

The Messenger

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE GENERAL CONVENTION
OF SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCHES

DECEMBER 1983



Alleluia

From one angle, I see a relationship between Christmas and the production of the first issue in my editorial tenure: both involve a birth. I certainly want to keep proper focus on the more important birth—the entrance of our Lord Jesus the Christ into the world of imperfection, distress and turmoil. We should not lose sight of the many blessings and joys which accompany our life in the world. But God came to earth to redeem the world at a particularly dark period in human history. So bleak, in fact, that God felt moved to take an unprecedented action, an action we continue to celebrate as a Church nearly two thousand years after the fact.

This holiday season arrives finding us embroiled in complex international tensions and subtle but far reaching domestic rumblings. Together, as a specific Church in Christ and as part of the Church Universal, let us meditate upon our Lord's Second Coming to a troubled world, even as we know it is truly occurring. Let us take solace in these holidays and rejoice that God has redeemed the world, though no one of us has God's perfect vision. Let us seek to do our part, however we conceive that to be, in assisting the Prince of Peace in his steady dawning within the hearts and minds of humankind.

Due to the intricacies of my schedule as a fourth year Divinity student and according to arrangements made months ago in preparation for this mid-year squeeze during my Comprehensive Examinations, Muff Worden will be guest-editing the January issue. Muff is a multi-talented—and I'm tempted to say *omni*-talented—person whose ability and zest in handling new challenges inspires me from time to time. To cite just a few of Muff's talents, she taught music at the college level for many years, has edited small publications, is an active stage performer with various groups and troupes in the Boston area and is currently teaching "Theatre of the Chancel" at the Swedenborg School of Religion.

Ernest Martin's provocative article concerning the stewardship of Convention's resources is given prominent space in these pages in the hope that a useful and spirited dialogue might issue from it. We recognize that Rev. Martin brings a message difficult to hear. And yet, he asks some good questions for a Church struggling to exist in a culture where traditional churches on all fronts (excepting the Fundamentalists) are rapidly waning. How do we feel about these trends and the questions raised in this article?

Mr. Axon's 1909 piece regarding Swedenborg's dietary habits seemed to the editors to be a fun piece to share with our readers. A careful reading of several Swedenborg biographies demonstrates quite convincingly that Swedenborg preferred a mild diet in his latter years, during his residence at the Sheersmith's, due to a weak stomach. Nevertheless, Swedenborg took his consumption habits quite seriously, and he ardently advocated moderation in both food and drink.

This month's cover is based on a painting by Marmion. Cover layout is by Val Brugler.

J. L.

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DECEMBER

You closed your eyes in a swoon of surrender
Dressed for your burial in softest white:
And though dying, you lit a star of splendor,
In a heaven of cobalt blue,
Which flamed in the heart of the humble Mary,
And warmed the cold world anew.

Theresa S. Robb

GOD

Who and what is God? Some say that He
Is persons three: they state the creed to me
That he is Father, Son and Holy Ghost,
Yet thought of God exalts the Son as Host.

His Word reveals to us that in the Son
Is seen the Father: He came to us as One
Who In His life, revealed the heavenly Three
Of Love and Truth and Deed: A Trinity
Not of persons, but of verities;
Truth and Love, in act, are life, and these
Were lived on earth by God alone, who said
To Philip and to others, whom He led,
"He that seeth me hath Father seen."
Could words like these aught else but One God mean?

Theresa S. Robb

THE SHEPHERD'S STAR

With troubled heart the shepherd lad
Breathed forth a prayer, and lo!
Upon his soul there stole a regal glow
Of sonship with his God; and in the night
The star that loomed so passing bright
Revealed within its brilliant ray
The advent of that Lord Who heard him pray.

Theresa S. Robb

Time For Decision

by Ernest O. Martin

A full-page ad in *Time* and *Newsweek* has issued an invitation to all Swedenborgians in the United States and Canada to attend a three-day conference at the convention center in Chicago. A highlight of the convention is to be a dramatic offer by one of America's wealthiest foundations. Intrigued by the invitation, you fly to Chicago and find yourself in the Company of 2,500 self-professed Swedenborgians.

These 2,500 people belong to no church organizations, hold no church property or buildings, have no endowments, and have no religious traditions or heritage. They are united only by the conviction that Swedenborgianism has a unique and priceless contribution to make to the ushering in of a new spiritual epoch.

The convention hall is hushed as the anonymous foundation president makes his offer. "On behalf of the New Age Foundation, I am happy and privileged to announce the grant of thirty million dollars to the Swedenborgians here gathered for the purpose of fostering clerical and lay ministries that facilitate the spiritual well-being of people, and which have in common a working for the Lord in bringing in the new age—the descent of the Holy City, New Jerusalem."

The president of the foundation adds only one qualification: the thirty million dollars will be turned over to the Swedenborgians when a satisfactory overall plan for the expenditure of the money is presented.

A representative council of men and women, ministers and laity, is appointed to meet monthly during the next year to consider and screen any proposals that might be submitted by individual Swedenborgians and groups of Swedenborgians from the United States and Canada.

A fantasy, yes, but with a solid touch of reality! In the United States and Canada we have approximately 2,500 people active in the General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches. Those 2,500 people hold buildings, property and funds that have a total value in excess of thirty million dollars. As church members and as members of boards, committees and councils, we have the authority and responsibility to decide how our total assets shall be used. We are endowed by the Lord with the capacities of freedom and rationality, and we have the responsibility of using these capacities in the service of the Lord and our fellow human beings.

If you had the invitation to submit new and creative ideas for the establishment of a Swedenborgian-sponsored movement to facilitate the spiritual well-being of people, where would you begin? If you were an ordained minister and you wanted to devote your life to this prospective new movement, what kind of ministry would you envision?

Before drawing up a proposal, you feel the need to engage in serious research. You recall reading, some time ago, an account of previous Swedenborgian movements in America. The book was titled, *The New Church in the New World*, by Marguerite Block. The book was originally published in 1932 and a Swedenborgian scholar, Robert H. Kirven, brought it up to date

with an introduction to a new printing in 1968. Dr. Kirven is now engaged in updating that introduction to bring the story of the Swedenborgian Church in America up to 1983.

A reading of the Block book proves very helpful. You learn that the first Swedenborgian church in America was established in Baltimore, Maryland in 1792. Within a very few years the movement spread up and down the east coast and churches were established in Philadelphia, New York, Boston, and Washington, D.C. Johnny Appleseed spread the good news into the American frontier, and churches were organized in Cincinnati, Chicago, Pittsburgh, Cleveland and many other cities throughout the midwest.

In 1817 a call was sent out by the Philadelphia Church to all "receivers of the doctrines of the New Jerusalem Church" to meet together "for the purpose of consulting upon the general concerns of the Church." This historic body met on May 15, 1817. Seventeen societies or churches were represented with a total membership of approximately three hundred and sixty, and spread over nine states.

In the decades between 1820 and 1890 church members grew to more than 7,000 members, with 154 churches and 119 ministers. Since 1900 membership has declined to 2,500. Sixty-five churches have disbanded since 1900, leaving a total of 48 churches. The number of active ministers has diminished to 34.

Following are my theories for the decline in membership of Convention churches:

1) There has been decreasing interest in doctrinal study, Bible classes and formal worship, yet our church continues to put its main focus on these areas of church life.

2) With the development of modern communication and transportation there is more competition for our time and attention, and the church has lost its central place in life. Spectator sports, television, skiing weekends, vacation homes, recreational vehicles divert us from regular worship.

3) Church attendance is dropping markedly in nearly all churches, but a small scattered church like ours is affected more than large denominations. In a mobile society, families move often. Many of our members move to cities and states where we have no church.

4) Our church is liberal in attitude, open to the truth in all religion, and believes with Swedenborg that there is salvation in all religions. Potential conservative converts are put off by our openness and our desire to work with other churches in local, state and national councils of churches. We don't accept the literal interpretation of the Bible or consign all non-Christians to hell. We will never be accepted by the "moral majority" (thank God). Yet we believe in a body of revealed doctrine through Swedenborg, and liberals within and outside the Christian Church resist our claim that Swedenborg was a revelator.

"There has been decreasing interest in doctrinal study, Bible classes and formal worship, yet our church continues to put its main focus on these areas of church life."

How do we account for this steady dramatic decline? Some theories have been proposed. It was reported to the Massachusetts Association in 1929 that the Church is "suffering from spiritual atrophy" due to various causes: "worldliness, death and removals, the discouragement of small numbers, lack of faith, lack of understanding, appreciation and effective teachings of the doctrines."

5) Another factor working against our growth as a denomination is the tendency of Swedenborgians to be individualists or even anti-organization people. Henry James Senior was a staunch Swedenborgian, but he wanted no part of an organized Swedenborgian Church. William James was very much influenced by his father's religious faith, and yet, as a Harvard philosopher and psychologist, he had no desire to

associate himself with a particular church. In her book, *My Religion*, Helen Keller testified to her indebtedness to Swedenborg, and she maintained close ties with Swedenborgians like Paul Sperry and Clayton Priestnal. But she never joined our church. We are fond of citing people like Balzac, Goethe, and Browning as being indebted to Swedenborg's works, but they never associated themselves with the institutional Swedenborgian Church.

"The real trouble seems to be that the New Church as an organization is now *old*, and like the other old churches, has an established body of traditions and dogmas with which it is loath to part. Whereas it was once ahead of orthodoxy in its scientific attitude and breadth of view, it is now exactly in the same place, and using exactly the same defense mechanisms to hold its firmly entrenched position. A large number in the New Church still seem in spite of all that

"The real trouble seems to be that the New Church as an organization is now old, and like other old churches, has an established body of traditions and dogmas with which it is loath to part."

6) Like the Unitarian Church or the Quakers, the Swedenborgian Church has lacked the evangelical zeal to go out and build up a powerful church organization. It has also exhibited certain cultish qualities which makes inquiring people shy away. We possess a unique body of doctrine that can provide a rational theological base for the new age, but often we come across as just another Protestant Church with buildings, services, Sunday School, and programs differing little from any other middle-of-the-road church. After ostracism and even ridicule, we have welcomed respectability.

7) Convention has been essentially a collection of individual parishes or congregations with little authority given to the national body. Our churches are widely scattered and there was no central office until 1968. Boards and committees are made up primarily of volunteers with few paid employees. Members tend to be suspicious of centralization, viewing the national church primarily as a source of funds to augment ministers' salaries, train their ministers, and publish books and pamphlets.

8) We can be proud of our forebears and heritage, yet we now feel restricted by our tradition and history. We worship our buildings, our books, and our organization; we find it painful to even consider new approaches and programs. In her conclusion to her history of the New Church in the New World, Marguerite Block wrote:

Swedenborg has said, to believe in 'salvation by faith,' and to feel that doctrinal 'soundness' is the *sine qua non* of true religion."

In the 1940's and 50's the decline of the Swedenborgian Church became almost an obsession. Individuals and groups, laymen and ministers, sought a diagnosis for the decline and a prescription for growth. Under professional leadership, and using human relations techniques, the Church set up regional training institutes to involve everyone in the process. The loose congregational form of church government was scrutinized, resulting in a reordering on a departmental basis with a central office established at the theological school in Newton, Mass.

In the flight to the suburbs movement in the 1940's and 50's, several of our churches abandoned mid-city churches and built new structures in the outskirts. Some of these churches enjoyed marked success, so far as membership and activity was concerned, until competition from main-line churches in the area led to a dropping away. Church buildings in Portland, Oregon, Bellevue, Washington, and Park Ridge, Illinois were built in that era and have now been sold. The Church in Miami, Florida was sold and a new center established in DeLand, supported by a ten-acre grove of orange trees. The church property in Cincinnati was taken by eminent domain and a new center was built in suburban Montgomery. The church building in

Boston was condemned. That society rebuilt on the same site, using the first two floors of a 14-story apartment building for the church facilities.

In some ways there has been a resurgence of life in the Church. The camp facilities at Almont, Michigan have been expanded and winterized, and the summer programs are livelier than ever. New buildings have been added to the camp facilities at Fryeburg, Maine and the summer program continues to meet the needs of a loyal clientele. A hardy group of Swedenborgian New Age Pioneers has been meeting for a week or ten days each summer in the rugged Santa Cruz mountains in California. Western Canadians meet at Camp Paulhaven. School-age children in Massachusetts have a camp program at Blairhaven, South Duxbury. Pre or post-convention conferences have attracted a dedicated group of adults each summer, tying-in with our annual conventions on college campuses. Ministers' spouses have their own programs at convention each year, and the ministers and spouses hold a week-long institute in the mid-winter every other year. Our involvement in the National Council of Churches is increasing. Award-winning films produced by the Swedenborg Foundation are being used in outreach programs in our different churches. The Wayfarers' Chapel in Palos Verdes, California continues to attract over 300,000 visitors a year, and new exhibits, film center and literature are brought to the attention of many new people.

including counseling, chaplaincy, and growth centers.

In her graduation address to the Swedenborg School of Religion at the 1983 convention (printed in the July-August *Messenger*), Dr. Alice B. Skinner declared that "the growth of the church may depend on our positive response to the untried." The church may grow if people who feel called to serve in alternative forms of ministry are encouraged to reach out to those who are looking for non-traditional approaches to spiritual development."

New forms of church life are emerging, yet the decline of membership in our churches continues. Churches built in the late 1800's and early 1900's accommodate 200, 300, 500 worshipers on Sunday mornings, but are now almost empty. The buildings are deteriorating. High energy costs force the groups to take leave of the main sanctuary for most of the winter. In many cases these buildings have become white elephants, and members wonder how long they can hold on. But there is a tendency to shy away from any serious talk of selling. Many precious memories are associated with these buildings, and it seems sacrilegious to even talk about abandoning them. Before we give up something, we want to know what we will have to take its place. So far, few viable alternatives have been proposed.

One of our city churches, currently without a minister, and with property worth well over a million dollars, says that it can

"Our forebears were bold and imaginative. We can honor them by dreaming new dreams and responding to the Lord's call forward in this new age."

The first woman was ordained into the ministry of the Swedenborgian Church in 1975, and since that time a record number of students, men and women, have been attracted to the Swedenborg School of Religion. A number of these students from abroad have returned to churches in their homeland. Other recent graduates have seen no future in the traditional parishes. They are opting for other plans of ministry,

offer a salary of \$9,000 to a prospective minister, hoping the Augmentation Fund Committee will match that amount. That would leave nothing, of course, for any other staff, supplies, equipment and program. Another church, owning valuable property, says that it can manage very well, financially, so long as they depend on lay services. They are not even contemplating an ordained minister.

Ministers are told that they should be satisfied with salaries ranging from \$12,000 to \$18,000 a year. If they cannot manage on such a salary, they should augment their income with outside employment. The suggestion is that the church will not expect more than a Sunday morning service and emergency pastoral care. The growth potential in such a situation is nil.

We can't just sit back and expect "Convention" to do the job for us, for *we are* "Convention." Through our membership in a local church or office on a board or committee, we are in a position to take a new course of action. We don't have to stay in a rut, continuing the patterns of our forebears. Our forebears were bold and imaginative. We can honor them by dreaming

"The growth of the Church may depend on our positive response to the untried."

My guess is that we are among the wealthiest churches in North America, per capita, so far as the total physical assets are concerned. We have a priceless treasure in the teachings of our church. And we have people, ministers and laity who possess extraordinary skill, talent and dedication. But instead of experiencing ourselves as wealthy, we are defeatist or complacent.

To make any significant contribution to American life we will have to focus our energies and wealth to decide just what our priorities are. The Ad Hoc Committee has been appointed to "discuss, to explore, and to set goals and priorities for our Church in the eighties." They have drawn up a statement of purpose for the church as a whole, with supporting objectives and strategies. They are now drafting an organizational structure that can be more responsive to the needs and proposals of individuals and groups in the church.

I am not suggesting that the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee are a panacea for our problems. A statement of purpose that we can all agree upon can help unite us as a church, give us a focus. The objectives can serve as criteria in helping us decide which proposals to support. A more responsive organization can help in implementing the proposals that are accepted. If new life is to emerge in the church through, exciting and challenging programs, we will need the vision, love, courage, industriousness and cooperation of our present members, along with their willingness and ability to enlist others in the task.

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The possibilities before us are limitless. I have spoken already of some of the encouraging programs now being carried out. The October issue of *The Messenger* describes the music workshop at convention. You may heard of the religious musical produced in Elmwood last spring. Another group is working on cassettes for expectant mothers. George Dole is exercising his creative genius in developing ideas for new films, while also continuing his translating of Swedenborg into modern English. A committee met in Maine last summer to explore the possibilities of creating a Swedenborgian Growth Center in the middle-Atlantic area. A detailed proposal will be submitted to the General Council for consideration at their mid-winter meeting.

Because our church is small, we have greater flexibility. We are not burdened with massive bureaucratic machinery, entrenched staffs, and millions people. All of our ministers can meet together in one room to dream, share and plan. Each member of the church can be involved personally in new ventures. We do not need to leave the decisions and actions to distant representatives. We have the resources. Do we have the will and commitment? The choice is ours.

Ernest Martin, formerly President of the Swedenborgian Church, is currently a minister at the Wayfarers' Chapel in Palos Verdes, California.

OLD AND NEW

Alice Van Boven

North Shore, California

Two articles in the October *Messenger* seem to convey some similar thoughts about practices old and new. Both were written by ministers, one this year, and one 82 years ago. Both speak of discontent in some areas of our church life and practices. Both seem to think some methods should be changed if our church is to grow.

Is this not an example of the need felt by every rising generation to change older practices and institute things of their own making? Younger people are prone to distrust things of the past, and propose changes, so that they can take the reins. A generation from now, a new group of younger members will be labeling as old and inadequate what we do now, and they will propose what they consider newer methods.

I have attended most Conventions the past third of a century, and most of my Association meetings since 1908, when I was a child. It seems to me that there are ways that the church was more virile half a century ago than now. The difference cannot be pinpointed by a mere statement of purpose. Neither can we go back to older times by imitating methods of the past, which may not seem adequate to people today.

We do not know, and might well wonder, whether our failure to maintain the rate of our growth in the 19th century is because we are in some way failing the Lord. Or whether it might be His purpose to let the New Jerusalem descend through other churches. The Lord looks at the whole Christian Church as one, and His love goes equally to each and all of His children, including, of course, the non-Christian sects. He is ever drawing toward Himself all who love Him and seek to do His will. There is much love and charity in all Christian churches to provide growth.

There is a great difference in attitudes among the major denominations from that of a century ago and that today. To illustrate the difference, let me share an episode in the life of my grandfather, who in the mid 19th century prepared in New Hampshire for ordination in the Congregational Church. He was denied ordination because of one question his oral board declared he answered wrong. That question was, "Do you believe in resurrection of the body?" He replied in the negative, having read "*Heaven and Hell*". It was shortly after that that he went to Boston and rang Thomas Worcester's door bell, and was soon admitted into the New Church ministry.

Some forty years ago I told that story to a professor of Church History at Pacific School of Religion, and he asked me, "What did he do? Turn Unitarian?" That was what many liberals did at that time. Of course, I replied that he did better by turning Swedenborgian.

This episode shows that the New Church gained many members in the 19th century because there was such a difference in attitudes toward life after death, and also other attitudes. Now it is not necessary to resign from other Churches because one reads Swedenborg, or because one does not believe in resurrection of the body. This fact, showing changes for good in larger Churches, keeps people in them, rather than turning them to us.

There are two ways a pile of stones can be moved across a street: they can be carried over, one by one; or they can be placed on a sled and pushed, inch by inch. The New Jerusalem is descending in this second way at this time. We should be thankful for that, and also very thankful for our opportunity to go to the Writings and learn the Lord's way.

To me our main purposes as a Church fall into two categories. First, we must feed and lead our members. Second, we must seek to acquaint others with the glorious truths of the descending New Jerusalem.

Let us be glad and rejoice that the Lord has made His Second Coming, rendering it possible to enter with understanding into the things of faith.

Peace On Earth, Goodwill Toward Men

by Perry Martin

Over a long history, we have reacted to fear with force. It used to work. Someone won. But stones became bombs and we now have nuclear weapons, which we cannot possibly use without destroying civilization as we know it. We must change our thinking.

As we center our faith in love to the Lord and the larger neighbor, we let go of our fear and prejudice. Love, says Gerald Jampolsky, is letting go of fear. Goodwill toward humankind emerges as we move beyond our fears and mistrust. If we are to perpetuate spiritual life on earth, we will need to find a new security within ourselves. Can you do that? Can I do that? A lifelong task, granted. But we must be at it: the alternative is nuclear holocaust.

I share with you a statement of faith written by a group of people working to change our thinking toward "peace on earth, goodwill toward men."

War Is Obsolete:

Throughout recorded history, war has been used to acquire, to defend, to expand, to impose, to preserve. War has been the ultimate arbiter of differences between nations. War has become intrinsic to human culture. Now we must accept that war has become obsolete.

We Cannot Fight A Full-Scale Nuclear War. A full-scale nuclear war would destroy civilization as we know it and would threaten life itself.

We Cannot Fight A Limited Nuclear War. It is highly probable that a limited nuclear war would escalate into a full-scale nuclear war. This escalation could result from attempts by the "losing" side to regain the "advantage" or from a breakdown in command, control or communications during battle.

We Cannot Fight A Conventional War Among The Superpowers. The ability to formulate and abide by the agreements and covenants necessary to keep such a war from escalating into a nuclear war would have avoided war in the first place.

We Cannot Fight A Conventional War Among Non-Superpowers without potentially involving the superpowers. The interdependence of nations has produced a network of "vital interests" that the superpowers have pledged to defend. This defense could, in turn, escalate through conventional war to nuclear war.

"The unleashed power of the atom has changed everything save our modes of thinking and we thus drift toward unparalleled catastrophe."

Albert Einstein, 1945

Possibility:

The same process of discovery that has led science and technology to develop weapons of annihilation has also produced the possibility of new ways to relate to other nations, other cultures, other peoples. Technology has moved us beyond war: what must now move beyond war is the human mind.

The precedent for major shifts in human thinking is established. As a result of redefining what it means to be human, we have moved beyond human sacrifice. As a result of redefining what it means to be human, we have moved beyond slavery. Now, having seen our earth from space and having experienced the interconnectedness of all humanity, we must move beyond war.

Societies generate their own visions of the possible and draw their behavior from those visions. Until now, security and survival have often been dependent upon maintaining a level of military superiority. This has resulted in an ever-escalating arms race. There is no limit to the ability of the human mind to continue to develop the technology of destruction. However, no healthy future can be built upon that vision.

Today our survival depends upon our ability to generate a vision of a world beyond war. The statement on the Great Seal of the United States is an indicator of this new possibility: "E Pluribus Unum"— "Out of Many, One." Today, that "One" must include the whole earth.

"Where there is no vision, the people perish."

Proverbs 29:18

The Process of Change:

The process of change begins with the acceptance of both the obsolescence of war and the possibility of a world beyond war. Change then requires the decision to move from the obsolete to the possible.

Decision means to cut (cision) away from (de-), to reject forever an option, to close the door to an existing possibility. Without a clean decision it is impossible to discover the new. If we continue to consider war as an alternative response, we will never build a world beyond war.

The decision to think new must be made both on an individual and a collective basis. Individuals are the basic elements of societies. Without individual change, societal change cannot occur.

Collectively, nations must decide to expand their identification to include the whole earth. We live on one planet. We are part of one system which derives its strength, its health, and its well-being from its diversity. We cannot eliminate conflict; we can, however, have an overriding vision that will allow conflict to be resolved creatively, without violence.

Entering into the unknown is placing ourselves in peril. We cannot preview what will happen. We must draw upon our individual and collective experience of making such "leaps" in the past. The Pilgrims had no knowledge of the outcome of their voyage across the Atlantic — only a move from their life in Europe to a vision of a possibility in the New World. All forward movements in civilization have come from this same process. Today, if we are to survive, we have no choice but to move again.

We do not yet have a demonstration of this new way of thinking on a national scale. The process of evolving this model can begin in this country where the government derives its existence and its direction from the values and visions of the people. It must include the ideas, the points of view, the interests of all segments of our society. It must be a demonstration that democracy is a process which can deal with complex, long-term problems.

"The Age of Nations is past. The task before us now, if we would not perish, is to build the earth."

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, 1936

CHRISTMAS -

Tinkle of a bell

Ripple of children's laughter

Sweetness of angel voices

Tenderness of a kiss

Sparkle of a star

Grace that banishes fear

Tears of sympathy

Refreshing breezes

Gentle words of comfort

Softness of a baby's skin

Pure blue of the sky

Coolness of water

Warmth of loving arms

Glow of polished gold

Beauty of a snowflake

Thrill of creating

And, thankfulness for -

Every day

The gifts of knowing

And believing

And of being

All these, and for

His birth

His life

His gift of love

And Peace.

Marge Ball 1983

Keeping A Short Christmas

by Henry

It is a good thing to observe Christmas day. The mere marking of times and seasons, when people agree to stop work and make merry together, is a wise and wholesome custom. It helps one to feel the supremacy of the common life over the individual life. It reminds us to set our own little watches, now and then, by the great clock of humanity which runs on sun time.

But there is a better thing than the observance of Christmas day, and that is, keeping Christmas.

Are you willing to forget what you have done for other people, and to remember what other people have done for you; to ignore what the world owes you, and to think what you owe the world; to put your rights in the background, and your duties in the middle distance, and your chances to do a little more than duty in the foreground; to see that others are just as real as you are, and try to look behind their faces to their hearts, hungry for joy; to own that probably the only good reason for your existence is not what you are going to get out of life, but what you are going to give to life; to close your book of complaints against the management of the universe, and look around you for a place where you can sow a few seeds of happiness—are you willing to do these things even for a day? Then you can keep Christmas.

Christmas: Christmas Sermon

Van Dyke

Are you willing to stoop down and consider the needs and the desires of little children; to remember the weakness and loneliness of people who are growing old; to stop asking how much your friends love you, and ask yourself whether you love them enough; to bear in mind the things that other people have to bear on their hearts; to try to understand what those who live in the same house with you really want, without waiting for them to tell you; to trim your lamp so that it will give more light and less smoke, and to carry it in front so that your shadow will fall behind you; to make a grave for your ugly thoughts, and a garden for your kindly feelings, with the gate open—are you willing to do these things even for a day? Then you can keep Christmas.

Are you willing to believe that love is the strongest thing in the world—stronger than hate, stronger than evil, stronger than death—and that the blessed life which began in Bethlehem nineteen hundred years ago is the image and brightness of the Eternal Love? Then you can keep Christmas.

And if you keep it for a day, why not always?

But you can never keep it alone.

Henry Van Dyke (1852-1933) was a Presbyterian minister, educator and author.

HE IS HERE

How can we see the Christ Child?
He was born so long ago, so far away
For us this day to know.

How can we tell the Christ child
That we love Him very much?
That we want Him *here*
And near enough to touch.

There came the little Christ Child
To show us all
That goodness starts
In children's hearts,
And must grow tall.

Each baby has the Christ Child
Within its tiny soul;
And when a baby smiles
We see Christ's love unfold.

So we can know the Christ Child
In children everywhere;
And we can tell *them* of our love,
And show them how we care.
And what we say to children
The Christ Child, too, will hear—
And what we say,
If true and loving,
Keeps the Christ Child near.

—Gwynne Dresser Mack

WOMEN COMMUNICATING

Sponsored by the Alliance of New Church Women

Annella Smith, Editor

Bertha Berran, Co-editor

Strangers and Communication

Examples of Communication are endless, such as between teacher and student, parent and child, husband and wife, friends and strangers. Let's take Strangers for example: There is a beautiful story in Luke concerning a stranger that you are all familiar with, so I'll paraphrase it. When Cleopas and the other apostle, whose name is not recorded, were on their way to Emmaus after the Crucifixion, a Stranger joined them and walked with them, questioning the things they were speaking of. Cleopas said to him, "Art thou only a Stranger in Jerusalem and hast not known the things that are come to pass?" The Stranger said, "What things?"

Then Cleopas and the other proceeded to tell him of all the things concerning Jesus, how he was a great prophet, how he was betrayed, condemned to death and crucified, and how today—the third day after his death—they had heard that his body was no longer in the sepulchre and that certain women had seen him alive. Then the Stranger began to tell them all the things concerning Jesus, beginning with Moses and all the prophets. When they reached Emmaus the Stranger made as if to go on, but they begged him to stay with them since the day was nearly done. So the Stranger went in with them and as they sat at the evening meal he blessed the bread, broke it and gave it to them—then and only then did the apostles recognize him as Jesus.

It was a familiar ritual, the blessing and breaking of bread. They had seen Jesus do it many times. And through this simple and quiet communication, "their eyes were opened"—they recognized him as their friend—not a Stranger. Who was the Stranger here? Certainly not Jesus. He knew them! Swedenborg tells us that in the spiritual sense "strangers," as used in the Bible, are those who are willing to be in-

structed in the truths and goods of the Church. By inviting Jesus to tarry with them, they showed their willingness to listen and learn. In a spiritual sense we all are Strangers when we are willing to be instructed in the truths of the Church.

But what about Strangers in the natural sense? Our dictionary says "a stranger" is an outsider, a visitor, a newcomer, one with whom one has no personal acquaintance. How long does it take to convert a Stranger to a friend—and how do we go about it? Well, we usually start communicating with "Good morning" or "Nice to meet you"—or as the French say, "Bon Jour." Then such witticisms as "What was your name again?" "Nice day, isn't it?" "Do you think it will rain?" We jockey words around until we find a common ground of interest upon which to converse more freely. We may find the Stranger likes to grow roses, too—his religion is like ours—he doesn't like taxes either. Through communication with words, we are changing a Stranger into an acquaintance or perhaps a Friend.

Let's go back to the road to Emmaus and the Stranger who walked with the apostles, and instructed them in all things concerning Jesus. The Lord is a stranger to us too until we learn to communicate with Him and listen to His Word. We are never Strangers to the Lord in the natural sense of the Word, because He is always in communication with us. It is only when we cut off that flow that He becomes as a Stranger—"Behold, I stand at the door and knock." It is up to us to open that door, let the Stranger into our hearts and make him our Friend. This we do when we listen to and obey His Commandment to "Love thy Neighbor as Thyself." To love our neighbor is to understand him and the only way to understand is to communicate.

by Ethel Swanton

Think ON These THINGS

READY OR NOT

"Here I come, ready or not." That familiar phrase from the childhood hide-and-go-seek game seems to haunt my mind as Christmas comes closer. Where does the time go? Wasn't it yesterday we were afraid of frost and covering the tomatoes...raking leaves and splitting wood...carving pumpkins and making costumes...baking pies and roasting turkeys. Now here it is Christmas! Mistletoe and holly...shopping and wrapping...tree hunting and trimming...caroling and parties...excitement and exhaustion! My mind becomes troubled and perplexed—there is so much to do and so little time. "Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him and said Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me. Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:40, 41, 42). Mary, that affectionate part of us, listening to the Lord's Word, loving and sitting, allowing ourselves to trust in the providence of everything in our lives—not letting our heart be troubled or afraid—not growing so weary with all the physical preparation of the holiday that we forget the good part...the good part of Christmas...the splendor of the snow—the soft silent snow like the Lord's peace drifting down to inspire and fill our hearts and minds...the adoration of shepherds filled with wonder and joy—filled with new loving and thinking...the exultant song of the angels—a multitude of happy feelings—joy and then peace. Peace, that absolute and immeasurable beauty that comes from these quiet thoughts that can encompass our hearts and minds if only we will slow down and "ready or not" be like Mary and choose the good part.

*Carole Rienstra
Religious Chairwoman*

O HOW SHALL I KEEP MY CHRISTMAS?

O how shall I keep my Christmas?
As they keep it in heaven above;
O keep it with peace and thanksgiving,
And kindest deeds of love;
And share with the poor and needy
The jobs which the Lord gives thee;
And thy heart shall keep with the angels
The Lord's Nativity.

MITE BOX COOKIES

Well, you can't put cookies in your Mite Box, but how about slipping in the price of a box of cinnamon hearts or five pounds of sugar? And, spend a few minutes sending out thoughts of love to unborn babies and parents of young children. Imagine them surrounded by a soft golden light. See it. Bathe them in it, for it is your wishing the Lord's love to be with them. Believe it. Give love. And may joy and peace be with you.

Marge Ball

THANK YOU, JEAN

Those of us who were unable to attend Convention and received greetings on behalf of the Alliance as well as a personal report on Convention 1983, would like to thank Jean Gilchrist for the time and effort she spent making us feel a part of the activities even though we weren't there in person. It was so thoughtful and so appreciated.

This is also a good time to tell you that Jean has offered to be the Alliance representative at the planning sessions for the 1984 Convention. If any of you have ideas or suggestions to share with her, please send them to her at:

Mrs. Douglas Gilchrist
12010-60th Street
Edmonton, Alberta
Canada T5W 3Z5

Was Swedenborg a Vegetarian?

by William E. A. Axon

The question of Swedenborg's relation to vegetarianism is sometimes raised, and it has, perhaps, special interest at a time when Sweden in various ways is paying homage to her illustrious son.

In the Manchester Reference Library there is a commonplace book written by Joseph Brotherton, who from 1832 to 1857 represented Salford in the House of Commons. In this volume there occurs the following statement:

"An account of the Honbl. Emanuel Swedenborg, taken from Mr. Sheersmith, by Robt. Armitstead, London, Dec. 20th, 1810.

Mr. Sheersmith mentioned that he lived at No. 25, Bath Street, Clerkenwell, London, when Baron Swedenborg lodged with him till he died, and observed that he generally wore a long gown in the morning; his eyes were of a brown grey near hazel colour, rather small; in stature about 5 feet 9 in. high, rather thin, and of a brownish complexion; never was seen to laugh, but had always a cheerful smile upon his countenance, generally wore a dark brown coat and waistcoat, with black velvet breeches, but when full dressed he wore his cloaths all of velvet, with a cocked-hat, and a sword in a silver scabbard, and walked with a cane with a golden knob, wearing spectacles, and taking snuff. Mr. Sheersmith particularly remarked, that from the first time of Emanuel Swedenborg's coming to lodge with him to the day of his death he never ate animal food or drank spirituous liquors (excepting *once*, he took two glasses of wine at a friend's house in London which made him unwell for two days), but lived principally upon milk and vegetables, with tea, and sometimes coffee with gingerbread. His expressions respecting animal food and fermented liquors were 'Not be good,' which he often repeated.

The above was taken verbatim from the lips of Mr. Sheersmith. Mr. James Clark, of Manchester, had an interview with Mr. Sheersmith when he was in London, November 2nd, 1811, when Mr. Sheer-

smith said that he had inquired of friends who had come over from Sweden respecting Swedenborg's manner of living, and they informed him that he had never eaten animal food since the days of Queen Ulrica of Sweden."

There is not much in the writings of Swedenborg that bears upon the subject. In the *Angelic Wisdom concerning the Divine Love and Divine Wisdom*, there is a passage in which "all things of the animal kingdom which are eaten" are included in the "uses for sustaining the body" (No. 331). A more important passage occurs in the *"Arcana Coelestia"* (No. 1,002), which says "Eating the flesh of animals, considered in itself, is somewhat profane, for the people of the most ancient time never on any account ate the flesh of any beast or fowl, but fed solely on grain, especially on bread made of wheat; also on the fruits of trees, on pulse, on milk, and what is produced from milk, as butter, etc. To kill animals, and to eat their flesh, was to them unlawful, and seemed as something bestial, and they were content with the uses and services which they yield; but in succeeding times, when men began to grow fierce as a beast, yea much fiercer, then first they began to kill animals, and to eat their flesh; and whereas man's nature became of such a sort, therefore the killing and eating of animals was permitted, and at this day is also permitted. Now so far as man can do this conscientiously, it is lawful, for his conscience is formed of what he thinks to be true, consequently what he regards as lawful: wherefore also at this day no one is ever condemned for eating flesh."

We may therefore conclude that Swedenborg's habitual diet in the later part of his life was practically vegetarian, and that whilst he held that flesh-foods were allowable, he felt in the vision of a bygone golden age there was embodied a nobler ideal of human life.

This piece is excerpted from a 1909 issue of The Vegetarian Messenger.

Dreams of a Free Life

by Harmon Bro

In Edgar Cayce's readings there is the promise of a way of life that offers a free and joyous spirit in the midst of the laws and contingencies that govern human existence.

Cayce himself reported that he had lost this sense of joyful freedom for many years, and then—after suffering and rededication—suddenly recovered it.

"While meditating in afternoon, the same exuberant feeling came over me that used to years ago, but which had been lost to me for twenty-five years."

When he submitted this experience for a reading, he was told he had been through "an experience of the inner self awakening to those potential forces as may become the more active...in those of the meditations." From this time on, Cayce gave silent meditation a larger place in his life, and urged it more often for those whom he trained.

The same reading added spontaneously, "As has been given, there shall be in the latter days, 'Your young men shall dream dreams, your old men shall see visions, your maidens shall prophesy.' These are coming to pass, with the upheavals as are just before the world (1932) in many a quarter!"

One of his dreamers reported a similar experience, after working on dreams for over a year.

"While reading James' *Varieties of Religious Experience*, I submit this, as I can't tell whether it is a religious experience of my own or whether it was purely a case of nerves, i.e., physical or pathological."

Cayce interrupted him to say, "An experience—not nerves." Then the man reported:

"While reading, a sudden quivering came over me. I felt every pulsation of my heart, of the nerves, of the blood. I became conscious of a vibratory force moving everything within my body—even the chair upon which I was sitting seemed to be in motion. I was not asleep—"

Again Cayce interrupted, and the report was not finished. He told the man he had experienced the physical effect of the "consecration of self's impulses, self's inner self" to the manifestation of the One Force in his life. He had undergone an authentic spiritual experience. In fact, Cayce added, it was an experience that could be traced "through the various ages of human development," and he offered these illustrations:

"Swedenborg, as he studied.

Socrates, as he meditated.

Paul, the apostle, as he meditated upon the happenings of the hour, with his inward purpose meeting that spiritual force in man which brought his self-conviction; the entity, then, being over-shadowed by the Force as seen, see?

And as was by Buddha, in that position when meditation in the forest brought to the consciousness of the entity the At-Oneness of all force manifested through physical aspect in a material world."

Cayce told the dreamer that in his moment of quickening he had seen and experienced the kind of personal baptism meant in the Bible—"My Spirit beareth witness with thy spirit, whether ye be the sons of God or not." This joy, this trembling sense of spiritual reality at work in human life, had been no deception. But it was meant to have concrete fruits. For Cayce told the man that from now on he would not only receive greater insights into the human lot, but he would have to counsel more people spontaneously seeking his aid regarding their daily lives.

This piece is excerpted from Dr. Bro's Edgar Cayce on Dreams, Warner Books, 1973. Dr. Bro was a Teaching Fellow at Harvard University and the first person to make a study of the Cayce material the subject of a doctoral dissertation.

Your Department of Publication

by Rafael Guiu

Perhaps few of us realize, unless the matter has been called to our attention, the extent to which the very life of the New Church has been dependent upon the written word.

Unlike such great leaders of the Protestant reformation as Martin Luther, John Knox, the Wesley brothers and others, whose influence was felt over such wide areas through their preaching, Emanuel Swedenborg left us no heritage of fiery denunciations from the pulpit or vast evangelistic efforts. Instead, his life was one of study and contemplation with the last third of it given over to setting down revelations he claimed were received from the Lord. Nor did he stop there. At a considerable cost to himself—not only in appreciable sums of money but often arduous travel—the truths revealed to him were laboriously set in type, and the finished products were distributed as widely as Swedenborg felt they would be received.

We must not overlook later adherents. So filled with love for these writings and so anxious to share them with others, they gave freely of their wealth to continue spreading Swedenborg's message. The 19th century saw great advances in printing and publishing, permitting a wider distribution of the printed word than had earlier been dreamed of. Ministers not only preached long and scholarly sermons, but wrote papers, pamphlets, books. The General Convention of the New Jerusalem, incorporated in 1861, early recognized the need for a Board of Publication, and, independently, the American New Church Tract and Publication Society was founded in 1865, "... to print and distribute tracts and other publications of a religious character based upon the teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg." There was also, in 1873, the founding of The Swedenborg Publishing Association by Benjamin Fiske Barrett, who saw the need, "... to promote the publication and wide distribution of the best religious literature and the most advanced Christian thought of these New

Times; and especially such works as vindicate the claims, expound the philosophy, and elucidate the doctrinal and religious teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg."

From such ambitious fervor and lofty idealism, then, has come the impetus to carry the Board of Publication through its various organizational changes, until at present the Department of Publication created by that Board is a veritable melding of all the printing and publishing efforts throughout the Church.

The Department of Publication holds at least two and sometimes three meetings each year, and its members regard attendance at these meetings as "priority one." A dedicated group of talented people is committed to responding to the Church's needs for literature, while listening and trying to relate to ideas expressed by Convention members.

The Department appoints the Editor of *The Messenger*, and sets the policies to assist the Editor. It receives and reviews manuscripts, and encourages talented writers among our Church members to submit work, often to meet a specific need. It is mindful of other needs: Wayside Pulpit posters; Pew Cards explaining the Church's teachings to newcomers; modernizing Certificates used in our Rites and Sacraments; the need for Wedding Booklets.

In 1980 General Convention observed the centennial of Helen Keller's birth. But long before this the Department of Publication, working with the Swedenborg Foundation, had mapped out a superb public relations campaign to apprise the public of Swedenborg's influence on Miss Keller's thinking.

There are also the many requests for reprinting some of the "classics" in our Church literature. Works by such well-loved writers as Thomas King, Chauncey Giles, Edward Mitchell, William Worcester, Leonard Tafel, George Henry Dole, William Wunsch and Everett Bray served an older generation well, but now there are new criteria to consider: will such

books fill a need for today's readers? is the language stilted and out-dated so that it must be up-dated? would sales of such books warrant the expenditure of today's high printing costs? who is to do the work if a book is considered worth reprinting but needs some editorial work or modernization? Over and over again, the Department wrestles with such problems.

How can the Convention be of assistance to its Department of Publication? Just as a start, there is a desperate need for new writers. The Department sees the need for a good-but-brief biography of Emanuel Swedenborg, a need long expressed by the Wayfarers' Chapel. A booklet of Biblical passages supporting New Church teachings is another suggestion. Or perhaps a series of brochures for newcomers covering the various aspects of our teachings; leaflets needed for distribution to young people, such as "Who Am I?" "Why Am I Here?" "Where Am I Going?" Children's literature is much needed, and the Department would welcome manuscripts.

Further, there is a need for the churches in Convention to recognize the Department's efforts, to cooperate with the Department by filling literature racks and acting as missionary outlets for the many fine books and pamphlets the Department has already produced. By ignoring this responsibility we deprive the Church of opportunities to interest strangers and to provide our members with excellent reading. It is also fitting that the Convention recognize the efforts of the many devoted and capable people who have served the Church in this capacity: Chairpersons Richard Tafel, William Woofenden, Edward Bohlander and Virginia Branston, to name a few, and various secretaries who have struggled to bring some order to the records, Corinne Tafel, Jan Seibert, Carol Lawson, Cecile Werben and Ethelwyn Worden. The representatives of the various publishing bodies have added much to the scope of the Department's activities. Richard Tafel, who single-handedly has brought out thirty-five years of *OUR DAILY BREAD** for the Philadelphia Book Center, Corinne Tafel for the Swedenborg Publishing Association, Rafael Guiu representing the Massachusetts New Church Union and Cecile Werben the Swedenborg Press. Last-

ly, there have been *The Messenger* Editors, Robert Kirven and Paul Zacharias, who have served the Church so well. All of these, and many others, deserve our heartiest thanks.

* *The Daily Bread*, a monthly magazine of devotions and meditation, may be obtained from the Swedenborg Book Center, 2129 Chestnut St., Philadelphia, PA for \$6.00 (U.S.) annually. Readers will be interested in learning that 500 copies of *OUR DAILY BREAD* are distributed every month at the Wayfarers' Chapel, near Los Angeles. It should be noted also that hundreds of isolated New Church families, as well as Swedenborgian societies without pastoral leadership, rely heavily on *OUR DAILY BREAD* for spiritual nourishment.

Mr. Guiu is the Manager of the Swedenborg Library in Boston.

FOR YOUR Interest

An active leader in the Urbana (Ohio) New Church Society has been appointed Acting President of Urbana college, effective November 1.

James M. Eaton, former chairman of the Board of Trustees at Urbana college, assumed his new duties following a decision by the trustees at their Oct. 28-29 meeting. He succeeded A. Perry Whitmore as chief executive officer at the college.

Urbana College librarian Connie Salyers reports that since Cataloger Jeanne Gamble has been putting the Swedenborg Collection into the InterLibrary On-Line Sub-System, requests have come in from all over the United States, England, and even one from Russia requesting Emanuel Swedenborg's *Treatise Concerning the Last Judgment*. Since this was a short article from a large book, Connie copied the relevant pages and mailed them to the State Library of Moscow.

At the Fall Meeting of Members of the Boston Society of the New Jerusalem held on Tuesday, October, 11th, the following item of business was enacted:

"It was moved by Elinore Peebles, seconded and VOTED that the members of the Boston Society of the New Jerusalem request the General Convention to provide local societies (by April 1) each year prior to their Spring meeting with the recommendations and/or amendments to be presented to the current meeting of Convention, together with the reasons for acting upon these."

This will enable the local societies to determine the wishes of their members and instruct their delegates in representing them.

Dorothy deB. Young
Secretary BSNJ

This may serve as a helpful reminder from the Boston Society that Standing Resolution No. 8 was adopted by General Convention on July 2, 1982 in response to just such a concern. All Societies should note that resolutions with "long-term relevance" need to be submitted sufficiently ahead of time to enable local churches the opportunity to consider the proposal or issue.

Editor

The second Latin edition of Swedenborg's diary (Volume I of six), published by the Academy of the New Church and newly entitled *Experientiae Spirituales*, became available in June 1983.

This first volume (over 600 pages), introduced by a forty-page English preface by Dr. J. Durban Odhner, contains: 403 paragraphs from *Explicatio in Verbum Veteris Testamenti* (*The Word Explained*) intended by the author to be included in this work; a reconstruction of the "missing numbers" (1-148 $\frac{1}{3}$) from the author's index; several items from the *Index Biblicus Esajae et Jeremiae*; and the paragraphs numbered 149-972 $\frac{1}{2}$ (likewise, as explained in the preface, originally extracted from volumes of *Index Biblicus*).

The book can be obtained from the Academy Book Room of the General Church Book Center, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009.

The Annual Meeting of the Pacific Coast Association of the New Jerusalem met September 3 and 4 at Palos Verdes, California. It was preceded on Friday September 2 by a meeting of the ministers at the home of Rev. Ernest Martin, and in the evening by a meeting of the Association board. The meetings were held in an ideal situation—a Salvation Army retreat center, a mile from Wayfarers' Chapel.

Saturday forenoon was given over to a Renewal program, and the business meeting was held Saturday afternoon. At this meeting Rev. Dr. Horand Gutfeldt was elected to be the Presiding Minister of the Association. Saturday evening there was a rather informal talent show; some persons came with prepared bits to present, but others were arranged on the spot.

After breakfast Sunday all got into cars and proceeded to the Wayfarers' Chapel for worship, led capably by Rev. Ernest Martin, with a short effective sermon by Rev. Paul Martin Grumman. After Sunday lunch Rev. Gutfeldt conducted the Sacrament of the Holy Supper, Rev. Martin showed two films from the Swedenborg Foundation, and we still managed to close in time for the Southern Californians to get home before dark.

Alice Van Boven, Secretary

Swedenborgians will be celebrating the life of regeneration next summer at Convention '84, hosted by the Swedenborg School of Religion. Nestled in the Ossipee Mountains, Geneva Point Center is a retreat and conference center on a small peninsula on the largest lake in New Hampshire, Lake Winnepesaukee. Come and explore scenic New England and the life of regeneration! Watch for details in upcoming issues of *The Messenger*.

**"What lies behind us and
what lies before us are
small matters compared
to what lies within us."**

Ralph Waldo Emerson

PEOPLE CONNECTIONS

Perry Martin, Ph.D.

I talk to myself sometimes—it helps me figure out what I'm doing. Yesterday, when I was beating my friend at tennis, I noticed she was having a lot of conversation with herself, explaining how she needed to change her backhand swing. Sometimes I talk to the characters in my dreams, and they tell me what I need to know.

I also like to spend time talking with my family and friends whom I've known for a long time. We accept each other, understand each other, sometimes get a little exasperated, sometimes wish they'd change, but they are comfortable and comforting to be with. We have a kind of short-cut language we can communicate with, we don't have to spell everything out.

I find meeting new people stimulating and fun, sometimes a little scary—they ask questions like, *Swedenborgian, what's that?* or sometimes they don't pay me as much attention as I'd like. The exciting times are when I make real contact with someone new and discover we value a lot of the same things. I get new information and ideas from them and a chance to let them understand what I'm about. A new friend is a precious find.

I've noticed that as Swedenborgians we spend most of our time talking to ourselves. Our signs are often old and dull, and our names don't even communicate to outsiders who we are. New Church? Doesn't look new. Seems to have the same sort of activities as any other church. Oh, New Jerusalem—Jewish.

An attractive poster arrives proclaiming a new translation of *Arcana Coelestia* by Emanuel Swedenborg. *Arcana Coelestia*? Sounds like Latin to me. The poster says it's an important book, but doesn't offer a clue to what it's about or why I should read it.

Much of our energy goes into meetings with ourselves. Questionnaires I sent out last spring indicated quite a number of groups were perfectly satisfied with what they were doing. The only trouble was that hardly anybody came.

Does your church talk to itself? Would you like to make more connections with new people? Convention now has a People Connector—a consultant available to help you design new programs to reach out to the outside world. Write or call Perry S. Martin, 31214 Marne Drive, Rancho Palos Verdes, CA 90274, phone (213) 541-2291. You could be having fun talking to yourselves about talking to more people.

CHURCH RECORDS

DEATHS

LEIB—Margaret Rogers Leib died on July 24. She is survived by her husband, George A. Leib. They were longtime and active members of the Buffalo New Church Society.

PETERSON—Elmer Peterson, life-long member of the New Jerusalem Churches in Chicago and St. Petersburg, died on September 19. Mr. Peterson was vice-president of the St. Petersburg Society.

WEIDNER—Hilda Weidner, a life-long member of the Pittsburgh Society, died August 31. Resurrection services were held on September 6, 1983 by the Rev. Ronald Brugler.

HOWE—Anna M. Howe died on September 28, 1983 in Daytona Beach, Florida. She was a member of the New Jerusalem Church in DeLand, Florida. Resurrection services were conducted by the Rev. Ernest L. Frederick.

ALLEN—Mildred M. Allen, member of the Church of the New Jerusalem in Fryeburg, Maine, died on October 23, 1983. Rev. David L. Rienstra presided over the Resurrection services.

MARRIAGES

HOYLE—EAST—Nettie E. Hoyle and Mark D. East were married in Orange City, Florida on May 6, 1983 by the Rev. Ernest L. Frederick.

SKELLY—CHAPLIN—Cathy Jean Skelly and Michael L. Chaplin were married on St. Bridget's Church, Cheshire, Connecticut, the Reverends Arthur Hanley and David L. Rienstra officiating.

Breezes From Blairhaven

Catching a bit of sun on the porch . . . watching the boats in Kingston Bay . . . a cool, salty breeze . . . and, oh yes, the rather noisy sounds of children at play! This is free time at Camp Blairhaven. We've already been through flag raising, breakfast, clean-up, morning chapel, religion class, arts & crafts, lunch, rest hour, afternoon activity and swimming. Right now we have free time until dinner (which will be followed by evening activity, camp meeting, vespers, campers' bedtime and a staff meeting), so I'd like to make the most of it and tell you a bit about Camp Blairhaven 1983.

As usual, we're having two sessions this year: one for campers 8-10, and one for those 11-13. Each of the two week sessions has its own high points, its own little problems, and its own distinct personality. But one thing both sessions have had in common is a very enjoyable smoothness. The campers have been good kids: interested and generally cooperative; and my staff has been effective and efficient both individually and as a group. Add to that our unbeatable camp property, and it totals up to two terrific camp sessions!

This year the bulk of our campers are kids who have been here before. It seems we only have to get them to come once, and they like it so much they keep coming back year after year! I must admit that there's something about Camp Blairhaven that keeps me and several other staff members coming back, too. What is it? It's hard to say. It's more than just the various activities. It's more than the facilities. It more than just a bunch of kids and adults getting together.

Camp Blairhaven operates like one big family with God at the center. This oneness (which comes from the Lord's oneness) is felt by everyone at camp. We are people looking to the Lord, and *that* creates a unity in our collective relationship that is not only hard to break, but also is longed for and looked forward to the other 50 weeks of the year. It's no wonder familiar faces keep returning.

A few basic facts about Camp Blairhaven: Camp Blairhaven is a religious camp

open to children of all denominations. It is owned and operated by Massachusetts New Church Union (who rents the property to families and other groups when camp is not in session). Blairhaven is located on nearly five acres of beach-front property in S. Duxbury, MA. It is in the heart of the historic Plymouth/Kingston area—in fact, the Myles Standish Monument and Park is only a short walk up the road.

As this summer's camp sessions are drawing to a close, we're already looking forward to Camp Blairhaven 1984. Perhaps we'll see your children there. For more information contact either the Mass. New Church Union at 79 Newbury St., Boston, MA 02116, or write to me at the address below.

Well, it's getting along towards dinner time, so I have to end this and go ring the bell.

Trevor George Woofenden, Director
32 South Main St.
Haydenville, MA 01039

We Get Letters

Pre-Natal Life

Intrigued by the report of Marge Ball which quoted generously from book written in 1865 by a Swedenborgian, I am offering these thoughts and questions.

Currently in vogue among occult and metaphysical groups is "Rebirthing," a technique designed to give one a fresh start by eliminating traumas as dating from the birth process. Years ago, I was privy to a number of sessions where the facilitator, using a transducer or Prayer Action Rod that he had developed, took patients back to the moment of conception. His scientific work was, for me, more than adequate evidence that consciousness (the life force stemming from God with Divine Wisdom and Divine Truth) as a soul being manifested as personality began at the time of conception. I observed patients undergoing emotional traumas when the first placental sheath dropped from the fetus at about the seventh week after the fertilization process.

You can imagine my astonishment when I read the quote from Fernald's book that life and happiness, harmony and prosperity "are more dependent on influences that bear upon human beings before birth" and that "what is organized within us, in our pre-natal state, is of more consequence to us and more vital to progress towards perfection and happiness, than what is educated into us after we are born."

Fernald spoke of the intimate connections between the spiritual world and the physical world and of spiritual beings having much more to do with the whole pre-natal condition and the birth than we are aware of.

I am personally aware that anger, rejection, sex problems and physically connected emotional traumas can be rooted in pre-natal experiences. I keep asking myself questions about current psychological and psychiatric approaches which address themselves only to afterbirth experiences.

Are they valid?

Only recently has the current community which calls itself "scientific" declared that when unconscious we are aware of thoughts and sentiments spoken aloud around us. More recently there has been an awareness that babies *in utero* are influenced by attitudes of the parents.

Shouldn't a church which has teachings on discrete degrees, refinements and levels of consciousness be preaching and publishing, in the language of today's world, insights into processes of interaction between mind, body and spirit in holistic terms?

I would like to know how others in my church community feel about these thoughts, and I would welcome a dialogue with anyone who would like to write to me.

Dorothy Travers
112 West 6th Street
New Castle, DE 19720

Smooth and Well Worn Stones

Sylvia Rankin

North Hollywood, California

When David was young (maybe a teen-ager) he was tending his father's sheep when he realized that the Israelites needed help to overcome the giant Goliath. It seems that the Israelites were encamped on a high spot opposite the high spot staked out by the Philistines. Each army was sending its own champion into a valley in between until, at last, there was no one who dared to go against this adversary.

David decided to give up caring for the sheep, and, though young, he would attempt to save his people. As he proceeded along, it was necessary to cross a brook, where he found and selected five smooth, well-worn stones. These he deposited in his pouch hanging from his belt. When he judged that he was close enough to stake Goliath successfully, he carefully choose one of the stones and inserted it into his slingshot.

Aiming carefully, he flung the stone straight at the target — the middle of the giant's forehead. The evil and mighty creature fell dead. Taking Goliath's sword, David symbolically cut off the giant's head.

When the Bible says there are giants in the land it means we have evils, some very big, that we must rid ourselves of. If we refer to the Scriptures and select some of its truths, store them in our minds and use them in our lives, they become well worn and smooth. Then when temptation presents itself — pictured here by the arrogance of the Philistines — we can use our internalized Biblical knowledge against the intruder. God will use his truths to lead us. With this sword of truth (which David seized from the giant) and in cooperation with God, we can run up, chop off the giant's ugly head, and save those Israelites within us struggling to reach the Promised Land.

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