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SUBSTANCE

We have in this season a golden opportunity to contemplate two exotic American hybrids of religion and politics those twin facets of life, goes the old yarn, that polite people never discuss. (I've never fully understood this, but it seems to have something to do with the notion that polite people don't divulge their views on such vital subjects except under duress.) This elective season, however, provides far too much temptation for commentary, even for reasonably polite church publications.

Both major political parties are "enduring" serious challenges for their top slot by preachers. Amazingly, in our supposedly post-Christian society we are being treated to the spectacle of two hyper-colorful men of the cloth staking out the far ground on the extremes of their parties' respective turfs—and drawing an amazing amount of support!

They're both Baptists, but that's where the similarities end. The Rev. Jesse Jackson is easily the best orator running for president since FDR and probably since William Jennings Bryan. Seen as long on vision and considerably shorter on administrative abilities, Jackson's leadership style reminds one of our current president. While this might be the only important similarity between the president and Mr. Jackson, it needs to be noted that Mr. Reagan also vigorously courted the religious vote during his presidential campaigns.

The Rev. Pat Robertson, scion of a powerful political family (his father was a United States Senator), finally chose to leave the electronic pulpit for a shot at the most powerful speaking platform in the world: the White House. He, too, is no stranger to inflammatory rhetoric. When he announced his candidacy, an ironic stage was set.

The two clerical candidates are easily the most controversial of all candidates, with each receiving the highest rating among voters in their respective parties as candidates they are least likely to vote for. At the same time, they both possess followings that are more committed than those of any of their rivals. Both are emphatically Christian. Both are deriving the vast majority of their funding from religious bases. And both would likely identify the other as the presidential candidate furthest from their own views.

Both ministers have extremist tendencies. Among many questionable gestures in his 1984 bid, Mr. Jackson aligns himself with the aims and objectives of the violent Muslim cleric Louis Farrakhan. Sober observers wonder whether the more even-tempered Jesse of late would prevail in the presidency or whether the loose-cannon Jesse of old would re-surface once he got past the electorate. Across the divide, Mr. Robertson sincerely believes that we are the last generation before the Apocalypse. He holds that the Soviet Union is the main anti-Christ nation, while America is God's hope for the world.

How marvelously flexible Christianity must seem to non-believers and the rest of the world! Next time, it would be nice if a serious and attractive candidate emerged from a more credible vector in the religious kaleidascope. Until then, happy voting.

James F. Jaw



There is a sense in which, for both Swedenborg and Kung, truth is a matter of choice rather than of proof.

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It took me a while to get used to Kung's mindset. He seems to draw a sharp line between what can be proved and what cannot, using what he regards as scientific criteria for "proof." In his use of Scripture, he follows the principles of historical research, believing that there is a factual core to most of the stories once one strips away a good deal of later embellishment.

In his treatment of near death experiences, he is insistent that they do not prove that we live on after death, and (to me oddly) seems to miss the critical point that they do "prove" that consciousness functions independently of the physical brain.

As the book proceeds, I find this apparently skeptical attitude more congenial than it first appears. Swedenborg writes (in *Arcana Coelestia* 7298.2),

... no one should be instantly persuaded about the truth—that is, the truth should not be instantly so confirmed that there is no doubt left. The reason is that truth inculcated in this way is "second-hand" truth [*verum persuasivum*]—it has no stretch and no give. In the other life, this kind of truth is portrayed as hard, impervious to the good that would make it adaptable. This is why as soon as something true is presented by open experience to good spirits in the other life, something opposite is presented soon thereafter, which creates a doubt. So they are enabled to think and ponder whether it is true, and to gather reasons and thereby lead the truth into their minds rationally. This gives their spiritual sight an outreach in regard to this matter, even to its opposite.

There is a sense in which, for both Swedenborg and Kung, truth is a matter of choice rather than of proof. Kung writes, "In these very basic questions, in which the ultimate, the eschaton of man, the absolutely final meaning of his dying and living is at stake, it can never be a question of decisions of reason, but of *decisions of the whole person*, who is more than a mere reason, and anyway more than feeling, sentiment, emotion, and who is therefore called to make a decision, not indeed proved by pure reason, but certainly justified in the light of reason" (op. cit., p. 69).

This emphasis on the limitations of "pure reason" is apparently a direct reference to Immanuel Kant; and if there is doubt as to the influence of Kant's dismissal of Swedenborg, I would note in passing this statement of Kung's.

It is Immanuel Kant who set up critical standards in regard to this question (philosophical inquiry into immortality], which are still valid today. Kant had at first attempted to prove the immortality of the soul, but finally largely adopted the skeptical philosophy of Pierre Bayle, Voltaire and David Hume, subjected the "Dreams of a Spirit-Seer" (1766), Swedenborg's dealings with the spirit world, to a severe critique, in order then in the Critique of Pure Reason (1781) to destroy the proofs of the immortality of the soul (and also those for the existence of God altogether). It is true that (contrary to Hume's complete denial) he permitted belief in immortality to count as a postulate of practical reason-for ethics. Together with free will and the existence of God, the immortality of the soul forms the precondition of an absolutely ethical behavior on man's part. For, according to Kant, man is destined for moral holiness but can attain this only in the hereafter; and without a balance between

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¹⁶ We gradually come to a mental view of the spiritual world as substantial and liveable. ... We see if as the world of our own present thoughts and feelings; and we see our own thoughts and feelings as solid and structured rather than as shadowy and fleeting.

virtue and destiny the whole moral order of the world would be called into question.

In fact, Swedenborg is probably closer to the totally skeptical Hume than to Kant or Kung when it comes to the relationship between "pure reason" and truth. In Divine Providence 195.2 he writes, "For all of us, the good is what brings pleasure to our affection, and the true is what therefore brings delight to our thinking. So we all label 'good' whatever we feel as pleasant, from the love of our intentionality; and we label 'true' whatever we therefore perceive as delightful, from the wisdom of our ability to discern." That is, Swedenborg is in full agreement with Kung that belief in God and in immortality are not matters of "pure reason" alone, but are "decisions of the whole person." He would go well beyond Kung in insisting that there is a primary subjective element to all our perception, even that perception which we have come to label "scientific" (cf. Soul-Body Interaction 1). When Kung draws a sharp line between what we can prove and what we can rationally believe. Swedenborg would object that this is really a difference in degree only, not a difference in kind. There is an element of choice, a subjective element, in each case.

I've dwelt on this at some length because I have come to think that it is a pervasive source of misunderstanding between Swedenborgians and "mainstream" Christians. They come across to us as skeptical about such fundamental issues as the Lord's divinity, human immortality, and the holiness of Scripture. We come across to them as simplistic or even dogmatic. Sometimes I'm sure that they are and we are, but there's more to it than that. As I have previously indicated, I see us all as participants in the same milieu of thought, with possibilities of profoundly constructive communication if we could find our common ground.

The rest of this article will deal with an area in which

communication is often more problematic than we realize, an area where we have to look hard for the common ground. We can focus on this area by looking at what we mean by the word, "spiritual." When we use this word, it has a meaning content well beyond what is usual in religious circles. The more I read, the more I find contemporary theologians spending pages and pages to explain that "spirit" is not something vague and amorphous, not something insubstantial.

There are good and sufficient reasons for this effort, which I tend to experience as unnecessary. Kung gives a history of belief in life after death, and finds that in pre-Christian Judaism, as in much of Greek thought, the impression was that we live on in some lightless underworld, as shades of our former selves. The radical thing about Jesus' resurrection was not simply its demonstration of living after death, but its demonstration of the living of a full, vibrant, and effective person-the resurrection of the body. This Kung sees as the deeper intent of Paul's mentions of the resurrection of the body. The point is not that we will again be made of matter. It is that we will be substantial beings, not shadows. Kung writes.

It is then a *bodily resurrection*, a raising up of man with his body? Yes and no. No, if we understand "body" in physiological terms as this actual body, the "corpse," the "remains." Yes, if "body" is understood in the New Testament sense as "soma." not so much physiologically as personally: as the identical personal reality, the same self with its entire history, . . . In other words, what is at stake here is not the continuity of my body as a physical entity and consequently scientific questions like those about the whereabouts of the molecules simply do not arise. What matters is the identity of the person. . . . "God loves more

than the molecules that happen to be in the body at the time of death." says the Catholic dogmatic theologian Wilhelm Bruening, rightly. "He loves a body that is marked by all the tribulation and also by the ceaseless longing of a pilgrimage, a body that has left behind many traces in the source of this pilgrimage in a world which has become human through these very traces . . . Resurrection of the body means that none of all this is lost to God, since he loves man. He has gathered together all dreams and not a single smile has escaped his notice. Resurrection of the body means that in God man rediscovers not only his last moment but his history."

This, I would suggest, is a point that we tend to take wholly for granted. When we talk about our post mortem life, we assume without question that we will be just as real to each other then as we are now. I suspect that when we read Swedenborg's descriptions of the other life, we tend to skim over the parts where he dwells on this, and may even wonder why he bothers to insist that spirits have eyes and ears, arms and legs, that everything is as real to their senses as this world is to ours.

Perhaps the cumulative effect of the Memorable Relations is more significant than we realize, more significant than any of the particular moral lessons we might draw from one particular story or another. We gradually come to a mental view of the spiritual world as substantial and liveable. We have a sense of the ways in which it resembles this world-so much so that some people do not believe they have died-and of the ways in which it differs. We see it, I trust, as the world of our own present thoughts and feelings; and we see our thoughts and feelings as solid and structured rather than as shadowy and fleeting.

I was talking with a friend

about one of his inlaws, a man who has made a fortune starting from scratch, and whose grown children are all involved in the business he started. There is a lot of discomfort in this second generation, because the father remains very much in control. After listening to some of the stories, I mentioned that this father sounded like a very fragile person, for all his talent, energy and charm. My friend's immediate reaction was denial-we are evidently talking about a potent personality. However, when I rephrased things a little and described the father as "easily hurt," he nodded. He seems to be threatened by the thought that things might get out of his control, or that any of his children might branch out on their own.

To me, there are clear signs of spiritual fragility in this. Or at least, there are not clear signs of a sense of inner solidity or security. There is an inability to let go. The outer world of achievement is very real to him; the inner world of mutual affection and understanding is elusive.

This, incidentally, was one of the major premises of the Swedenborg Foundation film, The Other Side of Life. In reflecting on what needed to be said, I came to the conclusion that there is not much point in arguing for immortality with anyone to whom "spirit" is "unreal." The first task, the prerequisite, is to awaken the sense of the experience that we are spiritual beings now. A great deal of the early material in the film is designed to give weight to the statement that " . . . our deeds show outlines of our purposes, are shadows of our inner substance falling on a world of circumstance ... Our bodies, shadows of our souls."

I can remember as a child reading a book of Victorian ghost stories and wondering what that wall looked or felt like to the ghost who walked through it. Even then, my images of spirit as substantial were secure enough that I could believe that the wall The physical 17 world is transitory, unreliable. Houses can burn, markets crash, businesses fail. Cars and bodies wear out with time. **Only the** spiritual is enduring.

would seem shadowy. The ghost would feel solid.

To believe in eternal life as our theology portrays it, as the life we are living now, we need to be capable of this kind of reversal of perspective. We need to be able to question the permanence of matter, and I very much doubt that we can afford to do so unless we have begun to experience something else, namely spirit, as solid and reliable. Otherwise we are defenseless against the most pessimistic forme of avitationing balaxies.

18 forms of existentialism, believing that nothing is real except what is happening at the moment.

> Once we being to experience our thoughts and affections as substantial, though, everything looks different. We look at other people's behavior differently, for example. We no longer simply react to what has been done. We are aware of the doer and not simply of the deed. We know that the action arose from a combination of motives and perceptions, that it is the vehicle of a meaning that is not necessarily obvious.

A great many things begin to make sense, simply because we begin to understand why people do some of the strange things they do. I had a long conversation at Convention with someone who was having trouble figuring out why anyone would want to live a hellish life. From a heavenly point of view, it simply doesn't make any sense at all. But as we become acquainted with the reality of our own loves and fears, of our longings for security and for intimacy, we discover how inevitably we shape our inner world to our own liking, calling what pleases us "good" and what delights us "true."

We also find that inner world to be consistent in a way that the physical world is not. Physically, we may not get what we strive for, and we may lose what we value. Physically, we may be where we do not want to be, with people we would like to avoid. Spiritually, we become what we love. We associate with the people whose values we share. Our minds roam free in fields of their own choosing.

In Swedenborg's view, the judgment after death consists primarily in our loss of the ability to pretend. The spiritual world, then is the world that does not deceive us. Granted, it is still a world in which we can deceive ourselves, still the whole nature of spiritual light is to show things —and people—as they are. Moving from the physical world to the spiritual must be very much like

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moving from a land of shadows to a land of light, seeing not just the outward effects of intentions, distorted by the demands of circumstance, but seeing those intentions take their actual form.

I want to close with one more observation, which I've made before in other contexts. Swedenborg informs us that some individuals spend no time whatever after death in the World of Spirits, but are taken directly into heaven or into hell. This means that the process that usually occurs in the World of Spirits, the dropping of externals and the appearing of internals, can happen here. There is a sense in which "the way beyond" and "the way within" are one and the same. Students of Buddhism are well aware that the classic Tibetan Book of the Dead can be read either as a description of what happens after death or as a description of the process of attaining enlightenment here and now.

This is, if you will, a necessary

corollary of the basic principles that spiritual life, eternal life, is the life we are inwardly involved in here and now. As to our souls, we are currently in the World of Spirits. What is happening to us on that level, what we are doing to ourselves, follows the laws of that realm. Only as we begin to realize that the physical is relatively shadowy and transient, that this spirit is eternal because it is substantial, do we begin to get our priorities in order. Then we value this physical world as the world in which we are presently conscious and effective, as providing us the only means we now have to express our care for each other. We see it, that is, as a means and not as an end in itself; and far from trying to escape its arbitrariness and frustrations, we involve ourselves in living here and now with far less anxiety, defensiveness, and pain.

In short, Swedenborg offers us a way of understanding eternal life that, like the near death experience, leaves us without fear of death and without longing for it. It introduces us to a joy in being now, as souls in bodies, that reflects the joy of being substantial souls eternally. ■

A First-Hand Account of a Near-Death Experience

Daniel Amore

I also "died" and came back to tell about it and to live life to its fullest with new meaning and understanding. It all started on June 2nd, 1985. I hadn't been feeling well that day; something just not right. At 7:30 that evening I drove myself to a medical center with severe chest pains, light headedness and difficulty breathing. I was having a heart attack. The pain was intense and scary. I knew I was going to die that night. I did not expect to live through the night, and the doctors did not expect me to survive.

At one point, I felt as if I was losing "control" over myself. My head was shaking from side to side, and I could not regain control of myself. It was then that I felt myself drifting, drifting away into darkness. It was a tremendous feeling of no pain at all, peacefulness, a tremendous high I was on. I felt myself being rushed into this darkness, a darkness of warmth, peace, love, just a wonderful, wonderful, peaceful feeling came over me. As I went further into this darkness, I was not afraid and wanted to keep going forward; I saw a vision, nothing I've seen before. I saw a vision of white objects dancing all around me, and I was being drawn closer and closer to these dancing figures. It was a tremendous feeling; you couldn't believe it. I was getting closer to these dancing figures, and when I got "close" enough, they appeared to be angels in white gowns, dancing all around me. The feeling was warm, loving, peaceful, serene. I did not want to leave this place of peace. I wanted to keep going forward into my journey, as I was still being pulled into this darkness except for those angels who were there.

At this point I felt myself being rushed backwards through darkness again and being pulled back into my body with excruciating pain. I do not remember anything that happened that night, or why. It should also be noted that when I awoke in the hospital, a priest did want to know if I saw anything or if anything happened.

I asked myself why I had come back into a body with pain, when I was in a peaceful, loving environment, a place where I wished to remain. If this is what happens when we die, I am no longer afraid of it. I know it will be peaceful, warm and loving. I know I won't want to come back here to mortal life. I know I'm going to a better place, much better off than where we are now.

I saw a vision of white objects dancing all around me, and I was being drawn closer and closer to these dancing figures... 19

Many people don't believe this experience when I mention it. No one can fully comprehend the feeling. We cannot experience it. It's such a tremendous high that no words can fully describe it. The only way to experience this feeling is to die.

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Church Historian Sizes Up Swedenborgianism

Sydney Ahlstrom

20 Swedenborg dealt with nearly every historic doctrinal issue, yet he pleased those who desired freedom from all ancient dogmas.

f all the unconventional currents streaming through the many levels of American religion during the antebellum half-century, none proved attractive to more diverse types of dissenters from established denominations than those which stemmed from Emanuel Swedenborg. His influence was seen everywhere: in

Transcendentalism and at Brook Farm, in spiritualism and the free love movement, in the craze for communitarian experiments, in faith healing, mesmerism, and a half-dozen medical cults; among great intellectuals, crude charlatans, and innumerable frontier quacks. When Emerson's *Nature* appeared anonymously in 1836, many thought that it was a manifesto from the Swedenborgian church; and in *Representative Men* Emerson not only paid homage to Swedenborg as the "last Father in the church," but also revealed essential aspects of his own world view. Bronson Alcott put Swedenborg in his hall of fame along with Plato, Plotinus, and Boehme. William James was linked with Swedenborgianism by birth (his father had been so attracted) and many interpreters have remarked on the continuities from father to son.

There are many clues to Swedenborg's amazing capacity to satisfy such varied yearnings, but first among them was his selfassured optimism and his sweeping comprehensiveness. He made the whole universe religiously intelligible, giving satisfaction to those who were surfeited with revivalism and narow-mindedness. Swedenborg dealt with nearly every historic doctrinal issue, yet

he pleased those who desired freedom from all ancient dogmas. Powerfully asserting the freedom of man and the promise of the times, he gratified those who would flee Calvinistic doctrines of sin. reprobations, and hell. And in all this he not only made the Bible his constant point of departure but gave a thrilling new impulse to biblical exegesis. Thus each of the major sectarian themes of the day-perfectionism, millennialism. universalism, and illuminism-had their place in his message. Its popularity, in short, is an essential guide to much that was new in America's great period of religious innovation.

Behind this immense ramification of influence, naturally enough, is the thought of an incredibly versatile religious genius, Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772). He was the son of Jesper Swedberg, an eminent Swedish theologian and bishop. After his university studies Swedenborg dabbled in poetry, turned to natural science, traveled widely in Europe, and then served brilliantly on the Council of Mines. In various capacities and through many publications he made memorable contributions in geology, anatomy, neurology, paleontology, physics, and astronomy. Then in his fiftyseventh year he announced his concern for religion in his book The Worship and Love of God. This vital turning point had been a vision in which God had directed him "to explain to men the spiritual sense of the Scripture." His first response was the Arcana Coelestia. an enormous eight-volume commentary on Genesis and Exodus in which nearly his entire system is expounded or fore-shadowed. Before his death thirty more volumes had given scope and specificity to the "Heavenly Doctrines."

The central claim of Swedenborg is that the Lord had come again in accordance with John's vision in the Apocalypse: "And I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven." (Rev. 21:2) The Second Coming of Jesus Christ is made in the inspired Word of God through Swedenborg's disclosure of its spiritual meaning; it is thus a way of reading the Bible revealed in God's good time by most extraordinary means. "I enjoy perfect inspiration," said the Swedish seer in his strange matterof-fact way. "The inner sense of the Word of God has been dictated to me out of heaven." Swedenborg was himself an eschatological event. natural world of mineral, vegetable, or animal "ultimates," the spiritual, and the celestial. He described the Bible in terms of these same three degrees: "The Word in its bosom is spiritual because it descended from Jehovah the Lord, and passed through the angelic heavens; and . . . was in its descent adapted to the perception of angels, and at last as the perception of men." When interpreted through Swedenborg's special visions, the Bible clarified



Swedenborg's formal principle, his method of disclosing the Bible's spiritual meaning—as against the literal, historical sense of the letter—was a corollary of his doctrine of correspondences, which may be said to be his material principle. Emerson described this doctrine as "the fine secret that little explains large, and large, little. ... Nature iterates her means perpetually on successive planes." In Swedenborg's system there are three distinct orders of being: the the correspondences that linked together the one system of God. Hence he could assert that "all heaven in the aggregate reflects the single man." On the other hand, such are the correspondences of the cosmos that every "ultimate," including man in all of his parts, corresponded to some higher reality. The Divine and the Natural are consubstantial in God and Man. All of this, moreover, has historical implications, for it means that the historic church and its old controversies are done and gone. In this new era of rational clarity there is hope for the heavenly conquest of hell. "The object of creation was an angelic heaven from the human race; in other words, mankind, in whom God might be able to dwell as in His residence." Swedenborg's ethic, naturally enough, was neither ascetic nor extreme. One need not renounce all to be saved; one must rather keep his loves—to God, have been surprised at its slow growth. Whether he in fact intended to found a visible church organization is uncertain, even doubtful. But in England an institute for the extension of his reformation was organized soon after his death, and it spread from there to other countries. After bitter controversy among Anglicans between separatists and nonseparatists, the first New Church society in the world was founded

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neighbor, world, and flesh—in the proper order.

Taken as a whole the Heavenly Doctrines were gauged to attract persons of liberal and thoughtful tendency. Yet the more esoteric features of his writings also attracted more eccentric followers. Swedenborg's visions and his communications with famous men long dead encouraged emulation, while his unusual views on sex and conjugal love provided a rationale for defying laws and social conventions on marriage. His spiritual interpretations encouraged new views on health, healing, and sickness, and his disdain for tradition encouraged radicalism in every direction: in social and religious matters, and particularly in biblical interpretation. Swedenborg, in sum, meant many things to many minds.

Since he believed that his appeal was limited only to intellectuals, and that the New Church would manifest itself gradually, Swedenborg would not in London in 1787. Its first apostle to America was James Glen, a rich planter from British Guiana who had been converted by a chance reading of Swedenborg's Heaven and Hell. Slowly small groups of intense and sometimes distinguished adherents were formed in Philadelphia, Baltimore, Boston, New York, and a few other places. The first General Convention, held in Philadelphia in 1817, reported seventeen societies, with a total of 360 members living in nine states. During the next few vears the New Church seemed to be declining; but even when this trend was reversed, growth was very slow. It never has numbered even 10,000 members in the United States; but through articulate spokesmen, it has wielded an influence very disproportionate to its size. Swedenborgianism, moreover, has spread far beyond the institutional New Church. Indeed, the way in which Swedenborg stimulated or became associated with other deviations from mainstream Protestant

impulses is the major aspect of his American influence.

Swedenborgian Variations

The first of the eccentric religious impulses with which Swedenborgianism became closely allied sprang from mesmerism or "animal magnetism" (i.e. hypnotism, somnambulism, and related phenomena). Friedrich Mesmer (1734-1815) was an Austrian physician and astrologer who identified the force of stars with electricity and magnetism; he was also a mystic and a born showman who during a long "practice" in Paris accomplished healings and many strange psychic phenomena. Due to this early association of "mesmerism" with magic and the black arts, and later with spiritualism, it was denounced and ignored by the medical profession, but for precisely this reason it flourished in the religious underground. Nowhere was it possible to find a more attractive basis for a Christian understanding leven a biblical theology) of these phenomena than in Swedenborg's writings. This fact had the double effect of attracting many doctors and pharmacists into the New Church, and of making Swedenborg a favorite resource of innumerable itinerant healers and quacks. Homeopathy or homeopathic medicine provides an important case in point. Both Swedenborg and S.C.F. Hahnemann (1755-1843), the originator of this medical theory, were intensive students of Paracelsus and held that disease was, essentially, a "dynamic aberration of the spirit." Hahnemann's accent on natural forces and spiritual healing explains why homeopathy spread through the New Church like wild-fire. Dr. Hans B. Gram, a Dane who had studied with Hahnemann in Germany, introduced the practice in America and soon became a New Churchman, and many others in the church also became very prominent in the "profession."

Homeopathy also was taken

up in diverse ways by many other healers, including those who had animal magnetism in their quiver. Phineas P. Quimby of Portland, Maine, who tried in his way to evolve a scientific view of mental healing, did not stress these affinities, but Warren F. Evans, a former Methodist minister in that city, became an ardent Swedenborgian after being healed by Quimby. Evans published his views on healing well before Mary Baker published Science and Health, and with other disciples of Quimby he founded the New Thought movement. Such linkages to Swedenborg continue throughout the century, and as we shall see in a later connection, Christian Science itself may be usefully understood as a precisely formulated, highly organized, and authoritatively led instance.

Mesmerism and spiritualism were so intimately related that for several generations they were deemed to be virtually inseparable. it is by no coincidence, therefore, that Swedenborg, too, became implicated. In fact, there is some ground for seeing Swedenborg as the greatest medium in modern times and the New Church as the first spiritualist church. In 1818, when a spiritualistic phenomenon was described to William Schlatter lone of the early New Church leaders in Philadelphia), he was not at all incredulous and urged that the person be won for the New Church with a copy of Swedenborg's Heaven and Hell. Many similar but isolated instances followed. Then in 1845 a series of articles on the subject appeared in the New Jerusalem Magazine. The major outcropping of interest in intercourse with the other world. which came in 1848 with the Fox sisters' rappings, was not directly traceable either to Swedenborg or to the New Church; but it did conduce to so rapid a growth of spiritualism among Swedenborgian "liberals" that the New Church was threatened by schism in the 1850s and after.

The most widely read philosopher-theologian of

spiritualism was Andrew Jackson Davis, the "Poughkeepsie Seer." Davis was an apprentice cobbler when an itinerant mesmerist found him an exceptionally apt subject. For a time thereafter he was a professional medium and exhibition piece of hypnotic marvels. Later, while under hypnosis and professedly in contact with Swedenborg and others, he gave lectures published with the aid of scribes as *The Harmonial* and also by the Utopian theorists Charles Fourier and Robert Owen. In 1850 Harris and an associate founded a short-lived cooperative community of spiritualists in Mountain Cove, Virginia, before returning to New York to found an independent Christian spiritualist church and a periodical to propagate Swedenborgian views. Yet he honored Swedenborg chiefly as a "forerunner" and in 1857 scandalized orthodox New

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Philosophy (1852), which went through twenty-four editions in thirty years. Professor George Bush of New York University in his book Mesmer and Swedenborg (1847) did much to dignify these efforts by publishing an enthusiastic appendix on "The Revelations of Andrew Jackson Davis." A member of the New Church and convinced that Davis could not possibly have absorbed such wisdom by any other means than spirit-contact, Bush was doubly rejoiced. Actually Davis's works exhibit nothing that an intelligent person of his background and absorptive propensities could not have produced under hypnosis; and they serve admirably to illustrate the way in which Swedenborg's unitive thinking could be combined in the popular mind with both animal magnetism and many of the popular reform panaceas of the day, including socialism. This complex syndrome was even better illustrated by Thomas Lake Harris (1823-1906), a Universalist minister of New York who was much impressed by Davis, Churchmen by publishing *The* Arcana of Christianity, wherein it was announced that to Harris had been revealed not merely the spiritual but the *celestial* meaning of Scripture. From this point he went on from excess to excess, even to the hour of his death.

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What's New in the New Age?

Deirdre Donahue

Despite the debunkers, growing numbers of the affluent and welleducated are turning to the New Age movement.

For most people, the New Age means J.Z. Knight, the woman who says Ramtha, a 35,00-year-old warrior from mythical Atlantis, speaks through her. In *English*.

It also suggests mysterious rock crystals with alleged "healing" powers. Or that interminable Shirley MacLaine mini-series, *Out On a Limb*, in which the actress recalled past lives spent riding elephants.

Despite the debunkers, growing numbers of the affluent and well-educated are turning to the New Age movement. Their interest is sparked less by its flamboyance and more by what they perceive is a holistic approach to life.

New Agers think they can transform themselves spiritually and physically. How? By exercise, good nutrition, meditation and avoiding drugs—including alcohol and caffeine. Most think that the mind's potential has not been tapped; that psychological wellbeing can be reached using such techniques as "self-parenting." All this, they hope, will result in a healthier world.

Adherents, it appears, are growing. For example: The circulation of *New Age Journal* has increased from 15,000 to 150,000 in the past four years. Typical reader: 39 years old with a college degree. At last month's American Booksellers convention, 52 publishers formed the New Age Publishing Alliance, including booksellers and distributors. Their motto: "A Consciousness Whose Time Has Come."
▶ Bantam, Harper & Row and others are publishing books on channeling, creativity and crystals. New Age booksellers report that in the last year, their clientele has expanded to include engineers, doctors and factory workers.
▶ New Age records, cassettes and CDs with titles like Quiet Fire by Ancient Future and Available Light by W.A. Mathieu, are a \$100 million annual business.

But does growing interest in the New Age mean that people are deciding to live differently? Or is the USA simply entering another of its periodic love affairs with mystical mumbo jumbo? Remember Edgar Cayce and Carlos Castaneda?

Walter Beebe, 47, seems the very paragon of Manhattan achievement: Partner with the Wall Street law firm of Jacobs, Persinger and Parker, he recently put together a \$40 million public offering for a steel company.

Success, however, left him hungering. "It was adequate but it really didn't go as far as I could go as a human being," he says. Result: Beebe began reading books on human potential and spiritual texts, including the Bible and Taoist philosophy.

In 1984, he founded the New York Open Center, where he is now president while continuing working as a lawyer. The center offers courses in body work, holistic health, spiritual inquiry, 25

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psychological insights and inner creativity. Some 2,500 people attend each month. Crystals and Ramtha are *not* part of the center's agenda, according the Beebe.

Beebe described the center's students as "primarily well-educated people like me who found their life in the midst of Western culture less than fully satisfying. They're seeking a deeper spiritual involvement in the world *without* getting hooked by a guru, channeler or other substitutes for their own individual creativity."

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Lynne Lisanti owns a New Age bookstore in Burlington, Vt.—called What an Interesting Bookstore! —one of the approximately 600 around the country. "People are coming in because they are not satisfied with the answers they've been given," says Lisanti. Her customers buy materials on philosophy, human potential, selfunderstanding, and reincarnation.

The New Age movement has its critics. Constance Cumbey, a Detroit-based lawyer, sees disturbing parallels between the New Age movement and Nazism. "Their goals include a new world order, a new world religion and a new messiah," she says. She has published two books on the subject, The Hidden Dangers of the Rainbow and A Planned Deception. Cumbey, a Christian, says New Agers "go into an altered state and are hearing things the rest of us aren't hearing. It's mass hypnosis at best, mass possession at worst."

Adds Robert Basil, an editor at *Free Inquiry* magazine: "There's a real American skepticism that's being abandoned. People are abdicating their sense. It's politically dangerous."

Basil contends widespread interest in spiritualism occurs at "times of great national tension, when there is no easy way to give your life meaning."

Others are more open-minded. "I don't think it's a cult at all," says Florence Graves, former editor of *Common Cause*, now editor/associate publisher of *New Age Journal*, "There's no dogma, no meetings, no guru. It's a loosely knit movement."

The magazine's topics are not exactly on the cutting edge of the occult. The May/June issue explores meditation, monasteries open to the public, the need for community involvement.

Jeremy P. Tarcher has been publishing New Age books—on topics such as health, science,

People often become involved with New Age activities because of a crisis in their own lives: illness, divorce, bankruptcy—or success.

"Everyday" spirituality and social transformation—for 10 years. And he decries the attention topics like pyramids and astrology are getting. "The New Age is about to be deluged with printed junk, and that's a pity."

In 1980, Tarcher published the book many consider to be *the* handbook of the New Age, *The Aquarian Conspiracy* by Marilyn Ferguson. It has sold more than 500,000 copies.

The book traces the New Age movement, with its emphasis on self-reliance, back to social philosophers Thoreau and Emerson. "They are the true founders of the American New Age movement," Tarcher says.

People often become involved with New Age activities, author Ferguson says, because of a crisis in their own lives: illness, divorce, bankruptcy—or success, New Agers often are "people who got everything they wanted and it still wasn't enough," she adds.

New Age music is perhaps the

most accepted element of the movement. This year a Grammy was set aside for the category. Usually instrumental, the genre is a blending of jazz and classical themes.

"People who call it musical Valium don't really understand it," says Gregory P. Westmoreland, vice-president of Global Pacific in Sonoma, Calif. "Instead of coming home and drinking a martini or taking Valium, you put on a New Age cassette. Which is healthier?"

Founded in 1979, Global Pacific has produced records, cassettes and CDs. According to Westmoreland, several rock musicians, including the Grateful Dead's Jerry Garcia, have expressed interest in recording. After all, says Westmoreland, "The New Age culture is trying to integrate the spirit of the '60s with economics. It's about living within the system but with certain values."

Deirdre Donahue writes for USA Today.

Can You Judge a Movement by Its Titles?

Martin Marty

'Musical Idiot,' or Zen and the Art of Blues Harp Blowing

The Guru is You: How to Play, and Win in the Game of Life Brahmacarya: The Joys of Saying No to Sex

The Drunken Universe: An Anthology of Persian Sufi Poetry Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism

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content with titles such as:

The Courage to Be I and Thou The Imitation of Christ The Responsible Self Markings

I don't believe in "good old days" most of the time. In this field, I do. ■

Martin Marty is professor of Church History at the University of Chicago Divinity School. This article appeared recently in Christian Century. Subscription information may

be obtained by writing to: Christian Century Foundation, 407
S. Dearborn St., Chicago, Illinois 60605. 27

(From the Religion and Society Report, published monthly by the Rockford Institute, comes this recommendation: "Lest you think we

do not take (the New Age Movement) seriously, let us recommend most warmly a recent book, Unmasking the New Age. It is by Douglas R. Groothuis and is published by InterVarsity Press (Downers Grove, IL). The title makes the book sound more strident than it is. In fact, it is not strident at all, being a very judicious analysis of the teachings, organizations and personalities that constitute the 'New Age Network'."—Editor

New Age books dominate the "spiritual" sections of **ب ا**ئے۔ bookstores and catalogues these days. We can best serve the uninitiated by simply listing some typical titles. I'll take them from the September 25 **Publishers** Weekly, omitting authors' and publishers' names What is this world coming to? It's coming to a "new age."

The Oracle of Geomancy: Techniques of Earth Division Your Incredible Cat

Rhythmetiques: How to Become All You Were Meant to Be

Tales of the Sexy Snake: The Art of Healing Through Touch and Language

Remember Your Essence

The Search for Omm Sety: Reincarnation and the Eternal Love

Voyage to the New World: An Adventure in Unlimitedness

Rebirthing Made Easy

The Psychic Power of Animals

Scentual Touch: A Personal Guide to Aromatherapy

Born Again and Again: How Reincarnation Occurs and What it Means to You

How to Learn from a Course in Miracles

Mind Power: Getting What You Want Through Mental Training

Did You Know, Genies Are Usually Green

Instant Blues Harmonica for the

The Essene Book of Days 1988 The Starseed Transmissions: An Extraterrestrial Report Confessions of A Kamikaze Cowboy Runelore: A Handbook of Esoteric Runology The Secret Is in the Rainbow: Aura Interrelationships

The Practical Pendulum Book

Eat your heart out, Judeo-Christian "Best-seller" authors. *Publishers Weekly* follows titles like these with statistics on numbers of copies printed—numbers like 163,500, 516,00, and even 2,749,000.

Imagination has come a long way since the days when one would enter a bookstore seeking an address to the deeper mysteries of life and find it necessary to be

Swedenborg and Biblical Scholarship

Charles W. Harvey

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T wo views are noticeable among Swedenborgians on the relation between present-day biblical scholarship and Swedenborg's interpretation of the Word. One view is that they are antagonistic, the other that they are complementary. A full interrelation of the two would require a scholar in both fields, but perhaps the following brief study may be better than none.

To see the interrelation of the work in the two fields as definitely possible, we turn to one book of the Bible. The prophecy of Amos provides us an illuminating example of how complementary a study of the literal sense and an exposition of the spiritual sense of the Word can be.

Amos is acclaimed as the father of the ethical monotheism of the Old Testament—the first to recognize that Jehovah (better vocalized Yahweh) was not only the God of Israel but of the whole earth, a God of justice and righteousness, not to be bribed by sacrifices to forgive the sins of His people and bless them above all others.

In present-day studies of the prophecy of Amos, we have a clear picture of the man and his times and message. A "herdsman" or, better, shepherd and vinedresser in Tekoa in the pasture-land of Judah, he hears inner voices and sees visions impressing him with God's displeasure toward Israel, the northern kingdom. Though he protests he is "no prophet," he feels deeply moved to warn Israel. "The lion hath roared; who will not fear? The Lord Jehovah hath spoken; who can but prophesy?" (iii. 8) On his business trips to the north, he finds conditions even worse than in

Amos is acclaimed as the father of the ethical monotheism of the Old Testament the first to recognize that Jehovah was not only the God of 29 **Israel but of** the whole earth.

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Swedenborg extends the interpretation of the spiritual sense to the "church" in any age, or to the condition of the spiritual life of a people at any time. The spiritual sense is timeless.

his native Judah, meriting a divine doom. As Morgenstern graphically puts it: "believing firmly that he had been charged to bring to the faithless and sinning people this divine message of its doom . . . bound up in some way with the Day of Yahweh . . . on the New Year's Day of the year 751 B.C. in the (northern) sanctuary at Bethel ... just before the dawn ... in the ears of the anxious, pulsating throng, assembled for the great festival, the words of this unknown and, because of the darkness, almost unseen stranger rang forth."1

A book more adapted to the general reader and giving what we call the literal sense of the Scripture is Professor Bewer's The Literature of the Old Testament.² **Discussing Amos, Professor Brewer** emphasizes the inspired insight of the prophet into the universal justice and righteousness of Yahweh as the God of all peoples. "Are ye not as the children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel?', says Yahweh. 'Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt?' Yes, but also 'the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir? (ix. 7).' The national history of Israel's hated enemies also has been guided by Yahweh! ... But assuming for a moment that 'you only have I known of all the families of the earth,' Amos drew this startling consequence," therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities (iii. 1)."

From Dr. Pfeiffer's Introduction to the Old Testament³ we gather the following summary: "The coming disaster that will annihilate Israel Amos envisions as a calamitous war: the enemy surrounds the land (ii. 11), puts the army to flight (ii 13-16, in part of questionable authority), invades the country, crossing it from north to south (vi. 14), destroying the sanctuaries and killing the king (vii. 9), and finally brings the miserable survivors into captivity liv. 2f.: vii, 17). The sentence is irrevocable because the nation, warned repeatedly through minor calamities (iv. 6-12 in part), refuses to

return to its God and do His will. The Israelites serenely based their confidence on the performance of religious ceremonies deemed agreeable to their God. For their religion consisted merely in traditional acts of worship, in the presentation of sacrifices and offerings, by which they thought to placate the anger of the deity and preserve its favor . . . For the most part the moral offenses denounced by Amos violate the common standards of decency recognized in all civilized nations, ancient or modern: dishonestv (viii. 5,6), inexorable ruthlessness (ii. 6.7.8; iv. 1; v. 11; viii. 4), the accumulation of wealth and venality in the courts of law (ii. 6,7; v. 7, 12; vi. 12), . . . extravagance, luxurious living . . . self-indulgence and debauchery, . . . the callousness of the rich for the privations of the needy (vi. 6)." Dr. Pfeiffer emphasizes Amos's scorn of those who lived luxuriously in Samaria and in order to make up for their indulgences multiplied their offerings at the sanctuaries of Bethel, Gilgal and Beersheba. So Amos proclaimed the word of the Lord, "I abhor the pride of Jacob and detest his palaces" (vi. 8). 4 Amos, he reminds us, "never for a moment doubted that his words were divinely inspired (iii. 8; vii. 15) ... He did not know that he was proclaiming an entirely new religion 'in spirit and in truth.' .... a universal religion from which were to grow the great monotheistic religions of salvation, Judaism, Christianity and Islam." 3

This, in general, is the message of Amos as expositors summarize it. Beyond the pronouncement of doom the prophet did not go. Amos was inspired to foretell the ruin of Israel in retribution for her wrongdoings. It is questionable whether he had any vision of a possible repentance, repentance on the part even of a few.

A vision, however, fartherreaching than that of Amos was growing in Judah. And from a slightly later time verses were added to the prophecy of Amos voicing this larger vision. "In that

day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen . . . and I will plant them upon their land which I have given them, saith Jehovah thy God" (ix. 11-15). This is the beginning of the doctrine of a saving "remnant" put forward by Isaiah and by Jeremiah. Those two prophets have a blessed vision of a possible remnant of the people with whom Yahweh can make a new covenant. R.S. Cripps cites Jeremiah xxiv. 11 as an utterance of the new vision that was coming: "For I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith Jehovah, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you hope in your latter end." Morgenstern finds the doctrine expressed by Isaiah, soon to prophesy after Amos. He cites Isaiah viii. 16-18: "Bind thou up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. And I will wait for Jehovah, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him." Morgenstern says,

"... within the nation, the little, righteous remnant, the prophet and his own immediate disciples, those who kept the faith and adhered lovally to their covenant with Yahweh . . . would escape the general doom of the nation; they would be spared and would endure for a very definite and specific future." 6 After Amos's unrelieved denunciation had time to sink in and perhaps turn a few to true worship of the living God, hope for a remnant sprang up and was voiced in what became the concluding verses of his prophecy.

This, then, is how biblical study gives us the message of the book of Amos, its "literal sense," what it meant to the prophet, to his equally inspired editors, to those who heard, and to those who may now read.

Turning now to Swedenborg's exposition of the spiritual sense of the prophecy, let us note first how basic in his view the literal or historical message is. It is the teaching of that message from which doctrine is had. That the doctrine of the church is to be drawn from the literal sense of the Word and confirmed by it is the

heading and point of the fifth chapter of Swedenborg's Doctrine of the New Jerusalem concerning the Sacred Scripture, 7 and the statement is repeated many times elsewhere in his writings. The "spiritual sense" is to "illustrate and corroborate" the teaching drawn from the literal sense.* Doctrine, moreover, is no abstract teaching; it is teaching to live by: "doctrine itself," he says, "from the literal sense of the Word, is one only, namely, the doctrine of charity and love-of charity toward the neighbor and of love to the Lord." 9 "Doctrine," he says, "is of no account unless the life be formed accordingly." 10

Now, can we not draw such life-forming doctrine from the message of Amos as Bible students summarize it? And does Swedenborg's interpretation of a spiritual meaning "illustrate and corroborate" the truth of the literal sense? We find his interpretation of Amos succinctly given in his Summary Exposition of the Prophets and Psalms. Succinct as it is, his interpretation goes into more detail than our space allows us to follow. We confine ourselves to some leading thoughts.

First let us note that the spiritual sense as disclosed by Swedenborg does not warn us against the evils which brought ruin to Israel, evils of selfindulgence, oppression of some other, disregard of our neighbor, and the other evils scorned by Amos. In its plain message the book of Amos continues to voice this warning, as it has voiced it all these three thousand years.

Swedenborg's spiritual sense goes behind the scene, albeit so penetratingly described by Amos. It dwells on men's covenant relation with the Lord. Amos does, too, in his message, but this becomes the prime thought of the spiritual sense. The evils disintegrating Israel or any people are traceable to a failure to stand in true relation to God. Something has gone wrong with the "church"—not the institution, but this heart of an institution, its dealing with God. Were that sound and real, society

would not be full of such evils as Amos denounces. Expounding Amos, Swedenborg penetrates farther than Amos. What specifically has attacked the covenant relation with God for such evils to spring up in the lives of the people? The "church" must have failed to work against these evils, for one thing, by "falsifying the truths of the literal sense of the Word" (Amos i. 13-15). God's manifestation of Himself to Israel has been turned into a weak favoring of them whatever they do,-this even to Amos's perception.

As soon as we get this concentration on the inner life, lived in God's sight, or on "the church" in an individual or a people, we step into a region where not only our actions but our wantings and thinkings are of moment, and the talk must be of truths and falsities, and goods and evils. Which of these are entertained in the inmost life of aim and outlook? The church is good and truth.

Swedenborg applies his interpretation of the spiritual sense first to the Jewish Church so understood. The oppression in Samaria, the violence and robbery in her palaces, are interpreted of the ways in which, not the land, but the church is being laid waste. Its truths are perishing in falsities. Meanwhile "they arrange a worship in externals similar (to real worship) vet only in outmost things" (iv. 4-6). The covenant relation is only pictured, not actually there; the church is only "the representation of one," as he often says. There is a ritualistic obedience to God, but not the obedience from deep within which affects the life for the better.

Falsification of "the truths of the literal sense of the Word" indeed! The "Book of the Covenant" (Exodus xx, 23-xxxii. 19) had been recovered a century before, to become the basis of a reformation. The Commandments Israel had had. All the evils flourishing in the land had been excoriated in Scripture after Scripture. But

somehow the truths about neighborly dealing and a present judgment by an all-seeing God failed to have their force. They were nullified by false ideas that ceremonial worship and gifts to sanctuaries would be an acceptable substitute for righteousness. No wonder Amos cried: "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies. . . . The Lord Jehovah hath sworn by himself. I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate her palaces: therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein." (v. 21; vi. 8). "Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live" (v. 14). "Let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream" (v. 24).

Swedenborg extends the interpretation of the spiritual sense to the "church" in any age, or to the condition of the spiritual life of a people at any time. The spiritual sense is useless. It speaks to conditions today. Do we still fail to see the evils of society for what they are, and that they are traceable to a lack of the spiritual life, its truth and integrity? We read many contemporary complaints of the churches. Do they ignore the many uncharitable and unneighborly attitudes and actions in industry, the racism in human dealings, even the ignoble and souldestroying practices in arts and letters? Do they seize on the spiritual life, to strengthen and cultivate it for the overcoming of such evils? Or do they work content to extend themselves, promote their beliefs, build an ecclesiastical structure, and maintain an external worship?

Swedenborg in his exposition goes on to say about Christendom itself, or "concerning the spiritual church which had been instituted, that it became worse than the religious systems of other nations; that it possesses in abundance all things of the church, and that they think nothing of the ruin of the church; that therefore all things will perish . . . for the reason that they have appropriated these things to themselves from self."

In other words, in the spiritual sense he expounds in Amos, Swedenborg presents a deep-going analysis of spiritual condition, first in Amos's own time, then in his day and ours. The picture is as sorry a one as was the prophet's, except that again the thought of the "remnant" recurs. A "remnant" of the faithful there was from the times of Amos to those of the Lord's coming, when there were those who awaited the consolation of Israel, and welcomed the Messiah. So there is a remnant now with whom the spiritual life or the covenant relation with God can be restored. In exposition of the spiritual sense of the closing verses of Amos, Swedenborg writes: "The church will not perish, but those in it. A new church will be instituted by the Lord, which will acknowledge Him. The doctrine of truth, and the understanding of it, will be in that church" (ix. 8-15). How inspired the addendum to Amos (11.15) is, is implied in this obvious consecutiveness of inner meaning from the earlier verses into the added ones. And again there is the ancient prophetic confidence that mankind's spiritual life will be revived and grow once more.

Is it not plain then that there is no conflict between the most intense studies of the literal sense of Scripture and their results on the one hand, and the exposition of the spiritual sense of Scripture on the other hand? They are mutually enlightening entrances on the Word of God. They are complementary studies. There is nothing about the Bible that is not worth knowing and learning, whether it is its best authenticated text, the time of composition of a book, sources drawn upon, the character of the prophet or other writer, or the first and still pertinent message and the most competent exposition of it. None of this, if we will understand it well, stands in opposition to the spiritual meaning of the Word, and a good grasp of this meaning. In fact, it helps to this. The spiritual sense for its part travels on more

deeply still, universalizes the truth of the literal sense, and is itself of timeless application. ■

The Rev. Charles Harvey was a longtime pastor of the Church of the New Jerusalem (Swedenborgian) in Philadelphia and an occasional lecturer and tutor at the New Church Theological School. This essay first appeared in The New Christianity in the summer of 1949.

#### Notes

- ¹ Amos Studies, Julian Morgenstern. Hebrew Union College Press, 1941, p. 427.
- ² Julius A. Bewer. Columbia University Press, 1945. p. 92.
- ⁹ Robert H. Pfeiffer. Harper and Bros., 1941. pp. 581 *f*.
- 4 Ibid. p. 582.
- ^s Ibid. p. 580.
- ⁶ Morgenstern, op. cit. p. 424.
- 7 Sacred Scripture, Nos. 50-61.
- * Ibid. No., 56
- ⁹ Arcana Coelestia, No. 3445.
- ¹⁰ Ibid. No. 1515.

#### If God Should Go On Strike

How good it is that God above has never gone on strike. Because he was not treated fair in things he didn't like. If only once he'd given up and said, "That's it, I'm through! "Ive had enough of those on earth, so this is what I'll do. I'll give my orders to the Suncut off the heat supply! "And to the moon-give no more light, and run the oceans dry. "Then just to make things really tough and put the pressure on, "Turn off the vital oxygen till every breath is gone!" You know he would be justified, if fairness was the game. For no one has been more abused or met with more disdain Than God, and yet he carries on, supplying you and me With all the favors of his grace, and everything for free. Men say they want a better deal, and so on strike they go. But what a deal we've given God to whom all things we owe. We don't care whom we hurt to gain the things we like; But what a mess we'd all be in, if God should go on strike.

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### ³⁴ Church Women United Launch Assignment: Poverty of Women

Jane Burton

The poverty of women and children has reached epidemic proportions in the United States. The following statistics belie belief in this land of abundance: 35 million people in the U.S. live in poverty and two of every three poor adults—20 million—is a woman. The statistics about children are even more shocking: one in every four children in the U.S. is poor—one half of all black children, one third of all Hispanic children.

It is this ever-growing cycle of poverty that has led Church Women United (CWU) to undertake a five-year Imperative identified as Assignment: POVERTY of Women. Its purpose is to concentrate all the human and financial energy and resources of CWU as a national movement of approximately onehalf million Protestant, Roman Catholic, Orthodox and other Christian women to eliminate the pauperization and marginalization of women and children in this country. Explaining this enormous undertaking, CWU's national president Dr. Sylvia R. Talbot said, "Today the poverty of women and children has reached such intolerable proportions that its root causes now stand as the primary focus for Church Women United's work. Our call is for the passionate commitment of church women to go beyond just 'doing for the poor' to taking action steps that attack the root causes of poverty and seek to correct basic economic injustices."

Since a major element of economic justice for women is access to the goods and services necessary for health, Church Women United has chosen to focus its action agenda on health issues that concern women. Problems of health, though they touch everyone, disproportionately affect women and children in poverty. For example, lack of parental care results in a significantly higher rate of infant mortality among poor women while malnutrition of poor mothers often results in mental or physical illness of children. Poor working women also have less protection against illness and disabilities resulting from unhealthy, unsafe workplace conditions. As CWU continues its efforts to address the root causes of poverty of women, the focus on health is seen as a way to impact both the lives of poor women and children as well as the future wellbeing of society.

Assignment: POVERTY of Women was launched as a national CWU campaign on May Fellowship Day, May 1, 1987, at which time approximately one hundred Church Women United units publicly announced their commitment to the Imperative and the fight against poverty of women. On World Community Day, November 6. 1987, another one hundred units declared their active participation. The plan of action for the campaign includes educating CWU's constituency about the root causes of poverty and the connection of poverty to other justice issues, the linking of Christian faith to action for economic justice for women, the forming of local and national coalitions to work on poverty projects and the shaping of public policies that support justice for women.

Fall of 1987 saw the momentum of the campaign increase. Six national Imperative workshops were held in different areas of the country bringing together three hundred and forty four church women from two hundred and one CWU units in twenty-five states. These two-day training events focused on theology, economic literacy, media effectiveness and community organizing skills. They provided each woman not only with information, strategies and resources but more importantly, with the inspiration and motivation to return home and involve others in the challenge of the Imperative.

Looking ahead, a CWU sponsored national consultation on poverty is planned for June of 1988

in conjunction with the meeting of CWU's Common Council in Cincinnati, Ohio. This consultation using the theme, "A Future Beyond Poverty for Women and Children," will bring together representatives of Church Women United's supporting faith groups with leaders from key national organizations also working on the poverty of women agenda. It is seen as a time to communicate CWU's vision for that "future beyond poverty" to a wider audience of women. It will also provide an opportunity to promote stronger collaborative action among women working in coalition with CWU and serve as a vehicle for sharing model projects that have proved successful in impacting the poverty of women and children.

Jennifer Johnston, one of the Imperative trainers who is also a member of CWU's Common Council and an M.Div. candidate at the Harvard Divinity School, expressed her hopes this way, "I have seen the effects of poverty among women both in the homes of those who suffer from malnutrition and among those whose poverty led them to a prison cell. Church Women United has taught me that women have a great power when organized in a focused campaign. We must look beyond the symptoms to find the root causes of poverty and then actively take steps to do something to bring about change."

This is only the beginning. The challenge of Assignment: POVERTY of Women is bigger than Church Women United. The call is to all people of faith to engage in this critical struggle and to act now to combat the root causes of poverty wherever they are found so that economic justice for all, especially women and children, becomes tangible and real.

Jane Burton is Director of Media & Interpretation for Church Women United



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#### ³⁶ Choose Life

Perry S. Martin

I shuffle papers and I look over ideas, I write down what fits, and I realize that this preparation could go on and on. So I take a new sheet of yellow paper, I write CHOOSE LIFE, and I begin. To begin is to choose life. To face a blank piece of paper, to admit to and let go of my expectation of writing a masterpiece, and to admit to and let go of my fears of that blank page, of nothing coming, of not being good enough—that too is to choose life.

Come to the edge, wrote the French poet, Apollinaire:

Come to the edge. No, we will fall. Come to the edge. No, we will fall. They came to the edge. He pushed them, and they flew.

Each of us faces the challenge, I set before you this day life or death, eros or thanatos, change or decay, risk or stagnation. Choose life. And without even our awareness, we have those choices to make every hour, every conversation, every little decision, to exercise, to overeat, to watch television, to reach out, offering or asking for help or comfort.

Now the church also is clearly faced with questions: shall we go on as we always have, shall we close, how shall we use our financial resources, how shall we use our meeting time, how shall we reach out to our communities, and how shall we respond to Convention's newly-stated purpose, "to facilitate spiritual well-being"?

If we allow ourselves the awareness of our situation, we may realize we are cast adrift on a stormy sea in a small rowboat. We have three choices: we can wait for rescue. we can panic and jump overboard, or we can row.

How can we row? You may ask. We are old, we have so few people and so little energy. We may have no minister, or we may be waiting for a minister to row the boat for us. Let me say to you that no minister can row the boat alone through these crashing waves. If we are to make progress toward our goals, we must all find an oar. We have oars. We have the power of belief that there is meaning in our journey. The purpose of life is growth and we have the freedom to pursue our spiritual potential.

Spiritual growth—what is that? That is the blank piece of paper. That is coming to the edge. That is taking up our oar and learning to row, making mistakes, using the power that is given to each one of us. We have everything we need.

Our theology and the new psychology both point to one purpose: to bring wholeness, to connect with transpersonal or divine energy in a way that we engage with life. That means risktaking. It means giving up the comfort of the familiar, perhaps experiencing the discomfort of the familiar, realizing that if it does not satisfy our dignity and purpose, then it is not working.

Choosing life may involve learning to say goodbye to the old, to our ancient excuses and selfimages, to our helplessness, to the very ways of life which have allowed us to survive this far. Choosing life is giving up old habits of blaming, or people-pleasing, of rationalizing away our feelings, of closing our eyes to the realities around us.

Many of the people I know who are actively involved in pursuing spiritual growth could obtain support, understanding and challenge from the Swedenborgian philosophy. Yet I do not invite them to church. they would find our traditional service of worship irrelevant to their struggles and not conducive to the practice of the presence of the divine which they are seeking. "The Lord is in his holy temple," we declare, "Let all the earth keep silence before him." Yet there is no silence. No space is offered, except for a few seconds of "silent prayer." Why, I ask the ministers, is there not time enough allowed for actually getting into that silent prayer? People are too uncomfortable with silence, I am

told. The reality is that we are all scared by the silence; we do not know what to do, we have never learned to be receptive to the spirit.

And so speakers learn to practice silence and meditation on their own. I do myself. Yet I know how powerful is the energy of people meditating together, silencing their thoughts and opening to the healing energies of the divine.

I attended a conference on psychology and religion, sponsored by the Friends. We were introduced to the concept of Meeting for Worship, and we practiced it each day. The auditorium was filled with silence, broken only when someone felt moved to share a message received, a ray of inner light felt. I felt that we were indeed meeting for worship. In contrast, our service allows us no opportunity for meeting, and our worship is prescribed. We follow the printed page, declaring our own worthlessness and proclaiming adoration of the Lord, emphasizing our separateness from the divine. Practicing the presence, receiving within us that sense of divine love, brings a dynamic union of our best selves with all that we are able to receive of God and with all creation, and inspires us to awesome praise.

In the October 1987 Messenger, the Rev. Dr. George F. Dole challenges us to move beyond the passivity of our present worship. He describes the Holy City, after which we take our churchly names, as a "spiritual state, essentially one of worship." Yet we have been explaining that eternal life is not saying prayers and singing hymns. Dole uses Biblical history to illustrate what is needed to achieve "genuine collective worship. . . . opening ourselves to each other as well as to the Lord; love to the Lord and love to the neighbor cannot be separated. . . . There must be a sense that the Lord is not represented solely by the open Word on the altar, but also by each participant." He suggests that we

being with a guided meditation which would invite us to experience where we are and what is concerning us. He asks for an Adoramus of such beauty and power that a response is evoked. He challenges us to develop imagery and then give that imagery a chance to work.

Swedenborg was not satisfied with the religious imagery and vocabulary of his day. He disciplined himself to find ways to

We have three choices: we can wait for rescue, we can panic and jump overboard, or we can row.

enter into his own religious experience. When we mouth his words, which we barely understand, rather than taking his message to enter our own religious experience, we are not being true to his spirit. We are like fundamentalist Christians who cling to the literal words of the bible, ignoring the spirit of love and forgiveness which is its theme.

There are many ways to foster our spiritual lives. Most of us have little real contact with each other in the church, outside of the business meeting and coffee hour chitchat. Where do we share our struggles and fears and vulnerabilities in ways that lead to selfacceptance and movement toward wholeness? Where do we encounter those ghostly voices from the past that keep us stuck in our helplessness or persisting in ways that we would not? Where do we get in touch with the eternal essentials of spirit that counteract the acquisitiveness and anxieties of our materialistic culture? Where do we touch each other in love? When do we share the feelings that help us understand and care for one another? Where is that community that can contain our rage for us and that can support us to encounter our fears with courage? How do we resolve the conflicts that inevitably occur in our church groups? How do we become that community that weeps over the hunger in the world and mobilizes us to stay the vastation of our earth through pollution and war? How do we learn to teach our children love so that the world may stop the pojection of hate and enmity that keeps us from peace?

Each of us is a church, and we meet together in societies of churches. Every day and every hour we make choices to risk or not risk, to jump out, to wait for rescue or to row. I want you in my rowboat. Choose life. ■

Perry S. Martin, Ph.D., is the human resource consultant for the Education Support Unit. She is available to your church group for helping you reach decisions for your future as a church. She is a people connector, who can help you connect with your community, as well as resolve conflicts that obstruct unanimity of purpose. She can enable you to figure out what you want to do and how you can go about it. She can assist you in assessing you resources and mobilizing your energy to move forward toward life and growth. Her new address is 692 Spruce Drive, West Chester, PA 19380. Call her at 215/696-8145.

## Replace Ignorance and Hate with Knowledge and Compassion

Bill James Cook

The views contained in this article are not necessarily the views of the editor, the Communication Support Unit, or the Swedenborgian Church. This article is published with the belief that homosexuality is an important and complicated part of modern life. With estimates that homosexuals comprise anywhere from 10 - 20 percent of our population, it is important that our church continues to seek a compassionate and knowledgeable position on this issue—Editor

uthor's Preface: At the time I was doing graduate work in abnormal psychology many years ago, homosexuals were all classified as sick abnormal people. In addition to my academic work, my experience in teaching and counseling has given me a great deal of knowledge of homosexual males.

Most Christian people avoid any type of contact with homosexuals. Thus, never talking to them, these Christians never know what homosexuals are really like. Many old and false ideas concerning homosexuality live on. I've known gays who were, in my judgment, rotten. I've known gays who were very nice people. In all fairness to homosexual people, the false ideas people have about gays should be corrected. In this article I have tried to present some of the myths that are accepted by large numbers of people and supplant these ideas with what I believe to be the truth. On the morning of the day that Christ was crucified most of His followers "knew Him not." Christ was forsaken.

On another morning, just two years ago, a group of Christian men met. I looked around the room. I felt a pang of despair for nothing had changed in almost 2000 years. So many of His followers really didn't know Christ. His most important teachings were despised and forsaken. I shivered with disgust as they proceeded fanatically to express their thoughts on "homosexuality."

To so many people being a Christian is—not smoking, not dancing, and not drinking alchoholic beverage. Homosexuals are criminals to be detected, punished, abused, and exterminated. The men who met that morning were no exception to this fanatical thinking. I was ashamed of their complete lack of understanding, knowledge, and Christian compassion.

So many of the common ideas concerning homosexuality expressed and believed to be true simply are not facts. Some these false ideas are:

*The idea*—Homosexuals are more inclined to molest children sexually than heterosexuals.

Not so! Most all child molesting cases involve heterosexuals. The few cases involving homosexuals are so rare that these cases are heavily publicized. Most child molesters are straights.

The idea—Homosexuals commit more crimes than straight people.

False again! Most all homosexuals are very law abiding citizens.

*The idea*—People are born heterosexuals. They become homosexuals by being seduced or abused by a gay person.

Gays, as stated before, seldom are involved sexually with children. With a young gay the sexual inclination is toward older members of the same sex. Likewise when over the 30-40 age range the natural inclination of most gays is toward younger members of the same sex. However these young members are sexually mature individuals; not children.

*The idea*—Males who are reared by a domineering mother become homosexuals.

There certainly are homosexuals who had domineering mothers. However, this is not the cause of homosexuality. What about all the straights who had domineering mothers? What about the brothers of the gay with a domineering mother? If a domineering mother causes a boy to become a homosexual, all men reared by domineering mothers would be gay.

*The idea*—Males reared in a home with a weak or missing father develop into gays.

Simply not true. There are homosexuals who did not know a father or whose father was weak in the male role in the home. Yet, this is just a coincidence. There are thousands of straights who were reared in similar homes. This is not a perfect home

environment but it is not the cause of homosexuality.

*The idea*—Gays are always singles; they never marry. Heterosexuals marry and have children.

Counselors who have gays coming to them seeking help reveal that among male gays seventy percent of the seekers are married men.

The above could mean that seventy percent of all male homosexuals are married men; or that married gays have more problems than single gays. The fact does show that a very large number of homosexual men marry women.

*The idea*—Any person who has one or more sexual experiences with a member of his or her own sex, is a homosexual.

There have been many surveys made and published concerning the sexual behavior of both males and females. Kinsey reported from the data in his survey that over forty percent of the males had one or more homosexual encounters. Certainly not forty percent of the male population is gay?

*The idea*—Homosexuals can not become parents.

Many gay men marry lesbians or marry heterosexual women. These gays father children. In fact the married gays tend to have more children than heterosexuals. Perhaps this is an attempt at a self induced change in sexuality by using marriage and repeated fatherhood; or maybe just another good way to cover up their homosexuality.

*The idea*—You can always detect gays by their looks. They are queer looking people.

Homosexuals come in all patterns. Some look queer; others are beautiful. Some are tall, some are medium, and some short. Some gays are very effeminate; others are very masculine. Studies made by psychologists concerning male gays and their occupations give strange results. These studies also reflect on the appearances of gay males. Occupations appearing to have the highest percent of gay men are:

First Place—Male models. These are the handsome, masculine men pictured in catalogues, magazines, etc., whom women swoon over.

Three groups tied for second place. The three groups are: Male Interior Decorators, Male Entertainers (professional dancers, singers, movie stars, T.V. stars, and musicians), and Male Artists (painters, men who design women's clothes, and men who work in advertising).

Most of the men in the above fields such as models, movie stars, etc., are rated by women as being good looking and loaded with "sex appeal." They do not look queer.

*The idea*—You can always tell a gay by the way he or she dresses, acts or talks.

Simply isn't true. Homosexuals may dress well or poorly; conservative or way-out. There is not one pattern followed by all. The same can be said concerning actions or speech.

*The idea*—Gays of the same sex can be legally married in the United States.

Homosexuals often marry but those couples who are of the same sex have a relationship that is not legal in the United States. If one dies the other partner, if of the same sex, has no claim to the dead person's estate as in the case of male and female marriages. Some of the countries in Europe do recognize such marriages.

*The idea*—Arresting gays and sending them to prison will teach them a lesson and cure them of their homosexuality. This is the way to help gays. Gays can not be changed by placing them in prison. If so, there would be no homosexual activity in prisons. The truth is that homosexuality runs full blast behind prison walls.

*The idea*—People choose to become homosexuals just as they decide to smoke or choose to try drugs.

Nobody choses to be a homosexual. Homosexuality occurs before the birth of a child. At sometime during the development of the human fetus (approximately the third or fourth month) there are marked changes in the appearance of the genitals. Before—the male and female genitals appeared the same. Now the genitals change so that at birth most babies are born with distinct male or female genitals.

When the genitals begin to change it is believed that our Creator programs the embryo for its adult sexual inclinations. If God programs the embryo so its natural inclinations will be toward the male sex and the genitals develop male the infant will be born homosexual. As the gay develops into adulthood his natural sexual attraction will be toward members of his own sex. Hence, it is God the Creator who chose for some reason to create a gay individual.

Some gays hide their homosexuality behind marriage and children. They go through life fooling everyone but themselves. Others "come out of the closet" and declare that they are gay. Many women are shocked to find the man they married (an ideal husband and father), suddenly decides to come out of the closet and live with another man.

*The idea*—If a person is gay all that is needed is to refer him or her to a good consultant or psychoanalyst. A cure can be made.

There is not cure for homosexuality. It is not a disease. The gay is following his natural sexual

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inclinations just as a heterosexual follows his. Gays are a minority between ten to fifteen percent of our population.

*The idea*—If a person is gay all that is needed is to bring him or her to the church altar and hold a "healing service."

Once again-homosexuality is not a disease. It was ordained by the Creator before the birth of the individual. All the prayer and the laving on of the hands will not change what God has ordained. Prayer will not change a black man into a white man, or a white man into an oriental man. Praver will not change the natural color of your eyes. Praver will not change a homosexual into a heterosexual. It is the choice of our Creator as to which souls will be born homosexual or heterosexual; or which souls will be born in a given racial group. This is ordained before birth. What God has ordained can not be changed by praver.

Prayer is effective when dealing with disease The progress of disease which came about through the malfunctioning of the immune system to worry, stress, etc. can often be changed through prayer. Malfunctioning of organs caused by hysteria can often be changed through a healing service and prayer.

Religion may cause a gay to hide his natural sexuality and change in behavior from an active homosexual to that of a latent homosexual by inhibiting his natural inclinations.

Gays are discriminated against, abused, and misunderstood by unenlightened people. Homosexuals are too often fired from their jobs, beaten up on the street, or even murdered. Others may be driven to suicide by self-righteous, fanatical people.

It seems such a waste to see fanatics never mellow/until they find that one of their own children or grandchildren is a homosexual. Yes, a homosexual because God created him or her that way. People need to be as enlightened and as compassionate as Christ our Savior in dealing with homosexuality. They spend too much time worshipping trivia in churches and miss the whole essence of Christ's teachings—to love God with all our hearts and to love our fellow human beings.

Mr. Cook has a B.S. in Education from Miami University of Ohio and a M.A. in Abnormal Psychology from Xavier University in Cincinnati. He taught high school in Ohio for twenty-six years and was certified for four of those years for guidance and counseling. Today Mr. Cook lives in retirement in Daytona Beach, Florida.

#### The New Jerusalem

I do not identify for one moment the new Jerusalem with modern ideas of Utopia, but I do realize that good will upon earth has never been widely tried, and yet that where it has, even in communities as small as one family, the results are glorious beyond cynical belief. I do realize that man, compared with the long history of the planet and man's evolution on it, has only just appeared. Ghevselinck the geologist said that if a movie film of the history of the earth were to be produced lasting twenty-four hours, then man would not appear on the scene until the last five seconds of the film. It is very early to give up building. Even if the architect showed us the plans, we should not understand them. They are as far beyond us as calculus is beyond the child learning that twice two is four. I admit that the site is in a muddle, and at the time of writing I wish some things could be got out of the way. They seem to impede progress, and I wish they were not there-the intransigence of Russia, for instance.

But the Architect may be saving, "Don't be so impatient. Wait and see what I can do with that material which contains so many splendid qualities as does the Russian character. It wouldn't be there if I couldn't use it. Much material has to be shaped and chiseld before it is ready for the building. Don't imagine that the limits of your visions are the limits of my purpose." In a way, God would not allow a muddle which finally defeated him. Ultimately he is omnipotent. If that is true, the measure of muddle is the measure of his purpose and must be the measure of our faith.

When the Lamp Flickers (p.171) by Leslie D. Weatherhead

### The Art Of Aging

#### **Getting It Together**

Elizabeth Johnson

⁴² My friend Cathy died last night. She was 59 years old.

Only six weeks ago she learned that the stubborn flu-like symptoms were in fact an insidious form of cancer which had penetrated throughout most of her body. She spent her final days in a state of shock and disbelief, attempting to come to terms with her approaching death and completing her "unfinished business." Since her rapidly deteriorating condition and the need for constant pain-relieving medication kept her in the hospital, and her senses were reeling with the enormity of the catastrophe, she had no energy to focus on small details of day-to-day business matters. Life was stripped down to elemental realities.

I know she was able to tell her children that she loved them and say good-bye to her friends. In the end she slipped away peacefully. The day-to-day business matters were now in the hands of her children. Due to the unexpected and swift progression of her illness and death, unless Cathy had prepared for such an eventuality, it is possible her children did not know where to find the essential information they now needed to settle the estate.

Cathy's death serves to sharpen the focus of the area my thoughts have taken recently because of an incident in my own life. Not long ago, while David and I were away, our son had to deal with an unexpected situation in which he needed information about my car insurance. He spent several hours in fruitless search for my insurance data, and had to make some decisions without it. On my return I was faced with the fact that I had been thoughtless of the burden my children might have to bear in case of an emergency. Suppose David and I had been killed in an accident-would our children have the information necessary to deal with our legal and financial affairs. Since the answer was No I decided it was time to "get it together."

What I am speaking of is a kind of survival kit for my family. I suspect many of us have postponed such a task not only because it is drudgery, but also because we are reluctant to face the fact of our death. We think we have plenty of time. We may not.

A survival kit can consist of a workbook and a file to contain documents. It must supply all pertinent information to assist our survivors and friends to take care of the myriad details in settling an estate. A sturdy three-ring-binder workbook will serve to hold all the written information relating to some basic categories, such as: Family, Finances, Insurance, Properties, Business, Funeral Arrangements. Original documents should be in a safe deposit box, but copies can be available in the file folder.

Each case is different, of course; information will vary depending on individual lifestyle, and whether your children are grown or still at home. Remember,

On my return, I was faced with the fact that I had been thoughtless of the burden my children might have to bear in case of an emergency.

death can occur at any age. You will want to describe what could be included in your own **Family** category—for instance names of individuals responsible for your affairs, such as doctor/s, attorney, minister, executor; how to contact friends and relatives. You might put it together like this:

#### Will

The original copy of my will is located at

The date of my will is

My will names as executor

I have designated as guardian of my children

My will was drawn up by

**Personal Documents** 

I was born in

Date of birth

My birth certificate is located at

I was married in

Date of marriage

I have been in the military Y/N Service serial number

Discharge paper located at

Similar information should be compiled in the following categories:

Safe Deposit-including names of other signators, location of key. Employment Records—Social Security documents **Property**—deeds, tax records Banking—names of banks, account numbers Investments Personal property-insurance information, tax receipts, credit cards Debts-money owed to me/by me **Income Tax Returns** Funeral Arrangementspersonal desires, service, burial/cremation. etc.

Be sure all these records are in a safe place and that several people know where to find them.



#### Disenchanted with Churches

#### Dear Editor,

Nothing in the article about the National Council of Churches in the November *Messenger Express* has altered my low opinion of the Christian ministry. One of the reasons I left the church for almost two decades was that the pastor, who taught me the catechism, stole the church funds and fled to Germany. From a three-part article in the old *Life Magazine* I deduced that ministers were mere servants of their congregations and not God's spokesmen. One popular television preacher spoke so glowingly about what's right with America that it didn't resemble the land where I was mugged, made to waste two of my formative years, experienced other injustices and now see as a nation that has lost the wonderful spirit of its forefathers.

In focusing on Bork, hasn't the Council looked at a tree and overlooked the forest? Bork was rejected, but our basic problem remains. What is the basic problem? To transform our laws and lives to conform with "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Since the Lord calls upon us to do good and will reward us according to our works, it would be wiser for the Council to urge both the ministry and the laity to push Congress for a Christian income tax system as a first step toward making America what she should be. Every citizen should have an exemption equal to the costs of his necessities-food, clothing, housing, transportation and health care. Over and above that figure every citizen is to be taxed-no tax free bonds, no IRA, no Keoghs, no tax loopholes whatsoever.

Can we truly call ourselves a Christian nation or even a land of the free and a home of the brave unless there are non-discriminatory tax laws on our books and we, the people, live by a code of brotherhood? The alternative is stated in Rev. 3:15 & 16. Religion is of the life and, if there is no religion in the life, beware of the gnashing teeth!

> George Kessler Maywood, NJ



#### The Almont Heritage: Building for the Future

The Almont Executive Committee has given initial approval for the new Locke wing addition for Heritage Hall at the rural Michigan Swedenborgian retreat and camp center. Current plans for the new wing include an expansion of the dining room that can be closed off for group meetings, additional kitchen facilities that will enable Almont to conform to health code regulations, and other improvements. A building fund has been established, and the Executive Committee is studying ways to raise the necessary funds.

#### **Contest Winner**

**Convention writer Carla** Friedrich Mason, member of the Deland, Florida Swedenborgian Society, is one of the winners of the New Church literature contest sponsored by the Australia New Church in honor of the Swedenborg Tricentennial in 1988. A children's story entitled "Celestial Serendipity-or-The Gift of the Rainbow," complete with illustrations, will share First Prize for Children's Literature for ages 5-10 with C.M. Mary Smuts of New Zealand. Being the mother of three small children, Mrs. Mason knew what sort of stories hold young children's interest while at the same time teaching them lessons about life.

#### Swedenborgian Scholar Recognized

The Rev. Dr. Robert H. Kirven, who teaches numerous theology courses at the Swedenborg School of Religion, ranging from the general Overview of Swedenborg's Theology to advanced Systematic Theology, has been the Swedenborgian representative for many years to the Faith and Order Commission of the National Council of Churches. Faith and Order focuses primarily on theological matters, hoping to arrive at consensus formulation and clarifications that all or most of the 31 member Christian denominations can accept. The work can entail hours of painstaking thought, discussion, experimentation, and can leave behind all but the most dedicated of theologians.

Recently a letter of recognition for Kirven's work was received at the Swedenborg School of Religion. Written by outgoing Commissioner Jeff Gros, the letter says, in part, "A word of deep appreciation on the part of the Commission and myself for the long and careful work you have given to Faith and Order here in the National Council. . . . During my tenure in the office many have remarked on your generosity. . . . May the Lord continue to bless you and to enrich all who come in contact with your ministry."

#### Marriage Enrichment: Weekend for Lovers

Marriage Enrichment is a nonprofit volunteer movement by credentialed professionals providing resources to help already good marriages become even better. The San Francisco Swedenborgian Church's wedding ministry provides marriage ceremonies for 160 to 300 couples annually. With the hope that many of these couples would appreciate a retreat designed to strengthen their marriage, the Rev. James Lawrence planned a weekend to experience this new venture in ministry.

Fourteen couples swelled the facilities at a retreat center in the Gold Country of the Sierra foothills for the weekend of November 13-15 to laugh, share, work, play and explore their marriage potential. A Marriage Enrichment weekend consists of several sessions of brief presentations to the whole group followed by specific exercises for each couple to conduct privately. That is followed by small group sessions of three or four couples to compare notes. The weekend has a lovely flow of large group, small group, and private times.



The Marriage Enrichment gang pause for posterity. Bob and Deanna McMain (couple standing on the far left) facilitated the weekend. The Rev. James Lawrence (center squatting) and the Rev. Rachel Lawrence (directly above) were a participant couple. Not pictured are photographer Joe Lederer and his wife, Loerne, both new members of the San Francisco church.

The usefulness of the event was attested to by virtually all participants. Several couples joined the Marriage Enrichment organization, through which they will receive a bi-monthly newsletter chockfull of useful resources. For information regarding Marriage Enrichment, write to: ACME, 459 South Church Street, P.O. Box 10596, Winston-Salem, N.C. 27108.

#### **Goodbye and Hello**

The Rev. and Mrs. Paul and Pat Zacharias officially retired from the Church of the Good Shepherd in Kitchener, Ontario with the beginning of the new church year. A Retirement Party was thrown for the long-serving couple in October, when they were presented with a Peter Goetz watercolor painting of Windsor Castle and a check from the church, as well as a beautiful handmade card from the Sunday School and a check from the Canada Association. The Zachariases have served churches in Elmwood, Massachusetts, Portland, Oregon, and Kitchener -the latter being a 22 year pastorate. In addition, the Zachariases served in a British Conference church in Birmingham,

England for nine months in 1985-86 as an interim measure. Though in retirement, both Paul and Pat continue to be active on national boards and committees. Paul Zacharias is currently the Chair of the Council of Ministers.

#### Another Successful Drive for the Women's Alliance

The Alliance of New Church Women has completed a fund drive totaling \$2,490. Contributions have gone to numerous Convention ministries, including the Urbana University Library, Convention Baby Sitting, five Church Camps, The Messenger, New Church Youth League, and travel assistance for the Convention President's wife, as well as the Church Women United. In addition, they were able to add contributions to the Meditation Chapel on the Urbana University campus and to the Swedenborg School of Religion library for microfilming books. As in past years, they also contribute to Kei Torita's ministry in Japan. Onetenth of the money coming for Sustaining Memberships and General Contributions was sent to Church World Service Crop Fund to help alleviate world hunger.

#### **Australian Celebration**

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The Australian Conference of Swedenborgian Churches kicked off the Tricentennial year with a Banquet at Macquarie University in Sydney. The Swedish Choir performed under the direction of Professor Eric Sharpe, Head of Religious Studies Department, Sydney University. In addition, there were offerings from an ensemble from the Conservatorium. The new edition of True Christian Religion, Swedenborg's crowning work, was unveiled (see next ECLECTICA item) amidst several speakers. Finally, a chest of books brought to Australia on one of the ships of the First Fleet Re-enactment was opened! Let us all make the most of this historic year with celebrations such as these.

#### **New Books to Ponder**

The Swedenborg Society of London has just released a new translation of Swedenborg's True Christian Religion. The two volume set is very handsomely produced with dustjackets showing a detail reproduction of El Greco's oil painting showing Christ driving the merchants from the Temple. The translation is by John Chadwick of Cambridge, England and is a distinct improvement over the John Ager translation many decades ago. The prices for the two volumes are \$27 for hardback and \$18 for paperback. Write to: Swedenborg Society Swedenborg House 20-21 Bloomsbury Way London WC1A 2TH

Also from England comes a little 16 page booklet entitled

Learning to Pray with Brian and Jill. "Brian and Jill" are the Rev. and Mrs. Brian and Jill Kingslake. No price is evident on cover or inside. It is published by "The Swedenborg Movement" and copies are available from:

New Church House 34 Dalton Street Manchester, England, M2 6LE.

#### Reorganization

The newsletter Context printed this nugget worth pondering. In an article on "The Decline of Evangelism," sociologist Tony Campolo writes, "'We trained hard . . but every time we were beginning to form into teams, we would be reorganized. I was to learn later in life that we tend to meet any new situation by reorganizing . . . and what a wonderful method it can be for creating the illusion of progress while producing inefficiency and demoralization.' No, it wasn't a disgruntled twentieth-century church bureaucrat who said that. It was the Roman writer Petronius, who died in A.D. 66."

#### **No Excuse Sundays**

To make it possible for everyone to attend church once a month, we are going to have a special "No excuse Sunday" and to insure its success, we offer the following "lures."

1. Cots will be placed in the foyer for those who say: "Sunday is my day to sleep in."

2. There will be a special section with lounge chairs for those who feel that our pews are too hard.

3. Murine will be available for those with tired eyes from watching TV too late on Saturday night.

4. We will have steel helmets for those who think: "The roof will cave in if I ever go to church."

5. Blankets will be furnished for those who think the church is too cold and fans for those who think it is too hot.

6. Score cards will be available for those who wish to list the number of hypocrites present.

7. Relatives and friends will be present for those who like to go visiting on Sunday.

8. There will be TV dinners for those who can't go to church and cook dinner also.

9. We will distribute buttons stating "Stamp Out Collection Envelopes" for those who feel that the church is always asking for money.

10. One section of the church will be devoted to trees and grass for those who like to seek God in nature.

11. A doctor and nurse will be in attendance for those who usually plan to be sick on Sunday.

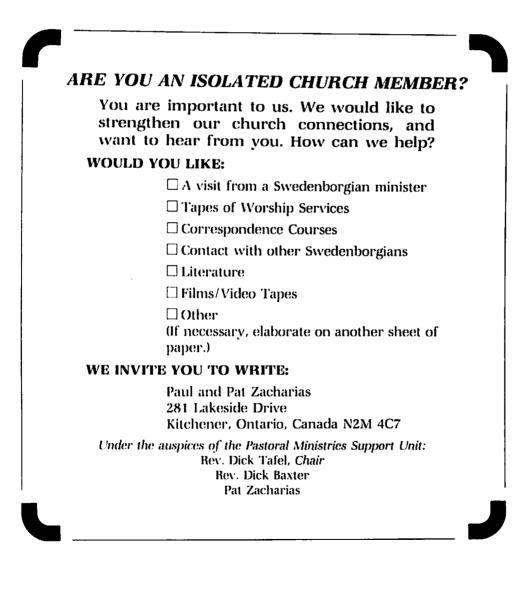
12. Last but not least, the sanctuary will be decorated with both Christmas poinsettias and Easter Lilies for those who have never seen a church without them.

—Bulletin, Roman Catholic Church, Boyne Falls, MI, September 1977. ■

### Church of the New Jerusalem 4 Oxford Street Fryeburg, Maine 04037

is accepting applications for a full-time MINISTER.

For further information, please contact: Mrs. Beverly Walker Chairperson for the Trustees



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## **CONVENTION 1988** June 29 to July 3

Join us in beautiful New England for the 1988 Convention, June 29 to July 3 at Lasell Junior College, Newton, Mass., with pre-Convention meetings June 25—June 29, and a Post-Convention conference at Fryeburg New Church Assembly, 'Fryeburg, Maine. A main event is the world premiere of Reverend Ken and Laurie Turley's oratorio, "Revelation," in celebration of Swedenborg's 300th!