

THE MESSENGER

Published by the Swedenborgian Church of North America

December 1998

~ BOOK REVIEW ~

Reviewed by Paul Martin
Chrysalis Books
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Steve Koke, with his new book, *Hidden Millennium*, has accomplished what very few Swedenborgian writers before him have done—written a book that is valuable and educational for both Swedenborgians and non-Swedenborgians. This is a task which is obviously more difficult than it sounds, and our inability to accomplish it has led to what I consider a very strange situation. We have Swedenborgian organizations with deep spiritual understandings, not only of Christianity, but of the human psyche and spirit, of the evolution of consciousness—and there is a world full of people who are searching and thirsting for just such a spiritual vision. Yet if they know we even exist, they have no idea that we have what they long for. It is no small accomplishment that Koke has written a book that has the potential to share this understanding with new people while at the same time helping clarify it for ourselves.

The book compares and contrasts literal and Swedenborgian interpretations of biblical and psychic prophecies relating to the millennium, Last Judgment, and Second Coming. I found the concise summary of fundamentalism valuable because it is too easy to slip into thinking of literalism as “traditional Christianity.” It is helpful to remember that fundamentalism, with its literal focus and “doctrine of the Bible’s inerrancy” arose relatively recently, in the late nineteenth century, probably as a reaction against scientific attacks on

HIDDEN Millennium

The Doomsday Fallacy

by Stephen Koke

Foreword by David Spangler

We can view the increasing preoccupation with the millennium, not as a silly superficial misunderstanding of prophecy, but as a once-in-a-millennium opportunity to share the depth of meaning in our spiritual tradition with people who are struggling to make sense of what is happening to their inner and outer realities.

the accuracy of the Bible. It seems ironic that while appearing and intending to protect the Bible and Christianity from science (by rejecting science’s conclusion that the Bible was false), fundamentalism severely restricted its focus and power by accepting science’s presupposition that the Bible was supposed to be about historical accuracy, as opposed to spiritual meaning, insight, and inspiration.

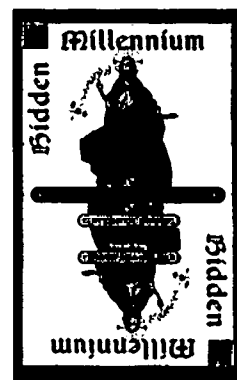
There are chapters on Nostradamus

and Edgar Cayce that I found refreshing because Koke does not attack them or reject their prophecies. He shows respect for their psychic abilities while getting us to question (as with biblical prophecies) how to move beyond a literal interpretation of them to find spiritual meaning.

The book should appeal to a large audience. I thought it was well-written and easy to read. Koke presents biblical and Swedenborgian concepts clearly and without resorting to obscure theological or Swedenborgian terminology. He does not come across as judgmental, but rather, like Swedenborg, appeals to our reason. He takes prophecies and examines what they would mean literally, how or whether they could even happen in the manner described, and whether they make sense. He looks at whether they are consistent with other prophecies, with reality itself, and with a loving God. He then takes the same prophecies and suggests possible spiritual meanings, never implying that there is one true Swedenborgian interpretation, rather demonstrating how to look at them correspondentially so we can learn to see multiple meanings ourselves.

We can view the increasing preoccupation with the millennium, not as a

(Continued on page 158)



In This Issue:

- A New Pentecost in the New Church • Healing from the Heart
- British Conference Votes Yes on Women in Ministry

Some Christmas Presents Come Early

Guest Editorial
by Ron Brugler

Some Christmas presents come early. I've had this truth reaffirmed right before my eyes in many ways these past few weeks. Some of these early arrivals are large and of immense proportions. One immediately knows that a gift has been received that will impact one's life for years to come. Others seem small and insignificant when they are first opened. One thinks, "It's the thought that counts." But even so, the value of the treasure is fully realized as the days and weeks pass and one's appreciation of the gift deepens.

I've been in office for only three months as I write this, but I can assure you that our church has received many early Christmas presents. Among these have been:

- The dedication of our church members in Pretty Prairie as they welcomed both Adam Seward as their new minister, and myself as our denomination's president. The joy that we shared in early October was a wonderful thing.

- The love that these same people, and all of us in our church, have expressed for Adam and Lynn during his sickness that has so tragically followed since then. The love that has been offered to them is a gift to be cherished.

- The support and appreciation expressed by our congregation in Urbana as they welcomed Betsy Coffman as their lay leader, and the pride that radiated from Dave and Elizabeth Johnson's faces as they witnessed their daughter's consecration ceremony. Our church and family relationships are an enduring blessing to us all.

- The commitment of the members of our various Support Units, Cabinet and General Council—individuals who make their commitment real by offering time and talents in service to our church. Each and every one of these people is a gift.

- And then there have been the uncountable acts of "service beyond the call of duty" extended by Martha Bauer and Karen Mears, the employees of our Central Office. I truly wonder what our church would do without them.

Yes, some Christmas presents come early. In terms of our denomination I am coming to realize that they come each and every day of the year. As we enter into this Christmas Season, I hope that you'll join me in expressing appreciation for them all.

May God's blessings be both upon the givers and the gifts they so freely share.

Ronald Brugler is president of the denomination and pastor of the Church of the Good Shepherd in Kitchener, Ontario. ❖

HIDDEN Millennium

(Continued from cover)

silly superficial misunderstanding of prophecy, but as a once-in-a-millennium opportunity to share the depth of meaning in our spiritual tradition with people who are struggling to make sense of what is happening to their inner and outer realities. I urge all Swedenborgians to order several copies of this book. Read it yourself—it will provide perspective and a framework for how our Swedenborgian understanding fits in with literal approaches, perhaps making you more comfortable discussing our theology with others. Then give copies away to friends who show interest. Churches should also have a supply on hand for curious visitors who wonder what is unique about our Church.

The Rev. Paul Martin is minister of the Swedenborgian Church of Puget Sound and director of the Swedenborg Spiritual Growth Center (Stonehouse).

Hidden Millennium: The Doomsday Fallacy, 160 pp, \$14.95. Order before January 1, 1999, and receive 15% discount (\$12.70 price to *Messenger* readers). To order, call the Swedenborg Foundation at 1-800-355-3222. ❖

Jeff Ahrens' review, from *Booklist*, October 1, 1998 (American Library Association), states the following:

"Koke offers a balanced, concise, well-documented account of speculation and concern about the millennium that necessarily is also a history of the end of the world. Beginning with the early church fathers, Koke shows that Christian eschatology has never been seamless. He documents the problems of those who have precisely prophesied the end of the world, which then doesn't happen, such as the Millerites of 1844 (forerunners of Seventh Day Adventists) and psychics who envision the world will not end, exactly, but be cleansed of evil, ushering in a new golden age. He particularly focuses on the eschatology of the Jehovah's Witnesses,* who maintain that nonbelievers will be annihilated instead of going to Hell, and their concern with the "last days." Koke also addresses the theology of time: What calendar does God use? Are events predicted in the Bible on a timetable? He cites arguments that God does not use our concept of time in determining the course of events. Quite an absorbing book."

*Reviewer's error: the Seventh Day Adventists stated this.

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A New Pentecost In the New Church

Part II

Eric Allison

In my last article (November *Messenger*), I sketched the history of our church as compared with the Pentecostal church. My hypothesis was that the "New Church" as described by Swedenborg would be a balance of love and wisdom, heart and mind. The power of experiences like the Pentecostals' would be integrated with a discerning intellect. The article closed with a promise to offer insights into how our denomination could become more "New Church" by stepping toward more of a heart focus. Here, I will share one recommendation.

What do we need to do? We need to be more intentional in including the Lord. We need to share from our hearts and minds how the Lord is real to us. We need to invite the Lord into the nuts and bolts operation of our Church.

Our church exists largely because the Lord led a Swedish man to read the Word daily while in a prayerful state. He boldly went where no one had gone before because he sought the Lord above all else. We need to be like Swedenborg in our boldness to know the Lord more fully.

I began ruminating about this last February while at a conference for small churches sponsored by Duke University. One of the speakers told a story about a young woman who had come to a small church seeking membership to confirm her recently discovered faith. She was ecstatic about her transformation and had been meeting with the pastor of a Methodist church in North Carolina when the church treasurer stopped by. She eagerly asked the treasurer, "What is the condition of your soul?" The treasurer was offended by the personal nature of the question and responded by saying curtly, "I kept this church in the black when we didn't have any money." The treasurer had indeed given from his heart to the church in the way he was most able. He was a good steward. Talking about the condition of his soul was not something he was comfortable doing even if he were able to do so.

Most Swedenborgians can identify with the treasurer's discomfort. But, we are changing, I think even yearning, to be more comfortable sharing about "the Lord" or our intimate spiritual life. We just aren't sure how. When people ask us what we believe, we tend to explain our faith rather than share it. Most of us click into a cerebral gear to describe the unique Swedenborgian concepts. What impresses people more than learning how we are different is learning how our faith makes a difference.

**How
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instead of talked?**

An example of how we are changing and need to continue to change is found in the types of groups we have and the way they operate. Our church began with small groups studying the doctrines and the Word. Today, the variety of groups offered is considerable, but doctrinal groups are still effective. They could be much more effective. We need to ask ourselves how our groups can be more spiritually nourishing. How can they be more "New Church?" How can they be more inviting for the Lord?

A typical example of our Bible study or doctrinal class used to go something like the following: There was often no opening prayer. If there was a prayer, it was very brief and usually solicited Divine help in gaining insight and uses for the insights gained. Passages from the Word or the writings were read and discussed. After the elapsed time everyone said good night and went home or got ready for the Sunday worship service to follow. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with this approach. The question I pose is, How could this group be more

spiritually nourishing? How could it be more "New Church?" How could it be more an expression of the New Pentecost? How could it be more inviting for the Lord? What has often been lacking in our doctrinal classes is prayer.

Let's take a real example of what used to happen and to a smaller degree still happens today. A lady came to a doctrinal group on *Heaven and Hell*. She didn't usually come, but she came that night because her husband was seriously ill in the hospital. She thought just being in the church would help her and him. It didn't. When she was casually asked how she was, she told the truth. A few consoling comments were made. After an awkward silence the group proceeded. When the group was finished, a few more consoling comments were made. One person even promised to pray for the ailing husband. People went home. Now, ask yourself, How would the woman have felt if the group had taken just five minutes at the beginning and at the end of the group to pray for her husband and for her? She would have felt more spiritually supported by the group. The group would have felt that they had done something together to help someone in need and done it in the name of God. The group would have shifted from a format that could have happened in a secular setting to one which was overtly spiritual.

(Continued on page 160)

A New Pentecost In the New Church

(Continued from page 159)

What is happening in our denomination is slowly moving from a head format to one that includes more of the heart. We are inviting the Lord.

I encourage you to take a look at the statements of purpose, mission, vision, and goals of our denomination, SSR, the support units, and the local churches. You will find some very impressive work. Some are inspiring. Many of these statements were arrived at after considerable time was spent in prayer and soul searching. God can speak to us from these documents.

I have been to dozens of meetings on all levels of General Convention. What seems to be the typical procedure at meetings is that dedicated, devoted people plough through the agenda trying to do the best thing but never refer to the guiding principles which are presumed to be the very foundation of the meeting's purpose. The Lord is not consciously invited into the proceedings other than in the opening prayer. The opportunity is missed to have a meeting become an event which spiritually enriches and empowers all who are present.

How would a meeting change if we periodically stopped and asked the Lord for guidance from our hearts and just listened instead of talked? How would the meeting change if every decision was considered in the light of its mission, vision, and goals? What would a meeting be like if every segment of the meeting opened and closed with a prayer, a reading, or a song? What would a meeting be like if everyone there left the meeting feeling that they had learned something new, felt the guidance of the Lord and the support of the group? The purpose of our existence is to help the Lord create a heaven from the human race. How would a meeting change if we considered every decision in the light of this mandate? What would it be like to look forward to a meeting because we knew that the Lord's presence would be a healing balm in which we would all share?

Generally Swedenborgians do not pray together. We have prayers in worship services, to start meetings, and occasionally special prayers for people who are sick. When we are at an impasse during a meeting we don't stop to ask the Lord for help. In over twenty years of ministry I have on only three or four occasions been invited to gather with others just for prayer. Getting together just to pray is something which we simply did not do until recently.

We do not teach our clergy or laity how to pray nor do we do much to encourage people to learn for themselves. A theological student can go through four years of school without taking a course on prayer. There have been over three hundred studies done on the effectiveness of prayer in healing. Medical schools now accept prayer as an important factor in healing, and they're teaching doctors how to pray.

Even if a gathering has a clearly intellectual focus, a time for prayer from the heart needs to be part of it. Why? Because every occasion in a church should allow the opportunity for an ailing soul to receive some solace as the result

of prayer directed to their specific need. That is what distinguishes a church gathering from a secular one.

We believe that the Lord is everywhere all of the time. I think it is time for this to be reflected in what we write and what we say. A common temptation is to believe we can come up with solutions without God's help. The reality is that everything good we are and every dazzling idea we have is the result of heavenly influx coursing through our souls. We need to acknowledge this.

A quick look through the Swedenborgian Church *Journal* and the various handbooks of SSR reveals that God or the Lord is hardly mentioned except in sections dealing explicitly with our faith. It was encouraging to see the SSR annual report end by saying, "We thank the Lord for the many blessings we have received during this past year!" But, this is not typical. More typical is the eloquent covenant of the SSR community jointly written by faculty and students and displayed at SSR. Its principles are an inspiring model for honest communication, but there is nothing in the statement to indicate that the people who wrote it are religious or have any awareness of how the Lord is involved in the process. A secular organization could use the same documents as a guide. I'm not picking on SSR. It is an example of how Swedenborgians are wired. The same observation can be made on virtually every level of our denomination. In all our organizations it is rare to see overt references to how we are working with the Lord. Even the reports from congregations in the *Journal* hardly ever refer to the Lord as an active participant in their ministry. It was heartwarming for me to see in the report from our church in Guyana... "All these speakers in their own varied ways gave us God's Word with much food for thought. With a song on their lips and a prayer in their hearts, members continued to use the fourth Sunday for Prayer and Praise to God for His many blessings in their lives."

Using the words "God" or "Lord" more often in our documents is not a solution—but it wouldn't hurt us. What I'm saying is that we need to be more overt in talking about and sharing what we believe to be true. There is power in sharing our faith by what we say, not just what we do.

Now is the time to enter intellectually into the mysteries of faith with our hearts open wide to the Lord and each other.

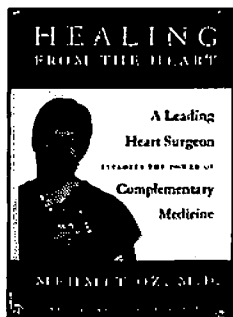
The Rev. Eric Allison is the Pastoral Ministries and Church Growth Consultant. He lives in Kitchener, Ontario. ❖

A Blessed Christmas and Inspirational New Year



from Messenger editor Patte LeVan
and the Communications Support Unit

Healing from the Heart



*A Leading Heart Surgeon
Explores the Power of Complementary Medicine*

By Mehmet Oz, M.D., with Ron Arias and Lisa Oz

Foreword by Dean Ornish

c 1998, Dutton Books, Penguin Putnam, Inc.

Review by Mona Diane Conner

We feel our faith is so wonderful, that we wish someone renowned might speak about its beauty and its value, and help us catch people's attention, by writing an important book. This may be that book. The fact that *Healing from the Heart* is not a book about religion makes what Mehmet Oz is saying about Swedenborgian theology and its influence upon him all the more powerful. After all, as we say, 'religion is of life; and the life of religion is to do good.'

As one of the top cardiothoracic surgeons in the country, Dr. Mehmet Oz works with patients who require transplants and artificial heart technology, such as the left ventricular assist device he helped to develop. In this area of medicine where life is so fragile, the battle for survival engages the patient's deepest inner resources even more than it pushes the limits of medical technology.

Yet pre-operative anxiety and post-operative depression bedevil a heart patient's ability to heal. So Dr. Oz is enlisting the help of complementary medicine in his Cardiac Complementary Care Center at Columbia Presbyterian hospital in New York City—employing a range of alternative therapies that include touch therapies, hypnosis, acupuncture, massage, reflexology, chi gong, yoga, aromatherapy, homeopathy, and music—giving his patients a special advantage and empowering them in their recovery.

I first heard about Dr. Oz in 1995 when my friend Patricia, who knew about my interest in hands-on healing,

gave me an article from the *New York Times Magazine* on his research program, "The Experiments of Dr. Oz." I found it amazing that he had the courage to put his reputation on the line by bringing alternative healing into the surgical setting. In October, I found *Healing from the Heart* displayed at Barnes and Noble, with its foreword by Dean Ornish. Thinking it would be an excellent book for my father, who has been battling heart disease this past year, I picked it up.

I could hardly contain my excitement when I perused a chapter called "Slow Down For Unicorns." In it Oz tells how meeting his wife, Lisa Lemole, and her family in Bryn Athyn, and being introduced to their Swedenborgian religious background was a key factor in his decision to take this uncharted path in his profession as a doctor! His understanding that physical healing cannot be separated from emotional and spiritual healing comes in part from insights he has gained from Swedenborgian theology:

"(Lisa's) family and their unconventional beliefs would offer me a series of experiences and revelations that would forever change my perceptions of healing

and bridge my dual cultures, East and West...

Swedenborg wrote that the second coming of the Lord did not mean a return of an actual person or deity, but rather a second coming of understanding, or enlightenment about the Lord's message... (our) image of angels and the afterlife... springs in part from Swedenborg's views of this other realm.

As I began to read about Swedenborg and other works by great thinkers, I saw a central theme expressed repeatedly. Explanations of life that are based only in hard logic derived from the material world will always be insufficient; we must expand our vision to encompass additional dimensions of existence."³

The front of the book acknowledges permission granted to reprint excerpts from *AIM: The Workbook*, by Peter Rhodes, a J. Appleseed and Co. book, and *Testimony to the Invisible: Essays on Swedenborg*, edited by Jim Lawrence, a Chrysalis Book (Swedenborg Foundation).

A dual U.S. - Turkish citizen, Mehmet Oz grew up in Wilmington, Delaware, and spent his childhood summers in Turkey.

His dual cultural background has also enhanced his ability and willingness to blend the best of Eastern and Western medicine in his work. On a more recent visit to

Istanbul he visited a music healer who provided him with taped Sufi-like music, designed to heal various parts of the body, which he has used at the Care Center.

Graduating Summa Cum Laude from Harvard, Oz went on to University of Pennsylvania Medical School and earned an M.B.A. from Wharton.⁴ In the past several years Dr. Oz has appeared on Dateline, 48

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(Continued on page 162)

~ BOOK REVIEW ~ HEALING FROM THE HEART

(Continued from page 161)

Hours, Today, Turning Point, and in *Life* magazine, among others.

He has also had some famous patients. Former baseball player Frank Torre got through his heart transplant operation, performed by Dr. Oz, with the help of what Torre called, "that footsie thing," the reflexology that was recommended to him. Blues musician Johnny Copeland awakened from a post-surgery coma when Dr. Oz provided him with headphones so he could listen to tapes of his own musical compositions.

The rising interest in integrative medicine is not such a surprise. Today Americans spend approximately 14 billion dollars a year on alternative therapies, herbs, and vitamins.⁵ But part of the significance of the work being done through the Complementary Care Center lies in the fruits of its carefully applied scientific research methods on the benefits of alternative healing. Consequent validation by the allopathic community at Columbia Presbyterian will, it is hoped, make it the first of many such care centers in

hospitals all over the country.

The benefits of methods employed by the center include reduction of tension, depression, and fatigue; a lessening of the need for pain medication with its accompanying side effects. And shorter hospital stays. In 1993 Richard Rosenthal gave \$750,000 to Columbia University's College of Physicians and Surgeons to finance the Richard and Hinda Rosenthal Center for Alternative/Complementary Medicine.⁶ With this background of interest at Columbia Presbyterian, Mehmet Oz and his colleague Jery Whitworth began the Cardiac Complementary Care Center in 1995.

Healing from the Heart is well-written—absorbing, enjoyable to read, and very accessible. It contains no unnecessary medical jargon. Oz's positive, energizing, and openly enthusiastic attitude empowers his patients and uplifts his readers.

I know from my father's experience how helpless heart disease can make a patient and his whole family feel. Not all doctors are true healers, but Mehmet Oz clearly is. He cares about his patients' feelings, their families, and their futures. After surgery, one of his patients was 'passively suicidal.' Learning that he was a very religious man, Oz consulted with the patient's wife and minister. Together they provided the man with a sense of "use" by persuading him that 'he was needed as an evangelist for his church,' which he promptly rallied to become.⁷

The role of emotions in the recovery process is well understood by Julie Motz, one of the energy healers who has been involved in Oz's research program. Her own book, *Hands of Life*, has also been released this fall. Motz, appearing on the cover in hospital scrubs, describes at some length her unique experiences working closely with Dr. Oz. Her intuitive ability to read patients' emotions, even while they are under anesthesia in surgery, has made for some interesting and even humorous interchanges between her and the surgical teams. Reiki is only part of Motz's training as an energy healer.

I've just begun to read Motz's book,

which deserves a review of its own. She looks more deeply into the role emotions play in disease, offering some fascinating theories: "I concluded that nerves, which govern perception and communication, carry fear; muscles, which govern movement, carry anger; bones, creating structure, hold memory and pain; and bone marrow, at the very core of the skeleton, regenerating our blood, carries love."⁸

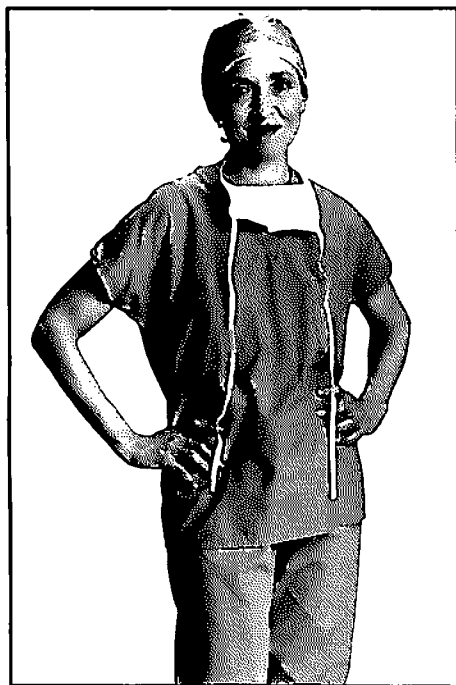
Today's work in integrative medicine is proving scientifically what Swedenborg understood mystically about the spirit's holographic location in the body, and helping physicians like Mehmet Oz become more effective through this understanding of the nature of human life.

This week my father called me to say he has read *Healing from the Heart*, and become so encouraged by its testimonials that he has decided to try self-hypnosis therapy! As Dean Ornish concludes in his foreword, "*Healing from the Heart* gives us a glimpse into what the future of medicine is likely to be—if we're lucky." Dad, and all of us, can 'heartily' agree. May this be the first of many books that generously acknowledge the influence of Swedenborgian theology and can also be found on the bestseller list (I predict)!

Footnotes:

1. Doctrine of Life #1, *The Four Doctrines*, Emanuel Swedenborg
2. "The Experiments of Dr. Oz," *New York Times Magazine*, July 30, 1998
3. *Healing from the Heart*, pp. 40-41
4. "The Experiments of Dr. Oz," p. 22
5. *Healing from the Heart*, p. 31
6. "The Experiments of Dr. Oz," p. 22
7. *Healing from the Heart*, p. 137
8. *Hands of Life*, Julie Motz, c 1998, Bantam Books, Bantam, Doubleday, Dell Publishing Group
9. *Healing from the Heart*, Foreword, Dean Ornish, xiv

Mona Conner is a member of the New York Swedenborgian Church, the Communications Support Unit, and a level II Reiki healer. ❖



Julie Motz, who worked with Mehmet Oz, as she appears on the cover of *Hands of Life*. (photo courtesy of Bantam Books, photo credit © Dennis Kitchen)

Equality for Women in Ministry Gets 85% Yes Vote in British Conference

Barbara Stanley

Did you realize it was as far back as the 1970s that a growing debate on women as ministers appeared in Conference Publications? And at last, at our 1998 Conference, the decision was to be taken on whether all levels of ministry should be open to women.

It was the first item on our first full days' agenda. The president, the Rev. John Sutton, introduced the subject by presenting a potted history of events and decisions since 1970 when the debate began. Some highlights from the 15 or so items he listed were:

1986: A Committee on Ministry (which included two women) was appointed by Conference.

1992: Following various reports and recommendations in the intervening years, a paper "A New Pattern of Ministry for both Men and Women" presented.

1993: July—Ministers' Committee Recommendation that "Only men should be accepted for further training in 'ordained' ministry beyond Auxiliary (Assistant)."

1996: A woman is inaugurated as an Assistant Minister.

1998: Ministers' Committee Recommendation to Conference: That all levels of ministry should be open to women.

A 'secret ballot' on this recommendation was to take place on July 22, 1998. But first, we had some more work and more thinking to do. After a break for coffee we returned for Group discussions. On a row of chairs at the front of the hall were cards, each of a different colour, representing the rainbow. The red end of the spectrum represented 'yes' to the recommendation and the blue end 'no', with the shades in between representing varying degrees of opinion: We were invited to stand by the color which reflected our individual thoughts and feelings, then to form groups comprising as many different colours as possible. There was much muttering on the conference floor! What was the point of a 'secret ballot' if we were all to show 'our colours' up front?! The president patiently explained that it was an opportunity not only to share and listen to a variety of different views, but also to look at what lies behind our own constructed reasoning.

In groups we were encouraged to talk about what it was like to walk to the place on the colour line; tell why we chose that place, or, if we moved along the line—why, and to talk about the things we were sure about and not sure about. Having headed for our place on the colour line, many of us then felt the urge to move a shade. And, indeed, the whole exercise proved to be very useful in focusing our hearts and minds on this important and far-reaching decision for our church before actually casting our vote.

The 'secret' ballot took place on Wednesday morning July 22. The votes were counted and, after more than 28 years of debate and deliberations, the waiting seemed to be over very quickly. For the record—out of a possible 72 there were 70 votes—61 for and 9 against: 85% voted that all levels of ministry should be open to women.

Reprinted from September 1998, *Lifeline*, Journal of the General Conference of the New Church, Great Britain.

SSR Workshop on Interim Ministry

The Rev. Roger Nicholson will be giving a presentation, "Interim Ministry," at the Swedenborg School of Religion on Wednesday, December 16th. The morning session, beginning at 8:30 a.m. is open to all ministers, students, and lay people who are interested. The afternoon session will be for the members of the Placement Advisory Committee: President of Convention Rev. Ron Brugler; Chair of the Council of Ministers the Rev. Paul Martin; President of SSR, Dr. Mary K. Klein; and a representative from MINSU, the Rev. Ken Turley.

Mr. Nicholson is employed by Interim Ministry Network, an organization that trains people for interim ministries and currently provides services to over twenty Christian denominations.

Interim ministers are trained to serve congregations in times of transition, helping them deal with and resolve the numerous and complicated issues of closure when a ministry comes to an end. The interim minister then helps the congregation in the process of self-evaluation and renewal of goals and direction for the future.

Interim ministers, by definition, do not accept calls to serve more than two years at most. They help a congregation move through the often difficult and painful transition from one minister to the next and are specially trained to deal with issues that arise at these times for the individuals and the congregation as a whole.

If you and/or your congregation are interested in learning more about the concept of Interim Ministry please contact a member of the Placement Advisory Committee after December 16th.

Rev. Ken Turley
pastor, Fryeburg New Church



And By the Way...

The Harvard Medical School Department of Continuing Education and The Mind/Body Medical Institute Caregroup, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, are jointly presenting a weekend course, **Spirituality & Healing in Medicine**, with special emphasis on **Death and Dying**, under the direction of Herbert Benson, MD. The course is being presented December 12-14 at the Westin Hotel in Boston. The objectives of the course are to provide the participants with an understanding of:

- ♦ The relationship between spirituality and healing from the perspectives of world religions.
- ♦ The scientific evidence for the effects of spirituality on healing.
- ♦ The physiologic and neurologic effects of healing resulting from spirituality.
- ♦ The relationships amongst healing, spiritually and belief.
- ♦ The importance of spirituality in death and dying.

PARISH NEWS

& Community Outreach

Blessings and Concerns from Pretty Prairie

Sunday, October 4th, was a day of rejoicing and cheer at the New Jerusalem Church in Pretty Prairie, Kansas. The Rev. Ron Brugler, president of convention, came to officially install the Rev. Adam Seward as minister.

The day started with Sunday school taught by retired minister, Rev. Eric Zacharias, on Divine Providence. The worship service and communion were given by the Rev. Adam Seward. Around 60 gathered for the church dinner in the fellowship hall. Many friends from the Church of the New Jerusalem in Pawnee Rock joined the congregation for the festivities. Guests were also present from the Pretty Prairie community, Montezuma, Oklahoma, and Missouri. Marian Mull was the photographer.

The Installation Service was performed in tandem by Rev. Ron and Rev. Adam. It was an enriching experience. The women's choir sang "Amazing Grace" for Adam in English and Choctaw, to honor Adam's native American heritage. It was a taste of heaven for many.

Following the installation everyone was served homemade ice cream and cake. The cakes were decorated with the Pretty Prairie church, the Swedenborgian symbol, and the Bible.

The next day, Adam became ill and his condition worsened throughout the week. He was hospitalized for over a week as the doctors tried to assess the damage to his heart and chart the best course for treatment. He has been diagnosed with congestive heart failure, etiology unknown at this time. He came home on October 22nd.

We ask for prayers for Adam and Lynn as they face the uncertainties that health problems bring. Adam prefers letters and cards over phone calls at this point in his recovery. We will keep *The Messenger* informed monthly about his condition.

Jane Siebert



The Rev. Ron Brugler (L) installing the Rev. Adam Seward.

Bridgewater Steeple Installed

The new steeple was lifted atop the Bridgewater church on Saturday, October 24, 1998, the crowning step in the restoration of the beloved 127-year-old landmark which was nearly destroyed by fire on July 12, 1994. A crowd ranging from 50 to 200 people, plus four TV stations and *Brockton Enterprise* reporters witnessed the lift which began at 7:30 a.m. and wasn't completed until 5:00 p.m.

Restoration of the classic steeple posed unusual design and engineering challenges. Every detail, from the intricate shingling to the grey-green, red, and purple slate mined in Vermont and Newfoundland, had to match photographs of the original. Both the Historic District Commission and Zoning Appeals Board had to approve the plan.

The new steeple consists of a 70-foot tall steel framework weighing more than six tons. The bottom two-thirds is wrapped in wood, stainless steel, and slate to match the intricate detailing of the original steeple. The top third is made of an RF (radio frequency) transparent screening system that is gel-coated and painted. Inside the steeple, the antennae will be raised and lowered on a 32-foot pipe mast.

Sprint PCS funded the \$500,000 restoration

(Continued on page 165)

Bridgewater Steeple Installed

(Continued from page 164)

as part of a partnership with the church. In return, the nation's largest all-digital phone service will be allowed to locate its antennae inside the spire. (See February 1998 *Messenger*, "Holy Toll Calls").

The Rev. Lee Woofenden, pastor, said, "Without support from Sprint PCS, I don't know how we would have found the funds to restore the steeple...it is especially appropriate that our steeple is being rebuilt at this particular time, because we are working toward a renewal both of our spiritual life and our outreach to the community."

The lift, which required a 120-ton crane with a 180-foot arm, took place in several stages:

- The top fiberglass section of the cone was first lifted off the lower, steel-framed section of the cone and put back in its cradle.

- The belfry section was lifted into place on the existing steeple base and secured.

- The lower, steel-framed cone section was lifted into place on top of the belfry section, and welded into place.

- The upper, fiberglass section (which looked like a big, furled umbrella with the pipe mast sticking out the bottom) was lifted into place, lowered onto the

PARISH NEWS & Community Outreach

lower cone, and secured. The pipe mast had to be threaded down into the lower cone. There was a big round of applause from the onlookers when it was seated into place!

A steeple dedication ceremony is planned for December 6 at 2:00 p.m. at the church. Representatives from the town of Bridgewater, Sprint, and other groups that were involved in the project are being invited to speak.



Cleveland

The Cleveland church (Swedenborg Chapel) hosted the Ohio Association annual meeting which was held October 2-4, 1998, at the Radisson Hotel. The Rev. Robert McCluskey, pastor of the New York church, was guest speaker.

New York

The Rev. Dr. Dorothea Harvey was guest preacher at the New York New Church October 4, 1998, in celebration of World Wide Communion Sunday.

The church received a call recently from a D.B. Finest in San Diego who is writing a book about his spiritual experiences, with a focus on his discovery of Swedenborg in the late 1970s. Title is *Backsliding into the Light*.

Spiritual Network Center, Concord, New Hampshire

Sampling of recent and upcoming programs and events at the Center:

New Age—Not So New

Rev. Dr. Wilma Wake

Friday, November 20, 7-9:30 p.m. \$8. "Discover how the roots of the new age are moving us into the millennium..."

Discovering Your Body's Wisdom

Laurie Sivonen

Saturday, December 5, 1-4 p.m. \$18. "Your body holds valuable genetic memory. Learn three powerful techniques to access this wisdom..."

Christian Mysticism— the Love of the Christ

Jerry Thomas

Saturday, December 12, 12:30-4:30 p.m. \$40.

"The birth of the inner Christ is an eternal event celebrated yearly..."

ONGOING AT THE CENTER:

Celestial Circle, Sundays at 10:00 a.m., Rev. Nadine Cotton.

Counsel of Men, a monthly men's spirituality group exploring men's emotions. Geoff, third Tuesday, 9:30 p.m. \$5 members, \$8 non-members.

Women's Vibrational Healing, exploring the healing effects of sound. Christine McKenna, second Monday, 7:00 p.m. \$5 members, \$8 non-members.

Meditation Group, second and fourth Tuesdays, Nadine Cotton, 7:00 p.m. \$5 member, \$8 non-members

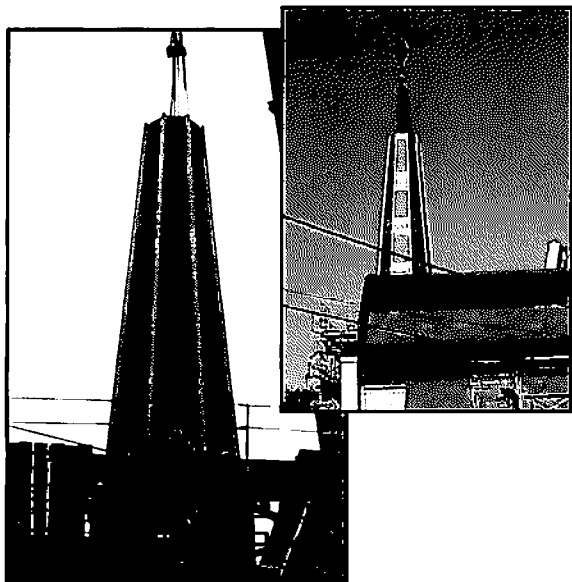


Photo: Our pastor getting closer to God! Rev. Lee Woofenden is in the bucket.

Continuing Film
commentary begun in
November Messenger.

Jim Lawrence

What Dreams May Come?

As a Swedenborgian, I say Hollywood got it wrong again—yet the enchanting *What Dreams May Come* pushes a provocative envelope in the “afterlife” genre of films. Most films centering on an after-death continuation of life have revolved around how the departed one maintains contact with loved ones still living in the world (e.g., *Ghost*, *Heaven Can Wait*, and a slew of others including *It’s a Wonderful Life*.) Though the Robin Williams character does have some peripheral interaction with his earthly wife (which ends up being the fundamental underlying reality), throughout most of the film he undergoes experiences in what a Swedenborgian would term “the world of spirits”—albeit one highly enclosed within his own imagination.

Several of my Swedenborgian friends felt that this film offered a strikingly Swedenborgian picture of the afterlife. I beg to differ—but due to the elaborate portrayal of the “world of spirits,” in which the mind instantly and naturally creates its own environment, there is a striking similarity (though heavily distorted) to the Swedenborgian picture of how one’s spiritual environment is heavily conditioned by one’s interior state “on the other side.” If you wish to let the film speak on its own terms and simply enjoy a daring story line produced in a fashion that is almost sure to gain an Oscar nomination (if not the trophy itself) for visual effects, then “*What Dreams May Come*” delivers a lot for your \$7.50 investment.

The film is produced by Metafilms, which was started by Stephen Simon and Barnet Bain, who met three years ago at a metaphysics seminar and got jazzed enough to form a production company focusing exclusively on films with explicitly metaphysical content. They brought in stellar screen writer Ronald Bass (*Rainman*) to produce a story based on a novel by Richard Matheson, who also wrote the story for *Somewhere in Time*.

So intent is this moviehouse on getting its point across, I experienced the film even adopting a proselytizing tone, becoming almost blushing blatant with the ending (which I won’t give away). And what is its teaching message? The “R” word. You know—that subject we get asked about all the time (reincarnation).

This is a reincarnation picture. Very intentionally so. The plot is driven by the spiritual mechanics envisioned in the Americanized pop-culture version of reincarnation (not necessarily a perspective shared by the ancient Hindu and Buddhist traditions), which posits that our deep and vital spiritual growth occurs in the natural plane over successive lifetimes closely entwined with the many-lifetimes journey of a few other key souls—with whom we keep swapping roles (siblings, parent-child, husband-wife, etc.).

This metaphysical premise is the basis for the action in the film. This understanding of spiritual cause-and-effect is why everything important happening in the protagonist’s after-death awakening occurs with two sons (both of whom died in a previous auto accident) and his wife (still living and grieving on earth). One poignant moment has the father and one son switching roles as a carry-over from a previous lifetime.

The filmmakers laden the dialog with much explanation as to what happens after death. This is, indeed, a teaching film, which endeavors to say some lovely things about life values, but it also seems intent on impressing the metaphysical mechanics of the transmigration of the ego (reincarnation) as the great mechanism. God as a strong and immediate presence is absent from this protagonist’s consciousness. There are no wise angels striving to come near with loving communication (no one seems particularly wise but merely idiosyncratic). And most important of all,

there’s almost nothing of the intense life-review that I believe our theology makes central to the after-death experience.

For the record, belief in reincarnation does not seem to me particularly unproductive. Most people are drawn to the concept for idealistic reasons, especially for the sense of its fairness with a level playing field for everybody. Some assert that belief in reincarnation reduces incentive—can always get it done in the next lifetime! But I don’t sense a lessened spiritual commitment with my reincarnation-leaning friends. I do, however, strongly prefer, both intellectually and emotionally, Swedenborg’s careful discussion of why the natural plane’s function is completed with a single launching from the natural world.

Overall, I applaud an adventurous movie, whose best accomplishment for me lies in its techno-graphics. And the lushly whimsical spiritual world generated by the protagonist’s after-death soul cannot fail to spark ponderings and ruminations upon—indeed, what realities may come.

The Rev. Jim Lawrence is co-pastor of the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church and manager of J. Appleseed & Co. ❖

Mona Diane Conner

As an illustrator, I was disappointed that the paintings Annie paints in the movie, and the related scenes in Christy’s sojourn in the spiritual world, derived from famous landscape paintings by artists like Albert Bierstadt, Thomas Cole, Hieronymous Bosch. I admit Bosch always fascinates, and Bierstadt’s lighting is not to be matched, but these things are familiar to us, and moreover, two-dimensional! With all the magic available to us via computers and film technology, couldn’t the makers of this movie come up with

(Continued on page 170)

Church Growth and New Forms Predicted

Dear Editor:

Dr. Woofenden's inspiring piece in the October *Messenger* shows how vital is the mission of the Swedenborg Foundation. What he says about the future destiny of the New Church is just the kind of thing we need as we approach the millennium.

I would add some particulars to the vision he casts.

1) The success of the New Church relates to the proper function of a church. Swedenborg compares it to the function of the heart. The church is to pump life to the body. It is not in competition with the body (AC 637). The Second Coming does not take place "for the purpose of destroying anything, but to build up" (TCR 772).

2) A church can perform its function "even if it consists of comparatively few" (SS 104).

3) Although it seems like fiction, there is a global influence of church individuals who read the Word (DP 256:2).

4) The growth of the New Church may be compared to the gradual growth of the early Christian Church (AR 547). That growth really got going after 300 years. Its slow growth did not flourish "until an age had elapsed" (AE 732). Although cautioned by Steve Koke's new book* not to emphasize dates, a comparison might lead us to look for growth in the middle of the next century.

5) The angels confess that they do not know the future. There are indications that the destiny of the New Church lies especially in Africa.

A new history of the British Conference has just been published, stating that in Nigeria there are 6,000 in the congregations there, and in South Africa 20,000. Now there is a stirring in West African nations like Ghana to which country the Swedenborg Foundation has sent thousands of books.

The rising and falling of various ecclesiastical organizations in the Western World may be regarded as only small parts of the big picture. (LJ 74). As Dr. Woofenden says, the New Church may take forms in the future which we cannot imagine at the present time.

Don Rose, Bryn Athyn
Pennsylvania

**Hidden Millennium*
The Doomsday Fallacy ❖

Seeing the Big Picture this Season

Eric Zacharias

We are, it seems to me, becoming more and more a people obsessed with statistics, with numbers. On record somewhere is the statistical history of every basketball player from junior high to the professional level of play. A hen that refuses or cannot meet its expected quota of eggs is soon relegated to the pot. The dairy cow that lags in its milk production becomes hamburger patties. Life has become a numbers game. Also, I fear we have become slaves to the statistical tables.

All of us, I assume, have our own way of looking at the world. Some divide the world into two parts—the haves and the have-nots. Some, like me, also divide the world into two parts, those who enjoy and appreciate the value of numbers, of statistics, and those, like me, who have no love and very little appreciation for numbers or statistics.

What is happening to, or may already have happened, to all the great visions, the mysteries, the ideals of the poets, the philosophers, the prophets? What about the big picture? The purpose of life? The reason for being?

With classical music quietly, magically filling the background, I was reading once more the familiar words of Isaiah—that old and wise man. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

I pushed back my chair, closed my eyes, to think for a few moments about these words of hope. The promise they hold. I wondered, Is this pronouncement by Isaiah strong enough, urgent enough to call us away, even for a little while, from the statistical table, from the busy round of life, to open our eyes to the big picture? ... "and the government shall be upon his shoulder."

Whose world is this? We try so hard. Our computer banks. Our statistics. Everything in its proper place. Duty catalogued. Our experts tell us, "We ain't seen nothing yet."

Still, there prevails a feeling of unease. Something is amiss. Something is out of joint. Is there not a spiritual dimension to our makeup that restlessly, insistently calls for recognition, that pleads for a response to that promise of Isaiah: "For unto you has a child been born, to you a son has been given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder."

Fretting. Anxious. I, with warm affection, recall the encouragement of another wise, old man who long ago reminded me, "Eric, this is God's world. All of life is in his care and keeping. It's in his hands." This is a lesson not easily learned. Once learned, it brings with it a joy and peace never before experienced.

This is the Big Picture. This Christmas season all of us will do well to "ponder" this message—with a great, great sense of awe and wonderment.

Reprinted with author's permission from the *Ninnescah Valley News*, Kansas. ❖

Reflections

Nanci Adair

After attending a church council-sponsored focus group on church membership, I reflected upon church membership as a marriage. A covenant, freely entered into, asking of each partner vows to one another. What promises would I as a member want to make to this, my church? What promises would I want the church to make to me? Reading a written confirmation service in the September 1998 issue of *Our Daily Bread*, I noted that it states: we (the church) hope that you (new member receiving confirmation) will take your spirituality seriously, consciously shape your spirits to be good and worthy vehicles of the One God, take an active role in your church, rise to leadership when you feel called, speak out when inspired or uncomfortable, and contribute your many gifts for the health and well-being of your community. You may expect that we will provide you with many opportunities for spiritual, personal and social growth. In times of decision and stress we will be by your side giving you love and support. We will also seek to be present with you in times of celebration and joy. You can count on our willingness to listen and share from our own experience. From this point on you need never feel alone.

I wondered if I, as a member of the church, can uphold such a promise. After all, the church is made up of its members. I am also intrigued by the use of the word "hope" when stating what the church needs from its members and the use of the word "expect" when describing what the church is willing and able to provide. I left the focus gathering feeling good about my maturity and the level of intimacy I have achieved by both giving and receiving in this, my church community. Earlier this year, unable to make a financial contribution to the church, I offered an astrology class.

We (the church) offered the class to the general public for a fee, which in turn became my financial contribution. I also gave the course free to church members. In this church I witness active members diligent in their ministry to one another and to the church as a whole. I wanted to make part of my offering a reward of membership. In the past year I have actively participated in the worship committee, led worship in church, and contributed to the newsletter. Our church is fulfilling me by developing my talents, providing fellowship, a place for worship, regeneration, and celebration. Our church cares for my

child. Many individual members have given aid to support my family. Following the vows we take (often publicly) in marriage are the long years of hard work. It has been said that marriage is like a flashlight shining on the very best in each of us and also in the darkest corners where the dust balls gather. No other relationship requires as much. I know I have become a church member in the spirit of marriage everlasting.

Reprinted from the Portland, Maine Swedenborgian Church Newsletter, September 1998.



Thoughts about the Church

David Murray

I think it was in June that I clipped from the *Casco Bay Weekly* an invitation to a "Summer of Discovery" from the Swedenborgian Church. A fortuitous act, it turns out, since I was having no small amount of difficulty at the time keeping my wits about me.

The first service I attended was on July 26. There were nine or ten people present, and because the day's topic, "Eco-Justice," was canceled, Susannah Currie offered a stimulating compendium of Swedenborgian ideals.

I've been to six of the last seven Sunday gatherings, one focus group, and two shingling parties. I am making an effort to find out about your church to see if, perhaps, it might become my church.

Last week, Nanci asked me to share my thoughts on the summer worship format.

In brief, I did not go to the Swedenborgian Church seeking a perfect place, but I leave each week thinking there is an atmosphere of civility here that gives me solace. Welcoming, accepting, compassionate, cooperative, relaxed, informal, fun, funny, and interesting. I like the self-administered approach because every week I see creative input coming from all directions. There is a definite core group of dedicated, intelligent, articulate, but humble people giving vitality to this holy place.

I enjoy the format, the simplicity, the bulletin boards, the newsletter, pamphlets and books on Swedenborg, the fellowship, the prayer circle, and the way the children are treated with care and respect.

Each week's dialogue gives me something to think about, rejuvenates me; I look forward to the next time. This summer has been a spiritual wake-up call for me. Thank you Susannah, Beth, Eli, Nanci, Nor, Lisa, Mimo, Roger, Matthew, Jay, Jenny, Michel, Paul, Joanne, Marie, David, John, Gretchen, Trish, Joan, Nancy, Carly and Steve.

Reprinted from the October 1998 Swedenborgian Church Newsletter Portland, Maine.



Face to Face

Eric Allison

This is a true story that happened almost a hundred years ago in Chicago. Elizabeth and Rebecca lived in a big house with their parents. Elizabeth was seven years old and Rebecca was five.

Elizabeth was kind of bossy. She was a good girl most of the time and generally minded her parents, but she did like to get her way. Elizabeth and Rebecca played together every day. When they were playing games Elizabeth made up the rules. The rules were fair, but she made them. If they were playing tag Elizabeth would say, "I want to be it first." When they went to granny's house Elizabeth always wanted first pick at the cookie jar. Whenever they rode in the carriage she always wanted to sit in the front with her father. Sometimes her father let her sit in the front and sometimes he didn't, but she always asked the loudest.

Rebecca liked Elizabeth very much. She followed Elizabeth around like a little puppy, but she didn't like Elizabeth being the boss all the time. Rebecca was a lot like Elizabeth except that she was younger. She wasn't as strong or as tall, and she didn't yet know all the things Elizabeth knew. So, it was easy for Elizabeth to get her way. Rebecca sometimes grew tired of Elizabeth being in charge, and she would say, "No, I'm not going to do things your way all the time." Now and again they would get into a fight. They hardly ever hit each other, but they sure made a lot of noise.

Their parents were very good New Church people who lived by the golden rule and taught the girls about the Lord, the Bible and Swedenborg's teachings. When their mother or father heard them arguing they would say, "Remember the Golden Rule—treat someone else the way you want to be treated. By the sound of your fighting I'm sure you are not following the golden rule. Girls, go to your rooms until you're willing to play together nicely."

Most of the time Elizabeth and Rebecca had fun and followed the golden rule. They treated each other as they would like to be treated, even though Elizabeth was the boss.

When Christmas came the family had a great celebration. Their big house was full of uncles and aunts and cousins who came from out of town. On Christmas Eve everyone got dressed up to go to church. Elizabeth was proud of how pretty she looked in her dress and was even a bit jealous that little Rebecca looked just as pretty. The ground was covered with snow, so they all loaded into sleighs and rode through the city. The bells on the horses jingled, and they sang and laughed on their way to the church. The church was full of candles shining in the darkness. It looked so beautiful. The congregation sang the well-known carols, and everyone felt closer to each other and closer to God.

The next morning the children got up early and made so much noise shaking the presents under the Christmas tree that they woke the adults. The children talked excitedly about what might be inside the packages, but they didn't open any of them.

Finally, their father came downstairs and everyone

gathered around the fireplace. He opened his Bible and read the story of the birth of Jesus. When he read everyone listened quietly. Then he said, "Children, now, you know why we have Christmas. God came to the world as the greatest present—as Jesus. You may open your gifts."

When Elizabeth and Rebecca opened their gifts they gasped with delight. Rebecca said, "Oh, lookie, how beautiful." Elizabeth said, "This is the prettiest doll in the whole world." They had each received a beautiful hand-painted doll. The dolls had blonde hair and each wore a lovely white dress. Elizabeth's had a blue velvet belt and Rebecca's had a green velvet belt.

They played with the dolls every minute they could. They played with the dolls so much that it wasn't long before they got dirty. Elizabeth decided to wash her doll's face. When she did, something terrible happened. She washed away its face. The painted eyes and lips were gone. She felt terrible.

Because she was in the habit of doing just about everything Elizabeth did, Rebecca said, "My doll has a dirty face, too." Elizabeth thought to herself, "If my doll doesn't have a face then I don't want Rebecca's to have a face either." Elizabeth looked at Rebecca and said "Here's a wet cloth to wash your doll's face."

Just when Rebecca was ready to wash off the face of her doll Elizabeth remembered the golden rule and said, "No, Rebecca don't do that. You'll wash away the face of your doll." Elizabeth held up her own doll. Rebecca saw that it no longer had a face. When Rebecca saw the doll she knew Elizabeth must be feeling terrible. She said, "I'm sorry, Elizabeth, that you washed away the face of your doll. I'm so sorry."

Elizabeth began to cry and Rebecca cried with her.

Rebecca said "Thank you, Elizabeth, for stopping me. That was very nice of you."

"You're welcome, Rebecca," Elizabeth said. "I was just following the golden rule."

"Here," Rebecca said holding out her doll. "You can have my doll."

"No, thank you, that wouldn't be right. But I'd like to share it with you sometime."

Rebecca and Elizabeth had fun sharing the doll. A few days later their father came into the playroom and held up Elizabeth's doll. It had a new face painted on it, and it looked as pretty as ever.

"Oh, thank you, father. Thank so much. She looks beautiful again." Elizabeth said.

"You have both learned to treat each other as you would like to be treated. You've learned the golden rule, and that makes your dolls even prettier. Now that you know how to share, the things you have are not as important as having each other for friends."

The Rev. Eric Allison is pastoral ministries and church growth consultant. He lives in Kitchener, Ontario.

Editor's Note: Eric says the above story is based on an account told to him by the late Elizabeth Munger. She said that this was the first moral decision she ever made. Elizabeth Munger was a faithful member of the LaPorte New Church in LaPorte, Indiana, and a lifelong supporter of the denomination. ♦

The Meaning of These Vestments

Ken Turley

It was last Christmas that the church family gave me the gift of my choice of new chancel wear. That proved to be no small decision on my part. I have two robes, both of them rather old, and three stoles. The robes are worn to symbolize that I, as minister, am speaking on behalf of God. When I put on that robe, it is intended to cover over my personality and personal preferences as I become God's representative.

At the beginning of my career, that caused me quite a bit of discomfort. While I didn't mind speaking on God's behalf, I could see no way of escaping the fact that, even as God's representative, I am me! As time has gone on, I have become more comfortable with understanding that, that is exactly what the situation is. The robe is only the exterior, and it is in fact I who am wearing it. With time, I have become more comfortable in accepting both the privilege and the responsibility of being God's representative without attempting to hide or deny the fact that I am who I am and that in wearing the robe I am serving God and the people of my congregation.

So the robes are a connection to the past and the traditions of our church. They also serve to emphasize, to me as well as the congregation, that something special is happening on the occasions when they are being worn. One of those robes was worn by my father. That is important to me personally, for he was both tied to the past and struggling to meet the future in his role as minister. And that is something I continue to seek to emulate.

The stoles each have a specific representation. The white one, representing both purity and all the colors combined, is worn for the rituals instituted by the Lord called the sacraments: communion, baptism, marriage, membership in the church, and memorial services.

The purple stole, representing the sovereign power of God and corresponding to the knowledge of good and truth from the Word, is worn for regular worship services in which we are both offering worship. (i.e. devotion, thanksgiving, and honor) to God and learning the Lord's teachings from the Word.

The red stole, representing love and passion, is worn for special events that come out of the expression of love and passion. That would include, for example, the birth and resurrection of Christ at Christmas and Easter. Other times of temptation, trial, or celebration might also call for red.

I have a stole of each of the above colors. But there is a color that I have not had, and that is green. A green stole, representing new life, rebirth, and the beauty of creation, is worn in celebration of spring, harvest, and spiritual regeneration. And so it was with great pleasure that I chose to add a green stole to the other vestments I have. I wore it recently to commemorate the beginning of the new church year. I will wear it to commemorate the harvest and the bounty of God's blessings at Thanksgiving, and in spring to symbolize

the renewal of life in both the material and spiritual worlds.

So it is with deep gratitude that I say "Thank you" to all of you in the church family. These vestments that I wear on Sunday mornings and for other worship services and special occasions have come to hold deep and significant meaning for me. I hope that they convey and hold some of that meaning for you as well. They are indeed symbols that come from traditions of the past. The challenge, for all of us, is to make them symbols that have meaning for us now and for our future. May God bless us all in our efforts.

The Rev. Kenneth Turley is pastor of the Fryeburg New Church in Fryeburg, Maine.

Reprinted from the October 1998 *Church of the New Jerusalem Bulletin*.

What Dreams May Come

(Continued from page 166)

more original material?

There was so much potential to be creative with this theme. And having Robin Williams frolic in oozing paint, just because the scene he's walking through is from a painting, is just plain silly! Where is heaven's turpentine, and why do we need it there? One scene I did appreciate was the part of hell where everyone lies, and a sea of heads is stuck in cement. Now we're talking! The spiritual world is not just flowery vistas. It's a much more fascinating place.

I did like how people presented themselves to Christy (Robin Williams) in spirit form. They show themselves as the person they think Christy wants to see them as, and as his awareness begins to penetrate the illusion, they reveal their true identity. This reminded me of Swedenborg's spiritual world.

I was most personally affected by the movie's main musical theme, taken from an obscure song that I used to listen to in the 70's, called "Beside You." My version is on an old LP by the New York Rock Ensemble, who played it live at my college in western Pennsylvania. I ran out and bought it, and "Beside You" became the musical inspiration for a watercolor I did then of a dual-reality landscape in rainbow colors. So, it filled me with delight that the music editor of this film selected this source piece to inspire the movie's heavenly scenes.



REVELATION

(Continued from back)

BIRTHS

Lopez—Reanne Marie Lopez was born September 1, 1998. Linda Burnside and Alex Lopez, active participants in the New Church of Southwest Florida, are the proud parents.

BAPTISMS

Brook—Haley Nichole, age 2, and Destiny Raven, two months, infant children of Edward Brook and Tina Manross, were baptized into the Christian Church and the guardianship of heaven September 14, 1998, at the New Church of Southwest Florida, Ft. Myers Beach, Florida, the Rev. Dick Tafel officiating.

Little & Woofenden—Nancy Little and Trevor Woofenden were united in marriage October 3, 1998, at the Bridgewater New Jerusalem Church in Bridgewater, Massachusetts. The groom's father, the Rev. Dr. William R. Woofenden, officiated.

MARRIAGE

Hatch & Stevens—Vicky L. Hatch and Michael B. Stevens were united in marriage August 30, 1998, at the Fryeburg New Church, Fryeburg, Maine, the Rev. Ken Turley officiating.

DEATHS

Chaplin—Gertrude I. Chaplin, age 88, entered the spiritual world August 23, 1998 in Bridgton, Maine. A resurrection service was conducted at the Fryeburg New Church August 27, 1998, the Rev. Ken Turley officiating. Gertrude was an active and hardworking member of the Fryeburg church and in the community, known as a wonderful cook. She was the mother of Burton Chaplin.

Langhart—Roberta Langhart, charter member of the New Church of Southwest Florida, died suddenly on August 9, 1998. She had been to church that morning and died peacefully at home that afternoon. A memorial service was conducted August 16, 1998, the Rev. Dick Tafel officiating. "Roberta was an angel and our Swedenborgian missionary. She will be greatly missed by all of us." Another service is planned later in the season so that more of her church friends can participate.



better flesh out the wide spacing in harmonies and to carry the solidity of sound that is demanded.

From there, the oratorio progresses selectively but fairly completely through this difficult-but-beautiful book. It is an optimistic reading with excellent variation in instrumentation and in sensitive writings for the voice. The musical styles, rhythms, and tempi are meshed well and varied enough that you are never bored or never over-stressed. And always, the words are clear.

Laurie Turley's beautiful and confident mezzo is shown to good advantage in several sections, in particular in the First Letter, to Ephesus, over a great guitar accompaniment. Others of my favorite parts include the gospel-rock chorus and sax solo in "How long?"; the amazingly wonderful scurrying-insect orchestration and piling up of tension under John's narration of the plague of locusts; the ragtime with brass band of "Hard-hearted Survivors"; and in the "Hymn to the Lamb," with its drum lead-in, great piano, electric guitar, and sax undergirding a fantastic dance of ecstasy (wow!) there is the great fun of the moment when the narrator says "...got down and worshiped," and the performing forces really "get down and boogie," letting you know in no uncertain terms that worship through dance is a powerful and positive medium.

REVELATION is full of life, and full of the rhythm of life. The only problem in this performance is the mechanics of the CD itself—there are gaps between tracks, so the music halts momentarily at those points, allowing the forward movement to pause ever so slightly.

Who would enjoy this recording? Everyone. And it should certainly be in every Swedenborgian's recording collection, for playing anytime and especially when one needs an infusion of good humor and happiness. It is a very well-written interpretation, on several levels, of a complex piece of literature; and if nothing else, the music itself will help in understanding the Book of Revelation in Ken Turley's positive and well-thought-out interpretation.

My compliments (and hugs) to Ken and Laurie on this outstanding work, and to John, Louise, Ken, Laurie, and the other musicians for their excellent production of a work that needs to be performed again and again, live, please.

To order, please include \$20.00 per set, and \$3.00 shipping cost per order. To receive the complete written lyrics and background information, please add \$5.00 per copy. Make checks payable to Ken Turley and mail to: 8 Elm Street, Fryeburg, ME 04037.

Muff's new address is:

Leynimefur 7,755 Stoovarfjorour, Iceland

Simi/Phone: +354-475-8979 • e-mail: muff@eidhorn.is



CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Phyllis Bosley, formerly of the San Francisco Church, recently moved to southern California and was welcomed into membership in the Los Angeles Society November 8, 1998.

Her new address is:

941 Morada Place
Altadena, CA 91021
Phone (626) 791-7536

Edwin and Esther Capon

1369 Balhan Dr.
Concord, CA 94521-3737
Phone (925) 691-8738

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.

A REVIEW OF THE CD SET *by Muff Worden*

REVELATION is indeed a revelation! Not only does this music pull you right out of your chair and set your feet to dancing, but it reveals a loving and caring God behind all of the dramatic scenes of strife, plague, and destruction, and thus reveals that same God connecting to each human as he or she deals with the daily temptations, problems, and also good things of humanity. It says it in the music, which reaches your heart and soul, no matter what kind of music you like to listen to.

The oratorio also reveals the Rev. Ken and Laurie Turley's understanding of many forms of music, and power that is generated by their having combined many of these forms in one dynamic work, performed by an excellent assemblage of singers and instrumentalists.

While I was playing the CDs yet again, both because I really like to hear them and because I wanted to make sure I had taken all the notes I needed for this review, the minister of the church where I am organist dropped in, with his three kids. With the music in the background he and I chatted, and the kids were dancing around the living room to the music. Then he tuned into the words for a minute, and said "Wow! What is that? I want to hear all of it — it's wonderful!" And so the CDs will continue to be passed around in East Iceland, where they are making a major impact

REVELATION

*an oratorio of contemporary music
based on the
Revelation of St. John the Divine
by
Rev. Ken and Laurie Turley*



with all who hear them. I suppose I should order more copies to sell here?

I remember being tremendously moved by the 1988 performance in the Arlington Street Church in Boston. I had looked at the music,

played through some of it on piano, unaware of the orchestration; but off the page and in performance it took on glorious life and came across as music with an attitude—a good one. As they say, I was really "blown away" by the power of the work, performed so strongly and beautifully by the same folks who are on the CD set.

It doesn't lose anything of that power on the recording. John Schumacher is an excellent John,

of biblical fame, narrating both in song and speech with many different colors of the voice to convey the intent of what he has to say. The dynamic and wide vocal and stylistic ranges of Louise Cloutier stand out in several places, but my favorite is "The Twelve Gates" in the Final Vision. This section could easily be a major hit as a single, with its great instrumentation, sax solo, and chorus.

The prelude/prologue sets a fine tone for the opening, with lovely harmonic progressions in the band and Jaye Churchill's truly angelic soprano soaring heavenward, contrasting tension and comfort. My only criticism of this section is that my ears wanted a larger performing group to

(Continued on page 171)

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