

# THE MESSENGER

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PARADOXES OF TRUE LOVE

What do I want to be when I grow up? That question is common enough when one is a kid, but many of us older ones continue to ask it with some resignation. Even at fifty or so, a great many people still don't have a clear answer. Well into adulthood, we experiment with this gaudy interest or that, find out that it is more difficult or uninteresting than we had thought, then look for something else.

What are we here for? I suspect that this question is at the root of a lot of things, such as our lack of national purpose, the decline in the quality of goods we manufacture, a fifty-percent divorce rate, the pessimism about human beings that incessantly produces films and television dramas about crime in the streets, military adventurism, horror, and so on. We live in a culture which thinks that too much is fundamentally wrong with the human animal.

We need a more optimistic sense of vision, of course. But it will probably begin with a better picture of our own worth. In a recent series on PBS, the late historian and mythologist Joseph Campbell was interviewed by Bill Moyers. Campbell produced an incessant theme of his own: follow your bliss. By that he did not mean do what you randomly want, but find that one thing in your life that produces the deepest passion and releases the most creativity.

A Swedenborgian approach could take up the theme in this way: each of us is created to express a particular aspect of the divine. We experience that as a special genius for some kind of activity, with all the passion and drive that normally accompanies genius. That special ability is a key to our place in what Swedenborg called the Grand Man, for it defines our individuality. It also opens a path through life on which we can receive the most protection and help from the divine providence, for when we follow it we are most at

home with ourselves and with the divine purpose. As Campbell puts it, "doors will open where you didn't know they were going to be."

But your bliss won't necessarily hit you between the eyes. It may appear instead as an occasional obsession, an intuition, or as a flash of interest in some supposedly plain subject. You can turn away. It does, however, seem to make some kind of dramatic appearance by early adulthood. Finding your bliss later may then require taking some long walks in the woods and doing a lot of remembering. I finally fell into a long reverie on a time in my early twenties when everything was going well, both within and without. In those days I had stumbled into my bliss unconsciously, then left it without fully recognizing it or making a commitment. That's the rub: you have to make a commitment. Evidently what is required is faith in the way things are ordered and some of Joseph Campbell's advice: "Go where your body and soul want to go; when you have that feeling, stay with it and don't let anyone throw you off."

*Steve Koke*

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## Paradoxes of True Love

*Horand K. Gutfeldt, Ph.D.*



found the article: "*Marriage on the Defensive.*" by Dr. Howard Davis Spoerl, in the June issue of the "*Messenger*" fascinating. In it the author called attention to a paradox: Genuine love has to be all-inclusive; the Lord's word clearly states that "... He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust." (Matt. 5:45)—so, how can Marriage Love, which Swedenborg distinguishes as "conjugal," be exclusive, and focused upon only one partner? Is real Love as an ideal, inclusive or exclusive; directed towards one or extending to everyone?

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As I read this, my memories of Howard came alive: I saw him before me, with his almost impish sense of humor, and sometimes even outrageous questions and statements, all of which were intended to make his students think—and how I loved every minute of it! His penetrating observations provide opportunity for profound thought, and his article contains a great many interesting issues, but in this article I will treat only one, which I consider the main point. I certainly don't advocate resolving this paradox by dismissing marriage lightly! (Although this seems to be a fairly popular approach in our time!) A real answer can only come from a focus upon the basic underlying principles which are found by deeper probing.

**Genuine love  
has to be  
all-inclusive**

## **Search For Love.**

I think we have all had the experience of going through a phase of rebellion when faced with the demands of ideals of love. And yet there are times when the quest for love is, and remains, most profoundly inscribed in every human soul. Who can ignore the love songs on the radio, or avoid being touched by poetry (which may appear primitive at times—while at other moments it may strike us as sublime, and often it does not seem to ever leave us completely)?

All the great religions stress the importance of love, from the Old Testament command that was to be attached to every doorpost (Deut. 6:9), to the words of Christ on the Greatest Commandment. In Buddhism the emphasis is upon compassion, and an idea of love is common in Hinduism under the name of Bhakti.

Every year the US postal service brings out a new stamp on the theme of love, and we are constantly deluged with clichés— "Free Love," "Smile, God Loves You," "I ♥ N.Y.," "Puppy Love," "Love Child," etc. How then can we find our way through these interpretations and distortions, past the abuse, and solve the puzzles and paradoxes that collect around this concept? Could it be simply that all human words are too small to convey Love's full meaning?

## **What Are The Problems?**

Howard could only point to a few, but all of us have puzzled at thoughts and feelings of love, at joys and disappointments, and any rational grasp easily slips out of reach! A great many beginners and even experts come to the conclusion that love can never be explained or defined sufficiently. Certainly, words of all languages are finite, and even our understanding has its boundaries and limits, while love is something that is not limited to anything. Yet our minds must be capable of coming close to a definition of love, or at least coming up with some glimmer of comprehension of what is surely one of the most important topics of religion and life. It seems that somewhere there must exist some attempts at understanding love, or at least at sizing up some of its most important aspects.

## **A Few Great Contemporary Thinkers.**

For a moment, I would like to turn to one of the leading recent theologians of worldwide reputation, Prof. Paul Tillich whom I had the privilege to hear during an unforgettable semester in Marburg, Germany, at one of the leading universities of Protestantism. He explains: "Love is the moving power of life . . . (it is) the drive towards the unity of the separated." This reflects the moving last prayer of Christ, which repeats four times the urging words "...that they be one..." (John 17:11, 20, 22)

This desire for unity certainly applies to sexuality and marriage love, and it almost appears that we are built to search for, and find this unity. However it is naturally geared towards only one partner, whom we then can come to fully and uniquely understand, such that ideally we can live in ever increasing harmony. Surely we can experience this overcoming of the limitations of our minds and bodies, this finding of a oneness that can mean ecstasy, many times. Unfortunately, much in our culture conditions us against such experiences, without us being aware of this—although perhaps this constraint is less common today. Far too often there is a tendency to poke fun at marriage, and caricatures of unrewarding relationships appear daily in the "comics," for example "Lockhorns."

In a different vein, a noteworthy and thorough analysis has been made by Prof. P. Sorokin at Harvard, one of the leading sociologists of our time, and the founder of the "Harvard Research Center for Creative Altruism." His book *The Ways and Power of Love*<sup>2</sup> is a very comprehensive analysis where not only the previous ideas are contained, but many different dimensions of love are outlined. There is a special emphasis upon the other-centeredness of love, which is certainly an important element.

These books go far beyond poetic descriptions, and are sincere efforts of great scholars to lead us to comprehend love, so that, by understanding it, love can become a part of our logical as well as our emotional lives.

Swedenborg includes a further definition of love in his great work "*The True Christian Religion*" #43: "The essence of love is to love others beyond oneself, to desire to be one with them, and to make them happy (or blessed) from oneself." We are told there that this is the Essence and Being of God, and also the basic message of the New Testament, the "Agape" of Christ, the sum of all the teachings of Christianity, and especially of a new age.

In personal experience, any approach in this direction is united with special feelings or emotions which are perceived together as a unit with great individual variety. And yet, we can identify and compare this experience, and can communicate something of it to a certain degree, depending upon the range of the practical life experience and maturity of every one. Thus, even though we may be far remote from perception of the full meaning, the question comes up, how far some theoretical grasp can in any way become relevant for us. This is not theory alone! Great decisions of our entire lives depend upon this at all important points, influencing our relation to all other people, and even extending to God. It is quite evident that real clarity about this is rare in our culture, while many distortions and misunderstandings prevail, as this was pointed out by H.D. Spoerl. Evidently, experience and mature thinking have to come together, so that people can identify in theory and practice what our lives here are designed for. Immediately, a serious question is implied:

### Can Love Be A Duty?

Here we come to a paradox again, but this is undoubtedly in the minds of many who declare and give at least lip-service that we "should" love, and that this is somehow an obligation of human life and religion. Many problems, to which Howard points, are the result from such underlying attitudes.

To this, it will have to be pointed out that in such an interpretation, and thus in all exhortations towards good qualities and virtues, there is already an impossibility contained. It can never be repeated with enough emphasis that love can under no circumstances be commanded and thence executed—never in the world! The more anybody tries this, the more insincere and "phony" will all such "love" be! With all powers of persuasion we cannot even talk ourselves into loving, and the harder we try, the more we are bound to

fall. We may step back and ask with justification: Do then all the precepts of our religion make sense at all?

Here we have in our teachings some very important pointers towards practical application: We are warned of the do-goodery of great and small "good works," including efforts to love. The first thing is to remove the unrecognized obstacles in our own hearts that stand in the way of receiving love and all other good qualities, like compassion and empathy. As long as hidden in our minds are resentments, judgments, condemnations, prejudices and wishes "to get even," even if we are not aware of them at the moment, no real love is possible. God is always ready to share His Love, but our hearts have to be ready to receive this,—this is a condition that can never be bypassed. But when we take the roadblocks away, with the help of the Lord, we open the road to be filled with His Love, which has to come together with insight and understanding. Our language speaks correctly of "falling in love" thus indicating that it is something that happens to us, which we cannot force—but we can make ourselves ready. The purer the mind can become, the more regeneration advances, and selfish energies are put into the proper place, the more our capacity to be filled with real love can grow and increase. Thus, the awareness of our "subconscious" motives and feelings is a necessity, as well as the overcoming of temptations or situations that test our direction and give us an opportunity to show our real determination. Then, love can become ignited in the deepest soul, and then there is no merit or possessiveness in it, no pride or weakness. As soon as there rises in us a claim upon another person, or a credit to ourselves, we slip on the wrong track. Some of this is indicated in the article by Howard, and it helps us to come closer to the center of the paradox and the problem. We are able to cooperate with the love that God is ready to pour into our hearts, we can work with God on the purification of the receptor... But as soon as a grab-

bing hand appears and wants to shout "It is mine!," all that is precious is destroyed, or at least seriously weakened. There is a place for self-assertion and self-love in all our relations, but it has to be at the bottom of our priorities, not at the very top! This brings us closer to an answer to the initial paradox, but in order to penetrate further, it will be needed to obtain a fuller picture of what it is that is involved in love.

### **Dimensions Of Love.**

Among the many mysteries of love is this, that our capacity of loving, and thus our measure of all happiness in this world and the next is connected with the structure of our soul. Since we are born masculine or feminine, there is a specific masculine quality of affection and love . . . and there is a uniquely feminine way of experiencing and expressing this. Already in young children one can observe differences in boys and girls, if one gives attention to it. It is not only education that makes girls play differently with their dolls than boys with their teddybears. They will also handle their pets as boys or as girls, and each will enjoy a puppy or a kitten in the way that they are disposed to do. Each of these has

**To come to know one other person of the opposite sex truly intimately is a profoundly maturing experience in itself, for everyone is an entire world.**

also its oneness and its distortions as well—and so in growing up, it becomes incorporated in adult and mature patterns. It is little known that this applies also to the experience of religion as well as to sexual love—we develop mature masculine as well as feminine ways of feeling and understanding, in-

volving all human relations. Again, our barren words seem insufficient to describe all the subtleties, and generally there is a more immediate and profound perception of love in women, and a more immediate perception of ideas and their value and importance in life in males. This in part explains the never-ending attraction and mutual supplementation that extends not only to the physical sphere, but also to the mind and the soul. To come to know one other person of the opposite sex truly intimately is a profoundly maturing experience in itself, for every one is an entire world.

It may be interesting to observe in this context, that each sex has its own exaggeration that develops in isolation from the other. Where men are only among themselves, like in prisons and in certain military units, a crude on-sided sexuality develops easily that has little, if any love in it. If women are only among themselves there is often a lack of the stabilizing masculine element, and emotions may run high. In order for a mature capacity of loving to develop, interaction is desirable, on intellectual as well as emotional levels.

We can be grateful that our time has opened more channels for both sexes to be with each other, in growing up together and also to develop their uniqueness in a way that they can meet and supplement each other. These relationships have positive as well as negative qualities, according to the maturity and responsibility of the partners involved. Today, seldom is there such a fetish made of virginity as it was in the past and is still in many cultures. Marriage itself is becoming more freed from the many legal and economic compulsions that have been prevalent in past ages, and the external bonds of society are becoming weakened. More than ever, a personal satisfaction and fulfillment is being sought, even if one relationship, or even a marriage (sometimes more than one) may have brought disappointment. Our time is sear-

ching for new dimensions not only of love, but also of sexuality and its function. We have become more open to accept a wide range of variety and uniqueness in expression, and our search for love is being met with new ideas, even new ideologies, which again direct and shape what and how we love.

Are we aware that it is the complex of all that we love which is the core of our souls? The search for harmony with a partner of the other sex is a major component of our personal makeup—of our physical endowment and function as well as in the structure of the soul. Our very being and feeling is directed to search for love, and to experience what love can be. In this line we may often be directed to ask:

### **Is Love A Process?**

So many things that we cannot touch directly are termed a "process" today, and it may strike us that love certainly has aspects of this in advancement and development, of evolving and changing. But it is better to be careful with the slogans of our time! If we perceive our great topic only as a process, and nothing else, it would make us overlook the aspect of stability and need for commitment! Does not every word of genuine love contain a whisper of longing for eternity? Is there not always at least a concern, if not an anxiety that it might be damaged or lost? Even in the most mature individuals, can there be a touch of jealousy, of a fear that something infinitely precious might be damaged? This was also pointed out by Swedenborg, who disagrees here with many tendencies of our time, and it is this where Spoerl's questions of exclusiveness come to bear. (Cf. C.L. 357-379) Of course, a concern for a relation that may be more precious than anything on earth is light-years removed from anyone who is inclined to have his rights to be lorded over by another person. True love then has in itself the ideal to extend beyond time, and it is

directed to the very center of the soul. It is designed to reach to the very center of the soul to establish a bridge, and even more, a union of understanding and feeling beyond everything that is perishable in our surrounding or in our bodies. It takes us a long time to learn that the forms of sexual expression can be a crowning fulfillment in the measure that they express and represent real love. Or they may be nothing but a superficial act, even destructive, according to the deep disposition of the heart of the person. Some people have developed an openness for the inflow of the divine energy, and others seem to have closed it. Some open the way to the heart, and others are led astray by external and material interests and loves. Something of the self has to come to die, so that something greater may rise from the ashes. The most universal type of love is the one-to-one relationship, which contains a commitment to last, and when it is genuine it is valid before God, whether it has been sanctioned by civil or church authorities or not. Is it still possible in our age of commercialization and consumerism, of shifting jobs and moving populations? Is not much in our society geared against this? It may be helpful to scrutinize the conditions for the growth of the capacity to develop the higher degrees of love.

## The Growth Of Love

Even before a human being is born, the conditions of the relation between the parents obtain an influence upon the budding person to be. If there is anticipation, tenderness and trust among father and mother, conditions are infinitely more favorable than if these factors are missing. As soon as a baby is born, its needs for love are a matter of life and death. Infants that do not receive at least a minimum of TLC—tender love and care—will die, and those that are deprived but survive will develop deficiencies in many ways. Children need the intimacy and constancy of the love of

both of their parents, and the more this can be provided, the greater is their expectation of steadiness in school and in relations of later life. We observe increasingly that a need for exclusiveness is characteristic for our most important relationships, and it is especially tragic, if children are abused. Especially sexual molestation or incest are among the most serious traumas that may never be completely healed. Swedenborg calls this the most heinous and abominable form of adultery. (C.L. 484) Sexuality should never be suppressed, and education to chastity is much more effective through example than through compulsion, punishments or rewards or words alone. Sex can be explained as an access to great fulfillment and happiness, if wisely developed. There are situations when genuine love has to be "tough love" as well. Again, to be effective, the condition is an understanding love, never a rigid legalism. Only this will lead to consistency and reliability in all relationships, first in the family, and thence to the outside world. To develop the capacity to love should be the greatest goal of education in the family, and should be built upon a closeness and personal relation that then will also be able to expand and to shine and become radiant and inclusive in all other directions. This leads to a concluding investigation that takes all limitations into account in order to come to the main point of the issue in this article.

## What Is The Essence Of Love

Trying to go beyond the narrow limits of our feeble words, in helping us to understand what love in its reality might be, we can best describe it as an energy, in which we experience something that is divine in us and in a partner, (and others in a wider sense). Various forms of love are the core and substance of our soul, of all that makes us really human. A sensitive and exclusive longing to understand and to be

understood, to know each other truly, and striving to establish a bond between two (or more) individualities is a part of love. Sexuality is a part of such a bond, but it has a very special place that is not to be cheapened. If we accept its purpose and its limits, it can lead us to greater harmony and fulfillment. Thus love can only be genuine if it is combined with the right kind of wisdom, and this cannot be at random, but in a way that establishes a harmony that is destined to be in us and with us beyond time. Thus a loving and committed exclusiveness can become the source of later inclusiveness, but not *vice versa*. It is wisdom to find the place for each, so that real love can come to grow, deep in the soul first, and thence to expand beyond all limits.

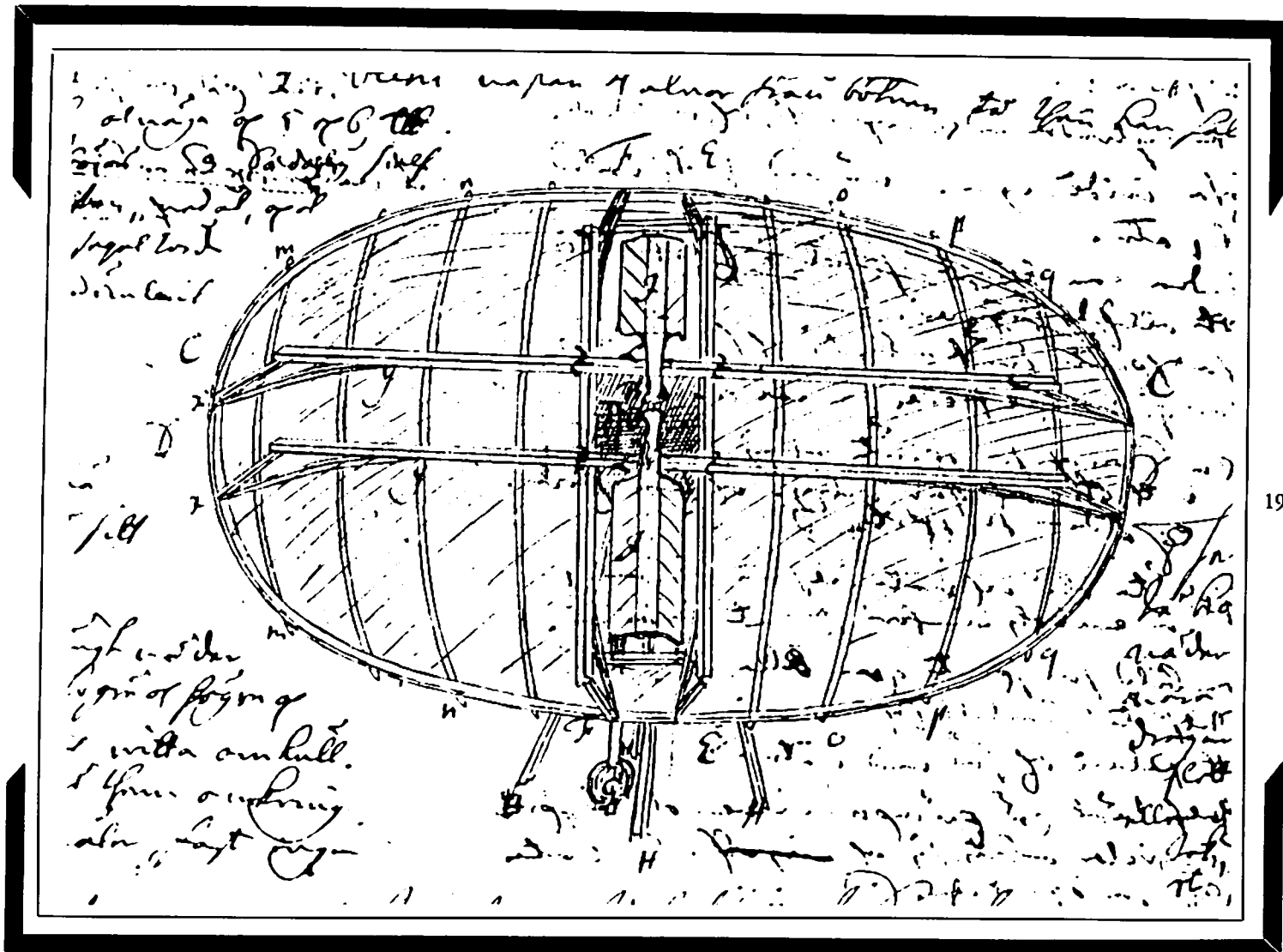
## Outlook

It is the greatest task of our lives to understand and to live for our unique configuration of love. This is our house for heaven, and it is built by wisdom that holds all parts together in a harmony. The proper limits of inclusiveness and specialness have to be explored in a way that God gives us to perceive and to understand. It is not only to be seen as a duty or to be made into a system of rules and regulations. It is designed to be felt in the depth of our heart as our own in a unique way, to be expanded—as a gift that grows by giving it away. In this the Most High shares His life and essence with every human heart that opens itself to Him.

In concluding I will quote the last verse of the word of Dante Alighieri, the great Italian poet and mystic, who sings of Paradise (33/43), "It is love that moves the Sun and the stars." ■

*The Rev. Dr. Horand Gutfeldt is newly-retired from his pastorate with the El Cerito, CA. Hillside Chapel. He lives in Berkeley, CA.*





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## Swedenborg's Airplane

A new book, *Swedenborg's 1714 Airplane*, by Henry Soderberg, retired vice president of Scandinavian Air Lines, is available for \$16.00 plus postage from:  
The Swedenborg Foundation  
139 E. 23rd Street, New York,  
NY 10010



## An Orange and the Word of God

Exodus 16:1-4 Matt 13:10-15 Rev.2:17

*Ken Turley*



Well, it happened again. Sunday morning God finally plops down the inspiration for a message right in front of me. But I've got to ask: "Why wait till Sunday morning?!?" I don't know if God is testing my level of trust or just has a slightly warped sense of humor and likes to see me sweat!

But let's be honest here, I am the one who is slightly warped. I am the one doing the testing. God's message is always there, I just don't seem to open my eyes and start really looking until the desperation of the final moment. And yet, true to form, in the moment of need, when we do open ourselves, God is there. So it happened this morning, I was struggling away getting nowhere, in fact I had been struggling since about Thursday and still hadn't settled on what to say.

So I set aside my anxiety and took a few minutes to sit down and share an orange with Emily, my two-year-old daughter. I took a spoon and peeled the orange (For the longest time I used to use my thumb, jamming the rind up under the nail, usually damaging the orange and loosing a good portion of the juice. But somewhere along the line I learned about spoons and now peeling an orange is not quite so difficult and I seem to get a lot more out of it.), at any rate, Emily and I sat there feeding pieces to one another, laughing and playing and simply loving each other. And because I was able to let go of my concerns, open my heart, quiet my mind and simply be, letting love wash over me, God was there and I got the message.

As we were 'fooling around' I took a moment to notice a second orange sitting on the table in front of us. It was round and perfect. Its skin was smooth and, of course, orange, and it still had the little green button where the stem attaches. And in that orange, in that moment, I saw the living Word of God.

Now that sounds dramatic I know, and in one sense, it was. It was a kind of revelation, certainly it was a miracle of timing, and it was also a mystery as I asked, "Why me, Lord?" Yet in another sense, it was so simple and natural and obvious it made me want to laugh. I've seen a lot of oranges, no different from that one, and surely God has been present in each and every one of them. But this time, perhaps, I was a little different.

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**An orange cannot be an orange without its peel.**

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So there we were, Emily sitting on my lap totally absorbed, and me looking at an orange and seeing the Word of God. The peel seemed to me like the literal meaning of the Bible: the most obvious, the most

accessible, the most concrete, the easiest to get hold of, and yet not the really 'juicy stuff', not the part with the most value. Now don't misunderstand me, an orange cannot be an orange without its peel. It could not grow or be kept for any length of time; in fact it could not reach our tables without its peel. And neither could the Bible be the Word of God without the literal level of meaning. Just as there are bioflavonoids in the peel of an orange to help us digest the Vitamin C within, so too there is important 'stuff' in the literal sense of the Word which we must have in order to understand and make use of what is contained within the inner sense. So understand, it is not that the peel is not important, it is, very much so, but it is not the fruit, rather it contains the fruit. It covers it and preserves it in the same way the literal meaning of the Word covers and preserves the meaning of the inner sense.

So here I was looking at this orange and seeing God's Word, and Emily reached out and took it because she wanted what was there inside. And for the next few minutes she did her best to open it and eat it. (She has already learned the folly of trying to eat the peel!) In fact she even tried to use the spoon as she had seen me do earlier. But her hands just weren't big or strong or skilled enough. Watching her made me think how children, in fact all people for that matter, are not at first able to get at the inner meaning of the Word. Their minds must grow to a minimum strength of discrimination in order to separate the outer from the inner, to a minimum depth of perception to see what lies behind the obvious, to a certain breadth of understanding so that the larger ideas can be grasped. But people are blessed with the capacity to grow and learn. And nearly every child, at some point, learns to peel their own orange. Until then, there are those of us who must peel the orange for them, and break it into sections small enough for them to handle, and feed it to

them at the proper intervals. The same is true of the Bible, for with teaching, and the growth and learning that follows, nearly everyone can begin to understand the inner sense of the Bible for themselves.

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**The writings of Swedenborg . . . are a tool to make . . . getting to the 'juicy stuff' a little easier.**

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Yet even when we can feed ourselves, who among us would take an orange, even if it was peeled, and try to eat it all at once? If we didn't choke ourselves outright, we'd make a heck of a mess and probably lose most of it in the process. No, we would carefully break it into sections small enough to handle, and we would take them in one at a time. And even better, we would eat slowly, chewing thoroughly, taking the time to truly taste the juice and feel the texture, savoring the flavor and digesting it properly. And, hopefully, giving thanks to God for creating such a wonderful thing.

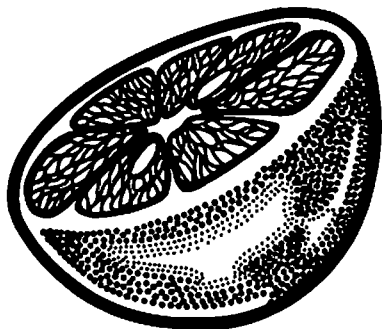
Now if we would eat an orange in this way, surely we should read the Word of God in the same way. We should break it into sections small enough to handle. We should read it slowly and carefully, not sloppily so as to waste its meaning, but rather taking each section and chewing it over thoroughly, savoring it and taking time to digest it properly. And, hopefully, giving thanks to God for creating such a wonderful thing.

Now remember that spoon I mentioned? It occurred to me that the writings of Swedenborg are something like that spoon. They are a tool to make the task of getting to the 'juicy stuff' a little easier, a little less painful, perhaps a little less messy and wasteful. Now without confusing the spoon for the fruit, we can use the writings to approach the Word of God from a different angle and get within that outer layer of meaning which at times can be

awfully tough to penetrate. Of course a spoon is not the only tool that can be used to open an orange, and Swedenborg is not the only tool that can help you understand the Bible. But it works well for me.

One last thought: I enjoy eating alone, sometimes I prefer it, sometimes it's simply necessary. But there was this morning, and there is usually, something wonderful and special about eating with someone else. Now you can each have your own orange and eat it in silence with very little sharing, or you can peel back the skin for one another. You can feed each other pieces, laughing, playing, maybe even crying or shouting, but still, opening your inner spirits to one another through the sharing of the meal, simply loving one another and giving thanks in the presence of God. Now this is a plain and simple thing, yet it can also be the most amazing and wonderful of miracles, just like an orange and the Word of God. ■

*The Rev. Ken Turley is pastor of the Elmwood New Church*



# INTRODUCING



## Dear Messenger Reader:

We thought you would like to know that Patte Wheat LeVan was unanimously elected editor of *The Messenger* at the September 22-25 meetings of Convention's Communications Support Unit.

Patte will work closely with Jim Lawrence and Convention's Central Office. She plans to include more coverage of: the family, healing, youth/aging, Convention, body/mind wellness, and tools for regeneration.

With Patte's professional experience in the above areas, her professional publishing background, and her serious commitment to our church—COMSU feels highly confident that *The Messenger* is in capable hands. Her first issue will come out in January 1989.

All of us love *The Messenger*. Its information inspires us and holds us together as a big family. But developing and producing *The Messenger* is a big job. Please give Patte your loving encouragement and support as she undertakes this major Convention task.

Sincerely,  
Carol S. Lawson  
Chair  
Communications Support Unit

## Everything New

*William R. Woofenden*

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t the beginning of that remarkable vision with which the Bible closes, found in Revelation 21 and 22, part of the opening proclamation heard by John from the throne was:

“I am making everything new!”

Revelation 21:5

How wonderful! Everything new! New clothes, new car, new house, new job, new this, new that. Great! Or is it? A whole new family? All new friends? A new, completely unknown city? A new country with a foreign language? A new and even more bizarre climate than New England? New aches and pains? New shoes? New responsibilities?

Old creeds and  
liturgies . . . ac-  
quire a sanctity  
that makes the  
devout believer  
reluctant to  
tamper with  
them.

As William Bruce notes perceptively in his commentary on Revelation, "In the natural world, as in the spiritual, the making of all things new must be preceded by the passing away of former things; and old things cannot be brought to an end without something of the nature of a judgment . . . Whatever tends to make clear the distinction between the real and the seeming . . . is seldom effected without something of conflict and tribulation."

In short, the descent of the marvelous Holy City New Jerusalem, which our church holds to be such a precious happening, apparently has to involve making *everything* new. Did we realize that when we allied ourselves with this strange and wonderful *new* church? I somehow doubt it. Let's examine a bit of what is involved here. You don't need to stand up and make a public confession, or anything like that, but may I ask that you answer honestly to yourself the following questions:

Do you like change, or do you distrust it? When something new is suggested, do you say, "Let's try it!" Or do you say, "Hold on—what's wrong with the good old way?" Do your instincts favor experiment and innovation, or caution and the lessons of experience? I suppose we are all temperamentally weighted on the one side or the other. In Gilbert and Sullivan's *Iolanthe* we are reminded:

How Nature always does contrive  
That every boy and every girl,  
That's born into the world alive,  
Is either a little Liberal,  
Or else a little Conservative!

Well, these labels are still with us, and, whatever they may mean politically, it is still true that most of us have a little prejudice one way or the other—attracted to change, or repelled by it; fond of what is new, or fond of what is familiar; easily persuaded to plunge into the untried, or strongly rooted in the proved and valued past.

This fact makes for differences in our approach to religion, too. In every long-established church there is always a strong conservative tendency, a resistance to change. Old creeds and liturgies and ancient customs acquire a sanctity that makes the devout believer very reluctant to tamper with them. Even habits of the quite recent past get a tenacious grip on us, and the notion of change seems a threat to the whole structure of our faith.

Churches are therefore naturally cautious about innovations, and every minister knows that even the introduction of an unknown new hymn—or, worse still, a new *tune* for an *old hymn*—can cause some people great distress.

Yet religion has always had its innovators, its revolutionaries, its reformers. In every generation some individual or group wants to make changes, to update old habits and ceremonies, to revise creeds, to experiment with new forms of worship and service. Christians, by and large, can, I believe, be roughly divided into those who incline toward the new, and those who stand firmly by the old—with many of us somewhere in between.

Therefore, let me ask (and then try to answer) a blunt question which seems to be hovering at the back of many minds today. "Does the world really need a new religion, a new church?" Over the centuries, a great many religions have taken hold of sections of the human race. In the last three thousand years, only a few of these have become more than local or regional religions. Only a few have had widespread influence affecting the destiny of whole nations or continents: Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam.

In the western world, Christianity has been the great formative and inspirational force, and it has spread—especially in the last couple of centuries—into every corner of the globe. Yet we also know that it has suffered tremendous losses in recent years, and there are those who feel that Christianity cannot meet the challenges of the present hour.

Times have changed, people say. Christianity was born into a very different world, where no one had any conception of the size of the universe, the possibilities of exploiting nature, of exploring the atom and the stars, of developing almost unbelievable methods of communication, of devising incredible labor-saving machines, of subtly controlling people's minds. A religion that was good enough for a Galilean fisherman, or a Roman soldier, or a Greek Philosopher, or a medieval theologian—or even for our grandparents—will hardly do today, they say; continuing: If you must have religion, then this age of science would seem to demand a new, scientific religion.

This type of argument, may I suggest, appeals especially to those who are temperamentally inclined to novelty. Almost two thousand years ago, when the apostle Paul was visiting Athens, he found a group of people there who were quite willing to listen to him speak of the Gospel, the new Good News, because apparently they were always delighted to hear about the latest in anything, including religion. "For all the citizens of Athens," Paul tells us, "and the foreigners who lived there liked to spend all their time telling and hearing the latest new thing." (Acts 17:21)

A great many people today apparently have this same "itch" for religious novelty; and in most cases, without any serious or critical study of either science or Christianity, seem to assume that *any* substitute for Christianity that comes along must be better than the faith of their fathers, especially if that substitute claims to be "scientific." The other side of this coin, of course, is that if the established church gives the impression of being stuck in a groove, mumbling the same old prayers, uttering the same old teachings, then, I suppose, a new religion probably would have a magnetic appeal to a modern Athenian.

The first thing to be said, then, in answer to the question, "Do we

need a new religion?" is, "Have we really given a fair trial to the one we have?" A Dr. D.T. Niles of Ceylon, who knew a good deal about different world religions, when answering a group of students and faculty members who were questioning him about alternatives to Christianity, once said: "You were all brought up in a Christian environment, so your first task is to make up your mind about Jesus Christ. When you've done that, then you can turn to other religions." It seemed a rough reply, but what the scholar intended was to call bluntly to their attention what he sensed was their general ignorance of the Bible and their superficial practice of Christianity, and to encourage them to face rationally the clear claims of Christ.

May I suggest there is no sense in looking for a new religion if we don't really know what our present one is all about. Recall those probing words of Jesus found in the Gospel of John: "You study the Scriptures because you think that in them you will find eternal life. And these very Scriptures speak about me! . . . If you had really believed Moses, you would have believed me, because he wrote about me. But since you do not believe what he wrote, how can you believe what I say?" (5:39, 46-7) I wonder how many of us today have faced up squarely to this challenge?

Some surely have, and for those who *have* accepted Christ as Lord, as well as for those who perhaps haven't reached *that* goal but who are nevertheless serious in their search for truth, there is something more to be said, other questions to be raised. For instance: Is the heart of religion, the central meaning of the Gospel, really concerned with such scientific data as the size of the universe, the speed with which one can travel around the world, or the sheer bulk of our technical know-how? Hasn't it more to do with the kind of *person* I am, the kind of society I am meant to live in, the God whom I seek to serve and worship?

Does the world  
really need a  
new religion, a  
new church?

You and I may live in an environment very different from that of the apostles. But are we really very different kinds of sinners, or do we really need a different kind of savior? Suppose that in our lifetime we were to colonize another planet. Do you think the Sermon on the Mount would be entirely irrelevant there?

Religion has little to do with the technical process by which people evolved from being savages with bows and arrows, into modern political leaders with power at their fingertips to blow our world to pieces. But it has everything to do with the shooting of that arrow or the pushing of that button.

God is not an object to be replaced or updated with every successive human civilization. When God speaks to you and me in the Bible as the one eternal living God, our creator, redeemer, sustainer—revealed to us most fully in the person of Jesus Christ as divine love and wisdom incarnate; when in his word he rebukes our sins and prompts us to live lives of honesty, purity, unselfishness and faith—if we in any way hear his voice, we should then begin to realize that our needs are not so very different from those of our ancestors, and that we really have no need to look elsewhere for spiritual enlightenment.

Let me again ask the question: Does the world need a new religion? And let me try to answer it with another question: Do any of us think that if we—individually and collectively—were thoughtfully and totally devoted to the Lord we would find him inadequate or insufficient for our deepest inner needs?

The more I think about the obvious answer to that question, the more I begin to feel that we *do*, after all, need a new religion, in the sense of a new appreciation of who Christ is, and of what he can and does do for us and through us. I further realize that we all need a new and deeper understanding of the Bible, especially of its revealed

spiritual message, which in turn will give us a new sense of the glory and wonder of God and his love for us.

Here we are. And, yes, I guess we should admit it, probably dragging with us a lot of conventional piety, tired prayers, listless worship, and outworn religious ideas. And, on the other hand, here is God, the eternal changeless God, saying to us, "I am making everything new!" Do we even begin to appreciate how personal this statement is intended to be? Do we realize that in saying this our Lord is really offering to each one of us his love and wisdom and strength to revolutionize our personal religion, to revitalize our personal faith, to make us a vital part of that "everything new" he promised?

When I think of the great ocean of Christian truth and experience, and the wealth of special help my own church offers me to understand it, I have to admit that I have only paddled a short way into that ocean, and that there is still a vast expanse to be explored, new discoveries to be made, new experiences awaiting me just over the horizon. And even in the midst of that realization I also remember that the heavenly doctrines of the New Church simply claim to offer to the world new *insights* into the Christian faith, not a new faith to replace the old one, not a new religion.

A little story I've always liked is this: One of the old saints is reported to have muttered on his deathbed, "Brethren, let us begin to serve the Lord our God, for until now we have made but little progress!"

Revision of personal religion begins, not with a frantic search for a substitute for Christianity, or with a revolt against all that the Christian church stands for, but with the recognition that the Lord has already made available to us, and all the world, much more than we may realize. Further, he is patiently waiting for us to get around to believing and acting on the word he has already given us. He is, in fact,

constantly searching for ways to break through the crust of our routine and listless worship habits and to lead us into the light of an intensity of truth that is truly new and dazzling. It is not mere coincidence that part of the description of the Holy City is that it "does not need the sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp."

We don't actually need a new religion. We need a new appreciation of the religion we already have. We don't need a new God. We need a new *faith* in God. We don't need a new savior. We need a new *vision* of our Lord God and savior Jesus Christ, "the same yesterday, today, and forever." (Heb. 13:8) ■

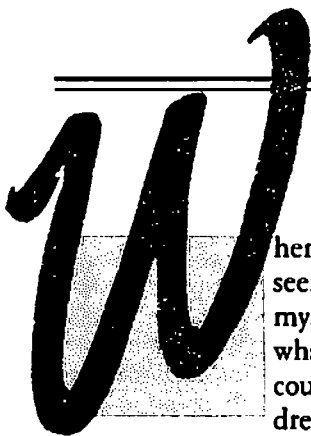
*The Rev. Dr. William R. Woofenden is on the faculty at the Swedenborg School of Religion, Newton, MA.*



## Dust Off A Dream

Carla Friedrich-Mason

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*"Whatever you can dream you can do, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it."*

*Goethe*

When filled with doubt and hesitation and it seems all odds are against me, I like to ask myself this question: what would I dare to do, what actions would I take today, if I knew I could not fail? It is a question that increases the dream factor to the power of two and opens the mind to unlimited possibilities. So if as a Church we could not fail, what would you dream for us today? You are the Dream Confectioner, and you can sweeten the dream with anything that is meaningful to you.

My dream has to do with the Church specific (the New Church in its visible and external form). It comes from two sources: great pain and great joy—from the joy I felt as a young adolescent discovering the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, and from the pain of isolation.

I became acquainted with the New Church philosophy at the age of fourteen. My father, R. A. Friedrich, and our minister, Rev. E. L. Frederick, were longtime friends; I was on a visit to see my father in Deland, Florida, where the church had relocated from Miami, and my father was living in a cottage beside Swedenborg House. What a blessing this was! Divine Providence shed His grace on me. On my first visit to Swedenborg House, my interest was piqued immediately. In the evenings there were lengthy discussions that lasted into the wee hours of the morning on psychic phenomena, dreams, theories of time and space, life in the universe, and life after death. And this man Swedenborg seemed to have something to say about everything (little did I know!). I was impressed! And besides, a church that lets you come in cut-off blue jeans couldn't be too bad. Everyone was so genuine. Though they had specific and firm beliefs, they were also tolerant and open-minded. I knew this one day when Dad interrupted the minister with an "I beg to differ!" Rev. Frederick patiently responded and an impromptu debate ensued. Eventually the sermon was wrapped up nicely, and we broke for coffee and refreshments and pleasant conversation. This was my kind of church!

The Writings were dished out in portions my young mind could digest. First I was given dozens of pamphlets, some collateral works, a biography or two, and then, when I was ready, *Heaven and Hell*. I was searching for Truth, and I was certain I had found it. Sometimes I had to read a passage four or five times before I could understand it. But oh, what light when it finally dawned on me!

When I had devoured those, I came back for more. I think I returned to Swedenborg house ten weekends in a row. It was 350 miles one way, but I loved hearing the sermons with all the wonderful analogies, and I was struck by the simple, yet profound and heartfelt quality of the services.

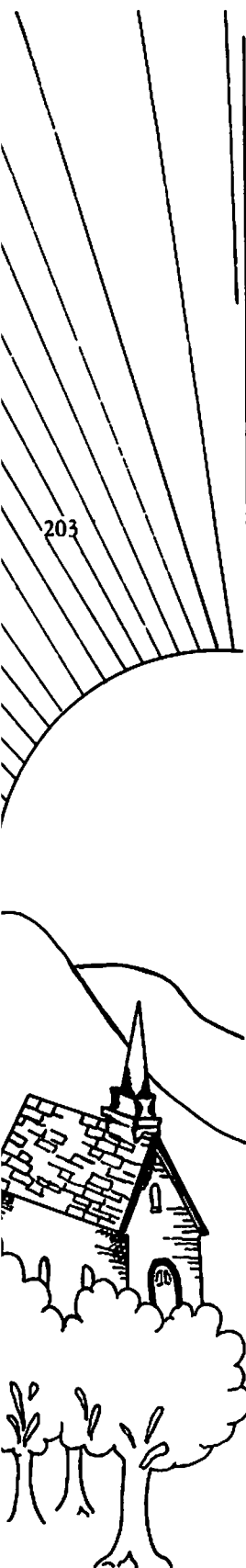
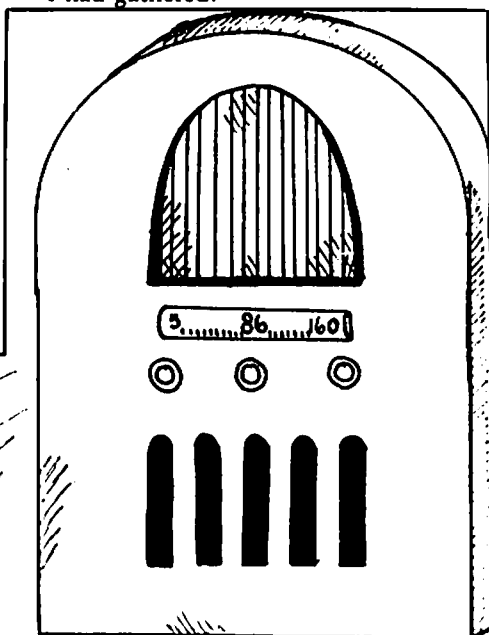
New Church theology encompassed all of life, pulling avenues of diverging thoughts at the center like spokes on a wheel. Emanuel Swedenborg's writings were confirmation of all I had come to believe and experience, and then some. I was ecstatic that someone else could confirm my beliefs with authority and personal certainty, and with logic. It was so reasonable! It was what I had been searching for all my life. I was troubled by incongruent messages about God, science, the Bible, religion, and life in general, and Swedenborg was able to reconcile those for me.

Soon I was given stacks of books: *The Divine Love and Wisdom*, *The Four Doctrines*, *The Divine Providence*, *Arcana Coelestia*. So many heavenly secrets revealed! I could not contain them! My cup runneth over, and I wanted to spill the wine into the cups thrust out by other thirsting souls. But how do you explain it to them? Why weren't there more churches? And why didn't more people know about this? I began carting friends and family and sometimes virtual strangers to Swedenborg House to share in this glorious discovery. Rev. Frederick even came to Warner Robins, Georgia, to speak to a group of folks I had gathered.

But even though these people were interested, I was very lonely, which brings me to my pain. How many adults, much less adolescents, can be persuaded to read four hundred or more pages of high spiritual writing? It was frustrating for me. I was grieving for the loss not of what was but of what could be. That disappointment signalled a need for change or action on my part. We needed more ministers and churches than there were to go around. This set up in me a resolve to do or dare something. But what could I do? Become a minister? At fourteen, I was full of insecurities, which immobilized me with fear. I wasn't smart enough, old enough, brave enough, etc. With that fear, I became a procrastinator in a major way. But dreams don't lie, nor do they die or go away; they just keep recurring. And now today, fifteen years later, this dream is still with me and still indicts my conscience.

**Dreams don't lie, nor do they die or go away.**

I asked myself why I was so reluctant and discovered that this was not just something other than myself. Some other life was exacting an answer from me: "Will you do this for me?" Whereas before I feared accepting this challenge, now I fear my life will not fare well if I do not. My brother once asked me, in a genuinely interested way, if what I had found was so wonderful why weren't there more of us? That had never bothered me before, except from the perspective of my loneliness. Well, I thought about that for a while and discovered that even though some needed the validity of numbers, I do not. I decided that our Church is not dying, despite its small numbers. I found comfort and encouragement in the fact that my faith is a vital one, contemporary, yet visionary at the same time. It has always been ahead of its time. For me, that is what makes it appropriate and ap-



plicable from one generation to the next. That is the way truth, divine influx, operates. I have discovered it anticipates my state of receptivity, and like a wise teacher, it is ready when I am. I feel my Church, internal and external, will forever be coming into fullness, advancing toward its prime, as with all things heavenly. For me it will always be valid.

I have decided to enroll in SSR in a few years. Attending convention this year made me feel that this was much more possible than before. Everyone I met was so loving and supportive, the fellowship was incredible! I finally felt connected, and I hope never to miss another convention.

Feeling that closeness brings me to the first part of my dream. I see on the horizon of my dreamscape the use of more media so that isolated Swedenborgians and other receptive people can be brought into community. If I knew I could not fail, I would fill the airwaves of television and radio with Swedenborg's lifegiving message. I often wondered about this as a teenager and thought about how wonderful this would be if it were available to me and others like me. I am sure there are hundreds, if not thousands, of other people (pew-potatoes), who would welcome such profound truths. I'm always baffled

at how to start on an uncertain and uncharted course but remind myself that it is best to start by doing what I can, when I can, with what I have at hand (to paraphrase Roosevelt and a few others).

Perhaps the individual ministers can initiate some videotaping of their weekly sermons, or even audio cassette tapes would suffice, either of which could be passed around Round Robin style. I used to tape Rev. Frederick's sermons and always enjoyed them very much. I feel we would be remiss if we didn't make use of all our available resources. What if those before us, or even Swedenborg himself, had not made use of the printing press? Television, telecommunications, radio, etc., are just more tools for disseminating knowledge.

Having experienced the lack of ministers and churches alike, it is my dream to see a church and minister in every town that wants and needs one. A more active recruitment of theological students would be helpful. I am grateful to the people who are supporting this effort financially.

The other aspect of my dream involves the continued hard work of translators, more explanatory works, and study guides like the one recently put together by Dr. William Woofenden. It also includes

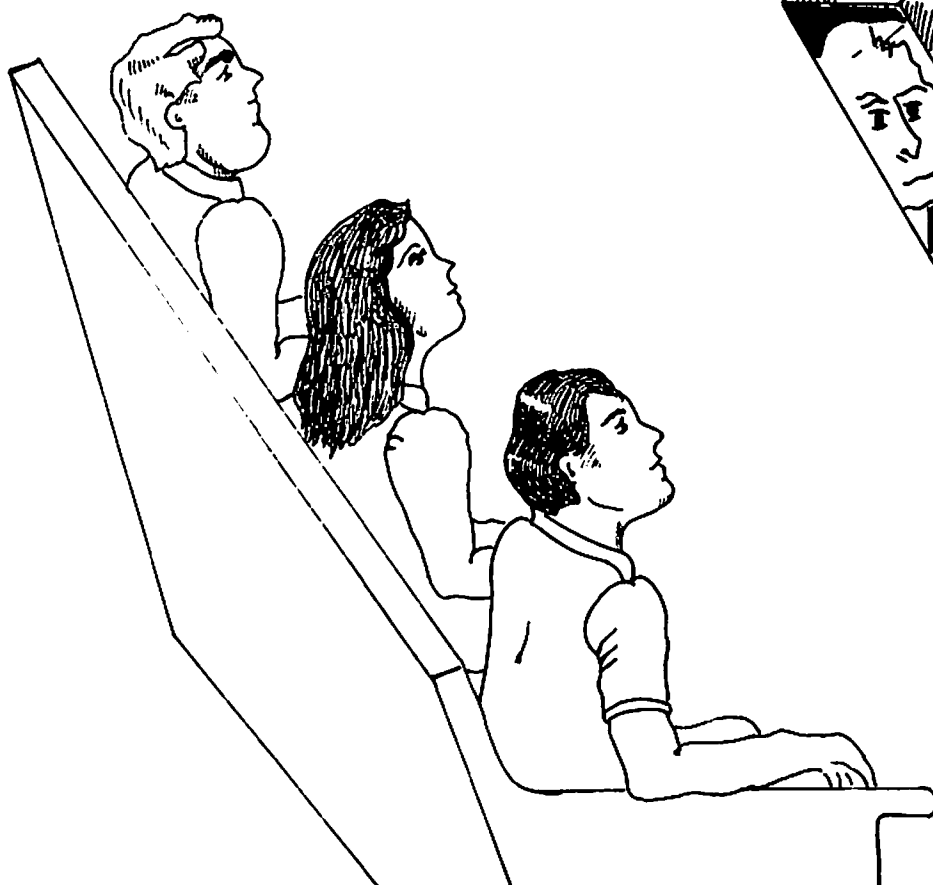
more collateral works for the general public and more literature at the juvenile level, a "trickling down," so to speak (but let's hope not at the sacrifice of scholarship).

I may be old and gray before I get anywhere close to fulfilling one of my dreams, but Swedenborgians tend to live to a ripe old age anyway. ■

*Courage is the price life exacts for granting peace.*

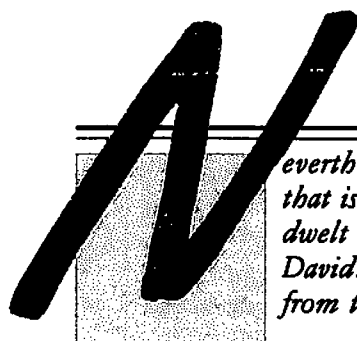
*Amelia Earhart.*

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## Building Up The Church

*Ian Arnold*



*Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion, that is, the City of David" . . . "And David dwelt in the stronghold, and called it the city of David. And David built the city round about from the Millo inward."* 2 Samuel 5:7 & 9

It seems to me that it would be useful for me to comment on this strange sounding place name, "the Millo," first of all, otherwise exactly what it was that David did and, in turn, what is meant by it, is largely lost on us.

Jerusalem, let's not forget, is built on a hill, and ground had to be levelled therefore for important buildings to be built there. Where, in due course, the Temple was to be built, a lot of levelling was carried out, terraces built, and filling brought in. And it is this particular spot in Jerusalem that was known as "the Millo" or the place where all the filling had been brought. Once David had conquered the citadel which became Jerusalem he set about building it into the capital city which up to that point he really hadn't had. He seems to have set about this reconstruction and enlargement of the city almost immediately and with a great deal of enthusiasm. The fortress he conquered was nothing like the city it became a few years later.

The second thing I draw your attention to here is the strategic importance of David's conquest. The thing is that so long as Jerusalem remained unconquered his kingdom was effectively cut in two. There was the territory the people of Israel occupied south of it and the territory they occupied to the north of it. And it was an enormously important political advantage to have Jerusalem in his hands and to be able to rule the tribes which made up his somewhat scattered nation from there.

You may wonder that it took all of this time to capture Jerusalem. Bear in mind that the people of Israel had already been in the promised land for several generations now, and the original inhabitants of Jerusalem, having easily resisted earlier attempts to take the place, absolutely scorned David's chances of doing so. Cripples could defend the city, they boasted. "You will not get in here. The blind and the lame will hold you off" (2 Samuel 5:6). In the end David made it seem just so easy. He sent soldiers up a water conduit from which the inhabitants had to draw water. It's amazing that a place so seemingly secure could in fact be so vulnerable.

And what a message that *in itself* carries for us! It's on the level of our inner, spiritual, growth and development that I am talking about and referring to when I say that we all know those times when there seem to be insurmountable obstacles and difficulties in the way. It even gets to the point that we feel mocked and scorned, just as David and his men were, and we could so easily give up defeated. "You'll never make any headway here" they derisively implied as they shouted to David, just as entrenched patterns of thought and behaviour seem to say to us. But David wasn't in the least put off by this. Nor should we be. The obstacles in fact are by no means as daunting as they seem.

But Jerusalem, as we now know, was more than just your ordinary obstacle. It has been said that until he conquered Jerusalem David was like a king without a kingdom. The whole thing lacked cohesion. There was no one focal point. Jerusalem was the key, and once it became David's capital everything could at last become integrated where previously it was fragmented and lacked unity and overall direction.

In the way that the Promised Land had a centre, which no one has any trouble in identifying as Jerusalem, so your life and my life has its Centre, and so does the life of every person everywhere. Every person's life has a focus. It simply has to do. If asked in a survey what is the focus of their life, people could be counted on to give a number of different answers, such as one's family, a child, a partner, work, the Church, sport, a friend, or a group of friends, a hobby or spare-time activity. But what we are getting at here and, indeed, what is actually involved here, goes more deeply than this. In every person there is what we might describe as being an *inner citadel* which, if it doesn't control everything else certainly influences everything else. We often refer to it as "the heart" of a person, such as when we talk about our "hearts" and "minds." It's the

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same thing which is meant when, for example, you hear it said that you can't really know what is in the heart of another person. It is interesting and not easily forgotten that when Samuel became so certain that it was one of David's older brothers he should anoint as the future king, to follow on after the disobedient Saul, the Lord gently rebuked him in these words: "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord sees not as man sees; man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." (1 Samuel 16:7). In more technical terms, the heart is *the will* of a person. We are people possessing both will and understanding. On the one hand there are our loves and desires, our inclinations and yearnings, both those we are unconscious of and those we are not; and on the other hand there is our rational thought, our ability to see and think through issues, in short, *to understand*.

Jerusalem, we noted, or the fortress which became Jerusalem, lay at the centre of the promised land. Control Jerusalem, as David had from the start been determined to do and as he finally succeeded in doing, and you virtually control everything. And that's exactly how it is with what we will now continue to refer to as *the will* of a person. The will is the psychological and spiritual control centre of a person's life. And it is really not over-stating the case at all to point out, as our Doctrines do, that the purpose of our life resolves itself into this, as to who is going to be in charge.

I remind you of what we saw earlier that for years this fortress which became Jerusalem, as I am referring to it, stoutly resisted any and all attempts by the people of Israel to conquer it. All through the reign of David's predecessor, King Saul, it held out, and what is also surprising is that David was several years into his own reign before he felt strong enough to make his move against it. Saul had been successful to a limited extent, imposing his

authority and bringing a degree of order into things. But he had not been able to make any inroads against the most important place of all.

There is, we have said, a psychological and spiritual control centre in every person. It is their will. We have also noted that *the* great question which confronts us as we go through life is, 'Who is going to control it?' The will with which we are born is a fortress. It is the home of innumerable unregenerate desires and inclinations. And these, taken together, defend themselves in the most formidable and aggressive manner. We have only got to stop for a minute and see how some self-seeking course of behaviour that has begun to appeal to us arms itself with all sorts of arguments and persuasions as to why we should go ahead. I suppose that one of the most common of these would be, 'Well why not? Everyone else does it.' And in some circumstances that can be a pretty powerful reason which we accept and so go along with. For a very long time, in fact, our will is and remains in the hands of influences and desires which really are our enemy and which block our spiritual growth and prosperity. So long as Jerusalem remained in the hands of his enemies David had absolutely no hope of making Israel the strong, prosperous and widely respected kingdom which under him it became. So long as our will remains under the control of unregenerate feelings and impulses, there cannot be, nor will we know, the growth, spiritual prosperity and blessing which the Lord is all the time striving to bestow upon us.

It took David to do it where the king before him, Saul, had failed. And really, what this is teaching us concerns a difference in attitude which is just so vital if we are going to wrest control of our Jerusalem from its original inhabitants or influences.

One of the things which Jesus warned us about is the different levels of obedience, or the different

kinds of Churchmanship we are capable of. People were capable of it in the past, and He observed it. And I refer you here to our brief second lesson. People would come to Him, He could see, certain that they had done all the right things, having prophesied in His name, cast out devils, and so on. Yet He would have to say to them, "I never knew you." Their attitude had been wrong. The way in which, and the spirit in which they had gone about these things, had been wrong. And it got them nowhere. Their obedience and Churchmanship had all been on the surface, for all the wrong self-regarding reasons.

It is in fact this which is highlighted in Saul's failure and David's success. It is a question of attitude. So long as it is a matter of obedience because it is in our interests in some way to obey, then Jerusalem remains untouched and unconquered. But when it becomes a *love* of obedience because this is what the Lord has taught and said, then things change, and the fortress falls.

After Jerusalem fell David straight away set about rebuilding and expanding it. As we said earlier, it was to become under him something quite unlike it had been before. This would be a new Jerusalem. This is not to suggest that his re-building programme was accomplished over night. Far from it. But slowly it became the city he had had visions of, having an influence in all parts of his kingdom and beyond.

It is in a way only the first part of the process to gain control of the fortress which is to be *our* Jerusalem. What is also required is that we embark on a reconstruction and expansion programme. Our aim, too, must be to make of it a *new* Jerusalem; a new and beautiful centre of our life and being where the Lord is truly worshipped and glorified. It is all the work that is involved in building up the Church in our lives which is involved here. It is for each of us to build the Lord's Church in our own lives. And it

cannot be stressed too much how vital it is that we do this. For the Lord's Church to exist in the world it must exist in the hearts and minds of individual people first of all.

"Everyone who lives in the good of charity and of faith is a church, and is a kingdom of the Lord." (Arcana Coelestia 6637). For the new Jerusalem to be felt in strength amongst us; the New Jerusalem which means so much to us; a new Jerusalem must in the first place be a reality in the life of each and every one of us. David's task is our task. And we have every reason to go about it with the quiet confidence and determination that he had.

There are sound doctrinal reasons for believing and stating that the Lord looks upon organisation and organisational structures only in terms of their use to the higher end, that the Church be built in each one of us. Organisational growth and prosperity, as an end in itself, misses the point. And so too should our attitude be; the organisation seen in the light of the use and service it can be to the building up of the new Jerusalem in the lives of we who aspire to be of the Church.

*"Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion, that is, the city of David:" ... "And David dwelt in the stronghold, and called it the city of David. And David built the city round about from the Millo inward."*

And then there are these inspiring words from the 62nd chapter of the prophecy through Isaiah:

*"For Zion's sake I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness and her salvation as a lamp that burns. . . . You who make mention of the Lord, do not keep silent, and give Him no rest till He establishes, and till He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth."* ■

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*The New Age*.

## Presidential Trips / Meetings

### July 1987 thru July 1988

August			
22-23	Pastoral Calls, St. Paul, MN., Preach at Sunday Services, St. Paul, MN. Meeting with Chicago Society's president on status of Chicago Church	10-12	Meetings with Rev. Mr. Norman Ryder, President British Conference of the New Church, Newton, MA.
September		10	Placement Committee Meeting with Graduating students of SSR, Newton, MA.
26	Temenos Board of Managers Meeting, Temenos at Broad Run, Marshallton, PA.		Meeting with Mary K. Klein, President, SSR, Newton, MA.
October		March	Executive Committee meeting of General Council, Newton MA.
1	Investment Committee, Boston, MA.	3	
	General Council Executive Committee Meeting, Newton, MA.	4- 6	SSR Board of Managers Meeting, Newton, MA.
209 2- 3	Cabinet and Support Unit Meetings, Newton, MA.	6- 8	CAM meetings, SSR, Newton, MA.
4- 7	CAM meetings, Newton, MA.	11-14	Joint meeting of Growth & Outreach Support Unit, Pastoral Ministries Support Unit and Augmentation Fund Committee, Almont, MI.
10	Mid-Atlantic Association Meeting, Temenos at Broad Run, Marshallton, PA.		Meeting with Council of Ministers Chairman, COW Chairman and Editor of <i>Our Daily Bread</i>
16-18	SSR Board of Managers Meeting, Newton, MA.	21	Executive Committee / Board of Managers of Temenos at Broad Run, Marshallton, PA.
22-24	Urbana Trustee Meetings, Urbana, OH.		
November		April	
5- 7	Board of Managers, Wayfarers Chapel, CA.	8- 9	Temenos Board of Managers Meeting, Marshallton, PA.
8	100th Anniversary Celebration of Pretty Prairie Church, KS.	16	Middle Atlantic Association Meeting, Wilmington, DE.
9-10	Executive Committee General Council—Temenos at Broad Run, Marshallton PA.	17	Meeting with Congregation President, Portland ME.
16-17	Pension Committee Meeting, Wilmington, DE.		Visit / Lead Worship Services—Portland ME.
18	Investment Committee—Wilmington, DE.	18-19	Peer Supervision, Blairhaven, MA.
18	Unified Fund Drive Committee Meeting, Wilmington, DE.	21-23	Wayfarers Chapel Board Meeting, CA.
20-21	Temenos Board of Managers Meeting, Temenos at Broad Run, Marshallton PA.	23-29	West Coast Church Visitation
December		23	Meeting with Mac McCormick
3	Central Office Review Committee, Newton, MA.	24	San Diego Church—Attend Services
4	SSR CORE Seminar—Newton, MA.	25	Meeting with President of San Francisco Society
4- 6	Cabinet Meeting—Newton, MA.		San Francisco Church Council Meeting
6- 7	Executive Committee General Council, Newton, MA.	26	Meeting with Gutfeldts and Bob Acker of El Cerrito
January			Meeting with Jim and Rachel Lawrence—El Cerrito
6- 7	Executive Committee General Council, Newton, MA.	May	
8	COMSU (Communication Support Unit) Meeting, Temenos at Broad Run, Marshallton, PA.	9	Executive Committee Meeting Board of Managers of Temenos, Marshallton, PA.
21-22	Cabinet Meeting, Temenos at Broad Run, Marshallton, PA.	13-16	Meeting with Rev. Ron Brugler, Director of New Church Camp in Almont
22	Executive Committee General Council, Temenos at Broad Run, Marshallton, PA.		Installation Services for Rev. Stephen Pults, Royal Oak, MI.
22	General Council Meeting, Temenos at Broad Run, Marshallton, PA.	20	Executive Committee Meeting of General Council, Newton, MA.
27-29	Swedenborg Birthday Celebration Address—Urbana University	19-22	Cabinet Meeting, Central Office, Newton, MA.
28	Meeting with Urbana Church Congregation	24-27	Meeting with Leon and Jane LeVan regarding retirement issues and Charitable Annuity—DeLand FL.
29	Meeting with Dr. Paul Bunnell, President of Urbana University at Urbana		Meeting with Ernest Fredericks regarding DeLand Church and Retirement
31	Convention Planning Committee Meeting, Newton, MA.	31	Meeting with President of Massachusetts Association and Massachusetts Union Representatives—Central Office, Newton, MA.
February		June	
1	Convention Planning Committee, Newton, MA.	3- 4	Board of Managers Meeting, Temenos at Broad Run Marshallton, PA.
6	Temenos Board of Managers Meeting, Temenos at Broad Run, Marshallton, PA.		
8- 9	Symposium on Swedenborg, Bryn Athyn, PA.	12-16	DeLand Florida—meeting with Leon and Jane LeVan regarding retirement issues and Charitable Annuity.



## A Short Introduction to Convention's Electronic Bulletin Board

Steve Koke

Convention now has an electronic bulletin board system (often called a BBS) for the general use of the Church. It is called the Swedenborg Board, and it is located at our Central Office in Newton, Massachusetts. The presence of such a thing opens up dramatic new ways in which we can communicate with each other. The advantages offered by a BBS make it definitely more flexible than ordinary telephone services, and in some cases the results are just as important as a printed publication. In fact, much of this issue of *The Messenger* has been put together, for the first time in the history of the magazine, by the extensive use of electronic communication. It has helped Muff Worden, at the Central Office in Massachusetts, and myself, at home in California, to confer and to edit and send manuscripts back and forth very quickly.

If you are unfamiliar with the idea of an electronic bulletin board, a little explanation may help. A bulletin board is a program that one can buy to run on a computer. Essentially, it makes the computer function like a big basket for messages and files. These messages and files are sent to it over the telephone lines from other computers scattered (in this case) all over Convention.

A word that is often heard in connection with this is *telecommunication*. It denotes the communication of one computer with one or more others.

From this point, the benefits multiply pretty rapidly. With a standard bulletin board system like ours, you can use your (or a friend's) computer to leave messages for other people in the Central Office's "basket" and to pick up any messages there that may have been left for you. You can also read other people's mail—believe it or not, this practice is recommended, for that is how the sharing of ideas and information often gets started. But privacy still exists, for you can tell the BBS that the message you are leaving is private. Only the person to whom it is addressed (and the system operator, who must be able to monitor all operations) will then be able to see it.

So far, the BBS functions a bit like a telephone exchange. But it has the unique advantage of allowing anyone to call in and participate at any time. A BBS will be online for a good part of the day waiting to process your call. Some are on for twenty-four hours a day seven days a week with only a few hours taken by the Sysop (system operator) to clean out old messages and do other housekeeping chores. Our board is open from 6:00PM to 8:00AM weekdays, and all day on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays.

Since the basket is open for so long, many people can contribute at their leisure to discussions. In our system, space can also be set aside for different interest groups. Suppose you want to discuss Swedenborgian theology. There can be a "message area" to which all contributions of that kind are routed. You are then in a room, so to speak, in which everyone else also interested in theology is in effect present. You can review what has been said and put in your two cents' worth. Over a period of time, the discussion can build up into a major disquisition on the subject at hand. And unlike telephone conferencing or discussions with friends at home, you will have a written record of what was said that can be printed out or stored in your computer. Boards and committees could of

course meet in the same way, but I suspect that a BBS will never actually replace traveling to meetings.

There is also a files section, distinct from the message sections. Our BBS limits messages to 46 lines of 75 or so characters. Messages otherwise could overwhelm the storage space of the computer, since they are expected to arrive in large numbers. But files are considered to be occasional major documents. For example, a file can be the Treasurer's report or our accountant's spreadsheet, an article for *The Messenger* left for Muff and her staff to typeset, reports from our Support Units, general reference information of any kind, or just messages that had to be too long for the message section.

That may bring up very reasonable concerns about security. Our bulletin board system is intended to serve people who are mostly within the confines of Convention. But that may make access to it sometimes difficult to control, and security levels may be advisable for some kinds of documents. Not everyone should be able to call in and look at, for example, a comprehensive spreadsheet. The BBS provides for ways in which people can be allowed into each area selectively.

Bulletin boards can also be linked with each other. Our system is often referred to as "FIDO," but that is actually the commercial name of the program we are currently using, not the name of the board. (When you call in, you see a cartoon of a doggie and his supper dish.) The FIDO program can be tied into a network of others like itself in other locations and share designated messages and files. In the future, we may have, for example, a network that includes "nodes," or other FIDO systems, at Urbana University, the Swedenborg Foundation, and perhaps one on the west coast. At present, this is dream stuff; it is not necessarily being considered by these other organizations. But large amounts of information peculiar to

them could be made part of the same system. A caller could gain access to any of it just by calling one location.

The idea can also be extended overseas. Imagine calling the Central Office and exchanging messages with Australia or England! The purpose of all of this, of course, is to pull the Swedenborgian community closer together. We are spread very thinly around the world, most of us see each other rarely or not at all, and a resource like this is very appropriate for us.

The disadvantage, of course, is that telecommunication requires a computer. Not everyone is at ease with one, and most people believe that computers are expensive. Actually, computers are more like televisions as far as price range is concerned. One which does the job and has a modem (a device which connects the computer with your telephone line) can be obtained for about \$200. In addition, there are hopes that we will eventually have computers all around Convention just for general purposes. That is a longterm process, but it will probably be possible in the not too distant future to go to your church and call the Swedenborg Board from there.

We have made the Swedenborg Board a little easier to participate in by adopting an 800 number. It has been published here before, but it will not be reprinted here. A call to the 800 number is free to the caller, but it must be paid for by Convention. You can get the number by calling the Central Office (617-969-4240), or by dropping a postcard to:

Muff Worden, Director  
The General Convention  
48 Sargent Street  
Newton, MA. 02158

with your name, address, phone number, and the name of your local church or a note about your interest in Swedenborg. We'll be happy to send you the number, as well as some details about how to sign on to the Board. ■

## The Isolated Members Network

*Susan Weiss*

During the past three conventions, a growing group of "isolated" members have been talking about what it's like to be geographically isolated from a Swedenborgian congregation or society. As we have gathered to talk, we've realized that in some ways we are the lucky ones. At least we have found ways of attending convention either once or regularly. But the question of how we maintain our connections and enthusiasm is still relevant. Of equally great concern are all the isolated Swedenborgians. Many of us can remember when . . .

How do people maintain a feeling of connection when they can't regularly attend a Swedenborgian church? What do we do for worship experiences? How do we attend to our personal spiritual growth, and how do we pass on our ideas and beliefs, or even explain them, to our children?

Lots of questions, with as many answers as there are isolated members. It has been good to get together and discuss our experiences. But we also want to find ways to encourage and support each other and to reach out and extend our network to others who can't regularly attend a Swedenborgian church.

Some of the ideas we've been working on are:

1. Compile and distribute a mailing list of isolated members.
2. Gather a list of resources that are available by mail.
3. Maintain study groups by mail.
4. Make use of Convention's computerized bulletin board system, The Swedenborg Board.

Anyone who is interested in becoming part of the network, or who has resources that they would like to make known to us, please contact:

Sue Weiss, PO Box 305, Somers Point NJ 08244 ■

## Council of Ministers Meeting Summary

*Rachel Rivers Lawrence, Secretary*

At the Council of Ministers meeting in June it was moved, seconded and voted to amend Article I, Section 3 of the Council of Ministers By-Laws as follows:

"Meetings of the Council of Ministers shall be of three types: public meetings, open to anyone who may be interested; business meetings, at which the business of the Council shall be transacted, attendance at business meetings being limited to members of the Council, the president of the Swedenborg School of Religion, authorized candidates, theological students, and others who may be admitted by vote of the Council; and executive session, for which all persons who are not members of the Council shall withdraw at the request of the Chairperson. Any guest may be invited to remain for executive sessions at the request of a Council member, together with a three-quarters vote of the Council."

Amended June 26, 1988, Newton, MA. ■

## Who Read Swedenborg's First Editions?

*John Chadwick*

hen you have a book published nowadays, at some stage during the printing the publisher sends you a form with a large number of questions for you to answer. The questions are about the book and yourself to assist him to decide how and where it should be advertised. One of the most important questions is: For what readership is the book intended?

Swedenborg did not have a publisher who was putting his own money into publication, for the author paid the cost of printing himself. This enabled the books to be sold cheaply, but it did not

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ensure much publicity for them; many were given away by the author, and we know that booksellers found little demand for them. Writing in *True Christian Religion* at the end of his life, he remarks that he will not discuss a particular subject in detail because he had already published a book on the subject, of which, he says plaintively, "there is still a large stock of copies at the printer's in London." (123<sup>4</sup>.)

But suppose Swedenborg had been asked the question: For whom is your book intended? He would no doubt have replied that the doctrines of the Lord's new church were for all Christians and ultimately for all humanity. Yet if we turn to the books themselves, it is obvious that he cannot have expected them to be read by all Christians, let alone others. The readership of a book is limited to those who can read, and remember that in Britain today that is less than 100% of the population, and the figure was far lower in the 18th century. Readership is also limited to those who are literate in the book's language, and this was, for all the theological and most of the earlier publications, Latin.

But of course the readership of Swedenborg's books was not limited to Britain. They could have been read by a similar proportion of the people in Holland, Germany, Scandinavia and perhaps a higher proportion of the population in Roman Catholic countries, such as France, Spain and Italy. But here there was a problem, since Protestant theology was anathema to the Catholic Church. The Vatican maintained an Index of prohibited books, and I had always assumed that Swedenborg's theological books appeared on it. In fact the only book of his which was banned was the *Principia*, which might have been thought to be purely scientific. It occurred to me to investigate whether copies of the original editions found their way to Rome—after all, you need to read a book to find out whether it is fit for anyone else to read. You may be surprised to learn that the Vatican Library, which includes the library of the Inquisition, has no copies of the original editions, other than Volume I of the *Principia*. Similarly the Library of the Institut de France in Paris reports only *Apocalypse Revealed* among the major works of which it has first editions.

From this I deduce that the educated public of Catholic countries were almost totally unaware of these books when they were published in London or Amsterdam. Their readership must have been very largely limited to Protestant countries.

But if we examine the works in detail, we shall find further restrictions on their readership. All of Swedenborg's theology is founded upon his interpretation of the Bible, so that a knowledge of the Latin Bible is an essential part of a reader's equipment. Certainly all educated Protestants of his time were familiar with the Bible, so that this would not have involved any restriction; but the richness of his vocabulary certainly owes something to Biblical sources, and even when he is not directly quoting, his language often parallels passages of scripture. Swedenborg does not, however, assume that his readers understand the Hebrew, and when he needs to refer to the original he carefully explains the meaning of Hebrew words.

Similarly, he does not expect his readers to know Greek, though the language of the New Testament was widely studied in universities. He does, however, use a great many Latin words which were borrowed from the Greek, but this is because they are technical terms—frequently those employed by physicians, as they are today, to prevent the patient from discovering what is wrong with him.

On the other hand, Swedenborg sometimes employs French words in a way which implies that he expected his readers to understand the

language. It is often difficult in Latin to convey accurately a concept unfamiliar to the ancient Romans (things, for example, like ice-cream). In such cases Swedenborg sometimes uses the nearest equivalent in Latin, followed by the French word. For instance, in *Conjugal Love* 459<sup>1</sup>, he says that young men before marriage cannot always live chaste lives, as they should, and it is therefore preferable for them to have as a female companion a *pellex*, a word usually translated "concubine." But he qualifies this by adding "who is called in French *maitresse*." Or in *True Christian Religion* 616<sup>1</sup>, when he wants to talk about galley-slaves, a medieval barbarism surprisingly unknown to the ancient world, he talks about "ships called *galeres*." Modern editors have emended the word to fit Medieval Latin; but no change is needed (except to supply the accent), for the word is meant to be French.

Even more remarkable is an experience in the spiritual world reported in *Apocalypse Revealed* 463. Here he wanted to talk about "turtles"; but the Latin word for this creature is ambiguous, for it can also mean "tortoises." In this case the French solution was little use, since in French too the same word is used, though in both languages the ambiguity can be avoided by adding the epithet "marine." What Swedenborg actually did was to add the Swedish word. We must not, however, conclude that he expected his readers to be familiar with Swedish. He used his native language frequently in this way in his private journal, and it looks as if this usage was taken over unchanged from an early draft.

We know Swedenborg spent much time in London, and consequently must have spoken some English; he wrote it too, rather inaccurately. In *True Christian Religion* 722<sup>3</sup>, he quotes with approval from the Anglican Book of Common Prayer, and gives a long passage in Latin translation; but in another place (*Apocalypse Revealed* 294<sup>9</sup>

and *True Christian Religion* 111<sup>9</sup>) he actually quotes a sentence from the same source in English, without providing any Latin version. A reader who knew no English would not lose much; but it does rather look as if English must be added to French as an accomplishment expected of the reader. At this point the use of foreign languages appears to stop.

Now a classical education in the 18th century included not only being taught to read and write Latin, but also to understand the culture of the classical age of Rome. The history and the writers of this period are frequently mentioned; for instance, Cicero, Seneca and Ovid, often allusively, as if these names were known to everyone. But since Latin literature was largely influenced by Greek, the Greek writers who are regularly mentioned by Latin authors are also named: among philosophers not only Aristotle and Plato, but lesser known names such as Democritus and Heraclitus. On the other hand Greek poets are not named; there is no mention of Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles or Euripides, but Greek mythology, a favorite theme of the Latin poet Ovid, is constantly used, again allusively on the assumption that the stories will be familiar to everyone. In other words, only so much of Greek culture as permeated Latin literature is required.

However, Latin words borrowed from Greek are freely used. Many of these are the technical terms of science, especially the medical sciences. There is in *True Christian Religion* 665 an account of an experience in the spiritual world, when various groups of learned men were asked to explain what conscience is. One of the groups was a panel of medical experts, whose answer was a long catalog of technical language, most of it of Greek origin. At the end, Swedenborg's party replied: "You speak the language of Hippocrates and Galen. This is Greek to us, we don't understand." Hippocrates and Galen were the two most famous Greek writers on

medicine, who had a profound influence on the development of medical practice right down to this century. But the remark, "This is Greek to us," makes it clear that a knowledge of Greek was not one of the requirements expected of the reader.

But, as I used to say to my students at Cambridge, if you come up to read Biology or Mathematics, all you really need to know is biology or mathematics. But if you read Classics, you will need to know something about biology and mathematics, and all the other sciences which were invented by the Greeks. In Swedenborg's time there was little specialization; the same man could, and often did, publish books on such diverse topics as mathematics, optics and theology, which is precisely what our own Isaac Newton did.

Swedenborg had a special interest in the practical applications of science, but these do not often intrude into the later theological works. That, however, is certainly not true of his interest in the human body, because this proved to be essential for the understanding of the organization of the spiritual world. Throughout his theological writing, medical and anatomical terms are frequently employed, and a reader unversed in anatomy will often need to look up the meaning of these terms. I think it needs to be emphasized that this is not just a matter of knowing a few technical terms; Swedenborg assumes that the reader has a firm grasp of anatomy and physiology as understood in his time.

Nor is modern philosophy neglected. Descartes, Leibnitz and Wolff are required reading. (Kant is absent because his most original work appeared only after Swedenborg's death.) The short work on the relationship of the soul and the body is in effect an essay on certain philosophical views held in the 18th century.

It hardly needs to be said that a thorough knowledge of theology and

Church history is essential. He thinks nothing of rattling off a list of thirty different heresies which have beset the Christian Church (*True Christian Religion* 378<sup>2</sup>).

215 I hope you are beginning to form a picture of the ideal reader of Swedenborg! But there is one more point I must make about his readership. He has been accused, with some justification, of taking what we should call a sexist attitude to women. While I think this is going too far, we must admit that he writes about women from a male point of view. But what else can we expect of a male author writing for an almost exclusively male audience? There were in the 18th century women, other than religious, who could read Latin, but they were very few indeed. A knowledge of Latin was no part of the education of a lady. Consequently, it would hardly have occurred to Swedenborg to adapt his language to the fair sex, though I think he places a far higher value on women than most of his contemporaries.

But let me mention one specific point. Not once, but repeatedly, he states that in the procreation of a child the soul comes from the father, the body from the mother. I was long puzzled by this statement, which I felt to be improbable in the light of modern biology and unsupported by any convincing arguments. It was only after prolonged reflection that I came to the conclusion that this statement is presented not as a revealed truth, but as a well-known fact, which none of his readers was expected to question. It is, I believe, a good example of the general principle that Swedenborg was not as a rule given instruction about natural facts unknown to his contemporaries, the sort of facts that he calls *scientifica*. He was allowed to remain in ignorance of spiritual truths. There are many other cases where he makes statements about the natural world which reflect the climate of opinion of his time.

We need therefore to read Swedenborg through the eyes of an

educated 18th century gentleman—something, I need hardly say, which is beyond the powers of most, if not all, of us. A translator can do a little for the reader by supplying information which Swedenborg takes for granted, but is not generally known today, even among university graduates. But there are limits to the footnotes which can be accommodated on the page, and it has been so far the practice to allow Swedenborg to speak for himself through the translation, not to interpret him to the reader.

Ought we to be content to go on producing nothing but Latin texts and translations, almost exclusively in English? I sent a copy of the new translation of *True Christian Religion* to a friend who is a Bishop of the Church of England but in thanking me he made it clear he would be unlikely to have time to read such a long book. How many other potential readers are put off by what is by modern standards Swedenborg's long-windedness? I think it is time we started discussing the preparation of new books aimed at presenting concisely Swedenborg's views of particular topics. We can do a little by books of selective quotations; but a reasoned view demands a careful study which will distill the essence from the vast bulk of the Writings.

I wonder too if we ought not to think about further research into the intellectual background of Swedenborg's theological writings. If we had satisfactory descriptions of the state of knowledge in the mid-eighteenth century, treatises on such topics as theology, philosophy, anatomy, medicine, chemistry, physics or astronomy, as these subjects were known at this period, these would be invaluable in interpreting Swedenborg's references to these subjects. A little has been done, but I feel sure we need a great deal more research here.

A Classical scholar is accustomed to having his texts presented, not only as a bare text with textual notes, as in the third Latin edition of *Arcana Caelestia*, but also accom-

panied by extensive commentaries. It would be absurd to write commentaries on the whole of the writings explaining every reference and citing all the parallel passages. We should end up with books twice the size of the editions we feel are too long already. But at least translators ought to have access to all the discussion which is relevant to the particular text on which they are working. This will become possible in the new age of the computer. If the present American plans are realized, it will soon be possible for the student to ask where else in the writings do the same words recur, and I am sure we shall learn a great deal that is now very difficult to dig out from Potts' *Concordance*, or in some cases is wholly inaccessible. The possibilities are enormous, and we need to be thinking along these lines as we plan for our future work.

If you have been daunted by my description of the attainments needed to read Swedenborg, let me leave you with a consoling thought. Swedenborg describes in several passages how he experienced in the spiritual world a truth coming down from the celestial heaven, passing through the lower heavens and the world of spirits, until it reached people on earth. At each stage it was changed to make it suitable for reception by the inhabitants. So we may expect that on this earth truth will always be adapted to our human intelligence, and we need not fear that anything which will help us will be put beyond our reach. ■

*John Chadwick, Ph.D., delivered this address at the annual meeting of the Swedenborg Society in London, May 1988. Dr. Chadwick is the translator of the newly released edition of True Christian Religion, published by the Swedenborg Society.*

## NOTES FROM CENTRAL OFFICE

*Ethelwyn Worden, director*

It is late August as I write this for the October issue of the *Messenger*, and I am just home from a wondrous month mostly in Scotland. I could now write, from personal experience, of the merits of a true vacation—I don't think I have had a real, non-working vacation longer than five days since I was a teenager! It is lovely to spend one's days wandering around new countryside, filling the senses with new sensations, meeting and making music with new friends hither and yon, and getting a real feeling for a country I have always wanted to visit. The month was very short and I left too much unexplored territory—so I will go back soon!

My trip to the Highlands and Hebrides had an ulterior motive, so I wanted to spend as much time there as possible. But I did make a quick trip to Hoddesden, Hertfordshire—about a half hour north of London—to attend the first day and a half of the New Church Conference and to bring direct greetings from Convention to that gathering.

My first clue that things were different from how we operate came as I entered the High Leigh Conference Centre and found the registration desk in a tiny room, and "manned" by only two people! Everyone was warm and welcoming, and glad to have a Convention visitor, so that by the time I had made my way around the hallways to the meeting room I had met quite a few folks, and was able to put quite a few faces to the names I have known.

On this first day there were about 100 people in attendance from all over England, Wales and Scotland, and most of the Conference's ministers. Norman Ryder, minister in Chester and president of the Conference, was among the first people I saw, and he was full of pleasant memory of his visit to the US in February, and sends his

greetings back with me. I also met three of the theological students at the New Church College, Brian Talbot, Ray Kennion and David Lomax, of whom the latter will attend the Symposium in Tarrytown this week.

Because Randy Laakko was not able to attend the Conference as they and he had hoped, I was asked to speak about the General Convention in the program slot that evening, so presented an overview of the 1988 convention, of what our churches and groups have been doing in the past year, of how our new system of government has worked in its first year, and so on—speaking for about a half hour before asking for questions.

The questions were good ones: how are our women in the ministry doing, and how are they received? How does the Central Office function, what sort of work does it do, and is it effective? What sorts of outreach are individual churches and the national organization doing, and are they working? What new ideas are we trying in areas of outreach and recruitment of new members?

The questions, and the responses to answers I gave, indicated we have a lot in common and could well profit by a good program of communication at many levels (all ideas about how to do this are welcome!! Please let me hear them.). There are about 40 societies in the Conference—perhaps the simplest communication might be a "pen pal" relationship between one of our societies and one of theirs? If this strikes your fancy, either your minister or the Central Office can supply a list of the British church groups.

I also received many compliments on the *Messenger* from the Rev. Dennis Duckworth and others, which I have passed along to Jim Lawrence. It is a good magazine, and one we can be proud of! You might be interested in subscribing to the Conference's magazine, "Lifeline," if you don't already. The editor's address is:

Harry Heap, 20 Cox's Close,  
Stapleford, Cambridge CB2 5SP  
England.

This magazine is also a great way to keep abreast of what is going on with the British New Churches.

This Fall the Central Office will return to publishing the bimonthly Newsletter, which is mailed to churches, ministers and isolated members as an informal contact with the more day-to-day news of Convention. If you would like to receive a copy, please let me know—we'll be glad to add you to the mailing list. In the two years that we ran the Newsletter we found that it did serve a good purpose, so we are happy to be able to publish it again.

In regard to the Newsletter, I would love to receive news of all sorts from church groups in the US and Canada. Many churches see that we receive a copy of the monthly bulletin, or the Plains Banner, and we would love more of them, please, because—as you note—we steal our material liberally from yours! And the more up-to-date our material is, the better the Newsletter. Thanks for your help.

Welcome back to church for many of you, after a summer of various activities that might have included a summer camp or two for families or children. We all, at Central Office, hope you will have a wonderful year! ■

## The Spirit of the Truth: A Fable

*Michael Leech*



Once upon a time lived the people of the Truth. Truth had been given to them on tablets and they lived the Truth. The Truth lived in them. It was current, immediate and guided every part of their lives. Many fell away in wickedness but some still followed the Truth.

Some decided the Truth must be Unchangeable to remain pure. It is only what is written on the tablets. Not a word could be altered or added to. Preserved in this way they spoke it to their children and their children's children. It became strange and foreign sounding and the children would not listen. The Elders bemoaned the spiritual state of their children and sat in their circles, aging, with dust gathering around them.



Another group entered into a relationship with Truth. When they raised their children they said the Truth of which we speak lives inside you not on tablets only. Let Truth speak inside you. The children listened and said "Listen Elders, we think the Truth dances!" Truth dance? How can the truth dance and still be Holy Worship? Their children showed them. They tried it out. The young had taught them a new aspect of the Truth. Holy and joyous dancing.

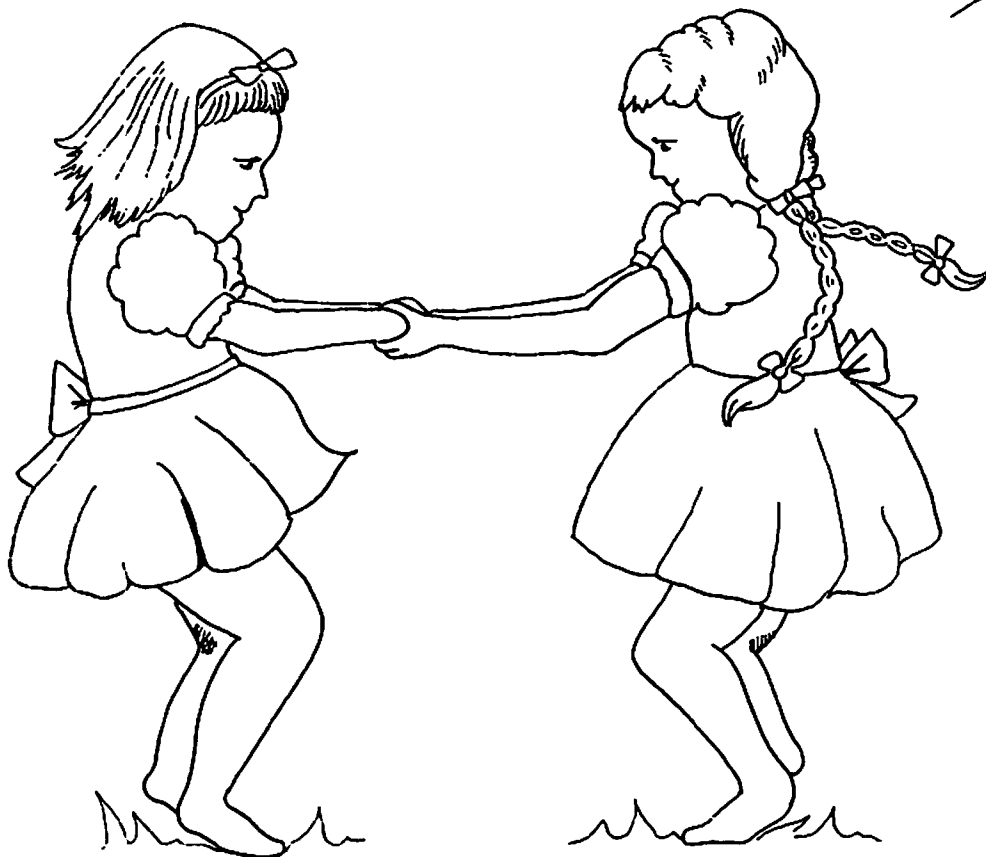
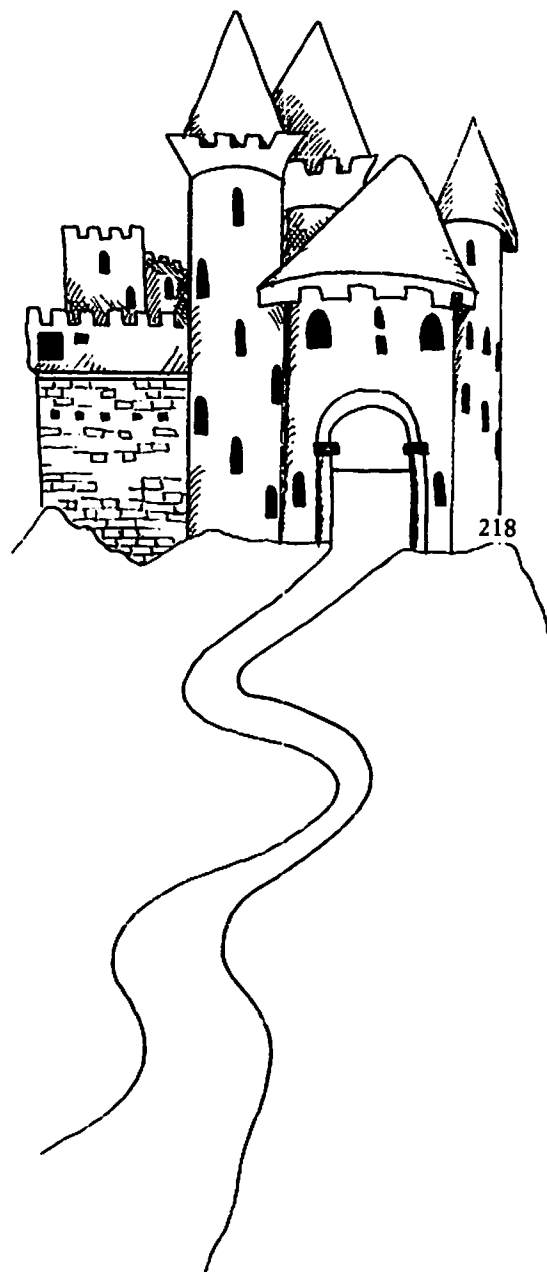
Stars in their eyes. Love in their hearts. Young and old dancing together. From that day sometimes they were right and sometimes they were wrong but always they lived the Spirit of the Truth.

*Moral:* Arcana Coelestia 3451  
"But as regards the Lord's kingdom on Earth, that is, His church, the case is that inasmuch as it has its doctrinal things from the literal sense of the Word it cannot but be carious and diverse in respect to these doctrinal things... Consequently, as the Lord's church has its

doctrinal things from the literal sense of the Word it will everywhere differ... Nevertheless, a difference in the doctrinal things of faith does not prevent the church from being one provided there is unanimity as to willing well and doing well... That there is one doctrine, namely, that of love to the Lord and of charity toward the neighbor. That the church would be one although they differed as to worship and doctrinal things... That in heaven there are innumerable varieties of good and truth, but that by harmony they nevertheless make a one like the organs and members of the body. ■

*Dedicated with love to Henry James, Sr., my Convention Church, spiritualistic Swedenborgians, philosophical non-aligned Swedenborgians and the General Church.*

*Correspondence can be sent c/o Church of the Good Shepherd, Kitchener, Ontario.*



## OPINION

### 219 Plea for Subscriber Inter-communications

Dear Editor,

I have been attending the New Christian Church (Sydney, Aust.) regularly over the past 5 years (4 plus as a member) and during this time I have enquired about, and searched for, in vain, a comprehensive Bible-based Introduction to our Church's Teachings. I am well aware of the numerous Scriptural references which are given in such books as *The Four Leading Doctrines* and the constant citing of Scripture found in *The True Christian Religion*; but I have in mind starting with, and drawing widely on Scripture showing how it teaches the Doctrine identified and highlighted on the revelation of the Heavenly Doctrine.

I have talked with my Minister about this project and I have in mind to gather together contributions from qualified people around the world to be assembled into a course of study notes, to be used by groups, (or individuals) covering the following main topics:

1. Introduction
2. The Nature of God
3. The Purpose of the World
4. The Lord's Relationship with His People (The Word)
5. The Lord Communicates with His People (The Word)
6. God's Coming to Save His People
7. Leading the Life that Leads to Heaven, highlighting the qualities that are needed
8. God cares for His People (Divine Providence)
9. Life from beyond Death (Influx)
10. Life Beyond Death (Heaven and Hell)
11. The Marriage Covenant
12. The Second Coming and the Future.

Presently I would be delighted to hear from people who 1. sense the need I feel and am talking about; 2. are possible contributors.

Please feel free to direct your expressions of interest to me, enclosing an International Reply Voucher or Stamps, whichever is applicable:

Patricia J. Fallon J.P., Ph.D.  
Box 196 P.O. Roseville 2069.,

Thankyou for your interest.

Patricia J. Fallon J.P., Ph.D.  
Sydney, Australia

### Tribute for Preview in *The Messenger*

Dear Editor

The August 1988, issue of *The Messenger* was one of the best ever. I spent June and July in Europe so lacked time and money for attending the "Convention." Through reading Rev. David Rienstra's sermon and the many reports found in *The Messenger* I felt that I was right there.

A special thanks to Nancy Hawley for the many pictures of activities and people, many of which were of people I have known. These did much to enchant the Convention coverage. As an example, the Rev. Dr. Dorothea Harvey would come down to the Glendale Church to help out on special occasions. She had the service at Glendale the Sunday my sister and I were confirmed into the life of the General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches.

Our paths never cross anymore, yet by seeing her picture several times in the Convention coverage it was like a visit with her.

Thanks for a super issue of *The Messenger*. Keep up the good work you always do in supplying this publication.

Bill J. Cook  
Daytona Beach, FL.

### Wedding Readings For Non-Swedenborgians

Dear Editor,

One of my minister friends does a number of weddings in his Swedenborgian church for couples who do not know of Swedenborg. In recent months he has been trying something that has most pleasing results.

He asks the couple to choose the readings that appeal to them for use in their service. He includes in the readings a number directly from the book *Conjugal Love* but without any indication of the source.

So far, not one couple has failed to mark an appealing quotation from *Conjugal Love* for use in their service, and often they choose several and express appreciation for the affecting and uplifting thoughts.

If your church has not tried this, it is worth considering.

Don Rose  
Bryn Athyn, PA.

**Baptism**

**Baker**—Betty B. Baker and Donald E. Baker, Sr. were baptised into the Christian faith on Sept. 1, 1988, at the Fryeburg Health Care Center, Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. Rachel Lawrence officiating.

**Confirmations**

**Baker**—Betty B. Baker and Donald E. Baker, Sr., were confirmed into the life of the General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches on September 1, 1988 at the Fryeburg Health Care Center, Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. Rachel Lawrence officiating.

**Gallagher**—Fawn Valmarea, daughter of Brian and Fawn Reddekopp and granddaughter of Erwin and Lisa Reddekopp, was confirmed into the life of the General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches on June 12, 1988, at the Royal Oak Swedenborgian Churches on June 12, 1988, at the Royal Oak Swedenborgian Church (Detroit Society), the Rev. Stephen Pults officiating.

**Deaths**

**Johnson**—Grace Elinor, longtime member of the Detroit Society Swedenborgian Church, entered the spiritual world on July 2, 1988. A memorial service was held July 23, 1988, at the Almont New Church Assembly chapel with the Reverends Ron Brugler and Stephen Pults officiating.

**Klassen**—John S. Klassen, lifelong member of the New Church in Hague, where he farmed, and then in Rosthern, entered the spiritual world on August 4, 1988. A funeral service was held on August 7, 1988, in Hague, Saskatchewan, Canada. The Reverend David L. Sonmor officiated.

**Knodt**—Freda B. Knodt, 95, longtime member of the St. Paul Swedenborgian church, entered the spiritual world on July 27, 1988. A memorial service was conducted by the Rev. Louis Becker.

**Reissner**—Anna Martha Frieda (Friedl) Reissner, 85, widow of the late Rev. Erich Reissner of Berlin, Germany, and a member of the New Church group in Berlin, entered the spiritual world on September 10, 1988.

**Sugden**—Jane Sugden, 93, a former member and longtime choir director at the San Francisco Church, passed into the spiritual world on June 25, 1988. A memorial service was held for her on August 21, 1988, The Rev. Edwin G. Capon officiating. Her sunny disposition will long be remembered, as well as her fine musicianship, and her leadership of the choir at the 1970 World Assembly in London.

**Torita**—Rev. Shiro Torita entered the spiritual world on Nov. 9, 1987. Services were held in Tokyo, the Rev. Kentaro Sato officiating. Rev. Torita published the *New Church Monthly Magazine* for 35 years. This publication included translations into Japanese of many of Swedenborg's works and collaterals.

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