
THE MESSENGER

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February 1997

Swedenborg and Hildegard of Bingen

Mary Kay Klein

Over the past three months The Messenger has published several articles on Swedenborg's mysticism. With this month's article, the series takes a new turn. This article and future articles will focus on Swedenborg in comparison with other leading Western mystics.

From 1992 to 1995, I was privileged to teach a course at the Swedenborg School of Religion which focused on Swedenborg and the history of Western mysticism. In research for that course, I came to know Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179), who, after centuries of obscurity, has recently become one of the most well-known of the Western mystics, in part because she has been discovered by the creation spirituality movement.

Her life parallels Swedenborg's in some ways, but is very different in others. A resident of the Rhineland, Hildegard was a gifted composer, healer, preacher, teacher, administrator, and prophet. Her parents committed her to religious life at the age of eight. She lived quietly as a Benedictine, and in 1136 was chosen to become abbess of the community at Mt. St. Disibod.

At the age of forty-two, she experienced a Divine call:

It happened that in the eleven-hundred and forty-first year of the Incarnation of the son of God, Jesus Christ, when I was forty-two years and seven months old, Heaven was opened and a fiery light of exceeding brilliance came and permeated my whole brain, and infiltrated my whole heart and my whole

breast, not like a burning but a warming flame, as the sun warms anything its rays touch. And immediately I knew the meaning of the exposition of the Scriptures...I had sensed in myself wonderfully the power and mystery of secret and admirable visions from my childhood—that is, from the age of five—up to that time, as I do now...the visions I saw I did not perceive in dreams, or sleep, or delirium, or by the eyes of the body, or by the ears of the outer self, or in hidden places; but I received them while awake and seeing with a pure mind and the eyes and ears of the inner self, in open places, as God willed it.¹

The same Lord
appears
to be at work in
each of these
lives, trying to
do the same
work in
different eras.

After the call, which she at first resisted, she became ill. She recovered only when she accepted her spiritual awakening and began to share her visions with the world. With the help of a monk named Volmar, who wrote down her visions, she completed a book called *Scivies* (*Know the Ways*) which contained most of the illuminations for which she is famous. Her

focus was on “the cosmic dimension, the struggle between good and evil, an absorption with the great work of redemption and the role of human beings.... She does not present herself as a role model or lay down a path of mystical union for others to follow. Hildegard is, rather, a mouth-piece, a ‘small trumpet’, ‘a feather on the breath of God’, whose task it is to teach and correct her fellow men and women and to glorify the Creator.”²

She continued her work as abbess, and also traveled throughout Europe and preached. She later wrote two other books: *Liber Vitae Meritorum* (Book of Life's Merits), based on her work as a spiritual director, and *De Operationibus Dei* (On the Divine Works), which reflects her mature vision of God and creation. *De Operationibus Dei* focuses on a pair of commentaries on the prologue to John's Gospel and the first chapter of Genesis. Barbara Newman comments that

This construction holds the key to Hildegard's whole theological vision, which revolves around the identity of the Creator with the incarnate Word. Reverent meditation on the cosmos and its proportions, which all have their analogues in the microcosm of the human body, leads to the same eternal meditation on history in its divinely ordained stages. Just as the human form is inscribed in the center of the universe in a celebrated illustration of this text, so Christ or incarnate Love is inscribed in the center of time.³

Hildegard sent numerous letters to church and political officials, and became distraught at what she perceived to be the very corrupt state of

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The Union of Love and Wisdom Within and Around Us

Guest Editorial by Renee Billings

Emanuel Swedenborg wrote in his book *Conjugal Love*, "There is a conjugal sphere [a marriage of love and wisdom or good and truth] which flows in from the Lord through heaven into all things and every thing of the universe, even to its ultimates" (para. 222). This sphere operates within human beings, within all of the animal kingdom on earth (even down to worms), and is moreover in all the subjects of the vegetable kingdom from olives and palms to the diminutive grasses.

What a beautiful theology this is! The sun in the heavens, which is in perpetual springtime, creates this sphere of love and wisdom that is continually radiating into our world and uniting what is good in us with what is true in us. The times in our lives when we feel most alive, happy and useful to others are times, I believe, when we to some degree allow the good and the true to be one in us.

Valentine's Day can be a day for us to be particularly aware of the sweetness the Lord brings to our lives as we encounter Love reaching for the Truth

within our own individual spiritual growth processes, between one another in romance, family and friendship and in nature's pure, wild and beautiful endeavor to create, nurture and sustain life. "All the delights of heaven stream forth from the delights of conjugal love, as sweet waters from the flow of a fountain" (C.L. #229).

When we feel the Divine close to us, all of life is a romantic experience. Swedenborg was shown that we can grasp the Divine life most fully when we are in touch with some quality or qualities of conjugal love, the union of Love and Wisdom within and around us. Have you ever been a part of a dull conversation and then suddenly at the mention of gender issues, romance or perhaps soul mates, people perk up and may even giggle?! I believe we are illuminated and stirred at the deepest levels of our being when we encounter the subject or activity of Love reaching out for the Truth.

Each of us receives and responds to conjugal love differently and, therefore, we have an infinite variety of

relationships with their unique qualities and challenges. This is so because love and wisdom together in the Divine are one and operate according to the same rules in all things yet the person or form that receives this Life determines how it will be expressed. "The changes of good and truth, or of its heat and light, are not variations of itself...but arise from the subjects that receive them" (C.L. #222).

Our joy comes in our unique experience and expression of this Love and Wisdom from our Creator. We are all born to know and to share this reality, and we are blessed in a special way when we find that one "other" who stirs the romantic flame of love that ultimately reflects our Lord's own passionate and devoted love for us all.

Happy Valentine's Day everyone!

The Rev. Renee Billings is the minister at the Royal Oak (Detroit) Swedenborgian Church.

Reprinted from February 1996 Royal Oak Swedenborgian Church Newsletter. ❖

EDSU Announces a Pre-Convention Conference

Mark your calendar today and plan to come to Kansas. Dates are the evening of

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to noon on
Wednesday July 9, 1997**

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Swedenborg Among Mystics

Wilson Van Dusen

The mystic is simply a person who has had the direct experience of God and this has come to order and affect their whole life. To those who know Swedenborg there can be no doubt he qualifies. It happens that I have surveyed all the world's mystics for some years now. Evelyn Underhill in her classic *Mysticism* lists only eighty-seven published mystics in the western world in the last two thousand years! Both Buddhism and Hinduism deliberately cultivate the experience of God, so the published mystics in the east would tend to be more numerous. I can now set Swedenborg in the context of the world's mystics.

Swedenborg is outstanding in this group in several ways. The first and most obvious is the sheer volume of his writings in this area. There are a few, particularly in Buddhism, who approach this output. By definition all of the mystics know of the direct experience of God and have described this. Swedenborg is very unique in his admission into the spiritual worlds and his description of these. In the entire mystical literature I have found

nothing of the stature of his *Heaven and Hell*. Indeed from the whole world's mystical literature one could hardly gather even a good part of *Heaven and Hell* and even this would suffer greatly in clarity.

Swedenborg's writings are also outstanding in clarity. For westerners to read the world's mystical literature they must adapt to culturally bound terms, particularly in Hinduism

and Buddhism. But even assuming that one has adapted to these other frames of reference, what Swedenborg was given seems unusually clear. I credit this in part to his adhering to a Christian frame of reference. But there is another very important aspect to the clarity of his

writings.

He was forbidden by the Lord to speculate. This means he felt bound just to set down what was revealed to him. There are mystics in the west such as William Blake, Jacob Boehme and the Jewish Kabbalists who felt free to widely speculate, and to formulate new symbols and concepts. Such writings present an almost impenetrable thicket. It is quite otherwise with Swedenborg. Even though he is pre-

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sending spiritual and even celestial matters he tries to make them clear to our understanding. Along with this lack of speculation he also never puts himself forward. For instance with William Blake, one feels that if he weren't in such a struggle to gain recognition, his writings might have more worth. Not speculating, and sticking to a Christian frame of reference, and not setting himself forward all contributed to his presenting spiritual matters modestly and clearly.

There is another unique side to Swedenborg's theology that I hardly know what to do with. It is clear Swedenborg felt that the inner sense of the Bible was one of his greatest contributions. In the world's mystical literature east and west there are comparable works where a sacred text is given greater depth. I can easily think of Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic, and Jewish examples. Yet Swedenborg's work in this area seems unique, in part because of what it reveals of human experience. My real suspicion is that we don't fully understand, or know how to best use this interior sense. It is as though his interior sense is a key we have hardly put to use.

Long ago I described my experience of Swedenborg's writings as an exploration of a whole Himalaya of mind/spirit/life. Now, after a survey of the world's published mysticism, his writings are still a wonder for their extent and clarity. This is not to say that we couldn't learn from other traditions. It is as though each contributes something new. For instance without the Islamic Sufi literature I would hardly know how intense mystical love could be. Zen Buddhism is the most aesthetic of the mystical literature. Each has contributed something to the whole. But if we are to tackle only one literature, I don't see how we could do better than to explore what Swedenborg was shown. Even when standing among the world's great mystics, he still appears to be a giant.

Dr. Wilson Van Dusen is a psychologist and author of *The Presence of Other Worlds* and *Natural Depth in Man* both available from the Swedenborg Foundation. He lives in Ukiah, California. ❖

IMPORTANT CHURCH CALENDAR DATES

| | | |
|------------|-------|---|
| ❖ January | 24-26 | COM ExCom—Deland |
| ❖ January | 27-31 | SSR Supervisors training—Deland |
| ❖ February | 21-22 | Urbana U. Board of Trustees |
| ❖ April | 1-4 | Committee on Admission to the Ministry Swedenborg School of Religion, Newton, MA |
| ❖ April | 10-13 | SSR Board—LaPorte, IN |
| ❖ April | 13-14 | EDSU—LaPorte, IN |
| ❖ April | 13-14 | Retirement Committee Central Office—Newton, MA |
| ❖ April | 26 | Investment Committee—Temenos |
| ❖ April | 27-29 | East Coast Peer Supervision—Blairhaven |
| ❖ June | 6-7 | Urbana U. Board of Trustees—Urbana, OH |
| ❖ July | 5-8 | Council of Ministers—Hutchinson, KS |
| ❖ July | 9-13 | Convention 1997—Hutchinson, KS |

The Power of Play

Reviewed by Kathleen Gajdos

"Thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven" ("kingdom come" moments) can happen when we play—when we *really* play—when the now becomes all there is, we can almost hear the angels sing. So immersed in earth when we play, we get a glimpse of the transcendent in the immanent.

The Power of Play: New Visions of Creativity, the Chrysalis Reader of November 1996, addresses the nuances of this power—the meetings, the moves, the surprises, the depths of play. This Reader, whose theme is "to play is to meet the Divine in the midst of right now," is a pleasurable treasure of stories, poetry, and reminiscences. Its cover of colorful palm trees invites the reader to peek within to uncover creative oases of playful word-worlds and images.

Having grappled myself with the deaths of both my parents and a close friend this past year, I was particularly drawn to the stories and remembrances that touched upon death. These were the pieces that poignantly reflected not only the power, but the paradox of play: how in facing our material mortality we need to play, and we need to have played. (These stories brought to mind my own remembrance of a dream where I meet Death at my door in the form of my bachelor uncle with his girl friend in Mardi Gras mask—I'm folding family laundry and ask if I need to take it along when my time comes. They laugh and smile and say, in essence, "that won't be necessary." I consider this dream to be my unconscious facing the inevitable with some levity!)

And so I was moved by Carol Lawson's story of a friend who is remembered in the play of music and cooking and Patte LeVan's story of

two young girls, one whose mother suicided. Their friendship of laughter and joy gave them another world that never confronted that grief—at least not directly. Their play was the healing balm that soothed the silent scream.

Newly orphaned in mid-life, when her mother dies, Lani Wright journals her trek to Nepal—she felt called to do something she had never done before in order to find that she was still alive. One dawn she awakens at her mountain campsite after an arduous journey and discovers "when you're alive, your feet get cold, you can't sleep, and things don't go according to plan. When you're alive, you wake up to find all the ordinary things shining in crystalline splendor in a way you never saw before."

Writing her memories of her husband, after his quickly succumbing to cancer, family therapist Peggy North-Jones adamantly urges the reader to remember to play. "If we hadn't watched him play and played

with him, the memories left would not be so bearable...from the deepest, most desolated place within me comes a groan, a roar—please, oh please, what I wouldn't give for one last chance to have fun with him again. If only I had known. I will remember to tell all families to please play while they can."

M. Garrett Bauman intuits this advice. His *Vacation with Family* vignette is a priceless reminder to us all how to play the game of life, literally and figuratively.

His humorous account celebrates the wonderfully wacky imperfections of living in a family that is neither Brady Bunch, nor Barbie and Ken. "At night, without television and without teenage boys honking for one's daughters, *people on vacations become families again*. With humidity-softened snacks, cheeks and arms

aglow with sun, and a cool breeze blowing through the screendoor, someone says, 'Let's play a game.'" And "Life" begins with a roll of the dice.

Other readers will discover a different perspective from the one I have chosen to highlight, but suffice it to say that there are enough palm tree



oases with "Divinity Bubbling Up" (as Kate Ransohoff says) here for most everyone. This artfully imaged Reader can be a rejoinder to the inner critic within us who thwarts our play and thus our quest for the Divine that is manifested in our delight of the moment.

In his preface to the Reader, Wilson Van Dusen tells us that in Hinduism, the ultimate nature of existence is said to be *lila*—play. So the good news from the mystics is that, "It is all play. The world was and is created playfully."

Let the play begin!

Dr. Kathleen (Kayta) Gajdos is a psychologist in private practice in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania. She is married, with two children, and enjoys singing, dancing and writing poetry, as time permits. She has published in Chrysalis and Family Therapy magazine.



The Power of Play is available from the Swedenberg Foundation for \$12.95 plus shipping and handling. To order, call 1-800-355-3222.

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TO THE EDITOR

OPINION

What is True Conjugal Union?

To the Editor:

Concerning, the Rev. Dr. James Lawrence's article "Risking on the Side of Compassion" November 1996 *Messenger*:

Marriage: a concept that has many variations of meaning, and is in many cases applied incorrectly to relationships observed every day.

There are true spiritual marriages, which Swedenborg portrayed voluminously in *Conjugal Love*. These are, without exception, described as the conjoining of one man with one woman. Then there are many other types and variations of unions between people that are *not* properly called marriages. These may have all the outward appearances of marriage, but inwardly are something altogether different. These include polygamy, adulterous associations, as well as natural unions held together not by love truly conjugal, but by reasons of "preserving order in domestic affairs, and for mutual aid" (C.L. 287) "the care of infants and in respect to children" (C.L. 284), "for the sake of various favors expected from the consort, or from his or her kindred, and thus for fear of the loss of them" (C.L. 287) and other examples that follow.

Because a man and a woman share a household and have had their relationship blessed by the clergy, does not make it a spiritual marriage. The relationship may have the appearance of a "marriage," but in fact internally it may have no resemblance at all to a spiritual union.

On the other hand, the possibility exists that a real spiritual marriage can take place because the *complementary aspects* of masculine and feminine are present.

Now, it has been argued that aspects of masculine and feminine exist within each of us, and that the masculine and feminine of a gay couple can be complementary also. I do not find any support for that idea within any of Swedenborg's writings, or in scripture.

To proceed by using any anecdotal examples will lead all thinking into a quagmire. It is essential that this issue be debated on the level of principles. Therefore, as simply as I can state it, the masculine-in-a man is inherently expressed differently than the masculine-in-a woman. And the feminine-in-a woman is inherently expressed differently than the feminine-in-a man. If the truth of this is not clear by our understanding of the language of correspondences, and a careful reading of *Conjugal Love*, then I would at least refer to the more accessible popular psychology of such sources as *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*.

Now, a man may *learn* to express his feminine aspects like a female, and a woman her masculine like a male, but these are acquired skills, and not part of the *essential* expression of either. (C.L. 174-5)

Also, it has been argued that homosexuality is genetically inherited, or at least that homosexuality is genetically based. This may be true. Many of our inclinations and dispositions may be genetically based or inherited, but I would have a hard time arguing that they all are part of divine order. At least some spring from the realm of disorder.

We as "human becomings"* have within us 1) elements of divine order, 2) elements of disorder, and 3) the location of their crossing or meeting. I believe that when the acquired or inherited inclinations of our ordinary nature are in conflict with a higher order within (of which we do not know directly, but receive instruction from doctrine and the Word, ref. *Arcana Coelestia* 1661 [2]), it is the

duty of regeneration to resist the inclinations of our ordinary nature and to try and ally ourselves with the higher order, however unpleasant and difficult that becomes. The battleground of regeneration is staged by, on one side, our natural inclinations, and the other side, the teaching from a higher order. I suspect it is a struggle we will take with us to our graves. In this case, to claim that because an inclination or predisposition to homosexuality is genetically present, and to maintain that it does not need to be resisted, runs counter to the huge body of religious tradition. To surrender to the various inclinations of our nature, in the light of clear teachings, is not the way of regeneration.

I find myself greatly disturbed by Lawrence's assertion that "Only a tiny few biblical passages seem to condemn homosexual expression...." I would ask him to point out even a tiny few biblical passages that condone homosexual expression.

On the level of principles, I don't understand how it can be argued that a homosexual couple can be capable of a conjugal union. I think our Swedenborgian teachings, as well as thousands of years of religious traditions are clear about this.

However, *on the level of daily life*, if two people of the same sex want to live together, and wish to share the burdens and benefits of such a life, perhaps the church should in some way recognize a solemn commitment made between them. Shouldn't the church serve both the natural and spiritual needs of its members? I believe the interests of the state would also be served in the establishment of a stable household in the community.

But I believe that the teachings of the church should be clear about what does and what does not constitute the possibility of a true conjugal union, and that the term marriage be applied only where that possibility exists.

* As compared with "human beings"

Duane V. Beougher
St. Louis, Missouri

(*OPINION* continued on page 25)



Life's Blessings



Dave Rienstra

On October 16, 1996, St. Louis University Medical School held a memorial service for those who have donated their bodies for the purpose of helping medical students in their training and so that there may be better doctors for generations.

I was quite impressed by the following reflection of one of the medical students and would like to share it with all of you.

I know that body donation is not for everyone, and that is OK. For those who can, this is a wonderful way to be of use, even in physical death. It is a way of saying "I believe in quality life." The students who benefit from this will return those benefits to the larger society by becoming good doctors. As the writings teach...

"When the body is no longer able to perform the bodily functions in the natural world that correspond to the spirit's thoughts and affections, which the spirit has from the spiritual world, man is said to die. But man does not die; he is merely separated from the bodily part that was of use to him in the world, while the man himself continues to live. It is said that the man himself continues to live since man is not a man because of his body but because of his spirit, for it is the spirit that thinks in man, and thought with affection is what constitutes man." *Heaven and Hell #445*

With these thoughts in mind, I wish to share the feelings of one young medical student who embraces life and holds in reverence the gifts offered through Carole* and others.

Reflections...by Marin Granholm, class of 2000

In trying to learn anatomy, I think many of us are overwhelmed by the intricacy of the human body. There is so much to learn, and once you think you've learned the way things are supposed to look, there they are, looking completely different. It has been a very challenging class for me.

But when I think about the kind of person who would donate her body to this process, I am also overwhelmed by the power of the human spirit. I feel that

validating their faith in you by the beautiful things you and they were able to create together. You began new works you knew wouldn't be completed in your lifetime, because of your faith in the future. And now you put your faith in me.

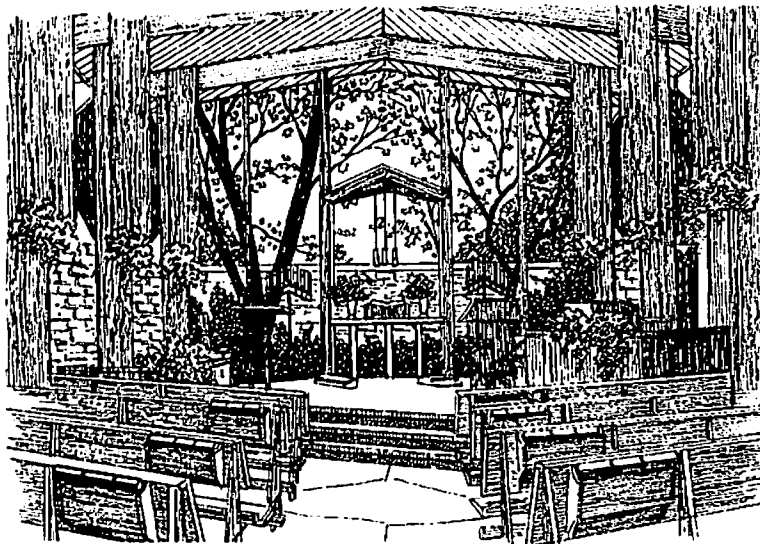
I am tremendously honored by this gift. It is a powerful gift, a gift of foresight, and with it comes great responsibility. By accepting this gift, I am accepting your trust in me, that your life's effort will be continued in mine, that I will respect your wishes and work my hardest and become the best doctor I can be.

None of us are here today solely due to our own efforts. All of us had friends, family or teachers who believed in us, who inspired us to follow our dreams. We are cherished, each and every one of us, by those who love us, and we know we owe a great debt to them.

We owe debt to the donors. I know the people we are remembering today are sorely missed. They are sorely missed by us as well. They are some of our best teachers. They had great faith in us and in this way inspire us to

our best. I wish that I could have met the woman who has become my teacher. I will spend the rest of my life trying to live up to the selfless honor she has shown me.

*The late Carole Rienstra, wife of the Rev. David Rienstra, pastor of the St. Louis Swedenborgian Church, donated her body to the St. Louis University Medical School. Marin Granholm's remarks are not of course specifically referring to Carole, but are representative.



Church of the Open Word - Swedenborgian St. Louis, Missouri

such a person embodies the kind of humanity we all aspire to. I would like to personally thank the woman who has and will continue to have such a powerful impact on me:

You were once a young woman like me. Even then, you knew. You knew how each one of us is dependent on others, how precious and short life is, how for great works to happen they must be the end result of generations of effort. You lived by this philosophy, building on the gifts you received from others,



The Essentials of the Church

Edwin Capon

There is a basic question all human beings ask in one way or another. It is the question about one's life. What really matters? How can I find fulfillment? What must I do to enter the Kingdom of God? What must I do to be saved? For Swedenborg the question is what must I do to be a member of the Lord's Church, not as an earthly organization, but as a divine fellowship of those in communion with the Lord and on a path towards heaven. Accordingly Swedenborg speaks of "the essentials of the Church," since these are what make for true Christian personhood, thus answering the question about the means to salvation. Unfortunately his statements as to what constitutes the essentials of the Church differ sufficiently to cause one to wonder. There seems to be a lack of consistency.

According to Swedenborg there is either one essential of the church, or there are two, or there are three, or there are four.

In at least seven places he speaks of one essential of the Church; in one case he speaks of "the most essential thing of the Church." But his one essential is not the same in each quotation. (Athanasian Creed 151, Apocalypse Explained, 105, Arcana Coelestia 10370, 10033, 6587, 4899, 30).

I have found at least 14 places where he numbers the essentials of the Church—or of salvation—as two. Again these quotations are not always in agreement.

I know of four places where Swedenborg numbers the essentials as three, though they are not quite the same. However, they have more similarity than is the case with the two above.

And there is even one passage I have found in which our teachings state the essentials of the church to be four. What are we to make of this surprising difference of statement?

You are probably familiar with Emerson's oft-quoted line to the effect that foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds. Swedenborg can never be accused of having a little mind—on any grounds.

Actually there is an amazing consistency in the theological writings of our church, but it is not always verbal. The consistency lies in the system, in the relationship of the truths to one another, or even more in the relationship of the realities to which the truths refer. Swedenborg does not seem to need to describe this consistency consistently.

For New Church persons who want to be able to talk about their faith, this means that they need to be able to go behind Swedenborg's words to their meaning so that they may be able to speak of their faith from a personal understanding of it and not merely by quoting. They need to know and remember not only what Swedenborg says in one place but also what he says in several places—or better yet in many places!

I'm not sure I know why there are these verbal inconsistencies in the writings. Partly it may be due to the fact that

Swedenborg had too great a mind to worry about whether he always everywhere expresses the same truth in the same way. Partly it may be due to his faith in those who would read him receptively, who would understand him not on the basis of individual statements but on the basis of the overall picture he paints. It may also be that Swedenborg felt a need at one point in one context to stress certain things; at another point in another context to stress others.

What are the things that matter, the essentials, according to Swedenborg?

1. From careful reading over the many statements we have about the essential or essentials of the church we are left with little doubt that the idea of God is an essential. In *Athanasian Creed* 151 Swedenborg writes that "the most essential thing of the Church is to know and to know its God." And in the *Apocalypse Explained* Swedenborg tells us that a person's place in heaven is dependent upon his or her idea of God.

It is not that the issue is correctness. The point is that our idea of God determines our value system and our view of reality, our concept of what is most high and most real, as Nels Ferré¹ would say. And this will have much to do with how we think life ought to be lived.

Swedenborg states this essential in a number of ways. But the main thrust is that we see Jesus Christ risen and glorified as the visible God in whom is the invisible. Failure to see the Divine within his human can be failure to truly see God.

2. A second essential—almost always stated or implied—is charity, or the good of charity, or love to the neighbor. Of course not everything that passes for charity or love in this life is true love and charity, without which there can be no regeneration. There is clear authority for this essential in words of Jesus recorded in the Gospels.

3. A third essential apparent in most of Swedenborg's statements of the essentials of the church is faith or knowledge or wisdom. When he lists four essentials of the church in *Canons* he lists "knowledge of God, knowledge of the goods of charity, knowledge of the truths of faith and a life according to them."

To my mind overstressing this essential poses a greater danger than over-emphasizing any other. Swedenborg can speak in the strongest terms of its value. But he also says things like this passage from the *Arcana*: "So long as good is in obscurity with them, so long is truth, for all truth is good." In our teachings good always implies truth and truth, to be really truth, always implies good. Hence Swedenborg does not feel he must always spell this out.

4. The fourth essential you have already guessed. Indeed it was mentioned in a quotation above. The fourth essential is life. All of the other essentials fail of their purpose if they fail to direct and govern the lives we live. Did not

(Continued on page 28)

New Students at SSR

Liz Balcomb



There are two new students at the Swedenborg School of Religion this year, Young Min Kim and Jun-chol Lee.

Young Min Kim was born in Korea in 1952. As a young child he lived in Pusan City, the biggest seaport in Korea. He has happy memories of going to the seashore, of fishing, and of catching crabs. When he was in the third grade, his family moved to Taejeon City, which is an important rail transportation center in Korea. He attended middle and high school there, and enjoyed judo, fishing, and mountain climbing (including playing the harmonica on top of the mountain at the end of the climb).

During high school he volunteered to work with a project whose aim was in part to help bridge the gap between urban and rural youth. He went to work in a small farming and fishing village on the coast in the western part of Korea. The students from the city helped teach the children. Their work included the formation of a youth organization for the village children. Young Min remembers this as a good experience in learning about different ways of living, including the differences between city and country life.

He attended college in Seoul, studying metallurgical engineering and

he spent three years duty in the army.

As a child, Young Min attended a Roman Catholic kindergarten. At the university, he joined a Catholic club. Also during his university years he helped in a project with a medical service which visited rural areas and provided care.

After university he had his own business for a time, and then went to work for another firm.

When he came to the United States, he met the Rev. Chungsun Lee, who is a Swedenborgian. Young Min became interested in the teachings of Swedenborg and in the ministry. He went back to school, attending New York Theological Seminary and the Korean New Church Seminary. He was ordained in March 1995 in Jesus Church (Korean New Church). At this time he became minister of the Church of the Little Grain in New York. Young Min notes that the story of how Jesus Church was started and how it connects to the Swedenborgian Church here in the U.S. is an interesting one that he would like to make the subject of an article at some future point.

Currently the Church of the Little Grain has a Sunday school, Friday and Sunday services, adult Bible study, Sunday morning classes, and a youth

group on Wednesdays. Their other minister is the Rev. Sook Hyun Yoon.

Young Min has a wife, Esther, a daughter, Aileen, 8, and a son, Keyman, 11. They also have a puppy, Susie, who was acquired in part to keep the family company during his absence. Esther plays the piano for the church and also works for the post office.

Young Min feels that being at SSR provides an opportunity to meet people and to have a chance to learn and to think about what he is learning. He notes that Korean immigrants to the U.S. have misconceptions about the Swedenborgian Church, and he would like to work to correct those misunderstandings, because it is important that people know about the Swedenborgian Church.

Jun-chol Lee was born in 1970 in Kwang-Ju, Korea. Kwang-Ju is one of the five biggest cities in Korea, and is a center of arts and culture.

Jun-chol has several sisters and brothers and half sisters and brothers, his parents having divorced when he was four years old. His father is a professor of law and Eastern philosophy in Kwang-Ju, and his mother is with his sister in the Seoul area. His siblings are in school studying various subjects, including medicine, marketing, and oriental medicine.

Jun-chol lived part of his childhood with his grandparents in the countryside, where, he noted, you see only "heaven and mountains."

He is very interested in Chinese culture and philosophy, as well as Chinese military tactics. At one time he wanted to work in the area of trade between Korea and China.

Jun-chol went to a university in Korea for students specializing in foreign studies and majored in Chinese language. He worked with the student association for Chinese majors and when a sophomore, was president of the Chinese Cultural Festival Committee, which put on a festival of arts.

(Continued on page 25)

OPINION

(Continued from page 21)

Gay Love Rooted in Self Love

To the Editor:

In regard to the Rev. Dr. James F. Lawrence's article, "Risking on the Side of Compassion":

I have read many of your comments on New Church doctrine, so I was deeply shocked to read what you said about homosexuality, that you are growing in support for the possibility of gay love being rooted in Divine love, and I say, sacrilege! Nothing could be farther from the truth, for it is pure self love.

You say there are only a few Bible passages on this subject, but read Leviticus 18:22-30, and that makes it loud and clear.

The Lord had good reason to create male and female, and that was to prevent such abomination. Read Swedenborg's *Conjugal Love* for enlightenment.

Anne E. Nielsen
Frederick, Maryland



New Students at SSR

(Continued from page 24)

He spent two years in the army, during which time he was able to do a lot of bowling and fishing, which he loves.

He came to the United States in December 1993 at the suggestion of his aunt. His aunt and uncle are leaders in the Bayside Church in New York. This was his first exposure to the Swedenborgian Church; from the age of 14 to 21, he attended a Presbyterian church because his best friend did. After that he stopped attending because it no longer made sense to him.

He spent time here in the U.S. studying English. At that time he started to read the Korean text of the Dole notes, which his uncle was translating into Korean.

After a few months, he decided to study religion here. He liked his aunt and uncle's life and faith, and wanted

to learn more about it. He said that they were instrumental in restoring his faith in adults (and that around this time he also realized he was going to be one).

Accordingly, he spent two years studying at the Academy of the New Church college in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, taking courses on Swedenborg and the writings. He was particularly interested in learning about the meeting points of Swedenborg and the Eastern philosophies which he had studied.

While he did not at first think about being a minister, he began to think about the usefulness of being a minister for himself and for society. His family reacted with joy to his decision to pursue the ministry. When he graduated from Bryn Athyn, he came to SSR.

Jun-chol is very active in the Bayside Church. He does much of their youth work, leading a young adult group, a doctrinal class, and a Bible study for young adults on Sunday, which uses the Dole notes in the Korean translation done by his uncle.

Jun-chol is enjoying studying here at SSR. He expects his MA thesis will be a comparative study of Swedenborg and Eastern religions, and he hopes to study for a Ph.D. along the same lines. He would also like to write books for Koreans to introduce Swedenborg to them.

Liz Balcomb is the new archivist at the Swedenborg School of Religion. She is a graduate of Simmons Graduate School of Library Science, with a concentration in Archives Management. The foregoing article is based on interviews she conducted with Young Min Kim and Jun-chol Lee. ❖

SSR Triples Enrollment



The above chart shows the total number of SSR students as of the September registration for the years 1989 to 1996. The total is 8 in 1989 and the total was 24 in 1996, which means we have tripled our enrollment!! In any given year, about half the students are in the ordination track or working towards it.

SSR received degree-granting status in February 1991. The evidence is only anecdotal, but it appears that degree-granting status has given a great boost to our enrollment, even though many of the new students are not in the M.A. program. Our status as a degree-granting institution, and the changes we made to receive that status, have had an energizing impact on the school. ❖

General Council Report

Convention's General Council met in Newton from November 22-24. All members were present. A major part of the meeting was devoted to consideration of the budget as presented to General Council by the Cabinet. The budget as finally approved shows a substantial deficit, but since it is usual for many line items not to be fully spent, it is expected that we will end the 1997 year with only a small deficit. To have trimmed the budget any further would have serious impact on some programs.

When the new constitution and bylaws were adopted some years ago the clear intention was expressed that the value and efficiency of our new structure would be reviewed from time to time. A committee with Chris Laitner as chair has been appointed to do this and will probably meet primarily by telephone. It will include in its considerations the memo presented from the New York Association at last year's convention. Any who have concerns in the area of this committee's responsibilities should feel free to contact Chris at 10 Hannah Street, Midland, MI 48642.

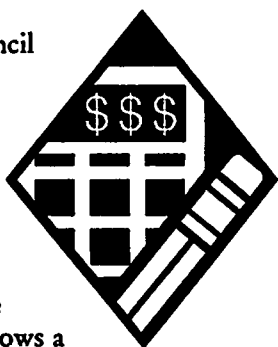
The agreement between General Convention and the Philadelphia church regarding Temenos having been signed, documents for a mortgage, a promissory note and a deed of transfer have been prepared by Convention's attorney and forwarded to Philadelphia. General Council has authorized its executive committee to act in its behalf in approving these documents and instructing the proper officers to sign them. We have been informed that work in preparation for the new dormitory building at Temenos has already begun.

Council was reminded that the theme for the 1997 Convention had already been chosen: "Let the earth rejoice."

Present at the meeting by invitation was Pastoral Ministries Consultant, the Rev. Eric Allison. Eric gave a presentation on his work, including a summary of encouraging signs and activities at many of the churches.

Betty Yenetchi, Secretary

Summarized by the Rev. Edwin Capon, President ❖



1997 CONVENTION UPDATE

Let the Earth Rejoice

Eric Zacharias

Our convention theme, "Let the earth rejoice," does indeed set the tone for this gathering on the Kansas prairie. The planning for the convention to take place July 9-13, is nearly complete. Your invitation will appear next month in the pages of *The Messenger*—the invitation to come to Hutchinson, a city of about 45,000, where our meetings will be held on the campus of the junior college where all meeting rooms and dormitory rooms are air conditioned and where all of your walking will be on level ground.

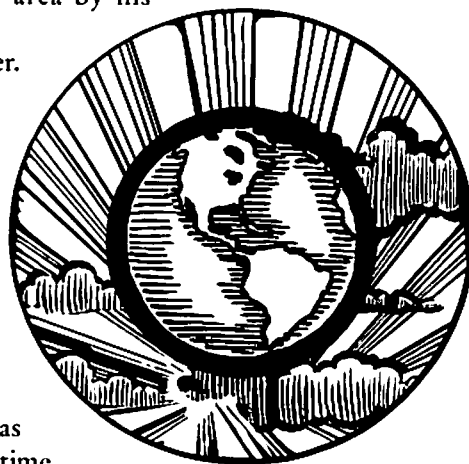
All participants will have the opportunity to visit the internationally acclaimed Cosmosphere and Space Center on the campus. Here is housed the museum which depicts the development of space flight from its beginnings to the present time. The most recent addition is the Blackbird—the U.S. Air Force stealth fighter.

The Women's Alliance luncheon will be enjoyed in the beautiful setting of the Prairie Dunes Country Club which offers a fine view of the golf course rated among the ten best in the nation.

Our variety of interesting features of the '97 convention continues on Friday evening with the presentation of a Johnny Appleseed program by Bill Mallory of Kerrville, Texas. Mr. Mallory has made it his mission to 'spread the word' of Swedenborg's vision of a revitalized Christianity throughout his area by his portrayal of this pioneer wanderer.

Late Saturday afternoon, we will be bused to Pretty Prairie for a pit barbecue on the church grounds, followed by the RCA-approved rodeo, heralded as the largest nighttime rodeo in the state of Kansas.

The plans are in place for a feast of good things—for study, for worship, for fellowship. For indeed, "The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof." *Psalm 97:1*





Verda Winter

A Celebration in Cleveland



A wedding ministry. Is it really a ministry? One of Webster's definitions states that "ministry" is the act of ministering or serving. When I became wedding coordinator at the Cleveland Swedenborg Chapel in July of 1994 I really didn't know much about what was expected of me. The job description given to me at that time was that I would "have to answer the phone." This seemed rather inadequate, and as I was soon to find out, really did not begin to describe what I would be doing.

In 1994, I had some very definite ideas of those things which I would *never* do but only vague ideas of what I *would* do. Now after two years as wedding coordinator, I know that the word "never" just doesn't fit, and that those things which do fit change from day to day.

Does a wedding ministry at our chapel serve others and serve the chapel too? Or is it just a means of improving our financial status? A means of renovating our place of worship? Are we really serving others?

I was amazed at first at the difficulty facing couples who wanted to be married in a house of God instead of at city hall or in Las Vegas. It seemed that if these couples were not members in good standing, then these Christian institutions refused to marry them. As one woman said to me recently, "I don't believe how rude many of the churches are." I remember one bridegroom who said to me, "I don't always do what the Lord tells me to do, but it just seems right to be married in His place."

I have learned in the past two years that the Lord does help some couples come to the realization that they should not marry and should perhaps postpone or cancel their wedding.

All this leads up to what I really want to talk about, which is our first annual wedding festival service. Last winter, I learned that such services are conducted in other Swedenborgian churches, and I was advised by some of our ministers to try it. Swedenborgian ministers are very helpful in sharing ideas, programs,

and just basic details about how to plan. The Revs. Jim Lawrence, Carl Yenetchi, and David Rienstra were a great help to us.

On June 23, 1996 we had our first service in celebration of our wedding ministry. We sent invitations to all those who had been married in our chapel during the past two years—56 couples. We were fortunate to have our friends, the Rev. Gregory Nadeau and his wife, Sheila perform the service which included a renewal of vows, encouraged us greatly in

our work at the chapel. We planned a coffee hour—complete with wedding cake—to take place immediately after the service. All seemed set for a wonderful Sunday.

I am always the eternal optimist and was sure we would have at least 100 of our wedding people and their families

attending church. How many actually showed up?

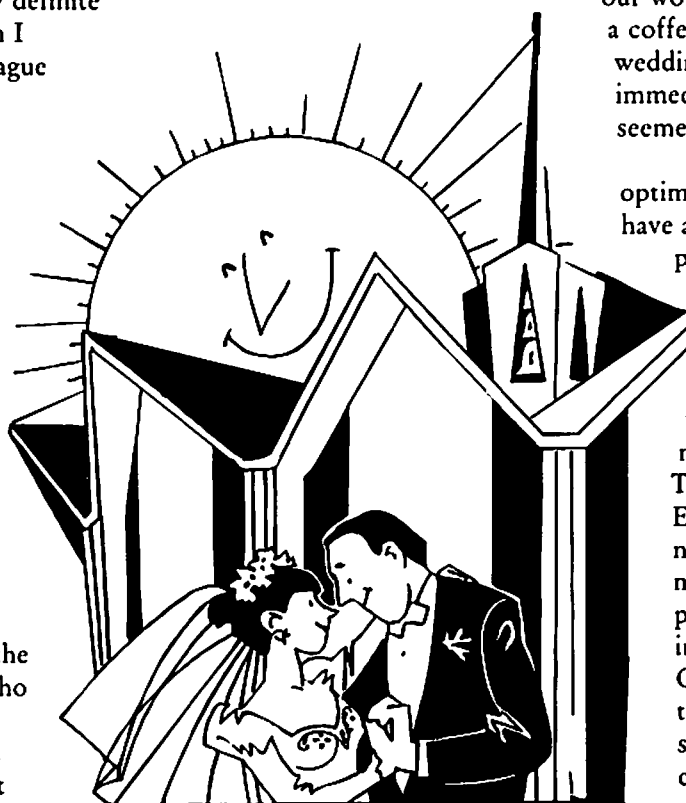
Six! Were we disappointed? Of course, we were, but that disappointment did not last very long. The service was so beautiful. Everyone present—the newlyweds, the long time married couples, the single people—everyone was included in the celebration. One of the newlyweds asked to be baptized during the service. I think all of us left church that day feeling that we had been truly touched by the hand of God.

What has happened as a result of that day in June? One of the newlywed couples has become active in our church, and we have performed two more baptisms for members of their family. We are also seeing new faces in church during our Sunday services.

We are currently making plans for our second annual marriage festival service. The date has been changed from June—which is a very busy month—to February 16, 1997 when more people may be able to attend.

We believe our wedding ministry serves a purpose—that our little chapel can serve others and also benefit us in many ways.

Verda Winter is a longtime member of the Cleveland Swedenborgian Church. ❖



Swedenborg and Hildegard of Bingen

(Continued from Cover)

the Church. She is considered by some to be one of the precursors of the Protestant Reformation. Never one to mince words, she wrote to Pope Anastasius IV: "O man, the eye of your discernment weakens; you are becoming weary, too tired to restrain the arrogant boastfulness of people to whom you have trusted your heart...And why do you not cut out the roots of the evil which chokes out the good, useful, fine-tasting, sweet-smelling plants? You are neglecting justice, the King's daughter, the heavenly bride, the woman who was entrusted to you."⁴

Her emphasis on the presence of God in the cosmos is revealed very beautifully in some of her prayers. The following is a typical example:

Without the WORD of God
no creature has being.

God's WORD is in all creation,
visible and invisible.

The WORD
is living,
being, spirit,
all verdant greening,
all creativity.

All creation is awakened,
called,
by the resounding melody,
God's invocation of the WORD.

This WORD manifests in every
creature.

Now this is how the spirit is in the
flesh—the WORD is indivisible from
GOD.⁵

I believe that Hildegard's life fits very well with George Dole's definition of a mystic (November *Messenger*) as one who has direct experience of the spiritual, and for whom such experience is both recurrent and meaningful. I also see many parallels with the life of Swedenborg. After active and prayerful early lives,

Hildegard and Swedenborg each had an experience of call in middle age (See Wilma Wake's article in the December *Messenger*), which they ultimately accepted. Their inner and outer lives appear to have grown dramatically after these experiences. Both were active and prolific. (For information on Swedenborg's active life, see Ted Klein's article in the January *Messenger*.) Both continued to have spiritual experiences. Each saw an inner meaning of Scripture as key to their visions. Each saw corruption and difficulty in the Church as they experienced it.

The same Lord appears to be at work in each of these lives, trying to do the same work in different areas. Even though the outer circumstances of time, place, gender, and personality differed, both Swedenborg and Hildegard responded willingly to the call they received, and each has made an outstanding contribution to the way we view the world, and to our understanding of our relationship to God.

Footnotes:

¹ Columba Hart and Jane Bishop, English translation. *Hildegard of Bingen: Scivias*. Introduction by Barbara J. Newman. New York: Paulist Press, 1990, pp. 59-60.

² Fiona Bowle and Oliver Davies, eds. *Hildegard of Bingen: Mystical Writings*. Translated by Robert Carver. New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1995, p. 21.

³ Hart and Bishop. Introduction by Barbara J. Newman. p 16.

⁴ Matthew Fox, ed. *Hildegard of Bingen's Book of Divine Works, with Letters and Songs*. Santa Fe: Bear & Co., 1987. pp 273-4.

⁵ Gabriele Uhlein. *Meditations with Hildegard of Bingen*. Preface by Matthew Fox. Foreword by Thomas Berry. Santa Fe: Bear & Co., 1983, p. 49.

Dr. Mary Kay Klein is president of the Swedenborg School of Religion. ❖



(Continued from page 23)

Jesus say, "By their fruits shall ye know them."

Sometimes the writings talk of this essential as repentance, sometimes as the obedience of faith, sometimes as the works of charity, sometimes as keeping the Ten Commandments. But the meaning is the same.

I am not sure there is any definitive statement of the essentials of the New Church, the New Christian Church, either in Swedenborg's writings or outside of them in some collateral work—or in this article. It may be possible to print a good short statement for distribution, something I would favor. But it is more important

—◆◆◆—
The consistency lies in the
system, in the relationship
of the truths to one
another, or even more in
the relationship of the
realities to which the
truths refer.
—◆◆◆—

by far that each of us make the teachings of our church so much a part of our thinking and our understanding that we can be guided by them in our living and speak about them to any who ask.

¹ The late Dr. Nels Ferré was professor of theology at Andover-Newton Theological School and author of *Evil and the Christian Faith*, *Faith and Reason*, *The Christian Faith*, *The Christian Fellowship*, and *Swedish Contributions to Modern Theology*.

The Rev. Edwin Capon is president of the denomination and a former president of the Swedenborg School of Religion. He resides with his wife Esther in Millville, Massachusetts.

Facing the Future: An Interview with Alice Skinner

The following interview with Swedenborg Foundation President Alice Skinner is reprinted from Logos, the Foundation's newsletter, to help Messenger readers who are unfamiliar with the Foundation become better acquainted with the work and goals of the Foundation and how it interfaces with the Swedenborgian Church.

Logos: What would you see as some of our accomplishments since you became president in 1990?

Skinner: I'd point to several accomplishments. The first is moving the Foundation headquarters from New York City to West Chester, Pennsylvania. This historic borough offers a congenial community for a small publishing foundation. Our new headquarters is a warm and gracious setting for the staff and attracts a surprising number of visitors.

Second, Foundation programs continue to make the public more aware of Swedenborg and Swedenborgian thought. During the presidency of my predecessor, John Seekamp, award-winning films drew attention to Swedenborg and people whom he attracted, such as William Blake and Johnny "Appleseed" Chapman. Responses from people who saw the films led the Foundation to publish *Chrysalis*, a journal for spiritual seekers that offered a forum for writers from diverse traditions. More recently we dealt with the fiscal problems associated with a subscription journal and have re-shaped *Chrysalis* into the Chrysalis Reader, an annual publication that places Swedenborgian thought side-by-side with insights from other spiritual traditions. I'd like to emphasize the bridge-building aspects of the Chrysalis orientation. Traditionally, the Swedenborgian community has concentrated on disseminating spiritual insights taught by Emanuel Swedenborg. Now we recognize that if we expect people to be interested in what we have to offer, we need to respect what they have to offer and celebrate the commonalities.

Third, the Foundation now benefits from the skills of a professional

publishing staff. Our publications are attractive, literate, and expansive works that connect Swedenborgian views to topics of popular interest, such as spiritual growth, angels, and near-death experiences. We are now using the services of a distributor to get our publications into bookstores. Our interest is in engaging people who are searching for spiritual insights.

Logos: What is the relation between the Foundation and the Swedenborgian church tradition?

Skinner: The church's principal concern is worship and teaching spiritual truth as it understands it. The church is also missionary in the sense of reaching out to invite people into a faith community. I don't think that those are the tasks of the Foundation. Our purpose is to provide books, other materials, and informational programs that convey Swedenborg's ideas, in his own words, or in those of others. People can use his insights as they will. We are committed to making Swedenborg's works and Swedenborgian ideas available as widely as possible.

Logos: What does the Foundation have to offer to people who are searching for spiritual direction?

Skinner: Swedenborgians have a comprehensive and profound theological system. It emphasizes a spiritual life that is an everyday here-and-now phenomenon, a quality of life that can be cultivated in both heart and mind, and the interconnection of mind and body.

Logos: When people make an annual gift to the Foundation, or through an estate legacy, how is their money being put to use?

Skinner: all donations support publishing and informational programs designed to emphasize the spiritual in everyday life. And the more funds you have, the more you can do. We always seem to have a long agenda of things that we would like to do. For example, we have a marvelous *Swedenborg, Scientist* film, begun in



1988 and awaiting funds for completion. It contains footage from world-famous scientists about the importance of Swedenborg's contributions to science and technology. We could also do much more with the Swedenborg Image Archive if we could print a catalog of the images available here so that they're more accessible to other publishers. But the main reason for people to give is that they are excited about the potential offered by the spread of Swedenborg's ideas.

Logos: What do you see as the challenges that face the Foundation over the next decade?

Skinner: I think one challenge is to expand the markets for our publications. Right now, there is a window of opportunity for vast numbers of spiritual seekers to become acquainted with us. As long as that opportunity exists, it makes sense for us to let people know who we are and why they will find Swedenborg's ideas useful.

Another ongoing challenge is to find more writers and translators. Swedenborgian thought has lots of gems to offer as we move into the twenty-first century. We need to be looking at the implications of what Swedenborg wrote for today's life, for today's inquirers, for today's issues and needs. For example, in the last ten years or so, there has been widespread interest in heaven and angels. On the other side of that coin, the reality of hell and the nature of evil may not engage readers as much as heaven and angels, but these topics too should be addressed in the contemporary world from a Swedenborgian perspective.



Patte LeVan

Peace and Joy Alive and, Well, Relative

With my editorial schedule keeping me in a perpetual time warp, the aftermath of Christmas spills over into the Valentine month, so it seems appropriate to continue dealing with the theme of love, with brief intervals of peace and occasional glimpses of truth and wisdom.

My son was in the process of a permanent move to New York after Christmas, but before he cleared out his apartment in the Hollywood hills, he wanted to have a "last" Christmas gathering of the family and close friends there, because who knew where we would all be the following year. My older daughter flew down from San Francisco and my younger daughter, who usually views with unease any gatherings of over two persons, especially if they're in our family, was looking forward to being among us. My son flew into Los Angeles a week before Christmas to make preparations.

I called him a few days before the big event to see how he was doing. "I can't deal with running out in this madness and buying Christmas presents," he said. "So I thought I'd just lay out all the stuff I can't take with me and let everybody pick what they want."

"That's creative and interesting," I said. "I'm for anything that lowers stress."

I arrived at his apartment at 4:00 p.m. on Christmas. Most of the streets in the Hollywood hills are about two feet wide, and just finding a parking place, getting into it, alighting and walking the precipitous angle to your destination fulfills the day's aerobic requirement. But I didn't have to negotiate any of that. I was granted a privileged space in the garage, since I was staying for several days. The Christmas tree was beautiful, smelled wonderful, and the room was aglow with the joy of reunion. The three children and I shared an enjoyable 20

minutes together before the other guests began to arrive.

My son had decided to heal a lengthy misunderstanding he'd had with his father, so he had gone to a war surplus store and purchased a hatchet and small shovel, and burned a message, "Let's bury...the hatchet" into the handles. His father was touched and obviously delighted with the present. Pictures were taken. Things were off to a good start. I went to the kitchen to help get the food laid out. My older daughter was suddenly heading for the bathroom, looking outraged. A relative who shall remain nameless had become over-animated as he was telling a story and had spilled his drink all over her silk blouse. "He barely apologized—he was much more concerned about getting his glass refilled," she fumed.

This was not a surprising move on his part. But it seems that along with our other Christmas expectations, we expect those old behavior patterns will undergo some miraculous transformation, and that we will, like the stars of *The Enchanted Cottage*, become more beautiful than we are, if only for one day.

Another close relation didn't show up at all. (Differing versions of how this came about and why have been put forth but are too lengthy and complex to get into here).

We had a late breakfast next day and watched some current films in video that were being considered for the awards. The picking and viewing were accomplished democratically—if anyone had already seen the movie, it was automatically eliminated. We agreed that we would stop action 20 minutes after each one started and take a vote whether we should continue. *Independence Day* got trashed 10 minutes into it; *Daylight* was fast-forwarded to near the end to see how much more absurd it could get; we all agreed that the actors were drowning



in their own clichés faster than the water was rising in the Holland Tunnel. We left them to suffocate in the bad script. Finally a small gem with Robert Duvall and James Earl Jones called *A Family Thing*, in which Duvall, a white southern farmer, discovers late in middle age that he is half black, James Earl Jones is his brother, and the woman he thought was his mother wasn't. The growth of the brothers' relationship from grudging acknowledgment to warmth, trust and love restored our waning Christmas spirit.

Close friends of my son's who couldn't make it to the party came by the next evening and regaled us with their family tale. It seems one relative had arrived with dark glasses covering a contagious eye infection and had to be kept out of the food-serving area as much as possible; another relative slipped and fell into her sweet potato casserole as she was getting out of the car. Her chin was cut and bleeding. Other guests were arriving; the glass and sweet potatoes had to be cleaned off the sidewalk immediately. The chin needed medical attention. The dog became over-excited and did what over-excited dogs have traditionally done throughout their domesticated history (especially the small ones with very shrill barks). The host's parents arrived and announced they could only stay for forty-five minutes, and insisted that everyone open presents immediately so they could be on their way. The hostess, who was expecting,

(Continued on page 31)

BAPTISMS

Rogers—Tyler Dwight Rogers, age 9, son of Dwight and Annice Rogers was baptized into the Christian Church December 1, 1996, at the Fryeburg New Church in Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. Ken Turley officiating. The godfather is Cliff McGee.

Yarborough—Andrew Charles Yarborough, son of Peter and Tracy (MacDonald) Yarborough, was baptized into the Christian Church November 24, 1996, at the Church of the New Jerusalem, Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. Ken Turley officiating. The godparents are Tamara Segalla and Tim Woodward.

DEATHS

Ives—Frances Ives entered the spiritual world December 2, 1996, after a long struggle with Alzheimers. Frances and her late husband, Howard, who preceeded her in death in 1982, were members of the Detroit Swedenborgian Church, participated at Almont summer school for many years, and were later involved in the Church of the New Jerusalem in St. Petersburg, Florida.

Wheaton—Lloyd Wheaton, Jr., son of the Rev. Gladys Wheaton and grandson of Alice Fairfax, died December 3, 1996, following a motorcycle accident. A memorial service was conducted December 11, 1996, at the Massachusetts Avenue Baptist Church in Cambridge, Mass.

Cards and notes to Gladys may be sent to:
1563 Solano Ave., #214
Berkeley, CA 94707

CHURCH FAMILY NEWS

Over the Christmas holiday, the Rev. Dr. Robert Kirven had emergency abdominal surgery for a severe hernia. He was expected to stay in the hospital for about a week, but at this writing is resting comfortably and his prognosis is good. Cards may be sent to Bob at:

8650 North 65th Avenue, #316
Glendale, AZ 85302-4347
(602)937-8376



The Rev. Ron Brugler, pastor of the Kitchener church, stated in a letter to friends and colleagues that, (as some of you know) he was experiencing serious vision problems in his left eye this past summer. A lengthy examination by an eye specialist at the Ivey Eye Institute resulted in the discovery of "choroidal folds," a thickening behind the eye which leads to deterioration of vision. A CT scan done in December revealed *no cysts or tumors*, which was a great relief. Since there are different ways the condition can progress, the path of progression will indicate what is causing it and further tests will then reveal what needs to be done to at least arrest the problem, although it is highly doubtful it can be eliminated. He asks for our prayers, and wishes to report on his condition in part to squelch a rumor that he had a brain tumor! Our prayers are with Ron for the best possible outcome. Meanwhile, he is getting a new lens in his glasses that promises to improve his immediate vision in the left eye.

On The Lighter Side

(Continued from page 30)

developed a severe migraine and took to her bed.

It was reassuring to know that these warm and wonderful Christmas scenes had probably taken place all over the country, and still we had survived to welcome in another new year.

I stayed an extra day and helped my son clean out his apartment. My car was loaded up with a great portion of his worldly goods and we were saying our good-byes when he grew misty-eyed and said, "You wouldn't want to adopt two really sweet, mellow, 11-year old cats, would you? Richard can't keep them anymore because of his wife's pregnancy. They've been together since birth, and he can't bear to separate them. I'd take them myself if I weren't in a short-term sublet."

"Can't," I replied.

I got home, thought it over, and called to tell him I would take them after all. Burt and Ernie were delivered to me a few days ago, with tearful expressions of gratitude for my kindness. I now have three cats who are working out their relationships. I think their basic need for fellowship will ultimately win out over their territorial imperative.

All in all, it was a good Christmas. Happy Valentine's Day! ❖



Mite Box Time

This year's collection will go toward the gazebo to be built in the garden of the Church of the Open Word in St. Louis. The gazebo will be built in memory of Carol Rienstra.

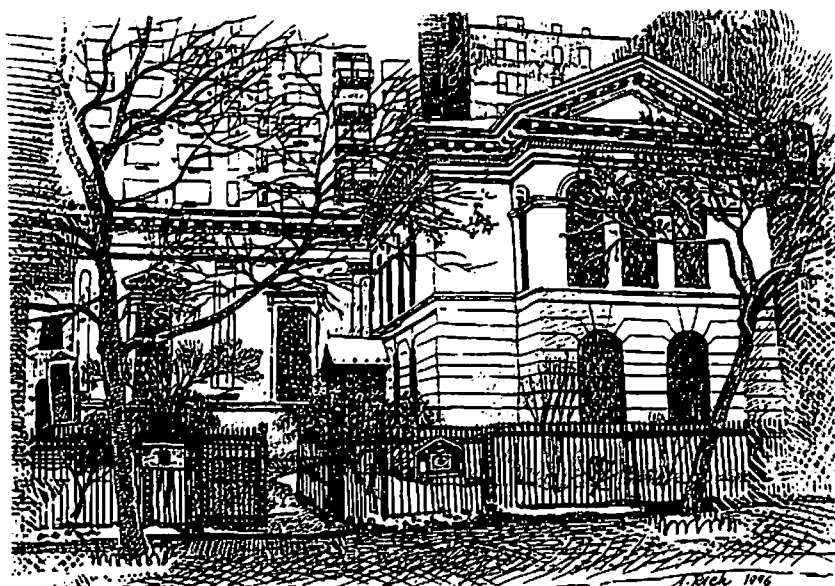
Contributions can be sent through May 1, 1997 to:

Margaret Krause
Box 264
Pretty Prairie, KS 67570

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.

New Light Shines on the New Church in New York City

Diane Moss and Mona Conner



New York Swedenborgian Church

Since it was built in 1859, the New York New Church has never been illuminated at night. But this year, just as when a star visited the earth at the time of the first Noel and shed its great light upon the world, the New Church has brought new light to its community, thanks to a generous donation of exterior spotlights for the church and its garden by Tiffany Hendry and Kip Colligan of Kipany Productions.

The new lights, together with a flurry of activity at the New Church during the Christmas season, ushered in an opportunity for it to renew its bond with the community and forge a stronger tie with its neighbors. After 137 years in the dark, the new lighting casts a beautiful glow in the midst of Murray Hill, symbolizing the resolve of the New Church to illuminate the

darkness found in close-by places and bringing hope, comfort, and greater meaning to our lives.

The new lighting, which also illuminates our announcement display case listing church and community events, and information about Swedenborg, has brought new interest in us from the community. It also casts a spotlight on the New Church and its efforts to carry out a broadened mission as it moves in new directions, and strives to achieve greater unity and develop a more comprehensive role both within the church, and in the community at large. Many thanks to Kip and Tiffany for bringing "new light" to our New Church!

Diane Moss is a writer, pianist, cat-lover, and friend of the NYNC. Mona Conner is an artist and member of the NYNC. ♦

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