

The Messenger

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH
FEBRUARY 1981

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Editorial —

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

The General Council of the United Church of Canada recently received the Report of the Study on Human Sexuality which has aroused a great deal of controversy both within and beyond the boundaries of the United Church. Lois Kerr, a Canadian playwright and active United Church member in Vancouver, disagreed with this liberal document in the November, 1980 *Observer* and we thought you might be interested in some of her comments. She begins:

"Shouldn't the Church put her trust in timeless and universal spiritual wisdom rather than modern secular permissiveness?"

Kerr continues with a list of quotes from great spiritual leaders, including Ramakrishna (a 19th Century Hindu leader), Buddha, Moses, Jesus Christ, Paul, Augustine and Thoreau, all of whom warned against opening the floodgates of human sexuality.

She says, "These days we hear many people saying, 'Enjoy your pleasures as long as you don't hurt anyone.' But when, except between a married couple, is a sexual relationship not at the expense of another? In extra-marital affairs at least one partner of the marriage suffers great pain . . . and the well-being of children is threatened. In pre-marital sex, who knows the quantity and quality of pain resulting from escalating numbers of abortions and illegitimate babies . . . and the escalating possibility of venereal disease?"

"Some people in the (United) Church seem to be saying, 'Follow Jesus, love God, love your neighbor and forget about the lesser rules.'"

"But Jesus said very clearly that we should keep the commandments, even though he cautioned that they were made for the benefit of human life and that it was sometimes necessary to break one of them, as he himself demonstrated by healing on the Sabbath.

"I believe the Church should say to young people: 'In spite of progress in medical science, self-restraint is still the only 100 percent safe method of contraception. You can have romantic excitement without sexual intercourse. Use these years to develop your character, learning new skills and growing according to your spiritual, intellectual and physical potentials'.

"To the adult attracted to an extra-marital affair, I believe the Church should say: 'Have

friendships with the other sex but don't play with fire or you'll get burned. When the sexual excitement of your marriage has waned, deepen your caring for, and friendship with, your spouse; share new activities and friends. As a member of a God-loving family you will find strength and help and comfort'.

"To homosexuals I believe the Church should say, 'We think others should not be encouraged into this life-style. Nevertheless we love you, we believe you have much to contribute to our community and we invite you to join us in our church, but not as our ordained ministers because the life-style of an ordained minister attracts followers'."

You might like to respond to these views. What do you think? We'd like to hear from you.

P. Z.

WANTED:

Executive Secretary — Board of Education

Apply now for position of Executive Secretary for Convention's Board of Education. This part-time job begins July 1, 1981. Contact Nancy Perry, 48 Sargent St., Newton, Mass. 02158 for job description and procedure.

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Paul B. Zacharias, Editor

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The Starting Line ————— by Eric Zacharias

Our 1981 Convention Planning Committee met in December on the Urbana College Campus. It is here that Convention will meet from June 24th to the 28th. The selected theme is the first sentence of the One - hundredth Psalm, "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord." It is the intent of the Planning Committee to offer a program that has the Lord very much at its center — in song, in music traditional and contemporary, in worship and study.

One of the decisions made at this initial Planning session was that we change our format somewhat from that of recent conventions. Rather than offering to convention participants a number of mini - courses, we will participate together in a program under the general heading, "Spiritual Journeying." Utilizing people within the Church who have developed skills and interests as these relate to wholeness and possibly, too, with some assistance from leadership outside of the Church, we will focus our time together on moving forward toward a fuller maturity.

Many of us are already familiar with the Urbana College campus. For those who are not, we invite you to the 1981 convention and this opportunity to get to know "your college" — its facilities, its key personnel and what it means to the Convention.

The General Council will meet for its mid - winter meetings in January at the Espousal Center near Boston. Here, from Thursday afternoon till Saturday noon, twelve persons will take up those issues that relate to the external organization of Convention. It is the function of this body to act on behalf of Convention between its annual sessions. You may be asking, "Who are these people?" The General Council consists of twelve persons — four of whom are ministers. All are elected at the annual meeting of the Convention delegates. The ministers currently serving are: Edwin G. Capon, Richard Tafel, Jr., Robert H. Kirven and George Dole. The lay persons serving are: Lorraine Sando, Charles McCormick, Adolph T. Liebert, Grace Sudden, Margaret Kraus, John Keller, Mary Crenshaw and Spencer Hallberg. Stewart Poole serves the Church and the Council with Emeritus status having been awarded him by the Convention.

The General Council takes under consideration matters both great and small.

Issues arise related to the managing of properties, the functioning of our various Boards and Committees, the annual budget, salaries for ministers, questions related to the health of the national body. One of the specific issues to come before the Council in January is a concern for the wise use of our resources. Closely tied to this is the question of the frequency of our conventions. In the face of high travel costs, is it practical to continue with our pattern of annual sessions? What options do we have?

If you have a member of the General Council residing in your area, you are encouraged to voice your thoughts. The national life of the Church is important to all of us. A report of the January meeting of the Council will appear in the March issue of the *Messenger*.

I wish to comment briefly, too, on the newly functioning program within the Council of Ministers. All of us are intensely aware that the world around us is changing at a dizzying pace. Alvin Toffler, the author of the popular book, *Future Shock* treats, at length, this changing order of things in his new book, *The Third Wave*. The Second Wave, he writes, which brought about a new civilization with the coming of the Industrial Revolution, is being dealt a block - buster blow by a Third Wave. Our world, he continues, is witnessing the death - struggle of an age coming to a painful end and it is beginning to react to a new one.

Our ministers are thoughtful, sensitive people. They are fully aware that in order to minister effectively they must be responsive to the needs of these times. To help them in their growth in ministry, a Peer Supervision program is now in place. Under the leadership of President - elect Dr. Calvin Turley our ministers are meeting at intervals in regional areas for learning and sharing. This is an opportunity to closely examine the process of ministry within the context of long and short range goals, individual attitudes and prejudices and growth within ministry and how all of these impact upon the Church. Mid - April is the time for the next regional gathering of ministers.

The Swedenborg Foundation has advised that the new film, "Johnny Appleseed and the Frontier Within" will be ready for distribution in early 1981. Along with many others, we are eagerly waiting to see this documentary.

TOWARD A RENEWED CHURCH

*by Gustave Bischof
Lititz, Penna.*

Our church, known as the New Church, proclaims the newness of its rational doctrines as opposed to the often contradictory, confusing beliefs of what we term the Old Church. Our name derives from the apocalyptic vision of the City of God which is the New Jerusalem. Our charter is a new heaven, a new earth and the holy city New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven.

This is a large claim for any church to make. What entitles us to this stupendous assertion? What have we done to deserve, persevere, enhance the pearl of great price? True, we have published and distributed the writings of Swedenborg, but have we really accepted or helped inaugurate the New Age, ordained by the Second Coming and made so evident by the vastly changing world of the past 200 years — changes which require not merely adjustments, but revolutions in thinking and doing, changes in customs, values, priorities, and loyalties.

It is universally accepted that truth endures without change. That applies to the truth and not to any man's version of truth at a particular moment in time and space. As our tools for acquiring knowledge become more refined, old hypothesis are shown to be either false or at best approximations of truth. The scientist knows that his discoveries and formulations are mere steps in paths leading to new truths which in turn will yield to still newer ones.

All our thinking and formulating likewise, whether of social values, methods of governance, national priorities, or even religious attitudes must, to be viable, undergo constant destruction (or vastation), rebirth, mutation, and evolution. Why should a church enshrine the attitudes appropriate a century ago or even of a generation past with the expectation of their propriety today? To be fully new, to lay claim to newness demands continual rebirth. To meet the challenge of the times requires continuing renewal, strange as that term may sound to a New Church person!

I think we Swedenborgians are faced with a particularly severe temptation to delude ourselves with the belief that since we know a superior revelation — a new dispensation — we can sit back comfortably, secure in the feeling that the last words have been spoken,

that contemporary thought is but a passing phase full of sound and fury. Need we not examine and re-examine what we hold to be true? Have our questioning voices been silenced?

Many of our youngest and keenest minds have drifted away. Our numbers diminish while our average age increases. Too often creativity is stifled in the name of a deceptive harmony. We seem unaware of the dictate that renewal comes not from harmony, but flourishes with the clash of ideas and confrontations, tempered by mutual trust, respect, and understanding. When a church is spared the travail of rebirth it is at the very cost of survival.

Churches throughout Christendom, whether it be the tradition-laden Church of Rome, or members of the National Council of Churches are today facing an agonizing period of soul searching. All suffer a decline in membership relative to population growth. The impact is most severe among the inner city churches. With few exceptions, vast edifices built to house hundreds attract pitifully few. Financial support on local and national levels declines. Population shifts account for much of the malaise in the cities, but not for that in growth areas. The cause seems far more fundamental. The Church, and I speak of no particular denomination, has lost its position of authority and moral leadership. The young, the idealistic, the vigorous, the articulate, the molders of our future no longer even challenge it. They regard it as irrelevant and impotent if not hypocritical. They simply ignore it, assured that it will wither away along with other anachronisms. One mentions the Church; they reply, "Who cares?"

The period of our Church's greatest growth occurred in the United States in the latter half of the nineteenth century. It was a time of great invention, industrial expansion, massive immigration, the opening of the west; a time of civic corruption, of great wealth, ostentatiously displayed for the few and the bitter degradation of poverty for the many. It was a time of astonishing advances in the arts and science, yet of disease and high infant mortality. Scientists explained the universe in mechanistic terms, confident in their materialistic concept and

derisive of all that could not be measured. Many believed in inevitable, automatic progress toward the good and beautiful and others lived in dread of predestined hellfire.

In these pews sat people of influence, of consequence, of culture and of wealth. The latter paid the piper and called the tune. The New Church was infected by the general optimism. We have merely to publish and distribute and general acceptance must follow. Collateral literature flourished along with numerous tracts and periodicals. New Churchmen were also known for their devotion to reform and social movements.

How all this has changed! Old methods fail to stem the tide of erosion. Nowhere else has the failure been more manifest than in the widening gap between young and old. The young are impatient idealists (those who still care). More than anything they are appalled by the abyss separating our beliefs and practices. They have little patience with abstract theology, and traditional forms. All this leaves them cold and they want out if that is what the church is.

Forty years ago the emphasis in college Christian associations was on Bible study, inspirational talks, socials, and on regional and national conferences. Twenty years ago study commissions on areas of Christian responsibility predominated. Now they go into the ghetto, tutoring youngsters, steering them toward college, leading others in crafts and games. This is *action*, giving of oneself — becoming involved.

To delineate what has happened is comparatively easy. What should and can be done to revitalize and renew the Church is vastly more difficult and must needs be limited to the tentative and suggestive often in the form of questioning. In all this I speak in a spirit of profound humility.

Foremost in any renewal is the question: Have we the *will* to change, to discard some of the past? Have we the receptive mind and the vitality to test, reject, and experiment in new and untried areas? Do we really *want* to change? Daily we pray, "Thy kingdom come on earth as it is in Heaven." Are these mere incantations or are they part of our life expressed in justice, compassion, and loving service one to another in our troubled world? New Churchmen often repeat, all too glibly I fear, "All religion has relation to life and the life of religion is to do good." Has this become a hackneyed catchword rather than a start in thinking through all that it might imply?

Renewal begins with an awareness of the inadequacy of past endeavors, even though these forms of churchmanship have become our emotional ties to the Church. May we not become more hospitable to change and better listeners? *Living faith*, like regeneration and unlike wealth, can not be inherited. Each life and each generation must struggle to meet its own peculiar temptations forging a faith relevant to the contemporary human condition, so that religion *truly* has relation to life.

Worship of our Lord and Saviour consists not merely in church services, but in every aspect and act of Christian life. A form of church service touching our hearts in the past is not necessarily effective with a new generation. Rather than taking offense at new expressions of worship, should we not rejoice in the vitality generating such renewal? Let us welcome and encourage new ways of drawing closer to the Lord in love and peace one with another.

I would suggest that our reliance has been too heavily placed on dogma and too little on love. Doctrine is the necessary skeleton on which hangs the flesh of religion — but who warms to a skeleton? People by and large are not attracted, initially at least by doctrine as such, but by the *quality* of our life. We may learn something from the lovely advice Abe Lincoln gave his law partner, "Don't shoot too high — aim lower and the common people will understand you. They are the ones you want to reach.

The educated and refined people will understand you anyway. If you aim too high your ideas will go over the heads of the masses and only hit those who need no hitting."

Let us put less trust in the efficacy of imposing structure, elegant furnishings, cultivated exchange, polished sermons, and beautiful music. The Lord's earthly ministry was among the poor, the simple, the uncultured. As He trod the dusty roads of Galilee, Jesus shared the simple joys, anxieties, and sorrows of the people.

While no church should engage in politics it can not isolate itself from political decisions for they touch every aspect of our lives. Almost every public issue vexing our locality or nation involves a *moral* judgment. It should not and can not be ignored by a church claiming relevancy to life. That is not to say that the church can propose an easy or even a wise answer. Yet it is the duty of our spiritual leaders to arouse awareness of the moral basis, point out the moral implications, and exhort the

(Cont'd on pg. 33)

THOUGHTS ALONG THE JOURNEY

by Andre Diaconoff
Los Angeles, CA.

As a growing child I experienced the world in which I was living as a surprise, a glad surprise in the beginning. Later I was to learn that the language in which we do our living is a discipline. The surprise is ordered by rules of syntax. Communication of feeling and action has to be conjugated; the names for objects and the pronouns obey patterns of declension. "All that, and heaven too . . ." Language I found, could be a chore.

I was learning in reverse the thing that brought such joy to the character in Moliere's play when he discovered that all this time, when he talked to anyone, he had been using Prose, and did not know that it was Prose. "Ah," he exclaimed, "what a wonderful thing it is to know something." The thing of it is, our world is drilled in Prose. We are full of it. Hopefully there comes a day when we find out that "religion is of life", that "love is the life of man", and so there is more to life than Prose. Sooner or later we outlive categories.

I am grateful for the saying in the Sermon on the Mount, "Let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatever is more than these cometh of evil." (Matthew 5:37) A stern reminder for our garrulous race.

It is not the words people use so much as the kind of life that is communicated through the words that works for good or ill. A while back I wrote, "language is a chore". I would take that back with apologies to our language experts. Language is not a chore, but a tool, expressing and describing things on the several levels of reality — and the higher the level the fewer the words.

We read in the Book of Job: "Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said, 'Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare if thou hast understanding.' . . . Moreover the Lord answered Job and said, 'Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? he that reproveth God, let him answer it.' Then Job answered the Lord and said, 'Behold, I am

vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken; but I will not answer; yea, twice; but I will proceed no further.'" (Job 38: 1 - 4, and 40: 1 - 5.)

I am reminded that we open our service of worship with the awesome word from the Book of Habakkuk, "The Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him." (Habakkuk 2: 20) I have caught myself disobeying the command in that saying of the prophet with hastening to speak the rest of the service. Silence however can also be an empty form unless the worshiper shares some of the penetrating experience of Habakkuk, who, "standing upon his watch and set upon the tower", knew the chaos of humanity before the eyes of the Lord.

But it is not just the chaos, it is the stirring of spiritual forces, that betoken the coming of the Lord, which should bring us to share with the prophet his "Watch upon the tower", so we can be creatively silent, to study and to listen.

The Reverend William Wunsch opens *An Outline of New Church Teaching* with the statement: "The teaching of the New Church assumes and declares that the Lord has come again. The boldness and the wonder of this announcement are appreciated. The serious Christian will want to examine carefully the truth of the statement." Indeed so. That is a spirit which animates the whole proclamation of the New Church. It was that accent on a world wide renewal that drew me from the beginning to our church.

An ending and a rebirth. The labor pains of a new age. I was not exposed then so much to what I found later on to be a compelling fashion in the spoken and the printed words of the church to prove how logical everything is in our faith, how it all fits perfectly together. Come to think of it, how logical is the delivery of a child? There is, to be sure, beautiful, living order in it, but is it not more emotional, more exciting than logical?

"Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith the Lord: shall I cause to

bring forth, and shut the womb? saith thy God. Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her." (Isaiah 66: 9, 10)

I found that my years at the Theological School in Cambridge sustained and guided the excitement. It was a wearying surprise later to find how much wordy discussion it took to arrive at the form to be used in announcing the Birth. I wonder whether we are concerned enough about the health of the Child born to us, and that, not in the germproof environment of denominational existence, but in the highways, byways and market places of the world?

* * * * *

We need to pray for insight to read and to understand aright the spiritual sense of what is happening in the world around us and within us.

The statement "Concerning the Faith and Aims of the New Church" in our *Book of Worship* initiates some of that thinking:

"The New Church regards as tokens of his coming the burst of scientific development, the rise of the spirit of inquiry, the progress toward political and intellectual freedoms, and the deepening sense of national and international responsibility which have characterized the last century and a half . . . More directly denoting a movement of the spirit of God on the human spirit are the stirrings in world faiths, the revisions of thought and outlook in them, the searching after standards and spiritual power adequate to the needs and problems of the times, and this notably in the Christian faith . . . In any coming of the Lord much is effected by him which men are slow to see. Our unseen, spiritual environment is made over as well as our visible world . . . This coming of the Son of man 'as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west,' making the salvation of all men possible, is the direct and sole work of the Lord — a redemption of the world by the Redeemer of mankind."

The Statement concludes with an eloquent appeal, indeed a cry to the Lord God of all humanity: "The New Church lifts its voice and prays, 'Come, Even so, come, Lord Jesus.'"

* * * * *

The church, I believe, has the sacred and responsible task to sensitize the mind of mankind to truth. It is a job of orienting the mind in the spiritual sense of the Word.

* * * * *

The Lord has come again. He is entering the life of mankind more and more deeply and widely. I pray that we may recognize his spirit at work, that we may help better in his liberating and redeeming work. In *Divine Providence* we find a great page on freedom. There are several levels of freedom, it says. "Natural freedom" for every person to make self interest the ruling motive in life, "rational freedom" to civilize the "natural", and "spiritual freedom" to detect and to shun evil and falsity, and to choose to live as a child of the Lord. "This freedom increases," we read, "as natural freedom decreases and becomes subservient, and it unites itself with rational freedom and purifies it. Anyone may come into this freedom if he is but willing to think that life is eternal." (#73)

* * * * *

The urge to unite the "spiritual" and the "rational" freedoms is growing. That is an immensely encouraging sign. Man's turning to the light spells not just new knowledge, but a new will aborning.

Emanuel Swedenborg writes: "This turning occurs because all people in the other life direct their attention to the things within themselves that are most influential — that is, to their loves . . . Man too, in spirit, turns himself in a similar fashion. People involved in self love and love of the world turn themselves away from the Lord, and people involved in a love of Him and love toward their fellowmen turn toward Him." (*Heaven and Hell* 123)

* * * * *

I started with comments on language. Let me conclude with this further quotation: "There is a single language for everyone in all heaven. They all understand each other no matter what community they come from, near or far. The language is not learned there — it is native to everyone. It actually flows from their very affection and thought . . . Anyone who gives the matter explicit attention can come to the realization that every thought comes from an affection, which in turn belongs to love, and that the concepts of thought are the various forms in which a general affection is parceled out. For no thought or concept whatever exists apart from an affection — this is the source of their soul and life."

(*Heaven and Hell* 236)

A Conversation With Pablo

*by Gardiner Perry
Detroit, Michigan*

When I entered the tennis clubhouse through the double doors, streams of morning sunlight angled sharply across the manager's desk. Plants hung in the broad plates of glass on either side of the entrance brought an out-of-doors freshness to the lounge area. After exchanging casual "good mornings," I sank into a modernistic, cushioned chair facing another glass wall. Pablo was with a middle aged man on the first court, apparently just finishing up the lesson.

I remembered the first time I had met Pablo, now almost a year earlier. "He couldn't be the pro of this club," I had wondered to myself. "He's too old, even a little odd looking." He was short, with slightly bowed legs, and naturally dark skin. His white, full head of hair was as brilliant as his tennis shorts. At that time, also, Pablo was standing on the first court, talking quietly with one of his clients.

I can recall as if it were yesterday my feeling of unease, almost embarrassment at coming to this man for a tennis lesson. He just did not appear to match the things, however sketchy they had been, that I had heard about him from people who "knew" the game of tennis. He greeted me by name as I walked onto the court and shook my hand warmly. He then wasted no time in introducing me to his philosophy of the game.

"First we rally from the baseline so that I can see you play." He glided toward the net, picked up his racquet without breaking stride, and when he reached his own baseline he dropped a ball and hit it to my forehand before he had even finished turning around to face the net. Each of his shots landed about four feet from the baseline slightly to my forehand and then to the backhand side. The ball had a quality of force that gave me the unmistakable feeling that each shot was being hit by a master. My returns were ranging from the top of the net to two feet out, with an occasional stroke that felt good. Some even began to feel "inspired" as I picked up the elevated wavelength on which this man was playing.

Since Pablo knew that I had signed up for a series of lessons, he suggested we build a

foundation for the series on my forehand, which was my strongest shot. He was talking now in a quiet, steady voice, with a slight Hispanic accent, his dark eyes looking directly at me. "It's no small matter to change a stroke in tennis," he said sternly. He stopped speaking. I felt that he was giving me a chance to back out now, so that I would not have to go through what he was going to teach. A long moment of silence, and my own stillness seemed sufficient evidence to him that I was ready to work.

"You see, the basis for change in the way a person plays the game must be laid in his entire life. Now take this talk about keepin' your eye on the ball. Everyone talks about it, it's almost the first rule of the game. But there's so much more to it than simply looking at that little sphere—your whole life is there, man. In the way you do it you bring your whole past into every shot. It's all written there in your bones and muscles and nerves."¹

I was for a moment taken back by the depth of his comment. Being a pastor I was accustomed to such thinking and I welcomed it. But coming from this man, an old tennis pro? The paradox of being confined by the boundaries of the court in the presence of his broad mind settled within me, and a smile, born from within, stole across my face.

He asked me if I had ever heard of the word, "hamartia." (I had not, but I have since learned that the word refers to the title of a poem by the early Christian poet Prudentius, "The Origin of Sin.") "It originally meant being off the target, in archery or some such," he said, "and then it came to mean bein' off the target in general in all your life — it got to mean a flaw in the character. Now I don't have to tell you that the body and the mind are both parts of the character, so when a man swings, he tells us all about himself."²

His words sank within me like a stone. I thought about how my own life had become dis-jointed lately. I ate at irregular times, and had several unfinished projects on my desk. It seemed that I would get so far on one, like writing an article for a church publication, and

would then lose interest. I was at loose ends. My forehand reminded me of that now. I'd hit two or three, and then lose interest. The ball invariably landed in the net or two or three feet out. Even on the shots that were in, my stroke was rather dis-jointed. I realized, too, that my relationships with friends were rather shallow. I would get to know people a little, and then back off. I blushed to think that I had been "backing off" my forehand as well.

The sermon I was working on that week was about repentance, reformation and regeneration. One of the quotes in it echoed in my mind: "Actual repentance is examining oneself, recognizing and acknowledging one's sin, praying to the Lord and beginning a new life." (T. 528) Would repentance begin here on the tennis court? I felt so small seeing in myself such a string of flaws in my character...

Pablo's voice interrupted my musing. "... so let's try a few cross court forehands." I strode more confidently to the base line, uttering an inward prayer of thanks for this unsought insight. I was then determined not to back off

from my forehand, and to follow through with each stroke. Pablo chastened: "Don't try so hard!" Slowly, stroke by stroke, my shots began to feel more true.

I felt invigorated after my lesson, and driving home, I decided it was high time to finish that article that lay half finished on my desk...

(This article was suggested by Michael Murphy's *Golf in the Kingdom*. Quotes 1 and 2 are from that book.)



Toward a Renewed Church — cont.)

members to act on moral principle, sacrificing self interest for the greater common good. Have we sidestepped this duty by virtue of timidity or worse by an indolent avoidance of studying the issues?

Finally, we rely too heavily on our ordained ministers and give of ourselves too little. One can not reasonably expect to find the ingredients of saint, counsellor, eloquent teacher, and business manager all in one lovable extrovert! A fairly new concept in medicine is group practice, consisting of teams of specialists in fields such as internal medicine, psychiatry and social medicine. Would this not apply to the Christian ministry? This would be far beyond most congregational resources, but not beyond local interdenominational co-operation. Thus, we could reach and minister to the needs of many more. The talents of the laity could also be productively employed. Furthermore, our idealistic and activity oriented young people might find a rewarding outlet in their *own* church.

Our doctrines proclaim the oneness of God. Swedenborg emphasizes the oneness and wholeness of love, wisdom, and power or use. Have we too long neglected love and use to the detriment of wisdom?

Renewal requires but two things — Divine Influx and human receptivity. We are assured of the former; are we ready, yes anxious, to receive? Have we the will to excise our personal, often petty, loves and hates to make room for Him who is ever standing at the door?

THEOLOGY CORNER

Man in himself can never die. What is alive in us is our spirit. Our physical body only serves us as an instrument to relate and respond to the physical world. Thus, the spirit is the real thing — or considered in ourselves we are spiritual beings. When our body is no longer able to perform the functions for which it was created, one experiences what we call *dying*. But we still continue to be ourselves and live, because it is the spirit which lives in us, and the spirit never dies. Simply put, *dying* is the transition from the consciousness of this world to that of the spiritual world. When this happens we take with us all things belonging to us as a person except our earthly body. Then we receive a spiritual body to house our spirit, or the real spiritual self. Let us remember that everyone is born for heaven; and they are received into heaven who receive heaven in themselves while in this world.

For Old Times Sake



How many of these Convention ministers can you identify? This group of Convention clergymen standing in front of the New Church Theological School in Cambridge, Mass. was taken in the early or mid - 1940's. Our thanks to Marjorie Engelage of Guelph, Ontario for this most interesting photograph. It brings back a lot of warm memories.



Eulalia and Obed Mooki



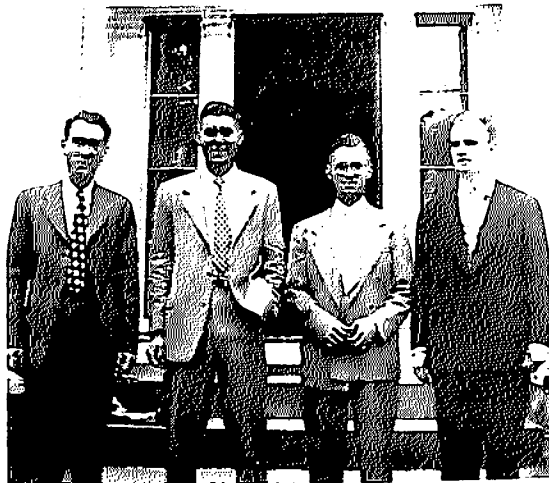
Jill and Brian Kingslake



Alfred and Antony Regamey



Friedemann Horn and David P. Johnson



**Eric Zacharias, Paul Zacharias,
Ernest Martin and John King**



**Franklin Blackmer
with son Hugh.**

MEDIA CHRISTIANITY

by Eric Allison

Now, more than ever, the mail is filled with material from Christian fundamentalists. This material ranges from misspelled and faded memo sheets about local revivals to well polished newsletters from large church organizations. Be it in the mail, on television or radio, whether presented in a sophisticated style or down home fashion, the message is the same. "Are you saved?" "Have you been born again?" And sooner or later they ask for money. This is the type of Christianity that I put in the same class as my junk mail because it is being marketed and sold to the public through the media, making salvation seem as easily attainable as any article available to consumers. It has now reached the point that it has become a multi - billion dollar business. Some people who have been involved in political scandals have now "seen the light" and changed their "life styles", written books (best sellers), and have become religious celebrities. What is the relationship between this and the ideal of the religious life that is spoken of in the Bible and in the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg?

I am rather suspicious of this brand of Christianity that is being sold as a method for becoming successful. It is uncomfortably similar to any of the get-rich-quick gimmick courses that promise health, happiness, and success. Becoming "successful" seems to be part of salvation by the power of God. It is as if everyone who is saved will be successful in whatever they do. Everyone wants a sure thing. Our culture is fraught with idol worship. We all listen when celebrities speak. We all give special attention when celebrities speak about their religious beliefs. It is painfully evident that millions have confused the success of the celebrities with their faith. If our desire to be a Christian or to be born again originates from a motive for material success then we would be better off signing up for a get-rich-quick gimmick course.

I am also leery of all the money that is involved. The I.R.S. is more than leery for they have seen fit to investigate, fine, and even prosecute some of these "Christian" organizations. The amount of money involved in media Christianity is awesome, numbering into

the billions. It is too easy; just turn on the tube and there it is. It is all free unless you want to send in a "guilt" offering to a well dressed preacher that looks more like a salesman or a "blown-dry" newscaster than a man of the cloth. They are just too slick. The viewer sends in five or ten dollars for the "desperately needed" new building of one sort or another. But is the media preacher building the Lord's Church or his own empire? Check the books and see where the money goes and whose name is on the deed.

What bothers me most is where, in all this media religion, is the sense of Christian community and Christian discipleship? I think the Lord's words on this are very clear: "You are my disciples", "You are to feed the hungry and clothe the needy and make sure there is justice throughout the land", "Go feed my sheep", "Love them and love them some more." Those watching and listening to media Christianity don't have to get involved. Just send in your guilt offering. The viewer can become an arm chair Christian. The viewer can become like the sports fan, who gets great satisfaction from watching sporting events on television, and may become quite expert in his knowledge of sports, but gets no exercise and in fact develops quite a paunch while watching others exercise for him. We cannot just be receivers of God's love from a television program; we must be dispensers as well. We cannot be Christian viewers; we must be participating Christians, investing ourselves in reaching out to those in spiritual need, investing ourselves in prayer, worship, Sunday school classes, doctrinal classes, group prayer, healing, and other spiritual endeavors.

Another concern is that the person who depends only on the media preacher will be at a loss for family baptisms, weddings, confirmations, and funerals. What happens when the viewer is in the hospital or has a personal tragedy? The media preacher is certainly not available for giving the viewers the counsel and support they need. It is at these times that the caring church provides the real support and love that is needed.

I should make clear that I am not accusing all media ministers of being crooks who are only

out for money, nor am I saying that this type of ministry has no value. I am certain that it has facilitated the spiritual development of many and I have gained insight and been inspired by some of the programs. However, the fact remains that the media theology is often dangerously superficial and has all the shortcomings which I have already mentioned. God does indeed save us from sin and we all need to be "born again." But being "born again" is not a one time experience that gives instant salvation plus a "successful" career. Swedenborg tells us that we need to be "born again" periodically. Regeneration is a life long process not just a flash of insight and one new commitment, but a continuing series of insights and commitments. The New Church has the theology, the media Christians have the

enthusiasm — the most effective approach lies somewhere between the two. God calls us all to participate in service to Him.



A Letter to Uncle Jacob

Please, mister Letter - Writer, write me a letter to my uncle Jacob, and tell him my wonderful news — that I can SEE!! really I can! All my life I have wanted to know what people meant by "light", and "green and blue, pretty, and far away"; and what my eyes were for, and why they hurt when I pressed them. Well, a few days ago a Rabbi came to our village, and my friend Ike said I should go to him as he sometimes helped blind people to see. I could tell where the Rabbi was by the noise of the crowd, and sometimes the people all cried "Oh!" Then someone said, "Here's that little blind boy!" and a gentle voice, which must have been the Rabbi's, said, "Come here, sonny!" and I was picked up. I felt so comfortable, and snuggled close; this stranger seemed to love me more than I had ever been loved before, even by my mother! Suddenly my eyes tingled and began to burn, and all at once they were like doors opening outwards, and I knew what it was to see! There in front of me was a large face. I put up my hands to feel it, as I always did: cheeks, nose, lips, ears, beard. For the first time in my life I knew how beautiful a face could be! Then the lips came close and kissed me; they were warm and soft and full of love. For a long time I gazed into the Rabbi's face, and felt strength coming from it. People were shouting: "The child can see! A miracle! A miracle!" He put me down, and I turned away and looked at the crowd and up into the sky. Such bright colours! Everything was dazzling and confused, so that I lost my balance and started to fall over, but the Rabbi caught me up and held me

again. I put my arms around his neck and didn't want to let go, but they took me from him and led me home, so that I cried. Away from the Rabbi I felt completely lost. The colours and shapes were so strange, and I couldn't tell what was near me and what was far away. Well, I am getting used to seeing now, and can even recognize objects without having to feel them. The Rabbi has left our village today; but mother says that when I am quite used to seeing I can go down to the lake - side where he lives and be with him always. Then I shall be happy! Please, mister, Letter - Writer, say all that to my uncle Jacob, and ask him to tell auntie and the others. And don't forget to tell them about the Rabbi. His name is Jesus.

BRIAN KINGSLAKE.
— from Conference "Lifeline".

CONVENTION CALENDAR

Feb. 12 - 14	Bd. of Ed., Newton, MA.
Feb. 19 - 21	College Board, Urbana, O.
Feb. 21 - 22	Convention Planning Comm. Urbana, O.
March 26 - 28	Dept. of Publications, Washington, D.C.
April 6 - 8	Comm. on Adm. to Ministry, Newton, MA.
April 9 - 10	Regional Peer Supervision Meetings
May 21 - 23	College Board, Urbana, O.
June 24 - 28	Convention '81, Urbana, O.



ABRAHAM LINCOLN

A Spiritual Man

Who Never Joined A Church

That Abraham Lincoln was a deeply religious man has amply been demonstrated. No one familiar with his many famous sayings, with their frequent biblical references and highly Christian character, can come to any other conclusion.

Why then his repeated refusal to join any of the organized religious denominations?

Mrs. Lincoln's family was Episcopalian, though after her marriage she usually attended a Presbyterian church both in Springfield and later in Washington. She was frequently accompanied by her husband, who maintained cordial relationship with his wife's natural desire to formally enroll as a regular member.

When questioned about his objection to becoming a particular church member, Lincoln replied in words which have become one of his most widely quoted sayings: "I have never united myself with any church because I have found difficulty in giving my assent to the long, complicated and questionable statements of Christian doctrine as their sole qualification for membership. I believe in the Master's condensed statement of the substance of both the Law and Gospel: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind, and thy neighbor as thyself,' that church will I join with all my heart . . ."

If Lincoln could not wholly accept any of the organized church denominations of his day, was there any theologian whose influence on him was predominant?

Detailed research reveals that a number of Lincoln's intimate friends were among the pioneer followers of the Swedish Aristotle, Emanuel Swedenborg. Records show that one of the more prominent of Lincoln's Swedenborgian friends was Isaac S. Britton, later to become the Illinois State Superintendent of Schools. And visiting Swedenborgian missionaries record being introduced to Lincoln by Mr. Britton. These journals also confirm that Lincoln was an interested student of the theological works of Swedenborg.

The following is from the notes of Rev. J. R. Hibbard: "At Springfield we remained for a week or more to rest after our long and fatiguing journey. Here I first met that remarkable man, Abraham Lincoln. I was astonished at the man I had never seen or heard until that morning. He was then unknown to fame. Mr. Lincoln was not a man of any of the various sects or churches. A very few knew why. He was a religious man, a very conscientious man, and his conscience was formed by the Ten Commandments and the Word of God, which in private he read much.

"His view concerning the Lord Jesus Christ as God manifest, concerning the moral government of the Universe, and the civil government of nations, the humanity of man and the duty of rulers to protect and preserve the principles of humanity wherever found, in the highest or in the lowest, were largely formed and influenced by the writings of Swedenborg, furnished to him by his friend, Mr. Britton."

Other early Swedenborgians among Lincoln's intimates were Col. William B. Archer and Jacob Harlan, whose cousin, James Harlan, became converted to the teachings of Swedenborg.

The memoirs of the Sargent family recall that Lincoln joined in one particular service and acknowledged acceptance of the doctrines of the Universal Church of the New Jerusalem presented as a Universal Christian Dispensation, not as a church organization. A grand-daughter asserts that this involved "Lay baptism," and some form of this apparently occurred. The family appears to have regarded Lincoln as a fellow receiver.

Yet another friend, Willis Johnson, owner of a brass and iron foundry, is recorded as having asserted that over a period he met with another friend and Lincoln, in the latter's law office, regularly on Saturday evenings, to study and discuss the teachings of Swedenborg. This, in 1914, was certified and sworn to in an affidavit filed in Canton, Ohio, by an old friend.

Swedenborg himself — the far seeing Swedish scientist, philosopher and theologian who lived from 1688 to 1772 — never advocated the formation of another organized church, but presented the doctrines of the “New Jerusalem” as those of a spiritual church, the members of which would be known to God.

As for influence on Lincoln’s religious concepts, it appears fairly well established that Swedenborg’s emphasis on freedom of doctrinal interpretation and the application of rational thought to the form of religious

concepts, exerted a strong appeal for him.

Such teachings of Swedenborg as, “Conscience is God’s presence with man,” “Doctrines divide but charity unites,” and his presentation of three essentials of true religion as faith in the one God, the holiness of his Word, and a life of charity and love towards the neighbor, are clearly sensed in Lincoln’s own statements.

(Our thanks to Lawrence Hanson of North Vancouver, B.C., for submitting this material on Abraham Lincoln.)

READ AN OLD POEM

— by *Bess Foster Smith*
Weiser, Idaho

Now that I am a Senior Citizen I am beginning to appreciate some of the old poems I had to read in my youth — I didn’t always understand them. Still, if I had not had to learn them then, I wouldn’t have them to remember now, with such pleasure. There was that poem by Gilbert Holland about how hard it is to get to heaven. Strange pictures went through my mind as I studied it. It began:

“Heaven is not reached by a single bound,
We build the ladder by which we rise
From the lowly earth to the vaulted skies
And we mount to the summit round on round.”

Jack-and-the-Beanstalk wouldn’t make it with his hitchity-hatchity-up-I-go. There were no magic tricks, you had to climb and build at the same time. There was no Jacob’s Ladder either, with angels going up and down to fetch you. You had to do it on your own. I understood that pretty well, but the second verse stumped me. It says, “A noble deed is a step toward God.” None of my deeds could be called noble, so there I was stuck on the first round.

The third verse says you can’t go by leaps and bounds because you have “feet of clay.” We youngsters couldn’t even get into the house with mud or clay on our feet. Here I was, really bogged down. On the other hand if you did start climbing, you could scrape off your feet on the rounds and gradually you could get up higher and higher and get a better view — it made sense!

So, we made our own interpretations with no one bothering to tell us how even the small things we children did and the lessons we learned and the beautiful things we saw and tried to make and any other kind, thoughtful things we did were the real rounds on the ladder, and that we were climbing it every day.

But now, after many years of living and studying and teaching and homemaking, the words of the poem ring true. That’s why I am glad I learned it when I did so I can remember it now. It is nice to think on. For even we Senior Citizens have not reached the top yet. But by making the effort to keep on keeping on, there are always new heavens to find.

The poem continues, “Hope and resolve and aspire and pray”, and we may even “mount to the air on wings”.

Dr. Joy E. Morgan, educator and writer, who has done so much for Senior Citizens, gives this advice — Never quit learning. If you have an aptitude for numbers, resolve to learn some new ones each day. He suggests learning your Social Security number, or telephone numbers you frequently call, or even review the multiplication tables; if you like literature, learn new poems or recall old ones; or if you like to study, do research, write, create. He says the learning habit will take you several rounds higher on the ladder and widen your horizons — your happiness.

He will tell you that if you can create a beautiful garden, or a picture or whatever brings a sense of accomplishment, you will

“feed your soul with happiness.”

Jesse Stuart, writer of homespun philosophy, tells about new rounds his father climbed, even though all his life he was a coal miner and never learned to read or write. He was one, Jesse says, who “salted the earth with his sweat and won a meager pittance in return.” He remembers hearing him say, “Ever see anything so pretty as the raindrops do make that little redbird sitting on her dark nest?” Jesse says that his father, pausing for a moment had seen beauty that “opened his eyes to those shining ramparts of the City of God.” He was high on the ladder in spite of his lowly labor.

Another much quoted philosopher is Henry David Thoreau, who paused on his upward

climb to contemplate life. After living alone in the woods for two years, is quoted as saying, “Now I begin to see that only that day dawns to which we are awake and that there is ever more day to dawn. The sun is but the morning star.” Who could say it better than that?

It seems these wise ones are all telling us to keep our minds alert by learning and our hands busy creating things and our eyes watchful seeing the beauty that surrounds us, and we will be more aware of what life is all about. It might be a good idea to dust off some old poetry book or fifth grade reader and read again what Josiah Holland said was the way to reach heaven.

Spirit Over Matter

In Medical centres across the nation, evidence has been accumulating that grief and joy — even the less dramatic daily eddy of emotion and thought — affect our bodies far more than scientists had believed.

“There’s been a huge transformation in the way we view the relationship between our mind and good health, our mind and disease,” says Dr. Robert Ader, professor of psychiatry and psychology at the University of Rochester School of Medicine, who has just stepped down as president of the American Psychosomatic Society. “In many ways it’s nothing short of a revolution.”

A greater understanding of the chemistry of the brain has uncovered a direct link between our feelings and the body’s control of pain. New discoveries have suggested how personality traits may contribute, on the biological level, to the development of heart disease or cancer. And there are signs that the manipulation of emotional states by means of such techniques as biofeedback and meditation may actually have the power to diminish pain, enhance our well-being and prevent many kinds of sickness.

Psychosomatics has long been scorned by most scientists as short on hard data and long on convoluted theories about how the psyche (mind) affects the soma (body). In a century when new marvels of medical technique have become almost routine, notions emphasizing the role of mind in illness have seemed antiquated and irrelevant. Yet, during the past decade, these very technological advances have led to proof of a direct link between mind and body.

In the department of behavioral medicine at Beth Israel Hospital in Boston, patients referred because of high blood pressure, chronic pain, arthritis and other ills are taught to exercise, meditate and gradually change their lifestyles. At the Psychosomatic Medicine Clinic in Berkeley, the emphasis is on total lifestyle change — from stress-reduction to changes in diet and exercise. It’s a natural evolution of psychosomatics into something loosely called ‘holistic medicine,’ ” says its director, Dr. Kenneth Pelletier.

Toronto Star



On Pain

Pain often signifies disorder — in integrity, personal relationships, social environment to a sense of ultimate meaning. “To suffer pain is to raise a question.”

If one succeeds in seeing pain in terms of significance, “then the pain can be said to have passed beyond the meaning of the Latin original ‘poena,’ namely punishment, to the meaning of the Sanskrit root ‘pu’ — purification.”

J. J. Degenaar
Brain/Mind Bulletin

Book Review

NO LIMITS TO LEARNING: BRIDGING THE HUMAN GAP (A Report to the Club of Rome) by James Botkin, Mahdi Elmandjra and Mircea Malitza (\$7 from Pergamon Press, Maxwell House, Fairview Park, Elmsford, N.Y. 10523).

The Club of Rome — an international group of scientists, educators and government leaders — has never shied away from controversy. *Limits to Growth*, its ominous 1972 report on the problems of material growth on a finite planet, sketched a picture of impending global disaster.

The latest report is more hopeful. Learning and the individual human being are seen as the keys to a viable future, more important than material resources. The authors draw some important and far - reaching conclusions.

Humanity, they say, is entering a period of "extreme alternatives." At the same time that an era of scientific and technological advancement has brought us unparalleled knowledge and power, we are witnessing the sudden emergence of a 'world problematique' — an enormous tangle of problems in sectors such as energy, population and food that confront us with unexpected complexity.

"Unprecedented human fulfillment and ultimate catastrophe are both possible. What will actually happen, however, depends on another major — and decisive — factor: human understanding and action."

They emphasize two critical points:

- "Humanity as a whole is moving rapidly toward a momentous crossroads where there will be no room for mistakes."

- We must break the vicious circle (increasing complexity, lagging understanding) while it is still possible to exert influence and some control over our own destiny and future.

The authors note a growing disenchantment with a "technological fix" for global problems. They emphasize the importance of closing "the human gap" — the divisions between social, cultural and political groups.

Too often societies "learn by shock," waiting for crises to stimulate new ways of thinking. Instead of this largely unconscious adaptation, the report pleads for conscious anticipation of diverse and desirable futures.

This fundamental shift will require "innovative learning" so that people can act in concert in unprecedented situations.

Such learning goes beyond conventional education or schooling. "For us, learning means an approach, both to knowledge and to life, that emphasizes human initiative. It encompasses the acquisition and practice of new methodologies, new skills, new attitudes and new values necessary to live in a world of change."

The authors see new roles for telecommunication systems, schools and applied learning research. The report deplores global inequities. For example:

- Of every 20 girls born in Third World countries to poor rural parents, only one goes to school.

- Nearly half of the world's scientists are engaged in military research and development.

The report's conclusion is not a blueprint but the plea for a new attitude: worldwide commitment to innovative learning. "The concept of learning must be raised to greater levels of visibility, just as ecology was promoted a decade earlier."

Four and a half billion of us, representing more than 150 nation - states or territories and an even greater number of cultures, are searching for consensus. This consensus on certain key values must also conserve the vital diversity of cultures. However difficult, the world's communities must take on "joint responsibilities for the solution of global problems."

from — *The Leading Edge*

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IN THE MARCH ISSUE

Use of Spiritual Principles in the Healing Arts
by Peter Francuch

Sexist Language in the Bible

The Johnny Appleseed Story

and more . . .

Living With And By Illusions

by Charles Copenhaver

I suspect all of us live with our illusions. I have little doubt that some of us live by our illusions. There is a measure of satisfaction to be found in our illusions that enables us to make our way more comfortably through the days. Here are some illusions that have served me well through the years and have done so with apparently no serious consequences.

I love to sing in the shower. My bass voice reverberates against the gleaming tiles with stunning magnificence, and I wonder how it is possible that the Metropolitan Opera has never summoned me to its famous stage. What a delightful illusion from which I draw much pleasure. I select a shirt with a collar size an inch too large, and my neck becomes miraculously thin and everyone asks me how much weight I have lost. Precious little, alas, but how greatly I enjoy the illusion. I have my car washed, and the dirty windows become clear as crystal. When I drive away with water still dripping from the body frame, I declare to you that car noise has been muffled and a new surge of quiet power comes from the engine. Of course, it is an illusion. Yet, it's worth the cost of a car wash. I turn away from the harsh fluorescent lights of the wash room and enter the restaurant with its candlelit tables and mirrored walls, and I look at myself with the confident assurance that I have set Father Time back at least ten years. Illusions can be comforting.

We all live with illusions and by them. For the most part they are innocent and harmless. Yet not always. I have been thinking of some commonly accepted illusions that in the long run are neither innocent nor harmless. Let me list a few to make my point. Politicians cannot promise everybody everything and then declare they will balance the budget without increasing taxes. To do so is to try to deceive people with a dangerous illusion. To suggest that this is a something-for-nothing world in which you can get what you want without paying a price for it is simply not possible. That is a tricky illusion. To hold the hope that from the wedding day on you will live happily ever after and not have to tend your marriage thoughtfully day by day is

the stuff of fairy tales. It is an illusion. If you believe that this beloved nation of ours will move with strength into the future without some renewal of dedication and some spirit of sacrifice by its citizenry, you are surely unacquainted with human history and you are living with a dangerously fragile illusion.

If you look upon this matter of having a strong and mature religious faith as something to be considered casually, you have hold of a dangerous illusion. If you have not already learned this, I promise you that you will learn it. I must also warn you as a friend that the learning may be painful. There comes an hour in every life when everything seems to have fallen apart. Then you realize that you had been living in a post card world. Now the need for a stabilizing faith is urgent. It cannot be a vending machine faith, offering instant delivery. It must be a carefully nurtured faith, and if it isn't, it can turn out to be the saddest of illusion.

Pulpit Digest

WORLD'S CRISIS OF SPIRIT

Dear Paul:

We observe the earthquakes, the devastating floods, the fires and volcanoes, all of which seem to be the effect of the cause — the human violence of the spirit. A crisis of the Muslim world and the Christian way of life or spirit.

We of the New Church believe the Lord made His Second Advent by opening the Spiritual Sense of the Word. May we not think of the current evolving conditions as a visitation! Matthew 24.

The world needs the Light of the New Church revelation. The human family will not survive without this Truth. All the present devastation occurring stems from the growing strength of the hells which accompanies the Lord's visitation. How can we best get the Truth before the Fundamentalist mind? This is the human problem of the New Church.

Leonard Cole,
Goderich, Ontario

THE UPPER ROOM

BUILDING A TOWER

*by Leon Le Van
St. Petersburg, Florida*

Jesus was in Perea beyond Jordan. Large multitudes at that time followed Him. Many were "flocking to His banner." Jesus at that time could have been a popular leader. He could easily have roused the people who were so much impressed with His words and works. He could have led a mass movement. He could have gathered a great body of disciples. But He clearly told all would - be followers that the cost of discipleship would come very high.

They must forsake father and mother. They must forsake house and kindred. They must lay down their lives. They must expect persecution. They must take up the cross. Jesus pointed out that even the "Great Supper" (which was His symbol for Heaven) would be spurned by those who would be invited by the King, and that people would almost have to be compelled to come into the Kingdom.

Then He turned and said to the multitude: "If any man come to Me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters — yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple."

Would - be disciples wanted to know why they could not be numbered with the chosen band. So Jesus told them why. "For which of you," He asked, "intending to build a tower sitteth not down first and counteth the cost, whether he hath sufficient to finish it, lest haply after he hath laid the foundation and is unable to finish it, all that behold begin to mock him saying; 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first and consulteth whether he be able with 10,000 to meet him that cometh against him with 20,000? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an embassy and desireth conditions of peace? So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple."

These words of Jesus show clearly that discipleship has its price. That is evident. But let us grant now that we do not normally understand what the "building of a tower" or

the matter of one king "making war against another king" really means. What is the Lord trying to tell us? What does a "tower" and the "war of two kings" have to do with our lives today?

If you are to "build a tower" you must know how to go about it. And if you are to "make war" with an approaching king and army you must know how it is done.

"The Lord is my shield, and the horn of my salvation and my high tower."

"Walk about Zion; count the towers thereof."

"The name of the Lord is my strong tower."

Your "tower" is your spirit, your Heavenly character. Your spirit is, indeed, not apparent to earthly eyes. But to the sight of angels, it is as clear and unmistakeable as a high tower in an open field. So you see that Jesus was talking about something real and vital when He said that His disciples must be prepared to "build a tower."

To "build a tower" is to procure intelligence and wisdom from the Lord by the truths of His Word and establish them in life. To "build a tower" is to raise up a heavenly character by the truths of the Word of God.

If now the "tower of character" is a person's inward, spiritual life, our "towers" are forever being built or torn down as long as we live in this world. We are always adding new materials; taking new measurements; putting new "stones" in place; adding new perfections. Our hymn declares: "We would be building temples still undone." In the words of Jesus we could equally say: "We would be building towers still undone." "We are building, daily building." You and I call it character. The Bible calls it a "tower."

But what now of the "battle of the kings," one with ten thousand, the other with twenty? Scripturally, "kings do battle" when falsities combat against truths. The Divine truths in a Heavenly character are confronted by the falsities from self - intelligence and evils, and the battle is joined.

Can a boy or girl who undertook to be a good spiritual person during the years of Sunday School and church maintain that promise and hope in maturity? Can the internal truths of the Word procured from the Lord in youth match the falsities of the natural mind and the allurements of the world? There will be warfare. There will be combat. And that is the "battle of the kings" and the "building of the tower."

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