

THE MESSENGER

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February 1996

A Painter and a Pastor

James Lawrence

Who Was Joseph Worcester?

Who was Joseph Worcester? What were his own talents and qualities, and what was it about him that so sustained Keith?

Before we take up a closer look at the long friendship that developed between the painter and the pastor, it is good to gain a better feel for the genius of the personality of Joseph Worcester that has made him a favorite among regional historians—for he was certainly well known at the time of his death and has been referred to in a number of memoirs as exceedingly Christ-like, as one who made the strongest salutary impressions upon people. It was a spiritual presence most of all that drew Keith so compellingly toward his "Dear Mr. Worcester."

An insightful portrait of the enigmatic Swedenborgian pastor is not easy to provide, for rarely has
(Continued on page 19)

THE SPIRITUAL COMPANIONSHIP OF WILLIAM KEITH AND JOSEPH WORCESTER

"You say that I write [to you] too much, but I can only say that it is necessary for me . . ." writes William Keith in a letter dated December 30, 1883. " . . . I don't expect you to answer my letters except at intervals. Of course, I am always glad to hear from you, but I know your time is occupied even more than mine . . . I must do it. It's an anchor, or a link in the cable attached to the harbor. I told Mary the other night that if I should get into heaven and was asked why I was there, I could only say for excuse, that I was acquainted with Mr. Worcester."

Some one hundred letters survive from William Keith to the same receiver of this tender and open-hearted letter, to this person who had become his anchor and his lifeline. Each of these letters begins with the salutation, "Dear Mr. Worcester," a figure who indeed grew to be of unusual importance to Keith. If we wish to better understand the inner life that guided Keith's artistic path, these letters draw us intriguingly toward the Rev. Joseph Worcester. Their friendship was more than pastor-parishioner, though Keith sat faithfully in Worcester's congregation
(Continued on page 20)



WM. KEITH AT WORK IN HIS STUDIO

Write On

Soon after Jim Lawrence sent "A Painter and a Pastor" to me, I was discussing it with someone who had also previewed it prior to publication in *The Messenger*. This person commented, "What a wonderful relationship they [Keith and Worcester] had—but why would anyone write letters to somebody he saw nearly every day?"

I felt some astonishment at the question. "Why wouldn't he?" I found myself asking. I thought about the conversations I've had with people over the years that left so much obscured—threads to take up, follow, ideas to expand, clarify—opportunities to deepen our understanding of each other that were lost, evaporated in the face of the next drama that presented itself. Too many tangled verbal exchanges hanging in the air that didn't reflect our true selves, our deepest longings, humorous insights, what we really wanted to express. Too much babble, too little thought. Too much happening, too little processing of the kind that, I've concluded, can only be done through writing. There was a sense of completion, of accepting the challenge to examine my life, on the occasions when I did decide to write a letter: to my father two years before he died. More was written than I had originally intended, because the act of doing it opened floodgates. I longed to begin a dialogue with him in this manner. He was unable to respond in kind, but I never regretted writing that letter. Or those to my husband, my children, a few close friends.

A letter like that is much like baring your soul in your journal, but with the intention of sharing it. It may require even more trust in yourself to risk setting down these things and then putting them out there. But it may be that there are depths of self that can only be reached in this way. It can bring forth the deepest awareness and sharing because we become quiet within and allow the truth of our being to pour forth, then we trust that it will find its way into the heart of the other. As I ponder this question more, I find that I regret nothing I have put on paper to anyone, only that I didn't do it more often.

Various marriage encounter exercises involve writing to each other. Therapists often advocate writing letters to dead family members, posted or unposted letters to living ones, for the sake of healing, closure, or just venting long-suppressed feelings. Some of the most eloquent, enduring literature takes the form of impassioned letters written to those persons dear to the writers in times of great stress, self-doubt, deep anguish, or an abundance of joy and love that flowed out of the heart and had to be expressed in writing. Much history could not have been written or understood in any depth were it not for letters and diaries discovered long after the persons involved had passed on.

Important Church Calendar Dates

February 16-20	Com ExCom—Newton
March 7-10	SSR Board Retreat
March 17-19	CAM—Newton
March 22-24	GOSU/PMSU/EdSU—Almont, Michigan
May 6-7	Retirement Committee—Newton
June 26-30	Convention 1996—Urbana, Ohio

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Ken Burns' Civil War TV series touches us so deeply with those haunting grainy photographs and strains of "Ashokan Farewell," the recreated voices of great and ordinary people long dead. But the soul-searing passage that brings me to tears every time I hear it is the voice of the young major, Sullivan Ballou, narrating what proves to be a final letter to his beloved wife Sara, a week before he is killed in the first Battle of Bull Run. All the things he wanted her to hear, that he somehow knew he wouldn't have another chance to tell her.

In this era of advanced technology and busy schedules, many of us tend to think of letters in terms of those newsy

one-size-fits-all missives we fire out to family and friends during the holidays—and why even bother with that when the telephone is so handy? On "cheap time" we can chat for an hour for just a few dollars, if we can manage to reach the live persons instead of their voice mail.

We've acknowledged that for many decades, with rare exception, the art of letter writing is long expired, but the art of journaling is enjoying a resurgence, so perhaps there is hope. And what about the art of friendship? Might we not find renewed depths in some of our friendships if we take the time to write a heartfelt letter to them? Doesn't it strike you as sad that the kind of friendship Keith and Worcester enjoyed was indeed unusual, then and now?

—Patte LeVan

Who Was Joseph Worcester?

(Continued from front page)

the modesty of a man, especially in modern times, draped such a cloak of secrecy around his private thoughts, hopes, and feelings. His extreme aversion to personal promotion, especially through publication, went beyond mere discretion: it bordered on peculiar. Upon his death, the editor of the *Messenger* remarked in Worcester's obituary notice: "It was hoped to print a half-tone portrait of Mr. Worcester, together with one of his sermons. But he never would consent to have his photograph taken. . . . Neither was he willing to have one of his sermons published. The editor of the *Messenger* has more than once solicited a sermon from him to give to the New-Church public, but was always refused."

Romance of California

Joseph Worcester came from a long line of Harvard-educated Swedenborgian clergymen. It was a most remarkable family. The Worcester clan was the engine driving the development of Swedenborgian theology between 1830-1910, dominating both academia and publishing. Though he started out along this well-scripted path trod by his grandfather, his father, his uncles and both his brothers, there are signs that he rather wished to be an artist instead of a minister. In any event, poor health seemed to be preventing his continuing beyond Harvard College in his ministerial studies. Poor health, in fact, is what precipitated a trip to California in 1863 that proved fateful for both Worcester and San Francisco. He met John Muir in Yosemite on that first trip, as well as other inspiring characters, and together with the romance of northern California, his imagination had been seized. Local Swedenborgians in San Francisco urged him to return to Boston to complete his theological studies and to return as their pastor.

Worcester did just that, arriving for good in 1867. He became so closely identified with the growing state and city that he never returned to the East Coast after 1873, living his last forty years in a one-hundred mile radius of the Bay Area. Content to keep up his family relationships by post, Worcester's poor health combined with his quiet, deeply rooted nature to mitigate against the tribulations of traveling. Well-heeled friends, including Keith, offered numerous times to pay his way to Massachusetts and even to Europe, but, as he once confided to Keith, he doubted very much that he could learn any more of human nature abroad than he could right at home, exemplifying the principle of Swedenborgian theology that the whole is always abidingly present in each particular.

Simple but Artistic Lifestyle

Worcester lived his long life as a bachelor, and the independent parson developed the essence of the simple lifestyle. Most everything he touched was imbued with this subtle but potent quality, including his own brand of architecture which began a regional revolution. His friends marveled at his shrewd money management, for he gave



This is the only extant photo of the Rev. Joseph Worcester. Here he has brought a number of boys from the orphanage he founded to witness Admiral Dewey's fleet returning victoriously from the Battle of Manila Bay, 1898. They are on the porch of his famous self-designed home at 1030 Vallejo St. on Russian Hill.

generous gifts often and always seemed to have money to give to others. He bought few things, but when he did they were of the highest quality. He never owned more than a few suits, but they were of the best cut and always immaculately kept. He lived on \$900 a year interest from a family trust and a small income for tutoring students. For more than twenty years, Worcester took no money for his ministerial services, and finally succumbed to a modest salary at the insistence of his congregation in the last years of his ministry. In his famous self-designed homes, he raised housekeeping to a Zen artform, keeping a spare but artistic domicile. All in all, Joseph Worcester lived outwardly with a rather severe but exquisite conservatism, and inwardly with abundant spiritual richness.

Social Activist and Architect

Despite his avoidance of any kind of publicity, Worcester enjoyed the company not only of the downtrodden, to whom he was of legendary aid, but also of the rich and powerful in San Francisco. He was without doubt a man of unusual influence in San Francisco's highest cultural circles. In his obituary, it was reported that Worcester's name and character were held in such high esteem that he had become a local authority to be appealed to and quoted with much deference. As Keith mentions in several of the letters, Worcester helped plan the launching of the University of California at Berkeley, having been recruited as a member of the board due to his complementary interests in education and architecture.¹

In politics and municipal reform, also, Worcester was an active and close intimate of powerful people, from the mayor, Edward R. Taylor, down. He had gained a reputation for tenaciously and doggedly promoting decent and fair social conditions in the city for disadvantaged citizens to improve themselves and thereby raise their general level

(Continued on page 20)

Who Was Joseph Worcester?

(Continued from page 19)

of life. For this cause, he was willing to forego his usual low-key profile, as he wrote several letters to editors of the major dailies on the subject. He was especially valued by downtown businessmen for his work with orphans and ex-convicts. They admired his practical efforts to improve the moral character of the most troublesome parts of society. Though few if any attended his church, many were said to consider Worcester their minister if they had one at all.

Worcester quietly collected the funds for the establishment of several homes for orphaned boys and for ex-convicts. He enveloped these latter projects in secrecy especially, because he felt if the police knew where ex-convicts or former juvenile delinquents were living, they would become prime suspects for every unsolved crime. The only publicly known home was one for boys that he designed himself which still stands today at Mariposa and Utah streets in the Protrero Hills district. It was funded through anonymous donations from the most powerful men on Market Street.

Above all, Worcester played an influential role among young architects and artists, extraordinary considering that he was an "amateur" architect and an "amateur" art critic. More than anyone else, Worcester is deemed the originator of the Bay Region Tradition style, which takes as its fundamental principle the idea that the most beautiful architecture is one which closely imitates the divinely inspired forms of nature. It is well documented that Bernard Maybeck, A.C. Schweinfurth, Willis Polk and Ernest Coxhead were among a younger generation of architects who enjoyed many long discussions with the gentle philosopher who was two generations their senior. Their partial imitation of his two self-designed homes and of his church on Lyon Street testify to the spiritual reach of Worcester's vision. Keith himself was also closely involved with these individuals and was known to have collaborated extensively on the chapel's design. When it was nearing completion, Keith offered four of his favorite paintings that had been exhibited in the California Building of the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition in 1893. Today they occupy the length of the northern wall of the sanctuary depicting the four seasons of northern California as an allegory of the cycle of life. □

¹He was also a friend of the Stanfords—a connection brought closer through the death of a loved one, as with Keith. (Much has been written of Leland Stanford's preoccupation with his son's untimely death. Not only was the founding of Stanford University essentially built as a memorial to his son, but Leland Stanford, through the death of his son, became extraordinarily interested in parapsychology and in any esoteric wisdom providing perspectives on life after death. Worcester's Swedenborgianism, a source well-known for its teaching on individual immortality, was perhaps a mutual interest.)

Spiritual Companionship of Keith and Worcester

(Continued from front page)

for thirty years; more than mere artistic sympathies, though they each had an art background and the artistic endeavor dominated the foreground of their relationship; more than mere congenial friends, though they saw each other nearly every day when Keith was not away on his travels. It was all of these and more: it was a friendship that deepened over decades into a profound spiritual companionship that nurtured each of them in vital and telling ways. For Keith, it was certainly his most involved and complex male friendship, a durable and increasingly encompassing relationship to which Keith entrusted important business transactions, through which Keith explored new spiritual horizons, and in which the painter permitted an artistic baring of his soul.

Compassionate Presence

William Keith may well have been introduced to Joseph Worcester by John Muir, for Muir was certainly a key mutual friend. We do not know exactly when or how they met, but we do know that the friendship deepened profoundly in the aftermath of the death of Keith's first wife, Elizabeth, in 1882. The void into which Keith fell after Elizabeth's passing affected the whole of his life—his personality, his outlook, his art. Two of Keith's art students later wrote that one person and one person only had pulled their master out from a black and crippling despair: the strong, compassionate, and steady presence of the Rev. Joseph Worcester. This pastoral experience set both a tone and a structure for their relationship that would abide for the next three decades.

Both Keith's letters to the pastor, as well as the observing comments of mutual friends, attest to a far-reaching spiritual trust in Worcester that at times almost has the feel of dependency during the period spanning most of the 1880s and 1890s. He seemed to revere, almost, Worcester's quiet wisdom, and the tone of his letters frequently takes on a novice/teacher-like feeling.

Numerous anecdotal portraits exist of their friendship habits. Every Sunday, for instance, the painter journeyed across the bay to breathe in the fragrance of the quietly spiritual services led by his pastor-friend. For the first ten years of their friendship, these gatherings were held in a rented room known as Druid's Hall on Sutter Street in downtown San Francisco. Then, later, for the next fifteen years, Keith faithfully took his favorite place on the back bench by the fireplace in the now-famous Lyon Street church they built together with other artistic friends.

In addition to Sunday services, it was also Keith's habit at least once a week to trek up from his downtown studio to Worcester's Russian Hill bungalow for a simple lunch of cheese and bread and marmalade. On many other days of the week, Worcester often dropped in at Keith's studio to sit by the painter's side as he worked—usually proffering commentary and suggestions.

Worcester's nephew and late-in-life confidante, Dr. Alfred Worcester, reported that Keith actually preferred Worcester's

presence as he worked. The stubborn Scot, who could be so strong-willed in some matters, was often tentative in his art, and he came to rely considerably on Worcester's judgment as he painted. Following a 1902 visit to San Francisco, Dr. Worcester writes: "On my daily walks with [Uncle Joseph] we often called on his closest friend, Mr. Keith. Of course, I could not help hearing my uncle's criticisms, and Keith's imperturbable acceptance of them surprised me almost as much as the freedom with which they were given. On speaking to my uncle of this surprise, he said by way of explanation that Mr. Keith, who never was satisfied with his work, was as apt to cast aside as worthless what really was excellent as he was to keep working away upon what was not worth finishing."

And, as the personal correspondence abundantly reveals, Keith needed to share his professional opinions with Worcester. He treats him thoroughly as an equal in the world of art and, what is perhaps more important, he has both a need to share his developing thoughts and perceptions, and to reach out to the pastor for guidance on how to proceed with his art.

Profound Change of Style

Along with John Muir, Worcester was one of two friends who exerted what might be called a profound influence upon Keith's art. And since Muir's influence belongs chiefly to Keith's earlier representational style and

But in 1890, the great Swedenborgian artist, George Inness, came out to California for health reasons, and the three men (Keith, Inness, and Worcester) spent considerable time together. Keith rarely associated with other artists, but he had a special interest in Inness, to whom he has often been compared.

For two months, Inness worked closely with Keith, frequently spending the entire day in Keith's Kearny Street studio, excitedly holding forth on his theories of painting and demonstrating them to Keith. In a private note to his pastor, Keith confided: "I am a very happy man, Mr. Worcester. He [Inness] is a wonderful man. You know the big picture, the one with the oaks that was going to illustrate all his theories. He has changed it entirely, it isn't the same picture any more, he has made something entirely different of it—I am learning ever so much from him. I have painted too solidly, laying on the material, and so my pictures lack color and are black and white. I must paint more thinly and transparently, that makes color and middle tones." He goes even further to say: "I no longer want to die since Inness has come. I have been feeling for a long time that I was just hanging around waiting; now I want to work."

Spiritual Perspective on Nature

Worcester encouraged this new direction in Keith's art, for it suggested the spiritual origin of nature. Drawing

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Worcester's to his later more subjective and interpretive style, in many ways it appears that the whole range of viewpoint and philosophical bent inherent in Keith's relationship with the pastor went at least as deep as with Muir, who made it clear he disapproved of Keith's change in style. While Keith and Muir continued to share a vigorous love of nature and the great outdoors, Keith increasingly looked to the introverted artist-theologian for companionship in his deepest introspections. That Keith would find in Worcester not only a harmonious resonance, but a creative foil off which to play his own deep intuitions, is understandable in light of Joseph Worcester's complex personality.

Beyond technical and aesthetic criticisms, there is little doubt that Keith was influenced in an even more profound way by his metaphysical friend. Much speculation has passed as to what fueled Keith's dramatic stylistic change from an accomplished representational landscape artist to an expressionist or suggestive pastoral painter. By 1890, Keith had shifted from grandly scaled, detailed landscapes to softer, more diffuse and subjective handling.

again upon Dr. Alfred Worcester's reflections following the 1902 visit to San Francisco, "In my school days, my uncle, as our drawing master, had been a devout Ruskinite. But he has now become a most enthusiastic disciple of Keith's very different artistry." The Swedenborgian influence, which came through both Inness and Worcester, rested primarily upon a spiritual perspective on nature that both exalted the natural creation and sought to heal the estrangement of man from God by displaying the oneness of all things.

Swedenborg's most famous and popular idea among nineteenth century artists and intellectuals was his highly original concept of correspondences, often called the Science of Correspondences. Coleridge was known to have begun a full work explaining the idea, and many thinkers loosely associated with Transcendentalism became steeped in its doctrine, among them Emerson, Blake, and the Brownings. Equally to the point, the Worcester family dominated the New-Church publishing ventures promoting the unique metaphysical system. Almost all of the

(Continued on page 22)

Correspondences

Correspondence is a Swedenborgian theological term meant to depict the unique spiritual quality and power inherent in each particular piece or aspect of nature, with the assumption that nature is a self-revealing panorama of God's own nature. Every object in nature, from the massive to the miniscule, contains and communicates some specific divine feeling, some specific characteristic of God's essential nature. In thousands of references, Swedenborg provided detailed illustrations of correspondences. Much more ambitious than a merely sentimental picture of nature, Swedenborg's position is that these essential aspects of the divine have tremendous power. Their dynamic flow into the natural creation actually causes nature to exist. Each type of tree, flower, shrub, all bodies of water, types of skies, rocks, animals, the different parts of human anatomy; each and all embody as to their inmost genius some particular nuance of God's divine love and wisdom. Taken as a whole, the natural creation reveals the spiritual mind of God.

This was no mere placid principle: Swedenborg once likened the ratio of power between the spiritual and natural worlds to be ten thousand to one! The scientist-mystic posited a divine influx proceeding from an absolute and infinite divine *Esse* into a highly integrated series of degrees of descent into finite and increasingly dense dimensions of reality, terminating in what we experience as the natural world. Human beings, being immortal and essentially spiritual, live vitally, even viscerally, linked to the entire spectral range of these realms. The correspondences in nature are dynamic windows onto these higher dimensions and ultimately to union with the mind of God.

—Jim Lawrence

Spiritual Companionship of Keith and Worcester

(Continued from page 21)

lasting classics on correspondences were written by Worcesters, and Joseph Worcester himself was likewise known as a master expositor of the subtle and complex theology involved in Swedenborg's correspondences.

Committed to Transcendental View of Life

Much has been written of Inness' reliance upon this inspiration, and it seems without doubt that between Worcester and Inness, Keith was well-inducted into Swedenborgianism's deeply spiritual view of nature. His paintings after 1890 demonstrate an ever-stronger move in this direction, and it seems poignant that as Keith drew near the end of his life, his artistic compositions became even more explicitly religious. One of his last works, "Gethsemane," is also considered one of his greatest: it depicts the lonely figure of Christ walking through a somber landscape.

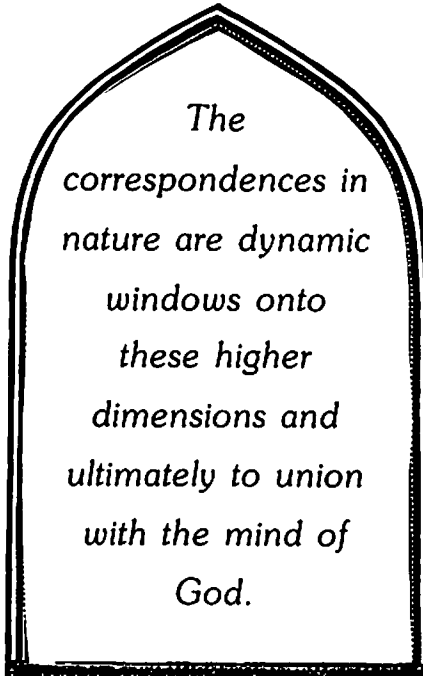
It has been said by others that Keith was more a Worcesterite than a Swedenborgian. Keith never commented directly on this matter. It is possible that he himself might not have been fully aware of the various spiritual influences upon him during

critical passages in his life, or it may never have occurred to him to speculate about it in such a way. Keith certainly became committed to the transcendental view of life that is the hallmark of Swedenborgianism. How much he ascribed to the full architecture of the reformist Christian theology that Swedenborg breathed into traditional categories of faith is unclear. Keith mentions in one letter (Letter 45) that he has a desire to attend church while on an East Coast trip, but he only wants to go to a "New Church" (that is, Swedenborgian). In other letters (Letter 2), he mentions Swedenborg works that he is reading. At the very least, one must assume Keith was comfortable around the explicit theological framework of Swedenborgianism, for he attended faithfully for thirty years! In addition, several prominent Swedenborgians cross through Keith's thought and activities in these letters: Daniel Burnham, Mary Curtis Richardson, and Bruce Porter, in addition to George Inness.

But nevertheless, it does seem that Keith was primarily interested in a deepened spiritual outlook, rather than in an intellectual theological system. He admired Worcester's mind, and he tried to learn from him. But most of the evidence suggests that ultimately his religious faith remained ambiguous as to systematic theology. This is supported by the oft-quoted legend that he sat on the back bench at the Lyon Street church without trying much to hear Joseph Worcester's quietly delivered sermons; he preferred the generalizations of Worcester's spiritual religion more than the particulars. He, perhaps, imbibed intuitively the wisdom through internal and personal reveries of meditation and reflection, which were, for him, potently induced by the chanting calmness of Worcester's liturgies.

Friendship Survives Money Trauma

Despite their extraordinary devotion to each other, they did suffer one period of great strain—surprisingly over a money matter. Worcester often served as a business liaison in



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handling sales of Keith's artwork, and so the subject of business was commonplace enough for them. Early in the new century, when Keith had already become extraordinarily wealthy, Worcester once urged the artist to invest in a real estate prospect with an individual whom Worcester was trying to help. Keith, who disliked keeping his assets in land, resisted, but Worcester, in a rather uncharacteristic manner, pressured Keith with undue excess. Apparently Keith, in order to put the matter at rest, finally wrote a check for \$3,000 to Worcester personally, but with the comment that he was giving the money to Worcester and did not want to be tied up in the deal. Yet Worcester did not loan it as if it were his own, but rather invested it on Keith's behalf, apparently without conveying this information to the artist.

Some time later, a tax bill came that Worcester forwarded to Keith,

which was the first Keith knew of "his" real estate investment. Keith utterly disavowed his connection with the deal and expressed in strong terms his unhappiness to Worcester over the situation. Worcester apparently then wrote a letter to Keith saying that Keith had "thrown their friendship on the ground like some dirty towel." It brought tears to Keith's eyes and deeply hurt him in ways that are probably difficult to assess, considering the pedestal upon which he seemed to keep the kindly pastor. For Worcester's part, it is likewise difficult to fathom what his motivations were, but he was known to have declared to others in the aftermath that Keith was "a hard businessman." Their friendship survived this trauma, but it took a couple of years to fully restore their treasured trust and intimacy.

The two men grew old together: Worcester was senior by two years, and they died but two and a half

years apart. William Keith entered the spiritual world on Thursday of Holy Week, April 13, 1910. Mary Keith relates that Worcester came across to Berkeley for a last visit just before her husband's death, and sensing that a special intercommunication was about to take place, she left them alone. When the minister took his leave, tears filled Keith's eyes. The visit concluded an earthly friendship whose remarkable qualities only they knew firsthand. They had enjoyed a rare spiritual companionship, one in which a minister shepherded a great artist with exquisite skill; and in return, the painter provided the pastor his closest friend.

Abridged text of a talk delivered at St. Mary's College of California, October 5, 1995.

The Rev. Dr. James F. Lawrence is co-minister of the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church and manager of J. Appleseed & Co., a small-press publisher of books and pamphlets promoting contemporary expressions of Swedenborgian spirituality.

Untitled

Love should grow up like a wild iris in the fields, unexpected, after a terrible storm, opening a purple mouth to the rain, with not a thought to the future, ignorant of the grass and the graveyard of leaves around, forgetting its own beginning. Love should grow like a wild iris but does not.

Love more often is to be found in kitchens at the dinner hour, tired out and hungry, fingers over tables in houses where the walls record movements: while the cook is probably angry, and the ingredients of the meal are budgeted, while a child cries feed me now and her mother not quite hysterical says over and over, wait just a bit, just a bit.

Love should grow up in the fields like a wild iris but never does

really startle anyone, was to be expected, was to be predicted, is almost absurd, goes on from day to day, not quite blindly, gets taken to the

cleaners every fall, sings old songs over and over, and falls on the same piece of rug that never gets tacked down, gives up, wants to hide, is not brave, knows too much, is not like an iris growing wild but more like staring into space in the street

not quite sure

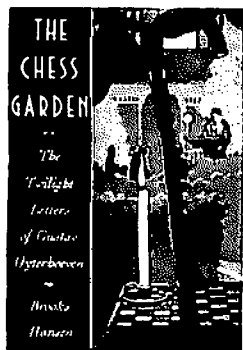
which door it was, annoyed about the sidewalk being slippery, trying all the doors, thinking if love wished the world to be well, it would be well.

Love should

grow up like a wild iris, but doesn't, it comes from the midst of everything else, sees like the iris of an eye, when the light is right, feels in blindness and when there is nothing else is tender, blinks, and opens face up to the skies.

—Susan Griffin

Reprinted from the June 1992 Swedenborgian Church Newsletter, Portland, Maine. Originally from Susan Griffin's Let Them Be Said, Mama's Press, Oakland, California.



The Chess Garden: or, The Twilight Letters of Dr. Gustav Uytterhoeven

by Brooks Hansen

481 pp., Farrar Straus, Giroux, NY

What is the Chess Garden? The Chess Garden was founded in Dayton, Ohio, in the late nineteenth century by Dr. Gustav Uytterhoeven and his wife, Sonja. The Chess Garden has entertained the likes of Henry James, Sr., Ralph Waldo Emerson, Madame Blavatsky and a host of other "spiritual luminaries," including the Transcendentalists, naturalists, Christian Scientists, theosophists, Swedenborgians and homeopaths. The Chess Garden also exists outside of time or place, forming a point of intersection and unity between nature and spirit. In the Chess Garden, all that is objective, scientific and certain is brought into relationship with all that is subjective, personal and mysterious, the clarity and timelessness of universal principles come together with the ambiguity of our experience of choice in "the now." *The Chess Garden* is a new novel by Brooks Hansen, and it is an ingenious and powerful blend of fact and fiction, inner and outer experiences, abstract concepts and concrete concerns: in short, it is Swedenborg through the looking glass.

Mr. Hansen is a native New Yorker, and graduated from Harvard University in 1987. He first learned of Swedenborg in 1990 by, of all things, a broadcast on a local Manhattan channel of "Images of Know-

ing." Living at the time on 23rd St., he easily found his way to the Swedenborg Foundation (then located in New York) and the writings. I had the pleasure of meeting him in the spring of 1993, when he came by to do some research on Swedenborg for *The Chess Garden*. He attended several Wednesday night discussion groups, met with me privately, and used our library resources. I must admit, his own description of the book was a bit confusing, and left me wondering just how Swedenborg might figure in such a strange tale. (Looking back, I realize that, like most authors, he was probably less willing to spell out the details of a work in progress than most reviewers are to make plain the contents of a finished product.) And so it was not until the book came out, and I had devoured it, that I realized what a seriously important work it is.

In its most "literal" sense, *The Chess Garden* moves on three distinct levels. Late in 1900, Dr. Uytterhoeven left the Chess Garden to serve in the Boer War in South Africa. During the next ten months, the doctor sends back 12 letters, along with 12 chess pieces, to his wife in Dayton, to be read to all regulars of the Chess Garden. The letters tell nothing of South Africa, but instead describe the doctor's adventures in the Antipodes, an unchanged land where "there is so much to understand. A land of games, strewn with every different kind of piece one can imagine, looking much the same as normal pieces do, except here they all have life, are of life-size, and move and will and think. But even as strange as this may be, once one has come to accept this single local convention—that one's company is comprised entirely of pieces—the rest all seems to follow naturally thereof. . . ." (p. 89) Here he is led on a journey of self-discovery and personal renewal. These letters form the central motif of *The Chess Garden*.

Secondly, there is the biographical or historical narrative of the doctor's life. His childhood, education, courtship and marriage, are all related, as are the growing complexities of his

career, as the scientific method and the reality of spiritual experiences at first conflict and eventually harmonize. We follow him through his "mid-life" crisis, also in South Africa, which includes a bout with yellow fever, and a chance encounter with an itinerant New Church minister, through whom Uytterhoeven is introduced to the writings of Swedenborg. Finally, there is the level of the Chess Garden itself, where the readings take place, and where spiritual insights and lessons are afforded to all present.

Displacement of time and space, the weave of fact and myth, and the simple pleasure of so many pieces, that is, characters—are all devices to get the reader thinking in new ways, outside of time and space, correspondentially. They direct our attention to the immediate and internal *karma* that exists between the spiritual world of cause and the natural world of effects. One of the unique features of the book is the way it gradually leads the reader, like Dr. Uytterhoeven himself, to such a radically new perspective on the meaning of what is happening to us.

Uytterhoeven believed that the natural world was an ongoing illustration of all the elements which form one's spiritual life.

"I look at the light of the sun, and I see that it serves the same purpose in nature as God's wisdom in heaven, to illuminate. I observe the warmth of the sun and see that it serves the same purpose in nature as God's love in heaven—to nurture; and when I do this, when I see how the spiritual affections and natural elements are the same in Use, it is difficult to know sometimes if I am being told more about the truths from nature, or more about nature from these truths.

But it is of no matter, for what should I mind if someday I lost sight of the difference? Mind? That should be my goal, I think, not just to remember this, but to see it every day—that nature is spirit, and spirit nature, such as I have been given to know either." (p. 285)

The usual favorites of nineteenth century Swedenborgians (correspondence, use, influx, and vastation) all make their appearance, but often in a guise that is not at first recognizable. Central doctrinal points have been woven seamlessly into the narrative, and form a coherent and very believable expression of the "nut" of Swedenborg's teachings: the power and beauty that resides within our immediate experience. The complex and important relationship between freedom and determinism, cause and effect, also forms a central concern of the book, and is explored in a variety of contexts, including that of homeopathy. At the same time, those familiar teachings are given new life as they are used to address the more current crisis of meaning in the postmodern age.

Swedenborgians will also recognize a number of parallels between the doctor's journey and the path traveled by Swedenborg himself, from science to spirit. Those willing to dig a little deeper will discover an even closer parallel with the life of John Bigelow, one of the founders of the New York Public Library, co-owner with William Cullen Bryant, of the New York *Evening Post*, an ardent Swedenborgian, and a member of the 35th Street Church, who himself underwent a Swedenborgian conversion of sorts while quarantined in St. Thomas in 1854. These parallels are in no way simple borrowings, but wonderful adaptations. Mr. Hansen seems to have internalized the actual lives of these and other spiritual thinkers, and then given them new life in the characters and events of this book. (Daniel Burnham, George Bush, Johnny Appleseed, and William James all make an appearance as well, but it takes a keen eye to spot Helen Keller!)

Emerson once wrote that "the truths passing out of [Swedenborg's] system into the general circulation are now met with every day, qualifying the views and creeds of all churches and men out of the church." Thanks to efforts like Mr. Hansen's, this encouraging maxim still applies. This book is in many ways a significant contribution to our understanding of contemporary Western spirituality, and while it stands quite well on its own, will be a special treat to New Church people everywhere.

—Reviewed by Robert McCluskey

The Rev. Robert McCluskey is pastor of the New York Swedenborgian Church.

It makes all the difference in the world—

When someone says, 'I believe in you'

Steve Pults

I wonder if you have found it true? When someone extends their faith in you, does it make a difference? As a parent, I am always touched by my children's insistence to "do it myself." It is a constant reminder for me that unless I give them the space and the affirmation to do it themselves, they will have no opportunities for learning accomplishment, self worth and to have pride in their successes. It is also an opportunity for me to say, "Thank you. You really helped me out. You make a difference."

I am also struck by how much better things turn out when we give the space and affirmation for others to contribute. I experienced this so clearly at our denomination's last annual convention in July. At the council of ministers' meetings we were dealing with a problem—a major problem affecting the life of our church. What I witnessed was amazing. Each pastor brought his and her individual skills to the problem. And those skills were combined in small groups to report back to the entire council. A solution was found that would not have come into being without the acceptance of the many varied gifts around that circle of ministers. I knew that on my own I would not have been able to do this.

It is said that one of our basic human needs is to be needed! And that each of us given the space and the trust to 'do it ourselves' can flourish and blossom and grow! Ever have a teacher or a caregiver in your life give you the gift of their belief

in you? I have. Those teachers who have said in their own way, "I believe in you," changed the course of my life.

Believing in someone also involves the willingness to let them make mistakes (even though you may bear part of the consequences of those mistakes), and let them try again. And believing in someone includes giving them the space to do it their own way.

When we don't receive that affirmation, much can be lost. Gifts and talents may never be realized or discovered. Something precious is lost. I will never forget in junior high art class when a teacher instructed us to make pottery bowls. One student took his clay and made a beautiful angel. I watched the teacher walk over, slam her fist down on his creation and say, "I told you to make a bowl!" I have often wondered about the consequences of that act.

When I consider the words of Jesus, "You will do even greater things than these," I hear the words "I believe in you." Is it not amazing that we human beings are given so much space, so much freedom and such awesome gifts to potentially fulfill those words? Perhaps the One who gives us life believes in us more than we have ever considered.

The Rev. Steve Pults is pastor of the Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound. Reprinted from their November 1995 newsletter, Connections.

A Valentine Message that Endures

Haven Bradford Gow



The New Testament tells us that "Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, endures all things."

When we use the term "love" today, many automatically assume we are talking about physical, romantic, sexual love; but love also can mean spiritual love and friendship such as the unconditional love that parents have

(or should have) for their children, or a person's love for Christ. As

an article in the February 1994

Focus on the Family maga-

zine points out, love also

is demonstrated by these

actions: "Rising at 7 a.m.

on your day off, with a

smile on your face, to pre-

pare breakfast for a spouse

who has to work; getting up

in the middle of the night to

quiet a baby or nurse a sick

child; doing tasks for your elder-

ly parents that they can no longer

do for themselves—mowing the

lawn, washing the laundry, fixing the

gate or changing the furnace filter;

driving an elderly person to church ser-

vices or community events; visiting a

grandparent or an elderly relative; sacrific-

ing some extras in order to save for a col-

lege education for your children; expressing

acceptance and respect for your inlaws, even if

you don't see eye to eye on some things; going

an extra mile when it's needed, either at home

or at work; being an example by living each day as

one of God's children—reaching out to others in

Christian love."

According to Helen Steiner Rice, author of *Joy for the Heart*¹, love is kindness in our everyday life: "Kind-

ness is a virtue given by the Lord. It pays dividends in hap-

piness, and joy is its reward. For if you practice kindness, in

all you say and do, the Lord will wrap His kindness all around

your heart and you. And wrapped within His kindness you

are sheltered and secure. And under His direction your way

is safe and sure."

In his book *The Primacy of Love*², Father Paul Wadell, a teacher of ethics at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, points out that, throughout all his work, the medieval saint and scholar Thomas Aquinas emphasized the importance of love for God and for our fellow man. Love, St. Thomas main- tained, means we desire the genuine good and happiness of the person loved. Father Wadell explains: "In love we are de- fined not through ourselves, but through what we love. To

is to be determined by the loved one, to receive them fully into our being.

Love is a handing over, a sur- rendering of ourselves to the goodness of the one we love. To love is to be remade according to that goodness."

*"In love we are defined
not through ourselves,
but through
what we
love."*

Certainly the only way we can overcome selfishness and achieve true happiness is by learning to love. And the kind of love that is genuine and that overcomes selfishness is the kind taught and practiced by Christ, namely a genuine, outgoing, unselfish, effusive and sacrificial concern for the moral, spiritual, mental and physical well-being of others.

To love someone, in this sense, means we desire the genuine good and happiness of the person loved; it means we affirm the intrinsic moral worth, dignity, value and significance and good qualities of the person loved. As the eminent scholar Josef Peiper observes, "The fact remains that to love a person does not mean to wish him to live free of all burdens. It means, rather, to wish everything associated with him may truly be good."

¹Fleming H. Revell Co., Tarrytown, N.Y.

²Paulist Press, Mahwah, N.J.

Haven Bradford Gow is a columnist who has published 1,000 articles and reviews in 100 magazines and newspapers. Mr. Gow resides in Arlington Heights, Illinois.



The Birth Of Jesus in Me

Eli Dale

In the beginning there was a void. I wasn't taught about Jesus, so I never thought about Him, His ministry, His impact, His reality. I had no opinion.

As I grew, I encountered more and more people who called themselves Christians, who said they knew Jesus personally, had accepted Him as their Personal Savior, and now everything was just fine. They called Him "*Our Lord*." They said a lot of other stuff too—much of which I found stupid at best, abhorrent at worst. And they did things I found stupid or abhorrent. And they campaigned for things I found stupid and abhorrent.

I also learned about all the strange and wonderful things people did in the name of *Our Lord*. No, not the miracles of love and healing. The conquering and obliteration of the peoples and cultures of Old Europe, the Crusades into the Middle East, the holocaust of women during the burning times, the conquering and obliterations of the peoples and cultures of the New World. . . more things than I cared to know about. The surface level meaning of the Bible just reinforced my certainty that there was nothing but injustice and insanity in western religion.

So I developed an opinion about *Our Lord*, and it wasn't a pretty one. If holding Jesus in my heart meant that I, too, could be a crusading, witch-burning bigot, then Jesus would have to forego the pleasure of my acquaintance. I intentionally kept my distance.

The religious wars were on: I developed a burning hatred and distrust for anything tainted by Christianity. Every time a Christian was convicted of a crime it added to my conviction that organized religion was a crime. *Our Lord* became *My Enemy*.

When and why I began to talk to Jesus I do not remember.

I've always talked to deities. Usually it's the Great Mother, who keeps her distance but gives wise counsel. Frequently it's to Jehovah to tell Him off. When did Jesus slip in? Sometime I probably considered the fact that the Goddess has always given birth yearly to the Divine Son who is sacrificed yearly for the good of the people. Or maybe a basic spiritual Truth just broke through and demanded to be considered one day.

My relationship with Jesus right now is very much like that with an imaginary playmate. He's my size, He's human but very together, He likes to laugh and dance, and He's willing to be with me and give me His undivided attention anytime I want.

Jesus has one special thing He can do that no one else can. He can get me to listen even when it hurts.

One day right before worship I had done one of my frequent insensitive blaming routines and a friend caught me at it. I tried to deny it, but it's hard to dodge the truth. I sweated through the service, appropriately ashamed (more for getting caught than for my nasty behavior),

and talked to Jesus for an hour.

He said, "You know what to do: confess and ask forgiveness."

Now the words "confess" and "forgive" are weapon words from my religious wars, and I don't take kindly to having them turned on me. I sweated more. "How about I just talk to the person I discounted later?"

"Now."

"No. It'll hurt too much; it's too public."

"Do it." So I did.

During prayer circle, my stomach in knots, my temperature soaring, my throat like sandpaper, I prayed a prayer of confession, asking forgiveness, and giving gratitude for the truthfulness of a friend who was willing to catch me red-handed. But my stomach did not relax and my temperature did not go down and my throat did not soothe.

"Hey, what gives here? I did the right thing. Why don't the bad feelings go away?"

"Why did you think they would?"

"Because they're supposed to! You do the right thing and everything feels better. That's the script."

"Sometimes," He says to me, "when you do the right thing, you end up with thorns in your scalp and nails in your hands and it doesn't feel good. Get over it."

Oh. Here is the Man who carried His own cross up the hill and got crucified when He hadn't done anything wrong. Here am I whining because I got a hot flush after actually doing something wrong. Nobody else on earth could have gotten away with saying, "Get over it." It would have sounded too cutting, accusing, judgmental, and angry. From Jesus, it was a gift.

We talk frequently. Once, after having gotten caught in someone else's private melodrama, unjustly accused and unable to defend myself, I complained to Jesus about how unfair life was and begged, "What am I supposed to do?"

"Lighten up," He said. He said it with warmth, with conviction that I *could* stand in the light, that I could see the situation from the vantage point of love and understanding, that *lightness* would benefit me and all I touched. From anyone else, "Lighten up" would have sounded like a slam. From Him, just good, light advice.

I don't refer to Jesus as *Our Lord*. Any identity He has as Savior is packaged in being my wonderful, supportive, attentive, talented older brother. Who *Our Lord* is, I don't know. However, I surprised myself in our closing circle the other day by saying, "Lord, hear my prayer," so an idea probably exists well and whole, if hidden, in my psyche somewhere. And my calling on the Lord and my new, tender relationship with Jesus also evidence the healing of the wounds of the religious wars. Birth is always possible. The Great Mother gives us a Divine Son every year. □

Eli Dale is the president of the Portland, Maine, Swedenborgian Church. Reprinted from their December 1995 Swedenborgian Church Newsletter.

Salvation

Paul Zacharias

Webster defines salvation as "deliverance from the power and effects of sin," which is a good place to start, and, ultimately . . . to end.

Swedenborg tells us that we are born with both good and bad tendencies, and as we grow into adulthood, this light-shadow "split" becomes ever more obvious. This is the way we are. These tendencies become actions; become "us." Let's be honest about it: we do things that we know are wrong; that we are ashamed of; that have hurt people we love; that are a far cry from our ideals. There may be dozens of motives and/or reasons behind these sins, but the fact remains: in many and varied ways we have hurt God, other people, and ourselves. Strictly speaking, in and of ourselves, we are in big trouble. There is no way we can do this essential work by ourselves. Let's look at a number of things Swedenborg tells us about human salvation.

- Every person in the world is born for heaven: thus, potentially, everyone can be saved.
- Salvation is a lifelong process which consists of gradually replacing the negative, hellish parts of our character with more positive, heavenly qualities. This process, which we call regeneration, involves: becoming more aware of the real nature of our inner life; intentionally making the best possible choices in everything we do; doing the right things for the right reasons; accepting responsibility for our lives (at the same time realizing that the Lord's mercy and goodness is behind and within everything); and trusting the unfolding journey. It helps to know that all of this really is God's plan for us. It is the Lord's full intention that we be saved, and He bends everything that happens in this direction, but our conscious cooperation is required.
- We can be saved only in freedom. Salvation, by definition, can't be compelled or coerced. Easy does it. The roads to salvation are many and varied.
- Good motives, beliefs and actions are all involved, and essential, in the salvation process. If any link in this chain is missing, our journey suffers. Of these three ingredients, proper motives are primary.
- Everything that happens to us—and I mean everything *without exception*—is a lesson that can contribute to our personal salvation, and, on the larger scene, to the salvation of all humankind. Knowing this helps us not to waste the little, so-called "hum-drum" daily events of life.
- It goes without saying that all infants and young children, when they die, are saved and enter immediately into one of the heavenly societies, there to be trained for a life of eternal usefulness and joy in the spiritual world.
- There are two essentials of salvation: to acknowledge a divine being (or at least a higher beneficent lifeforce); and to choose good over evil in our daily affairs.
- We might also bear in mind that "to whom much is given, much is expected," a spiritual principle that has a major impact on the many different ways in which people understand and live out the salvation process. Think about this sometime.

The Rev. Paul Zacharias is a retired Swedenborgian minister living in Kitchener, Ontario. He is the author of the ever-popular doctrinal pamphlet, "This We Believe."

No Excuse Sunday

To make it possible for everyone to attend church, we are going to have a special "No Excuse Sunday" soon.

- Cots will be placed in the church for those who say, "Sunday is my only day to sleep in."
- We will have steel helmets for those who say, "The roof would cave in if I ever came to church."
- Blankets will be furnished for those who think that the church is too cold, and fans for those who say it is too hot.
- We will have hearing aids for those who say the pastor speaks too softly and cotton for those who say he speaks too loudly.
- Score cards will be available for those who wish to list the hypocrites present.
- Some relatives will be in attendance for those who like to go visiting on Sunday.
- There will be TV dinners for those who cannot go to church and cook dinner also.
- One section will be devoted to trees and grass for those who like to see God in nature.
- Finally, the sanctuary will be decorated with both Christmas poinsettias and Easter lilies, for those who have never seen the church without them. . . .

*—From a Washington D.C.
Methodist parish bulletin.*

Forgiveness in Peacemaking

Richard Deats

The transition in South Africa from a white racist government to multi-racial democratic rule led Nadine Gordimer, Nobel Prize author from South Africa, to exclaim, "I can't think of any other instance in the world where you found a defeated power being treated with such tolerance and acceptance. It's extraordinary." Extraordinary, indeed. The dire predictions heard for years that apartheid would end in a bloody race war proved false as South Africans rose to the challenge afforded them with the first democratic elections in their history.

When former Mayor David Dinkins of New York City returned from South Africa, he said that what impressed him most was the utter lack of bitterness in Nelson Mandela, who had been incarcerated for almost thirty years and who, like millions of others of his compatriots, had experienced the brutal evil of apartheid rule.

Mandela's passion for freedom and justice for all was undergirded by a greatness of spirit that reached out in forgiveness to embrace even his enemies in a unifying vision "in which all South Africans, both black and white, will be able to walk tall, without any fear in their hearts, sure of their inalienable right to human dignity—a rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world." (The statement came from his inaugural address.)

This forgiving spirit is sorely needed in our world today where old hurts and animosities tear at our social fabric as well as our personal and familial lives. To talk of forgiveness is not cheap grace that ignores tragic injustice and evil deeds. I learned this lesson in Nicaragua on the second Witness for Peace team in 1983. One afternoon seven Sandinista soldiers were brought into Jalapa on the back of a truck. They had been killed in a Contra ambush. That night the Witness for Peace group held a prayer vigil at the home of one of the bereaved families as the wake began. Everyone knew the Contras were armed with American weapons and bullets, yet the bereaved mothers told us they forgave us for what our government had done. We were humbled by this act of costly and healing grace.

In the autobiography of Martin Luther King, Sr., "Daddy King" recounts the horror of that Sunday in 1974 at Ebenezer Baptist Church when his wife, Alberta, while playing the Lord's Prayer on the organ, was assassinated by a deranged person. Daddy King, who had already lost Martin Junior to an assassin's bullet and another son in a drowning accident, gathered together his grandchildren after Mama King's funeral to assure them that God wanted them to love and never to hate. He said, "Don't ever stoop so low that you let anybody make you hate." □

Editorial reprinted with permission from July/August 1994 Fellowship, the magazine of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, an association of women and men who have joined together to explore the power of love and truth for resolving human conflict. Richard Deats is the editor. For more information or a subscription, write or call Fellowship of Reconciliation, Box 271 (521 N. Broadway), Nyack, NY 10960. Telephone (914) 358-4601.

Singing Forgiveness

by Bronson Clark

In 1944 Bayard Rustin was riding in a train across Texas. On the train were seven German prisoners of war, guarded by an MP (military policeman).

The MP decided to have the Germans eat in the diner before anyone else and then clear them out and turn the diner over to the regular passengers. Well, one woman got so hot and mad because these Germans were to eat before she was, she slapped one of them across the face. The Germans became tense, but passed on, although one could feel them drawing into themselves.

At this point Bayard swung into action. He spoke to the woman, trying to get her to apologize, but got nowhere. Then he went to the MP and asked permission to speak to the Germans. The MP said that it was against regulations for a civilian to speak to prisoners of war. "Is there a regulation saying that I cannot sing to them?" Bayard asked. The MP said he knew of no order against singing. So Bayard sang Schubert's *Serenade*, followed by a song entitled *A Stranger in a Distant Land*. Later, as the Germans filed by, the one who had been slapped put his hand across Bayard's shoulder and said in broken English, "I thank you."

Bronson Clark is a Quaker who lives in Carrboro, North Carolina. Reprinted with permission from Fellowship, July/August, 1994.

"We must develop and maintain the capacity for forgiveness. He who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power to love. There is some good in the worst of us and some evil in the best of us. When we discover this, we are less prone to hate our enemies. Forgiveness is not an occasional act; it is a permanent attitude."

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

General Council and Cabinet Report

General Council and Cabinet met in a joint session December 2-4 in Washington, D.C. The following items of business were considered:

It was decided that the convention theme for 1996 would be "Serve the Lord with Gladness." It was further decided that the convention theme for 1997 would be "Let the Earth Rejoice." We are seeking suggestions for the convention themes for the years of 1998, 1999 and 2000.

President Edwin Capon reported that a Swedenborgian group is forming in Bayside, Long Island, New York and that they have applied for membership in the denomination.

The following actions were taken:

Temenos: It was voted to instruct the Executive Committee of General Council to insure that a fair and just distribution of sales proceeds, in the event of the sale of the Temenos property, be included in the agreement between the Philadelphia church and the denomination.

Members-at-Large: It was voted to recommend authorization of a list of members-at-large for convention to be established at the Central Office.

The Gray Fund: It was voted that a request be made to the Gray Fund that, in accordance with the Provisions of the Will, a complete financial statement be submitted to the General Council.

GOSU/PMSU merger: It was voted that the combining of the Pastoral Ministries Support Unit (PMSU) and the Growth and Outreach Support Unit (GOSU) into a single support unit be referred to the Committee on Amendments.

Foreign Ministries: It was voted that a joint committee of General Council and the Council of Ministers be formed to explore the following issues and questions that were brought forward by the Council of Ministers:

- Are denominational funds to be used for training foreign ministers at our seminary?
- Once ordained, are these individuals and the groups they serve entitled to access money from AFC and mission funds?
- Are foreign ministers entitled to travel assistance to attend the annual convention?
- Are they entitled to participate in our pension plan?
- Are there legal implications to carrying them on our roll of ministers?
- Should there be a means to limit such ordinations to service in the foreign field?
- Members of the committee are to include: Edwin Capon, Polly Baxter, Esther Capon, Carl Yenetchi and Ron Brugler.
- How to clarify the denomination's relationship to foreign ministries and ministers.

New Committee to Work on SSR-Cambridge Property Settlement

The SSR Board of Trustees has begun a new initiative in an attempt to bring closure to the Cambridge property situation. The board has designated Tom Peebles and Bob Reber as representatives to a new joint SSR-Society Committee to explore options to resolve the dilemma. The Cambridge representatives are Lars-Erik Wiberg and Bob Erickson. An initial meeting was held November 27, with a follow-up meeting scheduled for December 19.

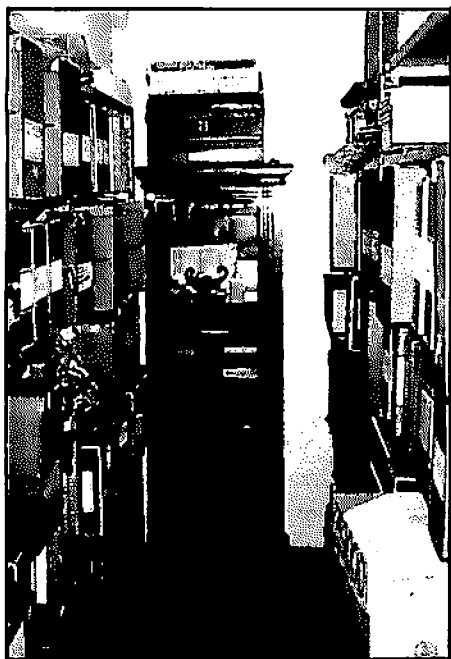
The SSR Board is in agreement that:

- they want to see the Cambridge Society continue to worship and function in the chapel in Cambridge;
- the school cannot continue to fund further expenses of the operation of the Chapel; and
- due to financial pressures SSR needs to receive appropriate return from the value of ownership of the Chapel property.
- The SSR Board's desire is to work together with the Cambridge Society to see how best these goals can be achieved.

— Betty Yenetchi, Secretary

Visits . . . Welcome

(Continued from back page)



SSR Archives

we have available about the Swedenborgian Church and the people and activities associated with it.

One of the functions of the archives, which we hope to be able to expand, is to help individuals and churches locate, identify, preserve, and make accessible important historical material. We are working on developing guidelines for churches on what records they should consider keeping. In the meantime, if you or your church (or church-related organization or project) have records which you would like to consider sending to the archives here in Newton for safekeeping, or if you have questions about the best ways to preserve your records, please let us know. We would be glad to discuss options with you. And if you're going to be in the neighborhood, come by and say hello and visit the archives. A phone call ahead will ensure that someone is here to greet you.

—Liz Balcom, Archivist

New SSR registrar Kathy Fiore (right) has taken the place of Hallie Williams, who recently retired. Kathy, a graduate of Northeastern University, has held a number of administrative positions in the Boston area. She will be working at SSR two days a week.

Passages

Baptisms

Almond—Celine Louise Almond, daughter of Danielle and Roland Almond and granddaughter of Anne Almond, was baptized into the Christian faith August 27, 1995, at the Church of the Holy City in Edmonton, Alberta, the Rev. Henry Korsten officiating.

Anderson—Grace Evelyn Anderson, daughter of Laura and Glen Anderson, was baptized into the Christian faith December 10, 1995, at the Bridgewater New Jerusalem Church in Bridgewater, Mass., the Rev. Dr. George Dole officiating.

Berry—Jared Lawrence Berry, son of Dawn Eisenman and Larry Berry, born August 11, 1995, was baptized into the Christian faith November 19, 1995, at the Church of the Open Word in St. Louis, Missouri, the Rev. David Rienstra officiating.

Dyer—Elizabeth Reid Dyer, daughter of Daniel and Lee Dyer, born August 30, 1995, was baptized into the Christian faith December 3, 1995, at the Church of the Open Word in St. Louis, Missouri, the Rev. David Rienstra officiating.

Foster, Mikuchonis—Chrystal Ann Foster, daughter of Hope Foster, and Ryan Scott Mikuchonis, son of Wanda (Foster) Mikuchonis, grandchildren of the Rev. Theodore and Beryl Foster, were baptized into the Christian faith December 3, 1995, at the Bridgewater New Jerusalem Church, in Bridgewater, Mass., the Rev. Theodore Foster officiating.

Theodore—Teghan Theodore, infant son of Sharlene Braun, was baptized into the Christian church November 26, 1995, at the B.C. New Church Society in Kelowna, B.C., the Rev. Erwin Reddekopp officiating.

Marriages

Scade and Moffatt—Adele Scade and Stefan Moffatt were united in marriage August 5, 1995, at the Church of the Holy City in Edmonton, Alberta, the Rev. Henry Korsten officiating. Adele is a granddaughter of Chris and Tom Scade.

Urquhart and Chrusch—Debbie Urquhart and Barry Chrusch were united in marriage August 12, 1995, at the Church of the Holy City in Edmonton, Alberta, the Rev. Henry Korsten officiating.

Deaths

Sawchuk—Anne Maude Sawchuk, longtime member of the Church of the Holy City in Edmonton, Alberta, entered the spiritual world September 1, 1995, in Fort Saskatchewan Hospital following a long struggle with cancer. She is survived by husband John and four children. A memorial service was conducted September 4, 1995, the Rev. Henry Korsten officiating.

Whitten—Beatrice M. Whitten, age 82, longtime member of the New Jerusalem Church in Fryeburg, Maine, entered the spiritual world November 8, 1995. A resurrection service was conducted November 11, 1995, at the Wood Funeral Home, the Rev. Dr. Robert Bossdorf officiating. She is survived by a son, two daughters, two sisters, seven grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.



Emanuel Swedenborg was born January 29, 1688, in Stockholm, Sweden.

Although he never intended a church denomination to be founded or named after him, a society was formed in London 15 years after his death.

This 1787 organization eventually spawned the present General Convention of Swedenborgian Churches.

As a result of Swedenborg's own spiritual questionings and insights, we as a church today exist to encourage that same spirit of inquiry and personal growth, to respect differences in views, and to accept others who may have different traditions.

Swedenborg shared in his theological writings a view of God as infinitely loving and at the very center of our beings, a view of life as a spiritual birthing as we participate in our own creation, and a view of Scripture as a story of inner-life stages as we learn and grow.

Swedenborg would conclude, "All religion relates to life, and the life of religion is to do good." He also felt that the sincerest form of worship is a useful life.

Archival Gold Online

As all of those who have enjoyed and learned from Louise Woofenden's articles in *The Messenger* know, the Swedenborg School of Religion and the Swedenborgian church archives contain a wealth of fascinating material. Housed in the SSR Library in Newton, Massachusetts, the archives contain many different types of materials, including publications, pamphlets, letters, organizational records, photographs, and some audio and video tapes. These materials relate to the history of the churches and of the school, including information about important people, places, and events.

One large section of records consists of biographical material relating to ministers and others active in the church's history. This material includes correspondence, writings, news articles, and obituaries. It is of interest to both family and church historians, and is used extensively in answering inquiries from genealogists.

We have the opportunity to make our archives holdings more accessible through inclusion of information about our holdings in two national-level databases. These databases, RLIN (Research Libraries Information Network) and OCLC (Online Computer Library Catalog) are available at many college, university, and research libraries throughout the world.

Librarians and archivists put cataloging information (such as types of records, dates and subjects covered, and correspondents) about their holdings into these databases.

Inclusion of information about our holdings is possible free of charge through a cooperative cataloging program operated by the Library of Congress called the National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections (NUCMC). (People may be familiar with this catalog in its multi-volume printed version). This free-inclusion opportunity applies to our archives and manuscripts, but not to our books.

Our new archivist, Elizabeth Balcom, has worked in several archives, including the Simmons College Archives, Pilgrim Hall Museum, and Old Sturbridge Village. Her interest in archives stems in part from a love of history; as an undergraduate she majored in history at the University of Chicago. She graduated from Simmons Graduate School of Library and Information Science in Boston with an MS in Library Science and a concentration in Archives Management. She is particularly interested in old photographs and looks forward to working with the ones in our collections. Liz replaces Jonathan Mitchell, who left the position of archivist last summer.

—Jean Hilliard, SSR Librarian



Liz Balcom

Visits and Calls Welcome

The NUCMC catalog is now available online in RLIN and OCLC. Researchers with access to these databases can discover descriptions and locations of all materials described in them. Inclusion of information about our holdings in these databases could greatly increase the use of materials in our archives, both in person and through the mail. This is potentially an exciting opportunity to spread the word about materials

(Continued on page 31)

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