

The Messenger

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH

DECEMBER 1975



Christmas In Our Hearts

Christmas is a little more crowded this year. There are more people around than ever before . . . more stores . . . more diversions and distractions. We need to be watchful, lest Christmas come and go, and we miss the true Spirit. But this is no new thing. It was always thus. Always Christmas has been a time of competition between good will and ill will . . . between giving and grasping . . . between hoping and hating. The Herods and the shepherds are with us still. They were there that first Christmas too.

There was scheming as well as singing . . . fear as well as faith . . . coldness as well as caring . . . suspicion as well as trust. The first Christmas was a time of darkness, tension, cold war.

In fact, the biggest wonder about that first Christmas was that it could happen at all! The mystery . . . the wonder . . . the incredible beauty of Divine Love and Wisdom coming into our midst in the form of a little child. Who else but God Almighty would think of such a daring plan!

And what do we do about it?

Maybe we have to do now just what shepherds and kings and innkeepers had to do then. That is, sort things out for ourselves . . . choose what we propose to see more clearly . . . make up our minds what we intend to hear more clearly . . . decide, in a word, whether to spell life "scared" or "sacred."

We have to do that for ourselves.

The first Christmas was the beginning. What about the wonder of this 1,975th Christmas (give or take whatever the historians require)? If you tried to choose a more unlikely setting in which to promote peace and good will than this present year, you'd have a hard time of it. Therein lies the wonder repeated . . . that the dark places of our fears and the snug little rooms of our self-centeredness can be lighted up with good will at all.

And when you stop to think about it, hasn't every year, in its own way, been "a year like this"? The whole 1,975 of them? Not much that was hospitable in any of them. Yet Christmas came, and came again and again. Coming, it brought a holy hush into our world.

The hush never lasted very long, of course, and it won't last very long this time around. Christmas gets itself packed away along about the second week in January. But enough of Christmas lasts, in enough hearts, to kindle the next one around the end of November. Enough always has. This is the joy and splendor of Christmas. For a few weeks it helps us to see life as it really is . . . and as it might become. And, thank God, little by little the true spirit of Christmas is growing . . . in the hearts and minds of people all over the world.

May this Christmas be a season of deep joy and peace for you . . . its fragrance spilling over into the New Year.

P.Z.

The President's Christmas Message

by Eric Zacharias

WHAT A MIRACLE!

The stage is set. The days marked by the calendar move unerringly toward December 25, a date illumined in brilliant red, proclaimed as Christmas day. The players await in the wing and the eyes of the audience are upon the Christian church as the curtain begins slowly to part, revealing the drama of the ages.

A unique opportunity is ours — for to each of us is given the dual role to be both observer and participant. We are the focal point of the theme for there is no escaping the pull of our commitment. However, we also have the capacity to experience times of distant detachment. Here we reflect upon our assessment of this deep penetration of the Divine into the natural, the external. "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel, which means, God with us." Matthew 1:23

Our role as observer permits us to view, as if from a hilltop, all the world below. Political leaders are scurrying about from nation to nation, from state to state, almost as if the solution to depressing anxiety will come about by more frenzied activity. The world, we are told, is facing grave economic problems, and there is present, too, a social instability that grows dangerously close to the heart of this civilization of the mid — 1970's. The very foundation, indeed, has begun to yield to the presence of forces seemingly out of man's control.

It is a time when terrorists strike without warning — to kidnap, to bomb, to burn. It is a time of moral confusion, of identity crisis, of the striving for greater freedom. It is a time that witnesses a wave of conservatism washing across the land. A time of polarization of positions. A time when society appears to be drifting, only the Lord knows to what end, and the efforts made toward the setting of goals and the choosing of values are blunted by rapidly shifting circumstances and the emergence of still more puzzling implications. Then, even as these assessments are given vent . . .

This is also a time when we see the searching, by people of all conditions, into the nature of the human spirit. Man longs to make the acquaintance with his inner self. Gusty winds blow over the earth and man is stimulated by promising ideas and the vision of what his potential offers to his future. "What is man that thou art mindful of him?"

The role of the observer is not enough, so we leave our hilltop post. We are players, too, and now we act and re-act, we respond to the environment that stirs our consciousness. We become, at once, startlingly aware of the atmosphere of this Season, and the mood is one of expectancy. It is as

if the voices of the angels in their jubilant proclamation of the Lord's birth are soon to break through the dark overcast of these tumultuous days, and by a miracle, right the world and set all men on a truer course. Is this dynamic expectancy the surfacing once each year of the child-like longing that somehow there must indeed be, "glad tidings to all men and peace," — the eternal hope assured of fulfillment by the Lord?

Can Christmas be this for all of us? It is that most personal experience of being touched, warmed by the love of God. It is the world being touched by the compassionate coming of the Creator. To be sure, man's dilemma will outlast the glow of this Season. The struggle for power will not so quickly be diminished; the hungry of the world will not have larders amply stocked; the ideal of the New Jerusalem will not come bursting into view overnight. And still, the call to open ourselves to the joy of this grand celebration must be given heed. The miracle of birth is our Lord sharing himself with us — with its pain and with the fullness of his presence.

This miracle of birth — it shines in the renewal of spirit, in the firmer dedication to the principles of truth — and the life of charity at its best. It is the strengthening of those values that moves toward a growing, orderly society, and the building of the church among all men.

What a miracle, indeed, is Christmas!

Mrs. Zacharias joins me in wishing for all members and friends of our Convention all the blessings of this holy season.

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Paul B. Zacharias, Editor

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AN EXPLANATION
AND
AN APOLOGY

We regret that the November MESSENGER arrived late. It was mailed from Port Huron, Michigan, on Nov. 5. The Postal strike in Canada has now entered its fifth week, and as of today (Nov. 18), the outlook for settlement is not promising. For the duration of the Post Office strike (check with your local postal authorities first), please send all MESSENGER and personal mail to:

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As you can well imagine, the lack of mail service has created problems in assembling the December MESSENGER. Several regular columns, including Richard Tafel's "That's A Good Question", George Dole's "Revelation Revisited", Jaikoo Lee's "Parables For Today", plus personal and Society news, have not been available. We look forward to seeing these popular features in the January issue. Thank you for your patience and understanding.

This issue was mailed from Boston, Mass. on or around December 1.

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CAN WE FIT THIS STREET SCENE
INTO OUR CHRISTMAS THINKING?

Baltimore (AP) — Eleven - year - old Stefan Redd died July 31 when 12 - year - old Hinton Stith stabbed him in the heart.

They had a grudge and squared off in the black brick street. It was a hot summer day. A kid fight, a fist fight. It happens all the time.

Their parents cheered.

Hinton was losing. He ran into a market, grabbed a knife and ran back. Stefan died on a street corner, with a soft cry: "Mama, I'm hurt."

Because of that fight three parents are in jail. Stefan's mother and stepfather are charged with child abuse. Hinton's mother is charged with murder, a sort of murder by proxy, using her child as a weapon. She never touched the knife.

"I thought if they fought it out fair, the best man would win," said Mrs. Newton, 33, unemployed and a mother of six.

My son didn't kill that boy," said Mrs. Stith. "He put a knife in him, but his mother and stepfather killed him. They forced him to fight."

Hinton Stith was charged with murder, found delinquent and sent to a reformatory in a cottage setting.

"It was like a cock fight, like chickens fighting," said William McKisson, owner of a sandwich shop, who saw Stefan die at his front door.

"It was an ego trip for the parents," he said. "They were to blame. They were jumping up and down and laughing like at a wrestling match."

* * *

"From what has been said it can be seen what the education of children is in heaven, namely, that it is leading them by means of understanding of truth and wisdom of good into angelic life, which is love to the Lord and mutual love, in which is innocence. But how different in many cases is the education of children on earth can be seen from this example. I was in a street of a large city, and saw little boys fighting with each other; a crowd flocked around and looked on with much pleasure; and I was told that little boys are incited to such fights by their own parents. Good spirits and angels who saw this through my eyes were so revolted at it that I felt their horror: and especially that parents should incite their children to such things, saying that in this way parents extinguish in the earliest age all the mutual love and all the innocence that children have from the Lord, and initiate them into the spirit of hatred and revenge; consequently by their own endeavors they shut their children out of heaven, where there is nothing but mutual love. Let parents therefore who wish well to their children beware of such things."

Heaven and Hell No. 344

Convention Long Range Planning

In August 1974 the Planning and Development Committee of General Council met in Bridgton, Maine, to consider long range plans for General Convention. The committee formulated six recommendations which were adopted by General Council. These were:

(a) The planning and development process employed by this committee for General Council should be encouraged for all major boards and committees of Convention. It is suggested that instead of one of the present regular meetings of each board that it hold a planning meeting as a committee of the whole. To be most beneficial the Process - Consultation method should be used for decision making. To achieve this "owning of my input" participants should ask "What do I want?" and "How would I do it?" Throughout they should focus on a mutually - agreed upon goal for the board as it relates to the overall goal of Convention. Inviting one person from outside the board to sit in as a facilitator would be helpful. A packet of background material for advance study should be assembled for each board to stimulate thinking.

(b) Team ministry in a regional center should be encouraged. This has been recommended several times in the past and though some steps in this direction have been taken, no true regional centers have been set up. It appeared to the committee that the next step is to facilitate the emergence of true regional team ministry. Therefore we recommend a fund be set up to be expended at the discretion of the President to finance travel expenses of ministers, students and laymen interested in exploring the possibility of working together as a regional team. A sum of \$2000 is suggested.

(c) A national team should be established. Such a team which might be associated with the SSR but separate from it would be a source for the local groups to draw on for special skills such as leading retreats, enrichment seminars and training sessions. The national team could be a "facilitating" group responsive to the church at large in areas of planning and development, interpersonal programs and other areas. Such a team could assist local bodies in seeking their place and role as a ministering caring group of people. As envisioned, some members of the SSR faculty might be part - time on the faculty and part - time on the team. Salary for time on the team would be paid by Convention with Convention reimbursement by the users according to a set fee schedule. A board or committee should be set up to whom the team would be responsible. To initiate action on this recommendation it suggested that the President appoint a committee of two ministers and two laymen to work with him in developing the concept.

(d) We support the employment of a second minister at the Wayfarers' Chapel, provided that this is used to expand the program of special services and counselling. Although the weddings and the public relations exposure afforded by the Chapel are important, a big opportunity to serve a large number of people is being missed by the lack of time that the present minister can devote to other counselling. If necessary, Convention should fund the deficit that the addition of a second minister might cause.

(e) *The Messenger* should be strengthened as a vehicle for Convention - wide interpersonal contact. We suggest the use of cassettes to stimulate more timely, personal input to *The Messenger*. It was felt that this plus an aggressive program by the staff to seek local news would overcome the inertia of preparing timely articles.

(f) The continuing education of our ministers should be supported by a policy statement from General Council and by the appropriation of funds in a reasonable amount when requested. Throughout the discussions of this committee we could see the many new types of skills that ministers of the future will need. Unless the clergy of Convention can grow with the Church, they will be unable to provide the leadership we expect from them.

In reflection on the specific recommendations we have been able to formulate and the process participated in to arrive at them, we ask the further question, "What is the essential characteristic we are seeking?" Our answer points not so much to specific techniques or definable skills but to personality characteristics. The essential characteristic we identified is *an openness to evolutionary development undergirded by a fundamental prizing of person*. This latter we see as a finite reflection of Ultimate Reality.

At the 1975 Convention Session, one of the mini - courses was devoted to long - range planning and other valuable suggestions were made.

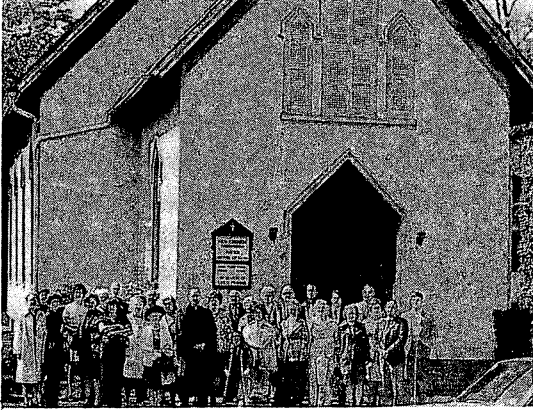
In October the Planning and Development Committee met again, this time at Blairhaven, to review their earlier recommendations, to develop the inputs from the mini - course and to explore other areas to help General Convention serve its members better.

The committee considered particularly pressing the need to minister to groups without professional clergy. Other areas were strengthening the leadership within Convention, both lay and clergy, improving the flow of information and enhancing the feeling of belonging within Convention.

General Council is scheduled to consider these areas in its January meeting.

Our Church In Laporte, Indiana

We wish you might worship some Sunday with us in our church building. It is simple and traditional in design. Its timbers hold history, for in this year of 1975, it is one hundred and sixteen years old. Through all these years worship services have been held.



AFTER A SUNDAY SERVICE IN LAPORTE

We are proud of our heritage. One of the five founders of our town, James Andrew, helped to organize our church. He and his wife gave the land on which the church stands. The seeds of our faith were first planted here in 1842, when the Reverend George Field gave two public lectures in our court house. It has been said that court houses were the first New - Church temples. That seems appropriate, inasmuch as our faith is based on reason and justice.

Later the Reverend Abiel Silver, another missionary, drove down in his horse and buggy from Edwardsburg, Michigan.

These missionaries and others found LaPorte a fertile field for their labors. Our town had been laid out in 1832, near a beautiful chain of lakes. Our name, "LaPorte", came from the French voyageurs who passed this way, following the famous Sauk Trail that went through here to "the door," an opening in the forest near our town. Among the early pioneers who settled here were men and women of education. Less than ten years after the town was founded, a university was established in LaPorte. Its medical department was the first medical school in Indiana. It later was taken over by Ashbury University, which later was to become the present DePauw University.

There was interest in the writings of Swedenborg, but it was not until June of 1859 that the LaPorte Society of the New Church was formally organized. John B. Niles, who had been a professor of chemistry at the University, Dr. Abraham Teegarden, an outstanding physician,

and Sutton Van Pelt, a prominent business man, were elected trustees. Plans were made for the building of a church, and dedication took place September 11, 1859.

Have you ever heard of the New Church Assembly? This was a group of New Church people who used to gather from far and wide at Weller's Grove, now one of the lovely residential areas, but in the past a wooded tract on the shores of Stone Lake. The Reverend Henry Weller, the first pastor of our church, had bought this property in 1852 to build his home, which is still standing there today. The Assembly constituted a New Church summer resort and it was the only gathering of this kind in the world. It flourished from 1887 to 1906.

Also, did you know that a New Church newspaper, first called "The Crisis," and then "The Independent," was published here in those days?

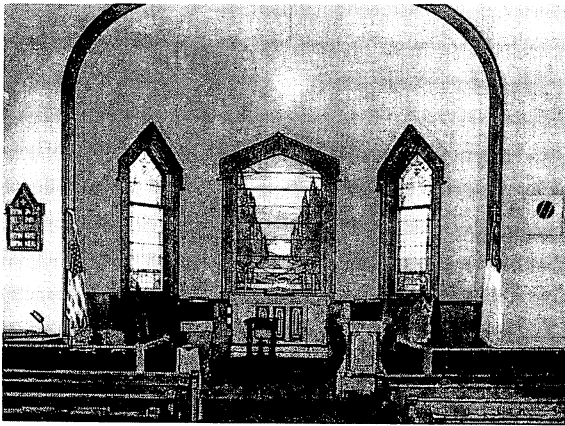
Many leading New Church ministers in the past have preached here, including Chauncey Giles, L. P. Mercer, Julian K. Smythe, William L. Worcester, and Paul Sperry. We have had many fine men as resident pastors. We cannot name them all but we are sure their names would evoke memories among members of our New Church family.

But personal memories pleasantly intrude. My mother, as a little girl, was in the Sunday School class of the Reverend Cyrus Scammon (1871 - 1884). We still have the attractive, carved upholstered chair he made for the little folks.

Then the Reverend Eugene Daniels (1893 - 1905), during his ministry here, wrote a comprehensive history of LaPorte and LaPorte County, which was published and is valuable in research today.

Dr. Charles Mack was our pastor from 1916 to 1930. Prior to his pastorate, he had been a doctor. I grew up with his fine family. As our pastor, he, with his wife, did much to make the Sunday School grow. I remember with pleasure his benign, gentle presence in the pulpit. Much later the Mack children gave the church a baptismal font as a memorial to their parents.

Now let us turn to the present. We invite you into our church building itself. The auditorium is small. The walls are lined with tall, slim stained glass windows, a memorial to Mrs. Hart L. Weaver, given by her children. She was my grandmother. The two corresponding windows in the chancel were given by Miss Anna Michael and Mrs. Camella Van Pelt Case. In 1916, a large memorial window was given by the children of Mrs. Mary Relief Niles Scott. It is above the altar and is a sermon in itself.



CHANCEL, LAPORTE NEW CHURCH

This year the auditorium was re - carpeted, chancel chairs were re - upholstered, and other improvements made.

Downstairs is the room used for the Sunday School and other church activities. This spring, the old, warped wooden floor was replaced by cement and carpeted. Loyal members painted the walls. It is now an attractive meeting place where we were proud to be host to the Illinois Association this Spring. The Association had met with us in 1937, 1954, and 1969. In 1956 the General Convention met here.

There is also a well - equipped kitchen, the gift some years ago of Mrs. Robert Wallace.

There have been times when we have had no full - time pastor but worship was maintained by lay leaders, with the assistance of such men as Franklin Blackmer from Urbana College, and Richard and Robert Tafel from Lakeland, Ohio. For the last two years we have been fortunate to have the full - time ministry of the Rev. Matthew S. P. Glowe.

He and his wife, assisted by Mrs. Richard Tukos, a young mother, have started the Sunday School, bringing pleasure to family groups and to us older members.

In addition, a study group for adults was started last year and is growing.

Active in the local Ministerial Association, speaking on radio occasionally, giving services at the two nursing homes here, visiting the hospital regularly, offering concern and comfort to the ill and the shut - ins, the Reverend Mr. Glowe is busy. This year he joined the Kiwanis Club to participate further in civic works.

His bulletin keeps us informed of church activities. Every Sunday we have the inspiration of his sermon, always thoughtfully prepared. We also have been fortunate to have the music of Mrs. L. L. Lockwood at the organ. She has been with us for over thirty years. Our average attendance at church has increased. The Woman's Alliance has been active as it has for many years.

For me, personally, our church is filled with memories, for both sides of my family were devout Swedenborgians, going back to great-grandmother Andrew, who made the Communion bread. Today, in a church of our size, we are like a family, with concern and thought for each other. We are looking forward to another year of working and worshipping together.

Mrs. Robert F. Coffeen

MINISTERS WHO HAVE SERVED THE LAPORTE NEW CHURCH

Rev. Henry Weller	1859 - 1868
Rev. Woodbury M. Fernald	1869 - 1870
Rev. Cyrus Scammon	1870 - 1884
Rev. Henry M. Grant	1885 - 1888
Rev. Thomas F. Houts	1889 - 1893
Rev. Eugene D. Daniels	1893 - 1907
Rev. Frank A. Gustafson	1908 - 1911
Rev. Warren Goddard	1911 - 1916
Rev. Charles S. Mack	1916 - 1930
Rev. Donald C. Gustafson	1930 - 1931
Rev. Rollo K. Billings	1933 - 1940
Rev. Carl Peters	1941 - 1947
Rev. Donald C. Gustafson	1948 - 1952
Rev. John W. Spiers	1955 - 1958
Rev. Jaikoo Lee	1968 - 1970
Rev. Matthew S. P. Glowe	1973 -

MINISTERS WHO SERVED ON A PART TIME BASIS

Rev. Franklin Blackmer	1959 - 1967
Rev. Robert W. Tafel	
Rev. Richard H. Tafel, Jr.	1970 - 1973

I have always thought of Christmas as a good time; a kind, forgiving, generous, pleasant time; a time when men and women seem to open their hearts freely, and so I say,

God bless Christmas!

Charles Dickens

What is time? The shadow on the dial, the striking of the clock, the running of the sand, day and night, summer and winter . . . months, years, centuries . . . these are but the arbitrary and outward signs . . . the measure of time, not time itself. Time is the life of the soul.

Longfellow

Christmas Delights

THE FRIENDLY BEASTS

This bit of Middle Ages' doggerel takes the assumption that animals were present at the nativity one step further: Its simple quatrains endow the animals with speech and generosity.

Jesus our Brother, kind and good,
Was humbly born in a stable rude,
And the friendly beasts around Him stood;
Jesus our Brother, kind and good.

"O," said the donkey, shaggy and brown,
"I carried His mother up hill and down;
I carried His mother to Bethlehem town."
"O," said the donkey, shaggy and brown.

"O," said the cow, all white and red,
"I gave Him my manger for His bed,
I gave Him my hay to pillow His head,"
"O," said the cow, all white and red.

"O," said the sheep, with curly horn,
"I gave Him my wool for His blanket warm,
He wore my coat on Christmas morn."
"O," said the sheep, with curly horn.

Thus ev'ry beast by some good spell,
In the stable dark was glad to tell
Of the gift he gave Emmanuel,
The gift he gave Emmanuel.



CHRISTMAS 1975

As this Christmas season draws near with all its traditions, trees and gifts, cards and carols, it seems as though that ancient Star of the East has sent its illuminating light into my heart.

Excitement wells up in me as, at last, I understand more fully the true meaning of the birth so long ago.

The baby Jesus, Christ, Emmanuel (God in Christ) became the divine - human one God, one Lord.

Suddenly the awesome God of my childhood becomes the real and personal Lord he wants to be in each of our hearts.

We hear the Christmas angels
The great, glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us,
Our Lord Emmanuel.

Betty Drummond
Kitchener, Ontario.

THE LETTER OF LENTULUS

What did Jesus look like? No record exists, but writers and artists have tried hard to portray Him.

Although now proved to be a 14th or 15th Century work, the description below from the so - called "Letter of Lentulus" is a plausible and enduring word picture of Christ.

Lentulus, president of the people of Jerusalem, to the Roman Senate and People: Greeting.

There has appeared in our times, and still is, a man of great virtue named Christ Jesus, who is called by the Gentiles a prophet of truth, whom his disciples call the Son of God, raising the dead and healing diseases. He is a man of lofty stature, handsome, having a venerable countenance which the beholders can both love and fear. He has wavy hair, rather crisp, and glossy, flowing down from his shoulders, with a parting in the middle of the head after the manner of the Nazarenes. His forehead is even and very serene, and his face without any wrinkle or spot, and beautiful with a slight blush. His nose and mouth are without fault; he has a beard abundant and reddish, of the colour of his hair, not long but forked. His eyes are sparkling and bright. He is terrible in rebuke, calm and loving in admonition, cheerful but preserving gravity, has never been seen to laugh but often to weep. Thus, in stature of body, he is tall; and his hands and limbs are beautiful to look upon. In speech he is grave, reserved, and modest; and he is fair among the children of men. Farewell.

WHY THIS EARTH?

There are many reasons why it pleased the Lord to be born and to assume the Human on our earth and not on any other, concerning which I (Swedenborg) have been informed from heaven. The principle reason was for the sake of the Word, in that it could be written on our earth, and when written, could then be published throughout the whole earth; and once published, could be preserved for all posterity; and that thus it might be made manifest even to all in the other life that God had become Man . . . That God has become Man is the first and most essential thing for the sake of which the Word was given. No one can believe in and love a God whom he cannot comprehend under some form, and therefore those who acknowledge the incomprehensible in their thought fall into nature, and thus believe in no God. Wherefore it pleased the Lord to be born here, and to make this manifest by the Word, not only in order that it might become known on this globe, but that by means it might also be made manifest to all in the universe who come into heaven from any earth whatever; for in heaven there is communication of all. — Arcana Coelestia, 9350, 9351, 9355.

WHEN THE BABY WAS BORN

The low, the high; a donkey, a star,
The worried inn - keeper and kings from afar,
Angels and lambs with shepherds between,
Every degree at the small, stable scene.

Denarii for taxes and gold for the Child,
Old Herod who feared and young
Mary who smiled,
Peace of the olive branch, pain of the thorn,
Everything there — when the baby was born.

Author Unknown

To know one another cannot mean to know
everything about each other; it means to feel mutual
affection and confidence, and to believe in one
another.

Albert Schweitzer

When the song of the angel is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among brothers,
To make music in the heart.

Howard Thurman



The Christmas Star

by Louis H. Dole

The story of the wise men and the star has captured the imagination of children and of older people as well all down through the centuries. There are those who try to explain the star as a natural phenomenon, and in Christmas fiction it is often represented as having excited the wonder of all the people. But the story itself precludes such ideas. The wise men saw the star "in the east." When they reached Jerusalem they told Herod they had seen it. It was news to Herod. Then the star reappeared to the wise men after they left Jerusalem and led them to the house "where the young child was." The star was seen only by the wise men.

"There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel." This is one of the well - known prophecies of the coming of the Lord into the world. It was spoken by Balaam some fourteen hundred years before the wise men set out on their long journey to Jerusalem. The wise men were of the same country as Balaam and cherished the same prophecies and when they saw the star, they knew that the prophecy had been fulfilled and they knew to what country to go to find the Lord.

We know that the Ancient Word was written entirely in symbolic language, and symbolism is characteristic of our Scriptures also. The star which was seen by the wise men was the symbol of the beginning of the Christian Church and has become one of the outstanding symbols of Christianity. It ties in the Christian Church with the Ancient Church and connects the Christian Church of today with all the churches that have gone before it.

And it connects the Christian with the heavens as well. For it was not a natural star seen by natural eyes. It was a supernatural phenomenon. The eyes of the wise men were opened in vision. The star they saw was of the same nature as the bright light the shepherds saw and the light that Paul saw on the road to Damascus.

This Christmas star has a distinct spiritual knowledge concerning the Lord's coming that has been handed down from most ancient times. Astronomers tell us that light comes from the stars over vast fields of space. They tell us that light, travelling at over 186,000 miles a second, takes about seventy-five years to reach us from one of the nearer stars, and that the light we see coming from the constellation Hercules started on its journey through space five thousand years ago. So the stars fitly correspond to spiritual truths handed down by revelation from century to century. The wise men were not of the Jewish Church. Their knowledge of the Lord's coming had descended to them in an indirect way and through many centuries.

The star that the wise men saw and which led them to Bethlehem was seen only by them, just as the greater light was seen only by the shepherds. Is not this true today? Can the Lord make His advent into our minds and hearts except as we learn, cherish, and obey the truths of His Word? The wise men cherished the prophecies of an Ancient Word. We have a Word for this age, and in the Gospels the record of the Christ life upon earth. Upon this depends our knowledge and recognition of God. As the Lord was recognized only by those who had His Word and believed it, so today the Lord is known and recognized only as He is seen in His Word.

If we want to know about this natural world, we collect facts and analyze and explain them by means of the power of the natural reason. We do not make the facts. We acquire knowledge of the world by going to the world for facts and finding out what they are and what they mean. Neither do we make the facts of the spiritual world. Facts concerning God and the spiritual world are revealed in the Word. We do not create for ourselves a knowledge of God. It is by means of the Word that the Lord is born in our minds. Since in the Christmas season we celebrate the Advent of the Lord into the world, Christmas should mean to us ever deepening knowledge, recognition, and experience of Him in our lives.

The wise men were led to the Lord because they cherished the truths of revelation. These truths were represented by the star which lighted their minds and led them to come to Him.

May we likewise learn and love the truths of the Word, that the Lord may lead us by these truths to the sure knowledge and recognition of Him as incarnate in Jesus Christ, so that He may be present with us.

(The late Rev. Louis Dole spent his entire ministry in Maine. This thoughtful Christmas message first appeared in the December, 1960 MESSENGER.)

New Church Translators Meet At Bryn Athyn

A brief conference of translators was held at Bryn Athyn in September at the close of a very successful symposium on the Ancient Church. We were particularly fortunate to have the Revs. John Elliot and Norman Ryder present from England, thanks to the generosity of the Paul Carpenter Fellowship Fund.

Mr. Ryder spoke of the work done and being done on the Old Testament, and Mr. Elliot of work in the theological writings, including a useful outline of things accomplished, things in process, and immediate needs.

General discussion centered on the need for cooperation and sharing of information among our several publishing bodies. Each such body is being asked to supply information concerning projects in course or under consideration. It is better understood now that different bodies may be aiming at different constituencies, making some apparent duplication of effort appropriate. *Studia Swedenborgiana* (the occasional journal of SSR) has agreed to serve as a translators' forum, so that we may keep each other informed of particular discoveries as we work.

On my own part, I found it delightful and encouraging to become, so to speak, a colleague of several very able and devoted scholars. And since representatives of both the General Church and the General Conference spoke of diminishing interest in Latin within the younger generation of their bodies, I am convinced that the current little revival of interest at SSR is significant and worthy of support.

George Dole

* * *

The Rev. John Elliott, soon to be pastor of the Snodland Society of the British Conference, visited the Boston area during the first week in September. During his stay he was entertained by members of the faculty of the Swedenborg School of Religion, staying with the Calvin Turley's, the George Dole's and the William Woofenden's.

On Sunday evening, Sept. 7, at a gathering of SSR students, faculty members and their wives, Mr. Elliott spoke informally on the history and present activities of the British Conference.

I thank thee, God, and like a child
Rejoice as for a Christmas gift,
That I am living — just alive —

Mattias Claudius

NOMINATIONS REQUESTED

FOR 1976 CONVENTION ELECTIONS

Following are offices to be filled by election at the 1976 convention at Philadelphia. We invite your suggestions for nominees to any of these offices. Please identify your nominees as to their local church and their main qualifications for the positions recommended.

OFFICE

Vice President: _____
Recording Secretary: _____
Treasurer: _____

GENERAL COUNCIL
(three 4 – year terms)

(Minister) _____
(Layperson) _____
(Layperson) _____

BOARD OF EDUCATION
(One 3 - year term)

BOARD OF PUBLICATION
(One 4 – year term)

_____ (unexpired 2 – year term)

INCUMBENTS

Mr. Adolph T. Liebert
Mrs. Wilfred G. Rice
Capt. August Ebel

Officers plus 4 ministers and 8 laypersons

1976	1977
* Rev. Erwin Reddekopp	Rev. Calvin Turley
* Mrs. Lewis Barrington	Mrs. Doug Gilchrist
* Mr. Don Lovell	Mr. James Zehner

1978	1979
Rev. Jaikoo Lee	Rev. Ernest Martin
Miss Chris Laitner	Mr. John Harms
Mr. Keith Mull	Mr. Robert Jerome

(*Ineligible for re - election)

Presidents of Convention, Swedenborg School of Religion, and the Sunday School Association, plus 3 elected members.

Rev. Dr. Dorothea Harvey (1976)
Mrs. Richard H. Tafel, Jr. (1977)
Mrs. Robert (Betsy) Young (1978)

President of Convention and 4 elected members

Mrs. Virginia Branston (1976)
Dr. William R. Woofenden (1977)
*Mrs. Ellsworth Seibert (1978)
Dr. Edward Bohlander (1979)

* Resigned

NOMINATIONS REQUESTED

AUGMENTATION FUND COMMITTEE (one 5 – year term)

Mr. Stewart E. Poole (1976)
Miss Ethelwyn Worden (1977)
Rev. Owen T. Turley (1978)
Rev. George McCurdy (1979)
Mr. Adolph T. Liebert (1980)

NOMINATING COMMITTEE (one 5 – year term)

Mr. Roger D. Paulson (1976)
Rev. Galen Unruh (1977)
Mrs. Ellsworth (Jan) Seibert (1978)
Mr. H. Page Conant (1979)
Rev. Randall Laakko (1980)

(2 to be nominated and 1 to be elected)

BOARD OF HOME AND FOREIGN MISSIONS (Two 4 – year terms)

Term Expiring 1976	Term Expiring 1977
Dr. George Dole	Rev. Paul Zacharias
Mr. Robert W. Tafel	Mrs. Alan Farnham

(Minister) _____

Term Expiring 1978	Term Expiring 1979
Dr. Horand Gutfeldt	Rev. Chungsun Lee
Mr. Tomas Spiers	Miss Margaret Sampson

(Layperson) _____

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ADMISSION TO THE MINISTRY

Executive Committee of the Council of Ministers
plus one minister and one layperson.

(Minister) _____

Rev. Ernest L. Frederick

(Layperson) _____

Mrs. Horace Briggs

BOARD OF MANAGERS OF THE SWEDENBORG SCHOOL OF RELIGION (Four 3 – year terms)

President of Convention, President of SSR, and 12
elective members

Term Expiring 1976	Term Expiring 1977
Rev. George McCurdy	Dr. Horand Gutfeldt
Rev. Jerome Poole	Mrs. Margaret Briggs
Rev. Walter Orthwein	Miss Agnes Cowern
Mr. Roger D. Paulson	Mr. H. Page Conant

Term Expiring 1978

Mrs. Virginia Branston	Dr. Wilson Van Dusen
Dr. Dorothea Harvey	Rev. Ernest L. Frederick

Please send your recommended nominees to the Chairman of the Nominating Committee

Mr. Roger D. Paulson, Chairman
48 Sargent St., Box 66
Newton, Mass. 02158

Rev. Galen Unruh
Mrs. Ellsworth Seibert

Mr. H. Page Conant
Rev. Randall Laakko

Letter to the Editor

Dear Sir:

I liked your article "My Credo", especially the open - minded concept. I, too, believe the Lord to be the Way, the Truth and the Light.

I would appreciate your reflections on some convictions that have become a good part of me this year. (Please keep an open mind).

I believe my God to be a POWER greater than man, so great a power, in fact, that it is sometimes difficult to comprehend. I believe that he is in all of us and will help all of us if we ask him to help us to live an honest life. I believe that we *cannot* be honest with others if we are not honest with ourselves — that we cannot love another person if we do not love ourselves.

My God, God of the universe, is a very loving, very understanding God. He forgives very easily but firmly. He doesn't want us running to Him every second of the day because we haven't the courage to change the things we can, when that courage is readily available with just a little mustard seed of faith and the same amount of effort.

You see, I have seen, walked, and talked with living miracles. People whose lives were wrecked, in such an unmanageable state that repair or restoration seemed impossible.

Their Credo has been to turn their life and their will over to a Higher Power as they understand Him.

As long as we keep our grubby hands *out* of the situation, the beautiful Great Friend upstairs will help us to live a good, honest day. *One* day at a time. Slowly (very slowly) defects of character are released and *replaced* by a healthy character trait and drop by drop and grain by grain the cup begins to fill with beauty, honesty and LOVE.

Just imagine replacing fear, doubt and resentment with Love, Trust and Serenity. I agree with you that we do not have an exclusive right to Him.

Thank Goodness that He is 100% present for all, everywhere and at all times.

To make use of Him we have to Give Him Away. If we have nothing to Give — we cannot help anybody. If we help somebody we get it back many times.

These are a few thoughts I wanted to commit to paper.

Kind regards
George B. Taylor
Belleville, Ontario.

People and Places in Convention

S.S.R. President Edwin Capon, and the Rev. William Woofenden, were in Edmonton, Alberta, on October 25 — 27 for another seminar in the Ministerial Training Program as set up by the Western Canada Conference. On Sunday evening, Oct. 26, David Sonmor of Slave Lake chaired a panel discussion on "The Relevancy of Swedenborg in Modern Day Living" at the Edmonton church . . . We are sorry to learn that Edmonton Lay Minister John Jeffery was hospitalized during a visit to Scotland this fall . . . Charity and Vince Bergmann of Detroit were happily surprised when a special coffee hour was held for them on Sept. 14, in celebration of their 55th wedding anniversary . . . Three couples in the Kitchener Society celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary this summer: Mr. and Mrs. Perlous Lasso, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Quaizer and Mr. and Mrs. Norman Schneider . . . Some interesting news items from the West Coast. Well known Convention members Ells and Jan Seibert are on a six month world cruise, which will include a visit with their son Graham in Germany . . . Prof. Jacques Chouleur of the University of Avignon recently attended services at the Lyon St. Church in San Francisco. This fall he spoke to the Youth Club at Brigham Young U. in Provo, Utah, on the teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg . . . From the West Coast HARBINGER: This year the National Alliance of New Church Women's Mite Box will go to Ghana, Africa, where there is a desperate need for paperback copies of the writings. West coast women are urged to save and send their Mite Box offerings to Mrs. Winifred Armstrong, 3105 W. 4th St., Los Angeles 90020 . . . Women who are interested in meeting new friends through Round Robin Letters are invited to send their introductory letter to Mrs. Jean Hoyt, 12942 Third St., Yucaipa, Cal. 92399 . . . This summer Ray and Betty Guiu became grandparents for the first time. If ever a Dance Contest is held for grandparents, Ray and Betty should win in a breeze. Speaking of Contests: SEE THE JANUARY MESSENGER FOR INFORMATION REGARDING OUR SPECIAL BICENTENNIAL WRITING CONTEST.

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

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

But you can never keep it alone.

Henry Van Dyke

Church Records

BAPTISMS

CAMPBELL — Jason Galen, son of Mr. and Mrs. John Campbell, was baptized at Elmwood, Mass., on June 1, 1975, the Rev. Arvid L. Anderson officiating.

WALSH — April Lee, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Walsh, was baptized in Elmwood, Mass., on June 8, 1975, the Rev. Arvid L. Anderson officiating.

CONFIRMATIONS

CARR — HORTON — MURPHY — PRATT — Douglas Carr, Robert Horton, Jr., Elizabeth Murphy, and Karen Pratt were confirmed into the faith of the New Church at Elmwood, Mass., on Maundy Thursday, March 27, 1975, the Rev. Arvid L. Anderson officiating.

On Maundy Thursday, March 27, 1975, Willie Bailey, Jean Blackwell, Marie Bowen, Grace Carr, Barbara Horton, Robert Horton, and Ruth White were received into the faith of the New Church by transfer of membership at Elmwood, Mass., the Rev. Arvid L. Anderson officiating.

MARRIAGES

GOULD — BARNES — Geoffrey Gould and Meredith Barnes were married at Elmwood New Church on April 5, 1975, the Rev. Arvid L. Anderson officiating.

DONAHUE — WINDSOR — John Donahue and Jeanne Windsor were married at Blairhaven, So. Duxbury, on May 24, 1975, the Rev. Arvid L. Anderson officiating.

MURRAY — SWANSON — John Murray and Carol Swanson were married at Elmwood, Mass., New Church on June 21, 1975, the Rev. Arvid L. Anderson officiating. Carol is the third generation of her family to have been married at the Elmwood Church.

DEATHS

FLOOD — Mrs. Bertha Flood died on December 28, 1974. The resurrection service was held at Elmwood, Mass., on December 30, 1974, the Rev. Arvid L. Anderson officiating.

Book Review

Some Thoughts Along the Way, (1975) Eric J. Zacharias. \$2.50. (Available from the author in Pretty Prairie, Kansas.)

Not often does one have the privilege of enjoying the actual "living space" of a fellow traveler through his years of experience in this world. *Some Thoughts Along the Way*, a compilation of

beautifully written insights about a great variety of life - scenes, is such an opportunity.

Throughout his years — from the time he first knew the light of day on the windswept plains of Saskatchewan to the present — the author, now residing minister of the New Church in Pretty Prairie, Kansas, and also the President of General Convention, has been more than open to the subtle influences of life around him.

There is no way adequately to describe this well - written little book. It is filled with a wide variety of people and situation descriptions, and it is drawn in a style that will set the reader to reminiscing about his own life experiences in a nostalgic mood. Just a few examples of the titles of the short pieces contained in the book may give some insight into what it is all about: "A Love Story;" "To a Friend"; "An Ode to Winter"; "Winter Storm"; "Daddy Come Home"; "Lone Star Cemetery"; "After the Rodeo"; "A Letter to a Granddaughter."

This little volume is written in prose, but the prose has a poetic style which leads one to conclude, along with the literary critics, that the world's poetic stylists are far in advance when it comes to expressing life or plumbing its depths with words. There is a gentleness permeating the author's writing which leads the reader to appreciate the sacred unity of life which he portrays so well in his unique way.

Galen Unruh,

"IT IS TO WONDER"

(from the St. Petersburg, Fla. church bulletin)

Rev. Le Van's review of Dr. Billy Graham's latest book on the subject of Angels showed again how the old theology and "old - time religion" still prevail in the denominational churches. Dr. Graham teaches (1) A Trinity of Three Divine Persons existed before the Creation of the world. (2) The angels were created (out of nothing?) before the Creation of the world. (3) The arch - angel Lucifer rebelled against God, was cast out of Heaven, and incited Eve to eat the forbidden fruit. (4) Because of Eve's eating, God condemned the whole Human Race to carry that original sin in their spirits through all succeeding generations. (5) Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity, appeared at various times in the Old Testament narratives. (6) God sent Jesus Christ His Son to die on the Cross as a substitute for man's sins and evils. (7) Jesus Christ sits at the right hand of God the Father, and together they determine to whom on earth they shall send the Holy Ghost with sanctification and salvation. Will Dr. Graham be willing to relinquish such teachings after death? Or will he insist on them and more forcefully teach them? It is to wonder!

The Last Word

THE SYMBOLS OF CHRISTMAS

In this season we again engage in a religious festival so old that ancient landmarks point mutely further back in time before recorded history. Some aspects of Christmas (Christ's Mass) are relatively recent, such as the exchange of Christmas cards, said to be invented in 1846 by Mr. Cundall of London. The idea of Saint Nicholas was brought to this country in the 1630's by my Dutch ancestors, but this is thought to stem from worship of the god Wodan, god of the elements. The idea of Santa coming down the chimney stems from an old English custom of cleaning out the chimney to enable good luck to enter in the New Year. During Shakespeare's time Christmas lasted 12 days with no work and much celebration. The Puritans tried to stop this excess of joy and substitute a somber fast, but the ancient celebration of Christmas returned with the Restoration. The Yule log is from the Scandinavian feast of Jul that was celebrated with bonfires in honor of Thor during the winter solstice. The mistletoe dates at least from Druid rites. It was cut with a gold knife and hung over the door to propitiate woodland spirits. Then, only happiness would enter under the mistletoe. The kissing part came later.

Christmas was put on the calendar of the Roman Catholic church by Pope Julius I in 350 A.D. Christmas was instituted to incorporate and replace pagan rituals that were prevalent then. For one, there was the Roman Saturnalia, a celebration of the god of agriculture, commemorated after the autumn sowing. It was a time in which everyone relaxed, had fun and the social order was reversed; masters waited on slaves. Pine trees were decorated with the image of Bacchus. Our Christmas was also built on the celebration of Mithra, god of celestial light, creator of the world, upholder of justice and truth, born December 25th. It is also said the Egyptian god Osiris, who was later killed and resurrected, was born on December 25th. So was Aeon, born from Kore, goddess of corn and fertility.

Beneath the individual ceremonies, which differ greatly in different parts of the world, we can dimly see the central drama represented by Christmas all the way from the time of the most ancient times. Christmas, in its origins, is a nature festival, as is Easter, May Day, and Halloween. The ancients were impressed by the power of the sun which waned in winter and then returned at spring. To this end they built many observatories,

of which Stonehedge is just one example. The winter solstice marked the time when, in the northern hemisphere, the sun had sunk lowest in the sky. It was cold, and few foods grew. At the time of the winter solstice, the god which appeared to have died and withdrawn from man, began the journey back. Hence the multiple legends of gods born at this time, especially a god which seems to die but comes back to earth. In the midst of cold, doubt and possible privation, the people of long ago celebrated the birth of god at the winter solstice (about December 25th). It was a time of joy, festivities, feasting and love of one another for the god which seemed to leave was born again, to return to men. The spirit of Christmas today is not far from this. Indeed, we would do well to find as much cosmic significance in it as they did. Also, it is well to honor our brothers and sisters across eons of time who gave us this season. For without the powerful impetus of their ancient ceremonies we might just have shivered through December. Merry Christmas to all.

Wilson Van Dusen



UNTO US
A CHILD
IS GIVEN

CONVENTION CALENDAR

S.S.R. B.O.M.	Dec. 5 — 6
First ballot due from Nom. Com. members	Dec. 15
Ministers and Wives Institute — DeLand, Fla.	Jan. 8 — 13
General Council DeLand, Fla.	Jan. 15 — 17
S.S.R. Board of Directors	Feb. 7
Dept. of Pub. Philadelphia, Pa.	Feb. 19 — 21

"WORDS OF WISDOM"

Bobbie Burns' familiar words as to seeing ourselves as others see us, are reflected in what in the New Church we term "evidence". This always is of interest and from time to time we shall publish such items, the following being a good example. — Ed.

It is the practice of the Mission Board's Stamp Outlet in St. Petersburg to include in the packages of frequent orders one of the little vest pocket booklets "Words of Wisdom", published by the Swedenborg Foundation.

Occasionally comments will be received or other contracts made, one such recent item being that the Lee Memorial United Methodist Church, Bonita Springs, Fla., published in its September 28 bulletin two well-known excerpts from the booklet, and although the source was not stated, this need not be regarded as too important. It's the truth that makes free.

Incidentally, this booklet was compiled nearly 50 years ago, and now in its 16th printing, was the result of a competition put on for the Leaguers to select the briefest and most salient passages from the writings. The prize went to a young man in our theological school who became the husband of the well-known New Church woman Bertha Berran, now residing on the Coast.

Leslie Marshall

Merry Christmas  Everyone!

THE MESSENGER

Box 2642 Stn. B
Kitchener, Ont. N2H 6N2

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