

THE MESSENGER

Monthly Publication, Swedenborgian Church of North America

April 1998

A Journey to the Inmost: Swedenborg meets the Buddha

Jun-Chol Lee

It seems worthwhile to begin by looking at Swedenborg's approach to other religions. In *Divine Providence* Swedenborg says that "The heavenly man, which is heaven, in order that all these things may be in it, cannot be composed of people all of one religion but of people of many religions" (DP 326:10). By this universalizing light from Swedenborg's theology, I would like to say that Buddhism, as I understand it is an enlightening and effective religion. I am sure that Swedenborg would have gladly agreed with me that Buddhists are very welcome in heaven.

The Buddha, whose personal name was Siddhattha (Siddhartha in Sanskrit), and family name Gotama (Sanskrit Gautama), lived in North India in the sixth century B.C.¹ As far as I understand the Buddha, there is no written form that can lead one to the real union with the ultimate reality nor is there someone who can tell anybody what is right and wrong. All writings, teachings, and even one's own thoughts are in the trap of appearances. We see a wave as a separate thing from the sea, and we name the river, fountain, stream, rain, snow, and lake. A wave is not a part of the sea, but the sea itself seen from one point of view. And all different names I have just mentioned refer to one thing, which is namely water. What I mean is that the Buddha teaches us to see a thing in its substantial meaning, which we may define as *end* or *use* in Swedenborg's terms, and to regard our true self as an eternal being. If one's mind is free from the

limitation of all these physically and materially based laws, cultures, criteria and measurements, then one may experience a whole different world, which is I believe, the spiritual world that the Buddha and Swedenborg experienced.

I assume that if Swedenborg met the Buddha in the life after death, they would be very glad to talk to each other and would have a discussion about their similar experiences of enlightenment and their discoveries about inner reality and the purpose of life on earth. But still they have some significant differences in their teaching. One of the major differences arises from dealing with human emotions. The Buddha considers all human emotions useless and worthless, preventing one from

gaining the awareness of inmost self, which is the ultimate reality of life. But in misunderstanding and misusing this teaching, a lot of people left their families, friends, and lovers—thinking that to be a monk was the best way to be free from all human emotions, which is to be isolated from human society. But I believe that what the Buddha meant by saying all human emotions are useless, is to warn people not to be totally wrapped up in emotional feelings and sensuous

desires. So indeed I, personally, don't believe that the Buddha's message is to abandon one's family and to deny all personal relationships in order to practice to be a Buddhist.

Even though they have different approaches on evaluating human emotions, Swedenborg and the Buddha are in agreement about human nature and the way to the enlightenment. According to Swedenborg, we are born with the tendency to perform more evils than goods as our beginning condition in the long journey toward regeneration, which is

the real union of inner and outer self. In *Heaven and Hell*, Swedenborg says "Man was created that he might come into heaven and become an angel; wherefore one in whom there is good from the Lord is an angel man (HH 57)." So there

*The point is clear from both
Swedenborg and the Buddha that
we are born
in a certain condition,
and that we are one
with the ultimate reality
from which we are,
in which we live,
and to which we return.*

is the influx from the Lord into our deepest mind to lead us to a better state than where we are. Therefore in its spiritual reality, it may be said that we are one with God from birth to eternity. In parallel, the Buddha says that we are born in a state that our true self is covered by evils, so we need to go through a certain replacement process of our intentionality from materialistic to spiritual, which is a process of moving from

(Continued on page 59)

In This Issue:

- Time and Again
- The Neglected Genius of American Spirituality
- Convention 1998 Registration
- Nominating Committee Report

Hope Rests in Finding Unity in Our Culture

Guest Editorial by: Eric Zacharias

In a short time the Christian world will be celebrating the victory of the empty tomb. The bonds of death are broken. Christ has risen as he said. Until that moment of Easter dawn, however we are given opportunity to reflect upon those events that led to the cross.

On reading and re-reading those accounts of the final days before Judas' betrayal of the Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane, there is one theme that reverberates powerfully throughout these pages of Scripture. Jesus, after his stress-filled ministry, has found peace within himself and his longing now is to reach out to his disciples in a way that brings them into Oneness with himself.

In John 17:11 we read, "Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are." The disciples

were a diverse group of men. There was Peter, the fisherman, who must have spent many nights quietly trolling the vastness of the Sea of Galilee. There was Matthew, a tax collector, an urban dweller accustomed to the noise and bustle of the city.

Oneness out of diversity. That was the challenge. Jesus, all during the course of his ministry, appreciated and responded to the uniqueness of all he met. It was not conformity that he championed. He knew that our individual nature, our individual interests and talents can so easily separate us from each other. He made it his mission to show that our differences, if honored, promote the richness of life. He held before his listeners the possibility of unity without conformity.

This is the ideal of the marriage bond. "That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united with his wife, and they become one." Gen. 2:24. In essence, the more each of us becomes what God intends for us to be, the more we have to offer to the beauty and strength of the relationship. Harmony, then, is the reward of shared goals made possible through personal fulfillment. There is present a heightened sense of Oneness from the partnership of the diversity of nature.

This partnership must serve as the internal structure of all interpersonal relationships and for our international relationships, too. There is much being written today about Global Society about One World Government. From one perspective we have already moved into the framework of this Oneness. The world community already maintains a World Court, a World Bank, the United Nations, a World Health organization, etc. If we can hold to the ideal of Oneness through our diversity of cultural heritage, there is little to fear from this. We are all part of the human family and the events within this family are inevitably bringing us face to face with one another.

At this juncture of our human story, this may well be the most significant message of hope that Easter holds up to us. To be sure, it's idealistic. However, if we do not have our ideals, what else is there?

The Rev. Eric Zacharias is minister to the Pretty Prairie Swedenborgian Church in Kansas.

Reprinted from Nianescan Valley News. ❖

The Swedenborgian Church Nominating Committee Report

Vice-President: Christine Laitner

Recording Secretary: Gloria Toot

Treasurer: Polly Baxter

General Council:

Jim Erickson

Rev. Edwin G. Capon (to fill remaining unexpired term of one year)

Open

Open

Communication Support Unit (COMSU)

Susan Poole

Education Support Unit (EDSU)

Ruth Tafel

Financial & Physical Resources Support Unit (FPRSU): Rev. Richard H. Tafel, Jr.

Ministries Support Unit (MINSU)

Betsy Coffman

Esther Nicastro-Capon

Rev. David Rienstra (to fill remaining unexpired term of one year)

Information Management Support Unit (IMSU): Steven Ledingham

Nominating Committee (to elect one)

Stella Podmore

Rev. F. Robert Tafel

Committee on Admission into the Ministry (CAM)

Rev. Steven Ellis

Rev. Skuli Thorhallsson

Patricia Tukos

Swedenborg School of Religion (SSR) Board

Edward Bollander

Barbara Tourangeau (formerly Penabaker)

THE MESSENGER

Publisher: The Communications Support Unit
Published monthly, except July and August, by the Swedenborgian Church of North America (founded 1817, incorporated 1861 as the General Convention of the New Jerusalem in the United States of America).

April 1998
Volume 219 No. 4
Whole Number 5229

Typesetting & Layout
Town & Country
Press, Plymouth, IN

Patte LeVan, Editor
Editorial Address:
The Messenger
P.O. Box 985
Julian, CA 92036

TEL: (760) 765-2915
FAX: (760) 765-0218

Business & Subscription Address:
Central Office
48 Sargent Street
Newton, MA 02158

The opinions of the contributors do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editor or the Communications Support Unit, or represent the position of the church. Subscription free to members of the Swedenborgian Church; non-members, \$12.00 a year; foreign \$15.00 a year; gift subscription from a member, \$5.00 a year; single copies \$1.00.

Deadline for material: Six weeks before the first day of the month of issue.

Time and Again: A New Year's Groundhog Day Message for Easter

"So teach us to number our days, that we may apply
our hearts unto wisdom."—Psalm 90:12

James F. Lawrence

New Year's Eve was my fourth time to view *Groundhog Day*, which has made my very short list of films that are worth owning, because they bear multiple viewing.

As we move inexorably along the great timeline toward a new millennium, I invite us to question this whole outer focus on the counting of days and years as yet another example of a superficial worldly missing of the deeper reality. I'd like to draw upon this very favorite film of mine, which I consider to be covertly a Swedenborgian film.

In *Groundhog Day*, the progress of time somehow hits a snag and instead, in the experience of the protagonist, present-tense reality jumps back to the beginning of the same day, over and over again. Much like a scratch on an LP sending the needle back to course through the same groove over and over again, as time tries to cross the divide of 5:59 to 6:00 a.m. on February 3rd, something causes reality to bump back to February 2nd, 6:00 a.m.—but only for the protagonist, a local Philadelphia celebrity TV anchor man named Phil.

February 2nd happens to be a day when he is on a business trip with the small crew—producer and a cameraman—to do an early morning feature in the quaint Pennsylvania town where they keep the national official groundhog, whose emergence from his comfy abode traditionally signals that the end of winter is in sight. February 2nd is national Groundhog Day, so they are there to do a cute story on a piece of Americana.

How would you like to be on a business trip, and on the second morning of the trip, you discover that everything that happened to you on the first morning is happening again? It's not simply an eerie *deja vu*: exactly the same day is happening again, down to minor, insignificant details. Not only are the radio comments and newspaper editions exactly the same as the day before, but the same people wearing the same things are crossing your path and saying the same things they said the day before—all with the same consciousness of the day before—as if it were happening for the first time.

It's totally bizarre, but the fun—and the deeper commentary on the relationship of time to experience—is just beginning. The next day it happens all over again: it is February 2nd—and absolutely everything unfolds as it did the two previous days. And slowly Phil bewilderedly begins to accept that he's somehow become imprisoned within February 2nd.

Imagine yourself getting stuck within some random day

in your past. Day after day, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty times and counting, when you wake up, the same day has to be lived again—and there is no escape. As Phil will discover, not even suicide can alter the equation.

The film's brilliance lies in skillfully tracing the antics and tactics employed by the protagonist to find meaning and purpose within the paradigm of February 2nd. An interesting caveat, though, is that he retains his own memory of experience throughout his repetitions of February 2nd, so that, though he is stuck with the rest of the world on February 2nd, he alone is able to act differently each time through it, and retain the cumulative experience of same, so that each time reality reverts to the beginning of February 2nd, he carries with him all that he has learned and experienced through his many, many February 2nds.

A veteran sleuther in Swedenborg's concepts will begin to discern an uncanny underlying ring of truth in this picture. That truth has to do with the illusion of time as an ultimate reality, in contrast with the accumulation of experience which emerges as the only thing that is truly real.

After getting past the initial disbelief and adjustment to the new dimensions of time, Phil promptly plummets into depression. He quits caring; he lets his id loose on autopilot; he binges; he throws all care to the wind, because, frankly, it seems that it all counts for nothing at the end of the day—because, like it or not, he will start fresh again with February 2nd.

Then he has an inspiration: he realizes that if he plays the days just right, he might be able by the end of the day to seduce his attractive producer—who actually despises him, so it's a tall order. The film makes it difficult to gauge the number precisely, but it seems as if he spends perhaps as many as sixty Feb. 2nds on this errand of selfish lust, learning as much as he can about her, building each day upon the gains of the previous, so that he begins to get very close to being able to not only have her change her mind about him by lunch, but almost

to accomplish the romantic miracle by bedtime. But, as the old saying goes, there are only 24 hours in a day, and he's never quite able to meet with success.

He then loses interest in that quest or any other quest, and his new despondency spirals all the way into suicidal depression, as Phil actually takes his life in at least a dozen creative ways—all to no lasting avail. The radio alarm clock sounds again, and it is another round of "This is your life: February 2nd, 1995."

Finally, something shifts. Phil begins to realize that he can live through February 2nd in an increasingly effective—and even beautiful—way. He learns about places in town where he can help people in emergencies—every day. He embarks on a time management program whereby he takes piano les-

Time
is simply a
consciousness
box that we
fill with
experience

(Continued on page 52)

Time and Again:

A New Year's Groundhog Day Message for Easter

(Continued from page 51)

sons, ice sculpting lessons and other self-improvement ventures, so that over time, even though he is always the same age and living on the same day, his talents and skills begin to increase—something his colleagues begin to notice at first with curiosity, then with admiration. He himself learns more and more about his two colleagues, not from a selfish desire to exploit them, but to have deeper, more meaningful interactions with them.

Increasingly, he begins to live an ever more nearly perfect February 2nd: each person he comes into contact with, he knows the best thing to say and do to deepen and enhance the moment for them; he makes sure he is at two particular places at two particular times to save people from an accidental death; he sets aside a portion of the day to play music, create art, and enjoy beautiful things. And most importantly, he discovers the bliss of living effectively and becoming a new loving, interested, creative self whose enjoyment of February 2nd only grows and grows.

The concept of time has always fascinated reflective people, and one of Swedenborg's most popular spiritual discussions is on the nature and purpose of time. Scientists describe time as the fourth dimension. It is the dimension of our reality that permits us to experience life appropriate to our consciousness. Most of us can just barely manage to tap our heads and rub our tummies at the same time, much less tap our heads, rub our tummies, call a friend back, fill out that insurance form, resolve a dispute with the children, pick up the new business cards, hop on the stairmaster, and fold the laundry simultaneously! We need a dimension called time that strings out the continuum of our experience into bite-size segments, so that we can absorb the meaning into our consciousness.

Therefore, there is an interesting relationship between time and experience: time houses experience. What is interesting in *Groundhog Day* is how there is both a sense of progression and stasis simultaneously, but the stasis of time is what proves illusory as the film unfolds, and the progression of experience emerges as the dimension of reality that finally and definitively supersedes the seeming limitation of time.

We learn in Swedenborg's book, *Heaven and Hell*, that this relationship between time and experience takes a fascinating development in the next level of life. In the spiritual world, time as an outer feature of consciousness does not exist. There is with fully spiritual beings only a sense of inner movement and progression of spiritual states. Swedenborg writes: "Although there is a succession and a progression of all things in heaven, as in the world, yet angels have no notion or idea of time; and this so completely that they do not even know at all what time is anymore . . . the reason is that in heaven instead of years and days there are changes of state . . . when angels hear terms from the natural world as year, month, week, etc., they perceive a certain quality of spiritual state . . . that is why periods of times in the Word signify states and correspond to

spiritual things." [*H.H.* n. 162-165].

We can see this fascinating fusion of time and experience in the spiritual world happening already in our living here. For who cannot discern that in our earthly anxieties over our time pressures and our time hassles, what really concerns us is the quality of our life?

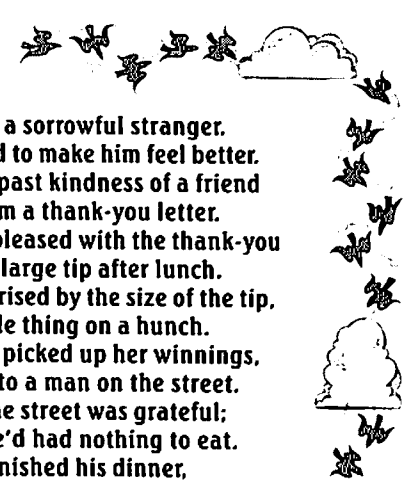
Time is simply a consciousness box that we fill with experience. The good news to hear today is that we will never run out of time, because we will never run out of the opportunity to experience God's life. That is the promise and the teaching. Like training wheels on a bicycle, time will be discarded from our consciousness at some point, in a way that we will scarcely notice, because the "essence of being" with all the same senses of progression and succession will continue—only more vividly.

But what a useful tool time is for us now. It exists so that we may have the means appropriate to our current state of consciousness to begin the creation of our eternal spiritual lives. The bottom line? Christ, Swedenborg and every spiritual teacher worth their salt says the same: we are here to learn how to love wisely—the same as the psalmist's ironic exhortation to number our days, like good ol' Phil on his eternal Groundhog Day, so that we may gain hearts of wisdom.

The Rev. James F. Lawrence is co-pastor at the San Francisco Swedenborg Church, and manager of J. Appleseed Press, the denominational publishing house for General Convention.

Editor's Note: *Groundhog Day*, in case you haven't yet seen it, is probably available at your favorite video rental store. ❖

Smile



She smiled at a sorrowful stranger.
The smile seemed to make him feel better.
He remembered past kindness of a friend
and wrote him a thank-you letter.
The friend was so pleased with the thank-you
that he left a large tip after lunch.
The waitress, surprised by the size of the tip,
bet the whole thing on a hunch.
The next day she picked up her winnings,
and gave part to a man on the street.
The man on the street was grateful;
for two days he'd had nothing to eat.
After he finished his dinner,
he left for his small dingy room.
(He didn't know at that moment that
he might be facing his doom.)
On the way he picked up a shivering puppy
and took him home to get warm.
The puppy was very grateful to be in out of the storm.
That night the house caught on fire.
The puppy barked the alarm.
He barked 'til he woke the whole household
and saved everybody from harm.
One of the boys that he rescued grew up to be President.
All this because of a simple smile
that didn't cost a cent.

Barbara Hauck, Age 13

Reprinted from December 1997 *Clear Blue Sky*

In Defense of Original Sin: *The Neglected Genius of American Spirituality*

John Taylor Gatto

Editor's Note: The following article, which includes introductory comments by *The Sun's* associate editor, Andrew Snee, is reprinted with permission from the author, John Taylor Gatto. It was first published in the January 1998 *Sun*.

Longtime Sun readers are probably well acquainted with John Taylor Gatto's criticisms of the public-school system, in which he taught for twenty-six years. He was named New York State Teacher of the Year before retiring to become one of compulsory schooling's most vocal opponents. The following essay, however, represents a departure of sorts. Its focus is not what's wrong inside the schools, but what's been kept out of them—namely, spirituality.

This is no reactionary call for prayer in school, however. While the religious Right and the liberal Left argue over who should hold the highest authority in the classroom—God or government—Gatto argues against any central authority, and proposes that small groups of people are capable of deciding for themselves what works best. He also believes that government, though besieged, is winning the war, and that its educational recipe of pure science and rationality has caused irreparable damage to our young people. Finally, he offers original sin—a Christian doctrine that to many seems hopelessly outdated—as one possible way out of the mess.

Although Gatto begins his essay with the example of America's early Protestant settlers, his ideas seem just as relevant to our ethnically diverse country at the end of the twentieth century.

—Andrew Snee

I was recently invited to speak at the Naropa Institute in Boulder, Colorado, as part of a conference on spirituality in education. On a warm evening in June, I found myself sitting on a camp chair under a big white tent directly in front of Tenzin Gyatso, the fourteenth Dalai Lama. He was on a stage about a dozen feet away, and there was nobody between us. As he spoke, our eyes met now and then, and I listened with growing delight as he talked about the Buddhist views on wisdom and the world. Most of what he said was familiar to me: that love and compassion are human necessities; that forgiveness is essential; that Western education lacks a dimension of heart; that Americans need to rely more on inner resources. But some of his presentation was surprising. At one point, he told this audience of Americans—many of them there to increase their understanding of Buddhism—that it is better to stick with the wisdom traditions of one's own land than to run from them, pursuing in exotic locales what was under your nose all the time.

It doesn't take a wise person to see that Americans have been substantially separated from their own wisdom tradition by forces opposed to its continuance. No mechanism has been more effective in accomplishing this than the public school system. The amazing insights of American

Christian spirituality—and Protestant dissent in particular—have been relentlessly suppressed over the past century by a new global orthodoxy using compulsory schooling as its laboratory and training ground. And no, I am not a Protestant. You don't have to be a Protestant to recognize that the abandonment of our home-grown wisdom tradition by policy-making elites has left our educational system spiritually bereft.

Although the American Christian tradition draws on European and Near Eastern roots, and has been fertilized by a variety of faiths throughout its course, the particular genius of American Christianity is primarily derived from the Protestant Reformation in Britain—a movement not only opposed to the official, systematic state church but, in a fundamental sense, a protest against *system itself*. This independent and dissenting religious tradition shifted responsibility for salvation from the political system to the individual.

In early America, Protestant dissent came in many different forms: Congregational, Presbyterian, Anabaptist, Quaker, and so on. From these independent interpretations of the Hebrew Bible and the stories of a long-dead Jewish carpenter came the basis for the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights, documents virtually without precedent in history. The Bill of Rights alone conferred powers on ordinary citizens—such as the right of free assembly, the right to deny the state access to one's home—that were (and are) unique on the planet. Out of these rights, derived both by accident and by design from the American Christian tradition of dissent, came the curriculum of early schooling in this country up until the Civil War. Whatever its surface variations, this curriculum was indeed to preserve the hard-won rights thought necessary to the life of an independent, dissenting Christian. It produced, for example, the American tradition of common argument—not the kind that leads to a dueling scar among the elites of Brandenburg, but the kind that leads to a broken nose in a beer hall in Pittsburgh, or to a magnificent statesman like William Jennings Bryan throwing away his political career in defense of small farmers. The American tradition of argument—our God-given right to damn the king, whoever that king may be—is a precious legacy handed down to us by British Protestants, not the Church of England, nor any secular tradition, either.

When English Puritans reached Salem in 1629, there were no Anglican officials present to certify their choice of leaders, so they took that responsibility—illegally—into their own hands. That simple, yet revolutionary, act transferred enormous political power to ordinary churchgoers, whose sole qualification to wield such power was that they had joined a congregation that took religion seriously. Historians dubbed this quiet insurrection the

(Continued on page 54)

(Continued from page 53)

Salem Procedure, and for the next 231 years this shedding of traditional authority—an act of monumental localism—challenged the right of arrogant rulers to disseminate their version of the truth without its facing review by the American people. This became the only nation in history where ordinary citizens could take issue with authority without being beaten, jailed, or killed.

Congregations were never universal in focus, but always intensely local. Members knew their fellow congregants by name and family history. These were not mere networks of people who met in church on Sunday if it was convenient. The congregants cared about each other in particular more than about humanity in general. And if a congregation had a problem, it would not accept outside intervention unless all other possibilities had been exhausted. These groups insisted upon doing things their own way and making their own mistakes.

Were some of these congregations bad? Sure, some of them were horrible. But at least the damage stopped at the boundaries of a single church and community. That's the difference between a congregational model and a state-church system, or indeed any systematic form of universal governance: a system won't let you walk away, whereas a congregation will say, "Goodbye and good riddance."

We are far from a time when we trusted ourselves to run our own lives without surveillance. Since the Civil War, nearly a century and a half of increasingly suffocating "expert" intervention in our schools and elsewhere has left us thinking that, to decide anything important, we have to call in Harvard, or Stanford, or Yale, or the Carnegie Corporation — all honorable institutions, but also outsiders, strangers. As a consequence, our children have no goal to aim for apart from the approval of these official strangers. I suspect such expert interventions are one reason why families are falling apart: how can children respect their parents when those sad souls are regularly contradicted by various agents of the state? Parents have been made childlike by this "Expert Procedure," just as the Puritans were given full adulthood by the Salem Procedure.

The Salem Procedure is completely antagonistic to the current model because it consists in lay people picking their own experts and keeping them on a very short tether. It also draws from the well of common-sense wisdom found among people who actually work, rather than talk, for a living: small farmers, craftspeople, teamster, artists, fisherman, loggers, small entrepreneurs, laborers, housemaids, and so on. I say *wisdom* because, of course, experts are expected to have superior *knowledge*. But to conflate the two, as our century has done, is madness. Going to college can help you become knowledgeable — an "expert," even — but it cannot make you wise, not even a little bit. Wisdom cannot be so easily purchased. The American genius was to locate wisdom in ordinary people, whereas every other government on earth located it in an aristocracy, theocracy, military class, merchant class, or counterfeit meritocracy.

The congregational principle is a spiritual force that encourages the greatest number of people to reach their full potential by vesting everyone with responsibility, identity, and a voice — and this is accomplished in voluntary associations of members who are in harmony with one another. That's the way the Council on Foreign Relations works, and the Advertising Council, and the Business Roundtable. It's the way Sidwell Friends School works, and St. Paul's, and Groton. And it's the way public schools would work best, too. (Think about this obvious discrepancy for a while, and you'll begin to wonder what purpose is served by structuring government schools any other way). The congregationalists knew that good things happen to the human spirit when it is left alone to make its own curriculum. The descendants of some of those congregationalists now run the country, and have remembered this lesson for their own children. But they have failed to remember that the American experiment demands equality for all.

Significantly, no two congregational churches ever got together, even to compare notes. Neither did they inquire after each other's doctrinal purity. They maintained no centralized management, and often discharged ministers who got too big for their britches. Some were good, some horrible, but each was sovereign.

No doctrine of Christianity has been more controversial, or more central to Christian vocation, than the doctrine of original sin. At its starkest, original sin is the frightening moral principle that the sins of the parents are visited upon the children. In the intense three-way religious debates that marked life in early America, settlers from the core of the Protestant Reformation tradition upheld the doctrine of original sin, defending it against attacks by liberal Christian groups like the Unitarians and Universalists, who vehemently rejected the notion that a grave, inescapable verdict had been handed down on all of us, and attacks by the newly minted corporate mind, obsessed with order, regulation, and profit, rather than salvation. The extermination of the doctrine of original sin sat at the top of both the liberal and the corporate agendas. The former group found it an intolerable obstacle to the pursuit of happiness, and the latter, to the pursuit of profit.

Thus, when a legislative mandate made school attendance compulsory, an unwritten mandate was also passed on to schoolteachers to rid the modern world of the doctrine of original sin, which had occupied such a central position in the organization of American life. It was nearly a century before that policy was put in writing, when the 1947 Supreme Court decision in the *Everson* case established that the state would have no truck with religion. Schooling was to be about the creation of loyalty to a principle of abstract central authority, and no serious rival — whether parents, tribe, tradition, self, or God — would be welcome in school. Corporate economics and the developing modern culture eliminated the other rivals, but it took the highest court in the land to bar God. It's obvious from this decision that the state considers

(Continued on page 55)

(Continued from page 54)

American religious tradition to be dangerous. And of course it is.

Before *Everson*, 150 years had passed without any court finding this fantastic hidden meaning in the Constitution, but we can forgo examining the motives of the *Everson* court, and even concede that the ruling is a sincere expression of the rationale behind modern leadership, without waiving our right to challenge the law's legitimacy on the grounds of the grotesque record of the past fifty years. Spiritless schooling has been thoroughly tested and found wanting — in my opinion because it denies metaphysical realities recognized by men and women worldwide, in every age.

As valuable a tool as rational thought is it doesn't speak to the depths of human nature: our feelings of loneliness and incompleteness, our sense of sin, our need to love, and our longing for immortality. To illustrate how rational thinking alone makes a wretched mess of human affairs, I will mount an attack on the scientific model of the universe.

As Galileo famously showed, the sun — not the earth — is at the center of the solar system. And we all know that the solar system itself is only a puny thing lost in endless space. And yet to date it looks as if only earth can support human life. I know Carl Sagan said we'll find millions of populated planets eventually, but right now there's hard evidence of only one. We can't live anywhere but Earth for long. So, as of today, Earth is, for all intents and purposes, the center of the *human* universe.

To push this line of reasoning a little further, where your life is concerned, Earth is most certainly not the center, but merely a background that floats in and out of conscious thought. *You* are the center of your universe, because if you don't show up, it doesn't exist. This may sound self-absorbed, but the minute you deny your own centrality, you betray the rest of us. You are then fleeing your responsibility — as the most important person in the universe — to make things better. When you deny your centrality, you lose trust in

yourself.
(And school is there to drill you in distrusting yourself.) As that trust wanes, you

lose self-respect, without which you can't like yourself very much; how can you like someone you don't respect or trust?

And it gets worse, for when you don't like yourself very much you lose the ability to sustain loving relationships with others. Think of it this way: You must first be convinced of your own worth before you ask for someone else's love, or else the bargain will be unsound. You'll be passing off low-grade merchandise — yourself — as the real McCoy.

The trouble with science is that its truths are only partial.

Galileo had the facts right about the dead matter of the solar system, but said nothing about the cosmology of the human spirit. Yet schools can teach only Galileo's victory over the Church, not his spiritual error. Galileo's observations are only a microscopic part of a real education; his blindness is much more to the point. The primary goal of real education is not to deliver facts but to guide students to the truths that will allow them to take responsibility for their lives. In that quest, Galileo is no help at all.

The neglected genius of American spirituality is that it grants dignity and responsibility to ordinary individuals, not to elites. This tradition, grounded in the doctrine of original sin, paradoxically identifies the core problems of living as the fundamental bases for inner peace and happiness. Rather than suggesting strategies to combat or flee these problems, American Christianity demanded they be accepted willingly as conditions of human life in a fallen world. (No wonder its critics called Christianity a slave religion.)

Whether or not we accept the biblical story of Adam and Eve at face value, we are all stuck with the burdens that Christianity ascribes to original sin. Nobody can escape, regardless of wealth, intellect, charm, powerful connections, or scientific miracles. Whether we are good or bad cuts no mustard—everyone is in for it.

The Christian reading of Genesis identified four specific penalties that attended expulsion from Eden. First, there was the penalty of work: there had been no work in Eden, but now we would have to provide for ourselves. Second, there was the penalty of pain: there had been no pain in Eden, but now we would be subject to tremendous suffering, even from such natural acts as childbirth. Third, there was the penalty of free will: in Eden there had been exactly one wrong thing to do, but now we would have to be morally wary, because every decision would be good or evil or a million shades in between. And last was the penalty of death: in Eden we might have lived forever, but now the term of human life would be strictly limited, and the more wealth, health, beauty, family, community, and friends we had, the more we would be tempted at the end of life to

curse God as we witnessed ourselves losing it all, day by day.

That's some doom, I'm sure you'll agree.

The best lives seem to be full of . . . private, personal attempts to engage the riddles of existence, from the cosmic mystery of death to the smaller mystery of exchanging secrets with a cat.

The question is what to do about it. Historically, two different answers emerged. Some folks cast in their lot with shrewdness, calculation, and science to find a way out, and that group has commanded our schools, our economy, our technology, and our public life for over a century. Here is its response to the penalties of original sin:

On work: Work is a necessary evil for the masses, but an avoidable inconvenience for the smart ones. Machines and

(Continued on page 56)

(Continued from page 55)

electronic devices are making most work obsolete. Only stupid people work; the enlightened can make a living exploiting and regulating others, paying them to mine the rock and harvest the earth.

On pain: Science provides ways to avoid pain and enhance pleasure. Chemicals and modern medicine will eventually render pain unnecessary. Feeling good is what life's all about; there isn't anything else.

On good and evil: There is no absolute good or evil. Every principle is negotiable, all ethics are situational, and right and wrong are relative. Don't worry about God's punishment. With enough knowledge, we can duplicate the power of the mythical God. So God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with fire; we turned the night sky over the desert to flame and incinerated a hundred thousand retreating Iraqis in a matter of seconds. We are God.

On aging and death: Science can stave off sickness and extend life. Aging must be concealed as long as possible through surgery, dress, personal-training regimens, and attitude make-overs. Survival is the highest goal, so it follows that the health industry wields the ultimate power. Every day, science gets closer and closer to making life eternal.

You see how easy it is to repudiate the penalties of original sin? From the start, this has been one of the main missions of forced schooling: to direct people's loyalty away from the organizing principles of a religious life and reattach it to the values of corporate industry, government, and professionals. Only the secular establishment would grant absolution.

What American spirituality taught was much different. It advised us to embrace punishment rather than avoid it, and taught the marvelous paradox that willing acceptance of our human burdens is the only way to a good, full life. If you bend your head in obedience, it will be raised up strong, brave, indomitable, and wise. Look at the difference, step by step:

On work: Work is the only avenue to genuine self-respect. Work develops independence, self-reliance, resourcefulness, and character. Without real work we will inevitably find despair, no matter how much money or power we have. Work has value far beyond a paycheck, praise, or accomplishment, and produces spiritual rewards unrelated to the reinforcement schedules of behavioral psychologists, but only if we tackle it gladly, without resentment.

By teaching the secular aversion to work, schools have created a horrifying problem that has so far proven incurable—the spiritual anxiety that arises when we have no useful work. Phony work, no matter how well paid or highly praised, results in great emotional disturbance. Major efforts have gone into solving this problem, but there's no hint of an answer in sight. In our economy, the real dilemma now is keeping people occupied. Jobs have to be invented by government agencies and corporations, both of which employ millions of people for whom they have no real use. Young men and women at their brightest, orneriest, and most

energetic are kept from working because they would either work too eagerly or invent their own jobs, which could cause a cataclysm in the economy. We cannot afford to let children learn to work for fear they will discover one of the great secrets of history: work is not a curse but a salvation.

On pain: Pain is a friend, because it forces our attention away from the world and refocuses it squarely back on ourselves. Pain of all sorts is the way we learn insight, balance, and self-control. The siren call of "Feel good!" lures us to court desirable sensations and to despise pain as a spoiler of pleasure. Pain, however, is the road to self-knowledge.

On good and evil: In a spiritual life everything is morally changed; nothing is neutral. Choosing between good and evil is a daily effort, but taking responsibility for your choices makes you fully alive. I recently heard about a woman who was having an affair openly in front of her husband and her six-year-old daughter. "It's no big deal," the woman told her mother. But if infidelity and the shattering of a child's innocence are no big deal, then what is? When we intensify our moral awareness, everything becomes a big deal.

To enhance life we must stop making preprogrammed choices. The fewer choices we make automatically, as if we were only machines, the bigger our lives will become, because every choice will have a moral dimension. Despite any excuses we may make—and there are legions of fine ones—the record of our choices marks us as worthy or unworthy. Even if nobody else knows what rats we are, deep inside us the running balance of our accounts will vitally affect our ability to trust, to love, and to gain peace and wisdom.

On aging and death: This world is only a stage in some longer journey we do not understand. To fall in love with our physical beauty, wealth, health, or capacity for pleasure is to kid ourselves, because all that will be taken away. Upon the death of her husband of sixty years (who had left her millions of dollars) my aunt said to me tearfully, "They don't let you win! There is no way to win!" She had lived her life in the camp of science, honorably observing all its rules of rationality. But at this final pass science was a useless ally. The Christian tradition would say that you *can* win—and if you think you can't, then you're playing the wrong game.

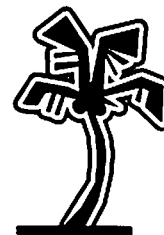
The only thing that gives our choices any deep significance is the fact that none of this will last. Awareness of mortality give relationships an urgency, makes our choices matter. If we were immortal, how could it possibly mean a hill of beans whether we did something today, tomorrow, or next year? There would always be more time *later*, so we wouldn't have to live *now*.

Everyone has experienced having too much of something—candy, sex, company. We can even have too much money, such that no individual purchase involves real choice, because real choices always close the door on other

(Continued on page 59)



CONVENTION 1998 REGISTRATION



Life Enrichment Center ~ Leesburg, Florida ~ June 24 to June 28

"TRUSTING THE PROMISE"

Convention 1998 will be held at the Florida Methodist Conference Life Enrichment Center in Leesburg, Florida. Although we expect June in Florida to be hot and muggy, the retreat center is fully air-conditioned. The rooms are motel-style, most with twin beds and some with king-sized beds, each with its own full bathroom. Half of the rooms have first floor access; the rest are up one flight of stairs. The meeting areas are modern, comfortable and all air-conditioned on a flat site where all buildings are close together. We will be right on the beautiful lake full of waterfowl (and alligators) in an attractive and restful setting. We have tried to keep the cost down to make this an affordable trip for everyone.

Transportation: The best access from the Orlando International Airport is by car. Since the convention is not hosted by a local church or association, there are no volunteers to do airport pickups. However, there will be some van pickups at peak arrival times. We suggest arriving with friends and sharing rental cars. For creative transportation options call the Central Office (617-969-4240) and ask for

the airport transportation information packet.

Children's programming: We will provide separate care for children ages 0 to 4 and a more structured program for children from 5 to 12 during scheduled activities from Wednesday evening through Saturday morning. Parents of each child will be asked to volunteer two hours each day helping with the children.

Saturday evening: Get ready to perform in a Swedenborgian Talent Show followed by a dance for all ages with a locally famous sister-brother team of DJ/entertainers.

Saturday outing: Plans are in the making for a trip to Deland to the Chrysalis Retreat Center and Garden Chapel. Or go to nearby Claremont for a Blessing of the Harvest at the Lake Ridge Winery. Many other possibilities are available for folks with cars!

RV hookups: If you have (or rent) your own recreational vehicle, there are lots of spaces available. Great for families! Call for rates.

See YOU At The Convention!



(Detach here)

Names: _____

Names and ages of children accompanying you: _____

Street Address: _____ City / State _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Arrival: _____ Departure: _____ # of Nights: _____ E-Mail: _____

Adult registration	@ \$ 65.00	x adults _____	= \$ _____
Teen registration (13-17)	@ \$ 50.00	x teens _____	= \$ _____
Child 3-12 registration	@ \$ 35.00	x children _____	= \$ _____
Registration family maximum	@ \$180.00		= \$ _____
Adult/teen room & board single	@ \$ 47.00	x adult _____	x nights _____ = \$ _____
Adult/teen room & board double	@ \$ 38.00	x adult _____	x nights _____ = \$ _____
Child room & board double	@ \$ 36.00	x children _____	x nights _____ = \$ _____
Child board only	@ \$ 16.00	x children _____	x nights _____ = \$ _____
Late fee if mailed after May 15	@ \$ 20.00	x adults _____	= \$ _____

☐ All charges are in US dollars. All bills must be paid in full at least two weeks before convention. No registration refund after June 1.

Total = \$ _____

Special needs: (dietary, handicapped access, roommate requests, etc.) _____

The theme of convention is "Trusting the Promise." Please write one sentence explaining which of God's many promises means the most to you and why. Your answer will be posted in the common area (with your name) unless you request anonymity.

TRUSTING THE PROMISE

The Rainbow Spiritual Journey

*Come connect, learn and
participate in this exciting
spiritual community of Swedenborgians*

PRE-CONVENTION 1998 ~ LEESBURG, FLORIDA
SUNDAY JUNE 21, 7:30 PM TO JUNE 24, 12:00 PM

Presenters:

Facilitator: Lorraine Sando (Washington): Art, Writing, Meditation, Healing Touch

Co-Facilitator: Laura Lawson Tucker (Vermont): Dance, Creative Process, Sacred Ritual

Joan McGavin (Ontario): Healthy Aging

EdSU staff: B.J. Neuenfeldt (Michigan) and Margie Shelley (Indiana): Song, Music, Humor and more

For more information contact: Lorraine Sando (206) 242-7354

REGISTRATION

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY, STATE, PROVINCE _____ ZIP _____
PHONE _____

REGISTRATION: \$75.00 Per Person (by May 1) \$85.00 Per Person (after May 1)

ROOM & BOARD: (Please check one)

☐ Single Occupancy \$47.00 ☐ Double Occupancy-2 people in a room \$38.00 per day per person

ARRIVAL: I/we will be arriving by car _____, airplane (list dates, airline, and flight times)

(Please see CONVENTION REGISTRATION for more details)

SPECIAL NEEDS: (Please Specify) _____

Please Note: This Workshop Will Be Taking Place at the Same Time as the Council of Ministers Meeting and Ministers' Spouses Meeting

**All Workshop fees to be paid in full
by June 1, 1997**



CHILD CARE AVAILABLE

Make checks payable to: THE SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH

**Send Form with
Checks to:**

**Central Office
The Swedenborgian Church
48 Sargent Street
Newton, MA 02158**

(Continued from page 56)

choices: if you can buy everything, why bother to buy anything? For the same reason, it's possible to have too much time: if there's time for everything, why bother to do anything at all? The solution is full awareness that time is preciously finite. You have less now than when you started reading this, so hurry; the clock is ticking! As you spend time on one thing, you lose the chance forever to spend it on something else. Science cannot help you one bit with time. Indeed, using scientific methods to save time is the best way to guarantee your life will be eaten alive by trivial matters, none of which will ever be any big deal.

The best lives seem to be full of contemplation, solitude, and self-examination; full of private, personal attempts to engage the riddles of existence, from the cosmic mystery of

death to the smaller mystery of exchanging secrets with a cat. When I see kids daydreaming in school, I am careful never to shock them out of their reverie. What I have to say can wait. We make the most of our limited time by alternating hard effort with still moments free of the cultural imperative to "get something." If such solitude seems impossible in the world we live in, consider that, in spite of all the hype about global communications, 67 percent of the world's population has never made or received a single phone call.

I may seem to have strayed from the topic of American spirituality, but I haven't, really. Until we understand that the factual contents of our minds—the "truths" upon which we base our decision—have for the most part been inserted there by others whose motives are not our own, we will never fully appreciate the unique

gift of American Christian spirituality. For it teaches that the answers to our problems lie within us, that we are the center of the universe, and that wisdom cannot be learned in school, but only through accepting the burden of work, learning the lessons pain teaches, sorting out right and wrong for ourselves, and coming to terms with aging and death. If these are our spiritual compasses, we need no rulers or experts to tell us how to live.

American spirituality offers a set of practical guidelines, street lamps for the village of our lives. Although the focus is on the individual, nobody is asked to wander aimlessly. What constitutes a good life is clearly spelled out: self-knowledge, duty, responsibility, compassion, acceptance of loss, preparation for death. In this neglected tradition, no teacher does your work; you must do it for yourself.



A Journey to the Inmost: Swedenborg meets the Buddha

(Continued from cover)

being as a wave of the sea to the state of full awareness that one is the sea itself in its inmost substance. The true self is 'the Buddha Nature' in a Buddhist term. And this Buddha Nature in our mind is not a branch away from the Buddha itself, but it is the Buddha. So the point is clear from both Swedenborg and the Buddha that we are born in a certain condition, and that we are one with the ultimate reality from which we are, in which we live, and to which we return. The matter is how we realize this universal truth in our conscious mind.

The way to be a Buddha starts with the recognition of the First Noble Truth, which is 'life is pain,' and reaches the Second Noble Truth, which is 'pain arises from one's selfish desires or thirsts.' After one reaches to the Second Noble Truth, one may perceive that there is the state of eternal peace, which is named Nirvana. This Nirvana is the state of being in eternal peace, free from all artificial criteria and physical desires. This is described in the Third Noble Truth, which is 'the

cessation of thirsts.' And the way to reach this final state is by means of the Fourth Noble Truth, which is 'the Path.' The Fourth Noble truth has eight levels of practice to reach Nirvana, namely the Eight Right Ways. The Eight Right Ways cover most basic activities that one needs to perform to live. These are the Eight Right Ways: right understanding, right purpose, right speech, right conduct, right vocation, right effort, right alertness, right concentration. These Eight Right Ways are mental and behavioral standards to reflect upon. From this we may be able to clearly understand that to be a Buddha's follower does not mean just having many quiet and peaceful meditations and living in an isolated monastery. Instead of that I'm sure that what the Buddha means by these teachings is that being a Buddha is a lifelong process, which must take place through a life with people by having relationships, contributions, and responsibilities as a member of one's community. I think a life of practicing these Eight Right Ways from the Buddha are parallel with Swedenborg's teaching about charity that "Charity is therefore an internal affection

from which man wills to do good, and this without remuneration; the delight of his life consists in doing it. With those who do good from internal affection there is charity in such things which they think and speak, and which they will and do." (*Heavenly Doctrine* 104) I believe the peace in the Buddha's teaching and the delight in Swedenborg's teaching share almost the same quality of spiritual living.

I assume that Swedenborg and the Buddha had the same experience of the ultimate reality, but in different ways because of their cultural, religious and historic differences. There indeed are many more significant things to talk about in comparing the Buddha and Swedenborg, so I think what I have covered is introductory. My hope for the next millennium is that there will be a gradual and harmonious gathering of all religions of the world into a new understanding of God or ultimate reality, and Swedenborg's theology can attribute a small portion in effort for that new approach.

Jun-Chol Lee is a student at the Swedenborg School of Religion. ❖

Thank You

The Swedenborgian Church wishes to acknowledge and thank the individuals and churches who made contributions in 1997-1998, as of March 15, 1998.

Philip Alden, Sr.	Benjamin Frost	Dr. & Mrs. Gerald M. Lemole	William Shakalis
Philip Alden, Jr.	Mr & Mrs. William Frost	Rev. Ted and Patte LeVan	Lois S. Sharpsteen
Anonymous	Fryeburg Church (Maine)	Carol Lindquist	Katherine E. Shaw
Anonymous Donation	Carol Anne Fusco	Robert Locke	Velma Shepherd
Celeste M. Ashley	David & Penelope Goldstein	Marion Lorentzen	Catherine Simmons
Julia Barton	Peggy Gorman	Mr. & Mrs. Merle Lundberg	Helen Sioris
Wayne & Joan Barton	Mr. & Mrs. Kenton Grabner	Mrs. Martin F. Lynn	Wickham & Alice Skinner
Don Beckham & Nancy Petrisko	Gwen Griswold	Dr. Barb Mackey	Helen Smith
Norm & Jean Bestor	Lucille Hallberg	Ruth Mackey	Florence Steward
David Billings	Dan & Barbara Halle	Albert Maletsky	Swedenborg Foundation
Edward R. Bosley	Frances Hanauer	Lynne Bischoff McClure	Edmund & June Swiger
Barbara Boxwell	Dr. John Harrington	"In honor of Lillian Bischoff"	Robert W. Tafel, Jr.
Virginia Branstion	Rev. Dr. Dorothea Harvey	Rev. Robert McCluskey	Alan Thomsen
Anna Buck	Richard Hatheway	Jay McElhenney	Margit Tobisch
Charles E. Bush	Dr. Francis Hazard	Virginia McGovern	Pete & Gloria Toot
Sarah Buteux	Brenda Helton	Alison Merrill	Barbara Tourangeau
Edwin & Esther Capon	Jeanette Hille	Rev. Jonathan Mitchell	Elizabeth Trautmann
Mary E. Carey	Michelle Huffman	Roy & Mary Mitchell	Jeanette Tucker
Eugene Carlson	Kathleen Hull-Ryde	Ed & Marie Morey	Steve & Pat Tukos
Dorothy Churchill	Donna Humes	John Mucka	Marilyn Turley
Glen Clemens	Betty Imhoff	Marjorie Mucka	Alvena Unruh
Doris F. Closterman	Michael Ivanoff	Keith & Marian Mull	Dan A. Unruh
Walter & Lurabel Colburn	Margery Jester	Network Center for Spiritual Growth	Naomi Unruh
Rev. Nadine Cotton	Pierce Johnson	Nan Paget	Urbana Swedenborgian Church
Josephine Cowern	Elsa Jones	Lawrence & Edith Pangaro	Vida Van Lennep
Patricia Dennis	Lamas Pavola Joyce	Rev. Sook-Hyun Yoon Park	Vivian Vanderberg
Philip Diaconoff	Florence Kearns	Pawnee Rock (Kansas) Church	Frances Vodola
Mary Dysinger	John Keller	Jim Perry	Michael & Stephanie Wagner
Mrs. Milton C. Early	Vivian Keller	John & Anne Perry	Ruth Wagoner
Judy Ebbe	Ginny Hye-Eun Kim	Nancy Perry	J.C. & Gloryann Webb
August A. & Mary Ebel	Rev. Dr. Robert Kirven	Leon Rhodes	Barbara Whitney
De Ette Ellis	Mrs. Robert Knierim	Maria Roca	Katherine Willens
Virginia Ann Fairfield	Bill & Mollie Koch	San Francisco Church	Irene Wilson
Kathy Stafford Farwell	Christine Laitner	Lorraine Sando	Charles & Verda Winter
Robert Ford	Dr. Fred C. Laitner	Margaret Schneider	Raymond & Olive Wong
Adrienne Frank	Betsy Lau	Hampton & Elora Schoch	Susan Wood
Hazel Frederick	Howard A. Lawrence	Brian & Helen Scott	Dorothy deB. Young
Nancy Freestone	Rev. Dr. Jim Lawrence	Adam Seward & Lynn Higgins	♦ ♦ ♦
	Frances Leland		

Four SSR Trustees Attend Special Seminar

Jane Siebert

"Rekindle the Gift of God Within You" are the words inscribed over the door to the St. Mary's Center for Continuing Formation. A group of Swedenborg School of Religion trustees—Dick Hatheway, Mary Kay Klein, Alice Skinner and Jane Siebert—spent three days attempting to meet this challenge at an *In Trust* Seminar: Practicing Good Faith Governance, in Baltimore, Maryland.

Through Mary Kay's contacts with the Lilly Endowment and *In Trust* Magazine, the SSR Board learned last fall about the seminar and decided that we should submit an application to attend. Our board was selected with seven other seminary boards from diverse denominations in the US and Canada. We were instructed to send the school president, board chair and two other trustees. (Marilyn Turley was originally scheduled to attend but health problems prevented her travel).

In Trust, a publication for leaders in theological education, has worked for several years under a grant from the Lilly Endowment to strengthen and advocate seminary boards. The Endowment believes that strong seminary boards improve the moral component in our society and in turn lead to a better place for us all. *In Trust* produces a quarterly magazine to help educate trustees and is now expanding their efforts through a

series of seminars. This was the first seminar in their pilot program.

The boards attending represented a wide range of denominations, seminary size, and experience. There were many things in common, however. The list of challenges named by each board was similar: collaboration issues, maximizing board effectiveness, economic restraints and leadership faculty transitions.

Everyone listened and discussed as the experts from *In Trust* explained how to add value to seminary boards by:

1. Asking penetrating questions.
2. Setting goals and helping the president achieve them.
3. Not getting sidetracked by the day-to-day management of the school but looking beyond to the broader governance of the school.

4. Identifying and trying out new models and ideas.

5. Modeling what we want to see in creativity, vision and accountability, and most importantly, binding it all together with shared trust. For "without shared trust on a seminary board, few of these value-added objectives will go far, and the board cannot be effective." (Thomas Holland, Professor of Social Work, University of Georgia.)



In Trust Seminar in Baltimore: Jane Siebert, Alice Skinner, Mary Kay Klein, Dick Hatheway.

Not only did we listen together and discuss together, we worshipped together: Catholic, Baptist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Evangelical, Moravian, Swedenborgian. We raised our voices in praise to our one Lord and thanked God for our unity and our diversity and the opportunity to serve through participation on seminary boards.

Jane Siebert, in addition to being a trustee on the SSR Board, is secretary of the Pretty Prairie Swedenborgian Church in Pretty Prairie, Kansas.



1997 SSR FUND DRIVE A SUCCESS

Two major donors and the SSR Board of Trustees pledged a total of \$15,500 as a challenge to be matched by contributions to the 1997 fund drive. SSR received \$17,681.90, far more than our goal, for a total of \$33,181.90.

In addition, the Boston church made a grant of 7,500 for student aid and the *Iungerich Fund* contributed \$9,100 toward the publication expenses for *Studia Swedenborgiana*, bringing our total for the year to \$49,781.91.

SSR thanks all our donors for their wonderful support! SSR 1998 Prayer Books will be mailed to all contributors in the near future. Additional copies may be purchased from SSR for \$1 each. ❖



Board members preparing fund drive mailing last October. (L-R) Bob Reber, Jane Siebert, Dick Stansbury, Tom Peebles, Erni Martin, Eric Allison, Jerry Poole, Karen Feil, Marilyn Turley. (Photo by Dick Hatheway. Alice Skinner and Mary Kay Klein were also present, but cannot be seen).

Return to the Promised Land

Bible Study Topic in St. Louis

The weekly Bible study and discussion group at the St. Louis church is based on Grant Schnarr's book, *Return to the Promised Land*.* Grant takes you through the trials of those represented in the book of Exodus, candidly providing personal reference to modern-day living that we all must overcome if we are to move along the path of spiritual growth and regeneration.

* Published by the Swedenborg Foundation.



New Signs and Steeple

The Cleveland church is moving ahead with plans for a steeple and new signs in front of the church, as soon as they get some zoning problems solved. They've also installed a drinking fountain near the door to the library, to help soothe nervous wedding couples—who number over 70 in only the second year of Cleveland's lay-led wedding ministry!

Urbana Students Lead Services

Weddings and attendance are up in the Urbana church, and Urbana University students are leading a worship service at the church every five weeks.

Puget Sound Teens

The first meeting of the Swedenborgian Teen Youth Group was held November 2, 1997, at the Stonehouse Bookstore, facilitated by George Henry. Ideas for the teen youth group activities were discussed. Goals were established for their group building a spiritual community based on a common interest in spiritual awareness through the teachings of the Bible, writings of Swedenborg, and their personal experiences.

Celebrating Spiritual Community

Since late December 1997, Stonehouse Bookstore & Growth Center has been providing events every second and fourth Sunday that enhance community building and offer spiritual support. Some of the recent themes presented for discussion are *Relationships as a Spiritual Path*, *Commitment*, *Embracing the Darkness*, *Honesty*, *Love*, *Humility*, *The Beauty Within*, and *Awakening to the Light*. Some have been led by Stonehouse Director Paul Martin, others by volunteers in the community.

Stonehouse had another record year in sales and doubled its income from programs to \$110,000.

The Spiritual Side of Food

Fifty-five leaguers came to learn about The Spiritual Side of Food at the post-Christmas Survivor Winter Retreat December 27–30 at Almont Retreat Center, organized by Betsy Lau. A "menu" of presentations included everything from eating disorders to the correspondences of a wide variety of foods, and dining silently to reflect on the correspondence of eating.

Going for Baroque

In celebration of Swedenborg's birthday, the Rev. Ken, Laurie and Emily Turley, and Doris

Henny, played Baroque music between interviews with Swedenborg (played by SSR student Andy Stinson) on January 30 at the Network Center in Concord, New Hampshire, and again on January 31 at their Fryeburg New Church in Maine. Audiences loved it, and the troop is most willing to take the show on the road. If your church would like a visit from Emanuel and Friends, contact Ken Turley at (207) 935-3413.



☆☆☆ ½ Review for San Diego Church



The San Diego church received an enthusiastic full-page write-up in a weekly local newspaper, *The Reader*, on January 4. It seems the author, Abe Opincar, visits places of worship in the area each week and reviews them. Eldon Smith's sermon, the liturgy, and music got three stars (excellent); while the architecture, friendliness, and snacks received four stars (extraordinary).

Toward the end of the article, Opincar commented,

... nothing at all seemed exotic or out of the ordinary until Pastor Smith disappeared behind a curtain and returned carrying a small charcoal brazier, which he placed on the steps leading to the altar. Although Swedenborgians eschew ritual, they do love symbols and metaphors. The first Sunday after New Year was, Pastor Smith explained, Renewal Sunday, when "we renew our dedication to our faith and our service to God." Pastor Smith asked that we take a small slip of flimsy yellow paper and write on it in pencil "one word, one quality that you would like God to develop within you."

One by one the congregation lined up before the brazier, dropped their slips of paper onto the glowing coals, and, while watching it burn, its thin smoke curling upward, paused in silent prayer.

"This symbolizes," said Pastor Smith, "our desire to improve and to rise upward to God."

After the service, in the social hall at the rear of the sanctuary, where we gathered for coffee, fruit salad, and slices of three delicious cakes, I approached a dimpled, smiling woman who seemed to be in her mid-70s.

"Maybe I shouldn't ask you this," I said. "But what did you write on your slip of paper?"

She cupped my elbow in her palm and whispered in my ear, "I wrote *hope*, my dear. Of course, I wrote *hope*."



OPINION

Dear Editor,

Being committed to finding a way to think about, and therefore speak about women as being of equal standing and value as men; and recognizing that, in spite of aging rules of grammar and presumptions of correctness based on habitual usage, that language is in a continual state of evolution (if not, why are we not still speaking Elizabethan English and why are there regional dialects); I would offer the following as one way of dealing with the lack of inclusive pronouns in our current English language:

AC 6313 as is currently found in writings:

When a man is being elevated toward interior things, he comes from the gross sensuous lumen into a milder lumen . . . Man can be still more interiorly elevated, and the more interiorly he is elevated, the clearer is the light he comes into . . .

suggested translation:

When one ("a person") is being elevated

toward interior things, they come from the gross sensuous lumen into a milder lumen . . . A person can be still more interiorly elevated, and the more interiorly they are elevated, the clearer is the light they come into . . .

I am aware that this bends, if not breaks, some of the grammatical rules concerning singular and plural pronouns. I would suggest that the use of "a person" in this case, is the same as the editorial "you" and refers not to a specific individual but any number of individuals and therefore to an unspecified group of individuals.

Even if this were not so, given the evolving state of consciousness around gender in our society and the limitations of our language, I prefer to risk violating the rules of grammar to the risk of violating the dignity, equality and sense of inclusion of slightly more than half of the human population.

Language is continually being transformed by developments in the vernacular that over time are incorporated and accepted into the common language. If we want our writings to be relevant in the future, we should be more concerned with developments in the thinking and the language of the common people than preserving the rules of

academia, which are important to only a very small segment of society.

The equal inclusion of women in the human race in our language, and hence our thinking, is not just a passing phase but a monumental step in the evolution of human consciousness. It is an essential step, for both individuals and for our species, in the regeneration of the spirit that manifests the *marriage* of love and wisdom and is a harbinger to the end of the persistent attempts to subsume the feminine identity under the dominating identity of the masculine.

As a church, and as individuals, we must ask ourselves, "Where do we look for growth and vibrancy?" We are more than familiar with the forms and practices of the past, and while there is value to be found in them, regeneration is an ongoing process of death and rebirth. Loss and death must occur for there to be rebirth and growth. The practice of using masculine pronouns to refer to masculine and feminine beings has long since outlived its usefulness. And if, as an organization, we continue to cling to the practice, we will find what we have to say lost and buried somewhere in the "dead letters" file.

—Rev. Ken Turley
Fryeburg, Maine

PASSAGES

CONFIRMATIONS

The Rev. Ernest Martin, director of Temenos Conference and Retreat Center and minister of the Swedenborgian Church at Temenos in West Chester, Pennsylvania, reports that nine people were confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church and have joined the Temenos church (formerly the Philadelphia church) during the last two years:

Bryan, Closterman, Miller—Sylvia Bryan, Doris Closterman, and Barbara Miller were confirmed March 3, 1996.

Sharpsteen—Lois Sharpsteen was confirmed September 30, 1996.

Slentz—William Slentz was confirmed November 17, 1996.

Beam, McGrady, Seeds—Sara Beam, Cheryl McGrady, and George Seeds were confirmed November 16, 1997.

Barnitz—Rai Barnitz was restored to active membership by a vote of the church society November 16, 1997.

Lowe, Samuelson—James Lowe and John Samuelson were confirmed into the life of the Swedenborgian Church January 25, 1998 at the New York New Church, the Rev. Robert McCluskey officiating.

DEATHS

Alden—Philip M. Alden, Sr., 97, lifelong Swedenborgian, entered the spiritual world February 4, 1998 in Lititz, Pennsylvania. A memorial service was conducted at the Luther Acres retirement community chapel in Lititz February 8, 1998. Philip was the son of Ezra Hyde Alden, who was for many years the superintendent of the Philadelphia Swedenborgian Church Sunday School and founder of the American New Church League. In addition to his active presence on many appointed committees, Philip served as a General Council member, president of the Board of Home and Foreign Missions, the Board of Managers of the Theological School (now Swedenborg School of Religion), and as a trustee of the National Church in Washington, D.C. He also served as chair of Trustees of Urbana University. He was secretary for the Swedenborg Foundation and later rendered outstanding service as president. He was also actively involved in the Philadelphia church's governing body for many years. Mr. Alden is survived by his wife, Emma Louise and his sons, Philip Alden, Jr., Thomas Alden, and daughter Sarah Alden Griffin.

Tobisch—Margit (Mrs. Othmar) Tobisch, 96, entered the spiritual world February 7, 1998, at her home in Aptos, California. Margit and her husband, the Rev. Othmar Tobisch, served a brief interim pastorate in 1928 at the Los Angeles church before accepting the call to the San Francisco church, where they served for 41 years (1929-1970). She served as president of the Alliance of New Church Women 1948-1951), as well as superintendent of the Sunday school in San Francisco and in many capacities within the Pacific Coast Association. Born and educated in Hungary, Margit moved to the United States as a young woman and met Othmar, a newly arrived Austrian, at a gathering for international young people. Othmar is best remembered for initiating and launching the only international gathering of Swedenborgians, held in London in 1970. Margit and Othmar were still in England visiting New Church people after the convention when he died of a heart attack. Margit continued to live in their Berkeley home until 1990, when she moved to a retirement community in the Santa Cruz mountains. She is survived by a daughter, Ilona Caldwell, and a son, Othie Tobisch, and several grandchildren. Memorial services are scheduled for Palm Sunday, April 5, at the San Francisco church, the Rev. Jim Lawrence officiating. ❖

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.

Urbana Invitation to Share Sesquicentennial in 2000

The Board of Trustees of Urbana University held its midwinter meeting February 20-21 in the Grimes Center at the university. They heard reports of an improving financial situation and a promising picture of enrollment for the spring semester. Among actions taken was the adoption of a revised tuition remission policy for the children of General Convention ministers. In its original form it would have reduced the remission of tuition from 100% to 50%, but this change was rejected. The new policy, however, does require the prospective student to seek other forms and sources of financial aid first, and the offer is limited to the children of ministers currently fully employed within the denomination or who have spent much of their adult life so employed.

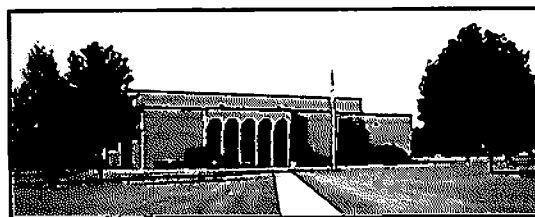
At the present time nine Swedenborgians are studying at Urbana, five of them are ministers' offspring.

Of a possible 25 trustees, seven are members of the Swedenborgian Church; present at the recent meeting were the Rev. Edwin Capon, Esther Nicastro-Capon, Betsy Coffman, Frank Doyle, Gus Ebel and John Keller. Frank is vice-chairperson of the board, Betsy is chairperson of its Education Committee, and John is chairperson of the Committee on Trustees.

During the course of the meetings Mr. Capon was given a letter inviting our Church to hold its annual con-

vention at the university in the year 2000. Having been founded in 1850, the university will be

observing its sesquicentennial. We are being invited to share in the celebration of this important anniversary. ❖



Grimes Center, Urbana University

EDSU'S PREVIEW OF THE 1998 CONVENTION MINI-COURSES

TOPIC

LEADER(S)

Developing Teaching Parishes (Field Education)	Rev. Dr. Wilma Wake
Sharing Your Spirituality	Betsy Coffman, Rev. Deborah Winter
Teen Panel	Facilitated by Bill Baxter
Reiki and Swedenborgianism	Mona Conner
Women's Spirituality	Elizabeth Johnson
Look at a Parable	Rev. Kit Billings
Millenium III	Rev. Dr. George Dole and Rev. Paul Martin
Power of Service	Rev. Dr. Ted Klein
Art Experience and the Spiritual Connection	assorted in-house talents (visual art, music, sports)
Swedenborgians in Cyberspace	Information Management Support Unit (IMSU)
Native American Spiritualities and Swedenborg	Adam Seward
Rainbow Diversity	Rev. Dr. Jonathan Mitchell

*More details next issue!

Never been to the annual convention? Wondering what a mini-course is? These are free two-hour classes/discussions held on Thursday and Friday afternoon at 3:00 p.m. Why don't you consider attending the '98 Convention in Leesburg, Florida this summer?

The Swedenborgian Church
of North America
The Messenger
48 Sargent Street
Newton, MA 02158

Forwarding Address
Correction Requested

CENTRAL OFFICE
48 SARGENT ST
NEWTON, MA 02158-2399

Non-profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Plymouth, IN
Permit No. 105