

THE MESSENGER

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FROM THE EDITOR

Every year we are subjected to another round of gripes and grumbles regarding the shortcomings of the Christmas season. It is too commercialized, too slick, too much made in Madison Avenue offices and not enough in heaven. Santa supplants the baby Jesus as the central dramatic figure, providing more exciting moments of anticipation of presents than Jesus ever could muster for his gift of salvation. The pagans have taken over.

I wonder. Can not some of these very signs be seen as evidence of a Christmas spirit much in keeping with the aims and goals of the One who came to deliver us from self-centeredness and isolation?

The Christmas spirit requires of us a redoubled effort of goodwill. Why, weeks ahead of time we are preoccupying ourselves with questions like, "What does Aunt Helen really need?", "What would make cousin Henry really happy?", "Does little Janet prefer dolls to games?" In countless ways the world over, people go the extra mile for each other. It is as if we all sense a deeper, underlying value in going all-out, at least once a year, for warmth, friendship, hope and peace. It is as if we really want to believe in ourselves.

So I want to ask: Who's to say that this commercialized Christmas spirit isn't inspired by the One whose birthday anniversary we are observing? Who's to say that celebrating Christ's first advent must be in the form of singing religious hymns, nativity scenes and sermons on light shining in the darkness, as good and appropriate as these are?

Who's to say that Jesus isn't tickled pink to have his birthday insinuated into the very commercial fabric of the entire Christian world? That the spirit of giving, even if induced by social pressures, has been implemented into the business cycle (and even salvages a great many commercial endeavors) is perhaps more pleasing to that One than we might surmise from the perspective of religious propriety or idealistic visions. I don't know.

Do not misunderstand me. I am not absolving merchants and Christmas barons from a certain cynicism in their construction of tinsel and glitter. I'm not even saying that deep down in their hearts, beneath the stony self-interest, there lies a tender spot of charity. I am saying only this: the Lord works for good in all things. In this most beloved and observed holiday, the Lord's leading seems to me to abound everywhere.

I, for one, plan to look for the subtle ways in which the Lord endeavors to keep His season holy this year. In dashing madly for last minute gifts, in listening to the endless barrage of ads, in discovering myself awash in Christmas American-style, I will keep my focus upon how totally reliant I am upon the work of others, how they are reliant upon my reliance, how our pattern of giving results in an economic matrix that may be the beginnings of the Universal Human form to be fully realized in the higher realm.

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Christ in the New Age

William Ross Woofenden

"At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other."

Matthew 24:30-31 [NIV]

As a memorandum at the end of the book *True Christian Religion*, Swedenborg wrote in part: "After this book was finished, the Lord called together his twelve disciples; and the next day he sent them forth into the whole spiritual world to preach the gospel that the Lord God Jesus Christ reigns...It was foretold in these words of the Lord: 'He shall send his angels, and they shall gather together his elect from one end of the heavens to the other (Matthew 24:31).'" [¶791]

In this way, Swedenborg linked an apocalyptic prophecy in the Gospel with the beginning of the New Church Era, a beginning which he states first occurred in the spiritual world about the year 1770, to be followed shortly by the beginning of a New Church organization in this world some 17 years later — the first New Church society having been set up in London in 1787. Both these events, in turn, are identified as direct results of the Lord's promised Second Coming.

The verses of this text are part of the Lord's description of the last judgment on the first Christian church era preparatory to the beginning of the second Christian era, marked by his second coming. These verses promise first a "sign" — "the sign of the Son of Man...coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory."

If we turn ahead to the book of Revelation, we find that it is written throughout in the language of "signs."

This means that the things described are symbols. If we try to understand them literally we turn them into nonsense. All through the Bible the coming of the Lord is described in symbol language; for example, that in preparation for his coming there will be earthquakes, famines, people fleeing to the mountains to seek refuge, and finally, sky and land to be destroyed in a great final catastrophe.

In Revelation 21 we read that John saw a new earth and new sky for the old earth and sky had disappeared — and then out of this new sky he saw the holy city New Jerusalem descending, symbolic of a new church to be established on earth. The teaching of this new church makes it amply clear that the church of the risen and glorified Lord Jesus Christ is the great theme of the book of Revelation. And that the natural calamities spoken of are signs of changes that will accompany this new church era.

No one is unaware of the fact that great changes are going on in the world around us. But very few relate these to the state of the church in the world. Yet the Bible consistently presents the state of the church during any dispensation as the paramount issue of that era. Whether the church stands true or becomes faithless, the spiritual fortunes of the times are bound up with that state.

In the Old Testament it is clearly predicted that the church era of that time would come to an end. For instance, when the Lord chose to foretell the end of that church because of its falsifying of the Scriptures, making the Word of God no longer effectual, he told the people through one of his prophets, "Look high in the skies and watch the earth beneath, for the skies shall disappear like smoke, the earth shall wear out like a garment, and the people of the earth shall die like flies." [Is. 51:6]

Again and again, similar figures are used: the skies will be shaken, their light will fail, they will roll up like a scroll, the stars will fall, the earth will reel back and forth like a drunkard. These are some of the Scriptural predictions of the Lord's first coming, and many people took these

prophecies literally. But we know that none of these things took place literally. Yet the old era *did* come to an end and the Christian era *did* begin.

This, as we have noted, is an Old Testament prophecy which has been fulfilled. And then we need to remember that the same sort of prophecy was made with regard to the



church of the first Christian era. It, too, is to lose its power and prestige. Its "sky" and its "earth" will pass away. The words of our text, in fact, signal the beginning of a new age of Christianity. And there can be little doubt that there is a crisis in the Christian world today.

I watched recently on public television an astonishing program called "Beyond War Spacebridge," satellite coverage between Moscow and San Francisco of the presentation of the Beyond War Award to both a Russian and an American doctor, at the same time honoring the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, a coalition of more than 100,000 doctors

The great bulk of humanity has yet to learn that God is related to his universe as the human soul is to the human body, everywhere pervading, controlling and caring for it.

from countries all over the world. It was one of the most moving and encouraging presentations I have seen in a long time. But notice that it was *not* honoring work of the *Church* — as we might well have expected — but of the medical profession. Clearly, world Christianity and its organizations have lost their clout, have all but abdicated their leadership role in the quest for world peace.

Many people have lost faith in their church. Many no longer believe the old teachings of their church. This is as true of ministers as it is of lay people. Many — clergy and laity alike — do not know what to believe. These facts, however, should not really depress us. For one thing, they are foretold in the Bible. While it is true that the Christian church in its beginnings was united, and formed the most beautiful and influential fellowship on earth, in time it became divided and was broken up into many conflicting and warring factions. As little as a century ago, each branch of the church had its own system of truth and seemed to be satisfied with it — even though it overlapped only very slightly with the faith systems of other denominations. Each church had its own message and preached it. But today there are few who believe these doctrinal structures.

But even a true knowledge of the nature of God cannot, of course, perform its intended functions in isolation. In addition to a basic knowledge of God, there needs to be an understanding faith in the future life; for this, too, is one of the fundamental teachings of the Word of God. If there is disbelief or doubt here, the underlying conditions of civilization are altered, its values and standards are changed, and *this* world — and not God and the spiritual

world — becomes of primary importance in human hearts and minds.

In short, the world needs *truth*. It is of no avail for the church to preach doubts or guesses. Above all, the church needs to recognize the Lord Jesus Christ in his glorified humanity, worshipping him as the one and only God who redeemed the world from spiritual bondage, the one infinite source of all love and wisdom, and therefore as the source of that power which alone can save and bless.

When the Lord was incarnate and walked on this earth among people, it was all too true that “the world did not recognize him.” [John 1:10] It is not strange, therefore, that in this new age the world should for a time be unaware of his second coming in a new revelation of truth. But we should never doubt that a new day *is* dawning and is slowly and surely brightening, through those who have learned and are learning of him, and are gradually understanding and trying to keep his precepts.

All who do know these things should see and be able to declare that we are indeed in the beginning of a new age, an age created not by ourselves but by the Lord, whose infinite love and wisdom are ceaselessly at work for human happiness and peace. The New Church — in its several present forms and in forms to come that we cannot possibly foresee at this time — is the church of the new age.

We have only to look around us and see what is going on in all the facets and phases of human life. Can any of us doubt that we are living in a time of testing the principles by which people live? These principles, it is being discovered, are in large part principles of self-interest and self-exaltation. For if more people really believed in the Lord, there would be more evidence of efforts to follow him and to honor and trust his teachings. The great bulk of humanity has yet to learn that God is related to his universe as the human soul is to the human body, everywhere pervading, controlling and caring for it.

Through those who do acknowledge the Lord in his second coming and who unite to learn and do his will, he is present among all the people of the world with power to establish his kingdom and to fulfill his promises.

This is the actual crisis confronting the world today. There seems to be no sure knowledge of or belief in Christian teachings. Even such fundamental tenets of the church as the divine incarnation, the oneness of God in Christ, and the immortality of the human soul are being widely challenged or denied. This is the true world's crisis. Such things as the terrifying nuclear arms race are merely symptoms of the deeper underlying spiritual disorder in the world.

The source of all life — natural and spiritual — is our connection with the spiritual world. And when this connection is frayed and corroded and near the point of being broken altogether, almost cutting off the flow of light and its accompanying heat into human minds and hearts, it is not surprising that life here is being thrown into confusion. The disorders around us in the external world are simply the effects of this internal disorder.

A new spirit of truth and love must come into the minds and hearts of the people of the earth. A new knowledge of the Lord and a new awareness and experience of his presence and power are necessary to the life of this new age.

We can rest assured that all the prophecies of the Word will in time be fulfilled. There is also no doubt that we are right now living in the days of the Lord's second coming, a time when false teachings, tyrannies, and hypocrisies are to be exposed and condemned. Along with the confusion, there is a new spirit abroad, a spirit of intellectual and spiritual liberty.

It is written of this new age: "This is what the Lord says: 'I will return to Zion and dwell in Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called The City of Truth.'" [Zech. 8:3] The fundamental truth of the new

age is that the Lord God Jesus Christ reigns; the truth that Christ is the only possible savior of the world. A real understanding belief in this truth is now possible.

The prophecy of this text speaks of the gathering of the "elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other." Understood in the language of signs, this relates to the gathering together and uniting of all the good that there is in people for the purpose of building up a new and higher type of humanity. I have no doubt whatever that the remarkable efforts of the international physicians group mentioned earlier is a part of the fulfillment of this prophecy.

The vision which is slowly forming in the world of the possibility of a new and higher type of humanity will become a reality when, through the new revelation, the true nature of God becomes known. As long as there is no knowledge of God — or a false idea of the nature of God — people are thrown back on their own meager mental and spiritual resources, cutting themselves off from, rather than connecting themselves firmly to, the source of all enlightenment and power. □

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Even such fundamental tenets of the church as the divine incarnation, the oneness of God in Christ, and immortality of the human soul are being widely challenged or denied.

Getting Close to God

Eric Allison

In the Bible the words “prayer” and “to pray” are used 337 times. If we also include praises, adorations, glorifications and thanksgivings unto God as a prayer, then prayer may be the most frequent act done by every major character in the Bible.

I visited Jill and Brian Kingslake not long ago at their home in Bath, England. Jill had been the driving force behind the Prayer Fellowship among Swedenborgians, and she is still a strong believer in the power of prayer. When she asked me what had become of the Prayer Fellowship, I had no choice but to say that apparently there is not enough interest to keep it going.

The Spiritual Growth and Healing Committee of the Swedenborgian Church has taken on the responsibility of endeavoring to revive the fellowship. This is not an easy task. A committee cannot make people get together and pray. We welcome the support, advice and participation of anyone who would like to be involved. As a tiny step toward reviving interest in the Prayer Fellowship, I have written the following article on the importance of prayer.

Probably all of the world's religions agree that God is described as the Creator and Ruler in the universe, the Infinite Almighty, who is all powerful, all knowing, all seeing, and is present everywhere at every moment. Swedenborg tells us that no one can escape God's presence. Yet, nearly every religious person feels the need to be closer to God. Nearly every one of us feels somehow unfulfilled and knows that, if we were just closer to God, we would be fulfilled with something wonderful that would bring us a greater contentment than we had ever had. But, God is already here, *right now*. At this moment the hand of God is upon you.

During the last few years several people have told me that they really did not know what I meant when I spoke of the “Presence of God.” I have often been asked, “How do you go about getting closer to God?” I don't mean this in a put-downish way, but until I

heard this, I just thought that all church-going people knew how, but for one reason or another, just didn't take the time to do anything about it. I still believe, to a very large degree, that this is the biggest part of the problem. People just do not take time for God.

How do you get close to God? Well, there are lists of methods and the following are some examples: Reading the Word, chanting or singing, taking the sacraments, being really open with another person, being in awe of a beautiful natural scene, or playing a musical instrument, and I am sure that the list goes on and on. But for Christians I would say that THE WAY to get close to God is to pray.

In the Bible the words “prayer” and “to pray” are used 337 times. If we also include praises, adorations, glorifications, and thanksgivings unto God as prayer, then it may be the most frequent act done by every major character in the Bible.

If prayer is THE way to get close to God, then is there a BEST way to pray?

As you look through the Bible you will find that there are many different ways of praying, and that there are, for the most part, not just different styles of prayer, but *different reasons for praying*. Prayer cannot be something we do so that we will be closer to God, and therefore feel better. It must be something that is done because we need to do it, want to do it, and in fact, feel called to do it. All prayer must carry with it the recognition that we are dependent upon God.

As far as I can determine, the different styles of prayer in the Bible are: thanksgiving and praise; prayers of petition, that is asking God for things, also known as supplication; repentance and forgiveness for sins that have been committed; intercession, asking for help for someone other than yourself; meditation, contemplation or communion with God, that is just taking the time to be with God and *listen*; interrogation—asking questions; the final type of prayer on my list is translated from a Greek

word that means "pouring out." It is emptying ourselves of ourselves. It is opening our hearts wide and turning our brains off.

There are many reasons and many ways of praying, but is there a BEST way? A way that will give us the closeness we seek?

Jesus is our model. He makes some very clear statements about how not to pray. He gave us what we call "The Lord's Prayer" and his actions give us an example to follow.

During the Lord's time on earth public prayer was a common practice for Jews. The "men of prayer" were the hypocrites Jesus spoke of. These men were bent on following all the Old Testament laws (or so they said), and to prove this they followed passages in Exodus and Deuteronomy which say that certain laws should be carried with them at all times. They had the laws written on small pieces of paper which were carried in a leather pouch, called a phylactery, which they hung around their necks. Often these pouches were large and elaborately decorated so that no one could miss them. They were 'show-offs.' When their congregational prayers were being said in the Synagogue, they would loudly recite their own prayers. During the three times of daily prayer when all Jews were to pause and face Jerusalem, these professionally pious men would always somehow manage to be caught on a crowded corner and would sometimes stand for three hours in their devotions. Jesus identified these men as the worst kind of hypocrites and said they were only pretending to believe what they said. *That is how NOT to pray.*

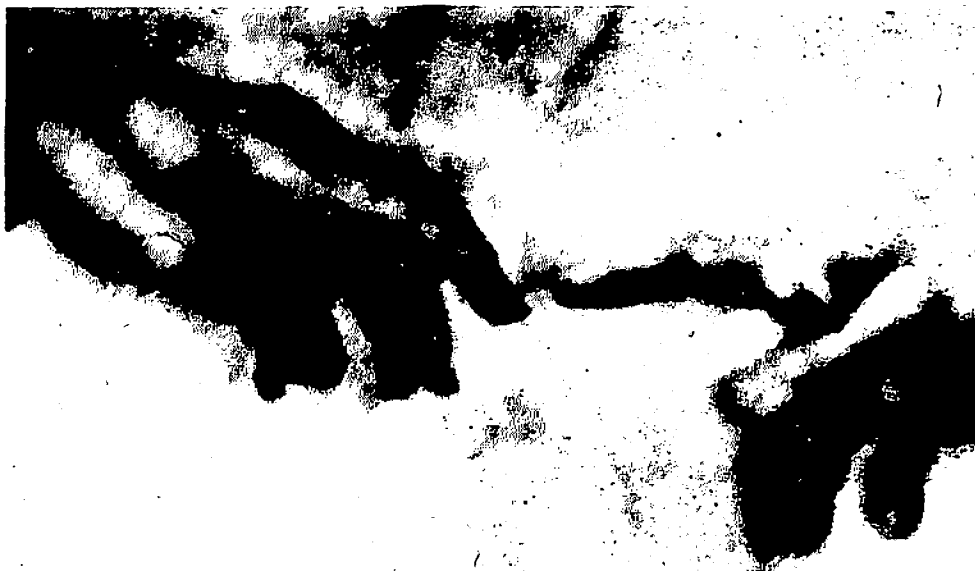
The Lord certainly says that it is perfectly all right to pray in public. He affectionately calls the temple "a house of prayer," and the Gospels tell us that it "was his custom" to go to the temple. What is very important to remember here is that he also says that we should either pray alone or as if we were alone.

I ask you now to think of the last time you said the Lord's prayer. What was the quality of that prayer for you? You know the prayer very well. Did you think about something else? Did you feel a closeness to God and think and feel every word of the prayer deep in your heart? If you did, what made it

so? If not, why not? Were you praying so that you would keep in time with everyone else? Is that important? If the prayer did not give you anything, what were you doing to keep yourself from receiving it?

What people either do not know, or ignore, is the context in which Jesus gave us that prayer. He was speaking to people who had the custom of giving several prayers many times longer than his simple and beautiful one. The people would repeat their prayers over and over again in the belief that the more times they said them the better their chance of manipulating God into giving them what they wanted. Jesus was strongly opposed to repeating prayers because that was the way the pagans and the pharisees prayed.

How should we pray? Jesus is our model and we should pray every way that he prayed. He prayed alone from his heart, He



prayed in front of people from his heart, and He apparently prayed the ritual prayers in the temples and certainly this was also from his heart. Swedenborg tells us that during many of Jesus' prayers he was "emptying" himself of all non-spiritual human infirmities. This, I believe, is the key for our own prayers. Prayer is "pouring out". It does not matter if it is a prayer of thanksgiving, questioning, or repentance. If we are not pouring out our soul before God, then it is not really a prayer — it is just words, and we might as well be like the pharisee standing on the corner shouting his performance before the crowds.

How, then, do we get close to God? Through prayer. How do we pray? From our hearts and often. The Lord is our model. He prayed honestly and often.

If I had to pick a single reason why the New Church has not grown, I would have to say that it is because most of us are afraid to really pray together. I know that here in Kitchener and in other Convention Churches, people are just not willing to get together and pray openly. We feel uncomfortable talking with emotion about our faith. We are generally unwilling to ask someone to pray for us or with us. We like things all set out in a nice and safe format. People will ask for a prayer group at the Church, so Paul and I put a notice in the bulletin, but only one or two people showed up. People say, "I don't have the time," or "I'm just too busy," Well, God is not too busy for us. He is waiting for us to enter into a closer relationship with Him.

Some folks have said to me, "I try to pray, but nothing happens." I always ask them how long they tried. Rarely does anyone say more than ten minutes. Now, I ask you to consider this: if you were going to meet a friend somewhere for dinner or a meeting of some kind and they were late, how long would you wait? Ten minutes? Twenty? Most people would wait at least fifteen minutes and then make a phone call. Doesn't God deserve at least the same consideration that we would show a friend?

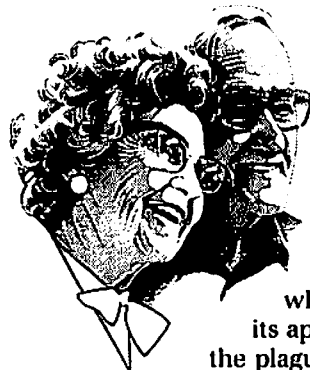
Speaking for the Spiritual Growth and Healing Committee, I ask you to consider the importance of prayer and the importance of praying with people in your church. When someone is ill or on an emotional low, phone up some friend and other members of the church and ask them to pray for that person. If you want more support, then phone other New Church people around the continent and ask them to have the local people in that region pray for the person in need. We do not need an organization to make the Prayer Fellowship work. We need only ourselves. □

Eric Allison is pastor at the Church of the Good Shepherd, Kitchener, Ontario.

The Art of Aging

Successful Aging

Elizabeth Johnson



The problem about growing old in our culture is the message delivered from all sides which tells us to dread its approach as we would the plague. We hear

"Oh, I forgot so and so, I must be getting old."

"Now that you are retiring get out of the rocking chair."

"Your husband will continue to notice you if you don't look your age."

Sadly, "The Golden Girls," television's newest successful series, sends out those negative messages encased in a glittering laughing disguise.

It is really difficult to find acknowledgement that older people can continue to be interesting, alert, good to look at and valuable members of society. However, there are such people around, and they are into "successful aging."

Successful aging is a life-long process, beginning with the awareness that life is a continuum of growth and change, a learning and expanding in response to challenges day by day, progressing through life and beyond death.

Successful aging is meeting the challenge of the changes which come with advancing years on our bodies, our skin and hair, eyes and ears; changes in our finances when we are no longer employed full time; changes in our environment as we cease to travel the daily route to work and see that our home is the place where we now spend much of our time; changes in time, which suddenly, with retirement, is completely in our power to use as we desire.

Successful aging is accepting the challenge of a new lifestyle with its possibilities, and searching for the facts to counteract the myths which belittle and disturb us. It is seeking out the information about what is really happening to older bodies; discovering that senility is not a part of aging, nor is

loss of mental ability. It is learning how to maintain good health with diet, exercise and recreation. Mental health is inseparable from our attitude about growing old, and knowledge which dispels fears is essential to a balance of mind and spirit.

Learning to make use of all the time now available is an exciting challenge. There are many opportunities for new experiences and relationships. Colleges are now offering a variety of classes to seniors at minimum cost. **Elderhostel** beckons with two-week-long learning experiences at colleges around the world.

If you know your mental abilities are unimpaired by age, what new skills await your time and effort? There are countless opportunities to volunteer in your community, using the skills you have acquired through the years. Employers are now aware of the value of older workers. Part time work is a possibility, perhaps in a new field. Finally, and most importantly, is staying involved with the world, caring what happens to it, and using our well-learned abilities to help others.

One factor in successful aging is good planning, which cannot begin too early in life. This is difficult for young people to understand. They are struggling to build careers and raise families and have little energy to plan for their retirement. We now know that Social Security is insufficient, and pensions are undependable to meet the needs of old age. Therefore, some strong financial planning becomes an early priority, with good health care provisions included.

Knowledge is a bulwark against the onslaught of "agist" stereotypes. Being alert to the false messages and determined to live to our full potential makes the difference in how we meet the challenge of our later years. □

Elizabeth Johnson, longtime member of the Swedenborgian community in the greater Seattle area currently serves on Convention's Committee on Admission to the Ministry and is highly active in local affairs. She and her husband, the Rev. David P. Johnson, are fine examples of active living beyond retirement.

At Work and Play in England

Paul Zacharias

As most *Messenger* readers have heard by now, Pat and I are spending eight months in England, serving the New Church society in Birmingham. The reasons for coming here are many and varied. As far back as I can remember I've wanted to spend some time in the United Kingdom...after 22 years in Kitchener it was time for a temporary change. The clergy shortage in the British Conference is critical, so I serve a use by filling in for Julian Duckworth, who has been called to the Mauritius New Church for a year. Finally, I look upon this temporary pastorate as a personal challenge; at my age, can I still serve reasonably effectively in a totally new and strange environment? Most of us like to think that we can cope reasonably well in completely different, unknown surroundings — here is a golden opportunity to test that thesis.

At this writing we have spent almost two months in Birmingham, and in general are finding this to be a most enjoyable and satisfying experience. The reasons listed above are being fulfilled in a gratifying manner. Perhaps first I'll share with you a number of random impressions of life here in England, then some observations of the New Church in the U.K., both locally and nationally.

Someone recently commented that when North Americans come here they invariably ask, "What is the population?", whereas the English would prefer to talk about the weather, or their flowers. So we'll start there. Greater Birmingham, which actually is made up of dozens of small villages and towns, has a population of about one and a half million people, second to London in the country. It's a heavily industrialized area, with industry and factories of all kinds scattered throughout the county, and as such is hard hit at the present time because of competition from Germany and Japan and other nations which have been more adept at modernizing their equipment and facilities.

The unemployment rate here is at least 20% of the work force; for the non-white young people the jobless rate is over 50%. This is one of the factors behind the recent riots in Handsworth, which occurred about 2 miles from where we live. In the riots 2

men died, about 120 people were injured, and property damage was 18 million pounds. (in the U.S. a pound is worth about \$1.45, and in Canada \$1.95.) Another element in the riots, both here and elsewhere in England, is racial tension. Perhaps this was the biggest surprise of all. Birmingham is over half non-white. Following World War II there was a tremendous influx of immigrants from India, Pakistan, East Indies, West Indies and Africa, with the result that whole areas of Birmingham are Hindu, Sikh or Muslim in culture. There are some age-old in-group hostilities that contributed to the recent riots.

The street on which we live is about 75% non-white; the people we have met have been most friendly and helpful, but in general they keep pretty much to themselves. Obviously this has implications for the Oaklands (New) Church, inasmuch as it is located in the midst of this diverse population, thus attracting new members from the area becomes extremely difficult.

The weather: England had a very soggy, dismal summer, but since our arrival in late August we've enjoyed mostly bright, sunny mild days, for which we are given credit, an added bonus! The flowers are nothing less than magnificent. Even now, in mid-October, all sorts of flowers, especially roses, are still in full bloom, and in our many walks in and around the neighborhood we frequently stop and smell the blossoms. Almost every garden is sheer delight. We don't have yards here, but rather, gardens, usually very small by our standards, but every square foot is neatly manicured, every hedge precisely clipped. It is indeed a gardener's paradise. On the last Sunday in September we had our Harvest Festival Service, something like our Thanksgiving holiday, and there must have been 12 baskets of flowers in the sanctuary, along with great mounds of fruit and vegetables, which the next morning were carefully sorted out and distributed to our senior members and shutins.

My impression is that the standard of living, in general, is about one-third less than that found in North America. there is little extreme poverty; the welfare system sees to that. But the cost of living is higher, and the wages are lower, so most people do with fewer "extras" than North Americans are accustomed to. In some respects, living here is like stepping back into a time warp, about the early 1950's. And this is not altogether an unpleasant experience!

Many people still do their shopping every day, in the local village shops (very few super-markets in Brum); people make do

with what they have; you drop by for a visit, and over a cuppa tea you'll be shown the family albums; the white lace curtains in every front window; the number of people who still enjoy long walks on a balmy Sunday afternoon-this all smacks of a charming time-gone-by.

A word about the unmentionable: driving in England. For years I've laboured under the delusion that driving in Boston was about as difficult as you'd find anywhere. Beantown drivers: enjoy your piece of cake. Consider: streets about two-thirds the width of North American streets; car parked on both sides of the road (cars facing both directions, both sides); winding roads; most roads change names every 5 or 6 blocks; roundabouts instead of traffic lights at most intersections; double-decker buses and massive lorries charging down the roads-and here am I, shifting gears with my left hand, on the wrong side of the road, wondering where in Brum I am heading!

So far we've seen quite a bit of this fair land. Church friends drove us to the Welsh coast, where we were thrilled to the splendor of Harlech Castle-the vast green pastures dotted with sheep everywhere, the quaint farmhouses nestled in the valleys, heather on the hills, the ancient villages with unpronounceable Welsh signs everywhere. In some schools English is still the second language!

We also toured Windsor Castle, which is splendid beyond compare, and made time for a leisurely stroll along the Thames, toward Eton College. An interesting sight: three Eton boys, formally dressed in black suits, white shirt and school cravat, with top hat in hand, eating Quarter-pounders at the local McDonalds. From the top floor of Windsor Castle, the Queen can look out any of the west windows and see a McDonalds; no doubt she's thinking, "There goes the neighborhood."

We've also spent a most delightful day touring Warwick Castle and Stratford-on-Avon, about 25 miles from Birmingham. Stratford is quite small and compact, and the number one tourist attraction in the UK, so even on a weekday in October the streets were filled with camera laden people, mostly from America. Some of the accents were almost as pronounced as those of Cornwall and Yorkshire!

Shakespeare's home is a "must", every room filled with furnishings and treasures from a very different kind of world. To think that Will once roamed those same streets and played along the banks of the Avon.

The theater building was a little disappointing—not as attractive as our Shakespeare theater in Stratford, Ontario—but no doubt the theatrical performances are outstanding. Saw the house in which John Harvard, founder of a well-known institution in Cambridge, Mass. was born. Had lunch in the pub next door, where the vic-tuals were not especially noteworthy.

So far we have seen 9 or 10 old churches, abbeys and cathedrals, most dating back to the 11th and 12th centuries. Splendid piles of stone with glorious stained glass win-dows, and one marvels at the craftsmanship involved. How could they build those enor-mous stone structures with primitive tools? The incredibly fine woodwork, the exquisite tapestries, the amazing colours, impossible to duplicate nowadays, the wonder of it all.

In one abbey an illuminated scroll listed all the vicars, beginning with Ethelbert in 1057 up to George Schwimm, installed in 1972. But let's go back a few years. Last Sunday was a perfect day here, so in the afternoon church members invited me (Pat was in Chester for the day), for a walk in Shrop-shire hills, about an hour's drive south-west of Brum. On top of the highest hill, clearly visible, is a large circular ridge of grass covered earth, and these were the ear-thworks thrown up by tribes living there around 4000 years ago; a simple fortification to ward off hostile forces. 2000 years later the Romans came along and subdued the en-tire area; they inturn were pushed out 5000 year later.

Speaking of the Romans, recently we had a most enjoyable visit with Brian and Jill Kingslake, in Bath. Not that they go back to Roman times, but we had a fascinating tour of the Roman Baths in their city, still in near-perfect condition. For thousands of years the water has been bubbling up at exactly 117°F, and the methodical Romans built an amazing system of pools, conduits, drains, etc. (They also built straight highways, and I dearly regret that in 1500 years since their departure others have seen fit to invent spaghetti-like roads.) Brian and Jill are still fit, mentally and physically, and send affec-tionate greetings to all their friends in North America. They live in a very comfortable rowhouse on one of the many hills in Bath (most of the housing in the UK is row hous-ing, which makes sense when you consider the limited space available, and keep busy with gardening, writing, reading, and con-siderable involvement with local churches, Swedenborgian and otherwise. Brian plays the organ every Sunday in the Bath New Church, and Jill leads a prayer group in the neighborhood. The hours sped by — all dic-

sussion centered on religious issues, with special focus on the New Church, past, pre-sent and future, in the UK, North America and around the world.

This is quite long enough for the first in-stallment. In a month or two I'll send you another epistle with my impressions of the New Church in the UK, the many parallels and some divergent trends in Convention and Conference, and a more in-depth look at the Oaklands New Church Centre in Birm-ingham.

To everyone a very joyous and blessed Christmas and may the New Year be kind to all of us. □

The Upper Room

The Three Wise Men

Leon C. LeVan

Many attempts have been made in various ages to define what a wise man is. Some would say a wise person is a university pro-fessor who is filled with academic informa-tion. Others might say a wise person is one who is shrewd enough to gain much of this world's goods. Yet others would say a wise person is a philosopher, or statesman, or diplomat. Let us now define a wise person as a one who has found the Lord.

It should be pointed out, however, that find-ing the Lord is not always a simple matter. It is possible to live a whole lifetime in a Christian country and not find the Lord in any practical manner. To find the Lord in a true sense means to experience Him con-tinually as the God of our hearts; to live ac-cording to His teachings; and to confess Him openly before others. If we do not do these three things, we have not fully found the Lord.

A true instance of finding the Lord is given in the story of the Three Wise Men. Just when it was that the Wise Men came to Bethlehem we do not know, but Bible scholars generally place their visit from twelve days up to two years after the Savior's birth. We are told in the *Gospel Ac-cording to Luke* that the Wise Men came from the East, and for various reasons we may believe they came from Persia. Now Persia is one thousand five hundred miles

away from Bethlehem. It is as far as Maine from Florida or Mexico from Pittsburgh. No one would make a trip like that in ancient days, traveling through deserts, fording rivers, fighting through enemy territories, who did not truly acknowledge Him whom he sought to worship.

We are not certain how these Wise Men knew that the Lord was to be born in the Land of Judah. But some kind of knowledge they certainly did have. The New Jerusalem writings tell us that in Persia (as elsewhere) there were magi (or wise ones) who retained some knowledges from the Most Ancient times, and that they were able to deduce almost to certainty that the Lord was to be born of the seed of Abraham that particular year. Thus those Three Kings (as they may also be called) organized a caravan to travel the great distance of fifteen hundred miles to the capital of the Jewish nation to find the new-born Child.

Let us now ask if the Three Wise Men have something to say to us today. The first thing they tell us is that the Lord Jesus Christ who was born in Bethlehem is the supreme object of human worship. Having once learned about Him, there was no obstacle that could keep them from Him. They could easily have said, "The new-born King is too far away from Persia." They could have said, "He is a foreign Messiah and no concern of ours." It is a tribute to the wisdom of the Wise Men that they did not do so. Instead, they assembled their retinues, took gifts for the Child, and made the long journey to worship Him. How they would find Him or where He would be, they did not know. Their part was to make the search — to find the Infant King of human hearts — and to lay down their own kinship in tribute before Him. The first lesson the Wise Men teach us is that He whom they sought so long ago is still He whom we must seek and find today.

The second lesson is that finding the Lord has its price. We commonly say that the Lord is accessible to all, and that is largely true. But it is also true that coming to the Lord has its price of spiritual labor. There are deserts of barren experience to be crossed. There are enemies of the soul to be conquered or avoided. The journey the Wise Men made was a costly undertaking. It required faith, courage, and a large retinue of servants and camels for the great expedition.

Why were the Wise Men from far-away Persia willing to pay the price? Here we are helped by the spiritual explanation of *Scripture*. The Wise Men came "from the East" and the East is the Scriptural symbol of "love

to the Lord." Love to the Lord will pay the price. Love to the Lord will do what is necessary to bring us to Jesus. On that journey we are guided by the Star, the clear Star of Heavenly truth, which is there and shining for those who seek its light.

In the *Gospel* story the Wise Men were actual persons who visited the Divine Child in Bethlehem of Judah. But in the spiritual meaning of *Scripture*, these "Wise Men" are the composite symbol of all true wisdom which follows the Star of Heavenly knowledge to the lowly Bethlehem manger. The three Wise Men symbolize all true wisdom in you and me. True wisdom, inspired by true love, and guided by the Star of Heavenly knowledges, will pay the price and will find the Lord in the "Bethlehem" of the soul.

The third and last lesson we learn from the Three Wise Men is that we need to show our devotion to Jesus in a free and open manner before others. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength."

When the Wise Men came to find the Infant Savior, they gave Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Those three gifts are symbols of the three departments of your life and mine — the heart, the mind, the actions. The Wise Men found Jesus in Bethlehem of Judea. May we who make the journey of the heart find the Lord Jesus Christ to be the light and life of the world today.

Wellness for a New Age

My Personal Journey

Dorothy Travers-Davies

For several months I have been sharing some of the ideas, treatments and philosophies that I have absorbed through my studies and practice as a holistic teacher. The overview that I tried to bring out during this period is that every mind is different, every body is different and each of us is working toward our own regeneration spiritually.

Biochemically, because of the individuality in operation, each of us reacts differently to a dose or procedure. Some people can stand certain drugs, for example, while others have violent reactions in either mind or body. Copper poisoning, I learned from my own practice, can in one woman cause a

schizophrenic breakdown and in a man cause such muscular collapse that he was diagnosed as having a stroke. The opposite reaction by sex could also occur, I am sure.

I have avoided getting into specifics on many occasions, because what is good for the goose is not always good for the gander, what is good for the black need not be good for the white, and what works wonders as a placebo in one instance might not work at all in another.

Hence, I have taken a position that each of us must be familiar with our own body, listen to its call for help, pay attention to it, and realize the first symptoms that suggest that the body is degenerating. Keeping the perfectly balanced mind in a clean body takes work, and undergirding that work there must be good information. The best source for that information is from within each individual himself.

The first time that I was examined by a holistic doctor, in 1977, I was told that I had heartstress (and I hadn't eaten meat for 4 years by that time), an infection (low grade) in my liver, kidney stones, pancreatitis, sinus congestion with mucus and arteriosclerosis in the head, poor digestion with gas pockets in the colon, red worms in the colon and lymphatic congestion.

Of course, I felt fine, was not on medications, and hadn't been to a regular allopathic doctor for more than seven years. A month went by and through a urine and saliva test I found out that I had low blood sugar, an alkaline body condition, underactive thyroid with low nerve energy. I was low in potassium, had a clogged liver and the colon needed a good cleaning. There was a growth in the right breast and stress on my heart, while the right kidney and bladder area were retaining toxins.

Two more months went by, and I had an iridology examination. Pictures of the iris of my eyes were made and when enlarged on the screen the diagnosis was for all practical purposes the same as the previous two. I continued on this discovery trail and in 1978 I had an exam by a nutritionist from Utah who had developed a technique of dermatographics of the feet; in 1979 at a health show in Washington D.C., one of the lectures used a pendulum to diagnose; in January 1980 I took an exam in which a computer spat out everything wrong with me, and in March of the same year, I was given a radionic exam.

While the medical establishment will not accept many of these procedures with diagnoses of things before they get to the crisis stage, I found it very interesting that in each case there was a strong verification of the earlier reports. I was feeling fine; I was

not sick. I was presuming that I was in good health because I was eating right.

But during the years of stress which I visited on myself because of the way in which I handled my husband's 16 year illness and death, I had subconscious problems in the making. I had to have the traditional 'female' operation because I had become a "tumor manufacturing plant" and I had lived with arthritis pain in my ankles, knees, neck, hands, wrists and shoulders and back. But I believed at that time that this was normal and to be expected for someone in their fifties, particularly when their congenital inheritance includes heart attacks and arthritis.

Then I found out that this aging process IS NOT NORMAL! I learned about Paul Bragg's work and how he died at 92 as the result of a scuba diving accident. I started listening and studying with people on the brink of death with cancer, alcoholism and other degenerative diseases, who restored themselves to health. I read everything I could, attended every health seminar, fair or symposium I could, and thoroughly changed my life style. While I was getting better and feeling stronger, I concluded that other people might like to know that they don't necessarily have to live with disease and pain.

I began teaching at the college level, appearing on radio talk shows, lecturing at health symposiums and consulting with patients in my home. I no longer have such a schedule, but I still feel that I can share my philosophy and knowledge with those who are asking the right questions.

As a postscript, a few months ago I had another set of pictures taken of my eyes by a friend who studied to be an Iridologist. He found none of the conditions previously diagnosed, so I took my five-year-old pictures to him for comparison. He was fascinated with the difference. So much so that he asked if he could make a set of earlier pictures to show his patients how, with detoxification and mind balancing, the conditions of the body could change and be reflected in the eyes at any age.

I still wonder what gave me the strength and faith to completely leave behind a lifetime of habits and adopt new ways of thinking about myself. I knew that I needed the time to work on my inner self and continue on my spiritual path. I preferred not to be distracted anymore by pain and body problems.

My innermost prayer is that I may be a catalyst, in some way, and help someone else take a new look at himself or herself from a different perspective. Let's drink a carrot juice cocktail to that! ☐

WOMEN COMMUNICATING



PHYLLIS BOSLEY, EDITOR

*"You see the earth as a bright blue and white
Christmas Tree ornament in the black sky.
It's so small and so fragile you realize that
in this small spot is everything that means
anything to you: all of History and Art and
Death and Birth and Love."*

Astronaut Schweikart

DEDICATION

Oh great measure
Steer this fellowship
To treasure grace
This planet earth
Experimental
Vessel in space
The dream is real
As ever the sun
The burning bush
The dream is real
As moon-tide of womb
That brought us here
The dream is real
Creative heaven
Bone-man evolves
Perhaps earth is
The only planet
To evolve leaves
Perhaps earth is
The only planet
Burning candles
Perhaps earth is
The only planet
Deciph'ring leaves
Perhaps earth is
The only planet
To read candles

A candle-wick
Becomes periscope
To lead hope
Cleanse well the glass
Mirror or prism
To clear the view
Listen poets
Dedicate your lines
To this circle!

Ruth Weiss
(from *Love and Other Poems*)

Born Of Woman

As the child Jesus was born of woman, so of woman can always be born and formulated divine ideals; ideals to which the true and reasoning brain of man will turn for inspiration.

But we must have it strongly in mind, that an ideal without a basis is an *ignis fatuus*, [a will of the wisp] and the following of such makes but a creature of impulse, which has been woman's reproach for ages.

Such was the feminine principle as expressed in the volatile Esau, who sold his birth-right, as first-born for present comfort; and to whom it was promised, as to woman, after the Edenic age, "Thou shalt serve thy brother." Yet the further promise is, "It shall come to pass when thou shalt have dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck." (Bear in mind that *dominion* always applies to love or the feminine principle.)

The writings tell us that woman has perception rather than reason; also that to have perception one must cultivate the understanding.

Here then we have a sure step toward the new development of woman, in her special sphere: cultivate the understanding. This we hope is being done for the present generation in the opportunities for higher education. But this will give her perception only on the natural plane, and we have seen that woman's especial work is higher.

She must make a study of spiritual truth, in order to attain this perception. Like Mary, she must ponder these things in her heart.

Women should form clubs for reading and discussing the doctrines in their own way, and according to woman's view, in order to learn to abide by their own views. They are so accustomed to acquiesce in man's version of spiritual truth that it is really necessary that they work in their own way for awhile. Supposing they do form erroneous opinions

at first, will it not be better than having no opinions? Let them do as they do in secular matters, have papers and discuss them; or take some topic upon which study and so prepare themselves, as to be able to express themselves clearly and definitely.

If women would begin to study woman's duties and privileges, as taught in the writings, the church would not be of so slow growth as at present. We leave too much to men; perhaps many of them are willing we should; but there are many in the church, even among the teacher's, who are puzzling over the problem status of woman, and until woman takes up the subject in a rational, studious way, it will remain a problem, — a problem which neither man nor woman can solve alone.

It is wholly a spiritual matter. When the spiritual side is in order, the externals will fall into place of themselves.

Meantime let her join hand and heart with the activities going on in every direction for the amelioration of ignorance and suffering. It is all a part of the new age now opening upon us.

In all ages, with every development, truth comes first harshly as law. Elijah came, as did John, like the voice of one crying in the wilderness, coarsely clad, and pronouncing harsh judgments. But as truth develops, and instead of law, we are able to see and feel the love concealed therein, come the gentle Elisha and the loving Jesus.

So, in the progress of the world, it is necessary that the coarser man with his principle of "Might makes right" should come first; he is superseded by the one of gentler mold and higher aspirations, ruling from justice. And unless all prophecies are nought, there is a still higher attainment, the dominion of love, exemplified by woman; the 'woman who openeth her mouth with wisdom, whose honor and strength are her clothing, who reacheth forth her hands to the needy: she shall rejoice in time to come.' This time to come, when women shall rejoice is upon us.

When that which is conceived by the Holy Spirit and developed in the hearts of true women comes forth with its message of love and power or perception, to meet its counterpart of truth and energy, and both work together, on every plane of life, then will be the true of image of God.

"In the image of God created He him. Male and female created He them."

The above is an excerpt from a paper read at "The Round Table Talks" in connection with the New Church Congress or of World's Congress Auxiliary, 1893.

Pacific Coast Association

The Pacific Coast Association meeting, August 30 through September 1, held at the Salvation Army Retreat Center in Palos Verdes, was delightful. The meals were beautifully served by a staff of Christian people who cared. The business of the Association went smoothly, and in between these business sessions there were inspirational parts of the program.

Then I came home to assume the responsibilities of a home, the house and the garden full of fruit trees in need of care. This caused me to contrast the worldly responsibilities with the carefree way of finding the meals in the dining room at the appropriate times. This reminded me of the way such needs are cared for in heaven. The food is there when needed, and no need to worry about any clean up afterwards.

Upon coming home and planning the details of home making, I am more thankful than before to the Lord for His good and wise provision of material things for our well being and comfort in this material world that He has provided as a seminary for heaven. His way is good. I assume responsibilities of life in this material world with more thanks in my heart, and a prayer that He will always provide for our material needs as we grow towards his kingdom.

Alice Van Boven

Riverside, California Society

*Did you know that Alice Van Boven is a 5th generation Swedenborgian! Her mother was born in Amherst, Mass. and studied architecture. A very progressive program for a woman in those days. Alice's father, Captain Skinner, was born in the Yarmouth Port, Mass. parsonage. The Skinner's came West in the late 1890's, and Alice was born in Los Angeles in 1899. Captain Skinner was one of the three founders of the Los Angeles Society. Alice resides in Redlands, California, a few miles East of Riverside. Alice is Secretary of the Riverside Society, serves as organist, teaches an adult Sunday School, and has upon occasion preached from the pulpit. You may have read one of her sermons reprinted in **Our Daily Bread**. Andre Diacanoff, who served as Minister in the Los Angeles and San Francisco churches, had a very high praise for Alice's understanding of Swedenborg's writings.*



ECLECTICA



Kitchener Church Dazzles With New Programs

The Church of the Good Shepherd in Kitchener, Ontario recently sponsored "The Call to Courage," a worship celebration similar to the one of the same name conducted this summer at convention in Windsor, Ontario. A packed sanctuary of 225 people worshipped in this interfaith worship experience that uses original music and dance. Elements of Jewish, Christian, Swedenborgian, African and Native American traditions are blended in a contemporary service of worship and celebration. Reading, prayer, movement and song all acknowledge and affirm the diversity of creation and the many faces of The Creator. The service is designed to assist each person in examining and taking responsibility for their own life.

The same team of Rev. Ken Turley, Laurie Turley, Julie Egger, Donna La Rue and Carol Fusco also offered an all-day workshop the day before on October 26, entitled "Liturgical Music and Movement." Designed to facilitate skills in creating sacred dance and music for personal or public worship, the facilitators of the workshop strove to show how these avenues of spiritual expression can lead to an experience of being closer to others and to God.

The Church of the Good Shepherd also sponsored an informal evening talk by herbalist Richard DeSylva on "Herbs, Your Health And the Law." This Thursday event in October dealt primarily with the latest developments in the world of herbs and the government's regulation of health care in Canada.

Beginning on November 1st, the Kitchener church also sponsored a two-day workshop entitled, "Proprioceptive Writing," which is the same workshop that was met with such success at the Writers' Workshop following convention this past summer. A full registration for this workshop ensured a repeated success.

Almont Program Growing

For people scattered throughout the Michigan area, the Almont New Church Assembly and Retreat Center has begun offering a worship afternoon once a month on the second Sunday of the month. They call it: Second Sundays. Attendance has been good. Almont also boasts the largest teen group in Convention (The Survivors), and they will be holding their annual Post-Christmas Retreat December 26-30. The theme this year will be "Who Made This Mess Anyway... a study of creation." Cost is \$25.00 — a real bargain! Late registrations can be sent to: Rev. Ron Brugler, 1513 Cameron Road, Almont, Michigan, 48003.

St. Louis Church Offers Outreach Activities

The Church of the Open Word in St. Louis has sponsored a six week workshop by Tom Driscoll on Feldenkrais Movement — a method of body-mind activity designed to increase awareness of living at all levels. The church has, in addition, sponsored two evenings of learning and fellowship with outside professionals. The first was a concert by San Jose singer and songwriter, Pat Proud, whose works derive from a spiritual perspective. The second evening was a presentation by Ruth Hanna on the use and theory of subliminal tapes for inducing behavioral and attitude changes in one's life. Both evenings were light-filled and provided an opportunity for several people in the community to become acquainted with the church.

Annual Lecture Series Begins

Lars-Erik Wiberg, president of the Cambridge New Church, opened the 1985-86 academic year lecture series at the Swedenborg Library in backbay Boston with a presentation entitled, "The Direct Measurement of Occupation Compatibility — A Jung-Swedenborg Connection." Mr. Wiberg, a management consultant and vocational counselor, presented Jung's four basic personality types and the relationship of these types to the typology found in Swedenborg's *Rational Psychology*. Mr. Wiberg discussed how personality types and employment situations can be made compatible.

Christmas Meeting

I said there was no time for Christmas, but
There was some time between the times of things
That didn't really matter after all.

I said the world was much too loud for me
To hear some Christmas angel, but my ears
Once turned to hear were flooded so with sound
They blocked out all the shrillness and the noise.

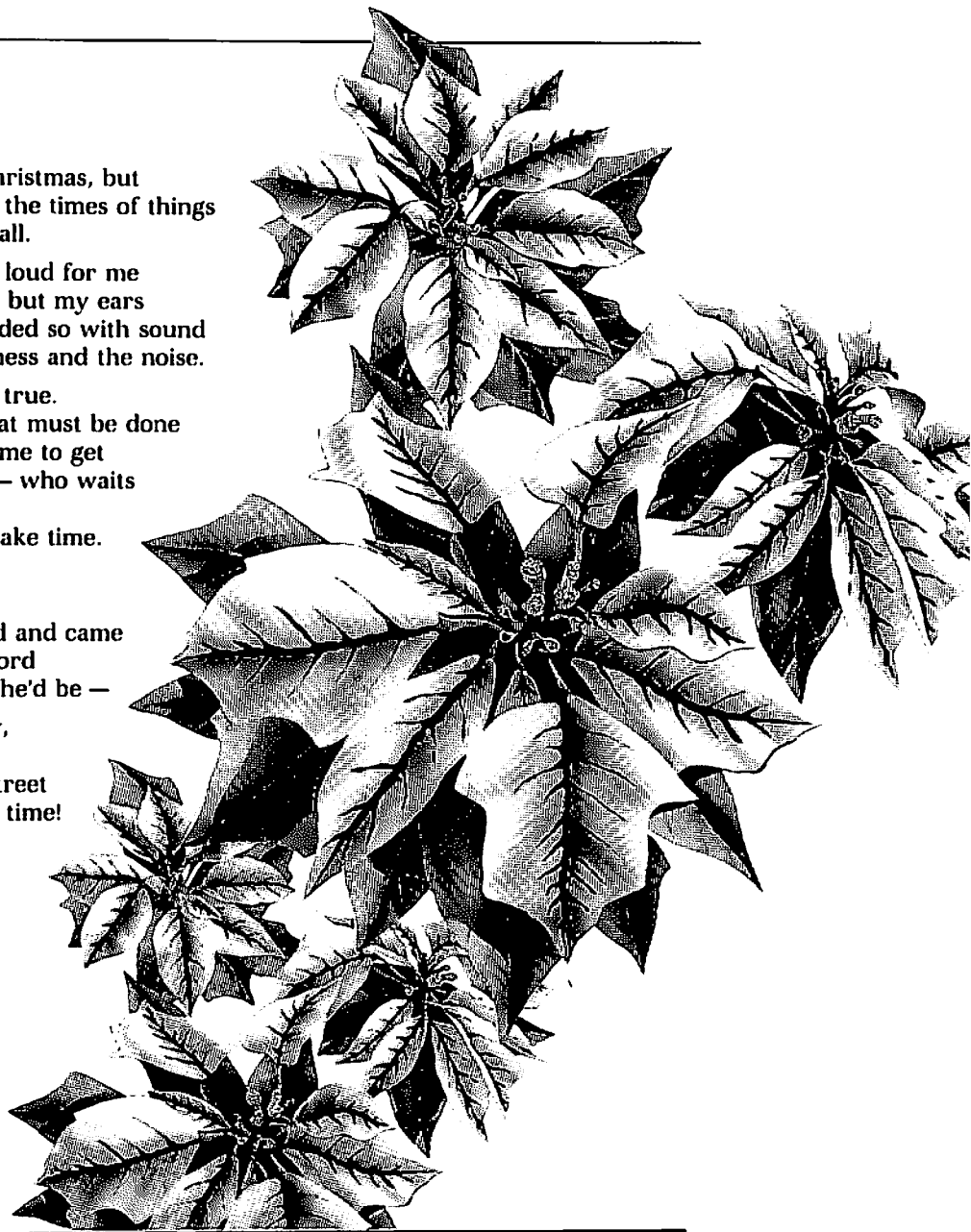
I said I was too busy: that was true.
The world has always more that must be done
Than I can do and still have time to get
To Bethlehem to see my Lord — who waits
So silently and undemandingly
For me to stop and listen and take time.

But timing by a brighter star
And hearing in an inward ear
I stopped and stood and turned and came
To Bethlehem and found my Lord
Right where the prophets said he'd be —

And stopping at the stable now,
Ready to turn in to praise,
I meet you coming down the street
To the same place in this same time!

O come let us adore him!

Robert H. Kirven



COMMENCEMENTS

Baptism

King—Joshua Scott King, son of Richard and Kristine (Hall) King, was baptised into the Christian faith on October 27, 1985, at the Fryeburg New Church, Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. David L. Rienstra officiating.

Confirmation

Henry—Ami Henry was confirmed into the life of the General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches, with a special prayer also for her coming baby, on October 27, 1985, at the Urbana New Church, Urbana Ohio, the Rev. Dr. Dorothea Harvey officiating.

Marriage

Bowman-Bingham—Gay Beth Bowman, granddaughter of the Rev. and Mrs. Galen Unruh, and Carl Dee Bingham were united in Christian marriage on October 5, 1985 at the Pawnee Rock New Church, Pawnee Rock, Kansas, the Rev. Eric J. Zacharias officiating.

Death

Rockenbach—Susan Carol Rockenbach, life-long member of the St. Paul New Church, passed into the spiritual world on October 2, 1985. Resurrection services were held at the Virginia Street Church, St. Paul, the Rev. Keith Tussing officiating.

General Convention of the New Jerusalem
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**Dr. Mary Kay Klein, President
Swedenborg School of Religion
48 Sargent Street
Newton, Massachusetts 02158**

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