

# The Messenger

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE SWEDENBORGIAN CHURCH  
DECEMBER 1978

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*Christmas 1978*

## IN EXPECTATION OF NEW BIRTH

Once again Christmas, with its wonder and joy and mystery, draws near to us. Every year it comes, and we hope it finds us a little wiser and a little more loving than we were at this time last year. And this will only happen if we make the best possible use of these Advent days. It would be sad indeed to wake up on December 26 and discover that we had missed Christmas altogether!

And how do we make the best use of this Advent season? By setting aside a few moments each day where we can read again those ageless gospel words telling of the Lord's birth. Reflecting on what Christmas really means to us. Re-living some of the joyfilled Christmases of past years. And most of all — thinking through what the promise of new birth means to us — not as an abstract theory, but as a very real and present opportunity. The expectation and fulfillment of new birth — that's what Christmas is all about.

The main value and purpose of the Lord's Advent for us today is that it portrays something profound and deeply personal that happens to people at a very deep level of life. It describes a process — a state of being — that we would like to have happen to us. And there are times — we all have them — when the whole drama of Christmas becomes so real we can almost reach out and touch it.

Like the time those shepherds were out on the hillside looking after their sheep. Nothing very extraordinary about that. When suddenly the skies split wide open and they were bathed in heavenly light and surrounded by angelic choirs. They were told to go and see this wonderful event that had come to pass, and they must have dashed across those fields like drunken sailors, their feet hardly touching the ground. They came, they worshipped, and they were never again quite the same.

Sometimes miracles like this happen within ourselves. Events and people converge in our lives in startling, unexpected ways. There are times when we recognize that a Power greater than our own is at work within, and we feel the stirrings of new life.

But this will only happen if we approach Christmas expectantly. Like a little child.

In these Advent days, read the Christmas stories again, as if they were written just for you. Put yourself into the events surrounding the birth of Jesus Christ; find your own meanings in this grandest story of all the ages. And as you read, ask: "What new things are there that could be born in me? What new

attitudes and dreams want to receive life in me? What is ready to be born in me, right now?" Then we begin to see what Christmas is all about.

P. Z.

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## THE MESSENGER DECEMBER 1978

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# The Starting Line ————— by Eric Zacharias

The cold rain was pelting down harder now. The traffic traveling the Interstate between Massachusetts and Maine took on an impersonal, uncaring appearance. Coming out of the late afternoon light, the cars sped by us in an endless procession. The Rev. David Rienstra and I were merely two Swedenborgian ministers — there surely was nothing to fear. Quipped David, "Would it help if we were wearing our clerical collars?"

What has our society come to? One was reminded of that, "Certain man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho." Our front tire had blown, our tire wrench was useless and — except for the travellers on this busy roadway — there was little evidence of civilization. We were somewhere in New Hampshire.

Passengers in the passing cars looked — some with interest, others with suspicious curiosity — as we stood in the rain hoping to flag a sympathetic motorist. Then, finally, a car stopped — then, the Highway Patrol stopped — and soon we were ready to continue our drive to Fryeburg.

Earlier that afternoon of October 14th, we had left Blairhaven following the conclusion of the Board of Education meetings. Still very fresh in our minds was the planning that had taken place enlarging the scope of our educational work in the Church. Many of us now have come to appreciate the benefits to be derived from retreats, training sessions and conferences. There is a continuing need to provide growth opportunities and those experiences which deepen our devotional and spiritual life for all ages and all stages of development. We have only begun to scratch the surface. We need to take advantage of that which has been uncovered.

It was a most rewarding moment, during the course of the Board of Education meetings, when several of the young people who had participated in SNAP (Swedenborgian New Age Pioneers) held in the Santa Cruz mountains, south of San Francisco, shared with us the depth of this experience in the outdoors. Here trails were cut. Poison ivy was sprayed. Here, too, eight young people made a life-changing decision as they joined the Church.

In our Convention, we can look forward to increased activity in the area of youth education as the Rev. Ronald Brugler assumes his work with the Board of Education. This was already so beautifully demonstrated in Cleveland, Ohio, during the course of the Ohio Ass'n meetings, when twelve young people prepared

and presented a skit thoroughly enjoyed by all the adults. Rev. Brugler is now scheduled to lead program workshops for the Kemper Road Center in Cincinnati and for the LaPorte Church.

One of the direct results of this increased activity among our youth is the recognized need for special programming for our youth, those not yet of League age, for our annual convention meetings. Initial planning for the 1979 convention has already begun.

The visit to Fryeburg — the Installation Service for Rev. David Rienstra, the beauty of the fall foliage, the visit to David Richardson's dowel plant — was so completely satisfying. This October 15th Service followed closely the Installation Service for Rev. Ron Brugler in Cleveland on October 1st, and in Pittsburgh on October 8th, conducted by Dr. Friedemann Horn. We wish a long and rewarding ministry for both of these newly ordained ministers and for their congregations.

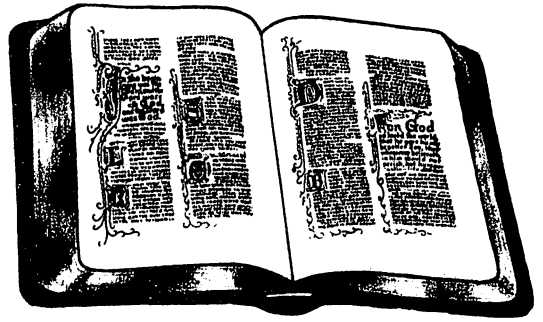
On Wednesday, October 25th, the planning for "Convention 1979" began. For Convention 1978, we chose the theme, "Alive In The New Age." It seems fitting and appropriate, therefore, to select for our 1979 Convention on the Urbana College campus the theme, "Moving Forward — Together." In this the Lord offers us his support, "Then we turned, and took our journey into the wilderness . . . And the Lord spake unto me, saying, Ye have compassed this mountain long enough: turn you northward." Deut. 2: 1 - 3

There can be no doubt that we are experiencing a measure of renewal — and everywhere in our Convention people are opening themselves up to new growth possibilities. As examples of this — we take note of the growing student body at the Swedenborg School of Religion, the excitement currently surging through our churches in Cambridge and in Urbana as new people enter into the life of these congregations. Now, indeed, must be the best time to join hands in prayerful support of one another and give of our God-given strength to move ahead together.

Within a few weeks, all of us will be celebrating the coming of the Lord in the event of His incarnation. May we "receive him gladly." May there be the prayer in our hearts that the love which He brought dwell in every heart and bring us to an ever increasing awareness of His presence. Mrs. Zacharias joins me in wishing you the blessing of this holy season.

# WORDS OF CHRISTMAS

by Robert Kirven  
Boston, Mass.



Beautiful handwriting became a hobby and special interest of mine a few years ago, partly because of theology. A theologian's work is the knowledge of God, but the tools and stock of his trade are words. The words and word-patterns of good theology are rare, precious and beautiful; so there is an appropriate joy in seeing them beautifully formed on their page. Since the most beautifully perfect words of theology are those of the Lord's Holy Word, it is not surprising that the Word — especially the Gospels and the Psalms — have been written most beautifully of all words.

I think of this at Christmastime this year, especially, because one of the world's oldest and most beautiful copies of the Gospel, with its Christmas story, happens to be on display in Boston this Christmas, and I've had the privilege of contemplating several of its inspiring pages.

Let me say just a little about that book. It is known as The Book of Kells, and it often is called the most beautiful book in the world. It is a lavishly decorated altar Bible, with 680 pages, about 13" by 9½". Work on it was begun, probably, in 797 A.D. in a monastery on the island of Iona, off the west coast of Scotland, and was continued in the monastery of Kells, in eastern Ireland, for about a quarter of a century (and a few pages were never finished). It is written in bold, majestic letters — an average 17 lines in a space about 7" by 9" — with elaborate and brightly-colored decorations. The first letter or letters of most verses are monograms in brilliant colors, with fantastic bird and animal shapes forming the letters. At a few points of special importance in the biblical text, just a very few words make up a whole page. The first words of each of the four Gospels, for instance, are formed in and around a huge, full-page-size first letter. Some full-page paintings illustrate the text. Still other whole pages are abstract, symmetrical decorations. Abstract or imaginary animal forms are painted in between lines at certain points. The over-all effect is of almost overpoweringly reverential beauty.

The time and culture in which such a book could be conceived and made was different from our own in many ways. As little as five hundred years before, reading and writing (as we think of them) were unknown in Ireland, and art involved abstract designs almost exclusively. The idea of using things as models for art came first, and then the idea of using books to convey thoughts; and both of these new ideas came with Christianity in the third century. By the end of the eighth century, the scribes and painters planning the Book of Kells still had a strong cultural tendency from their pre-Christian, pre-literate traditions, mixed into their ardent Christian devotion to the Word of God.

The fact that literacy had come to the country in association with Christianity encourages a feeling of awe toward books, and especially toward the Gospels — an awe that invested greater value in a beautiful Bible than we in our culture can easily imagine. The artistic heritage that for centuries had employed knotwork (interlaced ribbons), spirals, and arcs in abstract designs for religious purposes encouraged the incorporation of these patterns into Christian symbolism.

So, for example, the first words of the second chapter of Matthew's Gospel (*Christi autem generatio*, Now the birth of Christ . . .) were treated with more elaborate devotion than the beginning words of the four books themselves. The Latin *Christi* (Christ) is abbreviated to the first three letters of the Greek, XRI. The X (Greek letter *chi*) is an enormous, sweeping, curvilinear shape that dominates the page, bursting through the borders of the design into the margins. It is outlined in a shade of lavender or mauve — a color little used in the rest of the book, and one which suggests to me a spiritual quality in the page. The letter is filled with elaborate knotwork patterns, and the ends of each line explode in spirals. The other letters of the Lord's name (*Rho* and *Iota*) are relatively smaller, but still large, and are part of an incredibly complex pattern formed around the great X. The pattern is made up of an all-

but - infinite variety of arcs and spirals (with spirals forming larger spirals that form larger ones in turn), in a profusion that looks like clutter at first, but with study displays amazing complexity and precision. The page almost certainly took a year to paint, and may well have taken a monk four or five years to complete. Because it speaks of the birth of the Lord, it has become a kind of Advent Meditation for me this year, opening many unfamiliar corners of my mind and spirit.

As I mentioned, this book comes from a culture that is strange to us. But it has echoes in our own time and place and heritage. Book and magazine illustrations derive from just such origins, as does the love of beautifully printed and bound books — especially Bibles. But what strikes me especially at this time is Christmas cards.

During the decade in which I wrote a Christmas letter in these pages every winter, my thoughts often turned to Christmas cards — sometimes thinking critically of the time and energy that is expended on such a formalized ritual, sometimes thinking more fondly of the love that is in fact shared by the ritual. But after a fairly intense study of this “granddaddy” of all ornamental celebrations of biblical words, I find myself looking at Christmas cards with a new respect and deeper affection. Christmas cards are ornamental celebrations of the Words of Christmas.

From this perspective, the banality that characterizes many Christmas card messages seems to fade: it becomes less conspicuous than the attempts to express joy, fond recollection, the warmth of family ties and of the bonds of friendship, cheer, reverence, and sometimes even worshipful adoration — the affections that surround and make up our multi - faceted celebration of Christmas.

This Christmas, I hope you will join me in really *looking* at the Christmas cards you send and receive. Contemplate each card with enough focus of attention to allow a feeling - perception of the shapes of the letters which make up the words — especially when the words are drawn from the biblical Christmas story, as is true of many Christmas cards. Try to catch the feeling that is meant to be added to the sense of the words by the colors, patterns, and illustrations. Of course, the artists may have been commercial mechanics, rushing to meet deadlines; the printers may have distributed the cards just to make a buck; but the Words of Christmas — the secular words about merriment and bells, as well as the biblical words about the Word that became flesh — are living, powerful words. Their ornamental celebration on Christmas cards can enrich your Advent season. I hope they do, and that it is a blessed and beautiful time for you.

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## I REMEMBER CHRISTMAS

*by Erwin Reddekopp*  
*San Francisco, California*

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There are Christmases of the past that bring back vivid memories. For me, of course, Christmas meant winter with snow, and generally lots of it, for we lived in Alberta, Canada. While we did have moderating chinook winds, even in the middle of winter, we could generally expect plenty of snow around Christmas time, with temperatures ranging anywhere from zero F. to forty degrees below zero. This brings to mind some nostalgic experiences with which some of our *Messenger* readers may identify. I think, for example, of our annual Christmas school concert. This was held in our district rural one room school house, and generally right on Christmas eve.

For those concerts our teacher (one teacher for eight grades) had been rehearsing us for

about four or five weeks. What courage she had! No teacher strikes those days. On that wonderful night for which we had all been waiting, parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts and babes in arms gathered in that one room school house. What an occasion! I don't know how they could all get in such a small space. I remember, no matter how cold outside, the windows had to be open for ventilation while the furnace in one corner kept throwing out the heat.

Well, after the festivities of the evening, with Santa Claus, gifts, and Japanese oranges for everyone, the strains of that beautiful song, *Silent Night, Holy Night*, filled the night and I thought that even the northern lights (Aurora Borealis) shone more brightly to announce the

great truth of the birth of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Then the old cars had to be started and warmed up, (some frozen solid), or the horses hitched to the sleighs for the trip home. It may have been only three or four miles but that seemed something of an expedition and we were now eager to get home. On arriving home I remember my father and brothers putting up the horses while mother and the younger ones went into the house. Mother stoked up the heater in one of the back bed rooms. It took a bit of time, but before long the "banked" fire, revived, brought warmth to the room which was matched only by the warm glow of the spiritual climate in our hearts still unquenched after the festivities of the evening with our neighbors as we celebrated the birth of Jesus Christ.

The rest of the evening was hazy. We were tired! But mother and father still had work to do. There were seven in our family. For Christmas eve we set the dining room table; a plate for each of us, a deep, well rounded soup plate. We didn't have a Christmas tree those days on the prairies for the simple reason that it was just too difficult to get one. (Later years we did.) So with the table set, our plates at their rightful places, and the heater still sending out some warm rays before being banked for the night, mother and father opened up the packages of gifts that had been "hidden" away for some weeks (from the mail order catalogue). There was something for everyone, but nothing as extravagant as today. And those big soup plates were loaded with mixed nuts and topped with a Japanese orange and some little specialty like a pair of socks, etc. Mind you, the orange was a specialty at that time of the year too. After the table was loaded, I remember, my mother used to cover the whole with a bed sheet or two to keep us from peeking. But we did! I did, for I remember just where to look where my plate was placed. In the wee small hours of the morning I discovered that "Sandy Andy" but I didn't touch him. I scrambled back to bed, not to dream, but to hope that I could last till morning. I did!

Well, morning always came early, for mother, I'm sure. There were chores to do. The cattle needed to be cared for and the cows milked; then breakfast. But who could eat — we were too excited. But even that excitement did not long keep the hunger pangs away. Already we could smell the aroma of roasting chicken and dressing in the kitchen. What a feast! What a day! It was a long glorious day.

Those are some of the Christmases that I remember. I cherish now every moment of them and those memories. Parents, a brother

and a sister have since entered the spiritual world, and now I have to stop before my emotions run wild. But it is good! This is our Lord's doing. His life, His birth, must ever be a new experience for us in our lives even as they change from year to year.

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## CHRISTMAS 1978

**Dorothea Harvey**  
**Urbana, Ohio**

One of the most vivid memories I have of teaching grew out of a question from a woman prisoner at Marysville who desperately asked what would happen to her son at home, now beginning to go with bad companions. There was no way she could be there with him to help, or even to speak to her own son in trouble. He was in danger of harming himself and others, and she was physically removed from him, with no recourse.

So far, I have not been restrained by any such arbitrary, physical means. But I identify with her desperation. With no excuse like hers, I have let moments go by without speaking, predicting to myself before the event that it could never work, deciding that if I did speak of the danger he would not accept my view of it anyway, counting my risk of failure or embarrassment more important than the speaking. It is dangerous, isn't it, to speak? And now, that one I care for has grown farther away and we are looking at things from two opposing sides, and the speaking now would be out of anger, or out of desperation, or out of some thinly veiled "I told you so!"

Thank God, the Divine Love and Wisdom know better than we how to speak. Before we even knew the extent of the gap we had created, our Lord spoke. And our Lord spoke, not from some distant throne of judgment, nor from some protected position of Divine privilege to that other, human kind.

Thank God, the Divine Love counted neither legal restraint nor risk of failure. With God is no "I told you so!" Infinite Love is infinite risk. And so Divine Love came, to be present, to live our life, to speak from our side, to speak by simply being the reality of Love itself within our human life.

The Word of our God became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. And of the fullness of that Love have all we received.

Thanks be to God.

# THROUGH ADVERSITY TO THE STARS

by **Matthew Zacharias**  
Manchester, England

For all those people out there who are  
working —  
But not for themselves.  
Who are thinking — but are continually  
interrupted.  
Who are finishing a job — but not feeling the  
reward.  
This is for you and for me.  
What is it that is missing? Where is the lack?  
Why does the night bring sad mourning with  
sleep the only rest?  
Why does the new day's arising carry on where  
the last day left off?  
Where is the strength of your father; of your  
forefathers?  
Is courage waning with the advertised terror of  
the times?  
Where is the hope that once grew  
As plentiful as blackberries in full ripeness  
When all that was needed was to reach out and  
pluck them at leisure?  
Has the bush been left barren?  
— always picking and eating and picking  
some more —  
When will your bucket be full? Read Haggai  
1:6 and ponder.  
Are you eating more or less than you should?  
Does the bucket that's being used have a hole  
worn through to the ground?  
Do you not know enough to pick only those that  
are ripe?  
— that season is only one time a year; yet the  
season returns  
Again and again, each interval having its own  
splendor of delight,  
— being a season of its own.  
Do not struggle to pick while the winter winds  
howl  
Bare the storm with good grace and yourself  
make a vow —  
To fill up the storehouses that stand bare  
with long neglect  
As soon as the chance presents itself; as surely  
it will.  
For does not the day follow the dark of each  
night  
And season, follow season, follow season . . .  
If the seasons show themselves in extreme;  
see it as a sign

A hopeful growing revelation of rhyme.  
For the pains and the fears and the hardships of  
old  
Were so valiantly weathered in order for man -  
kind to grow.  
So that we, in this selected and privileged  
wondrous age  
Might be bold enough to once again take the  
forbidden bite  
That Adam once took, and find other than  
trouble and despair.  
The fruit has been purified by the struggle of  
the ages.  
If we had but courage enough to take the first  
bite  
We could not help but exalt in the ripe  
sweetness of the moment  
in which we all are one / once again.  
Until now we've trained our minds to grow in  
knowledge of particulars.  
The workman knows his duties, the business  
man his field;  
The doctor practices his speciality and the  
salesman knows his goods.  
The cleaning lady comes to clean, the  
secretary to type,  
The cook comes to fix meals but who is it that  
will light my pipe?  
Now is the time to face the whole picture as it  
gradually appears  
And to work for its clarity whatever your  
focus may be.  
Yes, the light is growing ever brighter over the  
mountainous  
horizon, the dawning of the age is nigh!  
And we, the ones who have looked up from  
our work to witness such an event, stand  
praising and glorifying the rising of this  
heavenly sun.  
We gaze with ever widening eyes.  
Who are those who crouch weeping in the  
shadows?  
Daring not to show themselves for fear of  
weakness.  
Of course! your muscles will disappear if you sit  
motionless.  
Don't sit there; join the climb.  
The path is upwards  
Burn your trail and follow it.

Climb with steady stride but if you should  
falter rest for a time / but not for ever!  
Regard the world from your newly gained vista,  
in all its beauty.  
Was the climb not worth the effort?  
If you should ever imagine reaching the top  
Be careful for there are others around who suffer  
the same delusion.  
Why not instead find your comfortable height  
Then get busy to establish yourself there!  
Take no heed of what your neighbor does  
For what you have to do only you yourself  
know.  
However never disregard the man you find  
beside  
Ever be conscious of his presence.  
For often he will call on you for help and  
advice.  
Always respect and ever be ready to serve  
fellow pilgrims,  
For the time will come when you too will seek  
help from them.  
If your awareness tells you  
That you are helping another for his sake alone -  
*Beware* — for the spirit requires common  
ground where  
thoughts and feelings can evolve and revolve  
Without restriction in the area set forth.  
(Like children playing in a field).  
Are your thoughts free to stretch and to bend?  
(like a band of elastic or a wad of fresh putty).  
Or are you like a clay pot (once soft and pliable)  
But now fired hot and set in its shape.  
(Being a pot is just fine  
As long as your vessel holds water  
And is overflowing like a fountain gone mad!)  
This is to those who have what they need.  
Bend low enough for others to see inside  
Else arrows cease to bounce off your strong fired  
walls  
And instead pierce and crack what you've  
built up so long.  
It is sure to hurt, this crumbling of all —  
No less tragic than the walls of a city called  
Jericho.  
Those who truly have something to give (and  
we all do)  
Will only keep it as long as they use their gift —  
Otherwise, there is no reason to have.  
What you once thought strong will weaken with  
disuse.  
Keep your eyes primed on love  
No matter how frail it may appear  
For this is the only key to open the door of  
another.  
Do your job with care; walk with head held high.  
And soon the mundane routine flashes a spark,  
And shortly after a small flame forms a blaze,

That burns constantly. But we mustn't forget  
to feed it  
With our own particular fuel, that's unique  
above all.  
Join together, make many flames, and much  
fire —  
For the heat will warm those who have grown  
cold  
And the light will be a guide for those who  
walk in darkness!

## A CHRISTMAS



## STORY

**Richard Tafel**  
**Philadelphia, Pa.**

A long, long time ago, long before any of us  
here were born — in fact more than a thousand  
years before Columbus discovered America —  
God wanted to give his children on earth a  
present: the kind which would make people  
happy forever and which people would always  
remember.

He had already given them many presents,  
wonderful presents; in fact so many that  
everybody should have been happy all the time.  
To begin with, he made this beautiful world,  
just for his children. He gave them all kinds of  
good things for food. He gave them the  
flowers, and plants, and trees. He gave them  
the rivers and lakes and oceans, and fields and  
mountains. He gave them the sunshine, so that



they could see and enjoy all these wonderful gifts. He made and gave the sky and clouds, the beautiful sunsets, rainbows, and the stars and the moon.

Hundreds and hundreds of such gifts he gave his children on earth, because God is our heavenly Father and loves us very dearly. He loves us so very much that we can not begin to imagine how much he really loves us. If we take all the love our mothers and fathers have for us, and add to that all the love that the millions and millions of people in the whole wide world have, and put it all together, it would not begin to be as much as God's love is for us!

That is why when he wanted to give a special present on that first Christmas so many, many years ago, he wanted to make it the very, very best present that he possibly could. What could that present be? God thought, and thought, and thought. What should it be? Since he had given so many wonderful gifts, it was going to be very hard indeed to find an extra special present!

"Maybe I should give them a new song," he said, "One that would be so beautiful, so lovely, so thrilling, that it would fill people's hearts with joy and gladness every time they heard it." The words could be about how much I love them, and want them to be always happy. I could set the words to heavenly music, and have my angel - people sing it to them!

"But, no! that wouldn't be special enough. They already have the beautiful songs of the birds that I have given them, and they have learned from them how to make songs of their own, and music. No, that won't do! And, besides, I have already given them my glorious Psalms to sing."

God thought harder and harder still. "Maybe this special gift could be a new star: a star that I would make so big and bright and glowing, that whenever my people see it in the sky they will think of me, and then they will be so glad to remember that I am watching over them and taking care of them. I am sure they would like that! Still, I have given them so many stars. No, I'm afraid that that wouldn't be special enough."

God thought still harder. "I wonder if this very special present shouldn't be a wonderful book? I could fill it with angel - like stories, telling them how much I love them and am taking care of them. I will tell them about the heavenly home which I have made for them, where they will always be glad and happy. Wouldn't that be an extra special present? But, no! that won't do! They have just such a book,

which I gave them a long time ago, and some people are still reading it. No, that won't do at all!"

"It is certainly going to be hard to find just the right present. Something that would be a special gift. I think maybe I have given them everything. I don't think there's anything left. Wait! I have it! I will give them myself! Isn't that the very best present, after all, that anyone can give. To give one's self is surely better than anything anybody can give!"

And you know, that is exactly what God did when long, long ago he wanted to give us an extra special present, the most wonderful gift that he has ever given us, a present that he called the "Christmas Present." This is why we give presents to one another at Christmas. It is our way of saying, "Because God loved us so much, we should love one another." (Some people think we got our custom of giving gifts for the new - born King. But I think they themselves brought gifts as a way of saying, "Thank you!" to God when he gave us his Christmas Present.)

Have you ever thought about why we do up our gifts in beautiful wrappings, and tie them up and label them, "to so and so . . . from so and so"? To show just how much we love the person we give it to? To make the surprise and delight all the more complete when the present is opened? That's part of it! But we really wrap our gifts as beautifully as we can because that is what God did when he gave us his Christmas Present!

He wrapped himself up in the form of a lovely little baby. All the mighty power that had created the sun and moon and stars; all the majesty that tints the flowers in our garden and paints the rainbows; all the glory that shines in our sunrises and our sunsets, was wrapped up in that infant baby, lying so quietly and so lovingly in the manger of Bethlehem's stable. And he had his angel - messengers tell the shepherds whom this present was for:

"Unto you is born this day in the City  
of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord."

And so he had himself born a little baby to a loving mother called "Mary", and had a manger in a stable for his little bed. Our Christmas Present: God coming down from heaven, so that we might know what he is really like and truly love him; and so that we can be glad knowing that he is always so near us.

Was that not a lovely present? And do you know why God called this his "Christmas"

present? Because, when he came to live here on earth, his name was "Jesus the Christ".

This is the Story of Christmas. But this is not all. When God gave us his extra special Christmas Present he gave us, besides, all those other gifts he had thought about when he wondered what he should give us.

He gave us that great Star — and you remember that it led the Wise Men to him in Bethlehem. And that Star is still shining? If you look for it, you can see it in the lights on our Christmas trees, in the candles we burn, and especially in the brightness that shines inside us during these glorious days!

And he gave us that wonderful new Song, the most glorious song that the world has ever heard, and he had his angels sing it to the music of heaven:

"Glory to God in the highest,  
And on earth peace, good - will  
to men."

Even today you can still hear that song which the Shepherds of Bethlehem first heard. Listen to it in our carols, in the hymns we sing in Church, and in the bells on Santa Claus' sled.

And that Book, which he thought would perhaps make a specially fine present, was actually being written and given to us, beginning on that first Christmas night when God gave us his Christmas Present. It is called "The New Testament of God's Holy Word." It tells us all about Christmas, his Birthday, and his Present to us. As part of your celebration this year, read or have your mothers or fathers read to you, the whole wonderful story of how God gave us Christmas.

*(Reprinted from the Messenger, December, 1968)*

## NOMINEE DEADLINE

Suggestions for nominations at the 1979 Convention in Urbana, Ohio must be submitted to the Nominating Committee no later than January 15, 1979.

Page Conant, Chairman  
45 S. Elm St.  
W. Bridgewater, Mass. 02379

## "CLASSIC COMIC" SWEDENBORG CONTEST

In an effort to stimulate a broader interest in the life and works of Emanuel Swedenborg, the Swedenborg Foundation announces an Illustrated Classic ("Classic Comic") Contest.

The publication is intended to introduce Swedenborg and appeal to the young by visual means. This concept has long been successfully used.

We invite the submission of no less than 15 to 20 significant and dramatic episodes in the life of Emanuel Swedenborg, with suitable titles and brief descriptions, to furnish themes for professional illustrators.

Prizes of \$200, \$100, and \$50 will be awarded to the winners by the Foundation's Editorial and Publication Committee

Submit Entries to:

C. C. Contest  
Swedenborg Foundation  
139 East 23rd Street  
New York, N.Y. 10010

\* \* \*

Note: The Foundation reserves the right to use the material in whole or in part or in edited form. Entries will not be returned.

## *A Prayer For All Seasons*

Keep us O Lord from pettiness; Let us be large in thought, in word and deed,  
Let us be done with fault finding and leave off self - seeking.  
May we put away all pretense and meet each other face to face, without self - pity and without prejudice,  
May we *never be hasty in judgment*, and always generous.  
Teach us to put into action our better impulses, straightforward and unafraid.  
Let us take time for all things; make us grow calm, serene, gentle,  
Grant that we realize that it is the *little things* that *create difference*.  
That IN THE BIG THINGS OF LIFE WE ARE AS ONE.  
And may we strive to touch and know the great common heart of all of us  
And, O Lord God, let us not forget to be kind.

(Submitted by Alice Spear,  
Los Angeles)

# THE PROMISE OF

# Christmas

## "And The Shepherds Returned"

Christmas comes but once a year  
And when it comes it brings good cheer,  
And when it goes it leaves us here  
And what'll we do for the rest of the year?

*Irish Saying*

Tidings of great joy came to some shepherds watching their flocks by night on a hill near Bethlehem long ago. They heard the angelic song, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." They came and saw "the babe lying in the manger." They were deeply stirred in experiencing for one ecstatic moment the presence of God, in listening joyfully to the divine announcement of salvation.

Year after year the approach of Christmas fills us with ineffable peace and joy: our problems, our struggles, our worries cease to afflict our souls, life acquires a new radiance, hope banishes fear.

"And the shepherds returned" to their sheep, to the daily task, to the dullness of their habitual occupation: the dreamy became dreary. Or did it? They returned "glorifying and praising God" for what they had heard and seen, for the nobility of their task in daily life, for the sense of God's presence, for the new appreciation of goodness and beauty in this world. As we return to our toil after the glorious vision of the babe in the manger, may the glow of this luminous hour continue through the year and preserve for us its peace and joy.

*Robert H. Pfeiffer*

"Never has there been  
such a quest for Truth,  
such a yearning for Peace,  
such a longing for Love;

Never such a striving to understand  
and to be understood.

Never has there been  
such a need for the Spirit  
that is Christmas."

Anon.

## Spiritual Air Pollution

by *Brian Kingslake*  
*Bath, England*

Somewhere or other there must be a light

To show us the way to go;  
But a golden smog obscures the sight,  
Billowing up from the realms of night . . .

We are lost in this murky glow!

O God, cleanse my soul! Blow the fog from  
my brain

That makes my eyeballs sting;  
That the ancient Signs may appear again,  
And the Bethlehem Star shine clear and plain  
To lead to the new - born King.



## IF — EACH CHRISTMAS

If each Christmas  
we would add  
one light,  
one thing or experience of beauty  
to put on our tree — of life  
the roots of which are in Eden —  
one song of love  
for the blessed moments of a year —  
the heavens would be open, again,  
and with the Hallelujah of angels and men  
the Promise fulfilled.

— Herta Rosenblatt  
*Quaker Life*

## WISHING YOU A REAL CHRISTMAS

Have you ever thought what a real Christmas would be like? There will be many this year in all parts of the world who will push aside the surface gaiety, the tinsel and the often meaningless gift - giving and will find and enter into the real meaning of Christmas.

The real meaning of Christmas is found in a Person. Oh, it is true that the world thinks of this glorious Person as a tender, little Babe born in a manger! At each Christmas time the wonderful stories of the angelic choir, the wise men from afar and the gifts presented to the Babe are always recalled. But upon how few does the glorious light dawn that this Child was none other than God the Creator who was from the beginning and who clothed Himself in a human body prepared for Him that He might make known the thoughts of God to men? ·

Why not have the real Christmas message come true in your own heart and life this Christmas season? In the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, God offers you the reality of life abundant and life eternal here and now. This is His promise: "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His Name" (John 1:12). So may yours be a **real** Christmas.

— Clyde H. Dennis

## He came once . . .

'He came once in the flesh that he might come forever in the spirit. He was born once in the city of David, that He might be born in every man who will receive Him. If He has been born in us, even though He can find no room in us but a manger, and no swaddling clothes but the few and tender spiritual truths we have learned in our childhood, we can have our Christmas. We can join our voices with the angels in singing, "Glory to God in the highest!" We can welcome Him to such homes as we have in our hearts. They are poor homes, it is true, and scantily supplied with the heavenly furniture of holy affections. But He will come wherever there is a place to lay His Divine Head.'

(Chauncey Giles)

## Please come . . .

Lord, please, come  
fill our homes with your childhood  
and make us children once again.

Turn our thoughts to Bethlehem  
and touch our hearts with eternity  
as we hear your story read.

Let us be the simple shepherds  
keeping watch over the sheep in our care.  
In the dark and cold — but there  
where duty calls.

Let the angels speak to us  
that we may share their joy,  
and become the men of good will —  
here on earth.

Let us be the wise men searching  
for the sign that you have come  
when our hearts begin to burn  
and our eyes fill with starry light  
and we see our dearest near,  
but know that **you** are there.

Christopher V.A. Hasler  
Derby, England

**G**ive us, O God,  
the vision which can see  
Thy love in the world in  
spite of human failure.  
Give us the faith, the trust,  
the goodness, in spite  
of our ignorance and weak -  
ness. Give us the knowledge  
that we may continue to pray  
with understanding hearts,  
and show us what each  
of us can do to set forth  
the coming of the day  
of universal peace.  
Amen.

First Prayer from Space,  
Apollo 8, Christmas Eve

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## THE COMING OF THE LORD

*by George McCurdy  
Boston, Mass.*

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*Matthew 1:18* "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise . . ."

*A.C. 39009* "The coming of the Lord . . . exists whenever the gospel is preached and what is holy is thought of."

The two texts selected for this meditation have a similar theme in that they stress the Advent of the Lord. The passage from Matthew signals the beginning of events that lead up to the natural birth of our Lord. We have heard the Advent story often enough that we are able to recall the general sequence of events: The angels' visit to Elizabeth and Zacharias; to Mary and Joseph; the angels' visit to the shepherds on the hillside; the visit of the wisemen following the star: Herod and all of Jerusalem troubled with the news of a new king; the non - availability of room in the Inn; Herod's slaughter of innocent children trying to eliminate the Lord; the flight to Egypt; and Simeon's blessing of the Lord in the Temple.

Indeed these themes are locked up in our memory. We enjoy hearing them over again each Christmas and react to the over-commercializing of these texts.

The quote from A.C. 3900<sup>9</sup> stresses that the birth (advent) of Jesus Christ is not just a historical one - time event, but occurs every time the Word is read, and its truths are deeply pondered. The birth of the Lord is a process going on each day. This process has a sequence which we need to consider as we enter our Advent season.

The Writings offer us this insight. Truth from the Word is admitted into our memory, and in many cases it remains there waiting for something else to begin.

When we begin to think seriously about truth, from the Word, and we enter into a state of repentance before the Lord, that truth is raised out of the memory and is advanced into our intellect where it becomes our faith, or belief.

If we use that truth in the intellect to reform our lives, it is raised out of the intellect into our will, or love.

Thus the memory knowledges of the Advent story, when removed from natural facts, become a spiritual faith and finally become celestial life. When we take the time to ponder all of the Advent themes, the Lord is born anew

in us. He becomes the Light of our Life in the fullest sense.

In John 3:19 we read:

"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

But not all men rejected the light in the night. The shepherds came out of the night to see this thing that had come to pass.

The wisemen came following the star to the place where the Christ child lay.

We, too, can come out of our dark state to the light of truth if we think and listen to the Gospel of the Lord's birth.

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## THE ROLE OF MARY

*by Ian Arnold  
Sydney, Australia*

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We speak of her as an 'instrument' which, of course, she was. She provided the infirm human with which God 'clothed' Himself and came on earth to effect redemption. She was in most respects a fairly ordinary young woman who shared the fallen tendencies of mankind at that time and who would, therefore, pass them on to any child born of her. We believe that there was nothing inherently special about her, though she must have been chosen because of her faith and convictions, her innocence, and her ability to handle graciously and believably the birth of 'the Son of God' of her.

The fact remains, however, that she was still just an 'instrument'. By birth of her, it is true, God became incarnate. But, as we know, Jesus put off everything derived from her and, in its stead, put on the Divine from within. Born the Son of Mary, as He was, He did not remain such. As with Swedenborg, who was the human instrument of the Lord's Second Coming, no special honour attaches to her.

But this is by no means where it ends because the Coming of the Lord, event in time that it was, is also a very individual thing. Just as the Lord came on earth two thousand years ago so He wills to descend and to be born in the lives of people today. And the Gospel stories of His Advent, when understood in the light of the inner spiritual meaning which they contain, tell us how this takes place; how it is accomplished. Everything described there (the Census, being turned away from the inn, the stable, the manger, the shepherds, and so on) teaches us

something of what's involved.

Bearing this in mind, let us look again at the role of Mary.

Mary represents a **spiritual affection for truth**, a longing from the heart for a life that is less selfish and more caring of the needs, interests, welfare, and happiness of others; a longing for the kind of life which has meaning and reality within it. And this is what serves to introduce the Lord into our lives — just as Mary served to bring the Lord into the world. This affection which she represents is what makes His Coming to us possible.

It is not, however, and as has been pointed out, just any spiritual affection, or longing, that is meant. The name Mary is from the Hebrew 'Miryam' which means bitterness, and the affection meant is something born of bitterness and struggle, of disillusionment with the old self-centered life we have lived. It is not until a person comes to see the emptiness of his own unregenerate self, the worthlessness of so much he strives after, and the ugliness of so many of the affections that stir him, that Mary

can be said to be present and that — subse-  
quently — the Lord can be born.

As is often complained of it, Christmas **can** be a superficial time, and this distresses us. But even when something of the reality which lies behind it is present in our thinking (the Lord's birth in us) we can be superficial about this also. If in fact the Lord is to be born in us it won't be on the basis of wishful thinking and the emotion of the moment. It is much too serious and much too significant an event for this. For the Lord to descend and come into our lives that affection meant by Mary must be present; that longing which she represents which comes of disappointment with ourselves, of anguish over sins committed and of disillusionment with the values and goals we have so far striven after.

The inner joy of Christmas lies in its promise of what can be — of life renewed, of heavenly love born in our lives, and (as a result of this) of peace and goodwill. It is a time when we turn our minds to these things again and renew our efforts to make them a living reality.

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## 1979 FRYEBURG ASSEMBLY THEMES ANNOUNCED BY NEW PRESIDENT

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At a joint meeting of the Executive Committee and Trustees of the Fryeburg New Church Assembly held Oct. 29 at the home of the new Assembly president Dr. Wm. R. Woofenden, basic plans for the 1979 three-week session were made. Inclusive dates are Aug. 4 — 26. There will be three one-week lecture themes: first week, "The Book of Jonah"; second week, "Laws of Divine Providence"; third week, "Temptation."

Thursday evening lectures will focus on "New Church terms." Every effort is being made to have the lecture and teaching staff fully lined up before the end of this year.

Although — as we all know — living costs continue to rise, it was decided **not** to raise rates for the 1979 session. It is hoped the resulting bargain rates will help insure a "full house" for the entire session. Full attendance will help level out costs and income.

Registrations this year will be handled by Louise Woofenden, 48 Highland St., Sharon, MA 02067. People wishing to look into early registration should write to her.

It was enthusiastically agreed to encourage the implementing of tentative plans of Convention's Board of Education to conduct an adult workshop or retreat at the Assembly

grounds the week preceding the regular session. Further information will be sent to the *Messenger* as plans progress.

Among improvements to the grounds agreed to by the trustees is a plan to provide a dormitory area on the second floor of the main building for younger girls. This facility will be ready for use at the next camp session.

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## CONVENTION CALENDAR

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Dec. 1 — 2	Board of Managers Newton, Mass.
Jan. 18 — 20	General Council Wayfarers Chapel, Cal.
Feb. 5 — 7	Committee on Worship Philadelphia
Feb. 23 — 24	Dept. of Publications
Feb. 21 — 25	Florida Conference, DeLand, Florida
March 1. — 3	Urbana College Board Urbana, Ohio

### NEW ADDRESS

Rev. and Mrs. Jaikoo Lee  
1503 River Dr.  
Glen Ellyn, Ill. 60137

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# CONVENTION APPEAL

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Last year Convention's Annual Appeal produced gifts to the Church amounting to seventeen thousand dollars. It was an increase of 11.6% over the previous year! Current giving to the greater Church program is a vital response of our membership to the needs of a healthy and ongoing larger Church program. Increased giving enabled Convention to increase its support of our summer camping program in the United States and Canada last year. Over the years summer camps have provided teaching and social encounters for many isolated Church members everywhere. We cannot underestimate the importance of great work of our summer camps in the life of our Church.

Convention annually supports the program at Urbana College. This denominational support is essential to our Church related College. The countless numbers of students whose lives are touched and changed by our educational program at Urbana College is a powerful testimony to the importance of the work there. Currently five of our ministers are Urbana College graduates, two of whom had never heard of our Church before attending college at Urbana.

The Board of Mission's work around the globe from Japan to Egypt and Africa is supported by current giving and income from invested funds held by Convention. Mission Churches in Japan, Korea, France, Switzerland, Africa and Guyana receive needed assistance from time to time or on a regular monthly basis.

The Board of Education supports a part-time ministry to upgrade religious education in its many aspects throughout our Church. Programs for retired persons, the youth of our Church and Churches and

groups without ministers are offered each year, and financed by Convention's treasury. Financial support in the form of low interest loans have assisted several congregations in time of crises and/or expansion.

Support of candidates for our ministry and in supplying salary assistance to ministers in Churches wanting to build their congregations is undertaken by our Augmentation Fund. Over the years wills and bequests earmarked to support ministry make this possible. The demand on these funds increases each year and will soon outdistance our ability to provide much needed financial assistance.

Administration takes a portion of our funds each year. Salaries and operating expenses of our Central Office, committees and board meeting expenses account for more ongoing expense.

Some of Convention's activities are self supporting, such as the Wayfarers' Chapel in California. That budget approaches a quarter of a million dollars annually and is supported by its wedding ministry and gifts and book sales. Thousands of visitors each year are exposed to our Church and its teachings there. The Chapel ministry is a seven day per week, fifty two week per year reality. They employ seventeen full time employees which includes two full time ministers.

Increased giving is essential to provide vigor and strength to Church programs. Your response last year was gratifying and we thank you for it. If the Convention Appeal could reach a goal of twenty thousand dollars for 1978 - 79 we could be assured of paying our way in the new year. What will your response be?

## Churches Ponder Tax Fight Over Arms Costs

NEW YORK (AP) — Three Protestant denominations opposed to war are considering a new kind of tax resistance — refusal to pay taxes that go for arms and equipment for war.

The denominations, whose hallmark for centuries has been conscientious objection to participation in violence and war, are relatively small. But they've had an influential impact on Christianity at large and on North American thought.

They are the Society of Friends, involving about 100,000 Quakers; the Church of the Brethren, a Midwest - based denomination with about 180,000 members, and the Mennonites, totalling about 130,000.

Although many of them have protested war in the past by refusing to accept military service, the nature of modern war has turned "from manpower to money for technology and automated weapons," the churches say.

In a joint statement, they say members of the movement now are "poised for stronger action."

"The time has come for all Christians and people of all faiths to renounce war on religious and moral grounds," the new co - operative coalition of peace churches said in its new call.

Regional meetings at 26 locations have been held in the last year about the issue, with more than 1,500 persons taking part, citing war and violence as "denials of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ."

At one of the conferences at Old Chatham, N.Y., last April, it raised this question: "Are we going to pray for peace, and pay for war?" Another in Wichita, Kan., declared that 50 per cent of funds collected from income taxes are used for military - related purposes and for manufacture of destructive weapons. The meeting encouraged "individuals who feel called to resist the payment of the military portion of their federal taxes."

A meeting in North Manchester, Ind., proposed making use of the current tax revolt highlighted by California's Proposition 13 and the distress at the national debt and inflation to further the peace cause.

The Indiana meeting suggested "legislative approaches that attract" the concerns of millions. The meeting urged an annual five - per - cent decrease in military spending until it is cut 25 per cent.

*(And this may turn out to be the most appropriate article of all in this Christmas issue of the Messenger.)*

## FROM CHURCH RECORDS

### BAPTISMS

**ROBINSON, ROBINSON** — Vickie Rene Robinson and Barry Wayne Robinson, of Crestview, Florida, were baptized into the Christian faith on June 18, 1978, the Rev. Ernest Frederick officiating.

**KOZAR** — Melinda Caitlin, infant daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Jon Kozar of Cambridge, Vermont was baptized on October 29, 1978, in the Cambridge Chapel, the Rev. Wilfred Rice officiating.

**HENDERSON** — Christen Mary, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Henderson, was baptized by the Rev. Richard H. Tafel in the Philadelphia New Church on September 17, 1978.

**LASSO** — Kevin Paul, son of Mr. and Mrs. Brock Lasso, was baptized by the Rev. Paul Zacharias in the Church of the Good Shepherd, Kitchener, Ontario on November 19, 1978.

**RUPPENTHAL** — Tracey Lynne, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Terry Ruppenthal, Owen Sound, Ontario was baptized into the Christian faith in Kitchener, Ontario on November 19, 1978, the Rev. Paul Zacharias officiating.

**WIENS** — Lynnea May, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Howard Wiens of Summerland, B.C. was baptized into the Christian faith on September 9, 1978, the Rev. Harold Taylor officiating.

## CONFIRMATIONS

**ROBINSON** — Leslie Joan Robinson was confirmed into the faith of the New Church on June 18, 1978, at her home in Crestview, Florida, the Rev. Ernest Frederick officiating.

**FRANCUCH** — Gloria Francuch of Santa Barbara, California, was confirmed into the faith and life of the New Church on October 22, 1978, the Rev. Erwin Reddekopp officiating.

(cont'd. on page 283)



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## THE CONNECTING POINT

# THE STABLE WAS SAFE

by Gwynne Dresser Mack  
Pittsfield, New Hampshire

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“Suffer little children to come unto me . . . for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” Jesus said this; and He Himself was once a child. His birthday is the most extensively celebrated holiday of the year, not just by Christians but by multitudes who are not thinking of Jesus Christ at all but nevertheless are caught up in a surge of jolly, generous loving - kindness. It is good to have a worldwide festival every year for bringing people closer together, even if they do not know why.

Yet there is an aspect of it which seems hollow and false. Stores now start in September to load up for the Christmas buying, displaying holiday merchandise in October. Postal service urges that Christmas mailing be done weeks ahead, and thus the sending of greetings becomes more of a pressure than a pleasure. This is a celebration? Honoring what?

Christmas has been called the children's holiday. Certainly their excitement lights it up as they become immersed in brightly - colored packages and exuberant merrymaking. But not everywhere. There are also on this earth millions of children who are suffering deeply. It is repeatedly documented in the news media that they are starving, sick, injured, illiterate, homeless, abused, exploited, corrupted, and many of them living lives of crime. For them there is no joy on December 25th — except possibly a bit of extra food, a toy, a bag of candy, appearing suddenly from some charitable group and as suddenly ended.

The entire Christian world should pray for these children. The birth of Jesus, for which there was no haven except a stable, was safe and gentle compared with what is happening on earth today to little ones in India and South America, Africa, the Orient, and — yes, all over the United States. The “right to life” campaigners seem to think that bringing a child into material existence is the entire story. If actually there is a right to life, as it is generally thought of, then *inseparable from it is the right to live safely*: to be protected, provided for, taught, guided into maturity and, through it all, *loved*. Have the “right to lifers” offered, individually or collectively, to take care of the

unwanted infants whom they insist must be brought into this world? Or have they even undertaken to guarantee *the right to healthy development* for the countless neglected babies already here?

In this New Age which we say should represent better ways of thinking and doing, how about finding a new approach to celebrating Christmas — by combining its meaning with the meaning of children? Not by discarding customs that are good and beautiful, for their preservation marks human progress, but by letting go of the frenetic compulsion to give and receive possessions, to send reminders of ourselves to people whom we seldom think of the rest of the year, and to overeat! Those who are able to do these things might well stop at last and turn toward all the others who can not.

Christmas surely should continue to cherish the lovely carols, and gather in their churches to honor the first Christmas by fully teaching its message. Every home should have a little creche for setting up each year, for touching and gazing upon. Christ's birthday is *the time* for children to become well acquainted with their Lord God, to learn that He is their Heavenly Father and that prayer is the way to talk directly with Him and be His friend. As He came to mankind in the form of a child, so now observance of that birth day should be for bringing children to Him. This truly would make Christmas the children's holiday. And all who have missed it as a little child should somehow be warmly invited to join the learning.

The Catholic church has long known that whatever a child is taught during its first seven years becomes embedded in its consciousness forever. For that brief time the undeveloped mind is continuously open, free from doubt, contradiction, or rejection by own - intelligence and self - will. There is as yet not enough knowledge and experience for evaluating, and so all is accepted and stored. The dynamic speaker, Rev. Jesse Jackson, recently said on television: “Don't tell me you can't control your child at sixteen, because you

probably can't; but you had your option at age six." From pre - school years onward, nowadays, immature minds with no ability for interpretation or sorting good from bad, are daily filled by television with an overwhelming conglomerate of dishonesty, stupidity, depravity and violence — emphatic demonstrations of what youngsters frequently assume is the usual behaviour of grown - ups. So the oncoming generation goes out and does likewise. Imagine what the results might be if knowledge of the Lord and the spiritual level of life were taught with the same continuing and vivid intensity!

Instead of every year showering family and friends with things, could not — in their

names — gifts be given to the *needs* of deprived children? Could not all non - deprived people plan and prepare cooperative projects to implement the endeavors of families, churches and towns — and make this the big Christmas celebration for everybody? And then greetings could be sent to far - away friends early in the new year according to the old French custom.

The Christmas story is a connection between humanity and Heaven. It is the record in history of "God with us" outwardly and visibly for awhile. The recurrence of Christmas Day is meant, above all else, for keeping Him with us in our hearts and minds, in our homes, in our relationships with others, and especially in the lives of all children — "for of such is the kingdom of heaven."



## THE NEWTONVILLE NEW CHURCH STORY

*by Mrs. Philip Carter*

Because I seem to be the last surviving member of the Newtonville Church, I am asked to write up some memories of it, that cover an early period, so this dates back to 1892, when I was five, and first went to church.

Rev. John Worcester was the minister there for forty years, and he was much beloved by his parishioners.

The first church, on Highland Avenue, was a wooden structure with plain glass windows. This church, later, was moved onto the land behind, and a new stone church was built on the site of the former church. The old one was used for entertainments, suppers, and dances, and the Sunday School building, which was made of stone and much smaller, was joined to the old church by a long corridor.

Mr. Worcester preached in the old church and filled it, and when it became necessary to move into a larger one, the membership increased greatly. Outsiders who admired Mr. Worcester came to hear him preach, and they were invited to join the church. He made pastoral calls regularly, and I remember my mother telling me, that when one of her

children was about ready to come into the world, Mr. Worcester came to the house and held her hand! He was a very conscientious and dedicated man!

Mr. Worcester had an illness, at the last of his life, and his daughter, Miss Margaret Worcester (Mrs. Horace Briggs) always put a note out on her piazza post every day for his friends to read, telling them just how he was as he was nearing the end. She was a most devoted daughter, as well as a teacher in the Sunday School for years.

Rev. John Goddard was subsequently called from Cincinnati to be our minister, and it was a hard assignment for him to fill, as everyone had been so fond of Mr. Worcester.

I am not quite sure just when Mr. Hoeck came to Newtonville, or whether he was an assistant of Mr. Goddard's.

Being a Scotchman, he had a different but delightful way of talking and we had to get used to his pronunciation. He would roll his "R's"!

Mr. Hoeck had reddish hair, and a goatee, which one little boy looked at with wonder. He said, "When you shaved this morning, didn't you forget something?" Soon after that the goatee disappeared!

For a while, people had to get used to his way of talking. He would always say at a meeting, "Well, I'm not a - going to keep you any longer!" (with a twinkle in his eye.)

Mr. J. R. Carter was long a member of the Newtonville Society and all his family (sometimes a little 'ordered') had to attend.

Mrs. Carter was the daughter of the Rev. Chauncey Giles, and after he passed away, she wrote a book on his life.

Mr. Charles Whittemore was another member of long standing and he had a pew full of relatives. As my family sat near them we admired the variety of fur coats they all wore!

They did not take up a collection every Sunday, as they do now, but whenever money was needed for a certain project, or repair job, Mr. Carter and Mr. Whittemore would put their hands in their pockets and pay the bills.

The whole John Carter family, who had the pew in front of ours, came regularly. There were four girls (Leslie later became Mrs. Charles W. Harvey) and one boy. During the service, one of them would see something funny, (like a queer feather on someone's hat), and start giggling. That would make the next one giggle until all four girls were trying to control themselves, and they usually did, but the pew squeaked!

The sermons in those days, were rather long for the younger ones, so we would count how many "ands" Mr. Goddard said, and as well as how many words began with an "a" or "b" or whatever letter we chose.

Entertainments were held every month — plays, musicals, dancing and church suppers. At the Christmas Party dinner it was announced that there would be dancing for the young people until 8:00 p.m. Mr. Edward Hooper, with watch in hand, on the dot of eight would announce that this was the last dance for the younger ones, so they would disappear and be replaced by the adults.

Mrs. J. R. Carter had a Sunday School class of 5 or 6 young boys, who learned a lot from her. At Christmas time she would take them all to see "Ben Hur" at the theater in Boston. No one ever dropped out of her class before Christmas!

Mr. Richard Carter was the superintendent of the Sunday School for years. He was very conscientious in his duties, and years later, married Miss Elizabeth (Elsie) Hobart of Cincinnati. She was a great addition to our Society, having been a worker in her home town for years. She wrote a book of plays for children called, "Christmas Candles," and many of these plays were performed by our Sunday School pupils. Also, every Sunday she told the children a different story, and they looked forward to hearing her tell them.

I don't recall how many years Mr. Goddard was our minister, but I do remember that the

Rev. Lawrence Gould assisted him in his later years.

The younger people liked to go up to Mr. Gould's house on a Sunday afternoon and play ping pong. Many of the elders disapproved of this, feeling that the younger ones were breaking the Sabbath.

At one of the church dances, an "Elder" dropped in and saw the young people doing the "Bunny Hug" and "Tango" and other too - close dances, so he stopped the dance, sent the pianist home, and closed up the hall.

My mother played the piano and drilled some of the young ones to sing in little cantatas.

Quite a few years later, new windows were put into the Church, designed by Mr. Charles Connick and Associates. These are lovely and after that, he and Mrs. Connick came regularly to our Sunday services. I don't know whether he ever joined the Church, however we said, "Whereas the rest of us came into the Church through the doors, Mr. and Mrs. Connick have come in through the windows!"

So finally, the reason why the membership of this particular Church has been dropping is probably because all of us, brought up in the church, have married and moved away. The older ones have passed into the Higher Life.

Newtonville is a well churchd city. There is a lovely Christian Science Church, which is full to overflowing every Sunday.

If it bothers people that the membership of our Swedenborgian churches is not growing, the following idea satisfies me: Swedenborg speaks of the "Grand Man". Each denomination corresponds with some function in the Grand Man. Some organs are more important than others, but the pituitary gland, though very small is vital to the whole. So our Church has its use to perform too!

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My mother played the piano and drilled some of the young ones to sing in little cantatas.

**Contributions to the Convention  
Appeal may be sent to:**

**Appeal  
48 Sargent St.,  
Newton, Mass. 02158**

## DOLE NOTES CHALLENGE

Each year at the annual Convention we have been in a position to introduce another volume of the Dole Bible Study Notes. If the present plan for funds is successful we will have another next spring.

This year's campaign is in the form of a challenge. The Southern Swedenborg Federation, Inc. has offered to match up to \$1,000 gifts received before December 31. They have already contributed \$5,000 toward the costs of printing and binding Volume IV.

We are now ONE THIRD of the way toward meeting the CHALLENGE.

**THE BEST WAY TO FIND HOW PEOPLE FEEL ABOUT NOTES IS TO SHARE WITH YOU —**

*From Ohio* — Recently the Executive Committee of the Ohio Association met in a Holiday Inn. During our stay there the maid cleaning our rooms picked up a copy of The Dole Notes and read it. She was very happy with what she read. She was a member of another denomination.

*From Florida* — "Mine was a love affair for two people that lasted half a century until their translation into the eternal life which they made so real to all of us. From the time their Bible Study Notes were mimeographed, they have assisted me in my study of the Bible and of Swedenborg's writings, and in my efforts to share the Doctrines with others. As President of the Southern Swedenborg Federation, I am

most happy to be one of those supporting the publication of these Notes. May they convey to a widening circle of readers the lasting impressions their authors made on a farm - boy turning teenager fifty years ago." Arthur M. Cigilliat, also President Emeritus, Dalton Junior College, University System of Georgia.

*From Newfoundland* — Parts of a letter from Mrs. Carol Kirbyson, Springdale, Newfoundland — "I find them (Dole Notes) particularly useful as Sunday School Lessons, as when one teaches children one has to thoroughly understand the basics of the lesson before trying to pass it on in class — From the writings of Swedenborg and suggested questions on the lesson I feel a lot more confident to teach the lesson to the children — Thoroughly enjoy reading them as they are written in a very easy - to - read style — I especially like the Basic Correspondences related to each lesson — we are not given too many and are given them in a form that is straightforward and easy to explain to the children — the notes are more than adequate — I always think it's such a shame that the other churches don't have them". Carol teaches in the United Church.

Contributors should make checks to the Sunday School Association and mail them to:

**Tom Zehner,  
439 E. Burgess St.,  
Pittsburgh, Pa. 15214**

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Theme: Spiritual Well Being: From Birth to Eternity  
Time to Relax — to re - establish old friendships and to make new ones.  
Time for Meditation Practice — a means of opening awareness to our intuitive knowing of what is good and true and as a means of enhancing our sensitivity to the Lord's presence with us.  
Time for Reflection — on the meaning of Spiritual well being and our Swedenborgian belief system.  
Under the sponsorship of the Adult Work Committee of the Board of Education, the staff will include the Rev. Dr. Calvin E. Turley, and his wife, Marilyn, and a theological student from SSR.  
Who is it for? Mature Adults — who plan to participate in the full program as we build a sense of community and deepen our spiritual awareness. Program will begin with supper on Wednesday, February 21st and end with lunch on Sunday, February 25th.

Costs:	Registration fee:	Single	\$35.00
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## THE UPPER ROOM

# QUAILS AND MANNA

by *Leon LeVan*  
*St. Petersburg, Florida*

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During the centuries after Columbus' discovery of America came an era of exploration and development that stirred men's souls. It was the emergence of a new world. Discovery, exploration, conquest, development — the supplanting of a wilderness and tribal populations with the most amazing civilization this planet has ever seen.

Now before our eyes has come the breakthrough into the Space Age. Such things (we are prone to say) are "real life"; and the gentle, peaceful ways of Heaven (like wearing laurel garlands in gentle paradises or teaching little children) — such simple joys must seem like almost nothing in comparison with the "real life" of struggle and accomplishments on earth.

The seeming inferiority of the Heavens as compared to the world raises a difficult problem in men's minds. Either the delights of Heaven must be as challenging and attractive as the accomplishments of life on earth or they can offer but little inspiration to our thoughts about the hereafter.

The contrast between Heavenly joys and earthly joys is treated symbolically in the sixteenth chapter of *Exodus* by the story of the quails and manna. The quails were given in the evening. The manna came in the morning. Each was a form of food for the hungry Israelites just starting their "forty years" in the wilderness.

"Quails in the evening" correspond to natural good.

When in the Other Life there comes that state which corresponds to "evening," the good spirits and angels are let down (or permitted to return) to the state of natural thoughts and affections they had when they lived in the world. They return to the delights of their natural life. That means when the state of an angel reaches his or her "evening," then natural delights take precedence over spiritual.

What are the natural delights we love here?

We like to learn about the external world, so we read the papers and hear the news. We like to compete in sports and contests, or at least to observe them. We like to grow gardens and study birds. We like to be entertained. We like to be appreciated in our employments and rise

to better positions. We like to improve or beautify our homes. We like to visit our friends and families. We like to go shopping. We like to prepare a meal; or make a dress; or build a cabinet; or ride a horse; or drive a car; or take a vacation; or eat a pie; or launch a spacecraft to the Moon.

It is just such delights we shall return to when we return to our "evening" states in Heaven, and those natural delights are signified by the "quails" that covered the camp of Israel in the evening.

Now let us look at the "morning" when the Lord gives the Heavenly "manna."

Do not suppose there are only high mountains on the earth to be climbed but not in the Heavens. Do not fear that the breath-taking new frontier of Outer Space will only remain on earth for exploration without counterpart in the Kingdom of God. All the mountains you will ever wish to climb — all the Space travel you may ever wish to make — will be waiting for you in the Lord's Universal Kingdom.

The "morning" in Heaven is the beginning of a new inward state of love to the Lord and love towards the neighbor. In that new "morning" of the soul every angel discovers with new freshness that the greatest joys which the heart can experience are the joys of love and goodness.

In the Other Life you will be the cause of your own "mornings" and "evenings." If your sky is dull it will be because your mind feels dull. If you find yourself in desert surroundings it will be because your life is going through a desert condition. An evil man on earth may possess a great mansion or world-famous castle. But his evil life shall have built for him only a shabby hovel in the spiritual world.

If you have true thoughts, your sky will be filled with sunshine and beautiful birds. Generous and merciful feelings will clothe your fields in Heaven with flowers and fruits. Truth in your mind will enable you to see sparkling lakes about you and glorious skies overhead. Your active thoughts will be like fresh running streams. Your good affections will give you to

see peaceful pastures and fruitful landscapes, with "cattle on a thousand hills."

There are only a few of the Heavenly truths unveiled in the New Church by the Lord in the story of the "quails and manna." The natural world, indeed, seems like the only "real" world. Its discoveries, labors, accomplishments, and joys seem all - sufficient for the needs of full creative life.

But compared to the realness of the Heavens — compared to the endless progressions and challenges of even our one Planetary Heaven — we shall find that our present material world is only a "shadow" compared to substance and reality.

In the language of the living *Word* the Lord gives "quails in the evening" and "manna in the morning." "He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness."

From Church Records (cont'd from p. 276)

## WEDDINGS

**BRENNEMAN — ANDERSON** — David Brenneman and Michele Anderson were married in the Church of the Good Shepherd, Kitchener, Ontario, on October 21, 1978, the Rev. Paul Zacharias officiating.

**BUCK — SCHNEIDER** — Ian Buck and Lynne Schneider were married in the Church of the Good Shepherd, Kitchener, on November 17, 1978, the Rev. Paul Zacharias officiating.

## DEATHS

**BROWN** — Marion Frost Brown, age 92, died June 27, 1978, in West Palm Beach, Florida. She was the widow of Lt. Louis C. Brown who died in France in 1918 in World War I. Marion was a life - long Swedenborgian, the daughter of the Rev. Albinus F. Frost and Emma Jane Richardson. She was born June 11, 1886 in Detroit, Michigan and was baptized by her father, who was then Pastor of the Detroit Society. The family moved to Cambridge, Mass. in 1894, where she grew up and was confirmed in the Cambridge Church.

For a number of years Marion was associated with the Church in Bridgewater, Mass., where she lived and taught in the public schools. She belonged to the present group of Florida New Church People which meets once a month in the home of her daughter, Mrs. Jack L. Hudnall in West Palm Beach, under the leadership of the Rev. Ernest L. Frederick of DeLand, Florida. A memorial service was held by this group October 8, 1978, with the Rev. Frederick officiating.

Survivors include one son, Albert Emery Brown, of Shreveport, La., two daughters, Mrs. Baskin T. Harper (Marjory) of Tullahoma, Tenn., and Mrs. Jack L. Hudnall (Betty) of West Palm Beach, Fla., ten grandchildren and two great grandchildren and one sister, Emma R. Frost, of Mansfield, Mass.

**TOOMBS** — Mr. Herbert Toombs, oldest member of the Cambridge Society, passed into the higher life on June 24, 1978. Funeral services were held in the Cambridge Chapel on June 28, with the Rev. Wilfred Rice officiating. Mr. Toombs leaves a son, Bernard A Toombs, with whom he made his home in Wilmington, Mass., and a daughter, Mrs. Adelaide Sundin.

## BIRTH

**POOLE** — Congratulations to Jerry and Susan Poole of Wilmington, Delaware, on the arrival of Timothy Alden on October 21, 1978.

## URBANA COLLEGE NEWS

The fall meeting of the Urbana College Board of Trustees was held on the campus October 26 — 28th. The number of full - time faculty is slowly being increased as new courses are added to the curriculum. The off - campus continuing education program is meeting a significant need and student enrollment is growing. A class of 82 freshmen is beginning its on - campus program this fall. The administration and all who have a concern for the well - being of Urbana College recognize that the reservoir of potential traditional college students will, if trends continue, decrease in the coming years. Thus, Urbana College will require strong support from all of its constituent bodies, and creative, dedicated leadership.

A committee of the trustees with responsibility in the area of church - college relations has been appointed. This group will work toward increasing the visibility of the Church on the campus and encouraging the implementation of the philosophy of education adopted by the college. It is our hope that an increasing number of Swedenborgian young people will take advantage of Urbana College. All of our New Church members and friends have an open invitation to visit the campus at any time.

E. Z.

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