

The Messenger

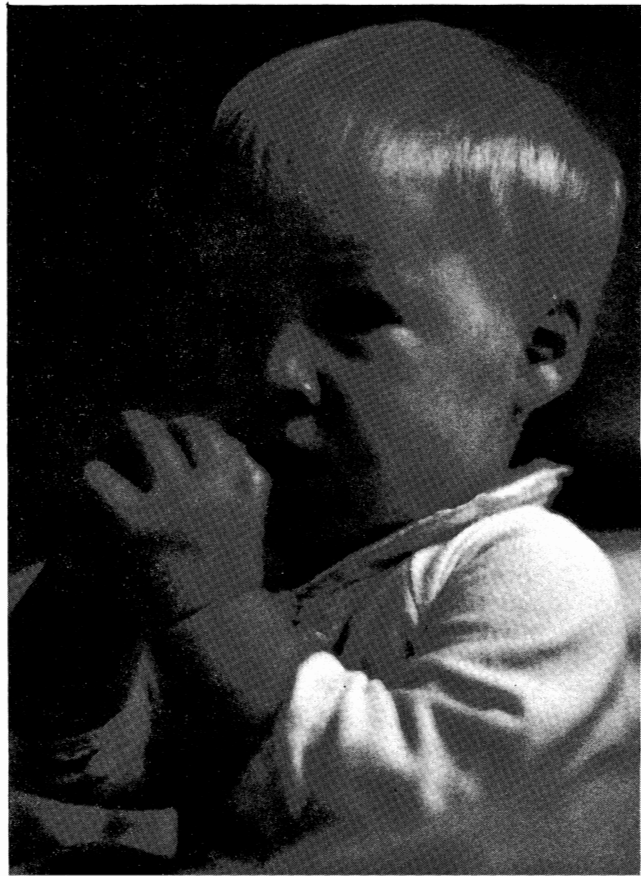
OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH

SEPTEMBER 1977

A child's world
is fresh and new and beautiful,
full of wonder and excitement.
It is our misfortune that for most of us
that clear-eyed vision,
that true instinct for what is
beautiful and awe-inspiring,
is dimmed and even lost
before we reach adulthood.
If I had influence
with the angel who presides
over the christening of children,
I should ask that her gift to each child
be a sense of wonder so indestructible
that it would last throughout life,
as an unfailing antidote
against the boredom of later years,
the sterile preoccupation
with things that are artificial,
the alienation
from the sources of our strength.

Rachel Carson

“Unless you become. . .”



Editorial
FACING THE FACTS OF LIFE

It is always difficult and painful to deal with harsh realities. We would rather not face them; they demand of us sacrificial effort, and we may not be prepared to go all the way. In wrestling with grim realities we may even fail, and this fear of failing is probably the greatest obstacle of all in resolving hard problems.

I am talking about our gradual but continuing decline in Church membership. The figures speak for themselves. Whether you go back 30 years or 50 years they tell the same story. Fewer new members are joining by profession of faith; Sunday School enrollment is lagging; the number of active Leagues is at an all time low; too many of our Societies are struggling to keep their doors open. Look around at Convention time, or at too many Association meetings, and count the number of people under 50 years of age. It's a little disconcerting. We should add that there was a greater proportion of younger people at our recent San Francisco Convention, and it would be interesting to analyze the reasons for this. The fact remains that the overall picture is not bright.

We had a wonderful Convention this past summer. We've had a number of wonderful Conventions in recent years. We've passed many worthwhile resolutions and resolved many thorny problems and shared some beautiful times together . . . but over the past 20 years or more we have never really come to grips with this dilemma of declining membership.

I would like to suggest that at all levels of Convention we at least look at this matter seriously and responsibly.

Obviously there is no special virtue in bigness in itself. I am not interested in playing the "numbers game". The only decent motivation for evangelism or church expansion is our conviction that a truly New Age is being born, and that we have been given the incredible privilege of being involved in the process of building a new way of life in the world. We have been given good news from heaven, and when you have something as wonderful as that, you want to share it with all those who will receive it.

We are not alone in this concern. The Methodist Church, with over 8 million members, is worried about decreasing membership. Based on the premise that "every number in the statistical tables represents a person of worth" they have spent 9 years examining trends and coming up with recommendations. They include:

1. That a comprehensive broadly conceived evangelistic outreach program be developed and implemented which would emphasize personal commitment, the development of a supportive community, and the conservation of members.
2. That a concerted program be launched to improve the quality of teaching and learning and nurture which are offered through the church school in order that more children, youth, adults and families might be enlisted and equipped for Christian discipleship and service.
3. That every pastor and all local church leaders be encouraged to develop and carry out those ministries which extend the outreach of the church to additional persons, increase the number of professions of faith, raise the level of participation of present members, and provide all persons with opportunities for spiritual growth, service, and nurture.

We will require our own solutions to our own problems. But we might do well to look at these guidelines as a good place to start.

Your comments are invited. However, we will need a lot more than literary and verbal responses.

P. Z.

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ON KNOWING THE LORD

George F. Dole

We do seem to exist. In fact, the appearance is so pervasive and persuasive that we normally take it for granted, except in those rather eerie moments when everything seems somehow unreal.

We do seem to exist, yet there is no complete logical explanation of our existence. The materialist must assume that matter has somehow always existed, and that chance processes have led to the evolution of mind. The theist can claim that the universe was created by an infinite God, but cannot explain how there is room for a universe in the presence of that infinite God. Perhaps, after all, the pantheist has the easiest time of it, claiming that everything is part of God; yet this does not account for our separatist consciousness or for the existence of inconsistency.

T.C.R. 33 cuts the Gordian knot in brutal and provocative fashion. Creation is there described in part as follows: "God first finited His infinity by means of substances emitted from Himself, which (substances) gave rise to a nearest boundary which made the sun of the spiritual world."

It is hard to conceive of a more fundamental contradiction in terms than "finited infinity" — or "the limited limitless" or "the bounded boundless." It may be easier to understand in more human terms, by saying that God withdrew into Himself to leave room for us to exist. "In truth, thou art a God that hidest thyself (Isaiah 45:15).

And since (D. P. 32) the act of sustaining creation is itself a constant act of creation, the finiting of infinity is a continuing act of God. As the first step of creation, in fact, it is fundamental to all His dealings with us. We exist because He keeps refusing to engulf us.

It is rather as though we were living in a cottage at the foot of the Hoover Dam, making use of our little fraction of the power it generates.

We flick a switch and a 150-watt bulb goes on and we think, "My, how bright it is." Yet the greatest fact is not the intensity of the power we can use, but the massive restraint that maintains our existence in the face of a mass so immense, a power so awesome, that we are utterly insignificant in comparison.

When we speak of creation, however, we are not talking about inanimate mass or impersonal power. The energy is love, the structure of that energy is wisdom, and this kind of structured energy is the essence of person. So while we may speak of the creation of the universe in abstract terms, if the Creator is to "finite His infinity" in order to be perceived and loved by finite creatures, this necessarily entails withdrawing into the form of a finite person.

Perhaps another analogy may help, even though it is again impersonal. We cannot make direct observations of the sun. The more directly we look at it, the more quickly and completely we are blinded. But a coronagraph enables us to observe it indirectly, and to learn a great deal about it. The coronagraph provides us with the projection of an image of the "fringe" or corona of the sun, on a scale we can comprehend. The basic mass of the sun is completely eclipsed; otherwise the far less brilliant corona would be invisible. Yet the image, if we allow for this, is fundamentally a true one.

In coming to our apprehension, then, the Lord eclipses the radiant center of His essential being and presents us with a projection of His "fringes" or externals — that which lies beyond the nearest boundary He has drawn around Himself. This He reduces to a size we can encompass.

Again, we must realize that the Lord is personal, that His "corona" is His glorified Human. Like the sun's corona, the Human is constant in its fundamental nature, and at the same time intensely active. It is a true representation of the invisible God if we make allowances for the reduction in size and intensity and for the eclipsing of the center. The Lord's dealings with the disciples after the resurrection are accurate but dim reflections of His love and understanding of us — so dim, in fact, that we can actually see and feel them.

It remains to be stressed that we worship the glorified Lord, not Jesus of Nazareth. The way the Lord chose to finite Himself for our comprehension involved, so to speak, taking a human nature and correcting its distortions so that it could present a true image.

The process of removing distortions is essentially a process of bringing into order. In human terms, there are minor distortions, readily corrected, that result from misinformation or ignorance. There are also major distortions, stubborn ones, that result from disordered loves.

The most spectacular and most absurdly false of these distortions might be labelled idiopathy —our sense that our feelings are real with no corresponding sense of the reality of the feelings of others. My mosquito bite itches like fury — yours just looks like a mosquito bite. Our senses may be more or less correct about the reality of our own feelings, but they are ridiculously wrong in presenting that as the sum total of reality. Perhaps those odd moments of unreality have something true to say to us.

“Feeling another person’s joy as joy in oneself — that is loving (D.L.W. 47).” This empathy is not the opposite of idiopathy but its fulfillment, for the same “nerves” that sense our own joys and sorrows are designed to sense the joys and sorrows of others. And until we,

through the process of regeneration, come to live in empathy, our understanding of the Lord is fundamentally false, no matter how accurate it may be intellectually. For until we do love other people by choice, we have only mechanical models for understanding both the process of glorification and its result. “He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love (I John 4:8).”



Rev. George Dole

THE JOY OF RIGHTEOUS INDIGNATION

Wilson Van Dusen

You are becoming annoyed at the conversation. No one seems to know what they are talking about. You know the answer! Suddenly you explode, pound the table and loudly lay out the full extent of your wisdom. You are almost trembling with excitement and a beginning feeling of relief. You’ve said it. That should shut up all dissent. Your fantasy at this point might be that they look at you with admiration, for the depth of your wisdom. Instead they seem to withdraw and wonder how you could be so thoughtless of others.

In this vignette we have a glimpse of a particular kind of pathology or falsity that strongly religious people are prone to fall into. After years of work with ordinary mental illness I can recall my surprise when I saw forms of abnormal behavior almost peculiar to religion. I can remember running into scrupulosity when working with Roman Catholics. These individuals were riddled with guilt, doubt and self questioning. To them the priest would say, “Try to relax and enjoy yourself more,” and “don’t worry so much about sin!”

To my knowledge no one has pulled together a description of the different types of religious pathology but the one I’ve seen most often among Swedenborgians I’ve called *righteous indignation*. Why go into this? Because of its joyous aspect, we are all prone to it! It is well that we understand, recognize and know how to deal with a problem that plagues church organizations and can mess up our own relations with others. First let us try to sense this condition from the inside, as though it is yourself. This form of falsity has a remarkable nobility about it which you might enjoy. By the way, this condition is described in the Bible and in the writings.

You are a sincere, reflective person who has long pondered on the truth as reflected in the Bible and the writings. What is progressively bothering you more and more is the way others seem careless with the truth. They don’t read. They don’t think. When you speak to straighten them out they overlook what you have to say. You see the greatness of the church you visualize being eroded by this indifference. Gradually you zero in on the leaders. If you

could straighten them out you might correct the whole mess. They listen for a moment and then rush off to other matters. Your letters to the editor are ignored. Gradually the pattern becomes clear to you. Certain persons are deliberately introducing evil into the church. If they could be gotten rid of —. You can prove your points by doctrine but no one will listen. A few people of like spirit join with you and send you supportive letters and other evidence. Your case builds. You find yourself more and more caught up in the excitement of the pursuit. It is clear to you that you are the real church leader. In fact you begin to think of leading your small group into a church of true doctrine. You become so excited when a friend tells of rumors that prove you are right!

Contrast the interior feeling of goodness with what it is like to be a victim of such zeal. You innocently put forth your understanding and our zealot pounces on you. You are wrong and the writings are quoted to prove it. You are headed straight for hell. It feels like you have been unjustifiably put down and then stomped on. A natural reaction is to withdraw and avoid this zealot. If you are not too sure of yourself or what the writings say you may come to doubt your position and question if this person is a real leader. In fact these people gather some followers and often split churches. There is a clear black and white, right and wrong, and guess who is right! Lesser zealots line up behind them and they split apart from the rest of the wishy washy, fuzzy headed or simply misbegotten crowd. If you are sensitive to your feelings, then the zealot is easy to spot. You feel uncharitably treated and put down. It feels like the zealot is getting some kind of kicks out of clobbering others with the truth. Indeed the condition resembles sadism. Every year a few of these people murder wrong doers in a burst of righteousness. It just came to the point where 'God's Will' had to be carried out. To the zealot he is only fighting for the TRUTH, FOR God, not for himself. (The experience of ordinary observers is the opposite.) He is grinding his own axe, to overcome all opposition. He feeds on rumor, on scraps of information. He lists his enemies and his few supporters. Often these people publish and distribute everything that proves them correct.

Although they seem like scholars of writings they are not. It is easy to spot the difference. The scholar is delighted to find out what is true, even if contrary to expectations. The zealot disregards everything which does not support him. The scholar can work with others. The zealot can only work with those who support him. They particularly enjoy the sexual weaknesses of others. It is part of their remarkable purity to find everyone else's impurity. They publish as fact any rumor or innuendo that supports them. This is a form of evil and falsity which feels so righteous as to thoroughly deceive themselves.

The man whose rational is of such a character that he is solely in truth — even though it be the truth of faith — and who is not at the same time in the good of charity, is altogether of such character.

He is a morose man, will bear nothing is against all, regards everybody as being in falsity, is ready to rebuke, to chastise, and to punish; has no pity, and does not apply or adapt himself to others and study to bend their minds; for he looks at everything from truth, and at nothing from good. AC 1949

Swedenborg quotes Jeremiah that such people are wild asses, that snuff up the wind like blind sea monsters.

. . . they snuff up the wind when empty things are seized on instead of real things
. . . AC 1949

and they are blind because there is no apprehension of the truth. Hidden behind his fierce fight for truth is his own will to dominate and control others. His aim is that all follow *his* way for after all, his truth is God's! How can this be distinguished from mere assent? It is difficult and this difficulty leads some to full tolerance of even wild asses. Dissent musters fact, not gossip and rumor. Dissent tries to work with and through others. But the real key is in the sensitive reactions of the listener. You feel put down, not heard by the zealot. The zealot's reaction feels cruel, uncharitable. He can only work with those who closely support his position. Everyone else is discarded.

An understanding of the dynamics of this condition can lessen the stress for individuals and churches. The zealot conceals from himself his willful attempt to dominate and control others by the nobility of his purposes and arguments and in this he has also lost sight of his own humanness and that of others. What to do with the zealot? It is dangerous to give them position or power for they seize and use it to the utmost for their own ends. Shunning them tends to aggravate their feelings yet you may not have much choice. The most difficult but most therapeutic response would be to try to sense and be kind to the lonely, hurt, simple person hiding behind a spiked shield. Their thrusts are most hurtful when you come to doubt yourself and your own understanding. If you are sure of yourself and sure that the central theme of the writings is that we love one another and try to be useful, then you can be charitable to them. The zealot often sells rumor of sinister things going on, leading to the decay of Christianity. Certainly their Christianity is decaying. But if you can sense the very sincere, lonely, hurt person beneath this reaction you just might be able to reach it by simple kindness. For after all, what is our doctrine but what we do. We can answer a perversion of goodness by simple goodness and kindness as we understand it. The zealot has lost the way to a simple community of people trying to be considerate to each other. But real, zealous, righteous indignation is difficult to deal with. The zealot doesn't want to be chummy. He wants to cross swords over doctrine, to stamp out evil.

If you are in doubt when in the presence of such a person it is easy to tell what is going on. By their response in the group, do they seem to be joining with others and contributing to common uses or are they more isolated and grinding their own axe when they speak? When



Dr. Wilson Van Dusen

they respond to you do you feel hurt or put down? Look at what they propose. At the bottom line is there something that will elevate them? Or are other people being persuaded to follow their will? At this point you should begin to smell the fumes of hell. Watch what they do. This often unmasks tons of argument about truth and doctrine.

I know of nothing in the writings that suggests that Truth should be used to clobber and hurt others. The appropriation of Truth does not involve the criticism of others. Rather, it is self questioning, wondering, exploring, receiving, that we might grow in relationship to God and the people in our world. Love, charity, uses — these are the essentials of life.

And the next time you feel like pounding the table and overpowering everyone with your wonderful wisdom, consider how close you've come to righteous indignation.

PLEASE NOTE

The mailing address for the **SWEDENBORG SCHOOL OF RELIGION AND CONVENTION'S CENTRAL OFFICE** has changed; the P.O. box numbers have been *eliminated*. Hence forth the mailing address for both the S.S.R. and the Central Office will simply be:

**48 Sargent St.
Newton, MA 02158**

Cover photo: "Katie" by
Nick Czudjowycz

CONVENTION CALENDAR

Committee on Worship, Phila.	Sept. 26-27
C.O.M. Exec. Committee	Sept. 28-29
Ohio Association, Urbana	Sept. 30-Oct. 2
Middle Atlantic Ass'n Retreat	Oct. 7-9
Kansas Ass'n Retreat	Oct. 7-9
S.S.R. BOM Exec. Committee	Oct. 14-15
Maine Ass'n, Fryeburg	Oct. 16
S.S.R. Bd. of Managers	Dec. 2-3
Ministers & Wives Institute	
DeLand, Florida	Jan. 12-18
General Council, DeLand	Jan. 19-21

Reflections On Teaching And Prisons

J. Theodore Klein
Urbana College

In the Fall Quarter of 1975-76, Urbana College initiated a program making college courses available to inmates at the Ohio Reformatory for Women at Marysville and the London, Ohio, Correctional Institute (a medium security state prison for men). Presently, students enrolled in these programs can receive an Associate Arts degree in Liberal Studies.

My experiences in teaching philosophy at these prisons have heightened my enthusiasm for teaching, and are a constant learning process as well. While it has been difficult, nonetheless it is extremely rewarding and challenging. Not only has it compelled me to explore new ways of teaching, but also to examine many of my beliefs and values.

Much of what I overcame was actually an unlearning of stereotypes. So often inmates are thought of as "amoral," "nihilistic," or "without values." I found this to be totally false. Many of my inmate students were strongly committed to positive values. Their attitudes often are just as morally sensitive as those I have seen outside of prison. I discovered that for me to be "constantly on guard against being conned" was wrong. The atmosphere in these prison classes was *extremely open and honest*. The students and I shared a mutual respect for honesty.

I think the most crucial problem in relation to prisons is the attitude that the inmate is less than a person. Whatever positive sense of "who I am" the inmate develops is something he or she develops from the inside, often against great odds. One very vivid phrase used by a Marysville student is "shattered self image;" another appropriate phrase is an "image of oneself as nothing." One Marysville student spoke of stealing because she didn't think she could do anything else." Another woman said: "I have no confidence in anything I do." The men did not usually verbalize such feelings, but many of them did speak of being "victims of the environment," caught up in forces over which they felt no control.

Despite so many obstacles, I found a sense of *inner strength* or *energy* in many of the prison students. Many spoke of their experience of "inner peace" and feelings of "oneness" with the universe. Sometimes the inner strength was not verbalized, yet showed itself in the high energy with which the students acted and expressed themselves. One man at London was in love with language; he loved to talk, and listening to him could be exciting even for someone not quite understanding his vernacular. A woman at Marysville has developed a whole "energy theory of the universe" (close in many ways to Leibniz and Swedenborg) without the help of books. Sometimes students would say, "only the strong survive in here," and for many just the sense of having "survived" was a beginning in developing a positive sense of themselves.

I remember well one vivid experience. I showed the film "Plato's Cave", with its beautiful scenes from nature, at the London facility. In the end, I could see the inmates identifying with the philosopher when he is beaten with chains as he tries to enlighten those in the cave. In the discussion following the movie, many spoke of experiences of "enlightenment" and how they wanted to develop further.

Another exceptionally vivid experience, very important for me. Before class a Marysville student beckoned me to her desk and as I looked down at her she said: "*Sit down here, I don't bite!!*" We talked until time to start the class, and after class as well, then no longer as teacher and student but as *friends*. I left with a feeling of elation, having unshakeable faith in her as a person who is now on a right path.

I saw many of the inmates going through fundamental changes in their lives. One man spoke of a decision "to become a vessel of God and no longer a vessel of crime." Another man spoke of finally coming to understand "why I did what I did." A woman spoke of finding something she had been "trying to find for fifty years." Another woman said: "Now I must find out who I am."

My most basic goal in teaching is to suggest ways in which people can develop a positive image of themselves and a sense of their worth as people. I hope that whatever insights students gain into philosophy will contribute to a positive sense of themselves and what they can contribute to others. I feel that I have been

much closer to fully realizing this goal in my prison teaching than in most of the other teaching I have done. The most inspirational experience I had was receiving a letter from a Marysville student in which she spoke of how much my faith in her has meant. She promised to "do us both proud," and I am sure she will!

POST-CONVENTION CONFERENCE

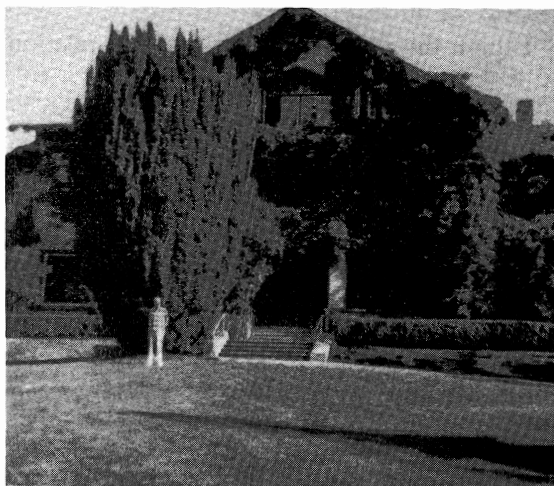
*R. Gustafson
Sarasota, Fla.*

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord which hath made heaven and earth." These words of the psalmist are called to mind by the setting of the fifth Post-Convention Conference, "Growing in the Beloved Community," which was sponsored by the Board of Education from Sunday evening, July 3, to Friday morning, July 8, 1977. Sunday afternoon, a Transall took 10 of us at a time with our luggage from the Convention site at the University of San Francisco, across the Golden Gate Bridge, past the village of Mill Valley, and up through the redwoods along a road that became narrower, steeper, and more tortuous as we climbed. A final sharp right turn revealed a sign, "Welcome to the Ralston L. White Retreat Center — maintained by United Church of Christ," which we had plenty of time to read as the driver backed and turned into the drive which led off the inside of the turn. This drive wound past a small parking lot and emerged from the trees into a setting that Mr. White had already named "The Garden of Allah" before he built the impressive steel and stone mansion with its heart shaped lawn for his bride. This is a knoll on the side of Mt. Tamalpais which provides views clear to the top of the mountain on one side and across the bay to San Francisco on the other. Flower gardens and tropical fruit trees in a sheltered dell between the knoll and the mountainside are no longer formally maintained, but still attract deer and many species of birds which can be observed from the verandas on each floor or the large picture windows of the living room. To this scene of rustic luxury, 21 retreatants from Canada and from the four corners (literally) of the United States gathered under the leadership of the conference staff of seven.

The dinner Sunday night introduced us to the unobtrusively devoted service with which the retreat center's employees provided for our

material well being while we were their guests. Meals were simply delicious, and were served hot, on time, and with seconds available for any who wished them. The employees truly complemented the beauty of the setting to provide the physical circumambience of the "Beloved Community."

The size of the living room was accentuated as all 28 of us gathered after dinner for our first community session in the rotunda-like front wing with its plate glass windows looking down the lawn and up the mountain. We sat in an uncrowded circle of sofas and easy chairs leaving the main part of the living room, with its huge fireplace and flanking reading alcoves, unoccupied. A short devotional period was followed by each of us going around the circle introducing ourselves by first name to each other conferee who repeated the name and gave his or her name in return. This not only introduced us to each other but also introduced us to the most basic lesson in communications which is that hearing is at least as important as speaking. Copies of the program for the next



The White Retreat Center



The Beloved Community

four days were then distributed and enlarged upon by the conference staff. A typical day's program was:

7:30	Early Rise Meditation
8:00	Breakfast
9:00	Community Meeting
10-12	Groups
12:30	Lunch
2:00	Community Meeting
2:30	Groups
4:30	Recreation
6:30	Dinner
8:00	Community Meeting followed by Party Time

These sessions might be classified pedantically as two colloquia (Community), two seminars (Group), and one symposium (Evening) per day with several periods for individual initiative. The schedule also included a Beach Party for Wednesday afternoon, which was expanded to include a visit to Muir Sequoia Park for those who preferred; and Thursday afternoon was reserved for Walking Trips along the beautiful paths surrounding the mansion. Each of the three group leaders then outlined the intended thematic approach to awareness to be followed in the daily seminars, which my memory recalls simplistically (and perhaps inaccurately) as philosophy, communication, and art, respectively. With the announcement that Monday would be Solo Time from the community meeting until lunch and the request that we each select one and only one group for the four days, the meeting was adjourned to informality over wine and cheese.

(cont. on page 199)

"PUBLICITY WORKSHOP" at Convention '77

Leader: Bill Etue

The Publicity Workshop was divided into three sessions, with each session having a different objective. In the first session the focus was on small periodicals in the church, such as Association newsletters and Society newsletters. In this session we looked at ways to make our newsletters more attractive and professional looking, while cutting costs to a minimum. This session was especially helpful to people who did not yet have a publication but wanted to start one.

In the second session we had a demonstration of videotape equipment. A videotape program of "Life after Life" was shown. A film on Johnny Appleseed was also shown and a comparison was made between the film format and the videotape format, weighing the merits and drawbacks of each. We talked at length about the numerous possible uses the church could make of videotape in the future as a publicity tool.

In the final session we discussed the many publicity possibilities available for people to accomplish on an individual basis and within their Societies. The consensus of our group of nine people was that it would be desirable to step up efforts of the church to organize its publicity work in general, and that a department of publicity or a publicity section of one of our existing boards is an idea worth seriously considering.



Publicity Workshop Participants viewing a videotape production of "Life After Life."

WHEN I AM DEAD

I am not sure that this title meets my way of thought. I do not think I am going to die.

Let me not be misunderstood: the undertaker will not be cheated of his dues. Earth will go to earth, ashes to ashes, and dust to dust. I am not a candidate for physical immortality.

But I have a quarrel with the term "death". My dispute arises from my belief in Life. Life seems to be so gloriously triumphant: it will not be gainsaid. Life and death are erroneously contrasted; they are not antithetic. Life is real; death is apparent. I deem that which goes by the name of death to be a process of life. I favour Longfellow's definition — "There is no death; what seems so is transition."

I am convinced that I am a spiritual being, even now a citizen of the spiritual world. For the time being I am in contact with the physical realm by means of my body of flesh — my "beastly body," as an old translator rendered words of St. Paul. The real "I" moves and has its being in a realm of love, affection, desire, thought, imagination, poetry, music, or, in lust, hatred, greed, malice and all uncharitableness. These qualities are not physical; you can't weigh them or measure them: you can't subject them to chemical analysis. Yet they are so real that you cannot imagine existence without them.

I am not a body, but a personality possessing a body: my personality is spiritual and, I believe, eternal. My body is of the earth, earthy. I shall always possess a body: when my present one is worn out it will be dealt with by the undertaker and I shall know it no more. But the worthy undertaker will not put ME in a coffin and I shall never be buried in a grave, or be reduced to a handful of ashes in a crematorium. By death, the beneficent process of life, I shall enter into consciousness of an objective spiritual world in which I have always subjectively functioned. I shall discover that I have a non-atomic, imponderable but substantial body by which I am in touch with a non-atomic, imponderable, but substantial spiritual world.

The great seer Swedenborg assures us that death is the continuation of life. It will end nothing but my consciousness of earth; it will continue, in its own proper sphere, everything that is "I". As Sir Walter Raleigh wrote: — "Yet stab at thee who will, no stab the soul can kill."

For me, death suggests no terrors; on the reverse, the thought of it awakens pleasurable anticipations. It is the friendly activity of a friendly plan. On this side it is a sleep and a forgetting; on the other side it is a new birth and an awakening. While some on this side, in their unwisdom will say, when I die, "Behold, an old man dead" others in the eternal world, in their certain knowledge will cry, "Behold, a man child born."

When through death, I am born into consciousness of the spiritual world, I shall find that I still possess all that constitutes my manhood — that I am the individual I always was. Death will not change my affections, my tastes, or my idiosyncrasies. Nor will death project me into a strange and inhospitable territory. I think that I shall sense a remarkable familiarity with my new environment, and that I shall be ministered to by friendly folk who will guide my faltering feet and strive to draw out my noblest affections. Their endeavor will be to lead me to the understanding of the good, the true and the beautiful, and to the service of the Highest. It is possible I may resent their kind offices and feel their company too high and rare for me. In such case, they may sadly withdraw and leave me to the approaches of others less exalted in character and ideals. I believe that every imaginable kind of help will be offered me, but that I shall eventually choose my own company and seek delight in associations that are congenial to my disposition. Only in such conditions could I be free to develop my individuality.

It is not at all improbable that at first I may not realize that I have died. I shall become convinced of the fact when I meet friends known to have predeceased me and am gradually introduced into unfamiliar circumstances.

I believe that my happiness in the future life will be established or marred by my dominant love. If I am animated by the love of God and the desire to serve others, I shall find myself in associations that are heavenly: if I love myself above all others and have no respect for the beneficent will of God, I shall, by weight of my self-love, gravitate towards association with those who are inwardly of my disposition — and the clash of selfish interests will be hell. I believe that heaven is constituted by those who love the Lord and walk in His ways: that the

(con't on next page)

NEW CHURCH PEOPLE AND PLACES

THE MIGHTY MITE

During the year members of the Alliance of New Church Women put aside their thank offerings to be collected just before the annual meeting. The individual offerings are not large sums but together they make a considerable total for a designated beneficiary.

The 1977 Mite Box offerings totaled \$1,022.81 to be used to provide Swedenborg's writings and collateral literature to missionary ministers who might otherwise be unable to obtain these needed books.

ALLIANCE FAVORS

The women of the San Francisco and other California churches prepared favors for each place setting at the Convention Alliance luncheon — there were walnut shell owls with magnets on the back, crocheted cable car key rings, felt bears with key rings and little notebooks with poems inside and extra pages for adding others. These were most attractive and greatly appreciated by the guests. There were 112 women present representing 22 different groups and several members-at-large.

A CORRECTION

The Alliance voted \$75.00 to each of six church camps, not seven as reported in the last *Messenger*. Split Mountain is not holding sessions this year.

AUSTRALIAN NEW CHURCH CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS 1981

During the past twelve months the Sub-Committee appointed to organize celebrations to mark the Centenary of The Association of the New Church in Australia in 1981 has continued with the planning. The residential Conference Centre on Western Port Bay, 80 kilometres south east of Melbourne, Victoria, has been booked for 9 days commencing on Monday 5th January, 1981. The present individual daily charge is \$8.00 which is considered to be very reasonable considering the facilities and fully catered accommodation available. It is envisaged that generous family concessions will be available. More detailed

publicity regarding the programme will be issued in due course. Considerable interest has already been expressed within Australia and from overseas organizations and individuals.

WHEN I AM DEAD (cont.)

spirit which makes hell is the love of self and everything that ministers to selfishness.

I believe that the spiritual world will prove to be a homely world, because it will be strangely like the world I have left behind, and because I shall meet many old friends there and make many new ones.

I do not think that God will cast me into hell or impose punishment upon me. If I find myself in hellish conditions, they will be of my own seeking. And if I suffer it will be the natural consequence of my hostility to a just and merciful order.

Rev. C. A. Hall

(Many years ago the Weekly Dispatch of London produced a series of articles by prominent authors under the heading, "When I Am Dead.")

Prizes were offered by the Editor for the best letters on the subject. More than twenty thousand articles were submitted and this article by the late Rev. Charles Hall, British Conference was one of fourteen which received a substantial reward.

This article has given comfort to thousands of people concerned with serious or terminal illness. It is now being re-published as a public service.)

From the Vancouver, B.C.
New Church Newsletter

IT'S NO PICNIC!

Getting out the *Messenger* is no picnic. If we print jokes, people say we are silly; if we don't, they say we are too serious. If we reprint articles from other magazines, we are too lazy to write ourselves; if we don't, we are stuck with our own stuff. If we omit news that we've never been told about, we should have picked it up from church bulletins or newsletters. If we print news about the same person or the same church several times a year, we are showing favoritism. If we don't publish contributions or poems, we don't appreciate true genius; if we use them the paper is full of junk. If we make a change in someone's article, we are too critical; if we don't, we're a poor editor.

Now, like as not, some guy will say we copied this from some other magazine. We did!

WHAT THEY'RE SAYING

The recession-delayed trend towards a shorter work week is picking up steam, according to the March 1 issue of Data-Alert. There are many consequences for the local congregation. The Wall Street Journal reports many blue-collar workers on four 10-hour days find exhaustion and lethargy results, and there is consequent resigning from church committee work in the mid-week. Churches may have to cut back weekday evening activity. Other forecasts:

1. There will be less regularity in weekend worship services as members go away Thursday evening.
2. Retreats may become increasingly popular as part of regular church programming.
3. As husbands and wives have more time together, many marriages will be tested. Congregations may need to provide more marriage enrichment programs for members.
4. As pressure mounts on school districts to shorten the school week, activities will be needed for children and youth whose parents are unable to take them away for a long weekend.
5. Congregations in resort communities near metropolitan areas will have families around for longer periods of time and may need to reconsider their programs and style in order to become the primary focus of religious ministry, affiliation and activity for weekend residents.

Small is okay. Church people who suspect the larger denominational units to be unwieldy have an ally in British economist E. F. Schumacher, author of "Small Is Beautiful". His pitch is that the old saw, smaller communities are not viable, is nonsense. He cites the fact that the great prosperity of the Icelandic nation dates from the day it separated from Denmark.

Enablement Information Service

TEN FACTS ABOUT ANGELS

The following ten facts about angels are gleaned from two books: "Angels: God's Secret Angels" by Billy Graham (Hardback \$4.95); and "All About Angels" by C. Leslie Miller (Paperback \$1.45). The former outsold all other books last year with some 1,200,000 copies being sold.

- 1 There are almost 300 references to angels in the Bible.

2 There are at least 100 million angels, (Revelation 5:11). Their number remains constant because they do not marry (Matthew 22:30) or have children. Nor do they die.

3 We are not to worship angels.

4 Angels are created spirits. Ordinarily they are invisible, able to pass through locked doors, etc. They can, however, become visible when necessary. (Acts 12; 6,7)

5 Not all angels have wings, only some of them. (Isaiah 6:2)

6 The angels rejoice whenever a sinner is converted. (Luke 15:10)

7 They protect us from harm and danger. (Psalm 91:11, 12)

8 They have great power. It took only one angel to destroy all the entire army of 185,000 Assyrians. (2 Kings 19:35)

9 Angels are always watching to see how we are getting along. (1 Corinthians 4:9)

10 Finally let us remember Hebrews 13:2, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."

Missionary Church *Emphasis*

Your assignment: To sift the wheat from the chaff! Ed.

SOME WRY OBSERVATIONS ON DEATH

Mark Twain said it: "So live that when you come to die, even the undertaker will be sorry." (An undertaker, of course, is the last person to ever let you down.) Will Rogers put it this way: "So live that when you die, your family would not be ashamed to sell your parrot to the town gossip."

And comedian Woody Allen is obsessed with the subject of death and dying, which is clearly evident in all his books and movies. Among (many) other things, he is reported to have said: "It's not that I'm afraid to die; I just don't want to be there when it happens . . . Death is one of the few things that can be done as easily lying down . . . I do not believe in an afterlife, although I am bringing a change of underwear."

And finally, a *Messenger* was recently returned by the postal service with these words across the label: "Deceased. Address unknown". You'd think the Post Office would have more faith.

BOOK REVIEWS

MORE-WITH-LESS COOKBOOK

Doris Janzen Longacre

Suggestions by Mennonites on how to eat better and consume less of the world's limited food resources.

Contains more than 500 recipes gathered from Mennonite kitchens in North America (and beyond) chosen on the basis of their contribution to good eating and good health. They encourage increased reliance on basic ingredients for a hearty, balanced diet. All recipes were tested by professional home economists in the United States and Canada.

The recipes are interspersed with helpful commentary by the author. Suggestions at the end of each unit provide creative ideas on how to serve leftovers.

An introductory section of the book is divided into four chapters that deal with (1) world food shortages and the typical American diet, (2) Christian motivations for simple eating, (3) ways of building a simple diet, and (4) joy and creativity in meal planning. The recipe section of the book is divided into twelve basic food categories.

"Practicing what they preach, Mennonites' concern for world hunger has evolved into a determination to eat and spend 10 percent less on food. This book, some 500 recipes from Mennonite kitchens, all tested by home economists, directs itself to changes in food habits: how to eat better while consuming less of the world's food resources. Doris Longacre presents her case authoritatively, stresses a simpler diet, one that uses less meat, does not rely on convenience foods, and provides clear recipes that demonstrate how to accomplish these goals. This is a fine and important book, one that heralds with good spirit significant and necessary changes that clearly are on the way. The author has done her homework meticulously and creatively and has produced a book that is an act of faith, a reservoir of information, and a practical manual." — Publishers Weekly, January 19, 1976

More-with-Less Cookbook, published by Herald Press, Scottdale, Pennsylvania, and Kitchener, Ontario, is available from your local bookstore at \$5.95.

THE NEW COMMUNITY, by Elizabeth O'Connor. Harper and Row, 1976, 121 pp., \$3.95.

Here we are brought up-to-date on the thirty-year history of the Church of the Saviour. In her initial book, *Call to Commitment*, Elizabeth O'Connor gave us the story of Gordon Crosby's dream of a church that would know its mission was to take a world for Christ with the resulting example of a community of committed Christians. The vision offered gave strength to many hungering for a full Christian life. Now she not only shows the distance covered but the expansion taking place.

The painful decision to restructure the Church of the Saviour into less encumbered sister churches is rare, if not unique, in today's religious world of expensive physical facilities and growing organizational expenditures.

The New Community reminds us that nothing in the world comes before human persons — again raising disturbing questions in regard to setting priorities, use of time, sharing of wealth and limits of personal comfort. We see token Christianity not merely as wasteful, but false, and unless we take up the vocation of Christ, as servant in the world, we will rationalize ourselves out of a major portion of our eternal responsibility.

There is no way of knowing the extent of the impact this Washington, D.C., church has had on the world, but there is no doubt that it is far out of proportion to that of most Christian congregations claiming equal membership. That they have not become lukewarm seems amazing, yet their awareness of being co-creators with God is a powerful antidote.

What becomes apparent is that so long as isolated groups such as these, with resolute faithfulness and yielded allegiance to Jesus Christ, bear fruits which are rare among professing Christians, there is hope; but we will continue to win the world at approximately the same pace. Are we prepared to be held accountable?

Elizabeth O'Connor offers more than just interesting reading — she portrays the process and results of people risking commitment together. This leaves me in the uncomfortable position of re-evaluating my status as a Christian.

Art Kupke
Kewanna, Indiana

MATTHEW ROSE UP

Leon LeVan

The change in Matthew's life from being a tax collector or publican to becoming a Disciple of Jesus is narrated so briefly in the *Gospels* we scarcely observe it in passing. Matthew was a tax collector; he became a Disciple of Jesus. That is all we normally remember.

Tax collectors are rarely loved in any age or place. In the case of the Jews, who had to pay taxes to the Romans, the tax collectors were bitterly resented. That resentment was the more sharp since the Romans utilized Jews themselves for the hated office of collecting the taxes. The tax collectors were publicans. Matthew was a publican. Matthew was not only a Jewish citizen. His real name was Levi (as shown in *Mark 2* and *Luke 5*) which fact tells us he was a Jew of the sacred Tribe of Levi — the consecrated Tribe which in ancient times had been given responsibility for the Tabernacle and Temple, and from which came the Jewish priesthood.

Matthew (or Levi) was a member of that sacred Tribe. Moses had been a Levite. Samuel had been a Levite. Aaron and his sons had been Levites. The Tribe of Levi was a holy Tribe. But here now was a Levite who, instead of ministering in the Temple, was daily sitting at the receipt of customs collecting the hated taxes from the Jews to give to the Romans.

When we search the depths of the Word, we discover that Matthew (or Levi) sitting at the seat of customs and gathering taxes for the Romans, pictures a spiritual mind subservient to that which is worldly. The world for Levi was upside down. The Jews were subservient to Rome. Matthew's office as a Roman tax collector found him as much out of his rightful place as the Jews felt themselves out of their true place oppressed by Caesar's legions. They had read the prophecies to mean that their nation ought to be above all other nations on the earth, but they found themselves at the bottom. The world was indeed "upside down."

Matthew collecting money from the Jews stands for that higher degree of the mind which collects knowledges of truth from the Word. That higher degree is called "spiritual-rational." Your mind has a natural degree. It also has a spiritual. In our spiritual degree, we can think about God — can know and understand truths of the Word — can "see"

Divine Truths in the light of Heaven. That spiritual degree of the mind is given to angels and men by the Lord expressly to be of service to the soul. The spiritual degree of your mind is heavenly country. It is "holy ground." It is your "land of Canaan which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

The difference between those who will be in Heaven and those who will not, is that the former have the spiritual degree of their minds opened by the truths of the Word; while those who will not be in Heaven do not believe that a spiritual degree of the mind so much as exists. Levi (or Matthew) in his true place signifies that higher degree of the mind in you and me.

One day while Matthew (or Levi) was sitting in his customary place receiving the taxes, suddenly Jesus and His Disciples passed by. Jesus said to Matthew, "Follow Me. And he rose and followed Him." That startling change in Matthew's life made of Levi, the despised Roman publican, a Disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. Such a "call" by the Lord (and such a response by Matthew) pictures the change in your life and mine when we put our rebellions and doubts behind us, and are willing to be the Lord's followers. The spiritual degree of the mind now takes its true place. Subservience to the external world is rejected.

From that time forward, "Matthew" became a name of honor. Philosophers and poets would be named after him. Parents would name their children for him. His name would be put on the first Christian *Gospel*. But more important, his name would be graven on the portals of the "Holy City New Jerusalem" and would be "written in the Lamb's book of life."

When Jesus called to Matthew, The *Gospel* tells us, "Matthew rose up." To "rise up" means to rise from a lower natural state to a higher spiritual state. That means we should rise in our affections and thoughts from natural goals to spiritual. Man's "upside down" philosophy must be turned right-side-up. God created man to be a spiritual being — an "image and likeness" of the Lord Himself. Man was created to be a companion with angels — to be, in fact, an angel in the making whose proper home should be the "kingdom of God."

Jesus, passing by, called to Matthew saying "Follow Me." And Matthew rose up and followed Him.

The Mask That Hides

Don't be fooled by ME. Don't be fooled by the face I wear. I wear a thousand masks, masks that I'm afraid to take off, and none of them are me.

I give the impression that I'm secure; that all is sunny and unruffled within as well as without; that confidence is my name, coolness my game; that the water's calm and that I need no one . . . But don't believe me . . . please.

My surface may seem smooth, but my surface is a MASK. Beneath dwells the real me in Confusion, in Aloneness. But I hide this.

I panic at the thought of my Weakness and frantically create a mask to hide behind to shield me from the glance that KNOWS.

Yet, such a glance is precisely my SALVATION . . . I know this. If it is followed by acceptance and by love, it is the only thing that will assure me of what I cannot assure myself, that I am worth something.

But I don't tell you this. I don't dare. I am afraid to.

So I play my game, my separate game, with a facade of assurance without . . . and a trembling child within. So begins the parade of MASKS, and my life becomes a FRONT.

I idly chatter to you . . . surface and top-of-the head talk . . . Saying nothing of what is crying within Me. Please listen . . . carefully and try to hear what I am not saying . . . what I'd like to be able to say . . . what for survival I need to say . . . but what I cannot say.

I dislike hiding . . . honestly . . .

I'd really like to be genuine and spontaneous . . . and ME . . .

But you've got to help me . . . You've got to hold out your hand . . . Even when it's the last thing I seem to want.

Each time you are kind and gentle and encouraging . . . each time you try to understand me because you care . . . my heart grows wings . . . very small wings . . . But Wings.

With your sensitivity and sympathy . . . your power of understanding,

You can breathe life into me . . . I want you to know that.

You can help me to be creator of the person that is ME . . . If you choose to.

You can break down the wall and release me from behind my MASK, My shadow world of panic and uncertainty . . . from my lonely SELF . . . DON'T PASS ME BY.

I may fight against the very help I need . . . But try to beat down the walls with gentle hands of love and understanding . . . firm but gentle . . . for a child is sensitive.

WHO AM I? I may be every man or woman you will meet coming through the doors . . .

A SIMPLE EXPLANATION OF THE SERENITY PRAYER WISDOM . . .

To Know Myself
COURAGE . . .

To Be Myself
and SERENITY . . .

To Accept Myself

from the A. A. magazine

FROM CHURCH RECORDS

BAPTISM

HARTMAN — Elizabeth Ann, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Bruce Hartman, Lisbon Falls, Maine, was baptized into the faith of the New Church in Bath, Maine, on July 24, 1977, the Rev. F. Waldo Marshall officiating.

BETROTHAL

Rev. Walter E. Orthweim III officiated at the betrothal of **Trevor George Woofenden** to **Lynn Christine Zimmerman** on June 10, 1977, in Bryn Athyn, Pa.

POST CONVENTION CONF. (cont.)

Thus far, only the Beloved Community has been described, in perhaps too much detail, because the Growing part is — to use Swedenborg's term — ineffable. The retreat experience cannot be described to anyone who did not attend and need not be described to anyone who did. Words which come to mind — introspection, participation, therapy, catharsis, repentance, evangelism, inspiration, rededication, and many, many more — are like the listed ingredients for a recipe, which convey a mouth watering picture only to the experienced. Among the leavening were such ingredients as: "The Lord imputes evil to no man." (TCR650); the ubiquitous, allegorical legend of the Holy Grail; the dawning of trust and the sunrise of love within the group; the sharing of lessons in massage, both physical and mental; the quiet of meditation; the increasing sense of both power and peace as individuality was absorbed in the community; the sharing of the Lord's Supper on the final evening. We had indeed "Grown into a Beloved Community."

THE MESSENGER
Box 2642 Stn. B
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