

The Messenger

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH

February 1978

AN AMERICAN WAY

TO PRAY

page 32

One eats in holiness,
tastes the taste of food in holiness,
and the table becomes an altar.
One works in holiness,
one walks across the fields in holiness,
and the soft songs of birds,
which they voice to God,
enters into the song of our soul.
A husband is united to his wife in holiness,
and Shalom rests over them.

— Martin Buber

Editorial:**SERENDIPITY**

By mid - December I was hard at work on the February issue; as much as one can work hard just before Christmas. But the prospects were not overly bright. Christmas week came and went — we spent several delightful days in Urbana — but I still couldn't put a handle on the February issue. No need to push the panic button, but wonderments were taking shape in the back of my mind.

Then Virginia Branston's letter came with the most powerful, the most beautiful article I've read in a long time. "An American Way To Pray" first appeared in the U.S. *Catholic* and was re - printed in the Trinity (N.Y. Episcopal Diocese) *News*. It deserves to be re - printed in every magazine in North America. Make that the world.

Last month in this column we gave you a little preview of our Convention '78 theme, "Alive in the New Age". That is precisely the thrust of this splendid article by Father Matthew Fox, and one can only rejoice and give thanks that New Age seedlings are sprouting all over the place.

Quite often we are pleasantly surprised — at times amazed — that New Church ideas and concepts are springing up in so many parts of the world, in non - Christian as well as Christian areas. But of course, we shouldn't be surprised, or amazed! It was, and is, bound to happen this way. It's all part and parcel of the Second Coming, which the world has known about for over 200 years, and which we as a Church have known about since 1817, *but I wonder if even now we really believe in the implications and the benefits of the Second Coming.*

Swedenborg tells us, very plainly, that a new spiritual era is now unfolding in both the spiritual and natural worlds . . . that people now can choose to enjoy the fruits of genuine spiritual freedom . . . that God's Divine Love and Wisdom is actively re - creating the universe moment upon moment . . . that the Lord is present in the world in a new way since His Glorification . . . that God has in mind a New Age for mankind, one based on true brotherhood, justice and love. If we really believe this, then we needn't be surprised at views like those expressed by Father Fox. A more suitable response would be to praise the

Lord and cry out, "Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

The poignant Martin Buber quote on the front cover sums up in a few words what I'm trying to say here. A Jew and a Roman Catholic. With comments by a Swedenborgian. "The Church of the Lord is scattered throughout the world, thus is universal; and in it are all who live in the good of charity according to their own religious persuasion." H. H. 328.

P.Z.

CONTENTS

Serendipity	Paul Zacharias	30
The Starting Line	Eric Zacharias	31
An American Way To Pray	Matthew Fox	32
Reaching Out — And In		36
	Jerry and Susan Poole	
The Swedenborgian Church		37
	R. H. Tafel Sr.	
Memorable New Church Teachings		38
Our Convention Heritage		39
A Second Coming	W. Whittaker	41
Flames 50th Anniversary		42
S. S. R. Correspondence Courses		43
1978 Convention Program		44
Convention Registration Form		45
The Other Half	John Drescher	46
On Reading Swedenborg	Mrs. C. Ford	46
Book Review	Matthew Zacharias	49
A Chuckle or Two		49
We Get Letters		50
From Church Records		50
The Upper Room	Leon LeVan	51

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The Starting Line ————— by Eric Zacharias

What is the church coming to! Some think about it. Some leave it. Others grow in their commitment to it. Of this, we can be certain, the church is changing in its role in our society. What exactly is its role in a society that becomes ever more secular in its thrust? Thus, we do a bit of browsing.

Arthur Herzog, a former magazine editor, one who has written articles for the *New York Times Magazine*, *Harper's* etc., writes in "The Church Trap", published in 1968, "The evidence suggests that organized religion is moving on exceedingly treacherous waters and whether it can circumnavigate is by no means sure. Caught in a crisis of identity, lacking a clear relationship with society, confronting unrest in its clergy and declines in its growth, the church has three possible futures: First, churches can respond actively to the gnawing discontent within the religious organizations and a growing disconcert without. To advocates of this way, it means violently wrenching the churches out of their old frames, committing them entirely to social action, progress, and the realities of urban life.

The second possibility . . . is a conscious retreat from denominations back to sects. The sects might . . . teach a social gospel, but they certainly would put high - minded emphasis on religious doctrine, their separate identity, and would follow their own beliefs and practices, no matter how odd - ball they seem to the outside world.

But the third possibility, to hang, or try to hang, motionless in the tides of change, is the greatest risk. Changelessness, after all, is death."

In concluding his book, the author writes, "If organized religion wants to be relevant, the way is not to abandon its theology and ideals, as it seems sometimes all too willing to do . . . But instead of trying to blend with secular culture, religion could separate out, declaring itself distinct from secular man and his thinking."

The excerpts which now follow were taken from a book titled, "Seed of the New Age" by Dr. Sue Sikkiné the founder of Unity - by the - Sea, Santa Monica, California. This was written in 1970. "We have already changed the world with this invincible power we call mind. Civilization, society, culture, and government

have been in the grip of this great upheaval for some time. Rules, regulations, old ways have been passing into chaos. They are no longer applicable to God's new expression of life. The "new heaven and the new earth" (Rev. 21:1) are at hand and the old shall pass away. There is nothing real being destroyed, only the old, outmoded structure giving way to the new. It's all so very simple, as simple as nature. The leaf does not drop in the autumn until the bud of spring to come, pushes it away. The ideas of life are eternal and will appear again and again until the new earth shall appear."

I move along. In 1975, Lyle E. Schaller, internationally respected church planner, wrote "The fastest growing congregations tend to be those who have two characteristics.

1. a clear self - image
2. a series of contemporary goals which also provide opportunities for the assimilation of new members.

What is ahead for the family - oriented church which . . . flourished during the late 1950's and the early 1960's?

One alternative is to clutch firmly to past glories for as long as possible, even though all the indicators suggest a bleak future.

Another alternative is to accept and affirm that fact that a new year brings both new opportunities and new problems, that the black revolution, the youth revolt, women's liberation, and the changes of the past dozen years are real, that this is a new day in God's world, and that new approaches are necessary to meet the needs of people in an increasingly complex society.

And, finally, our friend Swedenborg gives us something else to think about. "Be it known, further, that when any church becomes no church . . . and a new church is being set up again by the Lord, this is affected rarely if ever with those with whom the old church has been; but with those with whom there was no church before, that is, with the Gentiles." AC 2986.

It is a great time to be alive. The Lord is in this place — and working to make all things new. I trust that we will come to know and appreciate His handiwork.

An American Way To Pray

DAVID SUTOR INTERVIEWS FATHER MATTHEW FOX, O.P.

To most people, spirituality originated either in European abbeys and cathedrals or in the meditation habits of Buddhist monks and Hindu gurus.

But for Matthew Fox, a 35-year-old Dominican priest, spirituality is as American and, he would say, as much fun as apple pie and baseball.

Fox is an expert on American spirituality. His academic credentials are quite in order and include a rare doctorate in the history and theology of spiritualities from the Institut Catholique de Paris. His two most recent books are, *On Becoming a Musical, Mystical Bear — Spirituality American Style*, and *Whee! We Wee All the Way Home*, subtitled *A Guide to the New Sensual Spirituality*. Despite the toy titles, Fox is a serious theologian. It's just that his message is that God created us to have a good time.

Why an American spirituality?

It's an attempt to undo our childlike, alien notions of spirituality, really un-American notions that most of us have learned. We need to ground spirituality in the Gospels, instead of in foreign cultures, and then in our own culture as Americans.

I really built my ideas around the wrong concepts of prayer. Everyone knows prayer is a lifting up of mind and heart to God but that definition is ripe with misunderstanding. It originated from fourth-century Greek thinking. Mind and heart leave out totally the body and the feelings — our senses. It's an inadequate understanding of prayer.

You mentioned prayer.

Every spirituality is based on our understanding of prayer. Prayer is not talking to God — not primarily. If we think it is, we're still children. For children, talking to God in prayer is like talking to Santa Claus or an absent parent. Prayer is not primarily asking for petitions or favors, getting the problems in our lives solved by some spiritual spook in the sky. We adults must clear away the rubble, learn to un-pray, to get out of our childish notions.

Prayer precludes talk with God?

No, it doesn't preclude it. I'm not saying that some prayer cannot be an exercise in talking to God, in saying prayers, or in asking for petitions. Overall, however, the basis of prayers cannot be any of those. Prayer is not saying prayers.

What is prayer?

Prayer is a radical — that means a root — response to the gift we call life. We must look for God in our experiences, in the mysteries of life. We respond to such mysteries as birth, existence itself, death, human love, human tragedy, vocation; these are the stuff of prayer. That is what calls us.

I don't understand what you mean by radical.

There are two basic directions of responding in a root, or what I call radical, way to life: psychological and social. Formerly, prayer was discussed only as a mystical or psychological experience. I insist that prophecy, social criticism, giving birth to new institutions, new movements of human and divine liberation — these are just as much prayer as any mystical seance ever was.

Social action then is a form of spirituality?

Certainly. A spirituality without a social action viewpoint is not Christian, and that's the spirituality we've had for centuries — a non-Christian spirituality. Jesus was involved in criticizing the cultural institutions, including the religious ones of his day, and that is why they crucified Him.

Is spirituality only a social action?

No. Remember, it is also psychological. The psychological radical response to life is mysticism. I understand mysticism as the experience of pleasure in our life. I believe that everyone is potentially a mystic, to the extent that they can experience ecstasy.

Ecstasy is a mystical experience, the experience of union with all things. It may happen in nature: sitting by an ocean, being in the mountains, listening to the trees. It can happen in human love, friendship, or sexuality; in the arts, music, dance; in handicrafts, or in our work, if we truly love our work. It happens in so many ways in our life. These ecstatic experiences are, in fact, the experience of God, because the Creator is totally present in creating. In experiencing creation to such an extent that our egos are suspended, we are vulnerable to that being whom we call God.

There are four stages in the psychological experience of prayer. The first is awareness. How aware are we, for example, of nature around us? I live near a lake and as the sun sets on it, I am totally amazed that every night the sunset is different. The variety of nature is

untold, yet how dull our senses have become because of our materialistic or nonspiritual attitude toward life.

After increasing our awareness, there is the experience of freedom itself. That's the second stage, the experience of letting go, of letting this union happen. For example, feeling a union when you're out with the stars on a starry night. This is a freedom and an ecstatic experience. It is also prayer.

My favorite topic is the third stage: gratitude, thankfulness. The feeling of gratitude is perhaps the most basic prayerful experience. Thanks is something one is overflowing with when one has experienced something greater than oneself. We call that ecstasy, the experience of God.

The fourth stage that is truly prayerful, because it is deep, is an attitudinal conversion. Being able to turn, to change our hearts, our way of living. An example would be a person who gives up a high salary and prominent position to pursue a less rewarding, materialistically speaking, but a more satisfying type of vocation and work. That is an attitudinal conversion and you take risks in such. You become a new person.

That sounds terrific. But what if I live in Newark, N.J. or Gary, Ind. and I don't have access to the skies and the lakes and the mountains. I have nothing but paved streets and high - rise buildings to look at?

Okay. Now you've opened the whole door to the other part of prayer, which is prophecy. Prayer is as much prophecy as mysticism. Prophets were not people who said "No, God is not here. God is not in this lifestyle or in this kind of condition." Their concern was justice. A sharing of pleasures, of mysticism, and making the mysticism available for everybody.

God intended our ecstasy. She wants our pleasure. That's why we were born. It means that everyone has got to fight, has got to reshape society so that the basic ecstasies the Creator intended may be available to all.

The only answer is that we've got to change society so that the ecological issue which you raised, for example, will become a top priority for all of us to work on. We must insure that people can live and be able to see the sky or sun, breathe fresh air, hear a tree, or relate to the earth beneath their feet.

I hear what you're saying but what about the guy burdened with a low income and six kids who says, "Hey, I haven't the time to go out to reshape society. I'm just fighting a day - to - day battle to survive?"

When you speak to people like that, you've got to know them. In many respects, we're all in a position like that. That example relates to the experience that psychologists call sublimation. First you ask people, "What are your pleasures?" A man with six kids may very likely put much of his pleasure in the kids. He wants to see his kids grow up, he'll say, "with opportunities, with a life more pleasurable than mine." So, he has sublimated his own immediate pleasure with the pleasure of his children in mind and that is his ultimate pleasure.

What is important is that Americans learn the difference between repression and sublimation. We should have classes in sublimation. We should learn the arts, the skills, and the disciplines of sublimation because it, unlike repression, is a voluntary channel of one's gratifications into areas which, in the long run, can bring us the most pleasure.

An obvious example is a parent who has to get up in the middle of the night for a sick child. Who wants to interrupt their sleep? Sleep is a pleasure and a necessity. But a parent doesn't complain because the love of the child is a greater pleasure than one's own sleep.

You see sublimation then as a long - term benefit?

Yes. Sublimation tends to be long term. That man with six children — we must find out what his short - term pleasures are. Maybe it's bowling or fishing. If he loves fishing, isn't it a shame if he lives in Newark or Gary and his rivers are being polluted. His pleasures are taken away from him. For example, the pleasure of creative work instead of a hum - drum job. How can this man's work be more ecstatic? You know, we all have a responsibility toward one another, first of knowledge — knowing where our pleasures are — and secondly of somehow building a society where pleasure is possible instead of thinking of it as a no - no.

Do you make a differentiation about the kind of pleasure people should enjoy?

I can tell you what kind of pleasures we shouldn't enjoy. When we repress our own pleasure we are involved in a different kind of pleasure: sadism or masochism. Pleasure at other people's expense is sadism. Pleasures at our own depressions or neuroses, that's masochism.

I suggest that our society has gone so far in repressing pleasure that we have built a whole system of oppressing others and that becomes

our pleasure. As such, pleasure is a political issue, because you cannot keep it down. We were made for pleasure. God made us for ecstasies.

You use that word ecstasy rather freely.

Ecstasy is the opposite of boredom and our culture is becoming more and more bored. A survey in the Chicago area recently showed that out of 180 suburban high - school juniors, 178 listed boredom as their number one problem. This is critical because our youth are supposed to be at the very age when their mystical capacities are opening up. And they are bored. The reason for that, I suggest, is that materialism is boring. It's not ecstatic.

Are you saying that, for whatever reasons, some people do not allow themselves to enjoy the pleasure of life?

Yes. Much of guilt is self - imposed but a great deal of it is culturally imposed. If one is seduced by our culture into thinking that the goal of life is to have the most up - to - date car, then one is not going to be spiritual. That's materialism.

To be spiritual, as you describe it, means, I assume, to be free of many of our repressions. What repressions must be eliminated?

We need to undo the notion that pain is better than pleasure. The idea that God doesn't want our pleasure in this life. We have to undo the notion of looking for reward in another life, the notion of immortality.

Why?

Because Jesus tells us to, that's why. He tells us, for example, in John's Gospel and in Paul's late Epistles that eternal life has already begun in this life. It's not something you can put off for some kind of reward in heaven.

We need to get over the notion that spirituality is about my relationship to God. It is about our relationship to one another and with God. This is made explicit in John's Epistles, where he says, "How can someone who has the necessities of life call himself justified in any way if his neighbour is starving?" Which means we must get away from the sense of the love of God as sentimentality and get to the more earthy, adult, and hardheaded notion that love is, in fact, justice, the Jewish word for love.

Let's go back and talk more about the social aspects of prayer.

When we speak of social prayer, we mean becoming critical of the structures in which we live and think, because it is our structures, language and institutions that most dictate our way of life — our spirituality in contemporary America — based on things instead of

experience. It is saying no in order to say yes. People in our times are giving up on whole institutions as being incapable of providing the fullness of life that Jesus talks about and that every great spiritual leader has also spoken of.

But how do you relate the changing of institutions to a fulfilling spirituality?

We have to ask this question: are our institutions producing life, creating lively, alive people — people with the disciplines to truly enjoy and share life? Or are they, in fact, dulling people — making people bored, making them into their images, making people into things? Every institution is a thing and in America, we've been taught to worship institutions. If you are not identified with some institution — school, parish, or organization — people can't relate to you.

So, institutions are a barrier to a good spiritual life?

They certainly can be and very often are.

When you speak of institutions, you include the church, don't you?

Not just the church. There are others: General Motors, the Pentagon, hospitals, to name a few. We have lost our souls to our institutions in America. What I've been saying is that an adult prayer, from the social aspect, is critical and aware — aware of the demonic elements in our culture and our life. We have only talked about the institutional consciousness. There are so many.

I suggest a spiritual agenda for American culture in the immediate future that includes sexism, racism, ageism, materialism, militarism, and extreme forms of capitalism. All these isms are demons. I think our spiritual agenda, from the social - political perspective, is one of trying to wrestle with these devils.

Prayer has been understood to be a wrestling: Jacob wrestling with the angel, Jesus wrestling with the evil spirit of death and suffering in the garden of Gethsemane. Our society has so often defined prayer as comfort and pious feelings and sentimentality that we forget that prayer is literally the sweating of blood, which is what Jesus did at Gethsemane.

I think we, too, are asked to sweat blood and tears and hard work, and question all these evil spirits, these isms, wherever they reside in ourselves and in our institutions. To combat these demons is to pray.

The kind of spirituality you favor then is neither comfortable nor sentimental but is difficult?

Definitely. It's adult and it's challenging. I think this is why young people are so bored with our religion. It's not a challenging religion. Youth is a time for idealism and for

challenge and our faith at this time in history is not challenging enough.

What about people who are battling their own personal problems that are terribly important to them? They're in a depression, a very difficult state. It's awfully hard to be spiritual and concerned about others when you're not feeling good about yourself.

That's certainly true, and yet this is one of the tremendous insights from the mystics, that the dark night of the soul is, indeed, a spiritual journey. That the darkness, the loneliness, the silence, the emptiness of depression is still an experience of God.

God is not only ecstasy, but God is also our voids, our experience of utter despair. These experiences are a crucible for filling us more fully — emptying us, at first, in order that we may be more filled when, thanks to God's grace and the grace of others, we break through and see life anew with a new depth and a new awareness.

Are you saying that sadness and depression are intrinsically necessary for a good spirituality?

Absolutely. The spirituality I'm talking about builds on ecstasy. The void is just the other side of the coin. If you're willing to pitch yourself to a spirituality of ecstasy, you are also going to become more and more vulnerable to being hurt.

For example, if you become vulnerable to other people's love in the ecstasy of friendship, then you are also vulnerable if the person you love dies, suffers, or if the relationship breaks up. Now you have a choice. You could decide not to build your life on ecstasy but rather on security and on invulnerability, which is, in fact, what we're taught to do in our culture. Then you'll never have to face the problem or worry of losing someone else in life because there will be no one else in your life.

But I say that is exactly the opposite way from what Jesus taught. The meaning of the crucifixion is that the ultimate act of love is an act of vulnerability — but out of it is resurrection.

If you were to sum up concisely your idea of spirituality, combining the psychological and social, what would you say?

That God's will is that we enjoy the earth and that we share the earth for other people's enjoyment.

And to share the earth for others' enjoyment means, I take it, to help others to seek justice for all?

That's what I mean, exactly. Let me put it another way. Everyone is called to be a

prophet. Adult prayer is prophecy. But a prophet in your own way, your own vocation. I don't want to tell anyone else exactly how to be a prophet because prophecy is a unique gift of the spirit.

In other words, accepting individual responsibility is one form of a viable, worthwhile spiritual life.

Absolutely. That is one aspect of adult prayer, and it does not fall into the category of being conservative or liberal. It's a question of being alive versus dead, being spiritual versus satisfied. I don't think it's pure individualism, however. I think to accomplish anything and be effective, we need to band together as a community. That is what the church should be: a support for persons who are saying no, as well as for those who are saying yes.

What about prophets? You seem to feel there are prophets in our country today. Who are they?

There's a danger in answering that question. It's, I hate to say, typically American to want to know who our latest hero is, who's going to do it for us today. I insist that everyone is potentially a prophet, but, of course, we do learn from those who really respond to their vocation and so, in that respect, I'll answer your question.

Obviously, Martin Luther King has tremendous things to teach us. Jane Kennedy and Dr. Elisabeth Kubler - Ross too, not only about their insights but their courage. A prophet needs courage. America is full of fear today and the answer to fear is courage.

Dr. King was concerned about racial justice, Jane Kennedy with the Vietnam war and prison reform, and Dr. Ross with helping people to break through America's repression of death. A spiritual person cannot be satisfied.

The very definition of being spiritual is that we are in quest — that God is here but is not yet fully here, as much as God wants to be here. This is a God of justice. A God who desires that all of us have a share in creation's possibilities. Jesus taught that the kingdom of God is among you — not in your institutions — but among people who interact.

Do you think most people really have any sort of fulfilling spiritual life?

Better to ask, are people living life at a deep level in our culture? How many are? And my answer would be, I think more and more are asking the questions, the beginning questions, that will allow them and the rest of us to live life at a far deeper level. But, of course, we have a long, long way to go.

Reprinted from the Trinity News, Episcopalian (N.Y.) Diocese

REACHING IN — AND OUT

by Jerry and Susan Poole,
Wilmington, Del.

Tony and I spent several hours late this afternoon cleaning out one very messy basement. It would be hard to say whether the job resulted from Susan and I wanting a more orderly, less dusty workshop and laundryroom, or Tony needing a job, an opportunity to earn six bucks so he could begin his Christmas shopping. Anyway, we stopped before finishing our task; Susan called us up to supper — we had been enjoying the prelude of many good aromas prior to her invitation and were quite ready to sit down and eat.

Tony, who was five or six years old when I first met him as a day care center youngster, is now fourteen and both the antithesis of the middle class, suburban child and a living / human example of why we made our decision to move into the center of Wilmington, Delaware. Tony happens to be black, more importantly he is a member of that segment of our population considered culturally deprived. Materially he and his family have very little, and as far as lucky breaks go, they've known few.

West Center City is the specific neighborhood in which we live. Like so many other neighborhoods in other cities, it provides many opportunities where one can become a team member uniting with others to effect positive social change and overall improvements of living conditions. We can see high unemployment crowding together in front of a boarded - up building on the corner of Eighth and Jefferson Streets. Cultural and educational deprivation is a fact in nearly every classroom. The chronological ages of Susan's third grade students cluster around eight and nine; the *grade readiness* of her youngsters ranges from first to seventh grade. Spend half a day at our neighbourhood association office and you'll see that a significant percentage of our population is supported by some or several forms of welfare. Although no longer gasping from the twenty year exhale of former residents to the suburbs, our community's slums and blighted blocks still exist like huge sores.

We do not live in a community devoid of human resources. Susan and I are involved with a group of true believers convinced that what we're working on is "gonna be good", and that ultimately we will have something great.

Susan's energy and time is focussed primarily on teaching at Pyle School. Special talent is required to help children, who have little or no support at home, to learn. That so - called "vast variety of experiences" is not in every youngster's upbringing. Much of the education Susan provides her students is an introduction to what many of us take for granted. The cliché, "each child must be related to at his or her level of readiness and ability," is a must.

My involvement has been primarily with our day care centre and improvement of housing. For seven years we were given the use of an old building for our day care program. We gradually amassed a staff of ten teachers and aides, eight foster grandmothers and a director. The youngsters numbered sixty - four at last count. Within the last two months we moved into a spanking new, fully equipped facility — of our very own — situated in the middle of our community. The project took four years to complete. One hundred percent of the half a million dollar funding of our center was from individual and foundation giving — no government dollars — a remarkable feat when you consider the contents of our cause and the usual lukewarm public response to the need for day care centers. Because people outside of our community joined us in a commitment to a healthier home away from home for the children of many working parents, we have our West Center City Day Care Nursery.

Vacant homes on several streets are to have the plywood pulled from their windows and be rehabilitated. The dream of a better place to live has been in many minds for a long time — the problem has been how to effect it. I feel I've been helpful in this area. As a team, our housing committee has brought together residents, city planners, private investors and developers and individuals who hope to buy the rehab houses and reside within West Center City. We've had our difficulties, ranging from speculation by those only interested in the fast buck to the very real fear of dislocation and dealing with all the rumors that surround that concern.

Susan and I like where we are. Several weeks ago we were discussing the preparation of this article and so much of what we were sharing

simply cannot fit in this writing. We looked at the value of helping people formulate their ideas and organize themselves in such a way that they could implement them. We agreed that if people in a community are going to work as a team the emphasis needs to be put on how people are most alike and having similar basic desires. We focussed on how we sometimes

become drained and frustrated while at the same time realize we are two members of a larger group of worthwhile human beings and as such must participate in the accomplishment of certain necessary tasks. Although we are among a myriad of problems there is reward in working next to others in their gradual solution.

THE SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH

(The following article, written by Rev. Richard H. Tafel Sr., Philadelphia, Pa., will be included in the new edition of "The Encyclopaedia of American Institutions.")

Swedenborgian Church, The General Convention (Church of the New Jerusalem). The Swedenborgian Church is founded on the conviction that the basis and inspiration for a New Christianity lies in the divine truths revealed by the Lord in the theological writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, eighteenth century scientist, philosopher and theologian. It is convinced that the Lord has made and is making his promised Second Coming by opening a deeper meaning in his Holy Word, by a more rational theology drawn from the plain letter of that Word, and by his more intimate and quickening presence in the world and in human affairs, as he moves to "make all things new."

The Swedenborgian Church is Bible centered, the opened Word on its altar testifying to its faith that the Holy Word of God is the church's one source of doctrine and life. Its holiness is exalted, as it is proclaimed not only in its plain literal sense but in its inner and inexhaustible meaning as well. In its restating of Christian doctrine, drawn from that Word under divine inspiration by Swedenborg, it reaffirms and presents more understandably the oneness of God in the Risen and Glorified Christ, the God Man, for "In Jesus Christ dwelleth all the fullness of the godhead bodily."

Salvation and the way to heaven, it believes, is not by way of verbal profession nor by adherence to creed, but by faithful obedience to the commandments of Him who is "the way, the truth and the life." Primary emphasis is thus placed on life here and now. It sees the

world and society as an endless challenge to the man of faith to serve his Lord and to prove his religion. It looks forward confidently to a fairer, more human and more glorious future because in Christ God has fulfilled his promise to come again.

The Swedenborgian faith gives reaffirmation and definite undergirding to the traditional Christian hope of immortality. Under divine guidance Swedenborg was granted the privilege of entering into an awareness of the spiritual world, with all his mental faculties alert, that we may know from "things heard and seen" what awaits us on the further scene of human activity. There is no literal "Last Judgment" and no "End of the World," but we enter immediately the "many mansions of the Father's house" and find our place there on the basis of what our life has been here.

Swedenborg did not seek to establish a church, believing that the new Christian teachings which had come through him from the Lord would be eventually adopted by the existing churches and lead to a revitalizing of Christianity. This belief has been realized in part, as may be seen by comparing theology before and after his day. However, even during his lifetime (1688 - 1772) groups formed in England to study and publicize these new teachings, and shortly after his death established churches and founded a separate organization. The first public lecture on Swedenborg in America was delivered in 1784, leading shortly thereafter to the founding of churches in Baltimore, Philadelphia, Boston and elsewhere. In 1817 Swedenborgians met in Philadelphia to form a national organization. This was incorporated in 1861 as "The General Convention of the New Jerusalem." The official name that is now used is "The General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches in the United States and Canada," to distinguish it

from other Swedenborgian organizations in this country and abroad.

Believing as it does that God is moving to revitalize and re-fashion the Christian Church, as well as the world religions and spiritual life everywhere, the Swedenborg Church has not been intent on proselyting. Also, because it holds that salvation is open to everyone who faithfully strives to live up to the best that he knows, regardless of ritual or creed, it places only a secondary emphasis on membership. In a broad spirit of ecumenicity it looks forward to and works for the emerging New Church of the Lord, the Church Universal, which transcends all toward organizations and boundaries. In this spirit the

General Convention rejoices in being a member of The National Council of Churches.

Prizing freedom as a most sacred gift, the Swedenborgian Church is congregational in organization and spirit. The local church possesses total autonomy, from determining its worship to setting its program and choosing its minister. Local churches are members of regional groups called "associations" which in turn form the Convention, but the power and authority delegated to these is only that which is freely given. The Convention holds an annual session which consists of representatives chosen by the regional associations and their member churches. It publishes a monthly magazine, *The Messenger* and an annual *Journal*. Its Central Office is located at 48 Sargent Street, Newton, Mass. 02158.

MEMORABLE NEW CHURCH TEACHINGS

All religion has relation to life; and the life of religion is to do good.

Heaven is a kingdom of uses.

No one who believes in God and lives well is condemned.

To resist one evil is to resist many; for every evil is united with countless evils.

Where men know doctrine and think according to it, there the Church may be; but where men act according to doctrine, there alone the Church is.

It is not the desire of an intelligent man to be able to confirm whatever he pleases; but to be able to see truth as truth, and falsity as falsity, and to confirm his insight, is the way of an intelligent man.

To reason only whether a thing is so or not, is like reasoning about the fit of a cap or a shoe without ever putting them on.

It is the essence of God's love to love others outside Himself, to desire to be one with them, and from Himself to render them blessed.

Truths perish with those who do not desire good.

Peace has in it confidence in the Lord — that He governs all things, and provides all things, and leads to a good end.

Innocence is willingness to be led by the Lord.

One's distance from heaven is in proportion to the measure of one's self-love.

Peace in the heavens is like spring in the world, gladdening all things.

Love consists in desiring to give our own to another and in feeling as our own his delight.

If a man studies the neighbor and the Lord more than himself, he is in a state of regeneration.

Good is like a little flame which gives light, and causes man to see, perceive and believe.

To serve the Lord is to be free.

Emanuel Swedenborg

"If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them." John 13 : 17

— from the Vancouver Newsletter

All Convention Associations, Societies and members are urged to study the following statement. Send your reactions, impressions and concerns to the President or Secretary of Convention. This subject will come up for further discussion, and action that is deemed appropriate, at the 1978 Convention.

**A STATEMENT
PREPARED AND ADOPTED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE OF
THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS
June 28, 1977, at San Francisco
for distribution as a study paper to members
of the General Convention**

OUR CONVENTION HERITAGE

We are all committed to the goal of making the New Jerusalem a living reality in the world today. We have chosen to work in this direction within the framework of the organization called the General Convention of the New Jerusalem (Swedenborgian). In identifying ourselves with Convention we give our primary allegiance to the Lord and His Holy Word as understood in the light of the heavenly doctrines of the New Jerusalem, and our secondary allegiance to the outlook and attitudes traditionally associated with the General Convention.

A statement adopted by Convention's Council of Ministers in 1949 reads in part as follows:

“The Convention, congregational in mode or organization and prizing freedom of inquiry in religious thought, takes a position characteristic of it. It thinks that ultimate religious authority resides not in an ecclesiastical body or in a ministry, not in ways of stating things or in texts, but in the truth, and in Him who is the Truth. The Lord's mind, his Spirit guiding into all truth, are to govern our thought and life. Whether in the Bible or in the theological works, the mind of Convention finds authority in the truth described. To acknowledge this authority of truth, the human understanding must be able to move freely; freedom of inquiry is the path to such acknowledgment. A supreme motto of the teachings of the New Church is that it is now the privilege of mankind to enter with the understanding into the mysteries of faith.”

In the spirit of this motto which we of this generation enthusiastically reaffirm, we commit ourselves to the premise that freedom demands a corresponding responsibility. This requires that we think as clearly as possible, act as honestly as possible and love and respect others for themselves and for their individuality. Thus we should be deeply disturbed by the tendency of some who champion Swedenborg's writings taking the stand that those whose interpretations differ from their own are spiritually dead. The “fundamentalist” position in any religious organization, including our own, should be seen as a permission of divine providence intended to challenge others to think for themselves. This thinking for ourselves, this very spirit of freedom of inquiry, is something we all cherish in the General Convention.

Under what we have come to call the “umbrella” of Convention some find it difficult to take an individualistic approach to the teachings of our church. Those, however, who find themselves in this situation should at the same time be open to the thought that such a position can be quite sincerely taken by others and should, therefore, not be treated as an offense to be condemned. Insistence upon being allowed in some thought areas to make one's own interpretation of the writings is a position which Convention has traditionally

defended and should be seen as a sign of life in our organization rather than of death. In fact, those who choose not to do their own thinking, while they may be members of the organization, have perhaps not really caught the spirit of Convention.

The judgmental attitude which would condemn those who question a particular traditional interpretation of Swedenborg's teachings is seen by Convention as a form of denying the right to freedom of thought and as a denial of our church's concept of charity. Although such a stance must perform a use in the divine scheme of things (or else it would not be permitted), it is at the same time alien to the spirit of Convention to condemn those of us who in all sincerity may believe particular interpretations to be correct — interpretations which others of us may find unacceptable. The underlying danger is not in the existence of divergent or even conflicting interpretations but in the effort to control the minds of others, the hellish urge to cast stones, the tendency to condemn.

It is the position of Convention that it is essential to the protection of freedom of thought that the presentation of different points of view continue to be encouraged rather than stifled.

The heritage Convention has bequeathed to us is essentially one of spiritual freedom: the right to inquire freely, to evaluate freely and to make our own way unfettered toward truth. A dogmatic attitude, such as claims (based on quotations taken out of context) that one must believe that Swedenborg's writings are a part of God's Word instead of aids to its understanding — or any other such appeals to arbitrary authority — runs counter to this spirit of freedom. Swedenborg, by the grace of God Who is moving "to make all things new," lays no additional chains on us but instead leads us into greater freedom in the pursuit of truth.

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that to preserve this sacred heritage for ourselves and for those who come after us, we now dedicate ourselves anew to proclaiming and working for that free intellectual and spiritual climate which we of Convention believe is so necessary for holding and embodying and sharing our vision of the descending New Jerusalem.

We freely and joyfully welcome all shades of opinion, interpretation and understanding of the doctrines upon which the New Church is being, and is to be, established by our Lord.

By its very nature, however, the broad perspective of Convention excludes as well as includes. Freedom and unfreedom cannot exist together. Nor can tolerance and intolerance, inclusiveness and exclusiveness, trust and suspicion.

Thus we stand ready to accept and respect everyone's freedom to choose to dissociate himself or herself from our organization. At the same time we feel it proper that Convention reserve to itself the right to expel from membership anyone who, by his or her actions, seems bent on destroying some of the values we hold so dear.

But let not this statement end on a negative note. Let our final word be that we heartily invite into the fellowship of Convention all who wish to serve our Lord Jesus Christ in his Second Coming as seen from this perspective of the General Convention.

NOTICE

Collections and accumulations of Postage Stamps, covers and Picture Post Cards, formerly sent to the late Rev. Leslie Marshall, may now be sent to:

Philip M. Alden
Box 54,
Swarthmore, Pa. 19081.

Mr. Alden will arrange for their sale, the proceeds going to Convention's Board of Missions.

CONVENTION APPEAL

up to December 31, 1977

\$9,352.00

CONVENTION NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT

SEND YOUR GIFT TO:

Central Office
48 Sargent Street
Newton, Mass.
02158

A SECOND COMING

Wynford Whittaker
British Conference

For Christians the fact of the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is beyond doubt. They all acknowledge it. There is less unanimity about the time and manner of its fulfillment. The evangelical left wing anticipates a personal coming without knowing when or where He will appear. Others, of the orthodox right wing, are more attracted by the concept that the further advent will be on a spiritual plane — a deepening perception and inner understanding of what the Lord Jesus Christ meant in His teachings recorded in the Gospels (where He told the disciples He had many things to say to them, but they could not hear them now.)

Only one theologian has reported the second advent as having already taken place, in the revealing of the inner senses of the Sacred Scriptures — and that it was a fulfillment of the prophecy that when the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light and the stars shall fall from heaven, the Lord would be seen coming in power and great glory in the clouds of heaven. The clouds of heaven in this respect are to be understood as the literal sense of the Divine Word.

Such a startling claim was made by the eighteenth - century theologian, Emanuel Swedenborg, writing when Christian life and practice in Europe were perhaps as low as at any time in the Christian era: and when the teaching of the Christian Church was removed from that of Christ.

The Lord has not appeared on earth again as a man. Nor did He ever say, in as many words, that He would do so! His coming is as the spirit of truth, which seems to be nothing less than a revelation of what is called the spiritual sense of the Word of God — “the glory” beaming through the clouds of the letter.

Swedenborg claimed to write this inner sense; probably the most astounding assertion ever made by any Christian. It marks him as the human instrument of the Lord's second coming — as much so as Mary was the human instrument of the Lord's first coming.

The assertion can be either arrogantly false or humbly true. If it is false, let it be discarded and something better put in its place. If it is

true, it will ultimately change the whole concept of Christian thought.

Even more surprising is his statement (in his work *True Christian Religion*) that on the nineteenth day of June in the year 1770 the Lord sent His twelve disciples who were with Him in the world throughout the spiritual world to preach the Gospel that the Lord Jesus Christ reigns, and that His kingdom shall continue for ever — and that this was, in fact, a fulfillment of the passage: “He shall send his angels . . . and they shall gather together His elect . . . from one end of the heavens to the other.”

These claims are sensational; and, at first hearing, beyond acceptance. They have been dismissed as ludicrous. Possibly some of his few followers (organizationally few, even when considered from a world - wide consensus) could have wished for an “easier” interpretation, and one that was less likely to meet derisions. The consequence of this teaching — and much else that bears the mark of the unorthodox in his voluminous writings — is that scholars have regarded him as being outside their serious consideration. He could be the forgotten theologian.

Yet many highly respected people (Helen Keller, for one) have been utterly devoted to his teachings, and claim that he has changed their lives — mainly, one supposes, by giving purpose to this life in the certainty and reality of the life after death.

For the Lord to return in literal, physical fulfillment of His own words would appear to be outside the realm of possibility — unless we accept the inevitability of the destruction of the solar universe. If a natural outcome of His prophecy is impossible or unacceptable, a spiritual or supernatural fulfillment seems to be imperative; in which case the eccentric Swedenborg, apparently unaffected by public opinion in his lifetime, might be right. His, after all, may be the only rational interpretation of this Scripture. He may be the guru whom millions seek to lead them back to life.

ADDRESS CHANGES

Rev. and Mrs. Andre Diaconoff
4512 Gilbert Pl.
Los Angeles, Cal. 90004

Rev. David P. Johnson
1319 142nd Pl. S. E.
Bellevue, Wash. 98007

FLAMES TO CELEBRATE 50TH ANNIVERSARY

(At the 1978 session of the Fryeburg New Church Assembly there will be special activities in commemoration of the founding, in 1928, of the Fryeburg Flames, the young people's organization of the camp.)

You are dreaming, snug under your wool blankets. Suddenly you become aware of the noise of scuffling feet and muffled laughter. You reach out of the covers into the icy air and fumble around for your watch. 6:30 a.m.! Who . . . what . . . ? Then the sound of a splash, a pause, a scream . . . oh, yes, it's initiation day, and the Flames have roused the initiates out of bed, herded them down the hill and into the frigid waters of the Saco River. At breakfast they will appear with minus signs lipsticked on their foreheads. All day they will be at the mercy of their masters, doing chores, performing stunts. In the afternoon they will don outlandish costumes and parade into the village in search of sturdleys. At the candlelight service in the evening, the minus signs will be changed to "F's", "Lead, Kindly Light" will be sung, bringing a lump to the throat, and there will be a new burst of Flames.

If you are stirred into recollection of old and dear memories, you, too, were once a Flame, and are now an "Ember". Can you imagine that literally hundreds of young people have joined the ranks of Flames over the past fifty years? Flames have come to the Fryeburg Assembly year after year, learning truths from the Bible and the writings of the church, and establishing friendships (and not a few marriages) which have changed and enriched their lives.

Over the years much as changed at the Assembly. There are new and beautiful additions to the main building. (Can you guess how many tennis balls were found in the fireplace when the new Dole Memorial Wing was added on and the second granite fireplace uncovered after all those years?) There is a new lecture hall, new cabins, a dorm for the girls. Trailer hookups are available, and sites for family tenting. The kitchen has been enlarged and remodeled. Gone is the coal stove.

Val no longer cranks the dishes back and forth in the suds, as there is a new modern dishwasher. Gone are the baked bean

sandwiches (any regrets?). New aluminum canoes replace the old canvass ones which were out on the bank for patching almost as much as they were in the water. Gone are Mr. and Mrs. Louis Dole, the Gardiner Perrys, and so many other dear people who mean "Fryeburg" to many of us. In fact, you might think for a moment that the old Fryeburg you knew is no longer there. But join us this summer, and you will see that the spirit is the same. The young people are just as full of vitality, just as eager for the doctrines. There is still the same spirit of friendship which crosses all age barriers. There is still stunt night, the round river trip, the corn roast, the mountain climbing. There is still the occasional tense moment when the canoers don't come in on time or when pranks backfire. There is a new and large group of "Sparks" who assure us of the continued vigor of our church.

In this fiftieth anniversary year, special events are being planned. We hope to have a round river trip for adults, showings of pictures from past years, a stunt night with some of the classic presentations from yesteryear. (Do you remember "Ferdinand the Bull", "Bob and Ray", "Warm Fuzzies and Cold Pricklies"?)

Last year our new and extra - special cooks, Ruby and Dolly, surprised us one night with a huge buffet banquet, complete with flowers and candles on the tables. If they agree, we will hold just such a feast on the third Saturday of the session (August 19) and have a special service at the church the day following. We are hoping to have so many people that the church will not hold them and we will have to make special arrangements.

Soon we will be sending out a flyer about the celebration. In order to reach all the old Flames, we will need your help. Please write in, giving the names of all the Flames you can remember. The records are missing for many of the years, especially in the '50's and '60's. We need names and addresses, and we need the assurance that *you* plan to attend. We'd like to hear your suggestions for activities you would like us to plan. Write to: Mrs. Wm. R. Woofenden, 48 Highland Street, Sharon, MA 02067.

Watch the pages of the *Messenger* for further articles, in which we will announce the study program and activities for the 1978 session.

S. S. R. Offers Correspondence Courses

For a long time the Swedenborg School of Religion has had requests to extend its program of study. As an experiment to see how effectively this can be done by mail a

CORRESPONDENCE COURSE IS NOW BEING OFFERED BY FACULTY MEMBER DR. R. KIRVEN:

"OVERVIEW OF SWEDENBORG'S THEOLOGY"

1. INTRODUCTION * HUMAN NATURE
2. FREEDOM OF CHOICE * WILL & UNDERSTANDING * EQUILIBRIUM
3. PROPRIUM * TEMPTATION * EVIL * SIN * REMAINS * MERIT * IMPUTATION.
4. REGENERATION: PROCESS, STATE & GOAL.
5. ORDER * USE * PROVIDENCE * TOLERATIONS * INFLUX * CONSCIENCE.
6. RIGHTEOUSNESS * FAITH : CHARITY * FAITH & LOVE.
7. THE WORD & ITS SENSES * CORRESPONDENCES * AUTHORITY.
8. SWEDENBORG'S REVELATION * CONCEPT OF HISTORY.
9. THE CHURCH * SACRAMENTS * LIFE IN THE UNIVERSE.
10. CONTINUING LIFE * THE SPIRITUAL WORLD
11. THE LORD * GLORIFICATION * REDEMPTION.
12. GOD * THE TRINITY * THE SECOND COMING.
13. CREATION * DEGREES * CORRESPONDENCE * CASALITY - POWER.
14. ONTOLOGY * EPISTEMOLOGY * CONCLUSION.

For each lesson a list of appropriate readings from Swedenborg's Theological Writings will be provided along with a written presentation of central aspects of each topic. The presentations will also deal with relationships of certain topics to other parts of Swedenborg's Teachings, and occasionally point out relationships to the history and the modern development of theology.

1. The schedule for completion of lessons can be arranged to fit individual needs, but reasonable regularity according to an agreed schedule is expected. Completing one lesson every two weeks would take just over six months for the completion of the course.

Questions, calling for interpretive answers, will also be included with each lesson. Students are encouraged to ask questions of their own regarding their understanding of particular topics in the lesson, or the implication of such topics in other areas of their life. Ongoing discussion between the student and instructor as to the meaning of course material for the individual's life and work constitutes an important part of the course.

Tuition for a course is \$150 which may be paid \$50 on enrollment, \$50 before the fourth lesson and \$50 before the eighth.

2. Those not seeking an SSR recommendation for a position of designated leadership, but want only a guided program of systematic Swedenborg - study, may enroll in a course which parallels the experience of auditing a classroom course. The same reading lists and explanatory lesson materials will be supplied; but the questions with each lesson will be "multiple choice" or "sentence-completion" types, and faculty response will be limited to checking answers, and indicating references to correct wrong answers. This "Auditor's Course" in *Overview of Swedenborg's Theology* has a tuition of \$75, payable \$25 before the first, fourth and eighth lessons.

SSR keeps no record of performance on lesson quizzes in "Auditor's Courses".

.....
(cut here)

I would like to take Course 1 (\$150) ☐
Course 2 (\$ 75) ☐

Please, send the material to:

.....
(Please, print full address)

I promise to pay regularly; enclosed my first check on \$

.....

1978 CONVENTION PROGRAM

(Subject to change)

Sunday, June 25	Ministers and Wives Registration
6:30 p.m.	Buffet Supper and evening of fellowship at the Church of the Good Shepherd.
Monday, June 26	Ministers and Wives meetings.
Tuesday, June 27	Ministers and Wives meetings.
Wednesday, June 28, a.m.	Ministers and Wives meeting.
	Registration
1:30 p.m.	General Council Meeting
1:30 p.m.	Board of Missions Meeting
7:30 p.m.	Convention Opening
	Worship Service
	Convention Preview
9:30 p.m.	Reception
Thursday, June 29	
7:00 a.m.	Communion Service
9:00 a.m.	Worship
	Convention Business Session
	League Meeting
10:00 a.m.	Nominating Committee Report
1:30 - 4:30 p.m.	Mini - Courses
4:30 p.m.	Orientation for newcomers
8:00 p.m.	Keynote Speaker
9:30 p.m.	Reception
Friday, June 30	
7:00 a.m.	Communion Service
9:00 a.m.	Worship
9:30 - 12:00 a.m.	Mini - Courses
12:30 - 3:00 p.m.	Alliance Luncheon Meeting
1:30 - 3:00 p.m.	Men's Interest Group
1:30 - 3:00 p.m.	League Meeting
3:30 - 5:00 p.m.	Sunday School Association
3:30 - 5:00 p.m.	Augmentation Fund Committee
7:30 p.m.	S. S. R. Graduation — Grebel Chapel
	Reception
10:00 p.m.	Film: "The Man Who Had To Know"
Saturday, July 1	
8:00 - 9:30 a.m.	Kitchener's Farmers Market (optional)
10:00 a.m. - 1 p.m.	Business Session
	Elections
	A.N.C.L. Report
	S. S. R. — B.O.M.
Afternoon	Sight - seeing, walking tours, free time
7:00 p.m.	Banquet and Entertainment, Alpine Club
	"German Oktoberfest"
Sunday, July 2	
10:00 a.m.	Worship Service, Church of the Good Shepherd
	Consecration of officers, Ordinations, Communion
	Sermon: Rev. E. O. Martin
1:30 p.m.	General Council, Board of Education, Board of Missions

Make your reservations and travel arrangements early. All reservations must be in by June 1.

ADVANCE CONVENTION REGISTRATION

Conrad Grebel College, Kitchener, Ontario

June 25 - July 2, 1978

Name

Address

Accompanied by:

Names

Relationship

Age of children

.....

.....

Mode of transportation

Arrival Departure

(Give date, hour, and COMPLETE flight information — if applicable.)

Most arrivals at Toronto International airport will be met, PROVIDED we have have full flight information. In some cases limo service may be required, which will cost \$17.00. Bus and train (Canadian National) service is available to Kitchener. Motorists will be sent information regarding the location of Conrad Grebel College. *We hope you will consider driving to Kitchener for Convention '78.* Excellent roads, free parking during Convention, vacation sight - seeing before and after Convention for those driving.

Registration will be at College Center. Room assignments, keys and assistance with luggage will be available at the Registration Desk.

Any special medical or dietary requirements?

RATES

Room and Board, based on double occupancy, is approximately \$18.00 per person, per day.

Children age 10 and under, \$9.00 per day. (Cots provided, in parents' room.) Young people between 11 and 18, \$12.00 per person, per day. Children under 2, free.

Camper trailers, in limited numbers, may be parked and used on College Parking lot. This reduces your rate by \$5.00 per day.

Registration fee is \$15.00 per persons 18 years or older. Registration fee MUST accompany your registration form. The Registration Fee will be \$25.00 per person if received AFTER JUNE 1st, 1978. This Registration Fee covers cost of receptions, Saturday banquet, local transportation, audio - visual equipment, etc.

Due to local accommodation and transportation logistical factors, all Convention '78 registrations MUST be received in Kitchener by June 1, 1978. Early reservations will be greatly appreciated. Make cheques payable to: "Swedenborgian Convention '78".

Send this application and registration fee to:

Swedenborgian Convention
Church of the Good Shepherd
Queen St. N., and Margaret Ave.
Kitchener, Ontario. N2H 2H7

THE OTHER HALF

Most of us do a good job in expressing sorrow when someone we know suffers. We may send a card or letter or take time to attend the funeral. We, to one degree or another, "weep with those who weep".

But this is only half the command. The other half is just as important but more difficult to practice. "Rejoice with those who rejoice" is a greater test of true Christian character than to "weep with those that weep". How many cards or letters do we write to express gratitude and appreciation? How many letters do we write telling others they have helped or encouraged us? Why are we less free with words of appreciation? Without others we are helpless. Yet we often fail to express gratitude. How much brighter the world outlook of all of us would be if we would grow in the grace of expressing our gratitude.

William S. Stidger said that one evening during the depression of the 1930's he was discussing the situation with friends. The outlook was gloomy. Banks were closed. Thousands were out of work. Men by the scores were faced with financial failure, and some took their lives.

"There isn't much to be thankful for," someone remarked. Stidger said, "Well, I am grateful to Mrs. Wendt." He said that Mrs. Wendt was a school teacher who had gone out of her way to introduce him to the writings of Tennyson.

When asked if he had ever thanked her, Stidger confessed he never had. That evening he wrote her a letter. In a few weeks a reply arrived, written in the shaky hand of an aged person. The letter read: "My dear Willie: I want you to know what your note meant to me. I am an old lady in my eighties, living alone in a small room and cooking my own meals, lonely and seeming like the last leaf on the tree. You will be interested to know, Willie, that I taught school for fifty years and in all that time yours is the first letter of appreciation I have ever received. It came on a blue, cold morning, and it cheered my lonely old heart as nothing cheered me in many years."

Will you keep the other half of the command?

— John M. Drescher,
(Pulpit Digest)
The Mennonite Church,
Scottdale, Pennsylvania

MY FIRST READING OF SWEDENBORG

by Mrs. Charles Ford
Downing, Wisc.

One day my father handed me the book *Heaven and Hell* by Swedenborg. "Read this when you get time." TIME, that was the word. It seemed like there never was time. I kept promising the book, and making excuses to God why I hadn't read it yet. That book sat on my shelf for nine years. You know, they say you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink. Well, my father gave me the book, but he couldn't read it for me. One day I was rushing (I was always rushing) past it with my arms full of things and that book fairly demanded that I take it down and look at it. I thought I must be dreaming, but nothing I could do would dispel that feeling that I must take that book in my hands now. I promised myself that I'd only take a quick peek, then get on with my work. I even only half sat on the chair, because the look was only going to be that short. I was still sitting half off and half on that chair two hours later, and I never really did put that book away until it was finished. The hour had come, and God was finished with all the excuses. It was my first real earth shaking brush with the God I'd heard so much about, and the finest gift I ever received.

TWO NEW CASSETTES

The Board of Missions is producing condensations of Chapters 1 and 2 of the first volume of the *Arcana Coelestia*. Each is recorded on a C - 60 cassette which runs 30 minutes to a side.

The script was prepared by Margaret S. Sampson, in consultation with the Rev. Richard H. Tafel, Sr., and is read by Robert W. Tafel. Miss Mildred A. Purnell, organist of the Philadelphia Church, provided moments of soft organ music which are inserted at appropriate intervals. This allows the listener to muse over what he has just heard. It also makes a good place to break for discussion if in a group.

These may be ordered at \$3.00 each cassette (\$6.00 for the pair) from Miss Margaret S. Sampson, 330 East 84th Street, New York, N.Y. 10028. If a cassette is returned in good condition within six weeks \$1.50 will be refunded, making the cost, in effect, a rental of \$1.50. But nearly everyone keeps the cassettes they have purchased to play over again and again.

MOOKI FILM AGAIN AVAILABLE

When the Rev. and Mrs. Obed Mooki were in New York a few years ago, they were interviewed by the Rev. Ormand Drake, Professor Emeritus at New York University.

The interviewer was gracious and appreciative and framed his questions in a way that brought out richly informative responses from Obed and Eulalia. The film projects their personalities in a remarkable way and they were able to give a graphic picture of their activities, besides presenting some of our basic doctrines simply and clearly.

This film is now available for viewing until the first of June 1978. If your Society or Association has not seen it, now is the time to arrange to view it, as later it will be sent to England and Sweden for an indefinite period.

The film is rented for \$25.00 per showing and all the proceeds are sent to the Mookis for their personal use. To date we have forwarded \$225.00, for which the Mookis were most grateful. That amount helped them at a crucial time with medical bills. We hope to send them more as more rentals come in. Send your request to:

Miss Margaret S. Sampson, 330 East 84th Street, New York, N.Y. 10028. Make out your check to The New York Association of the New Church, and enclose with your order.

ANNIVERSARIES

FIFTIETH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Congratulations to **David and Vonda Krahn** were extended by the family, relatives, and friends at Hanley, Saskatchewan, Canada. Mr. and Mrs. Krahn celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary on July 17, 1977. They were married in the New Jerusalem Church at Rosthern, Sask., in 1927 by the late Rev. Isaac G. Enns, brother of the bride. They have a son, a daughter and seven grandchildren.

SIXTIETH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Many members of the Pretty Prairie, Kansas Society, along with a number of family members, joined with **Lloyd and Emma Ray** in the celebration of their 60th wedding anniversary in Spivey, Kansas. The Rays were married in the Pretty Prairie New Church on Christmas Day, 1917.

SWEDENBORG FILM NOW AVAILABLE

The Swedenborg Foundation announces that the film, "Swedenborg: The Man Who Had To Know," will be completed by January, 1978. Those interested in *purchasing* a print should write *immediately* to the Foundation for further information. A professional film distribution company will handle rentals.

This 28 minute full color film employs animation, music, graphics, and dramatic sequences. Miss Lillian Gish appears in the cameo role of Mrs. Castle and Mr. Eddie Albert is the narrator.

Geared for a general audience, the film will be an excellent vehicle for introducing Swedenborg to those not previously informed.

— from the Swedenborg Foundation
Newsletter

NEW TRANSLATION IN SERIAL FORM

SOUL - BODY INTERACTION, a new translation of Swedenborg's *INTERCOURSE OF THE SOUL AND BODY*, by Dr. George Dole, is a systematic study of how the soul and body of man relate to each other. There are two worlds: the natural and the spiritual. The spiritual clothes itself with the natural, just as man clothes himself with garments. Both the spiritual and natural exist in man who is a microcosm of creation. The soul is spiritual and the body natural. Love and wisdom from God flow through the soul into the body. This, says, Swedenborg, is the order of creation.

Also included in this paperback series of "Studia Swedenborgiana" published by the Swedenborg School of Religion, Newton, Mass., are "Canons of Interpretation," by "Studia" editor Wm. R. Woofenden, "The Internal Sense of *EARTHS IN THE UNIVERSE*," by Wilson Van Dusen, and "Women in the Ministry" by Gertrude Tremblay.

Vol. 2 (numbers 1, 2, and 3 described above), is sold as a set at \$2.65 postpaid.

Swedenborg Foundation
139 East 23rd St.,
New York, N.Y. 10010

BE A SWEDENBORGLIAN NEW AGE PIONEER (SNAP)

- How?** Participate in a brand new project sponsored by the Board of Education, made possible by the use of 160 acres of wilderness land among the redwoods in the Santa Cruz Mountains in California, made available by Dr. Esther Perry.
- Why?** This is an opportunity for creative church work. Picking up on the interest in land use, ecology and homesteading in this New Age, you will be a part of the planning process for the potential this land holds for our church.
- Program:** The first step will be to clear the camp site of poison oak and to make possible an access road by cleaning undergrowth. Then we are prepared for an ongoing study of terrain and potential use.
- Leadership:** Co - Directors Rev. Eric Allison and Miss Ruth Martin will head the staff.
- Dates:** August 19, 1978 thru September 2, 1978.
- Cost:** We Pay You. Funds are available on a first come, first serve basis for round trip bus fare, tent and board, plus \$50 per week.
- Further information can be had by contacting Nancy Perry, Executive Secretary of the Board of Education, Central Office, 48 Sargent St., Newton, Mass. 02158.
-

SLIDE AND CASSETTE SHOWS AVAILABLE *THE CITY OF JERUSALEM*

drawings by Louise Woofenden, narrated by Bill Woofenden — sponsored by the Sunday School Assoc.

THE FOUR SUMMER CHURCH CAMPS

arranged and narrated by Louise Woofenden — sponsored by the Board of Education.

These interesting and informative shows are suitable for use by a society, Association, retreat, or for viewing in your own home. They may be had upon request for \$5.00 to cover the cost of handling and mailing from

Nancy C. Perry
Central Office
48 Sargent St.
Newton, Mass.,
02158

OFFICE MANAGER for the SWEDENBORG FOUNDATION

Position soon available as supervisor and administrator of the office.

Challenging employment which requires knowledge of accounting and involves negotiations with printers and publishers.

A sympathetic attitude towards the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg is a prerequisite.

The position offers attractive working conditions, salary, and benefits. The applicant must be of mature age with office experience.

Those who are interested please send a resume which includes a biographical sketch with the background of experience to:

Mr. Forster B. Freeman
Swedenborg Foundation
139 East 23rd Street
New York, N. Y. 10010

Book Review

The Shaman's Doorway, by Stephen Larsen, published by Harper & Row, 1976, 244 pages, \$10.00.

The Shaman's Doorway speaks about that which is being born anew in society today. The book is a sign of the times (the heralding of a new age born), even if written somewhat intellectually for the common person (but who's a common person?) Everyone can profit from this book, which embraces an immense scope of the human situation or plight as it is today.

A generation ago Teilhard de Chardin made a prediction that has now become a cultural reality, "Like the meridians as they approach the poles science, philosophy and religion are bound to converge as they draw nearer to the poles". Larsen's book shows this happening beyond a shadow of a doubt, plus much more. He brings together all of those ancient world wisdoms from Greek mythology to Indian Shamanism and offers them to us today for our own use. After all, why not? Isn't every moment of the present comprised of every moment that has passed? And this progressively increasing to infinity?

The book breaks through and reveals the mythic imagination of man and integrates that into our contemporary consciousness. Isn't it about time we realized that all that has passed is at our feet, just waiting to be used! Of course, much that has passed is bad but is modern man's ignorance such that he judges it *all* so? It is an individual's responsibility to sift the good from the useless.

Words and ideas of Jung, Castenada, Van Dusen and Swedenborg, to name but a few, are interspersed throughout. There are references to literally hundreds of the world's great thinkers.

Not only does the book tell us about the mythic realities of the past. It also teaches us techniques to help bridge the chasm that has evolved between the past and the present. The western world's technology is spreading to the east while the eastern religious wisdom is being recognized by the west. The world is in a process of balancing. This same process can be seen in every individual as well.

I suggest anyone reading this book do so slowly and only when the whole mind is prepared. Every few pages, with each new perception introduced, the potential is there for a virtual revelation.

To me this book is like an accordion. It stretches the wrinkles from my mind, then squishes and stretches them again, and so on and on it goes until all there is music!

Matthew Zacharias

(The frontpiece of *The Shaman's Doorway* includes a dedicatory tribute to the author's parents, the Rev. and Mrs. Harold Larsen of Orange, N.J.)

A CHUCKLE OR TWO

Sign in front of a church: "Remember, Detroit is not the only place that the Maker can recall his product."

The teacher said raise your hand if you want to go to Heaven. One kid desisted, "Mama told me to come straight home."

The next phase in the space program is sure to make headlines: Scientists are planning to put 300 head of cattle into orbit. It'll be the herd shot around the world.

Remarked a lady to her friend, "I was visited Christmas by a jolly, bearded fellow with a bag over his shoulder. My son came home from college with his dirty laundry" — The Cumberland Presbyterian.

The teacher's assignment was a short essay on how each child wished to serve God. "I want to spend my entire life serving the Lord," wrote one youngster. "If I can't have this wish, then I wish for a color television set." — The Living Church

A mother asked her six - year - old son what loving - kindness meant. "Well," he said, "when I ask you for a piece of bread and butter and you give it to me, that's kindness, but when you put jam on it, that's loving - kindness." — The Cumberland Presbyterian.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

You cannot say the Lord's prayer,
and even once say "I".
You cannot pray the Lord's prayer,
and even once say "My".
Nor can you pray the Lord's prayer,
and not pray for another.
For when you ask for daily bread,
You must include your brother!
For others are included in each
and every plea
From the beginning to the end of it,
it does not once say "me".

— Favorite Radio Poems

FROM CHURCH RECORDS

BAPTISM

MOODY — Amber Elise, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Tim Moody, was baptized into the Christian faith at the Church of the Holy City, Washington, D.C., on December 25, 1977, the Rev. F. Robert Tafel officiating.

CONFIRMATIONS

CARLSON — Raymond Carlson of Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan was confirmed into the faith of the New Church on December 4, 1977, the Rev. Henry Reddekopp officiating.

GIGGS — Mrs. Ruth Giggs of Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan, was confirmed into the faith of the New Church on December 4, 1977, the Rev. Henry Reddekopp officiating.

MARRIAGES

TUTAK - MILLER — Ray Tutak and Barbara Miller were married in the Church of the New Jerusalem, Pawnee Rock, Kansas, on November 26, 1977, the Rev. Galen W. Unruh officiating.

COLBERT - ZACHARIAS — Clark Colbert and Becky Zacharias were married in the Pretty Prairie New Church on December 30, 1977, the Rev. Eric Zacharias, father of the bride, officiating.

DEATHS

HACHBORN — Russell Edward Hachborn, 67, of Toronto, Ontario, a member of the Church of the Good Shepherd, Kitchener, died on December 16, 1977. The resurrection service was held in Toronto on December 19th, the Rev. Paul B. Zacharias officiating.

HENSELMEIER — Mrs. Estella L. Henselmeier, 93, of St. Louis, Mo., a long time and very faithful member of the St. Louis Society, died on December 12, 1977. The resurrection service was held on December 15th, the Rev. Eric Zacharias officiating.

HOUSER — Mrs. Pauline Means Houser died on December 16th, 1977, with the resurrection service on December 21, the Rev. F. Robert Tafel officiating. Pauline, wife of the late Theodore V. Houser, was a lifelong active member of the New Church. She was a grand-daughter of the Rev. Adolph J. Bartels, a New Church minister and missionary.

HALEY — Clifford R. Haley, 85, of Dorchester, Mass., died on December 5, 1977. The resurrection service was held in Fryeburg, Maine, Mr. David Rienstra officiating.

SMITH — Francis E. Smith, 74, of East Fryeburg, Maine, died on November 30, 1977. Mr. David Rienstra officiated at the resurrection service in Fryeburg on December 2, 1977.

WE GET LETTERS

Dear Sir,

I am seeking information on Thomas Wildy, founder and First Grand Sire of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows. He was supposedly a member of the New Jerusalem Church in Baltimore, joining after 1817 when he came from England. Any information on Mr. Wildy will be much appreciated.

James Toney
3293 Evergreen Drive
Macon, Georgia, 31206

Dear Paul,

I would like to correct a few misimpressions in the otherwise fine article on the Edmonton New Church by Jean Gilchrist. We were there for eleven years, both Lisa and I vitally active and involved in every phase of the building program.

First, it should be known that we purchased a project home near the building site of the church and *that* is where the first Sunday School began in the community. After much pushing of door bells in the area, we had an influx of 50 children. We also had two groups of cubs and scouts meeting in the basement. This went on for almost a year; what a break when we could move into the church the next spring.

Jean indicated that after I was ordained my "sole duty" was ministering to the Edmonton Society. For some years I also served the Sunnyslope Society, 170 miles south, and the Meadowview group, north - west of Edmonton. For one year I also served all of Manitoba and Saskatchewan. It was only after the church was completed (for five years) that I ministered mainly to the Edmonton Society. It was not the Board of Missions that financed the building of the church. We obtained a loan, after long negotiations, from Convention.

So as not to confuse the office of the "lay minister", it is important to note that John Jeffery was not "ordained" as a Lay Minister. He was "consecrated" to fill that office in the local church.

So much more could be written, as Jean would know. She helped so much in the life of the Church and the Sunday School.

Thank You,
Erwin Reddekopp
San Francisco, Cal.

The Upper Room

AT THE FOOT OF THE MOUNT

The Lord's Transfiguration before Peter, James, and John took place on a Galilean mountain, and we normally think of Mt. Hermon. On the mountain was Glory. But at the foot of the mountain was misery and despair. A broken - hearted father was there with his epileptic son, together with the other disciples and a large throng of people from the countryside. One gospel adds that certain of the scribes were there too, perhaps to see what Jesus would do.

Even before Jesus descended to the foot of the mountain, the father of the afflicted child ran to him and said: "Lord, have mercy on my son; for he is lunatic and sore vexed; and oft he falleth into fire, and oft into water. And I brought him to thy disciples and they could not cure him." Jesus reproved their "unbelief; rebuked the "devil" or "evil spirit" who afflicted the child; and the boy was healed from that hour.

Raphael's great painting of the "Transfiguration" shows both the transfiguration on the mountain top above and the afflicted child with the helpless disciples on the plain below. There is the mountain top glory to which humanity aspires. But there is also the suffering and distress in which it finds itself.

Mankind is afflicted with spiritual disorders, better known as evils and sins. External restraints and coverings conceal the spiritual sicknesses within. The father's pleading for the help of his son symbolizes recognition and confession that we are not well as to our souls, and that we desperately need help from the Lord.

The fact that the "evil spirit" possessing the child often threw him into "fire" or "water" is the Scriptural way of showing that the person of the church is often plunged into the hells of selfish will and false beliefs. Historically, how true that has been.

Who can deny that the Inquisition pursued its dreadful activities in Europe for 500 years? Who can deny that historic Christian theology divided God into three separate Persons? Who can deny that there rose up a theology of "Salvation by Faith Alone" and that a Doctrine of "Substitutionary Atonement" was propagated? Other monstrous theological tenets are well known. Such theological propagations (like the "devils" possessing the afflicted son) can only be cast out of the church by the Lord.

When the Disciples asked Jesus: "Why could not we cast him (the evil spirit) out, the Master answered: "This kind cometh not out but by prayer and fasting." To "fast" means normally to abstain from food. But abstaining from food is not of itself a spiritual action. The things we should abstain from are evils and sins.

If evil thoughts or feelings are in our characters, then we must "fast" — namely, abstain from giving them free rein in our actions. That is to "fast". For example, how delightful it is for the people in the church sometimes to criticize and find fault with our neighbor. A person of that kind eventually may become a genius at discovering real or fancied faults in others.

The truth is — we are all at the foot of the Mount of Transfiguration, beside the afflicted child. No one can say, "I am without sin." Spiritually, we are all in the state of the child who fell into both "fire" and "water". The disciples apart from the Lord (who then represent only natural goods and truths) cannot heal us. Only genuine truths of the Word can free us from the destructive powers in our own human natures.

We must implore the Lord for help against our sins, which is to "pray". We must reject the falsities that arise from our evils, which is to "fast". In these words our Lord sums up the whole course of spiritual regeneration.

Seen in that light, the healing of the epileptic son is the image or type of the healing of the individual man or woman of the church, as also of the world.

Because the Lord was able to cast the "devil" out of the afflicted child, so in a parallel manner He can overcome the hereditary and voluntary "hells" in our human nature if with all our hearts we look to Him in "prayer", and shun our evils as in sins in our spiritual "fasting".

CONVENTION CALENDAR

Bd. of Missions, Newton	March 5 - 7
Bd. of Education, Newton	March 10 - 12
Planning and Development, Boston area	April 12 - 15
C.A.M., Newton	April 17 - 18
Ex. Com., Urbana Trustees, Urbana	April 19
S.S.S. Bd. of Managers, Exec. Com., Newton	April 20, 9 a.m.
S.S.R. Bd. of Managers, Newton	April 21 - 22
Urbana Trustees, Urbana	June 1 - 3
1978 CONVENTION, Kitchener, Ont.	June 28 - July 2
Post Convention Conference	July 2 - 8

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"God's Most Challenging Gift — Life"
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