

THE MESSENGER

Official Organ of the Swedenborgian Church



Emanuel Swedenborg

JANUARY 1968

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Unfinished Business

Several errors of omission and commission in the last two issues have been brought to my attention, so I will begin the New Year with some corrections, and a New Year's Resolution to be perfect in 1968 (*would you believe, the rest of this page?*).

COMMUNITY-SERVING CHURCHES. In the November issue, the reprint of my postscript to Dr. Block's *The New Church in the New World* included a list of community-serving churches. While the list did not claim to be definitive, there was no reason why the highly successful project in Edmonton, Alberta, was left off. Founded by the Rev. Erwin Reddekopp, and continuing now with the Rev. Harvey Tafel, Edmonton provides a particularly good example of Swedenborgian efforts in the community-serving direction.

BOARD OF EDUCATION. The report of the Board's November meeting, which appeared in the December issue, listed *some* of the members present, but omitted the name of the Rev. Harold Larsen, President of the Sunday School Association, and *ex officio* a member of the Department. Also present, but not reported were the co-chaplains of the A.N.C.L., the Rev.

Randall Laakko and the Rev. Jerome Poole. Mr. Poole also serves as director of the Leadership Education Institute.

COVER PICTURE. The December cover, "First Snow," features a striking White Beech tree on the campus of the Swedenborg School of Religion.

COMING EVENTS

Trustees of Urbana College	Jan. 13
Executive Committee of Council of Ministers, Chicago	Jan. 15, 16
Board of Missions Executive Committee, Philadelphia	Jan. 30, 31
General Council, Swedenborg School of Religion Board of Managers and Board of Directors at SSR	Feb. 2-4
NCTS Board of Directors	Feb. 16
Preliminary Planning Group on Adult Leadership Education at SSR	Feb. 16, 17

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THE STATE OF THE CHURCH

As you read this issue of *The Messenger*, 1967 is history. It was a bad year and a good year for the Swedenborgian Church. Two ministers announced their resignation from parish work for reasons that may be over-simplified as frustration; two churches that I know of, at opposite ends of the country, declined to a point where the prognosis becomes discouraging. On the other hand, two men have experienced an auspicious beginning of their parish ministry, and two churches that I know of, at opposite ends of the country, have experienced a significant increase in attendance and participation during the year (I did not inquire about the attendant membership statistics).

Looking over the year as a whole, and peering myopically into 1968, it appears to me that the church has about as many weaknesses as it has strengths; but for the time being, from where I sit, my most honest appraisal gives a slight edge to the strengths. As I see it, the State of the Church, at the beginning of 1968, is: "Getting Better."

Uniqueness

One of the strengths in the Swedenborgian Church today is the firm and systematic conviction that in some sense it is unique. Some find the uniqueness in our special heritage of doctrine in the works of Emanuel Swedenborg, some find it in a special mission to proclaim and make ready for the church of the future, some find it in a special compatibility with modern science or certain schools of psychology, some find it in combinations of these or in other ways. All varieties of the conviction unite in the confidence that what is unique about the Swedenborgian Church is something fundamentally important in the world of the present, and holds vastly greater import for the world of the future. This sense of a unique origin, mission and relevance is a deeply pervasive strength. It defies the pressures toward prestige and efficiency, that militate against maintaining such a small church; it defies both the fuzzy eclecticism and the limiting compartmentalization of our age. It not only defies them, it thrives on them; and unites men and women who can agree on nothing else (including even one way of stating this sense of "set-apartness") into a living church.

Continuity

One of the strengths of the Swedenborgian Church is its newly explicit sense of continuity with the long history and the broad present of the larger Christian Church. In cooperative ventures on local and national levels, we lend our strength to the good that churches can do together, and lend our witness to the principle that "charity unites." In conferences and colloquia where theology is discussed, we contribute to ecumenical understanding both by learning to listen (and listening to learn), and by learning better to contribute our perspectives on the problems that unite and the problems that divide the branches of Christendom. Where the preparation of ministers is discussed, we contribute from the particular experience which grows out of our view of man, ministry and the church; and we gain from wider experience of successes and failures in the great adventure of Christian ministry.

In each of these cooperative acts, and in the motivation behind them, we transcend our smallness and uniqueness in such a way that we simultaneously contribute to and gain from the strength of total Christianity.

Smallness

One of the strengths of the Swedenborgian Church is its small size. There are theological bases, as well as sociological ones, for expecting that the future will be more different than most of us suppose — calling for greater (and possibly faster) adjustments than can be made easily. Such adjustments are hard for individuals, but much harder for institutions, hardest of all for large institutions. It is not at all certain that the big churches will be able to survive all the changes that are gathering momentum in our culture today, especially with their essential religious character intact. It is not certain that our church will survive either, of course; but while size is a source of strength in some situations, smallness and agility can be excellent qualities for survival in others. The time to "come out of the wilderness" may be approaching more quickly than we think!

Theology

One of the strengths of the Swedenborgian Church is its theology. It is a future-oriented theology, essentially free from necessary encumbrance by concepts and concerns that lose rele-

vance or validity with the passing of time, and open toward the future in such a way that no particular sequence or outcome of events is necessary for its validation.

It has great potential for problem-solving, which can make it increasingly valuable as more and more people realize the inadequacy of traditional solutions to the kaleidoscopic problems whirling out of the fast-changing future. It applies more directly to persons and groups than to persons and institutions, which seems more viable for the present and the foreseeable future in our culture than the essential institutionalism of many theological structures. It has seemingly fathomless inner coherence and external consistency, which should provide continuing relevance in the rapidly increasing influence of cybernation on the culture; yet it relates this horizontal consistency at all points to an integral and infinitely-extended vertical dimension, meeting the basic human need for expression of depth without forcing a schizophrenic acceptance of irrational religion in a rational environment.

Love

One of the strengths of the Swedenborgian Church is the variety and the depth of non-theological relationships that bind us together. For many of us, our closest and dearest friends are church members we meet only at committee meetings and Convention. The value of these friendships is one of the prime ingredients in the cement of our organizational structure, and it motivates sacrifices of time and effort and money that maintain a highly capable church — a church capable of far more effective effort than it has yet found to do. Indeed, this may be one of our deepest strengths: Jesus said, “By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” He did not say, “... if you agree theologically,” and the violent arguments over theology and over church practices that sometimes occur between close friends at Convention testifies to a love that over-rides and under-girds intellectual differences over means and even goals.

Weaknesses

These are some of the strengths of the Swedenborgian Church: uniqueness, continuity, the flexibility of smallness, the stability of a theological base, and a depth of personal relationships that transcends theology. Each of these strengths, if elevated to too much pre-eminence, threatens to

become a weakness. The feeling of uniqueness can lead to intolerance and isolation, the sense of continuity can lead to dilution and compromise, smallness to futility and surrender, theology to intellectualizing, and personal relationships can produce a closed social circle that is not a church.

In continuing tension with one another, however, these are qualities of a strong church, a church with great potential for survival, creative adaptation, and vigorous action. But this does not describe the state of our church today. There is another major weakness or danger and another major strength.

Fear of Conflict

Perhaps the greatest weakness of the Swedenborgian Church today is a certain fear of conflict. Given the strengths and the weaknesses I have already described, it is evident that difference is a part of the life of this church. At its healthy best, it provides a dialectic tension that exerts a potent and continuing force toward more creative and effective thoughts, attitudes and actions. But difference involves at least the risk of conflict; and when fear of conflict leads to isolation of differences, a real danger becomes apparent. Differences that are suppressed out of fear of conflict are not eliminated, but rather deepened, and removed from the possibility of any constructive influence. When, out of fear of conflict, we discuss certain issues only with those who agree with us on those issues — talking only of “safe” subjects when in the presence of those who disagree — we pervert a healthy dynamic tension into a destructive divisiveness.

This happens in our church today (as, indeed, it has in the past). I am particularly conscious of it as Editor of *The Messenger*. It grieves me when I am criticized for publishing the “other” side of some issue by someone who does not submit material for the side he believes in; and it grieves me even more when my critics will not write or tell me what they think and feel. Let this be clear: it is not the criticism that grieves me, but the non-communicating divisiveness. Criticism is a sign of life, of tension, even of unity. When we cannot communicate about our differences, all the strengths that I have listed become weaknesses, and any difference, however inconsequential, can be fatal to the unity and the very life of the church.

Commitment to Future

Perhaps the greatest strength of the Swedenborgian Church today is an awakening commitment to the future. This commitment can be observed both negatively and positively. Negatively, it seems to me that the topic, "What happened to the New Church? What did we do wrong?" is discussed less frequently and less violently. I do not think this means in every case that we have forgotten our history, or that we have given up trying to learn from it. Rather, it seems to mean that we have drawn our conclusions, right or wrong, and are ready to test their validity in action.

Also negatively, I have heard our smallness and our decline counted as an asset on quite different grounds than the flexibility that I mentioned above: the grounds that we are approaching (or, perhaps, have already reached) a point in number of members, number of churches, or even financial resources, at which change and daring become imperative. Both of these observations, I think, are hopeful rather than pessimistic. Both indicate a growing commitment to the future.

This commitment to the future has positive expressions, too. There is an interest in experimentation and change. I hesitate to mention examples, because unless I cite over half the churches in Convention, some creative experimentation may seem slighted. Risking that, however, for the sake of brevity, consider the specialized ministry to retiring and vacationing Swedenborgians at St. Petersburg, Florida; the blend of that with a community-serving approach during the summers in Yarmouthport on Cape Cod, Mass; the focused ministry to travelers of all faiths at the Wayfarers' Chapel; the small-group, prayer-therapy emphasis in Bellevue, Washington; a new exploring, open-minded committee in Washington D.C., searching for ways and means to bring new life into the church; the focus on self-realization and consciousness of depth in El Cerrito, California; community-serving experiments in Edmonton, Des Plaines, Colorado Springs, and other places.

Also as positive expressions of this commitment, I would mention some of the experimental ventures that did not produce the results that were expected or hoped for: the Swedenborg Philosophical Centre near the University of Chicago, now the home of the Chicago Society; the Garden Chapel outside St. Louis, Missouri, where life and hope for a new venture seems to be awakening; the Cherry Park Community Church

outside Portland, Oregon; the team-ministry-yoke-parish experiment in Wilmington-Philadelphia. In these and others, the initial hopes, as well as the later lessons learned, are testimonies to a whole-hearted commitment to the future.

From my perspective, this appears the greatest single source of strength in the Swedenborgian Church today. Clearly, it does not replace the others that I mentioned earlier, and could as easily become a demonic weakness if carried to an excess that denied our historic roots, our common heritage and our essential nature as a church. But in tension with our uniqueness and our continuity, our flexibility and our stability, our theological and non-theological unity — if we can overcome our fear of conflict sufficiently to meet and deal with the full depth of our differences — this commitment to the future may indeed be the fruit of the Divine Proceeding in the life of our church. *Robert H. Kirven*

DOES ST. PETERSBURG HAVE WIDEST NEW CHURCH FAMILY?

The distinction of having what may be the most wide-spread New Church "family" in the USA may belong to the St. Petersburg Society whose communicants, members, and friends come from many sections of the country owing to the church's beneficent location in Florida's Sunshine City.

Under the Rev. Leon C. LeVan's new ministrations, the church is making a series of fresh beginnings while maintaining the beloved worship forms which have endeared themselves to generations of New-Church people.

During the cold-weather weeks ahead, many New-Churchmen will be making plans to visit Florida and St. Petersburg; and if they know there will be an active New Church awaiting their arrival, they may wish to participate in its worship and enjoy its social amenities.

Through the pages of the *Messenger*, the St. Petersburg Society wishes to extend a general invitation to all Florida New-Church visitors and prospective residents to "come and join us in worship and its resultant happiness."

It is pleasant to reflect on the fact that to the time of this writing (Dec. 13) west-coast Floridians have had almost continuous "shirt-sleeve weather" and many expect to go bathing in the Gulf of Mexico on Christmas and New Years.

ANCL Journal

This excerpt was taken from the American New Church League Journal, published in Pretty Prairie, Kansas in November, 1967.

by Eric Zacharias

On the fifth floor of the Reno County Jail in Hutchinson, Kansas is a lonely 14 year old boy. The heavy steel bars shut him off from his parents, his friends, the world. The days drag on in their empty monotony.

Mark's parents are well educated. The family lives in a lovely country home. In the garage are two cars. To the eye everything is complete.

But something is wrong. Mark has beaten his father. He has assaulted a police officer. He already drags behind him a long chain of unhappy events — the courts, the commitment to the Industrial School, jail.

Mark is one of thousands of young boys and girls who are finding the way to growing up a hard way. It has been said that we build fine machines but we all too often fail in the building of men.

There comes to mind the old grandfather's clock in our living room — its long pendulum swinging from side to side in a wide ranging arc. Our human nature takes to extremes — sex is worshipped for its own sake, material possessions are revered. Still in the midst of all this we do see change.

There is a growing awareness that each person has something in him which when given the chance to develop is good. People are not things to be used and abused. Every person — no matter what his plight — has the right to be heard. Mark has been crying for help for a long time. Too many are ready to judge him as "no good."

Another change we need to recognize is the growing awareness in people as to their rights as citizens. It is now a law that anyone arrested be told of his legal status under the law. This is good. As Judge for the City of Pretty Prairie, I give close attention to the reading of the city ordinance involved in any situation. It can be kind of embarrassing to have a teenager tell the Judge how the law reads. All of this has tended to emphasize the importance of technicalities.

Out of this, it seems to me there arises the great-

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Letters to the Editor

Dear Sir:

Your guest Editor invited reactions to articles in the November issue and that they would be cheerfully received.

My reaction is one of protest to the article "Vietnam: A Way Out;" that the pages of our church paper could be used to give aid and comfort to the enemy of the United States. This is the kind of writing the Communists are happy to see printed; especially in a church paper. It gives them encouragement to carry on. Divide and conquer. The Communists are patient people. It is not my intention to debate this Communist-slanted "way out" of the war, but to warn readers of articles by authors who confer with the Communists (our enemy) and then come up with a solution to the war. How can it be anything but slanted in the Communist direction? Bronson Clark did this and on this ground his article should not have appeared in the *Messenger*. *Gilbert T. Heddaeus, Pittsburgh, Pa.*

Dear Sir:

Bronson Clark, in his article in the November issue, implies fraudulence in the recent South Vietnam elections. When were the last elections held in North Vietnam? When are the next scheduled?

Mr. Clark states that American presence in South Vietnam has brought corruption, prostitution, inflation, etc., whereas in North Vietnam by contrast there has been economic control and land reform. May I point out that in Communist countries, redistributed lands have been well fertilized by the bodies of the previous owners. 20 to 60 million Chinese landlords and 10 million Russian kulaks could testify to that, if the dead could speak. Is there any reason to believe North Vietnamese agrarian reform is more kindly?

Mr. Clark shows great concern for the 10,000 Buddhists now in prisons. Should he not be at least equally concerned for the 1,000,000 Christians who fled from North to South Vietnam in the 18 months before partition? What would be their fate and that of other Christians under a Communist regime in South Vietnam? Buddhists and Christians alike must remember that all religion is suppressed under Communist rule. Many men of God and men of conscience have direct personal knowledge of life under Communism. Surely these exist in our own church. Let them speak. *Nan Hepp, Mill Valley, Calif.*

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er need for inner controls. It is quite impossible to pass laws to cover every situation. Therefore, we must build within ourselves those principles of respect for others and their property and all the other characteristics of an orderly community.

This way of thinking is taking hold of more and more of our young people. More and more of our young people are moving into the fields of the helping agencies, including the Peace Corps, VISTA, Social Work and related activities. Is not this the working out of the Lord's Laws of Divine Providence? Within each of us there is a voice that will not be stilled. We react against the burning of villages in Viet Nam, against the conditions in our cities, against the breaking down of moral standards. Our backs stiffen and we fight.

It does seem to me that there has never been a more wonderful time for the New Church. It does have a realistic view of life that keeps our eyes open to what is going on around us and then calls upon us to take our place in it.

F. LEE BAILEY SPEAKS at BOSTON CHURCH



On December 1st, F. Lee Bailey, perhaps the most widely known criminal lawyer in the United States today, spoke to law students from Harvard, Boston University, Boston College, Suffolk, and Portia. The lecture, sponsored by the Boston Church of the New Jerusalem was primarily for students and was held in the Boston Church Auditorium. Over 385 students and members heard Bailey's two hour talk.

F. Lee Bailey, graduate of the Boston University Law School, is renowned for his part in the acquittal of the suspects in the Plymouth mail robbery case in Massachusetts in late November and earlier for his participation in the Shepherd murder case.

Bailey directed his lecture to the law student familiar with legal language, rather than to the layman. He discussed the rules for preparing a well developed case, the need for many more qualified lawyers and spoke of some of the problems the law student might stumble upon. Bailey used the murder of Lee Oswald by Ruby as a mock case. He emphasised the need for keen investigators in preparing a sound case. Bailey has the help of seven professional investigators.

Following the lecture, Bailey answered questions freely. When asked about his controversial involvement in the Plymouth mail robbery case he quipped, "The Plymouth Post Office is still convinced that I made off with the loot and that they paid for my jet. They even offered to paint it red, white and blue." (Bailey travels from the East to the West Coast frequently in his own jet, speaking or working on cases.)

In answer to a question concerning Judge Wy-

zanski's handling of the mail robbery case, Bailey praised the judge. Unusual were Wyzanski's insistent interruptions, but Bailey pointed out that the evidence was so incongruous that the contributing judge did much to bring facts to the surface. "My face was often red," Bailey said, "but I welcomed his astute remarks." Bailey mentioned several times his feeling that many innocent people are sent to our jails. Therefore the need for good criminal lawyers cannot be overemphasized.

After the lecture and discussion period, Bailey mingled with the students, having coffee and posing for pictures with Rev. McCurdy and his brother who accompanied him to the Boston Church.



Rev. George McCurdy, pastor of the Boston Church, speaks with F. Lee Bailey and his brother William. Bailey's lecture was the first in a series of programs sponsored by the Boston Church. The next program, in the form of a panel, will be presented on April 26th.

Rev. George McCurdy, who initiated the idea of holding lectures on various topics of current interest as a service of his church, termed the first meeting a success. Having taped the entire evening's lecture, McCurdy plans to form this into a permanent record or book for use in the law schools.

On April 26th the lecture program continues with the presentation by the Boston Church of a panel including Harvey Cox of Harvard Divinity School, Roger Hazelton of Andover Newton Theological School and Elliot Norton, Drama Critic for the *Boston Record American*.

EMANUEL SWEDENBORG, Scientist and Seer

An account of Emanuel Swedenborg, translated from the "Conclusion" of Prof. Ernest Benz' biography in German, Emanuel Swedenborg, Naturforscher und Seher (1948) by R.H. Kirven

The description of Swedenborg set forth in the foregoing volume seems to me to justify the summary of a judgement of his personality and his work in the following theses:

1. Swedenborg was a genuine visionary of a charismatic type which can be traced through the whole history of the Christian prophets and visionaries from the author of John's Apocalypse, through Hermas and the medieval visionaries such as Joachim de Fiore, up to the 17th and 18th centuries. If one would reject his revelation as insane because they are based on visions, then one must likewise reject all Christian visionaries, including the author of John's revelations, as insane.
2. Swedenborg became a specifically Christian visionary on the basis of his Christian repentance and conversion experiences, which was decisively determined through his Christ-vision.
3. With Swedenborg, the appearance of the visionary charismas is involved with a genuine prophetic call-experience. If one would deny the authenticity of this call-experience, then one must simultaneously place in question all analogous call-experiences in the field of the churches of the Old and New Testaments.
4. Swedenborg was no spiritualist. It is false to abstract a system of "spiritualism" from his visionary theology, and set aside the specifically Christian impulse of his theology as superfluous or insignificant. His vision and his teachings about the transcendental world and the nature of its relation to the terrestrial world are not to be separated from his conception of Christ, his particular interpretation of the Bible and its Christian meanings, which is called "The Doctrine of the New Church".
5. Swedenborg brought to expression the true character of his conversion, and the morally binding genuineness of his visionary gift, by trying to practice in his own life, so far as

possible, the principles of a practical realization of Christian Love, which he declared to be an inseparable component of Christian Faith. Indeed, his conversion and call-experience represent not only the beginning of a new form of cognition, but also a new life, which was sharply distinguished from the former.

6. Swedenborg proved himself a genuine Christian prophet, in that his proclamation was meant for the church. His proclamation is not abstract philosophy, but addresses itself to the church of his time, and embodies as its inmost essence a renewal of the oldest form of the Gospel: Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand!

7. Swedenborg is a specifically Protestant visionary and prophet, in as much as his piety is not nourished primarily by sacrament and liturgy, but rather by the Word of Holy Scripture. His visions are not free utterances of a spontaneous visionary productivity; but on the contrary, they are commentaries on the Holy Scripture.

8. Moreover, Swedenborg is a specifically Protestant visionary and prophet in as much as his revelation and his prophetic criticisms were directed above all against the Swedish Lutheran Church to which he himself belonged until his death.

9. Viewed historically, Swedenborg's visionary criticism of the church of his time was thoroughly justified. This is demonstrated by the fact that it was directed against the same formal hardening of the doctrine of justification and against the same polemic spirit, uncharitableness and selfrighteousness against which the criticism of the contemporary Swedish Pietism and the spiritualistic cults was also turned.

10. The peculiarity of Swedenborg's charismas lies in the fact that from a philosopher and natural scientist he became a visionary. The fact that he thoroughly mastered – and in some cases developed further in a productive way – almost all the sciences of his time (particularly the natural sciences): and that before his conversion and call, he had already formed a metaphysical world-view on the basis of his explorations of all fields of human knowledge, also affects the visionary nature of his visionary charismas.

11. However, it is not true that all theoretical elements of his subsequent visionary speculations

were simply taken over from his philosophy. The elements of his former philosophy indeed appear again in his visionary theology, but now transformed through his Christ-experience and related to the new personal view of God brought about through his Christ-vision. The elements of his former speculations have been transformed in this way and unfold themselves within the experience of reality brought about through his call.

12. Swedenborg is a visionary of the Enlightenment. This comes to expression in that more than anyone before, he schematized and systematized his own visionary experiences, and laid a foundation through a theoretical epistemology. In that, he does not stand as an exception in the history of Christian visionaries, but rather a borderline case, in as much as extensions of such a schematization also are found with earlier philosophically trained and theoretically oriented seers; but nowhere did the visionary experience become so strongly systematic as with Swedenborg, and nowhere was the visionary experience so strongly assimilated into a rational system and unified under the influence of that system as with Swedenborg.

13. Swedenborg is also a visionary of the Enlightenment in that he shared the belief of his time in the power of a book, and indulged the error that to print a truth would be enough to secure its success. Therefore he renounced the medium of the spoken word for the public proclamation of his revelation and retained for this the form of the learned scientific publication in Latin, hoping that his "Doctrine of the New Church" would spread by itself.

14. The fact that many elements of his earlier philosophical concepts were again mixed into Swedenborg's visionary theology (though in converted form), and the fact that he systematized his visionary experience to the maximum, implies nothing against the genuineness of it, nothing against the intrinsic value of its truth. The history of Christian prophets and visionaries indicates from the start that the grain of visionary or prophetic intuition only grows from the stalk of human perception. With Swedenborg, of course, because of the strong domination of the didactic element, the proportion of stalk and grain (to keep the image) is somewhat unfavorable. However, it is false on this account to call the whole of it basically pure straw, because one

denies *a priori* that the grain of prophetic vision is able to grow from the stalk of human perception at all. The fact that he is a philosophical prophet and a prophet of the Enlightenment, must not lead to the conclusion that genuine visionary and prophetic charismas is not actually found with him.

15. However, with all due respect to Swedenborg's genuine charismatic character, it must be pointed out that he obviously succumbed to the logic of his own system. From the fact of uniqueness of his visionary endowment and particularly of his spiritual development from a philosopher to a seer, he has drawn the conclusion that the end and consummation of the Christian Gospel would be accomplished in his person. This conclusion is a fallacy, of course, and it is induced by the rarity of visionary and prophetic charisma in the Christian Church. Montanus held himself to be the fulfillment of the promise of the coming Paraclete: Swedenborg held himself to be the fulfillment of the promise of the returning Christ. He was unable to fulfill or carry through this extension in his sense of mission — which, to be sure, appeared only in the late years of his life. In this respect he obviously had overstepped the bounds of a reasonable ecclesiastical measure of a Christian sense of mission. Here his Christian humility should have called a halt to the impetus of his religious sense of mission. But who can limit a prophet, if not the Spirit itself?

16. Swedenborg's proclamation was thoroughly necessary for the church of his time. The concept of Last Things, of the reality of the Kingdom of God, of His Coming, of the manner of existence in life after death, of the Resurrection, of the Last Judgment, of Heaven and Hell: this whole complex of truths, which comprised the first original impulse to piety and life in the oldest Christian church, had faded completely in the Protestantism orthodoxy of his time. The "Last Things" were really "last", i.e. reduced to an appendix of dogma, and this because they certainly could no longer be maintained in their original literal form and because the church theology no longer dared to think these questions out anew. It is Swedenborg's enduring accomplishment to have furnished, on the basis of his visionary experience, any answer at all to these questions which moved them again into the center of the religious concept and personal piety.

17. Since Swedenborg's answer to the question

about Last Things is given from a Christian sense of mission, by a man whose charismatic endowment became awakened through a Christian conversion and call-experience, a man with whom this endowment was combined with an unusually universal education, a man who tried to the best of his ability to fulfill the ethical demands of his proclamation in a kind of sense of responsibility in his own life, there is no reason to deny his doctrines about Last Things *a priori* without examination; all the less when, in his own century, the strongest impulse to a renewal and intensification of the church concept of Last Things comes from him, as is acknowledged by Oettinger, Lavater, Franz von Baader, Jung-Stilling and many other great pietists from the Age of Pietism, the movements of Romanticism and the Great Awakening.

18. As yet, neither theology nor philosophy have established principles for a really sound examination of Swedenborg which make it possible to separate the wheat from the chaff. In philosophy, Kant, from his premises, fundamentally denied the possibility of visionary insight into the transcendental world, and therefore called Swedenborg, who claimed such insight, a pathetic crackpot who belongs in the madhouse. Protestant theology has accepted Kant's philosophy, but has forgotten to draw the conclusion from it: Since the beginning of the church and of theology goes back to the Resurrection Visions of the disciples, and the Apostle Paul in particular traces his call to the Apostleship and his Gospel, back to his Christ vision, so consequently Kant's church must assign their Evangelists and their Apostle to the same madhouse that Kant assigned Swedenborg. Either Kant's church must attend to this, or else it has to try to find a new category for the phenomenon of charismatic endowments, such as prophets and visionaries display. This new category would explain these constitutive phenomena which are so important and obviously decisive for their origin as well as for their final goal, and give a basis for judgment for them. Oettinger has begun this in his ten-year critical correspondence with Swedenborg, and his *Prophetic Theology* has articulated significant criteria for the judgment and examination of charismatic phenomena in the life of the church. To date, his call — raised in view of Swedenborg's work: "Examine, examine, and keep the good!!" is not yet fulfilled.

On University of Winsor Campus

Detroit Convention Plans Developing for 1968

The "Committee on Business," the group that plans the program for the coming General Convention, has held its first meeting, and preliminary planning of the business and theme sessions has begun.

The report of the Detroit committee that has been making arrangements for facilities was especially interesting. The convention will be held on the campus of the University of Winsor. Located on the bank of the Detroit River, at the Ontario end of the Ambassador Bridge to Detroit, the campus is easily accessible to travellers from the United States. Bus service is available from the Greyhound Depot in Detroit, which also provides connections to Detroit's Willow Airport. In addition, several airlines offer service to Winsor itself.

The facilities for housing, eating, and official and unofficial meetings appear to be ideal, and rates are expected to be reasonable. All agreed that the site provides many more advantages than the earlier plan for holding convention in a downtown hotel.

Program plans are not yet definite enough for announcement, but the early discussion of a theme suggests that this will be a convention of particular interest to the laymen from every Swedenborgian church in the country.

Massachusetts New Church Union Has New Office

The Massachusetts New Church Union has created a new office to serve the needs of the Mass. Association more fully. In response to a study of services that might be performed by such an office, Mr. Raphael Guiu, a member of the Cambridge Church, has been appointed General Secretary of the Union effective Jan. 8th. His office will be in the book rooms of the Union in Boston where he will be assisted by Mrs. Wilfred Rice, who has been acting as manager of the book rooms.

THE GOLDEN CITY

A golden city! What a wonderful, beautiful thought! "And the city was pure gold, like unto pure glass." — so do we read in God's holy Word of the New Jerusalem. There are other wonderful things, of course: the foundations of the city are precious gems; the light of the city is the glory of the Lord; the city is foursquare; the twelve gates of the city — three on each side — are so many pearls. But the main thing is this: the city is of gold, pure gold. And yet no ordinary gold, for this gold is as it were transparent.

If there is one thing that you and I — as men and women devoted to the ideal of a new, revitalized Christian faith — should keep in mind, it is the fact, the truth, that the city we love, the spiritual New Jerusalem, is a city the doctrines of which are the doctrines of that most precious of all spiritual metals, namely, love: love supreme to the Lord, and love from this to our neighbor. Our spiritual city is founded in love, springs from love, exists in love, and points to love; and, if the cycle of regeneration is complete, returns to love. And if our spiritual city is not this, it is not God's New Jerusalem.

We read in our doctrines: "Love is man's life." And in the regenerate life, this means love to the Lord and to our neighbor. But if love — spiritual love — must therefore be the center of our being, why is it that we so often seem to put it in the last place? Our lives should be radiant examples of what the Lord, through the wonderful truths which He has given us, can do for us, and is doing within us. Those truths — which, remember, are love's very form — should so permeate us that they affect, consciously and unconsciously, our every thought, desire, and act. For if the light that is within us does not shine and burn and glow from love, how is this admonition of the Lord ever to be fulfilled in us: "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven"? We must be transformed. We must let love — heavenly love — transform us and mold us into its image and likeness. We must let love — that love which is God's own true life — burn out of us everything that is mean, degrading, and sinful; everything that is base, and impure, and foul. We are God's temples; we should, from inmost to outmost, live the fact.

Our church, like others, has sometimes been hurt by discord and strife. In our meetings, the spirit of argumentation and controversy has sometimes prevailed over the spirit of love and charity. But this must not be. The Lord said, "Let your speech be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay; and whatsoever is more than these is of what is evil." It is of what is evil because, instead of being the approach of love through truth, it injects self into the pattern of things. There is a place for discussion, but it should be genuinely intelligent and — above all — loving. There is simply no place, especially when it comes to matters of religion, for that kind of argumentative spirit which, in the Lord's words, is very careful to "strain out a gnat," but which thinks nothing at all of "swallowing a camel."

What, then, do we need? We need, I think, a personal sense of God's holy presence. We need, I think, a conscious realization that He is near us, in a very wonderful way. We need, I think, the awareness that we are, truly, His children; and that He is with us all the time, guiding us and leading us heavenward. Our lives — our personal lives — must be much more than what is commonplace; we must simply not be content with trying to put the "new wine" of God's spiritual truth into the "old wineskins" of limited, narrow, and petty ways of doing things. As truth has expanded the horizons of our thoughts, so must love expand the boundaries of our lives, both with regard to our inner feelings and our outward acts. Instead of being Swedenborgian "literalists" — as, unfortunately, we too often are — we should catch the living spirit which is everywhere present in Swedenborg's writings; and we should realize that the words of truth which we find therein are simply — to use Swedenborg's own expression — "vessels" for the influx of a higher, heavenly life. If we truly believe that Swedenborg's writings are an expression of the Lord's second coming, then we must realize that apart from the marriage of love and truth they must remain meaningless to us; for in essence the Lord's second coming is this marriage.

One of the wonderful things about the kind of love which is the life and substance of the Lord's spiritual Jerusalem is that it is complete. It is not that kind of blind love before which truth is as a thick cloud; nor yet that zealous kind of love which has lost all sense of order and true meaning; nor yet that kind of love which is merely the sweetness of a superficial piety. No,

this love is a deep love. It is a love which is boundless, because it is God's own life; and yet it is, at the same time, a wise love, because it sees through truth and has been matured by truth. Yet, in spite of the fact that it is a very wise love, so that it sees clearly by means of truth (and this is the reason, incidentally, the gold of our city is said to be like glass), it is a vigorous, radiant, happy love; a love that is child-like and simple. A wonderful love!

Can we — you and I — find this kind of love? Yes, of course we can. After all, this is the "end-product" of the Lord's work of regeneration; and it is toward this end that He constantly leads us. This is the Lord's "seventh day," when He rests from His spiritual battles within us. This is that "other Eden," when Divine order has been restored, and we are made whole. And unless this is possible, unless this is our goal, the Lord's heavenly Jerusalem — His holy City of gold — is not real for us, nor the vision of it our light of life.

But we cannot find this City, much less live in it, by merely wishing to do so. The Way to this City is beautiful, but it is not always easy, nor without certain dangers and pitfalls. It is so easy to degrade this Way! It is so easy to depart from it and follow one of the intriguing but misleading and false side-roads which branch off from it and look so inviting! And there are so many things that we cannot bring into this City: we cannot bring a lie into it; we cannot bring hatred into it; we cannot bring into it anything that is spiritually unclean; anything that is evil and false. Things like these we must leave behind. If we are tempted to take them along, we must fight against them with all our might.

But, believe me, this City of gold is worth fighting for and striving for. For in it there are to be realized our highest aspirations and hopes; the ultimate things of our being. This, and nothing less than this, is the Lord's New Church, the Golden City that is called the New Jerusalem. And this, and nothing less than this, must be our personal devotion and our heart's supreme vision.

The Rev. John Odey is the lay minister in Temple City, California.

ANCL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETS IN DETROIT

The ANCL Executive Committee met in Detroit on Dec. 8th and 9th to hold their mid-winter meeting in preparation for the 1968 Convention. Rev. Randall Laakko met with the committee as advisor.

Several items of business were taken care of during the course of the meeting. In response to a need felt by the members of the ANCL, the Executive Committee drew up regulations to be observed by the members of the ANCL at future Conventions.

The second item of business was a discussion of the Poole trophy. The committee established the criteria by which the trophy will be awarded in the future.

The Leaguer's handbook is well underway and will probably be printed this Spring. The ANCL hopes to have the handbook available in time for Convention.

During the two day meetings, the Executive Committee was able to look over the Winsor campus, Winsor, Ontario which will be the site of the 1968 Convention. They found convenient facilities and envision meaningful ANCL fellowship when they meet at Convention in June.

GUSTAFSON MEMORIALS AT SWEDENBORG SCHOOL OF RELIGION

Contributions from many friends, given in lieu of flowers in memory of the Rev. Harold Gustafson of Bridgewater, Mass., have provided new altar appointments for the chapel at the Swedenborg School of Religion. An altar Bible, bound in red leather, and a silver-plated service for Holy Communion, have been inscribed "In Memory of the Rev. Harold R. Gustafson, Class of 1915" and placed in service at the school.

STATISTICS

Baptisms

Gary Francis, son of Charlotte Robertson of Oakland, California was baptized on Sunday, Nov. 26 by the Rev. Othmar Tobisch.

On Nov. 5th, Paula, daughter of Drexel and Olive Partridge, of Hayward, California was baptized by the Rev. Othmar Tobisch.

On Nov. 12, Michael, son of Robert and Beverly Davis of San Rafael, California was baptized by the Rev. Othmar Tobisch.

On Nov. 19, Rev. Othmar Tobisch baptized Paul Eric, son of Richard and Dolores Stephan of San Leandro, California.

Patricia Lee, daughter of Patrick and Janet Norris of Redwood City, California was baptized on Sunday, Nov. 26, by the Rev. Othmar Tobisch.

Kevin Wayne, infant son of Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Kendel of Saskatchewan was baptized on Sept. 24.

Deaths

The Rev. T. Denton Lee, newly installed pastor of the Riverside, California church passed into the higher life on Oct. 27th. The Resurrection service was conducted by the Rev. Robert L. Young of the Wayfarers' Chapel. A Memorial will appear in a future issue.

Isabelle Schoenberger Reuschlein passed away this fall. Rev. Richard Tafel, Sr., conducted a resurrection service for this friend of the Pittsburg Church.

Marriages

On September 8, Richard Weetman of Saskatoon, Sask., and Luella Gilchrist of Edmonton, Alberta, were married in the Church of the Holy City at Edmonton. Rev. Harvey A. Tafel officiated.

On September 30th, Dianna Gail Clarke married William James Bradley in the Edmonton Church. Rev. Harvey A. Tafel officiated.

Randy Laferte married Sara Bowman on Nov. 24th in the San Francisco Church. Rev. Othmar Tobisch officiated.

Kenneth Kiesman and Elizabeth Adams were married in the Fryeburg Church the day after Thanksgiving.

On September 8, Richard Weetman of Saskatoon, Sask., and Luella Gilchrist of Edmonton, Alberta, were married. The ceremony took place in the Church of the Holy City at Edmonton with Rev. Harvey A. Tafel officiating.

Confirmations

Albert Gene Braun, son of Mr. and Mrs. David Braun was confirmed on Sept. 24 with the Rev. Henry Reddekopp officiating.

Births

Tanya Lisa was born on June 2nd to Allan and Jennifer Deal of Walnut Creek, California.

Steven Joseph was born to Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Charzewski of Winnipeg, Manitoba on Oct. 12.



Recommendations of a special committee of the Swedenborg School of Religion Board of Managers, concerning experimentation, Field Education, and certain other aspects of the curriculum, were studied in depth during a week-long faculty meeting in Bellevue. From the left, above, are the site of the meetings, the church and the small-group center in Bellevue; SSR President Edwin Capon; Ernest Martin, Chairman of the SSR Board of Managers, who was also wearing his "hat" as President-elect of Convention in discussions of experimental church programs; Robert Kirven and Owen Turley, SSR faculty members. Also present from the faculty were David Johnson and Calvin Turley.

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