand.

But it's not too late. And it doesn't take *that* much time and energy to compile a League mailing for your area. I hope to hear from many more than the few faithful ANCL supporters who have responded. Soon.

Trevor George Woofenden
ANCL President
Box 463, Bryn Athyn, PA. 19009

A FAIR PRESENTATION

Dear Mr. Zacharias:

As a minister of the General Church, I would like to express my appreciation of the article by the Rev. Robert Kirven entitled "The General Convention and the General Church: an Historical Perspective." Mr. Kirven's outline of the Convention's position is necessarily a little more detailed than his description of the position of the General Church, which is quite appropriate in a Convention magazine. I was impressed however with his sense of justice in presenting the two opinions, and most certainly agree with his final point, regarding the importance of an individual's freedom. It is useful and valuable to present our beliefs to others with regard to the truth, and to enter into free and honest discussions on the subject. We must always keep in mind however that the internal acknowledgement of truth, which is a person's faith, should come in the final analysis from the Lord, and not from man.

Peter Buss
Glenview, Illinois

THE PRICE OF FREEDOM

Dear Rev. Zacharias:

Brother Andrew, in his book "God's Smuggler," tells of his daring-do of smuggling Bibles into iron curtain countries (Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, . . .) where he found entire congregations of Christians with no Bible among them, including the pastor. Also, pastors were unable to speak and act freely in these countries because of being under surveillance. Bibles not only had to be smuggled across borders, but had to be smuggled to the people.

In your editorial in the October issue of the Messenger, you say ". . . we are convinced that the arms race will provide neither peace nor security. . ." By maintaining the balance of power, we *have* bought freedom, and is not freedom, for a Christian, priceless?

Al Bateman
Los Alamos, NM

FROM CHURCH RECORDS

BAPTISMS

BERGMAN—Tamara Jean, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Eric Bergman, was baptized into the Christian faith at the Church of the Holy City, Edmonton, Alberta, on October 14, 1979, Lay Minister John R. Bennett officiating.

CONGER—Lauren Elizabeth, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Conger, was baptized into the Christian faith at the Los Angeles Church on November 18, 1979, the Rev. Andre Diaconoff officiating. Lauren Elizabeth's grandparents, Mrs. Ruth (Edward) Conger and Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Nielsen of Urbana, Ohio, attended the service and Mr. Daniel Nielsen gave the sermon.

FROBEL—Franklin Eric, son of Mr. and Mrs. Eric Frobel, was baptized into the Christian faith at the Church of the Holy City, Edmonton, Alberta, on October 28, 1979, Lay Minister John R. Bennett officiating.

JOHNSON—Jennie Marie, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Johnson, was baptized into the Christian faith at the Fryeburg New Church, Fryeburg, Maine, on November 11, 1979, the Rev. David L. Rienstra officiating.

ROCHETTE—Arielle Yvonne, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Craig Rochette, was baptized into the Christian faith at the Los Angeles Church, on November 18, 1979, the Rev. Andre Diaconoff officiating.

STEIN—Rachel Lorraine, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. David Stein, was baptized into the Christian faith at the Los Angeles Church on October 28, 1979, the Rev. Andre Diaconoff officiating.

SYLVIA—Adam Joseph, son of Ed and Susan Sylvia, St. Louis, Mo., was baptized into the Christian faith on September 22, 1979, the Rev. Robert Kirven officiating.

TRANSFER OF MEMBERSHIP

SMITH—Mr. Hilbert Smith was welcomed into the membership of the Los Angeles Church, by transfer from the San Diego Church, on Sunday, November 18, 1979, the Rev. Andre Diaconoff officiating.

DEATHS

FASNACHT—A Resurrection Service was held on Sunday, November 11, 1979, for Mrs. Doris Fasnacht of the Cleveland Society. Doris entered the spiritual world on November 3, following a long illness. Rev. Ronald Brugler conducted the service which was held at the Cleveland Church.

SMITH—Mr. Simon L. Smith, of Fryeburg, Maine, passed away on November 25, 1979. The resurrection service was conducted by the Rev. David Rienstra.

WIEBE—Mrs. George (Ella) Wiebe, 73, a stalwart pioneer New Church woman died peacefully in Medicine Hat, Alberta, on November 9, 1979. The resurrection service was held in North Battleford, Saskatchewan, on November 14, the Rev. Henry Reddekopp officiating.

THE MIGHTY MITES

The Board of Missions has recommended that this year the Women's Alliance help our

New Church Mission in Guyana, South America. This was formerly British Guyana. The church center is in the capital, Georgetown. The group was visited by our Convention president, the Rev. Eric Zacharias, in early 1979.

The Mission Board helped with the restoration of their building but there were not sufficient funds to refurbish the library. The need is great for shelves, more new and used Swedenborg books, and a typewriter. The funds could also be used for literature, Sunday School materials, a slide projector, and blackboards.

Resources of the Society are limited and the state of the economy is weak. The group is faithful and deserves our help. We see this as a worthy cause and an excellent project for the Women's Alliance to provide these items that are almost common place in our organizations. During the year, we trust that all members and friends of the Church will give this undertaking their financial support as well as prayerful consideration.

Mrs. Erwin D. Reddekopp
Chairman, Mite Box Committee

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