

THE MESSENGER

Published by the Swedenborgian Church of North America

April 1999

A Personal Journey with a Collective Project

Alan Thomsen

It was wonderfully, ineffably eerie to plan on attending the Pacific Coast Association annual meeting this past September (See article in the November 1998 *Messenger*) with the expectation of pulling off a huge success. The theme was Spiritual Global Warming, and I chuckled as I thought of myself as a little cog in a piece of a large incendiary device, one assembled mostly by PCA president and pyrotechnician extraordinaire, the Rev. James Lawrence.

It was Wonderful, Ineffable, Eerie. *Wonderful* to know that it wouldn't be business as usual: not mere boring routine business perfunctorily performed, not about cutting budgets, not a question of stifling visions grand or small, and not petty insecurity about a personal slice of the pie; *Ineffable* due to an inchoate sense that the theme would connect with our huge collective project that was "in, but not just of, the natural"; *Eerie* as I myself had never before intuited such potential spiritual explosiveness at a larger-Church gathering. I felt a bit queasy as to how it would all play out.

Frankly, I've felt for a while that the woes of this denomination are spiritual and flow languidly from its failure to powerfully and passionately implement its theology with a dose of intentionality and resolve. This seemed a great opportunity to concretely implement our theology in a most real, meaningful way. For whether you're a traditionalist, an innovating pioneer, or maybe a crazy or cranky mixture of the two, face it: It's Swedenborg's writings, friends! That's all we really have that is uniquely ours, not transitory or illusory. So let's own up, feel empowered and forge happily ahead!

I did arrive at PCA expecting something perhaps just short of the church battle of a lifetime. Certain my mere mortal mind had accounted for every possible scenario, every conceivable objection, and, ludicrously, even some likely vote tallies, I optimistically and with dogged determination planned

to make a strong case that PCA agree to do all in its power to try to purchase a secure, viable home for our two Northwest ministries: the Church of Puget Sound and the Swedenborg Spiritual Growth Center.

Friends, was I off, had I ever underestimated the spiritual stuff of which this Association is made! Blown away by the eager, open-armed enthusiasm and support of, first, the board and then the assembled delegates to take this idea and make it happen, I was left to ponder how my preparation had failed to include a Plan B of how to react if things went really well. But, not being entirely dense, I "got it" and thus got to celebrate having been very wrong. And I'd like to be wrong like *this* many times over again . . .

Granted, the proposal was compelling: to devote some quarter-million dollars (about 1/3 of PCA's total endowments) to secure our "homeless" ministries a place of their

own, thereby dropping a strong organizational anchor at this north end of the Association. PCA would hold the title and sublease the building to the two groups. They, in turn, would share the space and rent out unneeded areas so that, in effect, we would pay less to own a valuable and appreciating property than we would pay to rent an inadequate, cramped space. Instead of paying ever higher rents, we'd receive them while enjoying a fixed-rate mortgage. This would stabilize the ministries and relieve some heavy pressures, even as we grew our investments. Even if the ministries collapsed, PCA would have protection in the form of equity in one of America's hottest real estate markets: Redmond, Washington, home of Microsoft, on Seattle's East Side. If, however, as we fully expect, this plan allows our ministries to flourish, PCA could offer them a buy-out plan, get back

some capital, and stage a repeat performance elsewhere along the Coast. Assist, empower, and take the show on the road.

I thought it was a rule of thumb that whenever you hit

The woes of this denomination are spiritual and flow languidly from its failure to powerfully and passionately implement its theology with a dose of intentionality.

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This Issue: SSR Dialog Continues • On the Fine Art of Theological Sleuthing

The Point Is—Something Happened

James Lawrence

What actually happened on the resurrection morning two thousand years ago? Was it mythical, as some claim? Was it a form of group-induced hyper-motivated illusion, as others try to explain? Was it, in the worst accusation of all, a concocted story made up later to gain credence for a new religion?

The now-famed Jesus Seminar, based right here in the greater Bay Area up in Santa Rosa, questions the historical validity of much of what is reported about Jesus by the gospel writers. The Jesus Seminar is a group of seventy biblical scholars who took votes and came down with ringing conclusions about the validity of all that is in the gospels, including the various versions of the Easter story. This group of mostly lesser-known scholars became a media favorite due to their rather sensationalistic device of voting *en masse* in an auditorium by holding up color cards as they rate the authenticity of each gospel passage. Black means someone is trying to pull something over on us—thumbs down. Many of the great theological passages get a gray or black vote, especially the resurrection of Jesus' physical body.

The Quest for Historical Truth

But this line of inquiry is far from new. It began in earnest in the 1900s with what is known as the liberal German theological movement. The best known work was written by the great Albert Schweitzer in the 1940s, entitled *The Quest for the Historical Jesus*. A Sherlock Holmes style of inductive and deductive detective-playing regarding the factual basis of the gospel stories has dominated mainline seminaries for the past quarter-century and was the only meal on the menu at the well-known liberal Protestant seminary I first attended. The average person cannot

begin to appreciate how many billions of lines of type have now been published arguing over which gospel is oldest, who really wrote each gospel, how often and in what places was each gospel redacted before it got into its canonized form, which verses are more authentic than others, etc., etc., *ad nauseam*.

These days we are experiencing through some very public court trials how exceedingly difficult it is to determine precisely what has taken place when there are no eyewitnesses to interview. Even when there are multiple eyewitnesses, the facts in their memories can vary significantly. We bring millions of dollars of high-tech resources and a professional elite to try and determine with certainty something that happened *one year ago*, and we fill weeks of airtime haggling over various versions. What chance do we have of determining with any kind of certainty by modern standards what really happened two thousand years ago in a backwater region of ancient culture regarding events about which nothing was written down for at least twenty-five years—and maybe for as long as half a century? I find the whole enterprise to be a little like going to the greatest fireworks display of all time and spending one's time in the back of the truck examining the labels on the boxes in which the fireworks came!

I'm all for historical research. The church must never fear truth, on whatever level. But here's the rub: there are levels of truth—and some infinitely more powerful than others. Even many of the most skeptical biblical scholars who travel in corridors of doubt conceded that something extraordinary happened in Jerusalem after Jesus' death to account for the transformative power that erupted from a small band of followers, who by all reckoning were a defeated, insignificant bunch of rural laborers. The dream in which they had invested everything had gone terribly, terribly awry. But then *something else* happened—something more real than a

mere psychotically-induced hallucinogenic event, something more profound than an invented metaphor to impress the common person—because whatever force entered them following the death of Jesus, it not only permanently altered the lives of those immediate to him, it also carried enough imaginative power to spill over into surrounding populations who had nothing to do with the local Hebrew religion. Then it kept spreading, kinetic as wildfire, and as a worldwide spiritual phenomenon it has not stopped growing in two millennia.

Suddenly, they were mobilized into an incredible band of courageous heroes, who in the space of a few years set the world talking about Jesus Christ. They took risks with their lives and in many cases died for a living faith that eventually brought light to people all around the world. Within much of the world's greatest art and music, the world's most potent moral force issued from the

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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 1999
Volume 220 No. 4
Whole Number 5239

Typesetting & Layout
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Press, Plymouth, IN

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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.

Can We Have a Cost-effective Route to Ordination and Effective Ministers?

Karen Feil

"Because of our concern about the increasing cost of ministerial education, and in light of an increasing sense of alienation between General Convention and SSR, General Council recommends to the Council of Ministers that they explore alternative, cost-effective routes to ordination." Letter from the president of General Convention, to Swedenborgian congregations. 11/15/98.

Who among us can't rally behind the idea that there might be a new, more "cost-effective" way to train our future ministers? As a business woman for the past 25 years in two corporations, each with more than 500 employees, I have seen my share of "cost-effective" initiatives that fail to produce a more secure future. So while it's a tough platform to argue against on the surface, I caution that we consider carefully what's good about our current system before we trade it for a promise of future savings.

One of the concepts for seminary education that I have heard raised is a decentralized system that would combine long-distance independent study with periodic supervision—supervision that would not necessarily take place in a central location—thus being more "cost-effective" to the denomination. Such a program makes the following assumptions:

- A decentralized, "virtual seminary" would have equal or greater appeal to top-notch recruits for Swedenborgian ministry, and to the faculty needed to teach and supervise them, than SSR presently has;
- The level of spiritual formation we would like to see in ordination candidates can be consistently achieved and evaluated with periodic rather than regular face-to-face contact with faculty and supervisors;

- The cost of recruiting, administering an education program, compensating faculty and supervisors, and travel expense would be significantly reduced from the current program offered at SSR.

The first assumption raises a lot of questions for me that depicts future recruitment at risk—how appealing is a graduate degree from a school lacking a central home? How does it make the church as a denomination look to potential ministers? Will we be able to maintain qualified faculty within a decentralized structure? How would admissions be managed? Are we planning to depend on referrals from churches to attract local candidates from our remote locations?

I suspect that a decentralized school would depend more on locally-generated recruitment than SSR does today. While local ministers and congregations do have a very important role in encouraging an individual to choose the ministry as a career, looking to the church as the only funnel for ministers would reduce our potential field, not improve it. Consider that many of the fine ministers serving us today arrived to the church via the writings, not through involvement with a local parish.

The primary advantages of our present centralized system, as opposed to a remote or apprentice system, lie in consistency of program for ordination candidates, creative synergy between the teaching professionals who are focused on important and shared goals, and the opportunity for ordination candidates to develop a spiritual community of peers.

The "cost-effective" argument relies on the assumption that it is less expensive for the ordination candidate to obtain training, because it does not require costly relocation and a full-time



commitment, i.e. because *the market of candidates* would face fewer obstacles to enrollment. Under such a system, while we might find ourselves admitting and training more candidates, I question whether we would achieve the quality of candidates that the churches seek or make a significant impact on the number of ordination candidates successfully completing the training. I think we should be more focused on the churches as the market to be satisfied, not the candidates. Pursuing graduate training in all fields requires commitment—should the ministry require less?

In a decentralized program, which would be likely to require less financial commitment from the students, I anticipate that what would increase is the number of individuals applying out of an interest in individual attention for their *personal* spiritual growth, rather than from a call to the ministry as a profession.

Do we want "a cost-effective route to ordination," as the Council of Ministers has been asked to explore, or do we want effective ministers? Is it practical to think that we can have both? I would prefer to see the Council consider what contributes to the development of an effective minister, and how to attract more to the school, rather than to redesign what amounts to an economy trip up the mountain.

As a church, we may need to define what we mean by *effective* ministers. The vision statement of SSR, as found in its 1998 Strategic Plan, offers one definition:

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Can We Have a Cost-effective Route to Ordination *and* Effective Ministers?

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"... A prophetic vision revealed in Emanuel Swedenborg's call sparks personal transformation (regeneration) toward greater usefulness. Students are educated to be pastors sensitive to a wide range of spiritual needs and empowered toward effective outreach ..." *Excerpted from the vision statement for SSR, 1998 Strategic Plan.*

What is implied here is that students sensitive to a broad range of spiritual needs would also be effective in guiding other individuals from a broad range of starting points.

The second assumption, that the level of spiritual formation we would like to see in graduates can be achieved in a decentralized system, is the crux of the matter. In 1994, the Association of Theological Schools published a report of its forum on "The Good Theological School," in which many prominent school educators and administrators participated. This report articulates well an issue which has been raised in SSR Board meetings. That is—how do we handle the natural tension between SSR's role in nurturing those who affirm our faith tradition and who desire to become pastors in our denomination, with SSR's requirement of academic excellence for our graduates? Put simply, are effective ministers also good students?

I find it difficult to imagine that an individual who was not able to achieve the scholastic requirements of SSR could be effective at teaching our theology well to his or her congregation or in implementing effective outreach efforts.

The form raised a key question—How does a good theological school know if its formational goals are being met, and what is it willing to do if some students fail to measure up? It is exactly this question that gives me pause when I think of a decentralized structure for training our future ministers. Many of us have heard of the "fishbowl-like pressures" that living in the small SSR community put our ordination candidates under. The benefit is that our intimate community provides good opportunity for faculty and peers to know whether potential candidates are on a path of spiritual formation and

knowledge that will support effective practice of their chosen calling.

Some of the techniques that the schools participating in the ATS forum use to foster spiritual formation are ones that, with its centralized system, SSR is able to use:

- Shared worship at the school
- Voluntary small prayer groups and fellowship
- Regular interaction with spiritual directors or faculty mentors
- Supervised field education
- Clinical pastoral education
- Psychological and vocational testing and counseling

It is difficult to imagine candidates obtaining the benefits of the first tour in a decentralized system.

The third assumption is that there is an effective educational structure other than our current school which would be more "cost-effective." Cost-effective for whom? The students? The church and seminary contributors? Investments that we make in quality of training should pay back to our churches in spiritual benefits and would be a better long-term investment for the church at large than the dollars saved on an individual education.

Concerns that SSR has incurred a deficit after operating costs in recent years is not due to fiscal mismanagement by the school. The deficit stems directly from a change in General Convention's policy to reduce the distribution percentage of Common Fund investments. Rather than weaken the quality of the educational program, SSR's response to reduced income from the Common Fund was to institute an effective annual fund drive which has raised more than a quarter million dollars in the past five years—not enough to eliminate the operating deficit yet, but certainly making a substantial reduction in the need to draw down the endowment.

Before rallying to the cry of "cost-effectiveness" for seminary education, I recommend that concerned parties read the excellent work that the ATS engaged in during their 1994 quest to define "The

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Good Theological School." In reading the comments from other schools one can see how SSR has experienced the same friends, and faces the same challenges. It would be a vanity on our part to think that SSR's experience is unique, or that we cannot learn much from the experiences of other institutions, some of whom have already experimented with remote learning centers.

If in fact there exists a broad-based movement to seek more "cost-effective" ways to develop our ministers, I suggest that we take a reasoned, researched approach before we make alterations away from a centralized approach to theological education. If every member of the Council of Ministers recruited just one seminarian in the next year, it would cause a dramatic reduction in our average cost per ordained candidate in 2004.

If others would like to read the ATS forum report on "The Good Theological School," one lending copy is available from the Chicago church, or you can contact ATS at 10 Summit Park Drive, Pittsburgh, PA 15275-1103 for a back copy.

Karen Feil served as a trustee of SSR from 1992–1997. She is a member of the Chicago Society of the New Jerusalem and presently serves on the board of the Swedenborg Foundation. ❖

Do We Have a “National” Church?

Chris Laitner

Washington D.C., Church of the Holy City. That's what it says in the back of the *Convention Journal* if you wish to look up the phone number of the Swedenborgian Church in Washington, D.C. It could be the “Church of the Holy City” in any city, in any state or province. There is nothing special about the name as it is listed.

On the sign in front of the Church of the Holy City in Washington, D.C., the name is displayed fairly prominently. In smaller letters, possibly owing to a space limitation, the words “National Church of the Swedenborgian Church” are displayed.

Within the hierarchy of General Convention, there is a board of trustees of the National Church. I've been a member of that board for a long time. In my early years of membership, it seemed a kind of “name only” position. As time passed, the board underwent some changes, is now made up of current members of the General Council, and its makeup shifts as the terms of GC members end and new members take their places. The officers of Convention serve as members of General Council; thus, in my capacity as vice-president of the denomination, I am still a member of the board of trustees of the National Church. The members of that board placed me, through an election process, in the position of chair.

I am puzzled. If I were asked, I guess I'd identify Wayfarers Chapel as the most “visible” church within Convention. However, long before the Wayfarers Chapel was built, there were people who wanted a visible, representative church in this country, and so a church was built—not on the outskirts, but right on the “mainline” of Washington D.C. in order that our denomination, along with many others, would be present in our nation's capitol. I firmly believe that we have a most exciting opportunity for visible outreach and that we have neglected to fulfill it.

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Spirituality at SSR

Dorothea Harvey

No human being, or course, can “teach spirituality” to another. But education for the ministry at SSR makes sure that students are exposed to opportunities for spiritual experience. The students take the course in Western Spirituality in the first semester of their first year, reading such great figures as Hildegard of Bingen, Julian of Norwich, Teresa of Avila, Thomas Merton, Quaker mystics George Fox and Rufus Jones, seeing how their experiences compare to those of Swedenborg. The course asks students not only to read and to be able to present the thought and experience of these giants of the Christian tradition, but also to work with an experienced spiritual director of their own choosing for support and guidance in their own spiritual and prayer life. Other courses in the first year ask students to do more thinking about theological areas. But the program begins with an opportunity to experience as well as to understand. Students then have the option to continue to work with a spiritual director if they so choose.

Another course is offered in Eastern Spirituality, again as compared with that of Swedenborg. It involves work with Hinduism, including the reading of the *Bhagavad-Gita*; Buddhism, including the three major areas of Hinayana, Mahayana, and Zen Buddhism; Taoism, including the reading of the *Tao Te Ching*; and Islam, with readings in the *Koran* and in Sufi poetry and mysticism, all varied approaches to spiritual reality and experience. This course includes practice in Eastern spirituality in meditation exercises from the different traditions.

A third course is also available in this area: a practicum in which students learn and experiment with ways to help other people find more depth in their own spiritual lives. Students teach the class a new-found practice, learning by experience what works for other people as the class responds, and learning a new depth for themselves from the teaching of it. The intent of the course is to help ministry students to learn to encourage people in their churches into deeper spiritual experience.

The course in Western Spirituality comes in the first year of study. The Eastern Spirituality and the Practicum are electives. Other required courses early in the program include the introductory course in worship, normally in the second semester of the first year, as students begin to be more involved in field work in the churches. The course asks students to examine their own response to various forms of worship, to see how the different elements in a worship service encourage spiritual experience, to practice leading in worship and preaching, giving and receiving feedback in the class, to learn by experience how a worship service encourages prayer, awareness of inner reality, and encounter with the presence of God.

The course in the rites and sacraments of the church comes later when students are closer to the time of graduation and know they will soon be the ones to do these things with their congregations. The course includes practical experience in carrying out the rites and sacraments, but it also asks students to understand the connection between the action taking place and its spiritual meaning and power.

A theological education involves careful study of ideas and a consistent approach to truth. The regular daily chapel and the courses in spirituality and in worship are intended to help students keep a living connection with their own prayer lives, the spiritual experience which made them want to engage in theological study in the first place, and to help them bring the experience of living prayer to their work in the ministry of the church.

The Rev. Dr. Dorothea Harvey is part-time professor of Theology and Worship at SSR, and general pastor of the Massachusetts Association. ❖

On the Fine Art of Theological Sleuthing

Presented by Stephen Koke

In *A Scientist Explores Spirit*, by Drs. George Dole and Robert Kirven, we find a somewhat earthbound story of Swedenborg's theological years. This was the main criticism in my review of the book in the January *Messenger*. George wrote a response to it and other comments of mine for the *Messenger*, and we discuss them below.

In his review of *A Scientist Explores Spirit* (*The Messenger*, January 1999), Steve Koke deals at some length with the manner in which Swedenborg received guidance from the Lord for his task as revelator. In particular, Steve objects to the presentation of "only mundane causes" for the sequence of Swedenborg's theological publications, and is looking for more of "a sense of pattern and process, a divine purpose, pulling them into a coherent story." While I appreciate the effort and the concern, there are points on which I would differ.

The picture presented in *Scientist* grew less out of an effort to find a particular kind of pattern than simply to see what the evidence suggested. If I were to pick a "text" for its central theological focus, it would be *Divine Providence* 191 to the effect that our own prudence is nothing. It only seems to be something—and it should. To focus on Swedenborg's "prudence" in the design and composition of the theological works in no way denies or minimizes the reality of divine guidance. It represents simply an effort to explore the means of that guidance, and I think each of us knows from experience that providence can use the mundane as well as the transcendent. (Of course, if you really want the mundane, you can turn to the last paragraph of *Divine Providence*: "Excuse the addition of what follows to fill the remainder of the sheet.")

For a more serious example, in a letter to Swedenborg written on March

Prudence and Providence

by George Dole

18, 1766, Dr. Beyer expressed a wish for a book about the subject of marriage, a project which we know to have been begun but not carried to completion. The work traditionally known as *Conjugal Love* was published in 1768. I find it perfectly possible to believe that the Lord sent a message through Dr. Beyer, and that Swedenborg was attentive enough to recognize it.

The evidence in fact suggests, I believe, precisely what our theology tells us we ought to expect, namely that the Lord's messages to Swedenborg were "accommodated" to his understanding, and that he himself was aware of this fact and took it into account. That is, he

received direction in various ways and took responsibility for some latitude in interpreting the commands because he was aware that his own receptivity had limitations.

In the preface to *The Doctrine of the Lord*, he lists five works previously published

(omitting only the *Arcana*) and states that "now, by command of the Lord, who has been revealed to me, the following are to be published," after which he lists nine titles. These are listed in small caps, incidentally, so they are clearly titles and not just descriptions of

content. Of these nine works, he published seven, using the wording of the titles received from the Lord.

What about the other two? Dr. Beyer asked about the promised *Angelic Wisdom Concerning Divine Omnipotence, Omnipresence, Omniscience, Infinity, and Eternity*, and received the response that material on the subject had been included in *Divine Providence* and that there would be more in the work on marriage, "for to write a separate treatise on these Divine attributes, without the assistance of something to support them, would cause too great an elevation of the thoughts . . ." (Tafel, *Documents* 2, p. 261). There is no suggestion of any divine command, simply a statement to the effect that the mandate is being followed not to the letter, but in spirit. In particular—and I would underline this—it shows Swedenborg consciously trying to make the revelation accessible, concerned with his readership.

Swedenborg does at times use the Latin ancestor for the English word "dictation" when he talks about the process of revelation, but a little exploration of his use of the word raises caution flags. At one point, for instance, he says, "It was dictated, but in a wonderful way into the thought . . . Nor has it been permitted that anything should be dictated *viva voce*; although they [apparently attendant angels] have spoken with me almost continually for so long a time; but while it was being written they were silent . . ." (*The Word Explained*, 3/7167). Clearly, he was not hearing words while he wrote, and even a cursory examination of his manuscripts shows him constantly at the work of revision.

To put it another way, I would suggest that while he did sometimes hear divine commands in specific words—how else to explain the explic-

To focus on Swedenborg's "prudence" in the design and composition of the theological works in no way denies or minimizes the reality of divine guidance. It represents simply an effort to explore the means of that guidance, and I think each of us knows from experience that providence can use the mundane as well as the transcendent.

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One of the strongest impressions we receive from Swedenborg is that the Lord had the birth of an entire new age in mind and would not have been without a specific plan to achieve it. One would think that whatever fit that plan would have had precedence over Swedenborg's own book ideas, even if he thought they were very useful. But in *A Scientist Explores Spirit*, earthly incentives to write a book, especially *True Christian Religion*, may be enough to explain its existence. With the Lord largely absent from the account, *Scientist* may not be able to avoid the comment that so often the tail—local pressures and incitements for Swedenborg to write—seems to have wagged the dog, Swedenborg's commission to set up a new religious consciousness.

Swedenborg's career had to be significant beyond any temporary use, and it did not have much time for other business. His desire to satisfy his friends on the subject of marriage, refute Ernesti, or instruct the Swedish bishops required that any responses to them fit with archetypal relevance into the universal message of an Advent that would occupy almost a quarter of a century.

In my review, I mentioned a pattern in the long sequence of Swedenborg's major works that suggests a progressive divine descent or visitation. His writing sequence moves from very high primary realizations in Scripture (*Arcana Coelestia*) downward and outward to detailed assessments of morals and institutional religion. On the way, their sophistication and development increase until they have the fullness and power to address real problems in society. Especially at the end, an extremely rare Advent and new religious era had to be the result.

So a biography may start with an important question: How would the Lord's inspiration of a book be distinguished from Swedenborg's personal urgencies?

Here we seem to be in a foggy area. George writes that although Swedenborg did at times receive

Another Sleuth at Work

by Stephen Koke

explicitly worded commands, "he recognized that the words were vehicles drawn from his own mind and therefore subject to reconsideration." The final understanding is therefore two rather perilous interpretations removed from the real message. This has some bearing on our own guidance; but when considering Swedenborg's special mission, mistaken interpretations can easily slip in. Noticing the uncertain method, we could conclude that we don't actually know what his instructions *were*. We would then lose a lot of our theological

books, though they would appear there as books. Spiritual discourse will in fact call them books.

George's explanation of this incident assumes the instructions were literal, and it raises a question: Why didn't the Lord instruct Swedenborg to spread the contents of that book through other books? Any normal set of literal instructions would have covered everything needed.

To read Swedenborg's instructions and commands literally has no specific justification, for it is merely the way in which we read anything. To read his instructions as spiritual statements has much justification in the symbolism of the world from which they come. Symbolic interpretation proceeds by definite rules, well explained throughout his works. His sometimes inventive responses to his instructions look much

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understanding. If possible, we would want to find a better method of communication in the astonishing clarity of his spiritual experiences.

Swedenborg seems to have followed his instructions, including his commission, as if he understood them as an angel would—symbolically, rather than literally. When he wrote the list of commanded and very simple titles George mentions from *Doctrine of the Lord*, it differed not at all from a list of very literal titles he would normally have submitted to his printer. Consequently, the list was given as a very plain announcement to his readers. But after publishing the list and realizing that one of the books held special challenges for the reader, he took advantage of the symbolism of the list and changed his plan. Nothing had to be amended, for he knew that in the spiritual world the titles denoted large well-rounded ideas, not

more appropriate, even predictable, when understood this way. We have never discussed this alternative, even though it is an obvious one.

Why would one think that something went wrong with *Apocalypse Explained*? Well, we have its abandonment with no attempt to edit out its awkward form, a broken promise to his readers (AE in two years, in *The Last Judgment*), followed by some theologically unproductive years, then some commissioned works, and finally a new commission, given a suggestive new title, *Apocalypse Revealed*, and a complete rewrite without using any pages from AE.

This elaborate return journey is not justified if the two works differ only in form. If they do, then editing AE to achieve the rather plain format of AR

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Prudence and Providence

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itly worded titles?—He recognized that the words were vehicles drawn from his own mind and were therefore subject to reconsideration.

I must object strenuously, further, to Steve's opinion that in *Scientist*, "Swedenborg now looks, on two counts, like a very gifted man who also lacked some backbone . . . inclined to surrender a great project when facing a problem with it, even if the problem was his own creation and reversible." It takes no little determination to lay aside the labor of years and start over. It takes rather a genuine humility and a profound dedication to his commission.

There is a major and characteristic difficulty with Steve's argument concerning *The Apocalypse Explained*. He states that "awkward form is not a reason to quit, it is logically only a reason to edit. A work can actually be killed *only by something fatal in its substance*" (italics mine). What is this "something fatal"? Where is the evidence? Generations of Swedenborgians have accepted the work as revelation. The obvious major difference between *The Apocalypse Explained* and *The Apocalypse Revealed* is precisely one of form.

I find a similar flaw in Steve's argument concerning the ending of the *Arcana* . . . He suggests that this closure "was for the purpose of allowing the Judgment to shift his writing toward principles of the new age when the Judgment process started in January of 1757." Again, where is the evidence for this shift? *The New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* and *The White Horse* are essentially extracted from the *Arcana*. *Earth in the Universe* is extracted almost verbatim, and *Heaven and Hell* is copiously annotated with references to the *Arcana*. In these four works, Potts lists only one reference to the judgment itself, in *Heaven and Hell*, and that is a passing reference to the traditional Christian belief. Only *The Last Judgment* itself mentions the event. The obvious change is not in content at all, but again in form.

The basic position assumed in *Scientist* is that by the time Swedenborg published the first volume of the *Arcana*, what we might call the spiritual essence of the theology was clear and secure in his mind. No matter which book you pick up, it can be trusted to reflect that theology in one way or another, and for generations thoughtful and intelligent Swedenborgians have managed quite nicely without paying any particular attention to the order in which the works were published. The various volumes, including *The Apocalypse Explained*, different as they are, contain no fundamental inconsistencies or disagreements, no "fatal" flaws. The differences reflect what we might and in fact should expect—repeated and varied efforts to communicate spiritual truths to a rather unwilling world, and to different audiences in that world. If you want to see something that was abandoned because of a change in theological understanding, look at *The Word Explained*. Here, the evidence is overwhelming that Swedenborg laid it aside because his understanding of Scripture had changed significantly. He was no longer interested in comparing Schmidius' translation with that of Castellio, and he no longer took Genesis 1 as an account of physical creation.

Steve is of course right in his tacit assumption that Swedenborg did not stop learning or growing when he published the first volume of the *Arcana* in 1749. I do sense a kind of crescendo leading up to *Divine Love and Wisdom*, the book that asks us to change not only *what* we think but *how* we think. To develop such a theory responsibly, though, would be a whole separate effort which at this point in my life I am inclined to leave to the next generation. Incidentally, it is only within the last few months that it has struck me as significant that as his theological career drew to a close, Swedenborg turned more and more to story-telling. The practice begins formally in *The Apocalypse Revealed* (1766), where there are twenty-nine *Memorabilia*. It gathers steam in *Marital Love* (1768), where there are forty-five; and it comes to a climax where one might least expect it,

in the work the church has regarded as a "systematic theology," *True Christian Religion*, where there are seventy-seven.

One last note of a more pedantic sort. For the inscription in *Brief Exposition*, Steve offers the translation, "This book is the Lord's Advent, written by command." The Latin of the first clause is by no means that unambiguous; and it is wholly legitimate to translate it as "This is a book of the Lord's Advent"—a claim much more in keeping with basic principles, I believe, than the claim that the book is itself "the advent." The second clause is unambiguous. *Scriptum ex mandato*, "written by command" cannot modify *liber*, "book." *Liber* is grammatically masculine, and *scriptum* is neuter. It is the inscription, not the book, which is described as "written by command."

The Rev. Dr. George F. Dole is professor of Bible, language, and theology at SSR, author of Sorting Things Out and co-author of A Scientist Explores Spirit.



Another Sleuth at Work

(Continued from page 59)

was the solution to the problems of AE and could have been done right away. Furthermore, to wait so long to merely change the form of the work would hint strongly that he had wasted precious years getting to a merely mechanical matter. His instructions in CL 522 would allow that idea, if read literally—a polite but firm slap on the wrist.

What we have instead are hints of questions about AE that had to be overcome gradually. Heaven would not advise anything less than a shift of consciousness of some sort. To finish and do the remaining editing would be instead the advice of an old conscience.

What went wrong remains to be determined, for it demands close study of AE and AR for the detection of differences, including differences of

Another Sleuth at Work

(Continued from page 60)

emphasis and perspective. Editing is too versatile to allow poor form to stop a work, and I suggested how AE might have been edited and published. It is true in principle that only something fatal in the substance of a work can kill it. Swedenborg evidently saw something that had accumulated over time, for only a gradually emerging problem could force him to abandon the entire work at such a late stage. Anything smaller would have been corrected where it was found, and he would have continued. His standards were very high, much higher than ours; he was writing for the ages and evidently becoming aware gradually that AE could have been *better*.

But in what way? His new title, *Apocalypse Revealed*, may assert something more deeply revelatory. Certainly his change of title *against* expectations is not insignificant. His instructions from heaven (CL 522) occurred in one of his spiritual world experiences, rather than while he was in the body, making it doubly advisable to take the words spiritually. As explained in my review, they work only partly when taken literally. He was to go into his room, close the door, take up the work he had left behind on the Apocalypse, and finish in two years.

In the context of the newly plowed fields he saw (the New Church in its growing capacity to nourish), these instructions tell him to go inside for a deep awareness otherwise missed, continue his personal development of New Era consciousness ("work" is typically the work of personal growth and expression) and finish in "two years," that is, write more from the spirit of good in the New Church. Time in that world doubles as *quality of state*. He may therefore have produced AE as an intellectual genius writing primarily from his advanced learning and mere observation. AE does seem dry.

What is the evidence that the Judgment of 1757 caused a shift of emphasis in Swedenborg's writing?

The *Arcana* ended with the rarely encountered end of a book of the Word

(Exodus) just in time for him to accommodate new agenda at the Judgment. He did not know when the Judgment would occur; such timing, allowing the *Arcana* to not end at the Judgment in the middle of a book of the Word, was out of his hands and loudly suggests divine guidance and the importance of the Judgment year. It also suggests in turn that Genesis and Exodus were a self-contained unit that had satisfied the Lord's purpose for the work. In 1757 he described the Judgment and began *Apocalypse Explained*, on the one book of the Word about the Judgment and a new Christian era. In 1758, he launched a new and ambitious marketing program. He was not to do much marketing during the *Arcana* years, for reasons cited in the *Arcana* (nn. 3898.3, 3398.4). Those reasons depicted the church in a death process that pointed to the Judgment; it consisted of indifference to the truth which, if broken, would bring widespread profanation of the truth.

In 1758 four small, basic works were very quickly extracted from the non-exegetical parts of the *Arcana* as if a need for widespread learning had just occurred. They contained new age fundamentals, and they could circulate rapidly and cheaply—a sign of new hope that the church could now be revived. *The Last Judgment* announces the new era. Now that could be sufficient as an announcement for the five, since he sent them out to the English bishops and nobility as a package, and they refer to each other.

Swedenborg nevertheless mentions the Judgment a number of times in these works. George has consulted Potts' *Concordance* for references; but one would prefer a computer search program. *Heaven and Hell* notifies the reader of *The Last Judgment* and *Babylon Destroyed* in nn. 482, 559, and 587. *The New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* is rather heavy with material on the Judgment and the New Heaven: nn. 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 172, 229. *Earths in the Universe* is by nature specialized and remote from our turning points. *The White Horse* begins with an analysis of the white horse in Revelation—an important opening, considering the date

of publication.

The *Arcana* is not emphasized in these works—except through footnotes for people who, evidently, would like to inquire further or who already owned it. In *Doctrine of the Lord* (1763) Swedenborg mentioned that he had published the five but did not mention the *Arcana*. He didn't say that he had not published the *Arcana*; he seems to want people to now concentrate on the five. He points out that they are for the New Church (AR 716). In his *Continuation Concerning the Last Judgment*, n. 5, he remarks that it was necessary to show people that the afterlife is characteristically human before he could tell them about the Judgment and be understood.

Swedenborg mentions the New Church very frequently; it of course did not exist before 1757. The subject has virtually the same implications for his timing and sense of direction as the Judgment, since the Judgment involved the establishment of a new church. 1757 was therefor a year of critical importance, and the look of his timing, his emphases, and his shifts of strategy are extremely suggestive.

I agree with George on the more accurate reading of "This is a book of the Lord's Advent."

For an analytical review of Swedenborg's entire career, please see my "Swedenborg's Long Sunrise," published in both issues of *Studia Swedenborgiana* in 1995.

Stephen Koke is chair of the Communications Support Unit and author of *Hidden Millennium: The Doomsday Fallacy*. Swedenborg Foundation, 1998. ❖



Urbana Professor Regina Weilburcher in the Johnny Appleseed Museum, teaching children about J.A. (Story on p. 68).

TO THE EDITOR

Harnessing the Energies of Love

To the Editor:

The Rev. Eric Allison's article "A New Pentecost in the New Church" was thoughtful and inspiring. It gave me new insights into the past and present condition of the church and most importantly, ways that our congregations and individuals can begin to make a difference. Eric clearly states the importance, the legacy, the inheritance, the beauty of our intellectual Swedenborgian concepts—the wisdom that the Swedenborgian philosophy brings to humankind. Additionally, he doesn't hesitate to call attention to the ways in which we in our presentation of Swedenborg have left out the heart, the body, prayer and perhaps God. He brings this to our attention in a loving, non-blaming way. He suggests methods for integrating and bringing into form both the love and wisdom in our churches and in ourselves.

It is crucial for the growth of our church that we focus on creating loving, wise communities in our churches as well as in our homes and businesses. It is also important to the growth of each of us individually, and to the growth of God. This means our teachings and gatherings need to include a variety of learning formats. We need to stimulate our thinking, and we also need to provide experiential kinds of learning that include our seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting, touching, and smelling. The more of these sensory systems we use, the fuller and comprehensive the learning and the more capacity for transformation. Most of our schools are using multi-modal learning now, so the parishioners of the future will expect this kind of embodied learning. Are we ready? From my view, the goal of this kind of learning is the integration and experience of wholeness of body, mind, heart, and spirit. This can be difficult for us because it makes us vulnerable. But we must become vulnerable to have the full experience of God. So it means courageously asking for what we need in our church. I can remember a time ten years ago when my son was emotionally ill. I was late to a church meeting because of it. I mentioned it in the beginning, longing to be comforted. I forgot that the open heart people were missing at this meeting. I received looks of caring, but no one could offer words or gestures of comfort. I believe they wanted to be comforting, but were embarrassed. One woman, as the meeting concluded, reached out to me with words. I sensed she was uncomfortable doing it, but at least someone tried. I went away yearning for a spiritual community to support, understand, and be there for me. This made me aware that we need more heart in our congregations, people who are unafraid to express caring balanced with intellect. As a psychotherapist, I'm aware of my own spiritual growth and the extensive, lifetime process that my growth requires. I know the ways that learnings in our early families color our whole lives. I know that the rules we learned in our families affect our ability to become whole people of heart and wisdom. Rules such as *don't feel, be perfect, deny your body, your sexuality, don't see, don't touch, don't hear, don't ask for what you want*, can hold us in vise grips. It can allow the intellect to excel and explore sometimes, and this is wonderful. But we can't put these ideas fully to work, responsibly, if we leave out our hearts and bodies. Our bodies are needed to take action on our ideas and put them to use on behalf of ourselves and others.

In thinking about Eric's article, I'm aware that maybe it doesn't have to be as difficult as I've made it for myself. I have created contexts for this to happen in pre-convention conferences. I have rejoiced in the energy of warm, joyous voices in small structured dialog groups at convention, association meetings, etc. The energy of the room has been changed from, we must get the business done, to a blending of love, wisdom and body energies with the business of the day.

So I'm with Eric. I suggest starting small is starting big. What is small? Saying grace at meal time. Beginning and concluding a meeting with prayer, healing and thanksgiving, stopping at stuck places to be silent and ask for God's wisdom and love. Sending healing energy and prayers out to unknown recipients when we hear an ambulance siren, or we see someone in trouble with the police. I was sitting by the window in a restaurant when a drama unfolded outside. Four police cars and two young men perpetrators—a drug raid. I sent healing, loving energy to all parties involved. One of the young men looked up through the dark night sky toward the window. Perhaps he was sensing that someone cared even though he had so obviously done wrong. Our loving prayerful energy is much more powerful than we know. I believe that acknowledging the presence of God, letting go and being open for God's love and wisdom to flow into us in the silence of our hearts is big stuff. I also believe that it is akin to nuclear power. Teilhard de Chardin expresses it well when he says: "We will conquer for ourselves the energies of wind, gravity, waves. But one day we will harness for God the energies of love. And then for the second time in the history of the world, we will have discovered fire." I believe we can begin to harness those love energies.

Lorraine Sando
Seattle, Washington ❖

Do We Have a "National" Church?

(Continued from page 57)

What can we do to make the National Church more "national"? Good question. This was brought up at the meeting of the National Church board meeting held during the General Council session at Temenos this past fall. We were fortunate to have the Rev. Dr. Jonathan Mitchell, minister of the D.C. church, and Susan Baumgarten, a board member from the Washington, D.C. church, with us, along with Dr. Malcolm Peck, current president of the local church board. During our meetings we began to address the need to assist the church in visibly becoming what its name states: the "national" church. As a result, we are reaching out to all of the members of Convention to assist in this task.

The fall meeting of the trustees and the subsequent meeting of the local board have both generated some ideas, but, in the spirit of the original creation of the church in Washington, D.C., we would like to solicit ideas from the nation. Our first idea is to have our associations, at least, if not our individual ministries, present the national church with flags/banners that could be displayed. The dimensions would be equal, creating an orderly presentation that anyone entering the church would take note of. We also believe that the exterior sign should be redone to indicate our D.C. church's larger mission. We need suggestions from all members of the Swedenborgian Churches in North America. We need to solicit ideas from our Canadian churches as to how they too could participate in this mission; they are certainly as much a part of our North American denomination as any churches located in the "lower forty-eight."

So folks, we're looking for suggestions. The Rev. Dr. Jonathan Mitchell and his congregation are hoping that we all will assist in rededicating the use of the National Church as the entity its name denotes. If you have suggestions (or any strange ideas at all), please let us

(Continued on page 67)

CONVENTION 1999 REGISTRATION

Pepperdine University ~ Malibu, California

"IN GOD'S HANDS"

Convention 1999 will be hosted by the Pacific Coast Association and held at Pepperdine University, near Malibu, a lovely college campus in southern California on the Pacific Coast.

TRANSPORTATION: The Los Angeles airport is about one hour from Pepperdine. For airport transportation options call the Central Office (617-969-4240) and ask for the airport transportation information packet. We will be glad to match up folks arriving at the same time to share rental cars.

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.

PAYMENT: All bills must be paid at least two weeks in advance.

LINEN CHARGE: Linen is an additional one-time charge of \$10.00 per person. Linen is optional and anyone wanting to bring his/her own sleeping bag, towels, etc. should feel free to do so. A linen set will consist of the following: two sheets, a blanket, two bath towels, two hand towels, one wash cloth, a hotel-sized bar of soap, and a plastic cup.

----- (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		= \$ _____

* Add \$4.00 if you are attending Women's Alliance luncheon.

Adult/teen room & board single	@ \$ 55.00	x adult _____	x nights _____	= \$ _____
Adult/teen room & board double	@ \$ 47.00	x adult _____	x nights _____	= \$ _____
Child room & board double	@ \$ 40.00	x children _____	x nights _____	= \$ _____
Child board only	@ \$ 10.00	x person _____	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. (You may pay by Visa or MasterCard.)

Total = \$ _____

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

IN GOD'S HANDS

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

PRE-CONVENTION 1999
PEPPERDINE COLLEGE ~ MALIBU, CALIFORNIA
SUNDAY JUNE 20, 7:30 PM TO JUNE 23, 12:00 PM

We are excited to have special guest presenter Cecile Andrews join us in leading our Pre-Convention Conference.

- Learn from Cecile ~ ways of simplifying and enriching your life through the avenue of Volunteer Simplicity and
- Study Circles ~ Discover ways of meeting your deepest yearning for spiritual community and connection
- Learn Skills for creating this in your everyday life and making room for the divine.
- Cecile is author of *The Circle of Simplicity: Return to the Good Life*.

Conference Coordinator: Manon Washburn (California)

PRESENTERS WITH POSSIBLE TOPICS:

FACILITATOR: Lorraine Sando, Art, Writing, Meditation, Conscious Living and Dying, Community Building (Washington)

Co-Facilitator: Cindy Gutfeldt, Relating Our Teachings to Life Ritual, Healing Energy Work (California)

EdSU Staff: B.J. Neuenfeldt (Michigan) and Marjie Leas (Indiana)
Song, Music, Humor and more!

This workshop will include ministers' spouses, and will take place at the same time as the Council of Ministers meeting.

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

REGISTRATION

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

ROOM & BOARD: (*Please check one*)

☐ Single Occupancy \$55.00 ☐ Double Occupancy-2 people in a room \$47.00 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) _____

**All Workshop fees to be paid in full by
June 1, 1999**

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The Point Is— Something Happened

(Continued from page 54)

brilliant and the common, women and men, in every succeeding age and in virtually every culture. And this not through mere intellectual assent, but through the power that had entered their inner lives—a spiritual force emanating, according to countless millions, from the Risen Christ. That's an awful lot of real art, healing vision, and heroic deeds to pull off based on an illusion!

Something happened following the execution of Jesus the Nazarene—something big enough to fit the facts. Their own explanation is based on none of the obscure details told in the various gospels, but rather on three words: He is Risen! A genuine explosive and liberating experience of Christ's resurrection is really the only credible explanation for the change that occurred in the lives of the disciples.

An Intimately Personal God

My most important Bible professor at the Swedenborg School in Boston, to which I finally transferred, was George Dole. I found him more than sufficiently acquainted with modern historical criticism, but his approach centered upon Swedenborgian correspondential interpretations of the Bible—and this was the main reason I transferred. He wrinkled his nose at me the first time I brought up one of these historical authenticity questions, and he let me know that in the Swedenborgian view it was simply assumed that the historical record of the Bible was loosely accurate at best; its spiritual truth was the gold we were after.

And for a Swedenborgian, the events of the "third day" in Jerusalem contain their real power on the spiritual plane. And the greatest truth the writings of our faith give us in the Easter Story, that if absorbed will leave us permanently changed, is that the same divine spark, the same loving parental God who is so closely attentive to our human living situation as to enter our arena as one of us, who sat us on his lap and playfully

instructed us, who healed us, who talked endlessly long hours with us, who took on the ultimate weight of the natural plane, which included the necessary culmination of loving pain in the worst that physical earth can bring, did not vacate the premises with that death, but is *with us completely and intimately through all time*.

This vision is truly at the heart of the Christian faith, for Christianity is unique among the great religions in its assertion that the Divine-Human permeates all reality, including the present moment, in a personal way. Mohammed, Buddha, Confucius, Lao Tsu: they all have something precious and special to contribute to the spiritual quest. But only Christ is experienced as a *natural plane template of God* manifesting solely for the benefit of those with human consciousness. The Risen Christ makes personal the full divine essence.

In this regard it is important to understand that Jesus' resurrection is a full resurrection of this *physical* body—which is different from what our personal resurrections are going to be when we lay aside our bodies. But the Holy Spirit inspired the story to be told in this way, says Swedenborg, to present an important aspect of the nature of the Risen Christ. The gospel story has him showing his hands and feet, and eating fish and bread, to convey the *spiritual* truth that his glorification encompassed both this natural plane as well as the transcendent spiritual plane. The Risen Christ continues to exist not only in the absolute, eternal dimension, but in and throughout our historical, personal, natural world, also. He is *here*—as accessible as our willingness to engage, as our ability to receive. This is spiritual truth and does not hinge on historical inquiry regarding whether it was the right time of the season for fishing!

We Can Never Die

The Easter story also gives us the unwavering assurance of eternal life. All that make us who we are in spirit—our thoughts, the loves we are growing, the center of our personalities—can never die. Swedenborg has more to say about eternal life and the long-range picture than any other theologian of the West. And that is

because he concerns himself with the spiritual truth of scripture, which always uses natural language merely as a container for ultimate and abiding insights from the divine. Swedenborgians have supported near-death studies and have been eager to share with the world the experiences of those who have experienced such a near-total cessation of vital bodily signs that their spirit separated from their body for a brief time. What they as a group experience is very akin to what the early disciples encountered in Jesus's apparent resurrection. One book talks about how such people have been profoundly changed. *Coming Back to Life: the After-Effects of the Near-Death Experience*, shows that these folks, who come from different religious and social backgrounds spanning the entire spectrum of life, have one thing in common: their glimpse of eternity changed them pervasively.

One man went from watching about forty hours of TV a week to becoming an award-winning gardener. He uses gardening to teach analogies of spiritual development, feeling that a vibrant, peaceful garden is as close to a heavenly environment as we can experience on earth. One woman went from being suicidal to, as she puts it, "being high on life." Years later, she still feels utterly changed, claiming that there is peace deep within the core of her soul. Yet another woman went from being shy and chronically unemployed to becoming a creative businessperson and serving on the White House Council on Children and Youth. The Easter story boldly proclaims for the ages that life doesn't amount to much if we live but a few short years and then it's "lights out." Without a resurrection into a journey into Life, we are left with a cold, indifferent universe ignorant of our existence.

The message rings loud and clear: Christ lives forever, and we through him; the whole natural plane is redeemed for our use; we can receive now and today as much grace as we can possibly stand. For Jesus Christ is risen today!

The Rev. Dr. James F. Lawrence is co-pastor of the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church.

Reprinted in abridged form from the San Francisco church newsletter, April 7, 1996. ❖

A Personal Journey with a Collective Project

(Continued from cover)

people up for a third of their wealth, you'd meet with a bit of resistance. Incredibly, though, this didn't happen. Sure, folks had some good, hard questions and more than a few helpful ideas, but I heard no one selfishly cry out, "What about me?" or cry foul over this or that thing which is currently funded being "threatened." On the contrary, on a number of occasions, people said they'd be willing to make a sacrifice if necessary for the sake of the greater good and their northerly neighbors. How predictable, in hindsight, that smart Swedenborgians should model what it means to rationally love. How uplifting to witness the excitement, hope, and joy as love led inexorably on. I said to myself in awe "*This is the New Jerusalem that will not pass away.*" I must confess that in moments of despair, I have wondered if I'd ever really feel this way in our Church.

Throughout the eight-month journey with this concept, two models have repeatedly surfaced in my mind. There are certainly others. The Philadelphia church's commitment to Temenos, and the unbelievable generosity of the Los Angeles church, are among those which spring to mind.

But the following two have admirably and consistently served me as poignant examples. So I'm content to leave it to someone else on another occasion to sing yet other praises. Here goes:

Kansas. Our 1997 national convention in Hutchinson, Kansas, was something of a spiritual watershed for me in more ways than I can probably know. I'll spare you most of them, but let me say this. If you didn't hitch up your wagon and come on out, you did yourself a disservice. This, from all I hear, is a widely-held opinion. What struck me was observing our hosts pulling together with a "can do" attitude and enjoying themselves as they spread out a feast before us. I'm not just talking about how well it was organized but about all the meaningful things attended to in such a sweet spirit. It was a living course in performing uses. Or, as I like to think in what I hope is not too campy a fashion, "these people know how to raise a barn." I've tried to learn from and integrate their example in raising our own. So this is for me in a profound, symbolic way our heartland, the soul of Convention. Any ministers in search of a position need look no further than their own back yard!

Boston. If we have an intellectual capitol, her name is Boston. There is the Swedenborg School of Religion, our rich history in Cambridge, and many other facets to this metaphor. For the purposes of our project, however, Bostonview, our six-story church/apartment complex, has come to mind over and over again. In its capacity to generate funds through renting out apartments, it's a great model of sound financial thinking and vision. And it's not just about the money. It's about what can be done with it. Even at this distance, I know of a few of the things they do in Boston, and I hear they're having a pretty good, growthful time doing them. Examples of this

include the city-wide ecumenical clergy breakfasts, the monthly cafes, support to the Fryeburg Assembly, and surely many others of which I'm unaware, and many more to come. So Boston works for me as a symbol of our rationality and the fruits which can flow from it. Though our plan is of a much smaller scale, I'd like to think it will reflect in some respect the success of this light from Boston's Beacon Hill.

There are yet other aspects of our work that move me. For a couple of generations, a debate in our ranks has raged, albeit quietly at times, over what forms our ministries should take. Traditional? Experimental? Collapsible Tabernacle? My sense is that most of us would like there to be a range of styles and forms, that most of us can find room alongside our personal preferences for different folks, be they the "Blue-haired Doctrinals" (that's me), "Fringe Innovators," or any category you might care to create. This debate has, in truth, hampered and haunted our Northwest ministries—perhaps more so than anywhere else. I look forward to both a traditional and an innovative ministry thriving together under one roof. And this really needs to be said: PCA's near-unanimous vote was also one of pride in all that the Rev. Paul Martin and our members have accomplished, just as it was a vote of confidence in what we think they will yet do. The Northwest is a tremendous area of potential growth. We have voted with our feet, and we are determined to get it right and prove it can be done! All sides have been working very, very hard to share their visions, to reassure each other, to reconcile, to more than just get along, and to do and be more together than they can on their own. My sense is they're the happier and better off for it, and I know it can really work if we all just keep working at it.

As I travel around and get to know more and more Swedenborgian ministries and individuals, it is always disconcerting to see so many feel so defeated and demoralized. Sure, there are bright spots and glimmers of hope in which we rightly take solace and delight. But on the whole, defeatism takes a heavy toll. But I want to share a little secret with you: you don't get defeatism if you're not being defeated. We need some victories. We need to plan them, proclaim them, and feel good while celebrating them. If we do, our morale will change quickly. This project would be a great victory for us. It's huge by the standards we've been setting for ourselves. I think that this is what PCA members at least sensed, and it feels great to feel hope. So please keep us in your hearts and prayers as we try to competently, wisely, carry it through. We need and appreciate your support.

If any of this seems a bit inflammatory, I hope you'll forgive me. But to be honest, what I most hope is that the spirit is catching. May each of you, gentle readers, find yourself to be even a small piece of an incendiary device so that you, too, will feel globally warmed spiritually once it's set off. Why wait to take a look around and see what needs doing? Band together and be bold, smart, generous, self-sacrificing, reconciling, and have some great, explosive fun. Just remember: a small spark can start a fire raging!

Alan Thomsen is a member of MINSU and a member of the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church. ❖

1999 SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH MEETING DATES

- Apr. 8-10 Retirement Committee
Florida
- Apr. 15-17 EDSU
Newton, Massachusetts
- Apr. 17-18 Wayfarers Chapel Board
Wayfarers Chapel, California
- Apr. 23-24 SSR Board of Trustees
Newton, Massachusetts
- Apr. 25-27 East Coast Peer
Supervision Blairhaven
Duxbury, Massachusetts
- May 1 Investment Committee
Temenos
West Chester, Pennsylvania
- May 12-13 COMSU Temenos
- June 20-27 Pre-Convention and
Convention 1999
Pepperdine College
Malibu, California
- Aug. 26-28 Wayfarers Chapel Board
Palos Verdes, California
- Sept. 24-26 Cabinet
Almont, Michigan
- Oct. 22-24 General Council
Temenos

Do We Have a "National" Church?

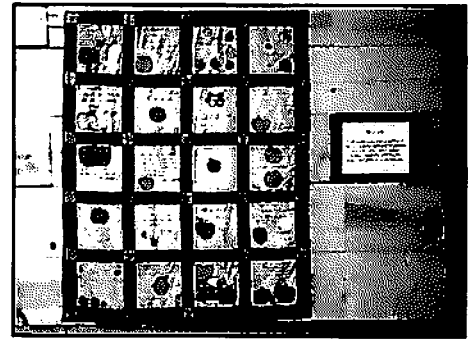
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know. Thanks so much for your help with this project! We can be contacted at the addresses below.

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Chris Laitner currently serves as chair of the National Church Board of Trustees and as vice-president of General Convention. She is a member of the Royal Oak church.



Quilt made by Arlene Hawkins for her project in the Johnny Applesseed workshop at Urbana University. She donated it to the J.A. Museum where it is on display. (Story on p. 68).

Nominating Committee Report

Vice President: Chris Laitner

Recording Secretary: Gloria Toot

Treasurer: Polly Baxter

General Council: (2 lay, 1 minister)
Nancy Freestone
Larry Conant
Rev. Jerry Poole

Communications Support Unit
(COMSU) (1)
Mona Connor

Education Support Unit (EDSU) (1)
Joy Flemming

Financial & Physical Resources Support
Unit (FPRSU) (1)
Fran McIntosh

Information Management Support Unit
(IMSU) (1)
Philip Bae

Ministries Support Unit (1 lay, 1 minister)
Barbara Halle
Rev. Donna Keane

Nominating Committee
(1 elected, 2 nominated)
Stella Podmore
Linda Kraus

Swedenborg School of Religion (SSR) (2)
Diane Stickney
John Titus

Committee on Admission to the Ministry
(CAM) (1 lay, 1 minister)
Patricia Tukos
Rev. Marlene Laughlin

—Sharon Unruh Billings, chair,
Nominating Committee

PASSAGES

Confirmation

Campbell—Jeff and Beth Campbell were welcomed into the membership of the San Diego Swedenborgian Church January 31, 1999, with lay leader Eldon Smith officiating. The Campbells were recently married at Wayfarers Chapel.

Deaths

Graves—Dorrienne E. Graves of East Fryeburg, Maine, entered the spiritual world February 13, 1999. A memorial service was held February 17 at the Church of the New Jerusalem, Fryeburg, Maine, the Revs. Violet Eastman and Kenneth Turley officiating.

Reddekopp—Susanna (Warkentin) Reddekopp, age 87, entered the spiritual world November 1, 1998, in Saskatoon. A celebration of eternal life was held November 28, at Park Funeral Home, conducted by her son, Dennis Reddekopp. She was predeceased by her husband of 59 years, the Rev. Henry W. Reddekopp, and several sisters and brothers. She is survived by her son, Dennis, her twin brother, Peter Warkentin, and two sisters, Kathryn

Heinrichs and Annie Thiessen. Her favorite book, which was a guiding star throughout her life, was Swedenborg's *Heaven and Hell*.

Young—Herbert Young, 80, of Lake Placid, Florida, entered the spiritual world January 18, 1999. The committal service was conducted at the Eden Cemetery in Crescent city, Florida, February 26, 1999, the Rev. Jon Skuli Thorhallsson officiating. Herb was a lifelong Swedenborgian and the founding president of the church in Miami in 1957. He is survived by his wife, Marty, son, Thomas, daughters, Janet Haller and June Taylor, two sisters, five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.



From the Rev. Edwin Capon:

"My quintuple bypass operation in mid-January went well, as is my recuperation. I expect to make the Wayfarers Chapel Board meeting in April and the convention in June. I would like to express my appreciation for the many cards and flowers I received from Convention friends and church bodies." ❖

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.

"Good News Fresh From Heaven!"

Missy Sommer and Joe Besecker

If you tune in to ABC's *Good Morning America* program Tuesday April 13, 1999, you just might hear a familiar message: tales of "Good News Fresh from Heaven!" The GMA spot is just one step on American Forest's Johnny Appleseed National Tour, a promotion for a newly developed line of Albemarle Pippin Apple trees that are offspring of the last surviving tree planted by Johnny Appleseed. American Forests, a Washington, D.C. - based nonprofit preservation organization, began work on these trees over five years ago when they learned of a tree on the historic Harvey farm in Savannah, Ohio that had been linked through extensive documentation to Johnny Appleseed. The declining tree on the Harvey farm proved challenging to propagate. When the seeds gathered from the tree's meager crop failed to germinate, cuttings were taken and successfully propagated. And a new line of Johnny Appleseed trees was born!

A prolific planter of trees and an energetic Swedenborgian missionary, Johnny Appleseed, born John Chapman, was an influential presence on the American frontier at the turn of the nineteenth century. He planted trees and maintained land holdings in spots throughout the region, especially Ohio, Indiana, and

Hugh Durbin (L) and Joe Besecker, co-directors of the Johnny Appleseed Society at Urbana University, visiting Leominster, Massachusetts, birthplace of Johnny Appleseed, in fall of 1998.



Pennsylvania. Johnny's practices of conservation, self-reliance, and community service, as well as his distribution of the works of Emanuel Swedenborg, or "Good News Fresh from Heaven," were well received by settlers and memorialized in folk history. A veritable folk hero, Johnny Appleseed remains a vital reminder to us all of just how powerful the dream and the journey of one individual can be.

The Johnny Appleseed Society, located on the Urbana University campus in Urbana, Ohio, is pleased to participate in American Forests' Johnny Appleseed National Tour. Society members will accompany the tour that will spread this word about Johnny through tree plantings, educational programs and other promotional events. On April 17, 1999, the tour will stop at Urbana University to plant five of the Johnny Appleseed seedlings. The planting will coincide with a celebration of song, speeches, and tributes to Johnny. Please consider attending a Johnny Appleseed celebration in your vicinity this spring: Leominster and Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts (April 12); Brooklyn, New York (April 13); Washington, D.C. (April 14); Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (April 15); Kirkland, Ohio (April 16); Urbana, Ohio (April 17); East Lansing, Michigan (April 19); Glencoe, Illinois (April 20); Madison,

Wisconsin (April 21); Cedar Rapids, Iowa (April 22); Fort Wayne, Indiana (April 23). For more information about the tour, contact American Forests at (800) 320-8733; for membership information for the Johnny Appleseed Society contact co-chair Joe Besecker at (937) 484-1303.

Missy Sommer is a teacher, a member of the Urbana Swedenborgian Church, and a member of the Johnny Appleseed Society. Joe Besecker is director of development and alumni affairs and co-chair of the Johnny Appleseed Society.



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